

Deceptive Inclusion

The 2010 Vancouver Olympics and Violence Against First Nations' People

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L'auteure de cet article remarque que l'inclusion des Premières Nations dans le Comité olympique des jeux de Vancouver (COJV) Vancouver Olympic Committee en 2010 (VANOC) cause problème. En misant seulement sur la bienveillance du COJV envers les membres des Premières Nations, le comité occulte la violence subie par les peuples des Premières Nations et en est aussi complice. Cet article veut discuter du problème de la place des Premières Nations à l'intérieur du multiculturalisme canadien.

In less than one year, Vancouver will play host to the world at the 2010 Winter Olympics. Though the event itself will last a mere sixteen days, this spectacle of international sport marks the culmination of many years of preparation and work by the Vancouver Olympic Committee (VANOC). Much of the work during these years has been the careful crafting of an international identity for the Games—rooted in describing the personality and character of the Vancouver Olympics, the city of Vancouver, and the nation of Canada. From mascots to fiscal responsibility, the committee has actively defined every element of the Games, and has laid this out for the world to see on its website, www.vancouver2010.com.

First Nations¹ peoples and cultures have formed an important cornerstone of the identity of the 2010 Winter Olympics. The symbol for the Games is the Inuksuk (or Ilanaaq in Inuktituk), a man-made landmark used by First Nations communities in Northern Canada; and it appears on anything and everything connected to the 2010 Olympics. Mythic creatures borrowed from coastal British Columbia First Nations have been used as the mascots for the Games: Miga represents a legendary creature that is half whale and half Kermode bear; Quatchi is a loveable Sasquatch; and Sumi is a Salish guardian animal spirit. Beyond borrowing Native symbols, however, VANOC has established itself as a friend and benefactor of the First Nations people. This includes negotiating land use agreements with some First Nations communities; creating

opportunities for Aboriginal employment and economic development; and actively inviting First Nations people to participate in every aspect of the Games, whether it be performing, playing, or otherwise helping these Olympics to be a success.

Indeed, a number of First Nations individuals and communities have given their stamp of approval, and many have become active partners in the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. Though some may ultimately benefit from these partnerships, there are also some significant consequences to First Nations inclusion in the Games. As this paper will argue, one of these consequences is the denial and erasure of violence against First Nations people in Canada, and VANOC's participation in the continued colonization of Canadian Aboriginal peoples. In constructing its international identity, VANOC has emphasized its benevolent and respectful relationship with First Nations peoples, advancing the perception that Native peoples are, indeed, valued and included in these Games (and, by extension, in Canadian society). This construction, however, not only fails to address the violence that Canadian Aboriginal peoples have and continue to face in Canadian society, but also makes invisible any complicity that VANOC may have in perpetuating violence against the First Nations. Such silence around issues of violence not only undermines the lived realities of Canadian Aboriginal peoples, but also makes this violence incredibly difficult to thwart. For First Nations peoples, then, the cost of inclusion in the 2010 Vancouver Olympics is the erasure, and subsequent perpetuation, of the **colonial** violence they have and continue to experience in Canadian society.

Multiculturalism and Native Peoples

Ultimately, VANOC's representation of the Games appears to be rooted in multiculturalism: the national "ethos which values not only the preservation and perpetuation

of various cultures, but also cross cultural understanding and harmonious cultural co-existence” (Garcea 1). As Joseph Garcea argues, this ethos “has been, and remains, a central component of Canadian political culture and the public philosophies which have shaped public discourse and public policies and programs in this country in recent decades” (1). Indeed, multiculturalism is “a core element of Canadian identity and pride” (Garcea 1).

There are, however, some important problematics attached to discussing the issue of multiculturalism in relationship to Canada’s First Nations. Firstly, Aboriginal peoples (including status and non-status Indians, the Metis, and the Inuit) are most often addressed separately from official multicultural policy. As Garcea’s content analysis of provincial multicultural policies in Canada between 1974 and 2004 demonstrates, such policies tend to emphasize immigrant populations—in fact, many are explicitly titled to reflect this focus (such as *Let’s Build Quebec Together: A Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration* (1990) or *Action Plan on Immigration, Integration and Intercultural Relations* (2004) (4). Furthermore, such policy often explicitly stipulates that First Nations peoples are a distinct group requiring special consideration outside of multicultural policy, (Garcea 6). As such, Canadian policy makers have long legislated First Nations peoples through policies separate from formal multicultural policy.

