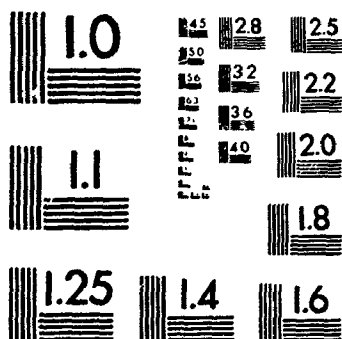


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BEADED RADICALS AND BORN-AGAIN PAGANS:
Situating Native Artists Within the Field of Art

by
Gerald R. McMaster, B.F.A.

A thesis
submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
Department of Anthropology/Sociology

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
November 25, 1994

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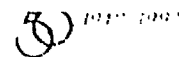
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**ZEADED RADICALS AND BORN-AGAIN PAGANS: SITUATING NEGATIVE
ARTISTS WITHIN THE FIELD OF ART**

submitted by Gerald R. McMaster, B.F.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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Ruth B. Phillips

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December 12, 1994

Abstract

Native artists have recently engaged in debates within the volatile field of cultural production. This has happened only in the last twenty to thirty years. Prior to that many artists worked in relative isolation, creating works mostly for personal and at times public use. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how some Native (Canadian) artists are struggling to articulate their positions within the 'field of art.' Following Bourdieu's notion of the field of cultural production as a 'field of forces' that includes 'spaces' where struggles and other practices take place, I examine the field of visual art to see how a select group of Native artists are struggling to re-position, re-articulate, and re-define themselves within art and everyday life. The thesis focuses on two key issues, identity and space -- 'space' as it refers to geographical, political, and social locations -- and their political implications in art and culture. I argue that one 'space,' viz. the field of art, is a site of struggle for the Native artist's construction of a cultural identity.

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Megwitch!

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[If] one is interested in doing historical work that has political meaning, utility and effectiveness, then this is possible only if one has some kind of involvement with the struggles taking place in the area in question (Foucault, 1980:64).

Through the machines they raced round and about again,
Changing their stars every minute or two.
They kept paying money. They kept running through
Until neither the Plain nor the Star-Bellies knew
Whether this one was that one ... or that one was this one
Or which one was what one ... or what one was who
(Seuss, 1961:21)

PREFACE

Two years ago while preparing for an exhibition of my work at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology (UBC-MOA) in 1992,¹ I felt I needed to meet with some knowledgeable people concerning my ideas about the 'spiritual' in Plains Cree art. I anticipated their advice would point me in the right direction. Coincidentally my decision to seek their advice occurred during our summer Thirst Dances (June), a dance considered our holiest ceremony. The other reason for my seeking counsel was my limited knowledge about sacred Plains Cree traditions, much of which was beyond my personal boundaries.

During the Thirst Dances, I was greeted by a dear old friend and his father, who is a highly respected elder in the community.² After explaining to them my interest in Plains Cree aesthetics and my interest in understanding the spiritual in art, I was surprised at how well the younger man understood my questions. My questions were in English so the elder did not respond the same way since he spoke only Cree. As it

¹ My original idea was to prepare for an exhibition under the title, Mystic Warriors, which was to deal with the notion of warriorship and with the issue of the 'spiritual in art.' After consultation and considerable personal debate my new idea resulted in the current exhibition called Savage Graces: "after-images" by Gerald McMaster, which focuses on the stereotype of the 'noble savage.'

² My friend's father passed away about a year and a half ago. This of course, was very sad for the community as his father had such a tremendous knowledge. When old people like him die it's as if a library has burned down.

turned out, I provided many of my own answers, and later wondered if the conversation was a test of my 'competence,' 'knowledge,' and 'attitude.' An old Plains Cree strategy? Perhaps.

My principal concern for the UBC-MOA exhibition had been to investigate representational constraints, if any, resulting from the Plains Cree tradition on the 'spiritual in art.' I needed to know the concerns about artistic depictions of the sacred before proceeding. Thus, I had to consult with those persons able to articulate these perspectives. In particular, I wanted to see how they might react to issues commonly debated in the museum³ regarding the sacred versus the profane, the secret versus the obvious, and traditional versus the modern conventions. As we talked, I began to understand much more clearly that boundaries of understanding are constantly shifting. That is, I came to understand more fully that aboriginal parent cultures are informed by knowledge systems that are not only different from those of the dominant Canadian culture, and that these aboriginal knowledge systems themselves undergo revisions and transformations as they are continuously reinvented within local and global contexts -- "'Cultures' do not hold still for their portraits" (Clifford,

³ I use the term 'museum' to conflate both art galleries and anthropology museums, as it is done in the U.S. The term 'gallery' is often used in commercial contexts.

1986:10). In this sense, then, the boundaries of Plains Cree knowledge systems are shifting ones, variously pushing against influences from the dominant culture or pulling them in.

On which side of this (shifting) boundary was I? Later I thought, maybe I am situated on the boundary between two cultural spaces that allows me to see, at once, two perspectives, Plains Cree and Western. Furthermore, as an artist I began to see that the effects of these shifting boundaries made representation and interpretation problematic and difficult to negotiate, that one must be scrupulous with certain kinds of knowledge and their use. I came to realize that having access to culturally-specific knowledge carries risks. I was, therefore, highly aware that my questioning was also a seeking for reassurance, that I feared breaching a trust for the sake of my artistic expression outside the Cree context. For example, I feared I might be using certain designs to which I may not have any rights. The elders at the Thirst Dance were clear: leave some matters alone. In doing so, one protects oneself. The dangers may be as subtle as a misunderstanding, as contemptuous as the breaking of a taboo, or as blatant as appropriating something to which one does not have a right! That day, I was being told that many Plains Cree traditions had not been severed by modernity; many traditional forms of knowledge, including spiritual beliefs, had endured.

Consequently, this cautionary advice convinced me to

adjust the focus of my planned exhibition. Instead of representing spiritual aspects of Plains Cree traditions outside their context, I decided to consider the ideological and conceptual frameworks and the practices of museums. Museums are often accused of offering up aboriginal objects, including spiritual ones, to the (colonizing) gaze (cf. Urry, 1990) of the Western eye so that little is in fact left alone. I therefore proposed to the UBC-MOA that I do a project (exhibition) critiquing its representation of First Peoples through its collecting and exhibition practices (cf. McMaster, 1994). Could (my) artistic practices question museums and their role? As an artist, could I simulate a reflexiveness in both UBC-MOA and its audiences? In proposing this alternate strategy, I would avoid infringing on or challenging my Plains Cree community. I began to see my position radically change, or at least I was more consciously aware of the complexity of any position I might take. As with my meeting with the elders, I saw myself somewhere in-between, in a liminal space. However, instead of feeling marginalized, I felt quite the opposite: empowered.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Western art historians often remind us that non-European cultures have no word(s) for 'art.' For some this might imply that aesthetics are also nonexistent in these cultures. To my surprise we can still hear this colonial discourse. To argue for the recognition of non-European aesthetics is not however, to collapse them into Western ones. As Rasheed Araeen, a Pakistani-born artist living in England, writes:

It would be foolish not to recognize the differences between European and non-European cultures, but it has been the function of modernism since early in this century to 'eliminate' the importance of these differences in its march towards an equal global society (1991:174).

