The Post-Anthropological Indian: Canada's New Images of Aboriginality in the Age of Repossession

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Abstract: The article examines the new public imagery of Canadian Aboriginal peoples formulated in the 1980s and 1990s. Concentrating on the public education system, the author identifies the implementation of multicultural policies in the late 1970s and early 1980s as the starting point for curricular revisions which led to the emergence of a new set of representations of Indianness. The author argues that the new imagery is ideologically motivated and distorted, conveying the impression of Aboriginal perfection. A detailed analysis of works produced by the Shuswap Nation of British Columbia demonstrates how ethnographic texts—in this case those of James Teit—are used in the reconstruction of the Aboriginal past. The article ends with an overview of the anthropological literature on invented traditions and their use by indigenous emancipatory movements in several parts of the world.

Résumé: Cet article examine la nouvelle image publique des peuples indigènes du Canada, telle que véhiculée dans les années 1980 et 1990. Se penchant sur le système d'éducation publique, l'auteur identifie la mise en oeuvre des politiques culturelles de la fin des années 1970 et du début des années 1980 comme le point de départ de révisions des programmes scolaires qui ont conduit à l'émergence d'un nouvel ensemble de représentations de l'indienneté. L'auteur soutient que la nouvelle image est idéologiquement biaisée en ce qu'elle semble chercher à associer la perfection à la notion d'aborigène. Une analyse détaillée des travaux produits par la nation Shuswap de la Colombie Britannique démontre comment des textes ethnographiques—dans ce cas-ci, ceux de James Teit—sont utilisés dans la reconstruction du passé des autochtones. L'article se termine par un survol de la littérature anthropologique sur l'invention des traditions et sur son utilisation par des mouvements de libération dans différentes parties du monde.

Introduction

In the last 30 years Western anthropologists have shown a growing concern for the relationship with the people they study. The fusion of several developments in the political realm (decolonization, multiculturalism, environmentalism) with new trends in scholarship (minority studies, deconstruction, postmodernism) has challenged us with the proposition that our central aim, the scrutiny and explication of "otherness," is an outdated colonial pastime which is injurious to or at least exploitative of anthropology's object, the Native. This charge, formulated eloquently both outside (Said, 1978) and inside (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) the discipline, stings perhaps the most when it originates with the very people who provide cultural anthropology's raison d'etre. The indigenous critique, usually combined with calls for the "repossession" of Native culture and history, often leads to outright demands that Western anthropologists abandon the field altogether and surrender their monopoly to indigenous specialists. The result can be the appearance of a "post-anthropological" form of Native (Aboriginal, indigenous) studies which competes or co-exists with anthropological knowledge. In Canada and the United States the repossession campaign has been won by the Aboriginal people. In his latest major work, poignantly called ***Red Earth, White Lies***, Vine Deloria acknowledges and defines the victory. For "American Indians," he declares, "the struggle of this century has been to emerge from the heavy burden of anthropological definitions" (Deloria 1995: 65). A recent anthropological assessment of the relationship between American Indians and anthropologists endorses this outcome (Biolsi and Zimmerman, 1997). In this article I explore the composition of a new public imagery of Canadian Indians after the lifting of the "anthropological burden." In order to delineate a meaningful and manageable focus, I dwell on particularly infuential, canonizing representations which are conveyed in schoolbooks and government reports. After a brief survey of the essential

features of the new imagery, I provide a detailed examination of its relationship to anthropology using material published by the Shuswap Nation of British Columbia in its quest to repossess the Aboriginal past.

Targeting Prejudice

In 1965, representatives of the American Indian Historical Society appeared before the California State Curriculum Commission to lodge the following complaint:

> We have studied many textbooks now in use, as well as those being submitted today. Our examination discloses that not one book is free from error as to the role of the Indian in state and national history. We Indians believe everyone has the right to his opinion.... But a textbook has no right to be wrong, or to lie, hide the truth, or falsify history, or insult or malign a whole race of people. That is what the textbooks do. (quoted in Gilliland, 1992: 90)

Five years later, two Canadian educators arrived at a similar conclusion after scrutinizing social studies schoolbooks employed in the province of Ontario. Their findings, published under the provocative title *Teaching Prejudice* (McDiarmid and Pratt, 1971), set the stage for the first discussion of the place of Native Indians in Canadian public imagery. It centred on the role played by the state, and in particular by the public education system, in the formulation of ideas about Canada's Aboriginal people (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, 1978; Decore, Carney and Urion, 1981). By the early 1980s enough evidence had been accumulated to allow the conclusion that "no other ethnic group is as consistently negatively stereotyped as Native people" (Decore et al., 1981: 31).

Equipped with these findings and encouraged by Canada's new multiculturalism policy, progressive educators lobbied for an overhaul of the public education system and demanded the adoption of non-discriminatory policies and curricula. In some parts of the country the 1980s saw the formation of special commissions charged with these tasks. In Alberta, for example, the 1984 Ghitter Report on Tolerance and Understanding singled out curricular changes as a top priority (Alberta Education, 1994: 2). When the provincial government responded with the creation of a comprehensive Native Education Project, its main responsibility came to be the development of learning materials that gave "a more balanced and positive view of Native people" (ibid.). In British Columbia, the 1988 Royal Commission on Education recommended sweeping changes and demanded that "[all] curricular materials ... should include material dealing with the unique character of Native Indian society, and make clear the past and continuing contributions of Native Indians to Canadian society. This should be a feature of every subject in the curriculum" (Royal Commission on Education, 1988: 61).