This point leads directly into the second problematic attached to discussing the First Nations in relationship to Canadian multiculturalism—for though the creation of Canadian multiculturalism is often connected to the post-World War Two era, with its peak in official multicultural policy in the 1970s and 1980s, it is inappropriate to begin a discussion of First Nations people at this point. To do so would be to ignore over two hundred years of governmental discussion and policy around the formal position of Native people in colonial Canada. In particular, this approach would exclude the gross number of recommendation papers (such as the White Paper Policy of 1969) and official government policy (such as the *Gradual Civilization* [1857] and *Indian Enfranchisement* [1867] Acts, as well as the *Indian Act*) that have long informed and shaped the location of Native peoples in Canadian society.

On this same note, the vast majority of governmental recommendations and policy in relation to First Nations peoples has emphasized, not the protection or celebration of Native culture, but aggressive assimilation and the complete erasure and disappearance of First Nations people. For instance, during his extensive tenure (1880-1932) with the Department of Indian Affairs—including a considerable amount of time spent as the Deputy Superintendent General of the department—Duncan Campbell Scott famously proclaimed that the ultimate goal of his department was to rid Canada of the “Indian Problem”:

I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. That is my whole point. Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department. (qtd. in Titely 50)

Policies of forced enfranchisement—such as those laid out in the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* (1867) and the *Indian Act* (1876)—resulted in a drastic “bleed off” of “official” Indians (those recognized by the federal government as “Indians” under the *Indian Act*). As Bonita Lawrence writes,

the phenomenal cultural implication hidden in this legislation is the sheer numbers of Native people lost to their communities...If one takes into account the fact that for every individual who lost status and had to leave their community, all of her descendants also lost status and for the most part were permanently alienated from Native culture, the numbers of individuals who were ultimately removed from Indian status and lost to their nations may, at the most conservative estimates, number between one and two million. (55-56)

Indeed, it is too often ignored that multicultural policy is *itself* a part of the colonial project. As Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua make clear, identity legislation results in fragmentation of Indigenous Nationhood, rendering it historical and unviable (131). Multicultural and immigration discourses often “obscure Native presence and divert attention from their realities” (135). Lawrence and Dua cite Canadian language policy—which allocates funds, first, to the “official Languages,” and divides what little funding remains between “heritage languages” (including 50-odd Indigenous languages)—as a classic example of the multicultural erasure of Aboriginal peoples. Furthermore, such a policy confines Aboriginal peoples to “the past” by reducing their languages to a cultural “heritage.” The “Multicultural Nation,” as such, “becomes a site in which Indigenous Peoples are reduced to small numbers of racially and culturally defined and marginalized individuals drowning in a sea of settlers—who needn’t be taken seriously (Lawrence and Dua 123-124). Confined to multicultural Canada’s mythic history and deemed contemporarily unviable, multiculturalism precludes Aboriginal peoples “from changing and existing as real people in the present (123). It also actively denies “even the possibility of regenerating nationhood” (123). In short, multicultural policy ensures the “direct extermination, displacement, or assimilation” of Aboriginal peoples (123).

It is also important to recognize the role of critical anti-racism and critical multicultural studies in sup-

porting colonialist agendas against First Nations people. As Sneja Gunew argues, “analyses of racism against [I]ndigenous people have for too long been separated off from considerations of immigrant communities” (328). Lawrence and Dua voice this same concern, claiming that international critical race and postcolonial theory has failed to make Indigenous presence and colonization foundational to critical discussions of multiculturalism. They argue that theories of nationalism contribute to the “ongoing delegitimization of Indigenous Nationhood.” “For Aboriginal Peoples,” they write,

province...where the cultural diversity of First Nations is celebrated as part of the provincial identity” (Wadden 186). His government has worked with BC First Nations leadership to establish pathways for reconciliation and recognition—for instance, they set aside \$100 million dollars to help First Nations prepare for land claims and self-government negotiations (Wadden 183). Premier Campbell was also behind the ill-fated Kelowna Accord—the 2005 conference and subsequent agreements between the federal government, the First Ministers of the Provinces, Territorial leaders, and Native leaders from five

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postcolonial deconstructions of nationalism simply do not manifest any understanding of how Aboriginal peoples actualize nationhood and sovereignty given the colonial framework enveloping them.... [W]hen contemporary Indigenous theorists on nationalism explicate traditional Indigenous concepts of nationhood, they redefine the concept of the nation by moving beyond a linkage of a nation to the state and/or modernity and other European-based ideas and values. (Lawrence and Dua 132)

As Lawrence and Dua conclude, “the failure of Canadian anti-racism to make colonization foundational has meant that Aboriginal peoples’ histories, resistance, and current realities have been segregated from Anti-racism” (132). Instead, “to acknowledge that we all share the same land base and yet to question the differential terms on which it is occupied is to become aware of the colonial project that is taking place around us” (Lawrence and Dua 126).