The discourse of 'difference' has become increasingly influential as an effective opposition to modernist homogeneity, constituting as it does a challenge that comes from artists of various cultures/backgrounds. Indeed, Canadian artists, including those evoked in 'woman, native, other' (to quote a title of a book by Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989), have frequently challenged modernist hegemony thus engendering new and surprising struggles within the field of art.

What is modernism's hegemony and how do we approach its analysis? Janet Wolff argues for a sociology of art which "consists in its critique of the ideology of timelessness and value-freedom which characterizes art theory and art history

in the modern world" (1981:143). She goes on to say that, this approach "enables us to see that art always encodes values and ideology, and that art criticism itself, though operating within a relatively autonomous discourse, is never innocent of the political and ideological processes in which that discourse has been constituted" (1981:143). A critical sociology of art allows us to see the interrelationships of art and cultural production (in society), as a kind of culture study.

Addressing art's ideological nature is an important direction to take in discussing the role and nature of contemporary Native art and artists in relation to the so-called 'mainstream.' For Wolff, 'ideology' plays a crucial role in artistic production. Using ideology to mean, "the ideas and beliefs people have [that] are systematically related to their actual and material conditions of existence" (1981:53), she points to various ideologies that work beside, within, and against each other. She states that "ideological forms are not only ideas, cultural values and religious beliefs," but that they become embodied "in cultural institutions (schools, churches, art galleries, legal systems, political parties) and in cultural artifacts (texts, paintings, buildings, and so on)" (1981:54-55). Furthermore, she argues that the artist must be located within the historical conditions of artistic production: "the author is

not conceived of as an ideal, free, creative spirit, but precisely as someone with a given social and historical situation, confronted by conditions of artistic production external to him/herself" (1981:62). Therefore, only by knowing the conditions, circumstances, and situations of artists, can we begin to appreciate and understand their works contextualized within the culture.

Wolff's views parallel Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the "field of cultural production" which he sees as a "field of force" or where competing forces take place. Therefore, by considering the nature of this field we may be able to better comprehend the practices that take place within it, who the agents (players) are and what the struggles are about. Knowing the dominant ideology that informs practices within it, however, is not adequate, as there are often competing ideologies held by various players that inevitably lead to syncretistic tension, or struggles about difference. So art is a "field of forces" (after Bourdieu) that includes, 'spaces' where struggles and other practices take place.

I realized that my own reality of difference was situated somewhere between my Plains Cree identity and the contemporary art world. In my own case, my professional training in Western art theory and practice situated me as a Western artist creating (producing) largely for the mainstream art market, while in the Plains Cree community I could be considered a

'cultural worker.' But I have lived most of my life in urban spaces and my profession as museum curator has, moreover, conferred certain opportunities. Accordingly, I began to see my identity as multiple, at times fragmented.

These issues were part of my thinking as, for example, I prepared the UBC-MOA exhibition Savage Graces, referred to in the Preface. The experience of preparing this exhibit led me to ask if other contemporary (Native) artists have experienced similar situations, and if so how they have dealt with them. I began questioning whether other Native artists experienced similar predicaments. Were they equally conscious of their subject positions being 'betwixt and between' two and more communities? Were they feeling marginalized or even ostracized from any community because of their differences? That is to say, how do Native artists negotiate their difference? What specific spaces within art, viewed following Bourdieu as a "field of force," allow for struggles over difference? It is these questions that I wish to address in this thesis.

In preparing for this study I determined that Native artists would have to be consulted. I was particularly attracted to the idea of having the artists speak to the issues, and then deciding whether to translate or transcribe the interviews. At first, I was keen to include within the body of this thesis Native artists from the disciplines of visual, literary, and performing arts, and I had already

obtained the permission of some performing artists. I quickly realized, however, that the scope of the project would have to be narrowed to visual artists. (Casting a wider net could, of course, be another project.) I decided to prepare a list of questions primarily on issues concerning identity, but was also prepared to engage in issues of the artist's choice. In my capacity as a museum curator I knew many Native artists. I decided to choose a range of young/old, male/female, urban/rural, and status/non-status. My choices were Daphne Odjig, Alex Janvier, Jane Ash Poitras, Edward Poitras and Lance Belanger. The interviews with these artists were transcribed and an original copy was sent to each artist for his or her record. Upon completion of this task, I analyzed each interview in terms of how and whether the artist had addressed issues of identity, struggle, aesthetics, and the specific 'spaces of struggle' within the field of art in order to: i) situate the artist within the issue of identity, ii) describe the various types of struggles each experienced within everyday life, iii) analyze how issues of identity and difference are resolved within their artistic practices, and finally iv) understand how they have created new spaces in which their identities can be expressed. By conducting the interviews, I wanted these artists' voices to ring out loudly. This is an approach that focuses not only on the art object, per se, or on the artists' stated intention in producing a

given work, but one that (following Wolff), locates these artistic practices and intentions within discursive and ideological constructions and within the institutional contexts in which they occur and which frame them. As a first step in the analysis of these interviews, I have undertaken a more reflexive analysis of the field of art, viewed as a 'field of forces' that produces spaces for struggle. As well, having interrogated a discursively constructed Art History that has been written from a universalizing Western perspective, I have offered my own genealogy of a so-called Native art.

In Part One, Chapter Two, I explore how Art History has provided a 'master narrative' and how its discursively constructed linearity ignores other global developments in art, seen as a 'field of cultural production.' This linearity is teleological and produces the notion of the 'mainstream' as an aspect of linear historical construction which presupposes its European origins. Appropriating this idea in order to subvert it, I will argue that a mainstream has connections to tributaries, which are other narratives. As a result of their confluence 'spaces of struggle' can be identified. Further, I argue that the mainstream can only flow so long before spilling into the ocean; this ocean I argue must be considered in spatial terms, where cultural identities compete for attention. Western Art History becomes 'another other' in

a space of others (McEvelley, 1992:132).

In Chapter Three I consider how critical theories of culture have addressed issues of identity and space, that is how they bring us to focus on a spatialized politics of identity. Specifically, I consider how theories show us that identity is political, legal, symbolic, and that it is played out in many spaces, such as the field of art.

