

Consuming Canada's Colonial Past: Reconciliation and Corporate Sponsorship in the Vancouver 2010 Olympics

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Introduction

The Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games were held on the land of four First Nations: the Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.¹ Known collectively as the Four Host First Nations (FHFN), this group partnered with the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) with the intent of coming together in the "spirit of friendship and cooperation to welcome the world and showcase their First Nations cultures as a vibrant and integral part of Canada's heritage."² While representatives of the FHFN claimed that their partnership with VANOC would benefit Aboriginal communities throughout Canada, others argued that the FHFN's participation in the Games contributed to the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal peoples.³ These competing viewpoints illustrate that critical issues related to representation, colonialism, and sport intersected in the Vancouver Games. I examine the intersection of these three issues by arguing that the ceremonial and consumptive practices associated with the Vancouver Games worked in conjunction with discourses like Prime Minister Harper's formal apology to Aboriginal peoples for the government's long history of involvement in residential schooling to foreclose considerations of the ongoing legacy of colonial violence in Canada and to promote a narrative about Canadian history that, paradoxically, both remembered and forgot Canada's colonial past. Put another way, representational and marketing practices associated with the Vancouver 2010 Games privileged narratives about national identity that secured the invisibility of a past that continues to haunt the present.

Valuable scholarship has been written about the representation of Aboriginal peoples in the modern Olympic Games. Janice Forsyth and Kevin Wamsley, for example, argue that Aboriginal images have been used in Olympic ceremonies to legitimize imperialism and promote multiculturalism.⁴ Moreover, Darren Godwell argues that Aboriginal cultural images were strategically used to support Australia's bid for the 2000 Sydney Olympics. These representations, he argues, supported the unequal race relations in Australia and failed to challenge the dominant assumptions about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

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relations.⁵ My work contributes to this ongoing discussion by examining how the Vancouver Olympics contributed to a broader hegemonic project by the state which secured non-Aboriginal privilege by celebrating particular aspects of Canadian national identity and (mis)remembering Canada's history of colonialism.

Background

The partnership between VANOC and the FHFN marks the first time in history that Aboriginal peoples have been official partners in hosting the Olympic Games.⁶ Although Aboriginal symbols have been the focal point of promotional efforts at previous Games, Aboriginal peoples have had few opportunities to determine how those images should be used, if at all. For example, in an effort to portray images of Canadian multiculturalism and the Olympic ideal of humanism, organizers of the Montreal 1976 Olympics included Aboriginal dancers in the closing ceremony of the Games.⁷ However, the participants were not consulted about their involvement and performed a dance that they did not choreograph.⁸ Similarly, Godwell argues that there is little evidence that Aboriginal peoples' participation in the Sydney 2000 Olympic bid process went beyond mere tokenism.⁹

The partnership between VANOC and the FHFN must also be understood in the context of Stephen Harper's apology to Aboriginal peoples. In 2008, two years before the Vancouver Olympics, the Canadian Prime Minister delivered a formal apology to Aboriginal peoples for the residential school system. The federal government, in collaboration with various religious denominations, developed and maintained the school system to speed up the process of Aboriginal assimilation. In his apology, Harper acknowledged that many of the students had been subjected to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse—a pattern that was made clear through Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.¹⁰ Many Aboriginal peoples celebrated the 2008 apology as a positive step towards repairing the fractured relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. However, scholars have argued that the apology failed to acknowledge the contemporary impact of Canada's colonial project and entailed a desire for resolution that was more about forgetting than remembering and addressing past injustices.¹¹

Legacies of Colonialism

During the opening ceremony for the 2010 Winter Olympics, members of the FHFN welcomed athletes and spectators to the Games. Following Nikki Yanofsky's rendition of the national anthem, representatives of the FHFN were introduced in French and English by narrators who observed that the Olympic Games were being held on the traditional territories of the FHFN. Each repre-

sentative declared in the language native to his or her community: “On behalf of the [Lil’wat, Musqueam, Squamish, or Tsleil-Waututh] nation, welcome.” They subsequently repeated the phrase in English, adding “bienvenue” at the end. This welcome drew attention to the inaccuracy of the myth that Europeans founded Canada and highlighted the fact that Aboriginal peoples inhabited the land long before European settlers arrived and claimed it as their own.

