Niitooii—"The Same that Is Real": Parallel Practice, Museums, and the Repatriation of Piikani Customary Authority

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In Dialogue with Reg Crowshoe, Thunder Medicine Pipe Keeper, Sun Dance Ceremonialist, and Director, Old Man River Cultural Centre

Abstract: Over the last two decades, use of museum-repatriated ceremonial Bundles and associated knowledges, practices, songs and rights by Piikani people has also been aiding in the reconstitution of wider socio-economic, political, and authority practices. Related to this, attention is drawn to a specific Piikani Blackfoot trajectory of material-metaphoric action over an extended history of contact relations: that is, of *making parallels*. A Blackfoot term for this is *Niitooii*, "the same that is real." As in such Bundle-centred ceremonies as the Sun Dance, *Niitooii* makes things real because it mobilizes a complex of shadows, transferred rights, and the authority of people and things. Recent Piikani mediation practices parallel this complex against those in Canadian non-native civil and political society which similarly give authority and force to people. In effect, this has helped advance a collateral process of reconstitution: that of reasserting—or *repatriating*—customary practices of law and governance, which historically have been enacted through the authority of the Bundles themselves.

Résumé: Au cours des deux dernières décennies, grâce aux collections des musées, l'analyse des «ballots sacrés» et des connaissances, des pratiques, des chants et des droits qui y sont associés chez les Piikani a aussi aidé à la reconstitution de sphères plus étendues comme le domaine socio-économique, la politique et l'autorité. Dans ce type de recherches, on peut relever une trajectoire spécifique d'action matérielle-métaphorique chez les Piikani Pieds Noirs couvrant une longue histoire d'interrelations: la propension à *faire des parallèles*. Un terme Pied Noir pour cette opération est *Niitooii*, «le même qui est réel.» De la même manière que dans des cérémonies centrées sur les ballots sacrés comme la Danse du Soleil, *Nitooii* rend les choses réelles en mobilisant un ensemble d'ombres, de droits accordés, ainsi que l'autorité des gens et des choses. Des pratiques récentes de médiation Piikani mettent en parallèle ce complexe avec celles qui dans la société civile et politique non-native canadienne donnent autorité et force aux gens. De fait, cette pratique a contribué au développement d'un processus parallèle de reconstitution: celui de réaffirmation – ou de rapatriement – des pratiques coutumières de droit et de gouvernance qui historiquement ont été accomplies grâce à l'autorité des ballots sacrés eux-mêmes.

> When we dissect western process, we can dissect out the language, what is written, what is legal . . . formal, informal, what's authority. . . . We should be looking at parallels at every one of those levels too, for every one of those things, in our traditional processes with our practice. . . . — Reg Crowshoe

While land claim and resource actions have dominated headlines on Native/non-Native relations in Canada since the 1990s, another intersecting set of materially and politically important interchanges has been unfolding. Museums and First Nations people have been engaging in extraordinary re-negotiations surrounding sometimes corresponding, often conflicting goals concerning Aboriginal cultural property and knowledges retained by museums.[1] Many museums are now collaborating respectfully with First Peoples on the making of exhibits, engaging in ceremonies with objects in those spaces and in communities, and, even more importantly, returning objects to original peoples. The Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, which concentrates on Western Canadian history is notable both as a flashpoint—recall the Lubicon protests associated with *The Spirit Sings* exhibition in 1988[2]—and a mediation point, especially in relations with members of the three Blackfoot speaking First Nations of southern Alberta: the Siksiká, Kainaa, and Piikani—the last of whom are the principal focus in this article.

Though encounters with museums—in particular with the Glenbow—form the launching point for the following discussion of transcultural relations, there is far more at play. This paper pointedly tracks relations into an Aboriginal community setting where accelerated use of repatriated materials and associated knowledge, practices, songs and rights by Piikani people has been aiding the reconstitution of wider socio-economic, political, and authority practices, affecting ever wider circles of

Native/non-Native relations. Attention is drawn to an historical trajectory of contact relations associated with a Blackfoot practice of metaphoric action: that is, of *making parallels*. Reg Crowshoe offers a Blackfoot term which captures this practice: "*Niitooii*, the same that is real." As elaborated over the course of this paper, *Niitooii* refers both to the paralleling of Blackfoot and non-Aboriginal sociocultural practices, as well as the paralleling of entities of the physical world and those of the *shadow* or *abstract* world.

A key proposition is that parallel-making enables the "repatriation" (in the political sense of return to an originating nation) of indigenous cultural, material, legal and personal rights and authority—or *Niitsitapi shadow authority*, the authority to survive as *Niitsitapi*, a "Real Person."[3] The premise is that *Niitsitapi authority* is attached to transferred community objects and is further animated by restored use of these objects, often following their return through relations with museums.

The paper is organized into four sections: first, aspects of the contemporary network of museum/Blackfoot transcultural relations are outlined; second, a particular *genealogy* of Piikani/non-Native relations emphasizes the persistence of material/metaphoric exchange historically; third, the tradition[4] and contemporary manifestation of *Niitooii* "abstract relations" and parallel-making is considered. Anthropologist Michael Asch's recent analyses on the "relational other" offers inspiration for the fourth section. There, *Niitooii* parallel-practices—what Reg Crowshoe terms *abstract repatriation*—are considered for what they offer to the renovating of native/non-Native relations by recognizing indigenous authority and principles of "sharing" between nations.

Entangled Authorship—A Note for Readers

This article draws significantly on exchanges of the last 15 years between Brian Noble, *Mai'stooh'sooa'tsis*[5] and Reg Crowshoe, *Awakaasiinaa*.[6] Noble has been associated over that period as cultural exchange developer, anthropologist, museums programming advisor, and extended family member. Reg Crowshoe belongs to a prominent lineage of transferred bundle-keeping people of the Piikani Nation, which reaches back through his parents, Joe Crowshoe, *Áápohsoy'yiis* and Josephine Crowshoe *Pyok'omonoiitapiaakii*, to Reg's great great Grandfather, Brings-Down-the-Sun, *Naato'siinapii* and his wife Bird, *Sisttsí*, both of whom lived at the time of the signing of Treaty Seven in 1877 and on into the early 20th century.[7] In keeping with the *Niitooii* thematic, the writing tack in this article both parallels and entangles our authorial positions as anthropologist of Euro-Canadian, settler descent and as Piikani Ceremonialist.[8] While following scholarly standards, the approach also highlights Reg's personalized, suggestive telling-practice.[9]

Noble's description and analysis is presented in first person, or in plural first person.[10] Reg Crowshoe's specific commentaries appear in the form of quoted statements (not italicized) from recorded discussions and dialogues with Noble.[11] Quotes from others are in italicized form.

Beyond the "Sacred"— Networks of People, Things, and Shadows

The recent repatriation of Glenbow-held ceremonial bundles and related objects to the three Blackfoot speaking bands of Alberta, and likewise in the Province of Alberta's new legislation on repatriation to Alberta First Nations,[12] media stories and official representations typically highlight "spiritual" restoration and "sacred ceremonials." The prominent material in question has been the complex bundles which have long been recognized by Blackfoot people, and also by anthropologists, as integral elements of communal ceremonies such as the Thunder Medicine Pipe Dance, the Sun Dance, and the Beaver Medicine ceremonial.

Gerald Conaty has rightly suggested that emphasis on "sacredness" in delineating objects has certainly helped to minimize impediments in conveying repatriation principles to members of Boards of Directors who might be nervous that entire collections could be lost through repatriation claims.[13] However, while respectful, the language of "spirituality" continues to romanticize the material in question along with native peoples from whom the material originates.[14] This language obscures the remarkable sociopolitical and personal reconstitution that is taking place in Aboriginal communities—which, in turn, is beginning to slowly correct power imbalances in Native/non-Native relations well beyond museum walls. As Kainaa Band Councillor Narcisse Blood aptly remarked to the *Globe and Mail* on the repatriation: "It means so much more than the general public out there will ever realize."[15]

The principal bundles referred to were those culturally and politically powerful objects, which had to be transferred through proper ceremonially supported payments or gifting, and kept responsibly by a woman and a man for communal purposes, either of a clan or of the entire tribe. Blackfoot leaders, museum curators and media stories alike have compared the bundles to the

Canadian Constitution, the Bible, written laws. It is with the bundles that communal social order has been regulated by means of explicit adherence to relations with the spiritual dimensions of life—referred to here as *abstract* or*shadow relations*. Glenbow scholars Gerald Conaty and Robert Janes have noted the sociocultural relation of the bundles and their keepers in their potent discussion of the *relational network* of communal *Niitsitapi* action:

> *Sacred bundles also embody the norms, values, and protocols by which Blackfoot culture functions.... When disputes arise or issues of cultural norms are breached, it is [the bundle keepers] who, through their bundles evaluate the situation. Since humans attain this authority only because of their bundle ownership, it is properly understood that the authority resides with the bundles, not with the humans.*[16]

They go on to point out emphatically how the bundles are crucial to activate the entire social, spiritual, human, non-human and ceremonial network, highlighting, in addition, the importance of songs in this action:

> *One cannot isolate songs from ceremonies; one cannot think of the relational network without including bundles, Other Beings, ceremonies, etc.*[17]

In this sense, the bundles are always, necessarily part of the relational network, as are the people, the songs, the entirety of life and beings. In addition, Reg Crowshoe explains how the authority is transferred over time with the transfer of bundles:

> ... our authority goes through the bundles, and the lineage of the bundles to Creator ... we don't have a hierarchy.... Anybody can challenge the leadership through those bundles ... cause they're transferred to anybody. Like I had hoped to keep the Old Man's bundle in the family.... But it's still open to challenge ... for that leadership....

