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**Delicious Resistance, Sweet Persistence:
First Nations Culinary Arts in Canada**

By

Annie Turner

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts
In Canadian Studies**

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Canada

Really Delicious Fry Bread

To make really delicious fry bread
You need to start the night before
With some long slow sweet sweet
loving with the precious one of your choice
This brings good dreams of swimming in cool water
Listen to birds singing alive the dawn
Then put on some strong Indian music
Half of the taste, the part that makes her rise
Is the joy you stir in
but you start with plain old white flour
1 cup to 1 teaspoon baking powder
& a sprinkle of sugar
This makes enough for 2 if you have
bacon, potatoes & eggs
If it's all you have
better make 3 cups worth
Sift everything a couple of times
Pour in your water in a spiral
The way the earth moves
It helps if you're singing with your pow wow tape
or laughing with your lover
Stir until you get a good dough
not too sticky
Knead in all the names who need a prayer
Shape her into a round mound
& cross her in the four directions
with a sharp knife
Cover with a clean red bandanna
& make the coffee
When you've finished your prayers
she'll be ready to cook up
The oil should be hot enough
to make your spit sputter
but not smoking
Pinch off a piece of dough & roll her
around to make a patty
pulling her flat with your fingers
Some people put a hole in the middle
for the spirits to pass through
& some roll them out on a board
but I do it the lazy squaw way

While you're frying them don't get caught
up in writing a poem
or talking on the phone
because even the crows
won't eat them burnt
We love fry bread in memory of the women
who, thrown off their land
with death in every dawn
& starvation in their children's eyes
made this food
so we'd all survive
Each tender bite honours our ancestors
who despite the greatest genocide
in world history
kept on
& kept on
So we could share bannock this morning
and love

-Chrystos (Menominee)

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of how First Nations chefs and restaurateurs are using the culinary arts, similar to other art forms, as a means of asserting contemporary identities as well as responding to the legacy of colonialism in Canada. Colonialism has forever altered traditional Aboriginal ways of life, including artistic expressions. However, a post-colonial analysis of a broad range of work by contemporary Aboriginal artists will reveal that the arts have been used by Native people as a means of responding to colonialism as well as a way of asserting their contemporary identities. This analysis will be done using a set of theoretical principles drawn from post-colonial studies, including self-representation, authenticity, hybridity, appropriation, and cultural continuity and survival, which will later be applied to my analysis of Aboriginal haute cuisine. An in-depth ethnographical survey of historical culinary traditions among Native people in Canada will reveal that food has always been an integral part of Aboriginal lifeways, and consequently the negative impact that colonization has had on the traditional eating habits of Native people. However, by looking at the development of recent trends in Aboriginal haute cuisine using the principles developed from post-colonial studies, it is clear that cooking is also a means, like other forms of artistic expression, of affirming and celebrating contemporary Indigenous identities. This thesis also seeks to contribute to the emerging field of Food Studies, as well as to suggest a new means of social analysis for Canadian Studies scholars.

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To all of you I dedicate this thesis.

• THE MENU •

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AMUSE BOUCHE: PREFACE

As long as I can remember I have been passionate about and deeply affected by food. In fact, I have been known on occasion to be brought to tears by a crème brûlée or made to laugh hysterically by a spoonful of hot and sour soup. What is more, something as simple as a lightly salted sun-warmed tomato can transport me back to summers spent with my late Nana at our family cottage. The sweet salty red flesh sliding down the back of my throat has the power to evoke memories of her that are more powerful than those captured in videotapes and photographs. Tastes arouse in me feelings and memories that inspire my own cooking. When I prepare a meal I want those who consume my creations to not only taste but to also experience the food on an emotional level. I generally attribute this zest for food to the way in which cooking and eating have contributed to my own personal development.

I grew up with a single mother who worked long days to make ends meet. Despite her busy schedule she always made mealtimes count. For me, sharing a meal has come to represent an intimate and important ritual which enables people to spend quality time together. Entering into adulthood I have found that I often gauge the success of my relationships on how good the food tastes when I am in the company of a particular person. Needless to say, my closest and strongest friendships are with those who share and understand my passion and love for food. I also come from a long line of strong women who never perceived their work in the kitchen as oppressive. The women in my family embrace food and its preparation, using it as a means of expressing themselves creatively, carrying on family traditions, and nurturing their relationships.

It came as no surprise to my family when I decided to study cooking after graduating from high school. It was a much bigger surprise when I decided to postpone my career as a chef to attend university, and an even greater shock when I decided to pursue a Master's degree. Even though I have developed a passion for academic inquiry, my love for food and cooking are too great to leave behind. Thus, I came to the natural conclusion of combining the two in the conceptualization of my thesis.

Times are changing and chefs are no longer considered to be mere craftspeople. Presently, there is a growing appreciation for their ability to create a more holistic, sensual experience. That is, with the food that they cook, chefs are able to appeal to all of our senses, as opposed to the mere visual or cognitive pleasure of other art forms. Furthermore, food is becoming recognized within academia for its ability to provide greater insight into different areas of our lives, including culture, politics, and economics. Food Studies is slowly becoming accepted on a par with such disciplines as Art History and Film Studies, thus making it an exciting and opportune time for the topic I will be examining in this paper.

Food and cooking are part of who I am, and have become the lenses through which I understand and experience the world. In writing this thesis I have aimed to demonstrate that we all have different ways of connecting with and understanding our surroundings. For some, a heated debate can open a mind, for others a photograph or a film can show another side of the story. For myself however, and a myriad of other likeminded people, a well-laid table brimming with delicious conversation about taste, texture and smell, is the ideal place to share stories, teach lessons, and acquire knowledge. Bon Appétit!

APPETIZER: INTRODUCTION

In 1992, the first ever Canadian Native Haute Cuisine Team set out to participate in the World Culinary Olympics in Frankfurt, Germany – the oldest and largest cooking competition in the world. The team consisted of Chefs Arnold Olson (Cree), Bryan Sappier (Micmac/Malicite), Bertha Skye (Cree), Andrew George Jr. (Wet'suwet'en), and David Wolfman (Sto:lo). They left for the competition unsure of what to expect, but returned home with an overwhelming number of medals for their culinary excellence. Above all else however, they returned ready to show Canada and the rest of the world that Aboriginal haute cuisine was unique, innovative, and something to inspire pride. Since the success of this first ever Native Haute Cuisine Team, Native Culinary arts in Canada have been flourishing.

Over the past few decades, there has been an increased cultural confidence and renewed vitality among Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Newhouse, 2002). Evidence of this renaissance can be found in their numerous political, economic and cultural achievements. Haute cuisine can now be numbered among these as a key ingredient in the rich melange of Canadian Aboriginal culture. In this paper, I will argue that like other art forms, the culinary arts are being used by Aboriginal chefs and restaurateurs to celebrate their evolving cultural identities. As such, cuisine can also be viewed as playing an active role in resisting and dismantling the fixed identities imposed on Aboriginal people through colonization in Canada. Simultaneously, Food Studies, a new interdisciplinary field that focuses on the historical, social, and cultural meanings of food – from its preparation to its consumption – is developing within academia (Ruark, 1999).

Food Studies is quickly gaining academic credibility through the work of scholars, who like myself, have been hungry to demonstrate how studying food and cooking can provide new insights into various aspects of society. Therefore, this thesis seeks to contribute to the relatively new field of Food Studies, demonstrating its relevance to the field of Canadian Studies and its potential to facilitate a better understanding of Canadian society.

In Canada, the term “Aboriginal” is usually meant to refer collectively to three distinct groups of Indigenous people: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. However, this paper will focus exclusively on the culinary arts of First Nations. This is not to discount the unique and diverse culinary traditions among Inuit and Métis communities, but rather their inclusion would inevitably detract from the more in-depth discussion of the distinct cultural groups of Native people that have been included herein. That having been said, I use the terms First Nations, Aboriginal, Native, and Indigenous to refer collectively to the First Nations people of Canada. Because of the great diversity among First Nations groups, using a series of accepted terms is often necessary, unless referring to a particular tribe or nation, in which case using the specific name is preferred.

Thesis Outline

The first chapter in this thesis will provide a brief overview of a range of contemporary Aboriginal aesthetic expression in Canada: film, literature, visual arts, and music. However, I will begin by examining the impact of colonialism on the artistic expressions of Native people in this country. My goal in this chapter is to establish how, and for what purpose Native people have used the arts as a means of responding to the colonial experience and as a way of affirming cultural identities. This first chapter will

also introduce a set of theoretical concepts, including self-representation, authenticity, hybridity, appropriation, and cultural continuity and survival, that will later be applied to my analysis of First Nations culinary arts in Canada. In the second chapter, I will present a historical overview of food traditions found among First Nations communities from across the country, illustrating the intimate relationship that exists between Native peoples and the foods they eat. This chapter will also explore the innovation and creativity involved in the traditional preparation of food, as well as the impact of colonization on traditional eating habits. The goal of chapter two will be to contextualize historically, how contemporary First Nations cuisines can be read as moments of survival, innovation, celebration of identities, and ultimately resistance to colonialism. In the third chapter I will employ the theoretical principles listed in chapter one to analyze how Native chefs today use food as a form of artistic expression. This will include a detailed examination of Aboriginal cuisine since the early 1990s, beginning with an introduction to the Olympic Canadian Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team, followed by an account of the accomplishments of Native chefs who are currently at the forefront of contemporary First Nations culinary arts in Canada. This chapter will also include a brief discussion of educational opportunities available to Native youths who are interested in the culinary arts. Finally, this chapter will illustrate how cuisine continues to shape the evolving cultural identities of First Nations people in Canada.

Before digging into the “meat and potatoes” of my analysis, it is first necessary to contextualize the two gaps that my research aims to fill. The first of these gaps lies within the literature on contemporary Aboriginal artistic expression. Scholars have written extensively on how the arts have been used to reaffirm contemporary Aboriginal

identities. However, cuisine has not been considered among these in the existing scholarship. The second gap that my research aims to address is the absence of Food Studies analyses within the field of Canadian Studies. Before discussing the various forms of contemporary Aboriginal art, and highlighting cuisine's place among these artistic expressions, it is necessary to first acknowledge the political and social history surrounding the artists and the art they produce. In order to contextualize these two gaps I shall now provide a brief overview of Aboriginal history in Canada, followed by an introduction to Food Studies and why I believe it is a viable area of academic inquiry.

History of First Nations in Canada

Archaeological evidence and oral tradition suggest that Native people have inhabited North America for several thousands of years. Europeans began visiting what we now know as Canada around 1000CE, but it was not until the sixteenth century that they came to stay. Despite great cultural differences between Europeans and Native people, early relations were fairly cooperative. This early cooperation however, was soon compromised by the European drive to proselytize and civilize what they perceived to be a savage people. By the mid-eighteenth century, colonialist pressures to assimilate Native people into "civilized" society greatly intensified. From governmental policy, such as the Indian Act of 1876¹ to residential schooling, the goals of both the Church and the State were to regulate every aspect of Aboriginal life, and ultimately to remould the identities of Aboriginal people according to a European model. While decades of efforts to denigrate Native cultures and identities have caused extreme psychological trauma,

¹ "A federal statute that governs the affairs of those Canadians legally recognized as 'Indians', the act had its origins in legislation, passed in 1850 in Upper and Lower Canada, that vested Native lands in the Crown. Paternalistic in tone, these acts assumed that Indians required protection from land speculators and careful tutelage to become self-reliant, Europeanized Christians" (Titley, 2004, p. 307-8)

such efforts have ultimately failed (Dickason, 2002; Miller, 2004). Olive Dickason has written “if any one theme can be traced throughout the history of Canada’s Amerindians² it is the persistence of their identity. The confident expectation of Europeans that Indians were a vanishing people, the remnants of whom would finally be absorbed by the dominant society, has not happened” (2002, p. 419). In fact, David Newhouse has explained that Aboriginal people *today* can be characterized as being “confident, aggressive, assertive, insistent, desirous of creating a new world out of Aboriginal and Western ideas” (2002, p. 400). It is significant to understand what has led to this rising self-assurance among Native people and artists in Canada.

The period following the Second World War through until the 1960s was a time of great transition for both Native and non-Native people in Canada. Native veterans who had enlisted in substantial numbers returned from the war only to find the inequities that they had left behind waiting for their return. The fact that the war had been fought against “institutionalized racism and barbarity” however, made it “impossible not to notice that the bases of Canadian Indian policy lay in assumptions about the moral and economic inferiority of particular racial groupings” (Miller, 2002, p. 324). Growing awareness of the mistreatment of Aboriginal people in Canada put pressure on the government to form the Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on the Indian Act³, which ultimately led to its revisions in 1951. Noteworthy among these revisions were repealing anti-potlatch⁴ and anti-dance measures⁵, as well as repealing restrictions

² Amerindian is a term used by Dr. Olive Dickason to refer to the original inhabitants of Canada and their descendants.

³ The Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on the Indian Act was a parliamentary inquiry that held hearings on the Indian Act between 1946-1948 (Dickason, 2002).

⁴ The potlatch is an elaborate give-away feast held among Northwest Coast peoples. Potlatches were used for various purposes including “to provide mechanisms for ambitious persons to rise in the social scale, and another was to distribute wealth” (Dickason, 2002, p. 67).

on the rights of Aboriginal people to organize politically. In both cases however, Native people had long been resisting and defying these laws⁶. While the 1951 revisions were not revolutionary, they did signify that change was on the horizon.

Increased lobbying around universal human rights in the 1950s and 1960s aided in the destabilizing of racist Indian policy in Canada. Nazism in the Second World War had revealed “the implications of state policy based on racist assumptions about one people’s inferiority,” which brought questions about human rights to the fore of the collective conscience (Miller, 2004, p. 254). Awareness of human rights was further advanced by an increased focus on cultural relativism⁷ in the social sciences. Anthropology, for example “was abandoning the concept of race entirely, preferring the idea of culture, and instead of a hierarchy of societies, anthropologists now perceived human communities as roughly similar in race” (Miller, 2004, p. 254). From the perspective of cultural relativism, Native societies could no longer be viewed as inferior to European ways of life. During this period, Native people in Canada were also increasingly organizing themselves politically, further undermining the country’s oppressive Indian policies.

The American Indian Movement⁸ (AIM) in the United States proved to be a catalyst for a number of events to follow in Canada during the late 1960s. In 1968-1969 the Trudeau government introduced the *White Paper*, which “proposed a repeal of the

⁵ In 1884 the potlatch was banned along with dances associated with any rituals. This was done under pressure from missionaries who felt it was necessary to eradicate what they believed were undesirable religious ceremonies (Dickason, 2002, p. 286).

⁶ According to Dickason, “political organizations, such as the Allied Tribes of British Columbia, had been functioning since early in the century” (2002, p. 312).

⁷ With cultural relativism “anthropologists try to understand the beliefs and behavior of other peoples within the contexts in which they occur” (Blundell, 2000, p. 10). Therefore, anthropologists try to “determine what such behaviors mean to the people who engage in them, what the consequences of such behaviors are in their lives, rather than what such behaviors might mean in another setting, or how such behaviors would be evaluated according to the norms of other groups” (Blundell, 2000, p. 312).

⁸ The American Indian Movement or “Red Power,” is a Native American civil rights movement that arose in Minnesota in 1968, in which Native people were challenging governments to allow them a greater say in running their own affairs (Dickason, 2002).

Indian Act, the dissolution of Indian reserves, and the turning over of responsibilities for Indian affairs to the province, among other things” (Newhouse, 2002, p. 396). Native people had not been involved in developing the *White Paper*, resulting in a “solid wall of opposition” to this proposed policy (Dickason, 2002, p. 378). According to Miller “in spite of the White Paper’s honeyed words about ending discrimination and ushering in a just society for First Nations and others, the proposed policy was the bluntest and most threatening assimilative effort the federal government [had] come up with yet” (Miller, 2004, p. 258). That is, the *White Paper* would “eliminate Indians as Indians” and Aboriginal people “would be just like another chip in the multicultural mosaic that the Trudeau government was soon to proclaim as government policy” (Miller, 2004, p. 259). Native political organizations such as the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) and the Indian Association of Alberta vehemently opposed the *White Paper*, and in 1971 it was officially retracted. As a result, Native people began to recognize that they had power, and that they could use their influence to create change (Newhouse, 2002). Furthermore, reactions to the *White Paper* led to “an enormous increase in research into Indian affairs, not only by academics, government officials, and concerned individuals but also Amerindians themselves” (Dickason, 2002, p. 379). The time period from 1969 to 1972 was considered a “critical and profound period in Aboriginal history” (Newhouse, 2002, p. 397). It was a period characterized not only by a renewed confidence among Native people, but also a sudden willingness among the dominant society to listen to Aboriginal grievances. These attitudinal shifts set the stage for even more changes for Aboriginal people, both politically and culturally.

In 1976 the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed⁹. Then in the early 1980s Native people insisted on being included in Canadian constitutional debates. Native participation resulted in the repatriation of the constitution so as to “recognize Aboriginal peoples as including Indian, Inuit (formerly Eskimo), and Métis” (Newhouse, 2002, p. 399). Furthermore, it also “affirmed existing Aboriginal rights and called for a series of constitutional conferences between Canada, the provinces, and Aboriginal people to try and determine what these rights were and what self-government meant” (Newhouse, 2002, p. 399). Throughout the rest of the 1980s Aboriginal people continued to participate in discussions with the government, addressing such issues as the discrimination against Aboriginal women in the Indian Act and the implementation of self-government (Miller, 2004; Dickason, 2002).

In 1990, Mohawks from Kanesatake in southwestern Québec set up blockades, not only to protest the expansion of a golf course onto their ancestral burial grounds, but also to call attention to a land claim that dated back to the middle of the eighteenth century¹⁰. This very public and violent conflict involving provincial and federal soldiers, commonly referred to today as the Oka crisis, was a sad moment in Canadian history, but one that awakened people to the deeper roots of Aboriginal issues in this country. One of the positive results of this 78-day standoff was the creation of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), in 1991. The report of the commission was presented in

⁹ This agreement was the “first modern day treaty with the Crees of Quebec that created a form of self-government and gave them varying degrees of control over resources” (Newhouse, 2002, p. 399).

¹⁰ According to Miller, “[i]n the late 18th century Indians settled at a Sulpician mission there [today, Kanesatake in southwestern Québec] began to demand recognition of their land rights. Repeated requests between 1781 and 1961 were ignored or evaded by government, and a decision by the highest court in the British Empire in 1911 also failed to secure vindication for the Mohawk” (2004b, p. 260). In 1961 construction began on a nine-hole golf course on the land which provoked a protest, and then “when the town of Oka proposed expanding the course to 18 holes, the Mohawk, who now referred to their lands as Kanesatake, promised resistance” (Miller, 2004b, p. 460).

five volumes in 1996. Chaired by Georges Erasmus, former Assembly of First Nations chief and Québec judge René Dussault, the commission was composed of both Native (Inuit, Métis, and Indian) and non-Native individuals (Miller, 2002). Their mandate was “to investigate and report on the situation of Aboriginal peoples across the country, which the Prime Minister characterized as being second only in national importance to the current constitutional crisis” (Dickason, 2002, p. 413). When the report was finally completed it “was stunning in its magnitude and scope of its proposals for Canada and Canadians, involving as it did a fundamental reorganization of the country’s social and political institutions in relation to Aboriginal peoples” (Dickason, 2002, p. 419). The commission emphasized that “the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people [was] a central facet of Canada’s heritage” (Dickason, 2002, p. 419), and they identified several key issues: “the need for a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, self-determination through self-government, economic self-sufficiency, and healing for Aboriginal peoples and communities” (Dickason, 2002, p. 419). The report made four-hundred and forty recommendations to achieve these goals. According to Peter Russell, a professor of political science at the University of Toronto, the historical significance of the report was that it was “[t]he first time in modern history that the non-Aboriginal people have sat down with Aboriginal people and together ... reviewed where they’ve been together and tried to chart a course on where to go” (in Dickason, 2002, p. 413).

While the RCAP report has been hailed by some Aboriginal leaders as an “inspiring road map to the future” it was not perfect. For example, the report focused primarily on on-reserve Native people and failed to recognize issues that affect the

growing number of Aboriginal people living in urban centres. Furthermore, today, almost ten years following the report's release, there has been little action on the part of the Canadian government to fulfill its recommendations. Still, Aboriginal people continue to grow stronger, not only in numbers, but also in their political influence in this country. As Newhouse has observed, "[t]here is a consistent theme in Aboriginal rhetoric: a strong and overwhelming desire to survive as distinct Aboriginal peoples." He goes on to say, "...it is not my intent to suggest that things are good. They are not, but we have come a long way in twenty-five years, and we are laying a solid foundation upon which those who come after us can build" (Newhouse, 2002, p. 400). Newhouse sums up succinctly the very important points that this brief political history of Aboriginal people has aimed to make. First, the situation of Aboriginal people in Canada is far from perfect. They are still greatly affected by the prevalence of such things as poverty, diabetes, suicide, and over-representation in Canadian prisons. Nonetheless, Aboriginal people have survived in this country despite efforts to eliminate them. Second, persistent affirmation of their identities as Aboriginal peoples, in political, and as we will see in artistic realms, have given non-Native people an opportunity to realize that Native people are not going to vanish or assimilate into the mainstream. Today, Aboriginal people are expressing their identities with more passion and determination than ever before. The recent accomplishments and successes of Natives signify positive change for Canada, and the innovation and success of Aboriginal haute cuisine is part of this positive process. I will return to the relationship between Native people and food, and the expression of evolving cultural identities among Aboriginal people through the culinary arts later in this paper, but first I will provide a background into the emerging discipline of Food Studies.

Food Studies

According to Food Studies scholar Warren Belasco,

Food is important. There is in fact nothing more basic. Food is the first of the essentials of life, our biggest industry, our greatest export, and our most frequently indulged pleasure. Food means creativity and diversity. As a species, humans are omnivorous; they have tried to eat virtually everything on the globe, and their ability to turn a remarkable array of raw substances into cooked “dishes,” “meals,” and “feasts” is evidence of astounding versatility, adaptability, and aesthetic ingenuity. Food is also the object of considerable concern and dread. What we eat and how we eat it may be the single most important cause of disease and death. (2002, p. 2)

Food is *very* important, and recently scholars interested in food have been working at developing a distinct academic discipline – Food Studies – which views food as the primary reference of inquiry. *The Encyclopedia of Food and Culture* defines Food Studies as “an umbrella term that includes foodways¹¹, gastronomy, and culinary history as well as historical, cultural, political, economic, and geographic examinations of food production and consumption” (Bentley, Nestle, and Berg, 2003, p. 16). According to Bentley et al., “by its very nature, food studies is interdisciplinary and must rely on methods, approaches and themes derived from other disciplines” (2003, p. 17). As an interdisciplinary field, Food Studies may be unique in the breadth of the disciplines from which it draws. Economists, historians, psychologists, nutritionists, agronomists, geologists, geographers, archaeologists, environmental scientists, legal scholars, political scientists, chefs, nutritionists, and food scientists – all bring “distinct methods of research and analysis to bear on food themes” (Bentley et al., 2003, p. 17). Historians have looked at how specific ingredients were grown, produced, prepared, and consumed by looking at recipes and cooking techniques. Sociologists study issues of hunger, malnutrition, and inequities of the global food supply, or societal determinants of diet and the effects of

¹¹ “Foodways” is a term that will be used throughout this paper, it was developed by folklorist Don Yodder in the 1960s and refers to “the entire range of food habits, behaviors, customs, and cultural practices associated with food consumption” (Bentley et al., 2003, p.16).

these on obesity and heart disease. Psychologists have looked at food choice determinants, eating disorders, food phobias, and connections between eating and taste, pleasure and disgust. Literary and linguistic scholars have examined how food themes and imagery enrich travel writing and memoirs, or how food is used to express an idea or point of view. Chefs, food scientists and nutritionists have contributed to Food Studies by considering the more fundamental properties of food and taste. For example, they have discussed how meals can be created to provide proper nutrition, the science behind food's behaviour as it cooks, and the balancing of flavours to create the perfect dish (Bentley et al., 2003).