However, the opening ceremony failed to acknowledge how the history of colonialism in Canada left negative and indelible inter-generational impacts on Aboriginal peoples. For example, the first encounter between European settlers and Aboriginal peoples was dramatized in a spectacular display in which the two groups greeted each other warmly, until the ice flow upon which they were standing suddenly split apart. As they were being pulled away from each other, expressions of horror and fear could be read on their faces. The crack in the ice flow was a metaphor for the ruptured relations between the Aboriginal peoples and the newcomers. The government’s implementation of policies aimed at assimilating Aboriginal peoples into settler society played a crucial role in that rupture because the policies imposed oppressive legal, economic, educational, and social restrictions on Aboriginal ways of life.¹² However, the dramatization made it appear as though an external force, in this case, the natural environment, and not the government, was the main reason for the breakdown in relations.

The dramatization also reinforced the common misconception that Aboriginal peoples are a homogenous group when, in fact, they are a diverse group comprised of hundreds of linguistic and cultural families. In addition, when athletes representing Canada marched in the Parade of Nations, Aboriginal peoples danced on stage alongside the athletes.¹³ The facial expressions on the athletes and performers, their body language, along with the upbeat traditional music conveyed an atmosphere of harmony and congeniality, which contrasted sharply with the expressions of fear and unhappiness on the faces of the performers in the ice flow scene. This juxtaposition effaced the fact that the government’s assimilation policies have had a negative impact on Aboriginal peoples and, instead, made the trauma of the colonial encounter seem like an isolated incident in Canada’s past.

Similar to the depiction of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations in the opening ceremony, Harper’s 2008 apology obscured the colonial violence that still persists in Canada. According to Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, the Prime Minister’s apology depicted residential schools as a “discrete historical problem of educational malpractice rather than one devastating prong of an overarching and multifaceted system of colonial oppression that persists in the present.”¹⁴ Dorrell’s close reading of Harper’s apology supports this claim. He argues that Harper’s reference to residential schooling as a “chapter in Canada’s past,” incorrectly suggested that the government’s posi-

tion towards Aboriginal peoples had progressed intellectually and morally, so much so that Canada's model for Aboriginal relations was perhaps worth emulating in other political regions of the world.¹⁵

Avery Gordon's concept of "ghostly haunting" resonates with the argument that contemporary narratives about Canada's colonial past do not recognize the ongoing impact of colonialism. According to Gordon, a ghostly haunting is

*a story about what happens when we admit the ghost—that special instance of the merging of the visible and the invisible, the dead and the living, the past and the present—into the making of worldly relations and into the making of our accounts of the world.*¹⁶

Although Gordon does not link her observations to the concept of hegemony, the fact that the FHFN's welcome and Harper's 2008 apology failed to incorporate the ghost of Canada's colonial past into their accounts of contemporary Canadian life is an example of the way in which the modern state maintains the public's consent to rule through education. Applying Antonio Gramsci's work on hegemony to contemporary politics, Stuart Hall argues that the modern state justifies and maintains its domination by exercising moral and educational leadership.¹⁷ In the case of the opening ceremony of the Vancouver Games, as well as Harper's 2008 apology, the state (mis)educated the Canadian public about Canada's colonial past by failing to acknowledge the ghostly hauntings of this past.

(Mis)Remembering Canada's Colonial Past

The opening ceremony of the Vancouver Olympics also failed to fully account for the ghostly hauntings of Canada's colonial past by treating the past as both visible and invisible. The latter half of the ceremony featured performances that emphasized the beauty of Canada's forests, oceans, wheat fields, and mountains, suggesting that these elements were representative of Canadian identity. The performances did not acknowledge the fact that European settlers seized the land from the Aboriginal inhabitants, even though the FHFN's welcome at the beginning of the ceremony publicly asserted it as fact. A performance by the spoken word poet, Shane Koyczan, in the opening ceremony also appeared to forget Canada's colonial history by conflating Canadian identity with the land. Koyczan explained, "we are more than just...hills to ski and countryside ponds to skate" and, echoing colonial discourses about "civilized" settlers, he noted, "we are more than genteel or civilized."¹⁸ Moreover, Koyczan's use of the pronoun "we" reflected the assumption that his definition of national identity was all-inclusive, an assumption that ignored the fact that any conception of national unity must be complicated through considerations such as the impact of the ongoing legacy of colonialism on Aboriginal peoples.

