

Le 400e:



Missing History in Québec's
year-long "celebrations"

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We are pleased to be associated with the Société du 400e anniversaire de Québec and to contribute in our way to the success and scope of this historic rendezvous. Our Nation, proud of its history and heritage, is delighted with this opportunity to share its rich culture. And, with our new tourist infrastructures in place, we are thrilled to celebrate this encounter that has been taking place for close to 400 years... ¹

– *Marcel Godbout, President of the Office du tourisme de Wendake.*

What's to celebrate? Theft of our land? Vandalism? Plagues? Genocide? Complete denial of our existence? Establishment of twisted and diseased European social customs on our land? Pollution and destruction of our environment? We would have all been better off if the French and English had stayed home and cured their sicknesses instead of contaminating the rest of the world? ²

– *Kahentinetha Horn, Mohawk Nation News*

Ah, le 400e... On December 31st, 2007, in the heart of Old Quebec City, throngs of citizens cheered exploding fireworks to welcome not only the New Year, but also the beginning of an almost year-long “celebration” to mark the 400th anniversary of the city's “founding”. It has been being billed as the biggest event in Canada running up to the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, and the allocated budget is over \$95 million dollars³. The scale of the “celebrations” is stupefying: throughout the year the city will experience “historical re-enactments” and military parades, a Solemn Mass for the International Eucharist Congress, shows by Celine Dion, Robert Lepage, and the *Cirque du Soleil* – and all sorts of other spectacular activities. However, despite the lavishness of the “celebrations”, the *Globe and*

¹Office du tourisme de Wendake. October 19, 2007 Press Release: “The First Nations Cultural Experience at the Heart of the Wendake Program for 2008”

² “QUEBEC CITY WANTS TO CELEBRATE 400 YEARS ANNIVERSARY OF CARNAGE, GENOCIDE & DEATH OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE”. Mohawk Nation News. January 3, 2008

³ Séguin, Rhéal "The Big 4-0-0", Globe and Mail, Saturday, January 4, 2008

Mail noted that “there is still no consensus in partisan circles as to what exactly is being celebrated this year – the founding of a city, the birthplace of the Quebec nation or the beginning of Canada?⁴” Politics has played a central role in these “celebrations”. Governments on federal, provincial, and municipal levels have all associated themselves with and supported the festivities. Indeed, there have been ongoing public fights on the international stage about ownership of the “celebrations”, with the federal government in Ottawa sparring against separatists in Quebec⁵. While there will be hundreds, if not thousands of events commemorating the history of Quebec City within various political frameworks and agendas, it is difficult to ignore the fact that certain unsettling historical events are being glossed-over, hidden, ignored, or in some cases, arguably co-opted. What is missing from the glaringly Eurocentric “celebration” is mention of the devastating history of colonization, genocide, displacement, and racism directed against the indigenous peoples. There is little mention of the fact that Quebec City was actually built on the remains of a First Nations town called Stadacona. Henderson (2000) defines Eurocentrism as the cognitive and educational legacy of colonization: “Eurocentrism is an intellectual and educational movement that postulates the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans. It includes a predatory set of assumptions and beliefs about empirical reality of the world” (p. 63). The fact that the city is “celebrating” 400 years of *European* history minimalises the fact that First nations have lived there for thousands of years in their own settlements, such as Stadacona. According to Michael Doxtater, a Mohawk elder and specialist in indigenous knowledge: “Colonial-power-knowledge communicates particular cultural presuppositions that elevate Western knowledge as real knowledge while ignoring other knowledge⁶.” Hidden from the “celebrations” is the long history of land theft, not to mention the amount of destruction and despair brought about

4 Séguin, Rhéal "The Big 4-0-0", *Globe and Mail*, Saturday, January 4, 2008

5 For example, see CBC News. “Bloc attacks Jean's comments on Quebec in France”. May 7, 2008.

6 Doxtater, Michael. “Indigenous Knowledge in the Decolonial Era”. 619

by the European colonists against the First Nations. Ignoring this knowledge validates occupation of the land, glosses-over genocide against the First Nations, and does absolutely nothing for reconciliation or social justice⁷. According to Hingley:

To truly achieve postcolonial status for nations and a global community, as individuals we must embark on personal voyages of introspection. We must face the disturbing fact that factions of society have systematically internalized the colonial mind-set and have overtly or covertly benefited from the oppression and subjugation of other groups of people. [...] We can and must view our neo-colonial oppressor mentalities as holding transformative powers whereby we can consciously change ourselves and the world in which we live. (p 101)

That so many First Nations people still live in deplorable Third World conditions in Canada and Quebec attest to the fact that these important issues, deliberately hidden from history in this “celebration”, are still not resolved⁸. This paper, then, is dedicated to examining some of the “hidden history” with the goal of dynamically integrating it into the 400e “celebrations”. Inspiring critical reflection for the “celebrants” is the goal, hopefully leading towards concrete actions that inspire reconciliation, healing and social justice for the First Nations.

