

“Finding” Payepot’s Moccasins: Disrupting Colonial Narratives of Place

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Abstract

Using altered readings of normative, “common sense” histories, this article illustrates diverse entry points into interpreting narratives, museums, and place. It queries ways in which colonial subjectivities can be (re)produced through museum objects, collections, and displays, as well as the social engagements collectors, benefactors, curators, visitors, and others might have with them. The article revolves around a late 19th-century pair of moccasins of First Nations provenance attributed to renowned Cree Leader, Chief Payepot, housed in a rural, community museum, the Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre. By examining both the physical and metaphorical positionalities of “Chief Payepot’s Moccasins” as they come to be represented through various texts and subtexts, we argue for a disruption of hegemonic settler narratives in the not-yet-post-colonial territory commonly known in contemporary nation state terms as southern Saskatchewan. This approach privileges thinking *with* objects in an effort to dislodge colonial assumptions about place and belonging, encouraging dialogic meaning-making about historical and contemporary life with Treaty in Western Canada.

Keywords

artifacts, First Nations, postcolonialism, rural museums, subjectivities, Treaty, Canada, Saskatchewan

Prologue

Tobias—The anthropologist

In early April of 2010, just as our teaching semester was winding down, I received quite out of the blue, an email from Lace, my colleague and now friend, entitled “crazy research idea?,” where she told me that the previous summer, she had “found Pay-e-pot’s [*sic*] moccasins at the Maple Creek museum. . . . ‘I’ really did. . . . What kind of postcolonial appropriation is that???” She invited me to join her in a small research project to take place at the Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre (JCHC) in Maple Creek, that would investigate these objects, their history, and position in the context of colonial and “post” colonial rural Saskatchewan. I was immediately intrigued . . .

My academic and research interests lie in the material culture and arts of the South Pacific, specifically Samoa, and I am interested in what artifacts used in public and private contexts can tell us about how Polynesian societies are understood or interpreted by indigenous and non-indigenous agents. In many ways, Lace’s idea was thus a rather stark departure from my previous academic “comfort zone.” Nevertheless, Lace’s invitation spoke to me. Originally from Germany, I completed my higher education in England, conducted extensive fieldwork in the

South Pacific, and lived in the United States for a short period of time before taking up a position at the University of Regina in 2005. Prior to this, I had no knowledge of Canada apart from its portrayal in popular media and impressions from the odd Canadian (most of them from British Columbia or Ontario). Canada, for me, was this “large, sparsely populated, liberal place above the US.” My first-ever experience of Canada was driving a moving van through the Port of Entry at Pembina, Manitoba. Canada, outside the bubble of my university life, continued to be *terra incognita*, and I jumped at the chance to learn more about my new home and also to engage more directly with local communities.

Lace—The curriculum theorist

For me, this research began in a narrative moment . . . One spring day in 2009, on a family road trip, I stopped with my spouse and two children at the JCHC in the town of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, to “visit” the museum.

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Figure 1. Close-up of Chief Payepot's moccasins.

Source. From a photograph taken by Tobias Sperlich. Courtesy and copyright, Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre.

Together but separate, and the only people in the room, so free to chat at a slightly higher volume than normal, the four of us were meandering through the collections, pausing in different places, chatting, and sharing. I stopped in front of a display case, glanced down, and saw a lovely pair of moccasins. Reading the label, I exclaimed, "Come look at this: I found Payepot's moccasins!" (Figure 1)

As soon as I uttered my declaration—made "my" knowledge claim one might say—I realized the assumed privilege of my words . . . I hadn't "found" anything. Yet, as a (White settler) consumer of colonial culture, I assumed entitlement, an entitlement of discovery, and by extension, some "ownership" over said discovery. My words caused me to shift from random, vacationing wife and mother to critical, reflective academic. Indeed, in stumbling upon these artifacts, quite by chance, I once again found myself caught in one of those "fairly strong moments of discord or dissonance" (Dickinson, Ott, & Aoki, 2013, p. 32).

As a scholar and teacher educator, I am continually becoming "conscious of my fictions", an epistemological perspective I borrow from postcolonial educator Valerie Mulholland (2006). And so, immediately after exclaiming to my spouse that I had "found" Payepot's moccasins, I pulled one of my ever-handy writing notebooks (Cixous & Sellers, 2004) out of my handbag to jot notes not only about the object itself but also about deconstructing my own declaration of assumed settler privilege.