Keavy Martin's critique of reconciliation practices between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples shows how deliberate historical misrepresentations, as reflected in the opening ceremony of the Vancouver Olympics, is a common characteristic of reconciliation practices. Martin argues that the discourse of reconciliation is sometimes less focused on the welfare of Aboriginal peoples than with relieving settlers and the government of their guilt and the ongoing need to be aware of their history.¹⁹ In other words, reconciliation can help non-Aboriginal people remember selective bits of history in order to forget other parts of the past. A number of public statements made by Prime Minister Harper about Canadian history expressed the same paradoxical state of knowing and not knowing Canada's colonial past that was reflected in the opening ceremony of the Vancouver Olympics. Not only did the Prime Minister's 2008 apology fail to include the word "colonial," a year after the apology, he publicly claimed that Canada does not have a history of colonialism.²⁰

Branding Canada's Colonial Past

The opening ceremony of the Vancouver Olympics was not the only element of the Games that promoted a narrative about national identity that simultaneously remembered and forgot Canada's colonial past. Consumer products associated with the Olympics operated as fetish objects that both signified and displaced knowledge of the past. The logo for the Vancouver Olympics is a case in point. A design featuring an inukshuk, a figure that the Inuit use as a directional marker, was chosen as the logo. The designer of the logo, Rivera MacGregor, explained that she and her team "concluded the inukshuk was in fact one character that could pretty much tell the whole story [of the entire country]."²¹ The logo was named "Ilanaaq," which means friendship in Inuktituk. The emphasis on friendship and harmonious co-existence supports Eva MacKey's argument that narratives celebrating Canadians' ostensible kindness to Aboriginal peoples are important for developing a national identity based on tolerance—a national identity, she argues, that contradicts the reality of Canada's history of cultural genocide.²²

MacKey's argument draws attention to the fact that the version of national identity embodied in the logo of the Vancouver Games contained an unresolved contradiction. Anne McClintock writes, "the fetish marks a crisis in social meaning as the embodiment of an impossible irresolution. The contradiction is displaced onto and embodied in the fetish object."²³ Donica Belisle, who applied McClintock's understanding of a fetish object to a Canadian context, further argued:

When it is bought and sold as a commodity, for instance, the Canadian flag becomes a fetish that signifies and displaces the violence of Canadian nation building. The representation of nature on the flag

(the maple leaf) can be, on the one hand, interpreted as symbolizing the contradiction between the state's "empty lands" ideology, and on the other, the presence of Aboriginal peoples throughout Canada.²⁴

The "impossible irresolution" embodied in the logo of the Vancouver Olympics is the contradiction between the history and ongoing legacy of colonial violence in Canada and the idea that Canada is a harmonious, multicultural, and tolerant country. Just as Belisle argues that the Canadian flag becomes a fetish object when it is bought and sold as a commodity,²⁵ the logo became a fetish object when it was produced as a commodity that was available for purchase. "Ilanaaq" was turned into statuettes and featured on snow globes, playing cards, clothing, and shot glasses.²⁶ Bottle openers were designed in the shape of an inukshuk and consumers could purchase the "Inukie Cookie," which was a kit that allowed bakers to fashion an edible inukshuk out of shortbread cookies.²⁷

The accessories that Canadian athletes wore during the Parade of Nations in the opening ceremony also embodied an "impossible irresolution." The athletes sported red mittens with large white maple leaves stitched on the top that the official outfitter of the Canadian team, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) specially designed for the Games. The white leaves could be said to represent the same conflicting meanings about the Canadian landscape that Belisle argues the maple leaf on the Canadian flag represents. On one hand, the white leaves represent the myth that the Canadian landscape was empty before Europeans arrived in the country, while, on the other hand, they represent the fact that the newcomers usurped the land from the original inhabitants.