The story of what is now called “Quebec City” goes back thousands of years. Indeed, the area had been inhabited by humans for at least 9,000 years before the French arrived, and possibly as long as 50,000 years⁹. It was the site of Stadacona, an Iroquoian settlement. In 1534 the first French explorer to visit the region, Jacques Cartier, arrived during an unsuccessful attempt to open a new trade route to China. Instead, he declared that the territory was now “New France”. On July 24th, 1534 he planted a cross bearing the arms of France into the ground of the present-day Gaspé peninsula and proceeded to “claim” all of the land for France, despite the objections of Donnacona, the Iroquoian leader of Stadacona. Donnacona was seized by Cartier, coerced, and only later released after grudgingly agreeing

7 See Churchill, Ward. *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present*.

8 See First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health Commission. “The quality of life and health status of First Nations in Quebec” <<http://www.apnql-afnql.com/onu/onu-health.pdf>>

9 See *Canada's First Nations*, page 15.

to let his sons Domagaya and Taignoagy return with Cartier to France, where he hoped to train them as interpreters. On his second voyage in 1535, Cartier travelled up the St. Lawrence River and established a winter camp near Stadacona, which had an estimated population of 500. Cartier hoped Domagaya and Taignoagy would serve France's colonial ambitions, and was dismayed when they stayed loyal to their own people instead of him. He also managed to offend the Stadaconans by establishing his base without their permission, and then travelling upriver to Hochelaga, present-day Montreal, against the wishes of Donnacona. In midwinter more than 50 Stadaconans died, likely due to European diseases to which they had no immunity. Twenty-five French explorers died of scurvy before the natives provided them a medicine made from fronds of white cedar which provided the cure. Despite this show of compassion and hospitality, Cartier continued to destabilize the community. He kidnapped Donnacona, his two sons, and several others, and brought them back to France, leaving Stadacona distraught, leaderless and infected by European diseases. All of Cartier's victims perished in France, apart from one young girl. When Cartier returned to Stadacona in 1541 he discovered a new leader named Agona, and proceeded to lie to the citizens about the fate of the kidnapped captives. Cartier wrote: "I answered [Agona], That Donnacona was dead in France, and that his body rested in the earth, and that the rest stayed there as great Lords, and were married, and would not return back into their Country: the said Agona made no show of anger at all these speeches: and I think he took it so well because he remained Lord and Governor of the country by the death of the said Donnacona." Agona may not have believed Cartier's explanation because hostilities quickly developed between the two camps. Without permission, Cartier established what he hoped would be a permanent colony – Charlesbourg-Royal – at the mouth of the Rivière du Cap-Rouge. During the winter the natives kept the fort under siege with attack after attack, suggesting that the French had overstayed their welcome. Thirty-five French colonists were killed before Cartier finally beat a

retreat back to France, but not before loading up his vessels with tons of what he believed to be mineral riches, but turned out to be iron pyrite, or “fool's gold”. His colonial adventure ended in embarrassment for himself - and destabilization for the Iroquoians of Stadacona.

There was a lull in attempting to settle this area of “New France” for over sixty years, but soon a new colonial figurehead appeared on the horizon. Samuel de Champlain, an explorer and mapmaker, first visited the “New World” in 1603 on a fur-trading expedition. Following his return to France on September 20th, he wrote an account published as *Des Sauvages: ou voyage de Samuel Champlain, de Brouages, faite en la France nouvelle l'an 1603*¹⁰. Instructed by King Henry IV to investigate further, Champlain joined another expedition in the spring of 1604 to “New France”, led by Pierre Dugua, the Sieur de Mons, who received a fur trade monopoly for a large area between the 40th and 45th parallel in northeastern North America on condition he establish a colony there. The first expedition arrived in 1604 and selected a site for settlement on St. Croix Island in the Bay of Fundy. That winter, nearly half the colonists succumbed to the cold and scurvy. According to Mi'kmaq historian Daniel Paul:

The harsh climactic conditions the ill-prepared French found in northeastern North America in the early stages of their colonization efforts seemed to present them with an insurmountable barrier. Those who first settled in Mi'kmaq territory suffered terribly from the cold temperatures and disease and died off in large numbers. Eventually, in a display of compassion, but to the People's long-term detriment, the Mi'kmaq would provide the French with the knowledge and skills they needed to survive in the new environment. (53)

The following summer, after exploring the nearby coasts, Samuel de Champlain and the leader François Pont-Gravé selected a new site, named Port-Royal, across the Bay of Fundy and located in the Annapolis basin. With the establishment of Port Royal in 1605 and the help of the Mi'kmaq people, the French colonists fared much better.

