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'An Amazing Gift'? Memory entrepreneurship, settler colonialism and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights

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Abstract

Drawing on research undertaken at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, this article considers the role of memory entrepreneurship in the museum's historic launch and in a sampling of its content, social media posts, points of sale and marketing campaigns. These examples are read in tension with Roger I. Simon's conceptualization of 'the terrible gift' of what we come to know belatedly about events of mass violence, which calls into question the consolatory promises of learning from 'those who came before us' and the 'lessons of their lives'. The museum's involvement in the City of Winnipeg's tourism initiatives and the revitalization of Winnipeg's downtown are also considered, and we suggest that the museum's participation in the creative economy might affect its tendency to situate human rights violations primarily in the past. Critiques of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights' present occupation of Indigenous land and the museum (and City of Winnipeg)'s ongoing reliance on natural resources extracted at the expense of Indigenous communities remain as difficult or inassimilable knowledge. Juxtaposing Indigenous, cultural and economic critiques with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights' advancement of memory entrepreneurship, our article explores the inter-implication of consumer culture, capitalism, settler colonialism and the museum's ability to contribute to societal change. We conclude by turning to the activism of members of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, arguing that their calls for access to safe water and an all-season road in and out of their community pose both an economic and a political challenge to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and its brand of memory entrepreneurship by insisting that gestures to include and proffer representational forms of recognition to Indigenous peoples must simultaneously attend to sovereigntist calls for redistribution of land and resources in order to meaningfully address the historical and ongoing injustices of settler colonialism.

Keywords Canadian Museum for Human Rights, difficult knowledge, gentrification and the creative economy, memory entrepreneurship, Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations, settler colonialism

Submitted to *Memory Studies*, 2019

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) is the first national museum in Canada built outside of the national capital region. It is located on Treaty One territory, traditional land of Anishinaabe, Métis, Cree, Dakota and Oji-Cree nations, in the city now known as Winnipeg, Manitoba. The concept for the museum began with proposals in the late 1990s led by the Canadian Jewish Congress for a government-sponsored national Holocaust or genocide museum, followed by a revised proposal for a privately funded human rights museum, featuring but not limited to Holocaust remembrance (Moses, 2012). The final version – the one that stands today – is a privately *and* publicly funded, broadly interpreted 'ideas museum' that by its own description is 'dedicated to the evolution, celebration and future of human rights' (CMHR, 2014a). Since its inception, the CMHR has incurred both praise and considerable criticism on a range of issues including its representation of Indigenous peoples and histories (see, for example, Busby et al., 2015; Dean, 2015; Dhamoon, 2016; Failler, 2018; Failler et al., 2015; Lehrer, 2015; Logan, 2014; Scott, 2015). Critiques of the museum's content and its framing of settler colonial violence, genocide, and assimilationist policies and practices have also taken place alongside cultural production and activism challenging the CMHR's occupation of Indigenous land (Cariou, 2013, 2014; Failler, 2015, 2018; Wong, 2014) and the museum (and City of Winnipeg)'s ongoing reliance on natural resources extracted at the expense of Indigenous communities (CBC News, 2014; Failler and Sharma, 2015; Huard, 2016; Ives and Perry, 2015; Perry, 2016). Taken together, these criticisms seem to confirm Dene scholar Glen Coulthard's (2014) insistence that 'the identity-related claims of Indigenous peoples for recognition are always bound up with demands for a more equitable distribution of land, political power, and economic resources' (p. 52). In other words, desire for 'recognition' here is not simply wanting to be included or counted by the state and its institutions as belonging to the nation, but requires an acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignty and a substantive redistribution of the means of survival and self-representation that have long been stripped from Indigenous peoples in Canada.

We argue in this article that the CMHR practises a brand of 'memory entrepreneurship' (Jelin, 2003: 33–45) that capitalizes on a particular version of Canada's colonial history, namely, one in which settler colonialism is imagined as part of Canada's past but not its present. This self-assuring, 'lovely knowledge' version of the nation limits opportunities for museum visitors to learn from encounters with 'difficult knowledge' (Britzman, 1998; Pitt and Britzman, 2003), including evidence of the ways that colonial violence and human rights abuses against Indigenous people remain present, near and ongoing. More specifically, we observe that the museum's investments in both lovely knowledge and a productive futurity that is aligned with gentrification-based discourses of civic 'betterment' compromise the museum's ability to respond to local and immediate human rights crises; for example, as nearly 2000 Winnipeggers gathered at the Forks (an area of the city near the junction of the Assiniboine and Red rivers where the museum is also situated) to protest and mourn the violent death of Tina Fontaine, a young woman from nearby Sagkeeng First Nation whose body was recovered just upriver from and in view of the CMHR, the museum maintained a public silence on the issue, using its social media feeds to instead promote its gift shop and new postage stamp (Dean, 2015).

