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Totem Poles, Teepees, and Token Traditions: 'Playing Indian' at Ontario Summer Camps, 1920–1955



In 1899 Pauline Johnson, famous 'Mohawk princess' and Aboriginal performer, paid a visit to the small northern Ontario town of Sundridge. As Johnson served up her fare of dramatic poems and recitations, one ten-year-old girl was particularly enthralled. Recounting the incident later in life, Mary S. Edgar, the young white girl in question, recalled, 'I was fascinated and wished I were related to her,' a longing only heightened by Johnson's later visit to the Edgar family home. Some twenty years later, little Mary's wish was, in one sense, granted. The summer of 1922 found the thirty-three-year-old Edgar the director of a newly established summer camp for girls. There she presided over the camp's Indian council ring, crafted her own Indian legends, and entertained campers in her wigwam-style cabin. On a visit to the camp sometime in the interwar years, Chief Mudjeekwis of the Rice Lake Ojibway extended the hand of friendship and bestowed on Edgar the honour of an 'Indian' name. Over the years, in her role as 'Ogimaqua,' Edgar, the white woman, would imaginatively weave herself and her campers into the family of 'Indians.'¹

In her fascination with all things Indian, Edgar was not alone. As least as early as the 1890s white audiences throughout Canada, the United States, and Britain thronged local halls and auditoriums to see and hear celebrities like Johnson, whose appearances fanned the flames of interest in the performing Indian. In the same period, North Americans crowded into the rodeos and Buffalo Bill shows that prominently featured Aboriginal performers. If, as with Edgar, this outsider fascination slipped into the desire for insider status, what most of these 'wannabee' Indians did with the impulse to 'go Native' is not well known. The story of Grey Owl's faux-Indian fame points in one direction, but it is unlikely that many took their enthusiasm to such extremes. For many who were not

1 Mary S. Edgar, 'Our Indebtedness to Our Indian Friends,' 72-007/5/16, Ontario Camping Association Papers [hereafter cited as OCA], Trent University Archives [hereafter cited as TUA]. Hereafter, the quotation marks around the term 'Indian' will be implied.

seeking wholesale changes of identity, playing Indian part-time would suffice.² Summer camp was one site in which this impulse could be readily indulged, a place where, it was understood, children learned to 'live like Indians during the camping season.'³

This article attempts to make sense of this curious cultural phenomenon, to place this cultural appropriation in a broad historical context. By exploring camps' Indian programming and representations of Native people in camp literature, it takes a critical look at the fascination with playing Indian. What becomes apparent is that the incorporation of so-called Indian traditions was part a broader anti-modernist impulse in twentieth-century Ontario. Like the summer camp phenomenon as a whole, it reflected middle-class unease with the pace and direction of cultural change, with a world that appeared to be irrevocably industrial, decidedly urban, and increasingly secular. As historian Leslie Paris has concluded in the American context, racial play-acting at summer camp was not a matter of respecting the experiences of racial minorities.⁴ So also at Ontario camps, 'going Native' had little to do with honouring (or even accurately portraying) Aboriginal tradition, but much to do with seeking a balm for the non-Native experience of modernity. Above all, at summer camp playing Indian reflected modern desire to create a sense

2 Bobby Bridger, *Buffalo Bill and Sitting Bull: Inventing the Wild West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 1992), 115–23, 142–3; Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Glen Mikkelsen, 'Indians and Rodeo,' *Alberta History* 34 (Winter 1986): 13–19; Cecilia Morgan, 'Aboriginal Travellers and Colonial Subjects? Pauline Johnson and John Brant-Sero in Imperial London, 1890s–1900s' (paper presented to the Conference of the Canadian Historical Association, Sherbrooke, June 1999); L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883–1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Keith Regular, 'On Public Display,' *Alberta History* 34, 1 (Winter 1986): 1–10; Donald B. Smith, *From the Land of Shadows: The Making of Grey Owl* (Saskatoon, SK: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990); Donald B. Smith, *Long Lance: The True Story of an Imposter* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982); Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

3 C.A.M. Edwards, *Taylor Statten* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1960), 88.

4 Independently, Paris and I have come to the similar conclusion that camps were shaped by simple life nostalgia, but also inextricably linked to the urban social worlds they claimed to be escaping. In addition to exploring racial play-acting in its Indian forms, Paris also traces the fascinating history of blackface minstrelsy at summer camp. Leslie Paris, 'Children's Nature: Summer Camps in New York State, 1919–1941' (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2000). See also Nancy Aleen Mykoff, 'A Jewish Season: Ethnic-American Culture at Children's Summer Camp (1918–1941)' (PhD diss., New York University, 2002), 89–96.

of belonging, community, and spiritual experience by modelling anti-modern images of Aboriginal life. These impulses point to a racialized expression of twentieth-century anti-modernism – one springing from adult experience, but articulating itself on the landscape of childhood. When playing Indian, children were offered the emotional outlet of intense experience not frequently promoted by modern child-rearing experts, and in contrast with camps' simultaneous preoccupation with order and control. In this paper I will explore the nature of this phenomenon, its multiple meanings, and its commercialization at camp. Briefly, I will also explore its impact on campers and some of its possible political implications.

The first camps in Ontario, founded by charitable organizations, private individuals, and the YMCA, appeared at the turn of the century, but before the First World War they served a limited clientele composed mainly of older boys. In the 1920s there were significant developments, including the appearance of girls' camps, camps for a broader age range of children, and the establishment of several private camps whose directors would become important leaders in the field of camping. By the 1930s, the impulse to take children of all sorts 'back to nature' spawned something of a camping movement, with the newly established Ontario Camping Association playing a prominent role. Its efforts to educate the public about the benefits of camp and its attempts to raise standards of the camps themselves, seem to have paid off. In the early 1950s *Saturday Night* magazine claimed that 'between 5 and 7 per cent of all Canadian children attend a summer camp,' while a *Financial Post* article quantified this at 150,000 children. If one considers that a majority of Canadian camping took place in Ontario – one journalist estimating roughly seventy per cent by 1960 – it would seem that the camp certainly had come of age by the end of this period.⁵

It is telling that the camps on which this study is based were of contrasting origins. Taken as a group, their founders were generally urban and middle-class, though as individuals they served sets of quite contrasting clientele. One set of camps formed what one might call the

5 On camp statistics, see Nancy Cleaver, 'An Old Canadian Custom: Sending the Kids to Camp,' *Saturday Night* 19 April 1952, 16; Peter Newman, 'Junior's \$10 Million Adventure in the Pines,' *Financial Post*, 5 June 1954, 5; 'Canada's Summer Indians Hit the Trail,' *Star Weekly Magazine*, 11 June, 1960, 3. On the early camp movement, see essays in Bruce W. Hodgins and Bernadine Dodge, eds. *Using Wilderness: Essays on the Evolution of Youth Camping in Ontario* (Peterborough, ON: Frost Centre for Canadian Heritage and Development Studies, 1992) and Ontario Camping Association, *Blue Lake and Rocky Shore: A History of Children's Camping in Ontario* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1984).

'elite' of the camping community: private, for-profit camps located in Muskoka, Algonquin, and Temagami, which catered to a well-to-do, upwardly mobile, middle- and upper-class clientele. At the other end of the spectrum were the 'fresh-air' camps: institutions run by churches, charities, and other non-profit organizations, which catered to the poorest sector of Ontario's working class. As a result of its prominence as the largest fresh-air camp in the province, Bolton Camp, situated just outside Toronto, was chosen as a case study of the fresh-air experience. Scattered across the province, Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) camps run by the Ontario Religious Education Council, by the YMCA, and by the provincially run counsellor-in-training Bark Lake Camp in Haliburton served a likely mixed clientele of middle-class and comfortable working-class origin. The children who attended these camps, whether rich, poor, male, or female, encountered strikingly similar recreations of so-called Indian tradition.

Playing Indian has most often been understood as a form of cultural appropriation, a practice that has been the source of intense debate among scholars, literary critics, journalists, and others. Hartmut Lutz, a German literary scholar, provides a useful explanation of the concept: 'What is at issue ... is the kind of appropriation which happens within a colonial structure, where one culture is dominant politically and economically over the other, and rules and exploits it It is a kind of appropriation that is selective ... and that is ahistorical in that it excludes from its discourse the historical context, especially, here, the history of Native–non-Native relations.'⁶ This is clear enough from other histories of 'playing Indian' – studies by Phillip Deloria and Shari Huhndorf among others – which show the phenomenon was clearly rooted in desires to fill the personal, social, and national aspirations of Whites. Deloria most effectively situates this phenomenon within the context of modern social and cultural change which put traditional identities and values in question and intensified the appeal of Native symbols, rituals and role playing. Other scholars argue that the appeal of playing Indian was heightened as time went on by the marginalization, displacement, even death of real Aboriginal peoples. With the latter posing a decreasing

6 Hartmut Lutz, 'Cultural Appropriation as a Process of Displacing Peoples and History,' *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 10 (1990): 167–82. See also Joanne Cardinal-Shubert, 'In the Red,' *Fuse* (Fall 1989): 20–8; Richard Hill, 'One Part Per Million: White Appropriation and Native Voices,' *Fuse* (Winter 1992): 12–22; Lee Maracle, 'Native Myths: Trickster Alive and Crowing,' *Fuse* (Fall 1989): 29–31.

