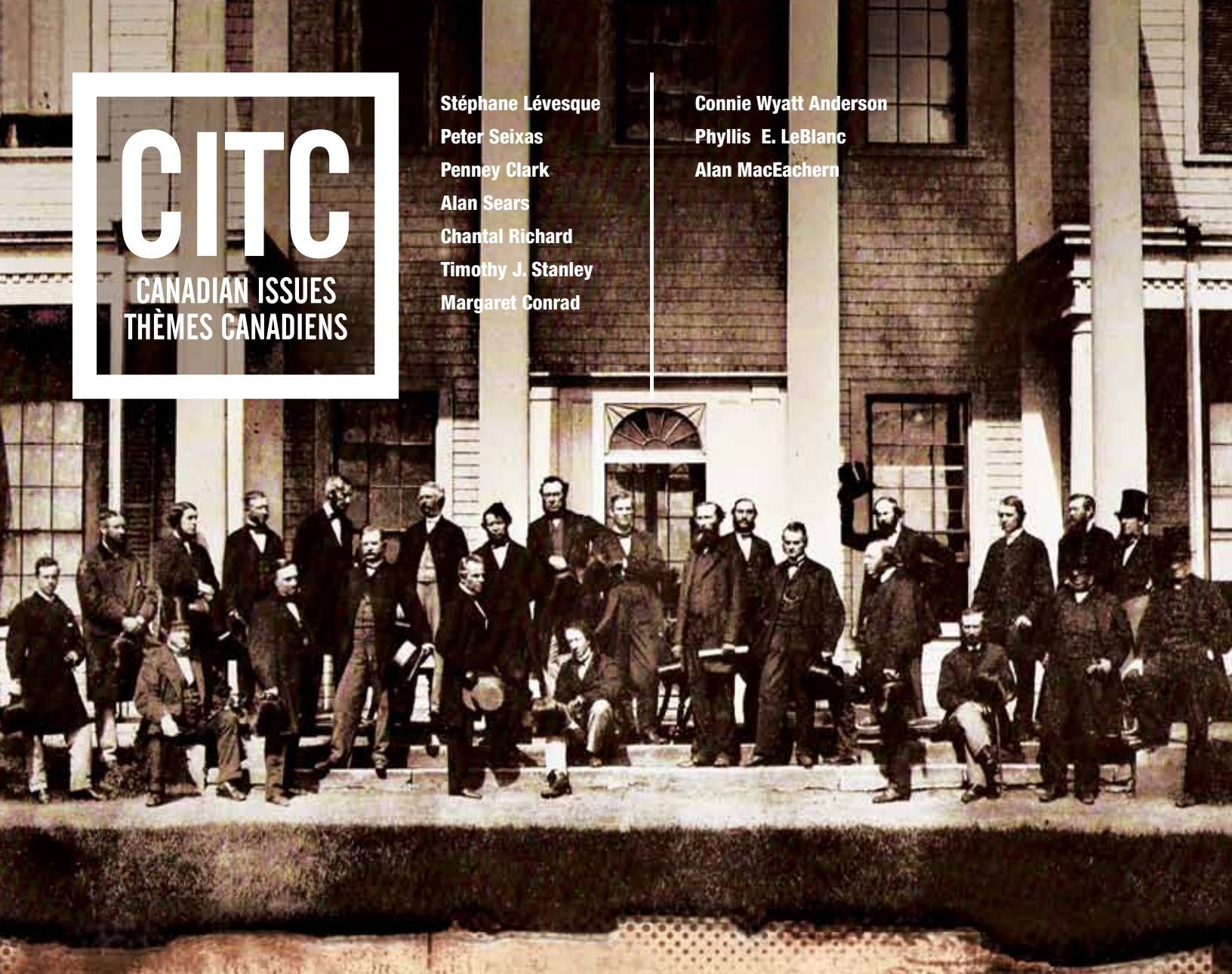

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WHY TELL STORIES? ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING NARRATIVE THINKING

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on narrative thinking and its importance for the historical education of youth. Based on an analysis of three perspectives on storytelling in history (realistic, postmodern and polythetic), the author demonstrates how teachers can promote the development of narrative thinking in students in a seven-step process.

INTRODUCTION

In the Fall 2012, historian Eric Bédard (2012) published his popular book *L'histoire du Québec pour les nuls*. The book, which quickly became a bestseller, tells the story of "a people who overcame difficulties and hardships, overcame discouragement and resignation. The story of a dream, that of French America, a great trial, that of the British conquest, and most importantly, the story of a long and patient reconquest that will lead Quebecers to reclaim their territory, economy and political life" (p. 1, translated) According to the author, "it's not just a history book, it's a story, our story. […] It is a story, and it can also be a sort of cheat sheet. Basically […] it's like a course for the general public" (Bédard in Guy, translated, 2012, p. 1).

Since its publication, the book has got people talking. It has sparked interest as well as controversy. For Jocelyn Létourneau (2013), Bédard's *L'histoire du Québec pour les nuls* oversimplifies the interpretations of the past "as if he was telling a story of the past that was obvious, leading the reader amidst obvious or apparent certainties" (p. 170, translated). Not only is the story structured around constituent referents of

this French people, some ready-to-think components of the collective memory, but his narrative gives the reader a teleological vision of a "people conquered but still alive" (Bédard, 2012, p. 73, translated). However, others admire the exercise in education which the author was able to accomplish. Jean-François Nadeau (2012) compliments Bédard for writing in a "clear and accessible language. […] The story is peppered with anecdotes, but it is mostly a succinct and effective summary for curious individuals who would not know where to start to learn about history" (p. 12, translated).

As an educationalist, this recent saga surrounding the publication of a popular history book is a source of interest and questions: what sort of connection exists between *narration* and historical *reality*? Is history basically a *narrative*? These questions are not only relevant to our work, but essential to our students' learning of the discipline. In attempting to answer these questions, we can analyze the issue from three different perspectives.

The first perspective suggests that historical reality is inherently narrative from the beginning. The purpose of history – and therefore of the historian – is to report as accurately as possible the account of events as they have occurred. This is the "realistic" view of history that gives students the role of taking in the historical narrative, the story of what has really occurred. The second approach argues instead that the realities of the past are meaningless. It is the historian who, through his/her retrospective view, imposes order through a narrative that has a beginning, a plot and an end. But historical reality has no beginning or end in itself. Events occur with no specific direction. And since the past no longer exists, there is no way to validate the accounts of historians. This is the "postmodern" view of history, which seeks to deconstruct narratives as objects of manipulation and power. The last approach is based on the previous two and argues that history does not exist by itself; it is (re) created by the historian. But this narrative is based on a conceptual framework of historical knowledge, that is to say, a proven means of casting a critical eye on the past. This is the "historian" view of history, where students are required to examine the past critically and ultimately develop their own narrative and polythetic views of the past.

In the following pages, I will try to present each approach and show how they are useful to our role as history teachers in schools.

THE REALISTIC VIEW OF HISTORY

The narrativization of events as an intertwining of occurrences related to each other by causes and effects has long been recognized as a unique and even spontaneous means of understanding reality. Some psychologists such as Jerome Bruner speak of a "natural mode of thought" developed early in a child's cognitive process. As he relates, "We know very little about how narrative thinking develops in childhood. What we do know, of course, is that the ability to comprehend stories develops or is present very early. This is sometimes offered as support for the deep structure argument" (Bruner, 1985, p. 100).

In the field of history, some also believe that the story is the best way to examine and to understand the reality of the past. Philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1983) argues in this regard that "time becomes human time to the extent that it is articulated in a narrative way" (p. 17, translated). It is through the story that time acquires its value and meaning for individuals. In the words of Antoine Prost (1996), "all history is narrative, because explaining is storytelling" (p. 245, translated). The idea that the realities of the past are intrinsically narrative has its origins in mythological stories of ancient Greece, for example in the works of Herodotus and Thucydides. But it is the work of modern historians, like Whig historian George Macaulay Trevelyan, which really propelled this conceptualization of history, by outlining the fundamental differences between fictional narratives and authentic stories. While the former present plausible events (*the likelihood*) in the form of stories, the latter describe historical reality as experienced by its witnesses. Far from being an imposition or a distortion of the events recounted and linked together, the narrative is the extension of "real" events, as experienced and narrated by witnesses (Carr, 1986). In this perspective, the narrative presents the events in the form of a point of view that arises from human experience, i.e., our ability and willingness to occupy the position of narrator in our own personal lives. Stories, in this sense, are "lived before they are told," according to Alasdair MacIntyre (1981, p. 197).

The argument that the past comes to us in narrative form provides a powerful way to learn. First, students are exposed to the narrative early in their cognitive development. Research shows indeed that the use of narrative facilitates the capacity to construct representations of reality. Young people are more likely to capture events and retain information when it is presented as a narrative (Mandler, 1984; Egan, 1989; Voss & Wiley, 2000). Although some facts are often overlooked in the students' narrative, the narrative structure remains largely intact. This is what Barton and Levstik (2004) argue when they state, "Even when people make mistakes in their retellings, they tend to leave the overall structure intact – that is, they misremember the details, but they don't retell the story in the wrong order, nor do they leave out essential elements […]" (p. 133). The use of narrative in history makes it thus possible to capture and organize the complex realities of the past in a coherent manner, with the help of an educational tool which is familiar to young people.

In addition, using narrative history can effectively mobilize a certain memory in the community. Since memory is a matter of what has existed and has been lived, narrative history allows people to remember yesterday without having to develop new ways of understanding the realities of the past. As pointed by Bédard (2012), "I'm attempting here a synthesis of the most significant events in the history of Quebec. At least those selected by the collective memory" (p. 2, translated). From this perspective, young people can easily place themselves in this destiny of the group to which they belong and thus carry the legacy of this memory.

Narrative history also allows the creation of a coherent vision of personal and collective identity. It follows a number of principles which stabilize identity, in relation to time (Rüsen, 2005):

- The narrative is intimately linked to the relationship with memory. It mobilizes the experiences of the past, engraved in collective memory, so that the experiences of the present can be coherent. For example, we find in *Histoire du Québec pour les nuls* a structure that puts into perspective the "national" present in Quebec's so-called evolution of destiny: 1. New France; 2. Conquered but still alive; 3. Survival; 4. The Quiet reconquest; 5. Province or country?
- The narrative organises the internal unity of time dimensions (past, present and possible future) by a notion of continuity, thereby adjusting the past to possible intentions and expectations. For example, *Histoire du Québec pour les nuls* traces the historical evolution of the Quebec people in a possible vision of the future, "A province or country?"
- The narrative serves to establish its creator's identity and audience: By using the concept of continuity, it can convince the audience of the permanence and stability of the group in a history in evolution. For example, *Histoire du Québec pour les nuls* uses modern concepts of "nation" and "Quebecer" to present the early settlers and their Canadian descendants, "nation of the New World, Quebec was founded by adventurers, missionaries, men and women who wanted to improve their lot."

THE POSTMODERN VIEW OF HISTORY

The idea that the reality of the past is inherently narrative is challenged today, because the narrativization of events raises many epistemological problems. Many critics argue that the past has no internal coherence that can be verified and validated. Events occur randomly in the vastness of human history without any real specific destiny. Historical facts, as alleged by Lowenthal (1985), are timeless and disconnected from each other before being ordered into narration by historians. Witnesses of history do not have a teleological view of the events they experience, only an experience of successive occurrences. It is the historian who imposes, by hindsight, the direction of the story. For Hayden White (1981), "the notion that sequences of real events possess the formal attributes of the stories we tell about imaginary events could only have its origin in wishes, daydreams, reveries." (p. 4)

For postmodernists, the historian's personal orientation biases his/her narrative and the ability of the audience to understand the realities so described. It is the historian that poses retrospective judgments about the significance of privileged events which he/she then places in a cause-and-effect relationship in the literary form of narrative. "It's to be able to punish the wicked that the narrative is committing mischief," said Ricoeur (1984, p. 64, translated) about the teleological view of the historian. Louis Mink (1970) agrees, arguing that

"stories are not live but told […]. Life has no beginnings, middles and ends […] narrative qualities of history are transferred from art to life" (p. 557). Historians thus produce from these acts *plausible* narratives based on personal choices which are influenced by culture, literature and morality. The historiographical enterprise is therefore only an attempt to impose "a meaningful form (or narrative) onto a meaningless past" (Harlan in Seixas, 2000, p. 27). Historians thus produce credible narratives, not by their method or way of thinking, but to the extent that they impose their expertise as "regulatory function in relation to the public past" (Bennett in Seixas, 2000, p. 29).

The postmodern critique has serious implications. First, it highlights the constructed nature of historical narratives. The historian produces an interpretation of the past from a retrospective vision that gives a sense of coherence and direction to history. To make the past intelligible, the narrative is necessarily reductive since it magnifies certain events over others. Thus, in Histoire du Québec pour les nuls, why talk about the crisis of conscription in 1942 but not the battle of Dieppe in 1942? These kinds of questions demonstrate the interpretive nature of history and the danger, as Ricoeur (1984) noted, of "closed alternatives" (p. 64), i.e., the regressive need for temporal finality, blind to other possible alternatives.

The postmodern critique also underlines the importance of history in our lives and the power historians have in shaping our view of history. Since we are mobilizing the experiences of the past to understand the present, it is important to understand the social and identity functions of narratives. Because the stories of the past have historically served several functions besides that of "telling the truth," including the promotion of patriotism and the furthering of political causes. In this vein, it is interesting to see how history was presented in Canadian schools in the last century. Notions of racism, colonialism and progress directly influenced the actual logic of history. One may wonder to what extent these ideas are still present in our collective memory.

THE POLYTHETIC VIEW OF HISTORY

The third perspective is based on the previous ones. It is based on the idea that the narrativization of events is generated by the historian. It is indeed him/her who assembles the story and not the past that dictates it. However, it argues that the narratives are not mere literary forms that impose a predetermined order on an incoherent and insignificant past, as it is claimed by postmodernists.

To explain this approach, a little musical analogy is required. We all have heard a song that deeply marked us upon hearing it for the first time. For proponents of narrative history, this song is the narrative of historical reality. When we listen, we are able to live, to remember and even anticipate the notes of the melody. In other words, we are in synchronization with the music and occupying, at the same time, both the position of the narrator (composer) and the reader (audience). With the passage of time, it is possible that some musical notes are lost. The role of the historian is then to recreate the original melody while trying to replace the lost elements or eliminate background noises that create distortion. For postmodernists, there is no such song but a mere set of notes. Rather, it is we, the audience, who enter them in our consciousness as a particular melody that, over time, seems familiar to us. Since many of us share the same melodic imagination, we convince ourselves of the reality and the merits of this "song" which thereby acquires a new collective significance. For proponents of the polythetic view, the musical notes we hear are arranged to form a song. However, the melody can be multiple and variable depending on the audience. In other words, it is possible, in the very structure of the song, to perceive or imagine notes that might lead the reader (audience) to hear variations of the melody. These notes are not purely imaginative, they do exist in the real world.

To return to our narrativization of the past, the polythetic view of history argues that historical accounts are not fictitious forms of imposing meaning to a chaotic past. As Jörn Rüsen (2005) reports, narrative and objectivity are not in principle opposed. The narratives we develop are valid insofar as they are limited by our human experiences, our historical sources, our relationships with others and our notions of what is possible and feasible in the real world.

