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Ernest Brown’s “Birth of the West”: Early narratives of imagined space and race in Western Canada

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by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the life and works of settler photographer Ernest Brown, and identifies ways in which Alberta and its Indigenous inhabitants were imagined, perceived and manipulated through his vocation towards history and education. Brown presents a unique case study in the historiography of Western Canadian photography, as he utilized his extensive collection of photographs to establish a museum running from 1933 to 1939 in the heart of Edmonton, as well as a series of teaching pictures called "The Birth of the West." While many photographers made a living through portrait studios or by selling views as souvenirs, Brown crafted an imagined settler space and history in the West, with specific roles for the Indigenous peoples with whom he was so infatuated.

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Timeline

1877: Brown is born in Middlesbrough, England (8 September)

1902: Brown first arrived in Toronto looking for employment

1903: Brown arrived in Edmonton to work as an assistant to C.W. Mathers (Edmonton's first photographer)

1904: Brown bought the rights to Mathers' studio (1 June)

1905: Brown expanded the studio into the Ernest Brown Co. Ltd. He hired Gladys Reeves to help manage the extra work load. She became Brown's closest associate, friend, and protégé

1907: Brown acquired the rights to Mathers' collection of archival negatives

c.1914: Brown's enterprises began to decline shortly after the outbreak of WWI

1921: Brown was evicted from his studio. He was later nominated as a candidate for the Independent Labour Party in the provincial election

1924: Brown moved to Vegreville, AB, where he set up another photograph studio while continuing to maintain his Edmonton connection through Reeves and "The Art League" (Reeves' studio)

1929: Brown returns to Edmonton, creates The Goblin Studio with Reeves

1932: Brown's first exhibition of "old-time pictures" runs for two weeks in honour of Johnstone Walker's Store's anniversary

1933: Brown organizes his Pioneer Days Museum as a permanent historical exhibition

1939: Brown's museum comes to an end with the outbreak of WWII. Brown was evicted from his premises at Haddon Hall, 10114 – 97th Street while the manuscripts and items displayed in his museum were put into storage by the Provincial Government

1947: Agreement was reached for the sale of this material (with the photograph collection) to the government and for many years it was in the custody of the Dept. of Economic Affairs

1951: Ernest Brown dies at the age of seventy-three (3 January)

Introduction: The Importance of Being Ernest

This thesis is about settler-colonial portrayals and perceptions of Indigenous peoples of Western Canada in the early twentieth century through the somewhat atypical perspective of one man, a photographer by the name of Ernest Brown. The focus of this thesis is quite different from what I had intended when I first decided to research Brown's photography. Writing the history of ideas and perceptions, tracing the origins of identity and discovering from where contemporary stereotypes and deeply entrenched prejudices stem, are all historiographical objectives that have influenced my research. These particular motivations informed my initial focus, as I decided to research Brown's photography of Western Canada, paying specific attention to his photographs of Indigenous subjects. I found upon first examination of the extensive amount of material available at the Alberta Provincial Archives that Brown was much more than a commercial photographer. He was a collector of photographs and stories, responsible for accumulating and preserving one of Alberta's largest photographic records. He was also an intellectual, a humanist, an amateur historian, a radical political activist, and an impassioned educationalist.

Upon realizing this, my focus quickly shifted from looking at Brown's own photographs of Indigenous peoples (which were few in comparison to the number of images in his collection captured by earlier photographers) to examining the ways in which Brown crafted historical narratives using his collection. Unlike most commercial photographers of his time who typically amalgamated their photographs into large, cumbersome albums, or sold their images to magazines intended for tourists, Brown went one step further.[1] He marketed his images distinctly as history, and established a museum in Edmonton to exhibit his collection of photographs,

[1] Matt Dyce and James Opp, ""Visualizing Space, Race, and History in the North: Photographic Narratives of the Athabasca-Mackenzie River Basin" in *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region*, Ed. Sarah Carter, Alvin Finkel and Peter Fortna (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 79.

manufacturing a narrative of the West that would be disseminated to potentially thousands of visitors, primarily school children who would receive his instruction at the museum or in their own classrooms via Brown's "History Teaching Pictures."

Clearly, Brown did not quite represent the typical photographer of the early Canadian West, and yet, very little has been written about him or his short-lived museum. A review of the limited secondary literature regarding Brown is forthcoming in this thesis; such works will be discussed in the first chapter. While Brown's life, however, was clearly unique and worthy of close examination, the narratives which he advertised to teachers and schoolchildren as an authentic history of the West were not only influential but were influenced by the values and historical milieu of his time. Brown's history of the West reflected the widely-held beliefs, insecurities, and self-identities of Alberta's early settler society, much of which were defined in relation to Indigenous populations, both real and imagined.

As an essential component of the formation of settler self-identity, the importance of Indigenous representation in settler imagery cannot be understated. Similarly to the various ways in which settlers have imagined the landscapes of the West, settler-colonists have also imagined the West's Indigenous inhabitants. As Douglas Francis has argued, such imagined perceptions became defining myths that told Westerners who they were or what they hoped to become.[2] Invented "Indians," – like invented landscapes – became powerful forces of self-identity.

Brown's museum exhibit, his photographs and mock-up teaching pictures, and his writings on Indigenous peoples and their role in Western Canadian history must be explored. As Anne Maxwell wrote in her work on colonial photography and exhibitions:

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[2] For a deeper examination on invented landscapes of the Canadian West see R. Douglas Francis, "Regionalism, Landscape, and Identity in the Prairie West," in *Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West*, ed. Lorry Felske and Beverly J. Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 30.

> Without a knowledge of the way in which such popular representations of non-western peoples contributed to the formation of European identities, people of European descent cannot begin to imagine - let alone contribute to fashioning - a world in which the ideology of white supremacy no longer informs dominant culture.[3]

Maxwell's words are applicable to the context of Indigenous-white relations in Canada as well. This thesis will present Brown's life and his works within a framework of post-colonial criticism and historical methodology, as his representations of Indigenous peoples have contributed not only to the formation of his own identity but also that of Western Canadian settler-society, and to the perseverance of destructive Indigenous stereotypes.[4] The term "settler-society" is not intended to be a vague generalization of white Euro-Canadian peoples; rather, I am referring to early non-Indigenous immigrants to Western Canada who arrived after the work of colonization had subjugated Indigenous populations through the policies of the *Indian Act* (1876). I am also referring to the beneficiaries of this early settler-colonization – non-Indigenous society as it exists in Canada up to today. Of course, concepts of race and racial theory play a fundamental role in defining unequal social, economic, political, and cultural power relationships in this context. Maxwell was correct to identify white supremacy (or perhaps white insecurity) as informing dominant, mainstream ideologies, and this will become evident through close examination of Brown's representations of Indigenous peoples.

To further clarify Maxwell's statement, two ideas need elaboration. The first is the term "dominant culture" and the second is the idea of culture itself as it relates to communication. The idea of a dominant culture is best expressed by Marxist theorist Raymond Williams who stated

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[3] Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the "Native" People and the Making of European Identities*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2000), ix.

[4] I refer to post-colonialism as a particular tradition of critical inquiry that is focused on analysing colonialism and colonial discourses. To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that present-day Canadian society is post-colonial. Canada has not undergone a radical process of decolonization and in effect persists as a colonial society. For further elaboration on this point, see Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community,* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 11.

that in any society at any particular point in history "there is a central system of practices, meanings and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective."[5] The dominance of such a system lies in its propensity to saturate everything that we do, and is continually affirmed by multiple dimensions of everyday life and ordinary experiences.[6] If one accepts the premise of a dominant culture, how then is culture disseminated in such a way that it can saturate everyday life? Moreover, how does this idea concern Brown's historical narratives of Indigenous peoples in Western Canada?

James W. Carey's theories on "ritual communication" as culture help to clarify answers to these proposed questions. In contrast to what Carey referred to as the "transmission" view of communication (the dominant definition of the term as "giving of information to others") the ritual view of communication "sees the original or highest manifestation of communication… in the construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that can serve as a control and container for human action."[7] Understood as more than a simple transmission of information from person to person, communication produces the social bonds that tie people together and make associated life – or "society" – possible.[8] Communication is therefore crucial to understanding how a dominant culture can arise. Brown happened to have under his influence a very effective means of communication: a museum that experienced thousands of recorded visitors over its six-year existence.

Settlement in Western Canada was perceived by many as an opportunity to develop a new and ideal society predicated on certain hand-picked values of the old world."[9] Settlers,

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[5] Raymond Maxwell, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays,* (London: Verso, 1980), 38.
[6] Furniss, *The Burden of History*, 14.
[7] James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 18.
[8] Ibid., 22.
[9] Anthony W. Rasporich, "Utopian Ideals and Community Settlements in Western Canada, 1880-1914," in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, Ed. R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 134.

although optimistic regarding their utopian view of the West, were also faced with a unique insecurity with regard to their collective identity as a fledgling society. Settlers such as Brown perceived themselves to be building their future homes in an empty and history-less land. In reflecting on what Brown considered to be the unique challenge of Western-Canadian schoolteachers, he lamented that "there is nothing but modern towns and cities or bald prairies" to show the children. "The teacher must be an artist indeed to draw a picture of earlier times sufficiently true to obtain that concentrated attention of the child necessary for its remembrance of the instruction given."[10]

Brown conceded that a history of Western Canada was not explicitly apparent – it had to be created by the teacher. As ritually communicated, history, allows people to form bonds based on the idea of sharing common past experiences. To understand the ideas and bonds that made associated, communal life as a dominant settler-society possible in Western Canada, we can examine the information communicated through Brown's museum, writings, and teaching pictures to determine how representations of Indigenous peoples were used by settlers to form and maintain an ordered, meaningful, cultural world.

Some historians have criticized the implementation of post-colonial theory as an effective methodology of analyzing and critiquing historical narratives especially when micro-histories are under examination. Historian Whitney Lackenbauer, in his work *Battle Grounds: The Canadian Military and Aboriginal Lands* (2006), argued that micro-histories of Euro-Canadian authority reveal that such authority cannot be categorized as "a mechanical totality in which fragments add up to a tidy, theorizable whole."[11] For historians such as Lackenbauer, this apprehension towards

[10] Ernest Brown, "visual teaching of history," Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR1990.0601, 88, Box 3 (30 August, 1932).
[11] P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Battle Grounds: The Canadian Military and Aboriginal Lands* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 8.

post-colonial theory stems from an assumption that such theory frames colonial authority as a monolithic "hive-mind," and that historical agency is thus taken away from individual Euro-Canadian actors. On the contrary, what I have found through my own micro-historical research of Brown and his work is that dominant discourses regarding race are evident in his writings, attitudes, beliefs, and works even though his life was clearly distinct in many significant ways from other settler-colonists. One can apply a post-colonial analysis to Brown's life and works while simultaneously acknowledging that settler-colonists acted with individual agency.

Concurrently, Brown was an individual with his own thoughts, beliefs, and worldviews, and also an embodiment of his historical context and mainstream culture. This certainty is revealed in all examined aspects of his life within the confines of this thesis. Brown's political activism was considered extreme by many of his contemporaries, yet when analyzed within the greater narrative of labour activism in Western Canada, his radical politics fit within a broader scope of social and political movements at the time. Brown's interest in racial theories of geography, a topic explored in Chapter Three, reveal that he was ahead of his time with regard to new academic theories of race. These new theories, however, were still informed by dominant discourses of race as a "biological" determinant of character, motivations, and temperament. Brown as an individual was progressive in his politics and worldviews – he was sympathetic to the injustices and colonial oppressions experienced by Indigenous peoples – yet he was also confined by the dominant culture, discourses, and socio-political and cultural values of the early twentieth century which greatly influenced his thought and his narratives of the West.

Before moving on to an analysis of the different chapters of this thesis, an important clarification must be made. Throughout this thesis, the common term *Indigenous peoples* will be used to refer to real First Nations inhabitants of Western Canada while the term "Indian" will

occasionally be used to refer to idealized or negatively stereotyped images, perceptions, and ideas regarding indigeneity. The term Indian does not, in this thesis, represent actual Indigenous peoples, only the imagined definitions that historically have been manufactured by colonists and settler-colonists alike as a means of defining indigeneity.

Chapter One will discuss the secondary literature that most significantly informed my research and my thesis. In this chapter, I will also discuss the primary source material, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the sources that were available to me. Chapter Two will provide a brief biography of Brown's life and works in Edmonton. While the majority of this thesis focuses on Brown's museum in the 1930s and his representations of Indigenous peoples, an overview of Brown's life is necessary for gaining a nuanced understanding of the discourses evident in his work and writings. I intend to examine Brown's life and works through a post-colonial lens; without a biography of Brown, he could easily be framed as a faceless settler-colonist with no historical agency or connection to the world around him.

Chapters Three and Four will be focused on Brown's writings and museum images respectively. Chapter Three will provide an evaluation of the popularity, design, and intent of Brown's museum as well as an examination of his unpublished historical manuscript, "The Birth of the West." To develop an understanding of Brown's often complex and self-conflicting worldviews regarding Indigenous peoples in the West, Chapter 3 will conclude with an analysis of his research material. I intend to illustrate how Brown's apparent empathy for Indigenous peoples and his condemnation of oppressive colonial forces and attitudes were constrained by a dominating discourse of settler history as an inevitable progression in the West, galvanizing efforts to erase Indigenous presence. Through an analysis of Brown's writings, this chapter will

also trace the development of settler concepts of authority, authenticity, history, and meaning within an imagined frontier space.

Chapter Four will examine the various settler-colonial representations and deeply-entrenched stereotypes and stigmas depicted through Brown's imagery of Indigenous peoples as displayed in his museum. Such visual representations, in tandem with Brown's written history and photographic captions, form a narrative in which Indigenous imagery is appropriated into the telling of a uniquely Western Canadian settler history while the Indigenous subjects represented are written out of the present and into a fictionalized history. This narrative affirmed the dominant discourse of the "vanishing Indian" while allowing settler-society to develop a sense of historical identity and authority over the West.

Brown's narrative of settler-colonialism in Western Canada required that settler-society achieve its ultimate goal in establishing a home on what was perceived to be a frontier. While he clearly developed a sense of empathy with regard to tangible injustices perpetrated against Indigenous peoples, Brown's narrative left no room for a truly Indigenous presence in the future of the West. The erasure of Indigenous peoples from this narrative was accomplished by writing them into the past, their authority over the West thus being transferred to settlers whom Brown and others perceived as inheritors of this imagined space. Through controlling the historical narrative and by having a means of communicating this narrative effectively, Brown was able to define Indigeneity in ways that would allow him and those who succeeded him to make sense of the space he inhabited, and to claim authority over it.

Chapter One: Historiography

Post-Colonial Criticism

Since the tradition's inception in the late 1970s, the existing secondary literature concerning post-colonial criticism has grown immensely. For the purposes of this thesis, the extensive tradition of post-colonial criticism, and the scholarly debates therein, will not be fully explored; rather, a select few works will be examined as they have significantly informed my own research and writing.

Perhaps one of the most commonly referenced scholars with regard to post-colonial criticism is the late Edward Said, whose ground-breaking work *Orientalism* (1978) analysed the discourses through which Western colonial powers observe, define, classify, categorize, and collect information on colonized peoples. Said's principal argument built on Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony to demonstrate how a created body of theory, representation, and practice formed a dominant culture which Western colonial powers used to come to terms with the Orient: an imagined place of "romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, [and] remarkable experiences."[12]

For Said, knowledge of the "other" or "Orient" was generated out of strength. This knowledge becomes a dominating framework which then contains and represents the "other."[13] Orientalism is then an archive of information bound together by a family of ideas. According to Said: "These ideas explained the behaviour of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; and most importantly they allowed Europeans to deal

[12] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1978), 1.
[13] Ibid., 40.

with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics."[14] Just as colonial forms of knowledge continuously represented the Orient as inherently different and inferior to colonizing populations, Euro-Canadians and European populations also saw Indigenous society as patently inferior, and in need of corrective study.

Although influential, Said's work has not escaped criticism. For example, scholars such as Elizabeth Furniss have argued that Said's analysis of colonial discourse is oversimplified and focuses too heavily on the perceived negative differences of the colonized. Furniss cited the "noble savage" as an example of an aggressive colonial representation that actually upholds Indigenous culture as morally superior to Western culture and therefore resembles a positive difference even though it is an inaccurate stereotype.[15] At least one early twentieth-century journalist attributed the noble savage stereotype to the perceived simplicity and trusting nature of the "Indian" but also towards whom the white man's behaviour was likened to "that of a wily and unscrupulous adult toward weak-minded children."[16] This loaded trope proposes that Indigenous peoples were in fact morally superior because they were like children who had not yet learned the vices of a modernized European society. As examined further in Chapter Three of this thesis, these criticisms lack persuasiveness. The use of the word "savage" is inescapable, and through the patently unequal relationship between the settlers and Indigenous peoples in the early part of the twentieth-century, Said's argument seems to be worthy of consideration in light of the lived experiences of the Indigenous peoples in the face of non-Indigenous cultures as positioned and encapsulated by Brown's exhibitions and texts.

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[14] Said, *Orientalism*, 42.
[15] Furniss, *The Burden of History*, 13.
[16] O.L. Rosenkrans Jr., "The Sons of Japheth," *The Golden Age*, 4:88, PAA, PR1965.0124, 288I-i, Box 35, 266 (31 Jan 1923).

Although his work belongs to the study of communication rather than the tradition of post-colonial criticism, James W. Carey's *Communication as Culture* has also been significantly influential to this thesis. This work has been previously discussed in the introduction; however, Carey's theories are deserving of some reiteration here. In agreement with Carey's theory of ritual communication, this thesis contends that Brown communicated information as a means of establishing and maintaining a societal identity through the representation of shared beliefs rather than simply disseminating settler knowledge regarding Indigenous peoples.[17] Carey has argued that the ritual view of communication has been overpowered by a transmission view of communication in American scholarship, and that:

> The activities we collectively call communication – having conversations, giving instructions, imparting knowledge, sharing significant ideas, seeking information, entertaining and being entertained – are so ordinary and mundane that it is difficult for them to arrest our attention.[18]

Particular aspects of social life, for example the display of Indigenous peoples in a photograph, or teaching history to children, can appear unproblematic or normal. Through a ritual view of communication, however, the aspects of life that are often simply assumed are exposed as part of a much more complex and problematic process of constructing meaning and identity. This idea remains important throughout the present study, as Brown's life, writings, and museum are analysed to determine how he constructed meaning and identity through settler narratives.

Three additional sources have significantly informed this thesis with regard to post-colonial criticism. Two of these sources will be discussed only briefly here: Lorenzo Veracini's work on settler-colonialism and Alan Lawson's application of post-colonial theory to the "settler-subject" are both expanded upon in the literature review of Chapter Three. Veracini has

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[17] Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 18.
[18] Ibid., 24.

drawn an important structural distinction between colonial narratives and settler-colonial narratives that is used in this thesis to explain why the dominant settler-colonial narratives of the twentieth century result in the erasure (in one form or another) of Indigenous peoples from the story of the development of Canada.[19]

Alan Lawson's theorization of the settler-subject within the contexts of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa examines settler narratives to illustrate the settler-subject's involvement with colonial space. Lawson's primary argument is built on the idea that settler-cultures are liminal sites of negotiation between contending authorities of Empire and Indigenous communities. With this being the case, settler-subjects can then be understood as "the very distillation of colonial power, the place where the operations of colonial power as *negotiation* are most intensely visible."[20] Lawson argues that "empty land can be settled, but occupied land can only be invaded. So the land must be emptied so that it can be filled, in turn, with both discourse and cattle."[21] These discourses take shape in predictable ways, as the settler-subject exercises authority over the Indigene and the land while expressing desire for the Indigene and the land as an aspiration for Indigenous authenticity in a series of narratives.[22]

This is one of the reasons why a study of Brown is so significant: this thesis agrees with Lawson's work and presents Brown as a negotiator of power between Imperial and Indigenous subjects in his narratives. In reacting to a sense of insecurity regarding their jurisdiction in the West, settlers such as Brown appropriated the authenticity of the Indigene, expressing this through historical narratives which present the Indigene as an integral part of settler history and

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[19] Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 84.
[20] Alan Lawson, "Postcolonial Theory and the Settler Subject," in *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism*, Ed. Cynthia Sugars (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 155.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 156.

in turn settler identity. How can Indigenous peoples, who have their own distinct narrative histories, simply be erased from the narratives of the West, thus emptying the land in a discursive sense? This is accomplished by universalizing Indigenous peoples as a collective with generalized characteristics and a uniform experience. This was a common element of Brown's settler narratives as well as the imperialist studies analysed by Said in *Orientalism*.[23]

Lastly, Mary Louise Pratt's post-colonial criticism of travel-writing and transculturation works in conjunction with Lawson's argument by demonstrating how colonial narratives constructed an innocuous version of European global authority, what Pratt calls "anti-conquest."[24] Even though Pratt's work focuses on travel-writing, something that Brown was not involved in, her analysis of the term anti-conquest is relevant. While Lawson's work emphasizes the supposed innocence of appropriating Indigenous authenticity in order to develop a sense of authority over land as compared to violent invasion, Pratt's work focuses on a system of dissociative, rationalizing, extractive understanding of experiential relations between people, plants, and animals known as natural history. Pratt identifies this Eurocentric discipline which arose in the second half of the eighteenth century as an overpowering discourse that asserted "an urban, male authority over the whole of the planet."[25]

While Brown's images of Indigenous peoples were not pseudo-scientific in the same way that many Europeans explicitly categorized and compared the bodies of non-European peoples, they were still ethnographic and historical, and they served to categorize populations according to their "race" and thus by their perceived historical roles. The innocence of this act was emphasized by Brown when he compared the historical treatment of Indigenous peoples in

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[23] Said, *Orientalism*, 227.
[24] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 39.
[25] Ibid., 38.

Canada to what he understood as a violent, unlawful invasion of Indigenous land in the United States. The notion of the settler-society couched in the idea, values, and direction of a culturally "progressive" British empire was thus reinforced in the minds of visitors to Brown's museum and the loaded images on display.

Post-Colonial Criticism and Photography

The volume of literature concerning post-colonial criticism and historical deconstruction of photography, much like post-colonial criticism in general, is increasingly vast. However, much of the literature concerning photography on the Canadian prairies, a large portion of which is owed to Western Canadian visual historian Brock Silversides, has focused on photographers as creators of valuable historical documents for strictly utilitarian purposes such as surveying, exploring, journalism, boosterism, and scientific research. Such an examination remains superficial and does not attempt to question the colonial motives or logic behind such documentation. Western Canadian photographers are also portrayed as neglected visual artists, who being Western and thus "parsimonious, self-made and independent at heart" are celebrated for their ability to overcome countless obstacles in order to secure their image.[26] While Silversides' work has acknowledged that commercial interests had an important influence on Western photographic portrayals of Indigenous peoples, his analysis stops short of post-colonial criticism.[27]

[26] Brock Silversides, *Looking West: Photographing the Canadian Prairies, 1858-1957* (Calgary: Fifth House Publishers, 1999), 1.
[27] Brock Silversides, *The Face Pullers: Photographing Native Canadians, 1871-1939* (Markham: Fifth House, 1994), 11.

Australian scholars have proven to be especially prolific in generating works of post-colonial criticism with regard to photography.[28] Within this tradition, Jane Lydon is a leading post-colonial critic. Her work has dealt primarily with the positioning of Indigenous photographs in Australian politics of the twentieth century. Her book *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (2005) examined the changes in photographs of Indigenous people over the twentieth century to reflect the various ideas of the colonial mission.[29] While this book emphasized the relationship between the visual image and the politics of colonialism, her more recent work has focused instead on the ways in which photography was used in particular contexts to communicate Indigenous views and values. According to Lydon, this intentional shift in focus was a way to deviate from the "substantial literature that defines colonial photography simply as the white photographers' view."[30]

Lydon's work has been fundamentally influenced by Said's *Orientalism* and Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975), as she sees photography as an "ideal tool of surveillance and control." Her work has been critical of the type of analysis provided by historians like Silversides as she has contended that "it has become common to regard nineteenth-century photographs of [I]ndigenous people as trophies bagged by the colonial hunter." Her analysis of the power dynamics inherent in the act of photography is trenchant. Lydon's work intersects with Said's idea of an object dominating a subject through the coercive power of discourse, in which the camera and the white, colonial photographer represent the object by which the subject—the photographed Indigenous person—is dominated.