My initial "discovery" struck me as important because of the espoused provenance of the moccasins; Chief Payepot is a well-known historical figure to me, both because of

recurring artistic representations of him in public spaces I frequent (e.g., portraits in art galleries) and through geographical demarcation; as a child, and now adult, I have driven past the town of Piapot,¹ situated just off the Trans-Canada Highway between Swift Current, Saskatchewan and Medicine Hat, Alberta, on occasions too numerous to count. My encounter with Payepot's moccasins as artifact led me—in the power of a narrative moment—to disrupt my own commonsense interpretations (Kumashiro, 2004) of ownership and knowledge claims. I hadn't "found" anything. What I had done was stumble into an altered way of engaging with an object and its environment—where both artifact and context contribute to the construction of narratives about place, identity, subjectivities, and belonging.

Introduction

Our research is situated *between* settler and Aboriginal cultures and histories, residing in spaces of overlap and intersection.² Furthermore, though produced by the Western academic discourses that shape us and our ways of researching, we are also working consciously to include a decolonizing lens in our research. Consequently, we heed Kovach's (2009) call to attend to the "centrality of voice and representation in research" (p. 81), recognizing that "story as methodology is decolonizing research" (p. 103). The central question we grapple with in this article is how artifacts, Payepot's moccasins, and their physical location in the JCHC in particular, contribute to the production—both historical and ongoing—of colonial subjectivities in relation to indigenous peoples and their representations. To contextualize this work, we briefly outline, in the first instance, discourses associated with the historical and geographical make-up of southern Saskatchewan within the political contexts of Canada as a nation state. In the second instance, we describe and critically engage with the moccasins and Chief Payepot as historical figure, as well as the display case in which the moccasins are located. In the third instance, we examine ways in which the JCHC is active in ongoing productions of place, both physical and constructed. We conclude with a discussion of the potential of artifacts, such as the moccasins, to disrupt unidimensional narratives, stimulate altered readings, and contribute to postcolonial meaning-making.

Setting the Scene: Discourses and Tensions

From both governance and ethical perspectives, "all Saskatchewan residents are the beneficiaries of Treaties . . . Treaties are the foundation on which we built our province" (Government of Saskatchewan, 2008). In the latter part of the 19th century, the British Crown negotiated and signed

several numbered treaties throughout present-day Western Canada, including five with “the Cree, Saulteaux, Assiniboiné and Dene people . . . in the territory that is now the province of Saskatchewan” (Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC), n.d., p. 2). One of these, Treaty 4, signed on behalf of the Crown by the government of Canada with the Cree and Saulteaux peoples, resulted in the ceding of more than 75,000 km² of fertile land in southeastern Alberta, southern Saskatchewan, and western Manitoba (Taylor, 1985). Because of these agreements,

newcomers and their descendents benefit from the wealth generated from the land and the foundational rights provided in the treaties . . . Today, there are misconceptions that only First Nations peoples are part of the treaties, but in reality, both parties are part of treaty. All people in Saskatchewan are treaty people. (OTC, 2008, p. 16)

Nevertheless, the role of Treaty and the co-existence of Aboriginal and settler Canadians remains contested,³ particularly in view of effacing discourses of national politics, as evidenced in 2009 by the then prime minister’s assertion that

We [Canada] also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers, but none of the things that threaten or bother them about the great powers. We also are a country, obviously beginning with our two major cultures, but also a country formed by people from all over the world . . . (Harper cited in Wherry, 2009, Oct. 1)

As this illustrates, even political leaders engage in effacing colonialism and continue to invoke the discourses of Canada’s *two* founding cultures—that is, French and English—and of multiculturalism, which serve to reinforce the silencing⁴ of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Situating Place

Using Western ontology, one can describe Maple Creek as located in the southwest corner of Saskatchewan, Canada, just north of the Cypress Hills. It is a settler community serving a rural area primarily focused on farming and ranching. Established in 1882 (Welcome to Maple Creek, n.d.), it is located along the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) with a present-day population of approximately 2,200. One of Canada’s three prairie provinces, present-day Saskatchewan occupies more than 650,000 km² of territory, with a population of just over 1 million (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Important to this work, there are approximately 1.2 million First Nations, Inuit, and Métis⁵ people living in all of Canada, with an estimated 141,000, or just over 10% of the total Canadian Aboriginal population, living in Saskatchewan.