Food Studies is evolving today as a result of two separate phenomena – epistemological trends within academia and trends within popular culture (Atkins and Bowler, 2001). Recent epistemological trends include the development of Cultural Studies within the social sciences over the last fifteen years. According to Valda Blundell, “cultural studies is primarily interested in the aesthetic forms that people produce in their everyday lives, and so it has studied those forms sometimes called the popular arts (or popular culture) as well as mass media forms such as television” (2000, p. 49). Thus, Food Studies has emerged out of the “‘cultural turn’ in social science ... which unleashed a new series of writing on food, some using the qualitative methodologies of ethnography, and many having a ‘post-modern’ flavour” (Atkins and Bowler, 2001, p. 3). Food Studies has also developed in tandem with “the surge of interest in food among the general public in the last 20 years” (Atkins and Bowler, 2001, p. 3). We need only look at the popularity of cooking shows on television and the bounty

of cookbooks in bookstores to see how “hot” food and cooking are right now (Atkins and Bowler, 2001).

Like any new field of study within academia, and especially one defined so broadly, Food Studies is being met with some resistance by sceptics who feel that food is not a legitimate area of academic inquiry. For example, in 1999 Jennifer Ruark published an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Learning*, entitled “A Place at the Table,” in which she described Food Studies as “a hot new field” of scholarship (1999, p. 1). This article generated a heated discussion on the Internet as to whether or not Food Studies was a legitimate academic pursuit or merely “scholarship-lite” (Sutton, 2001, p. 3). Ruark observed that food is a topic scorned by some scholars because there has not yet been any specialist terminology or tools of analysis developed within Food Studies. Proponents of Food Studies however argued that this was mostly due to the fact that until now, food “has been anything but central in the academy” (Ruark, 1999, p. 1).

One of the strongest proponents of Food Studies is Warren Belasco, a professor of American Studies at the University of Maryland, author of *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (1989), and co-editor of *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies* (2002). Belasco writes that history has “something to tell us about why people are surprised that food can be studied seriously, and more important, about why people are so oblivious to food, especially where it comes from and the wider social, political, and psychological implications of our food behaviors” (2002, p. 6). Belasco explains that “westerners – and academic westerners in particular – are heirs to a classical dualism that prizes mind over body” (2002, p. 6). Philosophers Deane Curtin and Lisa Heldke would seem to support this theory, stating that “our tradition has tended

to privilege questions about the rational, the unchanging, and the eternal, and the abstract and the mental; and to denigrate questions of the embodied, concrete, practical experience” (Curtin and Heldke, 1992, p. xiv). Belasco further explains that “so deeply engrained is this preference for the disembodied intellect that much of the *au courant* “cultural studies” work on “the body” is exceptionally rarified, as if to suggest that material matters can only be taken seriously when etherized in theory” (2002, p. 7). Anthropologist and author of the book, *Remembrance of Repast: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (2001), David Sutton writes that “food seems, at least in our culture to involve the baser senses, instincts and bodily functions, not suited for scholarly or mental pursuits” (2001, p. 4). He continues,

There is a hierarchy of the senses in the dominant cultures of the West which ascribe vision to the more evolved cultures and taste and smell to ‘the primitive.’ Food is generally not seen as conducive to thought. It always has the potential in our puritan-derived culture, to be labelled as giving into our ‘primitive’ nature, the line between gourmet and glutton being seen as quite thin, and the injunction “don’t eat like a pig” can be found on the lips of many a parent socializing their children into proper manners. (2001, p. 4)

Clearly, food has been ignored in academia because the more embodied experiences of tasting and eating have long been linked to the practical as opposed to the theoretical, and also to what have been considered the lesser of the senses. A further reason that has been cited for the delay of food’s arrival onto the academic scene is its long association with women and women’s work (Bentley et al., 2003; Belasco, 2002; Wolf, 2001; Forson, 2000; Ruark, 1999). The relationship between women and food and furthermore how this particular relationship has made food a neglected topic in academia is complex and multifaceted. While this subject merits further investigation, it is beyond the parameters of this paper.

While there is not yet a clear set of specialist Food Studies terminology or tools of analysis, food scholarship is definitely on the rise. Small conferences have started taking place on the topic of food, and academic journals such as *Southern Folklore*, *Social Research*, and *Proteus: A Journal of Ideas* have published special issues on the subject. Furthermore, in recent years a number of refereed, interdisciplinary journals have emerged, dedicated to publishing scholarly articles using food as a primary lens of analysis. These include: *Digest: An interdisciplinary Study of Food and Foodways*, *Food and Foodways*, *Food, Culture, and Society*, and *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*. Additionally, Food Studies programs have been established at two North American universities: Boston University established a Master's program in gastronomy in the early 1990s, focussing on "cultural and culinary aspects of food consumption", and in 1996, New York University expanded its Department of Nutrition and Food Studies to admit students in undergraduate, Master's and doctoral programs in Food Studies (Bentley et al., 2003, p. 16). As Food Studies "elbows for a place at the academic table," it seems to be developing much like other interdisciplinary fields – Women's Studies, Cultural Studies, Native Studies, Canadian Studies, to name a few – with great contestation, yet as will be illustrated in this paper, with many benefits.

Finally, I wish to mention two important Food Studies analyses, Jeffrey Pilcher's *Que vivan los tamales: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (1999), and Doris Witt's *Black Hunger: Food and the Politics of U.S. Identity* (1999). These studies reflect the diverse and engaging research being done by Food Studies scholars. Pilcher examines "the importance of mestizo cuisine - and of the women who created it - in forging Mexican identity" (Pilcher, 1999, p. 2). He shows how, despite efforts to

“Europeanize” Mexico by intellectuals and politicians, native foods and flavours have endured, and in fact, have become central to what it means to be “authentically” Mexican. For me, Pilcher’s study raises questions relating to Native Canadian experiences of colonization. For example, how were Aboriginal foodways affected by colonization, and, what has been the interplay between Aboriginal foods and European foods?

Witt examines African-American culinary history as reflected in film, vaudeville, works of fiction, poetry, essays, and cookbooks, demonstrating how “soul food,” such as chitterlings and collard greens, has been used to both perpetuate and challenge racial stereotypes. She describes how “soul food” has been promoted as both a sacramental symbol of protest against slavery and criticized by others as a “manifestation of black middle-class ‘slumming’” (Witt, 1999, p. 6). She also demonstrates how, through food, it is possible to subvert negative stereotypes of African-Americans. She relates how cookbook author Vertamae Smart Grosvenor transformed negative representations of black women such as the “plantation mammy” by “reimagining” soul food (the food that they cook) as “vibration cooking” (Witt, 1999, p. 11-12). Grosvenor explains that “vibration cooking” is a natural attitude, a feeling that some people possess and others do not, its about being creative and imaginative with food, cooking according to your senses instead of by the rules (in Witt, 1999, p. 161). Although Witt is primarily concerned with the use of food *within* specific artistic mediums, her work overlaps with my interest in drawing comparisons between Aboriginal culinary arts and other aesthetic outlets.

Food Studies scholar Deborah Lupton has written that “cooking is a moral process, transferring raw material from ‘nature’ to the state of ‘culture,’ thereby taming

and domesticating it ... Food is therefore 'civilised' by cooking, not simply at the level of practice, but at the level of the imagination" (Lupton, 1996, p. 2). Lupton illustrates how food is deeply entwined with our everyday lives, and how we infuse it with symbolism and meaning, therefore making it a topic ripe with possibilities for analysis and intellectual thought. I can say with confidence that the introduction of a Food Studies perspective to Canadian Studies will provide a unique analytical framework for examining aspects of the Canadian experience. Furthermore, the scepticism that still surrounds the emergence of Food Studies as a field of academic inquiry makes this an extremely challenging and exciting time to be conducting research in this area.

Objectives and Methods

I have two main objectives in doing this research. The first objective is to broaden understandings of what constitutes aesthetic expression, not only among Aboriginal people, but among the general population as well. A consequence of broadening understanding of aesthetic expression is the inevitable expansion of understandings of the politics of resistance. As will be illustrated in Chapter One, works of art by Native visual and literary artists, musicians, and filmmakers function as both a means of celebrating contemporary Indigenous cultural identities and as sites of resistance to the legacy of colonialism in Canada. I propose to widen definitions of aesthetic expression beyond the familiar forms (art, film, literature, and music) to include the culinary arts in order to expand the number of possible outlets through which identities – political, cultural, and otherwise, can be expressed by a greater range of people. Conversely, this will allow for a greater diversity of experiences to be shared by those who want to learn about other people and cultures, viewers, listeners and now

tasters. This is of central importance to me personally, as a chef who expresses my “self” creatively through cooking, and academically, as a scholar seeking to demonstrate the relevance of food preparation and consumption to an understanding of how societies function. A major difficulty for academics lies in the fact that taste and smell are probably the most challenging senses to represent in academic writing, making cooking a difficult aesthetic to analyse and to think about critically. Anthropologist Aldona Jonaitis writes,

... one can look at something unusual and attain a certain level of visual understanding. But one cannot, obviously, *see* taste or smell – those must [be] immediately experienced. Unlike light waves which travel from the object observed to the eyes, taste and smell are contained in the actual molecules that enter the nose and mouth. The immediacy, the subjectivity of the experience distinguishes these senses from the more objectified sight. (Jonaitis, 2003 p. 22)

The topic of this particular thesis however, First Nations culinary arts, creates an ideal space in which to represent and discuss the aesthetic power of taste in the assertion and affirmation of identities.

Aboriginal concepts of “value” in artistic expression expand beyond Western notions of what constitutes “fine” art so as to include a greater range of aesthetic experiences. In the West ‘art’ is generally understood as “something that is separated in art galleries or in other designated settings such as theaters, museums, or festivals” (Blundell, 2000, p. 17). “Fine” art is generally understood to include: paintings, sculpture, music, dance, architecture, and then there are the literary arts. However, as Berlo and Phillips have written,

...in Native traditions the purely material and visual features of an object are not necessarily the most important in establishing its relative value, as they have come to be in the West. Other qualities or associations, not knowable from a strictly visual inspection, may be more important. These may include soundness of construction to ensure functional utility, or ritual correctness in the gathering of raw materials, or powers that inhere because of the object’s original conception in a dream experience, or the number of times that it was used in a ceremony. (Berlo and Phillips, 1998, p. 9).

Furthermore, in Western society utilitarian objects are often relegated to the category of 'craft,' whereas in Native societies this has not been the case. According to Brown and Cousins,

[i]n Western society, art is generally that which is concerned with aesthetics, while craft is typically thought of as that which is merely functional. To dismiss utilitarian items as being only "crafts" in this way has contributed to the tragic separation of art from life. Within created traditional Native American forms, however, there can be no such dichotomy, because art is not only the particular created form but also the inner principle from which the outer form comes into being. An art form is often seen as beautiful not just in terms of aesthetics but also because of its usefulness and the degree to which it serves its purpose. Since the pre-reservation artist's survival depended on the making of useful things, almost every individual had means by which to manifest artistic ability, and life was permeated and enriched by beautiful forms. (2001, p. 62)

For many Aboriginal people 'art' was considered to be "a holistic part of everyday life;" that is, "it was so much a part of day-to-day living that it could not be separated as a distinct activity" (Kainai Board of Education (KBE), Métis Nation of Alberta, Northland School Division, Tribal Chiefs Institution of Treaty Six, 2004, p. 212). Art was valued as much for elements that could not be seen, as for those that could. Artistic production among Native people then, includes everything from narrative oratory, visually elaborated objects, dance, song, and theatrical production. Furthermore, Aboriginal aesthetics not only reflect a deep connection between art and life, but a connection between art and the expression of cultural identity.

These more inclusive concepts of what constitutes art often held by Native people overlap nicely with the new work in Food Studies that is attempting to transform Western ideas that promote a hierarchical conceptualization of the senses. Food Studies proponents are attempting to broaden scholarship to make taste, smell, and texture evenly balanced with the visual and the aural. Haute cuisine has not usually been considered to be one of the "fine" arts, and so those of us who express ourselves creatively through

cooking have been regarded as mere crafts people, rather than artists. Food Studies scholars agree that all of the senses (taste, smell, touch, vision, and hearing) are equally important to how we experience and understand the world, and alternatively how we express these experiences.

Therefore, my first objective is to expand notions of what constitutes art, which will be attained in this thesis by combining two different, yet congruent understandings of aesthetic expressions (shared by Native peoples and Food Studies scholars). At the same time, I seek to expand conceptions of political identity formation to include alternative aesthetic experiences, such as cooking, eating, tasting and smelling. In addition to this first objective, I also hope to contribute to the field of Canadian Studies by suggesting a new means of social analysis. Therefore, my second objective is to create a study that could function as a template to be used by other Canadian Studies scholars to analyse aspects of Canadian society, including the politics of identity formation, through examining food and cooking.

Due to the interdisciplinary focus of this study my method is multifaceted. I begin by drawing on concepts and themes from post-colonial theory (self-representation, authenticity, hybridity, appropriation, and cultural continuity and survival) to examine a broad range of contemporary Native artistic expressions (film, visual art, literature and music). Post-colonial theory is an appropriate framework for this particular study because it not only helps to illuminate the impact of colonialism on cultures, but is frequently used to examine the work created by these cultures in response to the legacy of the colonial experience (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2000). I also survey ethnographic material dealing with food traditions of Native people from across Canada. This

ethnographic survey is necessary to demonstrate the intimate relationships that existed historically between Native people and the food they ate. I also draw on interviews conducted with individuals from the Aboriginal community who are or have been involved with First Nations cuisine. These include team members and organizers of the Canadian Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team who participated in the 1992 World Culinary Olympics in Frankfurt, Germany, as well as a number of Aboriginal chefs and owners of Aboriginal restaurants and catering businesses in Canada. My interview questions were open-ended and informed by my studies of post-colonialism, Aboriginal arts and Indigenous food traditions (see appendices for interview questions). All of my interviews were conducted by phone, except in the case of Phoebe Sutherland who was available to meet with me in person. Among the questions posed to participants were: Do chefs feel they are expressing themselves culturally through cooking? Do they feel more connected to their cultures when they cook "Aboriginal"? How are traditional foods and cooking techniques used in contemporary Aboriginal haute cuisine? Or how is their cooking received by, not only the general public, but by other members of the Aboriginal community? Where interviews have not been possible, I have reviewed material written about or by Native chefs gathered from both the Internet and published cookbooks. Finally, as a chef myself, I have incorporated my technical understanding of food's more practical properties and also my more aesthetic and sensual appreciation for food and its preparation throughout the entirety of this analysis. This interdisciplinary method has aided my understanding of how First Nations culinary artists articulate their cultural identities and express cultural realities to a wider audience through the medium of cooking.

FIRST COURSE: CONTEMPORARY FIRST NATIONS ART AND IDENTITY

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework that will illustrate the relationship that exists between Aboriginal artistic production and the affirmation of contemporary Aboriginal identities. This framework will provide a critical space in which to situate my exploration of the culinary arts and how they too have an integral place among other forms of artistic expression. Because the arts are used in the assertion of contemporary Indigenous identities, they also become implicated in the process of resisting, dismantling, and ultimately responding to aspects of the colonial experience in Canada. My framework, therefore, will be built upon themes and concepts drawn from post-colonial theory, including self-representation, authenticity, hybridity, appropriation, and cultural continuity and survival. These themes and concepts will be illustrated through examples of work by contemporary First Nations artists practicing in a broad range of media (film, music, the visual arts, literature). In order to develop my argument, it is necessary to first contextualize contemporary Aboriginal art within the history of Native artistic production in Canada, which serves to illustrate how colonialism impacted upon what has long been a fundamental part of the expression of Aboriginal identities. Contemporary Aboriginal artistic expressions reveal the resiliency of First Nations people through their exploration of, and resistance to the legacy of colonialism.

First Nations Art in Canada

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, aesthetic production of Native people involved the creative manipulation of objects found in their natural environment, such as bone, hide, wood, bark, stone, and mineral pigments (see figures 1 and 2). Materials exchanged over continental trade routes, such as fresh water pearls, shells, copper, obsidian, pipestone,

Figure 1: Coiled cedar-root basket, with design made using beargrass and wild cherry bark. This basket is Umatilla or Salish from the Plateau. It was made between 1890-1910. It was most likely used for berry harvesting in the fall. Height: 14 inches. Width: 12 inches. (Harless, 1998, p. 35).

Figure 2: A Blackfoot robe painted on Elkskin. Made in 1844. (Harrison, J.D. et al., 1987).

and mica, were also employed (KBE et al., 2004; Ryan, 2004). When Europeans arrived in North America in the sixteenth century, they brought with them a wealth of new objects and materials that they traded with Aboriginal people. Items such as velvet, silk ribbons, pearl buttons, commercial pigments, and glass beads, expanded the repertoire of raw materials that Aboriginal people could use in their aesthetic productions (see figures 3 and 4). This early period of contact between Natives and Europeans has been characterized as a time of great artistic experimentation, in which many hybrid forms of art were created. The tradition of incorporating new materials and ideas into existing aesthetic practices suggests that Aboriginal cultures were, as they are today, innovative, and ever-evolving (Ryan, 2004).

As previously discussed, the nineteenth century was marked by significant social and cultural disruption for First Nations people in Canada. Both Church and State aimed to erase Aboriginal culture, making it their primary mission to “civilize the uncivilized.” During this time, legislated prohibition of Native religious ceremonies, severe cultural marginalization, and political pressure, all had a detrimental impact on Aboriginal artistic production (Ryan, 2004). On the Northwest coast, for example, anti-dance and anti-potlatch laws made it illegal to participate in what historically had been systems that “guaranteed the survival of indigenous political authority, oral history, and traditional art” (Berlo and Phillips, 1998, p. 201). Berlo and Phillips have written that,

...visual art and performance are integral to the narration of family histories. Inherited images, known as crests, symbolize these histories. When they are properly presented at ritual celebrations known as potlatches, the crests and their stories explain, validate, and reify the traditional social order, and affirm the acquisition of power by members of high-ranking families and the ownership of land. (1998, p. 175)

By making ceremonies such as the potlatch illegal, the newcomers attempted to shatter a fine balance that existed in the political and cultural systems of Native people. These

Figure 3: Button Blanket from Village Island. Depicts use of cloth, wool, felt, buttons and beads. 182 cm X 149 cm. (Jonaitis, 1991, p. 116).

Figure 4: Skirt that depicts the use of wool fabric, silver brooches, and silk ribbons. Made between 1820-1840. Collected at Peoria, Indiana. Length: 55.5 inches. Width: 53.8 inches. (Penney, 1992, p. 89).

oppressive laws made it difficult for Native communities to continue artistic production. Not only did this affect the visual arts, but also the performing arts, such as narrative oratory, dance, and song. Additionally, measures were often taken to prevent Native people from speaking their own languages. These measures further impeded the continuation of cultural traditions, in particular, narrative oratory. Moreover, the emergence of anthropology as an academic discipline led to the vast appropriation of Aboriginally-produced objects. These objects were placed in natural history museums and treated as cultural “specimens” in displays reconstructing the historical evolution of human kind (Berlo and Phillips, 1998).

Objects and information about Aboriginal people were also collected as part of the “salvage mode” of anthropology. The aim of salvage anthropologists was to collect as much information (including material culture) as possible from Aboriginal peoples in the form of ethnographical accounts before their inevitable “disappearance” in the face of modernism (Blundell, 2000). The removal of hand-made objects from Aboriginal communities prevented young artists from using them as examples and prototypes in the continuation of aesthetic traditions. Despite oppressive attempts to destroy culture, Native people often defied laws and continued to secretly perform the ceremonies that were so embedded in their cultures (Berlo and Phillips, 1998). For example, some Native people held potlatches during Christmas time by arguing that they were practicing the Christian tradition of distributing presents (Jonaitis, 2003). These early acts of resistance ensured that some elements of ceremony and artistic production survived in spite of European efforts to obliterate them.

Nevertheless, increased consumerism and tourism in Canada in the late nineteenth century expanded the market for 'Aboriginal art,' as visitors wanted to take home "exotic" objects, made by "exotic" people. Because European tourists desired objects that looked "Native," but which still satisfied their Western tastes, Aboriginal artists created hybrid forms of art that would appeal to the non-Native consumer. For example, Native beadworkers adapted traditional decorative techniques to create pieces, such as beaded "valises, purses, bible covers and lace-up shoes" (Berlo and Phillips, 1998, p. 30) (see figure 5). On the Northwest Coast carvers created miniature argillite sculptures decorated with traditional family crests (Berlo and Phillips, 1998) (see figure 6). Such tourist objects have been criticized by some for being "inauthentic" pieces of Aboriginal art. However, as Berlo and Phillips have effectively argued (1998), tourist art actually promoted the survival of some aspects of traditional artistic production in the face of prohibition laws, population decline, and the appropriation of material culture by anthropologists.

Up until the mid twentieth century the work of many First Nations artists was not viewed as "fine" art, but rather was classified by mainstream collectors, art historians and anthropologists as craft, tourist art, or primitive artifacts. The display of Aboriginal art was often relegated to museums, and considered inappropriate for "fine" art galleries. In the 1960s, the increased awareness of human rights, recognition of cultural relativism among academics, combined with increased political agency among Aboriginal people, brought Native issues into public consciousness as never before. At the same time, the works of Aboriginal artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers were gaining increased recognition and credibility. For example, in response to the 1969 *White Paper*, Harold

Figure 5: Valise made from hide and beads. Made in 1907, this valise depicts traditional Plains warrior imagery combined with alphabetic inscription “to produce a very modern looking work at the beginning of the twentieth century” (Berlo and Phillips, 1998, p. 31).

Figure 6: These Haida argillite totem poles are composed of traditional family crests. They range in height from 21-43 cm and in width from 4-6 cm. (Macnair and Hoover, 1984, p. 184).

Cardinal published *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (1969). This groundbreaking work introduced Native issues into the mainstream media and became widely read by academics, politicians, church leaders, and the general public alike. The 1960s saw the advent of the National Film Board of Canada's (NFB) first-ever all indigenous film crew, and the first Aboriginally-directed documentary, *The Ballad of Crowfoot* (1968), by Willie Dunn (deRosa, 2002). During the same period, Native musicians such as Buffy Sainte-Marie (Cree) began to appear on folk-music circuits across Canada and the United States (Keillor, 1995). Then, in 1973 Maria Campbell's autobiographical novel *Halfbreed*, heralded an era of critically acclaimed and highly regarded Canadian Aboriginal authors (Episkew, 2001).

After reviewing the history of First Nations art in Canada, it is clear that what was once a rich, vital and innovative tradition of aesthetic production, was forever altered by the colonizing efforts of Europeans. However, despite cultural marginalization and oppression, today we see aesthetic productions by Aboriginal artists working in every conceivable form of media.

Contemporary Aesthetic Expression:

Armand Garnet Ruffo (Anishnaabe) has written that,

Beginning in the early seventies, a creative 'renaissance' or 'rebirth' (as it has been called at various times) had taken place. After some fifty years of being silenced by both Church and State, and marginalized by the larger Canadian society and cultural establishment, Aboriginal people were beginning to speak out. To this end, both mainstream and marginal publishers were finally publishing Aboriginal writers; recognition was being given; awards were being won. (2001, p. 5).

