

# Material Histories

Proceedings of a workshop held at Marischal Museum,  
University of Aberdeen • 26-27 April 2007



Edited by  
Alison K. Brown



UNIVERSITY  
OF ABERDEEN



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## The contributors

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**Kevin Brownlee** is a Cree archaeologist and member of Norway House Cree Nation, and Curator of Archaeology at The Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg. At the age of seven Brownlee discovered his love of learning about many traditional activities such as hide working, and making items from bone, antler and birch bark. He learned these activities through consultation with Elders, experimentation, replication, and archaeological research. In 1996 he received an Aboriginal Youth Achievement Award for culture. Between 1996 and 1998 he trained as an Aboriginal intern in the archaeology department at The Manitoba Museum. In 1998 Brownlee was hired by the Manitoba Government as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer in the Archaeology Unit. While working with the Provincial Government Kevin registered for a Master of Arts degree in the Anthropology Department (University of Manitoba). In 2003 Brownlee returned to The Manitoba Museum as the Curator of Archaeology, and completed his M.A. degree in 2005.

**Neil G.W. Curtis** was born in Glasgow in 1964, and works in the University of Aberdeen where he is Senior Curator in Marischal Museum and Honorary Lecturer in Anthropology. He studied Archaeology (Glasgow, 1986), Museum Studies (Leicester, 1988) and Education (Aberdeen, 1995). He has responsibility for the wide range of Marischal Museum's collections (Scottish history and archaeology, European and Mediterranean archaeology, Non-Western ethnography, Numismatics and Fine Art). Exhibitions he has curated include *Going Home:*

*Museums and Repatriation* (2003) and *Inuit in Aberdeen* (2000). Curtis's recent publications have focused on Scottish antiquarianism and archaeology, and issues relating to repatriation, human remains and cultural representation in museums.

**Sherry Farrell Racette** is an interdisciplinary scholar with an active arts practice. She has a B.F.A. from the University of Manitoba, an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Regina and an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. (Native Studies, Anthropology, History) from the University of Manitoba (2004). Her dissertation, *Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and the Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity*, received the Distinguished Dissertation Award from the University of Manitoba in 2005. Her broad research focus is Métis and First Nations women's history, particularly reconstructing indigenous art histories that recontextualize museum collections and reclaim women's voices and lives. Some of her publications include: 'Sewing for a Living: the Commodification of Métis Women's Artistic Production' in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (2005), 'Métis Man or Canadian Icon: Who Owns Louis Riel?' in *Rielisms* (2001), 'Beads, Silk and Quills: the Clothing and Decorative Arts of the Métis' in *Métis Legacy* (2001) and 'Sex, Fear, Women, Travel and Work: Five Persistent Triggers of Eurocentric Negativity' in *Pushing the Margins* (2001). In addition, she has illustrated children's books written by Maria Campbell, Freda Ahenakew and Ruby Slipperjack. Her arts practice includes painting and multi-media works combining textiles, beadwork and embroidery with images and text. Recent exhibitions include *Dolls for Big Girls* (2000), Regina Art Gallery, *Illustrative Images: Sherry Farrell Racette* (2002), Mackenzie Art Gallery, and group exhibitions: *Rielisms* (2001), Winnipeg Art Gallery and *Animate Objects: the Grammar of Craft in First Nations Contemporary Art* (2002), Sakewewak Artists' Collective. Her works are in a number of public collections including the Saskatchewan Arts Board, MacKenzie Art Gallery and the Canada Council's Art Bank. Most recently she co-curated *Clearing a Path: an Exhibition of Traditional Indigenous Arts* for the Saskatchewan Arts Board showcasing contemporary artists working in traditional media for the 2005 Saskatchewan Centennial.

**Keith Goulet** is a Cree Nehinuw from Cumberland House in Northeast Saskatchewan, Canada. He is a fluent Cree speaker. He was raised in a traditional trapping, fishing, hunting and gathering lifestyle. His education includes a B.Ed. and an M. Ed. using Cree oral history. He has taught elementary school grades two to four and six, Indigenous education classes and has developed and coordinated a university teacher education program. He was an Executive Director of the Gabriel Dumont Institute and a principal of a regional community college. He was also elected and served seventeen years as a provincial Member of the Legislative Assembly and over nine years as a Cabinet Minister in the Provincial Government



of Saskatchewan. He is presently a Ph.D. student at the University of Regina.

**Tim Ingold** is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen. He has carried out ethnographic fieldwork among Saami and Finnish people in Lapland, and has written extensively on comparative questions of environment, technology and social organisation in the circumpolar North, as well as on evolutionary theory in anthropology, biology and history, on the role of animals in human society, on issues in human ecology, language and tool use, and on environmental perception and skilled practice. He is currently writing and teaching on the comparative anthropology of the line, and on issues on the interface between anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture. His latest book, *Lines: A Brief History*, was published by Routledge in 2007.

**Chantal Knowles** is Principal Curator for the Oceanic, American and African collections in the Department of World Cultures at National Museums Scotland. While a research assistant at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford University, she conducted fieldwork and research in Papua New Guinea and published on the colonial influence on material culture amongst the Arawe group of West New Britain province. She is currently part of the team developing new permanent world cultures galleries at National Museums Scotland which will be opened to the public in 2011. Since arriving at NMS in 2001 she has been working closely with the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife and the Tâîchô community in the Northwest Territories, Canada, to develop *Dè T'a Hoti Ts'eeda: We Live Securely by the Land*, a touring exhibition which draws on the historically important Athapaskan collection held by NMS.

**Jennine Krauchi** (née Meyer) was born May 3, 1956 in Winnipeg, Manitoba of a Métis mother and a Dutch father. She initially learned beadwork from her mother and sewing from her father, who ran a shop making a variety of Aboriginal clothing including mukluks, moccasins, beaded jackets, fur parkas etc. She loves doing beadwork and also porcupine quillwork and making clothing with a focus on Aboriginal and Métis design. Krauchi has made coats for several chiefs as well as for the previous Prime Minister of Canada, Paul Martin. She also has several items in The Manitoba Museum as well as elsewhere. Recently she worked with her mother, Jenny Meyer, on a beaded vest, which is now on display in Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow.

**Anna MacLennan** studied Geography at the University of Edinburgh before joining the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen. She has

recently completed her Masters of Research in Social Anthropology where she focused on traditional fur clothing from the Canadian Eastern Arctic. MacLennan enjoys sewing as a hobby and has a long-standing interest in Canadian First Nations and Métis beadwork and the historic links between Scotland and Canada. She is currently working as a teaching assistant in a Dehcho Dene community in the Northwest Territories, Canada, where she hopes to learn about tanning hides, sewing and beadwork from experienced seamstresses.

**Jenny Meyer** (née McLeod) was born December 9, 1938 on the shores of Lake Manitoba of Métis parents (Saulteaux of the Ojibwa nation). Her ancestors (the McLeods) were a part of the early fur trade. As a child she was taught to hunt, fish and trap by her father. She enjoys doing beadwork and has done several projects for The Manitoba Museum, where she is presently a volunteer. An article about Meyer and her work with The Manitoba Museum can be found in *First Perspective* at [www.firstperspective.ca/print\\_story.php?path=20060724meyer](http://www.firstperspective.ca/print_story.php?path=20060724meyer)

**Nancy Wachowich** is a lecturer in social anthropology at the University of Aberdeen. Most of her ethnographic fieldwork has been with people in the Inuit communities of Pond Inlet and Igloolik in Canada's Eastern Arctic. She focuses primarily on colonial histories and social movements, drawing on fields of historical anthropology, oral traditions, visual anthropology, museum studies and the anthropology of media. Her 1999 book *Saqiyuq: Stories from the Lives of Three Inuit Women*, written in collaboration with Apphia Agalakti Awa, Rhoda Kaukjak Katsak and Sandra Pikujak Katsak, won the 1999 Canadian Historical Association's Clio Award for the North and the 2000 Oral History Association (USA) Award for Best Project.

**Bryce Wilson** trained at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen, specializing in drawing and painting. He worked as an art teacher in the Orkney Islands before becoming Museums Officer for Orkney Islands Council and Honorary Curator of Stromness Museum, a post which he held for 28 years. Now retired, Bryce has maintained his connection with Stromness Museum and is now the Honorary Secretary. He has a long interest in the historic connections between the Orkney Islands and the Hudson's Bay Company, and has presented at several fur trade history conferences in Canada over the past twenty years. He is co-author of *No Ordinary Journey – John Rae Arctic Explorer 1813-1893*, co-published by the Royal Museum of Scotland and McGill-Queens University Press, a volume which accompanied a 1993 exhibition of the same name.

## Acknowledgements

This volume is the outcome of a workshop which was held at Marischal Museum in the spring of 2007, as part of the Material Histories project. I would like to thank all the participants, but most especially those who travelled such long distances to be with us in Aberdeen, for ensuring that the workshop so enjoyable and productive. We all learned a great deal from the papers, handling sessions and discussion at the workshop, and I am especially grateful to those contributors who presented over the two days, and who have made their papers available for these proceedings.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of colleagues in the Department of Anthropology and the staff of Marischal Museum, who hosted the workshop for us. Thank you.

Finally, without the generous support of our funding body, the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom, neither the workshop, nor these proceedings would have been possible.

**Alison K. Brown**

Aberdeen, January 2008

# The Material Histories workshop

**Alison K. Brown**

## **Introduction**

The Material Histories workshop was held in Marischal Museum at the University of Aberdeen from April 26-27<sup>th</sup> 2007. It was attended by 30 participants, including museum professionals, educators and seamstresses, university staff and students. The workshop was an extension of a long history of cultural, social and historical exchanges and entanglements between Scotland and Canada and presented the first opportunity in Scotland for people to engage in dialogue concerning issues of knowledge, creativity and the representation of First Nations and Métis museum collections. Aberdeen was a most appropriate venue for this meeting to take place. Scots from the Northeast have been travelling across the Atlantic for several hundred years, most often to participate in colonial projects, such as military expansion and the fur trade, or to emigrate permanently and settle in the growing towns and cities of Canada. Likewise, First Nations and Métis people have come to Northern Scotland, and have participated in the life of the communities they found for over three hundred years. Alexander Kennedy Isbister, for example, the son of a Hudson's Bay Company fur trader and his mixed blood wife, went to school in the Orkney Islands and attended Kings College (Aberdeen University) from 1842-4. Many other children of fur trade families spent time in the city, and were supported by relatives who lived locally. Material traces of these encounters can still be found in Aberdeen and the surrounding area.

The five First Nations and Métis participants who presented in the Material Histories workshop all have ties to Western Canada, including the Cree communities of Cumberland House in Northeast Saskatchewan, Norway House in Manitoba, and the cities of Winnipeg and Regina; some of them also have ancestral ties to Scotland (Plate 1). They were joined by representatives of several Scottish museums, including National Museums Scotland in Edinburgh and the Orkney Museum Service. It was fitting that people from such diverse locations and backgrounds were able to attend, as the workshop was part of a wider project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom, which sets out to explore the movement of artefacts between people and places, looking specifically at how the study of the material traces of the past can enhance knowledge of diaspora relationships.

Though the regional and historic focus of the project is on artefacts and relationships connected to the lengthy involvement of Scots in the fur trade in

Canada, comparisons can be made with experiences and colonial encounters in other parts of the world. Many questions and avenues of exploration are being generated by the project: How can the study of artefacts help clarify the sentimental histories of family relationships that cut across geographical and temporal spaces? How can knowledge derived from the study of artefacts be integrated with that drawn from oral and written histories? What strategies could be developed to share this knowledge with wider audiences, including First Nations, museums and the general public? How can practice-based knowledge contribute to more nuanced representations of First Nations collections in museums? These and related themes were explored in the discussions throughout the two days of the workshop and in conversations with participants since. They are also addressed in many of the papers included in these proceedings.

### **First Nations collections in Scotland's museums**

All the museums which were represented at the workshop have collections from Northwest Canada, though the number of objects varies. Though these artefacts came to be in the collections through a range of sources, each one of these museums has examples of First Nations or Métis work that were collected by men working for fur trade enterprises such as the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. Perth Museum and Art Gallery, for example, has one of the oldest known collections assembled by a fur trader of any museum – the Salish collection of James Murray Yale. The artefacts in this collection were acquired in the Fraser River area of present day British Columbia in the 1820s and some time during the next few years were acquired by Colin Robertson, a friend and mentor of Yale's. Robertson, who was originally from Perth and who worked for both the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, donated the collection to the Literary and Antiquarian Society of Perth in 1833 (Idiens 1987). More recently, in 1998, Glasgow Museums was presented with four pieces of beadwork made in York Factory, Northern Manitoba, which are part of a much larger family collection (Brown 2004); and in 2005 Marischal Museum received a caribou hide parka worn in the early 1970s by Graham Noble, a Fraserburgh man who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company in Baffin Island. Scotland's museums continue to acquire artefacts collected within fur trade contexts. Since this workshop took place, one of the participants, Angus Pelham Burn, himself a former Hudson's Bay Company man, kindly donated a pair of mukluks that he had bought during his service in the 1950s in Northern Manitoba and Northern Ontario to Marischal Museum (Plate 2).

In recent years, First Nations groups from Canada have variously become part of the institutional history of Scottish museums, and their involvement has ranged from research visits and negotiating repatriation requests to participating in exhibition projects. Currently, the role of Scots in the fur trade is enjoying

something of a resurgence as a topic for museum displays in Scotland, and there have been some efforts made to involve people of Aboriginal heritage in these developments. First Nations collections interpreted within fur trade contexts have become part of permanent displays in Marischal Museum, Stromness Museum and the Royal Museum of Scotland, and there have recently been several temporary exhibitions which have considered the cross-cultural nature of fur trade history and its enduring relevance for Scots and First Nations communities. The Stromness Museum's summer exhibition of 2007, *Hands Across the Sea*, for instance, details the experiences of Orcadians in Canada, and focuses specifically on the shared genealogy of a Kirkwall family and their relatives from the Sturgeon Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan (Twatt 2007, see also Wilson this volume). National Museums Scotland has also been active in developing exhibitions on fur trade themes. *Trailblazers: Scots in Canada*, an exhibition at the Royal Museum of Scotland in 2003-4, featured several displays connected to the fur trade and explored the continued links between Scotland and Canada (Stokes-Rees 2004). Further, in 2007, the NMS's travelling exhibition, *Dè T'a Hoti Ts'eeda: We Live Securely by the Land*, will return to Edinburgh, following its display in the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife and the Carleton Art Gallery in Ottawa. A temporary exhibition to be shown in the Royal Museum of Scotland in 2008 using the same artefacts as well as newly-acquired pieces, alongside contemporary community responses to them is currently being planned (Knowles this volume). In addition, during the spring of 2008, Marischal Museum will host a temporary exhibition based on the research that has informed the Material Histories project, and which draws upon the collections of Marischal Museum and those of Aberdeenshire families with ties to the fur trade.

### **Bringing First Nations people into Scotland's museums**

Despite the success of exhibitions such as those referred to above, and the clear benefits of raising the profile of First Nations collections in the United Kingdom, it is unusual for museums on this side of the Atlantic to maintain the momentum generated by exhibition projects and channel it towards areas of museum work which may be less publicly-visible. Historically, most museums in the United Kingdom, as well as elsewhere, have been rather conservative institutions. With a range of pressures facing them, including financial constraints and the need to respond to the needs of local audiences, many institutions have seen geographical as well as cultural distance as obstacles to working with overseas communities. This is slowly changing, however, and an emerging theme for discussion concerns the practicalities of developing partnerships with institutions overseas so that information about collections housed in the United Kingdom can be made more easily available to those audiences unable to travel. The results of the work being undertaken between National Museums Scotland, the Visual Research

Centre at the University of Dundee, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and the Tâîchô Nation, outlined in these proceedings by Chantal Knowles, suggest that partnership projects between universities and museums in Scotland and with First Nations can certainly be explored.

With issues such as accessibility and future partnerships in mind, when first I began discussing the programme for this workshop with colleagues in Scotland and in Canada we talked about the format a workshop might take, what its emphasis might be, and how it might benefit the different communities involved: First Nations and Métis groups, museum professionals, and the academic sector. It was clear from these discussions that there needs to be a better understanding of the collections we are dealing with, as well as their different contexts and potential. First Nations collections in Scotland are desperately under-researched, and so are largely unknown – with some major exceptions – to people outside of the institutions that house them. Sherry Farrell Racette's paper in these proceedings suggests some of the reasons why this situation has arisen. Accordingly, and based on the research profiles of staff in the Department of Anthropology here at the University of Aberdeen and their thematic interests in history, memory and materiality and in also in culture, creativity and perception, as well as my own familiarity with museum practice, it seemed that the workshop could usefully draw upon both formal presentations and hands-on activities that would allow us to explore together making artefacts and the knowledge that goes into these processes.

The theme of practice-based knowledge had been central to many of the conversations I had with seamstresses in Northern Manitoba during six months of fieldwork in 2006. A piece of beadwork, for example that decorates a moccasin or a pouch, is much more than a design on a piece of hide. This point was explained by Flora Beardy, a historian from York Landing, Northern Manitoba:

I remember my mother saying that the slipper which the caribou is used [for], all the caribou is used. You clean the hide, and it's smoked, and she'd have white hide, which is not smoked. And the different designs that they would get from flowers, the colours and from Jack Frost on the window, you know, the swirls, they would copy those and bead them...Things like that, there's a story to everything. Like, who shot the caribou? And if there's fur on it, what kind of fur? If it was beaver, how was that beaver [killed]? Was it trapped? Was it snared? Different things like that. So there's stories to everything. (Beardy 2006)

Other First Nations women with whom I spoke about their own memories of doing beadwork or seeing their mothers or grandmothers sew, talked about the social side of sewing – sitting with other women under a tree on a hot day while the children



played and the men were away hunting or fishing, sewing gifts for their families to be saved up for Christmas, and talking together. The Material Histories workshop was structured to give the participants time to experience something of the social side of sewing. Jennine Krauchi, Jenny Meyer and Sherry Farrell Racette, all of whom have many years experience of interacting with historic collections and teaching beadwork, led beadwork sessions in which participants were shown how to make a pin cushion with a floral design and a beaded trim. Each group had quite different experiences based on the practice of sewing and the stories that were told; we hope that these will feed into our continued discussions about skill and the production of knowledge.

The social knowledge of the use of artefacts as they move through different contexts, as well as the knowledge, skill and the social relationships which produced them, invariably have not been recorded in museum records. Instead, misidentifications and sketchy details focusing on a donor rather than the maker is by far the more standard. Furthermore, museum records are particularly vague in how they describe materials, with moccasins, for example, often being listed simply as being made of “hide” and “fur”. Though conservators are often more experienced in identifying materials than curators, it isn’t always the case that their knowledge gets added to catalogue information. As such, the purpose of the identification and handling sessions that took place in the latter stages of the workshop, in which a range of hides and furs as well as other materials used in the production of beadwork and quillwork artefacts, was to help participants achieve a better understanding of these items specifically in terms of their construction. The discussion during these sessions, in which Kevin Brownlee, the Curator of Archaeology at The Manitoba Museum, described the processes of preparing hides, and Jenny Meyer explained how to identify pelts, gave participants an opportunity to focus on the creative and social process of manufacture. Extracts from these discussions are reproduced in these proceedings.

At the conclusion of the Material Histories project, proceedings of the workshop will be distributed to a range of British and Canadian museums and educational institutions, as well being available to download from the project website ([www.abdn.ac.uk/materialhistories/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/materialhistories/)). In addition, at least two referred journal articles and a short book will eventually be available. We hope, however, that one of the less tangible outputs of the project will be the establishment of new professional collaborations, and that this workshop may give rise to the promise of closer working relationships between museums in Scotland and First Nations and Métis communities.



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# Animate and inanimate: The Cree Nehinuw view

Keith Goulet

## Introduction

This paper is a response to a key issue in my Ph.D. dissertation on the Cumberland Cree Nehinuw concept of land. On the level of specificity I would like to counter the pervasive view that the land is considered a living or animate entity in Aboriginal cultures. Contrary to popular and academic notions, the concept of land in Cree is not considered a living entity but is actually classified as part of the inanimate “nonliving” realm. A basic knowledge of the Cree categorical structure is therefore required as a framework for this analysis. My aim is to provide a preliminary introductory overview of the animate and inanimate categorical system using one of the Algonquian languages –the Cree Nehinuw of Cumberland House in Northern Saskatchewan, Canada. I will also be including a brief analysis of beads and beadworking as part of my examples. While I recognize that there has been a debate on the animacy concept in recent anthropological literature (e.g. Descola and Palsson 1996; Ingold 2000; Harvey 2005), I will nevertheless limit my review here to the animate and inanimate as it relates to Cree works in linguistics.

Because of the focus in the literature on the development of writing systems and the basic grammatical structures there has been a continuing and outstanding need to refocus and work on the Cree narrative.<sup>1</sup> As such, there appears to be only a general explanatory realm in the topic of Cree animate/inanimate categories. From the 1950s through to the 1970s the major work on grammar and conversational Cree was Mary Edwards’s *Cree: An Intensive Language Course* (1954). She provided some of the basic grammatical forms when using the animate and inanimate categories but there was no attempt towards an explanation. In 1962 C. Douglas Ellis published *Spoken Cree: West Coast of James Bay* (revised in 1983 and 2000). In addition to the situational content, he included a grammatical analysis and the following commentary on the animate and inanimate:

Cree nouns belong to one of two genders: *animate* or *inanimate*. It happens that the names of all living creatures are contained in the animate class; but so are the names of a good many lifeless objects like socks, kettles, stones, paddles, flour, etc. No living creatures are represented in the second, the *inanimate* group. (Ellis 2000: xxxv)

<sup>1</sup> The major texts and introductions to grammar are Ahenakew (1987), Bellegarde and Ratt (1992), Edwards (1954), Ellis (2000), and Wolfart and Carroll (1981). Booklet introductions that include the “N” dialect are Cook and Searson (1994) and Goulet (1975). On Cree narration there is Bloomfield (1934), Ahenakew (1987), Wolfart and Ahenakew (2000), as well as an ethnographic and theoretical reflection by Preston (2002).

In addition to the living and the nonliving entities, Ellis explains that “lifeless objects” can belong to the animate class. He does not include the additional fact that certain living entities can be inanimate.

One of the recognized authorities on Cree grammatical structure is H. Christoph Wolfart. He has written a Ph.D. on this topic and has published *Plains Cree: A Grammatical Study* (1981). In a joint work, Wolfart and Carroll had this to say, about the Cree categorical concept:

Cree nouns, pronouns, and verbs fall into gender classes, which correspond to the distinction, in nature, between *living* and *non-living* entities. These gender classes are called animate and inanimate... animate nouns generally refer to humans and animals... but the animate class also includes words for trees and a number of frequently used household items such as pipes, kettles, or snowshoes... All other nouns are inanimate, and this class not only includes the words for objects like houses or canoes, but also the terms for less palpable things such as stories or languages, or abstract nouns like ‘life’, ‘leadership’, or ‘Greenness’. (Wolfart and Carroll 1981: 19-20)

Most other writers who have written about Cree linguistics have generally followed their example and reiterated a similar explanation. While the existing analysis does give the initial general parameters, it needs to be extended to include other subcategories and dynamic interconnections, which I will now cover in this following section.

