

Shaping the Landscape: A Progressive Conceptualisation of Local History Museums in the  
Algonquin Highlands

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### Abstract

In small towns, local history museums often play a vital role in the preservation of heritage. These local history museums are responsible for ensuring that this heritage is maintained for future generations. The Dorset Heritage Museum and the Haliburton Highlands Museum are two such museums located in the Township of the Algonquin Highlands. Both museums have become important pillars within their communities and have made various efforts to remain relevant to the larger community. In doing so, they have altered their programming and exhibits to suit the needs of those who are visiting. By discussing the origins of local history museums, it is apparent that these early museums were created to preserve the "disappearing" heritage of Canada's early pioneers. In the contemporary sense, this aim to preserve an aspect of a community's existence that is slowly "disappearing" is still very much a dominant factor which impacts the ways in which local history museums continue to be run. In keeping with "tradition", the Dorset Heritage Museum and the Haliburton Highlands Museum relegate any existence of Aboriginal people to something in the distant past. The stories told in the museums relates to the progress of the early pioneer settlers within the Algonquin Highlands, an improvement that followed the Aboriginal historical presence. This perspective persists, even though there has been much scholarship that points to the need for a greater acknowledgement of the continued presence of Aboriginal society in the area, a recognition, if invoked, that could serve to address past injustices and improve the relationship between settlers and Aboriginal people. The ways in which the two museums describe the heritage of the region directly impacts the way in which visitors and long-term residents understand the surrounding landscape.

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## Foreword

This major paper (MP) was completed with the aim of the researcher to critically examine the role that local history museums play within the creation of historical narrative. It examines the ways in which the cottager landscape of the Township of Algonquin Highlands is interpreted as a result of this created historical narrative. This research emerged from my own personal experiences and relationship with the study area. For decades, my family has called the Algonquin Highlands home. Over a number of decades my ancestors lived, worked, and tried to survive life in the town of Dorset, Ontario. As a child, I was taught to be proud of the effort my ancestors made in being able to thrive in an environment that was known to be inhospitable. This was not something that was ever questioned, and was an area of pride which reinforced aspects of my own identity. As I began my postsecondary education, it was fascinating to see elements of my own identity embedded within the historical narratives that were being taught within the majority of my classes. As I made progress throughout my academic career I learned to challenge these narratives and to take into consideration other elements of history that are unknown.

The overall aim of my Plan of Study (POS) was to learn about different ways in which heritage can be preserved. This led to an extensive study about cultural landscapes. The importance of relationships with the physical environment were considered, when previously it was not something that was considered within my research. In trying to connect cultural landscapes within the Canadian context, what became apparent was that there needed to be more understanding about Aboriginal cultures within what we now identify as Canada. This was done through course work and independent research. What became a key aspect to my understanding was that there is a large gap between Canada's Aboriginal population and the colonial settlers.

Questioning how contemporary Canada is maintaining aspects of Aboriginal cultures led my POS to include discussion of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, intangible cultural heritage, and acts of commemoration. Each case study that was researched demonstrated the same ideas, that Aboriginal existence is relegated to the past and that, for many decades, the only aspects of heritage worth preserving are examples of moments or places significant to the creation of Canadian identity. This MP emerged from the questions posed in my POS. Is there opportunity to reevaluate the ways in which popular historical narratives are commemorated? And, how are current bodies of commemoration identifying significant aspects of heritage? This MP attempts to answer these questions, thus partially fulfilling the components of my POS.

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## 1. Introduction

The decision to designate a site as being a significant example of a region's cultural heritage is extremely political. Cultural landscape designation has gained popularity over the last few decades as there has been a surge in the environmental benefits to preserving cultural landscapes. Moving beyond just the ecological benefits, it has been determined that the cultural heritage related to human settlement is something that should be preserved. Of course, this is dependent on which human settlement, and who determines it to be significant. The inspiration for this research emerged from the author's own personal experiences with the Algonquin Highlands. As a child and into my adult years, I spent a large portion of my life exploring the Algonquin Highlands and the surrounding areas. These trips were not cottager experiences, as I had family members who called the region home. For a number of generations, my family lived and worked in Dorset and the surrounding townships. My own personal self-identity became shaped by the surrounding physical and cultural landscape. Through learning about the history of the township, I was able to identify the place of my ancestors within a traditional narrative. For a period of time, I accepted what I was viewing as factual, and even began to feel a sense of pride connected to the ways in which my ancestors were able to "conquer" this inhospitable wilderness. In no way did I ever try to question what I was seeing and experiencing. It was not until I had the opportunity to begin my postsecondary education that I began to question what I had come to accept as an authentic retelling of not only my personal history, but the history of the larger region.

This concept of authenticity became to cloud what once was my open acceptance of the historical narratives of the Algonquin Highlands. As a part of my lived experience, I consumed the cultural elements that surrounded me. Included in this "culture" were aspects of Indigenous

culture. These were composed of tangible souvenirs that were marketed and sold as "traditional" Indigenous items at "trading posts" located along major routes throughout Muskoka and the surrounding regions. Items such as tomahawks and moccasins were present alongside wilderness themed items, beach towels, postcards, and fudge. What I came to realize, through discussion and personal research, was that these souvenirs were representative of a Western perspective of what Indigenous culture is. I also came to realize that this Western perspective was the only presence of Indigenous culture that I could see within the landscape that I had come to accept without question as a child. Thoroughly convinced that this could not and should not be the only representation of Indigenous people within this area, I sought to visit locations within the Algonquin Highlands that were viewed as being culturally significant in order to find other narratives that may not have been deemed important enough to make it into the vastly understood popular culture of the Algonquin Highlands.

The aim of this paper is to introduce two local history museums in Northern Ontario. Both are situated in the Algonquin Highlands, a popular vacation destination for Canadians and international tourists alike. This region has become recognized as one of Ontario's leading cottager landscapes. This recognition, however, has not come without contestation. Local history museums play a significant role within this cottager landscape. Both the Dorset Museum and the Haliburton Highlands Museum operate as local institutions that create and market public memory and identity to both tourists and locals who have visited these sites. By discussing the way in which memory and tradition have been created, this provides the opportunity to explore the narratives that have been eliminated from the commonly understood heritage of the Algonquin Highlands. Through analyzing the physical exhibits, extensive interviews with various respondents at both museums, and participating in events hosted by the two museums, I

explore the relationships between local history museums and their supporters, staff and visitors and they interact with the surrounding "cottager" or "wilderness" landscapes. Many questions emerge based on these notions. Is the landscape a fabrication reflecting a romanticized vision of heritage? As well, is there any way to determine whether the act of designating a cultural landscape as significant, such as a specific "Aboriginal cultural landscape"? Can silenced narratives become a part of the more popular historical rhetoric of the region? Will they be able to "undo" centuries of colonization? Or will they merely reinforce colonial concepts?

## 2.Methodology

It is always difficult to determine which research methods are appropriate for a particular project. According to Kitchen and Tate (2000), "we all have our own beliefs about the world and the right and wrong way to do things, including research" (p.19). This can create a problem when trying to present research findings to a vast audience in a clear and concise way. The research conducted for this paper utilizes the concept of progressive conceptualization to analyze the case study. I use both theory and context to build my case where I scale my explanations and analysis at different levels, theoretical and spatial.

I begin my analysis by reviewing the literature on the emergence of cultural landscape studies, the recognition of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, the role of local history museums, and the push towards historical preservation. I then use an ethnographic approach to explore my case studies. Ethnographic research allows for the body to become a "site of knowing" (Conquergood, p.180). In this way, it values the actions and opinions of participants. Ethnography can be

described as an "embodied practice", meaning that researchers become completely enmeshed in their research by becoming observers through participation.

Three months prior to the summer season, I began to send out a number of emails introducing myself to a number of local history museums operating within the Muskoka area and the surrounding regions. Using this method I was able to establish a rapport with two local history museums; the Haliburton Highlands Museum and the Dorset Museum. I originally knew that I wanted to include the Dorset Museum in my research in some way. For a number of generations, my family had been residents of Dorset, Ontario, and so I felt a greater connection to Dorset than any other town that I might have had the opportunity to work with. Both the Dorset Museum and the Haliburton Highlands Museum agreed to meet up with me at the beginning of the summer season. For these interviews I met with two respondents. From the Dorset Museum, I met with a member of the board and from the Haliburton Highlands Museum I met with the museum director.

By conducting interviews, researchers become privy to a vast array of information that may not have been apparent strictly through participant observation. The importance of interviews in research projects is crucial, however simple interviews do not suffice. According to Heyl (2007), in order for an interview to be useful, researchers must establish a respectful relationship with those they wish to meet with (p.369). By establishing this relationship, there is the opportunity for an openness to develop where the questions being asked of the interviewee can turn into dialogue, which is where the interviewees can really gain a voice. Silverman (2000) writes that it is important for a researcher to read the respondents' answers in one of two ways. First, there is the option of exploring an external reality meaning that what is taken from an interview is a discussion relating to facts and events. The second option is the exploration of the

respondents' internal experience. This pertains to the feelings, meanings, and identity that the respondent holds (p.122). Rather than draw on either of these methods of analysis, Silverman offers an alternative that allows the researcher to treat the "interview data as accessing various stories or narratives through which people describe their world. This approach claims that, by abandoning the attempt to treat respondents' accounts as potentially 'true' pictures of 'reality', we open up for analysis the culturally rich methods through which interviewers and interviewees, in concern, generate plausible accounts of the world (p.123).