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[28] Jane Lydon's collection of essays, *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014), contains essays on Aboriginal perspectives of photography by an interdisciplinary range of scholars. These include Julie Gough, Lawrence Bamblett, Michael Aird, Sari Braithwaite, Shauna Bostock-Smith, and others who approach the subject of Aboriginal-Colonial relations informed by traditions of post-colonial criticism.
[29] Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (London: *Duke University Press,* 2005), xiv.
[30] Jane Lydon, "The Photographic Encounter," in *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies*, Ed. Jane Lydon (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014), 2.

Keith Bell is a Canadian Art Historian whose work is similar to Lydon in terms of social criticism. Bell's analysis of professional photography in Western Canada has explored the grand narratives of colonialism as established formulas meant to render "new" territories familiar and thus readily available for European settlement. Bell has argued that early photographers presented the West as a vast empty space to be discovered. Photographs of the prairies depicting large flat landscapes were often meant to deny the possibility of the existence of Indigenous peoples. The absence of Eurocentric historical antiquities such as ancient cities in these photographs suggested that the West was a space waiting to be filled by European settlement and civilization.[31] As a means of emphasizing the emptiness of the West, Indigenous peoples may have been absent from promotional material but Bell notes that images of the "Noble Savage" or the "Last of His Race" appeared in substantial numbers in stock albums displayed for clients in their studios. The reason for this, Bell argues, was the appropriation of Indigenous representation for commercial exploitation, under the total control of organizations and photographers who claimed these images.[32]

Another historian of photography whose work has proven important to this thesis is Martha A. Sandweiss. Although Sandweiss focused on American photography, her response to French photojournalist Henri Cartier-Brésson's book *The Decisive Moment* (1952), emphatically titled "Undecisive Moments," is applicable to traditions of Western photography in Canada as well. While Cartier-Brésson presented the photograph as a complete, coherent object or individual image that could be analyzed conventionally like a painting, Sandweiss argued that this approach, although characterizing much of the critical writing on nineteenth-century

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[31] Keith Bell, "Professional Photographers in Western Canada: Constructing the Great Lone Land," in *Plain Truth*, Ed. Dan Ring, Keith Bell, and Sheila Petty (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1998), 35
[32] Ibid., 52.

photography, misses the importance of such photography to its contemporary practitioners and viewers.[33] Her main argument is that early Western photographers thought of their genre as a narrative medium; therefore the presentation of their images must be understood as photographic narratives resounding with themes such as the taming of the wilderness, the subjugation of Indigenous peoples, and the Westward expansion of civilization.[34] These grand themes could not be distilled into single images and as a result photographers constructed means of displaying images alongside textual captions, lectures, dioramas, in sequence in albums, and in theatrical presentations.[35]

In analyzing Brown's presentation of photographs through his "Pioneer Days" museum, this thesis extends Sandweiss' identification of the narrative tradition of early Western photography from the nineteenth-century to the 1930s. Brown's use of text and captions underneath photographs, as well as his poster displays, supplementary lectures, and written accompaniments, provide more information than is immediately apparent in a single photograph, thus constructing a narrative history of the West through photography.

Secondary Literature Regarding Ernest Brown

In stark contrast to the amount of extant literature on post-colonial criticism and historical studies of photography, the number of scholarly works that have examined the life and endeavors of Ernest Brown are unexpectedly few. This is surprising for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that an abundance of primary source material is available and Brown himself is an

[33] Martha A. Sandweiss, "Undecisive Moments: The Narrative Tradition in Western Photography," in *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, Ed. Martha Sandweiss (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1991), 99.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 102.

important figure in Edmonton's local history. As I hope to demonstrate through this thesis, Brown's distinctive method of historical narration through his choosing and displaying of photographs—along with expository text and germane writing—stands out from among other contemporary photographers who were less interested in historical preservation and education, and more concerned with the commercial appeal and profitability of their photographs.

Although Silversides' methodology lacks the post-colonial criticism central to this thesis, his work has been included here as his analysis represents one of the few works that has directly examined Brown's images. In his book *The Face Pullers*, Silversides' categorization of Indigenous representations includes many of Brown's images and divides them into types based on four different historical depictions.[36] Silversides' categorization of Brown's and others' photographs, useful for organizing Brown's images into separate discursive groups, is the subject of Chapter Four and will be discussed in greater detail there.

Aside from a short, dramatized educational DVD produced by Film West & Associates, and directed by Tom Radford in 1973, the only other secondary source to provide a focused account of Brown's life and work was written by Matt Dyce and James Opp in 2010.[37] The film ultimately delivers a rather superficial interpretation of Brown's life as a struggling pioneer, featuring a narration by a voice actor posing as Brown. The film, however, does include several interesting albeit brief clips of interviews with Brown's younger assistant and protégé Gladys Reeves, thus providing a noteworthy commentary on Brown's life from someone who experienced it personally.

Dyce and Opp's "Visualizing Space, Race, and History in the North: Photographic Narratives of the Athabasca-Mackenzie River Basin" is more instructive than Radford's film as

[36] Silversides, *The Face Pullers*, 15.
[37] Dyce and Opp, "Visualizing Space," 78.

it focuses not only on Brown and his photographic albums with regard to the North but also the work of his predecessor C.W. Mathers from whom Brown purchased his studio in 1904. This book chapter provides a nuanced analysis of the imagined space that Brown constructed through his photographic narratives which is entirely absent from Radford's short dramatization.[38] As Silversides' work simply offers a commentary on Brown's photographs as general representations of Western photographic tradition without any mention of his personal life, Dyce and Opp's chapter, although brief in length, also provides a biographical account of Brown's life.

In a spirit of post-colonial criticism, this thesis aims to provide a much-needed examination of one of Alberta's most prominent historical photographers that moves beyond a static analysis of images. Brown's unique position as a settler photographer who was chiefly interested in preserving and sharing a history of the West demands critical investigation. As a case study in settler-colonialism, this thesis will build upon the collaborative effort of Dyce and Opp by exploring the interweaving dimensions of Brown's photographs and written works to trace Brown's construction of race and his appropriation of such constructs towards the establishment of a meaningful settler identity and the growing sense of non-Indigenous authority over the West.

Primary Source Evaluation

This thesis draws predominantly from the personal writings, correspondence, political papers, research notes and advertisements for the "Birth of the West" exhibit written by Brown as well as newspaper articles and magazines regarding Brown's museum. In conjunction with these

[38] Dyce and Opp argue that Brown employed a cartographical framework in his photograph album of the Canadian North, as commissioned by the Hudson's Bay Company, in order to portray the metropolitan center of Edmonton as a heroic influence of civilization upon the wilderness. See Dyce and Opp, "Visualizing Space," 81.

textual sources, this thesis examines several photographic posters from Brown's exhibit which were used as teaching pictures for visiting school children. Together, these sources equate to more than simple colonial photographs and a textual record of Brown's life and ideas; they represent educational posters supplemented by written historical narratives, thus illustrating the way that Brown perceived the poster subjects as well as his own place and role in the West. The ways in which artifacts and images were presented by Brown were never free of bias as the very nature of exhibiting makes the concept of a museum a contested terrain of colonial discourse.[39]

Despite having an extensive framework of secondary literature on which to build interpretations of Brown's museum imagery, the readings of photographs presented in Chapter Four are still essentially my own. One cannot put oneself in the place of the museum visitor to intimately experience Brown's exhibit as a settler or as the child of one of Alberta's original homesteaders. Brown carefully and intentionally "balanced" his narrative, however, by sequencing his photographs in such a way that a story of the West could be inferred by its audience.[40]

The original balance of these photographs is lost when viewing Brown's poster displays individually and out of sequence. Photographic historian Elizabeth Edwards has argued that the material forms of the photograph and its relationship to memory are "enhanced by its presentational forms."[41] The way in which photographs are displayed, including the physical space in which they are presented, influences the viewer's interpretation and understanding of the images. To best infer the narrative messages that were being transmitted and shared in

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[39] Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, "Introduction: Museums and Multiculturalism," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Ed. Steven D. Lavine and Ivan Karp (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 1.
[40] Ernest Brown, "Personal Correspondence," PAA, PR1965.0124, 34b, Box 1 (1928-1948).
[41] Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs as Objects of Memory," in *Material Memories*, Ed. M. Kwuit, C. Breward and J. Aynsley (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1999), 222.

Brown's museum, I have attempted to address this limitation of the source material by drawing similarities between different "types" of images. A more complete understanding of the layout of Brown's museum, however, would have been beneficial in this regard but alas is mostly lost to posterity.

In terms of researching and writing Brown's biography, an abundance of material relating to his museum does exist along with his political writings and the various societies and organizations to which he belonged or subscribed. Little is available, however, with regard to Brown's personal life before his immigration to Canada. While the focus of this thesis remains primarily on his historical and political writing and enterprises between 1920 to the late 1930s, Brown's experience before arriving in Canada accounts for twenty-seven years of his life that were undoubtedly formational. Even after he arrived in Alberta, one is hard-pressed to find any information concerning Brown's wife – Mary "Molly" Carr – who he married in July 1902.[42] Information regarding their son Alan is equally scarce although he is pictured in photographs alongside his parents at a young age.[43] This is why Brown's immediate family appears to be nearly non-existent in this thesis while on the other hand Brown's closest colleague Gladys Reeves appears much more frequently. Any suggestion that Reeves had a much greater influence in Brown's personal life than his family is unintentional but derives from her pervasive presence in the source material.

Another limitation of the primary source material is that unfortunately many of the Indigenous subjects of Brown's photographs cannot be individually identified. Rather than referring to the names of subjects, many photographs refer to individuals by the name of their supposed tribe or simply as "Indian." The identification of unknown individuals is a problem that

[42] "Banns of Marriage," PAA, PR1965.0124, 14, Box 1.
[43] "Ernest Brown with Wife and Son," PAA, PR1965.0124, B.10483, Box 9.

can only be addressed by past Indigenous community involvement in the researching and writing of these histories. For decolonization to be successful, not only must historians address what Amy Lonetree has called "the hard truths of colonialism" but Indigenous peoples must be involved in reclaiming narratives. By telling "the difficult stories – honestly and rigorously," future generations of Indigenous peoples will be able to "know the past and find the means to heal."[44]

Finally, while the importance of Indigenous perceptions of colonial images cannot be understated, such perceptions of Brown's work are absent from the primary sources reviewed in this thesis.[45] The primary sources analysed account predominantly for only one perspective—the settler-gaze of Ernest Brown. As a case study this thesis is meant to draw from Brown's perspective the historical narratives and worldviews of the greater settler-society which he both influenced and was influenced by. The intention of this thesis is not to fully review the wide range of injustices and historical traumas experienced by Indigenous peoples at the hands of colonial and settler-colonial powers but to investigate one settler's perspectives and ideas as disseminated to readers and visitors to Brown's museum, and which was generally accepted by greater Western Canadian society. This will hopefully contribute to a deconstruction of the colonization of historical discourse in the early part of the twentieth-century.

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[44] Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 23.

[45] Indigenous perspectives on and responses to settler-colonial imagery, and the preservation of such imagery, is a subject of continuous historiographical discussion. For a key publication addressing photographs of Indigenous peoples taken by non-Indigenous peoples and the various ways in which such photographs have been reinvented and infused with new meaning, see Lucy Lippard's collection of essays *Partial Recall*, Ed. Lucy Lippard (New York: New Press, 1992), 14.

Chapter Two: The Life of Ernest Brown, Settler Photographer

As a case study in settler-colonial imaginings of the West, Ernest Brown's life and career in Alberta informs us not merely of one individual's hopes, dreams, and passions, but of the meaning and purpose for which he searched and the consequent roles that he prescribed himself and the new social and intellectual space in which he inhabited. Undoubtedly, this search for meaning in a foreign land did not arise from a vacuum, and this thesis will establish that Brown's imaginings of Western Canada reflected those of the settlers around him, as well as those who were educated by his teaching pictures and through his museum.

Before any such examination, however, the context of Brown's life must be discussed. This chapter will serve as a brief biography focusing on Ernest Brown's life as a settler, photographer, educator, entrepreneur, political activist, and amateur historian from the time of his arrival in Edmonton in 1905 up until his death in 1951. Brown's museum and teaching pictures are the principal subjects of chapters three and four but will be touched upon only briefly here. This chapter will examine Brown's arrival in Canada, his purchase of C.W. Mathers' photography studio and collection, Brown's financial difficulties and subsequent foray into politics and writing, his relocation to Vegreville, the establishment and ultimate failure of his museum, and the last decade of his life in which he struggled to preserve his photograph and artifact collection. The aim of this overview is to partially construct an understanding of Brown, his ideas, worldviews, beliefs, and personality that examines settler-colonial imaginings of space, narrative-history, and race. Throughout his life, Brown clearly wrestled with an ever-elusive sense of settler identity, a struggle that surfaced not only in his appropriation of First Nations images to craft a "pioneer" history, but in nearly all of his various enterprises and activities.

Arrival to Canada

Today, Ernest Brown may be remembered most prominently for his career in photography, but his boundless enthusiasm for reading and writing history was readily apparent even in his own unfinished autobiography. Conforming to the contemporary trends of history-writing in the 1930s, as laid out by historians such as George MacKinnon Wrong, Chester Martin and W.N. Sage, Brown had turned away from the customary focus on Constitutional history to concentrate instead on "personalities and events of romantic interest."[46] Brown shared his own romantic depiction of his entry into what he perceived to be a grand narrative of history:

> Between 3 and 4am on a Saturday morning September the eighth 1877, a very important event occurred. A wee piece of humanity about seven or eight pounds in weight in the shape of a bouncing baby boy made his entry into this land of hope and disappointment… this little piece of promise was, and is, Ernest Brown.[47]

This "piece of promise" was born to a Scottish gardener, who with his English wife, raised Brown alongside eight siblings in Edinburgh. Although he grew up in Scotland, Brown always preferred to emphasise his English roots. Having been born in Middlesbrough, where his mother was from, Brown once told the *STET* (a University of Alberta Student Union publication), "I have always considered myself an Englishman, and in the early days here in Edmonton I was even President and District Deputy of the Sons of England." In the same interview, Brown recounted a story in which his Scottish roots were finally found out when he was forced to

[46] These three prominent historians produced a textbook called *The Story of Canada* which formed a part of Brown's collection of history books, archived in the Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR1965.0124, 704, Box 68; See George MacKinnon Wrong, Chester Martin and W.N. Sage, *The Story of Canada* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1929) vi.
[47] "The Autobiography of Ernest Brown," PAA, PR1990.601, 24, Box 1 (Feb 17th 1940).

register his nationality during the Second World War, after which he was mockingly given the mispronounced nickname of, "Mr. Broon."[48]

At the early age of seventeen, Brown's writings clearly showed that photography was his first passion. One of his personal idols was Captain Abney, an English chemist, astronomer and photographer, and in 1895 he wrote that it was his ambition to figure out colour photography;[49] According to Brown's close friend, colleague and protégé Gladys Reeves, Brown began his photography career in England, but weary of conditions in his home country following the Boer War, decided to make a life for himself in Canada, first arriving in Toronto in 1902.

Reeves claimed that Brown found difficulty in securing employment in Toronto, as he was discouraged by signs that read "Englishmen need not apply," and also because Brown was too frail to be hired by employers of day labourers, who apparently turned him down on sight. After approximately four months of seeking stable employment in Toronto, a photography dealer informed Brown of a photographer out West who was looking for someone to take care of his studio while he embarked on an expedition to the Arctic.[50] This was Charles W. Mathers, Edmonton's only professional photographer, whose expedition resulted in the production of a large collection of photographs and souvenir albums.[51] In his museum (later established in 1933), Brown would acquire, reorganize, and reconceptualise the negatives of this collection to display a history of the north in the "Birth of the West Exhibition."

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[48] "The Muster Roll (of Albertans who, without benefit of high position or of great wealth, have made significant contributions to the life and civilization of the West)" by T.H. Sutherland, in *The STET*: A University of Alberta Student Union Publication, Volume II, No. 2, 17-20, PAA, PR1965.0124, 12, OS (April 1949).
[49] "'My Friends' Opinions' book," PAA, PR1965.0124, 7, Box 1 (July 1895).
[50] "The Ernest Brown Collection; speech and slide show by Gladys Reeves," PAA, PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.
[51] For a detailed examination of C.W. Mathers' photographic expedition see Dyce and Opp, "Visualizing Space, Race, and History in the North," 67.

FIG.2.1 *Ernest Brown* Block, 1914, City of Edmonton Archives, EA-163-87.

Excited by the prospect of working at a studio in the West, Brown returned to England to collect his belongings, and with his wife, Mary "Molly" Carr, arrived in Edmonton in April 1903. Mathers had used his collection of negatives to establish a photographic view and souvenir store at 98 Jasper Avenue, and it was not long before he had sold the studio to Brown. On 1 June 1904, Brown purchased the studio along with sixty-six feet of land (Figure 2.1).[52] The original

[52] "Ernest Brown Collection; Reeves," PAA, PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.

sale stipulated a mutual agreement that Brown would refrain from entering the business of views--pictures taken outside and sold mainly as souvenirs--while Mathers would similarly avoid taking portraits for five years, so as to eschew any competition between the photographer and his former assistant.

To maintain his mortgage, however, Brown began to undertake his own view photography, thus calling for a new financial contract with Mathers in 1907. This new contract included the sale of Mathers' entire collection of views, and as Matt Dyce and James Opp have rightly pointed out, the transfer was significant; not only did Mathers' collection include tens of thousands of photographs from the defunct Calgarian photography firm Boorne & May, but when added to the photographs of William Notman (from Montreal) and of the photography firm Steel & Wing (based in Winnipeg) which Brown obtained from various photographers over the years, the total collection numbering more than fifty-thousand negatives. [53] This allowed Brown to claim in 1927 (as he did on many other occasions) that he owned the only collection of early photos of Western Canada that existed in the last half-century since the invention of dry-plate photography.[54]

Brown, the Amateur Historian

Soon after purchasing Mathers' studio, Brown's fledgling business began to thrive and he required an apprentice to handle the high demand, so he hired Gladys Reeves in 1905. Reeves, a teenager at the time, would go on to establish her own well-known studio in Edmonton, and to

[53] Dyce and Opp, "Visualizing Space," 78; Correspondence with G.A. McKee, Superintendent of Edmonton's Schools, PAA, PR1965.124, 111, Box 17 (Nov 25th 1926).
[54] Ibid.

partner with Brown in the establishment of his Birth of the West Museum and teaching pictures series.

Reeves was particularly observant of her employer's habits and interests beyond his business of photography, something that undoubtedly influenced the strong friendship that formed between the two. In a speech delivered on the subject of Brown's collection, Reeves stated that. "from the day of his arrival the growth and conditions of the West had been a great fascination to Ernest Brown, and never did he miss an opportunity of making notes (often on his shirt cuff) of his conversations with the pioneers, Mounted Police and travellers in this vast new land…"[55] Indeed, Brown was known for using his white shirt cuffs as a notepad[56] and for his idiosyncratic method of recording what he perceived to be an "authentic" history, "neither under or overstated," as he emphasised in the forward to his 1928 manuscript "The Birth of the West." These conversations and encounters, alongside a vast collection of books, newspaper articles, and magazines, are what came to constitute the "twenty-five years original research, tabulating and checking" that Brown would use throughout his manuscript to supposedly dispel the stories "written and passed off as history that [are] obviously incorrect."[57]

For Brown, historical authenticity was derived from the people who claimed to be involved in events themselves. Brown's own obituary estimated that he had photographed seventeen-thousand early Edmontonians, making notes of what they said to him and copying them out carefully as footnotes to pictures and into his book "The Birth of the West."[58] Proud of the way he collected details from old-timers, Brown once boasted of an encounter he had with a

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[55] "Ernest Brown Collection; Reeves," PAA, PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.
[56] "The Muster Roll," PAA, PR1965.0124, 12, OS, page 19.
[57] Ernest Brown, "The Birth of the West: a brief narration of the discovery; the early fur traders; Selkirk settlers; coming of the N.W.M.P.; building of the C.P.R. and the commencement of the towns in the Canadian West," PAA, PR1965.124, Item 219, Box 21 (June 17th, 1928).
[58] "Obituary of Ernest Brown," PAA, PR1965.124, 75C, Box 9.

man nicknamed "Barrel Smith," who unbeknownst to Brown walked into his studio one day looking for images of a man who tried to travel by floating in barrels to the Klondike. Brown suggested that he must be thinking of a particularly "crazy" prospector known as Barrel Smith, to which the man indignantly replied that he himself was that very prospector.[59] While knowing now whether this odd customer was in fact who he claimed to be is impossible, the story was nevertheless included in Brown's notes and retold as the kind of authentic western lore which he found so imperative to unearthing a natural "character" of the West.[60]

Another such personal account came in the form of a letter addressed to Brown from an old-timer named Alfred on 14 March 1924. Alfred, a seventy-six-year-old French Canadian, was writing to Brown about the many stories he had collected over his time serving with the North-West Mounted Police, with whom he had enlisted in 1872. He stated that he stayed in Fort McLeod "until the treaty was made with the blackfeet [sic]" before being transferred to Fort Saskatchewan. Writing about the prisoners he looked after there, Alfred wrote "among them was an Indian which had killed his family and had eat his children: he was tried by old Judge Richardson from Battleford and hung at the Barrack in 79."[61]

An examination of the Canadian government's inventory of case files reveals that the nameless man from Alfred's story was Ka-Ki-Si-Kutchin or "Swift Runner."[62] Tried by Hugh Richardson (a magistrate best known for presiding over the trial of Louis Riel in the summer of 1885) Ka-Ki-Si-Kutchin was the first person to be legally hanged in the North-West Territories,

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[59] "The Muster Roll," PAA, PR1965.0124, 12, OS, page 19.
[60] This notion of a supposedly natural character of the west constructed through the mythologizing of stories is something that has been widely covered in historical writing and will be examined in further detail in the following two chapters.
[61] "Personal Names File," PAA, PR1965.0124, 1, Box 11.
[62] Lorraine Gadoury and Antonio Lechasseur, Government Archives Division, *Persons Sentenced to Death in Canada, 1867-1976: An Inventory of Case Files in the Fonds of the Department of Justice* (Ontario: National Archives of Canada, 1994), 166.

in front of a relatively small crowd of whom the majority had likely never seen a hanging before.[63] While Alfred's story (unlike "Barrel" Smith's) is verifiable, the lack of names (Swift Runner was very well-known around the Fort Saskatchewan settlement) and concentration on gruesome violence in the recollection of stories involving First Nations people is revealing of the ways in which Canada's settler-society prioritized what to remember about the history of indigenous/settler interaction.[64] As will be examined in later chapters, this trend as part of mythologizing of the West carries through into the stories that Brown chose to include in his museum, writings, and his teaching pictures.

Financial Difficulties

While Brown's personal interactions with customers through his flourishing business provided him with plenty of note-filled shirt cuffs, Brown's growing prosperity would come to an abrupt end with the financial crisis of 1913 and Canada's entry into World War I. Soldiers and families of the men enlisted moved back to England to fight for the motherland, while American real estate promoters also pulled out of Edmonton and returned to the United States. Altogether, Gladys Reeves reckoned that over 26,000 people left Edmonton and the surrounding district at this time.[65] Meanwhile, Brown was declared physically unfit for service by the army and told that his patriotic duty was to "carry on and keep the Home fires burning."[66]

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[63] Jana G. Pruden, "The First Hanging," *The Edmonton Journal*, accessed Jan 10, 2018 from http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/hanged/swiftrunner.html.
[64] Ibid.
[65] "Ernest Brown Collection; Reeves," PAA, PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.
[66] Ibid.

