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AUSTRALASIAN CANADIAN STUDIES

Australasian Canadian Studies (ACS)—previously Australian Canadian Studies—is a multidisciplinary journal of Canadian studies. It is the official journal of the Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand (ACSANZ) and is published twice a year. ACS is a double blind refereed journal for the humanities and social sciences that welcomes Canadian and comparative Australian—New Zealand—Canadian analysis.

The audience is worldwide.

For twenty five years ACS has provided a forum for a diverse body of scholarship. Contributions across the full range of humanities and social sciences are sought, including: anthropology, architecture, communications, cultural studies, economics, education, ethnic studies, geography, history, information technology, legal studies, literature, media, musicology, political science, sociology, women’s studies, Quebec and other regional studies. Both disciplinary and interdisciplinary analyses are sought and a wide range of methodologies encouraged.

ACS publishes articles, essays, discussion papers and book reviews. The editor invites submissions on any topic in Canadian studies and the study of Canada, including comparisons between Canada and other countries. Manuscripts should conform to the Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition. The manuscript title and author’s name and address should appear on a separate sheet. To preserve anonymity during the refereeing process, the author’s identity should not be exposed in the text.

Manuscripts, inquiries and books for review should be sent to:

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The Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Monash University</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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ACSANZ is an interdisciplinary organisation which recognises and encourages interest in Canadian Studies and aims to promote greater understanding of Canada at all educational levels and in all disciplines.
The Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand (ACSANZ) is a multi-disciplinary organization which recognizes and encourages interest in Canadian Studies and aims to promote greater understanding of Canada.

ACSANZ has around 200 members, most of whom are academics and postgraduates engaged in research and/or teaching about Canada.

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- Promotes research and teaching in Canadian Studies in the social sciences and humanities in Australia and New Zealand
- Offers a range of grants and awards for academics and postgraduate to research and teach Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand (in conjunction with the Canadian High Commission in Canberra and the International Council for Canadian Studies)
- Publishes the biannual scholarly journal *Australasian Canadian Studies*
- Supports visiting speaking tours by prominent Canadian personalities
- Provides postgraduate travel awards to encourage scholarship in Canadian Studies among potential academics in Australia and New Zealand
- Holds biennial conferences and other colloquia to encourage interdisciplinary exchange of ideas in Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand
- Is a member of the International Council for Canadian Studies and collaborates with other Canadian Studies associations in Canada and abroad
- Participates in the Pacific-Asian Network in Canadian Studies (PANCS) and is the current chair of the Network (2006-2008)
- ACSANZ receives support from the Government of Canada, through the Canadian High Commission in Australia

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- Four issues of ACSANZ Newsletter of events, news and reports
- Inclusion in ACSANZ’s electronic announcement list for all the latest reminders about conferences, publications and annual grant competitions
- Entitlement to apply for funding to invite prominent Canadians to Australia and/or New Zealand

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Australasian Canadian Studies
Vol. 26, No. 1, 2008

Conference Issue

CONTENTS

Sonia Mycak 1 Editorial

ESSAYS

Stewart Gill 3 Canada—An Overseas Perspective

Roger Nichols 9 Residential Schools for Native Children in Canada and the USA
ARTICLES

Robert Lecker 23 Materialising Canada: National Literature Anthologies and the Making of a Canon

Kimberley McMahon-Coleman 43 Arctic and Outback—Indigenous Literature at the ‘Ends of the Earth’

James R. Miller 59 Dealing with Residential School Survivors: Reconciliation in International Perspective

Kim Richard Nossal 91 The Unavoidable Shadow of Past Wars: Obsequies for Casualties of the Afghanistan Mission in Australia and Canada

125 CONTRIBUTORS
On the first day of July 2008, the biennial conference of the Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand began. Emmanuel College at The University of Queensland provided an excellent setting for this Canadian studies event, which drew participants from across Australia and New Zealand and visitors from Canada, USA, England, Scotland, India, China, Taiwan, Israel, Japan and South Korea. The theme of the conference was Canada in the Asia-Pacific, the tone set perfectly by the day-long Graduate Student Forum of the Pacific Asian Network of Canadian Studies (PANCS) with which the conference began.

Holding a biennial conference is one of the most important activities undertaken by ACSANZ, not the least because it serves as a vehicle for Canadianists in Australasia to meet—to acquaint and re-acquaint with each other, to learn of the most recent developments within each other’s work. However equally important is the opportunity the biennial conference provides for colleagues from outside the region to participate within the Australasian network of Canadian studies, giving it a truly international perspective. Australasian Canadian Studies serves a parallel function—providing a unique forum for Canadianists in Australasia at the same time as addressing and including Canadian studies colleagues around the world. And with this issue, the biennial conference and the journal come together: all the papers featured here were first presented at the ACSANZ conference held in July 2008.

With some 36 presentations over three days, the papers presented in this issue of Australasian Canadian Studies are but a sample of what was. But what a fine sample it is. The articles are a representative selection—both in terms of scholarly excellence and content—reflecting the quality of research and the breadth of subject areas which were reflected in the conference presentations, spanning the
fields of indigenous studies, history, law and human rights, peace and security, political science, and literary studies.

This issue is a tribute to Professor Stewart Gill and acknowledgement of his leadership and commitment, both as president of ACSANZ and convenor of the 2008 conference. It is equally a testimony to the many participants who contributed their energy and expertise to create a dynamic and intellectually rigorous debate. It is indication also of the depth and breadth of Canadian studies as a field of scholarly endeavour.

Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand
Biennial Conference
Canada in the Asia-Pacific
1–3 July 2008

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Canadians have an overwhelming interest in what it means to be Canadian. Historians, political scientists, poets and novelists among others have spilt much ink over this issue. As the Canadian journalist and author, Roy MacGregor has written in his book, *Canadians: A Portrait of a Country and People*:

> Canadians, I sometimes think, do lead the world in one matter. Not hockey, not pulp production not snow not even potholes, but in picking through their own belly-button lint. For a people known for their resourcefulness, this can often seem a dreadful waste of one’s most important resource: time (39).

MacGregor goes on that Canadians are obsessed with “self-introspection” as contrasted with their neighbours to the south. This inferiority complex MacGregor suggests is a feature of having been part of the British colonial world. He writes:

> Several people have suggested that this inferiority mindset has its source in the colonial mentality found throughout the former British Empire, a deep-rooted sense that whatever is Canadian or Indian or Australian or South African is not quite up to standard. The sun never set on the British Empire, but not much light shone down upon it. A sense of unworthiness was just one of the struggles Commonwealth nations had to overcome as they came into their own. ‘My generation of Canadians,’ culture critic Robert Fulford told Malcolm,
‘grew up believing that, if we were very good or smart, or both, we would someday graduate from Canada’ (41)."'}

As a Scot, living in Australia, with an interest in the Scottish diaspora I have sympathy for this interpretation of Canada and Canadians.

As a student studying Canadian history and in particular Canadian-American relations in the late 1970s and early 1980s at the University of Toronto it was difficult to escape the tensions that existed between the two (or three) nations that shared the North American continent. Nationalist concerns had grown throughout the 1970s with the developments within Quebec where Canadian federation was starting to be questioned. This brought out a nationalist response from the other provinces where there were nationalist stirrings even from the federal New Democratic Party. A growing nationalism was also kindled by other developments south of the border—the United States involvement in the Vietnam War, the growing awareness of United States corporate power in Canada, and the United States dominance over culture. This was summarised by the Toronto historian, William Kilbourn, who wrote at the beginning of the 70s of Canada:

this two cultured, multi-ghettoed, plural community, this non-nation, nay-saying no place of un-Eden, this faceless unidentifiable blank on the map, ‘this wind that lacks a flag’, this Canada of ours (xi).

He goes on:

Canada, merely by existing, does offer a way and a hope, an alternative to insanity... everywhere in the twentieth century man is becoming American... is moving in some way towards a condition of high industrialization, affluence and leisure, instant communication, an urban man-made environment, and a mingling of cultures and traditions in a mobile, classless global society (xi, xiii).
Kilbourn believed that since Canada was the closest to the United States in terms of modelling its culture it also provided a North American alternative to the United States.

In the recently introduced Canadian Government programme entitled “Understanding Canada” the priorities have been set as below:

- Peace and Security (Afghanistan)
- North America Partnership (including key Canada-United States bilateral issues)
- Economic Development and Competitiveness
- Democracy, Rule of law, Human Rights
- Managing Diversity
- Environment / Energy
- Theme(s) directly related to missions’ strategic priorities in the region

It will be noted that the North American Partnership still understandably looms large. However, much has happened in the international sphere since the 1970s. As Roy MacGregor’s recent book, and others in the same genre, demonstrate what it means to be Canadian is still an important topic of debate. Increasingly, however, there is an international perspective being brought to this by the Canadian intellectual community of the ‘diaspora’ both Canadian born writing from overseas and those who have adopted Canada as a study area. One of the most interesting books to appear with this perspective is from the, to borrow a Scottish expression, ‘auld enemy’ in the cultural wars, the United States. Patrick James, professor and Director of the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California, and Mark Kasoff, professor emeritus of Economics and founding Director of the Canadian Studies Center at Bowling Green State University, have recently edited a book, Canadian Studies in the New Millenium, published by the University of Toronto Press. The book offers a new perspective on Canada written
by and large by United States academics. This work marks a coming of age in Canadian-American studies.

The world continues to shrink as we delve deeper into the twenty-first century and many countries continue to look to Canada as a balancing perspective to the United States. This is particularly the case in the other areas in the Understanding Canada program outside of the North American partnership. The 2008 ACSANZ Biennial Conference focussing as it did on Peace and Security and Democracy and Law including Human Rights brought together scholars from Australia, New Zealand and also the wider Asia Pacific Region, Canada and the USA. The papers in this volume are some of the fruits of the conference. The Conference provided an opportunity not only for senior scholars but also for post-graduate students to contribute. To be sure, the future of Canadian Studies in our region lies with the work done by our post-graduate students. Preceding the conference there was a graduate seminar run by the Pacific Asia Network of Canadian Studies and during the conference the launch of New Dimensions in Canadian Studies: Asia Pacific Perspectives (Gill and Dhawan). This was at the other end of the spectrum from the James’ book but with some thoughtful essays by graduate members of ACSANZ (Maxwell; Morris). The work of graduate students certainly points towards an optimistic future for ACSANZ as we continue to encourage the work of younger, alongside our more established, scholars.

**Works cited**


**Notes**

1 The reference to Malcolm is Andrew Malcolm who produced *The Canadians*. 
Residential Schools for Native Children in Canada and the USA

This short paper will compare the goals, methods, and results of residential schooling on native children in Canada and the United States. Begun about a century ago, the two educational systems bore remarkable similarities, although there were a few differences. First, Canada depended far less on Reserve day schools than did the United States. Second, the Canadian government and the major church denominations cooperated fully in establishing and operating the Residential facilities. Ottawa officials provided meager federal funds to supplement church operations, and exercised only half-hearted supervision. Third, beginning in 1890 the United States government withdrew its financial support of denominational Indian schools. Some of them continued to operate, but they remained outside the federal system. The result was an almost entirely secular organisation, quite the opposite of the situation in Canada. Despite these differences, the systems shared the same goals and methods. Those, in turn, produced almost identical failures.

For most of the last thirty years public statements by natives about government-sponsored education have differed. Spokesmen for First Nations and Métis groups denounced the residential school system bitterly, and have wrung a huge reparations settlement from reluctant Ottawa officials. At the same time American Indian leaders and organisations focused their attention on tribal sovereignty, the acknowledgement of new tribes, religious freedom and casino
gambling. Only in the last ten years or so have they raised serious questions about boarding school experiences publically.

To some extent historical scholarship on the topic followed similar paths. By the 1970s Canadian historians had begun what became a chorus of complaints and charges against their Government’s native policies. Clearly Ottawa authorities deserved these attacks. Canadian academics played central roles in analysing and publicising government shortcomings, particularly those related to Residential school issues. In the United States since the end of the Vietnam War, scholars had become cynical about the nation’s repeated aggressive actions. They too denounced federal mistreatment of Indians. By the mid-1990s they began to publicise the negative impacts of Indian education. Except for Ward Churchill’s bitter attacks, until the 21st century, the topic continued to receive only modest attention.

Officials in both nations shared motivations for wanting to acculturate and possibly assimilate the native peoples. These included a desire for their lands and resources, reducing administrative costs, and avoiding or ending any potential violence. Although the formal Residential school system began in the late 1870s, both governments built their educational programmes on earlier ideas and practices. By the 1830s Canadian officials began to encourage a gradual programme using the farm, school and church to bring what they described as “civilization.” For example, in Upper Canada, present Ontario, the Rev. Peter Jones, a Mississauga Methodist clergyman helped establish a few native Christian farming villages. Yet his limited efforts received little attention, and in 1844 the Bagot Commission reported that the reserve communities had only reached a “half civilized state.” Formal American efforts to acculturate Indians began with the 1819 Indian Civilization Fund Act. It offered some money for schools and agricultural instruction. In Canadian some of the mid-19th century land cession treaties included money for day schools (Donald B. Smith 516–517).

By the late 1870s officials in both nations reached the same conclusion. Residential or Boarding schools offered the most hope
for success. They would help destroy band and tribal identities and provide the means to incorporate the native people into their societies. In 1879 Canada sent Nicholas Davin to confer with United States officials on their efforts. He reported that the American actions combined government and church support while seeking rapid and total acculturation (Davin). While a handful of Residential schools already existed in Canada, his data and recommendations laid out the broad outline the programme would follow.

Its goal was clear. Turn Natives into Anglo–Canadians! Years later, Duncan Campbell Scott, who directed Indian affairs for decades, described his approach this way:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem...Our object 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...(qtd in Leslie and Maquire 115)

In the United States, similar views helped focus educational goals. There, in 1879, Captain Richard H. Pratt established the first federal Indian boarding school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Theoretically, his goal, like that of Scott later, was to give Indians the economic and social skills they needed. The oft-discussed objective was “that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him and save the man.” 3 This would take place at boarding schools, far from the children’s families. Describing his approach Pratt said that “In Indian civilization I am a Baptist because I believe in immersing Indians in our civilization and when we get them under [water] holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked” (335). Obviously the two nations had similar goals. They meant to strip away all aspects of the children’s tribal heritage: languages, beliefs and cultural practices, and replace them with Canadian or American “civilization.”

Uniform objectives brought nearly identical methods. Planners in both nations agreed that only a vigorous application of school, church and farm could bring about the desired result. Of those three, the
school offered the most promise for immediate success—but only if it removed children from their home villages. That would disrupt Indian social practices, undermine language persistence, and destroy multi-generational connections within the villages.

Often the two school systems functioned in remarkably similar ways. To ensure students attended residential schools, officials first tried persuasion, but if that failed they forced parents to part with their sons and daughters. Once the children arrived, staff members replaced their tribal clothing with western or military garments, cut their hair, gave them non-Indian names, and required them to use English exclusively. Housed in dormitories, the students attended classes half of each day while working at the chores needed to keep the schools running the rest of the time. The differences between goals and specific tactics in the Residential and Boarding schools remained slight (Miller 1996; Milloy; Neil).

In theory their regimen was to equip each child with work skills. That rarely happened. Instead the girls spent hours in often industrial size laundries washing the school dormitory bedding, their own clothing and that of the boys as well. At other times they learned to sew, cook and clean so that they might become domestic workers in the United States or better home makers back on the reserve or reservation. The boys spent much of their time tending livestock and crops on the school farm because neither government gave enough money to give the students an adequate diet. Canadian authorities hoped that as adults the former students would accept enfranchisement and become “regular citizens.” This rarely happened. In the United States Pratt’s “outing system” attempted to place the students in white homes or businesses where they would become integrated into society. Even when some of the young people gained the necessary skills, few Canadians or Americans wanted native neighbors or employees. Not many young Indians got either a solid academic or useful vocational education. So, despite a century of effort on both sides of the border, neither system achieved its positive goals (Ellis; Lomawaima; Trennert).
Then what can we say about the long-term results of the two systems? Most students found their experiences frightening and negative. Having to wear military uniforms, eat bland, even mediocre institutional food, and receive harsh punishments when they ignored or broke school rules, seemed cruel. Many young people returned home unable to speak or understand their own languages. Worse, they had been taught that all things white were superior to native ideas and customs. Their school experiences included psychic and physical abuse that often produced intense loneliness, and a sense that their families had abandoned them (Grant 2004; Neil; Segissel and Wotherspoon; Giago; Peshkin).

Reporting students’ reactions to the Mount Pleasant School in Michigan, anthropologist Alice Littlefield cited the following verse mocking that institution:

Six o’clock in the morning,
Our breakfast comes around.
A bowl of mush and molasses,
Was enough to knock you down.
Our coffee’s like tobacco juice,
Our bread is hard and stale,
and that’s the way they treat you
At Mt. Pleasant Indian Jail.4

Yet not all residential school alumni recalled such negative experiences. Some, only a modest number, strove to learn their lessons, and to benefit from whatever positive role models they observed. A few of them may have exhibited symptoms of the “Stockholm Syndrome” where prisoners embraced their captors’ standards (Beiser; Littlefield). Whether that occurred or not a few bright and motivated students used the schools as paths leading away from the poverty and isolation of reserve or reservation life. At Carlisle, for example, young men such as Jim Thorpe enjoyed national athletic success as a football player while competing against teams from Harvard, Yale and Princeton (Adams 2001).
By the early 20th century an entire generation of Indian young people had some boarding school training. In the United States a fortunate few achieved significant educational and professional stature, either because of or despite their earlier experiences. Just before, during and after the First World War a group of them organised the Society of American Indians. The first pan-tribal Indian organisation in the United States, it published a journal and opened a lobbying office in Washington. 5 I have no similar examples from among Canadian students at the same time, but think it unlikely that their experiences would have differed entirely from those in the United States. Nevertheless, if we look beyond these few exceptions, it is clear that for thousands of First Nations and American Indian children their schooling was traumatic at best.

Since the 1980s contemporary responses to residential schooling in Canada and the United States have moved apart. By late in that decade public awareness and reactions to reports of widespread student abuse provided the sharpest contrast. Two examples make this abundantly clear. In Arizona during 1987 the FBI accused John Boone, a teacher at the BIA Hopi day school, of sexually abusing at least 140 boys there. Subsequently he was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. This case received almost no attention from the mainstream national media (Smith, A. 2007). Just three years later in Canada, however, the opposite occurred. When Phil Fontaine, then Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, described his personal mistreatment by Residential school clergy, the news made headlines and brought demands for action in the national press. 6

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, Residential School issues have remained in the public eye. In 1991 the government established a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, an investigation that five years later delivered its five volume final report. Then in January 1998 the government issued a response entitled Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan. This included a statement of reconciliation that called for righting past injustices, proposed a “Healing Fund” and offered to make other changes. After several false starts and repeated
legal actions, in November 2005 government and First Nations leaders reached an Agreement in Principle. In the spring of 2006 the Cabinet approved the Indian Residential Schools Settlement. This included a $1.9 billion settlement to be paid to survivors of the school experiences.

Meanwhile in the United States charges of school abuse remained muted. Acclaimed scholarly studies of individual schools and the system in general appeared, but had little impact outside the academy. Certainly Ward Churchill raised the issue with charges of extermination, cultural genocide and even an Indian holocaust. These received little attention (Churchill 1997, 2004a, 2004b). One young American Indian Studies scholar, Andrea Smith at the University of Michigan, has raised similar charges repeatedly in the last few years, but again, with little apparent impact (Smith, A. 2006).