When not in use during an actual ceremony, bundles are respectfully cared for by the woman keeper and hung on walls in the homes of the keepers, or if in camp on a tripod outside their lodge. They are smudged daily and also "fed" spiritually on occasion. At the Glenbow, smudging and feeding of the bundles within the collections spaces has also been adhered to, either by museum staff on their own or led by Blackfoot ceremonialists. When bundles are used in Blackfoot communities, the practice is to meet in the circle arrangement of a tipi, where all of the participants fill various rightful roles according to protocols, sitting in designated positions in the circle, and with the bundle(s) placed in an authoritative focal position in relation to the other actors.[18] (See Figure 1.) If the ceremony is held in a house or any other building, these positions are maintained, the circle of discussion and protocols retained explicitly. As such, the circle and all the relations of humans, non-humans and their shadows are always already embodied by the bundle. In other words, the practice associated with the bundles and the mobilization of the relational network is enacted in this circle arrangement—a point of signal importance in the concept of *Niitooii*, the same that is real, and in contemporary parallel-making, as elaborated in the latter half of this paper.

From Zone of Contact to Extended Relational Network

Returning to the issue of museums/Piikani relations, the value of continuing the museum/First People relation as a locale for transcultural exchange and political engagement has to be underscored. Encounters and movements of the bundles and other cultural materials between museums and the Piikani has generated new forms of conjoined action. James Clifford has remarked that museum/First Nations interchanges like those between the Glenbow and Blackfoot produce a "zone of contact"—terms he borrows from Mary Louise Pratt. Pratt notes that such a zone stresses " ... copresence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices.... " She is also quick to add the crucial caveat that in 19th century colonial context those interlocking arrangements have been played out, " ... within radically asymmetrical relations of power,"[19] If we take this as a premise of the colonial workings of this zone of encounter, then the test of postcolonial correction lies in demonstrating how the noted asymmetry of power is being redressed *within or as consequence of* the actions in the zone of contact. As Michael Ames noted wryly some years ago, regarding the challenge of restoring power symmetries, " ... more drastic measures are required than simply balancing non-Native curators with Native consultants, like counterpoising so many Cowboys and Indians."[20]

With regard to the Glenbow, for instance, the museum has adopted a thoroughgoing "partnership" policy in its programming surrounding collections, exhibitions and relations with originating communities.[21] That said, it has to be remembered that these actions are still largely circumscribed within the general standards of museological practice, a notably modern, Western practice.[22] Once more, Michael Ames aptly suggests an even more radical vision requiring "the restructuring of the

entire enterprise and its value system in order to recognize the primal and sovereign status of First Peoples and their right to radically different claims to truth. . . . "[23] Again, this is not to fault Glenbow officials for their efforts, which certainly exceed most museums in Canada, but rather to suggest that the redressing of power imbalances is still being conducted within (and limited by) the ontologically privileged practices of the museological profession, rather than by practices of First Peoples themselves. As such, the contact zone continues to accord greater authority to museums officials over Aboriginal people.

To address the larger sociopolitical effects of shifting museum/First Nations relations one has to consider a wider landscape and a longer history of Niitsitapi/non-Native relations. This brings us to the matter of *shadow* relations (to use Reg Crowshoe's term) operating in transcultural, material and political encounters spanning a period back to the late 19th century (and arguably farther back than that). Interestingly, Blackfoot *shadows* echo aspects of Mauss's formulations about the "hau" of gifts in his *Essai sur le Don*, adding further grist to the longstanding critical discussion in anthropology of the pragmatics of exchange signalled in Mauss's essay.[24] In the context of the historical place of ceremonies in relation to past government policies, the discussion turns to a more localized genealogy of material/metaphoric relations.

Histories of Parallels and Recognition of Niitsipati Shadow Relations

Joe Crowshoe, *Áápohsoy'yiis*, long-time spiritual leader of the Piikani, passed away in 1999. From the days of his earliest involvement as Sun Dance and Thunder Medicine Bundle keeper in the 1930s, he would often explain to non-Native people how, " . . . We are now cross-culture, now cross-culture. I'm teachin' you my culture. You teach me your culture. So we can be the same."[25] The approach of many Piikani and Kainaa ceremonialists was one in which they directly engaged and welcomed non-Natives into their ceremonies and political ranks.[26] Joe Crowshoe strove to form respectful relationships with non-natives insisting, "We have to work hard on the cross-culture . . . the cross-culture is very important." What was this "cross-culture" to which he referred? The *Old Man*—a term of honour used throughout this paper in referring to Joe Crowshoe—offered his view on resisting assimilation:

> You see, the old people, the old people one time told me, "If you think like a white man, you're gonna die like a white man. If you think like an Indian, you're gonna die like an Indian." That's why I get my white people to come, governments come, when I open up my bundle over here. I want 'em to see it. I want 'em to learn it. We all pray to one god above. We're not strangers, you and me. All the same to god.[27]

Long before the Old Man, his great grandfather Brings-Down-the-Sun encouraged open-minded non-Natives to join ceremonies in order to build better understanding.[28] Reg Crowshoe described the historically persistent inclusions of non-natives as pointed efforts to build up non-native recognition of the "shadows" of Niitsitapi relations:

> . . . some of the stories I hear in my language. . . . When Crow Eagle and Mad Wolf and Bull Plume and Brings-Down-the-Sun . . . those Old timers . . . when they were dealing with the first Europeans . . . there was a standard set, at that point, of why they were allowed into the ceremonies. . . . To look at this context of what our shadows were . . . so that we can work together. . . . I believe from that point and even earlier on was where the idea was conceived and it was passed on to the Old Man. . . . I [was] fortunate to grow up in the Old Man's shadow . . . at home. . . . Even though I was gone a lot through residential school . . . growing up to him, I think certainly planted the seed of direction. . . . I credit this whole direction that I take to the Old Man's capacity to be able to pass that information on to me to keep going . . .

Reg also emphasized that the Old Man, Brings-Down-the-Sun, and other Blackfoot ceremonialists were discerning about *who* they invited into the ceremonies:

> They were dealing with ethnographers, anthropologists, missionaries, and Indian agents . . . those were the people that they were dealing with . . . not just settlers, but these main people that they were dealing with, were allowing into their ceremonies, because, they wanted to show them the shadow, and the institution to the best of their ability . . . the process started there. . . . And I feel that the Old Man and myself are just going to be part of those links. . . . In his words, I hear them in Blackfoot and in English: "If the white man can understand my people the way my people understand the white man, then we can get along. . . . "

In a similar vein, the Kainaa (Blood Tribe) very effectively enlisted sympathetic non-native allies via the Kainaa Chieftainship.[29] One influential member was the Member of Parliament for Lethbridge, John Blackmore,

who discussed his credentials during the 1951 parliamentary debates on amending the Indian Act:

> *In addition to being a Member of Parliament I possess another set of credentials . . . I am an honourary chief of the Blood Indians. It makes a difference when you are an honourary chief. You feel you have more responsibility. . . . I was initiated at the Sun Dance in 1945 by Head Chief Shot From Both Sides, Chief Cross Child and Chief John Cotton, and given the name of Motuskumau, "The Good Adviser." In addition to that I am director on the executive of what is known as the Kainaa Chieftainship, which is an organization comprised of 35 members who have thus far been selected by the Blood Indians as honorary chiefs from among their white brothers. . . . The aim of the organization is to help the Indians help their children to a better life.*[30]

In the course of the debates, Blackmore also spoke of his understanding of the treaty obligation to involve natives in discussions to amend the Act, remarking:

> *The Indians have always considered themselves to be partners with the white men. All the treaties they signed indicated that the white man looked upon them as partners; but since the Indians signed the treaties they have had an excessively difficult time asserting their right to be looked upon as partners. The white men choose to disregard their claim for partnership.*[31]

Blackmore had clearly expressed his recognition of this partnership, having been enlisted into the sociopolitical and ceremonial action of shadow relations in the Sun Dance. He saw parliament and chieftainship in parallel, manifesting the same intent as the Old Man: " . . . We are now cross-culture. . . . So we can be the same."[32]

This very idea, of being "the same" is a complicated one, as it is predicated on notions of difference, parallels, and crossing, as signalled in the opposed term "cross-culture." To better apprehend these ideas, I want to consider the term "museum" as a parallel practice which emerged while working closely with the Old Man.