At this time, Brown had four stores on Jasper Avenue, two of which were occupied by his photographic supplies and portrait studio, and the other two rented out. One store was being rented by the partner of a printing firm who was fighting overseas. According to Reeves, Brown "allowed them to run into arrears of over $5,000" because charging a soldier rent while he was on duty would be akin to "stabbing a man in the back."[67] The proprietor of the second store however was fiscally irresponsible, having started a second branch further West in Edmonton he used the east-end store (belonging to Brown) to financially support the new branch, to the point of bankrupting it.[68]

Many properties during this time were falling into the hands of loan companies or the city; as Edmonton's population dwindled, block-owners struggled to pay utilities, heating, taxes and mortgage payments. Although his business barely survived through the War, Brown was finally evicted in 1921, his goods and photograph collection supposedly piled on the side-walk to soak in the rain. Brown paid the city of Edmonton five dollars per month to use an old shack at the rear of his former property to store his collection while he gave his assistant enough equipment to start her own business, and sold the remainder of his assets to secure food and shelter.[69] In 1924, Brown's luck took a turn as he managed to take over a studio in the town of Vegreville, Alberta, about one-hundred kilometers east of Edmonton, where he resided until 1929.

Even in Vegreville, Brown's financial struggles continued to plague him as he struggled to turn a profit using his vast collection of photographs. Correspondence with the superintendent of Edmonton's schools – George A. McKee – between October and November of 1926 reveals

[67] "Ernest Brown Collection; Reeves," PAA, PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

Brown's frustrations with running his business out of Vegreville while investing time and money into his collection and seeing little to no returns. McKee had ordered a set of lantern slides of Edmonton's first schools from Brown, although the slides themselves were in Edmonton in the care of Gladys Reeves. Brown, assuming McKee would also be requiring (and paying for) a lecture set in addition to the slides, set out for Edmonton to meet the superintendent. Upon returning to Vegreville, Brown wrote to McKee explaining that he would not be able to finish his order in time due to a backlog of work and additional orders, and proceeded to chastise the superintendent for requesting him to travel by train to Edmonton for a mere twenty-five-dollar order.

> I paid $2,000 for these old-time negatives. At further cost I have preserved them 22 years, until now they have become a valuable asset. After 22 years of helping to build the City, the City has not dealt kindly with me. Two years ago when almost wanting for bread, I hawked these pictures around to the City; the School Board; The Provincial Govn'; The Old Timers; The Museum of Art; the Historical Society, and others who I felt would be interested. Successive officers and members of the School Board have said 'sure we must secure the pictures of our own early schools,' but not a dollar did I receive… so disgusted did I become with the whole proceeding that I came near destroying the only historical record covering events in the West from Winnipeg to Victoria, and the International boundary to the Artic, during the past 50 years.[70]

Brown was further incensed when McKee claimed his School Board was planning to add to the collection as they "come across pictures of historical interest." Furiously Brown argued that dry-plate photography was only recently invented in 1874, and because snap-shot photography was impossible fifty years ago, and because there were only three outdoor photographers covering Western Canada (Notman, Steel & Wing, and Boorne & May), he owned the only collection of early photos of Western Canada that existed at the time.

> The infringement of my copyright of late, has been so frequent, by newspapers, magazines, photographers and others, that we are rarely without a case in the Lawyer's hands. I have at present a settlement pending with McLean's Magazine;

[70] "Correspondence with G.A. McKee," PAA, PR1965.124, 111, Box 17 (25 November 1926)

> and on a recent visit to the offices of the H.B.Co., I found the walls covered with reproductions of my Far North and early Edmonton pictures, in a size we never made… I am sure the public would not consider it an unnecessary expenditure, if the Board appropriated $1,500 to pay for six large framed pictures at $25.00 each for each of say ten, of the principal schools. I am certain that someday they will pay a lot more.[71]

Political Involvement

Disillusioned with the direction his career was taking him, Brown's once passionate interest in photography began to fade, while his financial struggles gave rise to a newfound concern with politics. The 1920s saw most of Brown's political writing, providing historians with a strong idea of his thoughts and worldviews regarding socio-economic issues of the time. The Provincial Archives of Alberta house Brown's written works in a variety of labour-minded journal articles and pamphlets, as well as a short-lived newspaper - of which Brown was the head editor - called *The Glow Worm*.

Mark Leier's excellent analysis of early Canadian socialism sheds light on the reform-minded identity that Brown had adopted after World War I. Leier explains that socialist-leaning craftsmen in the artisanal tradition often did not identify their employers as their real class enemy, as these employers most likely modelled the kind of success story (from apprentice to journeyman to master) that craftsmen themselves hoped to achieve. Instead, the real parasites in the eyes of the Canadian artisanal worker were huge corporations, trusts, and monopolies; the non-producers who fed off the labour of the producers, or the working class.[72] Indeed, the parasites of Brown's newspaper were primarily banks, lawyers, and insurance companies.

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[71] "Correspondence with G.A. McKee," PAA, PR1965.124, 111, Box 17 (25 November 1926).
[72] Mark Leier, "Workers and Intellectuals: The Theory of the New Class and Early Canadian Socialism," in *Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement*, Ed. Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996), 144.

Featured prominently in the first volume of *The Glow Worm,* Brown wrote of these perceived non-producers:

> We… will show you how the banks take all the exported wealth of the country, the banks take nearly all the created wealth of the country, compelling us to go into debt (public) for our living," and "following close on the heel, in fact closely interwoven with the bond houses and the banks we have the insurance companies, robbing the people both coming and going.[73]

Brown's paper was a response to what he understood to be a "capitalist controlled press" with whom many people in the West were not satisfied.[74] Characterizing Brown as anti-capitalist may not be accurate, however, as Leier explains the difference between early Canadian Socialists and labourists:

> In the ideal world of the labourist and skilled worker, capital would still exist, but it would be small, personalized capital that would allow an honest day's pay for an honest day's work and would offer ample opportunity for employees to become masters themselves. None of this required revolution or capturing the state apparatus. Indeed the state itself was viewed as necessary but essentially parasitic, and labourists usually wanted to reduce its expenditures, which after all were paid for by productive workers.[75]

While Brown has been remembered as a radical for his politics, his ideologies seemingly represented the norm in terms of independent working-class politics east of the Rockies since as early as the 1880s. In June 1960, *The London Free Press* remembered Brown as a pioneer photographer who turned into a radical from "the shock of financial ruin," leading him to work for an "obscure labor party."[76] Reeves has stated that even the authorities in Ottawa had Brown fixed as a radical, with which Brown enthusiastically agreed.[77]

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[73] Ernest Brown, *The Glow Worm* 1, no. 1, PAA, PR1965.124, 430, Box 16 (Friday 13 April 1923), 1.
[74] Ibid., 2.
[75] Leier, "Workers and Intellectuals," 144.
[76] Gerry McNeil, "Collection of Photos of Old West Subjects Interesting Memorial," *The London Free Press,* PAA, PR1965.124, 12, OS (Wednesday 1 June 1960).
[77] Interview with Gladys Reeves, *Ernest Brown*, DVD.

According to Craig Heron, however, labourism was a distinct ideological current similar to, but also differing from, socialism, agrarian populism, and contemporary liberalism, and was moreover the main ideological current of working-class political parties before 1920. Leading up to the 1920s, workers frequently appeared in electoral campaigns across Canada as "Labour" candidates which is what Ernest Brown resembled in the summer of 1921.[78] Before moving to Vegreville, Brown was nominated as a candidate for the Independent Labor Party (ILP), and in a fiery speech characterized Conservatives as "the out-and-out representatives of the big interests, and the proven enemies of the worker and should be shunned as they would the devil."[79]

While much could be written about Brown's political passions, the history of independent labour parties in Alberta is not the subject of this thesis; nonetheless, Brown's politics are an essential aspect of his identity. His politics interconnect with both his religious life and, as will be discussed later on, his humanitarian beliefs, all of which represent important components to the self-imagined roles of settler-colonial society in the West. An example of such overlap was Brown's membership with the Labor Church of Edmonton, of which he kept a book of hymns and songs. The mission of the Labor Church, as listed on the hymnal was "to provide an open platform for the full and free discussion of social and economic problems," and to "assist in bringing about the 'Brotherhood of Man'." Below these statements is printed the quote: "Those who will not work, neither shall they eat!"[80] a phrase that is also found printed boldly underneath the title of Brown's newspaper. The songs of the hymnal themselves are filled with political imagery, one verse from the song "A Call to Arms" (sung to the tune of "When the Mists Have Rolled Away") includes lines such as: "the forces of oppression grind the faces of the poor," and,

[78] Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," *Labour/Le Travail*, 13 (1984): 45.
[79] *The Bulletin*, "Independent Labor Party Nominations: Joseph A. Clarke and Ernest Brown Are Chosen as Candidates" PAA, PR1965.124, 80, Box 16.
[80] "Hymns and Songs of Labor Church Edmonton," PAA, PR1965.124, 80, Box 16.

"the tyrant hosts are fearful when they hear the trumpet call of the proletarian army; 'all for each and each for all.'"[81]

The Labor Church, *The Glow Worm*, and the ILP made clear that the young region of Alberta would be best served by people considered to be producers, those who did "social useful labor" as the ILP put it, to put an end to the "monstrous inequality of circumstances… and suffering of poverty, disease, and brutalization of moral and spiritual life" brought about by "Capitalist production, unbridled greed, and wage slavery."[82] These were not simply the words of a Labor Party to which Ernest Brown belonged; they come from an official Labor Party pamphlet on which he is listed as the primary contact for any and all information, and also is credited with most of the compiling and writing. The hyperbolic language of the pamphlet suggests Brown perceived himself and like-minded workers of the newly-settled West as being central to a historic turning point as he wrote:

> Wake up, Canadians, before it is too late… you are at the most momentous point in history the world has ever known. The early Christians struggling for religious liberty, or the people wrestling the Magna Charta [sic] from the Barons of old, fade into insignificance with the questions before you know.[83]

Whether it was through amassing a comprehensive collection of photographs as an extensive historical record, or through political activism, Brown clearly saw himself as an active force in shaping the living history of his region.

Matt Dyce and James Opp have marked the 1920s as a significant point of change in Brown's understanding of his photograph collection. They argue that Brown's financial ruin and political endeavours was when he began to view his collection as a documentation of history, and

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[81] "Hymns and Songs of Labor Church Edmonton," PAA, PR1965.124, 80, Box 16.
[82] "Declaration of Principles of the Edmonton Branch of the Independent Labor Party," PAA, PR1965.124, 80, Box 16.
[83] Ibid.

that until this point the collection served primarily as stock for his store and sold as souvenirs. This reconceptualization of his photographs, Dyce and Opp suggest, led Brown to see the value in his images not as "glimpses of the exotic or scenic," but as a "specific reference of a time now considered to be past."[84]

While Dyce and Opp are correct in pointing out that Brown came to view his collection as a marketable heritage commodity, and that producing a visual narrative of history (as Brown would later do with his museum) was a simpler task than extracting financial reward from images as historical curiosities, Brown's interest in historical narrative-making seems to have preceded his financial ruin when he was recording notes from customers at his first studio in Edmonton.[85] The "culture of authenticity" as Miles Orvell has coined, includes the idea that one could truly experience place through "authentic" photographs and not easily-made reproductions.[86] This is a culture that Brown adhered to before his bankruptcy although his idea of marketing such a visual-narrative would not become a reality until the end of the 1920s.[87]

While Brown's political aspirations of the early 1920s were relatively short-lived and unsuccessful, as was his paper *The Glow Worm* which only published three issues, the financially defeated photographer continued to promote his photographs to anyone interested in buying, but often it resulted in disappointment. One letter dated 8 March 1927, from T. Morris Longstreth, the author of a series of books on the North-West Mounted Police, reveals that Brown's struggles with copyright infringement were severely hampering his trade. After delivering his well-rehearsed pitch of authenticity regarding the "only collection of photographs in existence of the

[84] Dyce and Opp, "Visualizing Space," 79.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 141.
[87] Dyce and Opp, "Visualizing Space," 79.

early days of the West," Brown sent Longstreth twenty-seven photographs of the Mounted Police. Longstreth used none of the photographs, writing back to Brown in April that he already owned photos of the subjects Brown sent him. Longstreth made a specific request:

> I beg of you for artistic reasons not to scratch your name so near the middle of your pictures. That picture of the 1905 show at Edmonton has your name on it 3 times… and for fine reproduction in a book is spoiled. I suppose it is hard to prevent theft.[88]

Once again, the historic value Brown placed on his collection of artifacts was not sufficient to pay his bills, regardless of how insistent he was of their authenticity or rarity.

New Beginnings

According to Reeves, what gave Brown "new heart", was the sale of three photo albums of Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) posts and undertakings in the West to the HBC in London, England, and to the CPR for prints of the construction of the railway for their own archives.[89] Brown and Reeves worked on creating the large, leather-bound albums together, wanting to create something that was a much bigger production than the typical and cheaply made "views" sold by Mathers. Some photographs filled the entire 16 in. x 11 in. pages of the eighteen-pound books. Their effort made them $750 for the three HBC albums, and $500 for the CPR project.[90]

Brown and Reeves found a new and seemingly prosperous, if initially painstaking, business in making these elaborate albums. Unfortunately, on 19 February 1929, however, while the construction of three albums was underway, a fire broke out at 10348 Jasper Avenue where Reeves and Brown were storing the albums and a huge collection of prints. The fire destroyed

[88] "Business Correspondence," Vegreville Studios, PAA, PR1965.124, 112a, Box 17 (1926-1929).
[89] "The Ernest Brown Collection; Reeves," PAA, PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.
[90] Dyce and Opp, "Visualizing Space," 80.

the albums and over 5,000 prints while the majority of negatives were saved because they were stored in Vegreville, and the most valuable of which were locked in the vaults of the Canadian Bank of Commerce.[91]

This disaster, along with the severe economic pressures of the Great Depression on small prairie towns, influenced Brown to return from Vegreville to Edmonton in 1929 to re-establish himself. When Brown first returned to Edmonton, one of his initial endeavours with Reeves was to create "The Goblin Studio." In an effort to provide young, unemployed men with something to do, "The Goblin Studio" resembled a factory assembly line of painting canvases. Men would paint various portions of a painting until it reached the end of the line, where it was finished by a professional artist and then sold with a frame in order to sustain the whole effort.[92] The studio was set up in a low-fire-risk building on 97 Street called Haddon Hall, only one block away from his old photograph studio on Jasper Avenue, where Brown had transferred his negatives and set up dark rooms and picture frame work rooms. However, during the Great Depression, luxury items such as pictures and frames were difficult to sell which led Brown to rent the entire building. The third floor became a dance hall, and a good source of revenue during this time, and the second floor was rented out as suites, while the main floor became dedicated to Brown's latest and perhaps most significant idea, the museum exhibit he had created called "The Birth of the West."[93]

The idea for The Birth of the West Museum, an audio and visual education experience that combined historical narrative via lectures alongside Brown's collection of images, started in 1932 when Johnstone Walker's Store wanted a display of old-time pictures for their anniversary

[91] "The Ernest Brown Collection; Reeves, PAA," PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.
[92] Interview with Gladys Reeves, *Ernest Brown*, DVD.
[93] "The Ernest Brown Collection; Reeves," PAA, PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.

exhibition. The exhibition ran for two weeks, and the manager of the Edmonton Exhibition suggested that the display would make a good show at the next Edmonton Exhibition. Brown's display of photos was enlarged, and his audience grew when the exhibit aired in 1933.[94]

[94] "The Muster Roll," PAA, PR1965.0124, 12, OS, page 19.

FIG.2.2. *Ernest Brown* [far left] *and Pioneer Days Exhibition,* 1933, PAA, B.8985.

The praise for Brown's exhibition gave him the idea to create a permanent exhibit in his newly acquired space on 97 Street. The museum was arranged according to Brown's own theory that learning should be the work of all the senses, so that various specimens, photographs, props, and artifacts could be touched, smelled, and weighed as well as seen. Brown responded to one visitor, the curator of the Chateau du Ramezay in Montreal, who questioned Brown's practice and implied that everything should be fastened down with nails or chains. Brown said, "we have a different people here," reflecting his firm belief that the settler-society of the West was unique even in the way that citizens engaged in learning. These were the "producers," the people who worked for a living with their hands for an "honest day's work." They did not merely observe the history of the West passively from behind a display, they were actively engaged with it because they and their pioneer forerunners created it. In his *History of Calgary* Brown wrote:

> Like beautiful Britain, our West is hand made. Brick by brick and stone by stone laid on the virgin sod, until first a village then a town and now a city, and as each man laid down his task, another took his place, always building better than the last, and ever working towards the same end – carving an Empire out of the trackless prairie.[95]

Brown's perception of settler-society as a nation-building force in the empty and history-less West, which was the prevailing concept of settlement of the time, influenced the way he structured the physical layout of his museum. The conceptual and physical designs of both this museum and Brown and Reeve's Teaching Pictures, and the insights they reveal about settler-society perceptions of historical narrative, imagined space, and race will be the subjects of the following two chapters.

The Birth of the West museum ran for six years and was continuously expanded upon by its ambitious curator and owner. In addition to adding to his exhibits, Brown planned a book of the same name as his museum, with twenty-seven chapters. His plan quickly grew into twenty-seven full-book volumes that was never finished, existing only as pages upon pages of notes housed at the Provincial Archives. [96] Unfortunately for Brown, in 1938, notice was served by the owners of Haddon Hall that the space was required by the Canadian government for Red Cross recruiting for Canada's involvement in World War II. Brown was once again given orders to vacate.

This time, the provincial Minister of Public Works told Brown that if he consented to packing up the museum and storing it for nine months, the Province would provide a building to house his exhibit. According to Reeves, however, the entire collection was moved three times, once to an old Salvation Army soup kitchen, and because this location became required for recruiting, moved a second time to the basement of a Normal School. When the Air Force

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[95] Ernest Brown, "Calgary History," PAA, PR1965.124, 220, Box 21 (8 June 1928), 1.
[96] "Obituary of Ernest Brown," PAA, PR1965.124, 75C, Box 9.

required the use of this building, the collection was moved yet again to a Government House, after which Reeves' compared the ensuing damage from the three moves, and the broken government promise, to that of a fire.[97] Brown held out hope that the museum collection would find a permanent home at the end of the War. He continued his historical writings and research at his home, still expanding on the historical narratives he had delivered through lectures and photographs in his museum, using newspaper clippings, magazine articles, books, and letters from old-timers to further his research.

In 1947, Brown and the City of Edmonton finally came to an agreement regarding the purchase of his museum. He spent the next two years meticulously and voluntarily planning the cataloguing his 50,000 negatives stored in the basement of his home at 10133 Macdonald Drive (this too eventually moved with him to his hilltop home at 112 Street). Without the negatives and all pertaining information recorded and properly organized, Brown worried his museum would not be of any use to future generations.

Brown had hoped to see this project completed in his lifetime, but in 1950 the City decided that it would hold off starting the building of a permanent location for his museum until the next year. In the meantime, Brown was given notice that the City required his property for the construction of Bellamy Hill, giving him only ten days to file his response. According to Reeves, Brown "normally of a contended and philosophical nature" began to worry and brood over what he perceived to be "inhuman and inconsiderate treatment" dealt to him by the City government. Brown never lived to see his museum find a permanent home. In October of 1950, at the age of seventy-three, Brown suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, and died three months later in January of 1951.[98]

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[97] "The Ernest Brown Collection; Reeves," PAA, PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.
[98] Ibid.

Having moved to Canada at the age of twenty-six, Brown's fascination with the land, people, social formations, stories, and myths of the West seemed insatiable from the moment he arrived to the end of his life. Having been raised in the old world which Brown had romanticized as a society of nation-builders, he saw in himself a mission and role within the new land which could be explained simply by stating his place of birth. "King's men have in them some rare simplicity that makes them of all men the best artificers at the fine old mystery of country-making" Brown wrote in a lantern-slide lecture prepared for the Sons of England Society.[99] His interest in formulating a historical narrative of the West, thereby establishing purpose and meaning for his own self-perceived involvement in its transformation from "frontier" to "civilization" is evident in the way he collected and hoarded stories from customers as well as photographs. Brown's identity appeared to be deeply interconnected with the collection that became his life's work and obsession. Brown fiercely defended the authenticity of his collection as well as that of his research and notes, not only as a means of protecting his primary source of financial recompense, but because he had based his identity on the organization and classification of the Canadian West, its people, and history into a comprehensible narrative that made sense of his own experience and knowledge.

[99] "Lantern Slide Lecture: Scenes of the Homeland and Our Adopted Country," PAA, PR1965.124, 214, Box 21.

Chapter Three: "The Birth of the West" Museum & Written Work

The Ernest Brown collection housed in the Alberta Provincial Archives contains a wealth of information with regards to the settler photographer's life, his photographic collection, and his different ventures; yet, surprisingly little work has been written about Brown. As previously discussed in the historiography review in Chapter One, no monographs exist where Brown is the primary subject, or even a figure of significance beyond that of a single book chapter written by Matt Dyce and James Opp.[100] This work has, to some extent, explored Brown's photos and writings to reveal the imagined space of the West and the roles demarcated by settlers during the formational years of the early twentieth century. The chapter, however, leaves much to be discussed. Specifically, while Dyce and Opp have produced a detailed examination of the space of Canada's far northern regions through an analysis of Brown's teaching pictures, their focus (for the sake of method and organization) remained primarily in this region and revealed little of settler perceptions of the West and its Indigenous peoples.

This chapter will analyze Brown's teaching pictures, his museum, his written works, and his research to reveal how he made sense of his surroundings, consequently ascribing roles, narratives, and meanings to Indigenous peoples as defined by their perceived relationship to settler society. In doing so, this chapter also seeks to place Brown's imagined West within the greater context of the extant historical literature concerning settler-colonialism.

This chapter will begin with a review of relevant literature regarding settler-colonial theory and discourses of settler-colonial photography. While the literature of colonial photography is far too extensive to attempt a comprehensive review here, readings have been

[100] Dyce and Opp, "Visualizing Space," 105.

selected as they apply to the combined use of photography and text in establishing narrative history for the exclusive purpose of constructing settler-colonial space. To this end, "The Pioneer Days" museum, as well as "The Birth of the West Teaching Pictures," purposefully combined the mediums of photography with both written text and spoken lectures.

Next the chapter will review the primary source material to describe Brown's museum, its intended purpose according to Brown and Reeves, and its reception among teachers, schoolchildren, and other visitors who experienced its exhibits and Brown's lectures. The source material for this section consists primarily of advertisements and reviews posted in newspaper articles along with correspondence and letters from visitors and children. Advertisements for the museum and teaching pictures reveal what and how Brown intended people to learn from his exhibits and photographs, as well as his intended audience. Examining reviews will provide an idea as to how widely-received were Brown's historical narratives, and to what degree these narratives reflect the views of a society that related to Brown's imagined roles for settlers and Indigenous peoples.

Once the purpose, design, and popular reception of the museum and teaching pictures have been established, this chapter will examine Brown's manuscript *The Birth of the West*. Written and compiled in 1921, the manuscript reveals some of Brown's earliest written work regarding: the settler-colonial role in Alberta; his first foray into narrative history; and evidence that Brown's use of photography as a means of education was a well-established and deeply entrenched interest long before he incorporated the manuscript into his museum exhibition. The manuscript is an invaluable source with regard to understanding Brown's own perception of Indigenous peoples and the West, and thus it deserves a thorough analysis.

Finally, the chapter will conclude with an examination of Brown's research and note-taking, ranging from his museum years to the last decade of his life, in which cataloguing and annotating his collection of photographs became an all-consuming obsession. Because we do not have any written records of lectures that Brown delivered to school children who visited his museum, we must rely on "The Birth of the West" manuscript along with records and documents of his research to establish an idea of Brown's conceptualizing of race, and how he used the image of the Indigenous to make sense of his settler-colonial experience. Once these sources have been examined, Brown's perceptions of Indigenous peoples will be become clear as he constructed a historical narrative in which an unspoken, non-violent transfer of authority over imagined spaces took place from Indigenous peoples to the new settler-colonists in Western Canada. This perceived transfer of authority largely resulted in the erasure of Indigenous peoples from future narratives.