In addition to wearing the red mittens, Canadian sport icon and Olympian Clara Hughes wore a scarf made out of the HBC's characteristic blue, red, green, yellow, and white striped material. The scarf distinguished her as the flag bearer for the Canadian team and made her stand out as she led the athletes through the parade. Not unlike the mittens, the scarf was made into a fetish object that exposed a historical contradiction. In the 1800s, the HBC produced striped blankets that they traded with Aboriginal peoples in exchange for furs.²⁸ The scarf that Hughes wore represented the fact that Canada's nation building process was achieved in part through colonization and the exploitation of Aboriginal labour rather than the ingenuity or efforts of Europeans like Radisson and des Groseillers, the founders of the HBC. Moreover, the design was linked to a time when many fur traders married Aboriginal women to take advantage of their knowledge about local food sources and clothing production, as well as their much needed experience as guides over land and water.²⁹

That being said, the scarf disavowed the history that it symbolized. Contemporary meanings of the HBC brand embodies a version of national identity that relies on the idea that Canada was discovered and built exclusively by

white male settlers, such as the founders of the HBC. This version of national identity is reflected in the company's website, which describes Radisson and des Groseillers as "resourceful Frenchmen" who "discovered a wealth of fur in the interior of the continent."³⁰ An advertisement for the HBC that was aired during the Vancouver 2010 Olympics, titled "We Were Made for This," also reflected a sanitized version of the Company's history. The narrator observed: "We arrived 340 years ago to a land of rock, ice, and snow. We outfitted a nation of pioneers, explorers, and dreamers. We are the skiers, we are the sledgers. We didn't just survive the elements. Together, we thrived in them."³¹ The storyline, in conjunction with images of European men arriving in Canada for the first time and interacting with the landscape, glorified the tenacity of early settlers and celebrated their relationship with the land. Nowhere is there any mention of how the Europeans relied on Aboriginal men and women for survival.

Consumer demand for Aboriginal-themed merchandise at the 2010 Games also reflected a willingness on behalf of consumers to embrace these fetish objects as symbols of Canadian national identity. The HBC initially produced the mittens exclusively for athletes to wear during the Parade of Nations but decided to mass produce the garments after discovering there was substantial consumer demand for them. Significantly, individuals who bought the mittens claimed that wearing them made them feel proud to be Canadian.³² My examination of the historical contradictions embedded in consumer products associated with the Vancouver Olympics illustrates that the practice of consuming goods as a way to express national identity is implicated in broader efforts aimed at keeping Canada's history of colonialism an open secret or, in other words, "something that is publicly known but treated as unknown."³³

Confronting Non-Aboriginal Privilege

The HBC ad "We Were Made for This" was only one of a number of ads that were aired during the Vancouver Olympics and which helped to keep Canada's colonial past an open secret. For example, an advertisement for Molson Canadian linked Canadian identity to the land without any acknowledgement to the history of the land or its original inhabitants. The narrator encourages viewers to think about their connection to nature: "You may ask yourself, why are we the way we are? Well, the answer is lying right under our feet. Literally. The fact is, it's the land that shapes us."³⁴ The images of Canadian forests, oceans, wheat fields, and mountains captured in the ad were almost identical to the images of the Canadian landscape that were shown during the opening ceremony of the Vancouver Games. Like Koyczan's use of the pronoun "we" in his poem, the ad's use of the pronouns "you" and "we" suggests that all Canadi-

ans share the same sense of national identity, which they developed through their connection to land.

By articulating narratives about Canada that reflected the same contradictions contained in the opening ceremony, the ads make it permissible for white settler subjects to, as Julie McGonegal writes, refuse “to confront and speak publicly about the conditions of non-Indigenous privilege.”³⁵ A confrontation of this kind entails an acknowledgment of the colonial violence that Aboriginal peoples experienced and continue to experience everyday. For instance, the Royal Commission for Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), the most comprehensive study on Aboriginal issues to date in Canada, lists the myriad ways that colonialism was (and remains) a systemic problem:

*Aboriginal people were more likely [than non-Aboriginal people] to face inadequate nutrition, substandard housing and sanitation, unemployment and poverty, discrimination and racism, violence, inappropriate or absent services, and subsequent high rates of physical, social and emotional illness, injury, disability and premature death.*³⁶

Often, colonialism, as a way of thinking and acting, can be detected through careful analyses of public policies.