10 Translated as “Of Savages: or travels of Samuel Champlain, of Brouages, made in New France in the year 1603”

On October 15, 1606, Poutrincourt and Champlain left with the ship and most of the men on another colonial adventure – a voyage of exploration. This one almost ended in complete disaster at a place which Champlain calls Port Fortune (at 40 degrees of latitude), where his expedition suffered a number of casualties after fighting with the local Monomoyick First Nation. Champlain left a vivid description of the battle which ensued, and speaks of the loss of a number of his men. He also describes their revenge: in a case of *lex talionis*¹¹, the French returned several days later and butchered several “Savages”, despite the probability of their innocence. Meanwhile, during their absence, Marc Lescarbot, a colonial lawyer and writer, kept the colonists at Port Royal busy tending the garden, improving the buildings, digging a drainage ditch around the Habitation, and opening paths through the woods – *and rehearsing* what would become known as “Canada's first piece of literature and drama” - his very own *Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France*¹². Indeed, it is not well-known that the much-hyped “founder of Quebec”, Samuel de Champlain, had a role to play in this historic theatre performance.

It also takes no great stretch of the imagination to see that *The Theatre of Neptune in New France* is an extremely racist play directed against First Nations (especially the Mi'kmaq people). When put under the critical microscope of postcolonial dramaturgy, it becomes increasingly clear that *The Theatre of Neptune in New France* was designed to subjugate First Nations through the appropriation of their identities, collective voice, and lands. Anton Wagner, editor of *Canada's Lost Plays*, believes that “[f]rom a political point of view, *Théâtre de Neptune* claims the new world for France and announces the submission of its indigenous people to the rule of white man¹³”. Rick Bowers concludes that *The Theatre of Neptune in New France* is:

11 Translated as: “Law of Retaliation”, typically meaning “An Eye for an Eye”

12 Translated as: “*The Theatre of Neptune in New France*”

13 “Nationalism” 23; see also Wagner, “Colonial Quebec”

...[an] accompaniment for a new world perceived as untamed and hostile, but also one in which the French now consider themselves resident ... The mythic and the realistic have been merged to produce the cultural material of the script through an image of hegemonic interaction in which the Europeans predominate... The play thus encodes sweeping and unprecedented social energy: new-world exploration and endurance, European/Native acculturation, cultural hegemony through assertion of the dominant myth...Its author has both a practical and metaphorical purpose in mind (498 - 499).

In an act of cultural appropriation, Lescarbot recast Mi'kmaq lands as "New France", co-opted the chief's title (*Sagamaos*) for the French explorer Sieur de Poutrincourt, and penned four "savages" who all happily welcome and accept European domination. In fact, these "savages" are positively obsequious to the French colonial masters, offering their devotion, servitude, skills, lands, and women. Furthermore, in a similar vein to racist American "blackface" shows, it is assumed that white French sailors played all the roles enacted - including the "savage" characters. Alan Filewod, in *Performing Canada*, explains:

We cannot know for certain who the actors in *The Theatre of Neptune* actually were, because Lescarbot doesn't tell us. There is a popular tradition that Neptune's aboriginal supplicants were portrayed by aboriginal actors...I suggest that it is probable that the "Savages" were performed by Frenchmen because the assumption that the colony's aboriginal neighbours took part in the masque leaves unanswered the question of why they would have. But even if we accept the possibility, the fundamental relationship of aboriginal body and surrogate representation still applies. (xiv)

Through this masquerade and role appropriation, the play attempts to re-frame First Nation cultures into an exploitative Euro-centric social reality, and re-cast aboriginal peoples as subordinates. Finally, this derogatory spectacle was deliberately presented to a Mi'kmaq audience including Membertou, their leader. While Hannah Fournier suggests that "Frenchmen and Native alike must have felt that the great culture of France was powerful indeed to make itself felt in such a place, [inspiring] awe in the hearts of those natives who may have been watching" (5 – 6), perhaps it is more likely that Membertou and his entourage had negative feelings about their roles being appropriated, in what may have appeared to be

a very bizarre and offensive ritual or performance. Filewod asks:

What did they make of this moment, as they saw their identities re-enacted by the colonizers? And what did they understand of the perfectly phrased couplets with which the enacted “Savages” deployed classical allusion to offer their world to the King of France and to promise devotion to “you and your descendants”? We don’t know because of course, nobody asked them. (xiv)

Mi’kmaq historian Daniel Paul suggested to me in an email that: “They thought the white man and his customs strange, but, being such gracious hosts, they would not contradict them, even though they thought them loco.” Filewod suggests:

For [the aboriginals] this was a spectacle of the new and was likely incomprehensible as a performance as well as a text. Two sets of eyes saw two very different events, and this gap between the structures of reception of the colonizers and newly colonized is still very much part of the politics of representation and aboriginality in modern Canada...In this moment of racial impersonation and colonial masquerade, Lescarbot had claimed the new world in a new way by enlisting the spectating bodies and appropriated voices of its inhabitants in his imagined theatre, and he had established the principle that the colonialism of spectacle is the necessary precondition of imperial invasion...[The] colonizing of the cultural imaginary is also a precondition of genocide. (xiv-xv)