"Museums are Death Lodges"

I met with the Old Man in 1988 to offer assistance to him and his son Reg in developing a museum in the unoccupied house behind the Old Man's place on the Peigan Reserve near Fort MacLeod. This museum would, in the Old Man's words, "help the young people get back to their culture." Special objects, some of which were being loaned by the Glenbow Museum and the Provincial Museum of Alberta, were to be put on display, and the elders would teach the young people what these things meant. The Blackfoot term he used to describe this museum—and which had also been applied to non-Native museums for some time—was *Makíínimaa*, or "Death Lodge," a word that also referred to graves elevated on poles or put on the ground where the remains and certain untransferred objects of the deceased person were reverently placed to go back to the earth, and back to the Creator. The very practice of using the Blackfoot term, "death lodge," for the non-Native idea "museum" is a specific case of cross-cultural paralleling.

Reg pointed out how this parallel opened up the opportunity for clarification of cultural meanings of the term, and an appropriate practice surrounding it during discussions with government officials in the 1980s. One official had latched onto a very limited notion that all the things in a museum were *dead*, including bundles which would have been transferred items, but being "dead" had been effectively disconnected (or alienated) from their users and the shadow relations of the Niitsitapi relational network. Reg recounted how he talked first with the official, and then with the Old Man, to arrive at a more adequate understanding of the term in terms of shadows and authority:

> . . . we talked about . . . designating the museum as a Makíínimaa, or "death lodge," so that we don't have to take things and put them on the ground . . . we can take them back to the museum and put them there. . . . That way, he said, well, things will be dead and we don't have to deal with the other situation [of whether bundles in museums belong with the Piikani]. . . .
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> But, can you really kill a shadow? That's my question. . . . [33] So, when we discussed it with the Old Man. . . . He told me that renewal comes from the environment you live in. . . . So, in this case, we're saying. . . . Our path of authority will come from Creator . . . to the earth . . . to the bundles . . . to human beings that are responsible for those bundles and carrying out the decision-making. So, that's why we put the bundles back out on the hills, so that the authority stays in. . . . They renew. . . .

Designating the museum in the Old Man's house as *Makíínimaa* was properly recognizing it (and this would also apply to non-Native museums holding native materials) as a place of renewal, not a place of termination in prevalent Western senses of death, finality, and the extinguishing or detaching of spirit or life from bodies and things.

"Today, the Dollar is the Buffalo"

In that same visit in 1988, the Old Man made another parallel for us, this one similarly drawing upon material-

ized metaphors, indeed the most material of metaphors: money. He told us that the buffalo, the traditional Blackfoot "source of life" were gone, and now people had to think differently. Holding up a two-dollar bill, he said, "today, the dollar is the buffalo." Fully in his "cross-culture" way of thinking, he was considering how dollars, money, could be used to develop a museum according to his sense of tradition. Some months later, in a letter to Chief and Council on the development of the Piikani Museum and dictated to Reg Crowshoe and me, the Old Man went further:

> *I would like to express my feelings regarding the spiritual ways of our native culture. This is very important from our heritage, from way back up to the present days. In our spiritual ways, the source of life comes from nature and the Creator. It also comes from the teachings of the Elders. àWith the bundles and songs and the artifacts it's known that only the ceremonialists have the rights to open them and recognize the power for the people.... This museum has to be developed in the right way, the traditional way. It should be just like organizing the spiritual ceremonies. This is the right way. It should draw the people by spirit, with spirit. I want to give you an example. We, the ceremonialists, prepare carefully for the ceremonies, but it is the bundles that have the spirit and draw the people together. This museum will need money to be developed. That money is an offering for this museum to the Creator. The spiritual opportunity comes first, the commercial opportunity comes next.*[34]

The Old Man noted that the power of the bundles to "draw the people by spirit, with spirit" was "very important from our heritage, from way back up to the present days." His sense of tradition was in no way something of the past, but rather something fully enduring or timeless which could be mobilized even in the work of museum-making. Equally important, he was putting *money* into the place of *buffalo*, the former "source of life" and survival, recognizing it as a spiritual offering to the Creator for the museum to succeed. The "cross-culture" demonstrated was one in which the Old Man folded money and museums into the relational network of the bundles, not to replace the network, but to both parallel it and strengthen it. With this, he extended shadow relations into the making and operating of a museum such that the notion of "commercial" viability would be built upon traditionally-meaningful, practiced, spiritual viability where money used is viewed as an offering to the Creator.

Such a transposing of money or other contemporary items in ceremonial gifting, offerings and payments exemplified in recent years by the Old Man and the Old Lady, Josephine Crowshoe, as they discussed the Sun Dance of 1977 when the Brave Dog Society had become active again. The Old Man recalled how:

> *... 1977 is when we had our Sun Dance over at Lizards' house just over to the prairie side. That's when Mike Swims Under ... I started working with him the first time in 1977. Look, and I gave him a tipi and a tent and a camp stove. All that to take home.*

The Old Lady felt compelled to explain why such a thing as a campstove or tent could be given out like this:

> *New campstove and a tent was new for helping the Old Man. That's how they trade things.... You know, when Indians, you don't buy. Give me this much for this. Dollars. You, me, no. You give me goods. What I need. That's what I want. That's the way Indians trade. They call it "trade." They don't call it "buy."*[35]

Of course, cash has also been given out in ceremonies for many decades. The Old Lady was making the crucial point that things of all sorts—by extension, even money—are not alienated but fully wrapped into the relational concern of "what I need" to survive, in the sense of "trade." The relational network, quite clearly, is a network of circulating items of value to recognize shadows—i.e., as the underlying authority—of the bundle practices, which in turn are the link to the Creator.

Shadows to "Make things Real," to "Keep the Circle Strong"

To this point "shadows" and "shadow relations" have been mentioned many times. These parallel ideas were further clarified in that first meeting, sharing coffee, food and stories in the Old Man's kitchen in 1988. At the time of these discussions with the Old Man and Old Lady, I had repeatedly been struck by the borrowing of non-Native models and the mixing of material metaphors: museums as death lodges, learning of *living* culture in a such a place by means of display cases, equating dollars and buffaloes. I wondered how the idea of museum cabinets—with their implicit meanings of looking at rather than holding and using of objects—could possibly work in "renewing" culture. At the time, and with Reg on hand, I also asked the Old Man what the old ways, quite apart from museums, had been for learning one's culture. The Old Man thought for a moment, grabbed a piece of paper, and began to draw an outline picture of the Sun Dance camp, showing the lodges of the clans and families arrayed in a large circle around several other lodges for the Societies and the two key Sun Dance ceremonials

themselves—the Holy Lodge and the Sun Lodge. Handing me the drawing and speaking sparely, he added: "We've got to get the young people back to the traditional camp, to the ceremonies, that's where they can learn respect for their culture. We need to keep the circle strong." So, here were more contrasting, paralleled ideas: a building with cases and objects, against a camp circle with tipis and ceremonies. The museum indexed the camp circle, and was a contemporary means of leading young people back to the camp, to renew it and ultimately to strengthen it. When reminded of the Old Man's drawing and comments, Reg added something which had eluded me in the original conversation:

> I agree ... [with the Old Man]. We have to make those camp circles a lot stronger.... Today, I would say, those camp circles are disappearing.... Let's look at it this way.... The camp circles were strong in the old days, because you could see the different designs that belonged to the different clans, or bands, or who owned those designs ... and which ones were stronger ... and who was transferred bundles, and who wasn't.... You can identify that way ... today, you go to a camp ... and you see tents instead of tipis.... And on the tipis all you see are nothing but white.... How can you identify the camp? It seems to disappear before your eyes....

As with the Old Lady's point on "trade," Reg was making yet another crucial point. In fact, painted tipi designs—which like bundles are transferred items—are re-appearing in Piikani as well as Kainaa Sun Dance camps, but many lodges still lack designs. The restoration of the camp has to be more than just a lot of tipis arranged in a circle, just as the restoration of bundles is more than the return of objects made up of skins, feathers, beads, or parts of animals, no matter how much they are labelled "sacred" or "ceremonial." Specifically, it is also the *transferred* dimensions and with that the reciprocal exchange obligations of the camp that need to be restored. In Reg's and in Blackfoot terms generally ... that would be the *abstract* or the *shadow* dimension, in addition to the material dimension. He emphasized the importance of this dimension:

> When I talk about the shadow ... it's what makes things real.... We would say, Creator created ... my physical body so that I could survive by feeding myself.... But he also gave me my shadow, that represents HOW I can feed myself ... what I could eat ... that abstract information ... that shadow is always represented by a song.... And that song is part of the authority....