Alternatively, drawing on indigenous methodologies, one can describe the town of Maple Creek as situated on the grasslands that were the home of the “great herds of buffalo, or more correctly bison, whose range originally extended through the Great Plains, east to the Appalachians, and into the Subarctic” (King, 1999, p. 225). It is just north of the hills known as *Manâtakâw* to the Cree, *Awai’skiimmiiko* to the Blackfoot, which constitute the highest elevation on the prairies east of the “*Mistâkistsi* ([in Blackfoot] the backbone of the world which was renamed the Rocky Mountains)” (Chambers & Blood, 2009, p. 254). With their protected valleys, these hills provided an important winter camp area for First Nations Peoples, situated as they are within the traditional lands of the Niitsitapii (Blackfoot Nation). Post contact, these lands also became important to the *Nēhiyawak* (Plains Cree), who, with the Ojibwas, “moved south and west with the increased hunting opportunities” (King, 1999, p. 227).

Finally, combining these two perspectives, the location of Maple Creek can be defined as situated in the southwesterly reaches of Treaty 4. Because Treaty 4 is a negotiated space between our colonial and indigenous pasts, and our ongoing colonial and indigenous present, it is neither a settler nor an indigenous space; rather, it is a co-constructed and continually negotiated space⁶ that represents both a political agreement and a geographical marker, and constitutes a common ground of settler Canadians and First Nations Peoples.

Payepot’s Moccasins—Textualizing an Artifact

It is within the context of Treaty that we, a longtime White-settler resident of Saskatchewan and a relative newcomer, embarked upon our research collaboration, venturing to the town of Maple Creek to further investigate the moccasins. It quickly became apparent that this rather ordinary artifact provided a treasure trove of intriguing research questions, linked to stories and histories of people(s) and place(s) in southwestern Saskatchewan and beyond, both First Nations and settler.

The Moccasins

The pair of moccasins sits elevated on top of two white boxes in the left half of a display case dedicated to First Nations artifacts, the case itself located in a room on the main floor of the museum (see Figure 2). They are entirely covered with beadwork of mostly white beads, forming geometrical patterns with beads of blue, yellow, pink, and red color. Due to their having been out of use and being kept in collections since their settler acquisition, they are well-preserved. As an example of the kind of handiwork of mid-late 19th-century Plains Cree artisans and craftspeople, they also illustrate the result of ongoing cultural changes initiated



Figure 2. Display case of the Flemming Collection containing Chief Payepot's Moccasins.

Source. From a photograph taken by Lace Marie Brogden. Courtesy and copyright, Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre.

by the coming of Europeans, where “glass beads gradually replaced quillwork after 1830” (Brasser, 2012, para. 15).⁷ Equally lavishly decorated examples can be found in museums across Canada, including a pair purportedly belonging to another famous First Nations leader from the Canadian Prairies, Chief Poundmaker, now housed at the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa-Gatineau.⁸

Based on information available at the JCHC and provided by Margaret Waller, a former owner, the moccasins have been attributed to Plains Cree Indian Chief Payepot, a historic figure of particular local and regional interest. Born c. 1816, Payepot lived most of his life in the southwestern corner of present-day Saskatchewan (Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, 2006). Although Treaty 4 was signed in September of 1874, “[m]any of the treaties, including Treaty Four, were subject to later adhesions from Indians who lived in the territory covered but who were not present at the original negotiations” (Beal, 2007, p. 115). Payepot was among those not present at the 1874 signing.

In 1875 he met with Treaty Commissioner William Christie, and after seeking guarantees that he would receive farm instructors, mills, more tools, and medical assistance, he signed an adhesion to Treaty 4. However many of the terms Piapot

[sic] believed he had negotiated would not appear until Treaty 6 in 1876. (Nestor, 2006, pp. 689-690)

Following his signing, Payepot and his people were relocated to reserve lands in the Qu'Appelle valley region of south central Saskatchewan, and from this point forward, his band, named after the Chief himself, became known as Piapot Indian Band and, later, Piapot First Nation.⁹ Before becoming, with his people, a displaced person, Payepot and his band lived in and around the Cypress Hills. Even after their forced migration to the Qu'Appelle valley, some 450 km (280 miles) to the east, Payepot made several return visits to his ancestral lands in the Cypress Hills until his death in 1908 (Watetch, 1959/2007).