To be sure, systemic problems still exist. For instance, the crisis in the Ontario First Nation community of Attawapiskat that arose in November 2011 illustrates that the substandard conditions in which many Aboriginal peoples live have not been adequately addressed since 1996, when the RCAP report was released. The Red Cross was called to Attawapiskat after members of the community declared a national emergency due to a housing shortage and lack of basic amenities like running water. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network was first to report the story, which was soon picked up by other news outlets, including CBC. The problems were shocking:

*The numbers in [the Attawapiskat] community paint a stark picture: 19 families live in shacks with no running water; 122 families live in condemned housing; 96 people live in one industrial-sized trailer and 268 new houses are needed immediately.*³⁷

Moreover, the decision of the federal government to appoint a third-party manager in Attawapiskat reflected the persistence of a colonial mentality towards Aboriginal Peoples that does not consider them capable of self-governance.

Exposing the harsh reality of colonial violence in Canada can disrupt the settler's sense of self and their identity as a Canadian citizen. For instance, Martin argues that the discovery that Canada has a genocidal past can often cause Canadian students to experience a crisis.³⁸ Likewise, McGonegal observes that acknowledging Canada's colonial past is unsettling to non-Aboriginal subjects.³⁹ Yet, the need to confront this identity crisis is integral to

a reconciliation process that challenges non-Aboriginal privilege; and, failure to face this kind of confrontation can lead to “the erasure, and subsequent perpetuation, of the colonial violence [Aboriginal peoples] have and continue to experience in Canadian society.”⁴⁰

Parodying Symbols of the Nation

Symbols of Canadian identity were parodied in the closing ceremony of the Vancouver Games, but these parodies made it possible for non-Aboriginal people to avoid confronting the reality of Canada’s past. During the ceremony, women wearing over-sized maple leaf costumes danced on stage alongside comically gigantic inflated beavers. The unusual size of the objects drew attention to their role as signifiers of national identity, but did not expose their paradoxical nature—such as the way the maple leaf both symbolizes and ignores the colonial history of the Canadian landscape. In other words, the signifiers (beavers, maple leaves) were mocked but the signified (a version of national identity that both remembers and forgets Canada’s colonial past) was not even acknowledged.⁴¹

Moreover, despite the fact that the closing ceremony also permitted the nation to laugh at its symbols of national identity, Aboriginal cultural representations, such as the inukshuk, were not included in the laughable line-up of distortions. Parodying the inukshuk as a symbol of Canadian identity might have illuminated the contradictions inherent in the celebration of nationalism by exposing the fact that the logo was, in Forsyth and Wamsley’s words, a “symbol without substance.”⁴² In other words, the Aboriginal images featured in Olympic Games, including the Games of 1976 (Montreal), 1988 (Calgary), 2000 (Sydney), and 2002 (Salt Lake City) did not facilitate meaningful cross-cultural dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.⁴³ Further to that, using the inukshuk limited the potential for cross-cultural dialogue by keeping the ghostly hauntings of Canada’s colonial past at the margins of the national imagination, thereby absolving non-Aboriginal people from having to confront their privileged status as Canadians.

The Sydney 2000 Olympics

The Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games were not the only Olympic Games to promote narratives about reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples that failed to facilitate substantive discussions about the latter group’s privilege. Discourses about reconciliation promoted during the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia, also reinforced the privileged status of its non-Aboriginal citizens. Catriona Elder, Angela Pratt, and Cath Ellis argue that the Australian media emphasized the importance of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples coming together to watch and celebrate Aus-

tralian athletes, especially Cathy Freeman, an Aboriginal Australian who won gold in the 400 meters in track and field at the Games in Sydney.⁴⁴ However, they argue that the emphasis on symbolic unity promoted through the Games overshadowed efforts to achieve real unity, especially concerning reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.⁴⁵ Even though public pressure was mounting, the Australian government refused to apologize for the mass removal of Aboriginal children from their parents by governmental agencies, a practice that occurred between 1910 and 1970. The government even went so far as to condemn protestors for using the Games for political reasons—an ironic twist considering the government was using the Games to promote its own ideological messages about the nation.⁴⁶