Seasonality plays a big role in assessing the ways in which the larger community and the local history museums interact with each other. The summer season is the time of year when there are the most visitors to Muskoka and the surrounding areas. This is due to the role Muskoka has as a tourism and recreation hot spot. In order to determine the way in which both visitors and locals interact with the museum and the larger landscape it was best to observe and participate in events hosted by each museum. These events are important because they are a part of museum programming, determined ahead of time and used as both an outreach and advertisement tool. Those who attend these events are both local residents who look forward to attending every year and visitors who may be stepping into the museum for the first time. The opinions of those who attend these events are important to understanding the role that the local history museums play within the community. It is also important to understand the ways in which the local history museums portray heritage.

According to Tedlock (2000), "Participant observation was originally forged as a method in the study of small, relatively homogenous societies" (p.465). The role of the ethnographer was to live among a society for what would be considered "an extended period of time, learn the local language, participate in daily life, and steadily observe" (p.465). Tedlock goes on to discuss the

way in which participant observation can almost be considered an oxymoron as it implies both "emotional involvement and objective detachment" (p.465). It is commonly understood that all social research is a form of participant observation because "we cannot study the social world without being a part of it" (p.466). Building on this, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2007) identify the ethnographer as both "scribe as well as quasi insider of both [an] exotic and familiar world" (p.352), and that because of this the ways in which the researchers record their field notes, including personal feelings and emotions is extremely important.

Interviews and participant observation were selected as the methods of choice because it was the aim of the researcher to create a research project that questioned a number of topics including race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, age, and other topics that are traditionally viewed as being exclusionary. Although not all of these topics are discussed, that is not to say that they do not play a large factor in the ways in which the cultural landscape in question is translated. No matter how much a researcher may try to be objective in the way they conduct research, they are all born with biases towards different issues. This research recognizes that "different kinds of people possess different assumptions about the world" (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011). The aim of this research is to challenge the white and dominantly Christian perspective about wilderness, settlement, and tourism in the cultural landscape that is dominantly recognized as being prime recreational space.

### 3. Theory and Context

#### i. Cultural Landscapes

The study of landscapes has undergone vast changes since its inception as a recognized field of study in the early 20th century. Earlier visions of landscape followed the constant study

and attempt at understanding the world through geography, with a strong research methodology rooted in observation via fieldwork. Early landscape scholar Carl Sauer proclaimed the importance of fieldwork in 1963 by stating "What I am trying to say is the conviction that geography is first of all knowledge gained by observation...in other words the principal training of the geographer should come, wherever possible, by doing fieldwork" (Wylie, 2006, p.19). Sauer began teaching at the University of Berkeley in the 1920s and inspired a number of scholars to further pursue landscapes studies. He studied the ways in which certain past "cultures", mostly Indigenous groups, were able to "climb up the ladder of civilization" in order to live harmoniously with nature. Sauer's work has been critiqued as a form of cultural determinism "because it ignores the ideologies of the people who created the visible landscape features, which were not just the result of a struggle for existence within a specific set of environmental and technical frameworks" (Whyte, 2002, p.17).

In the UK, a different scholar is credited with bringing landscape studies to the forefront of the field of geography. W.G Hoskins, also a proponent of conducting field research, coupled what he observed with further research using maps and other primary sources. Hoskins was inspired by the English landscape. His influence harkened back to an earlier time, prior to the industrial revolution. His stance on landscape was rooted in the aim to beautify what had been ripped apart and destroyed by the presence of industry. Both Sauer and Hoskins are often credited with being the "founding fathers" of research on landscapes.

However, landscapes are now also understood as spaces that can be interpreted in a number of different ways. J.B Jackson's perspective of landscape is rooted in the elements of everyday life, or what he referred to as vernacular landscapes. Jackson wrote that we are all participants in the world, not just spectators (Wylie, 2007, p.41) and that because of this

participation, it is important to focus on the inhabitants' point of view of a landscape. This everyday point of view became Jackson's idea of a vernacular landscape. Born into an upper class family in the United States, Jackson recognized his privileged upbringing and understood that it contributed to the way he viewed the landscapes around him. What is interesting to note is that "Jackson opened up? the concept of landscape in ways which seemed to democratise it, liberating both spectator and participant, by writing from the inside and pointing to the symbolic meanings which arise from the social life in particular geographic settings" (p.41). Landscape, to Jackson, was an aesthetic idea, much like it was to Sauer and Hoskin, but what differed was the way that Jackson focused on the role of landscape as a symbolic and material source (p.44). Quoting Cosgrove (1998), Wylie (2007) writes that "Jackson's achievement was precisely to have pointed to 'those issues of myth, memory and meaning which invade landscape's material existence'"(p.45). Jackson's perspective on heritage and historical preservation is key to the way in which these themes are discussed within this research paper.. He writes that "We have become a nation of history buffs, so enamored of historical preservation that we do not know where to stop: the Appalachian log cabin, the railroad station, the Art Deco bank all seem deserving of the most conscientious restoring" (Jackson, 1984, p.x). While this statement can be met with much criticism, the point is that all of these individual locations as well as the different movements that are met with popularity and support can "have the effect of making us want to see the landscape less as a phenomenon, a space or collection of spaces, than as the setting of certain human activities"(p.x). The notion of human activities is dynamic because very few human activities and relationships with landscapes are actually recorded. It is the untold elements of the landscape which are not on record or part of an 'official' telling of the history of a landscape that are the focus and critique of my work.

The work of Jackson can of course be criticized. As Groth and Wilson (2003) write: "J. B Jackson also left much work to be done by others. He wrote primarily about the landscape of men; rarely about those of women and children" (p.12). He also did not answer difficult questions related to political debates, nor did he position himself on particular issues choosing rather to be elusive on different positions (p.12). What he did make room for in the academic study of landscape was the ability to make personal observation, conduct research, and readings that can contribute to deeper analysis of the landscape that we wish to become more familiar with and have more of an understanding of (p.13).

It is difficult to define the term landscape. It is a word that comes with many different definitions and meanings to different people depending on a number of factors. To start, a landscape is the product of the relationship between the physical environment and human society (Whyte, 2002, p.7). The physical environment is not something that we have necessarily created as humans, but our existence impacts and changes it. But by extension, our existence is also impacted and changed by landscapes.

Landscapes are something in which we interact with every day either consciously or unconsciously. Whyte (2002) writes, "Landscapes are all around us, something we interact with daily, both physically and in our imaginations, forming backdrops to the whole stage of human activity" (p.7). What this means is that not only are landscapes a physical entity, but something that "lies within our heads" (p.9). Whyte goes on to say:

The landscapes perceived by one person is not the same as that perceived by another, even within the same culture. Every individual has his or her own personality and cultural viewpoint, which filter and distort information giving a selective impression of what a landscape is like (p.9).

Even if the landscapes do change, they reflect this change in their contemporary existence, "They are palimpsests that hark back to the earlier engagements with the environment by different societies, emphasizing change both ancient and recent" (p.8). One historical example given by Whyte is the length of time it took different regions and countries to transition from feudalism to capitalism. Another element of time that pertains to this research is the notion of seasonality. Palang, Printsman, and Soovali (2007), quoting Palang and Fry (2003), state: "... often we focus on just one of these two fundamental variables [time or space] treating the other as fixed, such that we study spatial processes via a snapshot in time, and temporal processes at just one point in space as if this was not connected to other similar points" (p.2). The opportunity to make greater connections beyond temporality is eliminated by considering "temporal processes as just one point in space."

The most important notion of the definition of a landscape is the concept that all landscapes are contested. This is an idea that guides the understanding of landscape within this paper. Clearly, there will be opposing perspectives, as well as stories that may not be well known or valued according to those who are able to create and share the heritage that they see as valid and important. In this paper, I understand a landscape as a contested space. There are those who have more of an opportunity to define the landscapes and are able to determine how visitors to the landscape interpret the space; this, creates a landscape that continues to reinforce relationships of inequality.

## ii. A Push Towards Heritage Preservation

According to Ashworth (1991), the first official policy dedicated to the protection of national heritage came from Sweden in the 17th century (p.12). This policy emphasized the importance of maintaining national antiquities and discussed the importance of monuments in the creation of a national identity. Two centuries later, there was a surge in legislation as various European countries adopted policies to hold on to a way of life that was disappearing during the industrial revolution. As a result of this early legislation and on-going efforts to preserve and maintain a sense of identity, the European context of preservation has become naturalized and diffused elsewhere (Smith, 2009, p.4). An interesting example of this can be seen in India where the principles of preservation, heritage, monuments, and museums were established as a part of colonial rule (p. 6). During this period, the role of museums became regulatory. By this, Smith (2009) means that museums were used to help establish and govern both social and national identity. Furthermore, "the existence of national collections demonstrated the achievements and superiority of the nations that preserved them" (Graham, 2000, p.17). Through colonial expansion, new dialogues about race developed. Building on this point, "ethnic and cultural identity became linked with concepts of biology or 'blood'" (Smith, 2009, p. 6). Social Darwinism further promoted and helped naturalize this conceptual link between identity and race. When discussing the role that museums play within our current understanding of dominant heritage, David Lowenthal (1998) stated it best when he said that museums "are the most exciting and dangerous places on earth" (p.168). Different levels of government and various bodies of authority both nationally and internationally determine what constitutes heritage preservation and the conservation of cultural landscapes. To them, heritage, is not "a thing, an object, or a place. Rather it is a social construct, one in which material artefact, a monument, a

site, or a cultural practice is endowed with meaning" (Gfeller, 2013, p.484). In the last few decades, heritage preservation has grown to become a global phenomenon. One political body that seeks to govern and maintain sites of significant cultural heritage is the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]. UNESCO was created in 1945 "in order to respond to the firm belief of nations, forged by two world wars in less than a generation, that political and economic agreements are not enough to build lasting peace. Peace must be established on the basis of humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity" (UNESCO, 2014). Through the creation of various policies deeply rooted in the importance of the safeguarding of cultural heritage, UNESCO's focus has shifted from an involvement in archaeology and architectural conservation to the act of preserving sites and locations that are in need of protection because of their own outstanding universal value (Gfeller, 2013, p.487).