Payepot as Historical Figure

Historically, Payepot was a charismatic, revered, and sometimes feared leader. He had a local and national reputation for being a forceful adversary of rival First Nations groups and White colonial incursion, conducting raids on fortified trading posts and unfortified settlements in search of food, horses, guns, and alcohol. At the same time, he was an insightful and forward-thinking politician who would engage in alliances with First Nations, Métis, and settler communities when such alliances proved politically expedient or advantageous. He is also acknowledged for recognizing the relevance of settler technologies, such as permanent dwellings, agriculture, and weaponry, and introducing them to his and other First Nations peoples (for accounts of Chief Payepot's life, readers are directed to Lee, 1992; McKay, 2012, 2009; Tobias, 2003).

Local lore has it that in 1883, Chief Payepot, protesting colonial settler invasion and military advancement, undertook a gesture of peaceful, non-violent resistance against the construction of the railway through his ancestral lands, and set up his tipi on the tracks east of the town of Maple Creek near the bend of a little river. In remembrance of this event and in honor of this famous (infamous to some) Chief, this river and the colonial settlement that was founded on this site in 1912 were both named Piapot. His reputation endures to this day: various publications about his life (McKay, 2012, 2009; Nestor, 2006; Watetch, 1959/2007) are available at bookshops, museums, galleries, coffee shops, and other localities in southern Saskatchewan; he has been included in encyclopedic works on Canadian and Saskatchewan history (Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, 2006; Tobias, 2003); and, his portrait hangs in the Assiniboine Gallery of Portraits of Saskatchewan Indian Leaders by Edmund Morris in the Saskatchewan Legislative Building. Most recently, a commemorative bust has been installed in front of the city hall of the provincial capital, Regina, a space used for public activities such as civic celebrations and the Regina Farmer's Market (Figure 3). Here

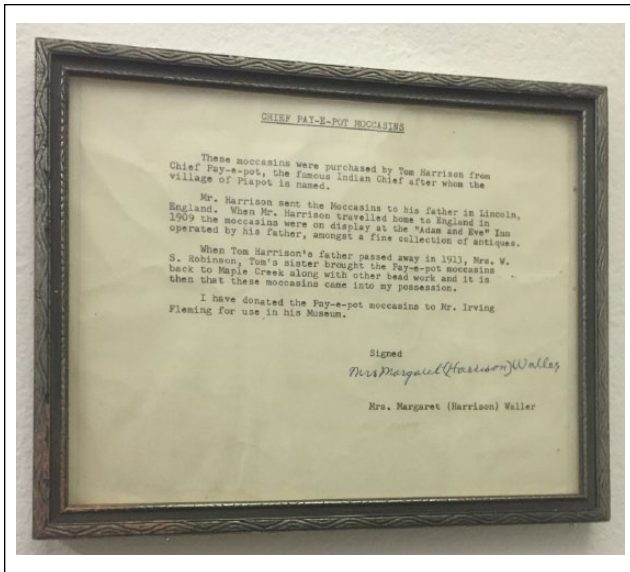


Figure 4. Letter from benefactor, Mrs. Margaret (Harrison) Waller.

Source. From a photograph taken by Lace Marie Brogden. Courtesy and copyright, Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre.

Regardless of the exact nature of these past relationships, the letter constructs a particular, colonial narrative that pervades the display case, both in the perspectives it recounts and in the silences it enables. The moccasins can be understood as a prized family possession, given that they were displayed “amongst a fine collection of antiques” and further that their migratory history was tracked over time by Mrs. Waller. This same colonial authority is enacted in assigning ownership of the moccasins to Chief Payepot, in the first instance, and to Mr. Tom Harrison, who “purchased” the moccasins, in the second.