Chapter Four presents a contemporary history of Native art in Canada since the 1940s. In this chapter I argue that to understand contemporary Native artists, it is necessary to understand the history of political developments that have affected First Peoples. Within this chapter, I discuss many of the milestones which have influenced the contemporary relations between Native and non-Native peoples. Paralleling these socio-political milestones, I present key developments in contemporary Native art, and I argue that in creating spaces for artistic and cultural possibilities, many Native artists have been politically motivated.

In Part II of the thesis, I present the results of my interviews -- the voices of the artists. Chapter Five addresses the issues of identity and struggles, focussing on issues outside the field of art, while Chapter Six addresses issues within the field of art. Using the interviews themselves, I examine how the artists negotiate within the field of art to create spaces for themselves.

Chapter Two
TEMPORAL DISLOCATIONS:
THE METADISOURSE OF ART HISTORY

In the final sentence of his essay, "A Time to Choose" (1992:133), Thomas McEvelley describes the current condition of Western civilization in relation to all 'Others.' He says: "It may well be that History is over -- but histories endure" (1992:145). Indeed, this is a fitting statement with which to begin the consideration of the idea of the 'end of Art History.' In order that we may understand contemporary Native artistic practices, we must first understand the idea of the 'master narrative' of Art History, that is, this project requires reflexive examination of current discourses about art. The dominant narrative of the West has been the subject of critique by major contemporary cultural and art theorists such as Burgin (1986), Belting (1987), and McEvelley (1992). François Lyotard also calls this the "grand recits" or "master narrative," "a science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse" (1984:xxiii). Fredric Jameson says History is an "uninterrupted narrative" (1981:18).

Art museums identified themselves with a master narrative of Art History; Anthropology museums have justified their 'gaze' upon the Other as scientific knowledge. Modernity's project employed the discourses of Art History and

Anthropology to reinforce law and morality: "[Modernity] hoped that art and sciences would promote not only the control of natural forces but also the understanding of the world and of the self, moral progress, the justice of institutions and even the happiness of human beings" (Sarup 1993:143). This discursive practice of the master narrative, however, speaks (or does not speak) to the 'invisibility' of the Other who remains subordinate and therefore minor¹ in terms of History.

The observation made by McEvelley and others that new spaces have opened up and are being created by all those Others outside Western History who were silenced or made invisible by the master narrative is important for our purposes. The master narrative in the fields of arts and museums has come under severe criticism by those outside History. Contemporary critiques show that these spaces or spheres of knowledge are very much about colonial domination, in which the dominant culture seeks to continue telling the story. In this thesis I will argue for the visibility of the small histories or micro-narratives as a new spatialization, that is, the creation of new spaces for new historical and cultural identities.

To avoid the risk of being appropriated by dominant discourses, I will bear in mind recent practices of post-colonial writers such as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1989:38), who advocate "re-placing language."

This involves seizing the language of the centre and replacing "it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place." This approach will allow us to see more clearly the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized, Canadian and aboriginal cultures.

The German art historian Hans Belting situates Art History's discursive practice as a "vehicle of representation." Art History constructs a "meaningful history of its own ... [by] constructing a narrative which locates the individual work just where it makes most sense [thus seeking] 'truth' of a particular kind" (1987:57). As Victor Burgin notes the traditional practices of Art History, are inscribed within a notion of 'common sense,' which "tends to construct a history and teleology of art by projecting the dominant contemporary notions of art into the past and the future" (1986:142). The common sense view of Art History is being abrogated and challenged by contemporary (Native) artists. Th's politics of representation and the process of extricating or "decolonizing one's mind by removing the Western ideology from oneself"² is what is critically involved in the current struggle at the site of art.

The linear narrative of Art History traces a progressive development of art from the Egyptian, the Greeks, and the Italians, and continues in colonial North and South America. This developmental path will be referred to as the master

narrative. The colloquial metaphor, the 'mainstream' is that which all else (other histories) flow toward or from, is mapped in the 'Janson-style' textbook. The mainstream is a linear, temporal flow, an 'uninterrupted narrative.' Belting writes that Art History "endows art with a meaningful history of its own, distinct from general history" (1987:57). The idea of the mainstream is itself a monolithic ideological construct, a master discourse of colonialism which has been very influential. Brenda Marshall reminds us, "If it is the teller who determines what story gets told, then the teller must write from a position of some authority" (1992:53). The teller constructs the reality which is always subjective, because it is seen from the position (ideological) of the teller (cf. Blundell, 1992:55). Thus, in Art History the teller constructs his or her view of history and delimits what can or cannot be said. The teller establishes the idea of the mainstream.

Within contemporary art history we have witnessed dramatic changes to how we view the art object. Indeed, both scholarship and artistic practices have generated many new possibilities for the analysis and production of objects. Equally important has been the emergence of artists with different identities, cultural, racial and sexual, bringing with them radically different discourses and definitions of art. These artists are demonstrating that the production and

definition of objects differ from one cultural perspective to another. Although, critics and art historians are beginning to recognize the enrichment these new practices bring to the ever expanding definition of art, mainstream Art History's 'gatekeepers' remain apprehensive about these developments.

With radical shifts taking place within the art world, and the reluctance of conservative art historians to acknowledge the shifts, Art History has become a 'site of struggle' over inclusion/exclusion. Some scholars, like Belting, acknowledge these shifts and, at the same time, that art's frontiers are in jeopardy as it competes with other representational systems. He seems well aware of the modernist paradigm of separating art from everyday life, to make art autonomous, saying:

Today the artist joins the historian in rethinking the function of art and challenging its traditional claim to aesthetic autonomy. The dutiful artist used to study masterpieces in the Louvre; today he confronts the entire history of mankind in the British Museum, acknowledging the historicity of past cultures and in the process becoming aware of his own historicity (Belting, 1987:xi).

In addition, he feels these innovations are creating problems for art historical practice: the object has lost ground and its self-referentiality is in question as interest becomes more anthropological, perhaps even sociological (cf. Tagg, 1992; Wolff, 1981). Although, the authority of art historical discursive practice is now questioned, Belting indicates that

the artist and the art historian are challenging tradition in parallel ways. After all, he says, artists no longer copy from the 'Masters,' but confront history and its discursive practices directly.

Belting further acknowledges the existence of new possibilities, "but also new problems for a discipline which has always had to legitimize the isolation of its object -- art -- from other domains of knowledge and interpretation" (1987:xi). In the past "legitimizing [of] the isolation of art" we see the paradigm of Art History's discursive practice, of what can or cannot be said. The attack against the Modernist ideology of the autonomy of the object breaks down the boundary separating the object from everyday life (Sarup, 1993:132), and the enforced separation of the signifier from the signified (Blundell, 1992).