In contrast to how the museum has framed its architecture, content, points of sale and, indeed, its very existence as an 'amazing gift' to Canadians, members of nearby Shoal Lake 40 First Nation (SL40) have responded to the CMHR by evoking what Roger I. Simon (2006) calls the 'terrible gift' of difficult forms of knowledge.[1] They have done so by pointing to the hypocrisy of the museum's exhibition of water pools as symbolic of the gift of healing, while people's survival on the reserve remains under threat due to an aqueduct that pipes clean water from Shoal Lake to Winnipeg (and the museum), leaving polluted water behind for the community (CBC News, 2014; CTV News, 2015; Green and Paul, 2011; Perry, 2016; Redsky and Merrick, 2014; Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, 2014). Calling the CMHR a 'towering shrine to hypocrisy', chief of SL40 Erwin Redsky and Cathy Merrick (2014), chief of Pimicikamak Okimawin, convey the *ongoing*effects of settler colonialism on their communities, insisting they want 'Canadians to know that for many aboriginal people, the grandiose structure is a bitter reminder of what we do not have'. We, thus, conclude by turning to the activism of members of SL40, arguing that their calls for access to safe water and an all-season access road in and out of their community pose both an economic and a political challenge to the CMHR and its brand of memory entrepreneurship. They do so by insisting that gestures to include and proffer representational forms of recognition to Indigenous peoples must simultaneously attend to sovereigntist calls for the redistribution of land and resources in order to meaningfully address the historical and ongoing injustices of settler colonialism.

Memory entrepreneurship at the CMHR: an 'Amazing Gift'?

Indigenous claims for recognition *and* redistribution challenge us, as scholars of public memory, to attend to the political-economic frameworks that shape what we are calling memory entrepreneurship at the CMHR. Memory entrepreneurship is a term coined by Argentine sociologist Elizabeth Jelin (2003) who uses it to describe a broad range of civic initiatives and engagements with memory and memory work. According to Jelin (2003), memory entrepreneurs are individuals or groups who 'seek social recognition and political legitimacy of *one* (their own) interpretation or narrative of the past' (pp. 33–34). Ksenija Bilbija and Leigh A. Payne (2011) note that Jelin expresses a preference for memory enterprises or ventures envisioned as social or public projects above the 'memory empresario' who 'would tend to create a memory business (*empresa*) for financial profit' (p. 11). For us, this distinction highlights a potential difference in approaches to memory entrepreneurship: in the former, the 'gift' of history and its representations can serve as an opportunity for individual and collective engagement with the ways that the past – including histories of trauma and violence – continues to inform the present; in the latter, history and its representations become a kind of commodity that functions primarily to perpetuate hegemonic, expected versions of the past (as in lovely knowledge).

As a site of the production of public memory, the CMHR has an opportunity to provoke Canadians to grapple with the difficult knowledge of how Canada, as Glen Coulthard (2014) puts it, sought throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 'to marginalize Indigenous people and communities with the ultimate goal being our *elimination*' (p. 4). And to be sure, there have been some attempts by individual curators (see Grafton and Peristerakis, 2016, for example) to address the long-standing critiques of scholars and more recently of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools by recognizing and acknowledging the role museums have played in the exploitation and marginalization of

Indigenous peoples and in perpetuating and reinforcing settler colonialism (Coombes, 2006; Lonetree, 2012; Onciul, 2015; Phillips, 2011; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; West, 2001). Despite these attempts, however, the CMHR's overall approach to memory entrepreneurship remains dominated by the 'empresario' or business-like approach where difficult knowledge is elided for the sake of framing its contents, including certain representations of Indigenous lives and histories, specifically as 'amazing gifts'.

In the lead-up to its public opening in September 2014, for instance, the CMHR launched several promotional campaigns including a video series called 'Be Inspired'. The series ran across Canadian airwaves as four televised 30-second commercial spots titled, respectively, 'On the Winds of Change', 'Dreams', 'An Amazing Gift', and 'Tower of Hope', anticipating the CMHR's broader representational politics enfolded within an assertion of its potential value for Manitoba and Canada's tourism industries and the wider creative economy. In these commercials, the casting of relationships between 'indigenized' human and animal actors, land and waterscapes, and symbols of culture and technology paints a picture of a nostalgic, nationalistic futurism.[2] This futurism relies on static identity categories and the reiteration of the myth of benevolent settler colonialism via the incorporation of Indigenous subjects and objects as belonging to Canada – rather than belonging to First Nations, Métis Nations, or Inuit Nunangat (regions). The inuksuk, an Inuit stone cairn appropriated as a signifier of 'Canadian-ness' for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics and repeatedly commodified for souvenirs and tourism campaigns, functions, in the 'An Amazing Gift' (CMHR 2014b) commercial, along with the ecstatic, smiling face of an Inuit woman, as a kind of Indigenous 'stamp of approval' for the CMHR. In other words, it suggests Indigenous peoples' appreciation for gestures of inclusion within the national museum and, by extension, the settler state, despite the state's historical and ongoing efforts to dispossess them of land, water and self-definition.