The overall subtext of the play appears intended for the First Nations observers: their role as depoliticised “savages” is to sit and watch how the colonial masters expect them to behave, and then follow by example. As the *first* piece of Western literature and theatre created in the so-called “New World”, *The Theatre of Neptune in New France* is a significant entry-point of Western cultural hegemony into First Nation cultures. According to Bowers in “Le Theatre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France: Marc Lescarbot and the New World Masque”:

...the French play by Lescarbot *is* a significant literary and cultural artifact: it represents a social interaction expressed in artistic form. In fact, *Le Théâtre de Neptune*...is an exercise of power to be grasped immediately by French explorer and Micmac native alike... But there is never any doubt as to the dominant cultural ethic. The French both create and benefit from this dramatized celebration of power. (483 – 484)

Douglas Rushkoff speaks of a "viral syringe," an initial event that injects a "media virus" into the social reality of any given community. Once injected, the "virus" proceeds to transform and distort the mediascape, discourses, and culture of the intended social body. In Filewod's analysis of important moments in Canadian theatre, *Performing Canada*, he writes that the play:

...was a defining moment that would be replayed for the next five centuries, a moment in which the theatre enacted an imagined authenticity even as it confirmed the extension of empire by transmuting the work of colonialism into spectacle. (xiii)

Canada's "first piece of drama and literature", as such, set a dangerous precedent based on racism and Euro-centricity¹⁴. Culturally-speaking, Lescarbot's play fits Rushkoff's "viral syringe" concept – jabbing into a prosperous and autonomous civilization, it injected a hegemonic poison that marked the beginnings of a cultural genocide against First Nation peoples, languages, and customs. The performance marked the starting point of Euro-centric cultural imperialism, and Samuel de Champlain played along in the *mis-en-scene*. After remaining at Port Royal until 1607, Champlain returned to France to prepare for his next adventure – the conquest of the St. Lawrence and the "founding" of Quebec. Port Royal was destroyed some years later by the English, leaving Quebec City with the title of "oldest" surviving French settlement in the "New World"¹⁵.

On July 3rd, 1608, Samuel de Champlain "founded" the habitation of Quebec on the north shore where the St. Lawrence river is at its narrowest. Orchards of nut trees grew on a strip of land between the river and the cliff, and Champlain ordered that they be chopped down to make way for his *l'Abitation*. Strategically, this location could enable one to control

14 More dramaturgical and cultural analysis can be found in my paper "Sinking Neptune: A Dramaturgical Analysis".

15 In 1613 English marauder Samuel Argall attacked from Virginia. In 1690 Port Royal was destroyed once and for all by a force sent from New England.

human movement up and down river, giving its occupants considerable power over maritime traffic. This was the site of Stadacona, which had apparently vanished mysteriously. What happened to it, along with the village of Hochelaga (present day Montréal) and 14 other villages noted by Cartier on the north shore of the St. Lawrence, is the subject of much speculation. Theories have been offered that these First Nations Iroquoian communities were wiped out by European diseases, inter-nation warfare, or migration and/or assimilation into other tribes, for largely unknown reasons. The destabilization process of these communities appears to have begun at the moment of European contact, and some surmise led to their rapid extinction. Positing a rapid genocidal demise, Dickason suggests that: “The Iroquoians of the St. Lawrence Valley were somewhat later than the Beothuk¹⁶ in meeting Europeans, but they appeared to have suffered the consequences even more quickly”. Despite the argument put forward by various scientists and archaeologists that the “Iroquoian” people had somehow vanished¹⁷, this notion is disputed by various First Nations people to the present day, who describe the theory as a dubious myth designed to validate European occupation of the land, which could be seen as “empty”. Mohawk Kahentinetha Horn describes this “vanished race” phenomenon in her article “Mythbusters in Montreal”. She describes what happened when visiting an exhibition at Pointe-a-Calière museum in Montreal about the “vanished” Iroquoians:

We complained to the guide that we had not disappeared, that he was not staring at ghosts, that this whole exhibit was misleading and that we are definitely still here. In other words, we were unconvinced by the story of our death. Excited and anxious, security was summoned¹⁸.