Like the story of Payepot sitting on the railroad tracks, the migratory trajectory of the moccasins can also be taken as “true” in so much as the letter is on display in the museum as a way of defining provenance and also as a way of describing a perspective on colonial, settler-invader life and activities, including acquisitions and entrepreneurship on the part of Mr. Harrison, and heritage keeping or legacy building on the part of Mrs. Waller. Thus, we can see, through the letter and the story of these moccasins, the exchange of ideas and material culture through colonial settlement on several levels: the village near Maple Creek was named after Chief Payepot; the Harrisons of Maple Creek remained connected to England, where Harrison’s father was a business owner; Harrison, as a colonial subject, had enough money to travel home for a visit to England in 1909; and the migratory story continued with Mrs. Robinson’s trip “back to Maple Creek” in 1913 following the death of Harrison’s father in England. In her recounting of the story of the moccasins, Mrs. Waller effectively produces, through

the letter, a story about the Harrison family, positioning them as colonial subjects, citizens, owners, and knowledge keepers.

Collecting of the Other was and continues to be a middle-class endeavor (hooks, 2000). As such, the Harrisons, Mrs. Waller, and even the Felmings in whose collection the moccasins now reside, engaged in the “very Victorian habit” (Nicks, 1996, p. 497) of collecting ethnographic material culture and its exhibition, both as curio and scientific specimen. Indeed, in the British Imperial project, “museums were classically the product of the interests of middle-class males, ranging from professionals to a wealthy upper-middle class” (MacKenzie, 2010, p. 15). Pearce’s (1992) observations on collecting further position it as a privileged activity when she states, “collecting is characteristically a leisure-time activity which happens at a different time and in a different place to that of the working day” (p. 50). She further observes that “we and our collections are one” (p. 55) and that there is a hope of a collector’s prestige “to extend beyond the grave” (p. 63). As argued by Classen and Howes (2006), “collecting is a form of conquest and collected artifacts are material signs of victory over their former owners and places of origin” (p. 209). Thus, by situating Mrs. Waller’s letter within these conversations of collecting and collection, the letter also illustrates a connection to perceived issues of personal and family achievement, renown, and immortality. This colonial authority silences divergent histories, ignoring multiplicity in favor of emphasizing a smooth, unproblematic narrative that serves to reinforce settler subjectivities.

Productions of Place

A First Reading: The JCHC as Settler Space

There is a direct link between settler mythology, and taking and taming the land, and the building of infrastructure including transportation and communications. The establishment of local and national museums, as MacKenzie (2010) posits, is intimately linked to this colonial project of opening up the land and taking possession of what it contained, and, by extension, of the indigenous peoples who lived there prior to contact. This settler invasion and occupation took the form of surveying, building railways, collecting and classifying ethnographic and natural-historical curiosities, and capitalist ownership. The JCHC, although not created as a museum during the settler period, nevertheless invokes this period of Canadian history and its narratives. For example, the exhibition space is organized into themed rooms, such as “The Railway Station,” “The Old West Room,” and “The Victorian Parlour.” As indicated on the Centre’s website, “visitors can view an actual railway station house, or a one-room school house, or a collection of Heritage saddles and nationally renowned, Canadian, naturalist Charlie



Figure 5. The Jasper Cultural and Historical Centre (JCHC), Maple Creek, Saskatchewan.

Source. From a photograph taken by Tobias Sperlich.

Russell's pictures" (Jasper Centre, 2012). School-aged children, in particular, are invited to participate in and experience nostalgic re-enactments of school and settler life during the early years of Maple Creek. Throughout its rooms and displays, the museum recounts history as the development of the fertile lands of the vast prairies and their transformation into a productive agricultural landscape. Indeed, the tag-line of the JCHC positions it as a keeper of settler heritage and history, speaking directly to settler Canadians when describing itself as a place "where your [i.e., settler] past is preserved."

Beyond its exhibition spaces, the physicality of the JCHC also reifies colonial achievement (Figure 5). Located in the center of town, along one of the main streets, it is housed in an imposing, red-brick building that is intimately entwined with the settler history of the town. Originally built in 1910 as the growing town's school, for most of the 20th century, the majority of the citizens of Maple Creek were educated in the building, until it closed when a new school was opened in 1986. Together with the Saint Mary's Anglican Church, built in 1909, and the main Post Office, built in 1908, the JCHC is one of the few remaining structures built during the "Maple Creek Boom" in the early 1900s. Like its counterparts, it was constructed using locally made bricks, further strengthening the physical ties of these buildings to the places where they stand, physical connections that invoke the "glory days" of settling and taming the land by European immigrants during the period of Canadian nation building (1867-1920s).