## **Animate and inanimate**

The following is my preliminary analysis of the Cree Nehinuw categories of animate and inanimate. I have included eight main subcategories. Five of the eight subcategories are related in the nature-life-movement continuum, while three are in the sacred-power-magnitude sphere.

### **Animate**

1. Cosmo-Natural
2. Whole
3. Life-giving
4. Survival
5. Movement
6. Sacred
7. Powerful
8. Large

### **Inanimate**

1. Processual cultural
2. Part
3. Functional
4. Instrumental
5. Stillness
6. Secular
7. Ordinary
8. Small

At the most general level of the animate category there are people (*unisinniyuk*), animals (*pisiskiyuk*), birds (*pineseesuk*), fish (*kinosewuk*), trees (*minuhiguk*), insects (*muncoosuk*) and other living entities. This category is composed mainly of the natural order of life. It also includes the sun (*peesim*), the moon (*tipiskahi-peesim*) and the stars (*ucagosuk*). The snow (*koonu*), ice (*muskumee*) and the rocks (*usiniyuk*) are also animate. Given the current debate about cultural constructionism, the inanimate category is a very intriguing one. The inanimate structures are mainly about cultural systems but also all processes, whether they are cultural and natural. To begin with, the concept of the mind (*mamitoneneecigun*) is a people created entity and is literally translated as “the thinking entity.” The Cree word “think” is *mamitoneneetu*, and *mamitoneneetumowin* is the process or act of thinking. All these variations on the concept of thinking are inanimate concepts.

Knowledge or the theory of knowledge is expressed as *kiskeneetumowin*. This general concept is inanimate but it does change form when it refers to either animate or inanimate entities. For clarification, the statement “I know him or her” is translated as “*Ni giskenimaw unu*” while “I know it” is written as “*Ni giskeneeten unimu*.”<sup>2</sup> Note that the change from the animate to the inanimate forms affects both the verbs and the pronouns. In English, the gender differentiation and use of he, she or it is generally limited to statements made in the third person while the animate and inanimate distinction in Cree impacts changes in the first person, second person and third person sentences in singular or plural as well as the different tenses. There is also an additional form called the obviative in the third person context.

Although the animate and inanimate categorization system is a lot more extensive than the following examples, it is meant to provide a short structural introduction of the nature and general idea of its impact. As I start this grammatical overview, my memory shifts back to the difficulties I had when I learned the English gender structure of “he, she and it” as well as the learning of introductory French and its gender structure that included the masculine “le” and the feminine “la.” I will start with the verb “to know” as my example.

*Ni giskenimaw.* (I know him/her.)

*Ni giskeneeten.* (I know it.)

*Ki giskenimaw na?*<sup>3</sup> (Do you know him/her?)    *Ki giskeneeten na?* (Do you know?)

*Kiskenimew.* (S/he knows him/her.)

*Kiskeneetum.* (S/he knows.)

<sup>2</sup> In addition to italicizing the Cree text, I have added the underlining as an added focus on the change in the animate and inanimate forms.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes you can ask the question without the questioning designator “na.” While most of Saskatchewan Crees use “cee” Cumberland House and Shoal Lake Crees use “na.”

Notice that the endings for the animate are *-maw* while the inanimate endings are *ten*. As stated before, there is also no specific gender differentiation of feminine and masculine in these cases, for it is understood that it is the animate entity or the inanimate process or entity that the sentence contextually refers to. In addition to the two separate structures of animate and inanimate there is also the special case of third person obviative.<sup>4</sup>

The major sensory and educational processes and actions are also inanimate. Two major concepts are used to describe the teaching/learning situation. *Kiskinaumagehin* is the Cree word used when describing a situation where someone is learning something from someone else. It is your regular teaching/learning situation.<sup>5</sup> It is similar to the apprenticeship model. There is also the dynamic interactive Cree concept, which is similar to reflexive, dialogical and interactional approaches. In this latter case, the more dynamic interactive form *kiskinaumatowin* is used. In this example, both the teacher and the learner are actually learning from each other. Speaking is *uyumihin* and critically speaking is *peegiskehin*. The latter example is used in a critical context with knowledgeable people. Listening (*n'dootumowin*), writing (*musinuhigehin*) and reading (*uyumeecigehin*) are also inanimate processes.

The Cree word for government is *ogimahin*. Government in this case is not a concept of the natural order but one that is created by people's joint activity. It is therefore an inanimate concept. On the other hand, the concept of the leader or *ogimaw* is carried out by a human being and is therefore classified as animate. The early fur trade literature specifically documents this terminology as the proper designation for describing a Cree leader. With the rise of colonization and the imposition of Euro-styled governance structures, the original Cree concept of the *ogimaw* changes to the more subordinate concept and position of *ogimagan*. This latter term, which has evolved over time, is now the term used for an Aboriginal leader or chief. It literally translates as an artificial, not real or substitute leader.

Other Cree words for different forms of leadership are *oneeganeew*, which literally translates as "the one who is up in front" and *wunusowehinni*, which means the councillor or council member. During the signing of the treaties the concept of Headman and Headmen was used in English. There is no literal translation that matches this concept so I asked Elder Starr from the Star Blanket First Nation for a translation. He stated that the word for headman was *simaguniseegan*. The root stem for this word *simagun-* actually means the spear or

4 For a more extensive treatment on syntactical form see Ahenakew (1987), Bellegarde and Ratt (1992), and Wolfart and Carroll (1981).

5 While most of the writing systems including the standard orthography have recognized dialect variants such as the *e* as in *nete* (Y and N), such is not the case for the *au* sound. The sound is the same as the "au" in *haul* or *Paul*.

spear point. *Simagunis* is therefore the word for the spear point protectors of the people or police. Most of the early records use *simagunis* for the Cree warrior. *Simagunis* must have changed to *simaguniseegan* during the imposition of the colonial order. By the early 1950s *simaguniseegan* was being used to designate the Aboriginal special constable who was a helper or subordinate to the police. In this particular example by Elder Starr, *simaguniseegan* or the artificial substitute policeman meant the headman. In addition to the general concept of artificiality this *-gan* concept therefore reflects the imposition of the colonial order right in the grammatical structure of the Cree language.

During this same period of time, the concept of land (*uskee*) evolved into the concept of parcelled off land or private land called *uskeegan*. The traditional Cree word for chief had also changed from *ogimaw* to *ogimagan*. *Uskee*, which means “the land, country or national territory,” including most geographical or geopolitical concepts are inanimate. Contrary to popular opinion, the lakes (*saguhigunu*), the rivers (*seepiyu*) and the water (*nipee*) are also considered inanimate. I have been most intrigued by the evolution and development of the concept of Mother Earth in the past thirty years or so (Goulet 2004). Although Cumberland House was surrounded by the three major Cree dialects of N, TH and Y, I never heard of the term in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s. It was only in the 1980s that I started to hear of its use when it was being talked about with students, some leaders and certain Elders. Gradually into the 1990s, I was hearing of its use in Cree. Because it sounded so authentically Aboriginal it did impress many people. I frankly do not have a major problem with the utilization of the concept of Mother Earth as a new evolving part of Indigenous culture, but I certainly couldn't say that it was an authentic part of traditional Cree culture. I believe that the concept does have merit. It does bring together some important interconnecting notions. On the critical side, it does bring into focus the degradation and destruction of the environment as well as the historic discrimination and oppression of women. On the positive side, it highlights the nurturing, the connection and protection of the land, life and environment.

On what basis do I question the authenticity of Mother Earth as a traditional Cree concept? As a person born and raised in the traditional livelihoods of trapping, hunting, gathering and fishing, I never knew anything of its existence, either in Cree or English right up till the 1980s. The Cumberland Cree did not talk about the land or the earth as a mother either in straightforward terms or in metaphorical ways. I do remember the first time that Mother Earth was used in English from a Cumberland Elder. It was in the late 1980s or early 1990s that I saw a documentary on the environment and Cumberland House made by Will Campbell and narrated by Maria Campbell, the well-known author of *Half Breed*. In this documentary, Elder Ovide Chaboyer used the words “Mother Earth” in English! This was the first time that I had heard them used in Cumberland House. Today, the words “Mother Earth” are still not used in the Cree Nehinuw language of Cumberland House people.

It was during the early 1990s that I first heard the words “Mother Earth” spoken in Cree. During a workshop on oral tradition Maria Campbell used *Nigawiuskee*, which literally translated as Mother Earth. Maria is a Cree speaker. On February 3, 2004 I attended an Elders’ conference on the environment and health in Prince Albert. I listened to twelve statements and reminiscences in Cree. I noted that one speaker mentioned Mother Earth in Cree and another in English. During the break, I interviewed the person who had used the Cree form.<sup>6</sup> I mentioned that this was new to me and that I had not heard the term used when I was raised. He agreed that it was indeed not used when he was growing up, so that it was therefore a “recovery” of lost history. It was an intriguing rationale, but it was the first and only time that I have heard it being made this way. I then interviewed three more Cree Elders from Red Earth and Shoal Lake who stated that they did not use the terminology.<sup>7</sup> It was new to them and therefore not traditionally used.

In addition to evidence drawn from cultural history, I will use linguistics and language to argue that it is problematic to combine mother and earth. As explained earlier in this paper, in Cree there are two central categorical systems of animate and inanimate. In general, the animate is about living entities and beings such as ‘mother’, whereas the inanimate is about nonliving entities such as land. I have heard many people state that the land in the Cree language was a living entity, but this is not substantiated in Cree language usage. Trees, rocks and the sun are animate but not rivers, lakes and the land or earth. So why could it not be used? As a comparative example, the rules in the English language do not permit the following, “She is a knife.” “It is a knife” is used instead. The proper gender category needs to be used. Cree operates in a similar fashion using animate and inanimate categorization. It is permissible to say “*nigawi uwu*” (this is my mother), but not, “*nituskee uwu*” (this is my land). The animate form of the pronoun ‘this’ (*uwu*) cannot be used with my land (*nituskee*), which is an inanimate category. The proper way to say, “This is my land” is *Nituskee oomu*. A different pronoun is used in each case of the animate or the inanimate. While the concept of Mother Earth may sound good in the modern eco-cultural context, it has not been traditionally used in the Cree language. I have noticed, though, that it has become to be used in unique prayer form by certain Elders.

### *Whole and part*

There is an old saying that “you can’t see the forest for the trees.” A person can become so concentrated on a particular tree that they don’t see the forest as a whole. The reverse can also happen where “you can’t see the tree for the forest.” In this case a person concentrates so much on the whole that they cannot see the

6 Robert Ermine interviewed by Keith Goulet in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, February 3, 2004.

7 Barnabus Head, Clara Whitecap and Lillian Lathlin interviewed by Keith Goulet in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, February 3, 2004.



particulars and the uniqueness. Certain types of structuralist theory and gestalt psychology are examples of the former and methodological individualism for the latter. The whole/part debate is also represented in the Cree grammatical structure.

I will start out by providing an example on the animate side of the whole/part issue. When the “whole” person is presented the animate version of speech is used. This happens in the case of a human being (*unisinni*), an Aboriginal person (*inni*), a man (*napew*), a woman (*iskew*) and so on. It is very interesting to note from a linguistic, cognitive and philosophical view that the whole person is more than the material entity of the body and its parts. A person is not a whole animate being without the life form dynamic or the life-giving dimension. When a person dies, a Cree will refer to the body as *miyuw*, which is inanimate. When I talk about my body (*niyuw*) in an abstract or concrete sense it is still not the living whole person, and it is therefore inanimate. Most of the parts of my body including my foot (*nisit*), my nose (*nigot*) and my mouth (*nitoon*) are all considered inanimate. There are a couple of simple tests to check out the animacy or inanimacy of the preceding examples. In the case of the animate entity, a statement with a demonstrative pronoun is used. For example, when you state, “This is a man,” it is written as, “*Napew uwu*.” In the case of, “This is my mouth,” the Cree translation is, “*Nitoon oomu*.” Notice that a different demonstrative pronoun is used. The demonstrative pronoun “this” is translated as, “*uwu*” for the animate case and “*oomu*” for the inanimate case. The test is therefore made by making a statement that includes the demonstrative pronoun, “This...” Stating the case in the plural can attain a further test. For example, the Cree translation for “These are women” is *Iskewuk oog*i while the translation for “These are my feet” is *Nisitu oohi*. Note that there are two differences between the animate version and the inanimate version. When the animate noun is pluralized it ends in *-uk* in all cases except the third person obviative or if the word has a built-in plural. The demonstrative pronoun, “These...” is written as “*oog*i” in the animate and “*oohi*” in the inanimate.<sup>8</sup>

### *Life-giving and functional*

At the general level, most processes whether natural or cultural are inanimate. As it was shown in the previous section, it is also true that parts of living entities are considered inanimate. There are exceptions to this rule. The birth of a child or a living entity is indeed an important stage in the cycle of life. While food (*meecowin*) and milk (*tootoosapoy*) are considered part of the cultural and people-created realm and are thus inanimate, the breasts (*mitootoosimuk*) that are the source

<sup>8</sup> In the past 40 years, I have noticed that there is a change taking place in the Cree language regarding the animate and inanimate form of the demonstrative pronoun “These.” The animate and inanimate form is slowly changing wherein there is a tendency to use the animate version in both cases. I believe that assimilative practices in education and other institutions, along with the large-scale communication systems, such as the television, are impacting these changes towards more simplified forms of Cree.



and passageway for the essential food of milk are considered animate. What other parts of the male and female anatomy are considered life-giving entities? What about the male and female organs? Note that the vagina (*mitesim*) is the animate life-giving entity which provides the baby's entrance into the world while the penis (*mitooroom*) is considered to be functionally "non-living" or inanimate.<sup>9</sup> The testicles (*mitusineemuk*) are recognized for their life-giving function and are therefore animate. Although they are part of a whole, certain parts of the body are considered animate, because they perform an "essential" life-giving function. What is most intriguing is that the heart (*mitey*), which is rhetorically and metaphorically embraced as the drumbeat of a nation in modern day powwows, is considered inanimate. Then, there is the breath of life. The process of breathing (*pugitutamowin*) is inanimate and the source and mechanism for breathing which is the lung (*ohpun*) is also inanimate.

### *Survival and instrumental*

One of the central philosophical guides to daily living for the Cree is the concept of *pimacihisowin*. The word stem *pimati-* or *pimaci-* relates to life or living. *Pimacihisowin* is therefore the process or act of survival. It is used in the traditional sense of learning to live off the land or in the modern sense of making a living. The word can be used in either an individual or social context. When it is stated in the third person singular "*Pimacihisow*" is used, while "*Pimacihisowuk*" is the plural form which translates as "They are enhancing living survival or making a living."

One of the toughest times of the year for survival is winter. The cold weather evokes a certain sense of danger and preparedness. While water and natural processes are inanimate, ice (*muskumee*) and snow (*koonu*) are animate. Clothing is an important part of winter survival, so part of it, is considered animate. Socks (*usigunuk*) and mitts (*ustisuk*) are animate, but shoes (*muskisinu*) and moccasins (*pagegineskisinu*) are inanimate. Pants (*mitasuk*) are animate, but the shirt (*pugiwuyan*) is inanimate.

How is the aesthetico-practical side of Cree life depicted? In the case of beads and beadworking, the former is categorized as a life force entity (animate) and the latter is a life force cremation (inanimate).<sup>10</sup> Why would beads be considered

9 Wolfart and Carroll (1973) mention the existence of a Cree R-dialect in Northwestern Saskatchewan but offer no substantive evidence. In 1975 when I was teaching a university Cree class, Bernadette Laliberte, an adult student from Beauval, stated that there had been a family who had spoken this dialect in the Canoe Lake region but they had already passed on. The other particular locations where the R occurs in the Cumberland House Cree N-dialect are in the words for frog (*uneegis* or *ureegis*) and ugly (*manatis* or *maratis*).

10 The use of the words animate and inanimate is problematic. The life force entity and the life force cremation are used instead. The word "cremation" is a combination of the words create and emanation. In this way the creative cultural construction side can be combined with the natural process side of "emanation".

as animate or life force entities? The word “*meegisuk*” or beads actually comes from the word *meegis* which was the original word for shells. It appears from its use that the beads had an aesthetico-religious dimension to them. All the related acts, actions and processes are inanimate. All cultural and natural processes are inanimate. Thread or *sestuk* is also considered as a life force entity but the needle or *saponigun* is inanimate.

Most of the tools, weapons, and instruments are inanimate, but certain key strategic necessities are made animate. The knife (*moogoman*), axe (*ceeguhigun*), saw (*keeskipocigun*) and gun (*paskisigun*) are inanimate, but the spear (*simagun*), bow (*ucapee*) and arrow (*ugusk*) are animate. While there is a greater or lesser degree of arbitrariness in these examples, it is still clear that certain items, which had a strategic and essential connection to survival, were indeed made animate.

### *Movement and stillness*

One of the main characteristics of life forms is movement or action. The animate form *wuskuweew* translates as “s/he moves” while *wuskuweemugun*, the inanimate form is the translation for “it moves.” As in the English language, you can make a move on someone or something in Cree. *Wuskuweestuhew* is used when you are making a move on someone, while *wuskuweestum* or *wuskuweetotum* is used when you are moving in on something.

There are some unique cases where what is considered inanimate in English is animate in Cree. In the case of a bat (*pugumatowunatik*) and ball (*toowan*), the former is considered inanimate while the ball is animate. In the context of canoeing, the paddle (*upoy*) is animate while the canoe (*ceeman*) is inanimate. *Otapanask*, which is the word for a car, is also animate. Note that in each of the cases of the ball, paddle and car there is a connection with something that moves. It is interesting to note that the airplane (*pimeenagun*) is inanimate. I believe that, in this case, the airplane is seen as an inanimate rendition in contrast to the bird, which also flies. The literal translation for airplane is “the thing that flies.”

What about the more modern developments such as the radio, TV and record player? One might automatically assume that all of them are inanimate, because they are part of the people-created sphere of culture, as well as being people creations or accessories. The surprise is that one of these entities is animate. The record player happens to be animate because it actually does move by going round and round.

### *Sacred and secular*

I think many people would be surprised to find that religion (*uyumiyawin*)

or the Cree religious belief system (*opuwamowin*) are both inanimate and appear on the cultural and people-created side of the categories. You will note that two different words are used to designate the Christian system versus the Cree traditional system. I believe that separate words were used not only because of the newness of Christianity but also because of the Cree perception on the nature of these two belief systems. The Cree word for Christian religions is *uyumiyawinu* and this comes from the word *uyumi* that translates as “speak.” This would generally describe the Christian practice of praying out loud. As a contrast, the Cree religious belief system or *opuwamowin* is based on the dream vision quest. The root word *puwa-* is included in the two interconnected words of dreaming (*puwatumowin*) and the dream vision quest (*opuwamowin*). The goal of the latter is to find a spirit helper (*puwagun*). The regular everyday dreams of people are covered by the word *puwatumowin*.

It is not the religious system itself but the sacred objects that are animated in the context of spirituality and the special ceremonies. The pipe (*ispaugun*), tobacco (*stemaw*), the stones or rocks (*usiniyuk*), and the crucifix (*umeyautik*) are animate. The use of a drum (*mistigusgeeg*) in the traditional context is animate but there is a shifting change where the drum is now beginning to be used in an inanimate sense when used in the more modern times as a toy. On the other hand, the rattle (*sehpicigun*) is animate. A traditional Cree Elder from Saskatchewan has stated that it is the rattle that can be brought into the sweat lodge (*mutotsan*) and not the drum.<sup>11</sup> There is also a connection between the rattle and the bell. Whether one is ringing the bell or shaking the rattle, the command form of the verb *sehpicige* is used.<sup>12</sup> The bell, in turn, is an animate term called *sehpicigun*. In these three latter cases, there is a connection to the sacred and all three are in the animate form. In conclusion, I would state that certain religious or sacred objects were perceived to have an inherent characteristic and connection with a powerful or magnanimous force and were therefore animated.

### *Powerful and ordinary*

The concept of power and magnanimity first comes through in the depiction of sacred objects as discussed in the previous section. It is also important to re-state that it is the entity itself rather than the process or structure that is animated. It must also be reiterated that a process whether it is natural or cultural is considered inanimate. Snow (*koonu*) is animate, but the process of a snowfall stated as “It is snowing” is inanimate. As stated before, water is inanimate, and so it is with the process of the rainfall as expressed in, “It is raining” (*kimowun*). On the other hand, a magnanimous natural force such as thunder that is literally translated

11 In conversation with the author on September 6, 2004 in Regina, Chief Sid Fiddler of Waterhen First Nation stated that he had learned this from Kawacatoose Cree Spiritual Elder Lawrence Tobacco.

12 There is a “w” to “h” in the Cumberland Cree dialect. For example *sewepicige* becomes *sehpicige*.

as thunderbirds (*pinesiyuk*) is animate. Lightning is considered an inanimate process and is stated as, “*E wastepunik*.” Although the thunder is heard and the flash of light is seen, the causal power and force is expressed as emanating from the thunderbird.

My final example deals with money. Crees sometimes quip about the connection between Europeans and money. Not only does *mooniyas*<sup>13</sup>, the colloquial expression for Europeans, rhyme with *sooniyas*, which is the word for money, but the latter is also connected with power. The word for treaty making in Cree is *tipuhumatowin* and it literally translates as “a measured amount in exchange.” With the historic exchange of goods and money, the latter would have been seen as a new powerful force especially in the new trade with the newcomers. Crees had recognized that for the European, money as well as the crucifix dealt with magnanimous power and were thus categorized as life force entities.

### *Large and small*

Size matters in the animate/inanimate designation. In the case of fruits, berries and nuts the shift from animate and inanimate occurs around the size of a raspberry and strawberry. The raspberry is animate and the strawberry is inanimate. Most of the larger fruits such as apples, oranges, peaches and plums are animate while blueberries, choke cherries, and saskatoons are inanimate. Large bushes and trees are animate while small weeds and grasses are inanimate. There is a tendency to say that all living entities are animate but such isn't the case. It is interesting that while the flower is inanimate the whole flower plant is animate. In the case of the grasses and the plains, both are inanimate.