These gestures of inclusiveness reiterate a memory entrepreneurship approach through which images or signs of Indigeneity – whether in the form of the inuksuk, the smiling Inuit woman, or the bronze casting of a 750- to 800-year-old moccasin print featured at the entryway of the museum's 'Indigenous Perspectives' gallery – become a kind of commodity that non-Indigenous Canadians are invited to consume as examples of our seemingly benign or even benevolent past and 'reconciled' present relations with Indigenous peoples. These images or signs of Indigeneity may not function as commodities in the traditional sense of a good or service offered for sale, and yet they are in a sense being *sold* to the museum-going public to convey an image of Canada and Canadians as preservers and champions of human rights. In other words, while the bronze moccasin print, for example, is not available to buy, its presence in the CMHR suggests to visitors that (for the price of admission to the museum) they too can be part of the museum's commitment to advancing human rights simply by viewing and appreciating artefacts of Indigenous culture.[3] Indigeneity, in this framework, is precisely what is being offered to Canadians as an 'amazing gift' in commodity form (one need only visit the museum's gift shop for further examples).[4] Simultaneously, Indigenous peoples are made in these representations to appear as though readily offering the 'amazing gift' of their culture, their artwork, and, by extension, their land and resources, to non-Indigenous visitors to the museum. This commoditized form of history/memory is proffered at considerable cost to Indigenous nations and people as it draws attention away from the ongoing theft of Indigenous land and resources, and violences against Indigenous peoples.

While in some instances the CMHR's efforts at memory entrepreneurship might be considered to perform (small) acts of redistribution – for example, by benefitting individual Indigenous artists or cultural producers whose works are featured in the museum or offered for sale in the gift shop – the potential of these works to critically engage museumgoers is limited by their depoliticized framing by the museum as tokens of Canada's rich multicultural heritage rather than as works that challenge the settler colonial status quo (Failler, 2015, 2018). Prompted then by scholarship and activism that insists upon the genocidal nature of settler colonialism as a form of 'difficult knowledge', we conceive of the mobilization of Indigeneity-as-commodity in these memory-entrepreneurial framings as a disavowal of the 'terrible gift' of ongoing settler colonial violence in Canada. According to memory scholar Roger I. Simon (2006), what we come to know belatedly about events of mass violence might be productively understood as a 'terrible gift' (p. 187). A 'terrible gift' is a form of knowledge that we are tempted to turn away from but which might also be read as an offering of possibility. This knowledge is 'terrible' not because it is wrong or not worth knowing, but because it is difficult to bear, disrupting any claim that the future will *be* better simply because one *knows* the lessons of the past. Such knowledge, however, is also a gift, because it offers us an important opportunity to be response-able to the histories and memories of others beyond our own. As Simon (2006) explains, '[s]uch a gift sets the demanding task of inheritance, a process with the potential to open a reconsideration of the terms of our lives now as well as in the future' (p. 188). A 'terrible gift', then, unlike the 'amazing gifts' proffered by the CMHR, is difficult and onerous, and what it asks of us is no small task; it asks us to be open to having our cherished and sometimes long-held beliefs about the world and our place within it interrupted by the reality of the suffering or oppression of others. It asks that we try to imagine how we might live our own lives differently in light of this suffering. And it asks that we not reduce others' suffering to a version of our own, or assume that we can know the other's pain and/or exonerate our implication in the conditions of their suffering by imagining 'standing in their shoes' (Simon, 2006: 188).

Simon's notion of the 'terrible gift' stands in stark contrast to the CMHR's understanding of itself and its contents as 'amazing gifts' that will not impose too heavily upon visitors' senses of optimism, inspiration and hope (Failler, 2015). The way in which the CMHR frames and activates the memory of museumgoers in relation to particular objects in its collection demonstrates this contrast. The bronze casting of the moccasin print mentioned above, for example, is described in a press release about the findings of the museum's archaeological dig as follows:

Two human footprints were found, including one very clear impression from a person who lived about 800 years ago, apparently wearing moccasins. This sparked a CMHR public event called 'Amazing Feet' in 2009, where people were invited to leave behind their own foot and handprints. (CMHR, 2013)