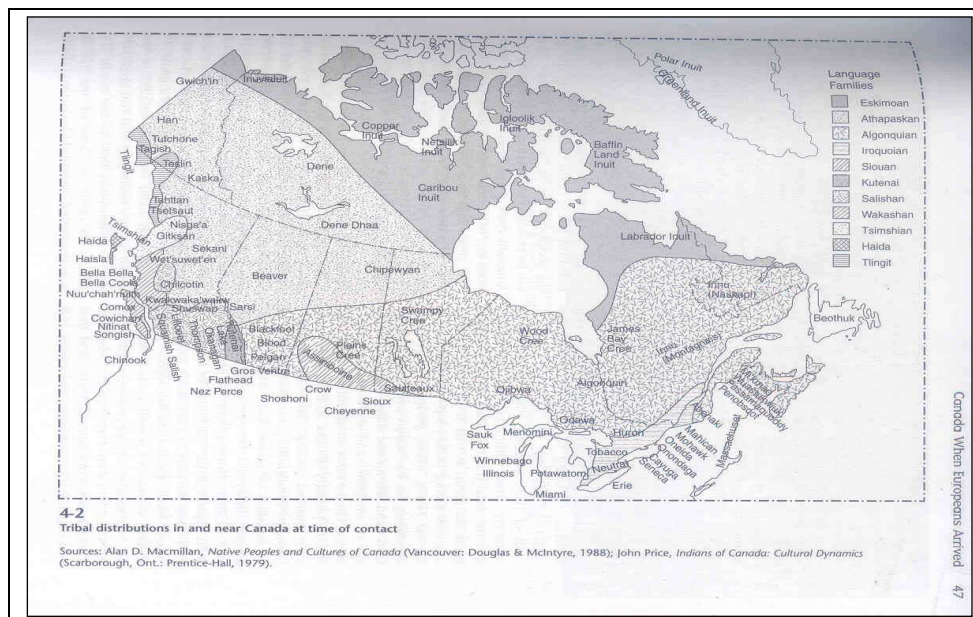
Local Iroquois in present-day Quebec, such as the Mohawk Council of Kahnawá:ke, insist that the area where Stadacona existed was always within the boundaries of their traditional

16 The Beothuck were a First Nation in present-day Newfoundland, who were driven to extinction by Europeans.

17 Trigger and Jamieson are major proponents of this theory.

18 Horn, Kahentinetha. “MythBusters in Montreal”

territory¹⁹. Indeed, far prior to contact with the Europeans, the Iroquois people operated a sophisticated democracy known as the Haudenosaunee, or “People of the Longhouse”, which involved the co-operation and alliance of five and later on six nations²⁰. Conceptually, nations of the Haudenosaunee followed a constitution known as the Great Law of Peace, or the “Gayanashagowa”, and welcomed its nations to live symbolically under one metaphorical “longhouse”. Member nations originally included the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk; the Tuscarora joined afterwards, bringing the number of nations to six. The Seneca were the appointed guardians of the western door of the tribal “longhouse”, whereas the Mohawk, also known as “People of the Flint”, were the guardians of the eastern door, the extremities of which included Stadacona.



Pre-contact nations in present-day Canada

Champlain hoped that the Quebec habitation colony would take root and become a

19 According to the Mohawk Council of Kahnawá:ke “[Our] traditional territory was situated between the fur trading posts established at Quebec City by the French and at Albany by the British.”

20 Oral tradition suggests the Haudenosaunee was formed in 1142. See Fields and Mann, *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol.21, #2.

permanent launching point for colonization, and he went to great efforts to ensure its survival. Fortifications were built for protection, and during the summer of 1609 Champlain attempted to cement better relations with some regional First Nations involved in the fur trade. He formed alliances with the Wendat nation (whom the French called “Huron”), the Algonquin, the Montagnais, and the Maliseet. These uneasy alliances were based on a “serious misunderstanding” according to sociologist Denys Delâge; whereas the First Nations saw the French as another tribe within the mosaic of nations with whom they could ally, trade with and intermarry, the French felt they were entitled to the land based on the Euro-centric view that the First Nations “savages” were not only incapable of farming, but were also non-Christian “pagans”. The French felt that these so-called “savages” could be subdued, converted to Christianity, and then “civilized”²¹. Indeed, despite the fact the First Nations had been living in harmony with the land of thousands of years, and had extensive farming knowledge²², in 1603 Champlain wrote: “I think that if anyone were to show them how to live, and teach them how to till the ground, and other matters, they would learn very well...”

21 See Delâge, Denys. “Uneasy Allies: They traded, and intermarried, but the relationship between the First Nations and the French was based on a serious misunderstanding”. The Beaver. February-March 2008. pp. 14-20.

22 The “Three Sisters” of corn, beans, and squash have been grown by various First Nations in the St. Lawrence valley well before European contact.



Militaristic self-portrait of Samuel de Champlain killing Iroquois

Securing native allies was deemed important by European powers for trade, protection, and later on, as instruments in various colonial wars²³. Once Champlain had cemented these arrangements, he was led to the Mohawk village of Ticonderoga by his new allies, the Wendat (Huron), where he provoked a state of war against the Iroquois nations of the Haudenosaunee that lasted at least until “The Great Peace of Montreal” in 1701²⁴. Of the battle in 1609, he wrote: “I held my arquebus against my cheek and aimed directly at one of the three chiefs. Suddenly, two fell to the ground and one of their companions was hurt; the latter died shortly thereafter from his wounds²⁵.” Following the battle, a Mohawk prisoner-of-war was viciously tortured. Champlain finished him off with a bullet from his arquebus.

²³ Beginning in 1689 European powers would try and play the First Nations against each other in what was the first of four Intercolonial Wars, pitting the French and their native allies against the English and theirs, namely the Iroquois of the Haudenosaunee.

²⁴ On August 4th 1701, the “Great Peace of Montreal” was signed in an effort to end the endemic warfare between France, her allies, and the Iroquois. 39 First Nations and representatives of New France signed the document.