Literature Review

The concept of narrative history is one that is not only necessary in understanding Ernest Brown's perception of Indigenous peoples in Western Canada, but it applies to a much broader tradition of photographic pioneers in the Canadian and American West during the last half of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. As such, the concept as it has been discussed and defined by historians and theorists deserves particular attention. The narrative tradition in Western photography is the subject of Sandweiss' work, "Undecisive Moments." Sandweiss convincingly argues that the photographic pioneers of the West "thought of their medium as a narrative one, whose richest potential was realized not by one picture but through a string of

images augmented with literary text." This idea lay in stark contrast to most nineteenth-century painting and more modern photography which imagined the pictorial art as a meaning-laden "decisive moment" that depicted a highly significant event.[101] Nothing was self-evident about the meaning or importance of an event that could be immediately drawn from early photographs; in fact, even paintings of the West (which the American public largely considered more interesting and extravagant than stark, objective daguerreotypes) were often accompanied by theatrical elements that resembled entertainment and information purveyed via lectures, exhibitions, and artifacts.[102]

Although Sandweiss focused on Western American photography, her findings apply just as easily to a Canadian context, as will be demonstrated by a detailed examination of Ernest Brown's own place in this photographic tradition. Brown often expounded upon the necessity of entertainment as an integral part of education, something that will be explored later in this chapter through an analysis of Brown's advertisements for his own teaching pictures and lecture series.

Sandweiss credits the gold-rush daguerreotypists of California with transforming photography into a narrative storytelling medium, one that would eventually give rise to the popular lantern slide lecture.[103] While general interest in lantern slide lectures began to fade in California by 1878, by the 1900s "there seemed to be a renewed interest in lantern slide lectures, particularly on Indians, who were by then seen as a safely romantic part of America's past."[104]

During the turn of the century, as Indigenous peoples began to be seen as a romantic and indistinct part of Western history, notable photographers such as Edward S. Curtis, Roland Reed,

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[101] Sandweiss, "Undecisive Moments," 99.
[102] Ibid., 102.
[103] Ibid., 103.
[104] Ibid., 108.

Gertrude Kasebier, and Joseph Kieley began to prioritize style over content, often dressing up their subjects to fit a particularly popular image of the romantic Indian trope. As Sandweiss effectively argues, however:

> Even the narrative texts they wrote to accompany their pictures could not disguise what was so apparent in their images: fiction prevailed over fact. What was so special about the West, what was unique about Indian culture, lay in the past, and only an act of imagination could recover it for the camera.[105]

Sandweiss' work provides an interesting reading of early Western photography as a narrative medium that is inherently mutable and thus difficult to interpret when looking for the actual intent of the original photographer. Although Sandweiss insists that we are free to read early Western photographs however we wish, this divide between the original intent of the photographer and subsequent narratives ascribed to photographs must always be kept in mind.[106] In the case of this thesis, interpreting Brown's ascribed narratives is more important than the original intent of photographers such as Mathers or Boorne & May, as Brown's narratives reveal how members of settler-societies perceived themselves amongst the Indigenous peoples of the West in the early twentieth century.

While Sandweiss has identified the narrative tradition of nineteenth-century photography as an act of imagination in which fiction undermined facts, historian and post-colonial theorist Lorenzo Veracini explored the formation of settler-colonial historical narratives in greater detail, illuminating the importance of narrative construction in everyday life as a way of allowing "nations, communities, and individuals to make sense of the world."[107] Veracini's theoretical analysis of settler-colonial and Indigenous relationship dynamics is far-reaching and ambitious as it aims to deconstruct settler-colonialism as a global phenomenon. His analysis, however,

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[105] Sandweiss, "Undecisive Moments," 125.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 96.

applies within the Canadian context, and particularly to the life and historical narratives of Ernest Brown.

Colonialism versus Settler-Colonialism

According to Veracini, a clear distinction must be made between colonialism and settler-colonialism. While colonial experiences necessarily involved close encounters and cultural exchanges with Indigenous populations, settler-colonial perception is methodically informed by a disavowal of Indigenous presence. This foundational disavowal, as Veracini contends, is enabled by the fact that first encounters between Indigenous people and settlers are actually quite rare; these first encounters were made instead between Indigenous people and agents of colonial expansion, for example with missionaries, traders, and explorers. When Ernest Brown arrived in Edmonton in 1904, the Indigenous peoples of Treaty Seven had been living on reserve land for approximately two decades. This physical separation – within settler-colonial perspectives – allows the Indigenous presence to either be completely ignored, or for their identity to be perpetually shaped into any form the coloniser is willing to project.[108]

Just as colonial and settler-colonial experience and perceptions should be seen as distinct, Veracini has also contended that colonial and settler-colonial narrative forms must be seen as analytically separate.[109] Colonial narratives retain a circular structure "where an outward movement is conceived with the intention to eventually return." Circular colonial narratives are often characterized by a "middle passage." For example, colonial narratives involving the trading triangle between Europe, Africa, and the Americas, exhibit a "middle passage" between the

[108] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 84.
[109] Ibid., 96.

outward passage from Europe to Africa, and the homeward passage from the Americas back to Europe.[110] Colonial narratives involve a return to home, while settlers, on the contrary, "move out in order to remain unaffected."[111]

Perhaps the most obvious example of this, and one that is also the primary subject of this thesis, is the movement of European settlers to Western Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century. Settlers, as opposed to colonists, settle another place without really moving, transforming the land in their image as they move towards "what amounts to a representation of their world." Veracini calls this the "frontier" phase. Comprised of community-building and battling the land, this phase combined with the linear structure of settler-colonial narratives influences the way that settler-colonists interpret their own enterprise. In other words, while colonial ideology leaves room for failure in its narrative (as a return home is expected), settler-colonial narratives do not have the same flexibility and hence show a "stubborn, recurring and inherent anxiety at the prospect of defeat or compromise." This very idea that the settler-colonial narrative in Canada could result in nothing less than success on the part of settlers in transforming wilderness to civilization inhibits indigenous peoples' struggle for a post settler-colonial future.[112]

When understood in the context of these two distinct narrative structures, Western Canadian society in the present day is still a settler-colonial society. While the colonial narrative allows for a return home, and a repetition of similar colonial systems (that is often referred to as neo-colonialism), individual settlers in the settler-colonial paradigm intend to "stay and operate

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[110] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism,* 97.
[111] Lorenzo Veracini, "The Imagined Geographies of Settler Colonialism," in *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity,* Ed. Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 191.
[112] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 99.

within a system that supersedes itself."[113] Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for historians to identify, analyse, and deconstruct settler-colonial narratives not only to better understand the present context, but to begin removing barriers that exclude a post settler-colonial future. The narratives compiled and constructed by Ernest Brown are by no means exclusive; however, his museum exhibitions and teaching pictures present themselves as a unique opportunity to analyse such settler-colonial narrative structures.

Appropriation of Indigenous Authority

While a space of "non-encounter" between Indigenous and settler-colonist populations, set up through the groundwork of colonial authorities, enabled settlers to portray Indigenous peoples in any number of imagined roles, historians have further argued that settler populations appropriated their self-perceived authority from these very same Indigenous populations. In his work on photography within colonial discourse, Robert Evans accurately distinguishes Canadian settler photographers from the central colonial authority. These photographers were settlers, and as such, Evans argues that they held a position within colonial discourse that marked them as part imperial and part native in the eyes of the colonial rule. While these settlers clearly had more in common in appearance with Western Europe than with the Indigenous peoples of Canada, they occupied a space between the two spheres. More importantly, these settlers tended to mimic both the culture of the colonial power and "the presumed authenticity and authority of Indigenous people with respect to the land the settlers claim as their own."[114]

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[113] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 99-100.
[114] Robert Evans, "Colonizing Images: The Roles of Collected Photographs in Colonial Discourse," in *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada,* Ed. Carol Payne and Andrea Kunard, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 103.

Evans draws from the work of Alan Lawson, who discusses the desire of settler-colonists for authority in their settled lands. In Lawson's view, settler mimicry of imperial culture implied that settlers expressed their implicit authority "on behalf of, but never quite as, the imperium."[115] On the other hand, Lawson uses the example of the frequent scientific observation of the "dying race" in the nineteenth century to explain how a narrative of ethical indigenization was enabled, in which the settler simply assumed the place of the "disappearing Indigene" without the necessity of violence.[116] Such a narrative allowed for settlers to claim white indigeneity in forms such as the pioneer, the woodsman, or the Mountie, all of which are embodiments of an unacknowledged recognition of Native authority over land.[117] Each of these figures did require an intimate knowledge of the Canadian geography and landscape in order to survive; however, the historical and literary narratives in which these figures are portrayed typically equates their knowledge with authority and ownership.

In his manuscript, *Calgary History*, written in 1928, Ernest Brown attributed what he markedly referred to as "our West" to the groundwork of the early fur traders and the North-West Mounted Police, who carved "an Empire out of the trackless prairie."[118] Brown's determinative use of the word "our" is typical of settler-colonial narratives, whose ownership extended beyond imperial infrastructure, and encompassed the geography itself. Such language is exemplified in the following passage from "Calgary History":

> It is… difficult for a traveler passing from the head of the Great Lakes to the foot of our Mountains, observing the many towns and cities and stretching over our illimitable prairies, that in the life of even our younger men and women not a stone or brick existed.[119]

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[115] Lawson, "Postcolonial Theory," 156.
[116] Ibid., 157.
[117] Ibid.
[118] "Calgary History Manuscript," PAA, PR1965.0124, 220, Box 21 (8 June 1928), 1.
[119] Ibid.

Importantly, homesteaders in the early twentieth-century did not necessarily perceive themselves as having appropriated ownership of the West (whether violently or not) from Indigenous peoples. The authority of pre-settler contact Indigenous peoples over land is mostly implied in historical narratives, as will be demonstrated through this chapter's examination of Ernest Brown's writings and museum. The perceived authority of the pioneer over the West is something that settler-colonists understood to be rightfully earned rather than appropriated. A sense of settler entitlement over land is not difficult to fathom when taking into consideration the trials of early homesteaders, who after receiving 160 acres of free land (the requirements of which were to be male, over eighteen years of age, and to not be Indian) faced the challenge of bringing isolated land under cultivation and trying to survive with minimal government assistance.[120] As Bill Waiser has maintained, these secluded early settlers "scratched out an existence as best they could," which contributed towards the language used by proud homesteaders, who spoke of their experiences with a "ring of triumph."[121] One needs only to read the works of historians such as Sarah Carter or James Daschuk, however, to understand that the trials faced by early homesteaders in turning "abstract plans into reality," difficult as they were, are not comparable to the hardships, discriminative regulations, and starvation policies endured by Indigenous communities who were expected by the Canadian federal government to cultivate reserve land as a form of enfranchisement. [122]

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[120] Bill Waiser, "'Land I Can Own': Settling in the Promised Land," in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, Ed. R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 157.
[121] Ibid., 170.
[122] Waiser, "Land I Can Own," 170; Sarah Carter's works "'We Must Farm to Enable Us to Live': The Plains Cree and Agriculture to 1900," in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, Ed. R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), and *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), as well as James Daschuk's *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013) represent a small part of an extensive historiography on Aboriginal reserve farming.

While Ernest Brown was a photographer rather than a homesteader, he belongs contextually to a society of early settler-colonists, and his work therefore was both influenced by, and a driving force of, settler-colonial narratives regarding concepts of authenticity, authority, ownership, and indigeneity. As an early photographer of the West, Brown's work fits into Sandweiss' examination of narrative traditions in photography: the tendency to construct narratives surrounding Indigenous peoples as a means to establish a unique history or "character" of the West. Such narratives represent an essential method by which settler-societies make sense of the world around them, consequently ascribing roles to themselves and to others as self-justification of their colonial presence.

The Pioneer Days Museum and Birth of the West Exhibition

Brown categorically belongs within the realm of the settler-colonial, as opposed to the colonial, and thus to be reasonably expected is that the narratives he constructed will be structured linearly, moving towards a single pre-determined future in which settler-colonization prevails and "civilization" is brought to the West. By grounding this study of Brown's life and enterprises in the theoretical framework of writers such as Veracini, Evans, and Lawson, Brown's museum can be argued to represent an example of a historical narrative that assumes Indigenous authority over the geography of the West, being co-opted into a settler-colonial history.

Having provided a biographical background of Ernest Brown and having grounded the present study within the context of settler-colonial theory and relevant literature, attention will now be directed to the primary evidence and examine the Pioneer Days Museum.

In examining the Museum, which ran from 1933 to 1938, this chapter will focus on three categories: the purpose and intent of the museum, its design, and its local popularity.

The purpose of the museum, along with a measure of its local popularity can be determined through an analysis of various advertisements and reviews written about the exhibits. Keeping in mind that the Pioneer Days Museum was not only an educational initiative but involved an entrepreneurial aspect through the promotion of The Art League's series of teaching pictures, this analysis must take into account the likely possibility of exaggeration on the part of Brown and Reeves in endorsing their own work. Nonetheless, an examination of museum and teaching picture advertisements, pamphlets, and bulletins will inform us as to the intent of the exhibition pieces with regard to promoting settler-colonial narratives. Various reviews and responses from teachers and the public who either visited the museum or otherwise used Brown's teaching pictures will provide an idea of how well-received and relevant and applicable Brown's narratives were in Edmonton during the 1930s. Looking at the physical design and layout of the museum and its various exhibits and artifacts will provide crucial information in developing an understanding of Brown's intended historical narrative, as everything that was included (and excluded) will inform as to what aspects of the Canadian West were given priority and significance in Brown's conception of settler-colonial space.

Purpose and Intent of the Museum

In 1933, Gladys Reeves typed up a manuscript announcing the opening of the Birth of the West exhibition. This announcement stated that Reeves, by arrangement with Ernest Brown, was opening a "semi-permanent Historical Art and Educational Exhibition and Museum with

Reference Library." This exhibition was stated to be the largest and most complete of its kind in the West, and as Reeves wrote "of special interest to teachers and students, writers, journalists and others desiring authentic data concerning the City, Province, or the West from the earliest of times." The announcement went on to briefly describe the various categories in which the museum would be divided including: "The Races of Mankind, The Coming of the White Man, and the Story of the Buffalo, which includes early ranching, pioneer towns, building of the CPR, Riel Rebellion, Indians, and Eskimos."[123] The official description of this grand enterprise as a "historical art and educational exhibit" makes clear the intentions of both Brown and Reeves, that this museum was intended to impart knowledge of the West, and its pioneer heritage, to its visitors.

According to plans for the layout of the Pioneer Days Museum, the first thing visitors would see upon coming through the front entrance was a map of Western Canada, as well as Brown's "Birth of the West" manuscript on sale for ten cents apiece. The manuscript was meant to act as a guide for the museum's Birth of the West exhibit, as chapters of the manuscript corresponded with the categories of various booths. The museum was organized in a horseshoe shape with an entrance on the right-hand side at the back of the building and the exit (once through the museum) on the left-hand side of the entrance. The booths, in numerical order, lined the outside wall of a path that led visitors through the museum and back to the entrance. The booths, numbered 1 through 16 included: geological diagrams; world map; Indian ceremonials; Eric the Red and other explorers; whiskey forts and police; building the CPR (with subheadings: Riel Rebellion and the Klondyke); early towns; pioneer days, primitive farming and early ranching; the story of transportation; Eskimos; furs and fur trading; the buffalo and other animals

[123] "Opening of Pioneer Days Museum," PAA, PR1965.0124, 170a, Box 20 (c.1933).

and birds; mountains; and the 20th Century in Canada. The final two booths housed Brown and Reeves' "Birth of the West History Teaching Cards," picture pamphlets, and a visitor's book.[124]

Advertisements for the museum indicated that teachers who intended to bring their classes to the free exhibition had to make an appointment if they desired a lecture which Brown had prepared for each section of his exhibit.[125] Throughout the museum's six-year existence, Brown refused to charge a museum admission price. Fundraising letters and sustaining member receipts, however, indicate that funding was solicited and donations were made towards the museum. One such receipt, dated 1938, proudly stated that over 30,000 people had visited the museum since its inception.[126] By Reeves' own estimate, long after the closing of the museum, over 40,000 children, accompanied by their teachers, had visited the museum "to receive instruction in the history of Western Canada."[127] According to Reeves and Brown, before the museum was forced to close, the total estimate of visitors including school children, normal school students, university graduates, church and secular organizations, and individual guests, numbered over one-hundred thousand, both from within and outside of Canada.[128]

To clarify, such estimates are to be found in a letter announcing the closing of the museum and may not be entirely accurate given the acrimonious nature of the announcement: "Large numbers of these visitors have written in our guest book a desire that the exhibition-museum be made permanent. It apparently is not to be so. The owners of this building have served us notice to vacate."[129] Regardless of whether or not the museum was visited by over 100,000 people in six years, the exhibit did receive favourable reviews by both teachers and

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[124] "Plans for layout of Pioneer Days Museum," PAA, PR1965.0124, 170a, Box 20.
[125] "Card advertisements for Museum," PAA, PR1965.0124, 160b, Box 19.
[126] Ibid.
[127] "The Ernest Brown Collection, Reeves," PAA, PR1974.173, 69, Box 3.
[128] Ibid.
[129] "Card advertisements for Museum," PAA, PR1965.0124, Box 19 (23 August 1939).

students, many of whom wrote essays regarding their museum visits and what they learned. Excerpts from these essays were used by Brown to further advertise the effectiveness of the museum.

An article written in *The Alberta Teacher's Association Magazine* by a teacher named Janet Miller in December 1936 claimed that Brown had given lectures to over three-thousand pupils over three years including students from rural schools along the Edmonton-Calgary railway line. Ms. Miller also claimed that two-hundred rural teachers had already visited the exhibition during the Fall of 1936, remarking that "you will surely stand entranced before the papier- mâché exhibit of pioneer life." The article concluded with Ms. Miller suggesting the usefulness of the museum for teachers wishing to trace the developments of transportation, lighting, or any other commodity, and for its usefulness in the "method of object teaching." Miller quoted two very positive reviews in the visitor's book and made a general call for help in finding proper housing for Brown's collection (which she said was in a very crowded condition).[130]

In addition to praise for Brown's Museum during its six-year existence, people offered their support upon hearing of its closure. On 1 September 1939, the president of the Alpine Club of Canada, Cyril G. Wates, wrote to the editor of *The Journal Letter Box* pledging:

> what assistance I can to the end that Mr. Brown's collection may be properly housed and made available to the public, as in the past, and that the curator himself should receive the recognition which is his due, for his many years of labor, requited only by the thanks of the thousands who have visited his museum.[131]

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[130] Janet Miller, "An Educational Exhibition and Museum," *The A.T.A. Magazine: official organ of the Alberta Teacher's Association* 17:4, PAA, PR1965.0124, 12, OS (December 1936), 27.
[131] Cyril G. Wates, *The Journal Letter Box*, PAA, PR1965.0124, 12, OS (1 September 1939).

Taken together, the reviews from both teachers and students as well as calls for support and various claims that the museum experienced thousands of visitors annually suggest that Brown's museum was quite popular locally. Its eventual failure could be attributed most likely to Brown's business model which insisted on free admission for all visitors while relying entirely on donations for funding.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Sandweiss has identified entertainment and theatre as essential components of the narrative structure of nineteenth-century Western American photographic tradition. Indeed, Brown's pedagogical framework continued this very tradition as he extoled the virtues of entertainment and hands-on experience with regard to learning. This, in Brown's view, was what made his museum both unique and valuable. In one advertisement, Brown stated that

> The children *enjoyed* the Exhibition and lecture; enjoying it, they *became interested*; being interested, they *assimilated the story*. [Enjoyment is] The essence of teaching, in fact the only way in which knowledge can be imparted to the pupil and retained by them. Knowledge is the basis of thought and reflection. There can be no Wisdom without Knowledge.[132]

Brown's philosophy of learning by doing was not at all far from the educational reform trend of the 1930s in Alberta, known nation-wide as the New Education, which focused on interests of the learner and on developing child-centered curriculum.[133] This element of entertainment may have accounted for a great number of interested pupils and favourable guest-book reviews; however, it is also indicative of the same process of fictionalization that Sandweiss argues to have prevailed over fact in the narratives of early Western photographers.[134]

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[132] "Card advertisements for Museum," PAA, PR1965.0124, 160b, Box 19.
[133] Nancy M. Sheehan, "Education, the Society and the Curriculum in Alberta, 1905-1980: An Overview," in *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational* History, Ed. Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson, and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1986) 43.
[134] Sandweiss, "Undecisive Moments," 125.

These advertisement cards which must be examined conjointly with advertisements for The Art League's series of "Birth of the West History Teaching Pictures" (for the use of teachers in their own classrooms) not only speak to the intent and pedagogy behind the exhibits and pictures as educational tools but also reveal the underlying narratives of several exhibits. For example, Brown's emphasis on enjoyment as the primary essence of teaching influenced the way in which lectures and exhibits on Indigenous peoples were presented, as well as which narratives were included and excluded. In one advertisement regarding Brown's museum category labelled "Indians," the photographer wrote:

> To the average boy with his red blood flowing in his veins the story of Cowboys and Indians holds the place of affection. After all, the boy is truly "the father of the man," and in our leisure moments we love to dwell on the things that interested us in our boyhood or youth. To adequately conceive what the future has in store we must know what has passed… While probably not as important in the life of today, the story of the Indians, is the most fascinating of the all absorbing history of the West.[135]

At this time, for educators and writers of school texts in Alberta to try to enliven certain passages by drawing connections to the experiences of the students themselves was not uncommon.[136] Due to what Veracini has called a "foundational disavowal" of Indigenous presence in settler-colonial societies, however, contact between settlers and Indigenous peoples was lacking, and the experience of the students to which Brown drew a connection were of stories of "Cowboys and Indians."[137] In this narrative, Indigenous peoples are framed as a relic of the past, no longer directly applicable to understanding the life of today. Their story as told by settler-colonial society, however, was deemed "the most fascinating" of the entire history of the

[135] Ernest Brown, "Brief articles re. Indians," PAA, PR1965.0124, 226, Box 21.
[136] Amy Von Heyking, *Creating Citizens: History and Identity in Alberta's Schools, 1905-1980* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 75.
[137] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 84.

West, and was thus appropriated for the purpose of enlivening what may otherwise be considered a dull history lesson for children.

After introducing the topic of "Indians" as the most fascinating story in the history of the West, Brown's advertisement continued to describe what, regarding this topic, would be included in his lectures and photograph collection. The first story which Brown highlighted is not surprising given his aim to grab the attention and interest of Euro-Canadian school children. An unsubstantiated story of Indigenous torture methods which Brown called "The Devil's Pin Cushion" is described as being "almost too awful to relate," but was included in "inoffensive language" in the story that accompanies the pictures in the 'Birth of the West'."[138] Brown's sources are difficult to ascertain as he charged ten cents for "extended references" for his slide notes and he did not provide any information as to his source material outside of writing that the knowledge was "well-known" or sometimes obtained from an "old-timer."[139]

A close examination of Brown's research notes later in this chapter will provide an idea of how Brown developed his own narratives of Western Canadian history and perceptions of Indigenous peoples and history; however, interestingly, this vivid imagery of violence is what Brown chose to lead his advertisement for lecture notes regarding "Indians." Violence was and remains an inherent aspect of what Daniel Morley Johnson has identified as a discourse of Savagism in North America. Savages in the settler-colonial discourse, according to Johnson, were inherently violent and their contemporary militancy constitutes terrorism against the nation-state.[140] This intrinsic link in the minds of settler-colonists between savagery and violence, and the association of these imagined characteristics with Indigenous peoples, provides justification

[138] Brown, "Brief articles re. Indians," PAA, PR1965.0124, 226, Box 21.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Daniel Morley Johnson, "From the Tomahawk Chop to the Roadblock: Discourses of Savagism in Whitestream Media," *American Indian Quarterly* 35:1 (2001): 114.

for colonial subjugation as a means of defending the law and order of the nation-state from Indigenous dissent. Although Brown most likely opened his advertisement with images of violence as a means of entertainment and grabbing the attention of teachers and pupils, "when these images are used 'all in good fun,' we might be led to believe that the underlying racism is no longer existent, which of course is not the case."[141] Johnson rightly points out that images of savagery become engrained and normalized with repeated use to such a degree that North Americans often accept these stereotypes unquestioningly.[142]

The remainder of Brown's advertisement contrasts sharply with how Indigenous groups were treated in the Alberta public school curriculum during the 1930s. Alberta educators and social studies text-book designers W.D. McDougall and Gilbert Patterson attributed the so-called defeat of Indigenous groups in the settlement of Canada to European technological superiority. As Amy Von Heyking has noted, the curriculum guidelines for a unit on "The Canadian Nomad Community" in 1936 required students to acknowledge that this lack of technological innovation and civilization must be attributed to the "improvidence of the Indian." The appraisal of Indigenous groups in settler history according to imagined racial characteristics was used to justify appropriation of their land. As McDougall and Patterson wrote in their textbook, *Our Country and Its People* (1938): "Where the Indians lived on lands desired by the Europeans they were soon driven out, because guns were better weapons than bows and arrows."[143]

In contrast, Brown's advertisement asked more questions of the federal government and of settler-society's responsibility within the discourse of land ownership. Brown inquired:

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[141] Johnson, "From the Tomahawk Chop," 106.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Von Heyking, *Creating Citizens*, 82.