Following the school closure in 1986, the structure was at risk for demolition. A group of citizens, all former students at the school, decided to find a new purpose for the building. Establishing a museum seemed a viable method

by which to save this valued place for future generations. In pursuit of their goal, the volunteers founded the JCHC and contacted rancher Irving Fleming, a longtime resident of the area. Fleming, who fancied himself a local historian, had amassed a large amateur collection over the course of his lifetime. With its emphasis on European settlement of the Canadian prairies, his collection seemed a fitting starting point for the venture. As a result, the moccasins, attributed to Chief Payepot and previously owned by Margaret Waller and Tom Harrison, found their way into the Centre.

The display of the Fleming Collection, like the organization of the museum as a whole, follows a thematic principle that reinforces colonial subjectivities and representations of same. The materials of the collection are distributed between two adjacent rooms, one focusing on objects traditionally found inside a settler homestead (e.g., kitchen appliances, clothes, furniture, toys), the other focusing on objects typically found in the outdoors, such as buggies, carriages, and farm implements. Reinforcing perceived separations between settler and indigenous ways of life, it is in this room with its focus on outdoor activities that the three display cases containing First Nations artifacts are located.

An interpretation focusing on the material context within which Payepot's moccasins are situated, these artifacts, the collection and the JCHC itself, all contribute to the reproduction of a smooth colonial narrative, which celebrates settler achievement. At the same time, it ignores complex understandings of, and engagements with, colonialism and its ongoing effects on the peoples and lands of the Canadian West.

An Altered Reading: Contemporary Performative Practices at the JCHC

Interestingly, the contemporary JCHC provides iterations that allow altered readings and the production of contemporary subjectivities. Along with the cultural-historical exhibits of a museum, the Centre today largely presents itself as a cultural gathering place for the town. As such, the Centre welcomes a wide range of activities, including Métis jigging, laughter yoga, cancer support meetings, and an annual cowboy poetry meeting (that celebrated its 25th year in 2014). In addition, there is also a gallery space within the museum for displays of contemporary, local artists' and artisans' works.

This is all the more impressive as the JCHC is run by a volunteer board and, with the exception of one part-time employee responsible for record keeping and basic collections management, had no other paid staff at the time of our field work. It is worth noting that none of the volunteers, board members, or part-time staff had received formal, professional training in museum protocols, ethics, or collections management. Thus, the practices and activities of the JCHC and the people committed to its purposes speak to

their critical engagement with the realities of creating and sustaining museum spaces that are relevant to their community contexts. Through their endeavors, the JCHC has shifted from its original mandate of representing the region's (settler) history to one that recognizes and responds to the evolving sociocultural contexts and realities of 21st-century Maple Creek and southwestern Saskatchewan. In so doing, it opens up spaces that allow for and facilitate diverse ways of being.

In focusing on the contemporary activities within the spaces of the JCHC, it becomes possible to understand the Centre as an historic place, a place of memory, a marker in the sociohistorical construction of the region, and a contemporary community centre and gathering place. From this perspective, the JCHC moves beyond the monolithic colonial narrative to offer a space open to altered and continually shifting narratives in the not-yet-postcolonial Canadian West. As posited by MacKenzie (2010), museums can offer "more than an arrogant cultural othering of nature and peoples: [they] also, ultimately if not immediately, stimulate fresh forms of respect" (pp. 4-5). Consequently, the moccasins, like the JCHC, do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they function in a space that makes possible multidimensional readings and sociopolitical interpretations. In such interpretations, we argue for responsibility on the part of individual visitors and community members alike, to take up and participate in these altered spaces and inclusive offerings.