So in April 2003 it came as a shock when a Florida law firm filed suit for physical, sexual and psychological abuse of students attending Indian Boarding Schools in the United States Court of Claims. The charges in Zephier v. United States echoed assertions made by First Nations people earlier and demanded $25 billion in reparations from the United States government. In late October 2004 federal judge Diane Gilbert dismissed the case on procedural grounds.7

Before the federal court reached its decision, the same lawyers filed two more suits in July 2004, this time in South Dakota state courts. The new actions did not charge the United States, but rather were against St. Paul’s Catholic School at Marty, SD in Sioux Falls circuit, and the St. Francis Mission School on Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation at Rapid City (Brokaw). They included the 16 former students at St. Francis and 57 others at St. Paul. Both suits remained under consideration in late 2007, and up to now I have not located any final decision on either set of charges. As with the federal suit, the South Dakota cases remain well below the radar of the national media. However, given the firestorm of rage that broke out over the sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy during the last decade, that may change.
Today it is clear that Native leaders and American society as a whole lag behind Canada in recognising and dealing with these issues. Indians in the United States have begun to report cases of physical and sexual abuse, but many hesitate to air their charges publicly. Despite that reluctance, in 2004 Dr. Eulynda Toledo, a Diné [Navajo] scholar founded the Boarding School Healing Project. Its goal is to “shed light on …the intergenerational trauma” of boarding school experiences on Native Americans (Pember). Up to now only a few activists have joined her effort. That same year, 2004, activist First Nations leaders declared the first Annual Aboriginal Holocaust Memorial Day on Canada. Since then another organisation, Friends and Relatives of the Disappeared (FRD), made public a list of 28 mass graves they contend contain the remains of “untold numbers of aboriginal children who died in [Canadian] Indian Residential Schools.” At the same time indigenous elders in British Columbia formed the International Human Rights Tribunal into Genocide in Canada (IHRTGC) to publicise these charges (Norrell).

In recent years First Nations activists in Canada have moved far beyond anything being done by Indian groups on the United States. The results are clear as seen in the two governments’ differing responses. In Canada on 11 June 2008 Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology for the residential school policies and abuses. South of the border nothing of the sort has occurred. We can only look back twenty years to a statement made by then President Ronald Reagan in June 1988 for a stark contrast. Rather than an apology repudiating assimilative policies, he suggested that the government had been too lenient. Speaking about Indians he said “Maybe we should not have humored them … [by allowing] them to stay in that kind of primitive lifestyle. Maybe we should have said, ‘No, come join us. Be citizens along with the rest of us.’” While a few tribal leaders and the liberal press complained, the President’s remarks brought no serious outcry. That general apathy continues to the present.

Prophecy is rather beyond my competence, but I feel safe in offering one prediction. The present differences in public awareness will
remain. When the school abuse question is debated in the United States, it will be done reluctantly, and with as little willingness as possible to accept any responsibility or face the consequences squarely.

**Works cited**


Notes

1For general discussions of Indian affairs in Canada see Dickason; Miller 1989. For early discussions of residential school issues see Chrisjohn, Young and Maraun; Furniss; Grant 1996; Titley.

2Hoxie; McDonnell; present the general story. For boarding school analyses see: Adams 1995; Child; Hyer; McBeth.

3Pratt to 19th Annual Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1892. (qtd in Adams 1995, 52).


5Some of these people included Gertrude Bonnin (Sioux teacher, singer and writer), Thomas L. Sloan (Omaha lawyer), Arthur C.
Parker (Seneca anthropologist) and Henry Roe Cloud (Winnebago minister) (Hertzberg).

6Toronto Globe and Mail, 31 October 1990.


The publication and dissemination of national literature anthologies is always an anxious act of citizenship. The process of creating these anthologies involves imagining the country, imagining a community, imagining an identity. Through this kind of imagining the anthology editor promotes a form of what Edward Said calls “affiliation.” For Said, “affiliation” is a “kind of compensatory order that, whether it is a party, an institution, a culture, a set of beliefs, or even a world-vision, provides men and women with a new form of relationship” (19). National literature anthologies express a particular world-vision, a deliberate textual construction of the country that the reader is invited to join. This kind of anthological affiliation is not restricted to the twentieth century. In his book entitled *Discourse Networks*, Friedrich A. Kittler observes that “anthologies in late eighteenth-century Germany replaced the Bible as the book that unified a culture” (qtd in Di Leo 7). Barbara Benedict explains why anthologies can be seen in this way: She says that because of their cooperative means of production and multiple authorship, anthologies are material expressions of a kind of community, and their format also directs readers to understand them as vessels of a common enterprise, even while registering the independence of each author (2003, 242).

As unifying cultural texts, national literature anthologies carry a special burden. Their task is nothing less than to represent the evolution of a nation through its literature. By engaging in this
task, these anthologies inevitably become deeply conflicted books. Their editors have to wrestle with questions about how the nation is to be mirrored in its literature and about the extent to which its existing literary canons should be repudiated or reproduced. In this challenging arena, editors are also forced to make difficult decisions about genre, gender, region, race, ethnicity, chronology, abridgement, and the repertoire of every single author to be included in the chosen group.

The problem of representing the nation in anthologies (especially those used in schools) is compounded by one of their most prominent features: textual apparatus. By including an introductory overview, biographical and critical commentary on each author’s work, explanatory notes, thematic groupings, or even essay topics and assignments, the editor also configures the ways in which the nation’s metaphoric spokespeople (its poets and fiction writers and sometimes dramatists) are known to the community that is created through the sharing of this nation, this book. The anthology’s apparatus encodes assumptions about how an author is to be understood and valued in a given culture. And frequently, that culture is comprised of young readers, students who have little conception of nation. For them the voices collected by a particular editor will provide their first sustained exposure to that conception. What comes out of this exposure is therefore formative in their developing sense of citizenship itself. As Laurie Finke points out, “the liberal ideology carried by the apparatus of teaching . . . contrasts the needs of individuals with the needs of social collectivity, individual identity with social identity, individual autonomy with the authority of the social community, always coming down on the side of the individual” (401). For this reason, Finke argues,

liberalism is capable of appreciating the individual labor . . . but not the collective work—the institutions, practices, and discourses that create, preserve, and circulate ‘works of art.’ . . . It discourages us . . . from asking how the publishing industry and the university as institutions, how editors, printers, professors, librarians,
information technologies, bookstores, and even students, perpetuate the ‘existing order of monuments.’

Finke concludes that “we are left with the problem of how to teach antiliberal ‘theories,’ like, say, poststructuralism using textbooks whose very form tailors and tames them to conform to the ideas of liberalism” (401–402).

Although the relationship between reader and book obviously does not enact a direct correlation between citizen and nation, the relationship between the audience and the anthology remains highly figurative, a symbolic means of experiencing the country through the conflicted pages of the text. What this means, of course, is that there can be no such thing as the accurate representation of the nation through a national literature anthology. Paradoxically, national literature anthologies serve to underline the fact that nations are plural and unstable, unmappable in any form. As edited collections, they are necessarily self-defeating. What we learn from national literature anthologies is that the nation they purport to represent cannot exist. At best, that nation is inevitably undermined, contaminated by the anthological act. National literature anthologies are naturally conflicted and in doubt. So they should be. Nations are naturally conflicted and in doubt. The challenge is to read these anthologies through the anxieties that haunt them. This can be a mobilising cultural experience for students who are permitted to explore the nature of these anxieties as they emerge through the anthologies they use.

Early anthologies were much less self-conscious about their aims and their intended audience. They were often described as literary feasts that offered sustenance to a wide variety of readers. However, as Barbara Benedict points out, “In its elevation of appetite to cultural capital, the metaphor of consumption is significant. Literary miscellanies and anthologies, indeed, promote the commodification of literature itself” (1996, 11). Although the root term for “anthology” comes from the Greek word for garland, or a bouquet of flowers, the
process of editing anthologies of national literatures is seldom a sweet-smelling affair. In fact, editors are routinely taken to task for upsetting the status quo or for making choices deemed to be overly conservative or overly subversive in the way they reproduce existing literary values. National literature anthologies are frequently identified as the focal points for debate about the makeup of the literary canon, mainly because arguments about the canon are displaced arguments about the makeup of the nation.

The challenge to the canon that marks the study of American literature over the past four decades is implicitly a rethinking of the nation. This challenge finds its most fervent expression in the rise of feminist theory, and in revisions to the canon prompted by a reconfigured concept of the nation that is plural, multi-ethnic, and open to interrogation. Such revisions, and all the tensions they invoke, are nowhere better represented than in some of the ambitious national literature anthologies that have appeared over the last twenty years. But let us go back in time a bit first.

The first American national poetry anthology was edited by Elihu Hubbard Smith in 1793. As Alan C. Golding notes, “Smith’s Federalism underlies what he saw as the use of his anthology: to build America’s sense of identity by gathering an independent national literature to match and strengthen the country’s newly achieved political independence.” Golding observes that “the term ‘American literature,’ rarely used before the 1780s, became commonplace after the 1783 Treaty of Paris” (281). It was this kind of intense literary nationalism, always equated with the creation of a national literary canon, that drove literary anthology-making in the United States well into the twentieth century, until the canon itself became the object of intense scrutiny and questioning. The most prominent late twentieth-century example of the controversial nature of anthology-making is Paul Lauter’s editorship of the Heath Anthology of American Literature (originally published in 1989). Lauter’s anthology was the end-product of a project called Reconstructing American Literature begun by The Feminist Press in the late 1970s. During this period, Lauter realised,
some academics began to see that the American canon was not complete. His controversial anthology significantly revised the canon by introducing a wide variety of previously excluded or marginalised works. The debate about Lauter’s anthology project consists of two questions: Should national anthologies collect great works, and if so, ‘great’ by whose standards? And should national anthologies collect those works that have survived the test of time, or should they reflect the contemporary writing of the culture that will use them? These questions are directly related to the concept of nation. In the instructor’s guide to the current edition of *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, for example, the editor encourages students who read her collection to see themselves as active participants in the process of cultural definition and transformation through their interpretation of and response to the texts in this anthology as well as through their participation in the institutionalised study of culture—in other words, to see the literature class itself as a kind of cultural work (Coryell 4).

Anthologies of Canadian literature have always been preoccupied with similar questions as they navigate the intertwined concepts of canon and nation. In one of the first anthologies of Canadian poetry, entitled *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864), the editor, Edward Hartley Dewart, argued that “A national literature is an essential element in the formation of national character. It is not merely the record of a country’s mental progress: it is the expression of its intellectual life, the bond of national unity, and the guide of national energy” (ix). Dewart’s equation of literature and nation would be reinforced again and again in dozens of national literature anthologies, especially those published in the years following Canada’s centennial, in 1967. A commonly held assumption among the editors of these collections is that reading Canadian literature anthologies involves people in the activity of constructing Canada; every anthology presents them with textual versions of the country they know or
are getting to know. But consider the extent to which the idea of ‘country’ embodied in any given anthology is the product of a series of negotiations concerning the representation of nation. Editors must carefully consider the weight they give to different geographic regions, the balance between selections of writing by men and women, the need to recognise ethnic and racial diversity, and the desire to resist various forms of genre suppression encouraged by the anthology-making act. To add to the complexity of these negotiations, the editor is faced with further challenges about how the nation is represented through the organisational structure of the text. If the anthology is organised in terms of thematic groupings, to what extent does this reduce the nation to convenient categories that bear no real relation to the unstable and multiform qualities of national life? Should the anthology include aboriginal texts? That question bears on the issue of when a national narrative actually begins. How far back should a national literature anthology go in order to identify a genesis? Is there a definable beginning, or does the starting point of national literary history shift over time? And if the starting points shift, what kind of valid commentary can the editor offer in terms of asserting a tradition? Should the editor resist asserting tradition, in the knowledge that this imposes the kind of deterministic historical pattern that has been undermined by poststructuralist thought?

The idea of Canada presented in anthologies varies widely and is constantly changing in response to shifting concepts of the country and to notions of literary value current in any given period. And different anthologists working in the same era often construct Canada in very different ways. By doing so, they show how the idea of Canada is multiple and evolving. Beyond the extrinsic constructions of nation that shift from collection to collection and over time, every anthology displays anxieties about the form it takes, the values it enshrines, the structure it imposes, and the way it frames its unstable national subject. Depending on the perspective of its editor, a national literature anthology may construct a modern nation, a postmodern nation, or a nation composed of intermingling voices that defy classification. Paradoxically, the anthological construction of the
nation today is in many ways about the deconstruction of national identity, a process that has been assisted by the rise of on-demand publishing, which turns every instructor into an anthologiser capable of envisioning the nation from multiple and shifting perspectives. In this environment, the nation is dynamic and polyvalent. However, if one’s understanding of community and citizenship is in some ways a function of a shared sense of national assumptions, or values, to what extent does the breakdown of conventional anthological authority make the notions of community and citizenship problematic? Do national literature anthologies—or the absence of them—say something about how nations are understood? Or do such anthologies encourage nations to be misunderstood? That could be their most valuable function.

While I cannot claim any expertise in the field of Australian literature, I was curious to see whether the pattern that characterises Canadian anthology-making had any parallels in another young country with many similar characteristics in terms of history and culture. What surprised me was the discovery that national Australian literature anthologies are not that common. Since I doubted my own findings, I got in touch with some specialists, who told me that academics teaching Australian literature are plagued by problems of texts being out of print and the relatively small size of undergraduate cohorts. I learned that Kramer and Mitchell had produced a large anthology for Oxford in 1985, which was followed by Goodwin and Lawson’s anthology with Macmillan in 1990. James Moore’s 200 Years of Australian Writing appeared in 1999. One effort to redress the absence of reliable texts is the Sydney University Press Print on Demand Classic Australian Works series. In addition, the Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature Project has recently released a major new anthology of Australian writing. I note that the editors of this anthology have resorted to the identification between anthology and nation that I have observed in American and Canadian anthologies. They say that the book will be “a major contribution to our national cultural infrastructure.” The creation of this new anthology implicitly participates in a current debate about the
nature of the Australian literary canon that is directly related to the conception of nation and which echoes similar debates in Canada and the United States. In a recent article in the *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, Katherine Bode argues that “quantitative analysis” provides an important means of examining the relation between texts and the culture that produced them. She says:

> The revival in cultural nationalism suggested by current debates about Australian history and literature represents . . . both a potential pleasure and a danger for Australian literary studies. While the injection of funds augured by this shift in government policy could resuscitate and reinvigorate the discipline, at present, such funds seem to be contingent upon reviving a canonical approach to the teaching and researching of Australian literature. This situation places Australian literary studies at a crossroad. Rather than following the path of least resistance and reinstituting the canon, I advocate a move towards innovation: that is, an extension and realisation of the principles and insights of cultural materialism through quantitative methodologies and resourceful readings, as well as through eResearch more generally. This direction would propel Australian literary studies beyond its current crisis of confidence—by reinvigorating the discipline and offering it renewed institutional, political, social and critical relevance, and alternative funding opportunities—without reinvoking the canon, and hence rejecting the cultural materialism that has shaped and positioned Australian literary studies since the 1980s (Abstract).

Bode’s argument is directly related to the rest of my paper, mainly because its emphasis on quantitative methods stresses the importance of using a materialist methodology to examine both canon and nation. Most commentaries on the process of anthology-making have focused
on the canonical implications of producing literary collections that are by definition both inclusive and exclusive of a wide range of values and interests related to race, region, gender, genre, theme, and subject matter—to name only a few of the variables involved in the anthological selection process. While debates about national literary canons are typically focused on these areas of inclusion and exclusion, they very seldom consider the material factors affecting anthology formation and, by extension, the creation of national literary canons or canonical ideals.

Last year I edited a new, comprehensive anthology of Canadian literature which includes poetry and short fiction from the eighteenth-century to the present. It is the first such anthology in the past decade, a fact that invites an examination of how the literary representation of Canada has changed over this period. At the same time, as editor, I also became familiar with a range of issues related to the material conditions influencing my selections—issues that usually remain invisible to the readers of anthologies in their final, published form. Yet these material factors are crucial to the kinds of selections I made, and they also account for the fact that users of the anthology—mainly students and their professors—will be denied access to much of the literature that could contribute to a redefinition of canon and nation.

The remainder of this paper is about those material factors and the limitations they impose upon anthology formation, not only in my case, but necessarily in the case of most editors of national literature anthologies. The point I want to make is that, despite the best intentions of their editors, material conditions and limitations inevitably lead to decisions that distort the canon and literary history. This may result in the creation of bold and creative anthologies, but it will in no way result in a selection that accurately represents the larger picture, which is ironic, given the fact that anthologies are usually perceived, in terms of synecdoche, as vehicles that use parts to represent the whole. Another way of saying this is to assert that national literature anthologies paradoxically become the opposite of what they are designed to be. So when we use such anthologies to
introduce students to Canadian literature, we are really introducing them to a severely compromised narrative governed largely by material concerns.

I would like to discuss a few of these concerns as I have experienced them.

National literary anthologies are usually pretty big beasts. Before commissioning such a project the publisher will have made detailed calculations about a number of related questions. How many pages can be printed? At what cost? What is the budget for permissions? Is the permissions budget sufficient to obtain current work? Is it sufficient to include works by the best-known writers? If not, how can the anthology be representative? How much money will be spent on copy-editing? On visual material? How much money will the editor demand? Is his or her name and experience worth the cost?

When I was approached to edit the anthology, I was told that it would contain 1,200 pages, divided about equally between poetry and fiction. Unaware of what the actual permissions costs might be, I proceeded to make my selections based on a series of criteria I had established. But no sooner had I started on this process than the first problem appeared. One of the most prominent genres in Canadian poetry is the long poem, or serial poem. Many of Canada’s most accomplished poets have done their best work in this form, and some of these poems can run to forty pages or more. In other words, they are short books. Obviously it is not possible to include the entire work. At least, this has not yet been done. The typical way of dealing with this problem is to use an excerpt. But then professors complain that their students do not really see the entire landscape, and that what started out as a long poem can in fact look like a much shorter lyric poem in its excerpted form. Ironically, the book budget has erased the long poem form and in doing so has denied students exposure to a crucial genre of Canadian poetry. I wanted to avoid this kind of truncation, so I pleaded with the publisher to allow me another 200 pages so that I could include the full text of such poems as Isabella Valancy Crawford’s Malcolm’s Katie or Robert Kroetsch’s Seed Catalogue (or
many other poems too numerous to list here). The answer came back all too quickly: the budget was set, the book could not be bigger, I would have to compromise. So I chose to include complete long poems, but was forced to include fewer of them.

Just as cost factors influence the ways in which long poems are handled, so do they influence the kind of fiction that is selected to represent the canon. Since every printed page costs money, editors have to be constantly aware of the length of the material they are selecting. This makes the process of anthology selection particularly hard on authors who favour the novella. Examples include Eden Robinson and John Metcalf. I wanted to include Robinson’s “Traplines” in my collection, but I had forgotten that it ran to close to fifty pages, far too long for inclusion in the anthology. By the same token, I was drawn to Metcalf’s more recent fiction, which tends to take the novella form. But the length of those novellas forced me back to his earlier short stories. Other painful decisions had to be made. Take Alice Munro. Some of her finest material is quite recent, but it is also quite long. In this case, I got indignant and decided to include “The Bear Came over the Mountain,” even though it rang in at a whopping twenty seven pages—certainly a number destined to displace another worthy entry. But once I decided to include this story, which verges on a novella, how could I justify the exclusion of the slightly longer pieces by other writers? To the uninitiated reader, the canon would seem lopsided indeed.

The budgetary constraints that result in space limitations take a big toll on the ways in which genre is represented. For example, novels obviously could not be included, given the fact that I had 1,200 pages in which to collect the best of Canada’s literature. I am well aware that other national anthologies—particularly the Norton anthologies—try to deal with this issue by including one or more chapters from canonical novels. But in the eyes of the student, these excerpts assume the status of short story; in fact, the anthologising process tends to reconfigure longer works as shorter works by selecting a chapter to represent the whole, or by truncating the original works
in other ways, through excerpting, condensation, or elision. The net effect on the new reader of the national canon is the sense that canonical works are more or less consistent in length, generally short, and generally not novels. In other words, the material conditions affecting selection introduce an unstated bias against longer forms by excluding or modifying length. If *The Great Gatsby* can be reduced to its first chapter, something has gone terribly wrong.