Once we understand that the narratives are not just "truth" or "fiction," it becomes possible to envisage a narrativization which is valid in historical terms. To do this, it is necessary to use what might be called "historical thinking" (Lévesque, Denos and Case 2013),

i.e. the reflexive mode which is a particular way of thinking about the historical reality beyond the common uses of memory. Among the components of this thought (Martineau, 2010), we find:

- a historian's attitude of openness to the diversity of perspectives, humility and distance with regards to the past and to the witnesses of history.
- a historical method of thinking human reality underpinned by a process of inquiry and meta-historical concepts (causes, consequences, perspectives, continuity, change, etc.).
- a language of history to explain intelligibly and in a lively manner our view of the past in narrative form.

As educators, the polythetic view of history offers many learning opportunities (Shemilt, 2000). It enables students to structure their relationship to the past in the vastly known form of narrative. In this sense, it involves the appropriation of a meaningful vision of the past using an effective tool, cognitively speaking.

The polythetic view also provides the ability to maintain a variety of narrative interpretations of the same past, thereby reopening the "closed alternatives" of reductive narratives that nourish the collective memory. Through historical thinking, students can better understand the polyphonic nature of history and the future opportunities which are emerging for them.

Unfortunately, in his extensive research, Létourneau concludes that young people gradually develop a narrative vision of their society that is expanding and becoming more complex over the years but remains largely stable in its structure and regime of truth. "It seems difficult," he argues in a text with Sabrina Moisan, "to redirect a well seated and structured narrative of the past rooted in a selection of raw facts, which feeds a large number of social discourse and which is part of a narrative intertextuality in which are also encrusted texts written by historians" (Letourneau & Moisan, 2004, p. 352, translated).

Given this situation, Létourneau (2014) rightfully places history education at the heart of opportunities for moving forward. However, few teachers to date involve narrative thinking to structure their visions of the past. In the current school system, the intention to teach takes the form of a curriculum that does not allow young people to narrativize the history of their society. It is therefore difficult for them to mobilize their scholastic knowledge for present-day historical orientation. Students therefore find themselves in a sort of "meaninglessness" to the extent that their real-life narratives, the ones they develop from their fluctuating and meaningful life experiences, are not included and discussed in the history education they receive in school.

This finding is especially disturbing given that learning is recognized as a particular activity of knowledge construction that builds upon students' previous knowledge and (pre)conceptions. Inviting teachers to use narrative thinking could encourage young people to reflect on their views of history, to make narrative interpretations based on the critical examination of sources and to be open to diverse points of view. But how can we get youth to develop polythetic stories by narrative thinking?

USING NARRATIVE THINKING

Let us refer yet again to *L'histoire du Québec pour les nuls* in order to find out how teachers can bring their students on the path of learning narrative thinking. A teaching approach in seven steps (under the acronym "SAPPIRI") is here suggested:

1. Start from the prior knowledge that youth develop during to their long-life learning experience by asking them to produce a brief explanatory narrative of the theme explored in the classroom (e.g., Tell me the story of the Conquest as you know it).
2. Analyse the students' narratives to highlight the missing elements and nodes of intrigue (e.g., the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, the French vs. English). Identify the elements of convergence/divergence between the various narratives from specific criteria (starting point of the story, events/actors mentioned, group composition, use of the term "we," etc.).
3. Present excerpts in class taken directly from the narratives to highlight the diversity of points of view among students. Enrich these excerpts by quotations extracted from primary and secondary sources (e.g., Memoirs of Montcalm, report of Admiral Charles Holmes, excerpts from *L'histoire du Québec pour les nuls*).

4. Place students into small working groups and ask them to assess the historical validity of these different excerpts. Invite them to rank the excerpts in order of importance (from the most valid to the least valid) according to their personal evaluation of sources (e.g., 1. Memoirs of Montcalm; 2. Report of Admiral Holmes). Remind them that they need to justify the reasons for their selection and use evaluation criteria for the validity of sources (e.g., the position of the witness, the approach taken, the reported facts, etc.).

5. Initiate a discussion with the class about the validity of sources to get students to compare their assessment of the excerpts. Then, present your own evaluation of sources to guide students in their learning (e.g., compare the order in which students placed the excerpts with your own assessment and explain what could explain this convergence/divergence). Emphasize the need to use assessment criteria to decide on the validity of a source (e.g., contribution to the aim pursued, its telling of the time, etc.).

6. Require from students that they rewrite their narrative of the theme (e.g., Conquest) using various sources presented in the activity. Remind them of the importance of producing a historical narrative supported by relevant sources, which will allow them to justify their point of view.

7. Invite students to compare their original narrative with the final narrative they produced in order to determine which one is the most valid and relevant. Bring them to understand that beyond this exercise, their narrative must be *useful* to the extent that they can take ownership and use it as a means to understand the past as well as for personal guidance. Remind students that narratives are inevitably provisional and subject to reinterpretation.

In conclusion, history teachers can do better in taking into account what students have learned inside and outside the school because their *real-life* knowledge, based on a series of formative experiences, plays a key role in the narrative vision of youth. In this sense, history education must better align the curriculum prescribed by the authorities with the real-life curriculum of young learners, who learn from various structured and structuring experiences, whether or not these are under the control of an educational intention (Perrenoud, 1993). Narrative thinking aims to provide young people with the intellectual tools necessary to create better historical narratives, which they can then use to orient themselves in time and to meet the challenges of a complex, diverse and increasingly global and multicultural world.

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NOTES

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HISTORY AND HERITAGE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Dr. SEIXAS' research investigates young people's historical consciousness, the relationships among disciplinary and extra-disciplinary approaches to thinking about the past, the education and professional development of history teachers, history curriculum and instruction, and school-university collaboration. He has received research grants and fellowships from the Canada Research Chairs, the Canada Fund for Innovation, the British Columbia Knowledge Development Fund, the Spencer Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Hampton Fund, and Killam Research Fellowships.

ABSTRACT

In some ways, "history"—as the scientific, evidence-based investigation of the past—and "heritage"—as the emotion-laden commitment to our national, familial and personal inheritances—are incommensurable approaches to understanding the past. When it comes to planning public commemorations or setting goals for school curricula, they are frequently at odds. This paper explores the relationship of history and heritage in the current moment in Canada, after the demise of the Historical Thinking Project, and in anticipation of Confederation commemorations. It lays out the educational potential of a careful and conscious reconciliation between the two agendas.

NOTE: An earlier version of this paper was presented at *Tanglible Pasts: Questioning Heritage Education*, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, 6-7 June, 2013.

INTRODUCTION: A DICHOTOMY OR A DIALECTIC?

David Lowenthal has supplied a clear, dichotomous definition of the difference between history and heritage as approaches to the past. History, according to Lowenthal, is universally accessible and testable. Heritage is "tribal, exclusive, patriotic, redemptive, or self-aggrandizing." Heritage counts "not on checkable fact but credulous allegiance." [1]

This dichotomy deserves a closer look. In common parlance, heritage includes the valuing of relics and historic sites, the sensory "experience" of the past that contact with those relics and sites can generate, and therefore a focus on the value of preservation.[2] Perhaps most crucial in the values of the heritage project, is a notion that these objects and sites belong to "us," that is, to a group defined either by nation, region, ethnicity or family. It is this *belonging* of "the tangible past" that gives heritage the power to confer and confirm group identities. "Heritage" is, in this sense, "inheritance": a past that is bequeathed to "us," (however defined), and that we, therefore, have an obligation to preserve for those who come after us. These are powerful emotional forces. Indeed, we might call the individual and social impulses to approach the past in this way, the "*heritage imperative,*" which achieves its power from the quest for identity in an unstable, rapidly changing world. As Dutch historian Maria Grever and colleagues have expressed it, "Heritage refers to direct

encounters, emotions and veneration, not to arguments or examination."[3]

In contrast, those engaged in the discipline of history expect to criticize and be criticized, to question and be questioned: those processes are part of the deal. Evidence, not authority, is the critical test of historical interpretation. Moreover, we expect historical interpretation to change—with new issues, new questions and new evidence.

Two developments in Canada over the past decade have brought national heritage promotion and history education into sharp contrast. First, a Conservative government has overseen the expansion and re-branding of Canada's national museums. Thus, the successful Canadian War Museum (first opened in 2005) is being joined by the transformation of the Canadian Museum of Civilization into the Canadian Museum of History. There is also planning and unprecedented funding for a series of national commemorations: the War of 1812, the outbreak of World War I, the Charlottetown Conference, Canadian Confederation, 1867, and the battle of Vimy Ridge, 1917. One might see these developments as a major move towards promotion of a potent national heritage to counter regional and global identities.

At the same time, on the other hand, there has been a remarkably successful national campaign, whose epicenter was the Historical Thinking Project (HTP), for building critical historical thinking into school curricula. In one form or another, over the past three or four years, explicit definitions of historical thinking have been incorporated into the school curricula of a majority of Canadian provinces, and into most of the new school history textbooks.[4]

The latter development appears to be on the other side of the celebratory heritage/critical history divide. An exploration of the contemporary situation in Canada can serve as the beginning of a discussion of relationship of the two big ideas heritage and history. Do they fit together? Can they? Should they? The goals of history education are framed by these questions.

CANADA'S STORY

Canada's status as a nation is, like most others in the twenty-first century, complex. For those wishing to promote a heritage agenda infused with emotion, this poses a problem. Within the borders of the sovereign state of Canada lie the francophone *nation* of Quebec (formally recognized as such by Parliament in 2006) as well as multiple aboriginal First *Nations*. While it is thus a multinational state, its non-Quebecois, non-Aboriginal citizens do not have a nation other than Canada to call their own. On top of this, Canada's rates of immigration—approximately a quarter of a million annually since 2006—are among the highest in the world.[5] For those who look to a variant of heritage education to solidify a coherent Canadian identity that belongs to all of "us," this demographic situation might lead either to redoubled efforts, or to abandoning the project altogether."[6]

National narratives potent enough to consolidate identities rely on at least three elements. First, there must be characteristics and values that can be credibly claimed as having persisted over the vicissitudes of time.[7] A people well defined by language and ethnicity has a significant advantage here. A nation defined by its civic ideals has a different kind of challenge. Canada does not fit in the former group, yet a set of distinctive and persistent civic ideals of Canada is not obvious either. In such a situation, national identity may reside for most citizens in the unstable symbols and icons of popular culture, with obscure, if any, historical reference at all (viz. the widely embraced beer commercial, "I am Canadian."[8])

A consensually held point of national origin is a second element in the creation of a potent national narrative. Again, this is problematic for Canada. First Nations claim their presence on their lands "from time immemorial." This mythic claim poses the challenge of the relationship of myth to history and heritage. In any case, Aboriginal migrations and settlement potentially give Canada a long history, though one that is problematic in terms of its modern identity.[9] Quebec celebrates its own national origin with Champlain's founding of the colony in 1608.[10] The origin of Canada is often traced to Confederation in 1867, but, as Barbara Messamore has pointed out, not much really changed at that point: the date does not mark a dramatic change in Canadian autonomy and self-government; it was not the point at which French and English Canada came together constitutionally (the Act of Union had done so in 1840); nor was it the point at which many separate colonies united—only Nova Scotia and New Brunswick joined the previously united Canada East and West.[11]

The successful resolution of threats, struggles, wars and conflicts, and the heroes responsible for them, comprise a third element necessary for a good national story. Thus, the Canadian contribution to a victory at the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917 is widely remembered *within* Canada as a moment of national self-definition. But it, too, has an ephemeral quality, in that it rests to a degree on the proposition that others outside of Canada recognize this victory as a key turning point in World War I, which they do not (even Word apparently fails to recognize it).[12]

In 2012, the Conservative Canadian government innovatively promoted the War of 1812 as the origin of Canadian national identity. What the nation *is not* is crucial in defining what it *is*, and wars provide clear and concrete answers. The enemy—the United States—is what we are not. But commemorations of 1812 as the origin of Canada were problematic. Ambiguity surrounds not only the "victory" retrospectively, but also the protagonists at the time: Alan Taylor has called it "the civil war of 1812," pointing to deeply divided loyalties on both sides of the border.[13] Moreover, as Taylor points out, the British war against the American republicans resulted in the ascendancy of anti-democratic elements in the Canadian colonial regimes, political stultification, and economic retardation, at least until the anti-elitist Rebellions of 1837: hardly a proud moment upon which to base a definition of national identity.

But the Conservatives were onto something: moving beyond 1812, there are many opportunities to define Canada against its closest ally and largest trading partner, the United States. Indeed, Canada as *not-the-United-States*, most perfectly satisfies the quest for identity as continuity over time in the face of change: (whether the United States had surfeits of democracy in the eighteenth century, or imperial ambitions in the nineteenth and twentieth, or private healthcare and uncontrolled guns in the 21st). Yet even this bears a certain irony, in view of Americans' geographic and cultural proximity across an undefended border.

NATIONAL IDENTITY, TRADITION, HERITAGE, HISTORY AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

As this brief account of the conundrum of Canadian identity suggests, a discussion of the relationship between *celebratory heritage* and *critical history* requires the introduction of some other key terms. The value of heritage in the modern era is its potential to convey and define collective *identities*. We see this clearly in the resources devoted to the preservation and display of objects in museums, the restoration of historic sites and buildings, and the climate-controlled care of founding documents. National monuments and memorials located in political centers are designed to inspire contemplation and awe at the persistence not so much of the power of a particular administration, government or regime, but of an underlying identity which has managed to survive and triumph over external threat, adversity and injustice. When they work as they are meant to, they link the individual visitor to a larger collective that has persisted from some moment of origin in the past through struggles into the present. Their visceral solidity, scale and mass, moreover, offer the hope of continuity into the future. The Washington Mall, London's Parliament Buildings, Tiananmen Square and, yes, Canada's Parliament Hill, all function in this way. Protest marches and demonstrations, as well, gravitate towards these sites because they express the national identity materially and spatially. When the nation goes off course, when leaders have seized illegitimate power, when there are wrongs to be righted, these sites become the loci of public expression and conflict.

The concept of *tradition* works in the same way as national identity in its handing down of continuity in the face of change. At any given moment in time, tradition's power rests on its claim to persistence and longevity. And yet, dispassionate historical investigation challenges much of what popular culture presents as long-established: tradition is, in fact, the product of slow accretions of change over time, if not outright invention.[14] But the more people experience the conditions of life as changing, the more they grasp for something that appears not to. Tradition, like heritage, consists of ideas, customs, and things that are handed down within a community across generations, establishing a natural-seeming, continuous line through time, maintaining identities and familiar patterns of life.[15] Traditions are thus the practices that hold collective identities together. The most important quality of a tradition is to seem to not have changed.[16]

By contrast, *historical consciousness* arises in the "unnatural" state of modernity, where ties that bind generations and communities are torn asunder

by capitalist relations of production, political and technological change, and the displacement of migrant populations: all that is traditionally solid melts in the modern air. Historical consciousness is the awareness that tomorrow's world cannot replicate yesterday's. Ossified, unreflective tradition will be inadequate as a guide for understanding and living in that kind of future. In Gadamer's words, historical consciousness is "very likely the most important revolution among those we have undergone since the beginning of the modern epoch […] a burden, the like of which has never been imposed on any previous generation." And what is this burden? It is "[…] the privilege of modern man to have a full awareness of historicity of everything present and the relativity of all opinions." Understanding our distance from the past, and being aware that those who lived in other periods were "in a foreign country," whose values and beliefs were radically different from our own, creates this "relativity of all opinions."[17] Because we understand that those forebears could not see beyond their own limited world-views, we come away from the study of the past with the realization that those who come after us will look back on our "enlightened" era, as similarly limited, historically bound and partial.