In the 1960s and 1970s, following the rebuilding efforts of World War II, there was a rise in heritage tourism. This rise in tourism correlates with UNESCO's desire to revisit legislation originally published in 1931. This piece of legislation, titled *The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments*, was rewritten and signed in 1964 and has since become known as the "canonical text of modern heritage practices" (Smith, 2009, p. 7). Smith states that this policy inspired the UNESCO 1972 *Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and National Heritage*. Both policies institutionalized the 19th century conservation ethic (p.7). Following the creation of the *Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and National Heritage*, operating rules of procedure were established which determine how the World Heritage Committee should proceed in practice. In 1992, the World Heritage Convention "became the first international legal instrument to recognise and protect cultural landscapes" (UNESCO, 2013). Cultural landscapes are defined as "cultural properties that represent the

"combined works of nature and of man. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal" (UNESCO, 2008, p.85). Building on this, we can understand cultural landscapes as falling into three main categories. "The most easily identifiable is the clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles" (UNESCO, 2013). The second is identified as an organically evolved landscape; this means it "developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment" (UNESCO, 2013). The final category is associative cultural landscape, which essentially is a combination of both the clearly defined landscape and the organically evolved landscape. The World Heritage Committee, a body of representatives from 21 different countries, determines which landscapes should be designated. Since the creation of the World Heritage Committee, over 1000 World Heritage Sites have been listed throughout the world. Of these, 85 are identified as being cultural landscapes.

Canada currently has 17 UNESCO designated heritage sites. Of these heritage sites, only one is recognized as a cultural landscape. This landscape is Grand-Pre, Nova Scotia, and is heralded as being a prominent example of Acadian culture. It is important to note that there can be cultural landscapes included on the World heritage List. The Canadian Register of Historic Places (CRHP) has designated a number of cultural landscapes which are comprised of "several natural and man-made features as part of the designation" (Canada's Historic Places, 2013). It is interesting to notice that Canada identifies the relationship between geographical location and the

cultural associations connected to the physical environment when discussing a significant historical or cultural landscape. One example of a Canadian cultural landscape is found at Grand Pré, Nova Scotia. It is identified as having "cultural meaning extending beyond its physical boundaries" (Canada's Historic Places, 2013):

Acknowledged as the heart of Acadian culture, Grand-Pré is not only a location; it is equally an idea. Acadian descendants, whose ancestors were deported from Nova Scotia in 1755, maintain very strong ties to this region for its symbolic associations to their sense of Acadian identity and many undertake pilgrimages to connect with their cultural roots. The Acadian spirit continues to live in the art and literature of that culture as well as manifests itself in the landscape of Grand-Pré with tangible memorials (Canada's Historic Places, 2013).

Other examples include the town of Tilting on Fogo Island in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site near Trois-Riviere, Quebec, and Fall Caribou Crossing, National Historic Site, Baker Lake in Nunavut.

The idea of determining outstanding universal value, and actively choosing which significant cultural landscape should be preserved is contested. First, what is interesting to note is that what is being conserved may not have been something that was created intentionally (Whyte, 2002, p.8). Because different people and political bodies may have different views about what makes a landscape universally valuable, tension can arise. The ways in which people interact with a landscape is guided by social structures, cultural traditions, economic activities and political patterns, and, because of these differences, the "values placed on different types of landscape are not fixed, but have changed over time and may represent different things to different people at any one period" (p.8). Other factors that influence the ways in which a landscape can be interpreted is via "time, place and historical context as well as age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race and other variables" (p.8). So, determining what should

become a preserved cultural landscape following a strict guideline does not allow for all of these variables to be considered.

The act of designation at its core is controversial because it creates lists (Hafstein, 2009, p.93). Smith (2009) agrees with this opinion stating that "the very act of making a list is not only an act of exclusion, it is also a performance of meaning making" (p.1). The World Heritage list has "shown itself to be not only Eurocentric in composition but also monumentally grand in aesthetic sites and places" (p.1). The inclusion of the UNESCO *World Heritage Convention* and the heritage list is important to the discussion of cultural landscapes in this major paper because it is these ideals that many local history museums adhere to, in their aim to create and maintain small museums dedicated to the preservation of a way of life that they recognize as disappearing and in need of protection. It also demonstrates that the recognition of "important" aspects of heritage may be predetermined and that anything that is not a part of the dominant story is not worth considering. This shows that there are many elements of personal history that contributes to the way in which different groups forge their self-identity, and that the act of preserving a grander vision of heritage may be an exclusionary act.

### iii. Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes

The primary responsibility of heritage designation in Canada falls under the responsibility of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC). This role of this Board is to communicate with the Government of Canada, and to make recommendations through the Minister of the Environment regarding the commemoration of nationally significant aspects of Canada's history. Coinciding with this rise in interest in maintaining and preserving monuments and structures that were significant to the creation of national identity following the industrial revolution, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board was created following World War

I. Pelletier (2006) argues that "while the HSMBC was composed of dedicated and leading figures in the field of Canadian history, Board members operated for its first 30 years almost exclusively as a Victorian gentlemen's club, without a system of checks and balances" (p.125). The Board was comprised of like-minded White males, appointed by the federal government on the basis of their social and economic status, ethnic origins, and reputation within their historical community (p.126). Pelletier continues by stating "the historical identity promoted by the HSMBC between 1919 and 1950 was largely the result of the common belief in the British imperial tradition, a popular element in the collective memory of Canadians during the late nineteenth century, when the first wave of Board members - were schooled" (p. 127). Ultimately, as Alan McCullough examines, and as quoted in Pelletier, "the growth of regionalism, the rise of the Aboriginal rights movement, and the changes in Canadian historiography led the HSMBC to amend several of its earlier inscriptions, especially those dealing with Aboriginal and Metis events in Western Canada" (p.128). This attempt to redefine history by designating and recognizing what is historically significant to Canada's various Aboriginal populations is a current phenomenon that still needs much improvement. Continuing on this trajectory, the Canadian Register of Historic Places has begun to designate particular cultural landscapes in Canada as Aboriginal cultural landscapes.

Traditionally, Canada has focused on preserving archaeological findings rather than cultural landscapes related to Aboriginal people within Canada (Buggey, 1999). Australia has emerged as a leader in applying the ideas of cultural landscapes to lands associated with Indigenous people in its territory. Australia implemented the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protection Act* in 1984 to preserve and protect places, areas and objects of particular significance to Aboriginals and for related purposes (Buggey, 1999, p. 20). A number of

questions emerge when attempting to understand what exactly defines an Aboriginal cultural landscape. According to the Northwest Territories Cultural Places Program (2007), an Aboriginal cultural landscape is "shown by the way Aboriginal people live with the land. This includes social and economic activities such as camping, hunting, trapping, fishing, and harvesting plants. These activities may leave behind signs that can be seen on the land, such as tools and belongings, tent rings, fire pits, and paths or trails" (p. 14) Traditional knowledge plays a key role in understanding Aboriginal cultural landscapes, this use of traditional knowledge becomes the basis for understanding what relationship different Aboriginal groups had with the land. It is this relationship that is explored and documented and throughout time preserved. It is very difficult to understand whether or not this designation of Aboriginal cultural landscapes is positive.

In the Canadian context, the federal government has created a mandate to ensure that "significant culture heritage is safeguarded for the benefit of all Canadians and is accessible to them." Smith (2009) problematizes the position that countries like Canada take in creating policy for intangible heritage. The issue lies with the fact that intangible heritage is very much connected to the idea of Aboriginal cultural landscapes. Yet, a number of countries do not recognize intangible cultural heritage as significant. The *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* is a policy that has been established by UNESCO in 2003 and is identified as "mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development ." (UNESCO, 2008) According to Kurin (2004), a number of countries chose to not vote on the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Canada included. Smith (2009) puts a lot of emphasis on the importance of intangible heritage for Aboriginal people in the definition of heritage. Much effort has been made to understand how heritage is determined.

Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa have done much research in regards to heritage planning. They determined that "Heritage only becomes "heritage" when it becomes recognizable within a particular set of cultural or social values. (2009, p.6) According to Smith (2009), "Indigenous works still remain under-represented even within the realm of intangible history" (p.3) Other scholars have come to view designation in this way as well. David Harvey (2001) states that "the use of the past to reconstruct ideas of individual and group identities is part of the human condition and that throughout human history people have actively managed and treasured material aspects of the past for this purpose" (p.320). Is the designation of Aboriginal cultural landscapes so much as an effort to preserve the significant intangible cultural aspects of various Aboriginal groups, or is it an attempt to classify and create groups that fit into the dominant western perspectives of heritage and history?

The largest argument that can be made regarding the inappropriateness of creating Aboriginal cultural landscapes lies with the idea that Indigenous perspectives of land are the same as European perspectives of the land. As the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) states "when Aboriginal people speak of the land they mean not only the ground that supports their feet, they also include waters, plants, animals, fish, birds, air and seasons - all the beings, elements and processes encompassed by the term 'biosphere'" (p.631; Danzinger, 2004, p.2). treaties have shaped the dynamic histories of Indigenous peoples (p. 4), and the designation of Aboriginal cultural landscapes follows that tradition. It is a way of continuing the relationship between European settlers and Aboriginal populations in a way that is accepting to the colonizers, and does not move beyond that mentality to reach a relationship beyond western notions of superiority.

As Smith (2009) states: "Heritage is not only a social and cultural resource or process, but also a political one through which a range of struggles are negotiated" (p.7). Cultural hegemony shapes historical identity. Ultimately, the desire to preserve and designate cultural landscapes lies with the need to seek alternative ways of living that are more sustainable than the way humans have been living for the past few centuries. We have come to view traditional knowledge as informative and useful because it can fit into the dominant understanding of environmental protection and heritage preservation. It is clear that the focus on Aboriginal cultural landscapes is just a continuation of a settler mentality, an effort to keep ideas that we do not understand into a compact checklist of what is significant and what is not. Although much improvement has been made in the last twenty years regarding the study of cultural landscapes, so much more work is needed in order to create heritage preservation methods that can show and detail elements of history that are not only maintained because they fit into a dominant narrative of a collective identity but also because they recognize difference and alternative positions.

#### iv. The Early Origins of Local History Museums in Ontario

In 1851, the Canadian Institute was granted a royal charter. The Canadian Institute is a key player in the discussion of museums because it was their presence and method of researching and presentation of this research that became the model for future museums. According to Tivy (2006):

The Canadian Institute unfolded in mid-century Canada West along the axis of Victorian scientific thought, which allied scientific research with public education: it would serve as a forum for the presentation of scientific developments in Canada that would confirm the progress of the nation and educate the public on scientific principles and national achievement (p.55).

In order to properly demonstrate and educate the public, the Canadian Institute assembled a number of exhibitions that aligned with its charter. The charter "emphasized the goals of collection, preservation, and publication of scientific and literary works facilitating knowledge in surveying, engineering and architecture" (p.55). With this mandate in mind, it became clear to members of the Canadian Institute that a museum would be the best option towards educating and demonstrating the glories of scientific achievement. The creation of this museum would ensure that the archaeological past that was being obliterated by constant developments and progress would not be lost for future generations (p.56). The first artifacts collected by the Canadian Institute represented this focus on archaeology. These included a number of skulls and other bone fragments, as well as a number of object that were classified as being "Indian" in nature. What is interesting about the way in which these artifacts were collected is that the objects in question were representative of those who were directly involved with the Canadian Institute. Because of this, the collection reflected the personal interests of a number of prominent early Canadian men. As well, the research conducted also reflected these personal interests. One such member, Daniel Wilson, began to research ways to "measure the capacity of aboriginal peoples for civilized development" (p.57). In order to do this, he measured the cranial capacity of excavated skulls. Following his research, he donated these skulls to the museum because, in his view, they would bridge a gap in these studies in Canada that had more focus in the United States and Europe (p.57).

The ways in which archaeological artifacts were displayed were chosen to remind spectators of the "natural" order that existed in Victorian imperial society. This natural order reflected the dominant thoughts and dialogues about race that converged with colonial expansion that was so much a part of British existence. As discussed previously, the belief that Indigenous

people only exist as a part of history is very much still the way a number of museums treat exhibits featuring Indigenous artifacts. This notion of the "dead Indian" is explored further by Thomas King, author of *The Inconvenient Indian*. According to King (2013), "dead Indians" are those that are the "stereotypes and clichés that North America has conjured up out of experience and out of its collective imaginings and fears" (p.53). He takes this thought further by writing that "North America no longer *sees* Indians. What it sees are war bonnets, beaded shirts, fringed deerskin dresses, loincloths, beadbands, feathered lances, tomahawks, moccasins, face paint, and bone chokers. These bits of cultural debris - authentic and constructed are what literary theorists like to call "signifiers", signs that create a "simulacrum"... A simulacrum is something that represents something that never existed. Or, in other words, the only truth of the thing is the lie itself. Dead Indians" (p.54).

The presence of "dead Indians" in museums and in ceremonies is a way in which settler presence is maintained. Frankly, as Thomas King states, it is the way in which white people are comfortable being around Indigenous people, as relics and artifacts. Not as actual cultures and people who exist. By relegating historical Aboriginal artifacts to museums and consistently recognizing Indigenous culture only as an element of ceremony and something the historical past allows, colonial expansion is still a reality in contemporary North American society. This still persists today as it has become naturalized through decades of continued use, and further contributes to the naturalization of the history that these museums and other heritage sites preserve and maintain.

Museums gained provincial recognition as the relationship between education and museum exhibits were explored. Many learned men at the time felt that the value of education increased when students had the opportunity to participate in object lessons. This was a method

of teaching that was heavily promoted by Egerton Ryerson, a public education advocate (Tivy, 2006, p.60). Ryerson established a museum at his Normal School, and then procured funding from the provincial government to turn the museum with his curriculum into a public institution (p.60). The Normal School Museum expanded in the late 19th century and was curated by a renowned archaeologist who had learned his methods of classification through networking with other curators at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.. This networking solidified the concept that all exhibits should be curated in a way that "showed the evolutionary progress of man" (p.65). As seen previously, this relegated Indigenous artifacts to the bottom rung of civilization and demonstrated the evolutionary sophistication of British colonial pieces connected to scientific achievement and imperial strength.

The creation of local history museums coincided with the emergence of historical societies. Heritage societies were considered the "chief vehicles for protecting and popularizing the past by the end of the nineteenth century" (Tivy, 2006, p.72). The aim of these early historical societies, created in smaller villages and towns throughout Ontario, was to preserve elements of local history that supported the dominant narratives of colonial history. As part of a celebration marking the place of the region within this dominant historical narrative, many societies often placed an importance on obtaining various artifacts from times past. If the historical society had the opportunity and the capital to do so they would also attempt to erect "monuments and plaques" as well as host "historical fetes and re-enactments to honour fallen and forgotten heroes and landmarks" (p.73). Given that these historical societies often held a membership comprised of middle and upper class patrons, those who were actively involved often held a personal relationship with the region. Often, a number of generations had called

these regions home, and they considered heritage preservation as a way of not only preserving the general history of the region, but also their own personal family histories.

In 1888, the Ontario Pioneer Association was founded, later to be renamed the Ontario Historical Society (OHS). The theme of pioneer living was viewed as a previous way of life that should be emulated and remembered by future generations. This lifestyle aligned with the concepts of imperialism while also promoting the importance of nationhood and social evolution (Tivy, 2006, p.90). Morgan (2001) writes that the first president of the OHS considered Canadian history as "the evolution of civilization and culture during the hundred years of the history of settlement." Subsequently, she included the comments of a later president who said that the role of the OHS was to "point out the path of the progress of civilization" (p.3). It is interesting to note that there was also a women's affiliate of the Ontario Historical Society. This women's affiliate was known as the Women's Canadian Historical Society (WCHS). These early women historians "emphasized Anglo-Celtic women's participation in events key to the founding of the Canadian nation: the arrival of United Empire Loyalists, the War of 1812, and the pioneer past" (Morgan, 2001, p.3). Although there may have been various discrepancies over the role of women in this dominant colonial-based Canadian historical narrative, one commonality was the position of Christianity and the Protestant Church in shaping Canadian history (p.6). As Morgan wrote, "it was an implicit component of narratives of progress that helped explain and justify the eventual success of Loyalist pioneers, British based institutions, and the Dominion of Canada itself" (p.6). This concept guided both the work of the OHS and the WCHS in the subsequent years, and ultimately, regardless of the differences that may have arose between the two groups, furthered the "building of Canadian loyalty and patriotism" (Tivy, 2006, p.91). It was during this period, the early phase of the OHS and the WCHS, that guidelines were implemented as a means

to limit the number of artifacts obtained. These guidelines included "materials related to pre-contact Indians, fur traders, pioneers, transportation, military, professions, education, and so on as well as maps, documents, illustrations and surveys" (p.91). If an object had no meaning (as recognized by the OHS or WCHS), then it was to be avoided. In a number of case studies discussed by both Tivy (2006) and Schneider (2008), the ways in which exhibits were curated relegated Aboriginal items to the fringe of the exhibit, almost completely separating these artifacts from what were considered examples of more "civilized" objects.