> Are the Indians happy in the reserves the Government has set aside for them? Is the reserve, or the $5.00 a year we pay the treaty Indians the best or fairest way to treat the ones whose country we appropriated?[144]

In the lantern slide notes for a lecture on the Riel Rebellion of 1885, Brown wrote of Poundmaker: "His men would have undoubtedly exterminated all of Col' Otter's men if [he] had not restrained them." Additionally, Brown wrote of Louis Riel:

> Traitor – patriot, benefactor or menace – sane or insane, whatever you will. He was all these things and more. One thing is sure; the Dominion government were not faultless. He asked for a bill of rights in 1869 and obtained it for the half-races; he asked for a bill of rights for the Saskatchewan Métis, *after* the rebellion it was granted. Sir John A. MacDonald gave him $5,000 in 1872 to leave the country after he had been twice elected to Parliament. The second time he was hanged at Regina Nov. 16, 1885.[145]

Brown's lecture notes and advertisements suggest that his own understanding of the history of the West was more critical of the Canadian and Dominion governments than what was being taught through Alberta's social studies curriculum at the time. This does not necessarily come as a surprise, however, given Brown's history with independent labour politics and his grievances with the federal and provincial governments in the 1920s.

Brown's lectures appear sympathetic to Indigenous communities yet they were delivered within a framework of what Lawson has called "ethical indigenization" which posited that the settler simply assumed the place of the "disappearing Indigene" without the necessity of violence.[146] Such a framework allows for justification of the appropriation of land as well as presumed authority over it by comparing the seemingly non-violent appropriation of the Canadian West with the violent invasion of the American frontier south of the border.

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[144] Brown, "Brief articles re. Indians," PAA, PR1965.0124, 226, Box 21.
[145] Ernest Brown, "Lantern Slide Lecture Notes for Riel Rebellion of 1885," PR1965.0124, 231, Box 21.
[146] Lawson, "Postcolonial Theory," 157.

The comparison of American treatment of Indigenous populations with the Canadian context was a central theme of Brown's historical narrative. Brown responded to the questions he had laid out in his advertisement without offering direct answers; instead, he drew the reader's attention to the contrasting settler narratives of Canada and the United States:

> While we do not attempt to answer these questions, we record the statements made by ones who are in a position to know. We record at length the contact of the early fur traders and show the tribes who welcomed the White man, and then we compare the treatment received by the Indians in this country at the hands of the White man with what they received across the border who resented this intrusion.[147]

This comparison focused primarily on a contrast between a violent and uncivilized American government (as well as wild, depraved whiskey traders) and a Canadian government concerned with law and order enforced by the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP). One advertisement card, titled "Pioneer Days: A Chronology and Explanation," claimed that the American government offered money for buffalo hide with "the object of removing the source of food and support of the Indians, and compelling them to accept treaty and go on the reservations."[148] According to this advertisement, the call for buffalo skins was answered with the establishment of whiskey forts, which sprung up to collect the hides, while owners of the forts became wealthy "by debauching the Indians."[149]

This narrative was immediately compared with what Brown understood to be a more civilized history in Canada. Here, the NWMP arrived in the West to close up the whiskey forts, allowing ranching to establish itself as an industry in Southern Alberta. After order was established in the Canadian West through the arrival of law enforcement, Brown explained that "the old timers, our pioneers came, carved a home for themselves out of the wilderness, and by

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[147] Brown, "Brief articles re. Indians," PAA, PR1965.0124, 226, Box 21.
[148] Brown, "Card advertisements for Museum," PAA, PR1965.0124, 159, Box 19.
[149] Ibid.

dint of hard and mostly unselfish toil, laid the foundation of our cities and our towns as well as the civilization we enjoy to-day."[150] In this narrative, the arrival of settler-colonists in Western Canada is presented as a non-violent inheritance of land earned through hard labour and virtue as compared to the violence and debauchery of the United States government and whiskey traders.

Another advertisement for the Pioneer Days Museum titled "Old Trading Forts in Southern Alberta: Sometimes called 'Whiskey Forts'" further contrasted the existence of whiskey forts in the South with the fur trading posts of the North. Brown explained that, "the treatment accorded to the Indians by the American owners of the [whiskey] forts was very different to that given the Indians at the fur posts."[151] The advertisement put forward two explicitly contrasting narratives:

> The fur traders of the North were interested in keeping the Indians alive and well so that they may hunt and bring in their furs year after year… The fur trader's word was his bond; the Indians knew he did not speak with a "forked tongue." Therefore, it was not necessary to prepare the posts against attack by Indians, in such a manner as the Forts in the South were built… The murders, massacres, and outrages by the Indians on each other, and on the whites, would take many pages to tell, but the cause of it all can be said in the one word "Whisky." The arrival of the Mounted Police in the West, in a very short time established law and a respect for it.[152]

Once again, the fur traders of Brown's narrative are presented as virtuous. Not only were they interested in keeping Indigenous peoples alive, they were also of trustworthy character. The relationship between fur traders and Indigenous communities is presented as being so peaceful that defending trading posts was simply not needed. These images are once again starkly contrasted against the violence of the United States, and the vice of whisky that was seemingly

[150] Brown, "Card advertisements for Museum," PAA, PR1965.0124, 159, Box 19.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

inherent of American traders. The settlers of Western Canada earned their power over the land through virtue.

Brown asserted a presumed settler-colonial authority over the West through a narrative of ethical indigenization. His comparisons of colonial treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States also expose an early humanitarian discourse popular during the turn of the twentieth-century. This discourse advocated for the liberty of mankind and the privilege of freedom as a birthright while simultaneously encouraging the marginalization of Indigenous peoples through white settlement of land. This discourse is particularly apparent upon comparing Brown's advertisements which proudly feature civilization in the West as an accomplishment of virtuous pioneers with his notes for a proposed chapter in his unfinished manuscript, "The History of the West."

Brown's research notes will be examined in greater detail at the close of this chapter; however, his humanitarian inclinations regarding Indigenous populations in Canada are worthy of mention here. The rough draft manuscript, which Brown had marked with notes, details the horrible treatment of Indigenous populations in America. It describes three ways in which they were generally dealt with on both a large and small scale. First, Brown notes that hunting down and shooting "Indians" was considered the cheapest and "most humane" method, of which he claimed, "a Christian nation would not tolerate… now."[153] Second, Brown posited that Americans chose to ignore "the Indian question" which was to "assume [the] Indian must submit to our way of living and laws, because they are better than his." Brown went on to ridicule this method as well, saying:

> The Indian made no improvement on the land, he has no legal title deeds, he can have no rights of a civilized being, that are recognized. They let immigrants pour

[153] Ernest Brown, "Notes for proposed History of the West chapter: Indians & Eskimos," PR1965.0124, 288m, Box 35.

> into the country and shove the old 'Lords of the North' back, hire them if they choose to work, punish if they break the laws, treat them as poor whites have to be treated.[154]

Finally, Brown detailed the last method as one of leaving the "struggle of two races to the principles of natural selection." Brown stated that this rule was practically followed in parts of America which led to frightful atrocities on both sides. Brown listed several injustices in this regard:

> Indians had no newspapers to tell how the miners tried rifles on unoffending Indians at a distance for pleasure of seeing him jump when a bullet struck… or how the innocent were slaughtered with the guilty, or poisoned by traders[,]' bad rum, or cheated, till left without gun, horse or blanket. This policy of giving to the children of the forest and prairie free trade, and told to look after themselves has not been a success.[155]

While Brown's manuscript notes offered more criticisms than they did answers, his identification of an "Indian question" as well as the paternalistic language used to describe Indigenous peoples as "children of the forest and prairie" or the title "Lords of the North" are interesting when contrasted with early imperial humanitarian discourses. Several notable similarities and differences must be accounted for here. Mid-nineteenth century humanitarians such as the "Aborigines Protection Society" (APS) argued that the Hudson's Bay Company was acting against the best interest of Indigenous peoples by maintaining the fur trade and withholding a capitalist economy and free trade that would come to the West alongside imperial expansion.[156] While Brown's manuscript notes share a similar paternalistic stance as the APS regarding "the Indian question," Brown's notes differ in that they criticize the arrival of free

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[154] Brown, "Notes for proposed History of the West chapter," PR1965.0124, 288m, Box 35.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Aborigines' Protection Society, *Canada West and the Hudson's Bay Company: A Political and Humane Question of Vital Importance to the Honour of Great Britain, to the Prosperity of Canada, and to the Existence of the Native Tribes*: *Being an Address to the Right Honourable Henry Labouchere, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies* (London: Published for the Society by William Tweedie, 1856), 1.

trade, suggesting that the "children of the forest and prairie" were simply too uncivilized for the advance of capitalism.

Brown's approach to what he referred to as the "Indian question" reveals another acknowledgement that the West had been appropriated from "the old 'Lords of the North'" by the very pioneers Brown praised in his card advertisements for having constructed the West in Canada. His position suggests sympathy for Indigenous peoples who did not control the means with which to report the injustices perpetrated against them, for example how they were portrayed in newspapers. The title of "old Lords of the North," however, is one that implies *past* authority over land. Once again, the narrative of settler indigenization is evident as Brown offered no solutions to the "Indian question;" rather, Brown's notes suggest that while the past was indeed unjust towards Indigenous peoples, the peoples were not capable of adapting to modern, Euro-Canadian civilization which has since replaced and assumed Indigenous authority over the West.

The Pioneer Days Museum represents a utilization of Brown's extensive collection of photographs and artifacts primarily to construct and share a mythology of the origins of Western Canada. The locally popular museum combined literature and text with photography to instill static images of mostly unidentified Indigenous peoples with meaning, values, and roles according to Brown's perception of history. By comparing and contrasting the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada with those of America, Brown's narrative of ethical indigenization—in which authority over the West was transferred from Indigenous communities to settler-colonists—justified appropriation of land in Canada as a virtuous and orderly undertaking as opposed to the violent conquest of the United States. Brown's attitude towards Indigenous peoples was sympathetic for his time period; however, as disastrous as he believed

the story of Indigenous peoples to be, they were still relegated as a relic of the past in his narrative. Brown's history of civilization in Western Canada credited white Anglo-Canadian accomplishment while mimicking the presumed authority of Indigenous peoples over the land and space of the West.

"The Birth of the West" Manuscript

Ernest Brown's forty-five-page history of the Canadian West is an example of what could be considered a localized history—that is a history written by an untrained enthusiast of the discipline based on a limited availability of source material and reflecting local traditions and beliefs. Although Brown wrote his manuscript in 1928, five years before he would open his museum, it would later become a companion piece to his "Birth of the West Exhibition." It provided textual narrative to the photographs and curiosities that were on display. This section of the chapter will be devoted to examining Brown's manuscript as it applies to his perceptions of Indigenous people and Indigenous-white relations within the context of his settler-colonial historical narrative.

"The Birth of the West" is divided into a long list of subheadings rather than chapters, of which this thesis will focus only on those that pertain to Brown's view of Indigenous-settler relations. The manuscript begins with an author's note that emphasized the authenticity of Brown's history:

> In the rush of the present day journalistic world, and with people's demand for interesting stories, much is written and passed off as history that is obviously incorrect…The contents of these few pages are the result of twenty-five years

> [sic] original research, tabulating and checking. As far as they go I believe them to be authentic, neither under or overstated.[157]

According to Brown's note, he had been accumulating notes regarding the history of Western Canada ever since his arrival in Edmonton in 1903. The authenticity of his notes, as briefly examined in Chapter Two of this thesis, was grounded in the fact that he had gained his information from old-timers and people who he believed to be involved directly or indirectly with historical events themselves. To Brown, the history of the West was not so far removed from the present. To him, civilization in the form of Western technology and city-building were the markers of modernity, and Edmonton still a young city when he lived there.

The first ten pages of "The Birth of the West" deal exclusively with what Brown called "our Natives… as we must refer to them by nomenclature by which they are known – Indians."[158] The language in these pages are clear in defining Indigenous peoples as belonging to settler-colonial society through their placement in a historical narrative as an inseparable part of white-settler history. This idea is further reinforced by Brown's descriptions of Indigenous peoples in relation to Western morals, values, and culture: "The excellent morals of some of the tribes was such, that it would put to shame those of our day and generation."[159]

While it was of course common for settlers to use their own culture and worldviews as the marker by which all other traditions, beliefs, and practices were defined and measured, the placement of Brown's "Indians" and their "excellent morals" in the past-tense implies that these supposed morals have been lost. Brown's narrative exemplifies the myth of the "noble savage," a concept that finds its origins, although not its name, from Jeans-Jacques Rousseau's (1712-1778)

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[157] Ernest Brown, "The Birth of the West: a brief narration of the discovery; the early fur traders; Selkirk settlers; coming of the N.W.M.P.; building of the C.P.R. and the commencement of the towns in the Canadian West," PAA, PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21 (17 June 1928), 1
[158] Brown, "The Birth of the West," PAA, PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21, 3.
[159] Ibid.

rejection of Enlightenment thinking. Rousseau believed that men were naturally good but were corrupted by civilization; thus, as society evolved and institutions were put in place, mankind's primitive innocence was eroded and replaced with artificiality. The concept was later resurrected with the founding of anthropology in 1859 and has since been deeply engrained into scholarly and popular culture.[160] Brown's use of the noble savage myth essentially defines Indigenous authenticity in contradistinction to white-settler society, reducing Indigenous historical agency and equating diverse groups of people with a monolithic, obsolete, and imaginary past.

In addition to Brown's collection of stories and notes from old-timers, he cited several other works in his writings on "Indians." Isaac Cowie's *The Company of Adventurers* (1913) and Alexander Henry's book *Alexander Henry's Travels and Adventures in the years 1760-1776* (1902) are among those listed as references. At least the case of Cowie's book, published in Winnipeg, represents a genre of pioneer memoirs written from the perspectives of fur traders and colonial agents. Having had direct contact with Indigenous populations as fur traders, these men were considered by Brown to constitute authentic history. While Brown was of course correct to consider Cowie and Henry's works as primary sources, he interpreted their accounts and descriptions literally, and thus their depictions of "Indians" were understood to be entirely authentic.

To be clear, the intention of this thesis is not to reproach Brown for failing to apply modern-day historical methodology to his research (which would be impossible); rather, it is to highlight the effects of what Veracini has called "non-encounter" between settler-colonists and Indigenous populations, as compared to the direct encounter that many colonists experienced with Indigenous peoples. Settler-colonists such as Brown rarely had contact with Indigenous

[160] M.J. Rowland, "Return of the 'Noble Savage': Misrepresenting the Past, Present and Future," *Australian Aboriginal Studies,* 2 (2004): 5.

peoples, and thus were able to define "Indigeneity" in whatever manner they saw fit. Brown's descriptions of "Indians," being based on the encounters recorded in colonist memoirs, provided his perspective with a false sense of authenticity. Thus, when Brown described a violent story exemplifying a so-called "Indian stoicism," he needed only to reference Isaac Cowie alongside an article from *The Prairie Illustrated* (1891) to get a sense of accuracy for a concept that is clearly based in racial stereotype and myth.[161] Racial understandings of ethnic or cultural characteristics were still very common in the late 1920s, and for white settlers to believe that "races" of people had distinct and inherent traits was usual; these portrayals were, in fact, imaginary. This was further enabled by the prevalence of non-encounter between settler-colonist society and Indigenous peoples.[162]

Much of Brown's descriptions of Indigenous peoples centered on themes of violence. Subheadings such as "Scalping," "Torture," "Indian Stoicism," and "The Ordeal" all convey narratives of extreme violence, while other topics, according to Brown, such as "Indian folklore and legends" and "bead and basket work" could not be dealt with in the manuscript for the sake of brevity.[163] More than likely, Brown's description of the "story of the Indian" as being the most fascinating to "the average boy with his red blood flowing in his veins"[164] informed his decision to focus on extreme violence so early in his manuscript, so as to catch the attention and interest of his male readers. Here, Brown's manuscript exemplifies the narrative tradition of photography and history, infusing elements of entertainment to create an imagined or fictionalized

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[161] "Results of the Indian Rebellion," *The Prairie Illustrated,* 1:15 (14 March 1891): 3, described an Indian woman slitting her mother's throat upon finding both of their husbands' dead bodies at Wounded Knee. She then apparently slit her own throat. No source is provided; only a "Calgary correspondent." "Notes for proposed 'History of the West' chapter on 'Indians and Eskimos'," PAA, PR1965.0124, 288m, Box 35.
[162] Writings on the construct of race are vast and increasingly numerous. My intention is not to attempt to cover this extensive body of work in this chapter, nor would it be possible to do so.
[163] Brown, "The Birth of the West," PAA, PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21, 9.
[164] Ernest Brown, "Brief articles re. Indians," PAA, PR1965.0124, 226, Box 21.

understanding of the past. The narrative of "cowboys and Indians" became the imagined past that Brown draws a connection to in the mind of the reader.

The subheading "The Ordeal" was used to describe a photograph that was included in Brown's museum. The photograph "Making a Brave: An Indian Sun Dance" (see Figure 3.1) depicts a group whom Brown identified as Plains Cree preparing to undertake the piercing ritual which involves the tearing of flesh as a self-sacrificial act as well as the dismantlement of egos, initiation of visions, and an attainment of power among other things.[165] While components of the Sun Dance vary between communities, it is a highly significant cultural ceremony practiced by nearly all Plains Aboriginal communities and generally involves a sweat lodge, prayers, singing and dancing with the intent of healing and giving thanks.[166]

By 1887—the date Brown provided for the ceremony depicted in this photograph—the Sun Dance had taken on associations with political change. In 1884, the leader of the Plains Cree in Saskatchewan – Big Bear – called a Sun Dance that gathered 2000 people with the goal of securing land for the Cree, determining leadership in dealing with Canada, and protesting the federal government's treaty abuses. The political associations of the Sun Dance carry forward to its various contemporary forms today.[167]

Brown's photograph of the Sun Dance is physically framed by settler-colonial imagery of his and Reeves' "Visual Teaching" poster. His textual description of "The Ordeal" also frames the ceremony in equally paternalistic language. Brown referred to the man undertaking the piercing ritual as both a "victim" and a "would-be-brave."[168] While some Indigenous peoples

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[165] Nicholas D. Shrubsole, "The Sun Dance and the Gustafsen Lake Standoff: Healing Through Resistance and the Danger of Dismissing Religion," *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 2:4 (2011): 3.
[166] Ibid., 4.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Brown, "The Birth of the West," PAA, PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21, 6.

interpret the Sun Dance piercing ritual as being created by warriors, this ceremony has not been interpreted in the same way by many other Sun Dancers.[169] By referring to the Sun Dancer as a victim, Brown implied his approval of the federal government's decision to ban the ceremony through the *Indian Act* (1885) "on account of the cruelty of this dance."[170] Finally, his description of the piercing ceremony likened the Sun Dancer to "a child going round the May-pole," thus reinforcing a position of paternal authority over a people who Brown further described as having "child-like faith in many matters."[171] While the Sun Dance involved a diverse array of practices and rituals, Brown undoubtedly handpicked the piercing ritual for the sake of providing what he perceived to be an interesting and engaging lesson to children—one that they would remember due to the graphic nature of its focus on self-torture.

[169] Shrubsole, "The Sun Dance," 5.
[170] Brown, "The Birth of the West," PAA. PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21, 7.
[171] Ibid., 9.

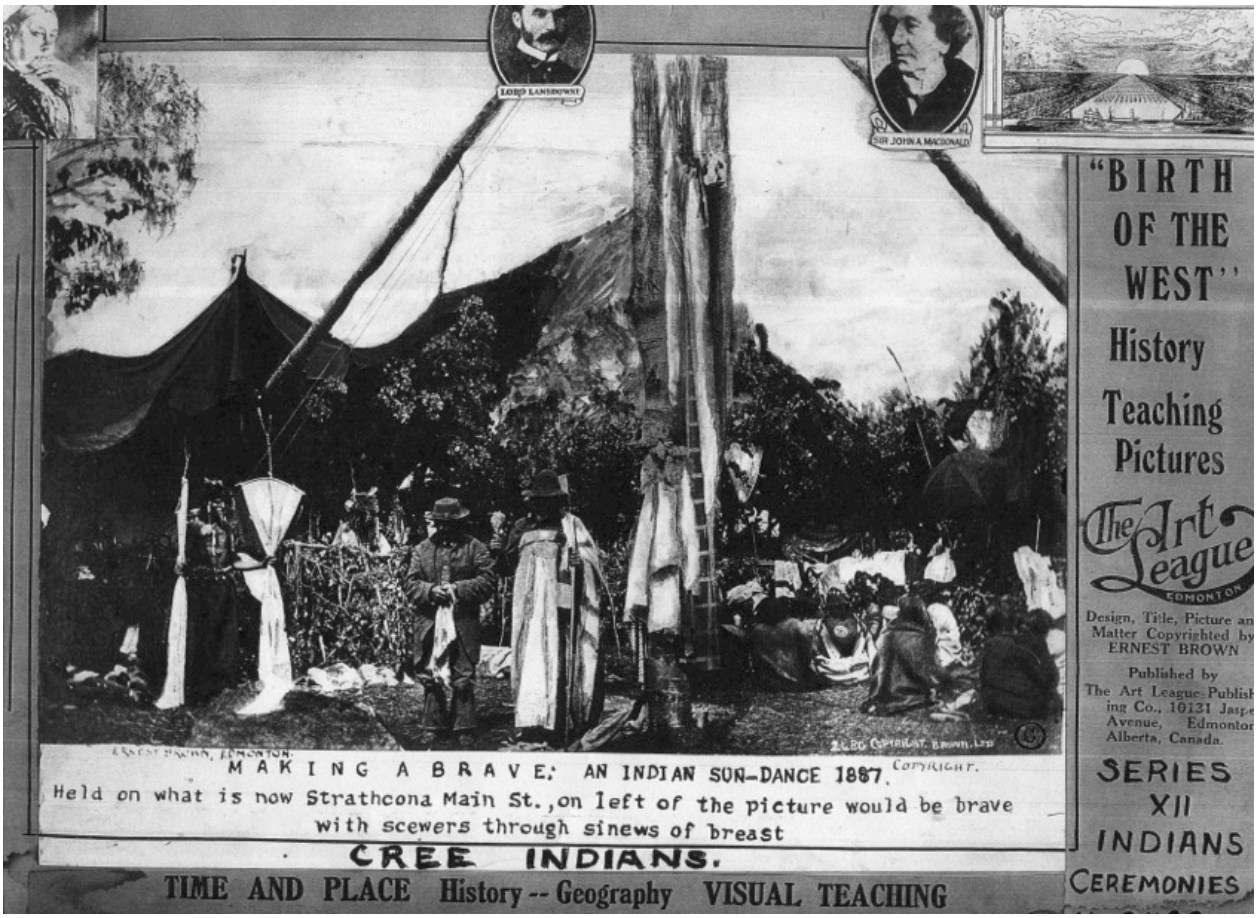

FIG.3.1 *Making a Brave: An Indian Sun Dance*, poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288o-m, Box 36.