### **Concluding comments**

First of all, the characterization of the animate and inanimate as living and non-living is inadequate. Not only are there cosmo-natural and processual cultural categories, but there are also the sacred and the secular, the whole/part debate, the movement activity aspect and the ideas of magnanimity and power. Also within the living category, there are important variations that include the life-giving forces and the centrality of survival. This life force idea is not limited to an anthropocentric or personhood vision as it includes not only human beings, but also plants, animals and other living entities. The age-old debate in Western philosophy about the dichotomous view of nature and culture is also reflected in a very general way in the animate and inanimate designation. But there is also qualitative difference on the degree to which certain entities and processes can be

<sup>13</sup> The connotation of the word *mooniyas* in Cree approximates the meaning of “the greenhorn.” When you accidentally did something wrong or were being careless, like cutting your foot, people would state that you were doing things like a European or greenhorn – *e mooniyahinigeyun*.

considered animate or inanimate. Instead of animate I have therefore been using 'life force entity' and life force 'cremanations' in place of the inanimate.

Secondly, while the argument in this paper extends that which was available in the existing literature, it is still a preliminary and introductory analysis that requires further work. There is also an interesting case where one word can be used as either animate or inanimate. I also found another word that was animate in one dialect and inanimate in another. Collaboration amongst the dialects and the different Algonquian languages will need to take place.

In the past ten years or so there has been a debate on animism in *Current Anthropology*, *Ethnos* and books by Harvey (2005), Descola and Palsson (1996) and Ingold (2000). Suffice it to say that an analysis on animism can not be done adequately without addressing the complementary system of "inanimism" or what I now refer to as the life force cremanation. I would also argue for a lifehood system rather than the narrower personhood concept.

Lastly, the interdisciplinary nature of history and anthropology, along with linguistics has been well stated in recent times. I would obviously confirm that in the case of the history of Indigenous peoples, the historical record would be greatly strengthened with a more careful, inclusive and critical examination of Indigenous cultures and languages. Part of the analysis and synthesis of the words and the discourse should also include a grammatical component. This particular paper shows the inadmissibility of the concept of Mother Earth in the traditional Cree Nehinuw sense and practice. While the writer is not closed to the idea and use of Mother Earth as a dynamic new aspect of culture change, I was testing its credibility as an authentic traditional Cree Nehinuw concept. I simply wanted to show by grammar and experience that it did not exist until more recent times. In the process of colonization and its many forms, the genuine and real land of the collective whole (*uskee*) held by the Crees had now evolved into a new concept of parcelled off land, reservations, and private land (*uskeegan*). New concepts of European religion and power were also reflected in the Cree Nehinuw language and worldview. Research practice will therefore need to include a constructive critical dimension to Indigenous concepts, ideas, practices and understandings that are based on a stronger recognition of Indigenous languages and cultures.

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# Hands across the sea: Orkney and the Hudson's Bay Company

Bryce Wilson

The title of this paper reflects the long and inter-twined histories of the Orkney Islands and Canada and especially the contributions of Orkney people to the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>1</sup> *Hands Across the Sea* is also the title of the summer exhibition at Stromness Museum arranged to coincide with the Canadian Homecoming in May 2007, the latest in a series of visits between Orkney and Canada over the past thirty years to renew and cement historic and family ties.

Many Scots have family ties with Canada. These chiefly date from the emigration that started in the 1830s, with Canada emerging from the fur trade to a farming economy, but few have such a long association as Orcadians do. While many Orkney folk of the nineteenth century became pioneer farmers, uprooting their families from their overcrowded island homes to build a new life in the spacious prairies of Canada, many of them already had a family link with the HBC. From the late eighteenth century the Company's ships followed a route around the north of Scotland to avoid the war-torn English Channel, calling at Stromness for fresh provisions. From at least the year 1702 they were instructed to recruit Orkney men for their fur-trading outposts around Hudson Bay. The Orcadians were found to be a hardy, adaptable people, used to turning their hands to a variety of trades. They were skilled boatmen, and could withstand the rigours of the climate. According to one observer, they were more sober and tractable than the Irish. "They were a close, prudent, quiet people, strictly faithful to their employers, and solidly avaricious." (Umfreville 1954: 210). By 1779 more than three quarters of the workforce were Orcadian. For almost two centuries the close connection between the HBC and Orkney endured without a break, to their mutual advantage.

The HBC provided a rare opportunity for young Orcadians to escape the lairds the estate owners who dominated island life and, with the blessing of the parish ministers, kept their tenants in a state of near servitude. The HBC was seen by the lairds as a menace to the natural order of society. By the late eighteenth century the selective emigration of young men left Orkney with 25% more females than males, who, according to one contemporary critic, "must lie as a useless burden on the country; and what is worse, many of them must be destitute of husbands, by which means they degenerated into that wretched species of being called Old Maids, so that to our other evils, that of being pestered with these female

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter HBC



“Grimalkins” is also added” (Fea 1775: 78). One Church of Scotland minister attacked those who abandoned wives, children and parents to enter the service of the Company, eventually returning with enough money to outbid “honest farmers”. According to him, they brought home none of the virtues of the “savage” but all of the vices - indolence, dissipation and irreligion (Liddell 1791-99).

One group, however, who welcomed the attentions of the Company were the merchants of the up-and-coming seaport of Stromness, on the sheltered natural harbour of Hamnavoe (Plate 3). In the year 1700 there were only half a dozen houses on the shore side, but the growth of trans-Atlantic trade transformed the place. The arrival of the outward-bound HBC ships in June became the highlight of the town’s social calendar, and a good time was had by all. According to Isobel Finlayson, en route to Hudson Bay in 1840:

The arrival of the Company’s ships is hailed by the inhabitants of this remote corner with no small degree of pleasure and in this place the primitive custom of early dinners and substantial hot suppers still prevails. The tables literally groan under the good things that were placed upon them; the evening never closed until the national and inspiring glass of whisky punch had passed around, when many a joke was uttered and many a song sung, under the effects of its potent and cheering influence. (Finlayson 1840)

The main event of the visit was the ball held on the quarter-deck of the principal vessel:

The whole ship was scrubbed clean, the masts were decorated with bunting, and a canvas awning erected in case the weather should be disagreeable. At seven o’clock precisely, the captain and some well-known local matron would lead off the dance, at intervals gentlemen would give soulful renderings of the songs most in vogue, and very frequently all would copiously refresh themselves. (Finlayson 1840)

Stromness merchants did a prosperous trade in supplying personal goods to Company workers, who sent in their orders by the returning ships in the autumn, everything from a christening robe to a tombstone. Spelling was fairly informal. One customer who ordered for his wife “a fine cloke”, two years running received a brass clock (Inkster n.d.: 1).

The majority of the Orkney men were employed as craftsmen and labourers. A minority became clerks and traders, while a handful rose to play a significant part in the development of the Company. Joseph Isbister from Stromness joined in 1726 and rose to become governor of Albany and Prince of Wales trading forts. It was he

who introduced the York boat as an efficient carrier of goods on the rivers of Rupert's Land. William Tomison, from South Ronaldsay, served for fifty years from 1760-1810. Brought up to the life of a poor crofter, he began as a labourer at Fort York, at the time when the HBC was forced to begin moving inland from the Bay to compete with independent traders. He rose to be Inland Governor, facing down hostile competitors to establish Company posts as far west as Fort Edmonton. He has been described as "the most notable servant of the Company, in his time" (Morton 1973: 276). He is well remembered in Orkney by the educational bequest which funded the building and running of a school, Tomison's Academy, in his native parish.

Another well-known Orkney man on long term service to the Company was Dr. John Rae. In contrast to Tomison's humble beginnings, Rae was brought up at the Hall of Clestrain, Orphir, son of the factor of a large estate who also served as employment agent for the Company. Rae's unpublished biography records that as a child, he enjoyed outdoor pursuits, ranging the shore and hills and lochs around Clestrain for fish and game. Like other Orkney boys, he was a keen and skilled sailor, having been taught seamanship at an early age:

Two excellent boats were provided for us by our kind father; the one, small and light and handy for fishing, and as a sort of tender to the other, which was about 18 feet long and admirably fitted for a crew of boys. (Rae 1813-54, cited in Wilson 1993: 9-10)

After graduating from the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh in 1833, Dr. John Rae signed on for a single voyage on the HBC ship *Prince of Wales*, which due to the early onset of winter was locked in the ice of the Hudson Bay until the following year. Rae so enjoyed the experience that he signed on with the Company as surgeon/clerk at Moose Factory. Here he continued the outdoor pursuits that he had enjoyed in Orkney, finding it natural to respect and learn from the methods of the Native people. As time went on he was noticed by Sir George Simpson, who appointed him to lead an expedition to complete the mapping of the Arctic shores of Rupert's Land. Over the next decade Rae led three of the four expeditions in which he was involved, two of them specifically in search of Sir John Franklin's vanished expedition in search of the Northwest Passage. His major contributions to arctic exploration were undoubtedly shaped by his reliance on Native techniques of survival, distinctly unfashionable among the nineteenth century British naval establishment. He almost completed the mapping begun by others of Canada's Arctic coastline, traversing thousands of miles on foot, and over wintering his men without starvation or illness. He was the first to bring evidence of the fate of Franklin's expedition. In his later years he wrote widely on the natural history, geography and anthropology of the north. When he died in 1893, some of his possessions were bequeathed to Stromness Museum, of which he was an early

corresponding member. The museum now hosts a permanent display on his life and work (Plate 4). Rae's contributions to arctic exploration are to be commemorated in a second Orkney museum. Rae's birthplace, the Hall of Clestrain, is now scheduled to be restored as part of the proposed Orkney Boat Museum. Alongside displays concerning the Islands' maritime history, the early life of the explorer will be interpreted, and most especially, the years in Orkney that prepared him for the Arctic.

During Rae's lifetime, his major contributions to arctic exploration - his methods and achievements - were dismissed by the Victorian establishment. He discovered the tragic fate of the Franklin expedition, and identified the last navigable link of the Northwest Passage that they sought - Rae Strait, east of King William Island. Nevertheless, the widowed Lady Franklin succeeded in passing the credit for such achievements to her late husband and his party who, according to the inscription on the Franklin monument in London's Waterloo Place, "forged the last link with their lives".

Rae spent many years in the HBC service before retiring and marrying Catherine Thomson, of a Canadian/Irish family, and settling in London. It was common, if not officially approved, for long serving Company men to take Native wives, according to "the custom of the country". There is no hint of this in the record of John Rae, other than a letter to Sir George Simpson, in which Rae admitted that he had no children that he knew of. Several years ago, however, the visitor book of Stromness Museum was signed by a Canadian visitor, "Douglas Rae -g. g. grandson of Dr. John Rae, Arctic explorer".

Many long forgotten tales can now be told of family connections between Orcadians and Canada's First Nation peoples, stories suppressed with the advance of the nineteenth century when white women were at last allowed into Canadian territories. White women assumed social superiority over mixed-blood women; white settlers increasingly displaced Natives from their traditional hunting grounds and way of life; compulsory education attempted to remove the last vestiges of Native culture.

While many HBC workers left their Native wives and families behind when they returned to live in Orkney, some mixed-blood families came to live in the islands, and there are many descendants. In the early nineteenth century Elizabeth and William Flett of the Red River Settlement had an Orkney father and a mother of Cree-Orcadian ancestry. When their parents split up, Elizabeth and William were sent to live with relatives in Orkney, and never left. Elizabeth's great, great granddaughter, Mary Bichan, has since donated a beaded watch-holder and an ambrotype photograph of William to Stromness Museum, where they take their place in a display that relates family connections between Orkney and Canada (Plate 5).

William Wylie, from the Orkney island of Burray, joined the Company in the 1860s. At Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca he took a mixed-blood wife and raised a family, never returning to Orkney. The family link was never lost. For over a century letters came and went between Burray and Fort Chipewyan. William's grandson, Horace Wylie, kept up the correspondence. Each Christmas he sent a food parcel to Burray. When at last in the 1960s Horace visited Orkney, he was surprised to find how advanced the islands were. William had told his family of the primitive housing and subsistence farming that had spurred him to seek a better life in Canada. The food parcels came to an end. In 1988, as Orkney museums officer, I contributed to the Fort Chipewyan bicentennial exhibition and conference in Edmonton. This was followed by a visit to "Fort Chip", and a chance to meet Horace Wylie and other local families with Orkney names, the Fletts and Louttits. The following year a party of senior pupils from Fort Chipewyan raised funds to visit Scotland and have a week long visit to Orkney (Plate 6).

Sometimes family connections can be made after several generations of silence. During the Canadian Homecoming to Orkney in 1999, Kim Foden was approached by a visitor researching an Orkney family. She later recalled, "Noticing the difficulty he was having with this surname I asked him if the name was Twatt. He winced slightly but was surprised to find he was talking to one. Twatt is my maiden name and I explained that Twatt is a good old Orkney place name and surname and that the family appeared to stem from Twatt in Birsay" (Twatt 2007: 2). This chance encounter led Kim Foden to research the story of Magnus Twatt, a relative of her own, who worked for the HBC during the last three decades of the eighteenth century.

Magnus Twatt grew up on a farm in the township of Kirbuster in Orphir. In 1771 he joined the HBC as a labourer at York Factory at £6 a year and in 1776 was described by Humphrey Marten as "a very handy man" (cited in Twatt 2007: 6-7). He made Canada his home, raising a family with his Cree wife, Margaret. By his death in 1801 he had risen to the post of trader, at £40 a year. His educational bequest led to the building of a school in his native Orkney parish. Magnus and Margaret Twatt had a daughter, Elizabeth, and two sons, Magnus and William, referred to in Orkney parlance as Betsy, Mansack and Willock. While Betsy married a Caithness man and left to farm in the Red River Settlement, the boys continued in Cree culture. They travelled, traded and hunted as Crees. Mansack Twatt was referred to in Company records as "a good hunter who knows his value & the principal of our upper Indians" (cited in Twatt 2007: 13).

The name Sturgeon Lake had occurred in records of Magnus Twatt's travels. During her research early in 2001 Kim Foden found a website with a fax number for Sturgeon Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan and sent a message asking, "Has anyone ever heard of Magnus Twatt?" The reply came, "You have found your

relations!” This led Kim and her family to undertake a journey to Sturgeon Lake in 2001 to get to know their Cree cousins. Three years later their visit was returned with a memorable visit to Orkney by a group of Cree dancers, singers and storytellers. They took with them an invitation to the people of Orkney to attend the Sturgeon Lake annual powwow in 2005. At Sturgeon Lake, a stone circle has been erected to commemorate the visit to Orkney in 2004.

Sturgeon Lake First Nation had originally been named William Twatt Cree Band after their leader, Magnus Twatt’s grandson, William. He was one of nine chiefs who met the Queen’s Commissioner at Fort Carlton in September 1876 to negotiate Treaty Six in order to preserve his people’s way of life and culture. With buffalo herds on the wane and settlers making more and more demands on the land, the chiefs signed over 121,000 square miles of land in exchange for one square mile for each family of five people, along with grants and benefits. Until well into the twentieth century state education was designed to assimilate Native peoples into European culture. Native peoples are now regaining their self-esteem by recalling their roots, and are tackling the problems of life in the twenty-first century.

Another moving example of lost links renewed is documented in *What Lies behind the Picture? A Personal Journey into Cree Ancestry*, recently published by Vernon Wishart. Wishart grew up with his brother, William, and sister, Shirley, on the prairies of central Alberta in the years before the Second World War. His father, Roy, was manager of a grain silo. Vernon had the usual childhood of a white Canadian, playing football and hockey and helping out on the neighbouring farms. But when he went to college and became an ordained minister he became very aware of the negative social attitudes among whites towards Native and mixed-blood people. Of their own family, Vernon and his siblings knew little. It was only in the 1960s, years after the death of their father, that Shirley Wishart chanced on the family tale that changed their lives. Roy Wishart had given no hint of his ancestry, but the story that now emerged made it clear that he was silent to protect his family from the racial attitudes that prevailed. A book of local history that had been published in a small town called Rosebud, northeast of Calgary, included a tale of the Wisharts. In the year 1887 James Wishart, heading home on a thirty mile journey by horse-drawn sleigh, was caught in a severe blizzard. After two nights in the open he struggled for miles on hands and knees and collapsed within yards of his house. His wife Eliza had to cut off his frostbitten toes. “Eliza’s knowledge of Indian medicine and surgery”, the story goes, “saved Jim’s life”. Eliza Wishart, born Flett, was Vernon’s great grandmother, and this tale was the first hint of his mixed-blood ancestry.

The quest on which Vernon Wishart embarked brought him on many journeys in Western Canada, to the United States and to Orkney. With the help of his sister, Shirley, he traced back through 250 years a tangle of Orkney/Native

ancestry among Wisharts, Fletts and Spences, Cree and Assiniboiné. William Flett, from the township of Redland in Orkney, had become a hunter and boatman with the HBC, and reached the position of master of several trading posts, aided by his Cree wife, Saskatchewan. Thomas Wishart travelled from Orkney to Fort Garry with the naval explorer John Franklin in 1819. He found work in the growing Selkirk colony and married Barbara Spence, daughter of James Spence from Birsay in Orkney and his Assiniboiné wife, Mary. Their son, James, married Eliza, great grand-daughter of William Flett and Saskatchewan.

As time went on, the lives of James and Eliza were disrupted by growing unrest. The Native and Métis peoples were increasingly marginalized by new settlers, who were supported by the Canadian government. After many trials the Wisharts finally settled in Alberta, by the Rosebud River, the first settlers in the area that would be known as Redland, and where the tale of the blizzard of 1887 would be recorded. Vernon Wishart's book is thoroughly and thoughtfully researched, with vivid tales of family hardship, discrimination and heroism in relation to national events. It sheds further light on the challenges and adventures of Orkney men in the Hudson's Bay Company, and the undying Orkney links in the families they founded among the Native peoples.

The Material Histories project, of which this workshop is part, will make a significant contribution to a long-neglected aspect of our social history. It is to be hoped that it will encourage others to engage in this field.

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# Caught between two worlds: the experiences of a Cree curator of archaeology

**Kevin Brownlee**

“Everything happens for a reason”

This saying has special meaning to me in my journey through life. In order to understand where I am coming from I must start at the beginning. I was adopted at birth to a non-Aboriginal family in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. My birth mother is Scottish and father is Cree. I always knew that I was adopted and that part of my heritage was Cree. Call it fate, but I was always drawn to my father's Cree heritage and while growing up my adopted parents encouraged this interest. I was influenced by an uncle who had a passion for understanding how things were done in the past... How did people make their tools? How was fire made? Basically how people lived in the past. Much of what my uncle taught me transcended cultures across the globe. One vivid memory was when I was seven and he took me to “look for arrow heads” in farmers’ fields of Southern Manitoba. One of the most important aspects of this fascination with this activity at this young age was the connection to my own culture and I thought a First Nations person made the stone tools I collected. Because I did not grow up with my Cree father, I never learned my language, or history from Cree Elders. Archaeology and the tools I found were that connection. My interest was not in the fragments of stone, rather the stories behind the tools. I had many questions... Who made this? When? What was their life like?

This passion has continued to grow over the years and I try and inspire others, particularly Aboriginal youth, about our ancient heritage that we should be very proud of. I have since reconnected with my birth father and in hindsight I would never have learned my language and culture from him as he is also disconnected from his own heritage. Everything happens for a reason.

I act as a bridge between First Nation people and archaeologists. While I may not agree with all interpretations that archaeologists arrive at, archaeology is an important piece of the puzzle when putting our history together. First Nations cultures and history is very complex and archaeologists are at a disadvantage because no history books were written prior to the arrival of Europeans, and much of what people used in the past was perishable and does not preserve over time. Archaeologists only see the durable material culture, a fraction of what people had, made and used. Archaeologists study this material culture to understand the past. We use science to provide radiocarbon dates to develop chronologies; ceramic residue can be tested to find out what people cooked in clay vessels; trace exotic



materials to understand trade networks and examine animal bones to look at resource use.

Because archaeologists can become so focused on objects, they often forget about the people. This is particularly true of archaeology done twenty or thirty years ago in Manitoba. It was at a time when consulting with First Nations communities was uncommon and virtually no First Nations people went into archaeology as a profession. Technical reports were the norm for most archaeologists. I was told that in the 1970s if you were in anthropology and did not want to deal with people, you focused on archaeology. If you wanted to work with people then you studied cultural anthropology.

While things have changed a great deal with a greater involvement of First Nations people, we are not encouraged to return the results of our work back to the descendants of the material we study in a non-technical format. In Canada, tenure-track positions are awarded on the number of refereed journal articles you have published, edited volumes compiled and conference papers presented. Tenure is not awarded on the basis of how many display cases are developed or the number of public friendly reports written. As a result, information regarding First Nations people generated by archaeologists tends to remain inaccessible to First Nations people. I see myself filling part of this role as a Curator of Archaeology. It is my job to create exhibits, outreach programming and actively integrate First Nations people into research and address issues that are important to them.

During the past fifteen years I have worked in Northern Manitoba and one of the main concerns voiced by Elders is that they are worried that the youth are losing touch with their past and heritage. Some of these Elders see archaeology as playing an important role in addressing this concern although this is not the only opinion I have heard. When I first started in archaeology, some First Nations people told me that I was a traitor. They said archaeology was a profession of others studying us. Thankfully, I have not heard this opinion in many years. Today, more and more First Nations people are entering the field of archaeology and I don't feel so alone. I was certainly not the first Aboriginal or First Nations person to pursue this career path; I have had others who influenced and encouraged me along the way.

In my job, I often try and position myself back when I first became interested in archaeology. What inspired me the most were the stories behind the tools; archaeology tried to decipher a past life. My uncle was probably unaware what an impact he had showing me how things were made. Seeing, doing, trying and experimenting moulded me into the archaeologists I am today.

I often question how archaeologists arrive at identifying tool use. Even the

most obvious tools I will question and want to experiment with to prove or disprove our basic assumptions. Particularly when dealing with perishable materials that are not recovered from archaeological sites, but we know that people in the past were using them. As a practicing archaeologist, I continue to be amazed at the skill and craftsmanship of our ancestors, everything from the delicate barbs on a harpoon to a finely chipped spear point. I only wish I had the time to test them all out. Was a scraper actually used to scrape? What were scrapers used on? In manufacturing replica tools, I begin to understand the steps of manufacture and then attempt to test out the functions.

I often reference the ethnographic collection at The Manitoba Museum and consult with Dr. Katherine Pettipas, the Curator of Native Ethnology and Hudson's Bay Company collection, regarding the perishable material culture when researching artefacts from archaeological sites. I will also involve First Nations community members in the interpretation and experimentation process. I have been warned about doing this from other archaeologists, particularly when the tools I am examining are thousands of years old. They are concerned that I am applying a direct historical approach suggesting a direct link to current populations. In response, I argue that regardless whether any genetic or cultural continuity exists, for thousands of years the environment has remained relatively constant in Manitoba's northern boreal forest. During the past 6,000 years the same resources have been available and many of the same tasks and activities have not changed. Therefore, interviewing current community members on interpreting tool function and identifying activities, projects and goals are essential towards our understanding of the archaeological materials. I have found this type of research model is very fruitful and has dramatically improved my interpretations and lead to better conclusions.