threat to white society, negative images of Indians could now, more often, give way to positive ones.⁷

Though much useful analysis emerged from such studies, more explicit connection can yet be made between the phenomenon of 'playing Indian' and the broader context of twentieth-century modernity and anti-modernity. In the guiding work on the subject, Jackson Lears pinpointed anti-modernism's North American origins in the late nineteenth century. As a result of broad social changes wrought by industrialization, turn-of-the-century intellectuals, literati, and other members of the urban bourgeoisie suffered feelings of 'weightlessness' and 'over-civilization.' Their efforts to compensate, to replace 'weightlessness' with 'intense experience,' took many forms, from renewed fascination with 'the simple life,' to the arts and crafts movement, the revival of martial ideals, and explorations of medieval and Eastern mysticism. Scholars since Lears confirm that such responses were not a strictly American, nor Victorian, phenomenon. In early twentieth-century Nova Scotia similar quests for identity and meaning spawned what historian Ian McKay has termed a 'quest of The Folk' – a pre-modern incarnation of Nova Scotians, one that folklorists and cultural producers would claim as the region's true cultural core. Like the camp industry, this image had important economic implications, serving as the cultural myth that fuelled modern tourism in that province.⁸

The phenomenon of playing Indian at camp fits into, but also promises to enrich, previous understandings of anti-modernist sentiment. Like the cultural forms explored by Lears and McKay, it emerged as a

7 Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Huhndorf, *Going Native*. Also see Mark C. Carnes, 'Middle-class Men and the Solace of Fraternal Ritual,' in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, eds. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 37–52; Rayna Green, 'The Tribe Called Wannabee' *Folklore* 99 (July 1988): 30–57; Gillian Poulter, 'Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Visual Culture, Sport and Spectacle in the Construction of National Identity in Montreal, 1840–1885' (PhD diss., York University, 1999).

Also useful is Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978; New York: Vintage, 1979); and S. Elizabeth Bird, *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (Oxford: Westview, 1996). Of related interest is Ann McGrath, 'Playing Colonial: Cowgirls, Cowboys, and Indians in Australia and North America,' *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 2 (2001).

8 T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Ian McKay, *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

reaction to urban, industrial culture and represented yet another manifestation of middle-class longing for authentic experience and nostalgia for simpler times. 'Playing Indian' at camp also embodied other aspects of anti-modernism that deserve further attention. First, it reveals that anti-modern concerns expressed themselves powerfully in connection with children and the institution of childhood. Second, it points to the appeal of alternate forms of community, belonging, and pseudo-spiritual experience in an increasingly secular society. Third and finally, it sheds light on a clearly racialized dimension of this phenomenon. Unlike white Nova Scotians who sought to reshape their modern identity by isolating one piece of what many considered their own past, here we see white North Americans attempting to claim a piece of the Other's past – and significantly a colonialized and racialized Other – as their own. In so doing, they expressed anti-modernist sentiment of distinctly racialized form.

The backdrop for the emergence of this strain of anti-modernist sentiment was a province that had seen rapid cultural change. Though the notion of 'modernity' is a notoriously slippery concept, suffice it to say that Ontario was very much a modern entity by the interwar years. To a greater degree than any other Canadian province, it was capitalist, industrial, and distinctly urban. In 1921, when forty-seven per cent of all Canadians were urban dwellers, the number in Ontario was at almost sixty. By 1951, when the national average reached sixty-two per cent, in Ontario the figure was already ten per cent higher.⁹ Possibly more significant than the physical consequences of modernity was the shift in cultural consciousness that underlay them. At the broadest level, this entailed the unadulterated exaltation of reason and commitment to the rationalization of not only production, but ever-expanding realms of social life. In the realm of child psychology, professional experts preached the wonders of 'habit-training' by which children, no less than the tools of industry, could become efficient working machines. Interwar child-rearing experts agreed that what children needed was unbending and factory-like routine, not the emotional inconsistencies that marked traditional child-rearing. By rigid scheduling of the child's day, restrained shows of affection, and a reasoned rather than punitive approach, children would develop along healthy and predictable paths and grow into the reasonable, well-behaved citizens modern living demanded.¹⁰

9 'Urbanization,' *Canadian Encyclopedia* (Edmonton: Hurtig Press, 1988), 2235.

10 Katherine Arnup, *Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 84–116; Katherine Arnup, 'Raising the Dionne Quintuplets: Lessons for Modern Mothers,' *Journal of Canadian*

On the religious front, orthodoxies of other sorts came in for questioning. As Canadian religious scholars have pointed out, the interwar years and after were a time of instability and uncertainty for the Christian churches; according to Robert Wright, it was a period marked by 'considerable stress and fragmentation.' Traditional evangelical faith came under attack on several fronts. For one, the continuing spread of Biblical higher criticism – a scholarly practice that applied historical techniques to the study of the Bible – increasingly undermined the notion of the Bible as revealed truth and called into question one of evangelicalism's fundamental tenets. At a more popular level, international horror at the events of the First World War threw into question the optimism of the Social Gospellers. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the products of an expanding consumer culture – magazines, film, radio, and later, television – offered new avenues of self-fulfilment centred in the material and not the spiritual realm. In the wake of these combined challenges, congregations gradually thinned out, Protestantism fractured into its liberal-modernist and fundamentalist pieces, and evangelicalism no longer held full sway. Though Canada certainly envisioned itself as 'a Christian nation' well into the twentieth century, it would be fair to say that Christianity as religious experience functioned less and less as the unifying force it had been for nineteenth-century evangelicals.¹¹

Adults agreed they were not the only ones influenced by the changing cultural landscape. If modern expertise and professional advice promised to turn out well-adjusted children, other cultural developments seemed to threaten healthy child development. In camp literature, concern was expressed about the fact that, already in childhood, Canadians were becoming soft, habituated to technological comforts, and alienated from 'real' experience. 'Children today, especially in large cities, have little opportunity for really creative living,' one camp director lamented. 'Lights go on at a switch, heat comes when a knob is turned ... [and]

Studies 29 (Winter, 1994–95): 65–84; Cynthia Comacchio, *Nations Are Built of Babies: Saving Ontario's Mothers and Children* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Nora Lewis, 'Creating the Little Machine: Child-rearing in British Columbia, 1919–1939,' *BC Studies* 56 (Winter 1982–83): 44–60; Veronica Strong-Boag, 'Intruders in the Nursery: Childcare Professionals Reshape the Years One to Five, 1920–1940,' in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 160–78.

- 11 Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Robert A. Wright, 'The Canadian Protestant Tradition, 1914–1945,' in *The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1760–1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 139.

drama means sitting in the movies.¹² Given twentieth-century understandings of child development – and of the lasting import of early experiences – the impact of these modern conditions was felt to be especially worrying. With few countervailing influences, many feared children would grow into adults incapable of enjoying life's simpler pleasures or of appreciating the importance of physical exertion and hard work. If the notion of childhood had always implied a degree of protection for the young, under conditions of twentieth-century modernity, the notion that children needed protecting from the very culture that surrounded them would deepen. To be a modern North American parent would be to contemplate no end of worries about the possible negative influences of modern culture.

Primary among these worries was children's presumed vulnerability to the lure of consumer culture. Paradoxically, having put an end to the most extreme forms of child labour, middle-class observers now worried about the uses to which children's expanding leisure time would be put. Crime comics and pulp novels, movie theatres and youth dance halls all worried bourgeois onlookers, some of whom worked to prohibit or restrict access to such attractions. On the other hand, proponents of 'rational recreation' – another modern innovation – took a positive approach, offering wholesome entertainment alternatives at local YMCAs, community centres, and postwar teen canteens.¹³

Founders of summer camps took this critique one step further, suggesting that what children needed was a complete break with city life and experience with more natural living. In this way of thinking, they were heavily influenced by Ernest Thompson Seton and, to a lesser extent, G. Stanley Hall. The widely sought-after Seton was popular as a naturalist, artist, master storyteller, and founder of the League of Woodcraft Indians. Seton's critique of modernity was inseparable from a marked romanticization of Aboriginal culture, one instrumental in fuelling youthful interest in 'going Native.' 'Our civilization is a failure,' he commented on one occasion, while his writings on Indian lore conversely idealized 'Indian life' and encouraged Euro-North Americans –

12 Mary L. Northway, 'Tools for the Job,' *Parent Education Bulletin* 13 (1941): 6.

13 Cynthia Comacchio, 'Dancing to Perdition: Adolescence and Leisure in Interwar English Canada,' *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32 (1997): 5–35; David MacLeod, 'A Live Vaccine: The YMCA and Male Adolescence in the United States and Canada, 1870–1920,' *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 11 (May 1978): 5–25; Margaret Prang, 'The Girl God Would Have Me Be: The Canadian Girls in Training, 1915–1939,' *Canadian Historical Review* 66 (1985): 154–83; Mariana Valverde, 'Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender, and Generation in the City,' in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945–1980*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 19–45.

especially children – in its emulation. His instructional manuals like *The Red Book: Or, How To Play Indian* were widely read at camp (and elsewhere), while in the case of at least one camp, he was brought on as temporary staff. Less directly, camps were likely also influenced by theories of 'race capitulation' popularized by Victorian psychologist G. Stanley Hall. In Hall's view, boys in particular needed to indulge their savage tendencies in childhood so that they might, as the human race itself had ostensibly done, progress beyond them to civilized adulthood.¹⁴