Belting's unequivocal critique of Art History is suggested by a rhetorical, if not ironic title -- The End of the History of Art? Yet he sees that change is inevitable. Are we indeed at the end of Art History? One reason for the disturbance is how 'expressive acts' by contemporary artists disobey the standard rules of production, which Belting calls "decanonization" (1987:61). He argues that important contemporary artists and their practices are not interested in carrying Art History forward. It is at this site of decanonization that a space opens up for the Other's competing

discourses. In other words, while questioning progressivist and formalist doctrines, Belting also questions/opposes certain radically a-historical tendencies in post-modernism. He says the canon is being raided by artists, which I assume he means are white-male heterosexuals. I would argue that in reality it is the so-called marginalized artists who are doing most of the damage. If mainstream artists are not obeying the rules, should all other artists be expected to? He sees mainstream artists raiding the past "without bothering to justify their reinterpretation within the ordered discourse of art history" (1987:61). Michel de Certeau (1984:35-36) would see this as a tactic of the artist who stages successful poaching raids as an operation of the weak against the strong. This raiding or poaching is quite clearly appropriation without a need for any justification. Ashcroft et al. see this as a strategy of 'abrogation' and 'appropriation,' both as a refusal to accept the categories of the dominant discourse and a reworking of the language to express a different cultural experience (1989:38). Belting finds the movements by artists into new frontiers in and from all directions is 'productive confusion' because they encroach "on the territory reserved for the critic and at the same time rival the privilege of the historian" (1987:61). How does this iconoclasm of contemporary artists affect Native artists? Have Aboriginal artists and others fallen into the abyss -- "the end of Art History?" --

or, are they very much part of its demise?

Belting's frame of reference is typical of most European and North American art historians. Although he seems intent on acknowledging only the works of Western artists in bringing about such changes we must also consider there are Others out there forcing changes, in addition to the white-male heterosexual. These Others include women, gay/lesbians, artists of colour, aboriginal, to name but a few groups historically excluded from the canon of Art History. We must extend Belting's acute critique by taking into account the new possibilities and spatialities of Art History's discursive practices introduced by these groups as has happened in other fields of cultural production. Often pressure for change is accepted only if it comes from those considered to be of the dominant culture -- white women, white gay/lesbians -- rather than those nonwhites who nonetheless remain within its discursive boundaries. The colonized receive little credit for causing the imperial discourse to undergo a reexamination of its identity in the face of the cultural Other.³

Belting acknowledges that today, in a world of disappearing boundaries, any system for an Art History is 'provisional' and 'fragmentary,' and also that, "individual positions are still rooted in and limited by particular cultural traditions" (1987:xii). In other words he seems to acknowledge the possibility of an 'Otherness' in Art History.

The disappearing boundaries (tradition) are the discursive boundaries which have delimited it as a discipline. Although Belting sees frontiers as the borders or limits of the discipline, I am, on the other hand, more inclined to view frontiers as areas just beyond boundaries, a position that obliges Modernist notions of progress and the practice of avant-garde artists. It is that zone beyond the margins of settlement. It is the territory of the Other which has always been vulnerable to cultural appropriation ever since early twentieth century 'primitivists,' if not before by tourists. Do the scholarships of Art History and anthropology oppose the practice of a cultural sovereignty by the Other? I was thinking of the well-publicized debates centred upon notions of 'cultural appropriation.'⁴ Although both disciplines have colonial histories, each fears being displaced (colonized). Belting clearly refers to other visual and literary media, but I would suggest this fear of displacement would also include the Other. I build on this argument in the following chapter.

McEvelley has sharply critiqued the Modernist practice of colonizing the 'frontiers' as part of the 'universalist' ideology of the Modernist mind. Colonizing the zone of the Other and the imposition of 'transcultural criteria of universal quality,' he posits, is part of the 'superiority' of European culture. Supposedly, the Other is striving towards 'similar goals. This notion of universality⁶ we know to be

culturally constructed. It can, furthermore, as Foucault says, be known only by those who have laid the grid over the top of the Other, for what is universal to some is local to others. Belting concedes that we all are bounded by cultural traditions, while critics such as McEvilley assert that a frontier mentality is Modernist and to accept the possibility of boundaries disappearing is post-modernist. The former position suggests one-way progress and movement (colonization) into the Other's spatial area, whereas, the latter suggests that barriers -- intellectual, symbolic, and physical -- are now being reexamined, and that they offer new possibilities for understanding the 'Self' by rendering the boundaries permeable from both sides (emphasis mine).

What are the constituent parts of the mainstream? David Trend (1992:82-83) argues that "although the imaginary mainstream purportedly includes a majority of people, it excludes everyone.... When stripped of its mystifying pretensions ... [it is a] rather small minority of people." He calls this small group's functions a 'Eurocracy' which maintains its hold by:

Material relations, to be sure, but also by the acquiescence of those it excludes. Such political ambivalence is largely premised on silence. Instead of encouraging citizen participation and criticism, the concept of the mainstream would suppress all opposition (82-83).

The notion of the mainstream must therefore be re-theorized to

take into account those 'outside' of History, that is, all the other histories which flow in parallel. The notion of the mainstream, as an equivalent to the master narrative, or Art History, is the discourse to which we have become subjects. We are all, somehow, constituted within its framework. The mainstream's teleological thrust is about progress through colonialism, forever moving forward, flooding out and disabling cultures that stand in its way. Along the way, the colonial process creates new subjectivities in those who are subjugated. This power relation, as we know, is also not passively accepted; rather, the resistance to this hegemonic process is a constant struggle. I would also add to my use of the notion of a mainstream, as part of the master discourse of colonization the idea of 'subjectivities': "Subjectivity [as] the product of ideology's power to interpellate -- to place individuals at particular sites within the field of meanings which it constitutes" (Grossberg, 1992:117).

To make the argument that we may be at the end of Art History, then, we have had to understand the master narrative. We must now ask what is the relationship of other histories to the master narrative? Are they the tributaries flowing towards or into the discursive practice of art, contributing to the mainstream, or to what Foucault calls a 'heterotopic space'?

If we can use the notion of the "tributary" as in relation to the mainstream, the tributaries may in fact be the

reproduction of the master narrative, only on a smaller scale. The tributaries become smaller histories feeding into the mainstream. In these terms, the relation of the mainstream to the tributaries suggests the notion of subjectivity, a power relation which situates one within the discursive practices of the other. The tributaries of the Other that flow into the mainstream suggest a subordinate relation. Thus, we begin to see the master narrative as the site in which various relations are played out in spatial terms. These systems of relation, such as centre/periphery, high/low, Western/primitive, construct identities and subjectivities, issues which I will address in the next chapter.