Four years ago I was hired as the Curator of Archaeology at The Manitoba Museum. I replaced Dr. E. Leigh Syms who had mentored me since I was fifteen years old. My first experience working at the museum was in the fall of 1993 when I was hired to help catalogue 25,000 artefacts from Northern Manitoba. I worked with the Manitoba government during the summer and helped to collect the artefacts that I was hired to catalogue. Although I was just a student at the time and inexperienced in cataloguing I often challenged the lab supervisor in his identifications. Unusual stone tools that were identified as "hide scrapers" didn't work for me. I had tanned hides and the angle on the tool was wrong. The supervisor had no practical experience in hide tanning and didn't understand my concern. Over the next few years I would be in disagreement over tool identification and continued to respond, "You try tanning a hide or making a clay pot or bone tool and you'll see what I am talking about". Experimental archaeology is not nearly as prominent in North America as it is in Europe. This is unfortunate as I feel this technique is extremely important. If properly documented

experimental archaeology provides a unique step-by-step life history of an artefact from when a raw material was selected through tool production, final tool use, reuse and discard. To the non-professional, terms such as biface, scraper, utilized flake, retouched flake mean nothing. Visually showing how tools were used is more engaging to the public.

When speaking to First Nations people they relate to hunting, fishing, trapping, picking medicine and berries. Archaeologists help to narrate the past when it is placed into terms people understand. For example, projectile points are beautiful to look at; you can study them to understand skill, the art in the finished tool and they are used for hunting. I have spent a lot of time in Northern Manitoba during work and vacations. I help community members with fishing, hunting and trapping. I can't imagine sitting around the fire and not listening to hunting stories. The big one that got away, the dreams that led to a successful kill. Every projectile point in every museum has a story attached. We don't have time machines to know these stories but we must always be mindful of them.

The way I see archaeology is an area of study that strives to create a story or narrative of the past. We use science, various archaeological methods, ethnographic comparison, historical documents, oral interviews, and First Nations participation and weave these together into a cohesive narrative. Is there one right answer or correct interpretation? No, of course not. This is why a collection can be studied and re-interpreted by many archaeologists arriving at very different conclusions. I draw a connection between the archaeologist and the First Nations tradition of story telling. Archaeologists are storytellers, or at least I feel that I am a storyteller, weaving results from various archaeological methods together.

I would like to touch on a number of concepts and issues that relate to museums and archaeology. My involvement within the Aboriginal community has shed light on the important connection between people and the environment. This concept was not part of my education growing up as I was raised in a non-Aboriginal family in an urban setting. I spend a lot of my free time learning on the land and from the people of the north. Every experience makes me a better archaeologist as I see how resources are used and how the land teaches us. My focus in archaeology has been in the northern boreal forest of Manitoba. I feel that I am at a disadvantage interpreting the archaeology without spending a lifetime on the land. The seasonal cycles and movement across the landscape is scheduled. Resources may or may not appear and how does this impact the people? I hope to one day take time away from the museum to live off the land and experience each season. This experience, I am sure, would be an important part of my education and make me a better archaeologist. To accommodate for my inexperience of the environment, I rely on community members to assist me on the interpretations. While this improves my work, I cannot duplicate the years of experience many of

my northern friends and adopted family have.

I am also at a disadvantage because I do not speak the Cree language. Language is vital to understanding the past. I can follow conversations but require help from others who are fluent when I conduct interviews. I was shown fish weirs in Northern Manitoba last summer and was told that the Cree name for fish weirs is *Pichipo-othogan*. This means to draw in and also means plate because fish are an extremely important part of the diet to current people and to those who inhabited the boreal forest in the past.

Art is very important to First Nations people. Just one look at beaded or porcupine quilled outfits in museums and you see the care and detail in the stitching and decoration. These items were truly made with love. Most Indigenous people make no distinction between art and technology. In order to take down a moose or caribou with a spear or arrow we need a tip that is sharp enough to penetrate the hide of an animal. When you examine projectile points in museums they tend to far exceed the minimum requirement of being able to pierce a hide. Projectile points are beautiful works of art. The production of such items shows respect for the animal(s) to be shot and showing respect to animals ensures that hunting will continue to be successful in the future.

My Master's thesis focused on bone and antler technology, which continues to be of great interest to me. Understanding how the non-consumable parts of animals are used is very important for archaeologists. Faunal analysis is one of the major areas of study in archaeology. Animal bones recovered during an excavation have huge interpretive value. I was told once that a nomadic hunting group would relocate their camp after a moose was shot due to its large size of 1,500 pounds. While I agree that an entire moose is too large to move in one piece, one only needs to cut it up and the entire animal can be brought back to a camp. The effort expended to cut a moose up and haul it to a camp is much less than trying to relocate an entire camp. Also moose tend to favour areas that are not suitable for camping.

Another interpretation that I disagreed with tried to explain why so many beaver phalanges (paw bones) were recovered at a fur trade post despite the absence of other beaver bones. The explanation provided by the archaeologists was that the phalanges were left attached to the beaver pelt and brought back to the post at which time the feet were cut off the pelt and discarded in a refuse pit near the post. My first issue is that beaver feet are normally broken when the animal is being skinned to facilitate the removal of the pelt. Second, beaver meat and fat is a very important food source for First Nations people. My explanation is that the entire animal was brought back to the fur trade post skinned and the animal consumed. Most of the large identifiable bones were likely broken up to remove the fat and

burnt. I would have been interested in if there was a difference in number of front feet compared to the hind feet. Hind feet are consumed by Cree people today and are considered a delicacy. The front feet were likely not consumed and discarded after the animal was skinned. A very short conversation with a trapper during the research would have completely changed the archaeologist's conclusions.

During my Master's thesis research, I examined bone and antler tools that dated to 4,000 BP. I replicated tools, interviewed northern First Nations people and asked for advice on how the tools may have been used then tested out the suggested uses. A common response to my questions on use was... "Why do the tools have to have only one function?" They would proceed to list a number of possible functions, which I then tested. This response made me question the validity of studying wear patterns on bone and antler tools. If tools were used for multiple purposes the idea that by studying the wear patterns to conclude a function seems irrelevant. Further during replication and experimentation, I realized that many of the tools would have some degree of wear and tear on the surfaces. If, for example, a bone tool was placed in a hide bag with stone tools the process of placing the tools in the bag and removing them would create parallel striations that could be misinterpreted as wear patterns from use. I found that during the process of making and replicating tools a dialogue would occur. All raw materials have different properties and the choice of one over another was based on the most advantageous properties for the tool being constructed. Inuit soapstone carvers describe how the stone dictates the final form and the carver brings that form out. I find the same is true when I make utilitarian tools. The raw material is alive and has a spirit and talks to you. If you don't have a clear mind you can't listen to the material and your work will suffer.

Site surveying is one of the preliminary activities conducted by archaeologists. Predictive models have been created to identify high potential areas that should be investigated. A significant amount of time and money has been put into modelling where archaeological sites should be found. One of the drawbacks of these models is that they can never identify landmarks that have cultural significance. Last summer the Chief of Pickerel Narrows, Leslie Baker, invited me into the community. I had known him for many years and only recently he began talking about conducting archaeology in his territory. He said he had some very important sites he wanted me to officially document. I was shown cultural landscapes, told stories that explain features in the landscape. Chief Baker took me to three separate locations known to himself and a few of the senior community members where First Nations people had mined quartz. These mines were dug directly into the bedrock to expose quartz veins. Millions of small quartz flakes surrounded the large pits in the ground. Quartz is not the easiest material to use for the production of tools. Despite my bias that this was a poor quality material, many generations had returned to these locations to extract quartz for stone tools. The

largest quarry that I recorded was 24 feet long by 8 feet wide by 8 feet deep. These quarries were the first to be documented in Manitoba. In hindsight, no archaeologists would have ever found these quarries as they were unsuitable for camping and no computer generated model would have located these sites. It is astonishing that this knowledge still remains in the consciousness of current people especially since stone tools have not been made or used for a few hundreds of years. In working with First Nations communities across Manitoba I have never been shown anything like this before and perhaps it is a trust issue. I may be Cree or a First Nations person but that does not mean that I am trusted immediately; trust can only be earned.

I would like to conclude with discussing the concept of history. First Nations people have used the environment as a history book. Events of the recent and distant past are recorded in the landscape. Where people camped, the location of graves, sacred landscapes are all recorded in the oral histories and triggered by travelling across the landscape. First Nations people are now spending less time on the land than any point in the past. In many situations the land cannot support large numbers of people drawing on resources. Education and health are delivered to reserves and people are just not on the land as they once were. The land is also being exploited for resources including wood, minerals, and in Manitoba hydroelectric dams are flooding traditional territories. Our history book is the environment and landscape, which is being destroyed. The youth are losing touch with their history and heritage because they are not on the land hearing the stories.

I feel it is essential that a holistic approach is taken to the documentation of First Nations history that includes oral history, sacred landscapes, archaeology, ethnology, history and science. A new history book can be developed only if these are recorded prior to the landscape being destroyed and before the Elders pass away. With an altered landscape and fewer people living and travelling on the land our history is in jeopardy. We must adapt and ensure that future generations have access to their history.

Ekosi.



# Object journeys: outreach work between National Museums Scotland and the Tłıchǵ

Chantal Knowles

Objects are always undertaking new journeys as they physically move with people, between people through exchange, and are used or engaged with by their makers, owners or users. These journeys diverge from the biographies of individuals or groups who are temporarily or transiently associated with them. The journeys that objects are taken on are both physical and metaphorical and bind together all the individuals whose personal histories are caught up with them in a network of stories and experiences. The collection of nineteenth century Athapaskan<sup>1</sup> artefacts held by National Museums Scotland<sup>2</sup> consists of 240 objects, each with individual ‘travelogues’ or stories associated with them. These travelogues began to be recorded once the objects entered the museum and developed as they began to be viewed as a coherent unit; a ‘collection’. In 2006 the collection embarked upon another significant and symbolic journey which brought 40 artefacts back to the Northwest Territories<sup>3</sup> the region from which they originated, providing an opportunity for the descendants of their makers and the traders of the artefacts to engage with them. The return journey of these artefacts from Scotland to Canada has also provided an opportunity to reflect on the past, on the craftsmanship involved in their production, and to encode the objects with their own set of contemporary meanings. Yellowknife, capital of the NWT, had been a manned trading post or ‘fort’ for the Hudson’s Bay Company<sup>4</sup> but was now a city with a population of 18,000. In this context the objects resonated differently as they were viewed by the indigenous communities, other Canadians and foreign tourists. This twenty-first century journey was realised through an exhibition displayed in the territorial museum, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre<sup>5</sup>, an outreach programme to the communities, a published catalogue and an online catalogue.

The exhibition and associated activities were the culmination of five years of work in partnership with the PWNHC, NMS, the Tłıchǵ Government (formerly the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council)<sup>6</sup> and the University of Dundee and was inspired by the nineteenth century fur trade collection held by NMS. The existence of this

<sup>1</sup>In this paper the terms Athapaskan and Dene are both used to refer to the language and cultural group in the sub-arctic and Northwest Territories region of Canada. Historically, Athapaskan has been the more commonly used term, but in recent times Dene has become more current.

<sup>2</sup>Hereafter NMS. <sup>3</sup>Hereafter NWT. <sup>4</sup>Hereafter HBC. <sup>5</sup>Hereafter PWNHC.

<sup>6</sup>Throughout this paper the term Tłıchǵ is used to describe the group formerly known as the Dogrib. This ethnonym was adopted by the Tłıchǵ Government on the completion of the land claim.



collection has provided the impetus and the physical focus of a sustained partnership between the museum and the Tł̥ch̥, enabling the redisplay, reinterpretation and, ultimately, a shared research programme on an important part of the NMS collection. This relationship between all the partners of the project has slowly evolved through a series of visits to Scotland by representatives of the partners and fieldwork in the region by NMS curatorial and conservation staff. For NMS this work has led to a re-evaluation of the collection, its importance to our respective communities and NMS's role in capturing Tł̥ch̥ history (and Scotland's part in their history) through the collection. The project, which is ongoing, has enabled NMS to rethink its collection strategy with particular regard to communities and cultures already represented in the collections.

In this paper I want to share with you the process of this journey, how it was brought about and what might be considered as its legacy. In essence I want to create a 'travelogue' for the objects and collection charting their multiple 'homes', uses and interpretation.

## **History of the collection**

The NMS Athapaskan collection is internationally known and highly regarded. The story of how and why these pieces were collected for the museum when it was a new institution that did not yet have a permanent home has been widely published (see Kerr 1953; Clarke and Idiens 1974; Idiens 1979). My aim here is to provide a background summary from which to discuss the acquisition of the artefacts, the exhibition and the outreach project.

The National Museum of Scotland was founded in 1854 as the Industrial Museum of Scotland. Since then it has gone through several name changes but in essence has continued with the same purpose for over 150 years. The first Director of the Museum, George Wilson, was also Regius Chair of Technology at Edinburgh University. Wilson noted in a public lecture shortly after the museum's foundation that 'the purpose of the Industrial Museum of Scotland was to illustrate not Scottish industry alone but the industrial arts of all nations and provide an opportunity to show 'the world to Scotland and Scotland to the World'.<sup>7</sup> This emphasis on the industrial goes beyond how we might define the term today and, in Wilson's view, included ethnographic material. In his words the museum wished 'to include works of Industrial Art, which owe more of their commercial value to their workmanship than to their material, such as Ivory Carvings, artificial flowers,...and all similar objects whose Industrial value is increased by their beauty of Design, form, or color [sic], but which are not in general, in the full sense of the

<sup>7</sup> Citation from The Scotsman newspaper relating to a lecture on the Industrial Museum given by George Wilson in 1854.

term, works of fine art'.<sup>8</sup> Although the museum was founded in 1854 it did not have a permanent purpose-built home until 1866. During this intervening period George Wilson used his time to amass a variety of artefacts related to all sections of the new museum in order to be able to fill the new galleries with relevant and splendid artefacts. Unfortunately his early death in 1859 meant he never saw the galleries realised.

Wilson's collecting strategy was to use the networks created by the emigration of Scots across the globe as part of trade, missionary and explorative enterprises. Wilson created a network of influential friends who effectively became agents for the museum, passing on the call for artefacts and encouraging others to participate in the creation of the new museum through the donation or acquisition of artefacts on his behalf. Amongst these agents was Wilson's brother Daniel, a professor at the University of Toronto, who forwarded a letter on his behalf requesting specimens and outlining specific criteria to George Simpson, a Scotsman and Governor of the HBC. Simpson endorsed Wilson's request and passed it on to a number of HBC men (most of whom were Scots or of Scots descent) working at the forts or trading posts. The request played upon these expatriates' fondness for 'home' and their sense of national pride, prompting one of them, Robert Campbell, to write:

...whatever could be procured in this country for the National Museum of Scotland – I am sure that Scotchmen in general in whatever clime they be, will feel it both a pleasure, and honour, to respond to the call.<sup>9</sup>

The response to this opportunistic letter campaign meant that between 1858 and 1862 the museum received several consignments of artefacts stretching from Inuit communities in the Eastern Arctic to the Athapaskan outposts of the Northwest. Amongst those who made these collections was Bernard Rogan Ross who was Chief Trader at Fort Simpson from 1858-62 and in charge of the Mackenzie River District. Ross noted in correspondence accompanying a consignment of artefacts for the museum:

These intellectual occupations serve to enliven our very long and monotonous winters and are a source of great and inexhaustible pleasure'.<sup>10</sup>

This correspondence, the attendant lists and notes that reside in the museum archives are one of the principal reasons why the collection is now so highly regarded. There are clear collecting instructions and correspondence relating to the collectors' interpretations of these, which gives researchers today the opportunity

<sup>8</sup> George Wilson to Sir George Simpson, 1 January 1856, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B.239/c/10, fo. 236.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Campbell to George Wilson, 5 May 1859, NMS Archives.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Rogan Ross to Thomas Archer, 1 May 1863, NMS Archives.

to examine the means and manner in which items were collected and others excluded from collection (Plate 7).

The result of the work was the arrival of almost 240 documented artefacts relating to the Athapaskan speaking Dene communities. Amongst these were approximately 40 items relating to the Tłıchǫ First Nation. For the Tłıchǫ today this collection (along with material at the Smithsonian Museum)<sup>11</sup> represents the earliest material that is categorised and documented as being traded and made by them on their land. Ross was the principal collector of this material and, as an extensive correspondent and note-taker, his material has a greater historical context than that collected by other HBC officers. Ross also inspired his HBC colleagues and associates to help him; the names of Roderick MacFarlane, Julian Stewart Onion, the Rev. W. W. Kirkby and Nicol Taylor are recorded in the museum registers as having contributed to the collection through Ross. Ross's wife, Catherine, also donated a number of artefacts.

The artefacts collected by the HBC men were gathered at a time of great change for the Tłıchǫ: the fur trade was reaching further north, the influx of European goods, the devastation caused by disease and the impact of the new economics meant that their culture was undergoing a period of momentous change. This is highlighted through the contents of the collection. Some items incorporate new materials, designs and fashion, yet the collection also includes traditional and now seemingly unfamiliar items that reflect the passing of an era. These objects preserve an earlier decorative aesthetic, one based on minimalist decoration, natural materials and abstract or geometric designs.

Once in the museum the objects began their transformation from utilitarian items to museum artefacts and, over the succeeding 150 years, they have been researched, reinterpreted and redisplayed at different times. The collection was probably on permanent display in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but currently no evidence of this exists. Periodically individual items have been displayed in temporary exhibitions and in 1998, when the new Museum of Scotland opened, Athapaskan artefacts were included in the permanent display area *Scotland and the World*.

However, more important than any of these exhibitions in terms of the collection's reputation was the 1974 travelling exhibition, *The Athapaskans: Strangers of the North*, organised jointly by the National Museums Scotland and the Canadian Museum of Civilization<sup>12</sup> in Ottawa. The exhibition featured 100 items

<sup>11</sup> The National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, holds contemporaneous material collected by Bernard Rogan Ross. In addition, the National Anthropological Archives holds photographs, correspondence and notes relating to collections he made for both museums.

<sup>12</sup> Hereafter CMC.

from the NMS collection alongside 200 archaeological and ethnographic artefacts from the Canadian Museum of Civilisation. Wilson's collection provided all the examples of nineteenth century Dene life, since most of the ethnographic collections in the CMC had been acquired in the twentieth century (Clarke and Idiens 1975). This exhibition occurred during a period when political activities amongst the Dene Nation were coming to a head and, in July 1975, three months after the exhibition opened in Ottawa, the Dene Nation issued the *Dene Declaration: Statement of Rights* at their Joint National Assembly in Fort Simpson.<sup>13</sup> This declaration, which states the inalienable right of the Indigenous Dene to their traditional lands, still resonates strongly in the communities today.

The NMS collection became even better known in 1979 when *A Catalogue of Northern Athapaskan Indian Artefacts in the Collection of the Royal Scottish Museum* (Idiens 1979) was issued as part of the Royal Scottish Museum's information series. This publication provided for the first time a comprehensive catalogue listing of all Dene material in the NMS collection (including acquisitions subsequent to the 'Wilson collection'). Where *Strangers in the North* had been an exhibition catalogue and therefore a partial listing, this provided a comprehensive listing of the collection.

Since this exhibition and the two publications which stemmed from it, the collection has begun to 'travel' in many different directions. Single artefacts have been borrowed for exhibition in Canada and, as publications have circulated amongst academics and communities, further research has been carried out on individual pieces and groups of items. Amongst the outputs of this research is a significant set of publications arising from a series of workshops and programmes which related to collections mainly held by CMC but with illustrative examples from the NMS collection and which drew together members of Dene communities with these historic materials. This work has charted the survival and resurgence of specific crafts within the communities. Elders have been given the opportunity to engage with collections enabling memories and traditional knowledge to be discussed and passed on (see Marie and Thompson 2003, 2004; Thompson and Kritsch 2005).

## **The development of the partnership**

In September 2002, NMS received a delegation from the Tăîchô community comprising seven Tłıchǝ including Elders, teachers, cul Tłıchǝ workers and translators.<sup>14</sup> The delegation spent several days looking at the collection, discussing

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.denenation.com/denedec.html> for a detailed transcript of the declaration.

<sup>14</sup> Representatives of both the Tłıchǝ and Gwich'in communities visited the museum and included Georgina Chocolate, Madeline Chocolate, Joe Mackenzie, Rosa Mantla, Dora Nitsiza and Charlie Tailbone. They were accompanied by Aalice Legat (Project Director, Traditional Knowledge Project), Gavin Renwick (University of Dundee), Tom Andrews (PWNHC) and Ingrid Kritsch (Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute).

its potential and highlighting its key strengths (Plate 8). Whilst in Edinburgh, the delegation also asked for the opportunity to present themselves, their land claim and their way of life to the museum visitors. Over a weekend, the group set up a small display which included objects, maps and literature. Museum visitors were invited to drop by for story telling, craft demonstrations and discussions about hunting and land use. This event could be said to have been the start of the outreach programme. It was very well-attended and some visitors chose not just to stop briefly but instead to spend the entire day in the museum and returned the following day to participate further. There was considerable interest amongst the visitors and some of the press as to the presence of the Tłı̨ch̨ô in Edinburgh and in their links to the museum. The initial action of opening Tłı̨ch̨ô museum stores to the visitors, giving them full access and then providing a platform for their own 'outreach' programme in the Edinburgh community provided the foundations on which the partnership was ultimately brokered. At the end of this visit there was general agreement that the ideal would be to enable access for the entire Tłı̨ch̨ô community to these collections through a long term touring exhibition to Tłı̨ch̨ô.

The project was set up with the aim of creating a touring exhibition in which a selection of Tłı̨ch̨ô artefacts (the choice to be determined by Tłı̨ch̨ô Elders) would be sent Tłı̨ch̨ô PWNHC for display for twelve months. During the course of the year a 'mini' display or outreach programme would take place in order to enable objects to travel to communities in the region and form the basis of related workshops in schools. The outreach programme would acknowledge that not everyone would be able to travel to Yellowknife and see the exhibition due to the distance of some of the communities from the city. In addition to this basic project, opportunities for replication of artefacts, touring the exhibition to one or more further Canadian venues, a schools programme and making a new, contemporary, collection were to be explored.