And so, paradoxically, historical consciousness liberates its subjects from tradition, at the same time that it demonstrates to them that they are not free at all. Even modern, historically conscious people, remain immersed in the changing course of history, whose beliefs, customs, understandings of the world are, in some fundamental way, impervious to critical, distancing analysis. In looking at the past, we can never escape the lenses of our own particular historical moment: they're all we have to look with.

If "tradition" forms a "natural relation" to the past in which collective identities are apparently passed from generation to generation, then "heritage" can be seen as the practices that aim to solidify those relations in times—like our own— when tradition threatens to change too quickly.[18]

Recapitulating the argument: the continuity of tradition supplies the bonds of community solidarity, both horizontally at a given moment in time, and vertically, across generations. As long as tradition's changes are less apparent than its continuities, it can function in this way. Modernity's pace of change, the mixing of different cultural groups, and, since the late twentieth century, the dizzyingly accessible global exposure provided by new technologies, pose seemingly crippling threats to "natural" tradition. Historical consciousness arises in this context, promising a degree of freedom from traditions, a critical lens that includes understanding change—even radical change—in the past, and thus into the future. The flip side of that freedom is instability and uncertainty. But historical consciousness does not free its subjects from history: rather it offers the possibility of an *orientation* in a history that is undergoing rapid change and that, as a result of human agency (*inter alia*), will continue to do so.

What, then, are the possibilities for history education, as we examine the divide between celebratory heritage and critical history? The "history wars" that gripped the United States, Canada, Quebec, and Australia, among other jurisdictions in the late 1990s, might be seen as a battle between these approaches. The stakes are high. On the one hand, school history can demonstrate to young people how a critical approach to the past can provide the most powerful tools for orienting ourselves in time. Internationally, there are a number of initiatives aimed in this direction.[19] They miss the mark, however, if they only supply the critical tools without addressing the identity issues, what Rüsen calls the orientation of practical life in time, and which heritage and tradition, either within schools or outside of them, target so directly.[20]

Coming at the history/heritage problem from the other direction, commemorations and museums provide another kind of opportunity for the intersection of heritage practices and critical history. Bringing a critical, disciplinary component to public celebrations and museum renovations could provide a series of events and institutions far more historically meaningful than the beer commercials and Olympic flag-waving.

CONCLUSION

In a world of accelerating mobility, distraction and dislocation, celebratory heritage offers a simple but alluring promise of roots, solidarity, belonging and identity. But it is precisely the forces that generate the need that make ahistorical heritage solutions inadequate in the twenty-first century. Heritage would segment "ours" from "not ours" and lay special claim, privileged knowledge, exclusive access, to the former. It would help us to feel good by separating "us" from "them." Collapsing past and present, it dangles the promise of preservation and tradition as solutions to accelerating change.

In our own era, these are false promises: the world is headed in the opposite direction. Ours and not ours are mingling; we and they are cohabitating. What young people need to comprehend about identity is not a question of purity of blood or spirit, but of heterogeneity and multiplicity. Under these conditions, only an understanding of malleability and change over time will satisfy the quest for roots. Solidarity will have to be built on a platform both more global and more local than the nineteenth century nation.

In such a world, a vision for heritage and history education starts to take shape. It is based on developing understandings of history's disciplinary tools and critical practices, while addressing the urgent questions posed by the needs for heritage and identity. If it is done right, the answers to those questions will be more open, complex and contested than they have ever been. Celebrations of national heritage will be open for critique; monuments will be sites of debate and contestation; museum exhibits will be self-reflexive; and school curricula will enable students to deal with this historical complexity in the public realm. Herein lies the educational potential for a reconciliation between heritage and critical history.

NOTES

1 Lowenthal, D. (1996) *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Industry and the Spoils of History*. New York: Free Press, pp. 120-1. To be fair, though I use this as a set-up to draw the distinction, nobody—including Lowenthal himself—sees these as completely dichotomous.

2 Van Boxtel, C., Klein, S., & Snoep, E. (*eds*) (2011) *Heritage Education: Challenges in Dealing with the Past*. Amsterdam: Netherlands Institute for Heritage (Erfgoed Nederland).

3 Grever, M., de Bruijn, P., & van Boxtel, C. (2012) Negotiating historical distance: Or, how to deal with the past as a foreign country in heritage education. *Paedagogica Historica*, 48(6): 878.

4 Seixas, P. & Colyer, J. (2014) *Annual Report of the Historical Thinking Project*. www.historicalthinking.ca under "Research and Reports." Accessed 3 June 2014.

5 The total population during that period was in the mid-30 millions. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa, 2 March 2012, "News Release—Canada continued to welcome a high number of immigrants in 2011." http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/releases/2012/2012-03-02a.asp.

6 See Kymlicka, W. (2001) *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press and Smith, A. (2007) Seven narratives in North American history: Thinking the nation in Canada, Quebec and the United States. In S. Berger (Ed.), *Writing the Nation* (pp. 63-83). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

7 For an insightful exploration of historical identity as the challenge of persistence through changes over time, see Lorenz, C. (2004). Towards a theoretical framework of comparing historiographies: Some preliminary considerations. In P. Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (pp. 25-48). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

8 www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRI-A3vakVg) (accessed 07 01 2014).

9 John Ralston Saul (2008) has attempted to redefine Canada as a "Metis nation," a mix of Aboriginal, French and English. See also Bouchard (2000) on defining old and new nations.

10 On history, memory and narrative in Quebec, see Létourneau, (2004).

11 Messamore, B. (2012) *Teaching Confederation: the problem with simple*. Paper presented at the Association for Canadian Studies/ OHASSTA. Toronto: 23-24 November.

12 Valpy, M. "Vimy Ridge: The Making of a Myth." *The Globe and Mail*, April 1 2007.

13 Taylor, A. (2010) *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies*. New York: Vintage (Random House).

14 Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (*eds*) (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

15 Avishai Margalit (2002) locates the "ethics of memory" in the obligation to remember past generations as part of an ongoing community contract that will be fulfilled by being remembered by those in the future.

16 Note that this is a different meaning of "tradition," than that discussed by Gadamer below.

17 Gadamer, H.-G. (1987) The problem of historical consciousness. In P. Rabinow & W. M. Sullivan (*eds*), *Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look* (pp. 82-140). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press: 89.

18 Nora, P. (1996) *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*. (A. Goldhammer, Trans). New York: Columbia University Press: 1.

19 E.g., Reading Like a Historian in the United States; the new Australian National Curriculum; the Historical Thinking Project in Canada.

20 Rüsen, J. (1993) *Studies in Metahistory*. Pretoria, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council (specifically, Chapter 9: Paradigm shift and theoretical reflection in Western German historical studies). Also see Megill, A. (1994). Joern Ruesen's theory of historiography: between modernism and rhetoric of inquiry. *History and Theory*, 31(1), 39-60. In the 1990s, key historians of popular memory—in the United States, John Bodnar (1992). *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.in the United States and in Britain, Raphael Samuel (1994). *Theatres of Memory*. London, UK: Verso —saw vernacular heritage efforts in a positive light as the democratization of history. I am discussing government-initiated, national heritage campaigns, which have a substantially different spin.

HISTORICAL FRICTIONS: HISTORY, ART AND PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the following questions: What is the relationship between history and art? To what extent are historians artists? To what extent are artists historians? What are the implications for using art in the teaching of history? The authors point out that in the same way that contemporary history education pulls back the curtain on how historians work, teachers can open up for examination the way fiction writers work. They contend that this is critical because artistic representations of history can be so appealing and so well constructed that they pull people in, inhibiting interrogation and critical thought.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Aminata Diallo, a West African girl of about 11, was kidnapped and taken from her family. After enduring days of forced march to the coast and months of a horrific voyage on a slave ship, she arrived in the colony of South Carolina, where she was sold into slavery. Years of misery followed, including forced labour on a plantation, rape, and permanent separation from her husband and child. Eventually, Aminata managed to escape slavery and make her way to Nova Scotia as part of the Loyalist migration of the mid-1780s.

Elijah Weesageechak was a Cree hunter from Northern Ontario who paddled several days from home to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force heading for Europe early in World War 1. Along with the overt racism common for the time, Elijah endured the unspeakable horrors of the "Great War." As a sniper he spent hours lying absolutely still in no man's land, sometimes behind the rotting carcases of horses or,

worse, those of his fellow soldiers. Elijah rose to become one of the best snipers on the Allied side but also descended into the twin hells of morphine addiction and an obsession with killing other men.

Vikram Lall was born in the 1950s in central Kenya and came of age during the Mau Mau Uprising and the tumultuous years of the making of an independent state. As an Indian in East Africa he lived the ultimate in-between life, neither colonizer nor native, used by both sides, trusted by neither. Falling into corruption and eventually getting caught, Vikram fled for a relatively safe but tortured life in southern Ontario. Again, as an immigrant forced from the only home he knew, he is in-between and unsure of who he really is or what his life means.

Aminata, Elijah and Vikram are compelling historical characters and as history teachers and educators of history teachers, we see all kinds of ways to use their stories with students. They are all quite ordinary folk, not the "great men" who so often dominate the textbooks. They are people our students can relate to. Furthermore, substantial parts of their stories take place when they are young and this, too, provides a potential connection with students. While they are quite ordinary in many ways, their lives touch on great historical events and themes: slavery, the Loyalist migration to Canada, the Great War, and the processes of colonization and decolonization. Finally, their stories deal with aspects of Canadian history and particular populations that are often left out of school history courses. They open up important parts of the history of African-Canadians, Aboriginal Peoples, and more recent immigrants.

While all of this is true, the problem for us as history teachers is that Aminata, Elijah, and Virkram are not real historical actors at all but fictional products of the imaginations of Canadian novelists Lawrence Hill, Joseph Boyden, and M.G. Vassanji.[1] Their fictional status raises several questions for us: What is the relationship between history and art? To what extent are historians artists? To what extent are artists historians? What are implications for using art in the teaching of history?

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORY AND ART

History and art are clearly connected in a range of complex ways and space here does not allow for a thorough examination of all of them. Most obviously, for writers of historical fiction, history is a source of inspiration and material for their art. Annabel Lyon, for example, found in the world of the Ancient Greeks characters and situations that were both compelling and with contemporary relevance.[2] She worked hard to construct stories that were historically accurate but also spoke of enduring human themes.

Hilary Mantel found inspiration for her Man Booker Prize-winning characterization of Henry VIII's advisor Thomas Cromwell not only in the history of the period but in historiography as well. In her research she became very aware of the contested interpretations of Cromwell presented by historians over the years and quite consciously developed her work to fit with some of the revisionist work on the man.[3]

While history is a source and inspiration for both these authors, it also raises challenges for their writing. Both felt obligated to make their stories as historically accurate as possible and, while free to fill in the gaps, they felt bound not to distort facts to make for more compelling art. Mantel says it most strongly:

I cannot describe to you what revulsion it inspires in me when people play around with the facts. If I were to distort something just to make it more convenient or dramatic, I would feel I'd failed as a writer. If you understand what you're talking about, you should be drawing the drama out of real life, not putting it there, like icing on a cake.[4]

For historians art is often an important source for developing their accounts of particular eras or individuals. In her recent book on the lead up to World War 1 Margaret MacMillan includes a chapter titled, "What Were They Thinking? Hopes, Fears, Ideas, and Unspoken Assumptions," which attempts to immerse the reader in the ideas and assumptions that permeated European societies in the early years of the twentieth century; to provide a deep sense of historical perspective.[5] In that chapter MacMillan draws heavily on artists, particularly fiction writers, as key sources for understanding the time.

A more comprehensive example of a historian drawing on art as a source is the book *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* by UBC professor Timothy Brook. Brook uses six paintings by the seventeenth century Dutch painter

Johannes Vermeer as jumping off points to discuss profound changes taking place in the world at that time. Art is the central source and frame for his work.[6]

These are just some of the ways in which history and art are connected. It seems to us that teachers of history – or art for that matter – should not ignore this relationship but rather find creative ways to engage students in considering its complexities.

HISTORIANS AS ARTISTS

We contend that the historian is no less an artist than is a novelist, or a poet for that matter. There seems to be a common belief that writing fiction or poetry is a creative endeavor whereas writing history is a routine, unimaginative series of tasks which involve ferreting out the necessary historical sources in dusty archives, selecting relevant information, and then compiling the facts into a coherent narrative, with causes and effects clearly identified. However, it is much more than that. Historian Hayden White calls the production of an historical account a discursive process. He says:

> *The facts do not speak for themselves [...] the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is—in its representation—a purely discursive one. Novelists might be dealing only with imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real ones, but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the object of a representation, is a poetic process.*[7]

He refers to "the unprocessed historical record [where] the facts exist only as a congeries of contiguously related fragments"[8] until the historian selects and combines them in ways that create new wholes just as novelists put together figments of their imaginations to create coherent fictitious narratives.

Historian Barbara Tuchman, following on from George Macaulay Trevelyan, points out that effective historians must exercise sympathy and imagination in order to understand the evidence. She says, "Without sympathy and imagination the historian can copy figures from a tax roll forever [...] but he will never know or be able to portray the people who paid the taxes."[9] The historian has to "exercis[e] the artist's privilege of selection"[10] by asking thoughtful questions of sources in order to make meaning from the disparate pieces of information she is able to collect. Two historians using the same sources will write two very different narratives because they will have different views about the importance of ideas, people, and events and therefore give them differing degrees of prominence in the narrative. Finally, the historian exercises creativity by conveying meaning through clear and compelling language that will draw readers into the narrative. The difference between the academic historian and the historical fiction author lies squarely in the historian's responsibility to avoid straying from what the available evidence can support rather than in a lack of creativity.

Perhaps leaning more towards art is what is sometimes called literary history, "a term that suggests a hybrid of historiography and literary journalism that requires factual honesty, intellectual exploration and engagement but allows for a wider range of narrative styles."[11] It is not fiction, but rather history accompanied by a degree of transparency typically lacking in historical accounts. This hybrid history allows the author to insert herself into the narrative and reveal her own motives, doubts and uncertainties. Julie Wheelwright's biography, *Esther: The Remarkable True Story of Esther Wheelwright*[12] is an example of this form. The author provides an account drawn from available primary sources, but reveals choices made about interpretations, decisions about privileging one source over another, and as Wheelwright puts it, dealing with instances where "the black hole of documentation gapes wide."[13] She goes on to say, "Perhaps the limitations can become part of the story and force readers to understand and appreciate the complexities of history."[14] It is generally accepted that historians interpret the evidence in the sources available to them, rather than discover the "truth." But, such an approach makes this interpretive process clearly evident to the reader. As Wheelwright points out, this approach "allows for reflection on the porous relationship between fiction and non-fiction as equally constructed texts."[15]

ARTISTS AS HISTORIANS

Although it is possible for an artist to be a historian, they are usually not because they possess a "license" to invent. Historians are not eligible for this license

because they have a scholarly obligation to ground their interpretations in the extant evidence. The relationship between a historical fiction writer and their evidence varies considerably from one writer to another and it can be a troubled one. Some authors wrestle with decisions to alter the historical record for the sake of the story. Margaret Sweatman, author of *Fox* (Winnipeg General Strike), has commented, "It is always kind of creepy when you do depart and steal and lie when you're working with the public domain. So I am an embezzler, you know, in public property, the history."[16] For Charles Frazier, author of *Cold Mountain* (American Civil War), this is not an issue. When asked which was more important, his response was, "Let the fiction drive and the history ride."[17] That pretty much puts history in its place.