Emerging from a culture of increasingly secular proportions, with anti-modern concerns over childhood and a penchant for 'playing Indian,' the camp offered itself as not only a physical escape from the city, but also – in its use of Indian programming – metaphoric release from the emotional confines of modern childhood. Here was a world, geographically removed from home and city, where the combination of newness and isolation offered the perfect backdrop for the construction of alternate identities. Indeed, as children first heard of the these camps – Temagami, Keewaydin, Ahmek, and so on – the foreign nature of the experience was announced. Arrival at camp quickly confirmed that it was one designed to usher youth out of the modern world and into the realm of the Indian past. As they first passed through gates that demarcated the boundary between the two worlds, campers frequently encountered camp names constructed from purportedly 'Indian' languages. One camp director's son recalled, 'All the popular camps of the day had Indian names.'¹⁵ Campers themselves were sometimes 'renamed,' with *Ojibwa*, *Algonquin*, *Cree*, and *Blackfoot* commonly marking their cabins or sections. Gazing about the grounds, children would quickly have noticed that not only names, but the material culture of camp – its teepees, totem poles, and sometimes whole 'Indian villages' – confirmed the Indian connection. At camps of all sorts, arts and crafts period saw children variously carving, painting, and constructing their own totem

14 H. Allen Anderson, *The Chief: Ernest Thompson Seton and the Changing West* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1986); Gail Bederman, "'Teaching Our Sons To Do What We Have Been Teaching the Savages To Avoid": G. Stanley Hall, Racial Recapitulation, and the Neurasthenic Paradox,' in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 95–110; Adele Ebbs, interview by Jack Pearse, 22 May 1986, 83-002/10/9, OCA Sound/Tape Collection, TUA; Edwards, *Taylor Statten*, 88; Jay Mechling, 'Playing Indian,' *Prospects* 5 (1980): 18–21; Brian Morris, 'Ernest Thompson Seton and the Origins of the Woodcraft Movement,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (1970): 183–94; John Henry Wadland, *Ernest Thompson Seton: Man in Nature and the Progressive Era, 1880–1915* (New York: Arno, 1978).

15 Bert Danson, 'The History of Camp Winnebago' (unpublished paper, 2000).

poles, teepees, and 'Indian heads.' As they went about their activities, children were reminded that the very earth on which they walked had once been 'Indian land.' This point was brought home in a special way to campers who thrilled at the chance to observe, listen, and learn from the Aboriginal staff employed at certain camps. Finally, campers would also have discovered the Indian council ring, set off geographically from the rest of camp. In this woodsy, chapel-like setting, 'young braves' would 'sit in solemn pageant' on their rough-hewn benches, awaiting the words of 'the chief' delivered from his sacred 'council rock.' Having been duly blanketed and face-painted, and sometimes in 'breech clouts,' these make-believe Indians would make use of everything from tom-toms and rattles to shields and headdresses.¹⁶

While camps offered surprisingly similar renditions of Indian programming, boys and girls also encountered distinct aspects of 'Indianness' at their respective camps. At boys' camps the Indian was frequently represented as bearing a kind of violent hyper-masculinity, a model deemed particularly fitting for male campers. In keeping with theories of 'race capitulation,' boys were encouraged to indulge their 'savage' impulses in games of 'scalping' and 'pioneers and Indians,' which, in one case, was happily reported to include 'blood-curdling yells' from 'fierce-visaged boys of ten.'¹⁷ Girl campers, on the other hand, were encouraged to emulate a very different sort of Indian. At their camps the emphasis on Native activities was on the development of artistic abilities, not on primitivist catharsis, with weaving and painting of 'Indian themes' being popular. Although sometimes providing campers with more independent models of girlhood, the tone of other Indian programming was also more appropriately feminine. For instance, a description of 'Indian day' at Camp Tanamakoon had no savage or primitivist overtones: '[The girls] had been in another world,' it was recounted, 'a world of quiet feet, gliding canoes and spirited dances.'¹⁸

16 Neighbourhood Workers' Association [hereafter cited as NWA], 'The Story of Bolton Camp,' in *After Twenty Years: A Short History of the Neighbourhood Workers Association* (Toronto: Family Services Association, 1938), 43, Family Services Association of Toronto Archival Collection [hereafter cited as FSATA]; Hedley S. Dimock and Charles E. Hendry, *Camping and Character: A Camp Experiment in Character Education* (New York: Association, 1929), 74; W.J. Eastaugh, *Indian Council Ring* (Camp Ahmek: Taylor Statten Camps, 1938); Camp Pine Crest, 'Report of Craft Activities,' 1951, 78-009/2/1, Camp Pine Crest Fonds, TUA.

17 NWA, *Annual Report: New Interests at Bolton Camp in 1935* (Toronto: NWA), 15, FSATA. On games of 'scalping,' references to 'scalps' (made of hemp rope) on display in council ring, and to Native 'tribes' as 'mortal enemies,' see Eastaugh, *Indian Council Ring*, 26, 31.

18 Mary G. Hamilton, *The Call of Algonquin: Biography of a Summer Camp* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1958), 149. Deloria has noted a similar gendering of the phenomenon in the

Broadly speaking, and whatever its gendered components, the summer camp experience was understood as a recreation of the Indian way of life. 'The Native Canadians ... were campers,' educator Mary Northway put it. 'In their small groups they lived a simple, outdoor life, striving against the elements and using natural resources to furnish their existence.'¹⁹ In this way of thinking, Indians were campers and campers were Indians. Nothing, it seemed, could be more 'Indian' than camping.

MEANINGS BEHIND THE MASKS

Indian programming was straightforwardly explained by administrators as having educational value. For them, building totem poles, painting teepees, and performing Indian rituals were ways to learn about, and express admiration for, the nation's Aboriginal heritage. Camp Ahmek literature boasted that the council ring's dances and dramas were based on actual 'historic ceremonies,' affording children 'much incidental historical understanding of primitive life and religion.'²⁰ At Glen Bernard, it was claimed, Mary Edgar instructed her campers to carefully consult the appropriate 'reference books' of North American Indians in choosing their own tribal names, songs, and yells. Camp names were sometimes chosen in a similar manner. Director Mary Hamilton conferred with a number of sources, including 'the library, Pauline Johnson's family, Ernest Thompson Seton, Indian people and authorities on Indian lore' before settling on the name of Tanamakoon.²¹

This strict attention to historical accuracy was, unfortunately, not the rule. Ironically, since praise of Indians had as its premise the presumably 'primitive,' even ageless, nature of their practices, so-called Indian culture at camp was sometimes quite literally made up. Perhaps the most familiar example is the use of simulated Indian names. If certain camps were careful to choose names that had real meanings in indigenous languages, many others were happy enough if the overall effect was an Indian tone. Thus were born institutions like the New Frencha Youth

American Camp Fire Girls, who used Indian programming to inculcate a domestic vision of womanhood. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 111–15. On the other hand, council ring also provided girls with the opportunity for public speaking, while the inducement to bravery that went along with acting like Indians may have subtly encouraged a more assertive model of womanhood.

19 Mary L. Northway, 'Canadian Camping: Its Foundation and Its Future' (paper presented to the Manitoba Camping Association Annual Meeting, May 1946), 1, 98-019/13/6, series E, Adele Ebbs Papers, TUA.

20 Dimock and Hendry, *Camping and Character*, 74–5.

21 Barbara Gilchrist, interview by Jack Pearse, 6 Nov. 1986, 83-002/5/8, OCA Sound/Tape collection, TUA; Hamilton, *Call of Algonquin*, 14.

camp and Camp Wanna-com-bak. Likewise 'Indian games' held during council ring – 'talk contests,' 'singing battles,' and marshmallow-eating contests²² – often bore little connection to Aboriginal cultures. Stories, no less than names and games, could also be creative fabrications. Recalling Mary Edgar's love of sharing 'Indian legends' with campers, her successor at Camp Glen Bernard admitted, 'How many of them were [from] her own fertile imagination and how many she [had] read about was a little hard to say.'²³ At Ahmek the invitation to invention was made quite explicit in the camp's Indian council ring handbook. 'Improv[e] and whenever possible invent an Indian story,' the author encouraged, 'to give the game more glamour.'²⁴ Suggestions for design of a 'medicine man' outfit in the same handbook went no further than to suggest, 'He should be dressed in some weird costume with many things trailing.' At Bolton it was admitted that campers made teepees out of 'discarded, leaky tents,' then painted them up 'in true Indian style, or what they conceived to be Indian style.'²⁵

Invention could also take more inadvertent forms, sometimes through careless blending of one Aboriginal tradition with another. All too often objects of Native material cultures were presented in utterly jumbled fashion. The desire to create an Indian atmosphere at Bolton, for instance, meant that the totem pole (a uniquely West Coast tradition) and the teepee (used only by Plains groups) could be displayed unproblematically side by side, with an Omaha 'tribal prayer' thrown in for good measure. Likewise, at Ahmek, council ring incorporated everything from the American 'Zuni Council Call,' the Plains Indians' 'Thirst Dance,' and the (apparently popular) Omaha tribal prayer. Ahmek's 'Indian village' showcased not only teepees and birchbark canoes, but also, somewhat inexplicably, a number of 'weird looking animals,' including a six-foot-long centipede. In such cases, camps were not penetrating the intricacies of Native history or culture; rather, like those of a long line of explorers, settlers, and academics before them, their images of Native people were based on a fantastical amalgam of Aboriginal traditions projected onto one mythic Indian Other, another version of the white man's Indian.²⁶

22 'Northway Recollection of Glen Bernard Camp,' 16 May 1982, 90-016/1/34, Northway Family Fonds – Additions, TUA; Northway, 'Canadian Camping.'