While Ruffo is speaking specifically to the 'renaissance' or 'rebirth' that has taken place within Aboriginal literary arts, his words speak to a range of other cultural productions as well. In the 1970s, Aboriginal filmmakers, musicians, and visual and literary artists began

to achieve greater success in the Canadian mainstream. Today, Native people continue to express themselves with exceptional vitality and enjoy national acclaim. This success can be seen, for example, in landmark art exhibitions, such as, "Land, Spirit, Power" displayed at the National Gallery of Canada in 1992, and "Indigena," at the Canadian Museum of Civilization that same year. In 1994, a Best Aboriginal Music category was introduced at the Juno Awards for Canadian Music. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) was launched in 1999. Zacharias Kunuk's award-winning film, *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* was released in 2001. Finally, *The Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro* opened in Ottawa's trendy By-Ward Market in 2003. I will now examine, through five theoretical principles drawn from the field of post-colonial studies, how these contemporary forms of aesthetic expression are being used to celebrate contemporary Indigenous cultural identities, and respond to the legacy of colonialism in Canada.

Self-representation

In Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), the author demonstrates how European colonialists employed the authority of academics, institutions, and governments, as well as that of authors, painters, and later filmmakers, to create ideological constructs of the non-European as the "Other." Jane Jacobs explains that "imperialism operated within an ideal of the Manichean binary, which constructed a demonized Other against which a flattering, and legitimating, image of the metropolitan Self [was] defined" (1996, p. 2). These social constructs of 'Self' and 'Other' provided "the fundamental building blocks for the hierarchies of power which produced empires and the uneven relations among their citizenry. Under colonialism, negative constructions of the Other established certain structures of domination through which the

coloniser triumphed” (1996, p. 2). That is, in order to assert domination, colonialists worked within a system of binary opposites (if the colonizers are civilized, then the colonized are savage) to construct positive images of themselves, and consequently negative and unrealistic portrayals of “Others.” According to Robert Berkhofer, author of *The White Man’s Indian*, “[t]hat Indians lacked certain or all aspects of White civilization could be viewed as bad or good depending upon the observer’s feelings about his own society and the use to which he wanted to put the image” (1978, p. 27-28). Thus, European and American culture created two fundamental, yet opposing images of Native people. The first being the “Noble Savage,” in which the Indian appears physically strong, kind, courteous, simple, at one with nature, and innocent. The contradiction to this “good” image of Native people was the “bad” Indian, or rather the “Savage Savage.” This “bad” Indian was depicted as being sexually promiscuous, filthy, a heathen, and generally deficient in all ways (Berhofer, 1978, p. 28).

In Canada, this colonial legacy has contributed to the creation and proliferation of stereotypical representations of Native people in a range of media. Dr. Allan Ryan, author of *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (1999) has written,

[i]t is after all, the sign ‘Indian’ that resonates down through the years in travellers’ journals, dime-store novels, and Hollywood movies; in countless images of feathered braves and savage warriors, solemn chiefs and mystical shamans, lusty maidens and sombre matrons, alternately imagined as primitive, noble, fearsome, honoured, captured, conquered, vanquished and finally, *vanished*. (1999, p.13)

These stereotypical representations have not only permeated popular culture, but have also informed, in a damaging way, how Aboriginal people perceive themselves. Marilyn Dumont (Métis) writes, “... the misrepresentation of me makes me doubt my experience, devalue my reality and tempts me to collude in an image which in the end disempowers me” (Dumont, 1993, p. 48). However, Native artists are not passively accepting this

disempowerment induced by historical and enduring misrepresentations of themselves. In fact today, Native artists are creating their own images, telling their own stories, and thus responding with great urgency to the perversions wrought by colonialism.

Mohawk artist Bill Powless' *Indians' Summer* (1984) (figure 7), is a prime example of the humour with which contemporary First Nations artists are responding to identities prescribed and perpetuated by Euro-Canadians. In this painting Powless reverses the romanticized image of the "noble savage," the naïve Native unencumbered by civilization, that is so often depicted in Hollywood movies. According to Ryan, Powless' character is "[d]ivested of all manner of exotic trappings, [a] self-satisfied image of contemporary reality [which] gently confounds the viewer and all but demolishes romantic fantasy" (1999, p. 55). Here, not only does Powless invert a popular and well-known stereotypical image of the noble savage, but he simultaneously engages and resists it – all the while making us chuckle with delight. Absent from Powless' image are the feathered headdress and leather loincloth from the romanticized past. They have been replaced by an umbrella beanie and red swimming trunks, reminding us that Native people do, in fact, live in the modern world. It is not just the attire of the "Hollywood" Indian brave that Powless has transformed, but also his shape. No longer is he the slim and trim warrior poised nobly upon his steed, but rather he is a well-fed Indian ready to consume a grape popsicle. Questions could be raised about whether or not the obesity of this individual might perpetuate negative stereotypes of a slovenly, welfare-dependent Indian. Conversely, Powless could be reminding the viewer, non-Native and Native alike, that obesity and diabetes are serious issues among Native people – making this piece a potential catalyst for a discussion of Aboriginal health issues. Another element of this

Figure 7: Bill Powless, *Indians' Summer* (1984)

Acrylic on canvas, 177 X 197 cm (Ryan, 1999, p. 54)

image that speaks to contemporary Aboriginal culture is the depiction of confidence. This Indian is dignified and self-assured, which sends a positive message about the pride that exists in Aboriginal cultures, countering more commonly held perceptions wherein all Native people are victims of poverty, depression, and substance abuse.

Like Powless, Cherokee author Thomas King uses parody in his novel *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993), to present images of Native people that counter stereotypical assumptions often made by white culture. *Green Grass, Running Water* is the story of four elderly Indian men who, following their escape from a mental hospital, enter the lives of an eccentric family of Blackfoot Indians on an Alberta reserve. Of specific interest here is one family member, Latisha Red Dog Morningstar. She is the owner of the local restaurant, The Dead Dog Café, to which she lures white tourists hungry for exotic Native delicacies.

Latisha would like to have been able to take all the credit for transforming the Dead Dog from a nice local establishment with a loyal but small clientele *and* a tourist trap. But, in fact, it had been her auntie's idea.

'Tell them it's dog meat,' Norma had said. 'Tourists like that kind of stuff.'

That had been the inspiration. Latisha printed up menus that featured such things as Dog du Jour, Houndburgers, Puppy Potpourri, Hot Dogs, Saint Bernard Swiss Melts, with Doggie Doos and Deep-Fried Puppy What-nots for appetizers. (King, 1993, p. 92)

By making her everyday menu items seemingly more exotic, Latisha mocks her non-Native clientele who might be seeking an "authentic" Native experience, as non-Native tourists often do. The dog-eating stereotype employed by King in this excerpt is based on the historical consumption of dog-meat by Sioux Indians during times of starvation. This history, which is often misunderstood by non-Native people, contributed to the creation of a belief that traditional Native food usually included dog meat. According to Davidson et al., the above passage,

...depicts White assumptions about Native culture, and then effectively pokes fun at (and 'cashes in' on) them. Through puns and the deliberately provocative renaming of traditional Native foods, Latisha plays with the English language as she simultaneously entices and mocks her non-Native clientele. Latisha's menu manifests a counter-discourse in action: the assumptions of the dominant discourse are already culturally inscribed, and the texts play upon these inscriptions and overturn them, thereby opening them to question. (2003, p. 52-53)

An interesting counterpoint to this analysis is the plethora of insider jokes among Natives themselves about Sioux dog-eaters. For example, Vine Deloria Jr's "The Sioux-Korean Diet Exercise Book: 101 Ways to Wok Your Dog" or "What comprises a Sioux picnic? A six-pack and a puppy" (Johansen, 2005, p. 13). Latisha's use of an 'inside' joke at the expense of non-Natives demonstrates boldness. That is, Latisha not only tricks white tourists by baiting them with their own ignorant assumptions of what Native people actually eat, but she also demonstrates the same sort of bravado that Powless depicts in his *Indians' Summer* painting. This use of play and mischief, demonstrated in both King and Powless' work, represents recurring elements in the aesthetic expressions of many First Nations people, which are telling about Aboriginal sensibilities and consequently, identity.

Contemporary Native artists effectively draw non-Native people into a dialogue, asking them to rethink stereotypical representations of Native people that have been propagated over the years. They do this through creating complex and nuanced images of Aboriginal people that are more illustrative of their current realities. As I will demonstrate, this is also happening in film, music, and indeed the culinary arts. However, first it is necessary to discuss how notions of 'authenticity' in Aboriginal art inform what is deemed acceptable or inappropriate within this already marginalized space.

Authenticity

Historically, 'authentic' Aboriginal art was considered to be those objects, carved, painted, or woven, dating back "to the early period of contact" and displaying a "minimum of European influence" (Berlo and Phillips, 1998, p. 16). Objects that came closest to this definition were seen as the most valuable and the most interesting to art and artifact collectors. Like stereotypical representations of Native people, this concept of authenticity is problematic in that it romanticizes "the past of Native peoples at the expense of their present" (Berlo and Phillips, 1998, p. 16). As Berlo and Phillips explain,

[a]lthough the image of the Native man as 'noble savage' or of a Native woman as 'Indian princess' may appear to express unqualified admiration for Native culture, such images can also crowd out, in a damaging way, the possibility of engagement with the modern lives, problems and accomplishments of contemporary Native people – in art as in everything else. Such stereotypes, furthermore, are based on early but enduring fantasies about indigenous culture and society that have little basis in fact. (1998, p. 16)

Thus, defining and categorizing any form of Aboriginal aesthetic expression as "authentic" limits the range of possible experiences that Native people can express. For the most part, non-Natives still determine what constitutes 'authentic' art. Today, these notions of 'authenticity' continue to have an impact on the marketability of Native art.

As Valda Blundell explains:

Media reviews often inscribe such art [Aboriginal] as authentic, and in most cases they praise it; or they question whether it is indeed authentic, and, if not, discredit it. Indeed, contemporary art by aboriginal Canadians is commonly advertised and marketed as authentic (or genuine) native art; the Canadian government even attaches tags to certain aboriginal-produced art forms certifying their 'authenticity.' (2000, p. 91)

The expectation to conform to these notions of authenticity has been particularly problematic for the rising numbers of Native people living in urban areas. As Dumont has expressed:

But what if you are an urban Indian, have always been, or have now spent a greater part of your life living an urban lifestyle? Do you feign the significance of the circle, the number four, the trickster in your life? Do you disregard these things? Or do

you reconstruct these elements of your culture in your life so you can be identified (read “marketed”) as a native Artist?

This is not to argue that an authentic voice does not exist, nor that the artists who write about/from the “traditional” experience write without the integrity of having that experience. Nor am I arguing that native culture is dying and that these symbols do not exist within the full integrity of the living culture. However, what I am arguing is that there is a continuum of exposure to traditional experience in Native culture, some of us have been more exposed to it than others, but this does not mean that those who have been more exposed to it are somehow more Indian, as if we are searching for the last surviving Indian. (in Monture Angus, 1999, p. 27)

Two of the most powerful forms of media which Native artists have employed as they strive to escape inhibiting definitions of authenticity and explore contemporary experiences have been film and television. *Moccasin Flats*, which aired in 2002 and is now in its third season, is a half-hour Aboriginal television drama that was conceived by Laura J. Milliken (Chippewa) and Jennifer Podemski (Israeli/Saulteaux) of Toronto’s Big Soul Productions. The program, however, was the result of collaborative efforts with over forty Native youth from North Central Regina, Saskatchewan. The storyline of *Moccasin Flats* revolves around the lives of urban Native youth trying to overcome the adversities of poverty, social injustice, racism and violence in an inner city community (Big Soul Productions (BSP), n.a., n.d.). The jarring representations of Native gang violence, drug use and prostitution counter the romantic, mystical and seemingly more “authentic” representations of Native people in the more predominantly historical mainstream productions by non-Native filmmakers, such as, *Dances with Wolves* (1990) or *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992).

Although *Moccasin Flats* is a rather dismal portrayal of Native youth living in an urban setting, it is much more realistic than some may think. In fact, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations released a report in 2003 revealing that “up to 90 percent of the youth in law enforcement custody are Native” (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian

Nations Website (FSIN), 2003, para. 4). While this is an alarming statistic that speaks to many socio-economic and cultural issues that Native people in Canada are facing today, it does raise questions about the need for more diverse media portrayals of Native life. The show's protagonist, Justin, serves as a positive role model for Aboriginal youth. He is not only academically inclined, but also a talented powwow dancer. Justin's character sends a message to Native youth about the possibility of succeeding in the face of adversity, as well as the strength that can be drawn from cultural expression and pride¹. *Moccasin Flats* speaks to the fact that Native people do not have to present themselves as "culturally correct" individuals, but rather, can be urban, trendy, and personally flawed. Gritty portrayals such as these are necessary as Native people strive to cultivate understanding of their contemporary circumstances. Narrow definitions of "authenticity" limit the capacity for Native people to incorporate and subvert elements of popular culture through self-representations that reflect their contemporary experiences. In the following section I will explore the politics surrounding the merging of Native and non-Native cultures, which I shall refer to as hybridity.

Hybridity

According to Ashcroft et al., hybridity "commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (2000, p. 118). Those who use this term have been criticized for negating the unequal power relationships that often exist in the exchange between colonizer and colonized, and for replicating assimilationist policies by camouflaging cultural difference (Ashcroft et al., 2000). Arguably, however, to not include the concept of hybridity in an analysis such as

¹ This cultural pride resonates in the show's soundtrack as well, which features music by Native hip hop groups, such as *Tru Rez Crew*, whose music is often mixed with traditional sounding chants and drumming.

this would be to ignore the fact that Native cultures *have* interacted with other cultures for centuries. This interaction has been seen, for example, in the pre-European exchange of raw materials across continental trade routes and the early exchange of material with Europeans, all of which resulted in the creation of hybrid forms of artistic expression. To not include hybridity as an analytical concept is also to suggest that First Nations people have been unreflexive about early and contemporary interactions with other cultures. Additionally, not thinking critically about hybridity is to reinforce stereotypes of Aboriginal cultures as static and unchanging. Presently, new forms of musical expression that blend elements of Native culture with elements of the mainstream (country music with Native lyrics or hip hop mixed with traditional drumming) are finding their way onto radio play lists, television dramas, film soundtracks, and CD collections across the country. These hybrid forms of music are a testament to the dynamism of contemporary Native cultures.

In his article, "First Nations Popular Music in Canada: Musical Meaning and The Politics of Identity" (1994) Christopher Scales discusses the music of Lawrence Martin and Kashtin. Martin, a Cree from Moose Factory, whose music is a blend of Native, country and folk, was the first to win an Aboriginal Juno Award in 1994. Kashtin² (1984-1996) was a musical duo consisting of Claude McKenzie and Florent Vollant, both from the Maiotenam reserve in Northern Québec. Kashtin's music is particularly memorable as their country-rock songs were performed entirely in their Native Innu language, and still managed to gain the interest of a mainstream audience. Scales says that by blending traditional with modern the music of these artists becomes a "symbolic representation of the modern Native socio-cultural circumstance" (Scales, 1999, p. 95).

² Kashtin is Innu for tornado.

Among today's Native youth, hip hop³, as a hybrid form of musical expression, is having a tremendous impact in the articulation of current identities.

According to Shane Breaker, editor of Alberta's *New Tribe Magazine*, hip hop is the "fastest growing craze among Native youth in Canada" (2003). Guthrie Ramsey, author of *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop*, writes that hip hop culture functions as a "source for youth of alternative identity formation and social status" (Ramsey, 2003, p. 165). Native hip hop groups such as *War Party*, *Tru Rez Crew*, and most recently *Team Rezofficial* (nominated in the "Outstanding Rap/Hip Hop Recording" for the 2005 Western Canadian Music Awards) are "taking advantage of hip hop's potential as a vehicle for mass awareness about the plight of Native youth, and for expressing individualism, collectivity, and pride" (Breaker, 2003). Breaker explains that,

By contributing their own realities and experiences back into hip hop culture, Native youth have adapted it as a vehicle to represent their identity; in particular, as people who relate to hip hop's Black American roots and accompanying lexis against depression, segregation, and racism. And so the hip hop form, already a venue for the remixing of records and samples and loops, has become a venue for remixing cultures as well. (Breaker, 2003).

War Party is a Native hip hop group from Hobbema, Alberta. They were the first ever nationally recognized Native hip hop group to appear on the television network Much Music, and are also three-time winners of an Aboriginal Music Award. Members of *War Party* claim that they are "inspired by the revolutionary forces of rap and driven by the untold injustice inflicted on the American Indian" (War Party Website (WPW), 2005, para. 1). They say that their music "focuses on the trials and tribulations of coming from a socially, politically, and economically deprived environment such as the First

³ Hip hop culture and one of its key modes of expression – rap music – emerged in the mid-1970s among African American and Afro-Caribbean youth living in the South Bronx and upper Manhattan neighborhoods of New York City (Ramsey, 2003).

Nations reserves of North America” (WPW, 2005, para.1). *War Party* says that they are influenced by their Cree culture, which is exemplified by tracks such as “Lyrical Powwow,” which is rapped entirely in the Cree language and was featured on their 2001 album *The Reign*. Their latest album, entitled *The Greatest Natives from the North*, released in 2003, demonstrates great self-assurance, evident in such tracks as, “Indian Prayer” and “Ain’t No Stopping a Native.”

Lawrence Martin says that music that mixes contemporary styles with cultural traditions inspires Native youth to “feel good about their culture” (in Scales, 1999, p. 95). Furthermore, as Aboriginal arts activist and promoter Elaine Bomberry has written, “the melding of traditional native music with contemporary stylings has resulted in indigenous music reaching a wider audience, and a growing interest on the part of non-native people in indigenous music” (1994, p. 41). This interest now extends to other aspects of Indigenous culture and artistic expression as well⁴. Acknowledging hybridity allows us to consider how Aboriginal people interact with and relate to other cultures, and furthermore demonstrates how Aboriginal artists have been reflexive about these interactions. Hybrid aesthetic expressions illustrate how Native people can embrace their Aboriginal identity and experience these in a meaningful way in the modern world. Hybridity speaks to the exchange of ideas that takes place between cultures and how this exchange can be expressed in the arts as active moments of resistance against colonial attempts to assimilate and dominate. Hybridity, then, offers a space for marginalized peoples to subvert the messages of the dominant culture by using the very tools that seek to oppress them.

⁴ For example, Zacharius Kunuk’s film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001), which combines the ancient Inuit skill of storytelling with the modern technology of film. *Atanarjuat* was well received by the mainstream winning a multitude of prestigious film awards, including six Genies.

Appropriation

According to Ashcroft et al., within the field of post-colonial studies, 'appropriation'⁵ is a term used to describe "the ways in which post-colonial societies take over those aspects of the imperial culture – language, forms of writing, film, theatre ... that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities" (2000, p. 19). This concept provides an insightful means of exploring the ways in which Native artists have used the tools of the dominant culture to transform works of art into sites of resistance. By appropriating these creative tools, Native people are able to "intervene more readily in the dominant discourse, to interpolate their own cultural realities, or use the dominant language to describe those realities to a wide audience of readers" (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 20). Film is one such tool that has been appropriated with great efficacy by First Nations people. In the early 1900s European ethnographic filmmakers sought to document cultures they believed to be in danger of imminent assimilation. Art historian Lynda Jessup writes that in these early films,

... ethnographic authenticity was located in what was imagined as the purer, pre-modern society that existed in contrast to the felt inauthenticity of the contemporary Aboriginal culture with which the filmmaker was working. Ethnographic authority – the power to designate this authenticity and, by contrast, inauthenticity – rested with the filmmaker and, by extension, with the west. (1999, p.4)

Jessup explains that in these films,

... members of Aboriginal societies were pressed into service to represent themselves as essentialized, universalized, "traditional" and rapidly vanishing, the ethnographic filmmaker was not a participant at all but, like the camera, an invisible observer . . . the filmmaker was seemingly omnipotent and omniscient, at once arbiter and guardian of anthropological knowledge. (1999, p. 4-5).

Today, First Nations artists have appropriated film as a means of recording their own cultural experiences. Native people are not only creating fictional dramas, such as

⁵ In some cases the term "appropriation" is used to refer to how non-Native people have used, for example, Native visual symbols without permission and incorporated them into their own cultural productions.

Moccasin Flats, to explore the contemporary issues they face, but they are also producing exceptional documentary films. Barb Cranmer is a documentary filmmaker from the 'Namgis First Nation in British Columbia. Her film *T'lina: The Rendering of Wealth* (1999), documents the communal tradition of travelling to Knight's Inlet to render "t'lina" or "grease" from the tiny eulochon or oolichan fish. This grease is used by the Kwakwaka'wakw, among other Northwest Coast groups as a condiment to make food more flavourful (Jonaitis, 2003). The rendering of t'lina is an important cultural tradition but is increasingly being threatened by logging and diminishing eulochon stocks. Cranmer has said that after six years of wanting to make this film finally,

... it became urgent because many of our old people were dying and important knowledge and history were close to disappearing with them. When I made a research trip with my family to Dzawadi [Knight Inlet] in 1996, we witnessed a sharp decline in the eulochon run. It was important to do the story right now. In ten years we might not be going up there. The eulochon may be extinct. The families who travel annually to Dzawadi are strengthened by the experience. Each year brings something new. It is amazing that in these times our people are fortunate enough to be able to go to a place where we can still practice a traditional way of life. It is like travelling back in time as we reaffirm our connection to our traditional territory. (in Jonaitis, 2003, p. 24).

This documentary is a site of resistance because it overturns elements of the earlier ethnographic documentaries. *T'lina* is told completely from the point of view of the Kwakwaka'wakw people, rather than from the "authoritative" voice of a non-Native filmmaker. There is little narration in the film, as Cranmer creates a story by weaving together interviews with members of the community, thereby offering them a space to articulate their own voice. Cranmer has said, "my work definitely has its own feel to it, in terms of being right up front with people that are speaking, from the voice of the community. I don't have the voice of God in there, with a narrator leading us down the garden path, because I feel our voices are strong enough, that they can speak for themselves" (First Nations Drum (FND), n.a., 2000, para. 37). This is a style that

Cranmer has employed in several of her films, including *Qatuwas: People Gathering Together* (1997) and *Laxwesa Wa: Strength of the River* (1995). Other Native filmmakers, such as Loretta Todd and Alanis Obomsawin, have also employed this style. By including the community and ensuring that individuals are named and credited, these documentary films reverse the notorious “ethnographic gaze⁶.” In films such as *T’lina*, Cranmer reminds us that Aboriginal people do not exist outside of the cultural framework of the individual making the film, but they are, in fact, very much part of the creative process. This effectively dissolves the romanticization, the anonymity and the mysticism created by the ethnographic gaze of the past. Like Cranmer’s other films, *T’lina* counters the notion of documenting a “vanishing” race. Even though the eulochon is threatened by logging it is made apparent that this is not a passive film about a utopian way of life, but rather an activist film about what has survived despite colonial attempts to civilize and modernize.

In viewing films such as *T’lina* it is possible to see how First Nations filmmakers have appropriated the devices and techniques utilized in earlier ethnographic films, and effectively wielded them in order to critique and challenge the problematic aspects of the ethnographic genre. *T’lina* also ensures that important cultural information is passed on to future generations because, as Cranmer argues, being able to have the experience of rendering grease strengthens her people’s sense of identity. Visual artists such as Jim Logan (Métis) are also appropriating aspects of Western culture, however in a different manner.