In addition, among its suggestions for exploring the museum with children, the CMHR recommends: 'Try putting your foot in the bronze cast of a human **footprint**. Just imagine: hundreds of years ago, someone wearing a moccasin left this print on the land where the Museum now stands' (CMHR, 2017b). In both instances, the moccasin print is framed as a reminder that Indigenous people existed on this land, but seemingly only in a romanticized past, replicating colonial museum practices of depicting Indigenous peoples as a disappeared race

and/or as pre-modern relics (Phillips, 2011; West, 2001). The ‘Amazing Feet’ event and the text encouraging visitors to place their own foot (or their children’s feet) in the moccasin print invites an interpretation of the universal nature of ‘humanity’, which risks both erasing and disavowing Indigenous difference; it also fails to call upon visitors to reflect on how or why it came to be the case that the museum is now in possession of the land (and of the moccasin print, for that matter), rather than the descendants of the Indigenous person who left the footprint. In other words, the framing and deployment of the moccasin print’s presence in the museum greatly reduces the likelihood that it might be received as a ‘terrible gift’ – as evidence of Indigenous dispossession of land, of genocide, of ongoing colonial violence.

The framing of the moccasin print and the ‘Amazing Feet’ event ultimately invite visitors to indulge instead in a ‘lovely knowledge’ (Britzman, 1998) version of the past that erases the much more complex and troubled history of Indigenous-settler relations on the land under the museum. Visitors are invited to quite literally leave behind their footprints, marking and reiterating a sense of (predominantly) settler-Canadian entitlement to the land. While Simon’s (2006) ‘terrible gift’ *is* potentially hopeful in the sense of offering possibilities for deeper understanding and insight, those open to receiving it must approach the knowledge the gift contains from quite a different framework than that offered through the museum’s narrative surrounding the moccasin print, for example. We worry that the moccasin print in this kind of narrative functions much like a commodity fetish, a kind of stand-in or replacement for that which has been (traumatically) lost but is still desired (in this case, Canada and Canadians’ dreams of innocence and desires to view historical and contemporary Indigenous-settler relations as benign or benevolent). As such, the fetish object distracts from and attempts to cover over the loss, but it must be fixated upon because it can never quite succeed at suturing over the more difficult knowledge of historical and ongoing colonial violence. The commoditized ‘amazing gift’ version of the moccasin print, unlike a ‘terrible gift’ version, must instead attempt to distract viewers from history’s losses by pretending that they are literally history (i.e. over and done with), thereby selling a very different, ‘lovelier’ image of Canada’s past and present; in this imaginary of an absolute past, Canada’s so-called ‘dark chapters’ are more or less over, safely sealed off from the present. Status quo fantasies of an innocent, reconciled ‘now’ and a hopeful future are thereby preserved, along with feelings of national pride (Failler, 2015: 234).

At the CMHR, human rights violations of the past tend to be disconnected from ongoing forms of injustice and can, thus, be offered as sources of ‘inspiration’ because they are largely framed as having been overcome through successful human rights struggles. The museum’s emphasis on ‘inspiration’ and ‘hope’ is aligned with its desire to attract (paying) visitors, which we recognize as necessary to its continued operation but nonetheless find the presumption that visitors will only be attracted to a ‘feel good’ experience troubling. In ‘Hope without consolation: Prospects for critical learning at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights’, Angela Failler (2015) argues that the museum, under financial pressure to provide ‘positive visitor experiences’, smooths over potential encounters with difficult knowledge in fear of earning a reputation as a ‘killjoy museum’ (pp. 229–234). She writes, ‘At the CMHR, consolatory hope promises visitors and stakeholders that the museum is going to get the right “balance” of tragedy and triumph so that people ultimately come away feeling inspired, not depressed or awful about themselves’ (Failler, 2015: 233). And while keeping its doors open remains a necessity for the museum, one wonders how its current commitments to ‘memory entrepreneurship’ and ‘hope branding’ are limiting its

ability to provide a meaningful space for public debate over the unavoidably difficult terrain of human rights and human rights abuse. In other words, the museum's mandate to explore the subject of human rights and include a diverse range of histories and experiences (and, thus, to presumably raise critiques of sexism, racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination and inequality) is perhaps compromised by desires for the museum to contribute in particular ways to the city, province and nation's creative economy.

Museums and the creative economy

In a 2009 lecture for the Canadian Museums Association, Catherine Murray (2009), professor and co-director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Studies on Culture and Communities, stressed the need for museums to 'connect with creative economy visions' (p. 17). The creative economy, she argued, represents 'a kinder, gentler capitalism', and museums, according to Murray (2009), 'have an important role to play in leading creative economy thinking and joining forces with the new urban agenda' (p. 17). Lauded for its emphasis on urban regeneration and attracting members of Richard Florida's (2002) ambiguously defined 'creative class', the creative economy is defined in its simplest form by Murray (2009) as 'activities based on the original expression of an idea, which may be sold or given as a gift' (p. 4). In the creative economy, Murray (2009)sees 'a new liberalism, an egalitarianism which asserts that everyone can be creative if they are only given the chance' (p. 8). Museums, she argues, have an important role to play in ushering in this new creative age, and need to work harder to persuade governments and policy makers of their potential to contribute to the building of the creative economy.