Designs on tipis, bundles on their tripods, people wearing transferred regalia, all the clans, the giveaways and transfer payments, the dances, and very importantly, the transferred and personal songs—all of these working together, show that the circle has been "strengthened" in the Old Man's metaphor. Without these shadows, the abstract authority, registered by the designs and by the songs sung by rightfully transferred people, the camp is neither restored, nor can it even properly materialize: in Reg's words, it "seems to disappear before your eyes."

People and things may be present, but it is their shadows activated by the practices and the songs, that make them real, gives them authority, makes people *Niitsitapi*, real people. David Duvall, the Piikani who recorded Blackfoot stories for Clark Wissler a century ago captured it in the simple statement of one old man speaking of ceremonial bundles: "One never gets power without a song to go with it.... "[36] Songs, then, come close to evoking, literally and figuratively, the "shadow" of which Reg speaks, as they are the empowering links, of real persons to real bundles. They are the authority which links everything to the Creator.

Contemporary Parallels to Redress Relations

> Why not take your system apart and bring your theories and we'll bring our practices.... At least that way we've got mutual partnership for co-management....[37] — Reg Crowshoe

What Reg Crowshoe and the Old Man have been speaking about is the Aboriginal reconstitution of what counts as *traditional*, faced with histories where museum officials and anthropologists have claimed far more authority on such issues. Referring to the Glenbow's plans for a cooperatively developed exhibition, *Nitawah —sinnanii: The Story of the Blackfoot People*, Reg reflected on matters this way:

> This is what I look at ... the concept of Western practice, and traditional "theory." What's happened is we're taking our traditional "theory," and we're processing through Western practice ... what comes out we call traditional.... But is it really traditional? That's where the question lies....
>
> The Glenbow is taking traditional theory. [They're] processing it and [they're] saying it's traditional theory. We're wondering if that's right. You have to say, "what is our practice?" That's going to be our language, song, action ... and the process is our pro-

> cess. If that comes through . . . then we can say it's traditional.[38] . . . But [even there], the practice was extracted from us when they took the bundles, when they stopped the ceremonies. . . .

Nicholas Thomas has described how museums—and disciplinary practices of anthropology in hand with museums—have been able to fashion their theories of tradition by recontextualization of captured things:

> *Creative recontextualization and indeed reauthorship may . . . follow from taking, from purchase or theft; and since museums and exhibitions of history and culture are no less prominent now . . . that is a sort of entanglement that most of us cannot step outside.*[39]

In the face of recontextualizations resulting from histories of museums encounters, Reg, the Old Man and the Old Lady have turned to lived practices of shadow relations as that which properly constitutes the traditional, "from way back up to the present." Tradition in this sense is not theory-bound, nor does it have to do with some archaic moment of lost glory. Tradition is imminent at any moment, activated and strengthened by the practice of enduring practices.

With such a history of mixed meanings and transcultural practices as a catalyst, Reg Crowshoe is also proposing practice-based actions for *sorting through* Native/non-Native entanglements in order to create delineated senses of identity and authority for Niitsitapi traditional practice. In particular, following the lead of many bundle keepers back into the 19th century, Reg has been extending upon the "cross-culture" and material/metaphoric paralleling work discussed above.

Over the last several years, Reg and his wife Rose Crowshoe have been continuing with three sorts of activities. One is the ongoing, responsible practice of Thunder Medicine Pipe and the Holy Sun Dance ceremonials involving peoples with transferred keepers' rights, and tangible or intangible objects, returning clan members, and rightful Society members, whose numbers are in fact increasing as more and more transferred objects along with the songs which activate them are coming back into circulation. Among the ceremonies undertaken are the All Night Smoke Ceremony, which, as a matter of traditional practice, is drawn upon to address community-based social and political issues, as well as for resolving conflicts and disputes in the Aboriginal legal sense.

A second area, is a *research* program, paralleling that which museums conduct, but with Blackfoot traditional practice as its focus. At the Old Man River Cultural Centre, Piikani are working to gather songs and dances, to record them, and to differentiate those that are transferred from those that are not. This is then turned to education parallels, for instance, by means of the enacting and practicing of children's ceremonial Societies, such as the *Niipomakiiksi*, or Chickadees, again using rightfully transferred authority of songs, dances, and ceremonial objects. Interestingly, the conduct of these activities is also providing a remarkably effective and appealing means for children to learn and use Blackfoot language, in the same instance that they increase their confidence and immersion in the shadow relations.[40]

The third area of involvement for Reg and Rose is perhaps the most explicit and definitive application of parallel-making, akin to the mixing and paralleling which the Old Man was advancing in speaking of dollars and buffalo, museums and *Makíinimaa*. Reg explained these actions:

> What I want to do is look at practice at a parallel. I'd say real traditional today has to be understood in parallels . . . right down to the fine point. . . . The reason I say that . . . when we dissect Western process, we can dissect out the language, what is written, what is legal . . . formal, informal, what's authority. . . . We should be looking at parallels at every one of those levels too, for every one of those things, in our traditional processes with our practice. . . . If you can accomplish that, then we're giving authority back to the practices which in turn should bring back our bundle ceremonies and ceremonialists. . . . And then . . . , we can look at a traditional practice . . . but only in that parallel context. . . .

The key example of such explicit use of "parallel context" has been the conducting of *traditional camps* to bring together Native and non-Native people to address critical social, legal, or economic issues arising in transcultural encounters. Reg indicated some of these in a conference presentation:

> We have a Police Camp, a Justice Camp and Health Camp, which are attended by people from all over Alberta. These are not wilderness survival camps where you learn to make jerky and cut up a deer. They're our traditional alternative to western system conferences which we run using traditional parallels for everything from the conference room to Robert's Rules of Order.[41]

Reg was speaking of the use of Blackfoot ways of sitting and making decisions in ceremony as a parallel means for pro-active discussion related to contemporary Native/non-Native relations. A wide array of participants from agencies spanning non-native civil and political society have engaged in this process: museums, Universities,

the RCMP, Calgary Rockyview Family and Social Services, the Chinook Health Region, the City of Calgary, Heritage Canada, major resource companies in their relations in Aboriginal territory, and provincial Child Custody courts.

A formative case outlining the principles and sources of parallel practices is documented in *Akak'stiman: A Blackfoot Framework for Decision Making about Health Administration and Services*, prepared by Reg Crowshoe and Social Psychologist and healthcare-giver Sybille Manneschmidt, which was used productively by the Peigan Nation's own Health Services Board. That document included a set of three illustrations showing in parallel: (a) the seating and material arrangements in a bundle-centred traditional ceremonial circle structure, (b) a generalized "Modern Circle Structure Outline," and (c) the applied case of the "Health Services Circle Structure Outline." (See figures 1, 2, 3).[42] The Health Services case works much as the Old Man suggested in his guidance on developing the Piikani museum project: to proceed in the manner of the ceremonialists as they prepare for their ceremonies. The arrangement used brings together the various players, assigns them to appropriate parallel roles, follows appropriate speaking rules, and allows the non-Native and Piikani participants to undertake their discussions and arrive at decisions *within the structural terms* in which the network of Niitsitapi shadow relations operate.

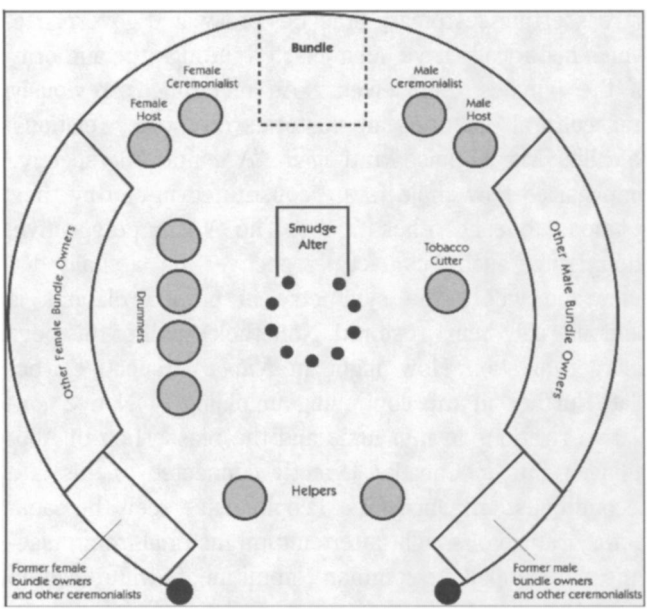

Figure 1: Traditional circle structure outline. Original illustration by Rob Storesham, © University of Calgary Press.