Olympic sponsors also got involved in the debate, using the controversy to enhance their visibility to a worldwide audience. Nike released an advertisement that simply read “Sorry.” The ad echoed the Australian government’s desire to defer, if not silence, substantive discussions about reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, since it featured Australian Olympians apologizing for being too preoccupied with training to engage in activities not directly related to their performance.⁴⁷ Of course, the real (but unstated) object of attention was Cathy Freeman, whose main sponsor was Nike. Freeman is the only athlete in the ad who does not apologize. Instead, she runs past the camera (suggesting she is also preoccupied with her sport) and asks, “Can we talk about this later?”⁴⁸ Aboriginal groups criticized the ad for trivializing the importance of reconciliation for Australia.⁴⁹ The message from government and at least one of the Games’ top sponsors was clear—an apology to Aboriginal peoples, presumably for the mass removal of Aboriginal children from their families, could wait. Similar to the way in which consumer practices associated with the Vancouver Olympics intersected with and supported practices aimed at securing non-Aboriginal privilege, Nike’s ad illustrates that these practices are not isolated incidents, limited to one Olympic Games or another, but are part of a much larger pattern whereby governments, corporations, and the public alike are complicit in the reproduction of colonial relations that are sometimes celebrated on the world stage.

Protesting the Olympic Games

An anti-Olympic campaign entitled “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land” that was launched by the Olympic Resistance Network in opposition to the 2010 Vancouver Games is an example of a counter-hegemonic effort aimed at exposing the open secret of Canada’s colonial past and present. The Olympic Resistance Network, a coalition of activists comprised of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, highlighted the fact that almost all of British Columbia is unceded Aboriginal land. As Christine O’Bonsawin writes, “indigenous peo-

ples maintain that the land was never surrendered, and in recent years, the common law legal system in Canada has supported such claims.”⁵⁰ Antonio Gramsci argued that consent for a shift in hegemonic power must come before coercive action, and that educating individuals is an important way to secure this consent.⁵¹ By educating the public about the history of the land upon which the Games were being held and by highlighting current debates about ownership of the land, the anti-Olympic campaign contributed to counter-hegemonic efforts aimed at undermining the public’s consent for the modern state and exposing non-Aboriginal privilege.

Problems arise when Aboriginal involvement in the “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land” campaign is considered alongside their involvement in the commodification of Aboriginal symbols and artifacts for the Vancouver Olympics since it complicates the relationship between hegemonic and anti-hegemonic activities. Thus, some Aboriginal leaders found themselves in disagreement with others. Tewanee Joseph, the Executive Director and CEO for the FHFN, observed: “We fought to participate in the Games. As full partners. We fought for the jobs. We fought for respect.”⁵² In addition, and contrary to other Olympic Games where Aboriginal peoples were not consulted about their involvement in Olympic ceremonies, members of the FHFN played an active role in deciding how their cultures would be represented in the Vancouver 2010 Games. As such, Aboriginal participants in the cultural practices associated with the Vancouver Games were not treated as subaltern subjects who were spoken for; rather, they were given the opportunity to speak for and represent themselves.⁵³

Moreover, the fact that some of the proceeds from the sale of Olympic merchandise went to supporting the Aboriginal Youth Legacy Program (AYLP), a program established by the FHFN and VANOC to “support sport, culture, sustainability and education initiatives” for youth primarily within the FHFN but also throughout Canada, reveals that, although commercial practices associated with the Games helped to secure non-Aboriginal privilege, the commodification of Aboriginal cultures also benefitted some Aboriginal people. One-third of the royalties earned from the sale of products sold under the Vancouver 2010 Aboriginal Licensing and Merchandising program was given to the AYLP. In addition, the AYLP received all of the proceeds from the Aboriginal Art Bottle Program, a program initiated by Coca-Cola, which auctioned off large Coke bottles covered with artwork made by Canadian Aboriginal artists.⁵⁴ Despite the fact that these commercial practices were likely motivated by a desire to enhance the brand value of the Vancouver Games and Coca-Cola, rather than improve the lives of Aboriginal peoples, their impact on Aboriginal communities is notable. The Aboriginal Youth Sport Legacy Fund, for example, has given out more than \$1 million in grants to support sport and recreation opportunities for Aboriginal youth in British Columbia.⁵⁵