23 Gilchrist, interview by Pearse.

24 Eastaugh, *Indian Council Ring*, 12, 21.

25 NWA, *Annual Report: Fresh Air Report, Season of 1933* (Toronto: NWA), 7, FSATA.

26 Robert Berkhofer makes this argument on the writings of James Fenimore Cooper, but his landmark study also stands as a general history and critique of white creation of the undifferentiated 'Indian.' Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*. On Bolton's Indian programming, see NWA, *Annual Report: Bolton Camp, Report of Operation, 1937*

In all of these cases, the child's experience of this culture – and not its realistic depiction – was clearly the central concern, a point underscored in the following advice:

If you have no serious objection to a little subterfuge, it is possible to enliven your Indian program ... by 'discovering an Indian Burial Ground.' It can either just happen or you can make it known that this camp was once the home of such and such a tribe and that arrow heads, bits of pottery and other evidence has [sic] been found Please yourself how far you want to go with this kind of thing. Once started, the ball will continue to roll. Bones and all kinds of things will be brought to your attention for there's nothing excites a camper more than discovery.²⁷

If discovery excited children, if Indian ceremonies awed them, and if games of scalping allowed them to let off steam, Indian programming was a success. In contrast to the regimentation recommended by child-rearing experts, campers were sometimes (though by no means always) encouraged to be excitable and to indulge in imaginative and often passionate play.

Clearly, Indian programming was not really about honouring Aboriginal traditions, but it was not without purpose or meaning in the life of the camp. Like anti-modernists of earlier periods, camp enthusiasts were on the trail of intense experience, which Indian programming offered in abundance. Council ring, for instance, could function not merely as Saturday night entertainment, but also as the symbolic centre of camp. It was here that important visitors were introduced, here that opening and closing ceremonies were held, here that directorships sometimes formally changed hands. In effect, council ring offered the ritual, solemnity, and spirit of communalism that such events demanded and seemed to be lacking in modern life.

At many camps, this phenomenon was linked to the increasingly secular tone of the dominant culture. Certainly there were camps with strongly religious agendas in these years, those run by the Canadian Girls in Training and the YMCA being just two examples. And yet while camps of various types retained religious commitments and broadly 'Christian aims,' some camps now considered religion of dogmatic or evangelical form to be a potentially divisive force. For instance, while chapel services were held at both Camps Ahmek and Bolton, their literature also suggested that camp was 'no place for any high pressure evangelism,' and,

(Toronto: NWA), FSATA. On Ahmek, see Dimock and Hendry, *Camping and Character*, 73–5; 'The War Whoop,' *Canoe Lake Camp Echoes* 4 (June 1931): 53, Ronald H. Perry Fonds, TUA.

²⁷ Eastaugh, *Indian Council Ring*, 30.

for instance, that 'no camper has been known to change his religious faith at Bolton camp.'²⁸ Ahmek administrators were even more direct, openly criticizing 'the meagreness of conventional forms of religion,' their tendency to be 'excessively formal' and dependent on 'theological concepts and terminology [that are] meaningless to boys.'²⁹ In fact, before establishing Ahmek, director Taylor Statten had been deeply involved in YMCA work, but later made the telling remark before entering that realm, 'If anyone tries to talk to me about religion, I'll slug him and get out.'³⁰

At the same time, camp administrators continued to place value on the spiritual experience and on the power of shared rituals and beliefs. Indeed, part of the essential meaning of camp was that it was more than a collection of unconnected individuals; above all, it was a community. A common spiritual striving, broadly defined, was deemed invaluable in nurturing this sense of community, even at camps without a primarily religious focus. We see this at Ahmek where references to 'the value of persons,' the search for 'higher values,' and the indescribable 'camp spirit' suggested incorporation of a liberal, humanistic spirituality. Despite its distancing from institutional religion, this camp still ultimately claimed, 'To many counsellors and campers, Ahmek has been their one outstanding religious experience.' They were careful to add, however, that religion was a concept 'as flexible, changing and real as life itself.'³¹

From this perspective, the Indian appeared as the perfect adherent of 'natural' religion and the ideal model for camper emulation. When administrators referred to camps' more 'primitive Christianity' and to taking a 'genuinely indigenous approach' to spiritual values, such allusions were not coincidental.³² They pointed to popular readings of the Indian as the most simple and naturally spiritual of men, as Seton put it, 'a Christ-like figure,' and Longfellow, as having 'pure religion without hypocrisy.'³³ As these examples suggest, enthusiasm for Aboriginal culture and distaste for organized religion often went hand in hand.

28 NWA, *Annual Report: Camp as an Educational Opportunity, The Story of Bolton Camp for 1936* (Toronto: NWA), 12, FSATA; NWA, *Annual Report: Log of Bolton Camp, 1941*, 1, FSATA.

29 Hedley S. Dimock and Taylor Statten, *Talks to Counselors* (New York: Association Press, 1939), 77; Dimock and Hendry, *Camping and Character*, 138–9.

30 Edwards, *Taylor Statten*, 18.

31 Dimock and Hendry, *Camping and Character*, 141–2.

32 *Ibid.*, 129, 141–2.

33 Seton quoted in Mechling, 'Playing Indian,' 20. Longfellow quoted in Helen Carr, *Inventing the American Primitive: Politics, Gender and the Representation of Native American Literary Traditions, 1789–1936* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 135.

At many summer camps the council ring ceremony was the central vehicle for channelling experience of this 'pure religion' to urban campers. Through it, campers could immerse themselves in ritual that contained no reference to Christian theology, but rather offered an air of novel freshness. The ceremony was often a weekly or bi-weekly event, held after dark, and involving the entire camp. 'It has been used as a vehicle through which much sound teaching can be given without effusive moralizing,' a short history of Bolton Camp explained.³⁴ At the Statten camps the ceremonies were treated with equal seriousness. Only those who had actively participated, it was claimed, could 'know the deep meaning of such an hour.'³⁵ Discussions of council ring's physical layout point out similar understandings of its import. The area itself was treated as semi-sacred space, and the rituals it facilitated, as quasi-religious. 'The choice of a site for the Council Ring is important,' one handbook advised. 'Select an area reasonably remote from any buildings A flat space ... surrounded by trees will lend enchantment. Atmosphere is very important Find another site for the ordinary camp fires and wiener roasts.'³⁶ Without question, the backdrop of nature was deemed essential in creating the desired atmosphere. At Bolton, this was achieved by situating the ceremonies 'in a most appropriate forest setting,' while at Glen Bernard, Mary Edgar rejoiced in her discovery of 'the glen, a perfect amphitheatre for a Council Ring.'³⁷ According to this way of thinking, trees became markers of the borders of intimacy, rocks became symbolic altars to be used by presiding chiefs, and the wide open sky suggested the loftiness of the entire enterprise.

Organization of council ring proceedings points to further parallels with religious ritual, as well as that blend of catharsis and control, freedom and order that characterized the rest of the camp experience. The usual roster of activities included a dramatic fire-lighting ceremony followed by prayers to 'the gods,' some form of camper recitations or reports (often of nature sightings), 'Indian challenges' or contests, and a sombre closing ceremony. All was to be guided by a strict 'order of procedure,' in keeping with the belief that 'everything that is done at the council ring is deliberate,' or at it was put at Bark Lake Camp, 'everything on the programme is planned ahead.'³⁸ Creating the desired atmosphere also depended on knowing when to keep quiet and when to join in the

34 NWA, *After Twenty Years*, 43.

35 Dimock and Hendry, *Camping and Character*, 141.

36 Eastaugh, *Indian Council Ring*, 1.

37 NWA, *Annual Report: New Interests*, 8; Edgar, 'Our Indebtedness,' 2.

38 Eastaugh, *Indian Council Ring*, 7; 'Notes on Programme: Bark Lake,' 1948, 98-012/1/1, Ontario Camp Leadership Centre, Bark Lake Fonds, TUA.

noise-making. At certain points 'absolute silence' was considered something of an iron law, while at other times input from the 'braves' (like lay participation) was essential. As council ring's central organizing feature, the fire itself cannot be overlooked. Fire, which often holds a sacred place in religious ritual, here held pride of place, providing a circular and thus communal ordering to the ritual.