#### v. Contemporary Local History Museums

Another pivotal moment in the emergence of local history museums in Ontario occurred after the Second World War. After seeing how much had been lost in Europe (particularly in Britain, where there had been a great loss of what many considered to be a part of the historical legacy of the Empire), a theme which was explored earlier in the discussion regarding the creation of UNESCO and the push towards historical preservation. As a result of the war, historical societies in Ontario had "the desire to clearly communicate a moral message that was a potent influence in altering the exhibition of history collections" (Schneider. 2008, p.38).

Local museums in the 20th century did not stray far from the focus on pioneer life. However, now other concepts were included that came to be recognized as dominant tropes in Ontario local history museums; "Indians", "Victorians", and "Pioneers" (Schneider, 2008, p.42). As understood from the earliest examples of local history museums established by local historical societies, pioneers were idolized as being the strongest examples of "self-sufficiency, industry, honest struggle, productivity, resourcefulness" (p.42). The reason for the pioneer image being maintained in contemporary local history museums can be attributed to the role that these

museums have in creating an environment which attracts tourist attention. One popular Ontario living history museum, Black Creek Pioneer Village, located in Toronto in an interesting example of the way in which the lines between tourist attraction and local history are blurred.

Black Creek Pioneer Village is the creation of a pioneer settlement. According to the website:

the Village is a living history experience featuring heritage buildings originating in communities across south central Ontario that have been faithfully furnished with original furniture and artifacts. Whether examining authentic household items in their intended setting, or marveling at the beauty and craftsmanship of period furniture, artifacts make Black Creek Pioneer Village a delight for antique enthusiasts (BCPV, 2014).

With over 40 buildings on site, brought from where they originally stood, Black Creek Pioneer Village is a popular destination for visitors of all ages. There is a great focus on the educational benefits that this living history museum can provide for school age children and adults alike. Educational programming varies according to age group, and for school aged children, the programming is reflective of the Ontario curriculum. Black Creek Pioneer Village has also recreated itself in recent years to become a popular location for social events. With an operating brewery onsite, the Village produces its own craft beer that can be purchased. This "historic" brewery opened in 2009 and is the recreation of a brewery that would have been operating in the late 19th century. John Bentley Mays wrote a scathing review of Black Creek Pioneer Village for the *Globe and Mail* in 1992. In his review, he wrote that Black Creek Pioneer Village is not at all an authentic village. Instead it is a " a nostalgic amalgamation of some genuine, non-nostalgic bits and pieces of architecture that have survived from earlier periods of Ontario's continuing commercial and industrial modernization"(Dec 16, 1992). He argues that Black Creek Pioneer

Village is a perversion of reality. He writes that the Victorians fled the pioneer life for one of "modernity", therefore the image that the Village creates "erases" that reality. Drawing on the concept of simulacrum which was discussed earlier in relation to King's (2013) work, Black Creek Pioneer Village is an image of something that never existed.

If the "pioneers" are to be emulated for their hardworking lifestyle, the "Victorians" are characterized by their "discriminating aesthetic tastes, affluent, surroundings and leisurely activities such as needlework or poetry recital; he or she is truly the precursor to modern consumerist sensibility" (Schneider, 2009, p.45). Elements of the "Victorian" trope are rooted in science, technology, and progress.

The last trope that must be discussed then is the "Indian". This was mentioned previously in the discussion about "dead Indians", remnants of stereotypes that persist and are used because they fit with the colonial notion of what is an appropriate way to accept Indigenous cultures. It can be argued that the only reason the "Indian" trope is included in local history museums is to further the concepts of progress and civilization. Schneider (2008) argues that local history museums "continue to rely on Eurocentric tropes of Aboriginal peoples and fail to incorporate collaborative strategies into their exhibition development practices" (p.4). She writes that the "meta-narratives of progress, evolution and colonialism that have dominated large urban museums in settler and imperial societies have also shaped the display of collections in small community museums in a parallel, more modest fashion" (Schneider, 2008, p.3). Schneider quotes the work of Hooper-Greenhill:

'modernist-museum' - that is, the type of museum originating in the nineteenth-century imperial Europe which sought to educate the 'uncultured' public and establish hierarchies of class, race, and taste - outmoded in the post-colonial, post-modern climate of the twenty-first century and must be replaced by what she calls the post-museum"

(p.5).

Have local museums been able to move beyond this 'modernist-museum' concept that originated in the nineteenth century? According to Schneider, many local museums still follow these Eurocentric tropes and, although much work has been put forward to eliminate these tropes, many museums still have not adhered to the changes.

One significant change was implemented in order to focus on the relationships that could be developed between local history museums and various Indigenous groups. The *Task Force on Museums and First Peoples* was born out of "the longstanding political, economic, legal and social circumstances of Aboriginal peoples in Canada which came to a head in the 1980s" (Bolton, 2004, p.12). These circumstances coincided with two "celebrations" of Canadian history; the quintcentenary of Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas and the 125th anniversary of confederation in Canada. A number of institutions decided to celebrate both of these events. The celebration of the quincentenary of Columbus' "discovery", however, greatly offended a number of people and "exacerbated the longstanding controversies around land claims and the appropriation of Native cultures by non-Native Canadians" (p.12). In 1988, in the shadow of the Calgary Winter Olympics, the Lubicon dispute quickly became a catalyst for a debate regarding the question of whether it was appropriate for museums to support political causes, and whether there would be any dangers from giving in the needs of special interest groups (p.15). The Lubicon dispute emerged from the efforts of the Lubicon Nation to secure "media and foreign museums to assist its campaign against the Glenbow Museum" (p.13). The Glenbow Museum was curating an exhibit called *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*. The museum had the opportunity to have the exhibit sponsored, and chose to willingly take sponsorship from Shell Canada. The Lubicon Nation actively began to call for the boycott of the

exhibit and a number of individuals within the field agreed. However, there were a number of prominent figures that felt the question of politics did not have a place within curatorship.

Although the Glenbow Museum kept the exhibit open, what proceeded these events were a number of changes to federal museum policy.

The extensively-publicized debates familiarized a wider general audience to the issues of Aboriginal representation and cultural appropriation, making it impossible for either governments or cultural institutions to ignore these issues without alienating their constituents or patrons (p.17).

The task force was comprised of a mix of museum workers and Indigenous people representing a number of Indigenous Nations. Upon its completion in 1992, the *Task Force on Museums and First Peoples* called on a number of needed changes. First, there needed to be a better relationship between Indigenous people and cultural institutions. With such a relationship, it was felt, there could be an improvement in the way that history and culture is interpreted. Second, it was recommended that there be a "return of human remains and illegally obtained objects along with certain non-skeletal burial materials and other sacred object to appropriate First Peoples" (p.22). This task force was also instrumental in formulating the Canadian Museum Associations *Ethic Guidelines*, which were published in 1999. The reality is that these changes are far from being implemented. Bolton believes that the future involvement of Indigenous peoples can be viewed with optimism. However, there is still much effort needed to maintain these relationships.

#### 4. Case Studies

Located within the Township of the Algonquin Highlands the Dorset Museum and the Haliburton Highlands Museum are both the leading institutions within the municipality focused on portraying local history. This analysis will be comprised of three parts. First, the ways in which the museums organize their displays and the exhibits will be discussed in detail. Second,

the role that the local history museum has within the larger community will be analyzed. The final portion of the analysis will discuss both the interviews and data gathered from the observation of two events. By creating this careful analysis it will be seen that both of these institutions are very active in the creation of a shared heritage and that this impacts the ways in which visitors and locals both recognize and understand the cultural landscape that surrounds them.

Scattered groups of Indigenous people settled in the Algonquin Highlands throughout history. This history is largely unknown, and unfortunately it is not until white settlers enter the region that the history becomes more known. What is known however, is that these lands were popular hunting and fishing grounds, and that there were at times various groups of Indigenous people who could rely entirely on the land around them for survival. This changed with the presence of settlers.

In the late 1800s, loggers from the Ottawa Valley reached the area and were attracted to the White Pine trees, a growing commodity throughout the British colonies (Algonquin Park, 2014). This logging economy prompted the creation of a number of towns within the region including Dorset and Haliburton.

#### i. Dorset History Museum

The origins of the Dorset History Museum do not follow the traditional local history museum rhetoric that is so common in many cases. Early in 2000, a former local councillor believed that there was a need within the community to preserve the legacy of the town. She recognized that a number of long-term community members were leaving the community and

that the knowledge that they possessed about the life in Dorset might be lost. This local councillor felt that this suggestion needed to come from the community and not from someone operating in a political position, and with some prompting the community rallied together to bring the idea of a local museum on to the table. A committee was established, and they worked ceaselessly to allocate the funds in order to see this museum become a reality. There was no lack of interest from the larger community, and soon a number of artifacts began to be donated. The issue, however, was that there was no long term or permanent location to house these donations. Within the small town, one building was available. This structure was originally built as a Forest Ranger base. It lies at the foot of a fairly steep hill at the start of a path that leads to the Dorset Tower, a once used fire tower. The municipality owned the building and following its function as a Forest Ranger base it also became a headquarters for the Ministry of Mining and Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment. Eventually the building was no longer needed and it sat for a number of years without a purpose. While it sat, the structure became derelict. While this building sat empty, the Dorset History Museum was operating out of a room in the local school. While housed there, the museum began fundraising and gaining support.