The recognition of the need for a re-drawn image of Aboriginal people came combined with the perhaps even more far-reaching acknowledgment that the authors of the revised curriculum should be preferably Aboriginal people themselves. Responding to a long-standing demand for "de-colonized education" (Archibald, 1995; Cameron, 1993; McCaskill, 1987; Perley, 1993), many provincial governments have embraced this notion. For example, the aforementioned Alberta Native Education Project came to employ a "mutualistic curriculum development model" which ensures that "form and content [are] determined by Native people" (Alberta Education, 1994: 3). In British Columbia, a new method for the allocation of funds earmarked for Aboriginal education has enabled Indian bands to develop their own learning resources and to exercise considerable influence over the way public schools design and deliver programs concerned with Aboriginal people (Cameron, 1993; Government of British Columbia, 1995). Just how important the idea of indigenous authorship has become can be learned from the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples struck by the federal government in 1995. The commissioners suggest that the government oversee the creation of a high-profile Aboriginal History Series Project which would give "due attention to the right of Aboriginal people to represent themselves, their cultures and their histories in ways they consider authentic" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996: 727).

What role did Canadian anthropologists play in the restitution of the indigenous voice? In his influential *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, the well-known American Indian scholar and activist Vine Deloria caricatures anthropologists as self-serving opportunists interested more in their careers than in the plight of "their" Natives. In the biting chapter "Anthropologists and Other Friends" Deloria asks rhetorically, "Why should we continue to be the private zoos for anthropologists? Why should tribes have to compete with scholars for funds when the scholarly productions are so useless and irrelevant to real life?" (Deloria, 1969: 99).

Canadian anthropologists who specialize in Native studies have faced similar challenges from Indian leaders as their colleagues in the United States. In the 1980s the biggest issue was the demand for "repossession" of Aboriginal culture and history. Christopher McCormick of the Native Council of Canada formulated it in these words:

> We were, we are and will be the First People. We will refuse to allow people to appropriate or interpret our Cultures for their own ends. It will be our elders, our specialists, our historians and our anthropologists . . . who from now on will be the interpreters of our Culture. That is what self-determination means and we will have no less. (quoted in Ames, 1992: 146)

On the whole, demands of this kind have been received favourably. Leading members of the profession have endorsed the right of Aboriginal people "to manage their own cultural heritage" without the interference of "paternalistic Euro-Canadians" (Trigger, 1988: 9-10). Repossession is expected to "liberate indigenous peoples from the hegemony of academic and curatorial interpretations" (Ames, 1988: 81), ensuring that they get the right "to control the telling of their own story" (Kew, 1993/94: 89). As we are informed in the latest comprehensive self-assessment, instead of making "hegemonic decisions about ethnographic authority," Canadian Native studies specialists have accepted a position "alongside and in the service of First Nations peoples" (Darnell, 1997: 277).

Post-Anthropological Depictions of Indianness

The voluntary surrender of anthropological authority as an autonomous source of knowledge about indigenous ethnography, one which clashes at times with other (including the Native) kinds of knowledge, has dramatically reduced the influence of anthropology on the new public imagery of Indians. Indeed, unlike the previous, openly Euro-centric iconography of Indianness which often invoked, and at times abused, ethnographic evidence (Berkhofer, 1978; Francis, 1992), its modern successor is largely unconcerned with explicit references to anthropological knowledge. This is particularly striking in primary and secondary level schoolbooks. In this sense, the new public imagery is "post-anthropological." One could even argue that significant components of the new iconography are explicitly "post-academic." This trend is well-expressed in the constructs representing Indian culture within the reformed school curriculum. Ostensibly driven by the need to provide "true, accurate, and unbiased" accounts of Native history and society (Royal Commission on Education, 1988: 69), the curriculum reformers call in the same breath for material which does not damage the self-esteem of Aboriginal students (ibid.: 62). The second expectation really becomes the leitmotif as one educator after another warns that Native children "need to feel proud" (Archibald, 1991: 115), that teaching resources should help build self-esteem (Cameron, 1993: 84), "reflect Native people in a positive light" (Alberta Education, 1994: 1), and make clear that "First Nations people have sophisticated social, political, and economic systems that existed long before the arrival of Europeans" (McCormick, 1994: v). In short, it is not enough to recognize Aboriginal histories and cultures; they should be promoted (Perley, 1993: 125).

The need to emphasize salutary attributes of Indianness is written directly into much of the educational material developed in recent years. The authors of the acclaimed *Chronicles of Pride*, a collection of portraits depicting accomplished Canadian Indians, introduce the work as telling "a story of dignity, strength, courage, hard work and great spiritual strength" (Overgaard, 1991: 2). They state their aim as providing educators with a tool to convey "the spirituality and quiet dignity of First Nations peoples" (ibid.). The purpose of another widely used introduction to Native studies is "to create positive awareness of First Nations cultures" (Clark, 1993: 1). Here, in page after page, diagrams contrast "European Canadian" with "First Nations" values. Aboriginal people are credited with traits worthy of respect, such as strong family ties, a sharing attitude, multi-lingualism, spirituality, appreciation of physical contact, co-operativeness, tolerance, enjoyment of life, playfulness, thoughtfulness, respect for nature, respect for elders and a sense of humour (Clark, 1993: 22-26). Among Euro-Canadian values we find worrying about germs and cleanliness, attempts to control nature, mono-lingualism and competitiveness.

The postulated Aboriginal respect for the environment permeates the new imagery. "Prior to contact with the Europeans," informs *Chronicles of Pride*, "Native peoples had a relationship with the land based on respect and understanding for the ecosystem. . . . They had great respect for Nature, for all things animate and inanimate" (Overgaard, 1991: 1). The obvious political lesson is drawn in a schoolbook explaining the intricacies of Northwest Coast potlatching: "First Nations' deep spiritual ties to the land and nature create an alliance with all Canadians who want a better environment in which to live and to pass on to their children" (Clark, 1995: 52).