²⁵ The only reliable image of Champlain, his 1609 self-portrait, depicts him in firing his arquebus into a party of Iroquois.

From the beginnings of the settlement of Quebec, war against the Iroquois was a permanent feature in the French colonial efforts to secure the fur trade and First Nations' lands. The French would later penetrate deep into Haudenosaunee territory with the establishment of Trois-Rivieres in 1634, followed by Ville-Marie (later renamed Montreal) in 1642, which was actually “founded” by a group known as the *Société de Notre Dame de Montréal pour la conversion des Sauvages de Nouvelle-France*²⁶. The Iroquois would ally themselves at first with the Dutch, and later the English. Renowned as dedicated warriors, the Iroquois would go on to upset and delay colonial ambitions by ceaselessly fighting off the French and their allies and by launching stealthy raids and using other guerilla tactics. The French responded by importing the 1000-troop Carignan-Salières Regiment from France in 1665, who proceeded with a genocidal campaign of locating and burning Iroquois villages down to the ground, after butchering or dispersing the inhabitants. A Euro-centric precedent was set. From those times forward, there has always been an uneasy relationship between the Iroquois and the various colonial authorities – French, British, then later Canadian and *Québécois*. This uneasiness is rooted in historical trauma, unresolved issues, and Euro-centric discrimination, and manifests itself amongst many First Nations people and communities. Many First Nation peoples continue to suffer from various forms of colonialism-inspired oppression, which continue unobstructed to this very day across Quebec and Canada²⁷. Furthermore, the Euro-centric cultural presuppositions also manifest themselves in dominant institutions such as schools, the media, and public offices, historically instilling in the population of European-descent racist attitudes, a sense of superiority, and disregard for the Other, including the First Nations. To illustrate my point, in 1933 archaeologists unearthed the

26 Translated as “The Society of Gentlemen and Ladies of Our Lady of Montreal for the Conversion of Savages in New France”.

27 For example, the Canadian government is one of only 4 nations in the world refusing to sign the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights.

remains of an aboriginal settlement near the Quebec village of Lanoraie. Not only was Lanoraie built on the remains of a First Nations village, but when residents caught wind, according to Victor Morin of the Canadian Antiquarian and Numismatic Society, “the inevitable result happened”:

...the following Sunday, the whole village of Lanoraie was digging on the site of the Indian village to discover objects of archaeological interest; they disputed between themselves the possession of their “finds” and they even smashed the skull of a most interesting skeleton...The foxy owner of the farm on which the place is located made the best of it by charging ten cents per person for admission...”²⁸

Ironically, while “celebrations” are frequent occurrences for anniversaries of European settlements, such as Quebec's 400e, there is very little public commemoration or acknowledgement of the first inhabitants or their settlements. Indeed, historically-speaking, the government has supported “celebrations” of European settlements while simultaneously implementing policies aimed at destroying First Nations culture, history, and identity. In fact, the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, recently apologized to indigenous victims of state-sponsored “Residential Schools” not only for abuses suffered but also for attempts at cultural genocide and assimilation²⁹. While the Euro-centric have historically patted themselves on the back with commemorations and “celebrations” for past colonial efforts, this happens all too often at the expense of the victims of historical European subjugation.

Concerning First Nations attitudes towards the 400e “celebrations”, there appears to be conflicting views. It is interesting to note that the Huron-Wendat First Nation, based in Wendake, a village 10 kilometers north of Quebec City, has agreed to play “Host Nation” to the almost year-long 400e festivities. The story of the Huron-Wendat First Nation is one of tragedy, migration, and survival. In the early 17th century, the Wendats, or “island dwellers”

28 Morin, Victor. “Achéologie: Discovery of the site of an Indian village at Lanoraie”. *The Canadian Antiquarian and Numismatic Journal*. Vol. IV, Nos 1,2,3,4. 1933. p 118.

29 Stephen Harper issued an apology to aboriginal victims of Canadian Residential Schools on June 11, 2008.

numbered more than 22,000 and lived in the Great Lakes region. There they formed a nation comprising 20 to 25 villages, where they practised farming, hunting and fishing. Wendake was a confederacy of five Wendat nations located on a peninsula jutting into the southern end of Georgian Bay on Lake Huron in present-day Ontario. Located at a crossroads of trade routes, the Wendats became indispensable middlemen in the fur trade and the main suppliers to the French. In 1615 Champlain arrived there with Jesuit missionary Joseph Le Caron, in hopes of "Christianizing" the very people who supplied the bulk of furs in the fur trade. As an international order, the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, operated like an army devoted to spreading Catholicism throughout the world. Encouraged by Champlain, who saw conversion to Christianity as a first step in the colonisation of the North American native people, the Jesuits travelled from village to village endeavouring to perfect their knowledge of the Wendat language, learning the aboriginal customs, and tirelessly preaching to the indigenous people. Their Superior, Father Jérôme Lalemant, dreamed of "building a house apart, remote from the vicinity of the villages, that would serve among other things for the retreat and meditation of our evangelistic labourers." This dream was realized as a wilderness mission rose on the banks of the Isaraqui (Wye) River in 1639. Clergy and laymen travelled from France to construct the mission, which was named Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, using the French name for the Wendat people. While the French were busy attempting to "Christianize" the Wendat, the Iroquois of the Haudenosaunee, supported by the Dutch, were trying to thwart French colonialism by attacking French and allied positions. Sainte-Marie-among-the-Hurons was a frequent target, and over the years eight French missionaries, later to be "Canonized" by the Catholic Church as "martyrs", were killed in the fighting. Under growing pressure and attacks from the Iroquois, in the spring of 1649 Jesuit missionaries, their helpers and Wendat followers withdrew from Sainte-Marie and burned it to the ground. They fled to St. Joseph (now Christian) Island where together they embarked to establish a new Sainte-Marie