The notion of the mainstream as a temporal progression rather than as a spatialization is the key concern of my work as a curator at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The mainstream cannot be an everlasting phenomenon, it too must either come to an end ('the end of the History of Art?' as Belting suggests), or spill out into an ocean. McEvelly expresses this as a metaphor in which all the histories spill out as effluents into the sea. This ocean signifies the global, not as in the 'universal' but in a sea where we are all spatialized in a post-modern moment. In this moment cultural identities and otherness become relative, as does the production of art. There is no one canon, or meta-narrative but many micro-narratives (McEvelly, 1992:144). Linda

Hutcheon engages Michel Foucault's notion of the discontinuity of history, or 'temporal dislocation,' as a new instrument of historical analysis. Her idea is a way of looking not for the common denominators but for the interplay of different and heterogenous discourses. Hutcheon (1989:66) says, "as we have been seeing in historiographic metafiction as well, we now get the histories (in the plural) of the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist."

In this post-modern moment, in this ocean of cultural identities, the boundaries of the master narrative are blurred as all art becomes equal. The field of art contains conflicting, negotiating, interrogating histories, traditions, and identities. The conjoining of these histories makes it possible to have one. No one history becomes more important than the other.

In the highly competitive environment in which we now find ourselves micro-narratives or discursive practices jockey for place. To live in a time when borders and boundaries are more permeable, when communication and economies are becoming globalized and routinely transgress boundaries, creates confusion.

Within the disappearing boundaries of artistic practice, Belting says, "individual positions are still rooted in and limited by particular cultural traditions" (1987:xii). This

is, of course, the idea of subjectivity, which states that "subjectivity and experience are always determined by the specific position from which the world is experienced and known" (Grossberg, 1992:117). In this thesis I am interested not in how, but where, subjectivity plays itself out. What are the cultural spaces, in which one's subjectivity is constructed? How does Belting's scheme account for the importance of subjectivity in influencing artistic practice? The modernist argument of universality betrays specific cultural identity which it supposedly transcends. Modernist formalism was thought to contain universal values that Westerners could locate in works. Art works had to be formally intriguing.⁷ Thomas McEvelley sees the universalist attitude as Modernist, and therefore as colonialist.

[The] relativization of any culture, the perception that it is not an absolute but just one approach among many to the shared human project of civilization.... It can now be recognized that Modernist internationalism was a somewhat deceptive designation for Western claims of universal hegemony. In hopes of entering the international art discourse, a nonwhite or non-Western artist was to repress his or her inherited identity and assume a supposedly universal one; but that "universal" identity was just an emblem of another tribal cult that temporarily had an upper hand (1992:11).

Modernism's coloniality saw itself as owning History by expecting Others to be like itself. McEvelley indicates this perspective:

when whites saw history as exclusively their own, African, Indian, Chinese, and Amerindian societies

were regarded by white Westerners as ahistorical because they weren't dominated by the need to feel that they were evolving toward some ultimate consummation. Colonialism was justified as a means to drag the supposedly ahistorical into history -- at which point non-European peoples were supposed to gradually become like Europeans or, more recently, European Americans [and Canadians] (1992:131).

The crucial fact about Modernism is that the West invented the notion,⁸ in which it was a self-conscious rupturing from the past (tradition), as in the artistic practices of the avant-garde.

These beliefs were forced upon Others through a colonial process. For example, in Canada laws were enacted to civilize the aboriginal people, to bring them into modernity from their primitive world. Modernism and modernity's influence was largely successful. But people cannot be dragged into, or subjected to, History. I have pointed out elsewhere that the passive acceptance of colonial messages by aboriginal people was largely fiction, and that resistance to colonization existed everywhere (McMaster, 1993). The resistance against acculturation is a struggle still being waged by many contemporary Aboriginal artists, as we will see in later chapters. The Modernist project has come apart within a more pluralistic environment, an environment that is creating new possibilities. With the end of Art History new histories of art begin to appear. The global confluences of histories have arrived, looking for new spaces. This is the post-colonial

moment.

McEvelley envisions the possibilities of new art histories that are post-modern and post-colonial, in which time and space meet.

Nowadays, we see the next age not as a Prussian ordering or homogenization of worldwide culture, but as a pluralistic globalization of it. Supposedly, cultures will reach some stable interaction that will balance and respect their differences. But behind the very idea of achieving a stable stage of time lies the unspoken suggestion that this levelled or non-hierarchical, multicultural global civilization will in fact constitute the famous end of history -- the millennium predicted by Hegel. Merely by saying, as we look back over the last decade, that progress has been made in the transition from quotationalism to multiculturalism, we show that the idea of linear progress is still in place in our consciousness, though the linearity that it assumes is no longer a tight line but one that spreads out like a broad river delta yet still advances toward its end, where many channels empty into the sea (McEvelley, 1992:142).

Michel Foucault calls these sites 'heterotopias,' the coexistence in an impossible space of a large number of fragmentary possible worlds, or more simply, incommensurable spaces that are juxtaposed or superimposed on each other.

Strident efforts by Aboriginal peoples to retain local cultural identities can be short-sighted. They must take note of other global cultures and their rapid absorption into a 'pluralistic globalization.' There is, however, another potential contradiction in this situation. As Aboriginal people struggle to reclaim land and to hold onto their present

land (reserves), will cultural identities remain stable? When aboriginal self-government becomes a reality, how will the local cultural identities act as centres for nomadic subjects? Many forms may still be maintained, others invented, some borrowed, and still others syncretized.

As diverse cultural points of view are juxtaposed within a new Art History the temporal explodes into the spatial. Now, we can all have a history. But, if Western-derived 'standards' are being questioned, what standards are Native artists and Others working within? The assimilationist practice of conservative Art History has evolved and now seeks to understand all Others. How is it doing this? What is the emerging global scenario McEvelley speaks of? What does it mean for local cultures? Do Art History, and other histories, continue to be linear (temporal)? Why is there no imperative to unite all art histories? Will they remain fragmented? What are some of the interfaces?

The temporalities of Art History and the notions of the mainstream are two versions of the master narrative. Indeed, they form the background against which I now turn my attention to notions of place and identity and the struggles by First Peoples to articulate a cultural identity.