Before gaining entry to this sacred space, campers were expected to undergo transformation on several levels. If, broadly speaking, all of camp life reflected the desire to 'go Native,' it was at council ring ceremonies that campers were, in essence, 'born again' as Indians. The first step in this process was external change. Here nature itself helped, eliciting positive reference to the Indian appearance of sun-browned campers. Suntans were assumed to be one of the healthy by-products of a summer at camp, providing not only physical benefits, but also the psycho-spiritual advantages of 'going Native,' as both Deloria and Paris have shown. In the Ontario context, one mother and her children who returned from fresh-air camp were described as 'mortals from another world. The mother is browned by the kiss of summer winds And the children? They look like four little nut-brown papooses – as tough as nails – sparkling and effervescent.'³⁹ To compliment their Indian 'skins,' campers anticipating council ring were expected to take on Indian dress. At Bark Lake Camp it was stated, 'Campers dress up in blankets, towels, feathers and war paint,' while photo evidence suggests that 'dressing up Indian' was also the routine at other private, fresh-air and agency camps.⁴⁰

Other aspects of transformation were less visible, if no less real. Fundamentally, one was to be open to a new way of feeling and of experiencing the self. Sometimes this meant accepting a new Indian name, according to Ahmek literature, 'the highest honour that can be conferred upon [a] ... camper.'⁴¹ More than anything, however, it required a willingness to be transported metaphorically to another time and place, to enter into a new state of mind, and to open oneself up to mystical experience. Directors were reminded that 'convincing leadership' was 'key' to creating the right atmosphere to facilitate this change. They were

39 'Five Years of Drudgery Bring Proud, Brave Family to End of Their Resources,' *Toronto Daily Star*, 30 Aug. 1927, 21. Deloria and Paris also note the symbolic importance of tans in connecting campers with a 'pre-modern time zone.' Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 106; Paris, 'Children's Nature,' 243.

40 'Notes on Programme: Bark Lake,' 1948; Dimock and Hendry, *Camping and Character*, photo, 74; Bolton Camp photo albums, 1920s–1950s, FSATA. Camp Pine Crest, *Camp Pine Crest*, 1945, 78-009/2/4, Camp Pine Crest Fonds, TUA.

41 Dimock and Hendry, *Camping and Character*, 139–40.

also told that this required not only 'dress[ing] for the part,' but also that the chief himself 'become enchanted' and open to 'the emotional appeal of the Red man.'⁴² Judging from a description of council ring proceedings at Ahmek, director Taylor Statten apparently played his part well. 'Each week at camp seemed to await the Council Ring,' it was recalled.

One gathered a blanket and a flashlight and marched off to the Council Ring as an actor in a well-rehearsed play ... somehow, the austere and [pervasive] presence of the Chief transformed the play into a realistic re-enactment of all Indian ceremonies of all time. The twentieth century slipped away in the darkness and all evidences of modern civilization were ... somehow forgotten It was a shock returning from this other world in which we had all been participants ... and the validity of the experience was owing to the magnificent skill of the Chief. He was really THE CHIEF.⁴³

In this atmosphere, members of the camp community could find themselves emotionally stirred, personally connected, and perhaps even spiritually moved – experiences one might have expected of the nineteenth-century Methodist camp meeting or evangelical church service. Here, without explicit reference to religion, one could taste the beauty of ritual, embrace feelings of awe, and experience the power of the communal event. In this context, Aboriginal people were far from mind and one's own experience, the focal centrepiece.

At more religious camps, the gap between symbol and substance could be even more distinct, as directors were careful to direct council ring's spiritual potential to Christian ends. Perhaps fearing the pagan overtones of the ritual, administrators at CGIT camps demanded that girls attend in uniform (not Indian dress) and saw to it that bugles replaced Indian drums. Importantly, it was felt necessary to remind campers of the Christian meaning of the ritual, that, for instance, 'fire represents the spirit of the camp council, a spirit whose foundation, we hope, will be our loyalty to Jesus Christ.'⁴⁴ Still, these modifications aside, this adoption of the council ring ceremony only underscores the point that the ritual was widely appreciated for its spiritual uses. At the YMCA's Camp Pine Crest, which proudly declared itself 'a Christian camp,' administra-

42 Eastaugh, *Indian Council Ring*, 1.

43 A. Eustace Haydon, 'Memorial Talk Delivered to Camp Ahmek: Founders' Day,' 12 July 1959, in Donald Burry, 'A History of the Taylor Statten Camps' (master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1985), 27. Emphasis in original.

44 'Report of the Fifth Ontario Camp Council, 1931,' 15, file 3, box 30, file 3, 85.095C, United Church Archives/Victoria University Archives [hereafter cited as UCA/VUA].

tors in 1940 listed 'daily chapel talks, weekly church services [and] Indian council ceremonies' as 'provid[ing] boys with specific examples and ideas for Christian living.'⁴⁵ Apparently administrators of many camps agreed that children were most open to discussions of life's higher purposes in the natural yet solemn setting of council ring and, as one Christian camp manual put it, under the 'subtle spell of the fire.'⁴⁶

Playing Indian could engender experience; it could also inform identity at all manner of camps. As in the world of art, literature, and sport, proving one's connection to Indians was a surefire way to found a 'Canadian tradition' and to establish one's 'Canadian' roots.⁴⁷ To achieve this feat at camp, outdoor enthusiasts ignored their immigrant roots and constructed themselves – as those who chose to 'live like Indians' – as the figurative 'heirs' of Native tradition. This helped to confer a sense of belonging in a country where their presence was really quite recent, as historian Gillian Poulter has shown in other contexts. The first step involved casting Indians as historical actors in a far distant past. Director Mary Hamilton's account of Algonquin Park history is illustrative:

To the uninitiated the name of Algonquin spells Indian. One thinks of wise men of the forest who knew this country well and trapped and fished here in the days when all the wilderness of forest and stream belonged to them. These associations are true, but Algonquin Park is much more than an Indian hunting ground. It is an expanse of twenty-seven hundred square miles of forest It is a land that finds a place in history associated with the records of Champlain, it was the happy hunting ground of the Algonquin Indians In the days of Tom Thomson it became the gathering place for members of the Group of Seven.⁴⁸

Clearly, there was tension here between giving the Aboriginal peoples their due and the construction of a narrative that assumed their eventual

45 Camp Pine Crest, *Annual Report, 1940*, 78-009/2/1, Camp Pine Crest Fonds, TUA.

46 W.A. Milks, ed., *The Camp Director's Manual* (n.p.: Ontario Boys' Work Board, n.d.), 21-2; Helen E. D'Avignon, 'Planning the Rally for Camp Promotion,' *Torch* 1 (May/June 1925): 70; 'Ontario Leadership Camp, 1927,' file 3, box 31, 85.095C, CGIT Collection, UCA/VUA.

47 Douglas Cole, 'The Invented Indian/The Imagined Emily,' *BC Studies* 125/126 (Spring/Summer 2000): 147-62; Francis, *Imaginary Indian*, 190; Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Gerta Moray, 'Wilderness, Modernity and Aboriginality in the Paintings of Emily Carr,' *Journal of Canadian Studies* 33, 2 (Summer 1998): 1-23; Poulter, 'Becoming Native in a Foreign Land.'

48 Hamilton, *Call of Algonquin*, 4.

irrelevance. The same tone marked Mary Edgar's prompting to past campers: 'We need often to remind ourselves that this country which we proudly call "this land of ours" once belonged to the Indians,' that, 'it was the smoke from their camp-fires which first ascended to the sky.'⁴⁹ Clearly, camps had much in common with the salvage anthropologist who lamented, but also assumed the inevitability of, the Indian's cultural demise.⁵⁰ From this perspective, Indians were those of strictly pre-contact innocence. Any cultural change or adaptation on their part was read simply as decay. 'Real Indians,' so it was understood, were no longer a people who 'lived among us' or who had a place in the modern world.

Having rendered contemporary Aboriginal peoples virtually invisible, white campers could now step in to fill the void as their remaining heirs. In doing so, they distinguished between themselves – true lovers of nature – from less-enlightened elements of their society. In a 1931 article, parallels were drawn between campers and early Aboriginal peoples. The author suggests that, like 'the redmen' of the past, it is now 'the new dwellers of the out-of-doors' who are being 'pushed further and further afield.' The enemies now are not from the east, but annoying cottagers from the south who 'bring with them their city habits and customs.' These philistines are described as 'inane bands of jazz-makers [who] violate the silence of the night,' who bring 'hot dog stands and shabby food "joints"' to the wilderness, and ultimately, as 'idolaters in the temple of the Great Spirit.'⁵¹ By contrast, camps painted themselves as respectful followers of Indian ways, inheritors of Native traditions and practices. In their use of the Aboriginal tumpline – a heavy leather strap that was tied around goods, then around the forehead of the hiker – Camp Keewaydin considered itself to be 'the custodian of ancient practices and devices long since discarded elsewhere.'⁵² At Bolton, campers who fished, tented, and chopped wood were depicted as receiving 'instruction in skills of the historic past,' while CGIT campers were said to be learning to live 'as did their Indian brothers and sisters.'⁵³

49 Edgar, 'Our Indebtedness,' 2.

50 For examples, see Peter Kulchyski, 'Anthropology in the Service of the State: Diamond Jenness and Canadian Indian Policy,' *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28 (Summer 1993): 21–50; Andrew Nurse, "'But now things have changed": Marius Barbeau and the Politics of Amerindian Identity,' *Ethnohistory* 48 (2001): 433–72.

51 'Change,' *Canoe Lake Camp Echoes* 4 (June 1931): 18, 82-016/2/8, Ronald H. Perry Fonds, TUA.

52 Brian Back, *The Keewaydin Way: A Portrait, 1893–1983* (Temagami: Keewaydin Camp, 1983), 37.

53 'Pale-faced City Tikes Taught Indian Lore by Expert Woodsmen,' *Toronto Daily Star*, 7 June 1950, 25; 'Calling All Campers,' *Canadian Girls in Training Newsletter*, 1952, file 4, box 39, 85.095C, UCA/VUA.