Writers of historical fiction are ranged along a lengthy continuum when it comes to their responses to the dilemma of how much license they have to "invent" history. We would place Thomas Wharton, author of *Icefields* (Jasper, Alberta and the Columbia Icefield) at one end based on his admission that he falsified some of the sources he acknowledges in his novels. His explanation is that, "[W]hen I finish a book, I feel like I'm not finished playing fictionally. Somehow I like to have the fiction bleed over into the real world in some small way. […] I guess it seals the book off with a buried statement: don't believe everything you read. I don't know."[18] Michael Crummy, author of *River Thieves* (the extinct Beothuk of Newfoundland) takes a stance that could be placed somewhere in the middle of the continuum, "You can't write it exactly as it was, because as a novel that would fail. So there were many places where I had to make decisions that collapsed characters into one another changed the historical record slightly, to deal with aesthetic writerly questions like, 'How do I speed this up? How do I hold these things together?'"[19] Margaret Atwood is close to the other end. She talks about the challenge of unearthing information about mundane quotidian details that have not been recorded because they were simply so taken for granted. She cites "how to clean a chamber pot, what footgear would have been worn in winter, the origins of quilt-pattern names, and how to store parsnips"[20] as examples of information which had to be researched for her novel *Alias Grace*, which took place in Canada West during the 1840s.

According to one fiction writer, "Historians can't invent in the gaps, so they wind up just building the structure all full of holes."[21] Artists, on the other hand, invent in the gaps all the time. Atwood says:

> *I devised the following set of guidelines for myself: when there was a solid fact, I could not alter it; long as I might to have Grace witness McDermott's execution, it could not be done, because, worse luck, she was already in the Penitentiary on that day. […] but in the parts left unexplained—the gaps left unfilled—I was free to invent. Since there were a lot of gaps, there is a lot of invention. Alias Grace is very much a novel rather than a documentary.*[22]

Historians cannot invent in the gaps in the way that artists are free to do. However, what they can do is to form educated inferences based on the information that they do have to work with. They can also be transparent about the limitations of the sources available to them and how they formed inferences.

IMPLICATIONS FOR USING ART IN THE TEACHING OF HISTORY

There has been a resurgence of interest in public history recently. In addition to documentaries and docudramas, commemorations, museum exhibitions, a new emphasis on historic sites, and nonfiction of various kinds, there has been a proliferation of historical fiction about Canadian topics. In a telephone survey involving lengthy interviews of 3419 Canadians, over half of the respondents indicated that they had read books (including historical fiction) about the past in the previous year.[23]

This public interest coincides with continuing reports that students find school history boring and irrelevant.[24] We see considerable potential for history educators to take advantage of the widespread public interest in the past as a part of a process of reinvigorating school history. Art, particularly historical fiction, is often a gateway to interest in history and more disciplined study of it. Characters and situations like the ones with which we began this article have the potential to captivate the imaginations of students and lead them to engagement with important historical content, concepts, and processes. This will require careful planning and teaching. We can only begin the discussion of what that might involve here but two broad areas of approach

might be pulling back the curtain on the work of artists and engaging students in the production of their own fictional accounts.

Current reforms in history education around the world are focused on introducing students to the disciplinary processes of history. It is no longer considered enough that students learn historical information. They are also expected to become conversant with the ways in which historical accounts are created. Students are being taken behind the curtain to see how historians work and, indeed, being asked to do some of that work themselves.

It seems to us that the same should be true for historical fiction when it is used in the history classroom. As demonstrated here, fiction writers write and talk about the ways in which they do their work, the sources they use, and the decisions they make in shaping their stories. In the same way that contemporary history education pulls back the curtain on how historians work, teachers can open up for examination the way fiction writers work. In fact, this is critical. Fictional accounts and characters like the ones discussed in this chapter are compelling. They captivate readers and take them on a journey that seems right – presenting the past the way it was, so to speak. As Darren Bryant and Penney Clark point out, artistic representations of history can be so well constructed that they pull people in, inhibiting interrogation and critical thought.[25] That may be fine in some contexts, but it is not fine in the history classroom. Students need to understand that fictional accounts, while potentially very valuable for understanding aspects of the past, are constructed by particular people, drawing on particular sources, for particular purposes, and they are neither unassailable records of the past nor made up stories with no relevance for understanding history.

A key aspect of contemporary approaches to teaching history is to engage students not only in the analysis of historical sources and accounts, but also to engage them in using historical processes in constructing their own accounts. In doing this, they engage with a range of sources, make decisions about what is or is not significant, develop a plot line to show history as progress or decline, and make judgements about historical events and actors. It is held that involving students in the production of historical accounts can make them more sophisticated historical thinkers.

Assigning students to write their own fictional accounts rooted in history has the potential to extend and deepen their facility with historical thinking. It can involve virtually every one of the six historical thinking processes described by Peter Seixas and Tom Morton and embedded in social studies curricula across the country.[26] In particular, it can foster a richer understanding of historical sources and a deeper sense of historical perspective as students attempt to develop characters that speak, act, and think in ways consistent with their historical contexts.

CONCLUSION

Aminata Diallo, Elijah Weesageechak, and Vikram Lall never walked the earth. They did not experience agonizing months on a slave ship, the paralyzing fear of enemy snipers, or the cultural dislocation of living in someone else's land. People like them did all of these things, however, and through them Lawrence Hill, Joseph Boyden, and M.G. Vassanji provide a window on the past that is sometimes missing in historical accounts. It is a window our students deserve a look through, but we shouldn't stop at the window. We need to open the door and bring our students inside to understand the relationship between history and art more critically, where they are symbiotic and where they are not, and why.

NOTES

A For the purposes of this article we mainly limit our discussion of art to historical fiction.

1 Lawrence Hill, *The Book of Negroes* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007); Joseph Boyden, *Three Day Road* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006); M.G. Vassanji, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2003).

2 Annabel Lyon, "Making It Up: Annabel Lyon on the Challenge of Writing Historical Fiction," *Globe and Mail*, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/making-it-up-annabel-lyon-on-the-challenge-of-writing-historical-fiction/article4558458/.

3 MacFarquhar, Larissa, "The Dead Are Real: Hilary Mantel's Imagination," *The New Yorker*, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/10/15/the-dead-are-real.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Margaret MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace: The Road to 1914* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2013).

6 Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008).

[7] Hayden White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," In *The Literature of Fact: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, edited by Angus Fletcher (English Institute, 1976), 28.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Barbara Tuchman, "The Historian As Artist," In *Practicing History: Selected Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 47.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Julie Wheelwright, *Writing in the Borderlands: A Critical Review of Literary Journalism and Historiography, 1989-2011*, Unpublished doctoral thesis, City University, London, 2014, 74.

[12] Julie Wheelwright, *Esther: The Remarkable True Story of Esther Wheelwright, Puritan Child, Native Daughter, Mother Superior* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2011).

[13] Wheelwright, *Writing in the Borderands*, 75.

[14] *Ibid.*, 87.

[15] *Ibid.*, 75.

[16] Herb Wyile, "Ghosts Are Our Allies: Margaret Sweatman," *Speaking in the Past Tense: Canadian Novelists on Writing Historical Fiction* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 171.

[17] Charles Frazier, "Some Remarks on History and Fiction," *Historians and Novelists Confront America's Past (and Each Other)*, edited by Mark C. Carnes (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001): 313.

[18] Wyile, "The Living Haunt the Dead: Michael Crummey," *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 301.

[19] Margaret Atwood, *In Search of* Alias Grace: *On Writing Canadian Historical Fiction*, Charles R. Bronfman Lecture in Canadian Studies, November 21, 1996, University of Ottawa Press, 1997, 32-33.

[20] Wyile, "The Iceman Cometh Across: Thomas Wharton," *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 293.

[21] Wyile, "History 'from the Workingman's End of the Telescope: Fred Stenson,' " *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 201.

[22] Atwood, *In Search of* Alias Grace, 35.

[23] The Pasts Collective, *Canadians and Their Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

[24] Pour un exemple, voir Anna Clark, "Teaching the Nation's Story: Comparing Public Debates and Classroom Perspectives of History Education in Australia and Canada," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, n°6 (2009): 745-62.

[25] Darren Bryant and Penney Clark, "*Historical Empathy and Canada: A People's History,*" *Canadian Journal of Education* 29, n°4 (2006): 1039-1064.

[26] Peter Seixas and Tom Morton, *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013).

ACADIAN COLLECTIVE IDENTITY BEFORE AND AFTER CONFEDERATION: THE CASE OF NEW BRUNSWICK ACADIANS

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a brief review of the Acadian reaction to Confederation before and after 1867. In the years leading to the creation of the Dominion of Canada, the Acadians from the Maritimes provinces strongly opposed the proposed confederation. Notably, in New Brunswick, many Acadian constituencies rejected the union of the provinces, even when their religious superiors advocated its adoption. What reasons motivated the Acadian elite to refuse Confederation while the Catholic Church and the French Canadians saw it as an advantageous repositioning? And how did the newly emerged Acadian elite from Collège Saint-Joseph continue to shape Acadian identity while navigating around this new level of government after 1867?

INTRODUCTION

Pascal Poirier wrote in the Acadian newspaper *l'Évangéline* on February 5, 1903: "The College in Memramcook and, indirectly, the confederation of provinces, saved our French nationality." Attributing the safeguard of Acadie to the Collège Saint-Joseph, the first post-secondary institution in Acadie founded in 1864, goes without saying. However, the second part of this statement may be surprising, given the tenacious opposition of Acadians to the proposed confederation. What motivated this radical change of position? In an effort to answer these questions this article provides a brief review of Acadian reactions to Confederation before and after 1867. More specifically, I suggest that the analysis of discourse on the Confederation by the Acadian elite after 1867 may shed new light on the situation of Acadians as a minority community at the time of the creation of the Dominion of Canada.

Indeed, the Acadians in the Maritimes had spoken strongly against the proposed confederation while Quebec, dissatisfied with the union of Upper and Lower Canada that prevailed earlier, came around to the idea in 1865 (Doucet, 250). Quebec guaranteed a significant French presence in the country project; therefore fear of English dominance was not the main cause motivating the Acadian people to reject it. In addition, although Acadians from the four Atlantic provinces were opposed to Confederation, the objection was most strongly voiced in New Brunswick. It is worth pointing out that, at the end of the 19th century, this province had the highest concentration of Acadians in the Atlantic provinces. Prince Edward Island was generally opposed to Confederation, which makes it difficult to assess the Acadian attitude as it is difficult to separate it from the anti-federalist mass of the island. Similarly, Newfoundland remained resolutely opposed to Confederation until the mid-20th century. As for Nova Scotia, Landry and Lang are of the opinion that "it is not really possible to elaborate on the position of the Acadians from Nova Scotia regarding the federal project." (159) Indeed, the opinion of Nova Scotians - Acadian or otherwise - is not clear because they had not been consulted prior to their entry into Confederation, although they attempted to undo the union thereafter (Conrad and Hiller, 132). In New Brunswick, however, there is a sharply divided demarcation between Acadians and anglophones on the question of Confederation.

OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSED CONFEDERATION BEFORE 1867

New Brunswick Prime Minister Leonard Tilley, favorable to the proposed union, was at the end of his term in the winter of 1865 and called an election in the hope of obtaining a mandate from the people to enter into Confederation (Forbes and Muise, 37). The project was rejected and the Tilley government suffered a crushing defeat. In addition to the Acadian ridings in the counties of Westmorland, Kent, Northumberland, Gloucester and Victoria-Madawaska, who expressed strong opposition to the project, there was also significant resistance on the part of the Catholic clergy. At this time, Catholic Acadians in the Maritime provinces were under the control of an Irish clergy. Given the lack of a means of mass written communication before 1867 - the date of the creation of the first French-language newspaper in Canada - the Catholic Church conveyed most official messages to the Acadian people. It is therefore understandable that the Acadians had added its voice to that of the Irish clergy in its opposition to entry into Confederation. Unanimity within the Catholic Church was such that a pro-federalist, Charles Fisher, observed: "I find them in a solid phalanx united against Confederation and I know that no argument but one from the church will reach them." (Bailey, 391).

Yet the following year, in 1866, a pro-Confederation government was elected in New Brunswick, at least partly because Archbishop Thomas Connolly, in Halifax, had flip-flopped on the issue. He urged his bishops to instruct the Catholic people to vote in favor of Confederation, fearing annexation to the United States (MacNutt, 19). Although Bishop Sweeny of St. John was unfavorable to the union of provinces, Bishop Rogers of Chatham supported the directive and asked Irish Catholics to back the project. Acadians, including those counties within the diocese of Bishop Rogers, however, remained stubbornly against Confederation. Westmorland, Kent and Gloucester counties expressed their disagreement by electing anti-confederalists but this time, the Acadian minority failed to prevent the project from moving forward. The question remains as to why the Acadians and their priests disobeyed their religious superiors.

Many reasons have been put forward to explain the persistence of the Acadians in opposing the union of the provinces. Some suggested that because they had been persecuted for so long, Acadians resisted any change due to an atavistic reflex (Doucet, 262). Moreover, despite directives expressed by bishops Connolly and Rogers, parish priests generally disapproved of the Confederation and thus their flocks would have obeyed their priests while disobeying their bishops (Doucet, 256). Indeed, a priest closely involved in the establishment of Collège Saint-Joseph, Father Francis Xavier LaFrance, confirmed in a letter to the archbishop of Quebec that he had advised the Acadians to oppose Confederation (quoted in Doucet, 256). Some have suggested that the Acadians had not sided with Quebec because they accused them of "not having really considered the French minorities of Upper Canada and the Maritimes" (Wade 31, quoted

in Doucet, 259). Indeed, the *Constitution Act of 1867* (Section 133) allowed francophones and anglophones to speak either language in parliamentary debates taking place in Quebec or in federal court, but the language rights of francophones outside Québec had been completely ignored:

> *The linguistic minority in both provinces [Ontario and Quebec] was also protected: Quebec anglophones, by a linguistic protection and the right to denominational schools, a right also granted to Catholics in Ontario, including the Francophone minority. Acadians, in turn, even if they were a significant demographic segment of New Brunswick, were completely neglected. (Migneault, 17).*

When Bishop Connolly, seconded by bishops Rogers and Sweeny, claimed similar guarantees for religious minorities in the Maritimes provinces at the London Conference in 1866, he was turned down on the grounds that "under the new constitution that would soon be in force, education would become a provincial jurisdiction." (MacNutt 21).

In short, some general conclusions can be drawn from the Acadian opposition. Enjoying a renaissance at the time, the Acadians enjoyed a strong enough collective consciousness to dare to go against the current. By joining the Dominion of Canada, the Acadians were gaining another level of government, which might slow their progress. The emerging members of the first Acadian elite were slowly beginning to get access to professions which would open the door to politics and state affairs, and thus had no interest in further diluting their number. Although there were no forums for collective expression until the national conventions which started in 1881, the nationalist sentiment was already fermenting within their ranks and the Confederation project was probably perceived as incompatible with the Acadian nationalist project. Ultimately, Confederation amounted to assimilation for Acadians who cultivated a new pride as a separate people - distinct from the English-speaking peoples surrounding them of course, but also distinct from other peoples with whom they shared a language and religion, notably the Province of Quebec.