The CMHR, including not only its exhibits but also its public programmes, special events and fundraising platform, seems designed to bolster Catherine Murray's view of the museum's role in the creative economy. During a public talk given in 2011, the CMHR's then-President and CEO Stuart Murray emphasized the museum's contribution to what he called 'civic upswing', wherein he named the CMHR alongside Winnipeg's returning National Hockey League team (the Jets), a new football stadium, and airport renovations as a 'major invigorating force' for the city of Winnipeg (CMHR, 2011). Indeed, the CMHR has been described as putting Winnipeg on the map as a tourist destination, and has also been heralded as advancing the renewal and 'architectural renaissance' of Winnipeg's downtown (Turner, n.d.); the CMHR also features prominently in Winnipeg and Manitoba tourism campaigns, and some individuals and groups working on social justice and human rights issues are attempting to see Winnipeg rebranded as 'a human rights city' (Hughes, 2015).

We worry that this emphasis on the museum's potential to contribute to local and global creative economies in such ways leads to prioritizing the museum's consolatory or hopeful messaging and its own points of sale while downplaying or overlooking the more difficult knowledge of ongoing human rights struggles in Winnipeg and beyond – struggles that suggest the creative economy is not being experienced as a 'kinder, gentler capitalism' by everyone (Murray, 2009: 17). For example, at the same time that considerable public attention is paid to the 'inspirational' campaigns of the CMHR and the role the museum might play in re-branding and attracting new visitors to the city, Winnipeg has been undergoing intense scrutiny for the divisiveness of its racism, particularly racism directed at the city's comparatively large Indigenous population.[5] Perhaps the museum's perception of its own role in 'civic upswing' and the creative

economy is felt to be at odds with highlighting the past's relation to *present* and ongoing human rights violations that might seem to stand in the way of Winnipeg's (and Canada's) vision for itself.

Attempts to attract the 'creative class' to particular cities are also heavily implicated in advancing inner-city gentrification, resulting in concomitant displacements of already marginalized communities (Antwi and Dean, 2010; Granzow and Dean, 2007; Miles, 2015; Peck, 2005). As cultural theorist Malcolm Miles (2015) puts it, 'gentrification is what happens when the creative class moves in. It happens in cities where the symbolic economy dominates, and spaces hitherto aligned to manufacturing or ordinary life are aestheticized to create urban villages and cultural quarters' (p. 40). Miles (2015) documents the role museums are playing (or hoping to play) in the establishment of such 'cultural quarters' in cities around the globe, raising concerns about whether museums can really meld their role in constituting more informed or engaged publics with 'market realism' (p. 74). High stakes are placed on the CMHR as both sign and catalyst for urban regeneration in Winnipeg. For example, in one 'concept video' created to promote the development of 'True North Square', a shopping and condo plaza under construction in Winnipeg's downtown, the CMHR features prominently as framing the downtown core and as the city's hopeful view of itself and its imagined future. While the sun rises and sets on the distinctive architectural presence of the museum, viewers of the concept video are told 'there's a feeling in our city. A feeling of renewal, of optimism' (Winnipeg Free Press, 2015). This renewal and optimism are presented as coextensive with national pride, as hockey fans begin spontaneously singing the national anthem at the site of the proposed plaza. Missing from the optimistic bent of the video – and from most representations of the CMHR as a harbinger of urban renewal in Winnipeg – are reflection or concern about Winnipeg's most marginalized residents, or about how urban renewal for some might amount to further displacement and divisiveness for others. Returning to Coulthard (2014), the logic of *terra nullius*, which rendered Indigenous territories 'legally "empty" and therefore open for colonial settlement and development' is currently governing 'the gentrification and subsequent displacement of Indigenous peoples from Native spaces within the city', particularly in the urban inner cities 'of Vancouver, Winnipeg, Regina, Toronto, and so forth' (p. 175). A similar structural process to colonial displacement underpins the 'creative class'-driven gentrification of the present, with urban Indigenous populations bearing the brunt of its impact. We argue it is precisely because of how the CMHR is being positioned (and often positioning itself) as a proponent of creative economy 'boosterism' and urban regeneration that it struggles to formulate or publicly communicate timely responses to ongoing human rights abuses as they occur in Winnipeg's inner city and the museum's immediate surroundings. The concerted efforts of volunteers to recover predominantly Indigenous bodies from the Assiniboine and Red rivers that run through Winnipeg is, for instance, obviously at odds with the city's (and museum)'s desire to attract tourists, investment and the 'creative class'.[6] And any attention to the fact of the city's (and museum's) occupation of stolen land and resources poses a real difficulty for the more 'lovely' view of the creative economy as ushering in a 'new frontier' of urban redevelopment and gentler capitalism.