Endnotes

1. I favour Kobena Mercer's (1992:429) clarification of this term, which he says has been used to connote "a subject who does not have the right-to-speak and who is therefore spoken-for by the state and its 'representatives'." Quite literally, he says, members of minority groups are thus seen as 'minors' without a voice, abject childlike figures.
2. Thomas McEvelley lecture, "Continental Drift: Problems of Cultural Identity in a Post-Modern World," National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 12 March 1994.
3. Svetlana Alpers, The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century, further problematizes these frames of references by indicating that the models of art historical discourse have been determined by the art of Italy and its study. Thus, her study of northern European, Seventeenth Century Dutch art, is to be distinguished from these "standards" of seeing.
4. We have only to remember the famous debate between Thomas McEvelley and the Museum of Modern Art's curator William Rubin over these issues following the exhibition Primitivism in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern, in the pages of Artforum. McEvelley's charges of cultural appropriation can be read in "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief," (1992:27-56)
5. McEvelley lecture, 12 March 1994.
6. Gregory Jusdanis (1991:10) explains the fallacy of applying European theories to non-Western cultures and traditions, and argues that they are not as universal as is often believed, and that this universality is valid and useful only within Eurocentric cultures. He says, "All methods are valid in their own contexts. The fallacy lies in masquerading a particular ideology as universal. As a European-oriented discipline, literary criticism cannot evade its Eurocentric character. Western theories do not automatically have validity outside the traditions that produced them".
7. McEvelley lecture, 12 March 1994.
8. Herbert Kohl (1992:14) says "Modernism [had] two faces, one rational, orderly, and planned, the other alienated, rule breaking, and defiant. Both tend toward the abstract, breaking down objects into component shapes and forms and unfolding the surface of reality to reveal underlying structures and forces."

Chapter Three

IDENTITY POLITICS AND THE FIELD OF ART

This chapter concerns two interrelated issues, space and identity. Specifically, I examine a body of theory that explains the way identity -- political, legal, symbolic -- is played out in many spaces, such as the field of art.

For aboriginal people identity has been particularly problematic ever since the Indian Act 1876 legally defined an 'Indian', vis-a-vis a Canadian citizen. That the legal issues of identity remain unresolved can be seen in the strenuous efforts made by aboriginal peoples to be included within the Constitution Act 1982 and in subsequent confrontations. These politics of identity have spilled over into the field of art.

In this chapter I begin by establishing a groundwork for discussing identity as it applies to aboriginal people in Canada. What does it mean to be 'Indian' in Canada? What is the legal definition? What are its problems? Who does it include and not include? What are the struggles regarding legal identity? What are the struggles regarding cultural definitions? What is the relation between the two? My primary interest is identity issues relating to Indians with a secondary interest in the closely related Métis.

Following this I offer a discussion of the spaces where identity is constructed and negotiated. I will also integrate

issues about identity and the 'spaces' where identity is constructed and negotiated within the context(s) of contemporary cultural politics. I will examine how identity has become objectified, by whom and for whom. I will also consider how important 'space' is in relation to identity, with a final consideration of the affect and effect of a 'spatialized politics of identity' within the discursive practices of contemporary art.

1. Defining "Native" Canadians:

[Aboriginal peoples] have fought tenaciously to maintain their identity, their culture and the remnants of their land (Berger, 1991:162).

In recent times we have heard a multiplicity of labels used to describe the aboriginal peoples of the Americas, first named 'Indians' by Christopher Columbus. This label has retained its powerful and highly contested inscription. Indian people are the only group in Canada legally defined.

To begin then, it is imperative to point out briefly the often confusing and multifarious historical legal definitions of aboriginal peoples in Canada, which have created situations of illogic and ambiguity, often leading to political confusion not only for aboriginal people themselves but for Canadians in general. In Canada, Parliament defined an 'Indian' within the meaning of the Indian Act 1876, as a person who "is registered as an Indian, or is entitled to be registered as an Indian."

More recently, the Constitution Act 1982 further defined 'aboriginal peoples of Canada' to include Indian, Inuit, and Métis. This legal definition of 'Indian' creates situations that catch people in a web of confusion that they are forced to negotiate, for there simply is no scientific base or cultural logic behind the definitions.

The definition derived from the Indian Act 1876 becomes imprecise when referring to Inuit or Métis. Aboriginal peoples in Canada, then, can be either Status or non-Status, although many recognize four indigenous groups: Status¹ or registered Indians, non-Status Indians², Métis³, and Inuit⁴. Only the first group is legally defined under the Indian Act 1876. The remaining three groups are self-identifying, although the Constitution Act 1982 recognized aboriginal people as Indian, Inuit and Métis, and left only non-Status Indians with no constitutional status. Legal and cultural definitions, furthermore, do not correspond, because of the constant daily shifts in legal definitions and meaning which continue to be debated.

These legal distinctions also assume at a fundamental level a difference between aboriginal peoples and all others who are described simply as 'Canadians.'⁵ The specificity of this designation, also known as 'citizens plus,'⁶ grants special status to Native people. Thomas R. Berger former justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, favours the

special status for aboriginal peoples argument when he says:

The distinction is that the Native people did not emigrate to Canada as individuals or families who expected to be assimilated. [On the contrary, it is the immigrants who] chose to come to Canada to submit to the nation's laws and institutions; their choices were individual choices. The Native peoples ... never relinquished their claim to be treated as distinct peoples in our midst (1991:151).

This would be akin to the notion that immigrants sign a metaphorical 'social contract' agreeing to the conditions for being Canadian citizens. Aboriginal peoples would argue they never signed such a contract, but rather signed treaties that granted them certain 'aboriginal rights and titles.' The conferring of special status on one group inevitably leads to political tensions, as the contemporary politics between English and French Canadians clearly show.

Should there be distinct status for either aboriginal peoples or the province of Quebec? Whatever the outcome of the future of English and French speaking Canada, aboriginal peoples will continue to be caught in the crossfire. Clearly, in recent times the events at Oka, Akwesasne, and Kahnawake, makes the issue even more problematic. So, who is more 'distinct'? Aboriginal people or French Canadians? What about the Métis?

2. Cultural Definitions:

So, here we are now, translated and invented skins, separated and severed like dandelions from the

sacred and caught alive in words in the cities. WE are aliens in our own traditions; the white man has settled with his estranged words right in the middle of our sacred past (Gerald Vizenor, Anishinabe, quoted in Lippard, 1989:23).

The issues of cultural identity are even more complex than those of legal identity. In these late-capitalist times, within those signifying practices that encode identity, the question of self-definition can be simultaneously self-empowering and open to contention. Native artists struggling for self-definition in the face of restrictive legal and official definitions may cause some to decide for what John Fiske would describe as, 'social agency' over 'social subjectivity' (1989:24). And, what about the tactical possibility he raises of a 'nomadic subjectivity'? We can understand Fiske's notion as agents freely moving among various subject positions; it recognizes contradictory situations in which individuals can either be seen as social agents (active agency) or social subjects (subjectivity). The quest for agency is necessary in order to negotiate the contradictions and to construct relevancies and allegiances from among them.