"The Disappearance of the Buffalo" is another subheading within Brown's manuscript. According to Brown, two "outstanding facts" concerned the bison: "[F]irst, that they covered the plains in countless numbers; the second, that the buffalo had to go before the Indians could be quietend [sic] down or settlers could come in."[172] Brown further described how different parts of the buffalo were used in various ways, and that the buffalo was essential to the life of the "Indian." Using the US government as an example, Brown described how American authorities "could not get the Indians to settle down so long as there were buffalo to hunt, so paid a bounty

[172] Brown, "The Birth of the West," PAA. PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21, 27.

to kill them off." Brown cited these government bounties, along with quicksand, hunting by Indigenous peoples, and the burning of prairies as causes for the annihilation of the buffalo.[173]

While Brown's apparent sympathies for the plight of Indigenous peoples who faced starvation has been made evident, the disappearance of the buffalo is treated here as a historical necessity towards the ultimate goal of settlement. In describing the "Coming of Police," Brown wrote that "[w]hile the buffalo existed the Indians could not be handled satisfactorily. Without the police there could be no law and order, no railroad could be built, and without the railroad there could be no settlement."[174] This narrative of Western Canadian history left no room for an alternative interpretation that did not result in the successful transformation of wilderness into civilization. With settlement and civilization of the West as the only possible result of settler-colonial history, any means by which this goal was attained could be framed as necessary, regardless of how damaging they were to Indigenous peoples.

In addition to portraying Indigenous peoples as unfortunate casualties on the road to settler-colonial civilization, Brown also portrayed them as potential obstacles towards this goal. In writing about the NWMP in Canada, Brown argued that "routing the whiskey traders and breaking up their forts, made the Indian population become less troublesome and war-like, and they interfered less with the white man in carrying out his peaceful pursuit of agriculture."[175] Brown's narrative of the West pitted wilderness and civilization against one another as it did chaos and order, violence and peace, or debauchery and lawfulness. His narrative was not unique in this sense, as the idea of Indigenous peoples being associated with wilderness, disorder, and

[173] Brown, "The Birth of the West," PAA. PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21, 30.
[174] Ibid., 33.
[175] Ibid.

violence is one that has existed in popular and scholarly culture long before Brown wrote his manuscript.[176]

Finally, Brown's subheading titled "Settlement of the West" is of particular interest as it relates directly with settler-colonial historical narratives of Western Canada. Much in this subheading is a reiteration of the history that Brown had previously covered: the police shutting down the traffic in whiskey; stock raising in Southern Alberta; the gold strike; and the building of railroads opening the country to settlement. Brown added that the "unequalled grandeur of the Canadian Rockies lured many to seek health and recreation, and finally live among such a congenial people; amid healthy conditions and such potential possibilities of a sure return from their labors."[177] Such optimism regarding the seemingly endless potential of the newly-settled West seems somewhat surprising given his own financial struggles and radical labour politics that characterized his life during the 1920s. Brown's optimism, however, is understandable when one considers his target audience.

Brown was promoting the narrative of settlement to a generation of young children who would be responsible for carrying out the settler-colonist project into future fruition. Brown described a map of density population in Canada that was likely on display in his museum, pointing out the changes in the West that have occurred in "sixty short years." Following this brief passage is an extract from an early nineteenth-century poem written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

> For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
>
> Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonders that would be;

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[176] A.A. den Otter, *Civilizing the Wilderness: culture and nature in pre-confederation Canada and Rupert's Land* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2012), xviii.
[177] Brown, "The Birth of the West," PAA. PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21, 41.

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, Argosies of magic sails,

Pilots of the purple twilight, Dropping down with costly bales.[178]

Tennyson, a poet who was himself fascinated with transformative change, depicted imagery with his verses of global commerce that included merchant ships with magic sails flying through the heavens.[179] Such images aptly convey the limitless potential that Brown saw in Canada: "Can we visualize what the map will look like sixty years from hence? The shading getting ever darker… reaching to the northern parts, that are now in their primitive state, as all the West was sixty years ago."[180]

Brown continued by describing the wealth that exists in the West (in the form of timber, furs, fish, water-power, wheat, natural gas, and tar sands), making particular note of Alberta's coal wealth. Brown wrote: "It is impossible to read or study figures like these and not become enthusiastic about the future prospects of the West."[181] According to Brown, New frontiers existed in the North and the interiors of the provinces. He saw his own historical narrative of settlement repeating itself in these new and "untouched" areas of Canada.

According to Brown's "Birth of the West" manuscript, the history of Western Canada was synonymous with the history of settlement. The structure of this narrative, leading to the single possible outcome of successful settler transformation of wilderness to civilization, left no room for the autonomy of Indigenous history. The roles played by Indigenous peoples in the "Birth of the West" amounted to curiosities of the past, unfortunate but necessary casualties on the unstoppable path to settlement and obstacles to non-Indigenous settlement that had to be

[178] Brown, "The Birth of the West," PAA. PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21, 43.
[179] Cornelia D. Pearsall, *Tennyson's Rapture: Transformation in the Victorian Dramatic Monologue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 44.
[180] Brown, "The Birth of the West," PAA. PR1965.0124, 219, Box 21, 43.
[181] Ibid., 44.

overcome. Indigenous peoples were erased from Brown's narrative entirely; they served no purpose in the future prospects and frontiers of the West, their place being firmly planted as "noble savages" of the past. Yet, interestingly the "story of the Indian" according to Brown was the most fascinating part of the history of the West. Indigenous peoples served Brown's historical narrative by providing what he believed to be the most essential aspect of pedagogy: entertainment. Brown and Reeves put forth a fictionalized and imagined history of Indigenous peoples to make sense of the space that they inhabited as settlers and to give themselves and future generations of settlers an ultimate historical purpose.

The Historical Research of Ernest Brown

Ernest Brown's research was a life-long pursuit, and many of his plans for future works such as the massive twenty-seven volume "History of the West" were never completed. Throughout his life, Brown collected articles, newspaper clippings, and books as research material for his proposed history, but while knowing whether Brown used such research material in his lectures to guests and children is ultimately impossible, these materials undoubtedly informed his worldview and influenced his perceptions of Indigenous peoples. Not only do these materials reveal Brown's own perceptions, they demonstrate that his views on race, civilization, progress, and settler-society were not singular and were shared by a significant number of people during his lifetime.

Brown included an extensive amount of material in his research notes regarding Indigenous peoples, much of which can be summarized as anecdotal. Brief newspaper clippings regarding "Indian myths and legends" or "Indian games" reveal little about settler-society

perceptions of Indigenous peoples aside from little actual comprehension of Indigenous cultures existing among newspaper journalists.[182] Other materials include: a manuscript titled "A Great Indian – Crowfoot" written by Alberta Senator Fredrick W. Gershaw; excerpts from John Maclean's book *Canadian Savage Folk* (1896); and articles from a Brooklyn-based journal called *The Golden Age*. The first of two articles from this New York publication deals with "modern 'medicine men'" and satires the concept of faith-healing of both Catholic and Episcopal Methodist denominations that compared their beliefs to a generalized and stereotyped Indigenous concept of healing.[183]

While this article is indicative of a Euro-American discourse regarding the prioritized place of science in the narrative of civilization and progress in the 1920s, the second of these two articles, "The Sons of Japheth," is worthy of a more detailed examination here, as it deals directly with conceptualizations of race that undoubtedly informed Brown's own understandings of Indigenous peoples in the West. "The Sons of Japheth" is among the research notes that Brown had included under the heading "File Geography – Advance of Civilization" for a chapter on "Indians" in his proposed "History of the West." Brown added his own notes and underlined or highlighted sections regarding "American Indians." The article's name refers to one of three biblical sons of Noah, widely believed during the early-modern ages to be the progenitor of European peoples.[184]

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[182] Clippings from the *Edmonton Journal* such as "Ancestors Queer to Some Indians" (n.d., author unknown) simply state that the Iroquois Indian believe their ancestors were turtles as opposed to monkeys. Other articles deal with Euro-Canadian conceptions of myths such as in the "Bloodroot Plant Marks Grave of Indian Warrior" (28 Dec. 1926) or Gladys M. Ricker's "Indian Legends" (12 Oct. 1929) regarding how the kingfisher got his sword-like bill. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288I-i, Box 35.

[183] "Modern 'Medicine Men'," *The Golden Age*, 5:124, "Notes for proposed 'History of the West' chapter on 'Indians and Eskimos," PAA, PR1965.0124, 288m, Box 35 (18 June 1924).

[184] Daniel Anlezark, "Sceaf, Japheth and the origins of the Anglo-Saxons," *Anglo-Saxon England*, 31 (2002): 14.

The article, written in 1923 by a man named O.L. Rosenkrans Jr., reflects what many accepted to be racial science of the time. This science aimed to explain the supposed characteristics of different races using geographical variances. For example, Rosenkrans argued that the modern European, being considered a descendent of "Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean" stocks, demonstrated an intrinsic primitive racial character that "was not molded by desert or steppe conditions of life, but in the dismal forests, fens, and bleak moors of the semi-frigid north."[185] The significance of this geographical difference was that "such an inhospitable country, where the conditions of life could not be otherwise than rigorous, nourished the growth, nevertheless, of a hardy, vigorous race."[186] According to this view the European character, influenced by harsh climate, geography, and a fight for survival, exhibited traits of clannishness, ruthlessness, insatiable rapacity, unswerving pertinacity in aggression, inflexible tenacity of purpose, unbounded covetousness, and a propensity toward fratricide and family rows.[187]

Upon establishing the supposed origins of the European races' "ruthlessness," the article used these traits to explain why this race seemed "placed by Providence in the exalted position of arbiter of human destiny." Rosenkrans posited that these very same traits put the white man in a position of global power as "the cruelty of the dark races is by comparison like the petulant mischief of children; that of the white man was almost uniformly calculated or restrained by self-interest."[188] On one page, Brown had written a note: "[S]ee Theo Roosevelt article on the extermination of Indians necessary for White man's possession of America." Next to this, he underlined:

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[185] Rosenkrans Jr., "Sons of Japheth," PAA, PR1965.0124, 288I-i, Box 35, 259.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid., 260.
[188] Ibid.

> [John Bull] set an example of sound business principles to the world by encouraging missionary activities which softened the intractability of savage tribes, rendering them amenable to peaceful penetration by the trader, and the introduction of such civilizing agencies as rum, opium, syphilis, and tuberculosis.[189]

The sardonic tone of the article mocked the idea of a civilizing force as one of moral and material improvement. It identified colonial civilizing missions as the result of an inherent ruthlessness and self-interest that were the supposed racial traits of white civilizations.

Brown used this article to further inform his understanding of white-Indigenous relations in America. Highlighting several paragraphs relating to the "American Indian," Brown noted that Indigenous peoples in the United States were promised the guaranteed possession of their land in perpetuity for the exchange of portions of their hunting grounds but were betrayed through broken treaty promises based on the supposed inherent greed of the white race:

> Treaties became 'scraps of paper,' the astounded Indians received peremptory orders to vacate, and soldiers were sent to escort them to some unproductive wilderness where they existed perforce as pauperized pensioners of the Government, robbed of two-thirds of their 'issues' by dishonest Indian Agents.[190]

In the article, Brown noted how certain tribes of the Sioux, who were becoming prosperous farmers, were transported to arid reservations, where they were forced to eat the unwanted leftovers of Indian Agents who appropriated for themselves the edible cuts of beef issues. Brown also noted that Indian uprisings were often provoked by white outrages, citing unprovoked massacres such as Sand Creek, and that "the cruelest of Indian customs – the tormenting of prisoners – is said to have been copied from the European judicial tortures."[191]

Similar to Brown's approach to what he called "the Indian question," Rosenkrans' article criticized systems of colonialism without offering solutions. Rosenkrans' article framed the evils

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[189] Rosenkrans Jr., "Sons of Japheth," PAA, PR1965.0124, 288I-i, Box 35, 264.
[190] Ibid., 265.
[191] Ibid.

of colonial oppression as an unavoidable result of contact with pioneers of white civilization whose need to "debauch, cheat and abuse" was simply an unchangeable and inherent racial characteristic of the Europeans and their descendants. This narrative, which shares the same fundamental principles as the noble savage myth, is best summed up by Rosenkrans' closing thoughts:

> Doubtless the rapid deterioration of the aborigines after contact with the whites was partly due to their inability to accommodate their wild habits to the more artificial conditions of civilization. They could not readjust themselves. The white man's theory of life was formulated to suit European requirements and was essentially unsuitable for a people living close to nature; but with astounding dogmatism, the white man insisted on all nations accepting his standards and conforming to his predilections.[192]

While the Indigenous peoples of Rosenkrans' narrative were still considered to resemble "weak-minded children," their "natural barbarism" was argued to have been exceeded by that of the white man.[193] Rosenkrans' paternalism and racial theory, although not as thoroughly detailed in Brown's own writings on Western Canada, draws parallels to Brown's narrative of inevitable settler-colonial progress at the expense of those deemed too "uncivilized" to adapt, resulting in the erasure of Indigenous peoples from the greater historical narrative.

The purpose of Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves' Pioneer Days Museum, Birth of the West Exhibition, and the Art League's Birth of the West History Teaching Pictures was to make use of Brown's extensive collection of photographs of Western Canada to convey a pioneer history and to teach children an authentic historical narrative of the West. The local popularity of this short-lived museum suggests that the historical narrative instructed by Brown was one that resonated with other settlers. The reason for this popularity most likely can be attributed to Brown's narrative focus on settler-colonial progress, the advancement of civilization, the high

[192] Rosenkrans Jr., "Sons of Japheth," PAA, PR1965.0124, 288I-i, Box 35, 266.
[193] Ibid.

moral standing of Canada's history with Indigenous peoples as compared to the US, and an unchallenged optimism regarding the future settlement of the Canadian West. All of these themes point towards a single possible outcome in which settler-colonist society successfully establishes a "home" in Western Canada, for the benefit of future generations of settler-colonists.

Chapter Four: "Birth of the West" Images

Introduction

On its surface, the act of photography may appear innocent or even objective to some. When a photograph has been staged to appear a certain way, such as the case in the famous ethnographic photos of Edward S. Curtis in his twenty-volume documentation *The American Indian* (1907-1930), this sense of innocence is quite obviously skewed by a clear, allegorical purpose.[194] However, if an image does not appear to have been influenced in an obvious way, can we then assert that the image portrays exactly what it appears to be? Historian Brock Silversides has described early first contact photos of Indigenous peoples in the West as being more indicative of the "true nature of First Nations people than later images" because isolated photographers could not afford to appear condescending or unfriendly towards unfamiliar Indigenous peoples. The relationship between photographer and subject during this period of early contact photography was, according to Silversides, "either equal or weighed in favor of Native people" as they chose whether to be photographed or not. The experience of taking photographs on the frontier was too new and unpredictable for biased photographers to skew in an unfavourable direction.[195]

On the contrary, the relationship between photographer and subject within a settler-colonial context has never been as harmless as Silversides proposes. Undeniably, in making

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[194] Edward Curtis' allegorical photographic record *The North American Indian: Being a Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska*, edited by Frederick Webb Hodge, 20 volumes (New York, 1907-1930) experienced a resurgence in popularity during the 1960s. Curtis presented images of Indigenous peoples and cultures in a tragic but inevitable process of extinction; Brian W. Dippie, "Photographic Allegories and Indian Destiny," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 42:3 (1992): 41.
[195] Silversides, *The Face Pullers*, 15.

repeated visits to Indigenous communities during their circuits, some settler photographers may have gotten to know their subjects very well, possibly even fostering "trust or warmth on the part of First Nations people" as Silversides suggests.[196] Nonetheless, the act of photography between parties of unequal status was never an innocent act. As a primary historical document, the photographic artifact , must be approached with a nuanced understanding of the contestation of power underlying the colonial encounter between settlers and Indigenous peoples.[197] For the photograph as a historical document to unveil the fluctuating state of agency and disempowerment in the colonial setting, the original purpose or function of the photograph must be considered.[198] Even those who Silversides has identified as "first contact" photographers still carried the exclusive right to define their subjects simply by deciding who to photograph, where to photograph them, and most importantly, how the photograph was to be used. The creator of the photograph, or historical artifact, controls the historical narrative.

The idea of history as an exploration of power between the colonist and the colonized, with traditional history being created (as opposed to recorded) and thus narrated by those who control the most power, finds its origins in Michel Foucault's post-modern theories of discourse as well as the subsequent post-colonial theories of Edward Said. Foucault conceptualized a "discourse" as a widely-accepted continuity of ideas that do not come about of themselves; rather they are always the construction of rules. [199]

Said applied Foucault's theory of discourse to his own seminal study, *Orientalism*, using the theory to define a Western framing of the Eastern "Orient" as a discourse that "is produced

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[196]Silversides, *The Face Pullers*, 3.
[197] Carol J. Williams, *Framing the West: Race, Gender, and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.
[198] Williams, *Framing the West,* 8.
[199] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 25.

and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power" shaped by political, intellectual, cultural, and moral power.[200] Said understood the "Orient" as a concept constructed, shaped, and manipulated by a multitude of varying colonial and imperial forces to define the people of Eastern regions. In Said's understanding, to have knowledge of a thing is to have authority over it in the sense that authority "means for 'us' to deny autonomy to 'it'."[201] Applied to the context of settler-colonial photography in the West, this idea suggests that to define Indigeneity by photographing and documenting Indigenous people in a colonial context is to exert authority of settler-society and to deny autonomy to Indigenous peoples.

The question then remains: how did settler photographers choose who and what to photograph in the Canadian West and for what purpose? The previous chapter explored Brown's narrative regarding an imagined space presumably inherited by settler-society from a "disappearing" Indigenous peoples. Of course, this narrative cannot be said to have been constructed by Brown alone; rather it is reflective of concerns shared by the greater settler-society of the West. Likewise, early photographs of the West and choices in subject matter reflect concerns that exceed individual or personal ambition or the self-interest of commercial photographers.[202]

Brown undoubtedly found motivation in achieving financial security and a profitable return for his collection. After 1880, a transatlantic ethnographic interest in Indigenous life began to increasingly determine what photographs would be commercially profitable; however, Brown's decisions regarding the ways in which his photographs were presented illustrated not only trends that were considered to be profitable but also an ethnocentric response to unfamiliar

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[200] Said, *Orientalism,* 20.
[201] Ibid., 40.
[202] Willams, *Framing the West*, 11.

cultural and political circumstances on the frontier as well as prevailing racial theories of the time.[203] Through a close examination of the various cultural codes that are present in Brown's "Birth of the West" displays, a narrative of the "vanishing Indian" becomes evident. This visual narrative coincides with that of Brown's lectures, research, and writings which implied the transition of authority over imagined space from Indigenous peoples to the new Euro-Canadian settlers of the West.

Categories of Portrayal

Tracing the original meaning and intent of documentary photographs can be an exceptionally difficult task. They are naturally unstable and unsettled due to the continuously shifting contexts in which they were placed.[204] Many of the photographs from the "Birth of the West" exhibition were originally taken by C.W. Mathers and other early photographers who most likely never envisioned their own photos in the same way that Brown had set them up to be displayed alongside lectures on settler history to schoolchildren. The intent of this thesis is not to determine the original purpose of each photograph analyzed; rather it is to demonstrate the various meanings which Brown ascribed to them and to examine the ways in which photos of Indigenous peoples were displayed in his educational images.

While the original purposes of these photos as ascribed by their creators are not central to this thesis, the categories by which Indigenous people have historically been portrayed through the medium of photography are essential to understanding the various codes that are present in Brown's displays. Although Silversides' work on photography in the Canadian West is missing a

[203] Willams, *Framing the West,* 11.
[204] Ibid., 13.

fundamental analysis of power dynamics that are inherent to the medium, his categorizations of portrayals of Indigenous peoples are helpful in understanding the codes in Brown's images. Silversides divides portrayal of Indigenous peoples into four categories which he argues correspond to different time periods: "the dirty, backward aboriginal in need of guidance;" "the idealized, but soon-to-be extinct 'noble savage';" the "Christianized, civilized 'white-Indian';" and the "romantic rendering of the 'legendary Indian'."[205] None of these categories stand entirely alone, as later Indigenous stereotypes often overlapped older, more deeply entrenched portrayals.

Before moving into an analysis of Brown's photos, Silversides' categories must be discussed. Silversides' reference to the image of the "backward aboriginal" calls to mind the arguments put forward by Canadian expansionists of the mid-nineteenth century for a greater European presence in the North-West. In 1848, the editor of the Toronto *Globe* - Reform politician George Brown – urged that a greater effort be made to bring the necessary knowledge of sedentary, agricultural life and Christian morals to "those poor wanderers of the forest." The *Globe* accepted the premise that Indigenous peoples were in urgent need of help and guidance, thus approaching the issue of annexation of the North-West from what was thought to be a humanitarian standpoint.[206] The image of the "backward aboriginal" was intended to reinforce this premise, calling for greater European presence and involvement in the vast, untamed territory controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company.

The portrayal of the idealized noble savage, or that of the "dying race," is typical of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when an increasingly nostalgic and romanticized view of Indigenous life, unadulterated by modern civilization, gained popularity.[207] Silversides argues

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[205] Silversides, *The Face Pullers*, 11.
[206] Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 29.
[207] Williams, *Framing the West*, 19.

that during this period, photographers marketed their images of Indigenous peoples to those interested in the "exotic" race but who could not travel to the Prairies themselves as tourism was still very new in the area.

Clearly, while photographers such as Edward Curtis, Benjamin Leeson, and Hannah Maynard (to name only a few) marketed their images to those who wanted photographs of "natives in as primitive a state as possible," the desire for such images was not limited to those from outside of the West nor was this demand driven purely by an imagined nostalgia.[208] While images of the noble savage were rendered through postcards, pamphlets, and magazines, Ernest Brown's lectures to children from Edmonton's school system reveal that the same demand for this romanticized image existed within the West as well. Further, as the noble savage was appropriated into settler history of the West, images of unadulterated "Indian life" were also desired by anthropologists and museums for "scientific purposes."[209] In response, photographs were often manufactured to meet the demand, sometimes using composite techniques to merge a modern photograph with an older one, thus replacing signifiers of modernity, such as a studio setting, with that of a forest backdrop.[210]

The third category, that of the Christian, civilized, "white-Indian," reverses the image of the noble savage. Silversides explains that after the North-West Rebellion of 1885, white society concluded that Indigenous peoples were child-like in the sense that they could be influenced by good or evil forces, and thus began a concerted effort to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the white mainstream through "cultural remodeling." During this phase, Silversides points out a high demand among white society for "photographs of Indians on plows, dressed in European clothes,

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[208] Williams, *Framing the West*, 20.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.

operating machinery, playing European musical instruments, engaging in white sports such as football or hockey, and attending white religious ceremonies."[211] Images of social and cultural transformation (such as the now infamous photographs of Thomas Moore Keesick at the Regina Indian Industrial School) served as propaganda for the government's assimilation policies.[212] These kinds of images were ubiquitous during the 1880s and 90s; their message celebrated what Indigenous people would become and dismissed as worthless what they were.[213]

An analysis of Brown's "Birth of the West" photographs will rely on the first three categories delineated by Silversides, as the final category is simply an extension of the noble savage myth. Silversides' fourth category – the "romantic rendering of the 'legendary Indian'" – is problematic in that it draws an unclear distinction between the image of the noble savage (which he argues to have largely disappeared by the turn of the century), and what he identifies as the image of the "legendary Indian" established through Edward Curtis' project to record the "North American Indian" in 1900.[214] Both the "noble savage" and Silverside's "Legendary Indian" images were imaginary and invented subjects based on the romanticized depiction of a people who were thought to be safely within the realm of Canada's past. With no clear distinction between the two, the latter portrayal is seemingly a simplistic continuation of the former which unfortunately has carried on in popular culture to this day.

The historical narrative of Indigenous peoples and their cultures as vanishing at the turn of the nineteenth century and the images depicting Indigenous peoples in traditional regalia or set in the wilderness to convey this narrative have undergone a standard critique by past and current

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[211] Silversides, *The Face Pullers*, 99.
[212] Miranda J. Brady and Emily Hiltz, "The Archaeology of an Image: The Persistent Persuasion of Thomas Moore Keesick's Residential School Photographs," *Topia (York University)* 37 (2017): 61.
[213] Dippie, "Photographic Allegories," 44.
[214] Silversides, *The Face Pullers*, 146.

historians of colonial images. The authenticity of these images and their value as data on Indigenous cultures speaks more about those who produced and consumed the images than about their subjects.[215] Although this critique is common, through a proliferation in popular media these images continue to be understood by non-Indigenous peoples as objectively representative depictions of Indigenous cultures.