⁶ “The ethnographic gaze is a term used to understand historical photographic images, specifically those taken of people who exist outside of the cultural framework of the photographer. The people placed before the lens are often considered the repository of some societal ideal now lost to the creators and consumers of the images . . . the subject is highly romanticized, invariably anonymous and aestheticized to the point of mysticism.” (Moosang, 2003, p. 1)

Logan's painting, *The Diners Club (No Reservations Required)* (1992) (figure 8), is a clever re-interpretation of French painter Edouard Manet's classic *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863) (figure 9). *The Diners Club* forms part of Logan's *The Classical Aboriginal Series*. This series was conceived when Logan read in a college art history text that the creators of non-Western art "had little awareness of their own history" (Ryan, 1994, p. 2). Taking great offence to this statement, Logan began to question the widely accepted superiority of Western art: "I went through art history in school and was taught how glorious European art was. It seems to be the standard to judge all other art and I question that ... Is it the standard, and (if so,) why is it the standard? ... what makes the masters masters?" (in Ryan, 1994, p. 2). In this painting, Logan has appropriated a classic European masterpiece and then critically deconstructed it. He begins by relocating the dinner party to his own familiar Cree territory. He reverses who is dressed and who is not in the image: the women are now clothed and the men are naked. In so doing, Logan raises questions about the patriarchal nature of European masterpieces and European culture. Furthermore, Logan incorporates elements from both traditional and contemporary Cree culture, a bowl of Saskatoon berries, the sacred pipe, and cans of Diet Coke. Thus, according to Ryan "Logan has imagined a Native utopia where past and present are in perfect balance and cultural inclusion is never an issue" (Ryan 1999, p. 130). Ryan further explains that, like other images in the series, "*The Diners Club* combines a healthy (and healthful) respect for Native tradition with a healthy irreverence for European art history" (1999, p. 130). That is, Logan's piece references issues such as body image and healthy eating, while simultaneously showing that he does not have great respect for the system that decides what constitutes a "masterpiece." Logan says,

Figure 8: Jim Logan, *The Diners Club (No Reservation Required)*(1992)
Acrylic on canvas, 89 X 135 cm (Ryan, 1999, p. 128)

Figure 9: Edouard Manet, *Le Déjeuner sur L'herbe* (1863)
Oil on canvas, 213 X 269 cm (Ryan, 1999, p. 129)

[w]hat I'd like [Native people] to get out of this [series is] a realization that ... there is a place for us in the mainstream of whatever field or profession we want to be in, whether it's art, religion, [or] dentistry. Whatever you want, we can be there ... I want to say the same thing [to non-Natives] ... Hopefully, they'll come out with the idea that you can't dominate some body, some thing without it eventually turning on you. (in Ryan, 1999, p. 130)

Essentially, Logan has appropriated a "classic" European piece of art and "Indianized" it by inserting his reality as a Native person living in Canada.

Using different mediums, both Cranmer and Logan demonstrate how Native artists have appropriated Western media to present a Native point of view, to tell a Native story or portray an aspect of Native life. Contrasting these examples with colonialist attempts to construct Native identity as "Other," exemplifies how film and visual artwork can become engaging sites of resistance to cultural hegemony. Native artists are constantly finding new ways to assert modern Aboriginal identities by being critical of media that, historically, have sought to subjugate them, and by inserting themselves into Euro-Canadian mainstream culture.

Cultural continuity and survival

After years of having their cultural traditions suppressed and marginalized, it comes as no surprise that some First Nations artists assert the importance of the past in their contemporary work. While there is a fear that in doing so they may be perpetuating romantic notions of what it means to be Native, or encouraging fixed definitions of "authenticity," by including elements of cultural traditions in aesthetic productions First Nations artists affirm their resilience against colonialist efforts to destroy their cultures. Describing this juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary symbols in *The Diner's Club*, Jim Logan explains,

I wanted to make it contemporary and yet I wanted to show a traditional feel [in] it also, in a sense that religiously, or spiritually, a lot of our young people are becoming spiritually renewed ... That's why I have a pipe there. That's why on their chests you'll see scars from the Sun Dance ritual or ceremony. (in Ryan, 1999, p. 126)

Shelley Niro's interpretation of Iroquois beadwork patterns in the framing of her photo-triptych *The Iroquois is a Highly Developed Matriarchal Society* (1991) (figure 10) is a similar example of the blending of traditional and contemporary elements. According to Ryan,

The simultaneous affirmation and transformation of Iroquois tradition goes beyond the interplay of title and photographic images, extending to the framing as well. Here, the pattern of dots perforating the black matte (by means of a dental drill) not only picks up the curve of the hairdryer but replicates the 'skydome' and 'celestial tree' designs found in traditional Iroquois beadwork on velvet and broadcloth. (1999, p. 66)

In this image, hybridity is created by the interplay of cultural and traditional symbols. The beadwork pattern is juxtaposed with a contemporary experience: the woman (Niro's mother) under the hairdryer. Ryan says that "the piece happily celebrates an aspect of contemporary Native women's experience, and Niro hopes that such images will encourage the more conservative members of her community to free themselves from stoic and restrictive stereotypes that are not of their own making" (1999, p. 66). This hybrid form then, serves to counter stereotypes that have long-been internalized by Native people. Cultural continuity and survival are not only manifest as visual symbols, but have also been demonstrated in the (re)creation of traditional forms of aesthetic expression using new technologies. For example, film and literature have been used to (re)create and continue the tradition of narrative oratory or storytelling.

Film has been conceived by Lickers to be "part of the tradition of storytelling: of how Native Nations speak to one another about what it means to be part of a nation, a territory, a cultural belief system" (in de Rosa, 2002, p. 328). In writing about the films of

Figure 10: Shelley Niro, *The Iroquois Is a Highly Developed Matriarchal Society* (1992). Three hand-tinted black-and-white photographs mounted horizontally in a single matte, 20 X 25 cm each photograph (Ryan, 1999, p. 67)

Aboriginal filmmakers Loretta Todd, Shelley Niro and Christine Welsh, scholar Carol Kalafatic has called Native filmmakers the “contemporary carriers of oral traditions” (1999, p. 116). That is, filmmaking is part of the covenant of storytelling that exists within Aboriginal communities. Earlier, I explored the benefits of the documentary style in Barb Cranmer’s film, *T’lina*, in terms of providing a space wherein Native people are able to articulate their own experiences. However, fiction has also been an important genre used by Native filmmakers in exploring culture and identity. For example, Shelley Niro’s *It Starts with a Whisper* (1993) is the story of Shanna, a young Tutelo woman who is trying to work through “a series of personal choices that involves the past, the present and the future” (Niro, 1994). The film begins with Shanna walking on the lush banks of the Grand River in Brantford, Ontario. Dressed traditionally, she speaks with the ghosts from an extinct Iroquois tribe. The film then cuts to downtown Toronto, where we are introduced to her extremely comical aunties with whom she embarks on a road trip to Niagara Falls. This film tells the story of a young girl struggling to find a balance between the modern world and her past. As in the traditional art of storytelling, an important lesson or teaching is offered. According to Kalafatic, Niro “tells us to move past the grief of our ancestors; once we honour the stories of the past, we need to make room for the humour that continues to serve us well as a survival tool in our ongoing, contemporary struggles against external as well as internal enemies” (1999, p. 110). Thus, tradition here is juxtaposed with the reality of contemporary society so that we might understand how the past informs the present as well as the future. Filmmakers, then, can be considered modern day storytellers, and their films the medium through

which both ancient and modern stories are told. The literary arts have also been used by Native artists in a similar manner.

Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie, editors of *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English* (1998), explain that while contemporary Native literature is often innovative, within this innovation always lies a sense of tradition (Moses and Goldie, 1997, p. xxi). Tom King has discussed how Native authors are “making use of elements from oral literature and culture and combining contemporary and traditional worlds, allowing both realities to exist in the same space” (King, 1990, p. xiii). King has said that “[t]here is the misconception that Native oral literature is an artefact, something that vanished as an art form in the last century. Though virtually invisible outside a tribal setting, oral literature remains a strong tradition and is one of the major influences on many Native writers” (1990, p. xii). According to Armand Garnet Ruffo “[t]he Oral Tradition continues to influence contemporary Aboriginal literatures profoundly and has led to the development of what Thomas King calls ‘interfusal literature,’ a stylistic and thematic hybrid of the oral and written, the past and present, the Aboriginal and Western” (2001, p. 6-7). This is aptly illustrated in Okanagan storyteller Harry Robinson’s work.

Harry Robinson chose to have his stories transcribed by anthropologist Wendy Wickwire. Robinson met Wickwire while she was working on her doctoral thesis. Her collections of transcribed stories, *Write It On Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller* (1989) and *Nature Power: In the Spirit of an Okanagan Storyteller* (1992), were the result of twelve years of interviews with Robinson. Robinson decided to have Wickwire transcribe his stories, fearing that without such a record they would

eventually disappear along with him (in Moses and Goldie, 1998). Moses and Goldie have written that “[a]s Robinson grew older, he found that even his Native listeners were unable to understand the Okanagan language, so he decided to tell his stories in lines of text rather than in run-on prose” (1998, p. 516). Wickwire explains,

I searched for a presentational style to capture the nuance of the oral tradition – the emphasis on certain phrases, intentional repetition, and dramatic rhythms and pauses. I have, therefore, set the stories in lines which mirror as closely as possible Harry’s rhythms of speech. Harry’s stories are really performed events, rather than fixed objects on a page. (in Moses and Goldie, 1998, p. 516)

In a discussion of Harry Robinson’s work, King observes that he is able to “make the written work become the spoken word by insisting, through his use of rhythms, patterns, syntax, and sounds, that his story be read out loud, and, in so doing, the reader becomes the storyteller” (1990, p. xiii). This is evident in a passage taken from Robinson’s short story *Captive in an English Circus*:

These Indian, when they run out of salmon,
 They know the salmon, they go by.
So they move.
Follow the salmon.
Then they come to Okanagan Falls.
Then the salmon, they can’t go no more.
They were there.
They can get salmon.
Some of them died in the water
 and get bad, you know, get spoiled.
Then they quit.
When they get together at Falls,
 there’s a lot of Indians and they put in a camp.
Some of them, they play stickgame.
They kind of celebrate.
But still some of them get the salmon
 at night or the daytime.
And some of them get whiskey from someplace,
 from Penticton, I guess, or somewhere.
And they drink.

This story demonstrates that it is possible to achieve elements of oral narrative in literature. For example, the way in which the lines in the story are spaced forces the

reader to pause in certain places. The words beg to be read aloud. Furthermore, phrases such as, “Some of them died in the water/and get bad, you know spoiled” remind the reader of the storyteller’s voice. That is, by including phrases such as “you know” or “I guess” speech patterns are replicated making the storyteller’s presence known. While Robinson’s stories owe much to the manner in which they were transcribed by Wickwire, they are, nonetheless, powerful examples of how oral literature can be captured in the written word, and through clever stylistic technique, returned, though in a hybrid form, to the spoken word.

By incorporating traditional components into their work, Native people continue to highlight the importance of cultural continuity. In so doing they are affirming their commitment to finding new ways of recreating the old using contemporary mediums, such as film, music, literature, visual, and as I will demonstrate later in this paper, the culinary arts, in order to ensure the survival of their cultural traditions.

Conclusion

Through examining themes and concepts drawn from post-colonial theory I have hoped to demonstrate how First Nations people have used the arts as a way of celebrating their contemporary spiritual, social and cultural identities. Native artists have regained and asserted control over their cultural representations by depicting the nuances, complexities, and adversities, of their past and current realities. Native artists have adapted both new and old mediums, incorporating elements from both contemporary and traditional life in order to sustain their cultural traditions and identities in the face of encroaching colonialism. Moreover, because the arts have long been a fundamental part of the expression of Native identities it is significant that they continue to serve a similar

purpose today. As previously discussed, historically, artistic expressions were inextricably woven into Aboriginal everyday life. Among Aboriginal peoples, aesthetics represented a deep connection between art and life, and the expression of cultural identities. As I will demonstrate, the culinary arts have an important place among these artistic productions, expanding the creative space of expression in order to allow even more Native people to participate in the celebration of their cultural identities.

Thus, this post-colonial reading of contemporary aesthetic expressions will function as a framework for looking at contemporary First Nations culinary arts. As we will see, Native chefs are demonstrating the same self-assurance in their cooking as seen in other artistic mediums. Native culinary artists are creating contemporary dishes, utilizing both traditional ingredients (moose meat, wild rice, and berries), and those introduced through the current globally-influenced foodscape⁷ (curries and wasabi). Native chefs are also using modern technology to recreate traditional cooking methods such as roasting and smoking. Furthermore, these culinary creations are being used to teach non-Native people about both contemporary and traditional Native cultures, through such avenues as fine dining restaurants and televised cooking shows. The following chapter will include a survey of food traditions among Aboriginal people. Here I will present a reading of food in the ethnographic record, situating food and people in a historical context, and looking specifically at how food has helped to shape cultural identities in the past, and how these have informed the Native culinary arts today.

⁷ Foodscapes is a word developing within Food Studies and is used to describe the “multicultural yet also highly globalized postmodern food scene” (Belasco, 2002, 17)

SECOND COURSE: HISTORICAL FIRST NATIONS CULINARY ARTS

In this chapter I will provide a historical context for understanding how contemporary First Nations cuisine can be used as a means of celebrating cultural identities and resisting colonialism in Canada. I will begin by examining the intimate knowledge and resourcefulness that Native people demonstrated within their diverse geographic environments. I will do so by surveying six regions across Canada: the Maritimes, the Northeastern Woodlands, the Subarctic, the Prairies, the Plateau, and the Northwest Coast (See Map 1). I will present a brief overview of the particular foods and ingredients available in these areas, and how they were acquired prior to and at the time of European settlement in Canada¹. I will then review the innovative cooking methods employed by Native people to manipulate the raw materials available in their environments, in order to create meals that were not only nutritious and non-perishable, but also flavourful and satisfying. Next, I will briefly discuss food's place in both the spirituality and social spheres of Native people, thus illustrating that Native food traditions were not only sophisticated and innovative, but deeply embedded in all aspects of Native life. I will then briefly examine the impact of colonization on food preparation among Aboriginal people in Canada. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the importance of traditional foodways to Native culture and identity. Because these culinary

¹ These geographic divisions are problematic in that they are generalized and do not necessarily capture the unique and varied cultural groups that existed within each of these areas. Furthermore, the regions themselves do not accurately represent where First Nations people live today. That is, there are upwards of half a million Native people living in Canada, and approximately a half a million more who claim Aboriginal ancestry, all of whom are divided up into over 600 bands, each with distinct cultures and traditional cuisines. Also, Aboriginal people today live on reserves, in rural communities, and many live in urban centres (Powers, 2003). However, based on the fact that historically, food availability was determined by the surrounding environment, we can infer that similarities existed in the dietary patterns of groups inhabiting the same geographic zones. Therefore, the divisions used here are both practical and useful for this particular study.

Figure 11: Geographic Regions of Canada (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004, p.9)

traditions, like all other areas of Native life, were forever altered by colonization, it follows that, as has been the case with other art forms such as music, painting, and film, Native people have used the culinary arts as a site of resistance and self-representation. Before exploring this avenue further, I will begin with a historical overview of how Native people from diverse geographic regions across Canada made use of their respective environments.

Historical Connections to Geographic Environment

Historically, Native people had no choice but to move with the seasons to ensure an adequate source of food. Furthermore, in order to survive they had to make do with what they could acquire from their physical environments. Thus, starting on the east coast

and moving to the west, I will explore the intimate connection and understanding that developed between Native people and their natural surroundings.

The Maritimes

The Maritime region of Canada was mainly inhabited by the Mi'kmaq (Mi'gmaq, Micmac)² and the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet, Malecite). Traditional Mi'kmaq territory included the Gaspé Peninsula of Québec, Northern and Eastern New Brunswick, all of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and eventually Southern Newfoundland³. The physical environment in the Maritime region is diverse, including a mix of coniferous and deciduous trees, fresh water streams and lakes, and sea coast along the Atlantic Ocean. Maritime climate is characterized by harsh winters and hot humid summers.

According to anthropologist Virginia Miller, “the Micmac had the intimate knowledge of their environment required to allow them to develop appropriate technology to exploit the food sources for their needs,” and this is best illustrated by looking at their seasonal subsistence pattern (Miller, 1995, p. 349). During the spring months, oysters and clams were collected, as were fish that spawned in freshwater, such as smelt, alewives, sturgeon and salmon. Fish were caught using traps built across river and stream mouths. Waterfowl, such as ducks and geese, and their eggs were also consumed during the spring. These birds were so abundant that Mi'kmaq hunters could easily catch them using snares, clubs, or bows and arrows. Maritime people also ate some

² The literature on Maritime First Nations tends to focus predominantly on the Mi'kmaq. This is due to the fact that it was Mi'kmaq territory that was first occupied by early Europeans, it was their cultures that have been most thoroughly documented in the ethnographic record. Therefore, they will be the primary focus here. It is also pertinent to mention the Beothuk who once inhabited the Maritime region. These Aboriginal people suffered complete extinction at the hands of the newly arrived Europeans and little is known about their historical traditions (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004).

³ Maritime cultures, despite differences in geographic region, are generally very similar to Northeastern Woodland cultures. Therefore on Map 1, the Maritime region is included within the Northeastern Woodland area.

small ocean mammals, such as porpoise, which were harpooned by hunters in canoes. In mid-summer strawberries, blueberries, cranberries and ground nuts were collected, dried and stored for winter. In late summer, coastal camps would move inland to be reconstructed adjacent to rivers or streams. In fall when the runs began, eels were caught in great numbers. Come winter, hunters would turn their attention to land animals such as moose, beaver, bear and caribou, which were caught using bows and arrows, harpoons, or traps (Miller, 1995).

The Northeastern Woodlands

There are two main groups of Aboriginal people with distinct cultural patterns who occupied the geographic region known as the Northeastern Woodlands – the Iroquoians and the Algonquians. The Iroquoians occupied the land around Georgian Bay, just off of Lake Huron, south to Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, and east along the St. Lawrence River past modern-day Québec City. This area is also known as the Lower Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands. Algonquian territory stretched along the northern shores of Lakes Huron and Superior (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004).

The Northeastern Woodlands are mostly covered with deciduous forests, dotted with lakes and rivers, and are characterized by moderate climatic conditions, including relatively long, hot summers, and short, cool winters. Because there is a frost-free period that is long enough for crops to ripen, this region was particularly conducive to Indigenous agriculture, and the Iroquoians were the only intensive Native farmers in Canada (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004; Rogers, 1970b). In Algonquian territory, however, poor soil and uncertain weather conditions made it more suitable for following

a seasonal subsistence round, and thus the Algonquians were predominantly hunter-gatherers.

The Iroquoians⁴ of the Northeastern Woodlands included members of the Six Nations (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, Tuscorora), the Huron, and the now extinct Petun, Neutral and St. Lawrence Iroquois. Agriculture was adopted by the Iroquoians around 500-900 C.E. when the innovative practice of cultivating corn migrated north from Mexico. This led the Iroquoians to adapt a food producing economy referred to as swidden horticulture, in which garden plots and fields were cleared using the slash-and-burn method⁵ (von Gernet, 2002). Because agriculture provided a consistent and localized supply of food, the Iroquoians led a relatively sedentary way of life, compared to other Native groups.

Corn, beans, and squash, known by the Iroquoians as the “Three Sisters,” were the primary crops and staples of their diet⁶. According to Beverley Cox and Martin Jacobs, authors of *Spirit of the Harvest*, the three plants were collectively referred to as the “Three Sisters” because they were believed to be female and grew well together (1991, p. 54). That is, the corn stalks supply the necessary physical support for the beans to wind up and grow around to help reach the sun; the beans help fix nitrogen in the soil, which the corn needs to grow; and the squash’s broad leaves help to keep the soil moist

⁴ The terms ‘Iroquois’ and ‘Iroquoian’ are distinct terms. ‘Iroquois’ generally refers to those nations allied as the League of the Iroquois (the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and later the Tuscorora) who together formed the historic Six Nations (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004; Becker, 1995; Snow, 1994). Linguists also use the term ‘Iroquoian’ to identify a set of related language groups. Those speaking the related Iroquoians languages included members of the Six Nations, the Huron, and the now extinct Petun, Neutral and St. Lawrence Iroquois. All people who spoke Iroquoian languages shared common cultural patterns, so here we will look at them all inclusively (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004)

⁵ Slash-and-burn included, “girdling trees to kill them, felling and then burning them to clear the land. Every ten years or so, the soil in the vicinity of the village became exhausted and it was necessary to prepare new fields” (Rogers, 1970b, p. 7).

⁶ The Iroquoians harvested fifteen to seventeen varieties of maize or corn, over sixty varieties of beans, and about eight varieties of squash (Rogers, 1970b).

under their shade and choke out unwanted plants (*The Gift*, 1998; Cox and Jacobs, 1991; Snow, 1994). Equipment used in agriculture was fairly basic, including hoes and digging and planting sticks. Corn was processed for consumption using a number of different methods, including the use of a bone or wooden peg to remove the husks and then a deer jaw to shell the corn. The kernels were pounded and ground using a pestle and mortar to make flour, to which water would be added to make dough (Engelbrecht, 2003, Rogers, 1970b).

While cultivated food has been shown to represent fifty to sixty percent of the Iroquoians' caloric intake, the rest of their diet consisted of foods acquired by hunting, fishing, and gathering (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004; von Gernet, 2002). Deer was probably the most hunted animal, while bear and smaller animals, such as beaver, and birds, and many types of fish were also consumed (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004; Snow, 1994). Game was caught using bows and arrows and snares, and fish were caught using weirs or gill-nets. The Iroquoians also collected wild berries, nuts and edible roots, and tapped maple trees for their sap.

The Algonquians who inhabited the Northeastern Woodlands of Canada⁷ included the Anishnabeg (Ojibwa-Odawa-Algonquin). Anishnabeg men spent their winters hunting for moose, deer, bear and other game, and took great pride in these endeavours. In spring, families left their hunting camps and joined larger groups at central fishing sites, where they would catch pickerel, pike and suckers throughout most of the summer. Like the neighbouring Iroquoians, many Anishnabeg people tapped maple trees for sap in the spring. In the fall, when fish were spawning, Native people

⁷ The Algonquian territory included all of Northeastern North America, and dialects of Algonquian languages were spoken from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to the Rocky Mountains (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004).

caught whitefish, trout and sturgeon. Corn, beans and squash were acquired through trade with their Iroquoian neighbours. The most important plant food in the Anishnabeg diet, however, was wild rice, which is not actually rice but a type of cereal grass. To acquire wild rice, men would pole canoes through rice fields, and women knocked the grains into the canoe with a pair of cedar sticks. The grains would be brought to shore and laid out to dry before being parched in the fire. The outer husks of the rice would be removed by tramping in a pit lined with skin, and then the rice would be winnowed with the aid of a birchbark tray (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004; Ritzenhaler, 1978).

The Subarctic

The Subarctic geographic area spans “the entire North American continent, from Cook Inlet on the Pacific Coast to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Newfoundland on the Atlantic” (Waldman, 2000, p. 47). The Subarctic can be subdivided into the Eastern and Western Subarctic regions. The East was mainly inhabited by members of the Algonquian language family, and the West by members of the Athapascan or Na-Dene language family. Historically, the Algonquians of the Eastern Subarctic were known by a number of various regional names. Today however, they can be broadly subdivided into Cree, Innu, and Ojibwa⁸ (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004). The physical environment of the Eastern Subarctic is dominated by the Canadian Shield, “a low, rolling land of forest, rock outcrops and muskeg, with innumerable lakes, ponds and rivers” (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004). The Western Subarctic stretches from the western shores of Hudson Bay into the interior of Alaska. In the north, it is bounded by the tree line that separates it from the tundra region of the Arctic, and in the south it grades into the Plains and Plateau

⁸ Ojibwa territory included parts of the Subarctic as well as parts of the Northeastern Woodlands. Because they have already been discussed they will not be a central focus in this section.

regions⁹. The cultures inhabiting the Western Subarctic region include the Dene Nation (Chipewyan, Dogrib, Gwich'in, Slavey, or Dene-thath, Hare, Mountain Yellowknives) as well as Han, Kaska, Nat'oot'en (Babine), Sekani, Tahltan, Tanana, Tutchone and Wet'suwet'en (Dakelh, Carrier) (Keillor, 1999).