Over the course of the following year a series of discussions developed with the PWNHC and a steering committee, which included representatives from the PWNHC, the Tłı̨ch̨ô, NMS, the CMC and Dundee University, was convened to oversee the project development.<sup>15</sup> This partnership was largely facilitated by the PWNHC, which has fostered good working relationships with the communities within the NWT since its foundation in 1979. Their track record includes several innovative partnerships with Dene and arctic communities as well as with other institutions and bodies. Projects they have worked on include the Dogrib Caribou Skin Lodge (Andrews and Mackenzie 1998); the Gwich'in traditional clothing project (Thompson and Kritsch 2005); and the Dogrib Birchbark Canoe Project (Andrews and Zoe 1998), all of which have provided a tangible legacy for both the

<sup>15</sup> The steering committee was made up of representatives of the collaboration partners, including John B. Zoe and Rosa Mantla (representing the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council), Gavin Renwick (University of Dundee), Tom Andrews and Joanne Bird (PWNHC), Chantal Knowles (NMS), and Judy Thompson (CMC).





Plate 1. Keith Goulet, Jenny Meyer, Sherry Farrell Racette, Jennine Krauchi, Alison Brown, Kevin Brownlee. Photograph by Neil Curtis.



Plate 2. Mukluks, Cree, worn by Angus Pelham Burn in Northern Manitoba, c. 1955. ABDUA: 64545. Copyright: University of Aberdeen.



Plate 3. *Stromness Harbour in the early nineteenth century. Acquatint by William Daniell, 1820.*



Plate 4. *John Rae display in the Stromness Museum. Photograph courtesy of Peter Stokes.*



Plate 5. *Mary Bichan with an ambrotype of her great great grandfather, William Flett. Photograph courtesy of Bryce Wilson.*



Plate 6. *Rodney Martin from Fort Chipewyan meets his relatives in Orkney in 1989. Photograph courtesy of Keith Allardyce.*





Plate 7. Stone pipes. Dogrib, Fort Rae, 1859. These items were collected to show the 'industrial' process of pipe manufacture. Copyright: The Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland.



Plate 8. Spruce root dish. Dogrib, 1862 'I hadn't seen one like this until I went to Scotland. Only at that time did I find out that something like this was made by the Dogrib people. It's from way back. Even as a young girl I've never seen anything like this.' Rosa Mantla, Bechoko/Rae 2006. Copyright: The Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland.



Plate 9. *Tł̥chq̣ Elders discuss the objects with Chantal Knowles. Gameti, 2004.*  
 Copyright: Gavin Renwick.



Plate 10. *Caribou Hide Parka, Inuit, worn by Graham Noble in Frobisher Bay, c.1970.*  
 ABDUA: 85002. Copyright: University of Aberdeen.



Plate 11. *Beaded Glengarry, Haudenosaunee, nineteenth century, donated to Marischal Museum by A.W.E.G. Marr in 1947. ABDUA: 5504. Copyright: University of Aberdeen.*



Plate 12. *Pin cushion designed by Jennine Krauchi, 2007. Copyright: Stromness Museum.*





Plate 13. Anna MacLennan, Jenny Meyer and Janette Park. Photograph by Keith Goulet.



Plate 14. Jenny Meyer's students. Photograph by Alison Brown.



Plate 15. *Materials used in the handling session. Photograph by Alison Brown.*



Plate 16. *Participants in the handling session. Photograph by Sinéad O'Sullivan.*

museum and the communities involved. The results of these earlier projects meant that NMS tapped into the goodwill they generated and that the starting point was one of trust.

Running concurrently with the establishment of the partnership and the realisation of the project, the Tłıchǵ were once again going through a period of momentous change. In 2005, the Tłıchǵ after their land claim was filed and five years after an agreement in principle, the Tłıchǵ Government was formed and the communities won the right to self governance. As a result, a territory of 39,000km<sup>2</sup> (roughly the size of Switzerland) was ceded to the Tłıchǵ. The timing of our project, with its emphasis on the Tłıchǵ artefacts and historical changes taking place within the territory was no mere serendipity. In fact in the context of the land claim, research was being carried out within the Tłıchǵ communities on 'traditional knowledge' - a method of mapping traditional knowledge of the land in order to support the substance of the land claim. The renewed focus on traditional knowledge and sources of information meant that the NMS collection came to the fore again as did its potential as a cultural resource. There was a general feeling that the objects could provide an opportunity to reconnect with the past and enable the passing on of oral histories, which, in turn, could encourage a revival of traditional knowledge. In this way, the project came to be understood as an opportunity for 'knowledge repatriation'.

In May 2004, I visited Yellowknife for the first time to begin a series of discussions regarding the practicalities of a touring exhibition, the potential means of funding this and the desired outcomes for all parties. This initial visit was greeted as a very important sign that NMS was committed to the project. On this trip I made two community visits to Rae and Gameti, met with the Chief Negotiator of the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council, John B. Zoe, and with a group of Elders in Gameti. I also gave a lecture at the PWNHC. The visit provoked a lot of local media interest. Local radio and newspapers, as well as the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), highlighted my visit and there was much discussion about the ownership of the artefacts and whether their return for exhibition should be permanent. However, during the discussions it became clear that there was a very positive view of NMS's role in the acquisition and care of the artefacts. Grand Chief George Mackenzie summed it up when he wrote in the foreword to the exhibition catalogue:

*All will be proud of the fact that their material culture is considered important and valued by museums around the world. For this reason we are grateful to our partners, particularly National Museums Scotland who have protected these objects for more than 150 years, for the opportunity to have them displayed in the north where our people can see them. (Mackenzie 2006: 2)*

An important part of this first visit by NMS staff to the region was to take



images of the objects to meetings with Elders to see which objects prompted stories and ask for people's preferences over which items should be selected for loan (Plate 9). As the project developed through email correspondence and telephone calls, a grant from the Canadian Museum Assistance Programme, sponsorship with the airline Canadian North and a commitment from NMS meant that funding for the exhibition was in place, and so a further fieldtrip was planned for 2005. This visit of three weeks' duration was undertaken by myself and the NMS conservator, Charles Stable, with the express purpose of taking PWNHC through our loans agreement, conservation criteria and also visiting all four Tâîchô communities with a view to assessing our ability to facilitate and develop a Tłıchǫ outreach programme.

By August 2006 a loans agreement was in place, a second Canadian venue had been secured (the Carleton Art Gallery in Ottawa), and Lynn McClean (NMS conservator) and I couriered the collection to Yellowknife to install the objects ready for the opening ceremony on 1<sup>st</sup> October. The resulting exhibition, *Dè T'a Hoti Ts'eeda: We Live Securely by the Land*, curated by Tom Andrews and Gavin Renwick, included individually cased objects, with trilingual labels, oral testimonies from members of the Tâîchô community set against a background of rolling images of the region relating Tłıchǫ artefacts to the land. The arrival of the objects and the unpacking of the crate for the installation of the exhibition received national coverage on APTN, and in print and on radio and the opening ceremony was attended by all the Chiefs of the communities, a mark of their respect for what had been achieved. In addition, the exhibition had a free trilingual catalogue to accompany it (Andrews 2006) and an online web catalogue which will endure long after the objects are returned to Scotland. Although the loan process was a risky business, with some of the objects such as the snowshoes and the cariole under tension and the process of travel and display of some concern, the Tâîchô had volunteered in earlier meetings with the Elders that no objects should be at Tłıchǫ risk. If there was any question that objects weren't fit to travel they should not be included in the show. This enlightened and considered view enabled us to put the objects first in planning and delivering the exhibition. In the event all the requested objects were sent to Canada, but we did restrict the potential items for the outreach programme.

## **The outreach programme**

After a successful opening ceremony I returned to the UK and Wendy Stephenson, Head of Education Services at PWNHC, devised an outreach programme to take place over three weeks in March 2006. The theme, Winter Travel, was devised partly through looking at the most portable and robust items in the collection and also as it provided a theme that worked well with the time of year

and the change in styles of travel would provide a talking point between Elders and school children.

The aim was to provide hands-on access to a selection of objects from the NMS collection to enable a close engagement with the collection that would only be possible during the course of the exhibition. In addition, Wendy was able to assemble an 'Edukit' to be left at each school which included hands-on items such as dog harnesses, a model dog team, model snowshoes, an album of images from the PWNHC archives, CDs, DVDs, books and a Teachers Guide with relevant teacher and student activities. The outreach programme visited each community and delivered a one and a half hour school programme to classes in each school. By the end of the three weeks we had delivered 16 school programmes to approximately 300 students (approximately 10% of the Tâîchô population).

#### Tîchô

Each programme introduced the students to three NMS ethnographic objects which they were allowed to handle with gloves. An Elder, interpreter and two seamstresses were employed for each workshop. After discussing the history of collection, the purpose of the museum and handling the objects, an Elder would use the objects as a tool for story telling. The students were then given the opportunity to try out the traditional snowshoes, outside on the snow, and to braid mitt strings with the assistance of Elders. In addition, each evening consisted of open house with tea and bannock in the local community hall, with local people invited to view a slide show and the NMS artefacts.

The programme worked well with different age groups and we adapted it for each venue. Although it was relatively easy to control access to objects and security risks were kept to a minimum for the NMS collection, the programming was a major departure in terms of our loans conditions and standard practice. We flew out to each community (with the exception of Rae/ Bechoko, which can be reached by road all year round) and the objects were packed in a carry-on metal case, which provided some buffering for the extreme temperature changes to which they were subjected. Once in the communities, the case was hand-carried to each venue, whether school, rented accommodation, community halls or a home. The case had to be carried with me at all times as there was no secure repository in any of the communities.

The outreach programme also provided a valuable opportunity of adding to the NMS collection. It had been discussed that I would make purchases on behalf of the museum during this trip. As a rule of thumb it was decided that I would purchase whatever was offered to me in order to 'capture' the community response to the collection and the momentous change in their recent history. I was able to acquire traditional mitts, moccasins and bags, while also purchasing a beaded credit card holder with the recently designed Tâîchô flag as a motif and calico bags for



sugar, tea etc..

Tłıchq

The outreach programme had the added benefit of providing publicity for the exhibition in Yellowknife while the ice roads were in and when travel to the city was easier and more affordable for people in the communities. Conversely, the timing meant that school attendance was often low as families took the opportunity to be out of town while the roads were in. In all, there was both a sense of success and a disappointment that more outreach work could not have been done over a longer period. However, overall the exhibition in Yellowknife had more than 30,000 visitors which, considering the local population is 18,000, meant that there were many repeat visits. In addition, 10% of the population participated in the outreach sessions, so the project has managed to involve a major portion of the relevant communities.

### **Where next? The future of the collection**

The project is now moving into its final phase. The exhibition has recently shown at its second venue, the Carleton Art Gallery, Ottawa. In December 2007 all the objects returned to NMS and the development of a temporary exhibition is underway and will be realised in April 2008. This exhibition will combine the exhibition shown at Yellowknife and Ottawa with the story of the objects and their return to the source communities. It will also incorporate the contemporary collection made during the project. In the longer term, parts of the Athapaskan collection will be put on permanent display in 2011 when the refurbished Royal Museum re-opens. This will provide a new opportunity for the collection's interpretation and, through the results of the outreach work and exhibition tour, there will be the opportunity for multiple voices to be heard within the gallery.

There had been no contact between the Dene and NMS since the collection was assembled. This project has ended that 150-year hiatus and created opportunities for new relationships. The partnership has created the foundations for a link between NMS and the Tłıchq which should endure. The legacy of the exhibition – a catalogue and the Tłıchq – will continue to keep the collection in the minds of the communities, allowing them to draw on the information as and when they see fit. There is also a renewed sense of joint custodianship of the collection; a sense of 'two homes' for the artefacts, charting the ongoing relationship between Scots and the Tłıchq of which these objects are the physical manifestation. This approach leaves the Tłıchq way open for a continued dialogue between the museum and the Tłıchq, which will ebb and flow as the years progress and different projects arise. There is an acceptance that it is natural for objects to move between the communities, being reinterpreted and imbued with meaning on both sides, but also that this shared history is an example of the

intricate histories that entwine our nations.

## Acknowledgements

This paper charts my personal experience of this project. The project itself would not have been realised without the help of many people, too many to name individually. However, I would like to thank in particular all members of the Steering Committee; the Tâîchô people who contributed in so many different ways; staff at PWNHC; staf Tł̓chq̓ Traditional Knowledge Project and my colleagues at NMS.

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# Confessions and reflections of an Indigenous research warrior

Sherry Farrell Racette

## Scholar-warriors

I think it is useful for museum curators to become aware of the larger historical and contemporary contexts from which the Aboriginal researchers who arrive at the doors of their museums emerge. Many of us are part of a growing group of Indigenous intellectuals, artists and community leaders who operate largely outside of academic and institutional frameworks. We are globally interconnected, and while there has been a great deal of activity over the last twenty years, we are surprisingly under-published. I was speaking about that to a friend recently and we realized that we are engaged in a contemporary version of the oral tradition. Many of the most influential ideas circulate through face-to-face encounters, conversations and discussions. Because we often work in alternate or parallel institutions serving Indigenous communities or in relative solitude within larger institutions, collectives and gatherings have become important means to develop and discuss research ethics and theoretical frameworks that privilege Indigenous thought, language and tradition. Conferences, gatherings, collaborative projects, artist collectives and cultural centres have provided regular forums for exchange and dialogue. The Taoist notion of the scholar-warrior is a useful concept for describing our collective work. Combining thought and action, we actively engage in the struggle against institutional and societal racism and marginalization, as it exists in both lived experience and Western intellectual traditions. The swirl of activity is profoundly inter/multidisciplinary; embracing education, history, health, literature, science, law, political science, sociology, revitalization of traditional knowledge, contemporary arts and relationships with cultural institutions such as museums and galleries. Much of our work is connected to distinct, but similar histories of colonization.

## Prelude

Many museum curators find themselves entrusted with the care of material that evokes powerful emotional responses in their source or home communities. In Canada, there is a particular historical context that has framed the removal and collection of cultural material. It also frames the growing importance of the aesthetic and cultural legacy that museum collections represent.

The relationship between the Canadian Government and First Nations in Canada is largely controlled by the Indian Act, a piece of legislation first enacted in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1867, and subsequently articulated as a piece of legislation in 1876.<sup>1</sup> Following the signing of the numbered treaties in Western Canada, and the movement of First Nations people onto reserves, the Canadian government implemented a series of legislative amendments to advance their policy of “aggressive civilization”. The most significant of these was Section 149. Enacted in 1884, Section 149, more commonly known as the Potlatch Law, criminalized both participation in and the encouragement of two Northwest Coast ceremonies the Potlatch and the Tamanawas. However, vague wording made it difficult to enforce until a subsequent amendment made attendance and participation liable a prison sentence of six months. The first arrests under the law took place in 1921 at Alert Bay. During that initial arrest and subsequent raids, masks, coppers and other valuable ceremonial items were confiscated and disappeared into private and public collections. Items inventoried by the federal government were transferred to what is now known as the Canadian Museum of Civilization and to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Others can be found in museums and private collections around the world. Although Section 149 was specific to the nations of the Northwest Coast, it was used to suppress ceremonies and confiscate items associated with ceremonial and cultural practice in other parts of Canada. Under this law, an enormous amount of cultural property was seized and sold, including wampum from the traditional governments of the Six Nations confederacy and ceremonial objects from the nations of the Plains.

Several punitive Canadian policies were also put in place in the aftermath of the 1885 Saskatchewan Resistance/s. Community councils and chiefs were stripped of their power. A pass system to control movement was aggressively implemented in Western Canada, and right of assembly was also restricted.<sup>2</sup> The Indian Agent became the authority in First Nations communities. The list of banned ceremonial and cultural expressions continued to increase: the Sun Dance (1895), all forms of traditional dance (1906), and public appearances in traditional dress (1914). Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1913-1932, secured successive pieces of legislation that culminated in the most oppressive period of First Nations history in Canada. Most of this legislation was not formally repealed. The revised Indian Act of 1951 simply did not include Section 149 and many other oppressive amendments. Other oppressive sections of the Indian Act such as the permit system, which controlled what people could buy

<sup>1</sup> The Indian Act (an Act respecting Indians and Indian lands) defines who an Indian is, band membership, and the rights and responsibilities of individuals legally recognized as Indians. It has a complex history of amendments and has been altered by both “order-in-council” and more openly discussed amendments in the House of Commons. The Indian Act does not recognize either Inuit peoples or the Métis, although both groups have been affected by government policies emerging from it, such as residential schools.

<sup>2</sup> The pass system was a federal policy not supported by legislation. Indians absent from a reserve without a pass were charged with trespassing or vagrancy under the Canadian Criminal Code.

or sell (including basic needs such as groceries and clothes), remained in the act until 1995. In 1960, the Canadian government declared First Nations people to be Canadian citizens. Dr. Roland Chrisjohn (Oneida) has suggested that this was more likely a strategy to protect the Canadian government from the possibility of prosecution under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, rather than the act of political generosity it is generally represented as (Chrisjohn 2001).

While First Nations communities were the intense focus of Canadian policy, the Métis were completely neglected. The Métis were excluded from First Nations lands, have limited fishing and hunting rights, and were pushed to the fringes of Canadian society. Similarly, the Inuit were not included in the Indian Act, but a 1939 Supreme Court of Canada decision determined that the federal government's power to make laws related to "Indians, and lands reserved for Indians" extended to the Inuit. For all three Aboriginal groups, the first half of the twentieth century was a time of extreme disempowerment and poverty. Many collectors visited Aboriginal communities during this time and found people willing to sell possessions that they might otherwise never have parted with. Even materials acquired as gifts or created for sale to European visitors often represent aesthetic traditions and skills that were lost or threatened by assimilative educational policies and the removal of children from their communities. Not surprisingly, these historic circumstances create an often highly charged and contentious space around museum collections.

### **Coming back from the brink**

"My people will sleep for 100 years, when they awake it will be the artists who give them their spirit back."

~ Louis Riel ~

These words spoken by Métis leader Louis Riel have inspired many contemporary artists in Canada. Spoken before his execution in 1885, Louis Riel predicted that artists would play a critical role in healing communities devastated by conflict and colonization. By the late 1960s, the resurgence he prophesized was emerging across the country. By the closing decades of the twentieth century, Aboriginal people were actively engaged in decolonization and political resistance.

In 1987, Poka Laenui (Hayden F. Burgess), a lawyer and leader of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, addressed the World Council of Indigenous People's Conference on Education in Vancouver, British Columbia. It was the first time I heard the words "decolonizing the mind". I did not realize at the time that he had been influenced by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986) (Figure 1).

## FIGURE 1: DECOLONIZATION: A GENEALOGY

- 1986 Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Kenya), *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*.
- 1987 Poka Laenui (Hayden F. Burgess, Hawaai), 'We Must Decolonize Our Minds,' World Council of Indigenous People's Conference on Education, North Vancouver, 1987.
- 2000 Poka Laenui (Hayden F. Burgess, Hawaai), 'Processes of Decolonization,' In Marie Battiste, ed. *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*.
- 2001 Linda Tuhiwi Smith (Maori) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.
- 2003 Chandra Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*.

In a subsequent publication, Poka Laenui (2000) outlined the process of decolonization as having specific stages or passages: rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment and action. For many of us, the process of rediscovery and recovery includes work with museum collections, and our encounters there move us into the second state of mourning. People visiting museum collections are often at different stages of the process of decolonization, and some have not begun the process.

### **Chapter 1: *The Spirit Sings* / Ma and Pa Kettle go to Europe**

In 1980 I began working at the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatchewan. Although I was working in a programme to train Métis teachers, I was part of the research and curriculum initiatives that marked our collective "rediscovery and recovery" of Métis traditions, language and history. It was an exciting time. In 1988 two things happened: my husband and I applied for a Canada Council Explorations grant to travel to museum collections and *The Spirit Sings* opened in Calgary, Alberta. The exhibition became the lightning rod for the accumulated frustration and anger felt by Aboriginal people in Canada regarding museums and museum collections. The exhibition and its resultant controversy are widely known (see, for example, Harrison 1993). I visited the exhibition after the Olympics were over. Although I was very supportive of the issues raised, I was also determined to see the material that was back in the country.

The following year, we received our grant and prepared a schedule of museum visits. I had rarely travelled outside of Canada, and I don't think my husband had ever been on a plane. Thanks to the kindness and generosity of Julia Harrison at the Glenbow Museum (who I think was just happy to meet someone who wasn't yelling at her), we were able to schedule visits with many of the pieces that had been part of *The Spirit Sings*. We left in the spring of 1990, and visited eight museums in the United Kingdom, Ireland and France in an intense six-week schedule.

Our initial object was to look for Métis material with a distant dream of repatriation, but the more immediate purpose was to locate, study and document. We dreamt of bringing it home but how? In the end we had to be satisfied with drawing, photographing, and taking the images back. We travelled "on the cheap", and had the kind of adventures two naïve travellers are bound to have. We experienced joyful discoveries and frustrations. Coming so closely on the heels of *The Spirit Sings* we were both welcomed and viewed with suspicion. We laughed uproariously at some of the catalogue notations. Porcupine quillwork described as "coloured straw" comes to mind. In retrospect, for two people who had no idea what we were doing, we accomplished an astonishing amount. We came home with over 1,200 slides and four sketchbooks full of drawings. The collection immediately transformed our teaching, and we shared our findings with communities. It was, and continues to be difficult to explain to people why I haven't brought anything back. It has been, I suppose, a kind of artistic and intellectual repatriation that has promoted appreciation of traditional art forms and contemporary traditional artists. Appallingly, it has raised the value of Métis material to collectors, so that it is now utterly out of the reach of our impoverished communities and under-funded institutions. It also began a research agenda that I am still pursuing. In the years that have followed that initial research trip, I have visited many museum collections in Canada and the United States. I returned to the UK in 2002, 2004 and again this year. Sadly, a mere handful have had the same opportunity. I have come to see the pieces in museum collections not only as our invaluable cultural property, but as encoded objects that carry knowledge, stories and memories. I see myself as a scout, bringing information home, and linking it with the knowledge that resides in the community of Elders, oral historians and artists.

### **Putting ourselves forward**

In 1999, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, published the conversations and dilemmas that had been happening in Maori communities and Indigenous communities around the world. She declared the "absolute worthlessness" of research conducted in Maori communities in terms of its value to those studied (not those who studied) (Smith



1999: 3). Smith had been circulating her ideas and actively engaging a broad Indigenous scholarly community in conversation for some time. I particularly recall the spring of 1996. The World Council of Indigenous People's Conference on Education in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was followed by Cultural Restoration of Oppressed Indigenous Peoples, a multi-disciplinary summer institute at the University of Saskatchewan organized by Dr. Marie Battiste (Mi'kmaq) and Dr. Sakej Youngblood Henderson (Cherokee/Cheyenne). Many of the same people attended both gatherings. Linda Tuhiwai Smith and her husband, Graham Hingangaroa Smith, shared their work – hers on decolonizing methodologies; his on the development of critical theory grounded in Maori knowledge. These were not new ideas. A young Saskatchewan Cree scholar, Willie Ermine, had written an influential and widely circulated paper entitled, 'Aboriginal Epistemology' as an undergraduate student (Ermine 1995; see also Ermine 1998). He has since followed with explorations of the concept of 'ethical space' in research with Indigenous communities (Ermine 2000; 2005). These ideas have been offered as counter-strategies to address concerns with Western intellectual methodologies. Deemed highly problematic, typical critiques of research in Indigenous communities identify the following concerns:

- that research often takes the form of *voyeuristic accounts* that objectify the people studied;
- that research practice and reporting is marked by *ethnocentrism*;
- that research activity continues to *extract knowledge*, removing intellectual and cultural knowledge without reciprocity or recuperative benefits;
- that research reporting misrepresents Indigenous communities and cultures through either intent, misunderstanding or error;
- that research activity and reporting perpetuates stereotypical representations;
- that research practice and reporting are often paternalistic or exploitive;
- that research is not useful to either research subjects or communities.