Material limitations do not only affect the size of poems included in anthologies. They affect the range of poems available to editors as they make their choices. For example, Anne Carson is one of Canada’s most accomplished and famous poets, yet her current publisher charges exorbitant fees for her most recent work, mainly because she has become famous. Those publishers, and perhaps Carson herself, have done us a disservice, for now, faced with these escalating permissions costs, anthologists turn to her earlier work, which can be obtained at a lower cost. The result? Students are not exposed to her most recent poetry, and cannot get an accurate sense of her evolution as a poet, mainly because the recent poetry is so seldom seen outside its original book publication, which few students can afford. To make matters worse, Carson frequently employs the long poem form, which to an editor only signals further hurdles to be overcome. When I spoke with another editor about the Carson poems I hoped to use, he gave me this quick bit of advice: ‘Don’t even bother asking for the later poems. The prices are through the roof.’ So I didn’t bother, and instead looked for a much earlier Carson poem. A short one. Of course, I could have left her out entirely, but then people would have complained that the anthology was unrepresentative. But how representative is it, now that she is in?

Carson made the cut, but it is not always this way. Often, an editor will not know for certain whether a specific author can be included until the entire process of arriving at a final table of contents has run its conflicted course. For only after a tentative table of contents is selected and then modified in response to peer review can the ideal table of contents be established. Even then, however, *that* ideal table
of contents is subject to revision, for only when the ideal contents are established will the publisher actually attempt to determine the permissions costs. If those costs are too high, the contents will have to be modified again and again until the budget ceiling is met. So a convoluted series of editorial negotiations over selection and cost is finally modified by an overarching determination of total cost. In the midst of these negotiations, the abstract idea of nation that first mobilised the editor to work on the collection becomes even more distorted than it once was.

Editors cannot help but be aware of these material restrictions. Or, if they are not, they will be rudely awakened. For many, this awakening produces some obvious cost-saving strategies. One temptation is to seek out authors whose work is in the public domain and therefore free for anyone to reproduce, a status obtained in North America after 50 years have passed since the author’s death. Since cost is a factor in the creation of any anthology, editors are naturally drawn to material that can be obtained without charge. The result? There is a tension between the desire to use this free material versus the realisation that it is frequently not the best material and is never current. For example, Duncan Campbell Scott, a respected poet, died in 1947. Therefore his work has been in the public domain for eleven years. Recent anthologies are using more of Scott’s work. Why? Has opinion about the quality of his work shifted radically? No. The increase is due to the fact that his work entered the public domain after 1997. So the inclusion of early Canadian poetry may be driven by its inherent quality, but it may equally be driven by the desire to flesh out the historical perspective through the use of works that have paradoxically lost their currency in terms of cold hard cash.

As for me, I wanted to create an anthology that is a little less dependent on these earlier works while emphasising the material of younger writers who may not be that well known to the general public. I thought that would not cost me too much, since the younger writers do not charge exorbitant prices, like Anne Carson does now. But if I included too many of those relatively inexpensive new writers,
what would happen to the more established but expensive ones? Should they be pushed out? Obviously, Margaret Atwood needs to be in, so does Alice Munro, but must they be in at the expense of a great young short story writer who is just happy to have her story in the collection and who will let me use it gratis? The cost of producing an anthology with an emphasis on contemporary writing might appeal to some users, but others will object to the fact that this takes space away from the more established writers, who are seen as crucial markers of the national canon.

Material conditions often lead to the exclusion of experimental writers whose work cannot be easily reproduced within the anthology’s given design. For example, concrete and visual poets such as bpNichol or bill bissett often present their work in very unconventional ways: as paper fragments emerging from a box, as a series of colored prints or paintings interlaced with printed words, as visual fragments that run across the page or that are housed in books of odd dimensions that can accommodate the visual elements. Contemporary writers such as Lisa Robertson and Erin Mouré use exaggerated fonts to create visual effects and their writing often challenges conventional book margins. In order to publish works of this kind, these poets found friendly publishers who were often as interested in the book as artifact as they were in the poetry those books contained. Design and content went hand-in-hand. But the large-scale anthology is never friendly to printing and design experimentation. Once the margins are established and the book gutters set, it becomes very expensive to run signatures of the book that defy these overall parameters, just as it becomes costly to introduce color. As a result, such boundary-breaking works are often made to fit the pre-established anthology mold, or the editor is forced to make selections that will fit that mold. The process robs the work of its subversive elements, or distorts them by civilising their presence. In many cases, the work that cannot be accommodated is simply left out so that students gain only a partial sense of the writer’s experimental methods.
Up to this point, I have been discussing what may seem to be some of the more obvious material conditions that account for the distortion of national literary canons through the anthologising process. Yet, surprisingly, most discussions of anthology formation scarcely mention these material concerns, as if they were somehow secondary to the process of selection, rather than inextricably linked to that process. This is particularly surprising given the fact that people writing about anthologies often recognise that the process of selection is simultaneously an act of commodification. Yet commentary on anthology formation usually focuses on what Barbara Benedict calls “the ‘demand’ or consumer side of the literary culture of anthologies, the way they were received and read,” while bypassing “the ‘supply’ side—the story of the material connections informing the construction of value and cultural currency in anthologies” (1996, 31). The few discussions of the supply side that do exist tend to come from disgruntled editors who have to make choices that are always compromised by material concerns. Kevin Dettmar, who has served as the co-editor of the twentieth-century selections for the Longman Anthology of British Literature for more than a decade, observes that because he was involved in overseeing permissions costs he was “in a position to witness how those costs influence decision about what is included and what is not (and why).” As he says, “one begins to think about how much one can afford, and what one can afford to do without.” He complains: “I resent being forced to make absurd calculations, such as five lines of Auden equals one page of Salman Rushdie.” Dettmar wanted to include some poems by American Sylvia Plath to accompany the poetry of her British husband, Ted Hughes. But eventually Plath had to be dropped because the fees for reproducing her work suddenly rose. “One goes into the project with big dreams,” he says, “but after meeting with the architects and builders, certain features go by the boards; even more desires are sacrificed during construction, as costs overrun estimates. In our third edition, a smattering of poems by Sylvia Plath became those skylights in the kitchen that would have to wait for later.” Dettmar concludes: “one of the hidden forces shaping the evolving canon of modern
literature, in ways not always having much to do with literary value, is the shortsightedness of copyright holders.”

If we examine the supply side with a bit more cynicism it becomes clear that there are even crasser material factors at work in the creation of national literary canons as they are exemplified by these national literature anthologies. Take, for example, weight. I am not talking about the weightiness of ideas here. I am talking about pure physical poundage. In the peer review of my own anthology I was made all too aware of how important weight is. My reviewers reminded the publisher repeatedly that the final anthology must not be too heavy. One said it should be designed in such a way as to fit comfortably into a backpack. And the paper should not be too thin. But it had to be acid-free and environmentally responsible. And lots of room should be left on the pages for notes. You begin to see the problem: somehow, I had to fill 1,200 pages, but I had to make sure that the final book weighed less than those of my competitors. I needed to create the Weight-Watcher’s version of a national literary canon. Perhaps we could use a lighter-weight paper, anything to slim down the book. But I knew the idea would fall on deaf ears: certain industry-sanctioned papers would have to be used. What else could be done with this canonical waistline? Chop an inch off the overall dimensions of the book? That is good for the backpack, but it reduces the margins inside. Bad for note-takers. Bad for the experimental poets who like to play with the distinction between margin and centre. Bad for the overall look of the book, which will seem cramped. Yes, it is true—every book encounters design limitations, but in this case, I would argue that the material appearance of one anthology—which is itself a function of mediation and compromise—transmits a different sense of the canon than another anthology which appears in a different physical form, even if the contents are identical. So national literary canons truly can be perceived in terms of physical dimensions and weight, and one’s response to holding that canon or stuffing it into a backpack is directly related to the kind of reception that canon will receive. In other words, the gross materiality of the product contributes to its reception just as much as the content itself.
The same holds true for the nation embodied in that anthology. Will it be slim or chubby? Backpackable or not? To add to this perception of the book’s value, we could also consider such material factors as the kind of artwork selected for the anthology’s cover, the technology involved in printing and binding the book in a cost-efficient manner, the amount allocated to marketing and promoting the title, and so on.

Because most small and medium-sized publishing houses will not be able to compete with larger houses in offering the editor an advance against royalties, or in making a substantial financial commitment to the permissions budget and other costs associated with production, large-scale national literature anthologies tend to be published by a few well-known companies that have literally cornered the market. This situation differs markedly from the conditions that apply to other kinds of smaller and less costly anthologies, which are often undertaken by independent publishing companies. But the big literature anthology seems by definition to be the creation of a few big companies and it is necessarily imprinted with the institutional values that allow those companies to succeed. So, in fact, the presentation of national literary canons is always restricted and partial, and always a function of the corporate material resources available to the companies that produce them. It is never simply a matter of editorial innovation or intelligence. There are too many material factors that stand in the way.

When I feel depressed about the monetary issues that inevitably compromised my selections, I always turn back to the selections themselves, trying to reassure myself that, in the end, a viable collection emerged. And just when I have entered the dream state of believing that my anthology is somehow representative and fair, I am brought back to reality by the voices of my anonymous assessors (there were seven of them), who insisted on reminding me how tainted a product I was bound to produce. Some of them applauded the poetry selections but thought the fiction choices were weak. Some liked the fiction, but thought I should include more selections by Aboriginal writers. Some thought my inclusion of Aboriginal writers was just
an example of political correctness. Two reviewers said my choices were far too canonical. Others disagreed. In the end, the mixture was inevitably a tortured compromise, a compromise mediated further by a host of material conditions that are usually invisible to those who will actually use the book.

When I began editing this anthology my original title was Canadian Literature in English. But I had to get rid of that title; it had very little to do with what I actually produced. The final title reflected what I thought was the ambivalent and unsettled nature of nation. I called it Open Country: Canadian Literature in English. I kept the introduction short, tried to make as few claims as possible, and left it up to the reader to imagine the country through the selections. That was my little leap to freedom. But as I have tried to argue here, it was a very small leap. In the end, the open country I wanted to create was compromised by a host of factors that contributed to my construction of the nation. No sooner was the book published than I wanted to start again. This place called Canada is hard to pin down. As every anthology is bound to show, the country remains elusive, resistant, dynamic. Not a bad place to be.

Works cited


Canada and Australia share many similarities in their colonial histories. Each land mass became the focus of Victorian Britain’s interest in areas outside the Metropolis; these were fantastic spaces which were deemed to be at the ‘ends of the earth.’ Postcolonial analysis has often been used to examine literature from Canada and Australia, but as numerous Indigenous critics have pointed out, postcolonial studies has limited application with regard to Indigenous literature. Furthermore, life-writing has been the subject of much of the critical attention shown to Indigenous texts, leaving some fantastic or supernaturally-themed works virtually devoid of scholarly analysis. By viewing Indigenous peoples in Canada and Australia as diasporic, that is, by acknowledging that the policies of forced removal and relocation separated Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands and traditions, it is possible to gain insight into how the Canadian Arctic and Australian Outback came to be used as sites of resistance in Indigenous literature. In particular, this survey of British attitudes will be used to provide a background for discussion of how two Indigenous authors, Alootook Ipellie and Sam Watson, have utilised shamanic figures who are both shamanic and queer to address issues of Indigenous Diaspora.

The quest to discover a Northwest Passage across the Arctic took on mythic qualities, and the Australian colonies were figured as the “Antipodes” of legend. These were locations at the “extremity of the British reader’s mind’s eye” (Henderson 297–298), a dangerous realm which they were happy to believe were populated by monsters,
demons, or sorcerers (Henderson 298). More recently, Margaret Atwood has described the colonial mentality in terms of its ability to cause “psychic disturbances” (Atwood, qtd in Brydon and Tiffin 90). Given that Alootook Ipellie’s *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* and Sam Watson’s *The Kadaitcha Sung* are set in Nunavut and rural Queensland, respectively, her comment about the impact of certain spaces on the colonial psyche is particularly pertinent:

> the North is to Canada as the Outback is to Australia, and as the sea was to Melville, and as …Africa is, shall we say, to *Heart of Darkness*. It’s the place where you go to find something out. It’s the place of the unconscious. It’s the place of the journey or the quest (Atwood, qtd in Brydon and Tiffin 90).

The use of maban reality in modern Indigenous Diasporic literature as a radical means of addressing binaries, it would seem, is an ironic reworking of a commonly-held and rarely-challenged colonial belief: that the colonies at the ends of the earth were populated by uncivilised, pagan and primitive beings that had access to supernatural powers.

The colonies were representative of promise for many in Victorian Britain. Members of the British Royal Navy began to arrive in the Arctic in the early 1800s and continued to have a presence throughout the nineteenth century. Between 1818 and 1828, the Admiralty undertook twelve Arctic expeditions, with varying degrees of success. Two aimed to reach the North Pole, another four sought to discover the North West Passage, and four others were sent to survey the northern mainland coast of North America. Of these expeditions, all but two were abject failures. Despite this, the publication of explorers’ diaries was greeted with “romantic enthusiasm” by the British public (Parry in Robinson 50). Indeed, Admiral William Parry led four failed expeditions, yet was treated as a conquering hero in Europe, and was knighted in 1827 (Parry in Robinson 50). He and George Lyon were the first white people to overwinter in the Igloolik
region. In 1824 both published books about their voyages, which were illustrated with Lyon’s pen-and-ink drawings. Consequently the Inuit of the Central Canadian Arctic became the “Eskimo of our imagination” (Brody 128). The reported good humour and stoicisim of the Inuit were seen as desirable, and as something to which factory workers in the newly industrial world should aspire (Brody 129).

Given European interest romanticised imaginings of the Arctic at the time, it is perhaps no surprise that Mary Shelley set her 1818 Gothic novel *Frankenstein* on board a ship in Arctic waters. As Hugh Brody has argued in *The Other Side of Eden: Hunters, Farmers and the Shaping of the World*:

Mary Shelley needed a place of mythic dimensions for the launch of her terrifying tale. She herself had been to northern Canada—along with many English readers who shared in the armchair search for a Northwest Passage and an abundance of bowhead whales—only in her imagination (Brody 127).

Indeed, as Brian Johnson argues, Shelley’s work was a “wry metafictional nod to Samuel Taylor Coleridge” (Johnson 84) because of her entangling of Coleridge’s tale of a nightmare journey to the South pole within the imaginative geography of specifically northern gothic tradition. The allusion could hardly be more apt. As John Livingston Lowes points out, Coleridge’s extensive reading of northern exploration narratives meant that even though [t]he Mariner’s ice-fields swim in Antarctic seas […] the ice itself is good Arctic ice, seen, heard and felt in the ‘infernal bitter cold’ of Barents’s Sea, and in the ‘stinking fogge’ of Hudson’s Bay, and off the ‘snowy Cliffs’ of Greenland and Spitzbergen (Lowes 1927, 139). For this reason, Mary Shelley’s tongue-in-cheek reinvention of the Ancient Mariner as … northern explorer Robert Warton is less an instance of cartographic alchemy, than a ‘South is
North, where the albatross is shot’ (Lowes 1927, 139) and an explicit reappropriation of Coleridge’s poem for the psychic geography of an Arctic sublime in which ice-choked landscapes provide the backdrop for daemonic encounters between the Romantic self and its monstrous doubles (Johnson 84).

The Canadian Arctic, then, became a space literally at the end of the earth, on the edges of maps and presumably, of civilisation—a space which was at once both terrifying and which offered limitless possibilities.

The Australian situation offered a similar canvas for the imagination. Coleridge’s aforementioned tale of a nightmare journey to the South was a manifestation of Britain’s long-held fascination with the possibility of a Great Southern Land. According to Ian Henderson, cartography prior to the Enlightenment did not only show those lands which had been charted but also those which were ‘known’ to exist for philosophical or religious reasons. One recurrent belief was in ‘a spherical world with symmetrical hemispheres and a great southern landmass that counterbalanced the known world’ (Fausett 10, qtd in Henderson 295), and confirmed prevalent ideas about balance and order. The ‘discovery’ of Australia, complete with its Indigenous inhabitants who looked different from Europeans and did not conform to the same standards of so-called ‘civilisation,’ seemed to confirm, on some level, the long-held romantic visions of the Great Southern Land as an outpost and a space wherein anything was possible. The establishment of penal colonies throughout the region established Australia as a place of terror and punishment, but the availability of land for settlement and farming also meant that it was a space where there were opportunities for the hardy, or perhaps the foolhardy. It was, in Henderson’s words, a place where “unintended meaning was realised, an unruly imaginative space accessible anywhere and everywhere” (Henderson 296). Life in the colonies was presumed to be strange,
exotic and “primitive” (Harris 133), unfettered by the constraints of ‘civilisation.’ Like Canada, then, Australia was a place of potential and also one of fear, distanced from the laws and constraints of Britain.

Another notable similarity between the two nations is that they each have histories of troubled relations with their Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples in Canada and Australia have experienced significant government intervention in their daily lives over the last two hundred years. In each country, the interventions have included but not been limited to the creation of permanent settlements, forced relocations for the purposes of medical treatment and schooling, and the removal of children from their traditional lands and families to live with Anglo-European families. These movements across traditional borders have created intra-national diasporic conditions, which Indigenous peoples in these countries continue to negotiate daily, and which are reflected in the contemporary works of Alootook Ipellie and Sam Watson, to be discussed later in this paper.

William Safran, one of the pioneers of Diaspora Studies, outlined six criteria for a diasporic community: they were displaced from their original location to two or more peripheral regions; they retain a collective memory; they feel partly isolated and insulated from their host community; they regard their ancestral home as their ‘true’ home or country and a place to which they, or their descendants would like to return; they are committed to the maintenance and restoration of their homeland; and finally, they continue to relate personally or vicariously to their homeland. (Safran 1991, 2) Whilst Safran was largely concerned with delineating the field, others have adopted a more pluralist view (Chariandy 7).

David Chariandy argues convincingly that postcolonial diasporic discourse is “something self-consciously ‘figurative’ or ‘metaphorical’” and is thus a “special agent for social change” (Chariandy 8). As with the term “postcolonial,” there are a number of questions which have been raised over the definition of “Diaspora,” including whether certain ethnic groups are automatically diasporic; what differences
generational changes make on the imagining of Diaspora; whether an extant culture must have been developed independently before dispersal or whether it can develop retrospectively; whether the dispersal has to be caused by traumatic exile, or can be voluntary; and whether the desire to return to a homeland is a mandatory feature and, if so, must this be physical, or can it be symbolic? (Chariandy 8).

It is apparent that the features which Safran originally identified as being ‘diasporic’—in terms of a collective memory, insulation from the broader community, a desire to return to country and a commitment to that return—also apply to Indigenous people who have been forcibly removed from their traditional lands. As mentioned earlier, government policies of forced removal and location were applied to Indigenous peoples in both Canada and Australia and consequently, many Indigenous groups within these countries have problematic relationships in terms of national belonging.

Fred Riggs concurs that “ethnonational” or internal migration does occur in Indigenous populations:

Ethnonational Diasporas often settle within the state where their homeland is located—Indigenous Americans in the US, Chechens in Russia, Scots in the UK, aboriginals in Australia, Maories [sic] in New Zealand, etc. Being in Diaspora, therefore, does not require crossing state boundaries for many ethnonations (Riggs 5).

In her unpublished doctoral thesis, “Leaving Country Without Leaving the Country,” Noeline Brasche also asserts that Indigenous Diasporas do exist and examines the Indigenous Diaspora which was created on and around the Cherbourg mission in South Eastern Queensland—an important site in Sam Watson’s novel—throughout the twentieth century. Brasche argues convincingly that William Safran’s key identifying features of Diaspora are evident in the policies and impacts of the forced dispersal of Indigenous peoples from their homelands as a consequence of colonialist practices.
In Canada, as in Australia, Indigenous peoples were removed from their traditional lands and housed in settlements away from the rest of the population. According to Brasche, the forced displacements of Indigenous peoples clearly

infringed traditional boundaries … Territorial or national groups who previously had little or nothing in common now shared experiences of dispersal and loss of sovereignty, as well as physical displacement from traditional country (Brasche 49).