The tendency to attribute to Native Indians characteristics considered positive by contemporary Euro-Canadians is not confined to schoolbooks. Menno Boldt and Anthony Long, two respected social scientists, identify as "the basic political culture of most [Native Indian] tribes" the ethos of "sharing and cooperation" (Boldt and Long, 1984: 541). Consequently, they assert, "the idea of hierarchical power relationships" is "irreconcilable with

Indian history and experience" (1984: 542). With equality as a spiritual gift "derived from the Creator's founding prescription" (ibid.), the two scholars claim "direct participatory democracy and rule by consensus" for most of Aboriginal Canada (1984: 545).

Another scholarly account, this one penned by a theorist of education, offers this view of Aboriginal cosmology:

> Traditional Indian society was based on the knowledge that all things in life are related in a sacred manner and are governed by natural or cosmic laws. The land (Mother Earth) is held to be sacred, a gift from the Creators. In their relationship to the land, people accommodate themselves to it in an attitude of respect and stewardship. To do otherwise would be to violate a fundamental law of the universe. (McCaskill, 1987: 155-156)

The author felt so confident that he was restating self-evident truths that he did not consider it necessary to support these assertions with any reference to published scholarship.

A clearly hyperbolic but by no means exceptional sketch of Aboriginal perfection emerges from the work of the respected Okanagan Indian writer and activist Jeannette Armstrong. In her keynote address to a scholarly conference, she summed up pre-European conditions in these words:

> In traditional Aboriginal society, it was woman who shaped the thinking of all its members in a loving, nurturing atmosphere.... In such societies, the earliest instruments of governance and law ... came from quality mothering of children.... Let me tell you that upon European contact our societies required no prisons, armies, police, judges, or lawyers. Prostitution, rape, mental illness, suicide, homicide, child sexual abuse, and family violence were all unheard of. Upon contact, physical diseases were so rare among us that our bodies had no immunities to even simple endemic diseases. (Armstrong, 1996: ix)

Perhaps the most authoritative sample of the new public image of Indianness is offered in the recently released Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. It contains well-written descriptions of five Aboriginal societies, each of which represents a major culture area. The accounts again tend to dwell on attributes that contemporary Canadians are likely to admire, such as conflict resolution mechanisms free of violence—"the potlatch was a way of fighting with property rather than weapons" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996: 75)—and cosmologies which uphold harmony. On the latter point, all Canadian Aboriginal societies are said to maintain a "spiritual relationship to the land" and to act "as stewards of the natural environment," living "in close harmony" with it on account of their "reverence for the natural order and a sense of wonder before natural phenomena" (ibid.: 87). About Aboriginal social and political order, the Report asserts that "individuals are generally equal, and deliberations typically continue until consensus is reached" (ibid.). The preference for consensus is said to derive from "an ethic that respects diversity" (ibid.).

New Indianness and Old Ethnography: Interior Salish and James Teit

The point I am trying to make is not, of course, that the praiseworthy qualities attributed to Canadian Indians by contemporary commentators are fabrications with no grounding in reality. The conclusion that every reasonably objective observer is bound to draw is that the new imagery omits or at least minimizes the reporting of equally real characteristics of traditional Indian societies which modern Canadians would find difficult, if not impossible, to approve of. The distortions, some of which have been remarked on by other anthropologists (Cannon, 1992: 522; Donald 1990; Price, 1990), are systematic enough to suggest that they are the result of an ideological filter which cleanses modern public discourse of unpalatable ingredients.

I would like to explore the application of the ideological filter in some detail in the context of a specific culture area, namely the southern interior of British Columbia. The situation here is interesting for a number of reasons. The Interior Salish Indians inhabiting this region were first described ethnographically by the anthropologist James Teit in the early part of the 20th century. In the 1980s their descendants began to repossess the local history and culture, producing post-anthropological versions of their ethnography, some of which have found their way into public school curricula. An examination of the relationship between the anthropological and the Native accounts reveals the impact of the ideological filter on traditional ethnographic evidence.

An immigrant from the Shetland Islands, James Teit (originally Tait) arrived in British Columbia in 1884. He settled down in Spences Bridge, a small community near Kamloops, where he married a Thompson Indian woman and began a systematic investigation of local Native cultures. Ten years after his arrival, in September 1894, Teit received an unexpected visit from Franz Boas who describes the encounter in a letter to his wife:

> I went to see a farmer who sent me to another young man who lives three miles away up the mountain and is married to an Indian.... I finally found the house, where he lives with a number of Indians.... The young man, James Teit, is a treasure! He knows a great deal about the tribes. I engaged him right away. (quoted in Bunyan, 1981: 21)

This meeting marked the beginning of a fruitful collaboration. Boas encouraged Teit to publish the results of his ethnographic investigations, and when he returned to British Columbia in 1897 as the co-ordinator of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, he entrusted Teit with responsibility for the exploration and documentation of the southwestern interior of the province. Teit's ethnographic legacy is found in three massive, beautifully illustrated monographs on the Thompson, the Lillooet, and the Shuswap, published by the American Museum of Natural History between 1900 and 1909. Recent scholarship bears testimony to the unusual scope and depth of this legacy (Banks, 1970; Wickwire, 1988; Wickwire, 1993). It also reveals Teit, a committed socialist, as perhaps the founding father of Canadian advocacy anthropology who was actively involved in the early political campaigns of British Columbia Indians (Campbell, 1994; Wickwire, 1998).