The entire Subarctic region is characterized by very long winters with heavy snowfalls and short warm summers besieged with swarms of biting insects. The climate in the Subarctic is generally cold, but during the spring and summer there is intensive sunlight, which decreases the frigid arctic air, making for extreme temperature differences in the seasons (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004; Brown and Wilson, 1995). Subarctic people in both the East and the West lived and survived by hunting and gathering; but they were principally big game hunters. Among Subarctic people, there were no permanent villages because they were always moving in search of food. Summers were usually spent at encampments located at abundant fishing sites, with up to a hundred people. When fall came, summer camps would break up into smaller hunting groups (Rogers, 1970c).

Subarctic people hunted moose, caribou, black and grizzly bears, goats, sheep and bison. Smaller animals such as snowshoe hare, fish, migratory waterfowl, and grouse were only of secondary importance in their diet (Wilson, 1995; Moore, 1999). Plant food, such as blueberries, cranberries, rose hips, crowberries, and in some regions gooseberries, Saskatoon (service) berries, raspberries, and currants were only supplementary to high protein foods. Other edible plant foods, such as wild onions, rhubarb, liquorice plants,

⁹ Physiologically, the Western Subarctic can be further broken down into two sub-regions, east and west. The east is predominantly rocky Canadian Shield which gradually melds into the McKenzie lowlands and eventually slopes into the McKenzie Delta River. The western most part of the Western Subarctic is the Cordillera, which is an array of mountains and valleys from which numerous rivers and streams flow into the Pacific Ocean (McClellan and Denniston, 1981; Rogers and Smith, 1981).

and the leaves and sap of willow and birch were also consumed (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004; Clark, 1974). Growing seasons were very short and thus subsistence activities within these periods, especially gathering, were greatly intensified (Brown and Wilson, 1995). Trade relations were important to people in the Subarctic. Exotic food items, such as dried clams, seaweed, and especially the much sought-after eulachon oil or “grease,” were important trade items. Grease was particularly important in this climate because it was an excellent preservative¹⁰ (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004).

The Prairies

The Canadian Prairies include the southernmost parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The major Native groups from this area include Nehiyaw (Plains Cree), Anishnaabe (Plains Ojibwa), Siksika (Blackfoot), Tsuu T’ina (Sarcee), Atsina (Gros Ventre), and Nakoda (Assiniboine, Stoney). The landscape of the Prairies is characterized by wide open grasslands, sprinkled with some wooded areas. Surface water is scarce because there are few rivers and lakes on the prairies, although some small ponds exist temporarily after the snow thaws in the spring (Rogers, 1970). Winters on the Prairies are long, cold, and intensified by strong winds. As in other parts of the country, the climate in this region dictated much of the Prairie peoples’ way of life. Harsh winters forced people into the foothills of the Rockies and river valleys to find protection from the winds. During the summer, large encampments of several thousand people would form on the open plains. Here, people would meet to organize the bison hunt and the Sundance¹¹

¹⁰ In fact, the major arteries of trade and travel that came to and from areas in the Western Subarctic have been called “the grease trails”, because of the many boxes of eulachon oil that were traded far into the interior from the Northwest Coast (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004).

¹¹The Sundance was the most important ceremony among Prairie people. For details see MacMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004, p. 153.

(Rogers, 1970d). The expanse of grassland made perfect grazing ground for buffalo (prairie bison and wood bison), and thus the most common feature of Prairie cultural groups was their dependence on this animal for subsistence. Buffalo were hunted using a number of techniques, including driving the massive animal over cliffs, as was done at the “Head-Smashed-in-Buffalo-Jump”¹² in Alberta. Prairie people also built enclosures, where they herded buffalo in order to kill them with stone-headed clubs or bows and arrows. Bison were also hunted by smaller groups of people during the winter months, who disguised themselves as other buffalo or as wolves, which allowed them to get close enough to the buffalo to shoot them with arrows or to club them (Rogers, 1970d). Animal food resources, such as, elk, deer, pronghorns, black bears, and rabbits, were abundant, but still much less numerous than the bison and were generally only consumed when buffalo were unavailable. By comparison, birds were significantly less important to the Prairie diet, although some waterfowl (dusks, geese, swans) and game birds (prairie chickens) were consumed when other resources were scarce (DeMaille, 2001). Chokecherries, Saskatoon berries, buffalo berries, wild plums, sand cherries, yellow and black currants, wild raspberries, wild strawberries, and rose hips were gathered seasonally on the Prairies.

The Plateau

The Plateau is the geographic region of Canada that is cradled between the Rocky Mountains on the east and British Columbia’s coastal ranges on the west. The Plateau landscape is characterized by valleys, plateaus, and mountain ranges. The physical environment of this region varies greatly from “sagebrush near-desert in the west to

¹² This famous “jump” has been used for centuries by Native people, today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

heavily forested mountain slopes in the east” (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004, p. 166). Summers on the Plateau are long and dry and winters are short, but relatively cold. The diverse cultures from the geographic area include Salishan-speaking tribes, the Okanagan, the Nlaka’pamux (Ntlakyapamuck, Knife or Thompson), the Secwepemc (Shuswap), and the Stl’atl’mix (Lilloet), the Nadene-speaking Tsilhqot’in (Chilcotin) and the Ktunaxa (Kutenai, Kootenay) speaking the Kootenayan, possibly of the Hokam linguistic group. The Plateau economy was based on a seasonal pattern of movement. People worked and lived in small mobile bands from spring through to fall, and in the winter several of these smaller bands would join together to form larger more permanent villages.

The Plateau region is one of the richest hunting and fishing areas of North America; but the most important food among Plateau people was fish, especially salmon. Most of the late summer and fall was spent catching salmon at spawning runs by scooping the large silvery fish from the water using dip-nets, by harpooning or spearing, and also by trapping (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004). People on the Plateau did, in some cases, hunt buffalo, especially in the more northern regions. More common, however, was hunting for deer, elk, beaver, caribou, moose, wild mountain sheep, marmots, hares, and beavers. Birds, such as grouse, ducks and geese were also hunted. Hunters mostly used bows and arrows, but when necessary, snares and traps (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004). Fruits and vegetables figured prominently in the Plateau diet, particularly Saskatoon berries, wild strawberries, and salmonberries (Powers, 2003). Plateau people also consumed the green shoots of fireweed and cow parsnip (Indian

rhubarb), roots, bulbs, lichens, wild greens, mushrooms, and the edible inner bark of trees (Walker, 1998).

The Northwest Coast

The Northwest Coast in Canada includes Vancouver Island, The Gulf Islands, Haida Gwaii (The Queen Charlotte Islands) and the coastal mainland north of the United States border, west of the Cascade and Coast Mountain ranges and south of the Alaska Panhandle (Turner, 1995). The major Aboriginal groups of the Northwest Coast include Haida, Heiltsuk (Bella Bella), Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl, Kwagiulth), Nisga'a (Niska, Nishga), Nuuchah'nulth (Nootka), Nuxalk (Bella Coola), Salish, Tsimshian, and Taku Tlingit. The climate in this area is humid and mild, which is conducive to the growth of dense vegetation. In these ideal growing conditions there was an abundance of food available to the people who lived there. Native people on the Northwest Coast spent most of the year in villages located near beaches at the heads of fiords. In the summer, villages were usually abandoned, and people would relocate to fishing sites.

Although some land animals were caught by Northwest Coast people using snares, deadfalls, pitfalls and bows and arrows, these did not compare with the great bounty of food that was acquired from the ocean, beaches and rivers. Salmon was the most abundant of the food sources available to Northwest Coast people. Not only was the salmon plentiful, but it was easily caught using spears, harpoons, gill nets, dip nets, weirs and traps. Thick and sticky herring spawn were often gathered on evergreen boughs to be eaten fresh as a delicacy, or dried and stored to be consumed during the winter. Sea mammals, such as whales, sea lions, porpoises, and sea otters, also had a role in the Northwest Coast economic life. Whalers used specialized equipment, including, large

harpoons, lances, and large sturdy canoes to catch these sea mammals. The meat of whales was highly desirable, as was the thick layer of blubber that could be rendered for oil. Seals and sea lions were generally caught by clubbing them to death while they were resting on land (Rogers, 1970). In spring, an abundance of plant foods, such as salmonberries, salalberries, huckleberries, fireweed, ferns and clover were a refreshing change after a winter of dried food.

Traversing the country, exploring the diverse geographic regions, it is evident how well Native people adapted to the particular environments in which they lived in order to survive. We have seen the almost scientific understanding of soils and botany required by the Iroquoians to successfully grow the "Three Sisters." Some Native people developed highly mobile migration patterns in order to take advantage of the seasonal availability of resources. In areas with more suitable growing conditions, such as those found on the Northwest Coast, Native people were able to lead a more sedentary way of life. Clearly, ecological conditions had an impact on what types of foods were available, and also upon the ways in which they were both produced and consumed. In order to survive Native people required an intimate knowledge of their natural environment, both of its potential and its precariousness. While historically, and still today, functionality was a significant aspect of food preparation among Native people, beyond ensuring their diet was nourishing and could be well preserved, they also demonstrated creativity and skill in making their dishes appetizing.

Traditional First Nations Food Preparation

In this section I will illustrate the innovative and rich culinary traditions of Native people before the arrival of Europeans to Canada. Historically, there were a number of

cooking techniques, with slight variations, used in many different parts of the country. Because, as we have seen, weather conditions were often harsh, it was necessary to develop food preservation methods that would ensure food availability year round. Furthermore, Aboriginal cooking was not only concerned with merely refueling the body, but as we will see it was also about creating food that was palatable and delicious.

For the most part, food was cooked by roasting, baking, boiling, steaming, fermentation, smoking, and wind or sun-drying. Cooking vessels were made from organic material that would easily burn, such as barks, roots, animal parts, or wood, making it necessary to develop ways of cooking food without placing these vessels directly on a heat source. As such, food was boiled using a cooking method commonly referred to as the hot-rock or stone-boiling method. This technique involved gathering rocks found in creeks or in river beds that would not crack when exposed to tremendous heat. Rocks would be heated by placing them in the hot embers of a fire. They would then be removed from the fire using wooden tongs, rinsed of grit and ashes, and placed into cooking vessels that were filled with water. This process of heating the rocks and then placing them in the container would be repeated until the water boiled and the food was cooked. Placing meat, fish, vegetables, and savoury herbs into a cooking vessel to be boiled created a healthful and flavourful stew (Turner, 1995; Davis, 1992; Cox and Jacobs, 1991; Waugh, 1916). On the Prairies, cooking vessels used in the hot-rock method were often made by cutting the hump from a buffalo and stretching it over a mound of earth where it was left to dry into the shape of a bowl. This bowl was then used to line a small hole dug into the ground. The pot would be filled with water and dried or fresh meat and wild vegetables or tubers, and then the stone-boiling method

would be used to boil and cook the food (Cox and Jacobs, 1991; Carlson, 1998). Sometimes, instead of a skin pot the women would use the paunch of a freshly killed animal (Cox and Jacobs, 1991). On the Northwest Coast the hot-rock method was done in bent-wood boxes. These boxes were made through an elaborate process of steaming or soaking cedar boards and then folding them into a four-sided structure with only one joint. The boxes were then fitted with a bottom and a lid, and the seams were sewn together with spruce-root twine. Bent-wood boxes were watertight and were not only used for cooking, but also for food storage (Turner, 1995).

Maritime First Nations, specifically the Mi'kmaq, had a particularly interesting means of preparing food in wooden kettles. According to Davis,

...[w]ooden kettles were fashioned from large sections of logs that were hollowed out using fire and stone axes. The top of the log was burned and then the soft ashes and burnt wood were removed with an axe, the maker taking care not to burn or cut through the sides. Once the kettle was hollowed out, it could be filled with water and, using the same techniques employed with the bark containers [hot-rock], the water could be brought to a boil. (Davis, 1992, p. 30)

Wooden kettles were most commonly used in the production of *cacamos* or moose butter¹³. Moose butter has been described as “fine white grease” and is regarded as a delicacy. Because it was highly nutritious it also served as a basic provision for Maritime cultures while traveling or hunting. Other animals were also used to render fat, such as seals or bears preparing to hibernate for the winter. Seal oil was stored in moose bladders, drunk straight or served as a relish or condiment at feasts (Davis, 1992; Miller, 1995).

Pit-steaming in underground ovens was a cooking technique that was used mostly on the Plateau and the Northwest Coast. To make these pit-ovens, deep holes were dug

¹³ *Cacamos* was made when the bones from a butchered moose were broken up and placed in the kettle with boiling water. The fat and marrow from the bones would rise to the top of the kettle as they boiled and would then be siphoned off with a wooden spoon (Davis, 1992; Miller, 1995).

and lined with large rocks, under which a fire was lit to heat them. Grass, branches and leaves were placed over the rocks to protect the food from ash and dirt. Food, roots and bulbs were then placed either directly on the vegetation layer, or put in bags or woven trays. This layer was covered over with more grass, branches and leaves. The pit was covered with earth, and another fire was usually kindled on top. A small hole would be made in the pit by holding a long stick upright as the layers of the pit were built around it. When the stick was removed, water could be poured down the hole and when it hit the hot rocks at the bottom of the pit, steam would be created to cook the food. This hole would then be plugged and the food would be left to cook for several hours or overnight. The pit-steaming method was an excellent means of infusing foods, such as lichens, that were edible yet naturally unpleasant tasting, with more agreeable flavours¹⁴ (Turner, 1997).

Wind-drying, sun-drying, and smoking all helped to preserve foods for storage over long periods of time. These three methods removed moisture from foods so that mildew, souring, rot or decay would not occur. To wind-dry, pieces of meat or fish would be filleted, scored, and then hung on racks for a week or two. Winds would remove sufficient moisture so that the food could be stored and then reconstituted by boiling or roasting. It could also be eaten raw. Similarly, berries, fish and meat were laid out in the sun for a period of time to dry so that they could be stored over the winter months and reconstituted as needed. Jerky, especially among Prairie cultures, was made by thinly slicing meat across the grain and placing it on a long pole to dry in the sun. The

¹⁴ For example, pungently flavoured bulbs or roots, such as liquorice or wild onions, could be placed within the layers of a pit-oven. Throughout the cooking process the strong flavours from these bulbs and roots would be released, infusing foods with a more delicious taste (Turner and Kuhnlein, 1997).

pieces of meat were then flattened and packed in rawhide containers (Carlson, 1998; Cox and Jacobs, 1991). Pemmican is one of the best known dried and compacted foods that originated among the First Nations of the Prairies. According to Paul Carlson,

Women preserved some meat as pemmican. To produce it they took sundried slices of meat and pounded them fine with a maul and mixed the resulting product with melted fat, bone marrow, suet, and dry paste from wild berries, cherries, or plums that had been crushed, pits and all. For flavor they might add walnuts, pecans, or other nuts, and they stored the mixture in skin bags, in large intestines, or in paunches. They sometimes used melted tallow to make the container air tight. Pemmican would keep for years. Warriors carried it while on a raid, and children ate it as a snack. But more often women saved it for winter use, and ... it became an important item of trade with whites. (1998, p. 56-57)

Variations of pemmican, using different types of meat and fish were also made in other geographic regions. For example, on the Northwest Coast salmon would be dried and pulverized into a powder that would then be mixed with dried Saskatoon berries (Turner, 1997).

In areas where winters were long, drying berries was important to ensure that vegetable protein was available over these cold and barren months. Native people would mash up and dry berries and other fruit into patties or leave fruits to dry whole on their own, to be stored for later use (Cox and Jacobs, 1991). Saskatoons are probably the most commonly used berries on the Prairies. Turner and Kuhnlein explain that,

Saskatoons could be eaten in their dried state as a snack, reconstituted by soaking in water, or cooked in various dishes. The Blackfoot used large quantities of them in soups and stews. Assiniboin people harvested the berries at the end of the season when prairie turnip roots were dug, then mixed together the fresh berries with dried prairie turnips, dried the mixture and stored it for winter. (1991, p. 235)

Among Northwest Coast people berries would be dried alone, or cooked, mashed up, and spread onto layers of branches and grass or woven mats to dry as cakes (Wyatt, 1998; Turner and Kuhnlein, 1997). Sometimes the juice produced from cooking berries was drizzled over the berry cakes, solidifying and giving the cakes a jelly-like consistency.

These cakes were eaten as they were, or re-hydrated by soaking them overnight in water or in eulachon oil (Turner, 1997; Powers, 2003).

Smoking was accomplished in a number of different ways including placing food around an open fire or, in some cases, in an enclosed “smoke house,” which would intensify the smoke flavour and speed up the cooking process. Smoke was created using green or fresh wood which does not burn well, but creates smoke when placed on a fire. A multitude of flavours could be attained by using different types of wood, such as, maple, birch, or apple. For example, in the Maritime region “still today a favourite food among the Micmac, [eels] were roasted or boiled and eaten fresh; quantities were also smoked for the winter” (Miller, 1995, p. 352). According to Davis, eels were usually smoked on rock-maple sticks,¹⁵ as this was the only method that would infuse the proper flavour (Davis, 1992).

Another means of food preparation was fermentation. Dishes prepared by Plateau cooks included sun-dried, smoked or fermented salmon roe. Fermentation was achieved by placing the roe in birchbark baskets that were then buried for several months. When the fermented eggs were recovered they were boiled in water with roots. Plateau cooks used berries to enhance the flavour of the foods they ate. According to Nancy Turner, “[m]any elders recall that people often mixed sweet berries with sour or bitter ones: an equal measure of Saskatoon Berries made Red-Osier Dogwood berries much more palatable” (1997, p. 27).

The eulachon, a small oily smelt was also particularly important to Northwest Coast people. Because it was so rich in oil, it was not possible to dry this fish. Instead it would be caught in great quantities, left to ferment or “ripen” for a short while and then

¹⁵ A branch from a maple tree with sap running through it.

cooked in large wooden boxes using the hot-rock method to extract its sought after and abundant oil. Eulachon oil or “grease” was, and still is, an important condiment, used to enhance the flavour of salmon, berries, and many other foods on the coast. It was also used as a preservative and a prized trade item and potlatch gift (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004; Turner, 1995).

In all parts of the country food was also cooked by roasting on split sticks over a fire or by laying items out on a flat rock in a fire. Baking was done by placing items of food, usually wrapped in bark, thick leaves, or seaweed into hot embers (Turner, 1995; Davis, 1992; Cox and Jacobs, 1991; Kennedy and Bouchard, 1983; Waugh, 1916).

Exploring the rich culinary traditions of Native people has illustrated the innovation and resourcefulness involved in cooking food. Aboriginal people fashioned cooking vessels and implements using only the raw materials that nature provided. Furthermore, they manipulated food to make it more edible by, for example, breaking it down with a pestle and mortar, sun-drying, wind-drying, freezing, and smoking it. They also found creative ways to make the food flavourful, such as smoking it with various kinds of bark and wood, and adding berries, ground nuts, and sap to infuse sweetness. Clearly, these examples of how foods were elaborated to enhance their flavours suggests that Native people were not unreflexive about what they were consuming. That is, Native people were not just eating to survive; they were eating to stimulate and satisfy a particular sense – they were eating to taste!

Spiritual and Social Significance of Food among Native Cultures

Historically, Native groups in Canada exhibited a strong spirituality and complex social structures. While the parameters of this paper inhibit me from exploring these often

elaborate and multifaceted areas of Native life in detail, I do want to mention that food was an integral component of their spiritual and social world.

Because endeavours in acquiring food were often arduous, and people were at the mercy of variable weather conditions and the changing seasons, Native people practiced many ceremonies to ensure their success in food production and acquisition. For example, among the Mi'kmaq, "eat all" feasts were held "before a hunting party set out; at such feasts, all available food was consumed, certainly indicating the optimism felt by hunters and non-hunters alike regarding the likelihood of bringing home game" (Miller, 1995, p. 358). Because wild rice was so important to Anishnabeg people, they practiced "first fruits" ceremonies to give thanks for the first crops of wild rice. This would appease the creator to ensure that the crops would be successful the following year (Ritzenhaler, 1978; Weiner, 1972). Among Subarctic cultures, hunting was not just necessary to survival it was, according to anthropologist Frank Speck, a "holy occupation" (1977, p.72). Many religious concepts in the Subarctic were centred around great respect for animals and the hunter's quest to obtain spirit helpers (McMillan and Yellowhorn, 2004). Major Plateau rituals included the first-foods ceremonies that celebrated, for example, "the first salmon and first roots and berries of the spring and early summer." (Walker, 1998, p. 6). These ceremonies were important to ensure that berry and fish harvests would be successful the following year (Walker, 1998).

Among some cultures, if a specific food item was integral to their survival the spirit of the animal or the food item itself became integrated into the community's spiritual practices. DeMaille explains that among Prairie cultures dependence on the buffalo was so great that it contributed to almost every aspect of their lives: "the hides for

making clothing, shelter, containers; the bones and horns for tools; hair for ropes; dried dung for fuel; and the spirit of the animal as an important part of religious life” (DeMallie, 2001, p. 6).

Among the Iroquoians the entire ceremonial cycle was deeply embedded within the cycles of agriculture and hunting and gathering. According to anthropologist William Fenton, the Iroquoians lived according to ecological time, or rather a “yearly round of activities that synchronized a hunting and gathering cycle with a maize cycle” (1978, p. 300). Fenton has shown that “these activities were keyed to a lunar calendar divided into four seasons and marked by a calendric cycle of ceremonies” (Fenton, 1978, p. 300).

Cox and Jacobs elaborate,

The annual ceremonial cycle began with the Maple Festival in early spring, followed by a Planting Festival. The Strawberry Festival celebrated the small, new wild strawberries that were a particular delicacy and harbinger of spring. Contemporary Iroquois communities still drink wild strawberry juice at ceremonies. The Green Corn Ceremony marked the emergence of the first ears of corn. The immature “milk” corn was scraped from the cob and eaten. There was a Harvest Festival in the fall, and finally, in early February, the Midwinter Ceremony ... (1991, p.55)

Living by these cycles of hunting, gathering, farming, and ceremonial practices ensured success in Iroquoian subsistence activities.

Particularly among Northwest Coast tribes or communities, food was a central component of their complex social structures. Within tribes there were class divisions, as well as several communal kin groups. Each of these kin groups owned the rights to myths, crests, songs, and titles, as well as the rights to “real property.” Real property included among other things, a number of resource sites, such as berry patches, herring spawning places, clover root-fields and fishing areas. Claims to these resource sites were hereditary and based on group membership (Codere, 1990; Boas, 1966). Ownership of property was an important means of establishing social status, and owning the rights to a

productive resource site increased a group's prestige. The potlatch was an elaborate feast held among Northwest Coast groups. As previously mentioned, the potlatch announced and legitimized a number of important events, such as birth, marriage, death and also the inheritance of rights, including property rights (Powers, 309).

While I have only briefly examined the relationship between food and both the spiritual and social life of Native people, it is clear that food was deeply embedded within all aspects of Native life. When the Europeans began to arrive in Canada, the range of available food products and cooking methods expanded greatly. However, as we will see, this increased repertoire came with a cost, as colonialism forever altered traditional ways of eating and cooking among Native people.