It is worth noting that among the objects that were sold through the Vancouver 2010 Aboriginal Licensing and Merchandising program were hand-made inukshuk by Inuit carvers. The sale of these items must be understood alongside the competing opinions expressed by Aboriginal leaders about the use of the inukshuk as the logo for the Vancouver Olympics. Members of the Inuit community, including Paul Okalik, the Premier of Nunavut, and Jose Kusugak, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, supported the design of the logo.⁵⁶ Other Aboriginal leaders took a different view. Peter Irniq, a former Nunavut commissioner, critiqued its usage, saying that the Olympic organizers should have discussed the logo design with the elders of Nunavut before they went ahead with the design. Additionally, President of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, Chief Stewart Phillip, criticized the logo because it did not reflect the cultures of Aboriginal groups living on the West coast of Canada, on whose lands the Olympics were taking place.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The fact that Aboriginal peoples were not unified in their opinion about the use of the inukshuk as the logo for the Vancouver 2010 Games reflects an ongoing and unresolved dispute about how Aboriginal peoples should be represented, if at all, in the cultural and commercial practices associated with the Olympic Games. Whether or not Aboriginal displays in sport mega-events like the Olympic Games helps or hinders cross-cultural understanding is a question worth exploring. Thus far, the evidence suggests that the inclusion of Aboriginal peoples on the world stage, as in the ceremonies, and the commodification of their cultures for corporate gain, has yet to result in tangible social, political, and economic benefits for them as a people. While debates surrounding the use of the inukshuk, as well as the marketing of Aboriginal cultural iconography are fraught with tensions and emotion, they are nevertheless important components of a constructive and long-lasting dialogue that may contribute to reconciliation. These conversations can be facilitated through an examination of cultural practices that expose the instability of and contradictions in a version of Canadian identity that both remembers and forgets its past.

Canada will host another international sporting event, the Pan American Games, in Toronto, Ontario in 2015. Organizers could take this opportunity to confront the ghosts that haunt Canada's past in a way that the Vancouver Olympics failed to do. For instance, they could consult with Aboriginal peoples about how the opening and closing ceremonies can be used to rupture prevailing notions about Canada's national identity. Moreover, Gramsci argued that organic intellectuals play an important role in facilitating the educational processes that are required to sustain a counter-hegemonic struggle.⁵⁸ The work of organic intellectuals in Aboriginal communities could be featured in

the Games' cultural programming as a way to undermine the stability of conventional narratives about Canadian identity and history.⁵⁹ The need to undermine the stability of such narratives is urgent because they help to secure non-Aboriginal privilege and perpetuate the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and in other host countries where Aboriginal peoples constitute an identifiable population.

Endnotes

- 1 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who provided thoughtful, detailed, and constructive feedback on my work. I am particularly grateful to the reviewer who twice read and reviewed my paper. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to present an earlier version of this paper at the 2012 International Symposium for Olympic Research, hosted by the International Centre for Olympic Studies at Western University, and appreciate the stimulating discussions I had with participants about my presentation.
- 2 "2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games—Aboriginal Art and Culture," Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada; <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014573/1100100014579>.
- 3 See, for example: Jasmine Rezaee, "Olympic Countdown: Aboriginal groups clash with the Games—and with each other," *This Magazine*; <http://this.org/magazine/2010/01/13/olympics-aboriginal-land-claims/> and Robyn Bourgeois, "The 2010 Vancouver Olympics and Violence Against First Nations People," *Canadian Woman Studies*, 27 no. 2/3 (2009), 39.
- 4 Janice Forsyth and Kevin Wamsley, "Symbols Without Substance: Aboriginal Peoples and the Illusion of Olympic Ceremonies," in: *Global Olympics: Historical and Sociological Studies of the Modern Games*, eds. Kevin Young and Kevin Wamsley (Oxford, UK: Elsevier Press, 2005), 234.
- 5 Darren Godwell, "The Olympic Branding of Aborigines: the 2000 Olympic Games and Australia's Aboriginal People," in: *The Olympic Games at the Millennium: Power, Politics and the Games*, eds Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 245.
- 6 "Aboriginal Participation," Government of Canada; <http://www.canada2010.gc.ca/obj/pa-ap/040201-eng.cfm>.
- 7 Forsyth and Wamsley, "Symbols Without Substance," 232.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Godwell, "The Olympic Branding of Aborigines," 245.