Ultimately, if campers were the children of these earlier Aboriginal siblings, their role as inhabitants of Indian land – the entire country, of course – could be regarded as only natural. They were legitimate ‘Canadians,’ and this was their home.

Such re-tellings, borrowings, and inventions were the base elements of camps’ Indian programming. They suggest that the history of playing Indian is not only one of longing, but also of privilege. Clearly, dramatic re-inventions of campers as Indians merely emphasized the shared whiteness of the actors under the paint, to their freedom in taking ‘Indianness’ on and off at will. Indeed, it was precisely because they felt so deeply assured of their status as ‘white’ that they could play at being, and long to be, Indian. Camp enthusiasts were not seeking a true change of status, but a revised, more pleasing image of their own racial character. Through their role as summer campers, lovers of the outdoors claimed an identity that was vaguely countercultural but, at the same time, still clearly white. One would be hard pressed to argue, for instance, that playing Indian was a truly progressive form of ‘transgression’ – that it inverted and thus challenged the social status quo – even if it contained some carnivalesque features. As most scholars of American minstrel performances agree, when whites put on other racial faces, they were not making attempts at accurate representations of the Other or at honouring the experience of subaltern cultures. On the other hand, neither should their acts be read as simple denigration, since they also revealed a certain ambivalence towards racial Others. This included a privileged longing to experience racialized ways of being and acting normally deemed unacceptable within the dominant culture. As Stallybrass and White explain, what is cast by the socially powerful as ‘low-Other’ is constantly ‘both reviled and desired.’⁵⁴

Playing Indian at camp, like ‘blackening up,’ represented a similar white, middle-class, and privileged longing to identify with the socially marginal, the ‘low-Other’ of Canadian society. Like the Setons and the Grey Owls they resembled, camp enthusiasts sought from Aboriginal peoples a connection to a time of pre-modern simplicity, a golden age of social harmony and calm. These idealized figures operated much as did the pre-industrial Folk in modern Nova Scotia, who, in McKay’s words,

54 Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 4. On blackface, see Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991), 115–32; Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).

were 'less people in their own right and more incarnations of a certain philosophy of history.'⁵⁵ In the context of the summer camp, Aboriginal peoples were seen as living the enviable simple life, and whites as those impoverished by modernity's flow. Indeed, at camp, anti-modernist tendencies were frequently expressed in racialized terms, with a simple, if unarticulated, equation undergirding common thinking on the question. Quite simply, white equalled 'modern,' and 'Indian,' 'pre-modern' or 'primitive.' Re-articulating much older primitivist tendencies in Western culture, twentieth-century camps in this way also fuelled their own unique version of primitivism.⁵⁶ From this perspective Indians were regarded as the quintessential primitives, identification with them as a way of distancing campers from distasteful elements of mainstream society. Note this description of the Aboriginal worker at Camp Keewaydin: 'The guide's values were different from those of a white middle- or upper-class young man,' it was explained. '[He] had no schooling but had been educated by Nature and life.'⁵⁷

Admiration for this proximity to nature was coupled with romanticization of the Indian's presumed distance from modernity. The *Toronto Star's* reading of the camp project at Bolton explained, 'City children ... will learn there were no department stores, super-markets or Saturday matinees for the Indians.'⁵⁸ Where Aboriginal guides were employed, they were similarly praised for their total lack of implication in the culture of consumption. Keewaydin's camp historian claimed of their Native workers, 'The early guide never owned an automobile. He owned a canoe. With it, he earned his livelihood, hunted ... and engaged in any leisure activity.'⁵⁹ The Indian, then, was one who did not rely on the comforts of mass culture, but who instead accepted the challenge of real physical work. As Terry Goldie has noted in the context of colonial literatures, the canoe was not regarded as technology at all, nor Indians as users of technology, a view that helped confirm their status as pre-modern.⁶⁰ If, like most stereotypes, this notion of the Indian as living at

55 McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, 12.

56 On Western primitivism, see Bederman, 'Teaching Our Sons,' 112-17; Carr, *Inventing the American Primitive*; Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion* (London: Routledge, 1988); Julian Stallabrass, 'The Idea of the Primitive: British Art and Anthropology 1918-1930,' *New Left Review* 183 (Fall 1990): 95-115; Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

57 Back, *Keewaydin Way*, 142.

58 'Pale-faced City Tikes Taught Indian Lore,' 25.

59 Back, *Keewaydin Way*, 141.

60 Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 21.

a distance from the modern world had some foundation in reality, it also ignored modernity's very real impacts on Aboriginal cultures and encouraged essentialist thinking that cast certain groups as something other than 'real Indians.'

Paralleling campers' praise for the idealized Indian was a mock derision and scorn for 'the white Man.' In keeping with earlier primitivist tendencies, those who glorified the Indian also offered a social critique of their own society, however limited. In the case of playing Indian, this manifested as a semi-serious attack on 'whiteness,' otherwise understood as symbol for implication in modernity. This critique took both implicit and explicit forms. Beyond the image of the hardy guide lingered the counter-image of the white man, living an alienated, compartmentalized, and ultimately unsatisfying existence. Behind praise for the Indian's 'natural' training was criticism of the dry formality of institutional education. In certain cases, whiteness came in for more explicit attack. At Bolton Camp, boys participated in dramatic re-enactments of historic Native-white conflicts, with one description noting 'the treachery of a band of marauding whites.'⁶¹ Use of the derogatory *pale-face* – 'pale-faced campers' or white visitors as 'chiefs in the pale-faced world' – also reveals attempts to look through Aboriginal eyes and to de-centre whiteness as the assumed vantage point.⁶² Looking back on the dominant culture from this new perspective, campers could join in the performance of the fire-lighting ceremony, which bid them to declare, 'Light we now the council fire, built after the manner of the forest children. Not big like the whiteman's where you must stand away off so front all roast and back all gooseflesh; but small like the Indian's, so we may sit close and feel the warmth of fire and friendship.'⁶³ Here, whiteness was represented as not only synonymous with ostentation, but also with a cold, impersonal culture, lacking in true intimacy.

By superficially critiquing whiteness, members of the camping community could distance themselves from the hollowness of modern alienation and excess, essentially allowing them to re-conceptualize their relationship to modernity. Through the summer camp experience, white urban Ontarians could think of themselves as existing outside the limits of the dominant culture. Clearly, the critique was a shallow one that lasted only so long as one's stay in the woods. What made 'going Native' at camp such an act of privilege was that campers could comfortably go home to whiteness once returned to their urban environments, settings where the benefits or 'wages of whiteness' were generally irresistible.

⁶¹ NWA, *Annual Report, 1937*, 8, FSATA.

⁶² 'Pale-faced City Tikes Taught Indian Lore,' 25.

⁶³ Eastaugh, *Indian Council Ring*, 7.

SELLING THE EXPERIENCE

Try as they might to temporarily escape it, camps and their campers were hopelessly enmeshed in modernity. What's more, like other expressions of anti-modernist sentiment, the camp phenomenon was not only a reaction against modern life; it also reinvigorated the very culture it regularly critiqued. It did so not only by indulging modern concerns about identity, but by becoming, itself, another piece of the culture of consumption. Indeed, those in charge of 'selling' the camp were quick to discover that 'Indian-ness' provided the ideal marketing tool for its times. In this context, proving one's camp was most truly Indian had valuable cultural cachet that easily translated into dollars and cents. Camp owners, whatever anti-modern tendencies they exhibited, were also shrewd businessmen and women, well aware of the need to compete with urban attractions. And compete they did, frequently using the Native theme as a focal point of advertising. Promotional events incorporating all things Indian were typical. Taylor Statten, founder-director of Camp Ahmek, was known to conduct council ring ceremonies not only at camp, but also back in Toronto during the winter months, events that his biographer describes as 'good advertising' for his camps.⁶⁴ Indian imagery also proliferated on camp brochures, which – in a world of limited media alternatives – were often the only source of information for those weighing their options from urban armchairs. This trend persisted well into the postwar period, when Camp Ahmek's promotional literature showcased director Taylor Statten in full Indian dress, complete with buckskin jacket, feather headdress, and hand-drum. As late as 1960, Camp Sherwood was forced to reverse its decision to replace Indian with medieval imagery; it was conceded that 'the council rings and the feathered garb and war-paint [were] an unbeatable combination for exciting the imagination.'⁶⁵

Whatever social, spiritual, or nationalist needs it addressed – or perhaps precisely because of this fact – Indian programming was also part of the business of camp. When it came to camp budgets, for instance, Indian costuming was considered one of the necessary expenditures. As one handbook instructed, 'It is not necessary to buy an expensive costume; but if you intend to remain in the camping business over a period of years, an expenditure in this direction would be justified.'⁶⁶

64 Edwards, *Taylor Statten*, 96.

65 'Canada's Summer Indians Hit the Trail,' *Star Weekly Magazine*, 11 June 1960; *The Taylor Statten Camps*, ca. 1950, 80-014/1/8, Adele and Harry Ebbs Papers, TUA; *Ontario Leadership Camp, 1927*, file 3, box 31, 85.095C, UCA/VUA.