Colonialism and Changes in Native Food Traditions

As previously discussed, the arrival of Europeans to what is now known as Canada was not initially problematic, and in fact early relations were even characterized by co-operation. Bannock or fry bread, which is still widely consumed by many First Nations today, is one food that developed out of these initial interactions between Native people and Europeans. While there are many different theories as to how bannock was developed, the probable origin is thought to be through the introduction of *bannach*¹⁶ by Scottish fur traders, hunters, trappers and adventurers. The introduction of objects such as metal pots, kettles, and guns, greatly reduced the work involved in not only acquiring food, but also in cooking and preserving it. According to Dickason, "[t]he two trade items that Amerindians had quickly adopted, the metal axe and cooking pot, continued to be much in demand; in the eyes of coastal Indians the copper kettle was the most valuable

¹⁶ *Bannach* is a Gaelic word for an oatmeal or barley flatbread. It was introduced "to Native peoples and it became a staple of company men [Hudson's Bay and Northwest Companies] and their Indian guides and wives on the onerous treks through the Canadian wilderness" (Gairns and George Jr., 1997, p. 18).

of European trade items” (Dickason, 2002, p. 138). Additionally, just as the introduction of new materials such as glass beads and silk ribbons had expanded Native aesthetic repertoires, the introduction of new plant foods widened the range of potential culinary creations. For example, as Mary-Ellen Kelm has written, “Spanish visitors planted gardens at Nootka Sound, which continued to seed themselves long after their departure. The potato was introduced by the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Langley in the 1830s, and its cultivation was spread throughout the area” (1998, p. 25). With the fur-trade, as long as Native people kept fur production at the necessary levels, there was no desire to alter Aboriginal ways of life. In fact, fur-trade personnel relied heavily on Indigenous food for their survival. However, as it did in almost every other aspect of Aboriginal life, the colonial drive of Church and State eventually had a profound and lasting impact on the foodways of Native people. According to Kelm,

...[e]arlier in the [nineteenth] century, medical officials viewed indigenous foods with disdain, discouraging their use, calling them unhealthy, as one Gitwinksihlkw elder remembers. Native foods, it seemed, were part of an Aboriginal lifestyle that was viewed by missionaries, educators, and doctors as diseased and inferior. In residential schools, teachers taught children to dislike their own foods and inculcated them with the poor eating habits of a non-Native institution. Through health education and personal pressure, health officials pushed First Nations families to adopt European-style food. (1998, p. 36)

Reminiscent of negative constructions of the “Other,” used by colonialists to create “flattering” and “legitimizing” depictions of themselves (Jacobs, 1996), Europeans employed doctors and health officials to create images of Native foodways as diseased and inferior. By constructing Native eating habits as unhealthy and repulsive, Europeans were able to assert domination through policies of assimilation and civilization that impacted on traditional food acquisition and consumption. Colonial policies that altered traditional means of subsistence were further advanced by the creation of reserves.

According to Kelm, “[d]uring the second half of the nineteenth century, increasing discontent among First Nations was expressed regarding the nature and the size of their ‘reserves’ (1998, p. 27). Native people were dissatisfied because “reserves were insufficient to sustain food production through agriculture or ranching and ... the processes of alienating the rest of their traditional lands to non-Natives meant that hunting and trapping territories were diminished” (Kelm, 1998, p. 27-28). Essentially, colonial policies, such as the reserve systems, imposed on Native people an inability to continue living as they always had, by the seasons and by using their surroundings to sustain themselves.

Conclusion

While many of the foods that have been explored in this chapter are familiar to the Canadian culinary repertoire (salmon, moose, wild rice, berries, maple syrup), the historical means of their acquisition and preparation are quite different from what they are today. In an analysis of over one hundred Kwakwaka’wakw recipes collected by anthropologist Franz Boas and his counterpart George Hunt in the early 1900s, anthropologist Aldona Jonaitis has written,

...[t]hese recipe ... describe Kwakwaka’wakw food at a critical moment in history, after a century of interactions with settlers, and before a period of intense cultural repression by Canadian authorities and constitute a baseline upon which twentieth century culinary developments can be evaluated. (Jonaitis, 2003)

Because there has not been a comparably thorough examination of recipes of other Aboriginal cultures in Canada, it is not possible to capture as accurately as Jonaitis, this “critical” moment in history for other First Nations. While the information presented here reflects an earlier period in history, it is meant to serve as a template for tracking the developments of Native culinary traditions over the past couple of centuries. As we have

already seen, artistic expression has long been a fundamental part of the expression of Aboriginal identities. This chapter revealed that foodways have also been an integral element of Aboriginal life. Additionally, early exchange of raw materials between Natives and Europeans expanded Native aesthetic repertoires and artistic productions. Similarly, trade with Europeans for items such as metal pots and staple foods (flour, baking soda) forever altered the way in which Native peoples would cook and eat. When both Church and State embarked on campaigns of cultural genocide, all aspects of Native ways of life, including their foods, were viewed with repugnance. Jonaitis has written that “the colonial record is replete with expressions of disgust and repulsion of the taste and smell of unusual substances” (Jonaitis, 2003, p. 22). This is significant because these similarities between the history of art and of food within Native cultures, suggest a historically-based logic for including cuisine within the range of aesthetic mediums used by Native people to assert contemporary identities and resist the colonial legacy. In the following chapter I will discuss the achievements of contemporary Aboriginal chefs. By employing the five post-colonial themes developed in chapter one (self-representation, authenticity, hybridity, appropriation, and cultural continuity and survival) to explore contemporary Native culinary arts, it will become evident how the culinary skills of Native chefs, rooted as they are in history and tradition, demonstrate a resistance to colonialism, and a celebration of modern Aboriginal identities.

THE MAIN COURSE: CONTEMPORARY FIRST NATIONS CULINARY ARTS

In Chapter One, I applied five principles of analysis drawn from post-colonial theory to discuss a broad range of contemporary First Nations artistic expressions. In Chapter Two the innovation and creativity involved in the traditional preparation of food was examined, revealing the historically intimate relationship that Native people had with the food they ate. Also included was a discussion of how colonialism impacted upon the traditional foodways of Native people. In this chapter I will examine the thriving industry of culinary arts among First Nations, and illustrate why this medium ought to be numbered among other forms of Aboriginal aesthetic expression. Further, I will demonstrate how the culinary arts have served as, and continue to offer a potential sight of resistance against the colonial legacy in Canada. I will begin by discussing the successes of the Canadian Native Haute Cuisine team, who won an unprecedented number of medals at the IKA World Culinary Olympics¹ in Frankfurt, Germany in 1992.

Upon returning from the Olympics, team members were filled with a newfound pride in their unique culinary abilities, and set out to establish a place for Native haute cuisine in Canada. The numerous achievements of various team members have provided the catalyst for a new generation of young Native chefs and restaurateurs to blossom. Among these successes are two high-end Aboriginal restaurants in Canada, a multitude of Aboriginal catering businesses, a Native cooking program on the Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN), and a Native haute cuisine cookbook. Furthermore, community colleges are beginning to add Aboriginal cuisine to their chef training programs and Aboriginal organizations are starting to develop culinary arts programs

¹ IKA is the acronym for Internationale Kochkunst Aussetzung (IKA) meaning World Culinary Olympics in German. Herein, referred to as The World Culinary Olympics or just the Culinary Olympics.

specifically for Native youth. More young Native people are choosing cooking as their vocation, and succeeding in their endeavors, as they respond to public demand for a unique and innovative approach to cuisine. From July through October, 2005, I had the opportunity to talk with some of the people involved in the Aboriginal culinary arts today. These individuals included Shawn Adler, chef and owner of Aasmaabik's Bakery and Bistro; Robert Gairns, co-author of *Feast! Canadian Native Cuisine for all Seasons*, Danielle Medina, co-organizer Canadian Native Haute Cuisine Team; Bertha Skye, team member of the Canadian Native Haute Cuisine team; Chef Brian Skye; Phoebe Sutherland, owner of Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro; and Dolly Watts, owner of Liliget Feast House – all of whom shared with me their experiences of Native haute cuisine. After discussing the *au courant* activity in Native haute cuisine, I will apply the post-colonial concepts developed in Chapter One (self-representation, authenticity, hybridity, appropriation, and cultural continuity and survival) to an analysis of contemporary Canadian First Nations culinary arts. Through this analysis I will explore how Native chefs, like Native artists working in other mediums, are using their creative skills to express cultural persistence, and assert their contemporary Indigenous identities.

The Olympic Journey of the Canadian Native Haute Cuisine Team

Winning a medal at the World Culinary Olympics is one of the pinnacles of success for those with a passion for cooking. First conceived by a group of German chefs in 1896, the Culinary Olympics was envisioned as “an international cooking event that would cross language barriers and communicate world trends in cuisine” (World Association of Cooks (WAC), n.d., para. 3). These chefs believed that through this competition “tourism in their country could be brought to a new level if people became

more aware of the quality of cuisine in their homeland” (WAC, n.d., para. 3). The first ever Culinary Olympics was held in Germany in 1900 with four nations competing in a cooking contest at the Frankfurt Fairgrounds. Today, more than 13,000 chefs from over fifty different countries participate, making it the oldest and largest cooking competition in the world (WAC, n.d.).

In the early 1990s, The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC)² began developing a number of Aboriginal initiatives, and hired Métis Robert Gairns³ as a consultant on these projects. Gairns, along with the president of the CTC, joined forces with Albert Diamond, the founder of Oudeheemin Foods⁴ and Danielle Medina, President and CEO of Medina Foods⁵. These four individuals, in consultation with Chef Georges Chauvet⁶, met to consider developing a Canadian Native Haute Cuisine Team for the Culinary Olympics. The organizers and sponsors wanted the team to represent the different First Nations communities across the country in order to showcase Canada’s diversity (Medina, 2005). At the time, in the early 1990s, there were very few Aboriginal chefs in Canada, making it difficult to find the desired variety among them, let alone the adequate number of chefs needed to even form a team. However, after sending out a call for participation to restaurants nation-wide, advertising the need for Aboriginal chefs, and

² “A crown corporation of the federal government, the Canadian Tourism Commission works in partnership with the country’s tourism industry to increase awareness of and interest in Canada as a four-season tourism destination” (Canadian Tourism Commission Website, n.d., para. 1).

³ Today Robert Gairns works for the Congress of Aboriginal People. However, he traveled with the team to Frankfurt, Germany as communications advisor and writer. He has also co-written a book with Chef Andrew George Jr. entitled *Feast!: Canadian Native Cuisine for all Seasons* (1997).

⁴ Oudeheemin Foods was a company owned by the Cree of the province of Québec. They were involved in promoting Aboriginal food and cuisine, however they are no longer in operation and were unavailable to comment on their participation with the Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team.

⁵ A Montreal based company that “specializes in food quality and safety standards and auditing for airline caterers and food producers” (Medina Foods, n.d., para. 1).

⁶ Chef Georges Chauvet is a Canadian multi-time Culinary Olympic gold medal winner.

with a little help from the “Moccasin Telegraph,”⁷ the organizers eventually arrived at a list of five Native chefs from across the country – the minimum needed to enter a team into the competition. Fortunately, all five individuals jumped at the chance to participate. The team consisted of Arnold Olson, a Cree from Saskatchewan, Bryan Sappier⁸, Mi’kmaq/Malicate from New Brunswick, Bertha Skye, a Cree living with her Cayuga husband at Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario, Andrew George Jr., Wet’suwet’en from British Columbia, and team captain David Wolfman, Sto:lo, from the interior of British Columbia, originally from Toronto, Ontario. Once the team was assembled, the chefs underwent an intensive six-month training period under the tutelage of the team’s co-organizer and manager Chef Chauvet. Reminiscing on this journey, Andrew George explained,

[n]one of us ... had ever faced the intense pressures of competing against so many outstanding chefs from around the world, and most of us considered the invitation to participate reward enough. But Chef Chauvet, a demanding yet loving taskmaster, reinforced our personal desire to work hard, to do our best. He gave us reason to believe we really had the talent to go for the gold. (1997, p. 10)

Following the intensive training period, the team was ready to set out for Frankfurt. Chef Andrew George spoke about this experience, recalling, “we packed our new chef’s whites with the Canadian Native Haute Cuisine Team crest that we were so proud of. It was almost like organizing an army to go into battle” (1997, p. 10). Going to the Olympics seemed to be “a dream come true” for the entire team, including Bertha Skye who recounted the following:

It’s really hard to believe that, you know we were so poor growing up ... we were always picking berries, always working. We’d see a jet going by, and [would say] “some day when I grow up I’m going to ride on one of those” ... and going over the Atlantic Ocean,

⁷ According to Gairns and George Jr., the moccasin telegraph is the “Native gossip hotline” (Gairns and George, 1997, p. 9).

⁸ Chef Bryan Sappier is the only Chef from the Aboriginal Haute Cuisine Team that I have been unable to locate or find any recent information about.

I couldn't believe it. And the experience getting there, we were treated so good in Germany ... they kept doing interviews with me and of course I had my buck skin dress on and ... that was on the front page in Germany. (2005)

In the early 1990s following the Oka crisis, relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada were tumultuous to say the least. This reality compelled some participants to get involved for reasons other than a passion for cooking. Danielle Medina spoke to me about why she wanted to be involved with this project.

I think that the reason that we put [the team] together was because at the [time] there was a lot of ... difficulty between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal [people] in Canada. Also there was a saying that the ... two cultures [Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal] are two parallels that will never meet. So if you look at the logo of the Aboriginal [Haute] Cuisine [team], it [represents] the two parallel[s] crossing each other in the form of a tipi [and] underneath was a [cooking] pot, because we [felt] that it is through food that you discover and understand a culture better, beside the fact that eating together is a social event, where everybody can exchange about who they are and what they do and you know ... an ability to discover another culture would be through haute cuisine, through the cuisine itself. (Medina, 2005).

The team organizers envisioned that each team member would submit traditional recipes from their respective regions, and then with the help of Chef Chauvet, transform these traditional foods into haute cuisine. The team's entries included five seven-course meals, each influenced by the chefs' diverse regional backgrounds. Describing the public's reaction to the team's food, Gairns and George recalled that "thousands of discerning visitors who saw the creations so beautifully displayed were awestruck at what Canada's Native team could do with moose, caribou, salmon, Arctic char, wild berries and all the other ingredients indigenous to our country" (1997, p. 13). In her interview, Bertha Skye recounted some of the events that took place at the competition:

...there were all kinds of people right around our table at all times trying to look at our food. We had chocolate sculptures you know, chocolate eagles, and we [had] beavers, and really nice carvings, these guys can really carve chocolate sculptures. And we had our hors d'oeuvres ... and I couldn't believe it they looked so nice. And I remember our first gold medal, it was a leg of rabbit and fiddleheads on a plate, and I don't know if anyone ever entered rabbit before ... it won a gold medal. And of course we have so much to offer when it comes to fish. We have so much to offer the world, like fish from

all the great lakes ... and Atlantic salmon, and salmon from the west coast ... We had so much to offer the world, it's just amazing. (2005)

George and Gairns have written that, "in the end it was the 'uniqueness, creativity and honest simplicity' of our team's platters that captured the respect and admiration of the judges" (1997, p. 13). When the Olympic competition was over the Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team had won seven gold medals, two silver, and two bronze. Medina recalled that they fared far better than any other country:

The uniqueness of this team ... it surprised a lot of other countries ... of course you would have the usual ... France for example, it would be a display of French cuisine with a little bit of innovation, but that [the Aboriginal team] was innovation. To have Aboriginal [people] that cook according to their community ... Bertha Skye to talk about the different communities in Ontario, and display products that come from her environment, and then you would have Andrew George that would talk about B.C. ... and you would have the sculpture that would match with that, it was unique, so yes, they outdid the other countries, they won over 14,000 chefs and I can't remember how many countries ... but it was huge, huge, huge ... (2005)

According to Colette Copeland, what the Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team did was "bring traditional Native ways of cooking up to date and produce a style called Nouvelle Aboriginal cuisine" (n.d., p. 1). Furthermore, the achievements of this one group of chefs at the Culinary Olympics, and their continued success in their respective endeavours, sends a positive message to Aboriginal people about the talents and possibilities within their own communities. Here, I will briefly discuss the activities of the winning group of Native chefs since the time of the competition, and how they have used their success to mobilize Aboriginal communities, and in some cases, non-Natives as well, to value the richness and diversity of Native cooking.

The Native Haute Cuisine Team after the Olympics

In 1994 Chef David Wolfman introduced the first ever Aboriginal Cuisine program to George Brown College's School of Hospitality, in Toronto, as part of the

college's Chef Training program. Today he continues to instruct Aboriginal culinary arts at George Brown College, while hosting his own Native cooking show – *Cooking with the Wolfman*, which debuted on APTN in 1999, and is now in its sixth season. The show, touted as featuring “Aboriginal Fusion: traditional foods with a modern twist” (Cooking With the Wolfman Website (CWW), n.d., n.a.), exposes the entire nation to the dynamic, versatile, and delicious foods of First Nations people.

In 1995, Chef Arnold Olson prepared an Aboriginal meal for the seven Heads of State at the G7 summit meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Olson also worked at the Parliamentary Restaurant on Parliament Hill before opening his own catering business in Ottawa, Ontario in 1997 – Aboriginal Catering Services. Most recently, Chef Olson took his Aboriginal culinary skills to Washington to cook for the opening of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian (von Baeyer, 2002).

Chef Andrew George returned to his catering business following the Olympics; however, after a couple of years, he felt that it was necessary to document his experience as well as share Aboriginal cuisine and culture with as many people as possible. Sharing this sentiment, Robert Gairns, who had become a close friend of George's throughout the Olympic experience, collaborated with him in the production of an Aboriginal cookbook. In 1996 the two published, *Feast! Canadian Native Cuisine For All Seasons*. Figures 12-13 are examples of the beautiful images of the food and recipes found in their cookbook. Chef George has also worked as a trainer with other Culinary Olympic teams in Montréal in 1993, 1994, and 1996. Today, he is developing his own cooking show while working with the Wet'suwet'en Nation on land use planning (National Gathering on Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism (CGATC), n.a., 2003).

Figure 12: Spirit Braid Seafood Platter. (Gairns and George, 1997, p.23)

Figure 13: Pan-Fried Rabbit with Wild Cranberry Glaze. (Gairns and George, 1997, p. 123)

Figure 14: Pacific Salmon and Atlantic Fiddlehead Stir-Fry. (Gairns and George, 1997, p. 58).

Upon returning from the Olympics, Bertha Skye had hoped to stay home and be a grandmother. However, following her success at the Culinary Olympics, she was seen as a role model by her community, and urged to share her gift:

I didn't go to the Culinary Olympics to be rich, famous, or greedy. I've been given hands to work and I'll keep working as long as I can. But one day I was ready to quit. The chief came to me and said, "Bertha, you can't quit now. We'll fund you to train three people and they can assist you when you have a speaking engagement." That is how I began a chef's training program in the Woodland Cultural Centre. It was formerly a residential school built in the last century ... Tours come to the centre and we cook a hot lunch of native foods. I find it very exciting to be teaching others about my native foods and letting others taste our cuisine. (1995, p. 118)

At the Woodland Cultural Centre Bertha not only taught cooking, she also started a catering business where she served community events. Bertha has also written an article entitled "Traditional Cree and Iroquois Foods" that appeared in *Northern Bounty: a Celebration of Canadian Cuisine* (1995), edited by Anita Stewart and Joanne Power. Today, Bertha is 73 years old and travels regularly to Saskatchewan to speak at conferences on Aboriginal health. She also continues to teach Aboriginal cooking to low-income mothers at the Woodland Cultural Centre.

While the Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team may have been among the first to introduce Native culinary arts to the world, many others have since chosen this vocation, galvanizing interest in Native cuisine across Canada.

Recent Trends in Aboriginal Culinary Arts

Bertha Skye's son Brian was taught to cook traditional food by his grandmother, and later used these skills to help his mother with her catering business. Eventually he studied cooking at Georgian College. When I spoke to him in August he had just returned to Six Nations from Québec City where he was conducting Native cooking demonstrations at the Canada Pavillion at Expo City, something he has been doing for the

past three years. Most recently he served as the head chef at a “makeshift” fine dining Native restaurant called “Origins,” that was set up on a giant stage in the centre of the field at the Skydome in Toronto, Ontario as part of the Canadian Aboriginal Festival that was held in November of 2005. The menu was inspired by the origins of Aboriginal foods in Canada (Bain, 2005).

While Dolly Watts (Git’ksan) was not on the Olympic team, she is one of the oldest and most beloved Aboriginal chefs in this country. Dolly Watts’ Liliget⁹ Feast House, located in Vancouver, British Columbia, was one of the first Aboriginal restaurants to open in North America. In her biography she discussed some of the challenges that faced her community, and their resistance to government efforts to obliterate Native culture:

... [t]he family into which I was born was strong. I am Git’ksan from the house of Ghu’sen, at Gitsegukela, B.C., the 10th of 14 children. [My grandparents] lived during the time change. The government had set boundaries around their village and made laws that forbade the celebration of their culture. They and others from the village fought to keep our culture alive. They continued to hold feasts despite the threats of imprisonment. I saw the great dances, reenactment’s of stories and heard chiefs speak. (in Stewart, 1999, para. 5)

The persistence of her family and community has been embedded into Watts’ character and colours the way in which she has lived her life. During her studies at the University of British Columbia, she ran a bannock stand on campus called “Grandma’s Bannock.” There was so much demand for her delicious bannock that she started a catering company called “Just Like Grandma’s Bannock,” the success of which led her to open the Liliget Feast House in 1995. In 2001, Watts was the recipient of an Aboriginal Achievement Award and has been referred to as a Woman Warrior (Stewart, 1999). She has also

⁹ Git’ksan for “place where people feast.” The Liliget Feast House was originally the Quilicum Restaurant before Dolly Watts purchased it in 1995, and changed its name.

received a number of Aboriginal business awards and is involved in developing Aboriginal business and tourism. While Liliget was the first business of its kind in Canada, more recently a different type of Aboriginal restaurant opened in Ottawa, Ontario.

Known for its trendy, urban fare, The Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro opened in 2003 and is owned and operated by Phoebe Sutherland – a Mistissini Cree, and her Jamaican husband Warren Sutherland. The menu at Sweetgrass changes with the seasons – “just as natives ate whatever the land proffered each season, the menus reflect this by also changing seasonally” (Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro Website (SGW), n.a., n.d.). The menu features Aboriginal cuisine from across the continent. For example, the fall menu this year included starters such as Northern game bird consommé, mixed green salad with Inuit crowberry tea and lemon vinaigrette. “In Betweens” as they call them, included such items as Pheasant pie with grilled Adobe bread and a cranberry citrus compote. Among the entrées were: Charbroiled Red Deer Chops with wild rice blend, summer vegetables, and a Saskatoon berry sauce, Canadian Maple & Aztec Chilpotle Duck, which is described as “glazed Mariposa duck legs, and savory smoked cornbread pudding and sautéed wild greens” (SGW, n.a., n.d.). The dessert selection included a Cloudberry Crème Brulée and Mom’s Indian Buudin¹⁰.

As a teenager in the 1980s, Sweetgrass co-owner Phoebe Sutherland moved with her family to Ottawa from her reserve near James Bay in Northern Québec. After high school she enrolled in the Hotel and Restaurant Management program at Ottawa’s Algonquin College. Phoebe seems to have always known that she wanted to create a restaurant that would celebrate Native cuisine, recalling, “my dad and I would always

¹⁰ A Cree dish that resembles bread pudding, it includes a mixture of flour, lard, currants, raisins and spices.

talk about [how] somebody should open a Native restaurant, [because] there is nothing like that around here and that would be great, so that's where the spark grew and that is when I went to hotel restaurant management" (Sutherland, 2005). After graduating from Algonquin College she attended the eminent New England Culinary Institute (NECI) in Vermont. There she honed her culinary skills and also met her future husband and business partner Warren. After completing their studies at NECI they moved to Phoenix Arizona, where they got to experience Southwestern Native cuisine. Less than a year later they moved to Ottawa to begin setting in motion Phoebe's dream of opening her Aboriginal Bistro. Sweetgrass has seen great success in its first couple of years, even winning Gold in the New Business of the Year category at the Ottawa Business Achievement Awards in 2004. Discussing her intimate relationship to food, Phoebe explained that cooking Aboriginal food is "kind of like a way to stay to my roots, and allows me to play around with what I grew up with and add some of my husband's Jamaican touches to our food" (2005).