- 10 A transcript of the apology is available on the website of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada: "Statement of Apology," Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada; <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644>.
- 11 For statements from Aboriginal leaders supporting the apology, see: "Aboriginal Leaders Look to Future After Historic Apology," *CBC News*; <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2008/06/11/apology-future.html>. or criticisms of the apology, see: Matthew Dorrell, "From Reconciliation to Reconciling: Reading What 'We Now Recognize' in the Government of Canada's 2008 Residential Schools Apology," *English Studies in Canada*, 35 no.1 (2009), 27-45; Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham, "Colonial Reckoning, National Reconciliation?: Aboriginal Peoples and the Culture of Redress in Canada," *English Studies in Canada*, 35 no.1 (2009), 1-26; Keavy Martin, "Truth, Reconciliation, and Amnesia: Porcupines and China Dolls and the Canadian Conscience," *English Studies in Canada*, 35 no.1 (2009), 47-65.
- 12 Henderson and Wakeham, "Colonial Reckoning, National Reconciliation?," 8-15.
- 13 To the best of my knowledge, Caroline Calvé was the only Aboriginal person representing Canada in the Vancouver Olympics, so she is presumably the only Aboriginal person who marched in the Parade of Nations: Cory Wolfe, "Snowboarder Calvé Proud of Aboriginal Heritage," *The Montreal Gazette*; <http://www.montrealgazette.com/sports/2010wintergames/sports/2010wintergames/Snowboarder%20Clave%20proud%20aboriginal%20heritage/2552466/story.html>
- 14 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 15 Dorrell, "From Reconciliation to Reconciling," 32.
- 16 Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997), 24.
- 17 Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," in: *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London, UK: Routledge, 1996), 411-440.
- 18 A transcript of Koyczan's poem is available here: "Text of Shane Koyczan's Open Ceremonies Poem, 'We Are More,'" *The Guelph Mercury*; <http://www.guelphmercury.com/article/460769--text-of-shane-koyczan-s-opening-ceremonies-poem-we-are-more>.
- 19 Martin, "Truth, Reconciliation and Amnesia," 49.
- 20 Henderson and Wakeham draw attention to Harper's comment, which was made to a reporter in 2009: Henderson and Wakeham, "Colonial Reckoning, National Reconciliation?," 1-2.
- 21 MacGregor was quoted in a CBC article: "Vancouver 2010 Logo Unveiled," *CBC*; http://www.cbc.ca/sports/story/2005/04/23/2010_vancouver050423.html.

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- 36 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 107, quoted in Melissa Farley, Jacqueline Lynne and Ann J. Cotton, "Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the Colonization of First Nations Women," *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 42 no.2 (2005), 245.
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- 38 Martin, "Truth, Reconciliation, and Amnesia," 51.
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- 42 Forsyth and Wamsley, "Symbols Without Substance," 241.
- 43 Ibid.
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- 51 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1999).
- 52 Tewanee Joseph, quoted in Rezaee "Olympic Countdown."
- 53 According to Spivak, subaltern subjects are individuals who are represented by others and cannot represent themselves: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in: *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, eds Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994).
- 54 Shelley Cook, "Aboriginal Artist Earns Unique Olympic Spotlight," *Winnipeg Free Press*; <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/life/aboriginal-artist-earns-unique-olympic-spotlight-80254452.html>.
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- 59 For example, Kent Monkman's art, which challenges and re-imagines dominant representations of Canadian history, could be incorporated into the imagery of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2015 Pan

Am Games. In an interview on the CBC, Monkman said: “My work has been very much directly challenging some of these received histories from the dominant narrative and especially when it relates to Aboriginal people and the land”; CBC, 8th Fire; <http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire/2011/11/kent-monkman-1.html>.