In 1982, representatives of the Shuswap Nation convened in Kamloops to sign the Shuswap Declaration, a document which obligated them to recover their heritage by means of an ambitious research and publication program (Shuswap Nation Tribal Council, 1989). This resolution bore first fruits with the release in 1986 of the *Shuswap Cultural Series*—seven booklets of varying length, each devoted to a specific aspect of Aboriginal Shuswap society. The series was commissioned, published and copyrighted by the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society (SCES), an entity created by the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council (SNTC) in order to implement the Shuswap Declaration. Despite its brevity—the seven booklets amount to some 75 pages of text and illustrations—the *Cultural Series* gives the impression of a work based on solid research. It contains references to reputable scholarly sources, and in one booklet Shuswap elders are credited with having shared their knowledge with the author/researcher (Matthew, 1986[5]: 1). Each component in the series offers a word of thanks to "everyone who assisted in the research and production" of the work.

Even a superficial analysis reveals that the bulk of the material has been lifted from Teit's *The Shuswap* (1909) and *Thompson Indians of British Columbia* (1900). The two monographs determine both the form and the content of the entire *Shuswap Cultural Series*. Whether the subject matter is traditional housing, fishing, hunting, dancing or weaving, the real authority guiding the hand of the compiler is James Teit. In view of Teit's status as the most thorough anthropological observer of the Interior Salish, it is inevitable that any work on traditional Shuswap ethnography must to some extent draw on his evidence. The *Cultural Series* does so explicitly in the introductory booklet which makes use of Teit's demographic data (Matthew, 1986[1]: 1-4). This is, however, the first and last acknowledgment of the ethnographic source of the entire series. Although Teit is listed in the bibliography, not a single reference in the main body of the text explains his contribution.

Just how pervasive Teit's presence is can be seen from the following excerpts. On the subject of birth, Teit writes:

> The infant was bathed in warm water shortly after birth, and afterwards in tepid water once a day . . . until able to walk. . . . The day after the birth of a child the father gave a feast (Teit 1909: 584).

The *Cultural Series* describes the same event almost identically:

> The newborn child was bathed immediately in warm water and had a daily bath until he or she could walk. The day after the baby's birth, the father gave a feast (Book 1: 6).

The construction of summer dwellings is sketched in these words:

> In places where the party was liable to attack by an enemy, these lodges were made of horizontal logs interlocked like the logs of a log-cabin. They were chinked with moss, or were earth-covered up to a height of four or five feet. Some small spaces were left open between the logs at a height of nearly two metres . . . ,and these were concealed by overhanging brush (Teit, 1909: 494).

The same subject appears in the *Cultural Series*:

> In areas where enemies might attack, these lodges were made of horizontal, interlocking logs, chinked with moss and covered with earth to four feet high. Spaces were left between logs at about six feet high and these openings were covered with overhanging brush. (Book 3: 2)

By the time we reach the last booklet, the overlap between the prototype and the copy is almost complete. Here is Teit's description of traditional drums.

> Drums were used at dances and as an accompaniment to singing. They were circular and exactly like those of the Thompson tribe. They were very seldom painted or decorated in any way. Fawn's hoofs were sometimes attached all around the rim. (Teit, 1909: 575)

The contemporary version goes like this:

> Drums were used at dances and as an accompaniment to singing. They were circular and exactly like those of the Thompson tribe. They were very seldom painted or decorated in any way. Fawn's hoofs were sometimes attached all around the rim. (Book 7: 1)

In spite of the obvious dependence of the contemporary account on Teit's Ur-text, the series has its own identity which derives from the manner in which Teit's ethnographic data are used. On the one hand, descriptions of material culture and innocuous customs are copied almost word by word. On the other hand, where it clashes with the present-day Shuswap view of themselves, Teit's material is omitted or distorted. The tendency to distort the ethnographic record can be illuminated with several examples. Throughout the series, considerable emphasis is placed on the postulated uniqueness and self-sufficiency of Aboriginal Shuswap. They had developed, the reader is told, "a unique culture that was totally self-sufficient" (Matthew, 1986[1]: 4). This claim is extended to spiritual as well as material culture. Thus, "the Shuswap took raw materials and worked them into the articles and tools necessary to make them a totally self-sufficient people. They adapted their surroundings to their use, creating a culture unique in its manufactures and implements" (Matthew, 1986[5]: 1). This postulate contradicts Teit's data and conclusions. If there is one theme underlying his work, then it is the remarkable similarity he observed between the Shuswap and other Interior Salish societies, especially the Thompson. Over and over again Teit asserts: "The implements and utensils of the Shuswap were practically the same as those of the Thompson Indians" (1909: 473); "The prayers and observances of the Shuswap were quite similar to those of the Thompson Indians" (1909: 601); "The marriage customs . . . were just the same as those in vogue among the Thompson Indians" (1909: 590).

Beside autarky and particularity—the stuff independent nations are made of—Aboriginal Shuswap as presented in the *Cultural Series* cherished harmony and equality. Warfare is covered in two short paragraphs confined to an account of regional alliances (Matthew, 1986[1]: 9). By contrast, Teit, who claims that "the most typical Shuswap [were considered to be] warlike, proud, inclined to be cruel, [and] aggressive" (1909: 470), devotes much attention to traditional warfare and feuding. One of the oral accounts which he records describes a raid on a Sekani camp. Having killed most of the enemies, Shuswap warriors "destroyed the lodges and all the property that they did not want. They tied the bodies of the children together in pairs and hung them over branches; others were impaled on the ends of Sekani spears, which they stuck up in the snow" (1909: 547).