Presently, fifty percent of all Native Americans and Canadian Native people live in urban areas where they are creating new communities and re-defining themselves. These urban communities add further complexities to the politics of self-identity. Alan E. Morinis's study of urban Indians in

Vancouver's Skid Row provides an interesting and accurate cultural definition that would challenge the legal definitions:

On Skid Row, there is but one category of Indians, and membership is determined on the basis of subjective and social criteria. A person is an Indian who looks like an Indian, regards him or herself as an Indian and is thought of by others as being an Indian, the legal distinction between status and non-Status Indians is of no significance here (1982:95).

There have always been many Native people whose definition of themselves and their people enabled them to meet the challenge of history. The dialectical tension between social agency and subjectivity will no doubt continue unabated. But will this have any consequence for Canadian Native people? Clearly these are contentious issues both in Canada and the United States. In the U.S., for example, a piece of legislation called PUBLIC LAW 101-644, 'Expanding the Powers of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board,' explicitly states that it is unlawful to exhibit or advertise as a 'Native American artist' individuals who are not from a 'federally-recognized tribe.' As I previously mentioned, contradictory situations exist for definitions of legal status in Canada, while in the U.S. this new law further exacerbates the issue. Consequently, Native artists in the two countries are now confronted by two systems that are both different and contradictory.'

3. Space and Identity:

The problem of *where* to practise is as pressing as *how* (Tagg, 1992:46).

I now turn my attention to the spaces where identity is constructed and negotiated, understanding 'spaces' here as the 'field of forces' that is contemporary art. I am, as noted in the Introduction to this thesis, using the concept of 'space' here as a master metaphor to understand a range of geographical and social locations where artists' identities are 'constructed' and where artists themselves 'struggle' to transform those identities.

Michel Foucault posited that to understand space one has to understand the relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980:69). By this he meant that in the construction of knowledge, a specific discourse establishes its domain or 'field,' regulated by what he calls an "administration of knowledge." In effect, we can compare this to a 'gate-keeping' ideology which maintains its boundaries by marginalizing the 'Other' beyond its borders. This field becomes a discursive space where struggles are potentially waged. Within the 'field of art,' for example, the discursive language that marginalizes non-Western artists of colour, or Native artists, is the pejorative insinuation that their work is neither 'art' nor of sufficient 'quality' to be considered serious. Rather, it is deflected to another discursive formation called

'ethnography.' This anthropological (ethnographic) distraction has complicated the issue; after all, it is the discursive space of art that is most sought after by Native artists, because it is here they develop their practice. This form of marginalization routinely takes place within the field of art.

Foucault understood the advantages of using spatial metaphors in the analysis of social relations. In an interview he implied that he came to understand the relations between power and knowledge through spatial metaphors:

Once knowledge can be analysed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power. There is an administration of knowledge, a politics of knowledge, relations of power which pass via knowledge and which, if one tries to transcribe them, lead one to consider forms of domination designated by such notions such as field, region and territory (1980:69-70).

Thus, using Foucault's idea of knowledge as a form of power inscribed by an "administering power," I would like to argue that within the field of art a similar spatial (territorial) domination is constructed. In the previous chapter I established the discursive field of art as a product of the linear narrative of 'Art History,' which defines Europe as its narrative enclosure and linked in turn to colonized countries like Canada and the United States. Is it possible, using Foucault's ideas, to 'decipher the discourse' to use spatial strategic metaphors to enable us to grasp "the points at which

discourses are transformed in, through and on the basis of relations of power" (1980:70)? I would argue this is possible.

Continuing to work with Foucault's spatial metaphor, Pierre Bourdieu (1993:30) similarly conceptualizes the 'field' as a (socially) structured space within which a discursive formation, like art, can function. Bourdieu's 'cultural field' situates artistic works within the social conditions of their production, circulation, and consumption, which exist within a kind of autonomous 'cultural circuitry' consisting of various social agents (artists, dealers, curators, collectors, etc.) acting in complex social situations or contexts. Within this space, or field of cultural production, complex relations and struggles, or power relations, occur, which he calls a "field of forces." Because the field of cultural production consists of agents, it is their relative and diverse position that Bourdieu calls into question. His idea is that agents occupy spaces, from dominant to subordinate. The struggles or "position-taking" that occurs within this 'field of forces' is a political act about gaining specific forms of symbolic capital,⁸ such as prestige. Furthermore, he says, within the 'field of forces':

The generative, unifying principle of this 'system' is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders (so that participation in the struggle -- which may be indicated objectively by, for example, the attacks that are suffered -- can be used as the criterion establishing that a work belongs to the field of position-takings and its author to the

field of positions (Bourdieu, 1993:34).

Thus, he suggests that to be part of the field is to understand that struggle is inevitable, an unwritten rule.

The initiative to force change within the cultural field comes from those that have the least cultural capital; Bourdieu refers to the young artists who endeavour to 'displace' older artists.⁹ Of course, women and artists of colour must be added. Bourdieu's notion of 'position-taking' is achieved by the younger/marginalized artists through the establishment of their difference. These young artists, he says, endeavour "to impose new modes of thought and expression, out of key with the prevailing modes of thought and the doxa, and therefore bound to disconcert the orthodox by their 'obscurity' and 'pointlessness'" (1993:58). This is the logic by which the rules (discourses) are established.

I would argue that many articulate groups of artists exist who use political means, or 'direct action,' to gain entry into the field above and beyond Bourdieu's analysis. The Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA) is a good example. The downside of this kind of politics of direct confrontation is that the powerful or dominant discourse inevitably reverts to Bourdieu's point, known today as the 'quality debate.'¹⁰ It has been an effective tool. Thus, the strategy is for marginalized artists to seek new and more sophisticated methods of displacement or inclusion within the

field. I believe Bourdieu's assessment of displacement describes a strategy, which "by the logic of action and reaction, ... leads to all sorts of changes in the position-takings of the occupants of the other positions" (1993:58).

Similarly, Michael Keith and Steve Pile use a metaphor of space in terms of 'new radical geographies' by demonstrating "that all spatialities are political." "Politics," they say, "is necessarily territorial but these territories are simultaneously real, imaginary, and symbolic" (1993:224). They see politics as an "enclosure" that constructs borders and walls (discourses), sealing itself off from the marginalized 'Other,' further creating eternal sites of (political) struggle (1993:222). As marginalized artists struggle for inclusion, what are the strategies Native artists operate with to situate themselves, or create a space within the field of art? Native American artist Jimmie Durham says:

Among artists, those efforts still today are usually made with constant reinforcement of the individual's identity and authenticity by employing parts of the stereotype. One's Indian community cannot authenticate or designate a position in the world of art because that world is of the colonizer. One must approach the colonizer for the space and licence to make art. The colonizer, of course, will not grant such licence, but will pretend to under certain circumstances (1992:434).