Diaspora theory, however, has only been applied to Indigenous writing in the last few years. A common perception remains within mainstream Australia, for example, that “Aboriginal” people have remained on “Australian soil” and therefore have not been displaced. As Sonia Kurtzer argues, however, the very term “Aboriginal” is a product of the diasporic function of colonialism, since

[t]he concept of Aboriginality did not even exist before the coming of the European. Rather, Indigenous Australians identified themselves and others according to kinship groups, skin groups, or on the basis of their relationship to totems, the Dreaming or particular tracts of land … it has been the oppressor who has sought to define Aboriginality (Kurtzer 182).

Even recent attempts by Indigenous peoples to label themselves according to regions bear traces of colonial influence. The term “Murri,” for example, used to identify Indigenous people from Central and Southern Queensland and the north of New South Wales, has its roots in colonial policies of forced relocation and displacement. The term is said to have originated in the Diaspora space of the Cherbourg (formerly Barambah) Aboriginal Reserve in south-eastern Queensland (Brasche 8 and 37). From 1905, Indigenous Australians from forty-four different language groups were incarcerated on this reserve, leading to the formation of a common, regional identity through shared circumstance. Gerard Guthrie completed fieldwork in the area
in the early 1970s, and noted Cherbourg was created by “bringing together Aborigines from the remnants of a number of large tribes in southern Queensland into a quite artificial grouping” (Guthrie in Brasche 197). The Cherbourg site plays an important role in Sam Watson’s 1990 novel *The Kadaitcha Sung*.

In the context of the parallel Canadian and Australian situation in terms of land and diasporas, therefore, this paper surveys two authors whose lives and works exemplify the Indigenous Diasporic experience, and who both use the figure of the shaman as a trope to examine this complex cultural phenomenon. As figures able to exist in two environments, and mediators with trickster tendencies, the shaman-characters in the texts are posited as useful symbols for relaying the complexities of being Indigenous peoples within the settler-invader colonies of Canada and Australia.

Sam Watson grew up in the suburbs of Brisbane. His mother was of the Mullenjarli and his father of the Birri Gubba nation. Although Watson considers himself very fortunate because he was allowed to remain with his nuclear family and attend local state schools, he was still very aware of the policies of removal and location which affected many Aboriginal families in the first two centuries of white colonisation. His grandfather, also named Sam Watson, a senior man of the Birri Gubba tribe in the Bowen Basin, was sold into bondage at the age of five (Fletcher 1). According to Watson, his grandfather was “chained up like a dog under the station house and fed on a tin plate” (Fletcher 1) after his day’s work. The elder Watson fled this treatment and worked in ring-barking camps until he could afford to employ a lawyer “who had him freed from the Aboriginal Protection Act, one of the first Aboriginal people to do so” (Fletcher 1).

Later, Watson’s father would also petition the courts arguing that he “didn’t need to be brought up in a reserve as he was quite capable of working and running his life” (Stewart 2). The younger Sam Watson, therefore, lived his childhood exempted from the protectionist acts which generally dictated how Aboriginal Australians lived, but was aware that “protected” Murris were not permitted to walk the street,
own a house, or enter into financial contracts without the signed permission of the Minister for Native Affairs.

As Watson has stated in an interview, his marriage to a non-Indigenous Australian has made him very aware of the bicultural backgrounds of most young Indigenous Australians, including his own children, and so he deliberately creates young protagonists who need to embrace both cultures in order to move forward; as he puts it: “We all have to draw strength and positives and lessons and knowledge from different Dreaming pathways” (McMahon-Coleman 2009, 318). Even the name of his protagonist, Tommy Gubba, designates his hybrid status, for his surname, Gubba, is a common colloquial insult for white people, derived from the Aboriginal-English ‘gubba-ment,’ (Gelder and Jacobs 110). Tommy works as a translator and mediator for the British-based Australian legal system, of which he remains suspicious, arguably paralleling Watson’s own employment as an advocate in the legal system and with Murri Watch, an organisation which aims to protect young offenders and to minimise the disturbing number of deaths in custody.

Alootook Ipellie’s work was also informed by his personal experiences as well as those of his people. He was a poet, author, artist, cartoonist, journalist and editor. In a thirty-five year career, he experienced times of great productivity and periods of extreme hardship. In many ways, his life experiences, political views and art were influenced by the dramatic cultural upheaval he experienced as a child in the Arctic. At the age of four, his family were forced to abandon their semi-nomadic lifestyle and move into pre-fabricated houses in the township of Iqaluit. The following year, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and taken to Hamilton, Ontario, for treatment. By the time he returned to Iqaluit, he could no longer speak Inuktitut, which he had to relearn in order to communicate with his family (McMahon-Coleman 2005, 92–93).

His childhood was marked by a problematic relationship with his alcoholic and abusive stepfather, Alivuktak. When he was about nine years old, he ran away from home and was essentially homeless for a
period of some eighteen months before being taken in by relatives. During this period, he had a brief but important opportunity to live on the land, using traditional hunting practices (see Kennedy, 348; McMahon-Coleman 2009, 293). As a thirteen-year-old he was again separated from his family when he was enrolled in a secondary school in Ottawa. He remained here for two years, boarding with an Anglo-Canadian family. Although he achieved good grades at school, Ipellie became a selective mute, refusing to speak with his teachers, classmates, guidance counsellor or finally, psychologist, during this time (Ipellie 1996, 1; Ipellie 1992, 26).

He returned to Iqaluit briefly as a young man, but spent most of his adult life in Ottawa, where he began to work for the Inuit lobby group ITK and for the Inuit publications Inuit Today and Inuktitut. He was prolific in his output for these publications. Perhaps his best-known work, however, remains the 1993 publication Arctic Dreams and Nightmares, a self-illustrated series of sequential short stories featuring a shaman-narrator who travels through time and across cultures. His work reflects his personal experiences, often dealing with issues of home and homelessness, speaking and silence.

Both Ipellie’s Arctic Dreams and Nightmares (1993) and Watson’s The Kadaitcha Sung (1990) use figures with supernatural powers and sorcery in order to tell their stories. Both works centre on the actions of shamanic hybrid figures, and not only “queer” or question accepted representations of Aboriginality, but also deal with queer expressions of sexuality. As examples of Indigenous Diasporic literature, both authors’ works operate in the interstices between maban reality and queer theory.

In The Indigenous Literature of Australia: Milli Milli Wangka, Australian critic Mudrooroo uses the term “maban reality” to describe the fantastic Indigenous genre, concerning works which he points out could also reasonably be classified as magic realist novels (Mudrooroo 101). Maban realist texts, he argues, bring to the foreground Indigenous spiritual realities which had been marginalised as “primal, pagan and savage” by early settlers, missionaries and educators.
Kimberley McMahon-Coleman

(Mudrooroo 90). Mudrooroo cites Watson’s *The Kadaitcha Sung* as being the novel which first broke the ground of this “new realm of reality” (Mudrooroo 46) in Australia. He defines maban reality as being “characterised by a firm grounding in the reality of the earth or country, together with an acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality” (Mudrooroo 98). He also argues that it is inherently political because “it seeks to establish an Indigenous reality which is counter to the dominant natural reality of the invaders” (Mudrooroo 100).

Mabans or shamans are naturally “queer” or unstable figures who undermine accepted social norms. Doty argues that

> [h]omosexuals as well as heterosexuals can operate or mediate from within straight cultural spaces and positions—after all, most of us grew up learning the rules of straight culture—[but] we have paid less attention to the proposition that basically heterocentrist texts can contain queer elements, and basically heterosexual, straight-identifying people can experience queer moments. And these people should be encouraged to examine and express these moments as queer ... the cultural ‘queer space’ recognizes the possibility that various and fluctuating queer positions might be occupied whenever *anyone* produces or responds to culture (Doty 3).

In other words, as Buchbinder asserts, readers experience queer moments when “reading texts or understanding situations from a reading position which one would not normally occupy” (Buchbinder 166). Buchbinder asserts that ‘queerness’ “seeks to defy and thence to destabilise” (152), and that queer readings undermine ideological boundaries and blur the boundaries between them; they also advocate a spectrum of subject positions in relation to performances of sex, gender and sexuality. Each of these texts introduces a protagonist who is culturally “Othered” through his Indigeneity; who is able to seek the familiar in unfamiliar environments, and who has
atypical relationships with the people around him. These characters continually undermine often-accepted binaries about black and white, straight and queer, thereby forcing non-marginalised members of the reading audience into a more marginalised reading position.

In Ipellie’s *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* the shaman-narrator appears to be celibate, yet provides quite detailed commentary on the sexuality of others. He meets a hyper-masculine shaman (in “Super Stud”), a polygamist shaman (in “The Five Shy Wives of the Shaman”) and a hermaphrodite shaman (in “Public Execution of the Hermaphrodite Shaman”) during his travels, but uses a proxy when Sedna attempts to seduce him (in “Summit with Sedna, the Mother of the Sea Beasts.”)

In one of the more amusing stories in the collection, “When God Sings the Blues,” the shaman-narrator enters a trance and begins his annual pilgrimage to meet with God. The narrator finds these visits “intellectually stimulating” because of the “opportunity to try [his] hand at outwitting this particular God” (45). We learn that God has a sense of humour, for he likes to call himself “Sattaanassee,” the Inuktitut word for Satan. The narrator is unsure whether this is God’s real name since He has a “way of convincing you that He [is] always telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth” (46). On this occasion God is depressed, however, as declining numbers of followers has had a negative effect on his business empire. In this story Ipellie subverts generally accepted notions about Christianity and the Western legal system—all of which were introduced through colonisation—through his use of satire.

One of the more surprising aspects of this story, however, is the quiet boasting of the narrator that he is the only person in the history of humanity to have these intimate audiences with God, and that they have “one of the most private relationships that two spirits could hope for” (46). The suggestion of intimacy and privacy in the relationship between the two spiritual figures is a queer moment in the text, for the comment about the “private” friendship with God is the only moment throughout the stories when the narrator appears to show any real
affection for another character. There are no further other clues, however, as to whether this should be interpreted as a homosocial relationship, or whether the narrator’s apparent celibacy is actually a function of a non-heteronormative sexual orientation.

*The Kadaitcha Sung* is graphic in its depictions of sexual activity, and the book opens with a harrowing recount of the repeated rape of an Aboriginal woman by police officers. Tommy himself is anally and orally raped by his uncle and nemesis, Booka, early in the novel, and notes that this is socially taboo (51–52). Elsewhere, however, consensual homosexual sex is used to create a moment of narrative disruption which destabilises heteronormativity (Sullivan 191). The scene in question certainly disrupts the progression of the narrative at this stage of the novel (207). Tommy has consummated his relationship with Jelda, conceived a child who will carry his legacy; and is searching a panel van for enemies, since he can feel that the time of final conflict is near. Thus the high indignation of the interrupted couple is unexpected, confronting and comic. The reader already knows that one of the participants, Tommy’s cousin, Boonger, rejects homosexuality as an identity, but rather, self-identifies as straight and has recently moved in with his long-term girlfriend. Boonger’s changeable sexual preferences undermine the heteronormative binaries of hetero- and homosexuality. In this way, his fluid identity acts as a foil to Tommy, who symbolically undermines racial binaries of black/white through his mixed race parentage.

The works of Watson and Ipellie, then, are transgressive and negotiate numerous cultural borders. They each offer alternatives to normative binaries in literature, especially with regard to colonial representations of cultural and sexual identity. The characters the authors create are shamanic, and thus able to negotiate the difficulties of being Indigenous Diasporans in the contemporary world. Ipellie’s narrator in his collection *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares* is still most at “home” in the Arctic, where his powers are at their strongest; he is hyper-masculine, pragmatic, and engaged with mainstream cultural iconography. Watson’s protagonist in *The Kadaitcha Sung* is bicultural,
promiscuous, and angry at authority figures from both cultures. Their works cross genre boundaries and use the interstices between Indigenous Diaspora, queer theory and maban reality in order to find a space—albeit at the ends of the earth—in which to locate cultural subjectivity in relation to their narratives.

Works cited


**Notes**

1The mission began at the “Blacks’ Flat” site in the Durundur/Woodford region of Queensland as “a philanthropic effort” of The Salvation Army (Brasche) but the Queensland government took control in 1905, when the mission was moved to the present Barambah site. It was renamed Cherbourg in 1931. In March of 2005, ABC–TV’s Message Stick chronicled the centenary of Cherbourg, suggesting that its inhabitants continue to mark the mission’s start date as 1905.
Dealing with Residential School Survivors: Reconciliation in International Perspective

In August 1986, at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, Dr. Bob Smith led a procession of representatives to his Church’s General Council out of their deliberations to a parking lot where Native delegates to the Council awaited them. Wearing the alb, the purple stole that symbolised penitence, Smith, the Moderator or elected head of the United Church of Canada, expressed the Church’s regret for its insensitivity towards indigenous people. “We did not hear you when you shared your visions. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality.” The Moderator also acknowledged that United Church missionaries had “confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ,” and had “imposed our civilization as a condition for accepting the gospel.” He concluded by “ask[ing] you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the Spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God’s creation healed.”

The response of the audience to which the apology was directed—First Nations delegates to the Church’s General Council—was revealing. They told the church leaders that their “apology was not accepted. Nevertheless, it was ‘joyfully received’ and acknowledged.” The Native delegates erected a stone cairn to commemorate the apology, but, “on the advice of the Elders who felt that time must be given to see how the church lives out the apology,” it was “left incomplete.”

The message was clear: when non-Native members of the United Church lived out the apology their leader had articulated,
the commemorative cairn would be topped off, and reconciliation would have been achieved within the United Church.

The United Church apology was the first of a series of similar statements from the churches and church agencies that had been involved in Native residential schooling in Canada. In 1991 both the Roman Catholic Church as a national entity and the Oblates, a major missionary order, issued apologies. That same year a “National Meeting on Indian Residential Schools” attended by sixteen bishops, officials from religious organisations, and First Nations Roman Catholics issued a statement referring specifically to the ills of residential schools. Also in 1991, the Oblates apologised for “the part we played in the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious imperialism” that Europeans manifested at contact and later. The Church of England in 1993 apologised for efforts “to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of your identity,” while an accompanying statement from the Anglican Primate referred specifically to residential schools as a site of offence. The following year the Presbyterian Church in Canada issued a lengthy “Confession” that apologised for cooperating with “the stated policy of the Government of Canada [that] was to assimilate Aboriginal peoples to the dominant culture,” while also making direct reference to residential schools. And, finally, the United Church issued another apology in 1998 that referred to “the pain and suffering that our church’s involvement in the Indian Residential School system has caused.”

The Canadian churches’ progress in making amends over misguided missionary activity, including residential schools, epitomises the country’s experience dealing with the legacy of abuse that Canada’s residential schools left behind when they were phased out in the last three decades of the twentieth century. The schools, typical of similar institutions in the United States and New Zealand, had been instituted in the 1880s as the young Dominion of Canada groped its way towards a comprehensive schooling policy for First Nations children. Though little acknowledged then or since, the new system
that the federal government announced in 1883 was built on and co-existed with older boarding schools and a number of day schools. The government initiative in the 1880s, however, emphasised three new industrial schools in the prairie region that were expected to be larger, better funded, and more pedagogically ambitious than the existing boarding schools. Slowly the system of schools spread through the West, including British Columbia from the 1890s onward, and then to the North, northern Ontario, and eventually northern Quebec, and one eastern school in Nova Scotia. From 1883 until 1923 Ottawa recognised both the new ‘industrial’ schools and smaller boarding schools, but after forty years of the new policy the differences between the two systems had shrunk to insignificance. From 1923 onward the federal government spoke simply of residential schools and day schools that it provided for Aboriginal, especially First Nations, students. In 1969 the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau announced that the residential schools would be phased out. That process took another quarter-century, and involved the stopgap arrangement of Native hostels in some locations, especially in the North, at which children resided while attending government day schools.

Several factors complicate the history of Native residential schools in Canada and largely account for the complex and noxious legacy they left behind when they were finally closed. One such consideration was that the institutions were run, not as secular schools by the federal government itself, but as denominational facilities operated by the missionary arms of four Christian denominations. The largest player in the residential school story was a variety of Roman Catholic agencies, the principal among them being the male missionary order known as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, or, more simply, the Oblates. The Oblates, Jesuits, Sisters of Saint Ann, Grey Nuns, and several other female religious bodies operated approximately sixty percent of the residential schools that were authorised by the federal government and run by church bodies. The Roman Catholic Church itself, represented by the hierarchy of bishops and archbishops (known formally from the late twentieth century as the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops), was not directly involved in school
operations, although the bishops often served as lobbyists on behalf of their missionary brothers and sisters in Ottawa. About one-third of the schools had their day-to-day affairs supervised by the Church of England in Canada directly, or in one instance by the New England Company. The rest of the schools were under the control of the Methodists and Presbyterians. When the Methodists and most of the Presbyterians joined with the Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada in 1925, most of the formerly Presbyterian institutions became United Church schools, although a few still were directed by the continuing Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The shared authority of church and state contributed to the systemic neglect that exacerbated the school experience for Native children. The dual leadership tended to diffuse oversight and responsibility, and provide a convenient excuse when things went wrong. The official approach was that the federal government’s Department of Indian Affairs authorised the creation of a residential school, determined the maximum enrolment for which it would pay financial support, approved churches’ nominations of principals and other staff, and inspected the schools to ensure they were observing the approved curriculum and looking after the children adequately. According to this official view, the churches recruited and nominated staff, supplemented government funds (which were never sufficient) with their own contributions, and provided day-to-day operation of the schools. The reality was depressingly different. Churches lobbied to get new schools approved and deficient schools maintained on the approved list. In effect, they selected their own academic and childcare staffs because government rarely disallowed a church’s suggestions. The result was that the missionary bodies were permitted to staff the classrooms with individuals who often did not have adequate—or, sometimes, any—pedagogical training. The most common rationale for this practice was that ‘a missionary spirit’ was more important than a teachers’ college certificate. The unstated additional reason was that those with ‘a missionary spirit’ were prepared to work for lower wages than academically trained and approved teachers were. Finally, the Department of Indian Affairs’
oversight duty was not adequately discharged, with the result that performance in both classroom instruction and childcare was often substandard. In a regime of shared responsibility, sometimes no one was properly in charge and responsible.

The other major complication with the schools’ administrative setup was that the separation of principal funding and operating responsibilities invited systematic underfunding and resulting negligence. Very soon after a formal system of custodial schools was established in the 1880s, the federal government became disillusioned with the institutions. It quickly became clear that the schools were not producing the results desired, that they were far more costly than anticipated, and that neither Native nor non-Native communities were well-disposed towards them. From the government’s point of view, the fact that those who completed their studies at residential schools had great difficulty securing employment in the mainstream economy was particular damning. The government responded to these disappointments in two ways, one of which had ominous implications for residential school students. In 1892 the Department of Indian Affairs initiated a long history of limiting government funding of the schools by shifting funding from an accountable costs basis to a per capita subsidy arrangement. A combination of per capita grants and government-controlled pupilage, the officially approved maximum enrolment, meant that Ottawa had powerful instruments to limit spending on schools. It employed those instruments to hold down its share of costs, and in times of difficulty such as world wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s the government could easily cut financial obligations by reducing the per capita grant. In times of inflation the government could similarly resist increasing the grant. The financial framework within which the schools operated guaranteed that there would be negative consequences that fell directly on the students.