An increasing number of Indigenous scholars are exploring research ethics and seeking to articulate methodologies and theoretical frameworks grounded in Indigenous worldviews, privileging Indigenous knowledge and language. In their 2005 article, Kathy Absolon (Anishnaabe) and Cam Willett (Cree) advocated a process of honest self-interrogation as an essential component of the larger research process: "What does this have to do with you? Why are you doing this? How are you invested in this research? What is your motive?" (Absolon and Willett 2005). They also responded to Smith's 'Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects' with a series of sub-headings that deconstruct common words, and offer new interpretations.

Smith proposed twenty-five projects organized into five basic themes: cultural survival, self-determination, healing, restoration and social justice (Smith

1999: 142). Indigenous scholars enjoy playing with English words, flipping words and meanings to embrace Indigenous perspectives. 'Re' words have been particularly popular. In 1991, Verna Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt introduced the notion of the "four R's: respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility" (Kirkness and Barnhardt 1991). Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird's *Reinventing the Enemy's Language* (1997) offered another 're-word'. Smith used the words: reclaiming, reformulating and reconstituting. Absolon and Willett hyphenated their subheadings to emphasize the meaning and use of the prefix (to do again, to look back, to intensify):

If research about Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal knowledge is to be useful to Aboriginal communities, location is critical for a multitude of reasons that we call the "Re's". Re means to redo; to look twice, and is the teaching of respect in the West direction of the Medicine Wheel. (Absolon and Willett 2005: 108)

Their 'Re' subheadings echo previous scholars and offer additional considerations: respectful representations, re-visioning, re-claiming, re-name, re-connect, re-cover, re-search. They speak for the collective group of Indigenous scholars when they state, "We will no longer be subjects of objective study, we are the subjects of our own knowledge creation" (Absolon and Willett 2005: 113). It is this active, decolonizing approach to research that calls on the scholar-warrior's courage and faith.

Institutions seeking to engage with this dynamic approach to research need to consider, and "re-consider" what Indigenous communities are saying about cultural protocols, sacredness, copyright, ownership and oral traditions. In addition, institutions need to think seriously about reciprocity, and explore the ways that they can "give back" and "give away", important values in many Indigenous communities.

## **Still marginalized**

It is critical that curators and administrators outside of Canada recognize the ongoing struggles of Aboriginal people. Racism is still a daily reality. We are the most impoverished people in the country, with the greatest volume of social and economic challenges. Our struggle to revitalize and protect our cultural traditions is still just that, a struggle. We continue to be marginalized. How does this affect our relationships with museums? There are very few Aboriginal people who can afford to do research in European museum collections. There are only a handful of Aboriginal curators working in Canadian museums who can initiate projects. Most projects that engage community are museum-centred and directed. Cultural

centres are Aboriginal controlled and able to initiate projects, but they are often under-funded, and struggle to meet their broad and ambitious mandates. Aboriginal researchers are rarely affiliated with research institutions, and are often unable to access the funding available to others. Funding agencies generally do not recognize community-based researchers, Elders and other traditional knowledge-keepers. Even in my own position of relative privilege, this is the first year (since 1989) that I have been able to access research funding. Ironically, of the four times I have visited, two visits have been partially funded by UK sources.

In 2000 Jim Logan, a Métis curator, submitted a report with the tongue-in-cheek title, 'Space, the Final Frontier' (Logan 2000).<sup>3</sup> Logan's light title buffered a serious demand: that visible, physical space be demarcated for Aboriginal art. Speaking primarily about contemporary art, Logan also addressed the importance of historic and traditional work. Spatial politics continues to be a critical issue. Pushed into the back rooms or the basement, the physical location (or invisibility) of Aboriginal collections speaks volumes. The conventional narrative trajectory in Canadian museums (rocks, dinosaurs, Indians, 'pioneers') assumes conventional settler activity and modernity to be the exclusive domain of Europeans and other recent immigrants. In addition to the ongoing issues of physical space within the institution, there is also the issue of the physical space that separates communities from the objects in overseas museum collections. Although there are examples of successful collaborative projects, we continue to struggle with fundamental questions. How can we connect across distances? How can we link people with the artistic and material legacy in museums? How can community based research initiatives and community/museum partnerships be nurtured?

### **What's important? What's remembered?**

It has been almost twenty years since I first stepped into the inner sanctum of a museum collection. From that vantage point, I can reflect on what has been important, and what has been remembered. I can't emphasize enough the importance of every scrap of paper, rumour and museum tag associated with an object. The shift to computer databases has resulted in a reduction of information available to researchers. I have often found the original acquisition documents, original tags or remembered stories to have been essential pieces of a puzzle. Information considered irrelevant or inaccurate often contains a clue when combined with community knowledge, Canadian archival evidence or similar museum objects. At the same time, on-line catalogues and collection catalogues are useful tools that can be accessed from a distance. Conventional organizational structures that neatly divide collections into regional categories (Plains, Subarctic)

<sup>3</sup> Logan's paper also addresses 'the myth of progress' regarding the physical presence of Aboriginal professionals, acquisition, and exhibitions in Canadian museums and art galleries.

are not always useful. Métis material, for example, defies categorization. I would like to express a hearty “Thank you” to everyone who let me do what I needed to do open every drawer, snoop through files, go into the bowels of museum attics . . .

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation to those who recognize that Aboriginal researchers are far from home, and in a very different cultural environment, and those curators who acknowledge that their museum collections are our material culture and artistic legacy. Before I left Canada, I spoke to my now ex-husband about this symposium and the title of my talk. Although we are no longer together, we are still good friends. He asked me to tell you about our first meeting with Dale Idiens at the Royal Scottish Museum. When we stepped into the storage facility and Dale moved towards the drawers that contained the Métis material, she paused and asked my husband, “Are you really Métis?” To which he responded something like, “Yes, I am.” She replied, “Well then, these things haven’t seen a familiar face for a very, very long time.” Seventeen years later, he remembered word for word, what she had said to him and the way she stepped aside and honoured the connection that we felt to the objects in her care, and the connection the objects had to us. It was an emotional moment. One of many that I have experienced in museum stores – the joy of discovery mixed with sorrow and anger. Although I have become less vulnerable to strong emotions while working with museum collections, there are certain objects and circumstances that can still trigger a strong response. It is a profound comfort to find empathy far from home.

On a more practical level, those individuals who offered assistance in finding college rooms and housing, offered the hospitality of their own homes, or have taken the time for lunch, dinner or an evening adventure have helped stretch limited funds and created moments of relaxation and fun. It is these gestures of kindness that form the foundation of the friendships, alliances and partnerships that can develop, and that I, and other Indigenous researchers, have come to value. I am now fortunate to have a network of supportive friends and colleagues throughout the larger museum community. This network has provided me with invaluable assistance for my own projects, and has rallied to assist in critical situations – most recently in the acquisition of the Southesk collection by the Royal Alberta Museum<sup>4</sup> and the Pasqua pictograph. Recently I received an email announcing the acquisition and return of an important pictograph document created by Chief Pasqua, documenting Treaty Four from a First Nations perspective. The pictograph now belongs to Pasqua First Nation, and will be housed in the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, an indication of the new relationships being negotiated between museums and communities. These days, while we continue to work

4 The Southesk collection of First Nations and Métis artefacts was acquired in 1859-60 by James Carnegie, the ninth Earl of Southesk, during a trip through Western Canada. The collection had been kept in the family’s castle in Scotland since then, and was auctioned in 2006. Most of the pieces are now in the collection of the Royal Alberta Museum, though some were purchased by private collectors.

towards better relationships with museums, our greatest concern is private collectors and the increasing commodification of our artistic and cultural legacy. Museums have been our allies in this struggle.

In closing, I would like to ask, “How can we make it easier?” I would like Scottish curators to be aware that Aboriginal artists, Elders, scholars and communities can apply for research grants through Traditional Arts Grant programmes at the Canada Council and the Saskatchewan Arts Board. This is a potential source of support in connecting museum collections with people from their home communities. I believe we need to pursue institutional partnerships in a variety of forms. Academic and curatorial exchanges could enable individuals from Canada the opportunity for more extended research and collaboration. University/museum partnerships could potentially bring Aboriginal artists, material culture specialists, and scholars over for more extended periods of time, enabling a deeper exchange of knowledge. Similarly Scottish curators could benefit from the opportunity to work with Aboriginal communities and institutions, and Canadian museum and archive collections. What current institutional structures exist that could be expanded to enable greater access and collaboration? I believe we have only begun to tap the potential of linking Indigenous knowledge and scholarship with the museum collections in your care.

Meegwetch.

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# North America in Aberdeen: the collections of Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen

Neil G. W. Curtis

## The creation of the collection

Among the many items from Canada in Scottish museums are those resulting from the activities of people working for the Hudson's Bay Company<sup>1</sup> who had family links with Scotland. Foremost among those represented in the University of Aberdeen's Marischal Museum is the collection of William Mitchell (born in Aberdeen in 1802) who, from the age of thirty, was a sailor and trader with the HBC. Becoming a master mariner in 1851, he was an officer on a number of the Company's ships on the Northwest Coast, including the *Cadboro*, *Una*, *Recovery* and *Beaver*. He is recorded as being a "generous, good-hearted sailor who utterly despised anything small or mean" (Walbran 1971: 340). In 1852, when in command of the brigantine *Una*, Mitchell took some gold miners to Haida Gwai'i (formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands). There a harbour was named after him, but the expedition broke up when the Haida opposed the HBC's intention to profit from the spoils without sharing. It is believed that his collection was bequeathed to the University of Aberdeen following his death in Victoria, Vancouver Island in 1876. Alongside items from northern coastal British Columbia, including a Chilkat blanket and Tsimshian masks, is a fine collection of Haida argillite carvings produced for the tourist trade, which includes model totem poles and panel pipes. One of these depicts a paddle steamer with a figurehead in the prow of a beaver, presumably the *Beaver*, the first steamship on the Northwest Coast, on which Mitchell sailed as 1st Mate. Others show people in European dress in combination with Haida motifs. A wonderful mingling of traditions, the panel pipes are a particularly evocative reminder of the complex relationships between Native people and European traders and settlers.

These links are also remembered in a tag attached to a small comb donated by Sir Alexander Ogston in 1929 on which the words 'Esquimaux comb from Dr. Rae, Hudson's Bay Co.' are written. John Rae, from Orphir in Orkney was another, but much more famous, mid-nineteenth century Scottish adventurer who was renowned for having a greater understanding of Native ways of life than most other Europeans. That these links between Scotland and Canada have continued to the

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter HBC.



present was shown recently with the donation of an Inuit parka by an Aberdeen University student whose late husband, Graham Noble of Fraserburgh, had acquired it while working as a storeman with the HBC in Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island in 1969-71 (Plate 10).

Marischal Museum contains the third-largest ethnographic collection in Scotland, with a particular strength in North American material (almost 2000 items). The Arctic collections are perhaps the most important aspect of this; they are certainly the largest. At the core is a donation by Sir William Macgregor (Governor of Newfoundland in the early years of the twentieth century), which includes archaeological material from Labrador. There are also nineteenth century ethnographic items from the United States as well as from Canada. Some of the earliest artefacts from North America are represented by an interesting donation recorded as being in the University's collections by 1824. That year Professor William Knight of Marischal College wrote in his catalogue of the College's museum that the collection included an "Indian Pouch, Indian knife, Belt of Wampum, Eight various Girdles, Belts &c used by the N. American Indians, Cloak, ornamented with Beads" and noted that "One of the Girdles and Garters were presented by Mr Ogilvie of Barras" (Knight 1810-21). A number of other items with a Cherokee or Choctaw provenance were also listed, implying that much of this collection originated in the Southeast United States in the era before the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Unfortunately, not enough is yet known about Ogilvie to explain how he came by this early collection or the nature of this particular contact between Scotland and North America, though there were well-established links between Scots traders and plantation owners and Native people in the region. Nonetheless, this material is an important record of early contact between Europeans and Native people in North America.

The most famous single item in the collection is undoubtedly a Greenlandic kayak with hunting equipment which arrived in Aberdeen in the early eighteenth century. In the 1820s catalogue it is described as "Eskimaux canoe in which a native of that country was driven ashore near Belhelvie, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, and died soon after landing". The first record of this kayak is in a diary written by a Rev. Francis Gastrell of Stratford-upon-Avon. Following his visit to Aberdeen he wrote that, "In the Church which is not used (there being a kirk for their way of worship) was a Canoo about seven yards long by two feet wide which about thirty two years since was driven into the Don with a man in it who was all over hairy and spoke a language which no person there could interpret. He lived but three days, tho' all possible care was taken to recover him" (Gastrell 1760).

The distance from Greenland to Scotland is about 1200 miles, but this could be broken into shorter lengths by landing in Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Shetland and Orkney. This would be needed to prevent the kayaks becoming waterlogged and to

get drinking water. Even so, it is difficult to believe in such a long journey on rough seas, particularly with the difficulties of navigating out of sight of land. Two theories have been put forward by researchers to explain how the Inuit could have reached the North Sea with their kayaks. The first suggests that they were kidnapped by whalers and brought to Europe as curiosities, but then managed to escape or were freed by their captors. An alternative is that the kayakers took advantage of the colder weather of the 'Little Ice Age' of about 1300 to 1850, when ice floes would have drifted much farther south than today and would have offered extra places on which to rest and collect fresh water. However unlikely this hypothesis, the contemporary resonances of the association with climate change has led to this theory becoming more popular; the possibility of an Indigenous North American man exploring Europe in the eighteenth century also has a current appeal.

Along with another kayak 'with paddles, darts and other implements; presented, 1800, by Captain William Gibbon, Aberdeen', there is another kayak in Aberdeen, in the buildings of the University's Medical School. This may be the one in which Eenoolooapik, an Inuit visitor to Aberdeen in 1839, demonstrated his kayaking skills in the River Dee to an admiring crowd. Eenoolooapik was brought to Aberdeen by Captain Penny of the whaling ship *Neptune*. Sadly, when he returned to Labrador the following year he died of tuberculosis.

## Repatriation

That the links between the museum and North America are not solely those of colonial collectors was highlighted in 2003 with the repatriation of a split-horn headdress to the Horn Society of the Kainai First Nation of Southern Alberta, Canada, who are also known as the Blood Tribe (Curtis 2005). The headdress was donated to the museum in 1934 by a Mrs Bruce Miller, about whom little is known except that her family owned an Aberdeen chemical factory. Records in the museum indicated that she visited the Blackfeet reservation in Montana, USA, in the 1920s, and it is possible that she acquired the headdress, as well as a deer hide shirt decorated with porcupine quills, moccasins and some other items, while in the surrounding area. Like many collectors, she did not record any tribal names or other details, so for many years the headdress was merely catalogued as a 'war bonnet'. This reflects European attitudes towards Native American people and an ignorance of the headdress being part of a sacred bundle.

Contact between Marischal Museum and the Kainai began when Kainai Elders spoke to Alison Brown (who had formerly been a student volunteer in the museum and who had worked for some years with Kainai people on history and cultural heritage projects) about a headdress which had gone missing some decades

earlier and which was believed to be in the UK. Though the headdress in Marischal Museum did not fit the description of the one which is missing, she suggested to the Kainai that they investigate the possibility of the headdress in Aberdeen being from their community. The museum arranged for photographs of the headdress to be shown to the Kainai and, in November 2002, a delegation from the Horn Society visited Aberdeen to see if this headdress was connected to them. The representatives included an Elder, Charlie Crow Chief, and his wife, and current members of the Horn Society, Randy Bottle, Karen Bottle, Duane Mistaken Chief and Marvin Mistaken Chief. They were welcomed by the University's principal and museum staff after which they smudged before identifying the headdress. We then spent two days in discussion, looking at other Blackfoot objects in the collection and writing a joint press release.

The University had approved a repatriation procedure that autumn (the current, revised, version is available on the museum website at [www.abdn.ac.uk/marischalmuseum](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/marischalmuseum)). The criteria to assess such a request were inspired by Glasgow Museums' repatriation in 1998 of a Lakota Ghost Dance Shirt:

- evidence relating to the identification of the object concerned;
- the right of those making the request to represent the community to which the object originally belonged;
- the continuity between the community that created the object and the community on whose behalf the request is being made;
- the cultural, religious and scientific importance of the object to the claimant community and to the University;
- evidence relating to how the object was acquired by the Museum and its subsequent use;
- the likely fate of the object if it is returned or if it is retained by the Museum

These issues were considered by an advisory panel appointed by the University, with members including curators from National Museums Scotland and the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta (the latter nominated by the Horn Society), as well as representatives of the University of Aberdeen. As well as reading the written request and a response from the museum, Randy Bottle and Frank Weasel Head, an Elder, also spoke to the panel at that meeting. Also discussed were issues such as photography and the making of a replica. They explained that there could only be four headdresses (rather like North, South, East and West), so making a replica would be impossible, while the photography of sacred objects would be seen as disrespectful. They did, however, accept that the museum should have photographs for its archive and for use in exhibitions and lectures. The University court approved the panel's recommendation in favour of repatriation in May 2003.

There are perhaps, two particularly important aspects to the decision which set it apart from many other repatriations from European museums. Discussion about legal title or the circumstances of collection did not feature significantly in the University's decision. Instead, it was the recognition of the immense importance of the headdress to the Kainai today that underpinned the decision that it should no longer be treated as a museum object. Following logically from this was the understanding that the University should have no continuing rights after repatriation, such as demands that it be kept on display, available for loan or not repaired.

On 7th July 2003, at a public ceremony in the museum, ownership of the headdress was passed to the Mookaakin Cultural and Heritage Foundation of the Kainai Nation and a Memorandum of Understanding signed to outline the conditions of the repatriation (including a promise of objects to be given to the museum) and to help us to work together in the future. Afterwards, the headdress was taken into the care of the Horn Society members.

A few months later, a temporary exhibition *Going Home: Museums and Repatriation* told the story of the repatriation of the headdress and raised some of the issues behind requests that have been handled by other museums, including the high-profile case of the Lakota Ghost Dance shirt, returned to the Lakota people from Glasgow Museums. In addition to a display of items donated by Mrs Bruce Millar and information about the repatriation of the headdress, the exhibition also displayed the replica of the Ghost Dance shirt on loan from Glasgow Museums, which had been presented to that organisation by the Lakota people. My favourite comments were "all of humanity is connected to each other" and "so glad to see this as a discussion – I knew very little about procedures and cases of repatriation." Exhibiting the absence of an object can clearly make as much of an impact as displaying an object.

During the summer of 2004, I was very fortunate to be invited with my family to the Sun Dance on the Kainai Reserve in Southern Alberta. As guests of Randy Bottle, we stayed with his family next to the circle of about fifty tipis that had been erected near the settlement of Standoff. I was able to see the headdress danced for the first time since its return, along with other bundles and to talk to people who now care for it. Without knowing the "meanings" of the headdress, I now have more understanding of its importance and why the repatriation mattered, as well as a richer perspective on the historical contact between Europeans and the Native people of North America. Since then, the bundle's current keeper has been in touch with me and has bought a 'Prince Charlie' kilt jacket to commemorate the connections created by the headdress's sojourn in Aberdeen.

## Interpreting the collections

The collections now in the care of Marischal Museum thus document some of the changing connections between the people of the Northeast of Scotland and the Native peoples of North America for some two hundred years. From the use of glass beads in some of the sashes donated by William Ogilvie and the argillite panel pipes, which visually represent their carver's observational skills, to the recent repatriation request from the Kainai, many of these connections demonstrate creative actions by Native people engaging with European culture.

The museum's reach has recently been greatly expanded with the development of on-line resources funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) which were launched in September 2004. They include a virtual version of the displays of Marischal Museum with images of all display cases and objects, the texts of all captions and QuickTime panoramas of the museum and conservation lab (see [www.abdn.ac.uk/virtualmuseum](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/virtualmuseum)). This is underlain by a database of some 3000 items in the collection ([www.abdn.ac.uk/museumsearch](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/museumsearch)) with links to archival evidence, associated objects and records of changing interpretations over the last two centuries. While only a small proportion of the items illustrated derive from North America, they all show the connections mediated by people from Northeast Scotland that link together many parts of the world. They also offer the opportunity for images of these items, if not the items themselves, to return to the homes they left decades ago.

While some of the contacts experienced by the objects in the collection have been unequal and destructive, some have been much more creative. Alongside the argillite carving of the *Beaver*, are other items that draw on mixed traditions. These include a seal skin coat made for Sir William MacGregor by Mrs Lane, a woman of mixed Inuit and European ancestry, and a beaded Glengarry hat made by a nineteenth century Haudenosaunee seamstress (Plate 11). Hopefully, the links established by the 'Material Histories' project will re-connect these items with the memories of the people who made and used them in the past. The challenge for the museum is now to use these collections to increase mutual understanding of our entangled connections, developing knowledge and understanding to benefit the descendents of the people from whom they were collected as well as the museums that now care for them.

## Note

A previous version of this paper appeared as 'The Marischal Museum and North America: connections and collections', *Resources for American Studies* 2005, pp. 6-13.

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# Making life beautiful: my experience of doing beadwork

**Anna MacLennan**

The Material Histories workshop held on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2007 at Marischal Museum in Aberdeen was an opportunity for curators and academics from all over Scotland to meet with First Nations and Métis colleagues, including curators, academics and seamstresses from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada. This interaction enabled a better understanding of the hide garments and beadwork that have found their way to Scotland over the years as a result of Scots' involvement in the fur trade from the seventeenth through to the twentieth centuries. Unlike a conference setting, the Material Histories workshop focused as much on doing as it did on talking. The 'doing' involved beading sessions that formed the core of the two-day event. The participants were split into three groups and, led by Jenny Meyer, Jennine Krauchi and Sherry Farrell Racette, each group was taught to create a simple beaded flower pattern for a pin cushion (Plate 12). The differences in backgrounds, experience and knowledge of sewing that participants brought to the workshop meant that everyone would have taken something different from it, and I can only write from an individual perspective.