settlement. The following spring, after a terrible winter of starvation and constant attack, the Frenchmen returned to Quebec with the surviving Christian Wendat in tow. The French in Quebec City were reportedly embarrassed, and the Wendat were settled on l'île d'Orléans. The Iroquois demanded that the Wendats assimilate into the Haudenosaunee, as was customary when moving into the territory of another First Nation, and were subsequently attacked when they refused, devastating the community. The surviving Wendat eventually gathered at Jeune-Lorette in 1697, and began attempts to rebuild their nation. However, due to ongoing colonialism, the Wendat nation soon faced serious risks of total assimilation. In 1760, following the defeat of "New France" by the British, James Murray was appointed the Governor of Quebec. The Murray Treaty, made in September 1760 during the final week of conflict between the French and the British, included a form of a *laissez-passer* which guaranteed the Wendats safe passage to their village at Jeune-Lorette. The document preserved the Wendats' right to trade with the British as well as their customary practices and Catholic religion. James Murray signed the treaty on behalf of the British Crown. In 1762 Murray estimated Wendat numbers to be less than 100, suggesting that the tribe had all but disappeared. He claimed: "They have at present but 32 Warriors and the whole Village, Men, Women, and Children are short of 100³⁰." In an 1836 government report by the Executive Council of Lower Canada, officials declared that the Hurons were too *métissés* (mixed-blood): "By the Intermixture of White Blood they have now so lost the original Purity of Race that they cannot properly be considered as Indians³¹." The Huron-Wendat even lost their language, as historian Marguerite Vincent Tehariolina elaborated in 1984: "For the past 100 years, there has been no one, for all practical purposes, who fluently speaks Huron, or at least not in the

30 General Murray's Report of the State of the Government of Quebec in Canada, June 5th, 1762.

31 Report of a Committee of the Executive Council, [...] of the 7th October 1836, respecting the Indian Department.

Huron village of Lorette³².” In a strange way, even though the Wendat had done what Champlain initially expected of the First Nations – settled down, adopted Catholicism, intermarried and embraced the French language – attempts were still made to extinguish the indigeneity of their community. Against all odds, over the centuries the Huron-Wendat have managed to remain a recognized First Nation in Canada. In fact, the Murray Treaty was confirmed as legitimate by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of *R. v. Sioui* in 1995.



Bilingual Wendat/English Stop Sign in Wendake

According to current Grand Chief Max “One-Onti” Gros-Louis: “We are the only Huron-Wendat Nation in Canada. The number of members is 2,994, of which 1,299 reside on the Wendake territory. Approximately 400 non-Native residents also reside in our Reserve.”³³ Gros-Louis recently told the so-called Quebec “Reasonable Accommodation” commission that: “the Jesuits did a good job with us. Most Hurons are Catholics³⁴.”

Today, as the “Host Nation” of the Quebec's 400e, the Huron-Wendat appear to be very supportive of the “celebrations”. The *Office du tourisme de Wendake* has been busy promoting the 400e “celebrations”, and is welcoming visitors to Wendake's brand new Hotel/Museum

32 Quoted in *Beyond Words*. Issue 2. 2008.

33 http://www.wendake.ca/nation/eng/nation_eng.htm

34 *The Gazette*. “Lapsed catholics at root of diversity debate: cardinal”. Oct. 30, 2007.

complex (*Hôtel-Musée Premières Nations*), an amphitheatre, and other tourist facilities. Grand Chief Max “One-Onti” Gros-Louis even opened the 400e “celebrations” with a traditional ceremony where he burned sweetgrass and welcomed the throng of visitors and spectators.