In addition to these general categories of portrayal, much of the early historical imagery of these peoples signifies generic Indigenous experience and conditions, portraying Indigenous peoples' identity as a collective rather than individual.[216] This portrayal is evident in Brown's work, as even when such photographs were clearly studio portraits, they were used as ethnographic subjects, and individuals were often identified by their Nation rather than their name. The implication of a generic Indigenous experience is also evident in the tendency of early photographs to define the experience as either part of the process of assimilation or as being distinct from it.[217] In each of the categories outlined here, Indigenous identity is defined relative to settler-colonial standards of "civilized" modern life.

"Birth of the West" History Teaching Pictures

Interpretations of Brown's "History Teaching Pictures" can be organized into two broad categories: portrayals of Indigenous peoples as a relic of the past; and portrayals of Indigenous peoples in a process of assimilation. Within these broad categories—the number of extant images far fewer in the former category than the latter—Brown's images, whether created by him or

[215] Andrea N. Walsh, "Visualizing Histories: Experiences of Space and Place in Photographs by Greg Staats and Jeffrey Thomas," *Visual Studies* 17:1 (2002), 38.
[216] Ibid., 38.
[217] Ibid.

someone else, can be further scrutinized using a modified version of the framework of portrayals of Indigenous peoples outlined by Silversides. Upon a review of these hand-made posters, the great majority of Brown's images depicting Indigenous peoples as historical artifacts becomes clear, with very few photographs focusing on an assimilation process. The few images that do depict a generalized, collective experience of Indigenous transformation to the Christianized, civilized "white-Indian" commend the teaching of Christianity or for example, the teaching of saddlery and boot-making to Indigenous boys and knitting and spinning to girls at St. Albert's Residential School in Alberta.

Considering Brown's research notes for his writings on "Indians and Eskimos," Brown's own conceptualization of "teaching" as opposed to "civilizing" was complicated and somewhat unclear. In a typed manuscript marked with various notes and corrections, Brown noted that the U.S. government spent an enormous sum of $929,239,248.02 in waging war on "Indians" between 4 July 1776 and 20 June 1886 while only spending a third of this amount on "pacifying and civilizing the Indians."[218] In his notes, Brown had crossed out the word "civilizing" and wrote in its place "teaching." Garnered from his criticism of the Eurocentric assumption that the "Indian must submit to our way of living and laws, because they are better than his," Brown saw a clear difference between the terms *teaching* and *civilizing*.[219] Brown might have possibly taken issue with the "cultural remodelling" of Canada's residential school system, but a safe assumption could be made that Brown more likely saw residential schools as a means of teaching as opposed to assimilation.

[218] Which U.S. congressional records from which Brown pulled this information is unclear. See Ernest Brown, "Notes for proposed 'History of the West' chapter on 'Indians and Eskimos'," PAA, PR1965.0124, 288m, Box 35.
[219] Ibid.

A popular notion was that the placement of Indigenous children in industrial schools (a name given to what would later become singularly known as residential schools) was evidence that Indigenous families were incapable of instilling necessary morals and discipline in their children. Industrial schools existed for non-Indigenous students as well but these were reformatory institutions for young offenders. A parallel can be drawn between perceptions of Indigenous people, whom missionaries and bureaucrats regarded with a mixture of contempt and fear, and those same outlooks that were apparent of middle-class attitudes towards the poor. Canadians often perceived Indigenous parents as a deviant, poverty-stricken class incapable of raising their children in an acceptable manner.[220] Settlers such as Brown likely perceived industrial schools as a necessary means of intervention and reform to purge an indigent parental legacy, rather than a tool of cultural remodeling.

Regardless of how Brown perceived Canada's residential schools, images of the "civilized Indian" were included in his visual history of the West, indicating that Brown considered these images to constitute an important chapter in settler history. Brown categorized the photograph and poster display of *The Crucifixion Passion Play* (Figure 4.1) into a museum exhibit booth labelled "Indian Ceremonials" alongside photographs labelled "The Devil's Pin Cushion, Sweat Tent, Open Tent, Tea Dance and other Indian pictures."[221]

[220] E. Brian Titley, "Indian Industrial Schools in Western Canada," in *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History,* Ed. Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson, and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1986), 149.
[221] Ernest Brown, "List of Groups 'Birth of the West' Exhibition," PAA, PR1965.0124, 170, Box 20.

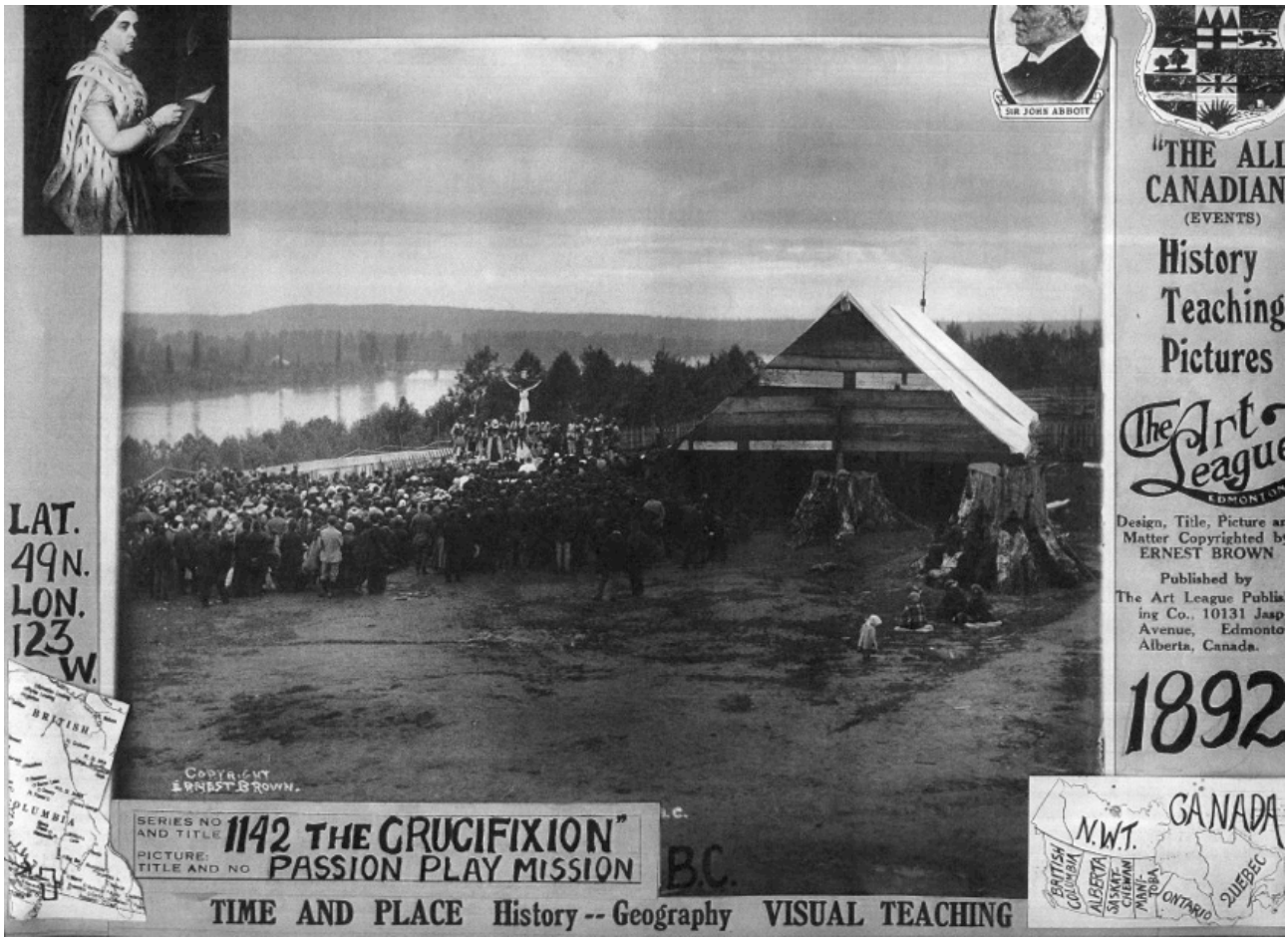

FIG 4.1 *The Crucifixion Passion Play Mission B.C.*, poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288n-b, Box 36.

From simply looking at Figure 4.1, an assumption can be made that the image does in fact represent Indigenous subjects. An article published by *The New York Times* in June 1892 (the same year identified in Figure 4.1) describes a "Passion Play preformed at St. Mary's Mission, British Columbia… by the Indians," validating the authenticity of Brown's photograph if it indeed represented what was described on his poster display.[222] According to the article, the play was performed near an "impoverished chapel" in honour of visiting Catholic prelates from

[222] "AN INDIAN PASSION PLAY: Given at St. Mary's Mission in British Columbia," *New York Times* (Jun 10, 1892), accessed from http://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/docview/94962910?accountid=9838.

the East. It was described as a great success, having been performed in front of approximately 1,200 people. Its achievement was measured by the great number of Indigenous peoples and tribes who had assembled to watch the performance.[223] The rationale behind these passion plays was described in the article as follows:

> The Roman Catholic Church has adopted a plan of teaching the Indians the events of the Bible… as their language is not well adapted to copious and graphic description. It is hoped by this means to bring the events of the Biblical history so vividly before the minds of the natives that they will never forget them.[224]

Events such as *The Crucifixion Passion Play* and the subsequent newspaper articles and photographs regarding these events were designed by the Church to celebrate their assimilating mission and to garner public support to this end. By framing the Catholic Mission as "impoverished" and yet celebrating its great success in teaching Biblical history, the article and photograph could be used by the Mission as a means of securing greater funding from the Church.

From a broader perspective, the image represents a collective generic identity of "Indians" in the process of assimilation. The fact that many different tribes attended the performance and that "each tribe… floated a banner inscribed with some device of religious significance" was not deemed important as every tribe was described within the same generic assimilation experience; each tribe's religion or spirituality did not matter.[225] The erasure of Indigenous cultures was, in this photograph, celebrated as a victory for settler-colonial cultural homogeneity.

Images of Indigeneity as Historical Artifact

[223] "AN INDIAN PASSION PLAY," *New York Times* (Jun 10, 1892).
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid.

As previously stated, the number of images within Brown's exhibit that depict processes of assimilation are few in comparison to those that depict Indigenous peoples and cultures as historical artifacts. This latter category of generic representation constituted most of Brown's exhibit as it most firmly supported his view of the West as having a proud, unique, and interesting history. While the civilizing mission of colonial governments may have remained questionable in Brown's mind, the image of the noble savage was most certainly easy to co-opt into a settler narrative of ethical indigenization. The image of the Indian in a process of assimilation necessitates an understanding of the deep and complex settler role in the disappearance of Indigenous cultures and way of life while the noble savage conveniently distanced settler involvement by portraying Indigenous peoples and cultures as being synonymous with the obsolete past. These were powerful images that implied settler authority over the West simply by association. Through a presumably shared and to the settlers "acceptable" history (of cultural inequality) with Indigenous peoples, the authority of the noble savage was thus one that transferred an imagined sense of authority to settler-society without discernibly explicit violence and without well-defined process.

This second category of image can be seen in Figures 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4, each of which requires individual analysis. Figure 4.2 depicts an Indigenous man dressed in feathered regalia and sitting on what appears to be a prop chair (not prominent) constructed with bones and animal horns. The subject is not named, only given the title of *A Cree Warrior*. With the pairing of the caption that is below what appears to be a staged portrait photograph, the viewer is expected to take certain details for granted. An assumption that a visitor especially a child or pupil to Brown's museum would likely have is that the subject of the photograph is indeed a genuine

Cree; however, to ascertain whether or not the subject of this photograph was actually Cree is extraordinarily difficult. Authoritative identification would be required, reflective of the widespread difficulty with regard to analyzing colonial photography of Indigenous subjects in general.[226] The out-of-focus prop chair appears especially superficial, as does the costume, both of which seem to display a caricaturization of the exotic that has persevered into modern day popular culture – in the form of modern sports mascots to name just one example.[227] To fortify this sense of exotic "otherness," the chair looks as if it were constructed to be generically and farcically African.[228]

Racist depictions of African peoples and Indigenous peoples as the exotic "Other" have often overlapped. This kind of imagery emphasized ornaments and elements of spectacle as a way of transforming the subject into a monolithic savage or anthropological object.[229] The possible transformation of the subject in Figure 4.2 from an unnamed sitter at a photographic studio to an exotic cultural object was accomplished with the use of props, while his role within Brown's historical narrative was defined by the caption: "A Cree Warrior." Similarly, the subjects of Figures 4.3 and 4.4 were both clearly taken inside of studios with backdrops meant to place them within what was considered to be their natural environment: the wilderness. subject of Figure 4.3, like the "Cree Warrior" is sitting for a studio portrait, yet his image is made into an

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[226] Michael Aird has argued that historians need to gain a more accurate understanding of the people featured in colonial photographs, and this can only arise out of greater Indigenous involvement and a focus on Indigenous perspectives in the documentation of these histories. See Michael Aird, "Aboriginal People and Four Early Brisbane Photographers," in *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies*, Ed. Jane Lydon (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014), 153.

[227] Michael Taylor, *Contesting Constructed Indian-ness: The Intersection of the Frontier, Masculinity, and Whiteness in Native American Mascot Representations* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 31.

[228] I am applying the cultural approach to communication advanced by James W. Carey, who saw communication of information as a means of constructing community and common understandings, the result of which is inherently an insider group and an outsider group, or "Other," who is perceived as being foreign and mysterious within a particular view of the world held by a community of people. See Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 20.

[229] John M. Coward, *Indians Illustrated: The Image of Native Americans in the Pictorial Press* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 179.

FIG 4.2 *A Cree Warrior*, poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288o-c, Box 36.

FIG 4.3 *Sarcee Indian with Pipe, Drum, Clubs, Etc., 1880,* poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288q-e, Box 36.

FIG 4.4 *Must-Took-No-Kow: Cree Indian Buck Skin Costume, 1904*, poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288o-a, Box 36.

ethnographic representation of the "Sarcee Indian." Once again, ascertaining whether this individual was in fact Sarcee (now commonly known as the Tsuut'ina) without specific identification is difficult. Because he was not considered to be a prominent or recognized individual, the subject was made to represent an entire collective of people. Similarly, the stated year of 1880 requires an assumption simply from reading the text as no indication is made that the photograph was indeed taken in 1880. In fact, the only copyright that is etched into the photograph itself belongs to Brown, and if this were indeed his photograph, the date would have to be after his purchase of Mathers' studio in 1904.

The props labelled "pipe, drum, club, etc." are present in the image to place the subject within an imagined historical context. The abbreviation of *Et cetera* denoting "other similar things" implies a recognition or previous knowledge on the part of the viewer as to what "similar things" in which a Sarcee Indian would be dressed, holding, or engaged in doing. The actual authenticity of the items themselves is not the most important factor in this image nor were they important to viewers who likely assumed authenticity by connecting the image with its textual description. As long as the image conformed to that of the popular imagination and presumed cultural understandings regarding the Indian of Western Canada's past, authenticity could be manufactured and mediated. Thus, these "similar things" could have included anything that the intended audience may have imagined belonging to an Indigenous person of the past.

The individual represented in Figure 4.4 is labelled in small lettering directly in the photograph as "Must-Took-No-Kow, or Thomas Hunter, head councillor at Saddle Lake to Chief Pakan at White Fish Lake." His label, in much larger text, according to Brown's poster, however, is simply a "Must-Took-No-Kow: Cree Indian, Buckskin Costume." The identification of the

individual in the etching on the photograph refers to the son of Cree chief Ohimnahos, or "Little Hunter," whose band was located primarily at Saddle Lake in central Alberta, and whose tribe was loosely connected with that of chief Pakan of White Fish Lake. Little Hunter was once considered to be one of the most influential Cree chiefs in the area, but due to failing health his influence declined and he died in 1882.[230] His son, Thomas Hunter, was a member of Pakan's band, and had aided chief Pakan in calming the restlessness that ensued when a supporter of Wandering Spirit's rebels named Joseph Cardinal (a man with kinship ties to Hunter) was shot and killed in White Fish Lake in 1885.[231]

None of this information is self-evident from Brown's poster display nor is it likely that the story of Thomas Hunter would have been familiar to visitors at Brown's museum. If the man in the photograph was indeed Thomas Hunter, any indication of his individual history is shrouded by the ethnographic framing of Hunter in his "costume," standing next to a prop tree stump and placed within the imitation wilderness of Brown's studio backdrop. Why this man had his photograph taken in Brown's studio cannot be determined. Whether he wanted the photograph for his own purposes, or if Brown convinced him to have his photograph taken as he did remains a mystery, but the end result is unchanged. Perhaps due to his distinguished role as a councillor to chief Pakan, Must-Took-No-Kow was provided with his own name on the poster as opposed to being identified simply by his Nation. The collective identification of "Cree Indian, Buckskin Costume" follows directly after his name, thus placing him within the same allegorical role as the subjects of figures 4.2 and 4.3.

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[230] Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 146.
[231] Ibid., 161.

Finally, the backdrop, which is similar in both Figures 4.3 and 4.4, represents an important feature of these images. According to Brown and other settlers, the imagined space belonging to the Indian was the wilderness or nature. Regardless of the fact that these individuals were photographed in a studio setting, to meet the demand for images of the romanticized noble savage and ethnographic representations, they had to be placed within these familiar surroundings. By placing a forest backdrop behind the "Sarcee Indian," Brown's message would have been clear to his audience: The natural landscape of the West that settler-society now inhabits once belonged to the noble savage of our shared past. An implied transfer of cultural authority is evident in the placing of Indigenous subjects within a past temporal context and what seems to be a natural physical context of the Indigenous people but is now governed and controlled by settlers.

Interestingly, the clothing worn by the individuals in both of the following photographs, Figures 4.5 and 4.6, are far from similar to the prop-like costumes and regalia worn by the sitters in the previous three examples. The clothing worn here is more representative of reality as these pictures were "views" as opposed to portraits; they captured Indigenous subjects wearing Western-style clothing with which they had been accustomed for quite some time.

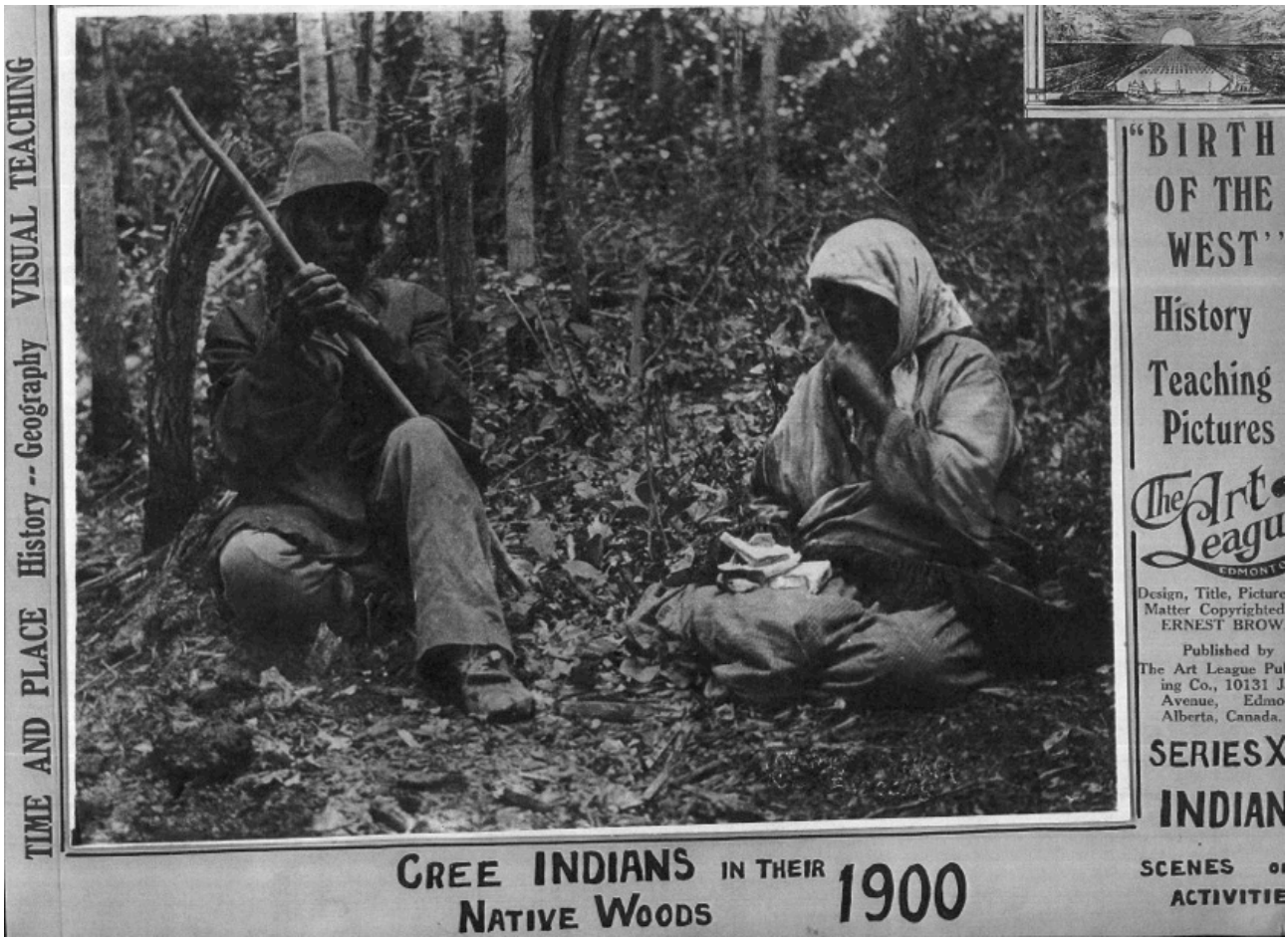

FIG 4.5 *Cree Indians in their Native Woods, 1900*, poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288n-l, Box 36.

The title of Figure 4.5, "Cree Indians in their Native Woods," transforms what is otherwise a rather nondescript image of an unidentified man and woman sitting amongst trees and underbrush into a statement regarding a narrative past of the West. Since the mid-nineteenth century, photographers used descriptive language and sequential presentation to supplement the information expressed by a single image. In this way, photography was transformed into a narrative medium.