Shawn Adler (Ojibwa/Jewish) is the owner of Aasmaabik's¹¹ Bakery and Bistro in Peterborough, Ontario. Although his restaurant does not feature exclusively Aboriginal cuisine, he does offer some occasional Aboriginal specials, and also does catering for the Native Studies program at Trent University and for weddings and other gatherings at reserves in the surrounding area. Adler grew up in Orangeville, Ontario, but spent summers at the Lac Des Milles Lac reserve near Thunder Bay, Ontario, where his mother grew up. Shawn was inspired to become a chef by a great instructor who taught a cooking course at his high school and from there he went on to study at the Stratford Chefs School in Stratford, Ontario. After graduating, Shawn moved to Peterborough to

¹¹ Aasmaabik's is Adler's name in Ojibwa, meaning "the face of the rock."

attend Trent University where he did a Bachelors degree in Native Studies. There, he says “[I] ended up doing a whole bunch of papers on Aboriginal foods because I was in the Native Studies program and I had a background in cooking so it was just sort of my interest” (Adler, 2005). While studying at Trent Shawn was given the opportunity to work on the television program, *Cooking with the Wolfman*, where he learned about traditional Native cooking methods and foods.

Adler and the other young Native chefs discussed in this chapter were all classically trained in the manner of European haute cuisine, with little exposure to Native culinary traditions. While they were all fortunate enough to have gained experience in Native cooking through family members, and experience working with other Native people, they were not able to study Native cuisine within a recognized institution. However, changes are currently underway. A number of community colleges in Canada have realized that their programs should include curricula that would appeal to Aboriginal students interested in the culinary arts. Chef David Wolfman was the first to introduce Aboriginal culinary arts to George Brown College, and now other colleges, such as Northwest College in Terrace, British Columbia have followed suit. Their First Nations cuisine course focuses on “cultural food customs, flavouring principles, and cookery styles” of the local First Nations people. The course description outlines the basic objectives of the class:

Typical First Nations food products and dishes will be prepared within the context of classical cookery methods. Indigenous plant identification, harvesting, and preparation techniques will be explored through field trips with expert First Nations guides. Students will also learn traditional methods of cutting, processing, curing and smoking game and seafood from local First Nations experts. (Northwest Community College Website, 2005, p. 4).

Aboriginal organizations and centres have also developed programs specifically for Aboriginal students to offer a more culturally appropriate learning atmosphere. The Klahow-eya Aboriginal Centre, run by the Surrey Aboriginal Cultural Society, offers a culinary arts program for Aboriginal youth, 17 years of age or older. The program “is a 23 week pre apprentice course which provides 12 students with a comprehensive understanding of basic culinary techniques uniquely integrated with traditional Aboriginal cooking methods, ingredients and practices” (*Now Newspaper*, n.a., 2004, p. 2). Troy Derrick, an instructor for the program says that “the food they’ll prepare is sort of a fusion of culinary styles with traditional aboriginal ingredients, like elk, venison, buffalo, wild rice or local berries, incorporated into existing cuisine, say a recipe like steak Diane¹²” (*Now Newspaper*, n.a., 2004, p. 2). The mission statement for the program is to “encourage individuals to develop their culinary potential in an environment of co-operation and respect” (Kla-how-eya Culinary Arts Program (KCAP), n.d. para. 1).

Unfortunately, some of these programs do not last long due to lack of funding, but certainly not because of lack of interest. That was the case for Musqueam Food Services, a program developed by The Musqueam Indian Band’s adult education program in Vancouver, British Columbia. When the program was conceived the Musqueam Band recognized that “First Nations food service is an important industry that is attracting more bright young Aboriginal entrepreneurs every day. For starters, First Nations cuisine is hip. And its increasing popularity means that more First Nations chefs are needed to prepare and present these culinary delights” (Musqueam First Nation (MFN), n.a., n.d., p. 1). The program was still in operation up until 2003, when the Musqueam Indian Band

¹² Steak Diane is a thin tenderloin steak sautéed with shallots, thyme, mustard, mushrooms, and cream. It is often prepared table side at fine dining restaurants and grand hotels.

reported that “almost three dozen young people [had] enrolled, most with the sponsorship of First Nations organizations, all with their eyes set on becoming professional cooks” (MFN, n.a., n.d., p.1). The program that the students followed was almost identical to the Culinary Arts program offered at Vancouver Community College (VCC) and students graduated with the same credentials as VCC students. As there was clearly a great interest expressed in the program, the fact that it did not survive due to lack of funding suggests the timeliness of this study and the need for further research into Aboriginal culinary arts in Canada.

Post-Colonial Analysis of First Nations Culinary Arts

Self-Representation

The theme of self-representation was fundamental to the analytical framework developed in Chapter One. Looking at this theme delineated how European colonialists constructed negative images of Native people in order to assert control and domination over their lives. These negative portrayals of Native people have been perpetuated over the years in Hollywood movies, dime store novels and television shows. As previously discussed, today Native artists such as Bill Powless in his *Indians' Summer* and Thomas King in *Green Grass, Running Water*, are creating new representations of Native people that are more illustrative of their contemporary realities. These self-representations include depictions of a people who have emerged from colonial oppression as confident and self-assured. Thus, through their work Native artists draw non-Native people into a dialogue, challenging them to rethink stereotypical portrayals of Native people in the media. Self-representation, then, is an equally significant concern among Aboriginal chefs and restaurateurs.

Phoebe Sutherland feels that her restaurant is a great way to teach non-Native people about Aboriginal culture, especially tourists. She relates that for non-Native people who come into her restaurant “they can realize that Aboriginal people can be out there competing with four star restaurants” (2005). She says that,

...when they [non-Native customers] come in here, they don't just come in to eat. They see art, they hear music, and [learn] a lot about our food, [because] our staff is able to explain where all this is from [and] ... we use a lot of Aboriginal words in our menu wording. So [those] kinds of things teach them where this is from or what that word means ... I think one of our main goals is to teach others about our culture. (2005)

Reflecting on Sweetgrass' contribution to improving public opinion about Native people through cuisine, Robert Gairns explains,

... I think that in a sense the image that some Canadians might have of Aboriginal people as being less than swift or less than rich, you know, they're just a bunch of drunks and winos ... and all this kind of thing. I think people are really surprised when they go into an upscale place like [Sweetgrass] and see how classy it is, you know, and how classy it can be. I mean, the whole idea of the décor itself, the food that's presented to people, the staff, the paintings on the wall of Aboriginal culture and scenes, I think it elevates people's impression of the Aboriginal community. I think it makes a very positive contribution in that way, in the sort of attitudinal side of things. I think it has some considerable effect on that. That's probably why there should be more of them in more cities in this country and I guess they're growing and there [will be] more. (2005)

Dolly Watts adds,

... they [non-Native people] think we're lazy and what not. But sometimes we get a big group to come in and eat and they see how we can serve the food so fast and it's so good, and everybody is racing around, like the cook and the chef ... you can see him through the window so you can watch him working ... there's just so much activity going on and I really like that. Because they imagine us as lazy and not doing anything, and I don't know how they think we live, but they get a chance to see us at work. And [because] I have a degree in anthropology and I took six years of English [both literature and writing], I can talk to them about our culture ... and they're so amazed at how I can make comparisons with different cultures ... I think it helps. (2005)

It is therefore not just the food that challenges people's stereotypical ideas about Natives, but the entire dining experience. Upon visiting an Aboriginal restaurant, patrons see Native people working hard and producing high quality food. Furthermore, they are inundated with aspects of Aboriginal culture, art, music, and cuisine, and given the

opportunity to ask questions to knowledgeable staff about Aboriginal history and contemporary Native life.

Reminiscent of Thomas King's fictional Dead Dog Café, both Sweetgrass and Liliget succeed in altering non-Native ideas about what might constitute real and authentic Native foods and culture. As Brian Skye noted, through his cooking demonstrations he is trying to make people see that Native culinary traditions were in fact more complex than has been depicted in popular media.

I try to ... let them [non-Natives] know what type of variety we had, Iroquois especially were primarily an agricultural group, a lot of their meals consisted of a vegetarian diet, meats were supplemental, but because of the vast farmlands ... a lot of our traditional recipes have the 18 essential amino acids that would sustain life, without having meat in them. And I try to let them know ... we weren't cavemen killing animals and stuff like that, our society was built upon agriculture. (2005)

Thus, Skye's cooking demonstrations show that Native foods and particularly Iroquois culinary traditions were based on a complex system of agriculture.

Similarly, in Gairns and Chef George's *Feast!*, the authors have aimed to create a teaching tool that will not only inspire Aboriginal youth, but also give non-Native people a chance to learn about Native life. George includes his own biography in the cookbook, allowing the reader to gain insight into the trials and triumphs and life experience of a young Wet'suwet'en boy. In the introduction to *Feast!*, George reflected,

I have been privileged to walk along a path where few others will set foot. In the tradition of my people I now have the obligation and honour to share my good fortune. That is why I have spent so much time travelling to talk with young Native children and students over the past couple of years, encouraging them to go for the gold in their own lives, regardless of the career path they choose.

It is also why Robert and I have written *Feast!* as something more than a standard cookbook. We hope that you the reader will gain a little more insight into the cultures and traditions of Aboriginal peoples throughout Canada, expressed from the Wet'suwet'en heart. (1997, p. 13)

As previously discussed, part of the colonialist goal in Canada was to obliterate Native culture. In order to do so Europeans employed health care professionals and

doctors to proclaim Native food as not only repulsive, but also unhealthy. Native people were led to believe that their foods were “diseased and inferior” (Kelm, 1998). Conversely, European foods and diet were promoted as purer and more healthful. Native chefs are trying to overturn and resist the negative associations attached to Native foods, showing that they are in fact healthy. Through speaking at conferences on Aboriginal health and working with low-income mothers, Bertha Skye seeks to show Native people in particular, that returning to traditional ways of eating are actually good for them, and less costly than processed, fast foods. She worries about young mothers and believes that teaching them how to cook traditional food will improve the health of her people.

So many people have gotten away from cooking, and they would much rather order a bucket of chicken or order McDonalds, and that’s not my way of eating. I’d rather cook a big pot of soup and feed my children and grandchildren ... and make bannock or bread ... mothers are a lot different today than mothers used to be. I think that’s why there is so much obesity in children ... Native children , non-Native children, and grown-ups, women, teenagers. (Skye, 2005)

Finally, Bertha said to me,

I think people have to go back to the way they used to eat ... look at diabetes, I mean its almost like an epidemic on the reserve, even little children have diabetes, and if we don’t do something about it now, today , we’re in deep trouble. I’m 73 and I don’t have diabetes, I think that has to do with the way I eat. (2005)

Through their restaurants and the food that they cook, Native chefs are able to show a side of Native culture seldom seen or understood by the non-Native population. Native people are cooking traditional foods as *they* envisage them to be today and presenting them to a dining public who are not only enjoying Aboriginal haute cuisine, but are also receiving a history lesson on Aboriginal culture. Native cuisine can be understood as a means of dismantling the colonial legacy in Canada. That is, despite European infringement onto their land, Native people have been able to maintain traditional ways of eating and have found new ways to adapt traditional foodways to

contemporary lifestyles and urban living. What makes these self-representations unique from those expressed in visual art, literature, film or music, is that Aboriginal ways of life literally become embodied through the five senses. However, the experience of eating Native cuisine may be complicated by the fact that many people who wish to eat at restaurants such as Liliget and Sweetgrass, may be looking for a more “authentic” or “exotic” Native experience.

Authenticity

As explored in Chapter One, the marketability of Native-made objects is often determined by how “authentic” a work of art is deemed to be by non-Native people. However, as with television programs, such as *Moccasin Flats*, Native artists are finding ways of expressing themselves through new technology and elements of popular culture. Native artists use, for example, film and television, to create works that are more reflective of contemporary realities. The television drama *Moccasin Flats* was explored as it speaks to the fact that Native people do not have to portray themselves as “culturally correct” individuals, but rather, can be urban and trendy. Native culinary artists are also taking strides to show how their food is not only marketable to mainstream consumers, but also uniquely “Aboriginal.” That is, Native chefs are creating dishes that appeal to even the most discriminating of modern day palates, but that are still unique and distinctly representative of Aboriginal culture today. For instance, Chef Arnold Olson featured Caribou Bruschetta and Bison Carpaccio on his menu for the opening of the Smithsonian Institute’s new Museum of the American Indian. Carpaccio is made from a prime cut of meat, such as loin or fillet, usually of beef. The meat is seared quickly so it is very rare and then thinly sliced. Carpaccio is a popular menu item at many high-end

restaurants and it is also a favourite dish of celebrity chefs such as Jamie Oliver from *The Naked Chef*, featured on the popular Food Television Network and touted as being “on the cutting edge of modern life and modern cooking” (Food Television Network Website, n.d., n.a., para. 1). Native chefs have to be innovative to keep up with the current trends in the food industry, while simultaneously asserting unique Aboriginality in their dishes. Sutherland explained that this was one of her greatest challenges,

... when you see all these trendy restaurants going up, especially right now its just incredible ... we [have] survived some of the ones that popped up [since] we first opened ... everything is very modern, very urban ... but when people come here ... we’ve heard several comments, like “this is our new favourite restaurant.” (2005)

Thus, Sutherland and Olson as well as other Aboriginal chefs are meeting the public demands by keeping up on current culinary trends. Similar to contemporary Native music that features traditional elements mixed with modern stylings, such as the work of War Party, Kashtin or Lawrence Martin, Native chefs are creating a cuisine that also appeals to a wider audience. Furthermore, because Aboriginal chefs are often seen as role models within the Native community, their cuisine can inspire pride in not only Aboriginal youth, but in the wider Aboriginal community. For example, Sutherland who is considered a role model in her community, says “[it] is great. I never thought that people would look at me this way, you know, I am just doing my job kind of thing [and] it’s quite flattering to be looked at this way and being asked to speak at youth conferences and stuff like that, it’s an honour” (2005). In an article by Tracey Deer, featured in the *Nation*¹³, Sutherland was profiled as one of four women of great strength. Deer has written that Phoebe “is especially proud that her restaurant and its success are a positive reflection for all Native people across Canada” (Deer, 2005, p.3).

¹³ The first James Bay Cree News magazine.

Native chefs are surviving in the food industry because they have something unique and distinct to separate them from other restaurants. In so doing, Native chefs are affirming that they are not trapped by narrowly-defined concepts of “authenticity” or a romanticized past, but rather that they are using trends from within the food industry to show that their contemporary identities are also hip and fashionable. Through cooking Native foods, Aboriginal chefs and restaurateurs affirm traditional identities and celebrate contemporary identities. Hybridity is another concept that illustrates how Native chefs express and celebrate the innovation of their cultures today.

Hybridity

Hybridity is generally viewed as the creation of new “transcultural” forms that develop out of interactions between people from disparate cultures in the contact zone created by colonization (Ashcroft et al., 2000). Hybridity is a concept that is useful in examining not only how Native people have embraced their own cultures, but also how they have drawn on elements from other cultures to express themselves. Native music, particularly Native hip hop, is representative of the dynamism inherent in Aboriginal cultures today. By creating hybrid forms of music, Native people have demonstrated the exchange between cultures and how these exchanges can be seen as active moments of resistance. With regards to cooking methods and ingredients, Native people have been drawing from other cultures for centuries. The Iroquois adapted agricultural techniques from Mexico as early as 1500 years ago. They have also utilized plants, staple foods, cooking implements and vessels, acquired through trade with European settlers. This cultural borrowing is exemplified in Chef David Wolfman’s concept of “Aboriginal Fusion.” Wolfman often creates dishes, such as Curried Caribou “served with mini-red

potatoes, served with zucchini timbale and garlic and hot pepper bannock” (CWW, n.a., n.d., episode 4.12). Another example of Wolfman’s hybrid meals is, “East Coast Ravioli: spinach ravioli, stuffed with scallops and codfish, served in a bergamot flavoured sauce” (CWW, n.a., n.d., episode 4.16). Thus, we see Wolfman’s inclusion of elements of East Indian as well as Italian culture into his Aboriginally themed meals.

The Sweetgrass menu is another example of an Abroiginal fusion or hybrid cuisine that draws not only on non-Native cultures, but from a range of Native cultures. As Sutherland explains:

Warren and I lived in Phoenix for less than a year, but a lot of our southwestern influence is from living there. I worked with a lot of Mexican guys when I was there and they would ... cook their traditional Mexican cuisine so we incorporate a lot of that in our food ... but we also do the whole of ... North America. You’ll see stuff from northern Canada, east, west and south, the more citrusy stuff, say from Florida, crawfish from Louisiana, you know, different areas in North America. So we’re kind of like an Aboriginal fusion in [and] of itself. (Sutherland, 2005)

Furthermore, in Native cuisine hybridity is also evident in the adaptation of traditional cooking to modern trends within the culinary arts, and also the blending of both traditional and contemporary cooking methods and ingredients. Aboriginal culinary artists have found ways of recreating traditional cooking methods using new technologies. For example, Shawn Adler explained that he has set up a cold smoker at his restaurant: “it won’t be exactly traditional because I am setting it up in an old fridge, but ... it’s the same idea basically, to dry and preserve things” (Adler, 2005). Similarly, Sutherland explained,

... we do traditional cooking methods, but we have to use modern day machinery, so to speak. The one thing would be smoking, we have a smoker that we use here ... Traditionally you would have your outdoor smoker, that’s kind of bringing back that kind of method of cooking ... we do some kind of ... drying out meats to make sausages and that kind of thing. (2005)

One of the more difficult aspects of Aboriginal cooking is acquiring Native ingredients that meet commercial standards. That is, because there are standards and regulations in commercial kitchens it is not possible to hunt for moose and then prepare and sell it in a restaurant. Both Adler and Sutherland spoke about the difficulties they have encountered when it comes to buying wild game. Phoebe says that,

... everything that we get has to be commercial so a lot of the stuff that we get is farm raised, so the moose meat that I would get back home I can't get here so I have to get deer to kind of replace it, or elk. The caribou still tastes the same because they run wild and they eat what they normally eat. But rabbit ... does not taste the same ... goose it's a little different. (2005)

Native chefs in the food industry must rely on commercially available food items in order to replicate elements of traditional cooking. Through hybrid forms of aesthetic expression, Native people show that they are not confined to a romanticized past. For example, they do not cook over fires, use the hot-rock method, and they do not have to go out and forage and hunt for food if they choose not to. But rather, they find new and innovative ways of recreating these traditional dishes. Native chefs show that Aboriginal food, like Native people themselves, are not static and unchanging, but rather are adaptable and dynamic. Acknowledging hybridity allows us to consider how Aboriginal people interact with and relate to other cultures, and further demonstrates how Aboriginal artists have been reflexive about these interactions. Hybrid aesthetic expressions illustrate how Native people can embrace their Aboriginal identity and experience these in a meaningful way in the contemporary world. Because Native cuisine embraces elements from disparate cultures, as well as elements from traditional Native cultures, hybridity demonstrates that Native people are innovative and will not assimilate or dissolve under colonial pressure. But rather, they can learn from other cultures and incorporate what they have learned into something that is meaningful to them and celebrates elements of

Aboriginal culture today. This innovation leads to the development of delicious and beautiful forms of hybrid aesthetic expressions that can be read as active moments of resistance and persistence in the face of the enduring impact of colonialism. Among elements from disparate cultures used by Native chefs are those appropriated from European cultures.

Appropriation

As explored in Chapter One, Native artists have appropriated aspects of “imperial culture,” such as “language, forms of writing, film, theatre” as a means of articulating their own “social and cultural identities” (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 19). The postcolonial principle of “appropriation” provides a means of exploring the ways in which Native artists have used the tools of the dominant culture to transform works of art into sites of resistance. Through the appropriation of these creative tools Native people intervene in the dominant discourse, they assert their own cultural realities, and use these tools to describe their cultural realities to a wider audience (Ashcroft et al., 2000). Through an examination of Barb Cranmer’s documentary film *T’lina* and Jim Logan’s *The Diner’s Club* it was made evident that Native artists have appropriated aspects of Western media to portray elements of, or to tell a story about, contemporary Native life. Native chefs are also appropriating elements of Western media, for example, cookbooks and cooking shows to illuminate Native realities today. Chef David Wolfman’s television show *Cooking with the Wolfman* is produced by an all-Native crew and is featured on the Aboriginal People’s Television Network (APTN). As an Aboriginally-produced program, it is able to reverse the control asserted over Native people through typical non-Native representations in ethnographic film or television dramas. Thus, *Cooking with the*

Wolfman becomes a site of resistance to European colonialism, as well as a means of celebrating and affirming contemporary Indigenous realities. This is also true of Native cookbooks, such as *Feast!* that use the popular medium of a cookbook to illustrate aspects of Aboriginal history and contemporary life to a wider reading audience.

The very notion of an Aboriginal “haute cuisine” is an example of appropriation. Like Logan’s reinvention of a classic piece of European art (Manet’s *Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe*), Native chefs use classic European, or more specifically French cuisine as a way of asserting contemporary identities and also participating in the mainstream. “Haute Cuisine” is translated from French to mean “fine” or “superior” cooking. Through appropriating this form of fine cuisine, Native people have appealed to a wider dining audience and have made more people aware of their foods. That is, Native chefs have drawn on one of the “superior” elements of a European culture and created something uniquely Aboriginal out of it. For example, in his cooking, Chef Olson “transform[s] tribal foods into haute cuisine, cooking traditional ingredients but in the grand European manner” (CNN.com, 2004). Olson has received some criticism from the Aboriginal community for his “culinary tinkering.” He says “there’s a lot of comments, especially [from] people who come from reservations, it’s like you are copying the white people,” to which he responds “for me to add European style into dishes is a must ... I really believe in the future of aboriginal foods” (Olson in CNN.com, 2004).

Similarly, Chef Wolfman uses classic French techniques in his cooking, as in his “Galantine¹⁴ of Prairie Chicken.” He describes this dish on his website as “a prairie

¹⁴ Galantine is a technique borrowed from French cuisine. It is described as a “cold dish made from boned and stuffed, poultry, game, meat or fish, pressed into a symmetrical shape, cooked in stock or cooking liquid” (Curnonsky, 1985, p. 684).

chicken served with a duxelle¹⁵ of vegetables, ground moose meat and lardons of pork, served with Saskatoon berry compote and quenelles¹⁶ of sweet potato and spinach". Chef Brian Skye has overturned the French classic Boeuf Bourguignon and created the more Native inspired Elk Bourguignon. Chef Wolfman and Skye confidently use classic European cooking terminology and methods and apply them to Native foods. All of the chefs interviewed were classically trained in French cooking, and in some cases, had little or no exposure to traditional Aboriginal cooking within the institutions where they studied. However, through their experiences growing up with parents and grandparents, through consulting with elders, or conducting ethnographic research, they were able to learn about traditional Native dishes. Thus, like Logan's *Diner's Club*, Native chefs take classic French cuisine and insert Aboriginality into it by incorporating elements from both traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture. This shows both Native and non-Native diners and gourmands alike that Native culture can be both modern and traditional. Native chefs have effectively wielded French Haute Cuisine in order to make it their own, carrying on cultural traditions in a way that may appeal to those who like to experience culture through their taste buds, instead of through more traditional forms of artistic expression. Native haute cuisine then, becomes a site of resistance because Native chefs have survived and flourished within an appropriated construct of European culture. Through the appropriation of European styles and conventions, and by inserting Nateness into these appropriated forms, Native chefs are able to define contemporary First Nations identities from their own points of view. By penetrating the world of haute

¹⁵ In French cuisine a duxelle is "a coarse paste or hash made of finely chopped mushrooms sautéed with shallots" (Gisslen, 1995, p.805).