When per capita grants from the Department of Indian Affairs declined in real terms, the missionary organisations that operated the residential schools had only a few choices. One avenue for seeking
relief was to raise more voluntary contributions from the churches of which they were a part, but over time enthusiasm for the missions and schools within Canada declined, particularly in the twentieth century. Another option, one that churches could and did implement, was to increase the ‘subsidy’ that students provided by extracting more labour from them to keep the school running and to raise funds through the sale of school-produced goods, principally agricultural products. Taking this route, however, courted the danger of impairing the students’ opportunities to learn their academic subjects and of creating a regime that wore on them physically. Another response that churches employed, particularly prior to the Great War, was to admit students whose health should have precluded them from attendance in order to keep student numbers up to the pupilage, or maximum approved enrolment. With the connivance of cooperative doctors and the willful blindness of government inspectors, tubercular students were admitted to the schools, with resulting health dangers for all. This course of action, regrettable as it was, was frequently taken. Finally, another institutional response was to reduce the amount of paid labour in the schools, especially in periods, such as the era of the Korean War, when inflation and heavy demand for workers made it hard to recruit missionary workers anyway. This response reduced the burden of operating expenses that the missionary bodies bore, but it exposed the students to grave dangers.

The combination of reductions in paid help and lax governmental oversight created an environment in which neglect and abuse flourished. It is these conditions that largely account for well-documented problems with student diet, deficient health care, poor clothing, and usually nonexistent recreational facilities. In such a setting it was all too easy for teachers and dormitory supervisors, often severely overworked themselves, to use severe corporal punishment on the students. When excessive discipline was combined, as it unfortunately all too often was, with evangelical messages that denigrated Aboriginal spirituality and identity, the result was young people whose identity, sense of self worth, and confidence were devastated. Finally, as is notorious in Canada, at least, the schools
also became host to a number of sexual predators who exploited their authority and the government and churches’ lax oversight to indulge their appetites. While a considerable portion of the sexual abuse for which Canada’s residential schools are now infamous was inflicted on students by older students, in all cases of such abuse the schools and their staffs bore responsibility. If the missionary organisations and government were not culpable for failing to screen staff carefully to eliminate such miscreants, they and their agents in the schools were liable for not providing adequate supervision that would have reduced the amount of student-on-student abuse as well. It is the problems of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools that have belatedly led to a governmental attempt at reconciliation.

For a number of easily understood reasons it took a long time for victims of residential school abuse to disclose what had happened to them. Some former students have explained that they could not tell their parents about sexual abuse in particular because sexual matters were never discussed in their homes. Conversation about such matters was not considered decent. Others have said that they feared to report what missionary workers had done because those school officials were viewed as ‘holy’ people by members of their community. Victims of physical abuse could and did, however, talk about their suffering, often with quick and decisive reaction from their community. A recurring pattern in the history of some individual schools was an initial positive response when a school was created, followed within a few years by resistance—mainly in the form of official protests and attempts to withhold their children—once the syndrome of overwork and physical mistreatment became known. Most First Nations were not opposed to schooling as such, but they were strongly against abusive pedagogy that victimised their children. Former students and their families protested physical mistreatment as and where they could, but sexual abuse remained for a long time a secret confined to the ranks of former students. As Phil Fontaine, at the time head of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, explained, when a group of former students got together to talk about their school experiences, “we end up joking and laughing about what we experienced. I think that’s
essentially a way of avoiding a sense of embarrassment and shame one feels. It's safe, face-saving; and it's really a form of protection.”

The conversation in which Chief Fontaine made those comments was part of a series of events in 1990 that blew the residential school abuse scandal—and many other results of government Indian policy—wide open. In the summer of that year a seventy-seven-day standoff between Mohawk and, first, provincial police and, later, Canadian armed forces, at Oka, Quebec cast a pitiless spotlight on the Canadian government’s handling of relations with First Nations. The Oka Crisis, as it became known, simultaneously threw the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney on the defensive and galvanised First Nations across the country to united action to protest what was happening at Oka and demand better treatment. The federal government responded with gestures of appeasement, such as easing restrictions on its land claims adjudication process, and also by promising to create a Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) to investigate federal policies and their impact. Chief Fontaine’s individual response was to meet with Christian church leaders in Winnipeg to disclose to them that he had been a victim of physical and sexual abuse at a Roman Catholic school in Manitoba, and to ask them to agree to a public inquiry into residential school abuse. As well, in the attendant publicity he revealed to a national television audience the same facts.

Fontaine’s disclosure guaranteed that residential school abuse would be one of the topics that the RCAP tackled between 1992 and 1996, but the wide-ranging nature of its mandate ensured that residential schooling and its problems would receive only minimal coverage. As newspaper reports at the time indicated, during several of the community hearings that the Commissioners held, former students came forward to testify that they had been abused by having their identity and beliefs ridiculed, by physical mistreatment, and sometimes by sexual abuse. The Commission’s Final Report included a lengthy, hard-hitting chapter on residential schools that highlighted the federal government’s failure to provide the oversight
and funding that would have ensured that students were properly
treated, and recommended that “the government of Canada establish
a public inquiry…”6 When the federal government eventually
responded to the RCAP Final Report in January 1998 with Gathering
Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan, it included a Statement of
Reconciliation. Indian Affairs minister Jane Stewart spoke directly to
victims of residential school abuse: “we wish to emphasise that what
you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened.
To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we
are deeply sorry.” She also announced the creation of a $350 million
Aboriginal Healing Fund. There was, however, no mention at all of a
public inquiry into residential schools, the policies that had underlain
them, or the consequences of those policies.7

Following the 1998 Statement of Reconciliation the trickle of
litigation over abuse in the schools turned into a flood. Former
students launched civil suits for damages in large numbers, alleging
that they had been the victims of physical and sexual abuse, general
neglect, and loss of culture and language. This litigation would
amount to some 13,400 individual suits by March 2005, and several
legal firms also initiated a series of class actions purporting to speak for
all students who had attended a specific school or, in one case, for all
former residential school students. The largest of these class actions,
known as the Baxter National Class Action, involved nineteen
legal firms claiming to represent 90,000 survivors across Canada and
seeking $12 billion. The class actions and individual suits combined
to put enormous pressure on both the churches and the federal
government.

The strain on the churches manifested itself in various parts of the
denominations’ structures. One common result was an enormous
increase in the demands for access to the churches’ and religious
orders’ archives, as litigating lawyers and their research assistants
sought documentation to support their claims. For the denominations
the financial burden of enhanced archival services and legal fees also
causd serious problems. By 2005 one Anglican diocese in British
Columbia declared bankruptcy and another in Saskatchewan reported itself on the brink of insolvency. Roman Catholics presented a unique case because of their church structure. The national governing body, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, pointed out that it and its predecessors had not run any residential schools, and referred potential litigants to religious orders such as the Oblates. The Oblates in turn found themselves extremely hard-pressed, especially in their western interior province, which had been the location of a large number of schools. Even more serious, of course, were the pains of conscience that church adherents from coast to coast felt.

The federal government's response went through several stages. Initially, the Government of Canada fought the legal actions by ‘third-partying’ (that is, cross-suing) the churches that had operated the schools. That phase, which consumed several years, culminated in court rulings that found both government and churches liable for damages, roughly in a ratio of 75:25 (government:churches). Two high-profile criminal prosecutions of abusers at the Gordon residential school in Saskatchewan and the Alberni residential school in British Columbia paved the way for settlement of claims with individuals from the two schools in which the convicted predators had worked. In cases where criminal convictions were secured the government paid out compensation to claimants fairly quickly, dealing with each survivor on a case by case basis.

Ottawa’s response entered a new phase in 2001, when the government established a new department, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC). Initially, the new agency carried on with litigation business as usual, but in 2003 it introduced an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programme intended to reduce the burden on the courts by resolving some of the pending cases by adjudication. The ADR model proved enormously complicated and unsuccessful. Under it claimants who were alleging physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or wrongful confinement could enter a voluntary process that was less formal than court procedures. One of the two categories within ADR, Model A, was designed to deal with sexual abuse and with physical
abuse that resulted in injuries lasting more than six weeks. Model B was for more minor cases of physical abuse, as well as wrongful confinement. Claims under ADR that were upheld would result in payments of 70% of the amount awarded by the government, leaving the claimant to seek the other 30% from the church body involved. (Students from a minority of schools—any Anglican- or Presbyterian-run institution, the Oblate Lejac Indian Residential School in northern British Columbia, or the boys’ or girls’ Catholic schools at Spanish, Ontario—who were successful would receive 100% of their award from the government under specially negotiated agreements.)

For a variety of reasons this mechanism never proved acceptable to Aboriginal people, or efficient for government and churches. Claimants under ADR faced a number of hurdles. They could claim only for physical and sexual abuse, and at first had to waive any future right to litigate separately for cultural loss. The application form for the process was a daunting thirty-eight pages in length. Offensive to many was the ‘meat chart’ that adjudicators were required to use in determining the amount of awards. Physical abuse that left a scar was worth ten points and repeated rape earned fifty points, and so on. The ADR scheme was expected to deal with only fifteen percent of claimants and cost $1.7 billion, with more going to administrators and adjudicators than to successful claimants. Finally, in recognition that the courts in different regions of the country had handled awards for damages differently, the ADR programme set different caps on settlements for various regions of the country. Successful claimants under ADR in British Columbia, Ontario, and Yukon would receive up to $245,000, but in all other jurisdictions the maximum was $195,000. These various challenges resulted in the ADR process being cumbersome, slow-moving, and politically controversial.

By 2004 the government, churches, Aboriginal political organisations, and leading lawyers involved in litigation began negotiating a proposed ‘blanket settlement’ potentially for all former students that became a major component of the Kelowna Accord that was signed in November 2005. Although the Kelowna Accord was repudiated
by the Conservative Harper government after its electoral victory in early 2006, the lengthening history of failed attempts at dealing with abuse claims and the advancing class action suits provided stimulus to seek a new, comprehensive settlement that would be more viable than the programmes the government had developed on its own. The Harper government appointed retired Supreme Court of Canada justice Frank Iacobucci to negotiate a pact with the federal government, legal representatives of former students, lawyers for the churches, the Assembly of First Nations (the national organisation for status Indians), and other Aboriginal political organisations.

The settlement reached in May 2006 was more wide-ranging and oriented towards reconciliation than any of the previous attempts at dealing with the legacy of residential schools. The most comprehensive element was a Common Experience Payment (CEP) for which all former students who could prove their attendance would receive $10,000 plus $3,000 for each year of residence after the first year. First Nations leader Phil Fontaine of the AFN maintained that this universal provision contained compensation for cultural loss, even though the government did not want to negotiate that specifically and did not acknowledge it in the agreement. In addition, those who experienced sexual or “serious physical abuse” could avail themselves of an Independent Assessment Process (IAP), an enhanced version of the adjudication system, that would deal with their claims over the next five years. “Compensation through the IAP will be paid at 100% by the Government in all cases, following validation of the claim by an independent adjudicator.” The settlement agreement had to be approved by courts in various regions of Canada, with an opt-out period of five months following court approval. “Since fewer than 5,000 eligible former students opted-out, the Settlement Agreement came into effect on 19 September 2007.”

The government had made interim payments to all former students sixty-five or older, and 10,333 of 11,646 claimants received an advance payment of $8,000 under this provision. After more controversy about a complicated and lengthy application form,
applications to the Common Experience Payment programme were accepted from 19 September 2007 on. As of 24 June 2008, 93,398 applications had been received, 83,515 processed (5,576 were reported “in progress,” and another 4,807 required “further information to complete”), 65,981 payments issued, and 17,534 applications rejected as ineligible. The average payout under the Common Experience Payment was expected to be approximately $29,000.

In many ways the non-monetary provisions (or at least expenditures not involving former students directly) were more interesting and more promising than the Common Experience Payments and the Independent Assessment Process. These other elements included a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, $20 million for “Commemoration” projects,” and “an additional endowment of $125 Million to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.” The agreement also specified that “The Church entities involved in the administration of Indian Residential Schools will contribute up to a total of $100 Million in cash and services toward healing initiatives.” Several of the churches had long before established programmes to assist with healing. Aboriginal leaders also requested that the federal government make a full and formal apology for the residential schools. When the Harper government initially signalled that it would not make an apology, it came under pressure in the House of Commons. After the Commons voted 257–0 to apologise to former residential school students, the Indian Affairs minister backtracked somewhat by saying that the government was not committing itself to make an apology until the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had completed its work. Pressure continued, however, and the Harper government yielded. The autumn 2007 Speech from the Throne, announced that the government would make an apology to residential school survivors.

During 2008 the Truth and Reconciliation has attracted the most attention—and hopes. According to the settlement agreement, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) would be set up with a budget of $60 million for a five-year mandate “to promote public
education and awareness about the Indian Residential School system and its legacy, as well as provide former students, their families and communities an opportunity to share their Indian Residential School experiences in a safe and culturally appropriate environment.”

The Commission, to be composed of three commissioners and support staff, would concentrate on two areas. “Over the course of its five year mandate, the TRC will prepare a comprehensive historical record on the policies and operations of the schools,” and leave as its legacy a “research centre… that will be a permanent resource for all Canadians on the Indian Residential School.” As well, the TRC will provide a platform for former students and others involved in residential schools to describe their experiences. “The Commission will host seven national events in different regions across Canada to promote awareness and public education about the Indian Residential School system and its impacts.” It would also arrange for people who appeared before it to speak to a commissioner in private if they so chose. The Commission “will be an opportunity for people to tell their stories about a significant part of Canadian history, still unknown to most Canadians.”

The initial appointments to the Commission promised a sensitive reception for informants who chose to appear before it. In late April 2008 Judge Harry LaForme of the Ontario Court of Appeal was announced as the Chief Commissioner, and in mid-May Jane Brewin Morley, a lawyer who served as an adjudicator under the earlier reconciliation process, and Claudette Dumont-Smith, a nurse with extensive experience in Aboriginal health matters, joined him to complete the trio of commissioners. Chief Commissioner LaForme insisted that the aim was not to assign blame, but to create a place for healing and public education. “I believe,” he said, “that if the commission does its work reliably, being faithful to its objectives, we will come out of the Indian residential-school experience enhanced and stronger.” The Commission is expected to begin its public hearings in the autumn of 2008 and complete them within two years. Other tasks such as compiling a history and supporting
commemoration events will be spread over the remainder of the TRC’s mandate. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission officially began work on 1 June.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologised for residential schools in the House of Commons on 11 June 2008. The government’s statement was comprehensive, specifying the types of abuse that had occurred, and stressed the government’s culpability for the damage done. All three opposition party leaders also spoke on the occasion, with Liberal leader Stephane Dion making the point that the Liberals, who had formed government for seventy years of the twentieth century, recognised their responsibility and acknowledged shared culpability for what had occurred. Representatives of the status First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and non-status Indian political organisations, as well as the president of the Native Women’s Association of Canada all were positive in their responses in the chamber, emphasising their appreciation of the apology and focusing on the future. In general, Canadians showed a surprising degree of awareness and approval of the government’s apology. A public opinion survey conducted by Innovative Research Group in the 11–13 June period revealed that 83 per cent of respondents were aware of the apology, and of those 71 per cent believed that the government should apologise. In the short term, at least, the residential school apology seemed to have contributed to the cause of reconciliation.

This latest phase of Canada’s lengthy struggle to deal with the troubling legacy of its Native residential schools shares a number of features with other countries, especially settler societies. Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa have all in different ways attempted to respond to the damage left behind by policies inflicted by non-indigenous minorities on indigenous majorities. Australia and New Zealand are, like Canada, true ‘settler’ societies, results of Britain’s overseas expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In those three dominions European minorities obtained economic and then political control, as their population growth and severe population decline among the indigenous peoples combined over time
to convert a non-indigenous minority into a majority. South Africa, of course, had a different colonial trajectory, with Dutch as well as Britons playing a role in the development of what eventually became South Africa. And, of course, South Africa is different from the other three because the indigenous majority remained a large majority, even though it lost economic and political control of its lands to the Europeans. Still, all four former British colonies—Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa—experienced oppression of the Aboriginal populations by the outsiders, including policies of attempted control and cultural change.

Australia in the 1980s, pushed strongly by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, began to contemplate some conciliatory gesture towards the indigenous population. The Labor government of Robert Hawke in the 1980s moved uncertainly towards reconciliation, but accomplished less than hoped owing to the resistance of non-indigenous Australians. Proponents of reconciliation began in this period to discuss anew the desirability of a treaty between indigenous and immigrant, a pact through which Aborigines for the first time would give their assent to the presence of Europeans and seek to pursue future development of their shared territory more cooperatively. Australia’s legal tradition of *terra nullius* had created a climate in which settlers assumed their usurpations were righteous and Aboriginal complaints ill-founded. Ominously, the National–Liberal coalition, headed by Opposition Leader John Howard, denounced the notion of a treaty. A National Sorry Day in May 1998 saw more than 300 events held across the country, but Howard, while his government gave permission for the Aboriginal flag to fly outside Parliament House on the Day, took no official part in the observances. At the end of the Hawke era in 1991, the principal achievements of his government on the reconciliation file were the establishment of the Aborigines and Torres Straits Islander Commission in 1989–1990 and the creation of a Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1991.

Through the first half of the 1990s the Labor government of Paul Keating contended with the same forces that had faced Hawke.
Now, however, support for the Aboriginal position was bolstered by a number of events. Indigenous territorial rights were strengthened judicially in the Mabo and Wik decisions, but the short-term impact of the High Court rulings was seriously reduced by Commonwealth legislation subsequent to them. As well, the release of the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991 and Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families in 1997 underlined the horrific impact of settler colonialism on indigenous peoples in Australia. Bringing Them Home called explicitly for a state apology and monetary compensation to victims (282, 284–293, and 302–313). The Keating government (1991–1996) not surprisingly focused on the complex legislative and federal-state relations issues that followed Mabo and Wik. All the same, indigenous peoples and sympathetic non-indigenous groups continued to argue for progress towards reconciliation.

Many of these forces came to a head in the 1996–2000 period, just after Keating and Labor had been succeeded by a National–Liberal Coalition government headed by John Howard. As Australia approached the centenary of its creation as a federal state, constitutional issues—including the question of adopting republicanism—came to the fore. Associated with plans for a referendum on removing the Crown was an effort to adopt a new preamble to the constitution that would address the place of indigenous peoples. In 1997, in the shadow of the Wik decision and Bringing Them Home, Howard had already signalled his distance from pro-reconciliation forces at a Reconciliation Convention in Melbourne. On that occasion the prime minister refused to offer an apology for wrongs on behalf of the country, emphasising instead what he termed “practical” measures for reconciliation. Many in the audience responded negatively to his position. The same clash of forces played out on national television three years later at Corroboree 2000, the culmination of the efforts of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. Again, Howard was at odds with the pro-reconciliation forces, refusing to use the word “sorry” to describe
his government’s position and avoiding all mention of a treaty-like agreement. At the heart of the difference was the prime minister’s interpretation of Australian history and the view of the Howard government that Australia’s indigenous peoples were client groups who needed, and deserved, assistance, rather than peoples who sought recognition and justice. Or, as Aboriginal leader Patrick Dodson put it, “‘Practical reconciliation’ became the government’s weasel worded mantra to discredit the inherent rights of Indigenous people” (26).\(^21\)

Not even a large demonstration of citizens’ good will in the form of a well-publicised walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge could cover up the fact that reconciliation had become a fiasco in the Howard years. It was, then, little surprise when Australia joined the United States, New Zealand, and Canada in refusing to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the autumn of 2007.\(^22\)

A thawing of the decade-long freeze on reconciliation in Australia began with the election of the Labor government led by Kevin Rudd late in 2007. The advent of the new ministry was heralded with a formal apology delivered by the prime minister at Parliament in Canberra in February 2008, and intimations of other possible actions to improve relations with Aborigines. What remains to be seen is whether or not the same forces that provided the electoral muscle of the Howard government, and that deterred both the Hawke and Keating governments from taking more positive action on aspects of reconciliation such as an apology, treaty, or indigenous land rights, have been reduced sufficiently to make real progress possible. The February 2008 apology was an important step. Ahead lie changing Australia’s position on the UN Declaration and moving towards concluding a treaty with Aborigines and Torres Straits Islanders.