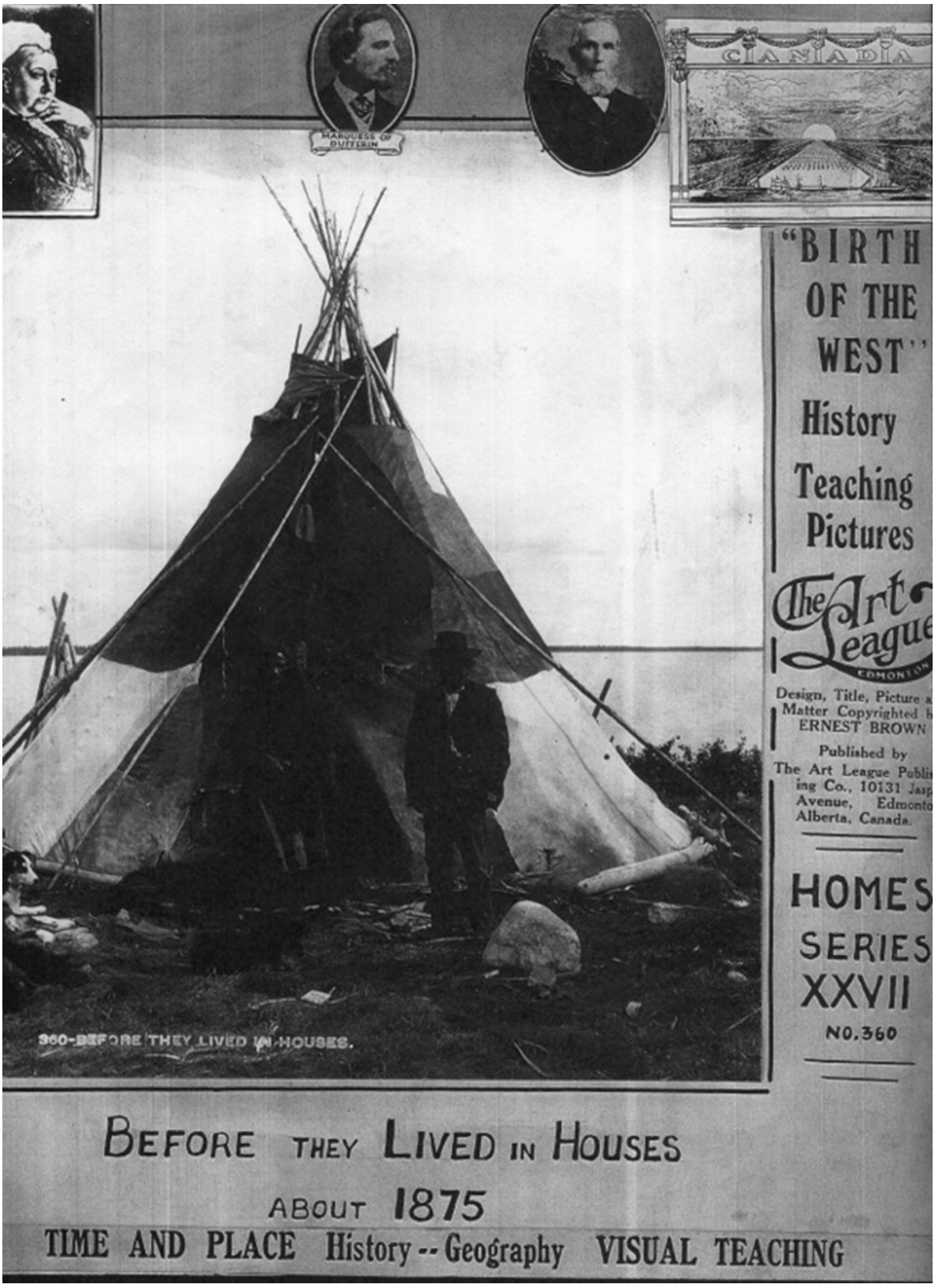

FIG 4.6 *Before They Lived in Houses: About 1875*, poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288o-t, Box 36.

Expositive titles such as “Sarcee Indian with Pipe, Drums, Club, etc.” and “A Cree Warrior” have the effect of aggregating the characteristics and costumes of individual subjects into collective, ethnographic identities. Similarly, the title “Cree Indians in their Native Woods” places the Indigenous persons firmly within the setting of wilderness despite the fact that both individuals are presented wearing Western-style clothing. The title also implies an authority over the woods as natural habitat, simultaneously isolating Indigenous peoples from the setting of civilization that was the perceived domain of Euro-Canadian settlers. This implication may seem somewhat innocuous at first, but when viewed within the context of Brown’s serial presentation of images, such as the image in Figure 4.6, a message of the “vanishing Indian” becomes readily apparent.

The title, “Before They Lived in Houses: About 1875,” taken in sequence with the previously discussed image, establishes a narrative of the vanishing Indian that is somewhat different from images of assimilation that commended the erasure of Indigenous cultures. Although this image paired with its accompanying description does indeed allude to the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into mainstream society, it serves to affirm the conviction that perceived Indigenous ways of life that include living outdoors and in the wilderness were destined to disappear. The description suggests a singular timeline in which the subjects of the photograph that were representative of a generic, collective category of “Indians” moved from living in the woods (as per Figure 4.5) to living as civilized Euro-Canadian settlers.

Another important characteristic present in many of Brown’s images is the colonial imagery included above the photographs within the borders of Brown’s posters. In the upper left-hand corner of FIG 4.6 is an image of Queen Victoria positioned perhaps intentionally in the upper left corner looking down on the colonized, while the figure in the top-center of the poster

is the Marquess of Dufferin, who was the Governor General of Canada from 1872 to 1878. In the top right corner of the photograph is Canadian Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie. All three figures are representative of British authority over both the scene and subjects in the photograph. The presence of colonial overlords in the poster promotes the idea that the image is a logical part of the narrative of Canada's history. The border of the photograph immediately politicizes the image, delineating a powerful narrative of the bold creation and establishment of Canada and a settler-dominated West.

The image in FIG 4.7 titled "Indian Scout on the Plains: Riel Rebellion 1885" presents another example of narrative-building through the combination of image and text. The photograph appears to have been originally taken by C.W. Mathers, while the text etched into the photograph itself reads simply "On the Plains" with no mention of the Riel Rebellion of 1885. Once again, nothing is in the image itself that indicates the subject was a scout or that the subject was even Indigenous. The title of this poster expresses much more information than can be ascertained immediately from the photograph. Brown's added textual description below the photograph is in fact the only feature that places the image within a historical context.

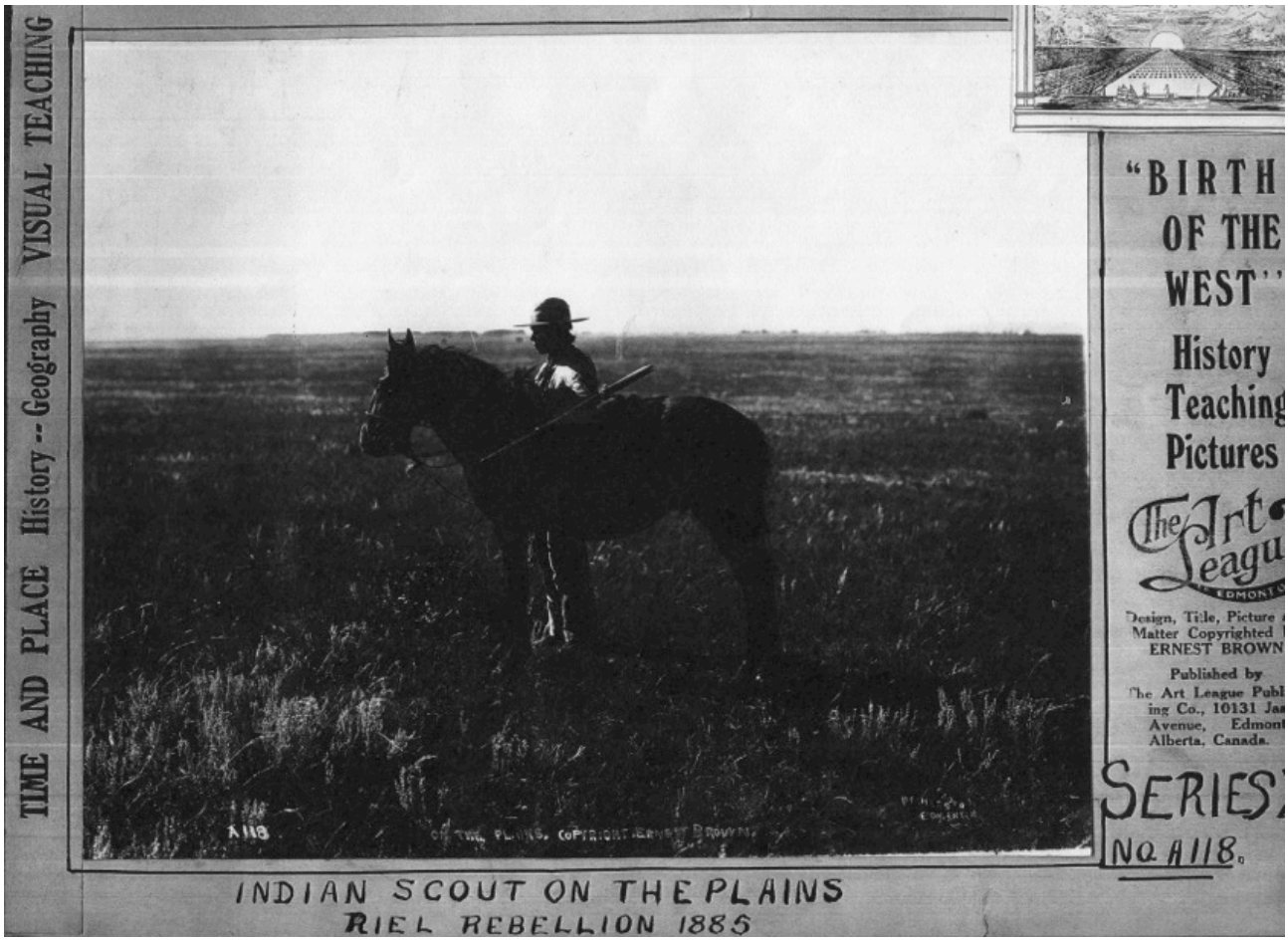

FIG 4.7 *Indian Scout on the Plains: Riel Rebellion 1885*, poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288o-p, Box 36.

Brown sequenced this image into his exhibit as an authentic picture, but whether Brown believed that this photograph was an authentic representation of an "Indian scout" during the Riel Rebellion or if he simply appropriated the photograph to fit into his historical narrative is difficult to determine. Even while Brown's text provides more information than can be authenticated, his description of the subject as an "Indian scout" presents a single pan-Indigenous identity, which in the words of the Mohawk poet Emily Pauline Johnson "signifies about as

much as the term 'European'."[232] The identification of the subject as a collective representation of all Indigenous tribes says nothing about the individual himself; rather, it reveals that the subject was perceived as a prop to be used in the telling of a settler narrative.

The image of the "Indian girl," a label provided by Johnson as a critique of the written Indian woman stereotype in Canadian fiction, is evident in Brown's ethnographic presentation of Indigenous women.[233] While Johnson's critique focused on the brute-like nature and inevitable doom of the Indian girl in literature, the image of the Indian girl holds many destructive stereotypes, all of which have been defined in relation to white males.[234] The ambiguous nature of imagery depicting Indigenous women allowed for the combination of stereotypes of the "Indian princess" – a nurturing, virtuous, submissive, and sexualized image – and the "squaw" – a debased, immoral, ugly, and sexualized image – into a single perception of an "Indian girl" who was expected to embody both primitive stereotypes simultaneously in populist images and popular media.[235] The indignity of this representation which objectified and devalued Indigenous women is only added to upon examining the possible origins of the term "squaw." A newspaper clipping from Brown's collection of research material titled "Chippewa Women are Not Squaws" (1928) explained:

> William Tomigo [was] enlightened as to the viewpoint of the Chippewa band, whom he represents as a council man. "'White people don't seem to know'" he said, "'that the Chippewa 'squaw' does not mean a lady or wife or woman in the inoffensive sense. It really means shape of a female, with vulgar suggestions."[236]

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[232] Emily Pauline Johnson, "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," in *E. Pauline Johnson, Tekahionwake: Collected Poems and Selected Prose*, Ed. Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 178.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, "Sacajawea and Her Sisters: Images and Native Women," *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 23:1 (1999): 124.
[235] Valaskakis, "Sacajawea and Her Sisters," 124.
[236] "'Chippewa Women are Not Squaws' London, Ontario," PR1965.0124, 288-l, Box 35 (7 July 1928).

This newspaper clipping may explain why Brown changed the title of one image (as seen in Figure 4.9) from the original title etched in to the photograph: "Cocona Sinipawksyissi Otokeman: Sarcee Squaw" to his poster title: "Cocona Sinipawksyissi Otokeman: Sarcee Woman." Despite Brown's awareness of the offensive nature of the word "squaw," the stereotype remained deeply entrenched in popular representations of Indigenous women. Between about 1915 to the 1940s, images such as those pictured in Figures 4.8 and 4.9 worked in consort with their male counterparts to establish the romanticized Indian as objects of history in textbooks, children's books, ethnographic studies, and in multitudinous forms of popular media.[237] These popular representations and stereotypes of Indigenous women would have been present in the minds of most of Brown's audience as they looked upon the images presented in his museum. As objects of history, these images served to affirm the same subordinate, unequal, and seemingly stoic narrative as still-life images of male counterparts; that is the narrative of the romanticized "vanishing Indian" and subsequent erasure from the present. Such images "reinforced the belief that the best Indian was the historical Indian."[238]

The various representations of Indigenous people through photography, as either experiencing a process of assimilation, or as romanticized artifacts of history, were appropriated for the purpose of conveying a historical narrative in Brown's "Birth of the West Exhibition." Imagery of the noble savage, the civilized white-Indian, the Indian princess, and the squaw, all worked in association with one another towards conveying a settler history in which Indigenous subjects were written out of the present and into a fictionalized past. The aggregation of individual Indigenous identities into monolithic, pan-Indian categories implied a shared,

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[237] Valaskakis, "Sacajawea and Her Sisters," 125.
[238] Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 176.

FIG 4.8 *Siupakio and Sikunnacio: Sarcee Indian Girls, 1881*, poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288o-b, Box 36.

FIG 4.9 *Cocona Sinipawksyissi Otokeman: Sarcee Woman, 1882,* poster by Ernest Brown and Gladys Reeves, n.d. PAA, PR1965.0124, 288o-f, Box 36.

collective experience of all Indigenous peoples. The individual subjects in Brown's posters became representative of entire Nations and sometimes of all Indigenous peoples in general, as they were transformed from portrait studio and outdoor scene photographs into ethnographic objects of history.

Conclusion

Brown's life and work in the West was characterized by an unremitting struggle to preserve his prized possession – his photograph collection – which he promoted overtly as an authentic historical record. To Brown, the value of this record was in the accumulated stories represented by the photographs. Speaking on the subject of British imperialism, Brown once avowed that while a "sturdy British belief [was] that the United Kingdom is the best place in the world… there are brighter skies, higher mountains, larger rivers, broader lakes, and taller trees to be found elsewhere."[239] He concluded that in travelling persistently to look at them all, "we come home again with a store of accumulated amazements and tell our traveler's tales."[240] Brown comprehended the preservation of history as the collecting of stories and the communal sharing of such stories. According to Brown, such an act, formed an important part of one's own identity. Most importantly, Brown also understood that "all repeated stories like exercised muscles enlarge themselves with use."[241]

Brown knew that the strength of a particular history depended upon its repeated telling. The greater the number of times a story is told, the more entrenched it becomes in the minds of those who hear it. Communication is then a method by which various histories compete and are contested. Controlling an efficient means of communication and dissemination of information and knowledge ensures that one's stories remain known. Brown's museum, teaching pictures, and lectures communicated ideas about Western Canada through the repeated telling of interesting and entertaining stories and sharing of visual imagery through photographs in his

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[239] Brown, "Lantern Slide Lecture: Scenes of the homeland and our adopted country," PAA, PR1965.124, 214, Box 21, 1.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.

Museum. Brown likely saw himself as a purveyor, arbiter, and curator of stories told by visitors to his portrait studio before the First World War, and an active agent in constructing a fledgling settler history of the West. Indeed he was in a sense a gatekeeper of regional cultural knowledge.

With the communication of history understood in this way, the power dynamics between colonist/colonized, photographer/subject, and observer/observed must be included in discussions surrounding early Western photography. Through Brown's museum exhibit and teaching pictures, the use of this dialectical framework to categorize images and portrayals of Indigenous peoples promotes a better understanding of settler-colonial historical narratives. As a response to unfamiliar situations on the frontier, specifically a lack of familiar or common settler history, Brown's historical narratives directly addressed questions of Western identity, lived experience, and authenticity. To make sense of his experience and presence in Western Canada, Brown used photography of Indigenous peoples alongside lectures and texts to manufacture narratives that would provide settler-society with a sense of communal ownership, authority, history, and identity in the West as viewed through a non-Indigenous lens.

The manipulation of the Indigenous images throughout Brown's histories played an integral role in establishing definitions of settler progress. Successful settler-colonialism first required the erasure of whom Brown referred to as "the old Lords" from future narratives.[242] Brown's photographs and imagery of the noble savage implied a past authority of Indigenous peoples over the imagined space of the West through the depiction of individuals in natural environments and wilderness scenes. Similarly, Brown's writings and lectures portrayed narratives of ethical indigenization in which settlers "non-violently" replaced Indigenous peoples who unfortunately could not adapt to the ruthless advancement of colonialism. In actuality, these

[242] Brown, "Notes for proposed History of the West chapter," PR1965.0124, 288m, Box 35.

narratives ignored the fact that Indigenous peoples and cultures were resilient and continued to survive. The physical separation and experience of the "non-encounter" between settler-colonists and Indigenous peoples, however, enabled settlers like Brown to ignore this fact.

Brown was sympathetic towards Indigenous peoples, but this sympathy came from a place of insecurity regarding his own identity in the West. The image of the Indigenous person was co-opted into Brown's history; and in this history, the so-called disappearance of the Indian was not seen by Brown as an injustice that should concern the present, rather Brown perceived it to be a predetermined fact that Indigenous peoples and their ways of life disappear in the face of settler progress. Because of this idea of predetermination, the "vanishing Indian" could be framed as neither positive or negative, rather it was simply an unfortunate truth to Brown and others who employed similar imagery. Although Brown clearly exercised historical agency in his progressive politics, his humanism, and his sympathy concerning the oppression of Indigenous peoples, Brown can also be understood in this light as a product of history and a reflection of dominant ideas and thought.

Brown's historical narratives allowed him to define Indigeneity in ways that would allow him and the pioneers who came before to lay claim to the imagined space that they now inhabited. With the West presumably "empty," these settlers and pioneers ardently worked towards civilizing the land and defining its history. By writing the image of the Indian into the past, visitors to Brown's museum could safely assume that the so-called Indian was indeed vanishing. Such narratives provided settlers with an evolving historical consciousness and justification integral to their establishing new lives in the Canadian West.

Future Directions

The enormous scope of Brown's museum and his role as a public figure who helped chart the intellectual culture of the West begs for further research. While this study focused on settler conceptualizations of race and history, this examination could be further extended to assess how settler's categorized and classified their histories with regard to such topics as the environment, geography, the fur trade, travel, early farming and ranching, the CPR, and other forms of transportation, all of which represent different categories of Brown's historical interests. A larger project regarding Brown, his social and political impact, and his museum would be instructive to evaluate how he perceived his own imagined roles with regard to multiple facets of life in the West, and how he wrote his histories accordingly.

Brown's archived collection, one of Alberta's largest photographic records, includes 11,000 photographs (one of which is prominently displayed in large format adorning the front entrance of the Archives itself) and 42 photographic albums. However, for the purposes of this thesis, only images of Indigenous subjects taken from "The Birth of the West" series were examined, as the majority of Brown's collection does not concern ideas of race explicitly. While the intent of this thesis was not to examine all of Brown's photographs, such a broad examination would be meritorious. In addition to an extended analysis of Brown's various museum exhibit topics, expanding this study in its scope of Brown's photograph collection, would be revealing as to how he framed multiple aspects of life and history in Western Canada.

While this study has focused entirely on Ernest Brown's perspective on extrapolating settler histories and perceptions of Indigenous peoples, a singular settler perspective does not take into account Indigenous perspectives of Brown's narratives or photographs. To further a process of decolonization, future research must take into consideration the various meanings,

theories, and constructions of memory that Indigenous peoples ascribe to colonial photographs. Often, such photographs are analyzed primarily as either static or objective images of the past, or as representations of the white settler gaze. However, further research is necessary to evaluate the discursive nature of photography concerning the perspectives of the peoples being photographed. How have these photographs been received by Indigenous viewers?

While this thesis has analyzed the underlying settler-colonial drives behind Brown's images, his photographs carry a multiplicity of conflicting meanings for Indigenous peoples especially if nameless individuals from Brown's photographs could be accurately identified. Indeed, a fundamental argument is that photographs taken by colonizers and settlers reveal more about Western society than they do about their subjects; however, in light of the significant role of the photographs and associated texts as contained in Brown's museum, teaching resources, and his choices for the images and stories told being a powerful means of public socio-colonial control, photography ultimately remains an intimate, interactive, and idiosyncratic undertaking between the subject and object. Further explorations regarding this relationship from the perspective of Indigenous subjects and from modern-day Indigenous viewers of Brown's photography would be instrumental towards constructing a broader and more complete picture of this chapter in Alberta's history.

The need for further historical research of settler-societies in a spirit of post-colonial criticism is continuous. Without critical examination of Canada's Western pioneers, homesteaders, and settlers, the dominant historical narratives of white supremacy based on settler insecurities and deeply-entrenched racial theories will remain unchallenged and persist as the standard by which Canadian history is written and consumed. In future research, further distinction between colonial and settler-colonial powers is needed, as recent studies of

Indigenous-white relations in the twentieth-century tend to fixate on the coercive political and legal apparatus of the Canadian and Dominion governments rather than on individual settlers or settler-society.[243] In response to this, the present study has offered a nuanced understanding of colonial power, revealing some of the many forces within the umbrella term of "colonialism." Through his photographs, works, and writings, settler-colonists such as Brown, being in a particularly high-profile socio-cultural position, mediated and interpreted ideas of the Canadian West and indigeneity that individual pioneers used as regional discourses of colonization. Through his selection and categorization of knowledge and information, Brown helped to facilitate and intellectually support an *ad hoc* and later *de jure* authority that inevitably uprooted foreign cultures (to the settlers) despite these cultures having thrived for centuries.

[243] Lackenbauer, *Battle Grounds*, 7.

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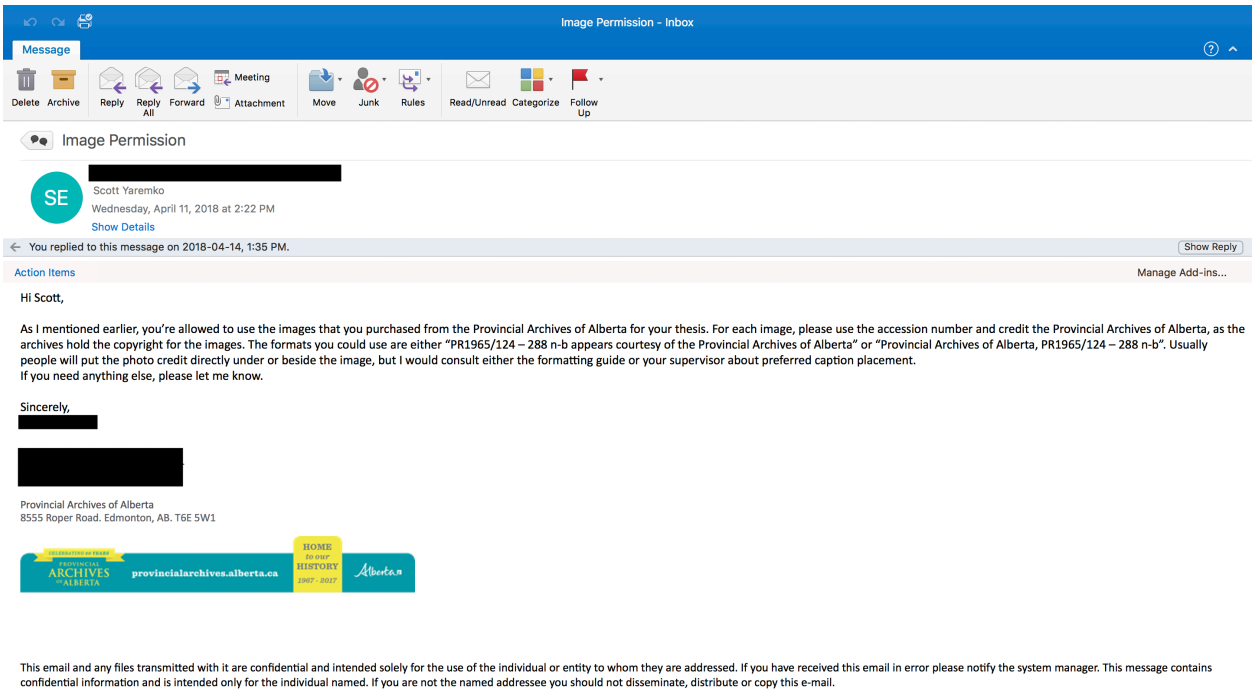
Appendix: Copyright Clearance



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