Beadwork continues to hold an important place in the public and private lives of many Canadians, and attending the workshop allowed me to develop my understanding of the beadwork seen on the clothing worn nowadays by First Nations and Métis people at public events in Canada, such as powwows. The experience of learning how to do beading has also altered the way I approach and understand historic beadwork found today in museum settings, and my responses to museum 'objects' more broadly. First, my appreciation of the skill and patience of seamstresses was amplified. In order to get my beadwork to lie flat and avoid gaps between beads I had to unpick and redo my stitches on many occasions. Even then, Jenny graciously sorted out a couple of beady messes I managed to create! Unlike some of the sewing I had done previous to the workshop, beading requires much more time for much less progress. Taking my time in an attempt to create neat work meant spending hours huddled over the same few centimetres of beads (Plate 13).

Second, I was encouraged to consider not only the aesthetics of the finished products that were familiar to me from museum settings, but also the story of these objects' creation in the hands of a seamstress. What struck me was that although our finished beadwork may be worlds apart, our experience of beading may not be so totally different. The makers of some of the museum pieces may have sat around

in groups sewing, much as we did in the workshop, talking about their families, memories triggered by a certain pattern, or what they were having for dinner. Only through doing, in addition to talking, was this transition in my understanding of beadwork possible.

In the closing discussions, Keith Goulet highlighted the concept of ‘appreciation’ as a way of summing up the workshop as a whole. Like Keith, I also appreciated the coming together of people from different backgrounds, and the thoughts and action involved in the sewing and beading process. However, what stood out to me through trying beadwork myself was an appreciation of the seamstress’s skill. It is often true that an understanding of how difficult a task is cannot be fully grasped until one tries it for oneself. Seamstresses certainly make the process look easy. As a beginner, I felt frustrated that my simple flower design was not always flat against the fabric and was not as neat as I would have liked. This was *despite* the fact that I was beading directly onto a ready-made pattern. Even more than before, when I look at some of the extremely neat, intricate and often perfectly symmetrical beadwork found on garments and other objects, I am left in awe. The time, patience and precision a project must have required, not to mention the years of practice it would take to reach the level of expertise I see in some of the pieces in today’s museum collections, amazes me.

I am now drawn to thinking more about the *process* of creating beautiful beadwork, rather than solely the beauty of the beadwork itself. Despite my inability to make the beads do what I wanted them to, having now tried to do beadwork myself, I feel able to empathise more with seamstresses, and I wonder about the stories behind the work they produced. I wonder under what circumstances the beadwork was created. What was their relationship with the person they were making it for? Was it a gift, a favour, or a business venture? What did the patterns and colours they chose mean to them? The list of questions could go on. The beadwork I created was so much *more* than an object of material culture. To me, the beads told a story of where I was when I was making the pin cushion, who taught me what to do, who else was there, who I planned to give it to once I was finished, and the various conversations the production process sparked. As a result, the finished product – my pin cushion – has many stories attached to it that are specific to my experience of making it.

I found beading to be relaxing, and not so demanding that it required my full attention, so conversations were able to develop. As people in my group became more comfortable with the skills required, it was amazing how quickly the beading was accompanied by everyday conversations about our daily lives (Plate 14). It made me more aware of the sorts of conversations seamstresses in Canada may have been having while creating the beadwork we now see in museums. The potential that every object has for a personal story specific to the seamstress that

made it, adds a hidden depth that I had not considered prior to this workshop. As a result, the beadwork I now see in museums seems far more complex and rich than objects to be admired solely for their beauty and workmanship. Though these stories are largely unknown, as are the identities of the women who produced much of the work now found in museum collections, for me, this is not the most important thing. Instead, it is my increased awareness of the human experience of making beadwork that has altered my appreciation of it.

Overall, my experience of learning how to do simple beadwork at the Material Histories workshop has changed the way I approach and understand beadwork found in museums, and has resulted in me considering the production process in *addition* to the finish article. I am now much more aware of the skill, patience and practice required to make the beautiful beadwork displayed in many museums. Moreover, I have become more cognisant of the existence of stories, experiences and histories inextricably linked to beadwork that began during the production process. This has added a very rich and interesting layer to the beaded museum exhibits I have seen. In broader terms, this new-found awareness and appreciation of beading and beadwork can be extended to include many other artefacts in museums. What interests me is not just the objects that are on display, but the story of their production, use and how they came to be displayed in that particular museum: their material history.

# Materials handling session

## Jennine Krauchi and Jenny Meyer

**Alison Brown** We're going to have the handling session now, which Jenny and Jennine are going to lead, and we're going to spend about an hour on this. Just to make everything clear, the three pairs of moccasins on the table here are from Marischal Museum's collections (Plate 15). The beadwork in the middle belongs to a man called Dr. Myron Hampton. He's an Aberdeen graduate and he grew up at a number of fur trade posts in Saskatchewan and Manitoba in the 1930s, and these are things that his family have. The beaded cloth at the end also belongs to a local family, the Third family. Taylor Third and his brother, George Third, worked for the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1920s. What's interesting about the Northeast is that from about 1910 to 1940 the HBC concentrated their recruitment for clerks in the Northeast of Scotland, which is why there are so many things from the early twentieth century in Aberdeen. They had agents in Aberdeen and in some of the nearby farming and fishing communities. The cloth was collected by Taylor Third, who worked at York Factory and Shamattawa in the mid-1920s, but other than that we don't have any further information on it. The family do have some photographs but they still have to find them. They may be a starting point for doing some more research into this object. The pieces round the table all belong to the three of us [Jenny Meyer, Jennine Krauchi, Alison Brown] and you're very welcome to handle all of those, but we thought that because of the size of the group it would be better if we leave the other things on the tissue where they are, unless there's anything specific that anyone wants to look at. So over to Jenny and Jennine.

**Jenny Meyer** As you look at the pieces round the table myself or Babes, I call her Babes, sorry, Jennine...

**Jennine Krauchi** It's been going on for fifty years! I don't think we'll change it now! You can call me Babes too.

**JM** We tried to bring a little bit of everything that pertains to manufacturing the moccasin and the fur trim that goes on. You can identify the furs as you wish – some of you may want to know what they are. There's some horse hair. It was used as a trim for moccasins.

**JK** Each little group of what's in the moccasin, the horse hair, the silk thread, all of that, we tried to put it in. That's what goes into making that pair of moccasins right there. We tried to keep everything together as far as how it's used. So you can see what the raw material is and the finished product and how it was used. So, if there are any questions as you go along, as you look at these pieces, if there are any questions, you go right on ahead.

**AB** There are several more pairs of moccasins and gloves and so on on the table in the corner too. Actually, do you maybe want to say something about tanning the hides?

**JK** Maybe we should get Kevin to give us a little talk.

**Kevin Brownlee** Sure. I have learned and have experienced tanning hides, and it was initially through my uncle. While it was all done by hand, he was using chemicals. And that got my interest sparked, and I always had this keen interest in how things were done traditionally. I remember for years I used to read these books on tanning hides and none of it seemed to make any sense at all. It was only when I was working in Northern Manitoba and I'd taken some time off, and one of the grannies was working on some hides at her camp and I said, "Would you mind if I came out?" So, she invited me to her cabin and it was just a fantastic experience, and I got to see it from start to finish and we worked on some moose hides.

Differences in tanning hides: the beginning parts are very similar. The flesh and the fat are scraped off. Traditionally, people would be using a bone hide flesher and that's still used by people up in the North, and that's one of the few tools that still remains in use today. It's far superior to any metal ones because it actually doesn't cut through the hide, so when you're doing beadwork or making a jacket, you want to have as few holes as possible. So, I always get frustrated when I'm up north because there are not that many people tan hides any more, and I'm really interested in it. And when we shoot a moose, a lot of the hunters, when they are doing it, they'll cut into the hide to be able to hold onto it, because it's very slippery when you're skinning the moose. It's a very large animal, and they'll just cut these holes, and I'll go, "Wait, wait, wait! No! Don't do that!" So, you use the bone one to scrape off all the flesh and the fat off the inside of the hide. Sometimes the hair is cut off with a knife and sort of shaved down a little bit. It's then stretched up on a large wooden frame. A square frame. And at that point it is left to dry and once it's dry they would take a metal scraper, basically, that's sharpened to a very sharp edge, and you take off not only the hair but that first layer of skin. So, if you're used to seeing leather...I'm not sure what this is [pointing to sample of hide].

**JM** That's commercial.

**KB** It's commercial. You'll notice it's got the leather side versus the suede side, so you've got the smooth side and then the inside. Home tan has the suede side on both sides because they actually scrape this side off completely.

**JK** And that's the side that the hair grows on.

**KB** Yes, the shiny side.

**Sherry Farrell Racette** You can see the pores, really close up.

**KB** So yeah, so you'll notice that you get the suede on both sides. The nice thing about home tan leather as opposed to any of the commercial ones...in Manitoba when I go around talking to schools, I talk to the kids and I say, "If

you ever have your mitts and your mitts get soaking wet with water if you've been in a snowball fight, something like that, when it dries, it dries really, really hard, so when you put them on and over the next couple of days they'll soften back up. Home tan is actually superior to that because if it gets wet, when it dries it'll soften up again. It's very much the best of the best material. And it's surprising that not that many people are keeping up that tradition. So, once both sides of the hide are scraped and you've got it down to the suede side on both, there are a number of different processes at that point, and it changes from group to group, what methods you're going to be using.

Basically, as it's been told to me, you need something oily to put on it, to do that tanning. People have used the brains of an animal. I've heard of people using parts of the liver. One of the women up north was criticized. She made some of the most beautiful home tanned leather, but she was criticized, or teased by the other women because she used fish oil. She had this big jar of fish oil at her camp and she'd use that and rub that onto this leather. Today some people even use lard. They'll rub that into the hide and let it sit overnight in a warm place and the next day you wash it out so you get most of the excess oil off of the hide. It's quite labour intensive. Two people would stand opposite each other and they'd wring out as much water as they could and then they'd stretch it. You'd turn it round ninety degrees and you'd continue to stretch. I like the two person method because it's very intense. Some of the grannies that I was learning from, they would do it, they'd be out at the camp and they'd do it all by themselves. They'd have it over a pole or whatever and it was just unbelievable. You know, I'm a quarter of their age and I'm having a hard time doing it. I like doing it with two people. You come up with a beautiful supple hide, very much like a felt. And then there were different methods of preserving it after that. Some groups, like the Dene, I know, will soak it in tea to get the colour...

**SFR**

That's their secret!

**KB**

Yes. And so they actually never smoke theirs. So, if you take a Dene hide and smell it, it won't smell like a Cree or some of the other groups, or Ojibwa. Many of the groups use a smoking technique. What they do is they basically sew up like a pillowcase, leaving it open on one side and sewn up on the other two, and they sort of fold it over. And there are embers and coals where they put punky soft wood, and they will keep that going and depending on how dark they would like it, it will change to different colours. So, most home tanned leathers will have a dark side and a light side. Sometimes people, if they want a consistent colour throughout, will actually turn that hide inside out and smoke it on the other side so it permeates both sides. So, a lot of the dark ones...you can see on this one here, the foot has got a beautiful colour. They smell absolutely wonderful! I'm going to pass these round.



**Mark Hall** So it was traditional that the women do the tanning then?

**KB** Yes. And it's amazing because the amount of effort it takes is phenomenal. When I was learning how to tan hides by a woman who was about sixty or seventy years old, and I strung up my hide and she feels the rope on the side of it, and I thought I'd tightened it enough, and she gets there and she starts yanking on it, and oh no, it's not tight enough. I was sort of like, eyes wide! And so she tightened it up. So that whole process of stretching thin the hide, so when you kill a moose and you start skinning it, around the neck, the hide can be close to an inch in thickness, and when you stretch it on the frame it gives it a much more uniform thickness.

And then different animals will have different thicknesses and different properties in the hide. Caribou hide is extremely thin. I am always amazed at the quality of the work that's done with caribou hide because I like moose, and probably it's because I'm less experienced, but it's forgivable. You're not going to be stretching this thing because it's basically like a stiff cardboard when you're scraping it. And I've had caribou hides up and I'm scraping away, and all of a sudden the angle hits it just wrong and I've made a great big cut down the middle of my hide. So, moose is more forgiving that way, and elk's the same. Buffalo, again, is a very thick hide.

Some of the best women in the North, they wouldn't take anything from a female cow moose, or from young bulls, particularly in the middle of the summer. They've got short hair at that time and they have the thinnest hides. A big old bull with extremely thick hide, and a lot of them when they had access to a lot of them would just say, "I'm not interested in tanning those ones" when there was an abundance of hides that weren't being used.

**JM** When you were in the North, did you find that they did most of their tanning in the springtime? When it's not so hot.

**KB** One of the women said that the best time that she found was usually in that March-April time because in the middle of the summer you let your hide dry and it's as hard as a rock, and it's completely dry and like cardboard. But if you string it up in the spring, one of the grannies would get up at four in the morning when it was above zero during the day, and she'd stretch it during the later part of the day. And overnight it would freeze. The water is still inside the hide and it would be much thicker. And they said that when you scrape it at that point, it's easier. You don't dull your metal scraper nearly as much. And that's the best time. But a lot of hunting is done throughout the year, you know, maybe in the winter, and maybe those hides are left to be processed. Fall is another very popular time to do hunting of moose, so you get an opportunity to see the different kinds. So there are better times of the year, but I think in many cases, if you've got a moose hide and it's the middle of the summer, particularly long ago, people would do it regardless of what the weather was like.

**SFR** There's a coat that's in the Newcastle museum and it's made out of a single

piece of hide. The sleeves aren't sewn separately. Each sleeve has a seam up the side and then, the sleeves like that, and it's a good size coat. So one of the questions I had, I took pictures of it and I took them up to La Ronge and I showed them to Ida Tremblay who is a traditional artist, and I said, "One piece of hide?" And she said, "A dry cow". That's a female moose after past child-bearing. They grow bigger than a bull moose. You can get a really big hide. So if you're combining that knowledge from the people...I was puzzling over it and I can tell from the thickness of the hide that it's moose. Moose is the thickest, except for buffalo, but buffalo wasn't used that much for garments. It's about the same thickness as moose for how it looks. People used to use old tipi covers for moccasins because they'd been heavily smoked. So *they* might be buffalo. But mostly buffalo wasn't used for garments. Deer is thinner. It's nice. Deer is like velvet, if you compare it to fabric, whereas moose is like a heavy wool textile.

**JK** When you get a deer hide, even if it's a commercially tanned deer hide, and I brought this one here, this is the colour they are dying these deer hides now. For myself, I don't care for that yellow colour. But deerskin, I don't care...anybody who deals with making any of these things, they always have their special deerskin. My Dad and old ladies that had it, you have your special deerskin off to one side for special things. Whether it's home tan, or whether it's commercial tan, there's something about deerskin that's so nice. And it wears like...you can leave it outside. There was a jacket that my Dad left outside all winter long and he pulled it out in the springtime and the only thing that was wrong with it was that the colour came out of it. Other than that, the hide was still really nice. And that was still commercially tanned. It wasn't home tanned. So, deerskin has a different quality and there's something about it that's different to any of the other hides that you might use in making garments.

**SFR** It's fine. There's fineness about it.

**JK** Yes.

**SFR** And it drapes really nice.

**JK** Yes and you just have to touch it. It makes nice fringe. Everything about it is nice.

**JM** If you're wearing a deerskin jacket, you've got money! You've got the best! With the commercial tan too, I should mention, we could bring in a moose hide to have tanned, or a deerskin, we could tell the tannery what texture we wanted. We could say, "We're going to use this for garments" and they've got machines that shave it down. They'll bring it to the thickness that you want. Like that one there has a finish; it has two different sides. The piece that they take off, it's rough on both sides. It's called split. So that's the difference. Native tan, that really can't be done. You've got to scrape it.

**JK** They've tried and it just can't be done.

**KB** It's also much larger, with the home tan, because of that process of

stretching. So instead of splitting that hide, you're stretching it. And by stretching it, it's not uncommon to have a moose hide that's eight feet by seven feet. They can be very large indeed.

**JK** You can easily get a coat out of a moose hide. Usually it takes forty square feet to make a beaded jacket. And you can easily get a jacket. You really have to be good with your pattern, like my Mum, but you can get a jacket out of a moose hide. But, talking about the holes in that, too, talking about commercial hides; if you were buying you go through piles and piles of hides, and you're picking through because the nicer the hide, the more you can get out of it. Because in a deerskin you can't use too much of the sides of the animal, so you are very particular about how you're going to pick your hides and what it's going to be used for. Whether it's a jacket or moccasins or mitts.

So just getting into that part of it, which is the first part of it....and then getting into the next stage, which is the beadwork, and Alison [Brown] has some pieces there of birch bark bitings, which were originally the first beadwork patterns that were made. And it was done the same way as we did in our beadwork class. You would put it on, bead it, and then the bark was taken away from the beadwork. So there are pieces of the birch bark there, and there are also patterns I have drawn out myself, or my Dad collected or my Mum's got, in there. You are constantly looking for patterns and you are constantly making patterns. So there's one process and then it goes onto the next.

Like I said, maybe you want to go walking round the table, because there's also the sinew that comes next, and the beading. The sinew, that's right off the animal. There's some sinew threads there. They are usually wetted down so they are easier to work with. And then there's the other stages, there's the different furs, the different fabrics and materials that are used until finally you get a piece. So, if you wanted to, you could go round, and you can touch all this stuff. There are the quills; I snipped the ends off the quills because they will really hurt you! There are samples of the quills and how they did quill wrapping on hide, and how it was done on smoked tan. It's very difficult to do on commercial tan. Ask any questions!

**SFR** A lot of the fur will shed, so what's left on the pieces in your collection, the guard hairs will come off and you might just have some of the short hairs. And also sometimes there's nothing left. It just looks like the fine white leather. So unless you looked really carefully you might not realise that maybe that garment had fur trim and all that's surviving is this little band of what looks like white leather. If you look really closely you can see the residual bits of hair and fur.

One of the things that people don't often think of, let's say if they are thinking of northern Cree material, is seal skin. They don't think about seals because they think that must be arctic. So, they associate seal with the

Arctic and Inuit material but not with Cree. But because of the fur trade and the relationships between many of your collections and the fur trade, a lot of stuff was collected in York Factory, and you'll have heard people mention York Factory several times. York Factory has seals and polar bears, so those kinds of animals that we associate with the Arctic, people used them at York Factory. So, some of the pouches from along Hudson Bay will have had seal as fur. So, with that coat that I mentioned, it also came into the collection with a particular U-shaped pouch, which is a distinctive Cree pouch from the end of the eighteenth century. All the fur has gone, but I just happened to be looking at it in a room like this and when I held it up to the light I could see the little hair shafts and they were coarse, so I went, "Oh. Seal". So, if you think you have northern Cree material have a little look.

Let them know which one the beaver is.

**JK** Yeah, Mum was just going to go through the furs.

**JM** So, here's some of the beaver. Why I picked the beaver is when you're going to a fur store to try and find fur, you might see a mouton coat. Well, mouton is actually a beaver. How the guard hairs are plucked...see this is the belly part of the beaver, so it's not really got guard hairs, but the back part might have had all the guard hairs pulled out and shaved down evenly. In the process it turns into something that is almost like a...it's sheer. And that's mouton. A lot of people don't realise what can be done with furs to make it look like something else. Looking at different parts of the beaver, like this one here is taken from the belly, and the beaver has a sort of a feathery feeling under here which is very soft. They also used rabbit fur and we all know rabbit fur. We also have mink. Mink is a very fine, but dense, fur.

**JK** And fisher.

**JM** Yes, mink and fisher.

**JK** And then there's a little muskrat down there. And some buffalo and some coyote fur.

**MH** Was bear ever used much?

**JK** Not really.

**JM** It's very coarse hair. It doesn't make into a very nice trim for a garment.

**Maureen Matthews** What about wolverine?

**JM** Wolverine was more for decorative trims. Wolverine is the finest fur you can get in the North to trim your parka because it does not steam up and freeze. Most furs will frost up, but not wolverine. It's the best you can get. It has such a nice long hair. The hair sticks out nicely. So, each animal has a purpose and they discovered how to use the parts of the animal. We didn't bring any deer horn slices. Deer antler. Babes will use them for most of her jackets for buttons. They can use the antler to make cribbage boards. You'll see that in the North. A lot of people play cribbage and they'll use the antler horn to make the board.

**SFR** The antler horn, too, is one of the most ancient tools. The antler horn quill

flattener. Like, in terms of an ancient tool, it is still functional. My quill flattener is of deer antler, and Rosalie LaPlante's quill kit, she had a real old fashioned Cree flattener.

**JK** So, yeah. You guys go ahead. Pick things up and ask questions. We only have a very short time (Plate 16).

# Group discussion

## Chaired by Nancy Wachowich

**Nancy Wachowich** I was so pleased to have the assignment to chair our group discussion near the end because I've found these last couple of days very exciting in terms of thinking about material culture and museums. Actually handling things this past hour has been really exciting. So I thought what we'd do is just run for a half hour and have a general discussion about some of the themes that have emerged over the past couple of days and then if it's okay with everyone, we'll wrap up about fifteen minutes later than the intended time and we'll start Tim's concluding remarks about 3.55pm. Great. So, does anyone have any general comments or specific comments about some of the talks? Any comments for the speakers?

**Chantal Knowles** My comment would be "Thanks, Ali." What a brilliant two days it has been.

**Mark Hall** Hear, hear.

**CK** It's been inspiring.

**Alison Brown** Well, thank you all for coming, because it wouldn't have happened without you. So, thank you.

**CK** I think the mix of the practical and the cerebral has been really good at getting me to think about collections again, and their actual manufacture and the people who are behind each piece the museums have.

**AB** That's the thing. The people are the most important part, aren't they? I think with any museum collection, well for me anyway, when I'm dealing with museum collections, I always try and think about the people. It's not about objects or artefacts. I was having a conversation with Neil [Curtis] earlier and I was saying that when I made the introductory remarks yesterday, I was going to say something about using the word 'artefact', because I hate the word artefact. I find it is really sterile, and I've never heard anyone that I've met in any of the communities use it. I suppose, to me, all the things you see before you, the things are important, but it's really the people.

**Maureen Matthews** I think the other point is that every conversation makes the object more useful to the museums and to the communities. So, generating conversations around objects makes them rise in their value to every group. So, getting people to talk about things and seeing them, and repatriating them in all of the ways – artistic and photographic and every other way – it just makes them, even if a museum loses an object and it goes back to a community, the story of that object remains. I just think the objects bring people together and make the history more interesting.