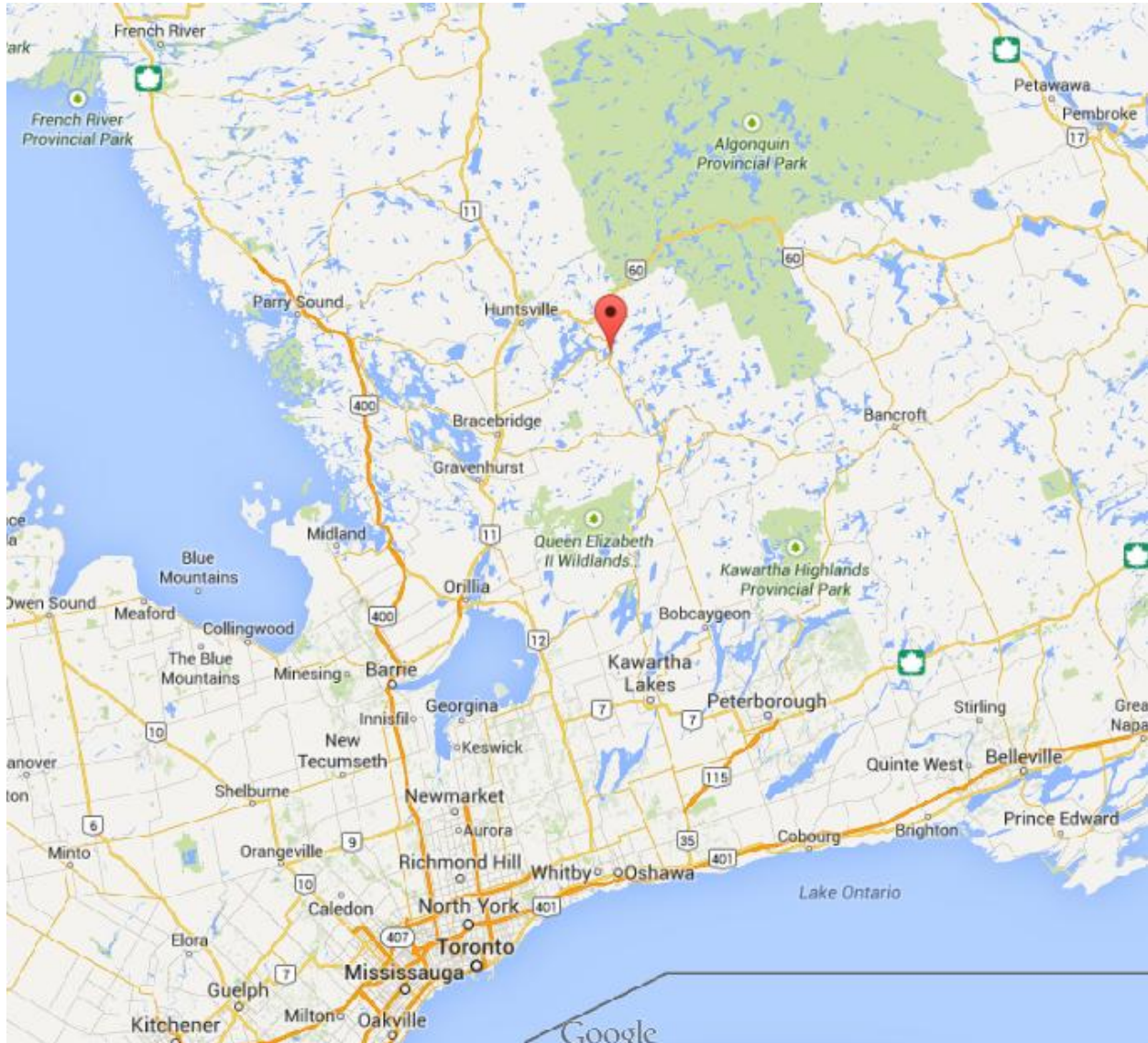


Fig 1. Location of Dorset, Ontario. Notice the vicinity to Huntsville, Ontario, a popular Muskoka destination, as well as the proximity to Algonquin Park image: google

It took a number of years for the museum to gain ownership of the building. The building had to be purchased from the Ontario Realty Corporation, and while working out issues with ownership it took three years to fundraise \$37,000 through a weekly bingo night in the nearby town of Huntsville. Fortunately, Dorset is located on the border between the Lake of Bays Township and the Township of Algonquin Highlands. Because of this placement, it was possible

for the museum to receive funding from both townships. Once the museum owned the building, they realized that there was a significant amount of work that needed to be done before they could consider opening. With a limited budget, they needed to find a way to renovate the building and still work within their funds. The solution was discovered through a program that is run by Beaver Creek. Beaver Creek is a Federal penitentiary that houses medium and minimum risk offenders. Beaver Creek offers a number of programs that aim to rehabilitate inmates, and teach them trades. A relationship was created between the museum and Beaver Creek, and a number of labourers were sent from the penitentiary to complete the work. The Dorset Heritage Museum operates as a 'living museum', with an emphasis on pioneer life of the community. Its mandate is to "celebrate and communicate our historical significance, appreciate the contributions of our ancestors, revitalize our community, educate our children and visitors through exciting activities" (Dorset Heritage Museum, 2013).



Fig 2. Dorset Heritage Museum in Winter. Former Forest Ranger Base, the site has undergone extensive renovations in order to become the fully operating museum that is on site today. image: Dorset Heritage Museum

## ii. Haliburton Highlands Museum

The Haliburton Highlands Museum emerged out of the popular heritage rhetoric during the 1967 centennial celebrations. The original museum that predated the centennial year originally operated as a pioneer museum. In this capacity, the museum provided guests with the chance to relive an "authentic" pioneer experience in the Haliburton context, one which focused on the logging industry. The support for a museum came from the community of Haliburton, and was initiated by the Rotary Club. These individuals were very supportive of the push to preserve the history of the town. In 1967, the Reid House, an old farm house in the town, once owned by a prominent family within the community, came up for sale. The museum sought funds in order to purchase it, and because of the funding made available during the centennial year, was able to make the purchase. Built in 1882, the Reid House was thought to be the perfect structure to house the future Haliburton Highlands Museum. Early artifacts that were displayed within the museum were an eclectic mix of items, from fine china tea cups to what were described as "rugged" farming implements. These items were curated haphazardly. The farming equipment was placed in the Reid House barn, while objects related to domestic life were kept in the home.



seekers. The current structure was designed in the 1970s, and officially opened on Dominion weekend in 1980. The Haliburton Highlands Museum also arranged to move the Reid House from downtown, and placed it on its new property. The Reid House had all of its exhibits removed, and has been converted into a historical house. Much time was spent searching for furniture and other pieces to authentically recreate the historical house. Currently, visitors have the opportunity to explore the exhibits both in the new museum structure, and to get a glimpse of pioneer life by going into the Reid House. The museum "will fulfill its obligation by continuing to collect, preserve, research, house, exhibit and interpret all those objects of cultural and historical value that will reflect local heritage and development from its prehistoric through more recent past" (Haliburton Highlands Museum, 2014).

### iii. Permanent Displays, Special Exhibits, and Depictions of History

Both the Dorset Museum and the Haliburton Highlands Museum showcase a number of items that display the way life was from the period of earliest settlement into the 20th century. Thematically, the way both museums have organized their exhibits follows a very similar narrative. Beginning with a small display explaining the earliest settlers, the Indigenous people, both museums discuss the ways in which territory was divided between the Anishinaabeg and the Haudenosaunee prior to settlement. In terms of artifacts, a number of arrowheads are on display at the Haliburton Highlands Museum, while at Dorset, they situated a large canoe above their display. In Dorset, the museum portrays history with a different set of themes than in Haliburton. It chronicles early settlement connected to the logging industry, the rise in recreational history, including the summer camp movement and the cottager presence. It also features educational, religious, and seasonal events (with a special focus on making maple syrup). In Haliburton, although there are many narratives that discuss everyday life within the region, these are woven

throughout a more historical theme. After featuring a First Nations display, the visitor moves throughout the legacy of the trappers, surveyors, loyalists, merchants and finally farming. It is interesting to see that both museums have organized their displays to fall in a chronological order. Regardless of how the museums chose to create their displays, what is obvious is that they are both attempting to demonstrate the heritage of their regions within the broader narratives of themes within Canadian heritage. As the visitor moves throughout the large room which houses the permanent displays, notions of Canada's colonial legacy are reinforced through the artifacts and images. One interesting example is the "surveyor" display located at the Haliburton Highlands Museum. The surveyor is celebrated as being an individual who was able to make his way throughout the rugged Haliburton landscape in order to assess and map the physical environment. As an agent of the government, the surveyor was responsible for reporting whether there were any opportunities for mining or farming. Often, surveyors were responsible for reporting any Indigenous presence to the government as well. Surveyors were also responsible for creating treaty agreements based on their findings. Surveyors were key figures in the removal of Indigenous people from their ancestral lands, and relegating them onto reserve established by the federal government. However, in contemporary understandings of Canadian history, surveyors are national heroes.