A “New Relationship”: First Nations and Policy in British Columbia

Interestingly, within the past few years, British Columbia has led the nation in terms of seemingly progressive First Nations policy. As presented on their website entitled “The New Relationship With First Nations and Aboriginal People” (www.gov.bc.ca/arr/newrelationship), the provincial government of British Columbia claims that they have joined with the province’s First Nations “into a New Relationship based on respect, recognition and accommodation of aboriginal title and rights; respect for each others laws and responsibilities; and for the reconciliation of Aboriginal and Crown titles and jurisdictions”. As premier Gordon Campbell has said, he “envision[s] a

national First Nations organizations that was ultimately squashed by the newly elected Conservative government of Stephen Harper in 2007.

As mentioned in the introduction to this piece, the forthcoming arrival of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver has also seen the development of seemingly progressive First Nations policy. The Vancouver Olympic Committee has actively pursued partnerships with local First Nations communities, agreeing to provide ethical and sustainable development that meets the demands of these communities, as well as provides jobs and infusions into their local economies.

Longing and Belonging: The Nation Imagined of VANOC

In VANOC’s world, those involved with the 2010 Games (which, by extension, include the city of Vancouver and the nation) are respectful and inclusive of First Nations people. This not only erases the existence of violence against Aboriginal people, but also elides any complicity that VANOC may have in committing colonial violence.

Missing, for instance, are the histories of colonization that have made this country possible, as well as the current practices and structures meant to maintain Canada as a colonial settlement. Through their website, VANOC provides visitors with a description and history of the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples. Though it mentions historical contact between First Nations and settlers (as in how intermarriage, for example, resulted in the Metis), and goes as far as asserting First Nations people as the original occupants of land, it fails to acknowledge the histories of colonial violence that been inflicted on Aboriginal peoples. There is no recognition, for example, of the land theft and failure to negotiate treaties that put the lands

of the nation into the hands of white settlers. There is no consideration of the residential school system and the generations of Aboriginal children who were subject to cultural degradation and systematic abuse. And there is certainly no consideration of the extensive body of governmental policy—most prominently the Indian Act—that have continuously eroded and undermined the existence of Aboriginal peoples across the country.

The contemporary realities of colonial violence being committed against First Nations peoples are also ignored; as too are the ways that VANOC and the 2010 Olympic Games are complicit in this violence. Though VANOC prides itself in having negotiated land-use agreements with several local communities, its use of other unceded First Nations territories without any sort of agreement is not discussed. One of the central platforms of First Nations resistance to the Olympics is the failure of VANOC to negotiate at all with the Coast Salish communities that have unceded territorial claims to land around the city of Vancouver. Interestingly, while VANOC has failed to negotiate with communities who have little political power or ability to disrupt the Games, they have actively sought out the support of communities where Native political dominance may threaten VANOC's ability to carry out the Games (such as in Squamish and Whistler). In this light, VANOC's perceived benevolence towards First Nations is transformed into acts of vested self-interest and self-preservation: these land use agreements are not a commitment to social justice in regards to First Nations territorial sovereignty, but, nothing more or less, than insurance that First Nations communities will not disrupt VANOC's Olympic plans.

In addition to drawing attention to how Indigenous land has been appropriated for Olympic Venues, the "No Olympics on Stolen Land" campaign has highlighted many ways that the 2010 Olympics perpetuates or is complicit with contemporary colonial violence against Aboriginal peoples in Canada. This includes governmental and economic development of and profiting from unceded Native lands, while the majority of Native peoples are left to face extremely high rates of poverty, unemployment, imprisonment, violence, and disease; the ecological destruction of important habitats and Aboriginal sacred sites; and the failure to address housing needs. All the while criminalizing the homeless and forcefully removing them from tourist areas (to name a few). In highlighting the colonial violence of the 2010 Olympics, the "No Olympics on Stolen Land" campaign disrupts and interrogates the multicultural and inclusive identity that VANOC has tried selling to the world.