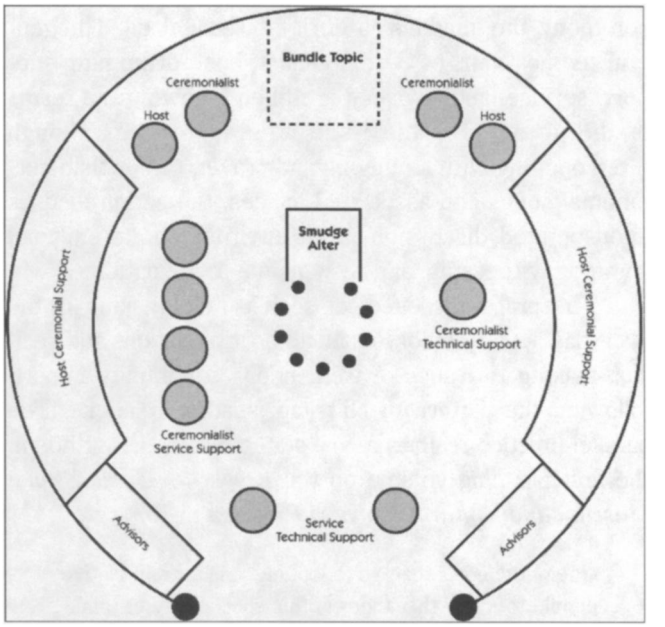

Figure 2: Modern circle structure outline. Original illustration by Rob Storesham, © University of Calgary Press.

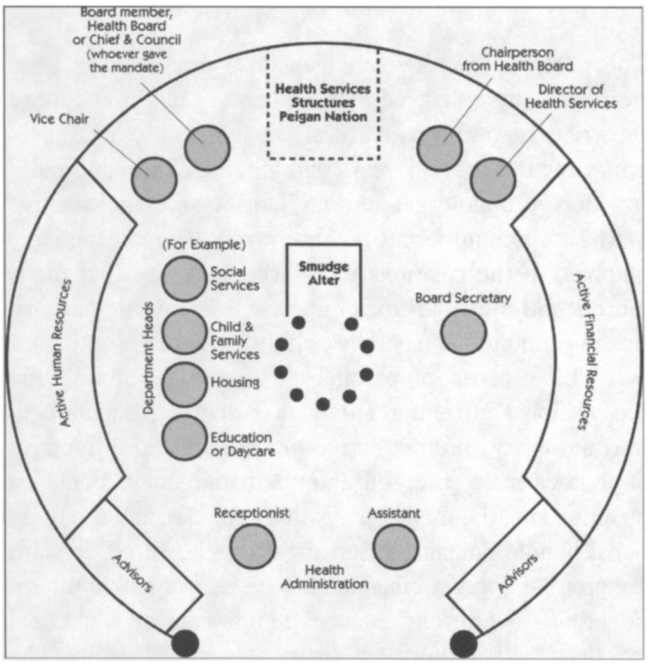

Figure 3: Health Services circle structure outline. Original illustration by Rob Storesham, © University of Calgary Press.

The authority of the bundles is paralleled in these arrangements by the authority invested in the policies and goals of the Health Services Board. As such, the policy documents are placed in the position of the bundle—recognizing their authority, in the same way that during a

ceremony, the bundle's authority is recognized. The generalized positions of Ceremonialist, host, drumming support, service, and advisory, are filled following the terms of the agency and the issue it is addressing. Though often opening with smudging and prayer, rather than ceremonial songs and associated dances, the action focuses upon pointed discussion in an environment of support, common witnessing, and responsible participation.

The pragmatic effect of such parallel-making is the everyday application of Piikani authority relations and decision-making to issues of tremendous community import, following the pattern of Niitsitapi shadow relations. The parallel practice realizes a goal stated by Reg Crowshoe in the first planning volume on the *Keep Our Circle Strong Museum and Cultural Renewal Program* in 1990:

> One of the goals that we're looking at is for non-Native people to know that there is this special way of thinking for our people—a way that is different from the non-Native way. Many non-Natives don't realize our values. This program gives us a chance to bring deep understanding to non-Native people about our Native ways.[43]

The potential for developing such a practice has been tremendously enhanced by the action of material culture repatriations and transcultural engagements with museums over the past 15 years and longer. With many more transferred bundle keepers and society members active in the community, and so many more people actively involved in the relational network, there are that many more rightful people to call upon as responsible authorities in running these parallel, circle structure meetings.

The process of parallels, then, is facilitating the recognition and reinforcement of Blackfoot, bundle-centred authority through active practice. Several domains of practice have emerged: the non-native domain entailed by museums; the mediating, parallel domain; and the traditional bundle domain. Taken together, the three domains are prompting great diligence on the part of native practitioners to define and secure their sense of traditional practices and authority with increasing precision. The restoring of the objects to native hands is allowing a widening collective of keepers to collaborate all the more in restoring shadow relations in this Blackfoot sense of tradition.

Returning, at last, to questions of redress in relations of power, what Reg points to in making parallels in such a deliberate and conscious manner is to effect a move beyond structural entailment, toward renewed cultural sovereignty. In this extended relational network then, the action of *museum repatriation* has begun to contribute to an even more potent action: the repatriation of *Niitsitapi authority.*

Abstract Repatriation and Customary Legal Authority

> "We're not strangers, you and me."
>
> — Joe Crowshoe, Áápohsoy'yiis

Parallel practice can be summed up in the Backfoot word, *Nitooi,* "the Same that is Real"—real because it mobilizes shadows, transferred rights, and the authority of people and things. It sets those practices that make things real and authoritative in Piikani terms against those in non-Native civil and political society that similarly give authority and force to people. Reg Crowshoe points out that not just identity, but indeed the entirety of traditional culture in modern venues is being defined and accorded its proper realness and authority through the paralleling work.

Obviously, this parallel work addresses pressing, everyday matters for the agencies, communities, and people concerned. In addition, however, these actions are also bringing about increasing recognition of sovereign indigenous authority by non-native people engaging in the parallel work. That authority is invested in the bundles and the associated practices of the Niitsitapi relational network, as a practical source of customary social, moral and legal regulation. In effect, the larger reconstitution underway is that of reasserting customary practices of law and governance, which historically have been enacted through the authority of the bundles themselves.[44] As mentioned previously, transcultural histories are histories of contact relations. Recalling Mary Louise Pratt again: "A 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. . . . "[45] The *Nitooi* perspective, then, is just such a contact perspective—but a vitally distinct one where the symmetry of power relations is demonstrably being restored. Nonetheless, all of this begs a larger question: How might the *Nitooi* perspective articulate further in the continuing unfolding of Native/non-Native relations in museums and the reassertion of Aboriginal rights in Canada? Directly connected to this is a second question: Once First Peoples have seen the satisfactory return of sought-after cultural material from museums, what impelling, common commitments will remain to extend the remarkable gains of re-negotiated transcultural relations won over the last 15 years in museums and First Peoples relations?

While Canadian museums have made considerable advances in developing respectful collaborations with Abo-

riginal communities over the last decade, there remain other structural limits relating directly to questions of the fuller recognition of Aboriginal cultural authority and sovereignty in the exercise of native customary rights. The core of the issue is competing senses of what counts as "culture" which Piikani see as including the authority accorded practices themselves in both local community and transcultural context. In relation to this, Reg Crowshoe has remarked:

> I'm saying ... we still have our practices ... they're given respect, a lot of respect ... but ... the question is, are they given the authority? That's where the question really is. Until we put that authority back.... That is really when we can make those practices complete.

This question has pragmatic ramifications for museums—beyond the now exhaustive discussions of the politics of representational practices such as collaborative exhibition development, which repeatedly conclude with a call for redress of authority yet struggle to suggest pragmatic alternatives.[46] While museums repatriate bundles, designs, regalia and other *tangible* matter, the vitally important issue of *intangible* matter—as in the example of songs held as recordings in archival collections—remains problematic. Reg points out how some museums have dissociated the bundles and the songs:

> This is what the museum people say: "We'll give you the bundles back.... But Freedom of Information Act says you can't have the songs, because they're on tapes and they're in the archives.... [47]

Other non-Native practices of authority have impinged here, most notably the primacy accorded to intellectual property laws which have tended to trump the customary transfer rights which Reg and other Blackfoot ceremonialists would otherwise apply to the determination of rightful title.

Native conceptions of relation to bundles and songs are akin to Aboriginal conceptions of the relation to land: they are understood as being inalienable from the relational network. In contrast, the separating of songs from bundles, societies from ceremonies, exchange relations from the camp arrangement, rights from all of this, derives largely from the modernist practices of anthropology and museology and museum management. As an example, Clark Wissler's landmark ethnographic reports on the Blackfoot compartmentalized and so separated "dance societies" from "medicine bundles" from "social life" from "material culture," each assigned to an individual volume.[48] Likewise, material objects have long been directed to museum collections where they are typologically fragmented, while recorded stories and songs have often been directed to archives and libraries—divided up according to the structures of administrative and architectural arrangement of museums themselves.