¹⁶ A quenelle is an "oval or sausage-shaped dumpling, made from a very finely-textured mixture based on fish, white meat or poultry, usually poached in boiling water. Quenelles may be served in a sauce as an Entrée in a French menu, or used as a garnish" (Curnonsky, 1985, p. 685).

cuisine Native people show that they too can be classy and sophisticated, thereby disrupting notions of Native people as being lazy or welfare dependent.

Cultural Continuity and Survival

The final post-colonial concept that was explored was cultural continuity and survival. Examining this concept illustrated the fact that despite having their cultural traditions suppressed and marginalized some First Nations artists continue to assert the importance of the past and tradition in their contemporary work. We have seen how Aboriginal filmmakers, such as Barb Cranmer, use film as a form of modern day storytelling. Like Jim Logan in the *Diner's Club*, Shelley Niro has layered her work, in both film and visual art, with elements from traditional and modern day Native culture. For example, Niro included traditional Iroquois beadwork patterns in the framing of her photo-triptych *The Iroquois is a Highly Developed Matriarchal Society*. Niro also asserted cultural continuity in her film *It Starts with a Whisper*. The plot in this film developed around the struggles of a young Native woman trying to find balance between the modern world and tradition. Furthermore, the style of the film itself included elements of traditional storytelling. Finally, literary artists such as Harry Robinson have adapted the medium of storytelling to the written form as a means of passing on traditional knowledge. Similarly, Aboriginal chefs are using the culinary arts as a means of continuing cultural traditions surrounding food preparation. At her Liliget Feast House Dolly Watts aims to recreate not only the experience of eating in a traditional Git'ksan village, but also the foods that would have been eaten there. At Liliget, the atmosphere is said to be "reminiscent of a Northwest Coast Longhouse" and the food is grilled over fire. Watts explains, "we use alder wood so that everything that we cook

tastes so much like we used to eat in our villages” (Aboriginal Business Network (ABN), n.a., n.d., para. 10). Entrées are served in “traditional long wooden bowls, made from carved cedar and alder.” At Liliget, Watts re-presents “the food on which she was raised: alder-grilled salmon and meat, cedar platters heaped with seafood, venison and buffalo, with wild berries for dessert” (ABN, n.a., n.d., para.8). Other menu items include Crisp Kelp on Steamed Rice with Oolican oil or High Country Wapiti (Elk), served with sweet potato pie, seasonal vegetables, sautéed onions and mushrooms, and wild blueberry sauce. In conversation, concerning the foods that she serves, Watts says that she really likes to show people about Git’skan cooking methods from long ago:

...we have one soup that we copy [today] that we call “ha’gul jam,” it means slow cook, and we copy the way it was cooked in the olden days, in cedar boxes. They used to heat the water ... you know like they would put a stone in the box and heat the water and just sprinkle salmon in it, and put a lid over it and let it cook ...on its own ... and sometimes they would add wild onions. And we try to keep the broth clear ... and in these days if you make ha’gul jam at home in my village ... if it’s all cloudy and looks like you stirred it, they laugh at you, and I’m just as fussy ... I won’t serve it [at the restaurant] if they [the chefs] didn’t make it the way I want it made, that’s just one of the things that we do. (Watts, 2005)

Furthermore, many of the Aboriginal chefs that were interviewed spoke about the importance of creating menus and dishes that revolved around the seasons, a reminder of the way in which Native people lived their lives before colonization.

By including these aspects of traditional life within both the restaurant atmosphere and the dishes that Native chefs create, diners are given the opportunity to learn more about Native history in Canada. Moreover, the enduring strength of Native traditions is made apparent as diners see that Native people have held on to many of their traditional eating habits in spite of colonialism.

Conclusion

Through a post-colonial analysis of Native artistic expressions we have seen how contemporary Aboriginal visual and literary artists, filmmakers and musicians have used their mediums to assert their contemporary identities, while simultaneously resisting the colonial legacy in Canada. By applying the same principles of analysis to Aboriginal culinary arts it is clear that they too are being used in a similar manner. Native chefs and restaurateurs counter negative stereotypes of Native people by articulating their contemporary identities through the food that they cook as well as through the atmosphere they create in their restaurants. They have done so by creating foods that appeal to mainstream gourmands and diners, yet retain their original integrity. Native chefs show that they are trendy, contemporary, and furthermore capable of embracing aspects of their food traditions that have been passed on for generations. Achievements within the culinary arts are similar to those in other art forms because they connote the persistence of rich Native traditions that developed long before contact with Europeans. Similarly, they speak to the fact that Native people do not have to portray themselves as “authentic” in order to be successful, but rather they can participate in the mainstream while asserting their distinct cultural identities.

The success of culinary artists, and the recognition of this success, has positive implications for the greater Aboriginal community in Canada. We have seen how participation in the culinary arts following the success of the Olympic team contributed to a growing pride among Aboriginal chefs. As cultural pride continues to grow and Aboriginal culinary artists receive recognition for their achievements, Native people will see that cooking is a unique and innovative way of participating in both traditional

Aboriginal culture, as well as in the mainstream. Native chefs such as Bertha Skye are taking their skills as well as their understanding of the healthful qualities of Native foods and returning this knowledge to Native communities. In so doing, low-income mothers for example, have been given the opportunity to learn about traditional foods and how to prepare them for healthier eating and also as means of saving money. Native people, and particularly Native youth, are being shown that being Native is something to be proud of, and that it is possible to embrace your heritage while participating in popular culture. Furthermore, through Aboriginal culinary arts, non-Native people are being given the opportunity to learn about aspects of Native history as well as contemporary Native life.

As we have seen, from the 1960s onward Native people have made great strides to increase their agency in both politics and in the arts. They have effectively resisted colonial pressures and governmental policies that aimed to expunge their unique cultural identities. These achievements in both politics and the arts are telling about the confidence and renewed pride that is increasingly developing among Native people in Canada today. Including the culinary arts within discussions of this renaissance, broadens our understandings of the profundity of Native culture. It is therefore pertinent that Aboriginal haute cuisine be considered among other forms of Native artistic expression as a means of not only asserting and celebrating contemporary identities, but also as a means of responding to colonialism in Canada.

DESSERT: CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have hoped to establish how First Nations chefs and restaurateurs use the culinary arts as a means of celebrating their contemporary identities, and as a means of resisting and dismantling the identities imposed on them through colonialism and its legacy in Canada. Through their cuisine, Native chefs have shown the survival of ancient culinary traditions, undone long-held constructions of Native identity and replaced these with more realistic and empowering images. Through exploring the evolving cultural identities of Native people I have sought to expand understandings of what constitutes aesthetic expression to include the culinary arts, while simultaneously broadening the range of tools within the Aboriginal politics of resistance. Secondly, I set out to create a template structured around foodways that could be used by Canadian Studies scholars to enrich and deepen their study of society.

Due to the constraints of language, discussing food within academia is a challenging task. This difficulty lies in the fact that, as anthropologist Aldona Jonaitis has shown, unlike the visual arts, the culinary arts must be immediately and subjectively experienced. That is, we can read or view a piece of art and the messages are sent directly to our brains, whereas with food we must ingest the molecules in order to stimulate our senses. In this study, as an alternative to physical embodiment, I have applied a series of principles drawn from post-colonial theory – self-representation, authenticity, hybridity, appropriation, and cultural continuity and survival – in order to make it possible to talk about food. These same principles, often used in the discussion of other forms of aesthetic expression proved to be applicable to the culinary arts as well. While these principles do not necessarily evoke the actual taste, smell and texture of the

food itself, they did facilitate the ability to think critically about, for example, the combinations of foods and the cooking methods used to prepare these foods.

The application of these theoretical principles made it possible to discuss new technologies, which facilitated the re-creation of both traditional food preparation and flavours. For example, with regard to Chef Arnold Olson's Bison Carpaccio, by replacing a quality cut of beef with a similarly prime cut of bison, a new dish is created that replicates this original, but with a more gamey wild flavour, obtained by using a Native ingredient. Thus, Bison Carpaccio can be analysed as a hybrid dish that maintains the cultural continuity of an indigenous ingredient, which can be used in combination with a cooking method from haute cuisine, demonstrating Native people's resistance to externally-imposed definitions of authenticity.

By looking specifically at "Native" cuisine, it was also possible to draw on Aboriginal concepts of art, which furthered my argument for expanding the range of aesthetic expression in the politics of identity formation. Historically, Native people believed that the value of a particular aesthetic creation was not attained through its physical characteristics alone, as would be the case for mainstream collectors, but alternatively its worth might be determined by its utilitarian purpose. Native people saw art forms as deeply intertwined with everyday life, and valued more than the mere visual pleasure they could afford. Thus, food preparation and presentation could be regarded as an art form of the highest regard.

Returning to arguments held by Food Studies scholars about the importance of thinking critically about food, it is evident that by escaping the confines of western academia that have tended to privilege mind over body, we can look at questions about

embodied, practical and concrete experiences, such as eating, in order to better understand human society. In the case of this study specifically, we have seen that some Native people have found the power of expression and the celebration of identities in the practical experience of food preparation. While I looked primarily at how Native chefs engage with haute cuisine in Canada, I also demonstrated how their talents and successes have had a positive impact on the larger Aboriginal community. Further, in exposing non-Natives to Native cuisine, people from other cultures are afforded the opportunity to learn about Native cultures, not only through eating, but the entire dining experience.

As we have seen Food Studies is a new and emerging discipline that is still working out a set of specialist tools and terminologies. This study has shown that it is possible to draw on the basic tools of analysis established in other disciplines in order to discuss food and its meaning to a particular group or society. Thus, this Food Studies analysis has demonstrated how post-colonial methodologies can be used to inquire about food, and its role within the politics of resistance. This is relevant to Canadian Studies as it offers a new lens through which to examine the Canadian experience.

This study has raised questions, not only about the need for further research into Native haute cuisine, but traditional Native foods in general. There is a need for further research into how the colonial experience in Canada specifically impacted on Native culinary traditions, and what this has meant for Aboriginal health. Further questions need to be asked about foods served in residential schools, the role of health officials in creating an image of repulsion and disgust around traditional Native foods, and about the inappropriateness of the types of food rations distributed by government to Native reserves. In doing this study I came across a multitude of unique Native food products

that have stimulated economic development through job creation and income generating activities in remote Native communities. I also came across some excellent work being done by Native American chefs in the United States, that focus on Native-specific fast-foods, that celebrate cultural identities while promoting healthier versions of tribal favourites such as fry bread. These findings suggest many potential research areas that could ultimately benefit Native communities. For example, further investigations might consider how the availability of more traditional Native foods in urban centres could have a positive effect on the health of Native people who are prone to obesity and diabetes.

Food Studies analysis such as this could also be used in examining issues that effect the non-Native population in Canada as well. Because food preparation has historically been deemed women's work, we might gather insights into the experiences of Canadian women and their relationship to food and its preparation by reading cookbooks as historical texts. What would a thorough examination of women and food reveal about gender roles and national identity? What about the experiences of new Canadians? Have they expressed cultural identities through food and what are the implications of this for the greater Canadian society? What about food imagery in other art forms; what can we discover about experiences of Canadian artists through their use of food symbolism in poetry, literature, photography, or sculpture? This is only a very short sample of some of the implications for future research using food as a primary lens for analysis. The possibilities, however, seem endless.

Finally, Native people have endured a great many hardships in this country, and these will never be forgotten. However, Native leaders, artists, and chefs, and the larger Aboriginal community alike, are not sitting idly by waiting for a return to a romanticized

past. Rather, Native people are actively resisting long-held stereotypes by escaping the confines of European-imposed standards of authenticity, offering their own perspectives on cultural traditions, and asserting contemporary identities through aesthetic expression. The culinary arts, as an addition to the larger aesthetic repertoire, expands the range of possible outlets through which a greater number of Aboriginal people are able to express their current realities. Food, then, offers a space in which to revisit and reclaim cultural traditions, while merging these with other cultures, as well as modern technologies in order to redress colonialism and celebrate the survival of Native people in this country today.

DIGÉSTIF

I began this thesis with a poem entitled *Really Delicious Fry Bread*, by Chrystos. This poem beautifully depicts not only the sensual relationship, but also the political relationship that this Native woman has with food, specifically fry bread. My purpose was to provide the reader with a taste of the power of food, and the ability of this power to be captured in words. Furthermore, in my preface I discussed the importance of food and food preparation to me specifically. Both the poem and my preface were meant to capture for the reader, who may be less gastronomically inclined, how food affects some people on a deeply emotional level. Throughout the process of writing this thesis, many people have asked me to define the goals of my research. To some, my thesis topic seemed self-indulgent, maybe even gluttonous. I am often met with criticism by those who do not understand food as anything other than a basic necessity, and who consider its preparation and consumption as mundane daily activities, necessary only for survival. However, I hope that in engaging with this thesis it has become evident that food can be so much more than a monotonous daily routine; that eating can be an experience that appeals not only to all of our senses, but also one which engages our minds and spirits. I encourage those of you who have never thought about the deeper implications of what we eat, to think more carefully about the meanings and implications of food. Visit an Aboriginal restaurant; remember that while there is an Aboriginal haute cuisine today, this has not always been the case. Native people have fought and overcome great adversities to share with us today such delicious resistance, and such sweet persistence.

APPENDICES

Interview: Phoebe Sutherland, July 21st, 2005

- At the New Sun conference you spoke briefly about growing up on the land and living in a traditional way, and also about how you and your father dreamed about opening a Native restaurant. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?
- How did living in a traditional way inspire you to open a restaurant?
- On the Sweetgrass website it mentions that at the restaurant you “embrace the dishes with traditional methods and ingredients,” I’m interested in how you do that, could you talk a little bit about that?
- Do you think you feel more connected to your culture because of what you do?
- Do you find that the flavours of traditional stuff, and what you make here ... that the flavours are a lot different?
- I also got the sense when I heard you talk at Carleton and also from looking at your web site and the menus at Sweetgrass that you draw inspiration from all sorts of different places, people and cultures. Could you talk a little bit about the other cultures you get your inspiration from and how you choose what other cultures you will draw from?
- You also spoke at the conference about how you wanted to showcase Aboriginal food in Canada’s capital because here it’s more of a world stage. And on the Sweetgrass website it is written that, Sweetgrass is “a destination place to discover aboriginal traditions and artistic expressions?” I think these are two really interesting comments that I have a couple of questions about.

First:

- Do you think non-Native people can learn about Native people by eating at Sweetgrass or eating Aboriginal cuisine in general?
- I guess I’m also interested in Canadian people also. Can there be a dialogue between Native and non-Native people through food? Do you think it makes a statement about Aboriginal people.
- What kind of knowledge about Aboriginal people gets out to people who eat in your restaurant?

Second:

- And a little bit more specifically about the location of the restaurant. Do you think that it makes any sort of a statement because it is located in this really

trendy, touristy, urban area in the Capital of the country? Does it overturn any stereotypes that might exist about Native people? Was that part of your goal at all? Does it tell non-Native people that Native people are contemporary, hip, we live in the city, we are urban, we don't live in some stereotypical past?

- There could also be a somewhat political statement you are making because of your location, but also in the very nature of an "Aboriginal" restaurant. I guess I was thinking about that when you guys were doing your presentation at the conference – I was just sort of thinking to myself what other kind of restaurant proprietors would find themselves in an academic conference speaking about what they do? Do you feel there is sort of a political edge to your restaurant?
- Who is your primary target clientele or audience?
- What has been the response from the Aboriginal community towards the restaurant?
- Can you tell me a little bit about the name of the restaurant and why it was your final decision to call it "Sweetgrass"?
- I am familiar with the Liliget Feast House in Vancouver, but do you know of any other Aboriginal restaurants in Canada? Have you ever been to Liliget? Can you tell me about it? How is it different from Sweetgrass?
- At the conference Warren sort of talked a little bit about how cooking was sort of both an art and a craft – I am really interested in how, we as culinary artists, can sort of explain to people the art behind it. This is more of just a personal questions for myself – I just have a hard time verbalizing sometimes why I think it is an "ART"?
- Do you see a lot of Aboriginal youths becoming interested in the culinary arts, specifically Aboriginal culinary arts?
- What would you suggest to Native youth who wanted to get into cooking Aboriginal food or what would you tell them?
- Where do you think Aboriginal cuisine is going, what does the future look like? Do you think there is a growing market for it?

Interview: Bertha Skye, August 23rd, 2005

- I read that you were originally from Northern Saskatchewan – is that correct? Whereabouts are you from?
- Would you say that you grew up in a traditional way? Living off the land?

- Can you describe a little bit about how the food that you ate when you were growing up is different from the foods that you eat now?
- Did you do a lot of the cooking at home?
- How did you become interested in cooking?
- How did you learn about cooking traditional foods?
- In what capacity do you cook now? Like who do you cook for today?
- What kind of cooking would you say that you do now – is it traditional? Or more contemporary?
- I read that you taught cooking at the Woodland Cultural Centre?
Do you still do that?
- Is the school still there?
- Were there lots of people who participated in the cooking school?
- What kinds of things did you teach?
- How did you get involved with the Culinary Olympic team?
- Did you have any formal training before joining the team?
- Can you tell me a bit about the experience of going to Frankfurt, Germany and showcasing Aboriginal food on a world stage?
- Do you know if there will be another Olympic Aboriginal haute cuisine team in the future?
- Can you tell me about the significance of the three sisters to Iroquoians culture?
- Do you feel more connected to your culture when you cook/eat traditional foods?
- Do you think that non-Native people can learn about Native people by eating traditional foods?
- Do you ever have young Native people ask you about becoming chefs? What would you tell them if they did ask you?
- What do you think the future of Aboriginal cooking looks like?

Interview: Brian Skye, August 23rd, 2005

- Did you grow up at Six Nations?
- I guess you did a lot of cooking with your mom? Was that your inspiration?
- Did you have any formal training?
- Do you use traditional cooking methods, like smoking or anything like that?
- So you sort of do the fusion thing?
- Do you feel more connected to your culture when you cook or eat traditional foods? Do you find it's a way of sort of expressing yourself culturally?
- Do you think it is possible to teach both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people about culture through food?
- Have you heard of the Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro here in Ottawa, or the Liliget Feast House in Vancouver at all?
- Do you ever have young Native people ask you about becoming chefs, cooking traditional food?

Interview: Shawn Adler, August 24th, 2005

- Where are you from? Where did you grow up?
- So did you grow up with Ojibwa culture?
- When and how did you get interested in cooking?
- You also went to University as well, did you? What did you take?
- I have noticed that your menu doesn't include a lot of really Native stuff, like I wouldn't necessarily compare you to Sweetgrass or Liliget, but do you ever include sort of Aboriginally inspired items on your menu? Such as?
- And when you do where do you draw inspiration for your more Aboriginal dishes, do you do research, is it stuff you learned growing up? Can you tell me a bit more about that? Where do you draw your inspiration from when you do Aboriginal dishes?
- Do you include both traditional ingredients and traditional cooking methods when you cook Native food? Like what? How?

- Would you say that you feel more connected to your Aboriginal culture when you cook Native food? Would you consider cooking Aboriginally a means of experiencing your culture? Can you tell me a little bit about that.
- Do you think it is possible to teach people, Native and non-Native, about First Nations culture through food and cooking?
- Do you think that the success of Aboriginal restaurants, such as, the Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro in Ottawa or the Liliget Feast House in Vancouver makes a statement about Aboriginal people in Canada?
- What do you think it says?
- Can you tell me your thoughts on the idea of cooking as an art, like writing, painting, or playing music?
- With other forms of art, like painting, filmmaking, writing it seems a bit easier to make statements about resistance and survival of a culture, but do you think there is any way to make similar statements through cooking? If so, how?
- Do you think that Aboriginal Chefs could be considered cultural mediators, or cultural interpreters?
- Do you ever have young Native people talk to you about cooking, becoming Chefs – is this something you would encourage? What would you tell young Native people who were interested in cooking?
- Do you think there is a future for Aboriginal cooking in Canada or elsewhere? What does it look like?
- What did you do when you were working on the show for David Wolfman?

Interview: Dolly Watts, August 25th, 2005

- I read a bit of your biographical information on the internet, and I read that you grew up in a very strong family, and that your family and people in your community fought to keep your culture alive, for example, they continued to hold feasts despite the risk of imprisonment. So I am guessing that you grew up in a sort of traditional way, can you tell me a bit about the role that food played in your community growing up?
- Do you feel that the way you present the food in your cooking today in your restaurant and in your catering represents in a way how you grew up with food? Or is this hard to recreate in a commercial restaurant?

- How are these traditional foods and traditional preparation methods received by the general public?
- Where do you get your ingredients from?
- Do you get asked a lot of questions about the cultural significance of food items or preparation techniques?
- Do you have any formal cooking training?
- Do you consider what you do in your restaurant an opportunity to make people think about or learn about Aboriginal culture?
- Do you think Native youth can learn about culture through cooking and eating traditional food?
- Do you feel that you are more connected to your culture because you cook Native food?
- Do you think that Aboriginal Chefs could be considered cultural mediators, or cultural interpreters? Do you think of yourself as a teacher or keeper of your culture because of what you do?
- Do you draw inspiration from any other cultures, First Nations or otherwise?
- I read that you have spoken overseas about Aboriginal cuisine. What kinds of things do you say to people in other countries about your Native foods and cooking?
- Do you think that the success of Aboriginal restaurants, such as, Liliget and Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro in Ottawa makes a statement about Aboriginal people in Canada today?
- Can you tell me your thoughts on the idea of cooking as an art, like writing, painting, or playing music?
- With other forms of art, like painting, filmmaking, writing it seems a bit easier to make statements about resistance and survival of a culture, but do you think there is any way to make similar statements through cooking? If so, how?
- Who are your clientele at Liliget?
- Do you get a lot of Aboriginal customers? How do they respond to what you are doing at Liliget? What has been the response from the Aboriginal community to your restaurant?

- I read that when you were in University you were part of a group of women who pushed the university to offer/create a special course on how colonial oppression constructed and manipulated the image of Native peoples. Do you think that cooking Aboriginal food and selling it to the public can help to counters these constructed and manipulated images of Native people in Canada?
- I guess I am wondering if you feel as though there is a political edge to what you do?
- Do you find that there are a lot of young Aboriginal people who are interested in becoming Chefs/restaurant owners?
- Do they ever come and seek guidance from you about getting into the restaurant industry? What do you tell them?
- Do you offer or have you been involved in any special training for youths?
- What do you think the future of Aboriginal cuisine looks like? Where is it going from here?
- Is there any other comments or thoughts that you have that you would like to share with me?

Interview: Danielle Medina, October, 19th, 2005

- What inspired you to put together the Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team?
- What kind of research did you do?
- Based on what criteria did you make your final decision about who would be on the team?
- What is Oudeheemin Foods?
- What was the Olympic experience like?
- What were the benefits of sending an Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team to the Olympics? For the members of the team? For Canada? For the rest of the World? Canada?
- How did you get funding for the team to go?
- Will there ever be another Aboriginal team?
- Are you still in touch with the members of the team?
- What is Medina Foods?
- You said that the team won, enormous amount of medals, how did they compare to other countries – did they sort of blow them away?

Interview: Robert Gairns, October 26th, 2005

- How did you get involved with the Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team in 1992?

- What was the impetus behind the Olympic team?
- What was the Olympic experience like?
- What were the benefits of sending an Aboriginal Haute Cuisine team to the Olympics? For the members of the team? For Canada? For the rest of the World?

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