66 Eastaugh, *Indian Council Ring*, 9.

Other aspects of Indian programming could be more costly. For Seton's expertise in Indian lore Camp Ahmek paid the handsome sum of \$20 per day in 1922.⁶⁷ Apart from expensive professional advice and ornate costuming, an Indian atmosphere also influenced the architectural design of many camps. Primitive simplicity may have been the desired aesthetic of camp life, but it didn't rule out substantial expenditures – \$600 at Bolton Camp – to set up elaborate council ring programs. As for other architectural features – the Indian villages, Edgar's 'wig-wam' style cabin, or Ahmek's 'totem poles from British Columbia' – one can only guess about the cost.⁶⁸

In efforts to hold the attention of young campers, securing a few Aboriginal staff or visitors was also regarded as well worth the expense. As already noted, certain Ontario camps were marked by an ongoing, if limited, Native presence. One form it took was the appearance of Aboriginal guest-performers. At Glen Bernard Camp, Mary Edgar brought guests Dawendine, daughter of a Mohawk chief of the Ontario Six Nations, Chief Mudjeekwis of the Rice Lake Ojibway, and Nanaki, a Blackfoot from the 'Western Plains' to participate in council ring ceremonies over the years.⁶⁹ Elsewhere the thrill was to be found in witnessing performances of a different sort, where presumably more 'primitive' Native locals interacted with the camping community. Camps in more remote areas like Algonquin and Temagami had the edge here, with the possibility of encounters with local Aboriginals providing an added attraction to, and also partly defining, their 'wilderness' settings. In some cases, Aboriginal people, hired initially to guide would-be directors into remote locations, were kept on as regular staff.⁷⁰ At Camps Ahmek, Keewaydin, Tanamakoon, and Temagami, Native staff filled various roles, sometimes as trip guides and as canoeing and woodcraft instructors. Though rarely serving in great numbers, such workers nevertheless functioned as indispensable teachers and also attractions. In the interwar years at Ahmek, administrators boasted of their canoeing instructor: 'Bill ... is a full-blooded Ojibway Indian from the Golden Lake Reserve. His father is a chief.'⁷¹ Camps Temagami and Keewaydin apparently also employed Chief Jean-Paul Whitebear as woodcraft instructor since, as it

67 Edwards, *Taylor Statten*, 88.

68 Gilchrist, interview by Pearse; Burry, 'A History of the Taylor Statten Camps,' 33; Minutes, Bolton Camp Committee, 17 June 1926, FSATA.

69 Edgar, 'Our Indebtedness,' 1–5.

70 Hamilton, *Call of Algonquin*, 8; Back, *Keewaydin Way*, 42.

71 'The Fine Art of Canoeing,' *Canoe Lake Camp Echoes* 4 (June 1931): 37, 82-016/2/8, Ronald H. Perry Fonds, TUA.

was acknowledged, the chief's presence had 'considerable promotional value.'⁷²

Ultimately, all that the camp promised – escape from the city, return to nature, and connection with Aboriginal tradition – was essentially available for a price. To suggest this is not to minimize the importance of the camp's role in fostering community, spiritual experience, or nationalist identity. In fact, what points precisely to the camp's inescapable entanglement with modernity is the deep value attached to this form of racial play, but at the same time the willingness to market this pseudo-spiritual experience. Again, as the work of Lears and McKay suggests, if it did not spring from commercial motivations, anti-modernism could have clear market value. For those touched by the anti-modernist quest, experience – whether of the mystical, physical, or tourist variety – was a commodity for which they were willing to pay. In this sense the camp's emergence was merely symptomatic of an age when ever-expanding realms of social and cultural life would be brought within the ambit of the market economy, when even community and connection could be bought and sold for a price.

ASSESSING IMPACT

Children did not run camps, nor did they, alone, make decisions to attend them. With adults as both the founders and the paying clients of these institutions, one might argue the entire enterprise was an exchange between adults and, as such, reflected their needs and aspirations. Looking back, at least one ex-camper concurs, believing that Indian programming was more meaningful to adult administrators than to campers. True enough, staff and directors could, themselves, get quite caught up in playing Indian. At his beloved Camp Ahmek, Taylor Statten was rarely called by name, but went almost exclusively by 'Chief.' Other staff at the camp also had special opportunity to 'play Indian' with the institution of the 'Gitchiahmek Order' in 1923, in its early years a 'staff-only' club that, among other things, bestowed Indian names on its members. At other camps, adult supporters could be equally affected by the excitement of 'going Native.' At Bolton, a visiting board member was heard to remark of council ring in 1937, "That Indian ceremony really gave me creeps in the back."⁷³

72 Back, *Keewaydin Way*, 53; A.L. Cochrane, 'Camp Timagami,' *College Times*, (Easter 1924), 44, Upper Canada College Archives.

73 'Big Businessmen Enjoy Visit to Camp at Bolton,' *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 July 1937. For

On the other hand, if Indian programming was of clearly adult origin, it also had its impact on children. That certain families patronized the same camps over several generations suggests that powerful loyalties engendered in childhood sometimes endured into adult years. Many children, it seems, were strongly affected by their stays at camp, and it is likely that lessons learned there – Indian programming included – followed campers into later life. Fitting as it did with the rough and tumble aspects of boy culture sanctioned in other social contexts, Indian programming was particularly popular with boys. At Bolton Camp, one observer remarked, ‘The Indian Ceremonial has been of never-failing interest to the boys,’ while participation in one ‘Indian pageant’ of 1938 was said to have given its male campers ‘a thrilling experience, so thrilling indeed that many of them insisted on wearing paint, feathers and tomahawks for the rest of their stay at camp.’⁷⁴ Where Native guides were employed at more northerly, private camps, boys’ fascination with the Indian could be intensified. In such cases, Aboriginal workers modelled an alluring masculinity based on their mastery of wilderness skills. At Camp Ahmek, Ojibwa canoeing instructor Bill Stoqua was described as ‘a perfectionist.’ Staff recalled, ‘He had the style and the physique and the appearance [A]ll the campers thought if they could paddle like [him] they would have achieved something important.’⁷⁵

When it came to council ring, boys and girls alike appear to have been moved by the ceremony, which some, looking back on it, place ‘in the realm of the holy.’⁷⁶ Indeed, Taylor Statten claimed that ‘no single activity contributes more to the camp sense of unity than the weekly Council Ring,’ while YMCA Camp Pine Crest counted council ring ‘among the most attractive all-camp activities.’⁷⁷ One Wapomeo camper, later director, recalls that this was no casual event. It was ‘always done very precisely, very organised and well planned,’ she explained, ‘Some of us were in fear and trembling that somebody would do the wrong thing and spoil the atmosphere.’⁷⁸ Other former campers agreed. According to one, ‘We all behaved as if ... in a church service,’⁷⁹ remaining quiet

camper memory, see Dimock and Hendry, *Camping and Character*, 139–40; Susan Houston, conversation with author, 11 Nov. 2003.

74 NWA, *After Twenty Years*, 43; NWA, *Annual Report, 1938*, 11, FSATA.

75 Ron Perry, interview by Bruce Harris, 2 Dec. 1981, 83-002/5/1, OCA Sound Tape Collection, TUA.

76 Shirley Ford, interview by author, 20 June 2000, Toronto.

77 Dimock and Hendry, *Camping and Character*, 321; Camp Pine Crest, ‘Director’s Report,’ 1950, 78-009/2/1, Camp Pine Crest Fonds, TUA.

78 Ebbs, interview by Pearse.

79 Jane Hughes, interview by author, 26 June 2000.

except when called on to sing or recite. Mary Northway recalls of council ring at Glen Bernard Camp, that it was 'awe-inspiring. At dusk in blankets the Big Chief (little Miss Edgar [the camp director]) turned us into Indians of a long ago time.'⁸⁰ In a lighter spirit, Jim Buchanan remembers council ring as 'a fun event and certainly ... one of the highlights of camp.' He now admits he couldn't help indulging the idea of Taylor Statten as truly Aboriginal, even though he knew otherwise. 'In many respects he struck you as stoical [sic],' he now explains, '... that he actually had an Indian background ... which he sure as hell didn't. But he seemed like he did.'⁸¹

Beyond the reaches of campers' childish psyches, playing Indian at camp had other repercussions. As we have seen, camp programming conveyed the same negative images and limiting stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples as those circulating in the wider society. In so doing, camps did more than shape attitudes of individuals campers; at a broader level, they contributed to the ongoing rationalization of colonialism. Negative images of violence and savagery rationalized it from the humanitarian perspective, while positive stereotypes, by freezing Aboriginal peoples in time, suggested that such noble, pre-modern creatures couldn't hope to survive in a modern civilized society. Either way, the colonial project was naturalized; that is, it was simply the way things had to be. On the other hand, as with the colonial project in general, silences and omissions regarding the tragic history of Native-white relations did as much harm as these articulated messages. Indeed, perhaps more damaging than what camps had to say about the Indian was what they did not. Nothing, it seems, was ever said about the fact that, as white campers played at being Indian, contemporary Native children were the target of aggressive campaigns aimed to rid them of their 'Indian-ness.' Did campers have any idea, one wonders, that as directors donned Native headdresses, state laws attempted to bar Aboriginal peoples from appearing publicly in traditional dress? Were they ever aware that as they enthusiastically participated in Indian rituals, Native bands in western provinces were prohibited from holding their own sundance and potlatch ceremonies?⁸²

Whether campers knew it or not, as they seasonally put on Indian skins, Aboriginals could not escape the taint of their Indian status. Even while scholars conclude that racial categories in general are 'shifting and

80 'Northway Recollection of Glen Bernard Camp.'