The distinguished Australian historian Henry Reynolds has pointed out that this country has always harboured a minority settler group that struggled for justice and reconciliation (\textit{passim} but especially 245–251). Perhaps in the early twenty-first century that splinter is becoming more influential.
Although the Australian government’s apology appears broader in scope than the later Canadian one, in reality they are similar. Stephen Harper’s statement was specifically for damage done by residential schools, while Kevin Rudd’s was for a broad range of mistreatment of his country’s indigenous peoples. In other words, the Australian apology was for more than the harm done to the Stolen Generation. In Canada, however, residential schooling and its malign legacy have been amplified by the media and First Nations political leaders into the sole explanation of Native ills. In fact, of course, the social pathology found today in some Aboriginal populations in Canada is the result of more than a century of a broad range of policies that aimed—in addition to attempting to assimilate Native societies through their children—to control and limit their political leadership, limit their access to legal and political mechanisms for seeking redress (1927–1951), modify their land tenure and use, stifle Aboriginal spiritual observances, and for a time on the prairies limit their mobility. In other words, in Canada residential schooling has become ‘the silver bullet’ or ‘the black box’ that is said to explain all ills in Native society. For that reason, an apology for residential schools’ harm in Canada is analogous to the apparently broader apology offered in Australia.

The New Zealand case was dramatically different from both Australia and Canada. Native–newcomer, or Maori–pakeha, relations there had as their foundation the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi that covered the entire country and provided a framework for relations of all kinds. Like Crown–First Nations treaties in Canada, however, for a long time the Treaty of Waitangi was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The Maori had a long tradition of resistance and protest that had won them some political advances. In 1975, in response to another surge of Maori protest, the New Zealand parliament established the Waitangi Tribunal, made up of both Maori and pakeha representatives, to adjudicate disputes brought under the terms of the Treaty. The effectiveness of the body was greatly enhanced by a 1985 amendment that authorised the Tribunal to deal with claims that stretched back as far as 1840. As events unfolded,
the Tribunal’s jurisdiction expanded to a broad range of subjects, far beyond simply territorial issues. In a sense, the Waitangi Tribunal has become New Zealand’s forum for working out arrangements to promote reconciliation between indigenous and immigrant peoples. Following Tribunal decisions, contending parties often find themselves working out mutually acceptable solutions. So, the 1995 apology of Queen Elizabeth and the government to the Waikato–Tainau people for confiscation of their land followed negotiation of a settlement that included NZ$170 million in compensation subsequent to a Tribunal report on their claim. Similarly, the 1998 apology to the Ngai Thau was accompanied by NZ$172.5 in compensation following similar negotiations (Nobles 8–9).

South Africa, of course, experienced the most horrific abuse of Indigenous peoples by European newcomers, and arguably has made the most progress towards effective reconciliation. Certainly it has produced the most dramatic initiative in the field, with its Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Set up in 1995 under the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, the Commission held public hearings that led to the airing of the many sins of apartheid, and also the anti-apartheid groups such as the African National Congress and Inkhata Freedom Party that eventually reaped the fruits of political victory. It issued its final report in 1998. Although the Commission granted only 849 of the 5,392 applications for amnesty, its amnesty process was important. The incentive of gaining immunity from criminal prosecution led many perpetrators to disclose their deeds fully to the Commission, thereby increasing greatly the information on past wrongs that was available to both commissioners and families of victims (Tutu 180–181,192). While the South African TRC by no means resolved all the intercultural problems hanging over from the earlier oppressive regime, it did advance the process of national reconciliation and social healing dramatically, at least between Europeans and Africans. There is little doubt that it is the most successful example to-date of a national attempt at overcoming past wrongs.
One question that obviously arises from the varied experiences of South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada in searching for reconciliation is, ‘Why are there such sharp national differences?’ South Africa made rapid strides in a short period; New Zealand took a long time to make a breakthrough. Canada moved towards reconciliation led by some of its churches only a century and one-half after its colonial predecessor initiated a policy that aimed at assimilating Indians. Australia took almost as long to begin uncertainly. Clearly the explanation is not prolonged intercultural relations and acculturation of indigenous cultures to newcomer ways. Canada lags well behind South Africa and New Zealand, even though relations in the North American dominion go back more than four centuries. A more likely explanation is the demographic one. There is some correlation between the proportion of the total national population that the indigenous peoples constitute and success at reconciliation. South Africa is overwhelmingly indigenous and most advanced. New Zealand, whose population is approximately fifteen percent Maori, has also made substantial progress during the past three decades. Australia and Canada, whose Native populations are about two and one-half to three percent of the total, are well in the rear. The demographic hypothesis is at least a plausible theory worth exploring.

Personalities, or the actions of individuals, are important, too. The way in which John Howard’s government halted Australia’s uncertain steps towards reconciliation for a decade demonstrates this point clearly. Howard, no doubt, represented deeply seated forces—many of which had deterred Hawke and Keating’s governments earlier—but it is equally doubtless that his obstinacy and skill in rebuffing and deflecting pro-reconciliation forces played a significant role in Australia’s recent history. South Africa, in contrast, provides an illustration of forceful leadership from the top in support of reconciling former enemies. Both the former President F.W. de Klerk, who initiated the thaw in relations by entering into negotiations with African opponents, and Nelson Mandela, the first president of a post-apartheid South Africa, provided astounding examples of forgiveness.
and magnanimity, dramatically altered their nation’s course, advanced its peoples towards reconciliation, and helped to avert the bloodbath that most observers were certain would follow the defeat of apartheid.25

A factor in the willingness—or otherwise—of countries’ leaders to issue a state apology is the society’s understanding of its history as it relates to the transgressions for which an apology might be made. As a recent study of state apologies argues, such statements “validate reinterpretations of history by formally acknowledging past actions and judging them unjust.” They might also, the author argues, “strengthen history-centered explanations of minority disadvantage” and “advance reconsideration of the obligations and boundaries of membership in the national community (Nobles 71–72).” At least the first of these three propositions is relevant to the countries considered here.

In Canada, a traditional historiography, largely propagated by the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), that argued that Indian policy was benevolent and far-sighted, has been overthrown during the last quarter-century. Beginning in 1983 with an article by Dr. John Tobias of Red Deer College and in 1986 with a devastating critique of DIA policy between the 1880s and the 1930s from Dr. Brian Titley of the University of Lethbridge, a historiographical revolution quickly supplanted the old view and installed instead a new interpretation of state policy towards First Nations as miserly, insensitive, and ultimately gravely damaging. The revisionist view was capped and given an official face in the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996.26 A few lonely voices—most notably Political Scientist Thomas Flanagan—resisted what he termed this new “Aboriginal orthodoxy” (Flanagan 2000) but in academe in general and among historians in particular, it was ascendant. It is widely believed that Prime Minister Stephen Harper shares the interpretation propounded by Flanagan, who served as his campaign manager in the 2006 general election. Harper himself is reported to be a history ‘buff’ with a research interest in the history of ice hockey. If
Flanagan’s views on the history of Aboriginal peoples were influential with Harper, the Conservative leader chose to disregard them in favour of the dominant revisionist view when he agreed to issue an apology in June 2008.

In New Zealand, the Waitangi Tribunal itself has been the motive force leading to the production of a large, new historiography. Maori groups have sponsored a vast array of historical investigations in support of their claims. Needless to say, most of the historical studies placed before the Tribunal emphasise state wrongdoing and Maori victimhood. When the Tribunal hands down a report that endorses the claimant’s case, in effect it stamps its imprimatur on a view of history. In this manner the Tribunal has wittingly or otherwise generated a substantial revisionist literature that paints settler society, colonial administrations, and modern New Zealand governments in a negative light (Byrnes).

The Australian case confirms and complicates the argument that historical interpretation is central to the issuing of official apologies. A strongly revisionist history that censured Australia’s settler society emerged from the 1980s at the hands of scholars such as James Cook University’s Henry Reynolds and Griffiths University historian Lyndall Ryan. Unlike Canada and New Zealand, champions of a pro-settler interpretation of the nation’s past were more numerous and outspoken in Australia. What appears in retrospect to have been a warning shot across the bow of the revisionist historians came from respected University of Melbourne historian Geoffrey Blainey. In a public lecture in 1993, Blainey pointed out to his audience that he and his generation has grown up with a ‘Three Cheers view of history,’ which was now being challenged by what he termed “the Black Armband view” (qtd in Macintyre and Clark 128). If the distinguished Blainey was the small-calibre warning shot, independent scholar Keith Windschuttle was the heavy cannon, or perhaps blunderbuss. Beginning with a magazine article in 2000 and moving on to a series of volumes under the general heading The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Windschuttle attacked the methods, evidence,
conclusions, and characters of historians such as Reynolds and Ryan, whom he viewed as leaders of the black armband crew. Australia’s “history wars” were on.

Prime Minister John Winston Howard was an enthusiastic volunteer in the ranks of those opposed to “black armband history.” It was not that he held Australia’s history since the arrival of the First Fleet to be free of unfortunate events, but on the whole he thought that the good outweighed the bad. And he was inclined to hold some professional historians responsible for always talking about negative events. Speaking immediately after his coalition’s victory at the polls in 1996, he minced no words: “One of the more insidious developments in Australian political life over the past decade or so has been the attempt to rewrite Australian history in the service of a partisan political cause (qtd in Macintyre and Clark 1).” As he went on to demonstrate during his decade in office, that cause was not his. His answer to the problems of the past was not recognition in an apology to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, but “practical reconciliation.” His views of history profoundly influenced the positions he took on a variety of indigenous issues, including the reconciliation movement in general, during his prime ministry.

In Canada, where for good and ill, history is not taken as seriously as in its South Pacific Commonwealth cousins, there are encouraging signs that effective healing is beginning now. One indication is found in the experience of the United Church of Canada, the first of the country’s Christian denominations that began to make amends for its mistreatment of First Nations. Church leaders had apologised to Native peoples in 1986 for misguided missionary activities in general, and more specifically in 1998 for the damage that Methodist, Presbyterian, and then United Church schools had done. It began to be proud of some of the steps it had taken to heal the damage. It had created an All Native Circle Conference for Native congregations, established its own Healing Fund, begun to explore the integration of indigenous and Christian liturgy and symbols through a “Circle and Cross” process, and taken an active role in the talks among
government and various churches on how to respond to Native leaders’ demands. In August 2005 First Nations United Church representatives assembled again in the same parking lot at Laurentian University in Sudbury where they had heard the initial apology in 1986. Then they had responded, not with a declaration that they accepted the apology, but with an expression of “joyful” receipt of the gesture. A new Moderator, the Rev. Dr. Peter Short, offered the church’s apology again nineteen years later. In response “the various presbyteries and individuals each placed a stone on the cairn and explained why they were adding their stone.” It was because their Elders had deliberated and concluded that the United Church had made meaningful efforts to bring about reconciliation. As Moderator Short recalled the occasion, “several stones (‘grandfathers’) were mortared into place as a sign of significant steps that had been taken.”

Over the past two decades Canadians have travelled some distance along the road of reconciliation in an effort, belated perhaps, but an attempt all the same, to make amends for the damage inflicted by the residential schools that Euro-Canadians imposed on Natives. In common—though not in lockstep—with other states such as South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, the North American dominion is trying to advance towards meaningful reconciliation with indigenous peoples. If the forward movement continues, perhaps a new generation of Native adherents to the United Church of Canada will find reason to go to that parking lot in Sudbury and cap off that cairn with the last few stones.

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Bell, Catherine and David Kahane. 2004. *Intercultural Dispute Resolution in Aboriginal Contexts.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.


Notes


3The various apologies are usefully reproduced in Janet Bavelas *An Analysis of Formal Apologies by Canadian Churches to First Nations,* 20–25.

5Phil Fontaine, interviewed by Barbara Frum of CBC Television, 30
1622 (accessed 29 April 2008).

6Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, vol. one, Looking Forward,
Looking Back, 385. The Commission recommended that such a public
inquiry have the power to investigate school policies, the effects of
such policies on later generations, and “conduct public hearings to
enable the testimony of affected persons to be heard.” The author of
the RCAP chapter on residential schools was historian John Milloy of
Trent University.

7Government of Canada, Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal
Action Plan, (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1998), Statement of
Reconciliation.

8This waiver provision was removed very quickly, before the ADR
process got under way.

9Chief Fontaine explained this element of the agreement at a training
session for Independent Assessment Process adjudicators in Calgary
on 19 November 2007, and expanded on it in private conversation
following the public session with new adjudicators. Shawn Tupper,
who was a principal INAC figure in the residential school story
from November 1996 until late 2005, agreed with Chief Fontaine’s
contention. Interview with Shawn Tupper, Ottawa, 9 June 2008.

10Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada, “Settlement


12“Settlement Agreement Backgrounder.”

13Globe and Mail online, 27 March 2007 (accessed 27 March 2007)
(refusing an apology); Globe and Mail, 2 May 2007 (House of
Commons apology); and www.sft.gc.ca, Speech from the Throne, 16

14“Settlement Agreement Backgrounder.”

“Truth and Reconciliation Commission to Begin Work on June 1: Canada Announces Final Appointments,” www.irsr-rqpi.gc.ca, (15 May 2008); “Meet the TRC Chair and Commissioners.” www.trc-cvr.ca.en/index.html (accessed 23 June 2008). Ms Dumont-Smith, an Algonquin from Kitigan Zibi on the Upper Ottawa River, had lengthy experience working in the Aboriginal health field. Ms. Morley, a lawyer trained in Ontario but working largely in B.C., served from 1996–2001 as Chair of a panel appointed to recommend compensation for victims of sexual abuse at the Jericho School for the Deaf and Blind. In 2007 she joined the panel of adjudicators for the Independent Assessment Program that is part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Mr. LaForme, an Anicinabé, of course, is a lawyer and jurist.

Commissioner LaForme’s comment about not assigning blame was made in a telephone interview with CBC Saskatchewan radio’s host, Sheila Coles, on her morning show on 29 April 2008. The other comment was made at a press conference on 28 April, and reported in the Globe and Mail, 29 April 2008.

These comments are based on my observation of televised events in the House of Commons on 11 June 2008.

Globe and Mail, 14 June 2008.


Patrick Dodson had served on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and chaired the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation for six years (Dodson 338).
Earlier Canada had been a supporter of the Declaration, but with the election of a Conservative government in early 2006, Canada’s position changed.

Belich, 477–479. An overview of the Tribunal, including its procedures, is Love’s. Morris Te Whiti Love is the Director of the Waitangi Tribunal.

Ironically, though, the Tribunal’s Director notes, “There is considerable division in Maori society, and the treaty claim process, rightly or wrongly, shoulders much of the blame for this division.” (Love 146).

Tutu regarding de Klerk, 36–38; regarding Mandela, 39, 164. I am also indebted to my colleague, Bill Waiser, who pointed out the importance of Nelson Mandela in the South African story.

Stanley; Tobias; Titley; and Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, vol. 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back.


MacIntyre and Clarke 1, 120–123, 128–131, 138–139; Curthoys, Genovese and Reilly ix–xi.
30 United Church of Canada, “Moderator’s Message—A Letter on the 20th Anniversary of the Apology to First Nations,” (25 April 2008). In the United Church a ‘conference’ is a territorial designation. A conference includes a number of (usually) regional presbyteries, which in turn are made up of individual congregations. Its General Council, which sits atop the various conferences, is the church’s governing body for the country as a whole.

31 The first quotation is from “Letter from the Rev. Laverne Jacobs,” February 2006; the second from “Moderator’s Message—A Letter on the 20th Anniversary of the Apology to First Nations.”
The Unavoidable Shadow of Past Wars: Obsequies for Casualties of the Afghanistan Mission in Australia and Canada

There is an essential sameness in the purposes of the obsequies accorded members of the armed forces who die in wars in the service of their community. As Timothy Wolfe and Clifton Bryant remind us, the military funeral, “with its distinctive ceremonial characteristics and embellishments, serves to certify the deceased as a fallen warrior; it publicly legitimises the ultimate sacrifice, provides public announcement and celebration of the individual’s death, and memorialises the social fact of the soldier’s demise.” Most importantly, military obsequies are intended to ensure that “the memory of the fallen soldier is indelibly fixed in the collective consciousness of the society” (Wolfe and Bryant 170). By the same token, however, how a government chooses to memorialise those killed in war will inevitably reflect the politics and political culture of the community.

There is perhaps no better illustration of this than how members of the armed forces of Australia and Canada who have died in the stabilisation mission in Afghanistan have been commemorated by their respective communities. Between February 2002 and January 2009, eight members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and 108 members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) died in Afghanistan as a result of Australian and Canadian contributions to the American-led Operation Enduring Freedom or the NATO-run International Security Assistance Force. How these 116 casualties were treated by their governments, however, differed dramatically. While all
were accorded essentially similar ceremonies—a “ramp ceremony” in Afghanistan where the body was loaded into a transport, a “repatriation ceremony” held at the air force base at home, followed by a funeral service and interment—there were essential differences in how they were memorialised, and who was involved in the obsequies.

The celebration and memorialisation of Australians who died in Afghanistan were mostly public affairs, even though many funerals were open only to family and invited guests. These obsequies involved members of the government and opposition at the highest levels, who participated in what became a national memorialisation of the war dead. By contrast, in Canada the involvement of federal government officials was limited to just one part of the funerary process, a ceremony, moreover, that was largely kept out of the public eye. Importantly, the funerals of those Canadians who died in Afghanistan were essentially private affairs, even in the case of those funerals that were ‘open’ to the public; there was no funeral where both federal government and opposition leaders were present for the obsequies.

This article seeks to explain this difference. I examine how the eight Australians and 108 Canadians who died in Afghanistan between February 2002 and January 2009 were treated, demonstrating the differences in practice between the two countries. I conclude by suggesting that the way that the war dead are treated in these two countries is a reflection of how war and the armed forces are regarded in what John Blaxland has called “strategic cousins.” Following Blaxland, who explores the similarities and differences in military culture and force structure in both countries, I argue that in both cases the shadow of past wars plays a crucial role in shaping how the political elites in each community treat their contemporary casualties. In Australia, the armed forces occupy a central place in the mythology of the nation, in part a function of the Gallipoli landing in 1915 and how that event is memorialised in Australian political culture; in part a function of the 1942 Kokoda Track campaign against the Japanese;
and in part a function of the way in which Australians who served in the Vietnam War were treated in the 1960s and 1970s.

In Canada, war casts a completely different shadow. The deep divisions within Canadian society exposed by its expeditionary campaigns of the early part of the twentieth century had exceedingly long-term effects on politics, and affected how Canadians saw themselves and the relationship of their armed forces to the development of the political community. In particular, it can be argued that political elites in Canada have always had powerful reasons to avoid commemorating war, with the result that over the course of the twentieth century the armed forces were increasingly constructed by political leaders in ways that depreciated and diminished their war-fighting capacity. This, in turn, affected the ways in which political elites commemorate those Canadians who died in war. These different shadows of past wars, I suggest, account for the differences in practices between Australia and Canada by making the military obsequies we can observe in each country seem quite ‘natural’ to that country’s citizens.

**Australian Obsequies**

Of the eight Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, one died in February 2002 as a result of a landmine planted during the Soviet Union’s occupation in the 1980s; the others were killed between late 2007 and early 2009, three from improvised explosive devices (IEDs), three in combat, and one from a rocket attack. For seven of these soldiers, repatriation ceremonies were held at three Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) bases close to where the individual’s unit was headquartered; one repatriation ceremony was held at Melbourne airport. These ceremonies were attended primarily by members of the units to which the soldier had been attached and their commanding officers, together with the leadership of the Australian Defence Force. The chief of the Army was present for every repatriation; the chief of
the defence force and the minister for defence were present for all but two.

In only one of the eight cases did the next of kin insist on excluding dignitaries. Kylie Russell, spouse of Sgt. Andrew Russell, killed in 2002, decided that the repatriation ceremony at RAAF Base Pearce with full military honours provided the opportunity for the Army and his regiment to honour him, and that the family wanted “to say goodbye away from the public eye.”