The "No Olympics on Stolen Land" campaign also brings into question the actions of Aboriginal communities that have made agreements with VANOC in support of the Games. Though some may argue that they acted in the best interest of their communities, Taiaiake Alfred argues that such deals are "nothing more

than a sell-out designed to benefit elite politicians on both sides of the colonial divide" (42). Highlighting the absence of meaningful opportunities (such as skilled job-training and long-term employment solutions) in these agreements, as well as undermining the knowledge and ability of the community to make changes on its own, Alfred argues that this is "just another feeding frenzy for white consultants and band council politicians, who are collaborating to bury their faces in the government funding trough" (42). According to Alfred, Aboriginal communities seduced by money and inclusion are, indeed, complicit with the continued colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Violence Against Aboriginal Women: Sport and Colonial Sexual Violence

Another area that the "No Olympics on Stolen Land" campaign has identified as contributing to the problematic consequences of the Olympic Games is its negative impact on the lives of women. As the campaign states on their website, "events such as the Olympics draw hundred of thousands of spectators and cause large increases in prostitution and trafficking of women." This concern was also voiced by the NGO, The Future Group, in 2007, who used the 2004 Olympics in Athens and the World Cup of Soccer in Germany in 2006 as case studies for making sure that the 2010 Olympics "showcases our best to the world—and is not a flashpoint for human trafficking" (4). They argued that international sporting events are accompanied by an increased demand for sex, and paired with Vancouver's preexisting status as both a destination and transit city for human trafficking, that the 2010 Olympics may be viewed as an ideal short and long-term business opportunity for human traffickers (4-5).

VANOC, under pressure from community organizations, has attempted to address these concerns, mostly in support of harm reduction efforts meant to minimize the impact of the Games on prostituted women. In 2007, VANOC supported a community bid for a legal exemption under Canadian law to run a Vancouver brothel for the duration of the games—which was ultimately squashed by the federal Conservative government, who favoured increased immigration vigilance and general policing as ways of addressing concerns about increased human trafficking in relation to the Olympics. In turn, VANOC threw its support behind the unionization of "sex trade workers" as a means of protecting prostituted women for the duration of the games.

Something that activist organizations like the Aboriginal Women's Action Network (AWAN) and the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre have been careful to point out is that the burden of demand for sex will be something disproportionately carried on the bodies of Aboriginal women. A 2003 study by Farley and Lynne found that 52 percent of 100 women prostituting in Vancouver's

Downtown Eastside were First Nations, compared to 1.7-7 percent of Vancouver's population (cited in Rabinovitch 249). As AWAN argues, "Aboriginal women are often either forced into prostitution, trafficked into prostitution or are facing that possibility" (2). Arguing that "the problem is male sexual demand for women and children's bodies," the group opposes the legalization, decriminalization, and any state regulation of prostitution as this serves the demand by increasing access to bodies for sexual exploitation, and entrenches Aboriginal women and children in the "sex trade" (AWAN 2-3). The legalization of brothels, in the

The erasure of violence also diminishes the capacity of anti-violence efforts to establish coalitions with non-Native Canadians and those who benefit (directly and indirectly) from the violence. In this way, guilty parties get to retain their veneer of innocence and the general public remains unaware of the kinds of violence been committed in their midst (and often, in their name). Again, it becomes the burden of First Nations and anti-violence activists to prove the existence of the violence. Furthermore, since popular will is strongly implicated in the outcome of social justice movements (Niezen 84-85), it also entails the education

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opinion of AWAN, would be like offering up our sisters and daughters as disposable objects for sex tourists (3).

Importantly, AWAN has argued that supporting brothels and other regulation and decriminalization of the industry in preparation for the Olympics is simply a continuance of colonial sexual violence against Aboriginal women. It is "the western world," they argue, "our historical colonizers, [who] were responsible for institutionalizing prostitution" (AWAN 5), claiming that Aboriginal women "were Canada's first prostituted and brotheled women" (AWAN 6). Those in support of decriminalization and regulation, then, are participating in the colonization of Aboriginal women, ensuring "that the violence that is prostitution will not only continue unabated, but it will actually increase" (AWAN 7). Instead, AWAN argues that what is needed are meaningful changes to address addiction, homelessness, and poverty—such as more detox beds, job training, and cultural tools—and improve the overall quality of life for marginalized and exploited women; and ultimately, "legislation to stop the sexual demand by men for women's and children's rented and bought bodies" (9).