In his poem '*Louis Speaks to Gabriel Through the Ground*', Warren Cariou (2013), a writer and Canada Research Chair in Narrative, Community and Indigenous Cultures at the University of Manitoba, addresses concerns about the CMHR's occupation of stolen Indigenous land through

an imagined conversation between two important figures in the history of Métis struggles for land and recognition in Western Canada, Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. Riel is buried just across the Red River from the CMHR, and it is from this location that he speaks to Dumont (buried in Saskatchewan, the next province to the west) 'through the ground' as Riel bears witness to the construction of the museum. 'Night and day the cement trucks roll', Riel relates, 'as if there was no one beneath them' (Cariou, 2013: 36). Here Cariou draws attention to the widely held belief among many Indigenous people in Winnipeg that the CMHR is built upon the bones of ancestors, a belief reinforced by the museum's refusal to publicly release a commissioned report making recommendations on heritage management practices after a brief archaeological survey of the land on which it was built, prior to its construction (CBC News, 2011; Cariou, 2014: 33). In a news story published by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which obtained part of the unreleased report, the CMHR is criticized by a retired archaeologist for essentially burying 'the history of eight ancient First Nations that occupied the area' (CBC News, 2011). For Cariou's Riel, the CMHR, therefore, offers only 'a bland directionless goodwill / that crushes the bones of our dead', where tourists will go 'staggering through the exhibits / sick with the iniquities of elsewhere' (Cariou, 2013: 36). With cutting poetic insight, Cariou critiques the museum's desire to emphasize human rights abuses including genocides 'elsewhere' while minimizing the ongoing occupations of Indigenous land here in the Canadian context – including by the museum itself – and proffering romanticized gestures of goodwill. The poem concludes with Riel wondering:

> if anyone will ever look outside
>
> and see our people walking here
>
> leaving sage and tobacco
>
> for the old ones. (Cariou, 2013: 37)

Cariou (via Riel) here invites his readers (and museum visitors) to notice the continuous *presence* of Indigenous people in Winnipeg's inner city, in and around (and in spite of) the land now occupied by the CMHR.

Cariou (2014) has written elsewhere that, in his view, the 'purposely obtuse approach to the museum's construction is … an attempt to push aside an uncomfortable reality in favour of a more sanitized and gentrified imagining' (p. 33). Such gentrified imagining can be seen in another example – this time by way of the CMHR's mobile app, a downloadable application for mobile devices that provides guided tours of the museum using audio, images, text and interactive maps (CMHR, 2017c). The app prompts users to take a 'Journey of Inspiration' through the 13 galleries of the museum, culminating in the Tower of Hope. The radio-trained male voice that narrates the app's tour boasts of the Tower's '360 degree views of the City, the Forks and the prairie', suggesting that 'the 100 meter high tower could be a pinnacle of hope for the oppressed, inspiration of people working hard for change, or a symbol of the universal power of human rights' (CMHR, 2017c). An interactive map of landmarks advertised as perceptible from the tower allows users to click on 'hotspots' that provide additional narratives. The brief

narrative that accompanies the hotspot of 'St. Boniface' is worth quoting in its entirety for its relation to the subject of Cariou's poem:

Winnipeg's French quarter, Saint Boniface, is the site of key events in human rights history. Ongoing struggles for French-language rights, and Métis land and culture, were fought here. Métis leader Louis Riel is buried at Saint Boniface Cathedral, which you should also be able to see. Riel was one of the first people in Canada to draft a bill of rights for all. (CMHR, 2017c)

The app here presents a 'lovely knowledge' story of Riel as a human rights hero but includes no mention of the fact that he was hung for treason on the command of then Prime Minister of Canada John A. McDonald precisely for his work defending Métis land and culture rights. Tellingly, while the mobile app's interactive map uses a 360° view of the city around the Tower of Hope (from panoramic shots taken during the construction of the museum), 360° cannot actually be seen by museumgoers with the naked eye. From the window-encased viewing platform in the Tower, only about 300° of the city can be seen due to the placement of the emergency stairwell on the north side of the building. In effect, the 60° that is blocked from this 'inspirational view' is a view of the city's notoriously impoverished and racially segregated north end where many of Winnipeg's Indigenous community members live. The viewing platform is instead orientated towards the south end of the city, looking over the Forks commercial area and Union station (formerly of the CPR railway line). The museum's implication in such visions of a more gentrified and sanitized – or 'cleaned up' – downtown core for Winnipeg is simply another reminder of how examples of memory entrepreneurship at the museum – such as the app – emphasize superficial versions of Canada's fraught past and seemingly reconciled present and future relations with Indigenous peoples, at the expense of supporting and perhaps even provoking its visitors to grapple with the much more difficult knowledge of *ongoing* displacement and violence against Indigenous people in the city, in Indigenous communities, and across Canada.