In the other seven cases, the funerals were very much in the public eye (even though some funerals were not open to the public). The governor-general, Michael Jeffrey, attended one funeral as commander-in-chief of the ADF; the Governor of Queensland, Quentin Bryce, attended another. The funerals were attended by the ADF leadership—the chief of the defence force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, and the two chiefs of the Army during this period, Lieut.-Gen. Peter Leahy and Lieut.-Gen. Ken Gillespie, together with the commanding officers of the unit.

The federal leadership attended all seven funerals. Prime Minister John Howard was at the funerals of Trooper David Pearce in October 2007 and Sgt. Matthew Locke in November. After the Liberal/National Coalition was defeated in the 24 November 2007 elections, the new Australian Labor Party prime minister, Kevin Rudd, attended the funerals of Pte. Luke Worsley in December 2007, Lance-Corporal Jason Marks in May 2008, Signaller Sean McCarthy in July 2008, Lieut. Michael Fussell in December 2008, and Pte. Greg Sher in January 2009. The minister for defence was also present at four funerals, and was represented by a junior defence minister at the others.

Moreover, these were bipartisan ceremonies. When he was leader of the opposition, Rudd attended the funerals with Howard, including the funeral for Pearce, which occurred in the middle of the 2007 general election campaign. After Rudd became prime minister, he was joined by Brendan Nelson, who had taken over the leadership of
the Liberal/National Coalition, at the funerals of Worsley, Marks and McCarthy, and by Malcolm Turnbull, who succeeded Nelson as leader in September 2008, at the funerals of Fussell and Sher. Likewise, Joel Fitzgibbon, the ALP shadow minister for defence, attended the funerals before he became minister for defence in December.

The presence of this wide range of dignitaries transformed these obsequies into a very public memorialisation of Australian deaths in Afghanistan. Moreover, the involvement of the representatives of the Crown, and bipartisan nature of the appearance of both the prime minister and leader of the opposition, and ministers and shadow ministers made these funerals essentially national events—commemorations intended to be shared with and by the entire nation.

Fig. 1: Australian political leadership at military funeral.
At the military funeral of Trooper David Pearce in Brisbane, Prime Minister John Howard and leader of the opposition Kevin Rudd offer condolences to Pearce’s spouse Nicole. The Age, 18 October 2007. Photograph: Paul Harris.
Canadian Obsequies

Between 2002 and 31 January 2009, 108 members of the Canadian Armed Forces died in Afghanistan. Eight of the fatalities occurred between 2002 and 2005, but only three were caused by hostile fire: two from a landmine in October 2003, and one from a suicide bomber in January 2004. ‘Friendly fire’ killed four Canadians in April 2002, and one soldier died in an accident in November 2005. The major turning point occurred after the Liberal government of Paul Martin decided to contribute a battle group to Kandahar in 2005. Those troops took up position just as the Conservative government of Stephen Harper was taking office, and the number of casualties increased dramatically: 36 deaths in 2006, 30 in 2007, 32 in 2008, and two in January 2009. Of the 100 deaths between March 2006 and 31 January 2009, 86 were caused by hostile fire, many the result of roadside bombs or IEDs.³

Some general patterns in the obsequies for these casualties can be observed. First, with but one exception, political elites played a limited role in the memorialisation of Canada’s Afghanistan war dead: they were involved in the repatriation ceremonies held at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Trenton, but not the funerals or memorial services that followed. The exception involved the very first fatalities—four soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (3 PPCLI) killed by a bomb dropped on a Canadian formation by an American fighter at Tarnak Farm near Kandahar City on 17 April 2002.⁴ Prime Minister Chrétien, Art Eggleton, the minister of national defence, and the military leadership were present at the repatriation ceremony at CFB Trenton on 20 April. All four soldiers were given full military funerals, which were attended by a number of dignitaries. Nova Scotia premier John Hamm attended the funerals of Pte. Nathan Smith in Dartmouth and Pte. Richard Green in Hubbards, Nova Scotia. The governor general, Adrienne Clarkson, who had cut short a trip to London to visit soldiers wounded in the Tarnak Farm incident at Ramstein, Germany, attended Cpl. Ainsworth Dyer’s funeral in Toronto, which was also attended by the
premier of Ontario, Ernie Eves, and the minister of foreign affairs, Bill Graham. On 28 April, Clarkson, Chrétien, Gen. Ray Henault, the chief of defence staff, and Gen. John de Chastelain, the colonel of the regiment, joined more than 16,000 people in a memorial service held at the Skyreach Centre in Edmonton, where 3 PPCLI was based (Gregoire).

But the obsequies for the four soldiers killed at Tarnak Farm were unique. No comparable public ceremonials were held for any of the other 104 Canadians killed in Afghanistan down to 31 January 2009. The governor general did not make a further appearance at a funeral held for any of those killed in Afghanistan. Chrétien did not participate in the obsequies for any of the other three Canadians who died in Afghanistan during his prime ministership. Two Canadians were killed in Afghanistan during Paul Martin’s prime ministership: he attended the repatriation ceremony for Cpl. Jamie Murphy, killed by a suicide bomber in January 2004, but not the ceremony held for Pte. Braun Woodfield, who died when his LAV III was involved in an accident in November 2005.

Following the deployment to Kandahar in February 2006, the number of casualties increased dramatically. However, under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper, the involvement of federal dignitaries was limited to the repatriation ceremony alone. When two soldiers died in early March 2006 and one soldier was killed at the end of that month, Governor General Michaëlle Jean, who had been installed in September 2005, was present at the repatriation ceremonies at CFB Trenton along with Gordon O’Connor, the minister of national defence, Gen. Rick Hillier, chief of defence staff, and other general staff officers.

Because the number of casualties had an impact on public opinion, the Harper government tried to lower the visibility of casualties. First, Chrétien’s decision to lower the flag on the Peace Tower of the Parliament Buildings (and other government buildings) to half-mast whenever a soldier died in Afghanistan was rescinded. Second, when four soldiers were killed by a bomb in April 2006, the PMO sought
to try to limit the domestic political impact by trying to “manage”
the media. The media was banned from CFB Trenton, the ban
issued the day before the bodies were to be repatriated. Although
it was justified on the grounds that the families needed privacy to
grieve, it was widely interpreted as having been imposed so that
Canadians would not be exposed to the sight of flag-covered coffins
returning from Afghanistan. The governor general did not attend the
repatriation ceremony: the PMO had told her that “it was better if she
did not attend.”

These moves backfired badly. The half-masting decision drew
considerable criticism, since it was portrayed by some as a slight to
the sacrifice of the forces in Afghanistan. The media ban also aroused
strong opposition. Officials at National Defence Headquarters went
out of their way to signal to the media that they opposed the new
rules. At CFB Trenton, some officials purposely undermined the media
ban by moving equipment on the apron out of the way so that the
media gathered along the fence of the base had an unobstructed view
of the ceremony.

The families of the fallen soldiers were uniformly critical. The father
of Cpl. Paul Davis, who had been killed the month before, called the
ban “a terrible mistake,” noting that it had been a “beautiful moment”
when the governor general greeted his son’s body. At Cpl. Matthew
Dinning’s funeral, his father showed a video of the repatriation
ceremony taken by family members, introducing it with the words
“Now I’d like to show you some of the video that Mr Harper wouldn’t
let you see close up of Matthew’s arrival home.” Yet another father,
Tim Goddard, claimed at the funeral of his daughter, Capt. Nichola
Goddard, that he could see “no reason” for the ban, noting that he
“would like to think that Nich died to protect our freedoms, not
restrict them.”

The negative reaction of the families was mirrored by thousands of
critical emails, and condemnation not only from the opposition
parties but also from some government backbenchers. Much of the
criticism focused on how Harper was merely copying President George W. Bush’s efforts to control media coverage of fatalities returning from the war in Iraq. In the end, Harper backed down, amending the guidelines to allow the families to decide whether the media were to be allowed on the base for the repatriation ceremony.

After the summer of 2006, however, the obsequies for Canadians killed in Afghanistan assumed a certain routine. All the coffins were met by the defence minister and the chief of defence staff, together with other senior commanders. On numerous occasions, the commander-in-chief, Governor General Michaëlle Jean, attended the repatriation ceremony: she was there to meet 35 of the 91 fallen soldiers who were returned to Canada between July 2006 and January 2009.

Most of the funerals were held with military honours; most were closed to the media. Of the 104 funerals held between the four ‘friendly fire’ casualties in 2002 and January 2009, only twelve were attended by dignitaries. The lieutenant governors of British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador each attended two funerals; the lieutenant governors of Prince Edward Island, Québec and New Brunswick each went to one; provincial premiers attended four; members of provincial legislatures, mayors, or members of local town councils were also present at a number of ceremonies. Federal leaders, by contrast, were notable by their absence. Neither the prime minister nor the minister of national defence participated in any of the funerals held for the 100 Canadians killed between March 2006 and January 2009 (though two federal cabinet ministers from Québec attended funerals of soldiers in their own constituencies).

There were also a number of memorial services, usually held by the regiment. These were public, in the sense that they were open to the media and the community; however, on at least one occasion, the families of the soldiers specifically asked that government ministers and senior military officers not attend so that the service could be, as the families put it, a community memorial.
In addition, there were a number of informal community memorialisations. For example, in 2006, LCol Dave Anderson, commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (1 PPCLI), decided to deploy soldiers from his unit to Remembrance Day services across Canada in towns and cities where those who had died in Afghanistan were buried (Blatchford 334–348). Don Cherry, a commentator for CBC’s *Hockey Night in Canada*, regularly devoted a portion of his intermission show, “Coach’s Corner,” to those killed in Afghanistan. Some Canadians copied the American practice of wearing a red article of clothing on Fridays to demonstrate support for troops overseas, and organised Red Friday/Vendredi Rouge rallies. Perhaps the most visible community memorialisation evolved around the escorted convoys that took the bodies of soldiers from CFB Trenton down Ontario’s major motorway, Highway 401, to the coroner’s office in Toronto for autopsy: local police forces, fire services, ambulance services, veterans organisations and ordinary people took to lining the 172 km route to salute the passing hearses—a practice that prompted the Ontario government to designate that portion of the highway as the “Highway of Heroes” to honour the fallen troops.

There was no bipartisanship in the commemoration of those who died in Afghanistan. While all the opposition leaders—Stéphane Dion, the Liberal leader of the opposition from February 2006 to December 2008, and his successor Michael Ignatieff; Gilles Duceppe, leader of the Bloc Québécois; and Jack Layton, leader of the New Democratic Party—routinely issued statements of condolence on behalf of their parties whenever a CAF member died in Afghanistan, they were not involved in their funerary rites. No member of the opposition was involved in the repatriation ceremony—under any of the three prime ministers between 2002 and 2009. As far as can be determined, no opposition leader or national defence critic attended any of the funerals of those killed in Afghanistan. Nor were opposition leaders involved in what were billed as non-partisan “non-political” support-the-troops events like Red Friday rallies. Rather, the only
commemorative occasion in which opposition leaders were routinely involved was the annual Remembrance Day service.\textsuperscript{22}

In short, the contrast with Australia could not be more marked. In Canada, obsequies for those killed in Afghanistan were not designed to provide the political community as a whole to participate in the memorialisation of those who died in the service of their country. With the singular exception of the four ‘friendly fire’ deaths in 2002, the commemoration of Canada’s war dead in Afghanistan was structured to emphasise the private, the regimental or, on some occasions, the local.

**Explaining the Differences**

How to explain the differences between the way in which the national leadership in Australia and Canada commemorate those who died in Afghanistan? A logical place to start might be to focus on the most obvious difference: the much larger number of war dead in the Canadian case—108 Canadians versus eight Australians. Could it be that the difference in the number of casualties had an impact on how the war dead were memorialised—in other words, because there were fewer Australian casualties, the more attention they were given in commemoration? The numbers of casualties will have an obvious impact on the ability of the leadership to attend obsequies: at a certain point it would become physically impossible for the leadership to attend the funeral of every casualty. However, in the case of both Australian and Canadian casualties, the variation in the numbers alone does not explain the difference. In both countries, patterns of national leadership attendance at funerals for those killed on service overseas had been set well before the variation in numbers of casualties emerged in 2006.

In Australia, there were already precedents for treating some military funerals as national events. When two Black Hawk helicopters collided in Queensland in June 1996, killing eighteen members of the ADF, the memorial service was attended by the governor-general,
the prime minister, John Howard, the leader of the opposition, Kim Beazley, and many other federal and state dignitaries. Moreover, in the case of Australia’s operations in the Middle East, Howard had also established an important precedent. In April 2006, Australia’s first (and only) casualty in Iraq, Pte Jake Kovco, had died in his barracks as a result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Unfortunately for his family, the wrong remains were repatriated to Australia; when Kovco’s widow received the body of a Bosnian contractor, she angrily telephoned Howard directly. By all accounts, when Kovco’s remains were finally returned, the prime minister wanted to attend the military funeral to make amends for the error in repatriation. According to sources in the ADF, Howard was eager to pay his respects by attending subsequent military funerals, but even if he had not been so eager, the precedent set with Kovco’s funeral would have made it difficult not to attend subsequent funerals, even if Australian casualties had mounted to Canadian levels.

In Canada, a pattern had likewise emerged after the initial ‘friendly fire’ deaths in 2002, and was well established before casualties started mounting in 2006: the prime minister expressed his condolences, but did not attend any of the actual funerary ceremonies; the repatriation ceremony was attended by the minister of national defence, the CAF brass, and on occasion the governor general; opposition leaders were not formally involved in the obsequies. Importantly, that pattern did not change even as the number of fatalities increased. In short, the variation in the number of casualties does not appear to explain the difference.

Could the difference lie in how the war was seen in both countries? It might be surmised that one of the reasons why the political leadership in Canada has not appeared at military funerals is because the mission is not popular and the presence of politicians would be interpreted as an attempt to politicise the issue and increase support for the mission. The problem with this explanation is that the public opinion numbers in both Australia and Canada are virtually identical: in both countries, opinion about the mission is essentially divided, and has
not changed markedly in response to the number of Australians or Canadians killed in Afghanistan. In a Decima poll in April 2006, 45 per cent of Canadians polled approved the mission and 46 per cent were opposed. In February 2007, an Angus Reid poll showed that 46 per cent wanted Canadian troops brought home; by April 2007, after nine further fatalities, that number jumped to 52 per cent. As of May 2008, 54 per cent of Canadians opposed an extension of the mission. These figures mirror Australian attitudes almost exactly. An AC Nielsen poll in March 2006 found 45 per cent were in favour of the Australian mission, with 48 per cent opposed. A Lowy Institute poll in April 2007 found 46 per cent favoured the mission and 46 per cent were opposed. A University of Sydney poll released in October 2007 showed little change, with 50 per cent in favour and 46 per cent opposed.

Could the difference be explained by the positions of the political parties on the Afghanistan mission? While in Australia there is clear bipartisan support for the mission in Afghanistan—despite tepid public support—in Canada the positions of the opposition parties are more ambiguous. The Conservative party—and its predecessor, the Canadian Alliance—was in favour of the Afghanistan mission, both in opposition and in government. The New Democratic Party has consistently pressed for a withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Bloc Québécois is not in favour of the mission but has not pressed for an immediate withdrawal. The Liberal party is in an ambiguous position: it was a Liberal government that contributed forces to the original mission to oust the Taliban and it was a Liberal government that volunteered to contribute a battle group to Kandahar. On the other hand, in opposition after February 2006, not all Liberal MPs have been enthusiastically in favour of a continuation of the mission. The problem with this line of argument is that the Canadian pattern of not having the political leadership present in a bipartisan way had already been well established by the time that some of the ambiguity in the Liberal party’s position on Afghanistan emerged.
Could the difference lie in the different ways that politicians are viewed in each country? There is little doubt that if the prime minister and the leader of the opposition showed up at a funeral for a Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan, they would likely be accused of ‘playing politics’ with casualties. The same is not true in Australia: Australians appear to be generally entirely comfortable with the national leadership attending these funerals, and there were few suggestions that Howard or Rudd were ‘playing politics’ with Australia’s Afghan casualties. (Indeed, in Australia the national leadership was criticised when they did not show up for a military funeral: when Howard and Rudd could not attend the funeral of Capt. Mark Bingley, who died in a Black Hawk helicopter crash on HMAS Kanimbla off Fiji in November 2006, they were roundly criticised by the deputy mayor of Townsville.29)

In short, the differences cannot be attributed to a particular prime minister, or a particular government, or a particular party. The practices in each country outlined above were unchanging over time, and persisted despite changes of leadership and political party in both countries. In Australia, prime ministers from both political parties attended funerals; they were accompanied by leaders of the opposition from both parties. In Canada, three different prime ministers from two parties did not attend a single funeral, and leaders of opposition parties were nowhere to be found in commemorations.

A more fruitful explanation, I suggest, is to be found in how Australians and Canadians react to the practices outlined above. Australians appear to find it quite natural that their political leadership—the governor-general as commander-in-chief, the prime minister and leader of the opposition, ministers and shadow ministers, and the Australian Defence Force brass—would gather for a public commemoration of the war dead, even in the middle of a bitterly-fought general election campaign. By contrast, Canadians appear to be quite comfortable with the absence of their political elites at funerals and the absence of any bipartisan commemoration of the sort that is routine in Australia; indeed, one could reasonably hypothesise
that Canadians simply would not take kindly to efforts to turn funerals into something more *public* and *national*.

What might account for the ‘givenness’ of such divergent practices in the two countries? I argue that the answer lies in how war is historically seen in Australia and Canada, and what impact wars of the past have on contemporary political culture.

In Australia, the commemoration and celebration of the armed forces and the war dead are deeply embedded in national culture. This comes from the long-term effects of three wars and how those Australians who fought (and died) in those wars are commemorated: the Great War, the Second World War, and the Vietnam War. We must begin with the importance attached to the role of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) in the First World War—particularly the ill-fated landing on the Gallipoli peninsula on 25 April 1915 and the campaign that followed. Gallipoli cost 8,700 Australian and 2,700 New Zealand lives, but that “glorious defeat” is a deeply-entrenched “collective remembrance”\(^{30}\)—an event that almost since the campaign itself has been widely regarded by Australians as crucial in the creation and shaping of their nation (Blaxland 273).\(^{31}\) The dawn ceremony that marks the commemoration of ANZAC Day on 25 April is a *national* experience. Even though it is a holiday, huge numbers turn out each year well before dawn for what is an intensely *military* ceremony that celebrates the role of the armed forces in the creation of the nation. And because families now routinely take their children to these ceremonies, the annual ANZAC ceremonies socially reproduce this celebration of the armed forces.

The degree to which Gallipoli is entrenched in Australian culture can be seen in the large numbers of Australians who take what is in essence a pilgrimage to Anzac Cove (which under the terms of the 1923 Lausanne peace treaty with Turkey is a single war cemetery under the management of the Office of Australian War Graves): in 2002, 10,000 people attended the dawn ceremony on 25 April; by 2005, that number had grown to 17,000. A large tourist industry has grown to accommodate the demand, with considerable environmental
stress on the site itself. As Bruce Scates has argued, the pilgrimage plays an important role in how “the nation invents, and reinvents, a sense of community” (21).