(In)Conclusion

Without a critical regard, the display case at the JCHC, or any other museum exhibit, can be taken as unidimensional. It is, in fact, possible (even convenient) to remain uncritical. We argue, however, that it is equally possible to disrupt commonplace narratives by inviting altered readings of such spaces. Indeed, critical understandings of the reproduction of colonial norms and silences, the dynamics of Treaty, and the ongoing hegemony of settler narratives (Beal, 2007; Gilman, 1992; Lee, 1992; McKinnon, 1996; Sideway, 2002; Sterzuk, 2011) make alternate interpretations of museum objects and displays possible. This is particularly relevant in the Canadian (not-yet-post-) colonial context, where many "well-intentioned" efforts toward multiculturalism are found lacking. Indeed, "multiculturalism works against Aboriginal sovereignty and anti-colonialism in its production of national histories that imagine Canada as a socially just and successful multicultural state" (St. Denis, 2011, p. 310).

Relevant to colonial contexts beyond Canada, display cases such as the one showcasing Payepot's moccasins at the JCHC tend to reproduce a singular perspective, one in which the historical realities of indigenous peoples would represent a splinter in the fabric of what wants to be—*qui se*

veut (Derrida, 2005)—a smooth colonial narrative. These enactments of colonialism should not be confused with, or taken for, curatorial intent or neglect (Cannizzo, 1991). Rather, they result from broad discourses that reinforce the colonial project over time. As Bhabha (1994) reminds us, it "is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated" (p. 63). Even the perspectives we have presented in this article are themselves subject to these forces. As Denzin (2013) posits, "it is easy to scapegoat" (p. 67) the individual agent within the colonial project, but indeed, "the criticism must be focused on the larger cultural discourses" (p. 67). The moccasins cannot—and we argue should not—be separated from the narratives that continue to enfold and produce them. Indeed, connections made to the larger discursive production of colonial subjectivities are precisely the type of critical readings required for complexifying our understandings of living with Treaty.

In many museum spaces, it is not unusual to encounter a singular—even monolithic—narrative associated with, or tied to, a specific object or collection of objects. Taken uncritically, the narratives of Payepot as historical figure and the attribution of the moccasins to him, Mrs. Waller's letter and the migratory story attributed to the moccasins, and the Fleming Collection and the positioning of artifacts of First Nations provenance within the collection, all contribute to the perpetuation of such a singular, monolithic narrative. This narrative values settler achievement, minimizes, even negates, settler conflict with First Nations peoples, and reinscribes the "civilized and civilizing" mythology of migration as settlement. While there may not be an explicit attempt to exclude alternate narratives (and the volunteer staff at the JCHC certainly discuss their collections and displays critically when touring visitors through the museum space), the dominant norm comes to be reinforced through the storying of a given artifact, as well as through the silence of that which remains unsaid (Mazzei, 2007). Thinking with the moccasins and positioning them in relation to the contemporary space and practices in which they are embedded can help to uncover narratives and (re) construct meanings from a variety of subject positions (Dion, 2009; Hoerig, 2010; Lather, 2010; St. Pierre, 2010). The interpretations and readings we have presented here, Payepot as a historical figure, Mrs. Waller's letter, the Fleming Collection, and the JCHC as both a place of memory and contemporary experiences, all illustrate the potential of building theory with and through "artifacts" (Brogden, 2010).

Recognizing the poststructural argument that there is no authentic truth to be told by a unified, authentic subject (Jackson, 2004; St. Pierre, 2000), we also acknowledge that "there is no exhibition without construction and therefore—in an extended sense—appropriation" (Baxandall, 1991, p. 34). That the JCHC remains bound by the parameters of its own collection serves to further illustrate the re-enactment of

discourses, which continue to privilege dominant cultural narratives, and displace or defer others. Although there is no explicit attempt to exclude alternate narratives, it is important to consider ways in which the dominant norm may come to be reinforced through both the storying of a given artifact, as well as through the silences that remain. It is through a critical examination of museum artifacts and the performative contexts in which they reside that disruptions to dominant narratives and normative power structures become possible. Indeed, such efforts foster more nuanced understandings of artifacts, their role(s) in constructing colonial and contemporary subjectivities, and their potential for the disruption of same when engaging with ongoing meaning-making and constructions of knowing in not-yet-post-colonial spaces.

Epilogue

Tobias & Lace

We are, through our work, interpellated to grapple with our colonial assumptions about histories of place, stories that can be, perhaps must be open to negotiation and reinterpretation. We have endeavored to dislodge colonial assumptions about place and belonging in view of fostering dialogue. We live in Saskatchewan, we live with Treaty, and the stories we live and within which we are situated have produced and continue to produce us as settler subjects. Thus, we seek to push against the unexamined, the uncomplicated, in favor of continuing our altered readings of contemporary life in present-day Saskatchewan.