Shoal Lake 40 First Nation: the 'terrible gift' of stolen water

There have been numerous powerful and important responses by Indigenous peoples to the establishment of the CMHR, including the support and involvement of some First Nations, Métis and Inuit elders, community leaders, artists and museum professionals, alongside protest and boycott by others. Among them, SL40's response is notable. This community has persevered for over a decade in attempts to communicate with and be heard by the CMHR during its nascent phase up until the present. More recently, strategically coinciding with the public opening of the CMHR, SL40 launched a counter-museum, the Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations (MCHRV), intervening in the self-congratulatory discourse surrounding the establishment of the CMHR and reiterating the community's long-standing attempts to raise awareness about its water security plight and the devastating effects of settler colonial expansionism for its peoples' cultural continuity and everyday survival. As Redsky and Merrick (2014) assert, in response to the CMHR members of SL40 wanted to 'invite Canadians and the world to visit a more realistic museum, the Museum of Canadian Human Rights Violations. This is the living museum of our community. Our doors are open'.

Straddling the Manitoba–Ontario border, SL40 has existed as an artificial island for a hundred years since the City of Winnipeg built a 155 kilometre aqueduct to transport water from its lake to supply the provincial capital. Completed in 1919, the aqueduct pushed the Anishinaabe nation off their traditional territory at the mouth of the Falcon River. The federal government unilaterally took their reserve land and the lakebed, sold it for a token amount to the City of Winnipeg, and moved their people onto a narrow peninsula. The peninsula was then severed from the mainland when government engineers constructed a canal to divert Falcon River's tannic, muddy water away from the aqueduct's intake pipe, setting the First Nation community afloat (Failler and Sharma, 2015; Kives, 2015; Neufeld, 2015; Perry, 2016).[7]

Forced dislocation has stymied the community's capacity for economic sustainability and required its members to haul water, groceries and other provisions by ferry during the summer months and by foot or light vehicles over the frozen lake in winter. While Winnipeg enjoys some of the cleanest and safest drinking water in Canada, SL40 has been under a boil-water advisory for nearly two decades and remains cut off from other basic and emergency services (Neufeld, 2015; Redsky and Merrick, 2014). The community has tirelessly advocated for change despite struggling under conditions borne of settler-colonial expansionism. Lack of broader political will to address the exploitative relationship between the state and the Indigenous nation continues, even in spite of recent positive developments such as government support for the construction of an all-weather road (Kives, 2015). Yet the community persists in creative attempts to raise consciousness about its ongoing crisis.

In a press release issued by SL40, MCHRV curator Stewart Redsky explains that inviting visitors to view their entire community as a 'living museum' is a means of 'showing them all the injustices and the ways we're blocked from accessing the necessities of life'. 'A Violations Museum', he adds, 'is a way to broaden the understanding of injustice to the rest of the world' (Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, 2014). The MCHRV also protests the CMHR's use of water as a metaphor for universal human rights where, for instance, reflection pools in the CMHR's Garden of Contemplation (filled with Shoal Lake water) are presented as symbols of 'healing'. Members of SL40 have lobbied the CMHR since long before its opening – including by way of a protest walk from their community to Winnipeg in 2007 (Winnipeg Free Press, 2007), and in subsequent years letters and invitations to museum leaders to visit and witness the conditions of their community (Hale, 2014) – and have been met with relative indifference until recently. Public attention garnered by SL40's MCHRV has finally nudged the CMHR into preliminary dialogue with the community, and the museum has promised to undertake oral histories with community members to be integrated into the museum's exhibits, along with a plaque (Duhamel, 2017). One of the aims of the MCHRV has been to expose the hypocrisy of Winnipeg's new national site dedicated to human rights for capitalizing on a resource that contributes to the precarity of lives on the First Nation (Redsky and Merrick, 2014). But ultimately, SL40's aim is not only to have better or more inclusive forms of representation in the CMHR; instead, activists and leaders from SL40 are calling for structural change, such as access to clean water and the building of the all-weather access road that will allow the community to develop proper waste disposal and other infrastructure.[8]