Might these matters of disarticulation and rearticulation of native tangible and intangible, social and material, craft and aesthetic, ceremonial and political practices, and indeed, the displacement of customary rights by Canadian juridical rights, become the next potential area for making parallels? Is this a new project to which museums and First Nations could apply themselves in extending relations that have been respectfully developed since the release of the AFN/CMA Museums-First Nations Task Force report in 1992?[49]

Certainly, Canadian courts have been moving gradually in the direction of recognizing and rearticulating the authority of intangible matter to issues of land and resource tenure, most notably in the acceptance of the evidentiary validity of Aboriginal oral accounts in *Delgamuukw v. R*(SCC).[50] Legal scholars Catherine Bell and Robert Paterson suggest that Supreme Court of Canada decisions of the last 14 years have underscored the redress motivation informing such recognition:

> *... because of the significant power imbalances and problems arising from language barriers, Canadian courts have maintained that treaties are to be interpreted in a manner that reflects how the Aboriginal signatories to the treaty understood the treaty. Any ambiguities in the terms of the treaty are to be resolved in their favour.*[51]

Interestingly, this move by the courts is both founded upon and braces up an acceptance of the Aboriginal cultural sense of *relationality* and *sharing* as the native understanding at the time of signing historic treaties, a point which Michael Asch has been examining in considerable depth in recent work on the notion of indigenous *relational* orientations.[52] Echoing the previously quoted statements of John Blackmore in the 1951 House of Commons debates, Asch cites legal scholar Leroy Little Bear—himself part of a highly-regarded Kainaa Blackfoot ceremonial family—who has discussed the Aboriginal understanding of the treaty relation:[53]

> *The Indian concept of land ownership is certainly not inconsistent with the idea of sharing with an alien people. Once the Indians recognized them as human beings, they gladly shared with them. They shared with Europeans in the same way they shared with the animals and other people.... when Indian nations*

> *entered into treaties with Europeans nations, the subject of the treaty from the Indians' viewpoint, was not the alienation of the land but the sharing of the land.*

In his paper prepared for a 1998 Glenbow-hosted repatriation conference, Asch saw that the basic premises of Little Bear's position—and that of most Aboriginal peoples whose relational economies were based on sharing and not on the alienation of land *or things*—was consistent with what he calls a "Self and relational-Other" orientation between most Aboriginal peoples and the settler populations that have arrived in North America over the last several centuries. He shows how this relates to philosophical propositions from Martin Buber, and then writing on repatriation claims concludes:

> *... there is a strong relationship between the I-Thou as described by Buber and the mode of thought respecting the relationship between the Creator, the Land and the People as depicted in much Indigenous political thought. And it is through the adoption of processes based on this mode of thought which I believe will be quite helpful in resolving the issues that will arise were we to adopt the proposition that Indigenous peoples have a better claim to the ownership of materials than does Canada.*[54]

It is our contention that the Niitsitapi parallel-making approach proposed by Reg Crowshoe—which builds on a continued legacy of practices from the Old Man and those before him back to the treaty days of 1877 and even to pre-treaty days—fits with the sort of processes which Asch urges museums and First Nations to adopt in their relations.

At the heart of all these matters is the slowly emerging civil and political recognition in Canada of Aboriginal authority that inheres in key forms of tangible matter *as a consequence* of their largely inalienable connection to non-tangible entities and practices (e.g., transferred songs, shadows, stories, as well as by ceremonial giving, face painting, and payments). That recognition is emerging through the continuing relational orientation of Aboriginal people with non-Aboriginal societies. Clearly, museums have an important role to play in this action: in this instance by finding ways to fully rearticulate songs and other intangible matter with relational objects like bundles in their repatriation and partnering activities. Rather than foreclosing future relations, Reg Crowshoe suggests that the Niitsitapi view on such a move would actually *lead to strengthened relation*s in the future. Indeed, Piikani and other Blackfoot people would be strengthened in their relational networks just as the reciprocal bonds with museums are reinforced. Reg's terms for these strengthened transcultural relations is *re-repatriation*, or *abstract repatriation*, which sees an ongoing reciprocal relation and authorization between First Nations and museums among other institutions of Canadian civil and political society:

> ... if we really want to understand repatriation we've got to re-repatriate back.... That would keep the door open to parallels.... If it's just a one-way street, then when it's given back to us, the door can be closed so fast, just like that, after it's given back.... So, you've got to be able to re-repatriate back.... For example, when I say "re-repatriate" ... we've already given up our authority to the courts, for example.... Say for temporary guardianship orders.... Now we've opened up the middle door we call mediation.... But.... we haven't opened the third door, where we give temporary guardianship orders to the bundles, so that they can be restored, and be an option for our own people....

As with Reg's example of the courts in slowly moving toward recognition of the authority of bundles in child custody matters, museums can also help to open this third door for Aboriginal communities. When songs and other intangible transferred elements are *fully* reattached and returned with the bundles, then their customary legal authority will have been recognized, and the assymetries of power will have been more adequately redressed. That judges are able to entertain discussion of such propositions is a sign of emerging power shifts, much as museum Boards are now able to endorse the productivity of repatriations even when this means a significant deaccessioning of institutional holdings. The reciprocal benefit is enhanced relations. Running alongside the many other collaborative programming activities now underway in museums—from joint research to partnerships in exhibit development—this sort of parallel action and *re-repatriation* would advance the radical project which Michael Ames has suggested as necessary, "the restructuring of the entire enterprise and its value system."[55]

Inseverable Ties?

Museums specialists such as those at the Glenbow Museum are now offering some remarkable understandings of how "relational networks" are mobilized with and through powerful objects like transferred medicine bundles, and how those networks effectively operate for native communities. The question we ask, however, is are they stopping short in their reconceptualizations in a very important way? Utlimately, what we are suggesting

is that museum officials themselves, as stewards of institutions which hold tangible and intangible relational material are, *de facto*, part of the relational network, and they have been so throughout the history of Native/museums encounters right back to the time of treaty signing and earlier. In faithfully enacting spiritual ceremonies in museums, or visiting native communities to join in their ceremonies, are not the museum practitioners themselves becoming *Niitsitapi*, at least in some measure, and so becoming increasingly entangled in the shadow relations? In so doing, are they not also *beginning* to restore the sort of relations which Aboriginal people have repeatedly stated was the intent of treaties settled with the Crown in the 19th century?

With its ever-strengthening ties with Blackfoot and other Aboriginal nations, Calgary's Glenbow Museum stands as a critical proving ground for Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations. This is likely to be increasingly true in many Canadian museums which have earnestly acted upon, or even exceeded, the recommendations of the 1992 Task Force—that is, as long as museum managers and governing Boards resist neocolonialist impulse to retrench in the orthodoxy of museums as sites for objectification and aesthetic fetishism. While actions falling in line with the Delgamuuk'w decision, the Nisga'a Treaty, and the Marshall decision may be sorting through dimensions of self-determination and matters of resource rights and inherent title on one front (the often adversarial Western juridical front), museums as part of an extended relational network are sorting through equally subtle matters of lived transcultural interaction in a highly-informed and mutually respectful manner. In this approach, the museum as *Makíinimaa* becomes a dynamically adjustable place of crossing in response to changing demands for transcultural sharing and, ultimately, for transcultural redress.

Reg Crowshoe nowadays, is drawing productively on the perseverance of his ancestors, *Áápohsoy'yiis*, Joe Crowshoe, over much of this past century, and the Sun Dance man *Naato'siinapii,* Brings-Down-the-Sun, at the end of the previous century, each of whom managed Native/non-Native encounters diligently. In Dara Culhane's words, these are Aboriginal *models of reconciliation*.[56] The resulting recognition of indigenous shadow authority in transcultural parallel practices suggests to me that the balance of power relations is beginning to shift.

The repatriation of *Niitsitapi* shadow authority is by no means complete. Indeed, *completion* itself might best be characterized as *extension*, not termination, of relationships in parallel practice and sharing. On this, Reg summed matters up far better than I possibly could:

> I see repatriation, in one sense, where, I can physically drive my pick-up truck to the loading door of the museum and take out all the material objects. . . . The "sacred" objects . . . and put 'em in my pick-up and repatriate them back home . . . but what I'm really trying to do . . . is I'm coming up to the museum loading door, and I'm looking for an abstract repatriation. . . . That's why, when we look at . . . justice . . . health . . . mediation . . . when I see those things happening, or working with those. . . . Those are what I call the beginnings of an abstract repatriation . . . next time I come to the loading door, I want them to give me the bundles *and* the shadow. . . . We need those shadows to make real bundles. . . .