Captives taken in war and integrated into society as slaves are mentioned in the *Cultural Series*, but the claim that "these people gained full membership in the community upon marrying a Shuswap person" (Matthew, 1986[1]: 9) clashes with Teit's observation that male slaves rarely married free women and thus remained in bondage (1909: 570). They were, according to Teit, "often treated cruelly" (1909: 290). At times slaves appear to have been killed and buried with their masters (1909: 592).

Noting the lack of formal distinctions derived from ascription, the compilers of the series conclude that "[t]here were no classes among the Shuswap people. Even the Chiefs or Shaman had no special privileges . . ." (Matthew, 1986[1]: 6). This postulate is based on Teit, but, again, only in part. Teit explains that the egalitarian social structure was confined to the southern bands (1909: 570). By contrast, the western and northern bands constituted a rank society with three "classes"—nobility, commoners and slaves. Nobility appears to have been hereditary, and its members possessed special privileges which they sought to protect by means of endogamy (1909: 576). Shamans, who occupied a special position in traditional Shuswap society, come across in the contemporary account as benevolent practitioners "specially trained in the medicines of the Shuswap people" (Matthew, 1986[1]: 5). There is no hint of the fear shamans seem to have instilled on account of their association with witchcraft, cannibalism, madness, and aberrant behaviour in general (Teit, 1909: 612-617).

Throughout the *Cultural Series* there is a clear reluctance to admit that Aboriginal Shuswap experienced pain and death. Teit gives much space to various ordeals associated with coming of age customs, such as whipping (1900: 310), self-inflicted burning of selected body parts by girls (1909: 588), and cutting and slashing practised by boys (1909: 590). Adolescent boys reportedly also made themselves vomit "by running willow-twigs down their throats" (1909: 589). The contemporary account mentions none of this. It also says very little about death. The dead, we are told, "were buried along with some of their personal possessions. These items might include the knives and weapons, gambling sticks, and always

included all of the person's moccasins" (Matthew, 1986[1]: 9). The enumeration omits slaves buried at times alongside their masters, and the favourite dog of the deceased, usually "killed at the grave, and the body hung up on a pole or to a tree near by" (Teit, 1909: 593). One also searches in vain for any allusion to the horses slaughtered and eaten at the funeral feast (1909: 593).

The second work published by the Shuswap Nation in its attempt to repossess the past is a richly illustrated book of some 100 pages, which is aimed at elementary school children. Entitled *We Are the Shuswap*, the work is presented as an insider's account of traditional life observed through the eyes of two sisters and their male cousin. To enhance the ethnographic value of this approach, the author incorporates numerous sidebars and spreads which provide detailed and illustrated depictions of cooking, sewing, fishing and building methods. Virtually every piece of the ethnographic data—including the drawings—is borrowed from Teit's monographs on the Shuswap and the Thompson. However, neither Teit nor his books are mentioned anywhere. This omission is particularly noteworthy in view of the numerous consultants who are thanked for their assistance with the production of the book. The list includes individuals and groups that lent "cultural advice and guidance" (Smith Siska, 1988: 95).

The degree of overlap between Teit's work and *We Are the Shuswap* is striking. For example, the modern account describes the construction of a canoe in these words:

> Fine sewing was done with a split root of spruce or pine.... Three or more crossbars kept the canoe stiff and well stretched.... The ends of the canoe were caulked, or plugged, with moss and pitch. (1988: 41)

In Teit's account, the same activity appears in this form:

> The finer sewing was done with split root of spruce or pine.... Three or more cross-bars ... kept the canoe stiff and well stretched.... The ends were caulked with moss and pitch. (1909: 531)

A shamanistic performance is depicted in *We Are the Shuswap*:

> A shaman with the rain as his guardian spirit might paint his face with red stripes and dots. These marks stood for the rain cloud and the rain. The shaman would then walk in a circle, singing his rain song. (1988: 76)

Teit's version runs as follows:

> a shaman whose guardian spirit was the rain painted his face with ... red stripes or with dots in red.... These probably represented the rain-cloud and the rain. He ... walked around in a circle ... ,singing his rain song. (1909: 601)

The commencement of collective berry picking is described in *We Are the Shuswap* in these words:

> Each year, picking began as soon as the chief announced it was time. Young men watched the patches. From time to time, the watchmen brought in branches for the chief to see. When the berries in one patch were almost ripe, the chief sent word to the women. (1988: 56)

Here is Teit's account of the same activities:

> The chief ... watched the ripening of the berries, and deputed young men to watch and report on the various places. From time to time the watchman brought in branches and showed them to the chief. When the berries were almost ripe, he sent out word.... (1909: 573)

Further instances of almost complete overlap between the two versions could be adduced *ad nauseam.*

We Are the Shuswap continues the tendency to position the "borrowed" ethnographic material within a carefully designed context that underlines harmony, equality and happiness. As the story moves from one season to the next, the reader cannot but conclude that traditional Shuswap life revolved around laughing children and smiling elders showing one another respect and affection. For example, we learn that

> [At the onset of winter] families were settled in their ... villages along the rivers. Their pit houses were snug and warm. Their food caches were well stocked. It was a time for storytelling and visiting. It was a time to enjoy being together. (Smith Siska, 1988: 24)
>
> And so the days of winter passed. The women trapped, worked on hides, sewed clothing and prepared foods. The men hunted, fished and worked on their tools and weapons. Families visited one another and enjoyed being together. Elders told stories, children played games. The long winter nights were filled with dancing, singing and feasting. (1988: 37)

Summer was as conducive to happiness and good cheer as winter:

> In the gentle evening warmth after the heat of the day, the camp was peaceful. The air was filled with the

> smoky smell of drying fish. People gathered to talk and laugh and play games. Elders told stories. Parents taught children the songs and dances of their people. Everyone was relaxed and happy. (1988: 59)

Within the happy and harmonious setting of traditional Shuswap society, women are singled out for special attention. Whenever the author depicts an important event, she makes sure to place a female character at the centre. For example, in the interaction between a boy and his female cousin, the boy acknowledges his cousin's "great wisdom" on account of which she would become "an important elder" one day (1988: 31). The children have learned from their relatives that women and men are equal. Their role models, Grandfather and Grandmother, perform family rituals "side by side" (1988: 66). At meal times the best piece of meat goes to the grandmother of the hunter (1988: 28).