The MCHRV provokes visitors to reckon with the violations of settler colonialism – so often relegated to the past, if they are acknowledged at all – as *present*, and, thus, to confront settler

colonialism as an ongoing process of appropriation and theft that relies on violating the very basic human rights of Indigenous peoples (to clean water, for example) in order to secure others' prosperity and ability to participate in the creative economy. Through the activism and cultural work of members of SL40, stolen water can be read as a form of Simon's 'terrible gift', for attending to the historical and contemporary processes through which the water is continuously appropriated challenges representations of Canada's relationship to Indigenous peoples as historically benign or benevolent and presently reconciled. If we attend to the dissonance between the ongoing theft of SL40's water and these other more common, more 'lovely' forms of knowledge about Canada's relationship to Indigenous communities, we might indeed engage in 'a reconsideration of the terms of our lives now as well as in the future', which Simon (2006) suggests is precisely what a 'terrible gift' demands of us (p. 188). Although more onerous than the 'amazing gifts' of Indigeneity in commodity form proffered by the CMHR, or of a past understood only through the lens of seemingly limitless human progress, the 'terrible gift' of stolen water remains a hopeful one. But its brand of hope is a hope 'without consolation'; as Simon (2006) elaborates, '[p]aradoxically, hope requires a public history that refuses to disavow despair, resisting the allure of inscribing events with consoling transcendent meanings that erase a complex and contradictory finitude, one that can neither be escaped nor overcome' (p. 202). The stolen water that fills the reflective pools of the CMHR's Garden of Contemplation, in other words, should perhaps invite us to find renewed motivation for structural change through our despair, rather than console us. Instead of attempting to imbue the pools with a transcendent feeling of universalized optimism, what if visitors were asked to dwell with the more complex and inescapable reality of how the water comes to fill the pools, and what its presence in the CMHR's Garden means for residents of SL40? It remains to be seen how the CMHR will respond to the interventions offered by members of SL40, but if it attempts to recognize and acknowledge the historical harms to the community without also finding a way to address the ongoing theft of water or the community's present and ongoing calls for justice, then the creative economy (and the CMHR's participation in it) seems likely to only perpetuate a version of memory entrepreneurship incapable of serving as a provocation for more substantive forms of decolonial justice.

Notes

1. See the advertisement of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) as an 'amazing gift' available online (CMHR, 2014b). We provide a closer analysis of this advertisement in the next section.

2. For their important critical responses to the rapidly growing popularity (and appropriation or misuse) of the term 'indigenizing', we are indebted to conversations with Dr Vanessa Watts, Academic Director of Indigenous Studies at McMaster University, as well as to a Twitter thread on this topic posted by Dr Eve Tuck (2017), Associate Professor of Critical Race and Indigenous Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. See also Elina Hill (2012).

3. The bronzed moccasin print is, to date, the only representation in the museum of the extensive collection of Indigenous artefacts uncovered during the museum-commissioned archaeological survey of the land on which it was built. See Lamontagne (2014).

4. The CMHR's gift shop or 'Boutique' carries a selection of items deemed 'ethical and sustainable', including children's educational toys, books and stationary, clothing, jewellery, stylized home décor items, and other souvenirs like a miniature chocolate replica of the museum itself (CMHR, 2017a). Some of these items are identified as being made by Indigenous artists and designers, or 'fair trade' producers from the global south. Interestingly, for a period of time that coincided with the museum's 'Canada 150' showcase celebrating the sesquicentennial anniversary of Canadian Confederation, t-shirts emblazoned with 'Got Water? Thank Shoal Lake 40' appeared for sale right next to t-shirts emblazoned with the Government of Canada's official 'Canada 150' logo featuring its maple leaf graphic. The curious appearance of the Shoal Lake t-shirts (with no contextualization) points on the one hand to the museum's recognition and acknowledgement of the community's water sovereignty struggle. On the other hand, it is perhaps telling that Shoal Lake remains an exhibitionary silence in the rest of the museum, its representation reduced here to a commodity for sale in the gift shop (even if, hypothetically, the proceeds from the t-shirts, which are produced by the community itself, may have been returned to the community, in terms of a redistributive gesture such a move would still be much more tokenistic than structural).

5. See Rosanna Deerchild (2016), whose talk was offered in response to how her experiences of racism in Winnipeg were represented in Nancy Macdonald's (2015) exposure on Winnipeg racism published in *Maclean's* magazine.

6. Efforts to recover the bodies of missing Winnipeggers from the Red and Assiniboine rivers are being led by 'Drag the Red', a grassroots group of predominantly Indigenous volunteers who have been dragging the river since 2014. For more information, see the group's Facebook page (Drag the Red!, 2019), numerous news stories or Erika MacPherson and Katherena Vermette's (2017) National Film Board of Canada documentary, This River.

7. See also Gill (2002) for a critical reading of the Manitoba Hydro Act and its impact on Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba.

8. As recently reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Freedom Road is inching towards its last phase of development, the Manitoba portion of the highway that will connect the community of Shoal Lake 40 to the TransCanada highway. The road is due for completion in March 2019, according to the *Press*, after years of lobbying by the community and negotiations that have resulted in an agreement between Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg, and Ottawa with each pledging to fund part of the 24 km project. Ottawa agreed to pay $20 million, while the province and the city put in $10 million each (see Barerra, 2018; Kives, 2015).

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