IDENTITY DISCOURSES IN POST-CONFEDERATION ACADIE

Following New Brunswick and Nova Scotia's entry into Confederation in 1867, and Prince Edward Island in 1873, Acadians living in the Maritimes had to face the fact that they were a minority people within the new country. How did the Acadian elite that had strongly opposed the project cope with this new reality? And how did they negotiate the various levels of government and collective identities, ranging from a colonial identity to a state identity?

Despite this new complication, the Acadian Renaissance movement only gained strength and reached its peak during the 1880s. Patriots of the Acadian Renaissance worked to restore the collective memory, and in 1881, at the first Acadian National Convention, a national holiday was chosen after an intense debate. Some advocated the adoption of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, in order to express solidarity with the French Canadians, while others insisted that Acadie should maintain a separate identity by choosing its own national holiday: the Assumption. Conscientious of the importance of maintaining links with the province of Quebec, speakers reminded their audience of the commonalities between the two peoples and evoked Confederation as the guarantor of this union:

> *The same religion, the same language and the same origin will keep us united as we have always been. We will also be united in another way, by a political union elevated above that of political parties - the way that we, French Canadians, English, Scottish, Irish, are united together by ties under the great Canadian Confederation. (Rev. Stanislas Joseph Doucet, Memramcook, 1881, quoted in Bourque and Richard, 137).*

Paradoxically, this reference to Confederation suggests that the relationship between Acadians and French-Canadians was on the same level as that which united all other peoples of Canada. Implicit in this speech is the notion that if the union of peoples under one flag may be favourable to the development of a nation, it was essential that everyone could maintain a separate collective identity within the new country – and this included an Acadian identity distinct from French Canada. The specter of

assimilation was an effective means of encouraging delegates to choose a distinct Acadian holiday. Reverend Marcel-François Richard went as far as provoking his audience with the following facetious suggestion: "by Confederation we have all become Canadians, and therefore there should be only one national holiday. In this case, the English and the Irish should be invited to meet with us to celebrate one national holiday, the Saint-Jean-Baptiste, because they are all Canadians." (Bourque and Richard, 151).

For his part, Pascal Poirier, the first Acadian senator, spoke more diplomatically:

> *National Acadian Day should not be, if we stay true to our past, that of the Scots, the Irish, or even the French-Canadians; though we are all citizens of the same Confederation and French Canadians are consanguineous brothers we love and with whom our destiny is inextricably linked. Each nationality has its national day, its family celebration. Why would the Acadians not have theirs as well? Either we must choose only one national holiday for everyone and then this holiday will be on July 1, the day of Confederation. Or each nationality that makes up the Dominion, not excepting the Acadians, must have its own celebration (without prejudice to the official holiday of July 1), and then there will be as many national holidays as there are nationalities in Canada. (Bourque and Richard, 144-145).*

The arguments of these Acadian patriots carried considerable weight, and most of the Acadian delegates opted for the preservation of their identity rather than the association with a stronger group. This choice was decisive for the Acadians, as it marked a desire to maintain the identity and history of the Acadians as distinct from French Canada. Nevertheless, some managed to find political benefits within the new Confederation.

In fact, the Acadian elite of the first Acadian National Convention saw Confederation as a way to preserve its distinct status because according to its constitution, all Canadian citizens were considered equal. Speakers frequently insisted on the fact that they were only asking what was given to other Canadians. Pierre-Amand Landry, president of the 1881 convention of Memramcook, spoke briefly in English in order to address the English dignitaries attending the event:

> *[…] Divine Providence in its wisdom has made this Dominion of ours one composed of different nationalities and of different creeds, each one as it were forming a separate family and the whole united forming a nation called the Canadian nation. The French Acadians are one of these families, and the members of this family are widely scattered and disseminated. As a compound part of this young but growing and prosperous Canadian nation, our family of French Acadians is equal in the eyes of our Constitution to the families of other origins. (Bourque and Richard, 184-185).*

This excerpt is particularly interesting and representative in its use of the word "nation," which means Canada ("the Canadian nation"), and its use of "nationalities," which refers to the different peoples who coexist within its boundaries. In this vision announcing a uniquely Canadian multiculturalism, the nation is composed of peoples, or "nationalities" of various origins.

Similarly, still in 1881, Rev. Philéas-Frédéric Bourgeois pointed out that Confederation guaranteed the Acadians the right to practice their religion: "Elsewhere in the Confederation, family and religion have found timely, forceful advocates for their rights. The state has granted to each sect, every religious denomination equal protection" (Bourque and Richard, 206). In other words, the equality of all citizens of Canada represented an advantage, at least theoretically, for minorities.

CONCLUSION

Opposition to Confederation on the part of the Acadians was not surprising given their position as a minority group and their desire not to be assimilated into Quebec or English Canada. During the 1860s, an Acadian elite began to emerge and a strong nationalist current fed into a resurgent collective identity. The Renaissance was characterized by the use of a collective memory which needed to be preserved by recalling a distinctive past – distinct not only from English-speaking peoples, but

also from French Canada. The Dominion of Canada had devised a place for French at the federal level and in the province of Quebec, but not in the Maritime provinces. It was logical and natural that the Acadians could not see how the entry into Confederation would be an advantage for them.

However, they were not numerous enough to prevent their provincial governments from entering the Confederation. Put before the *fait accompli*, the Acadian elite who spoke at the Acadian National Conventions recognized the advantage that claiming equal status might confer upon them, since it guaranteed them the same religious and linguistic rights as their fellow citizens. In the speeches published in newspapers after Confederation, the Acadian elite often insisted that they were only asking for the same privileges others already enjoyed, and they managed to adapt their collective identity to this new governmental structure. To illustrate this fact, it is worth pointing out that at the ten Acadian National Conventions which took place from 1881 to 1937, Acadians sang both God Save the Queen and Ave Maris Stella (the Acadian national anthem) and declared loyalty to the British crown while claiming an Acadian "nationalism" within the Canadian "nation." For post-Confederation Maritime Acadians, this identity scaffolding offered the necessary flexibility to ensure the survival of a collective memory, without offending the federal government, and provided a model that eventually allowed them to successfully claim official bilingualism in the province of New Brunswick.

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JOHN A. MACDONALD AND THE INVENTION OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN CANADA

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ABSTRACT

In 1885 during debate in the House of Commons John A. Macdonald justified taking the vote away from people of Chinese origins on the grounds that they were a different species from Europeans. Far from reflecting the prejudices of the age or being the result of his personal antipathy towards the Chinese, Macdonald's exclusion of the Chinese was a key element in creating what he called an Aryan Canada through his control over Indian Affairs and immigration. Macdonald's white supremacist vision of Canada challenges received notions of a norm of multicultural tolerance highlights the fact that racisms were integral to the making Canada.

Canadian historiography underplays the significance of racisms in shaping Canada, representing them to be individual moral failings or expressions of the prejudices of the age, all the inevitable result of difference, their devastating consequences largely ignored. Yet, racisms are historically invented systems of rule that have shaped the modern world including Canada and whose origins can be traced.[1] Asian exclusion is one such system and John Alexander Macdonald's enactment of it was integral to the creation of European dominance over a vast territory that we know today as Canada.

Although Macdonald's antipathy towards "the Chinese" is well known, few historians have closely examined Chinese exclusion or how this exclusion articulated his broader vision of Canada. Instead, they represent his anti-Chinese racism as an uncharacteristic moral failing.[2] Yet, Macdonald not only excluded the Chinese, he personally introduced biological racism into Canadian state formation and used it to define Canadianness. Biological racisms depart from older racisms by constructing allegedly natural, immutable and inescapable racial categories. Previous racisms had been based on alleged cultural characteristics that could change over time.[3] For example, in the 1870s the new province of British Columbia had established white minority rule by ensuring that "No Chinaman or Indian" could vote,[4] even though the latter were the overwhelming majority of the population and the former were the next

largest group and had voted in previous elections. At the time, "Chinamen" and "Indians" were equivalent to "Englishmen" and "Americans," comparable to ethnicities today and whether the children of "Chinamen" could become "Canadians" was at least debatable. However, in 1885 Macdonald legislated biological racism so as to ensure that those labeled as "Chinese" could never escape the exclusion, while at the same time establishing what it was to be Canadian in biological "race" terms. This fixing of difference was neither accidental nor simply the result of mere prejudice.

Macdonald's introduction of biological racism took place during the debates over the 1885 *Electoral Franchise Act*, legislation designed to create the federal polity through an electoral system separate from that of the provinces. Macdonald initially proposed to the House of Commons that "Chinamen" should not have the right to vote on the grounds that they were "foreigners" and that "the Chinese has no British instincts or British feelings or aspirations."[5] When a member of the opposition asked whether naturalized Chinese ceased to be "Chinamen," Macdonald amended his legislation to exclude "a person of Mongolian or Chinese race."[6] The opposition response was incredulous, variously pointing out that the Chinese were "industrious people" who had "voted in the last election," or had "as good a right [to] be allowed to vote as any other British subject of foreign extraction."[7] This led Macdonald to make clear that Chinese exclusion was necessary to ensure European dominance. He warned, "if [the Chinese] came in great numbers and settled on the Pacific coast they might control the vote of that whole Province, and they would send Chinese representative to sit here, who would represent Chinese eccentricities, Chinese immorality, Asiatic principles altogether opposite to our wishes; and, in the even balance of parties, they might enforce those Asiatic principles, those immoralities […], the eccentricities which are abhorrent to the Aryan race and Aryan principles, on this House." He then claimed that the Chinese and Europeans were separate species, "the Aryan races will not wholesomely amalgamate with the Africans or the Asiatics" and that "the cross of those races, like the cross of the dog and the fox, is not successful; it cannot be, and never will be." Chinese exclusion was necessary or, as he told the House, "the Aryan character of the future of British America should be destroyed […]."[8]

If Macdonald was a racist, most of his contemporaries in Parliament were not. Macdonald was the only member of the Canadian Parliament to use the term "Aryan" during the 1870s and 1880s, as well as the only member to argue that Asians and Europeans were separate species. His views differed markedly from those of the previous Canadian premier, Alexander Mackenzie. Mackenzie had condemned calls for restrictive legislation on the Chinese as unseemly for "a British community,"[9] and had told the House, "To avow the principle that some classes of the human family were not fit to be residents of this Dominion would be dangerous and contrary to the law of nations and the policy which controlled Canada."[10] Macdonald's 1885 comments palpably shocked the members of the House of Commons; however, reaction in the Senate was even stronger. Because it introduced what they saw as an invidious principle into Canadian law, Senators, including some of Macdonald's own appointments, debated whether they could get away with sending the legislation back to the House of Commons;[11] this despite the fact that, as the Senators well knew, it had taken Macdonald two years to get his legislation through the House. In fact, in 1886, the Senate tried to repeal the *Chinese Immigration Act* and in 1887 and 1888 refused further restrictions on the Chinese.[12]

However, Macdonald was not merely expressing personal prejudices, he was forming the state system. As he told the House, the danger was that the Chinese might control the vote in British Columbia, which would put at risk the European dominance he was creating. The solution was to exclude people of Chinese origins in a way they could not circumvent, premising their exclusion on their supposed biology rather than their behaviour or culture. Thus they could enter the country, but would remain permanently subordinate. He was also showing himself to be familiar with the writings of Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, an obscure French diplomat whose theories of an originally pure Aryan race as the founders of all great human civilizations were gaining currency in Europe during the early 1880s.[13] Most importantly, he was inventing Candianness in racial terms, defining "Canadian" as "European" and "Chinese" as something that could never be "Canadian."

Thus, Macdonald's introduction of scientific racism into Canadian law was part of his larger imperialist agenda. It came as the major European powers were

completing their division of the world and as scientific racism was also becoming popular. Macdonald himself had been the architect of the greatest land grab in British Imperial history; the purchase of the territories nominally controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company. He had devoted much of his career in federal politics to constructing actual Canadian control over these territories. Indeed, Macdonald's 1885 comments came as his project of imperial control was being realized: the railway was almost finished, Canadian and British Imperial forces were putting down the Northwest Rebellion and with it, they were completing "the pacification" of the First Nations of the plains. His exclusion of the Chinese parallels his ruthless marginalization of the First Nations on the southern prairies through government-organized famine, military actions and total bureaucratic control over their lives.[14] *The Franchise Act* was therefore a key moment in the history of Canadian state formation: it defined who this new territory was to be for and who would be a member of the new polity that was emerging *ad mari, usque ad mare*.[15] This was Macdonald's "greatest triumph."[16] More important than the railroad or Confederation, the legislation assured that the new polity of Canada was to be for European men who owned property.

Just as his National Policy of building the railway, protective tariffs, and opening the prairie west to European resettlement was premised on a fourth element — the "pacification" and exclusion of First Nations people from their traditional territories — Macdonald's imperialism was about creating the dominance over this territory of racialized men like himself, i.e., of European property-owners. In 1885 there was only one group of property-owners who threatened his Aryan vision: men from China. If the 1885 *Chinese Immigration Act* was designed to limit the entry of racialized Chinese workingmen and their families, the *Electoral Franchise Act* was designed to keep Chinese merchants and businessmen out of the federal polity. Thus, Macdonald's exclusion of the Chinese was part of his larger project: the creation of a society of people from Europe on the territories of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people of Canada. To make it the land of Europeans, it first had to be emptied of Aboriginal people. Then non-Europeans had to be kept out. In 1885, this not only meant restricting the entry of Chinese, but removing their access to the political power that would control the territory.

The term for the political system that Macdonald was actively creating, i.e., a system premised on the dominance of racialized Europeans, is white supremacy. As his contemporary critics pointed out, enacting one invidious distinction made others possible. In future years, Macdonald's Aryan vision would mean further legal and popular restrictions on Asians, Africans, Jews and Moslems as well as the continued exclusion of Aboriginal peoples. Meanwhile, the racialized Chinese people of Canada would bear the consequence of his actions for the better part of the next century. Even today in popular belief people cannot be Chinese and Canadian in quite the same way that they can be European and Canadian. This might be something worth remembering in a multicultural, multiethnic and multi-racial Canada as Canadians begin to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of the father of Canadian white supremacy.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

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2 E.G., Richard Gwyn, Nation Maker: *Sir John A. Macdonald: His Life, Our Times*, Vol.2, 1867-1891 (Toronto: Random House, 2011): 528-533.

3 Edouard Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

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6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid*., 1585.

8 *Ibid*., 1588.

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16 Macdonald to Charles Tupper, July 7, 1885, cited in Donald G. Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain* [Ebrary Electronic Resource] (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 427.

"NOTHING, OF COURSE, EVER HAPPENS DOWN THERE": ATLANTIC CANADA IN THE NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

The title of this paper is derived from a comment by Frank H. Underhill in *The Image of Confederation*, published in 1964. By that time, the Atlantic Provinces had become identified as the "sick man" of Canada, lagging behind the rest of the nation in economic growth. Underhill used this flimsy justification as an excuse for excluding the Atlantic region from his discussion, a common practice among policy makers and scholars of Canadian history. Exclusion from the national narrative is perhaps preferable to what often passes for analysis of the region. This paper probes the "mistaken identities" that bedevil Atlantic Canada and argues that the nation would benefit from paying more attention to the region located "east of Canada."