**Sherry Farrell Racette**

I think sometimes when you come from the communities, right away you see the people. Especially if you've been in the situation where you've travelled a lot and met a lot of people. Neil showed the coat that had been made by the woman who was half-Inuit from Labrador. I just walked up there to see it. There was a small group of Inuit-Métis from Labrador and Newfoundland and they have always identified under that term, as Métis, and they were not included in the Constitution. They have not culturally affiliated with the Inuit except historically. And they are a distinct group in Labrador and Newfoundland. So I went upstairs and I thought, "Mrs Lane, eh?" And one of the women who is from that community teaches at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, so I'm thinking of her. You know, I've found something from her community. Her community is so under-represented and acknowledged in Canada. So then, when I went upstairs and I saw the boots that are also from Labrador and they've got this Métis-style embroidery kind of wedded to this very traditional Inuit boot, I thought "Ah!" There is very little material history connected to that community so sometimes you'll come across pieces and you'll think, "Oh!" It's very rare to find something from that particular community and yet just by coming here and noseying around and listening to Neil's presentation and seeing the objects that he picked to represent the Museum, you know, right away there's a context there. A specific community and a history. Even individuals that I can see when I look at those objects. So, I think there are museum people also who work with the communities who often start to see more clearly the people, where they can see objects that then remind them of people, and it makes them think, "I have to tell so and so about this". Or if they've been talking about objects like this, then this must be one of them.

**Jenny Meyer** What I've learned by coming here and I feel very, very proud of this is to know how interested you people that are from here, from this country, how you value the objects, the Native objects. I'm so pleased because thinking back, being at home, I was thinking, "They are across the water. Do they even know what they have?" But you *do*. And I really, really appreciate that. It makes me feel good that they are being protected and looked after and this is very, very important. Also, I want to take this opportunity to thank every one of you. You've been so kind. The hospitality has been just wonderful. I would like to come back some day. Thank you so much, Alison. And I never did tell you [Sherry Farrell Racette], that speech you made...I was so proud of you. Proud to be your sister. That was wonderful.

**SFR** Meegwetch.

**JM** Same as you [Kevin Brownlee]. I see him every week! It was really nice coming here, there are people here from home I'd never met. I'd never met Sherry before, though I'd heard about her. I got to know Kevin quite well now. And certainly to meet Keith [Goulet]. I've added you to my collection

of good friends and new friends. And thank you, everybody.

**MH** I was struck by one of the things you said this morning [Sherry Farrell Racette], when you talked about your first encounters with your art, as it were. What was the context, because that was still at the time when you were culturally disenfranchised basically...what was the context when those museums were displaying that material?

**SFR** I don't even remember, because it was such a fluky kind of thing. The museum in Winnipeg, there's those connecting hallways. I was going from Place A to Place B and using the underground passage to get there. I still remember what it was. They were Dene. They were those traditional Dene outfits where those boots are sewn to the pants. And there was a solid beaded shirt. And it was just in a pedestrian walkway that was there to draw attention to the fact that there was a museum upstairs. And I was just, you know, walking by and thinking "What are those?" But a lot of people had that experience, if you came from a community where the art wasn't being continued for whatever reason. I grew up in what was not really a white town, but a company town. It was really racially segregated; it was a hostile environment. Other communities had an oppressive Indian agent where the practices were actively suppressed. It wasn't like that everywhere, but say, like the Haida. A lot of Haida artists never saw their work until they walked into a museum in Victoria or Vancouver. So, it wasn't even beyond critiquing how they were represented. I had no clue. I came from a really little place. We didn't even have a library. So there were none of those institutions. Our high school was one hall and three classrooms. I was just amazed to see them there. And I didn't know for years, and a lot of people still don't know, that what's in the glass boxes is just a tiny percentage of what's there. So the first time I went behind the scenes was in The Manitoba Museum with Katherine [Pettipas], and for Jenny and Jennine and myself it was Katherine Pettipas at The Manitoba Museum who has really been doing pioneer work with providing access to the communities. So, when you turned up, you know, and you were emotional, and you were not even knowing what...she was so patient, and she'd just wait while you bounced off the walls for a bit.

**Jennine Krauchi** Yeah, she did that for me.

**SFR** And then, she'd say, "What are you interested in?" and she'd let you access the collections. I just remember looking at all this stuff, like John Norquay's suit. All these things that she would know. Like, what community you were from. She would know you would really want to see this, or you'd really be interested in that. And here's the Paul Kane stuff, and open that drawer.

**JK** She's certainly always had the time for you. And she's had a very difficult time working within the community. In a community like Winnipeg where there are a lot of different Aboriginal groups, she can work within that community and bring out the best in that community. If you ever have a

chance to come to Winnipeg you should try and meet Katherine.

**SFR** She was working with Elders from Saskatchewan to try and identify sacred bundles way before anyone else. It was real pioneer work. Because of the way they were removed, there was a fellow named Alex Greyeyes who worked with the different museums to try and work out where the different things ended up. And a lot of museums were really uptight about that; they were really threatened by it. It takes a few individual curators to be open to that to start those relations. And also in that initial process, and Ali [Brown] had a bit of that as well, because of the emotion that we bring to it, it means a curator gets yelled at. You get to be on the receiving end of all of that accumulated, “You’ve got our stuff”. You know? Some people are quieter about it than others. But you end up being the public face of a whole history and sometimes that can be very challenging for some people. But once you get through that, then those enduring relationships can continue throughout. So some of the museums now have these decades’ long relations, and it has been through this that some of the protocols that are now used in the museums have developed. A lot of these situations, these challenges we face, there really isn’t a traditional way. It’s like, long ago, we didn’t have museums. We didn’t have sacred materials that didn’t get buried. It’s like new challenges for us as well.

**JM** The medicine man’s bundles are very sacred and have to be looked after in such a way that they are not displayed to the public. They need to be where the family can visit. We had some and we got them a sacred room and people from different communities that have family bundles will come into Winnipeg and Katherine will just take the whole day and be with them. And they want to be there quietly by themselves and give their offerings. It’s theirs. It’s their museum, actually. It’s our museum. It’s there for those of us who want to be involved. I’m talking as a Native person and a lot of Native people, they see this big building and they think they can’t see in there. They think, “Who is going to welcome me?” Because, you know, we got involved with the museum through Katherine, because she wanted us to do a project – the Boreal Forest display – and my husband and I did the clothing for it. We got the deer; we skinned the deer; we tanned the hides. My husband made the sinew. And we had those mannequins live at our house till they were dressed and then we brought them back to Winnipeg. We were living in Brandon at the time. And so we did that and we really understand what it took to get that Boreal Forest. A lot of people go through and they think, “Oh yeah”, but they don’t realise that everything that the curator has gone through to put that into place. And Katherine along with Doug Leonard, they worked together on that. Katherine is a very dedicated person. I’m sure there are people sitting round here who are just as dedicated.

**SFR** It’s a good understanding for us to get to because it was something that for a long time we were excluded from, so we know nothing about the process.

- We learned as we went along. It's that process of mutual respect. You get involved and you meet more people and you develop things and you start to appreciate all the little pieces.
- JK** You get to appreciate all the people involved and all the expertise, not just within the Aboriginal community, but beyond that. Everybody has a part in that exhibit. I know with Katherine, too, she's worked a lot within the communities, and to bring the communities together in order to have that exhibit, and making sure that the community is involved and that the right information is put out there for the public. She's very concerned about it and I know she has very many sleepless nights of making sure that is done properly. Like my Mum says, as Aboriginal people, we really appreciate that and we're very fortunate to have that.
- NW** This workshop has brought out a whole new set of ideas about how we can engage with the materials.
- JM** That's what we were hoping it would.
- NW** Yeah. You know, like touching and smelling the furs, and thinking about...I had to try and focus quite a bit yesterday and today. I found it really great.
- JM** You were very good students!
- AB** That's bringing the discussion back to the people behind the beadwork as well. You know, I remember last summer when I was talking to some women who sew, and one woman, I remember this made a big impression on me; she only does beadwork for her family. She doesn't make it for sale. She said with every stitch she takes she puts love into that stitch because she thinks about who she's making that object for. And then some of the things that we see in the museums, if we think about them in those sorts of terms, you know...
- JK** Yes. So like with you guys, what were you thinking when you did your beadwork? Were you thinking of your families? Your kids? You know? All of those things. And what's the difference between how you were feeling and what those women were thinking years ago when they were making these pieces. What were they thinking of? They were probably thinking about what to get ready for dinner, or their kids. You know? All of those different things. And we have those thoughts today.
- NW** Even like a particular flower could be working through some problem.
- JK** Yes.
- NW** And then you move on. Part of my stem was done this morning and part of my stem was done yesterday and I can see that now, and those feelings and thoughts are there.
- JK** Yeah. All the steps, all the way through till you finally peel that paper away and you see it and it's there.
- NW** Has there been much documentation or oral histories done on particular artefacts, like beadwork or garments? Are there many women who would really talk about that flower, or, I guess, documenting it is what I mean?

**JM** This is where I'm hoping and praying that this gal right here [Sherry Farrell Racette] is going to do that.

**SFR** One of the things that I did in my dissertation is I tried to look at process and I found some stuff in archival sources. One of the things that I found in relation to the floral perspective is that the Catholic missions were telling people about the equation between the flower and the Virgin Mary, so they are associated with the Virgin Mary. And so for a lot of Indigenous Christians, really Christianity was all about the Virgin Mary. She was sort of the central draw, along with some of the saints. It was actually quite female if you look at the emphasis. And sometimes the priests would want to hunt buffalo with the Métis and they would have tents and people would make flower offerings. And when I talked to some of the women, we were talking about the flower with four petals and they referred to it as 'the cross'. And each flower, then they'd talk about each bead, like when Alison [Brown] was talking about the woman thinking about her family, like each stitch, each bead. I was told when I was beading for someone to clear your mind and think good thoughts about that person.

**JK** That's right.

**SFR** So every stitch, every bead that you put on is like an act of love for that person. Partly you do it unconsciously, but the more that you love a person...like people would make things for their husbands and for their children, and they are just covered with these, well, offerings really. At the same time, it can be commodified, and someone can come along and say, "I want a lot of beadwork". And you do it. You'd do it. It's not the same. It's not so personal. But you still have that sort of meditative thing going on. It was interesting. Everyone had different processes and techniques. Almost everyone that I talked to - and I interviewed about five or six different artists - and found some support. And also there's the evidence in the materials themselves, but there's the healing aspect of beadwork. These women lived such dramatic lives. One of the women I researched, she lived at Fort Union and she witnessed every tragedy on the Northern Plains during her lifetime: Cypress Hills Massacre, Batoche, a massacre at Fort Union. Her life was just one event to the next, and yet her work is just amazing. There's the same thing with Mrs LaRoque. She does this just exuberant beadwork, and yet her life is just these struggles. And so I was asking the obvious question. How could women who had such difficult lives make such beautiful work? So I talked to the artists today about how they felt when they did their work, and everyone talked about the aspect of healing. People talked about the spiritual engagement that they had. Some artists talked about dreams. Dreaming their designs. Designs come to them. So, I'm hoping to interview some more artists to get them to talk about that a little bit. So, there are some things that are quite unique and specific. Everyone's got their own techniques and processes, and there are things that are available, you know,

the things that they use, but then there's the personal meaning and engagement that people all talk about.

**JM** It's like a therapy.

**JK** Yes.

**JM** It's there in your mind. It's the only time when you have time for you to just use your mind and just meditate in a loving and caring way. You come away from it and you feel refreshed.

**JK** You couldn't wait till next morning. It's like, I want to do this now.

**SFR** It can be mildly addictive. Some of you may find that out! But you know, I paint, I do different art forms and I can go a long stretch of time without painting but I can't go long without beading. I don't feel right.

**JK** Yes.

**SFR** So it's like I need to have a little project.

**JM** That's like Babes [Jennine Krauchi] is. If she needs to get away from things, phone calls, whatever, she beads.

**JK** Sometimes you almost feel like you're sneaking away and you're being sneaky about it. You know you're not supposed to be doing it; you're supposed to be doing that over there, but still...I know that I'll get into trouble if I don't!

**JM** There's a lot of feelings that go along with it.

**SFR** It was definitely like that for the women in the past. They had challenges. I mean, it's not like it's an easy life being a man, and a lot of this stuff depended on men, like you mentioned, you know, who got the moose. So a lot of this stuff starts with the man. So some of this is women's work but it relies on that collaboration with men. The man has to first of all get the moose; has to get a clean shot so the thing isn't full of holes; has to get the hide home. The scraping and stuff, the men are the ones that sharpen the tools, keep the fire going. It's a collaborative thing. And an awful lot of this work is also for men. So men were like, in fact, the canvas for women. So your husband, that's your art gallery. Your kids going out there, too, but certainly your husband.

**JM** It was like that with my husband. He was an art gallery.

**JK** Yeah, he was a well-loved man!

**SFR** It's also a way of going, "*My man!*"

**JM** He built me a log house, so I had to build him a jacket!

**Keith Goulet** For me I thought if there was one word that I would use to reflect back on the past couple of days, I would use the word "appreciation". I thought that the word appreciation would have to be extended in quite a multi-dimensional sense. So, an appreciation for the coming together of people, from different backgrounds, from South America, from France, from Scotland, we've all come together. There's a life form, the beads, that has brought us together. And so the word appreciation is an appreciation of that which we have thought about for a long time, and now we are finally



together. And we talk about the languages we have learned, about how we deal with these things. And now we bring these together in actual action. There's an appreciation of thought, there's an appreciation of language, there's an appreciation of language. And in Cree there is a dimension that is talked about, when a person says in terms of history, "*Mooskatuheneetum*". That means in literal translation, "A person is crying out thinking". There's a combination of what people will label as cognition and also what people will say is emotion, when people are under stress and doing things in action. That is how the word comes to be, and how it is generally. And for me, on a personal level, I have thought about it for many years...you know, twenty years in education, seventeen years in politics...and now I have a chance to go back and do a little bit of writing. It generates from that appreciation I get of the action, to move forward and redevelop new partnerships that are possible from these situations. And move to a stage, you know... I was talking to somebody about the creation of hides in Northern Saskatchewan and if you could get all the community colleges together and get some key people and get something rolling. Talk about the traditional way of hide making. There are very different words that are used. Like in hide making, there's scraping on the one side, where there's the hair, it's a different instrument plus action. There's the fleshing that needs a different tool and action. And it is those things that when I was talking about these concepts of Cree categories, I was talking in very general terms, and we need more specific development on that. So for example, when I look at the beads, they are alive, the *sestuk*, the thread is alive. And it's those things that have to be talked about because in Cree we talk about it at three different levels of aliveness. It's those things that are generating from the appreciation that I have for today. That's it. Thank you very much.

**NW** Are there any other comments? Thank you very much. We'll move onto Tim's concluding remarks.



# Concluding remarks

## Tim Ingold

Let me start by saying, on behalf of the Museum, the Department of Anthropology and the University as a whole, that it has been an enormous pleasure and privilege for us to have been able to welcome so many honoured guests from so far away. I feel very proud to be here in the midst of such a distinguished gathering. The beautiful weather is obviously a sign that something or someone is smiling on us! I should also thank, more formally, the United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Research Council which has provided the funding, through a grant that we hold in the Department, for this event to take place. It is nice to be able to acknowledge support for a good cause, once in a while, from the United Kingdom government.

Something that really came home to me as I was listening to the presentations, particularly yesterday morning, was how everything and everyone suddenly seem to be connecting up – I mean around the North. In this conference we have been pointing primarily westwards, towards the American North. Here in Aberdeen, of course, we are also interested in the European and Siberian North, and the next stage is perhaps to attempt to link these Norths together on an even wider canvas. But I was really struck that while sitting here in Aberdeen we have been talking about our connections with people in Orkney, and at the same time with Tł̥ch̥ Dene people, Métis people and Kainai people in Canada. We have seen pictures of Aberdeen research students and postdoctoral researchers meeting up with folk in Canada, and we have welcomed visitors from there to the Museum here in Aberdeen and a few years ago to the conference in Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup>

I may be wrong, but I have a feeling that this connectedness is fairly recent, and dates back no more than a decade. Indeed I would like to think that we have achieved it over only the last eight years, since it was eight years ago that we re-established the anthropology programme here in Aberdeen – but that might be being a bit presumptuous! In any case it is an achievement, and it is one on which we need to build. It is not enough merely to congratulate ourselves on having come thus far. Having established a platform of concrete achievement and a network of connections, the challenge is to determine where to go from here. How can we build on what we have already established? In practical terms, of course, it always starts with money. So we need to identify sources for grants to carry on with the work, and to succeed in that we do need to be fairly clear about our objectives. I believe this workshop has helped us to clarify these objectives.

<sup>1</sup> The Ninth International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, 9-13 September, 2002.

That's the practical side; now for the intellectual side. This is where, being an academic, I cannot avoid what we call 'critical engagement'. During our discussions I had some niggling worries that all converged on the word *object*. Alison [Brown] said she doesn't like the word *artefact* since it is the people that count. I sympathize with this view. But it is the word *object* that I don't like. Whenever anyone talks about objects, a warning sign goes up in my head. Part of the reason why I don't like to talk about objects is that it makes it seem as though we had the finished thing before us, all complete. It is as if the thing is saying to us: "Here I am. I'm an object. I've finished with you. I'm now fully constituted. I've got my surface and I'm looking at you, and you're looking at me. We're no longer together, we're split apart!"

That is why I so much appreciated our workshops yesterday afternoon and this morning. Here we focused not on the finished object but on the process of making. The distinction is critical. And if I worry about the word *object*, I also worry about the notion of *material culture*. That is another term I dislike. One of the reasons I don't like the concept of material culture is that it stops us from thinking about materials. Most of the time when analysts speak of material culture they mean objects. Much of what goes under the rubric of material culture studies consists of investigations of contemporary practices of consumption in Western societies. They are studies of ready-made objects of the kind you might buy from the supermarket and what happens to them after they have been purchased. But the more you focus on material culture, the less you focus on the stuff things are made of and the process of making itself.

The point arose in our discussion here. One of the things we began to appreciate through the workshops was that from the maker's point of view, you have to understand the properties of materials – not the materiality of objects, but the properties of materials. That is the sort of understanding you can only get through engaging with the materials and working with them. This is a really important point to stress. As long as we are saddled with the language of objects and material culture studies, it is a very difficult point to get across. There is a critical argument here. I like to think of objects not as solid blobs of stuff, but as rather like knots. Each knot is woven from many strings. Different strings then go off in different directions and perhaps become knotted up with other strands in other things. In other words, we should try to imagine what we are calling the object as a kind of *gathering*, in which all sorts of different lines and strands are momentarily, though not necessarily permanently, brought together in a particular kind of thing.

There was a good deal of discussion during the workshop about the relationship between objects and stories. Thinking about things in terms of stories is clearly important, and resonates with the way people who make things think about their work. It seems to me, however, that if you want to find the analogy with

telling a story, it lies in picking up a needle and threading it through the beads. Thus the story telling is the *actual movement* of threading the beads. And this is different from saying that finished pieces of work are storied objects. They are stories in a sense, but it is one thing to have a made object and to tell a story about it, quite another if the telling is actually in the making itself. Although you can obviously tell stories about objects that are already made, the real story – the beginning story, the story that is at the bottom of it all – is the story that lies in the making.

I was thinking in particular about *hands* because Keith [Goulet] started his talk on Thursday morning with this very topic. He explained that the hand is the organ of an active body: we have things to do, and we use the hands to do them. But had you looked on yesterday afternoon when everyone was bent over their tables, concentrating on their beadwork, you would have noticed that all the hands were *moving* with immense care and dexterity, and under the closest observation. Thus we go from the hand on the body that Keith was talking about, to this moving hand here, to the glove on the table over there, which is decorated with the beadwork that has been made through all of this handicraft, and the story somehow runs in the work of the hand from the organ, through its gestures, to the designs.

I was thinking, too, about the designs themselves. The discussion we have just had brought up some of the possible symbolic meanings of these designs, especially in terms of Christian theology. This is clearly important, though I don't know enough about it to comment. What did strike me, however, was that the designs include lots of flowers, as well as leaves, tendrils, and little vines going this way and that. Curiously, no-one in our discussion has talked about what the designs depict, and I wonder what the reasons are for this omission. It is as though everyone is interested only in the personal meanings and symbolic values of these objects, and in the fact that they are beautifully decorated, but not in what the decorations are *of*. But to my mind it is no accident that these decorations are pictures of flowers and leaves and things of that kind, because flowers and leaves, like stories, also grow and leave traces, or *tracery*. Indeed you could think of a growing plant with a flower as, in itself, a kind of a story. I just wonder whether there is a connection on this level between the stories and the designs. Could one imagine beadwork designs that depict things that do not grow, or that leave no tracery? I suspect not.

A moment ago Nancy [Wachowich] was talking about how we had all kinds of feelings, thoughts and emotions as we got on with our beadwork. This was my experience too. Are these things that go through our minds distracting, or do they help us to concentrate? That would be an important question to address, and I don't know the answer. In any case, I wonder how you can 'read off' these feelings and thoughts from the finished beadwork. At least in my case, you could read them through the imperfections. Mine was a pretty flawed job! But I wonder whether, if there could be such a thing as a perfect piece of beadwork, you could you read any

thoughts, feelings or emotions from it at all. Is it because there are always little differences – maybe a stitch left out here, or an extra bead put in there, or something that has gone a tiny bit wrong – that feeling is registered?

This is an intriguing question. However the really crucial issue, I think, concerns the meaning of history. What we really need to do, through the kind of discussion we have been having, is to claim back a sort of history that has been sidelined by mainstream academic historians. It is the history of people making things. Academic historians speak only of people, usually important or powerful people, and of what they have done. On the other hand, mainstream archaeologists reconstruct histories of objects. Some archaeologists advocate a Darwinian approach to the cultural history of artefacts. In this approach there are no people at all. It is as though objects themselves had offspring – the next generation of objects of that kind – which have offspring in their turn. If people are in there at all, they are merely the means by which objects beget more objects. So you have these two parallel histories: of people on the one hand and of objects on the other. If, for example, you were to read a book about the history of architecture, you will find lots of names of famous architects, alongside pictures of the designs they made. You won't however find anything about builders, because they are conceived to have been merely workmen who got the structures put up. Obviously, if there were no builders then there would be no buildings. Yet all you can read about in the history of architecture is architects' designs.

What we have in reality is indeed a history of people, but it is one in which their actual gestures, movements and engagements in making things are themselves intrinsic to the historical process. We need, then, a kind of history that gives centre stage to the creative work of actually bringing things into being. *That* is the kind of history we need to reclaim, regardless of whether it is a history that belongs to Indigenous people, Aboriginal people, or non-Aboriginal people. In a way it doesn't really matter so long as it is not a history in which people and objects end up on opposite sides of a fence. We need to see histories as continually generated through the engagements of people with materials and with the land. I think that is what we have been trying to do here, but we need to be very clear about it so that we know, at least, what we are *not* trying to do. Then, if people challenge us, we can say where we stand. This workshop has certainly helped me in thinking these issues through, and I hope that others have found it helpful too.

That is more or less everything that I wanted to say, except finally to thank you all very, very much.