An equally important celebration commemorates one campaign of the Second World War: the Kokoda Track campaign in Papua New Guinea. In 1942, Australian forces held off a Japanese overland advance towards Port Moresby in a series of battles fought along a 96 km single-file track crossing a mountain range (Ham 2005). This battle was only elevated to national prominence after 1992, when Paul Keating became the first Australian prime minister to visit the site on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary. Kneeling to kiss the ground where a memorial was located, Keating declared that there could be “no deeper spiritual basis for the meaning of the Australian nation than the blood that was spilled on this very plateau, in defence of Australia.” It may well be that, as Graeme Davison suggests, “there was more than a little political calculation in Keating’s use of history” (3) in this case. However, by this single action Keating had “baptised Kokoda as a new Gallipoli in national memory,” as Warren Snowdon (ALP: Lingiari) put it in the House of Representatives. Indeed, walking the Kokoda Track is increasingly being embraced as a pilgrimage comparable to Gallipoli: in 2001 just 76 individuals walked the track; in 2007, over 5,100 did so. In April 2006, when he was leader of the opposition, Kevin Rudd did a bipartisan walk with Joe Hockey, a Liberal member of Parliament. In January 2007, Rudd announced that the Track should rank with Gallipoli in the country’s military history, and promised that an ALP government would work with the PNG government to have the Track placed on UNESCO’s world heritage register.

Australian participation in the Vietnam War from 1962 until December 1972 also plays an important role in the contemporary celebration of the military—but in a paradoxical way. The Australian contribution to that war—which climbed to a strength of more than 7000 combat troops after 1965—grew to be intensely unpopular in Australia, particularly after conscription was introduced in 1964.
The unpopularity of the war manifested itself in a wave of antipathy towards the approximately 47,000 veterans who served in Vietnam. Many veterans from the Second World War spurned Vietnam veterans, and some RSL (Returned Services League of Australia—Returned and Services League as of 1990) branches made it clear that Vietnam-era veterans were not welcome. Certainly the national RSL refused to cooperate with the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia in the VVAA’s struggle for recognition and support. More importantly, on numerous occasions it was made clear that Vietnam veterans were not welcome to join in ANZAC Day ceremonies. The ALP was critical of the war—and of those who had fought in it. In Canberra, there was a period when soldiers were barred from wearing their uniforms—in order to prevent incidents (Ham 2007; Damousi chapter 7; Hiddlestone; McKay xv–xvii).

However, this ill-treatment had a paradoxical long-term effect: following the lead of American Vietnam veterans who organised “Welcome Home” parades long after the war, the VVAA organised a “Welcome Home” march in Sydney on 3 October 1987 that involved more than 25,000 veterans. Hundreds of thousands of Sydneysiders turned out to ‘welcome’ the veterans home—fifteen years after the last combat troops were withdrawn. This single event appears to have been a watershed, for it was after this that a Vietnam memorial was constructed on Anzac Parade in Canberra, dedicated in 1992, and rededicated in 2002. Moreover, Howard used the 40th anniversary of the battle of Long Tan in 1966 as the opportunity for the expression of a collective apology to the Vietnam veterans. Speaking to the House of Representatives, he said:

The sad fact is that those who served in Vietnam were not welcomed back as they should have been.... The nation collectively failed those men. They are owed our apologies and our regrets for that failure. The very least that we can do on this 40th anniversary is to acknowledge that fact... and to acknowledge the magnificent contribution that they have continued to make to our nation.
The efforts to reconstruct the Vietnam experience so that it conformed more closely to the historical tradition demonstrates the continuing long-term impact of the two world wars on political culture in Australia. It also suggests that one of the reasons why the war dead from Afghanistan receive truly national commemoration, despite the tepid support for the mission, is the remembrance of how the nation treated the Vietnam veterans.

In Canada, by contrast, war casts a completely different kind of shadow. During the formative years of the self-governing dominion in the late nineteenth century, English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians had fundamentally different views of the proper role of their country in global affairs. For English-speaking Canadians—the vast majority of whom had either been born in the United Kingdom or had family in Britain—fighting in the wars of the British Empire was entirely natural; French-speaking Canadians, who had had no connection to France after 1763, had a very different definition of interest. The wars of the early twentieth century—particularly the South African war of 1899–1902 and the Great War of 1914–1918—exposed these cleavages most unambiguously.

But it was the issue of conscription during the First World War that had the longest effect on Canadian politics. In 1917 the Conservative prime minister, Sir Robert Borden, decided that the best means of countering declines in voluntary enlistments was to introduce conscription, and invited the Liberals to join a Union coalition government for the duration of the war. The measure split the country along linguistic lines. Borden’s ministers from Québec opposed the measure, as did the Liberal leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, although some Liberals did join the Unionist government. The December 1917 election, fought over conscription, revealed the depth of the division: although Unionist candidates swept English Canada, they won just three of Québec’s 65 seats.

The 1917 election had exceedingly long-term electoral effects in Canada. Beginning in 1921, the Liberal party reaped a long and enduring harvest from Borden’s and Laurier’s decisions: for the
remainder of the twentieth century, the Conservative party was cast into the electoral wilderness in Québec, and the Liberal party became what in the 1980s and 1990s was widely described as Canada’s “natural governing party.” Over the course of the twentieth century, there were only three short interludes—1930–1935, 1957–1963, and 1984–1990—when the Conservatives were able to secure enough seats in Québec to form the government.

The key to the persistent electoral success of the Liberal party in the twentieth century was the ability to maintain the support of French-speaking Québécois. The prime minister, Mackenzie King, framed his foreign policy with an eye to the avoidance of committing Canada to any conflict that might reopen the cleavages of the Great War (Nossal, Roussel and Paquin 246–254, 294). Part of the isolationism of the interwar period was that the Liberals embraced what can be called an attitude of indifference towards the Canadian military as an institution important for the building of the nation. It is thus not at all surprising that during the interwar period the King government did not celebrate the armed forces as an institution that helped forge the nation in war. While the war dead were commemorated in Canada as in other countries, the commemoration tended to be local (Vance). And while King himself worked hard to erect a war memorial in central Ottawa to commemorate those who had died in the Great War (Gordon and Osborne), the federal government never put in place a pan-Canadian ceremonial celebration comparable to ANZAC Day; nor was there any comparable celebration of the contributions of the armed forces to the Canadian nation.

These historical habits had long-term consequences, affecting attitudes and practices towards the armed forces long after the conscription crises of the world wars had passed into history. After Lester B. Pearson, the foreign minister in the Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent, was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for his diplomacy during the Suez crisis of 1956, more and more Canadians came to the view that the primary mission of the armed forces was peacekeeping (Wagner; Maloney; Granatstein 1993), that Canadians
were an “unmilitary people,” (Stanley, George) and that Canada was a “peaceable kingdom” (Howard). This was accompanied by a progressive depreciation of the war-fighting abilities of the armed forces under the Liberal governments of both Lester Pearson and Pierre Elliott Trudeau—a trend continued under the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney. The dominant view was reflected most clearly in the name of the forces themselves, which allowed politicians and other elites to neatly strip the “Armed” from the name.  

In the first decade of the post-Cold War period, depreciation turned into denigration. J. L. Granatstein has argued that defence policy in the 1990s was marked by a series of “disasters” (2004a, xii). For others, the period 1993–2003 is widely known as the “decade of darkness,” a phrase popularised in 2007 by Gen. Rick Hillier, chief of defence staff. And indeed for the CAF, it was not a happy time. The Liberals did not return to office in November 1993 with a positive view of the military. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien’s first act was to cancel a military procurement agreed to by the Mulroney government—the purchase of EH–101 helicopters—for purely partisan reasons. The Chrétien government used cuts to the National Defence budget as the primary means of bringing federal finances into balance. But it was also clear from Chrétien’s words and actions that he had little sympathy for the military, openly questioning for example the arguments being made for re-equipping the armed forces (Bland; Granatstein 2004b). Importantly, the depreciation of armed force accelerated with the cuts to the military budget. One example was the Korean War memorial dedicated by Chrétien in 2003: it features an unarmed (and unhelmeted) soldier carrying a Korean girl and holding the hand of a Korean boy, giving little sense of what Canadian ground troops actually did in Korea. Another example was the way in which a firefight involving the CAF in the Medak Pocket in Yugoslavia in September 1993 went completely unremarked by the Chrétien government when it came to power in November—becoming, in Carol Off’s phrase, “Canada’s secret war.”
One of the reasons why the Chrétien Liberals had negative views of the military was because of the “Somalia Affair” and its aftermath (Bercuson). In March 1993, during a United Nations mission in Somalia, members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment tortured and killed Shidane Arone, a Somali teenager who had broken into the Canadian camp at Belet Huen. While the soldiers who killed Arone were arrested, the killing evolved into a major scandal over the course of 1993 as it became clearer that there were serious problems in the Airborne that senior officials in the Department of National Defence had sought to ignore, paper over, and then cover up. While in opposition, the Liberals had called for a public inquiry and eventually the Liberal government appointed a commission of inquiry in March 1995; later that year the regiment was disbanded. However, the Somalia Commission of Inquiry engaged in such a detailed investigation of the Department of National Defence that the Chrétien government decided to shut it down before the 1997 elections.

The Commission did not go quietly: its final report was a damning indictment of the Canadian military and particularly its leadership. Much of the scathing anger evident in the final report came from what the commissioners called the “wall of silence” that confronted them: “the testimony of witnesses was characterised by inconsistency, improbability, implausibility, evasiveness, selective recollection, half-truths, and plain lies.” The report pulled few punches:

> Evasion and deception, which in our view were apparent with many of the senior officers who testified before us, reveal much about the poor state of leadership in our armed forces and the careerist mentality that prevails at the Department of National Defence. These senior people come from an elite group in which our soldiers and Canadians generally are asked to place their trust and confidence.45
Such is not the stuff of which national celebration of an institution can readily be made, and it can be argued that the highly negative and widely-publicised views of the Somalia commission report played a powerful role in legitimising and entrenching the negative attitudes towards the military being displayed by governing elites in the 1990s. Public trust in the military was deeply affected by the scandal, the large number of resignations of senior officials notwithstanding. One measure of the poor regard of the public was that members of the armed forces were embarrassed to wear their uniforms. As Hillier admitted in 2007, after Somalia “we were disowned by our population.”

It is true that the “decade of darkness” came to an end with Chrétien’s retirement in December 2003; with Martin’s appointment of Hillier as CDS in February 2005; and with the election of the Conservatives under Stephen Harper in January 2006. However, there is still little of the bipartisanship towards the armed forces in Canada that one finds in Australia. For example, during the 2005–2006 election campaign, the Liberal party produced a campaign advertisement that sought to play to Canada’s putative ‘unmilitary’ nature by implying that a Conservative proposal to redeploy CAF units to different cities for handling natural disasters was in fact a nefarious plot to stage a coup.

In short, just as Blaxland has demonstrated the degree to which differences in military history between Australia and Canada have affected military culture more broadly in both countries (Blaxland, especially 259–264), the argument here is that the ways in which war and the role of the armed forces in the development of the two countries is remembered has important impacts on how those who have died in the service of their countries abroad are commemorated and memorialised.
Conclusion

For Australians, the repatriation of those who have fallen in the service of the nation provides an opportunity for the nation as a whole to mourn; the obsequies are very public, and the bipartisan attendance of the prime minister and the leader of the opposition at the funerals underscores the essential unity of the state’s commemoration of the fallen. For Canadians, the memorialisation of the war dead is much more private. The Canadian state—personified in the form of the governor general, the minister of national defence, and the CAF brass—meets the remains of the fallen as they are returned to Canada in a ceremony that is semi-public or semi-private depending on the wishes of the next of kin, but then passes the body to the family for obsequies that are essentially private, even if they involve full military honours. Neither the prime minister nor the leader of the opposition are involved in any of the commemorations.

These differences between the way that the armed forces in Australia and Canada are viewed and celebrated can best be explained by looking at the impact of earlier wars on the political culture of both countries. In Australia, the armed forces are widely commemorated as an institution crucial to the emergence of the nation as an independent community within the British Commonwealth and crucial to the defence of the country in the Second World War. The depth of the ANZAC legend helps us understand the paradox that it was the very ill-treatment of the Vietnam-era veterans which resulted in a strengthening of the national commemoration of the armed forces. In Canada, by contrast, war has historically been divisive, exposing the contradictions in a political community that has never been able to create a singular nationalism. I have suggested that the habits of the first half of the twentieth century have had long-term consequences: while the attitudes of ordinary Canadians towards their armed forces have been supportive, the shadow of past wars has meant that Canadian political elites are disinclined to celebrate the contribution of the armed forces to the nation.
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Works cited


Notes

1For the ramp ceremony of Canadian Trooper Darryl Caswell, killed on 11 June 2007, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=rS76hnhphG0; for the repatriation ceremony of Australian Trooper David Pearce, killed by an IED on 7 October 2007, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIqJGLsvZYs.


3Down to 31 January 2009, 56 were killed by IEDs, roadside bombs or landmines, 22 as a result of combat or other hostile fire, eleven by suicide bombers, ten in accidents, six from ‘friendly fire,’ and one from suicide. In two cases, the cause of death was classified as “non-combat related.”

4The pilot had ignored an order to “hold fire,” for which he was eventually disciplined (Friscolanti).

5When a submariner, Lt(N) Chris Saunders, was killed on 6 October 2004 as a result of a fire aboard HMCS Chicoutimi, Martin postponed a state visit to Europe so that he could be in Halifax for Saunders’s repatriation; Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, the minister of national defence, Bill Graham, and the premier of Nova Scotia, John Hamm, attended the funeral. Shawna Richer, “Farewell to a submariner,” Globe and Mail, 14 October 2004, A1.

6Martin did not attend the funeral of Glyn Berry, a Canadian diplomat killed by a suicide bomber in Afghanistan on 15 January 2006.

7Polls taken in early April showed that 46 per cent of Canadians were opposed to the Afghanistan mission. Angus Reid Global Monitor, 17 April 2006: www.angus-reid.com/polls/view/11588.

8After the ‘friendly fire’ deaths in 2002, Chrétien had waived the standard Heritage Canada rule that flags be half-masted only on Remembrance Day: www.pch.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/occasion_
Kim Richard Nossal

e.cfm; Joshua Errett, “Tories won’t lower flag for troop deaths,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 5 April 2006.


10Harper initially claimed that the idea was O’Connor’s; it was quickly revealed that the idea came from Sandra Buckler, Harper’s communications director, who suggested that a ban would generate “a week of bad publicity” and then be accepted as a fait accompli. Michael den Tandt, “Harper’s staff behind media ban, sources say,” *Globe and Mail*, 28 April 2006.


12“Military officials opposed repatriation media ban,” CTV.ca, 2 July 2006.


17Bush was criticised for trying to hide United States casualties in Iraq by banning coverage of repatriation ceremonies: “Curtains ordered for media coverage of returning coffins,” *Washington Post*, 21 October 2003. In fact, the ban had been imposed in 1991 by George H. W. Bush during the Gulf War. Under the so-called “Dover Ban,” the United States Department of Defense banned media from
photographing the coffins of war dead being repatriated at Dover AFB, although the ban had not been widely enforced until the Iraq war (Gran).

18 The families of Cpl. Robbie Beerenfenger and Sgt. Robert Short, killed in October 2003, requested that the service held at the Pembroke Memorial Centre on 7 October 2003 exclude government ministers and senior military officials; it was attended by approximately 3,000 soldiers and civilians. Stephen Harper, leader of the opposition, was present but took no part in the ceremonies.

19 For an illustrative example of one of these convoys, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbCg1uf6XB8.


22 This lack of bipartisanship is even evident in such ceremonies as the return of the unknown soldier in May 2000, or the dedication of the Korean War memorial in September 2003, when members of the opposition were conspicuous by their absence: www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=Memorials/tomb/ottawadirect4; www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2003/09/28/korean_tribute030928.html. By contrast, when the names of Australia’s Vietnam war dead were ‘entombed’ in a memorial in Canberra, both Paul Keating, the prime minister, and John Hewson, the leader of the opposition, gave addresses. Likewise, when the unknown soldier was returned to Australia in November 1993, both Keating and Hewson were pall-bearers. Tony Wright, “Goodbye to heroes of the forgotten war,” Sydney Morning Herald, 3 July 1992; Tony Wright, “Home at last, a soldier with no name,” Sydney Morning Herald, 12 November 1993, 1.
23 Tony Wright, “Nation’s leaders pay tribute to young warriors,” Sydney Morning Herald, 18 June 1996.

24 A military board of inquiry determined in December 2006 that Kovco had shot himself accidentally while engaged in “skylarking behaviour” with his service pistol—a finding confirmed by a subsequent coronial inquiry. “Skylarking all along, not suicide,” The Age, 3 April 2008.

25 One confidential source asserted that Howard was equally keen to be publicly associated with the ADF for political/electoral reasons, since the ADF tended to be drawn from a demographic that was the Coalition’s ‘heartland.’


28 In the early 1990s the Progressive Conservative party had fractured with the rise of the Reform party, a populist protest party in western Canada. However, throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the PCs and Reform (which became the Canadian Alliance in 2000) consistently split the conservative vote. In 2003, the two parties merged to become the Conservative Party of Canada.


30 As Winter and Sivan remind us, “Collective remembrance is public recollection. It is the act of gathering bits and pieces of the past, and
joining them together in public… Collective memory is constructed through the action of groups and individuals in the light of day.” (6). See also Mosse.

31As an iconic event, the “ANZAC Legend” is constantly being socially reproduced, with new histories making a periodic appearance: see Bean; Stanley, Peter; Carlyon. For an exploration of the social construction of Gallipoli in Australia, see the contributions in Macleod.

32When the Turkish government widened the roads to the site to accommodate the increasing numbers of tourists, significant damage was done to the local environment: see Australia, Senate, Finance and Public Administration Committee, Matters Relating to the Gallipoli Peninsula, 12 October 2005: http://202.14.81.230/Senate/committee/fapa_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004–07/gallipoli/index.htm.

33Known as both a track and a trail before the Second World War, American wartime reporting entrenched the use of “trail.” Kokoda Trail was the official name adopted by the Battles Nomenclature Committee in 1957, the New Guinea Place Names Commission in 1972, and the Australian War Memorial. Despite this, “track” remains the common nomenclature: access to the trail is regulated by the Kokoda Track Authority, and many Australians, including Howard and Rudd, and even the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, routinely refer to it as the Kokoda Track.

34Peter Hartcher, “PM pays homage to heroes with a kiss,” Sydney Morning Herald, 27 April 1992, 2. The kiss was a last-minute and spontaneous act; some in the prime minister’s entourage thought he was suffering a heart attack (Watson 181–184).


37CPD, Representatives, 17 August 2006, 41.
The term was from discussions of British politics in the 1970s (for example, Watkins 411). At first used by academics (for example, Black 141), the term gained wide currency in Canadian politics in the 1980s and 1990s.

Analyses of Canadian nationalism do not mention the military as a nation-building institution: for example, the contributions in Russell; Bashevkin; Resnick 207–220.

In 2003, 86 years after the battle for Vimy Ridge, the Chrétien government declared 9 April Vimy Ridge Day, to commemorate the Canadian attack that began on 9 April 1917. However, Vimy Ridge Day is not a national holiday and is not widely commemorated.

According to the National Defence Act, 1985, “The Canadian Forces are the armed forces of Her Majesty raised by Canada and consist of one Service called the Canadian Armed Forces.”

The phrase was first used by LGend Al DeQuetteville, former chief of the air staff, in an interview on 10 March 2003 to describe the unpredictability of the defence budget during this period. Joe Sharpe and Allan English, “The Decade of Darkness,” Report for the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, Kingston, July 2003. DeQuetteville’s phrase was later picked up and popularised by Hillier: see Mike Blanchfield, “Top general calls Liberal rule ‘decade of darkness,’”17 February 2007.


In September 1993, soldiers serving with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Yugoslavia engaged in a firefight with a Croatian army unit seeking to prevent UN troops from entering a Serb area in the Medak Pocket that was being ethnically cleansed by Croatian forces. Four Canadians were wounded in the battle, with 27 Croatian fatalities (Windsor; Off).


“Hillier’s appointment would fundamentally change the philosophy, the strategy, the organization, and the culture of the Canadian Forces. He would become the most important and influential CDS in living memory” (Stein and Lang 151).

The ad was posted to the Liberal party website. The English-language ad was immediately pulled, but a French-language version ran in Québec: www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060103/ELXN_liberal_attackads_060110/20060110/.
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