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Instructional Development and Research Unit (University of Regina), and the Humanities Research Institute (University of Regina).

Notes

1. As was and remains common practice with many First Nations peoples, Payepot (né c.1816) had several names. "Originally named Kisikawasan, or Flash in the Sky, Payipwat [Piapot, Payepot] was one of the five major leaders of the Plains Cree after 1860" (Tobias, 2003, para. 2). When Payepot and his people came into closer contact with settlers and government officials, Cree names were frequently transliterated into English or French, often rather crudely. This led to more than one spelling of his name. In contemporary Saskatchewan, "Piapot" is commonly used for geographical and political names for the settler town of Piapot, the First Nations' Piapot Reserve lands, and the Indian band living on these reserve lands, the Piapot First Nation. While sometimes also referred to as "Piapot," the chief himself tends to be designated by the terms "Pay-e-pot," "Payepot," "Peyepot," or "Payipwat." Throughout this contribution, we use "Payepot" to refer to the historical figure.
2. We are inspired here by the concept of creolization as used in the archaeology and early European history of the Americas (see Braithwaite, 1971) and in particular by the work of Richard White (1991) who coined the term "middle ground" for spaces of Indigenous-Colonial interactions during the mid-17th to early 19th centuries where First Nations and Europeans constructed a common, mutually comprehensible world in the region around the Great Lakes the French called the *pays d'en haut*. . . . The middle ground is the place in between: between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the nonstate world of villages. It is a place where many of the North American subjects and allies of empires lived. It is the area between the historical foreground of European invasion and occupation and the background of Indian defeat and retreat. (pp. ix, x)
3. As posited by Chambers (2008), "there is a great deal of grief and sorrow about place in Canada, about land and who it belongs to, about whose stories get told and which stories are to be believed" (p. 124).
4. "[M]ulticulturalism implicitly constructs the idea of a core English-Canadian culture . . . [where] other cultures become 'multicultural' in relation to that unmarked, yet dominant, Anglo-Canadian core" (Mackey, 1999, p. 2).
5. "Métis are one of three recognized Aboriginal peoples in Canada, along with the Indians (or First Nations) and Inuit" (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2010).
6. The lands of the Canadian Prairies, and the sense of place they invoke, are ontologically diverse. As recounted from a Blackfoot perspective,

these places are not simply *piles of rocks, cliffs, or glacial erratics*; they are places imbued with meaning and history. These places are the equivalent of *books*,

encyclopedias, libraries, archives, crypts, monuments, historical markers, and grottos; these are destinations for pilgrims; places of sacrifice, revelation and apparition; and sources of knowledge and wisdom. (Chambers & Blood, 2009, p. 261)

One can identify similarities and many differences in examining views of land stewardship, language more commonly used by settler farmers, conservationists, and even corporations:

In its broadest sense, stewardship is the recognition of our collective responsibility to retain the quality and abundance of our land, air, water and biodiversity, and to manage this natural capital in a way that conserves all of its values, be they environmental, economic, social or cultural. (Land Stewardship Centre, 2009, para. 1)

7. For First Nations moccasins, see Crain (1977) or Webber (1989). For a more general discussion of aspects of Plains Cree clothing, including footwear, see Paterek (1994).
8. These moccasins are catalogued as Artifact Number CMC V-A-26 a-b (Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2010).
9. The Indian Act of 1985, last amended January 31, 2011 (Government of Canada, 1985), defines an Indian reserve as a "tract of land, the legal title to which is vested in Her Majesty, that has been set apart by Her Majesty for the use and benefit of a band" (p. 2). Today, Piapot First Nation is an Aboriginal community as recognized by the Canadian government as affiliated with 12 tracts of Indian Reserve land, including an Urban Reserve within the City of Regina, Saskatchewan. While many bands, their communities, and their reserves are named for geographical features, many are also named for an important historic chief, often a signatory of one of the numbered treaties with the Canadian government, such as Poundmaker, Little Black Bear, and Piapot First Nations.

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