INTRODUCTION

The title of this paper is derived from a comment by Frank H. Underhill in *The Image of Confederation,* published in 1964.[1] By that time, the Atlantic Provinces had become identified as the "sick man" of Canada, lagging behind the rest of the nation in economic growth—the only measure, it seems, by which societies are now judged. Underhill used this flimsy justification as an excuse for excluding the Atlantic region from his discussion, a common practice among policy makers and scholars of Canadian history. Exclusion from the national narrative is perhaps preferable to what often passes for analysis of the region. I have written elsewhere on the role that "mistaken identities" have played in shaping negative perceptions of Atlantic

Canada.[2] In this paper, I probe these perceptions and argue that our nation would benefit from paying more attention to the region located "east of Canada."

I base my argument on several assumptions:

- First, identities in the Atlantic region are deeply rooted. They were forged in the long eighteenth century (1689 to 1815), a period punctuated by a series of devastating wars fought on the region's soil and in which Aboriginal peoples and Acadians were marginalized. Between 1763 and 1850 the region was resettled by new immigrants, most of them from Great Britain, Ireland, and other colonies in North America. The Maritimes (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island) are the only provinces in Canada that took their final geographical shape before Confederation, shapes that resemble the small New England states more than their counterparts across Canada, including Newfoundland and Labrador, which is territorially larger than Great Britain or Japan.

- Second, what constitutes a region is always fluid, subject to shifts in communications, cultures, migrations, political regimes, and trade patterns. Despite assertions to the contrary, Atlantic Canada has never been frozen in time, but continues to change and evolve.

- Third, well-respected scholars have made a convincing argument that Atlantic Canada is not a region in any functional sense. Writing in the late 1970s, J. Murray Beck could find no regional identity at all—only provincial ones.[3] Others have gone even further, claiming that identity exists primarily in Atlantic Canada's own untidy regionalisms. Mi'kma'ki, Acadie, Africadia, Cape Breton, and Labrador are only the most obvious examples of regions that exist within, across, and beyond provincial boundaries.

- Fourth, the Atlantic Provinces offer little by way of a unique culture. While a regional affinity might manifest itself as friendliness in distant communities where Atlantic Canadians have migrated to find work, it leaves few traces of a distinctive legacy from a beloved homeland. This should come as no surprise. Notwithstanding a family resemblance due to their geographical origin, Atlantic Canadians have been full participants in creating a shared continental culture in which they are easily assimilated.

It is thus necessary at the outset to acknowledge that "region" and "regionalism" are slippery concepts, reflecting shifting cultural and historical contexts.[4] The two terms also need to be distinguished. While the Atlantic "region" can be easily found on a map, "regionalism" implies a political stance, a consciousness of a shared outlook that can be summoned up when other structures—familial, communal, provincial, national, global—fail. Calls for a union of the Maritime or Atlantic provinces have been voiced by policy makers desperate to find a quick fix for real or imagined ills, but no such union has ever materialized. This outcome suggests not only that there are other powerful identities in Atlantic Canada competing for dominance, but also that regionalism has limited value as a vehicle for common action.

Finally, it is important to understand what is meant by the names applied to the region. While the term "Maritime Provinces" was coined before 1867, "Atlantic Canada" and "Atlantic Provinces" only came into common use after Newfoundland (Labrador only became part of the official name of the province in 2001) joined Confederation in 1949. Many observers make the mistake of labelling Newfoundland and Labrador as a Maritime Province. It is not and its differences from the Maritimes cannot be casually dismissed.

CREATING IDENTITIES

Notions of conservatism and backwardness permeate scholarly and journalistic commentary on the Atlantic region. One of the most egregious examples was published in 2002 by political scientist Barry Cooper who asserted, as a matter of "fact," that "stagnation and decadence remain the most prominent features of premodern communal life to have survived into the present in the Maritimes" (by which he meant Atlantic Canada).[5] Cooper offers little evidence to back up this claim, but such comments serve to consolidate second-class citizenship. As a victim on a personal level of unflattering assumptions based on my geographical origins when I lived in Toronto in the 1960s, I can attest to the harm that such attitudes inflict.

If Atlantic Canadians are more conservative and backward than other North Americans, how do these traits manifest themselves? Those who favour

the conservative stereotype point to the comparative reluctance of Atlantic Canadians to support radical political movements; the tendency of the region's artists and creative writers to cling to realism; and a commitment to the notion of welfare state liberalism in social policy. Scholars who dispute this view emphasize the region's leadership in the movement for responsible government; pitched battles between capital and labour in the coal, fish, and forest industries; radical efforts by the region's governments to impose modernization through resettlement programs, sweeping municipal reform, and state-run enterprises; and the success of its world-class entrepreneurs, among them K.C. Irving, Frank Sobey, Harry Steele, Craig Dobbin, and Harrison McCain. Clearly, the wiser course is to concede that Atlantic Canada is a complex region with a history long and deep enough to accommodate any academic prejudice.

For the most part, policy makers and scholars outside the region follow Underhill in ignoring the Atlantic Provinces.[6] This tendency was established at the time of Confederation when the blueprint for British North American union was under discussion.[7] During the Confederation debates in the colony of Canada, the "Lower Provinces" were rarely mentioned and the concerns of the Maritime delegates expressed in the negotiations leading to political union were often discounted, part of the reason why Prince Edward Island missed the party in 1867. By holding out until 1873, the "Cradle of Confederation" secured a better deal from Ottawa than was initially offered, but Prince Edward Island was still a small jurisdiction in an expanding transcontinental empire.

The marginal position of the Maritimes in Confederation was reflected at the outset in the name of the new nation, the choice of its capital, the "Canadian" make-up of its civil service, and the balance of provincial representation in the Senate. When the western provinces were added to the mix, the influence of the Maritimes was further diminished. Small gestures were made to accommodate regional protests—the 1915 agreement whereby no province in Canada was to have fewer elected members of parliament than senators and the Atlantic Provinces Adjustment Grants established in 1958 are good examples—but the general trends continued to prevail. With small populations, the Maritimes had neither the revenues necessary to sustain their provincial governments nor the clout in the House of Commons to determine regional policy. Market forces, meanwhile, ran rampant, sucking money, people, and power to growth centres elsewhere.[8] When Newfoundland joined Confederation, the union agreement stipulated that a royal commission would be established to determine what level of assistance was needed to maintain adequate public services while keeping taxes comparable to those of the Maritime Provinces, not Canada as a whole. The regional fix was in.

Beginning in the 1950s the governments of the four Atlantic Provinces have cooperated among themselves to achieve common goals, and Ottawa has established equalization programs and various regional development agencies to kick-start economic growth. In 1982 the have-not provinces achieved a victory of sorts in Article 36 of the Constitution Act committing governments to the principle of equalization, but this article has never been invoked in the courts to improve conditions in the Atlantic region. The current state of provincial coffers in the Maritimes suggests that the time has come to test the potential of this constitutional commitment.

CANADA WITH A DIFFERENCE

In matters of public policy, the interests of the Atlantic Provinces inevitably take a back seat to more powerful regions, a process thoroughly documented in research by E. R. Forbes, Donald Savoie, and others.[9] Canada might well be a different place if the Atlantic region played a larger role in framing national policies. Let me offer a few examples:

- The Atlantic Ocean is an integral part of the Atlantic region. Although its fish, oil, and tourist potential are well-known to other Canadians, national policy has never really engaged these assets in the same way as, for example, Iceland and Norway do. The crisis in the fisheries, which threw 30,000 people in the Atlantic region out of work in the early 1990s, made headlines and brought much-needed financial assistance from Ottawa, but had this tragedy occurred elsewhere in Canada, the threat posed by climate change and irresponsible resource exploitation in the nation's oceans would figure more prominently in national policy. Indeed, the likelihood of Prince Edward Island being largely submerged by rising ocean waters over the next century would be the subject of sustained national attention.

- The Atlantic region serves as an uncomfortable reminder that unfettered market forces often fail. While Newfoundland and Labrador no longer receive equalization payments—the province has the third highest per capita income in Canada—the Maritime Provinces are less well-off. Now that Ontario is also a recipient of equalization, we hear less about abandoning the policy put in place by Ottawa in 1956 to ensure a basic standard of living for all Canadians no matter where they lived, but "equalization" is still a dirty word in the neo-liberal vocabulary. Even the economic meltdown of 2008, when governments propped up a system riddled by greed and irresponsibility, failed to stop ideologues from preaching that less government is the best government. This in a country where the richest 86 Canadians have more wealth ($178 billion) than the people of New Brunswick ($141 billion).[10] Since the gap between rich and poor is not only manifested geographically across regions but is also embedded in class, ethnic, and gender relations, it is important to sustain an activist state that encourages a better balance in the distribution of the nation's bounty. A good place to start in any effort to address regional disparity is with a discussion of the impact of "per capita" thinking, which has inflicted hardship on small provinces since 1867. The upcoming changes to the Canada Health Transfer, which will remove provincial income level considerations now in place, promises to have disastrous consequences for the Atlantic Provinces, where population has remained constant over the past two decades while other regions have grown in numbers.

- Atlantic Canada scores well in many indices measuring quality of life, a tribute not only to the success of equalization but also to the values that many of the region's citizens share with other Canadians. For whatever reasons—the tragic circumstances experienced by so many of its founding peoples, a commitment the social gospel promoted by its Christian churches, an inclination to neighbourliness in its relatively small communities—the Atlantic Provinces are often cited as a good place to raise a family and to escape the fast pace that defines more prosperous jurisdictions. Rosemary E. Ommer and Nancy J. Turner go further, suggesting that the practices developed in the region's informal rural economies may well serve as models for a world preoccupied by unrealistic visions of economic growth.[11]

CONCLUSION

Since the 1950s, scholarship on the history of Atlantic Canada, much of it published in the journals *Acadiensis* and *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, has proven Underhill wrong. A lot has happened in Atlantic Canada but the research is slow to make its way into larger narratives of Canadian history. It will be interesting to see how the region fares in the books, exhibitions, films, and websites commemorating the 150th anniversary of Confederation. On matters of public policy, the question before us as we approach 2017 is how to bring issues of equity and environmental integrity into the forefront of the national conversation. Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that people living in Atlantic Canada in the twenty-first century enjoy a standard of living well above the global average, but the challenges we face as citizens of this embattled planet underscore the urgency of bending the arc of history in significant new directions.

NOTES

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3 Murray Beck, "An Atlantic Region Political Culture: A Chimera," in David Jay Bercuson and Phillip A. Buckner, *eds*, *Eastern and Western Perspectives: Papers from the Joint Atlantic Canada/ Western Canadian Studies Conference* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 147–68. See also David Alexander, *Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays on Canadian Political Economy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press/Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1983), 144-45.

4 On the challenges of writing on Atlantic Canada, see Ian McKay, "A Note on "Region," in "Writing the History of Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis* XXIX, 2 (Spring 2000): 89–101, and James K. Hiller, "Is Atlantic Canadian History Possible?" *Acadiensis* XXX, 1 (Autumn 2000): 16–22. See also "Forum: Reimagining Regions," *Acadiensis* XXXV, 2 (Spring 2006): 127-62.

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[9] E.R. Forbes, *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989) and Donald J. Savoie, *Visiting Grandchildren: Economic Development in the Maritimes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

[10] David Macdonald, "'Wealthy 86'so flush they could buy New Brunswick," CPPA *Monitor* 21, 1 (May 2014), 1.

[11] Rosemary E. Ommer and Nancy J. Turner, "Informal Rural Economies in History," *Labour/Le Travail* 53 (Spring 2004): 127-57.

CANADA'S SESQUICENTENNIAL: REVISITING CONFEDERATION

CONNIE WYATT ANDERSON has been teaching high school history and geography on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation since 1992. She has been involved in the creation of student learning materials and curricula at the provincial, national, and international level, and has contributed to a number of textbooks, teacher support guides and school publications. She has written educative materials for several non-profit groups and her articles have appeared in the Globe and Mail and Canadian Geographic magazine. She co-authored the Grade 11 History text used in Manitoba schools and is currently writing a Grade 9 geography textbook for Ontario. She is a Governor of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and the Chair of its education wing, Canadian Geographic Education. Ms. Wyatt Anderson co-wrote the Treaty education learning materials for the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba and is involved in the professional development of Manitoba educational leaders and teachers as part of the Treaty Education Initiative. She holds a Bachelor of Education with a double major in history and geography and a Master of Education in curriculum and instruction. Ms. Wyatt Anderson received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal presented by the Royal Canadian Geographical Society in 2012; was a finalist for the 2013 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching; and honoured in 2014 with an Aboriginal Circle of Educators award for her work with the TRCM.

ABSTRACT

As the countdown to 2017 begins, educators across the nation are given the occasion to explore both the historiography and pedagogy associated with teaching the narrative behind Canada's inception. For decades history textbooks and curricula have omitted an integral part of the story of Canadian confederation: the role of the Numbered Treaties. As the new nation expanded west after 1867, it was these agreements with the First Nations to share the land that allowed the Canadian government to expand west with relatively little violence. Leading up to Canada's sesquicentennial year, we have the opportunity to not only explore our nation's evolution, but to expand their students' historical thinking by asking *whose voice has been left out and why?*

As the countdown to 2017 begins, Canadians from coast to coast will be reminded that the country will be marking its 150th year of nationhood on July 1st. Undoubtedly, there will be a concerted media focus, with official messages, activities and events, as well as television, print, and Internet ads from all levels of government. As was the case on Canada's centenary in 1967, school children across the country will be given the opportunity to raise their consciousness about Canadian history and Canadian nationalism. 2017 will offer history teachers and curriculum developers, such as me, the occasion to look inward and outward using both a historiographical and pedagogical lens. We should take the commemoration as a time to reflect: whose perspective has been omitted from the Canadian narrative and how can we work to include it in our teaching practice? In what ways can we ensure that our students are imbued with the historical thinking skills necessary to ask *whose voice is absent?*

1967: A LAMENT FOR CONFEDERATION

To mark Canada's centennial, Chief Dan George, noted chief of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, offered an elegy for Canada's First Nations' peoples in a speech at the Empire Stadium in Vancouver:

> *"Today, when you celebrate your hundred years, oh Canada, I am sad for all the Indian people throughout the land."*[1]

Standing in front of 32,000 people in Vancouver in 1967, Chief Dan George's *Lament for Confederation* challenged how history was taught across Canada:

> *"My nation was ignored in your history textbooks – they were little more important in the history of Canada than the buffalo that ranged the plains."*[2]

So, where do we stand today, almost 50 years after Chief Dan George's speech? How is First Nations history – notably, the First Nations' role in the creation and development of Canada – approached in classrooms across the nation?

1867: CONFEDERATION – A JOINING TOGETHER

THE EVENTS THAT LED TO CONFEDERATION

The first decade of my history teaching career found me teaching grade 9 social studies (alongside Canadian and American history, geography, Western Civilization, and world issues at the secondary school level); a primarily civics-based course with a smattering of Canadian history and geography. The curriculum's accompanying textbook, aimed at a 14-year-old audience, defined *confederation* as "a joining together," and went on to explain how George Brown, John A. Macdonald, and George-Étienne Cartier overcame their personal, cultural, and professional differences, as well as years of political deadlock, and joined forces in 1864 in a coalition government. After conferences in Charlottetown and Quebec, these "Fathers of Confederation" laid the footing for the new nation. This groundwork was reflected in the passing of the British North America Act on July 1st, 1867, Canada's constitutional birth certificate.