Conclusion

The cost of erasure and denial of violence is experienced as the inability to fight such violence. By denying the existence of violence, the dominant participants transfer the burden of proof to the victims—it then becomes the First Nations' responsibility to prove that violence did happen. This necessarily makes a double battle for activists and those working towards social change—not only do they have to fight the violence itself, they must also fight to prove its very existence. This double burden necessarily entails double the work, which ultimately dilutes and diminishes the effectiveness of anti-violence efforts.

of the general public about the violence being experienced by First Nations peoples.

Therefore, VANOC's perceived efforts of multiculturalism and inclusion are merely a façade, masking the violence being perpetrated against First Nations peoples in Canada, as well as the Olympic committees' participation in such violence. Indeed, this veneer of benevolence and respect shelters abuses of power from the international community, allowing VANOC to emerge as the consummate responsible and ethical world citizen with nothing but the utmost respect for Canada's First Nations peoples.

Of course, some of us know their dirty little secret, and despite the difficulties that erasure poses, Aboriginal communities have worked diligently in exposing and undermining the "Olympic Spirit." In a number of cities across Canada, Native activists allied with other social justice activists have disrupted the ceremonial procession of the flame as a means of bringing attention to the colonial violence attached to the 2010 Olympics. At the writing of this conclusion, activists at Six Nations have just forced the flame to detour around the reserve, and have prevented the celebration of the Games on their traditional lands.

Unfortunately, some First Nations communities have collaborated with VANOC and the Olympic games—and perhaps, more unfortunately, this has occurred to the benefit of some band politicians and at the cost of those communities (Alfred 42), and particularly of the most marginalized and disadvantaged First Nations people. As Alfred argues, "the majority of band chiefs don't care about community accountability and question of integrity because the colonial gravy train keeps dropping loads of cash into their coffers" (44). VANOC and the 2010 Olympics are simply an extension of colonialism and colonial violence, and they have thrown cash at our leadership

in the hopes that we'll turn a blind eye to the violence being perpetrated against our own people—and some of us have. “As a result,” Alfred argues, “they continue to play their designated and essential role in the colonial system” (44).

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¹Throughout this paper, I use First Nations, Aboriginal, Indigenous and Native interchangeably to refer to those individuals who identify as First Nations (status and non-status), Métis and Inuit, as these terms are generally accepted and used by the people they are intended to define. I resist using “Indian,” as it is a colonial fallacy and construct—perpetrated through the *Indian Act*—meant to denigrate and marginalize First Nations people, and whenever possible, I try to identify and name specific communities and nations by their proper Indigenous names. In terms of referencing, however, I have opted to retain the terminology used by the author(s) as a means of ensuring the integrity and accuracy of the original material.

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JOANNA M. WESTON

Loss

Mother lost
the green glass brooch
Father gave me

dropped it
between apple tree and lavender
somewhere on the path
to becoming an emerald

I clipped grass with scissors
turned soft earth
found a knife patterned with fish
and a spoon engraved with leaves

she sketched patterns of bark
details of miniature:
an ant on a grass stem
a speed of red spiders
while I wept
the emptiness of green

Joanna M. Weston has published internationally in journals and anthologies including The Missing Line (Inanna Publications, 2004).

MARGE LAM

Chinatown East

Keep holding me like this
and help me untie my birth language
my first language
steeped in bruises, knotted up in a child's still
body
petrified with fear
words thrown at me
alcoholic bodies raging into me
embedded like ceramic shards
all around my little heart
me, so small and already, convinced
my home felt like captivity

When I sought my freedom
learning this new language
all around me
language of the good people
where families kissed and hugged each other
and parents asked their children how they
were

I began to beg
for brown bag lunches
embarrassed by my thermoses of fragrant rice
stewed in pork fat
wanting to belong between
pieces of white bread
I ran into the arms of British table manners, fine
cheeses
English literature, Led Zeppelin
feeling myself evaporating into creamy skin
bleached hair
steel cold blue eyes

took me many decades to realize
I got lost
trying to disappear

Now, as I begin to relax
in your embrace
I find myself
a little shy
surprised by my greediness
for your 5000 year old
Fujian phrasings
found in the singsong rhythms of
our Taiwanese tongues

So teach me our old language of love
with enough patience
untie all these crunchy knots
and unfurl my native tongue
help me make room to express this want
in between my legs
all through my body of ancestral wounds
drip hot words into my ears
I am ready to come home.

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