Much of this contradicts the ethnographic evidence as found in Teit's work. Teit states without any ambiguity that women had no voice in any formal deliberations "nor in any other matters of importance" (1900: 290). Among the many prohibitions imposed on women by virtue of their sex, Teit mentions the absolute taboo on eating the "most wonderful" parts of an animal (1900: 326-327).

Obvious selectivity can also be observed in contemporary depictions of the relationship between humans and animals. The essential attributes of that relationship are summed up in the assertion that "Shuswap people have always cared about the earth and tried to use its resources wisely" (Smith Siska, 1988: 18), examples of which are provided on several occasions (1988: 30, 64-66, 76). Although the evidence supplied by Teit may warrant this conclusion (1909: 601-603), it also demonstrates that the respect of a traditional hunter is not necessarily synonymous with that of a modern-day environmentalist. For example, Teit provides a very interesting illustration of the traditional manner in which eagles were captured and their tail feathers pulled out. He notes that although the eagle usually survived the operation, at times it ended up dead and skinned (1909: 523). *We Are the Shuswap* paraphrases Teit's account but fails to mention the possible death of the eagle. In its harmonious version the bird is released unharmed and rewarded with a salmon for parting with its tail feathers (1988: 76).

The relationship between animals and humans is the subject of the last textbook to be reviewed here, *Coyote as the Sun and other Stories*. Published in 1993 by the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, this richly illustrated compilation of nine traditional Shuswap legends is introduced as the collective effort of numerous groups and individuals, including a Cultural Curriculum Committee (SCES, 1993: 54). All nine stories were adapted from James Teit's *The Shuswap*, and this is acknowledged in small print on the last page. The adaptation involved some simplification of the vocabulary and abridgement, but otherwise the stories remain essentially the same as they appear in Teit's account.

There are three exceptions to the symmetry between the original and the copy, two of which I wish to discuss briefly. In the title story "Coyote as the Sun," the anthropomorphic creature displays excessive zeal in meddling in human affairs, and this brings about his demotion. In Teit's version we learn that "Whenever he saw married women commit adultery or young women fornicate, he would call and let all the people know" (1909: 738). The new version renders this sentence as "Whenever he saw a person doing something wrong, he would call out and let everyone know" (SCES, 1993: 7). The second cut is found in the "Story of Chipmunk." In Teit's prototype Chipmunk annoys his grandfather Owl by telling him over and over again "your scrotum has many lines and is much wrinkled" (1909: 654). The adapted text replaces scrotum with stomach (SCES, 1993: 37-39).

Although this is not the place for a discourse on Shuswap mythology, I think it is clear that the adjustments made to the prototype have serious consequences for the interpretation of the legends. Both Coyote and Chipmunk express the centrality of sex in Shuswap mythology and culture. Many of the Coyote stories recorded by Teit reflect Coyote's preoccupation with sex (1909: 639, 685, 721, 741), and since he is an anthropomorphic figure, we may assume that his adventures provide a commentary on the power of sexuality. The removal of any reference to sexual organs makes the ending of the "Story of Chipmunk" far less meaningful. Owl namely was so angered by Chipmunk's insults that he attacked him and inflicted the markings which chipmunks still bear today (SCES, 1993: 39). Would a grandfather really be driven to violent rage by a child's observation that his belly is wrinkled? Clearly, the original version makes more sense, containing probably an allusion to the waning of sexual powers and intergenerational conflicts triggered by it.

The three works reviewed here were produced with the intention of contributing Aboriginal content to the social studies curriculum of provincial public schools. All of them have been adopted by several school districts in the southern interior of British Columbia and possibly elsewhere. But the tendency to reconstruct the past in order to create an image of Aboriginal perfection is by no means confined to the Shuswap. A cursory look at similar

types of material authored by Okanagan Indian authors reveals similar results. For example, *Neekna and Chemai*, a children's book written by the acclaimed novelist and activist Jeannette Armstrong on behalf of the Okanagan Tribal Council, introduces the reader to an implausibly harmonious community populated by obedient children, wise elders, friendly neighbours, and a generous Great Spirit (Armstrong, 1991). The same message jumps from the pages of *We Get Our Living Like Milk from the Land*, a work of non-fiction which promises to provide "an historically factual basis for all ... members of the Okanagan Nation" (Maracle, Armstrong and Derickson, 1993/94: ix). The chapter on "Original People" gives an overview of Aboriginal conditions when wise grandparents watched over well-behaved children, educating them "in a patient loving way" (Maracle, Armstrong and Derickson, 1993/94: 14). The children grew up "to be happy gentle people" (ibid.). Just how ideal the precontact society was is shown in this summation:

> The syilx had no schools, jails, judges or police. No person ever went hungry while they were part of a village. Rape or child abuse was unknown. People were strong and lived to be old and were free all their lives. Gathering food and everyday work was shared and there was lots of time to spend on creative and interesting things. The syilx were great story tellers, artists, crafters, thinkers, singers, and musicians. They were the best of natural scientists and doctors. They excelled at sports and were extensive travellers. Our history shows all of this. (Maracle et al., 1993/94: 16)

Anthropology and Ideology

On the basis of the samples reviewed here, I think it is evident that the revised public imagery of Indianness, as it has emerged in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s, contains stereotypical constructs drafted in accordance with formulaic ideas about the Aboriginal past. Post-anthropological in the sense that it took hold at a time when anthropologists began to divest themselves of their previously uncontested authority over Aboriginal studies, the new iconography is in many respects at loggerheads with the canons of ethnography, and in some instances it violates commonly accepted standards employed in the production and dissemination of most kinds of educational material.