Grand Chief Max “One-Onti” Gros-Louis opening the 400e “celebrations”³⁵

Meanwhile, the government of Canada has been busy promoting, among other things, the historical and present “importance” of all things military, once again overlooking the contradiction of “celebrating” institutions known to have oppressed the First Nations historically. Apparently overlooking the validity of thousands of years of human habitation prior to European contact, Josée Verner, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, suggested that: “The founding of Québec City in 1608 was a historic moment for Canada and North America. It is from that date that we really started to become what we are today,” during a speech in September of 2007 to announce “Military Programming for Celebrations of the 400th Anniversary of Québec City”. She went on to declare:

35 http://www.ocol.gc.ca/newsletter_cyberbulletin/huron_e.htm

....I can assure you that the Canadian Forces will be joining in...the military programming is filled with excitement. It showcases the military heritage of Québec City, a very rich heritage. If we could go back through the time tunnel just travelled by Canadian Forces members before our eyes, we would witness a series of encounters, battles, and migrations that have shaped Canada and America. There are few North American cities that can celebrate such a past....I cherish this heritage, and I invite all Canadians, young and old, to come celebrate with their families and friends the historical and military past of Québec City in 2008.³⁶

The federal government's aspirations to glorify the military as an integral component of the “celebrations”, as outlined in Verner's speech, raises serious questions about what is being “celebrated” versus what has been forgotten, neglected, glossed-over, or co-opted. Euro-centric assumptions litter the federal government's communications and programming, and nowhere is mention of the historically genocidal conduct against First Nations, nor the ongoing conflicts and issues affecting many First Nations communities. The provincial government's planning appears to be equally Euro-centric. Regarding the actual July 3rd “founding” date, there is a \$3.5 million spectacle called “Rencontres/Encounters” that will play for 3 days in front of the government's seat of power, the Quebec Parliament Building. Billed as being on the same scale as “Olympic opening and closing ceremonies”, the outdoor spectacle features:

Samuel de Champlain in person, portrayed by Yves Jacques, an actor originally from Québec City, will recount 400 years of history through ten impressionist and musical tableaux...Fifteen singers accompanied by 15 musicians, 6 vocalists, 25 acrobats, a number of dancers and performers along with a chorus of adults and children will bring this show, based on the history of the Capital, but also inspired by the history of Québec and the rich heritage of the French-speaking world, to life...

Despite the fact that the show is described as being “a series of portrayals of the great encounters among the peoples that have marked our history: the First Nations, France,

36 Verner, Josée. “Military Programming for Celebrations of the 400th Anniversary of Québec City”.

Acadia, Great Britain, Scotland and Ireland,” it is clear that with Samuel de Champlain as the narrator and colonial government buildings as the backdrop, the story is told from a Eurocentric viewpoint:

The show opens on the façade of the Parliament Building with acrobats, disguised as the bronze statues that adorn the building, personifying the Europeans that set out to discover a new world. On the ground level, the Tourny fountain is at the centre of a 360-degree stage, on which is set a dome representing the globe. On this structure, two shapes representing Québec and Europe move, shift and illuminate throughout the tableaux.³⁷

This signature glossy spectacle promises to be colourful, musical, non-linear, highly visual - and not-at-all-critical. Unfortunately, while watching frolics dancers personifying “Quebec” and “Europe” on the stage may be eye-catching, it does little to explain the negative effects of colonization, nor the ongoing destructive influences on First Nations communities. Furthermore, there are hundreds of more Euro-centric events scheduled, all carefully laid out on the Société du 400e anniversaire de Québec's website.

This leads to the obvious question as to why Grand Chief Max “One-Onti” Gros-Louis and the Huron-Wendat nation are supporting, indeed, even “hosting” this so-called “celebration”. In doing so, is an illusion of harmony between Quebec/Canada and the First Nations created at the expense of the truth? Aboriginal Healing Foundation President, Georges Erasmus, notes that truth-telling is a necessary step in repairing the broken relationship between Canada and indigenous people. He cites historic trauma, institutional physical and sexual abuse, forced removal of children, relocation of communities, and forced assimilation as being at the root of many of today's challenges faced by First Nation peoples. Erasmus feels that healing of these deep historic wounds is critical to our ability to create a better future, and that reconciliation is critical to our collective ability to move to a

³⁷ Press Release from Société du 400e anniversaire de Québec: “Rencontres/Encounters - The Commemorative Show for the 400th Anniversary of Québec City”. March 26, 2008.

better relationship. "Canada has much to gain from a meaningful, effective grassroots healing and reconciliation movement," suggested Erasmus, before adding: "We have reached a point where the choices are clear: we can perpetuate the wounds of the past or we can move forward. There's no third way³⁸." One wonders if a military parade and re-enactment of Champlain's colonial "founding" is still appropriate in the 21st Century, given the tragic history and ongoing difficulties faced by many First Nations. Would not a procession of mourning for the victims of colonialism and genocide be more appropriate? In glorifying and "celebrating" the colonial and military history of European conquest, it appears that instead of "moving forward", the levels of government have decided to "perpetuate the wounds of the past." The unfortunate situation makes it all the more urgent to shed some much-needed light on this glossy Eurocentric 400^e "celebration". In examining what is being highlighted versus what is being hidden, it is possible to challenge deeply ingrained Eurocentric cultural presuppositions, alienating practices and discriminatory behavioural patterns.

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38 Press Release from Aboriginal Healing Foundation, March 3, 2008.

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