The ensuing chapters gave coverage to discontent in Nova Scotia and the Métis "rebellions" in the west, as well as post-Confederation legislation like Macdonald's National Policy.

While my intention is not to disparage the textbook (as a matter of fact, I much liked its layout and design, especially the manner in which it effortlessly incorporated literacy-building and reading comprehension exercises), it is to point out a major missing perspective: what was the role of the First Nations on the Prairies in Canadian confederation? Recall the historical thinking skill I mentioned above: *whose voice is absent?* Who *joined together* to create Canada?

THE EVOLUTION OF CANADA: 1867 – 1914

There is a legend in the west that the news of the Canadian government purchase of Rupert's Land in 1869 reached what is now the province of Manitoba a short while later when Louis Riel and his friends were hunting south of present-day Winnipeg and saw federal government Dominion Land surveyors. With a moccassined foot, Riel stopped the surveyors, and the subsequent Red River Resistance saw Manitoba (the "Postage Stamp" province) join Confederation in May of 1870.

The British North America Act (1867) and the Manitoba Act are foundational documents in the creation and evolution of Canada. Canadian history students explore these, as well as a raft of other pre-1914 events that saw Canada grow from four provinces to a dominion stretching from the Atlantic, to the Pacific, to the Arctic. A current Canadian history textbook or curriculum tour of this period would see a number of pivotal events in the evolution of Canada: the Dominion Lands Act, the creation of the Northwest Mounted Police, the Northwest Resistance, the Manitoba Schools Question, the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Klondike Gold Rush, to name of few.

TEACHING ABOUT CONFEDERATION

Over the past decade or so, curriculum writers and textbook publishers have mindfully added Aboriginal perspectives. In curricula, specific learning outcomes have been fortified with distinctive learning outcomes, which are meant for Aboriginal (or francophone) students

to enhance the development of their language, identity, culture. Terms like 'rebellion' and 'massacre'– laden with subjectivity – have been replaced by 'resistance' and 'battle,' and the word 'Indian' is used only in a legislative sense.

Nevertheless, it is my contention that Canadian students are still missing one fundamental part of the story concerning the creation of Canada: the Numbered Treaties – *all students*, not just First Nation. Rather than associating words like "cede" or "sale" with treaties, we need to approach them using terms such as "relationship" and "sharing." Treaties were, and remain, a fundamental part of the Canadian landscape.

THE NUMBERED TREATIES

PRE-CONFEDERATION

Prior to European colonization, the North American continent was populated by many nations of people with different languages, cultures, religions, ways of life and traditional territories. When First Nations met with each other they negotiated alliances that were mutually beneficial. These alliances established peaceful relationships among them which included trade, passage, peace and friendship, and other obligations and responsibilities.[3]

The process of making treaty was well-established in First Nations communities; they engaged in, and were adept at, the process long before Europeans came to the continent. Treaties were more than agreements recorded on paper; they were spiritual covenants between the treaty parties and the creator. As well, there was no expiry date on a treaty (and it was customary to renew the agreement year after year). Treaties were to last into perpetuity.

With the arrival of French fur traders and the Hudson's Bay Company, negotiations continued; with the Europeans adapting to First Nations requests and conditions.

The 5th Earl of Selkirk, Thomas Douglas, purchased an area of land around present-day Winnipeg in 1812 and moved a number of impoverished Scottish crofters to the area he called Assiniboia. Chief Peguis and his people, whose traditional territory the Selkirk Settlers now resided, created and presented a land-sharing treaty for the Europeans to endorse. This treaty outlined the Selkirk Setters' responsibility and the land they could use and live on.[4]

POST-CONFEDERATION TREATIES

Beginning in 1701, the British crown entered into treaties to encourage peaceful relations between First Nations and non-First Nation people. Over the next several centuries, treaties were negotiated and entered into to define, among other things, the respective rights of First Nation people and governments to use and enjoy lands that First Nations people traditionally occupied.[5]

After Confederation in 1867, the Dominion of Canada looked to the North-West Territories to expand and followed the precedent that had been set for treaty making. Between 1871 and 1921, eleven Numbered Treaties were negotiated between the crown and First Nations covering the territories from present-day Ontario to Alberta and portions of British Columbia and the Northwest Territories.

THE TREATY MAKING PROCESS

Both the Crown and First Nations peoples practiced their own customs in sanctioning the Treaties. The Crown had lawyers and government officials and the First Nations peoples had Chiefs, headmen, spiritual women, and Elder advisors and spiritual leaders. For First Nations peoples, it is customary to approve important matters through spiritual ceremonies. During the Treaty signing process, the First Nations peoples conducted spiritual ceremonies because they believed the Creator must be part of the arrangement in order for the Treaties to be validated.[6]

Treaties are about the future, First Nations leaders signed treaties with an everlasting relationship in mind. It was First Nations way in which they legislatively and spiritually joined Canada. Treaties were to last "*As long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow*."

Jamie Wilson, commissioner for the Winnipeg-based Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, told a Thompson, Manitoba Chamber of Commerce gathering in 2013 that treaties between the Crown and Canada's First Nations "have more to do with the future than they have to do with the past."[7]

TREATIES: THEIR ROLE IN CONFEDERATION

Both parties to the treaty-making process benefited from the Numbered Treaties. The Canadian government benefits included:

- peaceful access to lands for settlement, farming, railways, and development;
- peaceful settlement in the west;
- minimal costs for westward expansion and prevention of costly wars with the First Nations peoples; and
- protection for western lands by creating a barrier to American expansion.

These benefits became a reality as the Crown settled the land from sea to sea, eventually building the nation now known as Canada.

As a treaty settlement, First Nations peoples believed they were receiving:

- physical survival of their nations;
- peaceful relations through ongoing equitable relations;
- respect for cultural and spiritual survival as distinct nations by the preservation of their distinctive traditions and institutions; and
- a transition to a new lifestyle by learning different technologies within education, economics, health and other benefits.[8]

The treaty relationship is an integral to the creation of Canada as is the BNA Act.

CONCLUSION

The map of Canada from 1867 onward is a map of treaties. It was the process of treaty-making that led to the land that we all share today. 2017, Canada's sesquicentennial, will allow all of us to revisit the history of our nation's confederation. It will give teachers an occasion to bring new perspectives and narratives to their lessons. They will have an opportunity to bridge the past with the present and make it meaningful for their students, for they are legacy of it.

I see 2017 not as a tipping point in the teaching of historical thinking, but rather a turning point. A point at which we can embrace and appreciate the contrasting historical and contemporary narratives associated with our nation's genesis. This broadened view will give our students the ability to see that the seeds of Canadian confederation were sown before the passing of the British North America Act in 1867, are evident in the post-Confederation treaties and continue to grow today, nurtured by all of Canada's people.

In words of educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire, "Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they [leaners] are so that they can more wisely build the future."[9]

NOTES

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SOME THOUGHTS ON TEACHING THE HISTORY OF ACADIE AND ACADIANS IN ACADIE

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ABSTRACT

Identity is presented here as a tool with which not only historians, but also the community views the past. The persistence of identity to contemporary issues in Acadie allows historians and teachers of history to connect between events, such as the Charlottetown conference and Confederation with the issues that are defined as essential within the Acadian community.

This conference takes place in a unique context, namely the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference. The broader objectives of the conference, to discuss how best to communicate history to our students and explain the relevance of the creation of the Canadian federation and the evolution of Canada since then, are not new. Under the auspices of the Association for Canadian Studies, a large number of conferences bringing together professional historians and teachers have already taken place on the teaching of our common past.[1] In my area, Maritime historians met in 1985 on the Fredericton campus of the University of New Brunswick to reflect on how best to teach Maritime studies in public schools;[2] in 2000, the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference offered a retrospective on the evolution of historical practices since the inception of the journal *Acadiensis* in 1970[3] and especially in view of the tensions that still persisted in Canadian historiography between promoting Canadian nationalism and the persistence of regional identities. Moreover, in the Acadian community, each of the five World Congresses, since the first held in Moncton in 1992 to its most recent edition in northwestern New Brunswick in August 2014, have addressed the issues of the content and relevance of education in Acadian history. Which brings us to the topic of "teaching history of Acadie, in Acadie."

Are there specific elements that define the teaching of Acadian history, in Acadie? By what means and why should we register this education in a regional and/or national

historiography? What contribution can the teaching of Acadian history make to the objective of (Re)Creating Confederation and (Re)Imagining Canada? These are legitimate questions. We attempt here to offer some answers to these questions, in the light of our experience as a professor of Acadian history, in Acadie.

For Naomi Griffiths, teaching Acadian history had to go first through the conscious exercise of recognizing that she always treated it as the story of "the other." The historian acknowledged that "The beginning should not be 'here are Acadians: they are not we' but rather, 'here are men and women, teachers, lawyers, doctors, farmers or fishermen. Their lives are based on the demands of these pursuits, as are ours.'"[4] Let's face it, this changes the meaning of our examination of the past in a radical manner. Griffiths therefore advocated a historian's look at the multiple realities of individuals who lived in the past, a more productive exercise for her than to define the Acadian group according to its general characteristics, such as language (French) and faith (Catholic).

The historian's gaze on the object of Acadie and on the topic of Acadians uncovers other findings about the group, beyond language and faith, which are relevant and, in many ways decisive, with regard to the community, such as the minority status wherever Acadians live and, therefore, the absence of a geopolitical territory within which to place their collective future, and the preponderance of the theme of identity in the analysis of the past. The teaching of Acadian history, both in terms of school education and university education should be part of these contexts (and others as well!) that secure what was possible at the time our ancestors lived. This teaching must also recognize and address the aspirations and achievements of contemporary Acadian communities through the discovery – and validation – of the group's historical experience.

Let's take the example of the theme of identity to illustrate more clearly the social function of teaching Acadian history. The theme of identity is not easy to communicate in teaching the Acadian past. Let us recall that in spite of considerable historiography, historians are still in the process of clarifying the meaning and scope of the Acadian identity. They agree to situate the birth of an Acadian identity in colonial times and certainly before the key event of deportation, which is its first and greatest challenge: the survival of the group following the scattering of its population and the disintegration of its family and community networks. There is less consensus among historians when trying to define the characteristics or the social and historical significance of this identity.

Thus, for the American historian Faragher, neutrality is a main defining characteristic of the group in the 18th century; the Acadians' refusal to submit to the will and authority of either French or English empires constitutes for Faragher a tangible sign of their distinct ethnicity.[5] Deportation, according to Faragher, was a first experiment in what he describes as American history, in "ethnic cleansing." Faragher takes the American colonial societies of the time to task for getting involved in this exercise.

Moreover, in a recent study historian Gregory Kennedy analysed the pre-deportation context in Acadian history through a comparison with French society in Loudun. Kennedy noted that for each of these rural societies of French origin, community and family networks were the basis of their collective identity, and neutrality was their best political strategy against intrusions from external authorities.[6] Greg Kennedy does not deny the Acadian identity in the 18th century; rather he seeks to frame it in the wider colonial mentality that draws its roots and ways of seeing from within a French framework: that of *ancien régime*.

Historians' analyses of the identity theme during the post-deportation period also have significant consequences. Historian in training Carolynn McNally seeks to measure the sense of identity in the context of the Acadian diaspora or, as supporters of the Acadian World Congress have said, Acadia in plural. In an analysis framed by her doctoral thesis at McGill University, McNally seeks to capture, even measure, the Acadian identity through the experiences of exogamous marriage. The Acadian identity is captured differently, that is to say, sustained, abandoned or marginalized, according to the experience of the group's endogamous or exogamous marriages and according to the territory inhabited by Acadians: Quebec, Louisiana or Nova Scotia, etc. McNally's proposed study seeks to measure the effect on Acadian identity in a genealogical sense: an Acadian is defined here as someone who can trace his/her ancestors back to colonial Acadie, *before* the deportation.[7]

This definition of the Acadian identity anchored by McNally in the discourse of Acadian elites of the second

half of the 19th century still has some legitimacy within the Acadian community. For example, in the context of the most recent World Acadian Congress (2014), the daily *L'Acadie nouvelle* presented a survey to its readers. The paper proposed four categories to define who is an Acadian: someone whose ancestors dates back to the Deportation; someone who considers himself/herself Acadian; someone born in Acadie; or someone who has lived in Acadie for years. The result: half (134 or 50%) of the 268 respondents opted for a genealogical definition of Acadian identity: someone whose ancestor can be traced back to the deportation.[8]

In 1986, historian Leon Theriault was already challenging this "ethnic" definition of the Acadian identity. According to Theriault, the test of French roots to measure the Acadian identity was both too restrictive and too ambiguous. Being able to trace one's roots to France at the time of colonization did not define what it is to be Acadian, according Thériault, because this way of defining oneself could not include immigrants to the community since the return of the original group nor consider the integration of families of anglophone and/or Protestant origins in the Acadian community (through mixed marriages, one could assume).[9]

What should we conclude from this inevitably short presentation on the complexity of the concept and the persistence of the Acadian identity problematic in the context of history education in Acadian history/Acadie? I will respond by taking up the theme of this conference: (Re) Creating Confederation: (Re) Imagining Canada. The Charlottetown Conference is presented here as the beginning of the Canadian federal project. It certainly represents an important junction for many of the changes that have occurred in the mid-19th century to build our country. Viewed from the perspective of Acadian history, however, the Charlottetown Conference – and the union of 1867 – are not seen as positively nor as progressive events. Catholics, including the Acadians, were afraid of their fate in1864, because the draft project then referred more specifically to the birth of a nation defined by an anglophone Protestant majority. The two votes that took place on the project in 1865 and in 1866 in New Brunswick, where a majority of Acadians of the Maritimes lived already, are interpreted by political scientists and historians as an Acadian voice against the federal project. Important events that took place in this new federation in the 1870s probably confirmed, in the eyes of the Acadians and especially their elite, the vulnerable state in which the Acadians lived as a minority group in an overwhelming majority and, by extension, the need to articulate a coherent collective project to support the minority group.

One of the events that pushed the Acadian elites to act in this way was the adoption of the Education Act of 1871 in New Brunswick. This law was attacking the privileges, otherwise the rights to Catholic education and, by extension, to education in French. The calls from Catholic politicians in New Brunswick asking the new federal authorities to disapprove the provincial law ended in failure. More importantly, perhaps, was the impact of this failure to act on the part of the federal government which, in the eyes of Catholic politicians, opened the door to question the ability or, worse yet, the will of the federal authority to interfere in provincial affairs on issues related to cultural minorities. Given the significance of faith, at the time, in defining identity among Canadian cultural communities, both for Francophones and Anglophones and among Catholics and Protestants, one should not be surprised by the political position of both sides on this issue.

This illustration of an Acadian perspective on the historical links that connect the Charlottetown Conference, the achievement of Confederation in 1867 and its immediate aftermath is important because it sets the logic, content and scope of the Acadian institutional organization that took place at that time and which was called in the historiography, in turn, the Acadian renaissance, the period of national consciousness or the first Acadian quiet revolution.[10] Indeed, it may seem simple to say that the establishment of the Canadian federation has meant that Acadians needed to adjust to new political as well as cultural and social realities. We still underestimate the impact of these events today: they set an important context that quickly led to the reaffirmation of Acadian identity, through the choice of collective and unifying symbols and the establishment of a collective strategy vis-à-vis cultural groups with whom Acadians had some affinity: the French Canadians (and

especially Quebecers) as Catholic and francophones or vis-à-vis the English and Protestants maritime provinces with whom they shared the territory, a common economy and political life. Through institutional organization, in the formulation of a collective discourse and in the choice of symbols used to represent the Acadian people's separate identity, one can see the impact that new realities and contexts, imposed by geo-political changes, has had on the group of Acadian elite who led, on behalf of all they said, the exercise of redefining the bases for identity and the tools to ensure the collective future of the Acadian group.