What should be our reaction as anthropologists to schoolbooks based on plagiarized and distorted versions of ethnographic classics? How should we respond to pseudo-anthropological accounts driven by clearly ideological motives? Must our long-standing alliance with and sympathy for oppressed indigenous peoples override our scholarly responsibility as interpreters and, yes, protectors of knowledge? And if we don't think that Teit's legacy is worthy of the most basic defence against blatant misuse, then what does this say about our attitude towards other anthropological classics and, beyond that, our collective past? It is important to emphasize that the question whether Teit's depictions of Shuswap society are accurate or not is not the issue here. The problem, as I see it, concerns the way in which the conclusions of anthropological classics are dismissed or distorted by post-anthropological authors without an honestly critical engagement with the claims they object to. Instead of an open attack, the canon is dismantled surreptitiously and without the benefit of any new evidence.

The global anthropological discussion of these and related concerns revolves around two basic questions. The first one asks whether anthropologists have the epistemological justification to presume that their models of culture and history are superior to those formulated by Native authors. By now there is a considerable corpus of literature devoted to this topic, ranging from intricate commentaries on the Obeyesekere-Sahlins debate (see Borofsky, 1997) to examples of what Charles Tilly calls "softcore solipsism" (Tilly, 1994). The latter category shelters postmodernists who adhere to the notion that all traditions are invented and shaped by contemporary concerns among which the anthropological ones should not be privileged in any way (Friedman, 1992; Hill, 1992; Linnekin, 1991).

The second, and in some ways related, question asks whether anthropologists possess the moral right to scrutinize and possibly reject the Native view of self. A spirited discussion of this question followed Allan Hanson's description of Maoritanga, or Maoriness, as a deliberately political invention aimed at justifying the quest for power of an emerging Maori political elite (Hanson, 1989). Similar to Canada, non-Native New Zealanders, including anthropologists, "have been active participants in the invention of the tradition that Maoritanga presents to the world" (Hanson, 1989: 895). Although Hanson had made it clear that he did not consider the inventions incorporated into Maoritanga inauthentic (1989: 898-899), his ideas were not well-received in New Zealand, and this in turn led to a debate about the appropriateness of using the term "invented traditions." Linking epistemology and ethics, Jocelyn Linnekin declared that because present-day anthropologists do not regard "Native models of culture, custom, or tradition ... [as] inferior to scholarly representations," the term "invention" implies no disrespect (Linnekin, 1991: 447). But, in view of the perception that the

concept is "a political revisionist and anti-Native rubric . . . [which] undercuts the cultural authority of indigenous peoples" (1991: 446), Linnekin warned anthropologists to employ it only with caution.

The mixing up of epistemology with ethics has become the trademark of later discussions of this subject. In his overview of a special issue of *American Anthropologist* dedicated to "contested pasts," the guest editor declared that

> invocations of a uniquely valid, objectivist concept of the past can in many instances be interpreted as supremely political acts of "disauthenticating" or preempting, the validity of alternative ways of defining the past by reducing the latter to falsehoods, ideologies, or political agendas. (Hill, 1992: 810)

Anthropologists are put under an obligation to accept the global "release of alternative historical voices" (Hill, 1992: 813) as a process of "ethnic reempowerment" which enables marginalized peoples to resist "ongoing systems of domination, racial or ethnic stereotyping, and cultural hegemony" (ibid.: 811).

Probably the most consistent critic of the solipsist position was the late Roger Keesing. An unabashed "objectivist," Keesing examined in great detail the elevation of Melanesian *kastom* to a potent political symbol used by Native elites and described it as fetishization and idealization of tradition (Keesing, 1994: 53). The fact that, in much of the Pacific, contemporary indigenous representations of the past omit any mention of "human sacrifice, chiefly oppression, bloody wars, patriarchy" and dwell instead on "a paradise of holistic healing, ecological reverence, love for the land, and communalism" (Keesing, 1991: 169) constitutes, in Keesing's opinion, a conscious ideological device which exaggerates the distance between the (Native) "insider" and the (colonial/immigrant) "outsider." The process of distancing helps divert attention from what Keesing considers the most important political issue in present-day Oceanic societies, namely the growing political and economic inequality within the Native camp.

> The cultural nationalist discourse of a postcolonial elite, counterposing the indigenous and authentic to the foreign, alien, and exploitative, lays down ideological smokescreens that cover and hide the realities of class interest, neocolonialism, and the exploitation and pauperization of hinterlands villagers. To find the subalterns, we must penetrate the smokescreens laid down by the "insiders" who have the power to represent the present and claim the past. (Keesing, 1990: 298-299)

For Keesing there is no single "insider" view, except "in the simplifying rhetoric of nationalist ideology" (1990: 295). After all, members of indigenous elites, including academics, "have risen to positions of considerable power, prestige, and privilege" which separate them from "their rural poor cultural cousins" (1991: 169). According to Keesing, appeals to a selectively constructed *kastom* help members of the indigenous elite "resolve these contradictions, to validate their right to represent 'their' people, and to maintain senses of personal identity by invoking bonds of shared essence, racial and cultural" (ibid.).