Acknowledgments

This paper could not have come together without the long-time support and blessings of Elder ceremonialists, Joe and Josephine Crowshoe and the authority of the Short Thunder Medicine Pipe Bundle of which they were keepers from 1934 to 1999. I want to thank several other people for their very useful comments and discussions on the content and issues raised by this paper: Michael Asch, Gerry Conaty, Constance MacIntosh, Bruce Miller, Julie Cruikshank, Robin Ridington, Catherine Bell, and in particular, Michael Ross. I am grateful to Elizabeth Furniss and Deborah Bird-Rose for organizing the 2000 CASCA panel "Comparative Perspectives on Settler Cultures" for which the original version of this paper was prepared. I must also express my gratitude to the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Fund of the University of British Columbia for providing the much-needed postdoctoral funding that supported travel and my time in researching and writing this article.

Notes

1 In the late 1980s, the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association collaborated in a series of nation-crossing workshops and consultations in both the museums and First Nations communities, resulting in the report "Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Nations." See note 19 below.

2 Cf. Harrison et al., 1988.

3 Gerald Conaty (1995: 405) gave the following description of Niitsitapi, which is more or less in accord with the way we use the term here: "Real People (Niitsitapi), human members of the Blackfoot culture, use the physical representations within the bundles as a means of connecting with the intangible (that is, the spirits and their power). This connection, or awareness, is necessary for reminding the Real People that they must maintain a balance between the concerns of the material world and the con-

cerns of the spiritual world. Success comes to those who are able to maintain this balance."

4 I use the word "tradition" here in the sense of an historically continuous practice, one that is recurrent over time. Clearly, it is a contested term. See Graburn 2001 for a discussion of the word and its complexities in modernist terms, and Povinelli 1999 for a discussion of how forceful fantasies of "tradition" are deployed by indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in settler states to compartmentalize, rationalize, or factionalize indigenous peoples claims to sovereignty and title to land.

5 This Blackfoot name translates as "Crowtail Feathers," a name associated with the Sun Dance ceremony, and was given to Brian Noble by Joe Crowshoe and Josephine Crowshoe in 1987.

6 *Awakaasiinaa* translates as "Deer Chief"; *Áápohsoy'yiis* as "Weasel Tail"; *Pyok'omonoiitapiaakii* as "Far-Away-Nez Perce-Woman."

7 Reg Crowshoe is also Director of the Keep Our Circle Strong Cultural Renewal Program and the Oldman River Cultural Centre of the Piikani Nation in Brocket, Alberta.

8 Brian Noble has been entangled with this lineage over 15 years through participation in bundle ceremonies through collaboration on the development of the "Keep Our Circle Strong" museum and cultural renewal project, and coordination of a international cultural exchange involving the Piikanii, Mongolian and Khazak peoples, along with Canadian and Han Chinese palaeontological researchers (cf. Grady, 1991: 108-113).

9 Although drafted into a literary text by Brian Noble in the role of anthropologist, the development of the content was achieved through the longstanding dialogue (an oral-literary practice) involving Brian Noble and Reg Crowshoe, along with others, especially Reg's father, Joe Crowshoe Sr.,*Áápohsoy'yiis*.

10 Plural pronouns are used to convey entangled propositions derived from our history of interchanges. In relation to anthropological discourse, the paper is a revised version of one presented at the annual CASCA meetings in Calgary on May 4, 2000. The convention followed also reflects the wish to critically engage and advance questions of anthropological discourse and practice.

11 Reg Crowshoe's comments are presented as indented quotes, but are not italicized. Italic quotes are used in the case of individuals being cited other than Reg Crowshoe. In addition to drawing upon our own recorded exchanges which took place in April of 2000, Reg Crowshoe's comments are also drawn from a number of other entangled-authorship publications (Crowshoe and Manneschmidt, 1997; Eggermont-Molenaar and Crowshoe, 1993; Noble, Crowshoe and Ross (Penumbra), 1990; Ross and Crowshoe, 1996) as well as a number of public-speaking engagements by Reg Crowshoe on the topics here. The words of elder Joe Crowshoe Sr. also figure prominently throughout, and are drawn from a series of interviews with Michael Ross and Brian Noble to be published in the forthcoming volume *My Stories*, (M. Ross (ed.) and J. Crowshoe, n.d.)

12 Province of Alberta, Bill 2, First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act, S.A. 2000, c. F-11.2.

13 Personal communication with Gerald Conaty, July 2000.

14 Conaty (1995) and Conaty and Janes (1997) begin to complicate what "spiritual" and "sacred" may mean for Aboriginal people, but still limit the scope of the terms to mean that which is associated with ceremonial activity of the Blackfoot peoples themselves, and do not engage the actual question of Native/non-Native relationality, which is the central thesis of our paper. They do begin to elaborate on these matters in their discussion of a "relational network" that operate for Blackfoot peoples (1997: 33-34), but do not take up how that relational network directly implicates the museums, only the native communities themselves. Indeed, one of their concluding statements suggests that their consideration is still only preliminary and developing: "The first step toward power sharing is the acknowledgement of a people's right to self-definition and rights to access objects which are fundamental to that definition." (36) We take up here what are emerging as one line of subsequent steps in that process.

15 *Globe and Mail*, January 17, 2000, A1. This was a front page story in this, Canada's leading national daily, with a circulation of 315,000 daily.

16 Janes and Conaty, 1997: 34.

17 Ibid.

18 See Crowshoe and Manneschmidt, 1997, for their discussion of "The Blackfoot Circle Structure Process," which also refers to early 20th-century documentation of these practices documented by David Duvall and Clark Wissler in the latter's monograph (Wissler, 1913), *Societies and Dance Associations of the Blackfoot Indians*. Several of Wissler's monographs are republished in D. Thomas, 1986.

19 Clifford, 1997: 192, citing Pratt, 1992: 6-7.

20 Ames, 1994: 15.

21 While the Glenbow is outstanding in its proactive efforts to revert title or control to original peoples, especially given the major 1999/2000 repatriations and the introduction of Province of Alberta, Bill 2 (First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act, S.A. 2000, c. F-11.2), a few of the major museums conducting notable partnership relations include the Royal British Columbia Museum, the UBC Museum of Anthropology, the Provincial Museum of Alberta, Manitoba Museum of Man, Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Royal Ontario Museum. There is no unitary template for actions which are, for the most part, reactive rather than pro-active. Rather, a complex of factors come into play on an institution by institution basis: the exigencies of community requests, general guidelines from the AFN/CMA task force report on museums and First Nations relations, local institutional aims and staff practices, the particularity of collections holdings and cultural affiliation, the highly varied emphasis on retaining control of collections exercised by individual curators and managers, the degree of community accord established between museum staff and individual native communities, Board policies and inclinations, alignment with larger political actions (e.g., The Nisga'a Treaty heritage components), jurisdictional issues, budgetary capacity to support repatriation and partnering, etc.

22 That is to say, exhibitions, collections, storylines, advisory committees, even community partnering itself, are practices rationalized within the bounds of a self-identified "civil society" institution. See Janes, 1995 for his discussion of the Glenbow as an element of civil society. Janes's position

parallels that outlined by Smithsonian anthropologist Ivan Karp (1992) in his introduction to the volume *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture.*

23 Ames, 1994: 15. For compelling discussions of the unremitting suspicion about the effect of the new museums/First Nations relationships see gii-dahl-guud-sliiaay (Terri-Lynn Williams) 1995, and Doxtator, 1996.

24 Sahlins (1972) has pointed out the difficulty in interpreting Mauss, owing to the fact that Mauss's interpretation is at best a secondary one, based on Best's idiosyncratic translation's of the accounts of Ranapuri, the Maori who provided the original story. Chris Gregory (1982) has offered a political economy analysis of how gifts may become commodities, or commodities become gifts. Strathern (1988) has discussed the matter of gendering of gifts in Melanesian society exchanges and in anthropological readings of such exchange. Arjun Appadurai (1986), has discussed the social life of commodities affected, most notably, by transnational circulation and the shifting politics of value, and finally, Nicholas Thomas (1991) addresses the complexity that emerges when one takes into account those transactions that do not fit comfortably with rigid formulations of the Maussian gift, or the Marxian commodity. Of these, Bourdieu's position bolsters the pragmatic approach to exchange relations we point to, where he comments that structuralist and economistic analyses seek to reduce principles "to the state of isolated atoms . . . ignoring the economic and social conditions in which historical agents are produced and reproduced, endowed (through their upbringing) with durable dispositions that make them able and inclined to enter into exchanges, equal or unequal, that give rise to durable relations of dependence." (Bourdieu, 1997: 239). M. Ross (ed.) and J. Crowshoe, n.d., 132.