The Reid House is an additional exhibit that the Haliburton Highlands Museum utilizes as an example of an authentic pioneer house. Dorset, interestingly, does not have the same interest in recreating pioneer life but instead interested in maintaining the knowledge of a way of life that is "disappearing". This fear of a disappearing way of life is a constant theme that emerged in discussion during the interviews and through the events that I observed. The Township of Algonquin Highlands published their cultural plan in 2013. As a part of the cultural

plan, various localities within the township offered residents the opportunity to participate in a survey. This survey requested that the respondent identify what they thought should be considered cultural inventory (significant cultural locations) within the township. One respondent wrote

I personally like the fact that it is NOT as diversified in cultures as in the City. By that I would expand and say as a Canadian whose family lineage goes back to the 17th century. I like to be amongst people and see art history and festivities that are traditional to my heritage, which also encompasses Native or Aboriginal people. I have become invisible in the City, and in fact I felt like I am coming home when I come up to Haliburton, I can identify with the people around me and the traditions...i.e. a pancake breakfast for East at St Peters Church, or the Wake boarding at Head lake, Various Lake Activities, the artists sitting at the church painting, my kids took swimming lessons at Dorset IN THE LAKE, not in a pool" (p.31)

This response showcases the desire to push away from the way of life that has replaced the way life once had been. This respondent shares this same desire to maintain a way of life that had "disappeared" from the life they once had in the City. The loss of white Canadian culture is an argument that many people make in the face of a more globalizing world. Immigration has changed the cultural fabric of Canada in a variety of ways, and many do not view these changes as positive. This respondent in particular felt that their heritage and self-identity is being lost. This respondent legitimizes a claim that s/he is a "pure" Canadian with a long standing family lineage within the country. This act of legitimizing one's existence is a way of proclaiming that one's heritage and culture is more important than the others that have become a part of the greater cultural fabric. This respondent is stating that his/her culture, heritage, and elements of identity deserve to exist more than others. Another interesting aspect of this individual's response was the statement that depictions of their culture also "encompasses Native or Aboriginal people". The respondent does not do much to explain what is meant by this statement, however, if they are in fact claiming to be "pure" Canadian, white, and therefore privileged they are

asserting their existence as important and that their existence of a white Canadian only validates Indigenous culture in connection with their own existence. Not as a culture or heritage worth preserving or representing on its own. This thought is very much embedded in the depictions of heritage that each museum creates. It is an attempt at preserving the white Canadian way of life that has been forged out of the "wilderness". The reality of this "wilderness" is an environment that has been preserved, conserved, managed and interfered with for hundreds of years (Campbell, 2005, p.161). Difficult environments, which the Algonquin Highlands has been considered to be (since a majority of attempts at farming have failed) are meant to be managed. Just like the Canadian "wilderness", any presence of Indigenous people also has to be managed, or else the power of the nation will fail.

Both museums attempt to create special exhibits on a semi-regular basis. The decision to create these exhibits is dependent on any current events that will take place within the town, whether any special artifacts have been donated, or if there is a significant individual from the community worth celebrating. While I was at the Haliburton Highlands Museum, there were no special exhibits on display. At Dorset however, the museum made the decision to showcase prominent families that had once lived or still live within the community. The town of Dorset is comprised of only a handful of families. Some have moved into the community in more recent years, and others who have lived in Dorset for generations. In order to commemorate these more long term community members, the museum felt it was important to publically recognize who these families were. This is the first season the museum has decided to do this, and for their debut they selected the Nielsen family. The Nielsen family made their fortunes in the dairy business and purchased a summer home in the Dorset area. For generations, the Neilsen family had a seasonal home within the town and established a strong relationship with the local

population. Differentiating between original settler families and those who moved into the community at different points in history is another attempt to preserve a way of life that is constantly changing. This insider/outsider attitude is one that is persistent within both towns, and is reflected in the way that they attempt to be a part of the larger community.

#### iv. Role within the Community

Programming plays a key role in the ways that the museums interact with their surrounding communities. Each museum carefully selects the programming and activities that they wish to host or be a part of at large annual meetings. These decisions are made by a board of members and other volunteers who assist at the museum. The bulk of programming is done during the summer season. As a top tourist destination in the summer months, programming and special events hosted in the summer are a guaranteed way to attract more visitors from the all-season community, as well as seasonal visitors. This insider/outsider divide is becoming more significant as the population appears to be changing. However, looking at a number of demographics the change is not as apparent as the reactions of the local history museums might have some believing. The Township of Algonquin Highlands Cultural Plan includes a number of these community trends. The age group of residents is particularly important because the statistics demonstrate that the most prominent age group are those who are between 50 and 75 years of age (Planescape, 2013, p.6). One important changing trend is the number of seasonal residents becoming permanent residents after retirement (p.11). These new permanent residents have moved from other municipalities all over the province, but have had seasonal residency within the Algonquin Highlands for decades. Those who spend the summer months within the Algonquin Highlands are also creating an interest in the area with younger generations. Family cottages instill in younger generations the opportunity to carve their self-identity amongst the

cultural landscape of the Algonquin Highlands. It is not known what the future may hold for the future generations to settle in the Algonquin Highlands, but what is known is that those who have a relationship with the local history museums take it upon themselves to attempt to preserve the past in situ for the enjoyment of future generations. But more than just for enjoyment, it also serves as a lesson. When we think about the respondent from the earlier argument, we see that there was a fear of losing the way of life within the Algonquin Highlands from what they interpreted as the constant change that has been taking place within the city. This fear is deeply rooted within these communities, however it is more noticeable within Dorset. Programming and participation in public events is the way that these local history museums attempt to preserve a way of life that is seemingly disappearing.

What is interesting to notice about the selection of programming hosted by both local history museums is the lack of diversity. When looking at census data, it is seen that the presence of visible minorities is almost non-existent. 93% of the population responded to the census stating that they only spoke English. Why would there be any attempt to create an atmosphere of diversity, if there was no reason to do so? Museums and heritage are now heavily commodified. As sites that garner tourist interest, they have become locations to buy and sell not only physical items, but the promise of new experiences. According to Laurajane Smith (2006), "Visitors are constructed as passive receivers, and what they do at sites is only valued in terms of its economic, rather than cultural or social, consequences" (p.124).

At the Haliburton Highlands Museum, programming is primarily focused on the education of children between the ages of 6 and 12. Especially during periods where there is no school in session, the museum operates as a sort of day camp that welcomes children every week with a new theme and a new planned session. These themes that change week by week are the

same themes that are the basis for the permanent exhibit discussed earlier. Beginning with a session focused on the regions Indigenous people of the past, the museum attempts to garner interest in the past by creating a unique day camp setting centred on play. Progressing through different eras of settlement, there are weeks dedicated to early European explorers, logging heritage, and pioneer living. The Dorset Heritage Museum does not offer programming of this variety, instead they prefer to host events in collaboration with the village, such as the annual Snowball Festival held in February, or Canada Day festivities. Another popular event that both museums participate in is the annual Doors Open Ontario event. An event centred on making heritage sites accessible to the public, when previously there may not have been an opportunity for the public to experience them. This event, like the others hosted by the Township of Algonquin Highlands, is an active way of reinforcing the dominant heritage narrative. Harvey (2001) wrote that, "Heritage has always been with us and has always been produced by people according to their contemporary concerns and experiences" (p. 320). And, as Lowenthal (1985) wrote, "Memory, history, and relics continually refurbish our awareness of the past" (p.187). This "refurbishment" is a constant, and no matter how many times this past is recreated it is constantly done through a colonial hegemonic lens that disallows the narratives of Canada's Indigenous populations to take a dominant role.

Regarding the role of the museum within the larger community, Schneider wrote (2008): "It has become widely accepted that the modern museum is an instrument of power in creating collective identity, and is consequential in defining the values of the citizenry" (p.14). The role of contemporary museums is to act as "contact zones", as a "contact zone" it must be understood that a museum is not just a warehouse to preserve and display collection, but also as stewards

with responsibilities to originating communities as sites of cultural exchange with the potential to generate increased cross cultural understanding" (Schneider, 2008, p.21).

#### v. Voices from Museum Staff and Visitors

In Haliburton, there was more of a discussion regarding the role of Indigenous people within the region. My respondent, an employee at the museum was very quick to point out that they did have a display discussing Indigenous presence within the region, however she also justified why there was not more inclusion. She turned to archaeological evidence to support her claim, and went on to state that there has been no evidence of any long term settlements within the region. All that has been found suggests that there were only short term camps set up by both the Haudenosaunee and the Anishnaabeg at different points in history. It was likely, my respondent went on to say, that it was just too difficult for anyone to sustain themselves off the inhospitable environment. It is interesting to note that the early European settlers had no issue with the harsh landscape, managing to "conquer" it. Of course, they met with a lot of failure when attempting to create farms, but through the lumber industry they had no issues finding a way to create a life. In Dorset, there is also archaeological evidence that points to former settlement by Indigenous people as well as a burial mound located on Bigwin Island in the Lake of Bays.

Fear of change was made apparent through my discussion with my interviewee from the Dorset History Museum. At a point during our interview, we had a discussion about a new demographic of people moving into the community. According to my interviewee, there is a growing south-east Asian seasonal community as the number of cottages available continues to increase. This change within Dorset is reflective of more global trends, and is a shift that is

impacting the way day-to-day life is practiced in the town, especially in regards to the management of Dorset's pioneer legacy. Visible minorities are virtually non-existent within Dorset, so this has caused quite a shift in attitude in recent years. The demographic of tourists has also changed. During an interview, it was fascinating to learn that the majority of tourists between the 1960s and early 1990s were visiting from Germany. The tourism industry thrived as the German tourists created a really strong market based on the demand of "authentic" Indigenous items. Now, a large percentage of tourists are South-Asian tourists who arrive on bus tours. These bus tours travel from town to town, so overnight visits within the Dorset or Haliburton area are not likely.