81 James Buchanan, interview by author, 26 July 2000, Toronto.

82 Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, *An Iron Hand upon the People: The Law against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990); Regular, 'On Public Display'; Mikkelsen, 'Indians and Rodeo.'

unstable,' and even 'appallingly empty,'⁸³ for those racialized Others, the biological 'unreality' of race conflicted with its pressing social reality in their day-to-day lives. Take only the example of the Bear Island band of Temagami. By the time of this study, they faced an unenviable set of social and economic conditions. As the result of a long-outstanding land claim, the band had never been formally assigned reserve land. Despite this fact, they adapted gradually to the fact of white encroachment on their land, surviving on a combination of trapping and guiding, including even some employment at the area's summer camps. However, without clear hunting and fishing rights, the Temagami band faced continual harassment by local game wardens. Worse still, resource development in the area and the infiltration of white trappers in the 1930s put the supply of fur into serious decline, leaving many to survive increasingly on relief funds. Postwar years saw little improvement in these conditions. The province continued to equivocate on the issue of establishing a reserve, and problems of alcohol and family breakdown increased.⁸⁴

During this time, the small but influential recreation-based community of Temagami did little to ameliorate and, in some ways, exacerbated the problems of the Bear Islanders. With their own eyes firmly on preserving the area as wilderness escape and/or tourist mecca, white cottagers and resort operators complained variously about Native health problems, their destruction of the visible shoreline, and abuses of alcohol in the Aboriginal community, calling for increased police and medical surveillance as solutions. Camp Keewaydin's employment of Bear Islanders gives some indication of how camp communities fit into this picture. At the camp's founding in the first years of the century, the administration considered Ojibwa men from Bear Island knowledgeable, experienced, and close at hand; in short, the ideal tripping guides. Primarily trappers, they spent the winter on their lines but were available and often looking for summer work. Over the years, however, Keewaydin's preference shifted away from the Bear Island band so that by the 1920s the camp no longer sought workers from within the local community. Although the camp historian is silent on the issue, it is quite possible that, given the situation already noted, the Bear Islanders were

83 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 52; Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 8.

84 Bruce W. Hodgins and Jamie Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience: Recreation, Resources, and Aboriginal Rights in the Northern Ontario Wilderness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 210–28.

increasingly regarded as the undesirable sort of Indians, hardly the noble self-sustaining survivalists that camp life sought to glorify. As far as other questions are concerned – for instance, the Bear Islanders' outstanding land claim – there is no indication that the white community – camps included – had anything to say on the issue, much less that they played any role as advocates for Aboriginal rights. Reminding children that they walked on what had been 'Indian land' was portrayed not as a matter of controversy, as the basis for a critique of colonialism, or social redress, but rather as a mildly interesting (if unchangeable) anthropological fact. Were camp administrators aware of, or concerned about, the Bear Islanders' long outstanding land claim? Certainly, by the 1970s and 1980s some involved themselves in this struggle.⁸⁵ For this earlier period, however, decades still marked by a broad cultural confidence in the colonial project, nothing could be found to indicate camp concern about the social and economic predicament of their Aboriginal neighbours in Temagami.

In other contexts, the early postwar years saw the first indications that parts of the camping community were developing new sensibilities toward the design of their Indian programming. As early as 1946, educator Mary Northway attacked the 'distortion' of Native culture that she observed in camp programs. 'Isn't it too bad,' she observed, 'that the only conception some of our campers, living in haunts so recently inhabited by Indians, have is that Indians were a people who met on Saturday nights dressed in blankets from ... the Hudson Bay store and engaged in marshmallow eating contests?'⁸⁶ Presumably in response to the shift in public consciousness, some camps moved to eliminate certain features of their Indian programming. In 1958 Mary Hamilton described the decision to do away with Indian council ring at Tanamakoon: 'The familiar "How! How!," the tribal set-up and the Indian names still exist,' she explained. 'As for the Indian council fire, it was short-lived. We decided not to be Indians any longer and proceeded to be our

85 In the 1970s camp director and scholar Bruce Hodgins began researching his *Temagami Experience*, which took a sympathetic view of Aboriginal rights in Temagami. During the late 1980s, former Keewaydin camper (and later, camp historian) Brian Back served as director of the Temagami Wilderness Society (precursor to Earthroots), which fought for environmental protection and a just settlement for the Temagami peoples. In 1989 the society's eighty-four-day blockade of the Red Squirrel Road in Temagami brought national and international attention to the region. See articles in Matt Bray and Ashley Thomson, ed., *Temagami: A Debate on Wilderness* (Toronto and Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1990).

86 Northway, 'Canadian Camping.'

own natural selves.⁸⁷ Other camps could be slower to initiate change. At the prestigious Taylor Statten camps, it was an Aboriginal youth who apparently articulated the first critique of council ring. In the early 1970s this counsellor-in-training, also daughter of the chief of the Ontarian Curve Lake band, complained to the camp administration: 'I was so shock [sic] to go to council ring last night ... having to watch you people make fun of my people.'⁸⁸ Initially, the camp administration attempted to pacify the youth by removing the 'dress-up' element from the ceremony, but when this prompted others to complain that 'something was lost,' the ritual was reinstated in its original form.⁸⁹ By the 1980s and 1990s, some camps – like Bolton – were more self-critical. There, council ring was not eliminated but modified; the use of broken English was forbidden, and campfires were instituted, following non-Indian themes. Around the camp, Aboriginal names were dropped from cabin sections, and the 'Blackfoot totem pole' was taken down in response to at least one visitor's complaint. In the hot political context of late-twentieth-century Native-white relations, clearly playing Indian was not always seen as harmless child's play. On the other hand, the issue is still contested, if silently; these traditions continue in many ways at different camps, with Aboriginal names and practices still in evidence. As late as 1994, Indian council ring was still going strong at Camp Ahmek, with staff carefully following Statten's original order of proceedings, and campers continuing to dress up in 'blankets, feathers, and paint.'⁹⁰

CONCLUSION

The history of camps' Indian programming tells us something about the shifting nature of Native-white relations, but ultimately the history of 'playing Indian' is the history of whites and of white middle-class culture. One aspect was a recurring anti-modernist sentiment that presented itself as a strong, if sub-cultural, tendency throughout this period. The fact that camps did not disappear, but indeed proliferated in the 1950s and beyond, is just one indication that anti-modernism still figured in the postwar cultural landscape. Granted, infatuation with modernity in many forms was everywhere to be seen, but anti-modernism

87 Hamilton, *Call of Algonquin*, 22.

88 'Margo,' quoted in Ebbs, interview by Pearse.

89 Ebbs, Interview, 20.

90 Liz Lundell, *Summer Camp: Great Camps of Algonquin Park* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1994), 104–6; Fred Okada, conversation with author, 15 Dec. 1998; Dale Callendar, *History of Bolton Camp* [1997], 11, FSATA.

also percolated beneath the surface, raising questions and dampening the cultural optimism of the day.

In the interwar years this ambivalence revealed itself by the fact that while child-care manuals counselled rigid and controlled approaches to rearing children, many also considered the temporary outlet of experiences like camp – its Indian programming included – as necessary antidotes. It is revealing to note that the diminishing importance of Indian programming coincided with not only a changing climate of racial politics, but also with the rise of more permissive, emotional approaches to child-rearing in the postwar period. Perhaps as children were treated less as machines and more regularly encouraged to be 'their own natural selves,' the catharsis of playing Indian was deemed a more dispensable frill.

In a broader sense, the camp's incarnation of anti-modernism was different from, but also of a piece with, turn-of-the-century expressions. For one, it points to a more popular expression of anti-modernist sentiment. True enough, some camp directors played significant roles as social leaders, but many others – especially of less illustrious camps – were not the 'cultural point men' that Lears saw directing the flow of Victorian anti-modernism. By the mid-twentieth century, anti-modernism could be both more widespread and also less deeply felt, an increasingly typical, barely countercultural aspect of the modern mentality. More than the purview of an elite group of literati or intellectuals, anti-urbanism, belief in the healing power of nature, and romanticization of a presumably disappeared way of Indian life were common reactions to the contradictions of modern culture. This was not, then, an anti-modernism that retained much of 'an eloquent edge of protest' against the dominant culture, like that Lears described. Camp enthusiasts did not generally suffer 'immobilizing depression,' or the 'turmoil of [the] divided self,'⁹¹ but were active optimists animated by the promise of therapeutic recreation and the transformative possibilities of playing Indian. As we have seen, that therapy and transformation pertained wholly to their own well-being, not that of contemporary Aboriginals. This racialized form of anti-modernism ultimately served conservative political ends; as with the 'folk-ifying' of Nova Scotian identity, it venerated certain aspects of the province's past, but at the same time facilitated erasure of its less palatable, colonial elements.

The common thread connecting this and other North American incarnations of anti-modernism was its ultimate social impact, what Lears saw as the 'reinvigoration of modern therapeutic culture' and

91 Lears, *No Place of Grace*, xii, 237, 263.

McKay, as 'modernizing antimodernism.' Through the camp, modern ways of thinking, feeling, and imagining the self and racial Others were reinforced. Preoccupation with intense experience and with identity, and the belief that both were to be sought on the terrain of leisure, were all typical of the modern condition. That camp administrators were not above marketing this experience was also indicative of their times. Born of anti-modernism, the summer camp was a modern animal. Playing Indian in this setting was just one way it allowed for simultaneous expression of these competing cultural impulses.

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