25 M. Ross (ed) and J. Crowshoe, n.d., 132.

26 Kainaa Thunder Medicine Pipe and Beaver Medicine woman Beverly Hungrywolf (1996) noted how elder ceremonialists had so often stressed to her that non-Natives should be welcomed into Blackfoot ceremonies. She also notes how Thunder Medicine Pipe man, George Kicking Woman, in sitting on Blackfeet Tribal Council (Montana), and his wife Molly "are among the last to practice the Blackfoot custom of 'mixing religion with politics'" (1996: 130), a comment meant to acknowledge the connection between community political leadership and ceremonial involvements.

27 J. Crowshoe, n.d., 133. Many of the old people of which Joe Crowshoe speaks were active in ceremonies and transfers in the 1930s when he first was transferred many tipi designs and Medicine Pipe Bundle rights. Katherine Pettipas (1994) has offered a fine overview of the complexity of ceremonial/State relations which folks like Joe Crowshoe would have faced up to that time and through to the 1950s. Hanks and Hanks (1950) also discuss the resurgence of Blackfoot (especially Blood tribe) involvement in transfer relations among ceremonialists in the 1930s and 1940s, locating that action within the terms of State economic wardship.

28 The life story of Brings-Down-the-Sun and of ceremonial bundles and societies were recounted by the U.S. Forest Service agent Walter McClintock, whom he had welcomed into his lodge as had Mad Wolf of the Blackfeet to the south, in order to encourage fuller understanding of their lives. McClintock noted how Mad Wolf wanted him to recognize that the ceremonies were not injurious to anyone, "You have been among us for many years, and have attended many of our ceremonials. Have you ever seen a disturbance, or anything harmful, that has been caused by our Sun-dance?" McClintock, 1968: 508.

29 See Dempsey, 1998. Today, the Kainaa Chieftainship includes, among others, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein.

30 *Hansard*, House of Commons, Federal Parliament of Canada, February 27, 1951: 752,754.

31 Ibid., 752.

32 M. Ross (ed.) and J. Crowshoe, (n.d.), 132.

33 Reg's point here specifically hearkens Mauss and his discussion of Ranapuri's indescribable and inextinguishable *hau* of the gift, where, spirit, relationships, resources, reciprocity, etc., are always perpetually attached to the objects in question. It is also akin to and complicated by Nicholas Thomas's (1991) point about transcultural *entanglement*, that the objects, being in circulation are always relationally in play, while their status as more commodity-like or more gift-like becomes quite blurred.

34 Letter from Joe Crowshoe, Elder to Peigan Chief and Council, June 26, 1989.

35 M. Ross (ed.) and J. Crowshoe, n.d., 174. This is a counterexample to Appadurai's (1986) and Kopytoff's (1986) discussions of the movement of things into and out of commodity state. In this case, the object, a campstove by example, has moved into ceremonial payment state—what others might have taken as alienable is here fully activated as inalienable.

36 Wissler, 1912: 263.

37 Reg Crowshoe, quoted in Ross and Crowshoe 1996: 247.

38 Reg's position on what counts as "traditional" lies outside of a temporalized, evolutionary conception, which has commonly regulated the logics by which canonical anthropological positions have operated (cf. Fabian, 1983; N. Thomas, 1991). Rather, he notes how that "traditional theory" of museums is more or less a view to the "traditional" from a "modern" standpoint, "modernized indigeneity," as opposed to his own approach which is more in line with Marshall Sahlins inversion of this process in his terms of the "indigenization of modernity" (Sahlins, 1999). This contrasts with Fabian's (1984) descriptions of the standardized anthropological production of the Other by means of placing non-Western peoples on a progressive time scale which primitivizes indigenous people and modernizes Western peoples.

39 N. Thomas, 1991: 5.

40 In light of the parallel-making discussion, this research program has some rather more subtle and productive dimensions, beyond knowledge-augmented repatriation, than that which former Glenbow Museum Director Robert Janes was able to discern in 1994:

> Reg Crowshoe, a Peigan Ceremonialist, observes that this is not simply a matter of museums making objects available, as museums may also possess knowledge about the use, meaning and context of the objects which has been lost to the memories of first Nations peoples. Reg Crowshoe is also calling for a deliberate

> process to ensure that relevant information is collected in Native communities. This documentation, along with the knowledge which the ceremonialists possess, will add immeasurably to what we know about our collections.

Though museums do indeed have documentary knowledge that is useable by the Piikani, and while the Piikani efforts may reciprocally augment Glenbow's knowledge of collections, the action taking place is considerably more than the restoration of lost memory. More decisively it is about the reinforcement of Niitsitapi shadow relations, the strengthening of the Old Man's circle of the traditional camp.

41 Reg Crowshoe speaking during the "Citizens Forum: Challenging Power with Power," Calgary, Spring 1997; organized by Social Investment Organization, SIO, a non-profit organization to promote socially responsible investment and corporate social responsibility.

42 See Crowshoe and Manneschmidt, 2002: 38, 39, 48. For an extended synopsis of the "circle structure process" see the transcription of Reg Crowshoe's presentation (Crowshoe, 1996) at the 1994 Commonwealth meeting of indigenous peoples and museums specialists in Victoria, BC, *Curatorship: Indigenous Perspectives in Post-Colonial Societies*.

43 Reg Crowshoe quoted in Noble et al., 1990: 44.

44 In a 1993 article Reg Crowshoe and legal scholar Mary Eggermont-Molenaar began discussing in more general terms some of the propositions which this paper has developed further on the relations between material repatriation and the repatriation of "cultural authority." What we have sought here is to elaborate those propositions in considerably greater detail out of our own history of exchanges.

45 Pratt, 1992: 6-7.

46 See, for instance, Miriam Kahn's recent article on the complexity of representing multiple "Pacific Voices" in collaborative exhibit-making (Kahn, 2000). The matter of representational politics associated with exhibitionary practices has been a principal focus of the critique of museums issuing from scholarly and Aboriginal positions over much of the last decade. The American journal *Museum Anthropology* regularly publishes on such matters, and a recent volume of the National Museum of the American Indian (West et al., 2000), has been devoted to these issues. The turn we are gesturing to in this article is from the otherwise critical second-order issue of *representation* to the first-order issue of *practice* in its most articulate, lived and transcultural sense. Others who have offered general discussions of the problem include Bray, 1996; Johnson, 1997; Johnson and Phillips, 2000; and Kreps, 1998. Pragmatic guidelines have been proposed in the voluminous reports of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996. Interestingly, archaeologists are among the most pro-active players in their interactions with Aboriginal communities on these issues (see Holm and Pokotylo, 1997).

47 Gerald Conaty has indicated (personal communication, July 2000) that the Glenbow actively makes copies of songs from archives when rightful people make requests for them. They also restrict copying in response to ceremonialists' strictures on transferred rights. That said, the original tapes themselves are not given over entirely. An even more complex question, however, is what the effect is of the very technological mediation which separates songs from peoples or objects by means of recording, and what the parallel common law, customary law consequences of such a separation may be. The ease of analog or digital reproduction of songs, and the equal ease of listening to them in a public or research library setting, or over the internet for that matter, raises many issues of rightful use if customary protocols and contextual fidelity are to be taken seriously.

48 Michael Ames (2000: 83) has commented on such academic segmentation practices in relation to the exhibition-making work of Native peoples: "Aboriginal curators, as well as Aboriginal artists, often do not perceive as important the common academic distinctions between anthropology and art history, art and artifact, art and craft, secular and spiritual, and aesthetics and politics. Their approach is more holistic or inclusive."

49 Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museums Association, 1992.

50 Julie Cruikshank (1999: 1-2) notes on the Delgamuuk'w decision: "The decision states that, 'the laws of evidence must be adapted in order that this kind of evidence,' meaning oral tradition, 'can be accommodated and placed on an equal footing with the types of historical evidence that courts are familiar with, which largely consists of historical documents.'" As a cautionary note about the risk in taking the court's parallel too far, she goes on to suggest: " . . . we need to think really hard about oral history as historical practice, as history, not merely as sources, not merely as evidence, not merely as "like legal documents." Again, I would suggest that while the court gives them some definitions to think with, we don't want to be bound by those definitions because it can constrict the range of ways that people can talk about their histories and oral histories."

51 Bell and Paterson 1999: 189.

52 Also see Seguin, 1986 for a cognate case of relational "real people" orientations among the Gitksan (Tsimshian) in their kin and potlatch relations.

53 Asch, 1998a: 18, citing Little Bear 1986: 246, 247. Leroy Little Bear's sister is Beverly Hungrywolf, the Kainaa Beaver Medicine and Thunder Medicine Pipe woman. For more context on treaty relations, see Ponting, 1986.

54 Asch, 1998b: 14.

55 Ames 1994: 15.

56 Culhane, 1999: 3.

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