Although much of my preliminary research was done before the summer season, it would not have been a solid project if there had been no interaction or observation of the Haliburton Highlands Museum or the Dorset Heritage Museum. Initial interviews were done very early in the busy tourist season, the weekend after the Victoria Day long weekend, therefore it was not as busy as it would have been the previous weekend. In order to see the ways in which the museum interacts with the larger community fully, as well as to assess the ways in which the museums attempt to create and control the elements of local history that they share with visitors, participant observation had to be done during a larger event. For this research, I attended two events, one in each town. First, I attended the Haliburton Home & Cottage Show, and Heritage Day in Dorset, a part of their Canada Day festivities.

The Haliburton Home & Cottage Show is an annual event that takes place in downtown Haliburton. The aim of this event is to showcase different vendors who are selling wares that would be useful around the home or cottage. The inclusion of "cottage" in the title is to acknowledge the presence of seasonal visitors to the region, and that they too can purchase items

to make their stay at their cottage more comfortable. A number of public services also created displays, informing the public about what to do in case of an emergency and safe boating practices. The museum creates a display at the show, describing the museum's current exhibits and upcoming special events. They also take certain artifacts from the museum to place in a showcase for spectators to see. As mentioned previously, the primary age of those who live within the town are very polarized. So, it was logical that the majority of individuals that I saw attending the show were between the ages of 50 and 75. As a number of attendees at this event viewed the display at the Haliburton Highlands Museum's display, they each made a comment about how they in some way connected to an item in the showcase. This sense of nostalgia that was connected to the items in the showcase created an interest with these visitors to the Home & Cottage Show to contemplate visiting the museum. Amongst the items on display, they were able to see aspects of their own self-identity. This importance of self-identity was constantly reinforced during my interviews with both museums. As mentioned previously, both museums came into existence because it was felt by those within the respective towns that there was a need to preserve a vanishing way of life. As a participant, it was very difficult to separate myself from these dominant narratives because so much of my own self-identity is embedded with the themes and narratives that the museums have created. A number of times, those stopping to view the display put together by the Haliburton Highlands Museum also engaged in dialogue with me, sharing tales about summers past and experiences that are so pivotal to the way that we, as white colonial settlers, have come to understand our dominant privileged place within these communities. Our privilege is not questioned within these environments, and this acceptance of what many consider to be our "natural" right is the reason why so many people are fearful that this could all change with any inclusion of "outside" cultures. Though there may be class

divisions in larger municipalities such as Toronto, in the Algonquin Highlands there is (for the most part) a shared "wilderness" experience.

The experience that I had at the Dorset Heritage Museums Heritage Day celebration varied greatly from the experience at the Haliburton Home & Cottage Show. With family from the area, the discussions took on a far more personal tone than those in Haliburton. This was understandable as a number of the people involved with the everyday task of operating the small museum have interacted with my family over a number of decades. Because of the more personal connection, the things people shared with me were far more personal than I had expected. This event is one that is anticipated every year, and a significant number of volunteers come out to assist in ensuring that the event is a success. As part of the events, a number of historical displays are set up on the front yard of the museum, and these are more interactive than the permanent displays. These historical displays were all various technological implements used to make the lives of early residents of Dorset easier. These included a 1940s washing machine, a turn of the century rope maker, and an automatic wood chopper. Visitors queued up in order to participate in a number of demonstrations with those who were the owners of the various machines. The owners of these implements also chose to dress up in period clothing, with the aim to bring a greater sense of "authenticity" to the displays. Also present was a costumed volunteer wearing military regalia representative of a member of a local regiment during World War I, a display included because of the celebrations surrounding the 100 year anniversary of the beginning of World War I. What differs in this experience from the event held in Haliburton is that this Heritage Day event was an exclusive museum event, with others present by invitation from the museum. The Haliburton Highlands Museum were participating in another event, so the ways in which people could interact with the museum was limited compared to the Dorset experience.

Because of this difference, participants in Dorset were much more open and willing to participate, rather than just take some pamphlets about the museum and the programs offered.

At both museums, the relationship between the museum and visitors was similar to the relationship established between a consumer and a producer in a retail sense. What the Haliburton Highlands Museum and the Dorset History Museum was doing was actively choosing what elements of history to include within their exhibits, and in the process creating an interest in their exhibits from those who would be the most beneficial patrons of the museum. These beneficial patrons may in turn feel grateful for this sense of self-identity that is being preserved and may donate financial support or their time towards maintaining these aspects of the collection.

The fact remains, that Canada's Indigenous population has not been offered any opportunity in these small community museums to claim space for themselves. This inability to claim space is a direct consequence of an almost irreparable rift in the relationship between settlers and Indigenous people. Much emphasis was put on the differences that members within both communities place on those who are "insiders" and those who are "outsiders". But, when it comes to discussing who is a settler, there is no difference. Those who are seasonal visitors or first time tourists, and those who have been living within Dorset or Haliburton for decades are still both colonial settlers, continually appropriating Indigenous culture with every item purchased from the numerous "trading posts" that have been established along main highway corridors, and who continue to deny Indigenous people the opportunity to exist within this set region. Pointing towards archaeological evidence has been the logical reason for many as to why this presence can be ignored. The reality however, is that Indigenous people do not need to have actually lived in a particular region to become an included narrative within Canada's museums,

within both large national or provincial museums as well as small local history museums in every municipality. It is unlikely that "historical inaccuracy" can be cited for the exclusion of Indigenous cultures within a museum, as the reality is that all of our museums are located on land that has been taken away from Indigenous populations over a short period of a few hundred years. From the settler perspective, it is far easier to deny any presence of Indigenous people inside their hometowns than to try to take the steps towards reconciliation.

### 5. Conclusion: Thoughts on Landscape

A major factor that impacted the results of this research is the role that tourism has within Dorset and Haliburton. Tourism to Muskoka and the surrounding regions has been increasing steadily since the late 19th century. Since the turn of the century, Muskoka has been one of the most popular destinations for holidays for both Canadians and international travellers. According to Jasen (1995), there was no part of Ontario "more thoroughly and widely affected by the growth of wilderness tourism and the therapeutic holiday during this period than the region of Muskoka and its adjacent territories" (p.116). In his thesis, Watson (2014), discusses the impact that Euro-Canadian settlement had on the Anishinaabeg who lived more recently within what we recognize as contemporary Muskoka. As a result of these new settlements, the Anishinaabeg began to lose their traditional domain, and in the face of colonization began to impact the sustainability that they once had (p.129). Settlers disrupted the Anishinaabeg's way of life, and because of this the way their society had been constructed needed to be redefined. As Jasen chronicles, the early years of settlement and tourism relied on the Indigenous populations living within Muskoka. Indigenous people often found work as guides, and were recognized as being an essential source for those who desired a more rigorous adventure in the wilderness. Souvenirs that were available for purchase were far different than the kitschy wares available today.

Indigenous people were primarily providers of items that were sold, selling hand beaded crafts to tourists who wanted to purchase "authentic" items (p.118). Following the Second World War, there was more of an interest in the cottage experience. This interest can be credited to a number of factors including a "Thriving economy, an expanding provincial highway system, a general upswing in nature appreciation and outdoor recreation, and a child-centred social climate that prioritized domesticity and family togetherness" (Stevens, 2013, p.235). There was a push for anti-modernist ideas that emerged during the period of technological progress and "forward" thinking. The rediscovery of the "natural" environment was met with a push towards returning to a more "authentic" and rural way of living and a need to escape from the everyday harshness of city life.

The reality now, however, is that the Indigenous presence has been largely eliminated from the landscape. Although a visitor to the region might stop to ponder the reason a lake carries a distinguishable Indigenous name, or purchase a souvenir pair of moccasins at a local "trading post", there is no other recognition of Indigenous culture at all within Dorset or within Haliburton. As mentioned previously, settlers within these regions do not feel it is necessary to include Indigenous narratives because, archaeologically, there is little evidence that there was any permanent settlement in the area.

As a solution to this lack of Indigenous historical narrative, a number of sites have been under consideration for designation as Aboriginal cultural landscapes. Why has this recognition and validation of Aboriginal cultural landscapes not resulted in a greater shift in the attitudes of those who do not believe, or wish to acknowledge Indigenous presence within this position of Canadian "wilderness"? Would there be any difference at all in the everyday attitudes of Canadians who have been taught throughout their lives, through institutionalized racism and

prejudice, that Indigenous people are a mere figment of Canada's past, not living and thriving communities located throughout all of Canada? By looking at the institutionalized aspects of colonial dominance not only within the local history museums, but in other important aspects of the town, there is very little question that any opportunity to recognize some form of Indigenous presence within the landscape will be highly controversial. Divisions of power within these towns are strictly enforced as it has become imperative that the way of life within these towns be preserved as much as possible. These divisions of power are reflected in the landscape and in the dominant discourse of heritage within Dorset and Haliburton; it is highly unlikely that this will change any time soon.

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