Across the Pacific, in North America, views similar to Keesing's were articulated by some of the contributors to James Clifton's *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies*. Its central thesis comes down to the proposition that the new collective representation of American Indians consists largely of "cultural fictions" circulated in order to legitimize the goals of Native interest groups (Clifton, 1990a, 1990b). Cultural fictions, claims Clifton, "are fabrications of pseudo-events and relationships, counterfeits of the past and present that suit someone's or some group's purposes in their dealings with others" (Clifton, 1990b: 44). The aims are, supposedly, "the ordinary ones of manipulating power and controlling resources" (Clifton, 1990a: 16). In the same volume, the late John Price unfolds a similar argument about Indian support groups in Canada. Taking the "Native advocacy industry," including, presumably, anthropology, to task for failing to distinguish between advocacy and propaganda, Price warns that "advocacy of ideas carried to an extreme can become unethical and lead to distortions in the promotion of special views and images" (Price, 1990: 255).

Echoes of this warning can be heard from Australia where the divisive Hindmarsh Island debate has cast a very long shadow over the credibility of anthropology. Triggered by the emergence of two opposing indigenous positions regarding the impact of a proposed bridge on secret women's beliefs and practices, the conflict escalated with the charge of one of the Native parties that its opponents had invented the allegedly traditional beliefs (Weiner, 1995). In the course of a protracted public inquiry, prominent Australian anthropologists came out in support of the claim that such secret women's beliefs did exist in the area despite compelling ethnographic evidence which disputed it (Brunton, 1996). A commission of inquiry eventually determined that the so-called "secret women's business" had taken shape in 1993 as a deliberately political ploy (Weiner, 1997: 5).

Conclusions

My own case study from British Columbia adds to the (by now) considerable evidence that deliberate fabrications are part and parcel of some of the nation-building movements initiated by indigenous communities. This should not come as a surprise to anybody even faintly acquainted with the well-known correlation between nationalist discourse and self-glorification (Gellner, 1983; Lefkowitz, 1996). I think it is naïve to suppose, as many solipsists seem to, that all, or even most, of the post-anthropological Native self-assessments will be "iconoclastic and subversive" treatises which challenge the "Western hegemonic control over discourse" (Linnekin, 1991: 447). Much of the literary outcome of repossession is probably more likely to resemble the *Shuswap Cultural Series* than the non-conformist ideas expressed in *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1989).

In view of such realities, it is clearly unconscionable to go on pretending that there is no qualitative difference between unabashedly ideological ethno/nationalist self-promotion and the scholarly quest for knowledge. "In a plurality of tongues what happens to scholarly speech?" asks Michael Ames. "Is anthropology only to be regarded as one more voice among many, perhaps even inferior to the self-interpretations of underrepresented peoples? Has anthropology become just another story, yet another mythic 'discourse'... ?" (Ames, 1992: 167). Such a demotion would have far-reaching consequences. As we see in this case study, it can be the pseudo-subversive rather than the truly innovative interpretation of culture and history which finds its way into textbooks and other powerful channels of communication. Once entrenched in the public domain, this type of rather old-fashioned, Herderian cosmology perpetuates the illusion that bonds of race and ethnicity are the ultimate source of order in an increasingly untidy universe. Ironically, by dichotomizing society into "good Natives/insiders" and "bad Whites/outsiders," the ethno/nationalist iconography canonizes the very boundaries which postmodern multiculturalists have laboured so hard to tear down. Unlike the real world inhabited by hybrids, tricksters, cross-dressers and chameleons, the fabricated world created by nationalist "awakeners" doesn't tolerate ambiguity or paradox. Children are well-behaved and respectful of elders, chiefs are wise and generous, Whites are evil. There is no place for iconoclastic and hybrid figures, such as James Teit. In the arts, such deliberate elimination of ambiguity and paradox is usually condemned as kitsch; in public life it is known as propaganda.

As the academic study of emancipated indigenous peoples enters the post-anthropological stage—where much of the research, including the topic, methodology, and communication of results, is influenced and often even defined by the researcher's host community—the traditional academic goals of impartiality and objectivity may be in danger of being overshadowed by less lofty interests. It is well-known that Canadian anthropology of the last 30 or so years has been deeply involved in the emancipatory efforts of local indigenous groups. Some leading members of the profession even postulate that it is the political engagement of the discipline which provides its unique flavour (Darnell, 1997). Having dealt elsewhere with the uneasy co-existence of political and scholarly interests in Central and East European ethnology (Scheffel, 1993; Scheffel and Kandert, 1994), I am beginning to wonder whether a discipline which openly commits itself to a position "alongside and in the service of First Nations peoples" (Darnell, 1997: 277) faces a brighter future than its communist-era East European counterparts which fought valiantly "alongside and in the service" of the working class. Can independent scholarship survive the imposition of such a strait-jacket?

It seems to me that the transformation of much of Canadian anthropology from a discipline concerned mainly with traditional academic interests—in this context the description and analysis of indigenous societies and cultures—to one which sees the redress of social injustice as an increasingly important goal, is bound to have a lasting impact on our ability and willingness to engage in research which might depart from the rather narrow scope circumscribed by the job description of a well-meaning "advocate." It is perhaps no coincidence that while a growing number of First Nations specialists can debate competently intricate legal opinions concerning Aboriginal rights and a host of other current issues, the production of professional ethnographies depicting modern Native communities has taken a nose-dive. This means that we do not have much to say about factionalism, the formation of elites, the use and abuse of power, class distinctions, and similar phenomena which would provide a useful context for the topic I have described in this essay. Were it otherwise, Roger Keesing's (1990) and more recently Eric Wolf's (1999) exploration of the link between indigenous elites and the fetishization and idealization of traditional culture might be an interesting impetus for further research.

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