The contribution of Acadian history in Canadian history (and, hopefully, to its future) is therefore in the recognition of the importance and persistence of multiple identities, determined by the contexts and events of our past, but always subject to changes and adjustments due to new realities and power relationships.

NOTES

1 An example of which is the Biennial Conference on the teaching of history, held in Toronto in November 2010 on "Canada's Diverse Histories."

2 See more on this reflection in P.A. Buckner (editor), *Teaching Maritime Studies*, Fredericton, Acadiensis Press, 1986, 299 p.

3 See *Acadiensis*, volume XXX, no 1, 2000.

4 Naomi Griffiths, Teaching Acadian History » in P.A. Buckner, *Teaching Maritime Studies*, op. cit.: 55-57.

5 John Mack Faragher, A Great and Noble Scheme. *The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians From Their American Homeland*, New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2005: xviii.

6 Gregory M.W. Kennedy, *Something of a Peasant Paradise? Comparing Rural Societies in Acadie and the Loudunais, 1604-1755*, Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014.

7 Carolynn McNally, « Les mariages exogames chez les Acadiennes et les Acadiens lors de la Renaissance acadienne », presentation made during the colloquium *L'Acadie dans tous ses défis*, World Acadian Congress, Edmundston, New-Brunswick, August 18,2014.

8 Launched on August 10, 2014 during CMA 2014, the survey is available on *l'Acadie nouvelle* website.

9 Léon Thériault, "Some Important Features of Contemporary Acadia" in P.A. Buckner, *Teaching Maritime Studies*, op. cit.: 58-59.

10 See Phyllis E. LeBlanc, "Acadian renaissance" in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, edited by Gerald Hallowell, Don Mills, Ontario, Oxford University Press, 2004: 21-22.

THE LARGE AND LOVELIER CANADA

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ABSTRACT

Canada grew from a country of nine hundred thousand square kilometres at birth to one of nine million a little more than a decade later. This paper surveys the Parliamentary Debates of the Confederation era, and in particular discussion surrounding the acquisition of the Northwest in the late 1860s and the Arctic in the late 1870s, to explore how Canadian politicians conceived of territorial expansion.

Before him stretches through immeasurable distance the large and lovelier Canada – the path of empire and the garden of the world.
- Charles Mair, writing in the Northwest, 1869.

Authors in recent decades have tended to misquote "large" as "larger," inadvertently denying Mair his point that, prior to expansion, Canada was not large.[1]

One of the trickiest things to do in teaching Canadian history is impress upon students simultaneously how old and young the nation is. It means on the other hand instilling an awareness of First Nations' experience of deep time in Northern North America and of Europeans' intermittent then growing interest in this land over the past millennium, and on the other hand conveying how critical the flood of decisions and happenstances of the more recent past was in creating the country we know. The sesquicentennial of Confederation can assist greatly with the latter task, offering an opportunity to show that the form and even existence of Canada was far from inevitable, but rather the product of immediate events and often short-term thinking in the Confederation era.

Nothing demonstrates this better than the remarkable growth of Canada's *physical* form in its first years: from a land of nine hundred thousand square kilometres at its birth to one of nine million little more than a decade later. In 1868, Canada purchased Rupert's Land and was given the North-Western Territory – an area slightly larger than Australia, this was a spectacular acquisition for a one-year old nation. Three years later, it integrated British Columbia and two years after

that, Prince Edward Island. In 1878, it received Britain's Arctic possessions, a gift of uncertain size that would turn out to be another million square kilometres. By the time Canada turned a teenager, its growth spurts had made it one of the largest nations in the world. Now, almost 150 years on, with Canada's .5% of humanity possessing 6.7% of the earth's land area and with our much of our affluence due to that discrepancy, it is worth teaching or reminding Canadians how that great expansion came about.

Doug Owram's *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900* is, to my mind, our best guide to expansion in this era, capturing how the Northwest came to be accepted as a site for agriculture, and so for immigration, and so for population growth, and so, ultimately, for Canada to become a global power.[2] But Owram focuses largely on the opinions of journalists, scientists, poets, and other writers, largely bypassing politicians' views. And politics, really; Confederation barely figures into the book. I recently read the 1867 to 1881 Debates of the House of Commons and of the Senate, now online, to see what federal politicians thought about territorial expansion in principle and in practice.[3] In particular, can their views be seen to evolve in the decade between the 1868 acquisition of the Northwest and the 1878 discussion about the Arctic? These were hardly average Canadians and their statements hardly off-the-cuff or unbiased, but their speeches may provide a more representative and politically relevant sampling of Canadian opinion than Owram's writers do.[4]

From the very first session of Parliament in fall 1867, the acquisition of the Northwest was a subject of debate. (However, it is interesting to learn that the term "expansion" and its variants were infrequently used, reserved more often for discussion of the circulation of currency or credit, or the economy more generally). Britain's desire to assist in the transfer of the Northwest was a catalyst, but so too was the United States' purchase of Alaska – that agreement having been signed within hours of Queen Victoria signing the BNA Act. New Brunswick politician Charles Fisher told of an American friend who had warned that "If you don't go up there [the Northwest] pretty soon, we will squat you out."[5]

Minister of Public Works William McDougall wondered that if the Americans were willing to pay "enormous sums for regions of ice, how much more would they give [the Hudson Bay Company] for this fertile tract?" [6] But the Macdonald government spoke confidently of being able to beat the American rivals at their own game, by adopting their policy of territorial expansion.[7]

So little was known about the Northwest that advocates of expansion tended to focus not on resources, but strictly on area: a bigger Canada would be a stronger Canada. Comparisons to other nations, and especially Russia, were common. "The moral power we would acquire by this acquisition of territory would be something very great," one member stated. "We would have territory half the size of Russia, and thirty times the size of England, Scotland and Ireland put together." [8] The Opposition ridiculed expansion for much the same reason. Nova Scotian Joseph Howe compared Canada to "a long fellow, seven feet high, narrow-chested, and ill-jointed [...] that if he were to take him in hand he could pitch over his shoulder in half a minute. [...] Did anyone ever hear of any country in the world, such as Canada, with a territory so vast, and a population so scanty, proposing to purchase extension?" [9] The opposition repeatedly derided the Northwest in these early years as "sterile," "infertile," "barren," "desert," and "wasteland." Surprisingly, one word that we might expect to see invoked – "wilderness" – was instead saved mostly to describe the largely unsettled hinterland of New Brunswick through which Canada was obliged to complete the Intercolonial Railway. This wild land within a settled province was, oxymoronically, comprehensible "wilderness." By comparison, the land of the Northwest was largely unknown.[10]

Canadian members could debate acquisition of the Northwest, but Great Britain's desire for the transfer and its assistance in facilitating it ensured it would happen. The 1868 agreement allowed the Hudson Bay Company to retain 5% of the region within what explorer Henry Hind a decade earlier had dubbed the "fertile belt." But for unknown reason the 1870 Order in Council that officially sanctioned the transfer redefined the belt, extending it all the way to the American border. In terms of perception, this meant that the entire Prairie West could be deemed "fertile." But in practical terms, it meant the Company retained much more land – approximately five million acres.[11] The Northwest was an abstraction to such a degree that no one in the Canadian Parliament noted the change.

With the transfer a done deal, there was little for the opposition to oppose, so it was stuck arguing lamely that Canada still did not know what it had acquired. Senator Jonathan McCully exemplified the Liberal position in declaring, "There was no precedent could be found in history for the transfer of so large a tract of territory by a Legislative Act, or by any cession made by one country to another, as that now to be ceded to this Dominion under the terms of these resolutions. [...] He did not know that he could add anything to what had been said, yet he felt it was a question which should occupy the attention of the House for days." [12]

For its part, the Macdonald government emphasized that the transfer justified Confederation. "It was a matter of glorification to us that in so short a time since we entered into Confederation, we had made such progress," said Georges-Etienne Cartier. "Who, under such circumstances, could say that this Confederation had not been successful?" Once B.C. and Newfoundland were admitted, "We might say we had completed our territorial organization." [13] But westward expansion would not turn out to be as tidy as first supposed. The Métis would resist Canadian sovereignty on the Red River, leading to the establishment of Manitoba as a province. Canada would commit to a transcontinental railroad to secure British Columbia's entry into Confederation. And the opening up of the West by surveying, settlement, and railway-building would make plain that large pockets of this land was as unsuitable for agriculture as Eastern Canadians had once supposed the whole region to be.

Yet even as the realities of expansion became manifest in the 1870s, Parliamentarians grew more positive about the land that had been acquired. For example, the use of "fertile belt" increased dramatically in the late 1870s and, more tellingly, the term became synonymous with all the Prairies or even the entire West. The Debates suggest a growing appreciation for Canada's vast hinterland – if only because there was no point in being pessimistic. The government had to be optimistic about it, since it was getting a syndicate to build a railway through it. The opposition had to

be optimistic about it, since it was arguing that the syndicate was getting too much good real estate as part of the deal. And, of course, the expansions of the past decade had not capsized the new nation, but rather seemed to have strengthened it. And fundamentally, all this land was now *Canada*. Nationalism dictated appreciation, and there was less upside in being critical.

This new attitude was evident in 1878, when Canada was asked if it wanted to acquire formally Britain's Arctic possessions. The discussion in Parliament about Northern expansion was far different than the one about Northwest expansion had been a decade earlier. Although the members knew even less about this territory and had even less confidence that it would be of any material benefit to the country, only one independent member spoke in any way against it. The entire debate in the House of Commons to acquire 1% of the world's land area took than six thousand words. Resolution came even swifter in the house of sober second thought. Handed the Commons' petition to Her Majesty that Britain transfer its Arctic lands to Canada, the senators moved, "To agree with the House of Commons by filling up the blank with 'Senate and.'" [14]

Hector-Louis Langevin had supported the Arctic's acquisition In the House of Commons by saying, "The future greatness of this Dominion, and its position on the continent, required that from the boundary line of the United States up to the North Pole should be Canadian Territory. […] It was necessary to complete and extend our boundaries." [15] But no matter how much Canada accomplished in extending its dominion in its first decade, completing the process – in terms of both reality and perception – would take far longer. In terms of reality, Canada gradually colonized the territory with respect to state control and resource extraction, but Canadians' actual engagement with this land remained far more limited. We would not live in most of it: a Canadian population distribution map of 1921 – most settlement hugging the American border, with a northern rise into the Prairie provinces and a few pockets of south-central to central British Columbia, Quebec, and Ontario – is remarkably similar to one of today. And in terms of perception, we would only slowly come to think of all this land as ours. The now-ubiquitous phrases "sea to sea to sea" and "coast to coast to coast" do not seem to have entered the Canadian lexicon until the 1960s.[16]

To self-plagiarize one of my better lines: Beaver and Bieber notwithstanding, Canada is best known for being big.[17] The passage of time only makes our country's size seem more and more natural, so it is worth reminding or teaching Canadians that this size is not a timeless entitlement, but rather a product of history. And it is a history in which the era of Confederation looms large.

NOTES

1 Charles Mair, "The North-West: The Great Riches of the Territory…" The Globe, 28 May 1869. See, for example, Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1970), 56.

2 Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

3 Historical Debates of the Parliament of Canada, http://parl.canadiana.ca.

4 The early post-Confederation debates contain refreshing honesty and an absence of kneejerk nationalism that would infect Parliament over time. One of the first meetings of the Senate, for example, ended with John Sewall Sanborn saying bluntly, "Some honourable members were very enthusiastic as to the resources of the Dominion, but he could not be blind to the fact that it had drawbacks as well. It had a drawback geographically in its shape and another of climate…" 11 November 1867, Senate *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 1st session, vol.1: 9.

5 Charles Fisher, 8 November 1867, House of Commons *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 1st session, vol.1: 8. Weymss Simpson similarly raised the threat of Canada being "squatted out" by the American. 16 April 1869, House of Commons *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 2nd session, vol.1: 5.

6 William McDougall, 6 December 1867, House of Commons *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 1st session, vol.1: 203.

7 John O'Connor, 11 December 1867, House of Commons *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 1st session, vol.1: 252. The feeling crossed the aisle: see Liberal Dr. Thomas Sutherland Parker, 5 December 1867, House of Commons Debates, 1st Parliament, 1st session, vol.1: 190. William Miller would go so far as saying Canada should follow the U.S. in developing a doctrine of manifest destiny, "a destiny, however, not of wrong or aggression, or of self-aggrandizement at the expense of their neighbours, but a juster and a nobler one." 3 April 1871, Senate *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 4th session: 185.

8 Robert Harrison, 5 December 1867, House of Commons *Debates*, 1st Parliament, Ist Session: vol.1: 194. Four years on, Senator Robert Dickey would note that while the Franco-Prussian War had been fought over "a mere strip of land on the left bank of the Rhine," Canada was "peacefully annexing a region nearly half the size of Europe," and, in integrating B.C., was about to annex territory the size of France. 3 April 1871, Senate *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 4th session, 195.

9 Howe, 6 December 1867, House of Commons *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 1st session, vol.1: 206. Howe would also compare Canada to a boy wearing man's shoes, and a frog inflating itself to the size of an ox. (4 December 1867, House of Commons *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 1st session, vol.1: 181) Future Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie would in 1870 mock the idea of little Manitoba getting its own government as something from Gulliver's Travels. 2 May 1870, House of Commons *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 3rd session, vol.1: 1306.

10 Likewise, in this period "frontier" was much more often used in reference to the U.S./Canada border in the East than to the Northwest, or, after its acquisition, to the US/Canada border there. A proposed route for the Intercolonial that ran closer to Maine was dubbed the "frontier" route.

11 Thanks to Bill Waiser for information on the 1870 Order in Council.

12 McCully, 31 May 1869, Senate *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 2nd session: 229.

13 Cartier, 28 May 1869, House of Commons *Debates*, 1st Parliament, 2nd session, vol.1: 485. At the conclusion of his speech, according to the *Debates*, "The gallant baronet resumed his seat amidst cheers, having spoken for an hour and a half."

14 3 May 1878, Senate *Debates*, 3rd Parliament, 5th session, vol.1: 903.

15 Langevin, 3 May 1878, House of Commons *Debates*, 3rd Parliament, 5th session, vol.2: 2391.

16 For example, the first recorded use of "sea to sea to sea" in Parliament was by Gene Rhéaume on 30 March 1965, House of Commons *Debates*, 26th Parliament, 2nd session, vol.12: 12968. By the 1990s, the phrase was being employed ten or so times per year. Rhéaume, it should be noted, represented the North West Territories. He also has the first recorded use of "coast to coast to coast."

17 Alan MacEachern, "A Little Essay on Big: Towards a History of Canada's Size," in "Big Country, Big Issues: Canada's Environment, Culture, and History," Nadine Klopfer and Christof Mauch, *eds*. *Rachel Carson Center Perspectives 2*011/4, http://www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/2011_4_big_country.pdf.