What Durham is saying is that Native artists must make every effort to understand the territory they are moving into because there are always rules to the discursive space. Only

when the rules (discourses) are deciphered is it entirely possible to subvert them. Durham's notion of the art world granting a 'license' has a double meaning, at once signalling a permission to practice and an opportunity to transgress. The crucial point to making incursions into the discursive space is either with the intention of 'position-taking' or constructing a spatial identity alongside others.

If these licences to practice art are being issued, how are they obtained? It seems the licence to practice is a recent phenomenon. American art critic Thomas McEvelley sees these radical changes within the art world as a 'post-modern moment' -- whether this is a result of radical incursions or a change of perspectives on the part of the mainstream is a debatable point. I would like to consider the former, since the latter is not the normal process but occurs, rather, as a 'politically-correct' move: somewhere struggles had to take place. McEvelley says:

Increasingly, it has become clear that in the emerging global scenario no one cultural form will be enforced on all, i.e., no New World Order. Instead, it will be one culture made of many cultures, one history made of many histories -- a whole made of disunited fragments, with no imperative to unite them. Peoples clinging to their own heritages, traditions, languages, and styles of self-hood insist that they be written into history as themselves, and that their picture of us, with elements we might not relish, be written into that history too (1992:132).

Fredric Jameson agrees with McEvelley that post-modernism has

opened a space for the Other, when he says,

The totalizing account of the postmodern always included a space for various forms of oppositional culture: those of marginal groups, those of radically distinct residual or emergent cultural languages, their existence being already predicted by the necessarily uneven development of late capitalism, whose First World produces a Third World within itself by its own inner dynamic. In this sense postmodernism is 'merely' a cultural dominant (1991:159).

Both these assessments, however, do not give minorities/marginalized peoples any credit for the struggle to establish spaces by their action; instead the dominant voice takes the credit.

4. Identity Politics:

Identity is a contested concept with no one fixed definition or meaning. Similarly, the implications for multiple cultural identities, are equally dynamic and complex, and perhaps undefinable. What makes identity a contested terrain is that the privileged, and dominant, society is slowly losing its authority and identity, causing a crisis within itself. The shattered 'Old World Order' is being replaced by new experiences and emerging identities, thus forming part of the so-called 'post-modern condition.' This fragmentation and plurality are what inspire the critique of Modernism's notions of 'universality.' Identity is being invoked to reveal a new social presence of many new actors. As

a result no one political group can monopolize an oppositional identity.

In analyzing the contested terrain of identity politics we must consider the conflicts and contradictions within and between global relations. We cannot overlook contested definitions of identity because their connotative meanings, subject to varying interpretations, depend, for instance, on whose discourse is being supported. In other words, empowerment takes place at the site of language. Here the oppositional or subordinate appropriates the dominant discourse, changes it, re-defines it, re-replaces it, and engenders re-articulated signs -- this is the post-colonial notion of 'abrogation' and 'appropriation' (Ashcroft et al, 1989). Kobena Mercer (1992) says this is the two-faced quality of every sign: to create political interpretations or ideological meaning.

Previously, McEvelley and Jameson spoke of the post-modern as making space for the Other. What is the connection of identity politics to the post-modern condition that Kobena Mercer suggests when he says, "identities are not found but made; that they are not just there, waiting to be discovered in the vocabulary of Nature, but that they have to be culturally and politically constructed through political antagonism and cultural struggle" (Mercer, 1992:427). Are the privileged becoming more and more the minority? Is the

dominant ideology of the master narrative fragmenting? Is the post-modern condition the simultaneous fragmentation and displacement of the dominant voice by the polyvocal, heteroglossia of the Other? All can be answered in the affirmative. To what do we attribute the rise of awareness of cultural identity? After democracy? Clearly, Mercer sees that making space is a political act.

Similarly, in the cultural field, the politics of identity is not just the struggle to define oneself against the dominant discursive practices of a contemporary art discourse. Of course the politics of identity intends the subversion of the discourse that has steadfastly denied the articulation of cultural identity. This Foucauldian 'politics of knowledge' has been used by the mainstream against non-Western artists to prevent them from transgressing the field by introducing culturally-specific issues. They (the gate-keepers) argue that to do so would compromise the aesthetic ideals of art; they do not distinguish art from ideology, theory from practice.

Victor Burgin writes that:

The canon is the discourse made flesh; the discourse is the spirit of the canon. To refuse the discourse, the words of communion with the canon, in speaking of art or in making it, is to court the benign violence of institutional excommunication (1986:159).

The discursive practices that take place in institutions and

the power of excommunication become, in Burgin's view, part and parcel of the struggle. On the one hand, those positioned outside the centre want change, while those on the inside prefer the status quo. This, however, is not always the case. There are those on the inside who are part of the radical struggle for change. Burgin's notion of 'refusing the discourse' refers to an oppositional practice that seeks radically different views. To bring any view of relation, like the tributary to the mainstream, involves a power relation. Where radical views or actions are grounds for 'benign excommunication' the radical nature for change can become a spark that can re-fuse the discourse. In other words, old discourses become infused with new ideas. This is similar to Bourdieu's notion that "space for position takings" are constantly being negotiated and become 'sites for struggle.' The 'site of confluence' of the tributary and mainstream, for example, is conflictive, as it forces a reexamining the spatial relations of dominant/mainstream and oppositional discourses. It continues to mean, however, that the mainstream speaks from a position of power. The mainstream is still 'art' but this does not mean it cannot change its complexion, as other discourses become inscribed within the dominant discourse.

Why is cultural identity problematic only for non-Western man? Can 'Western man' be subjected to notions of 'otherness'?

For example, British art critic Guy Brett points to his unproblematic cultural identity as an Englishman -- at least this is what he has always assumed. Interestingly, however, this assumption was made apparent to him by a Mexican-American artist who interrogated him about his cultural identity.¹¹ Brett, who quickly realized his status as 'white, male, and Anglo-Saxon,' had always been used to ask the Other about his/her cultural identity. Brett concludes that the dominant culture sees itself as:

Whole and beyond question.... accustomed to rule, to decide, to explain, to define. This is our conception of knowledge. But this self confidence today is actually hollow, like an empty suit of clothes, a kind of void (Brett, 1992:52).

The unproblematic identity: this to me summed up the struggle and politics of identity within Western society, and more particularly within the field of art.

Conclusion

In Canadian society aboriginal peoples have struggled to maintain their cultural identities in the face of dramatic changes to their lives. Earlier, I showed the draconian measures taken to legally define an 'Indian' in Canada.

Today, identity politics allows individuals to choose their identities, as members of one or more groups as their political point of departure. They assume roles with the recognition that such identity is politically paramount.

Similarly, the struggle for land by Native Canadians is a struggle to create identity and expand space. Claiming land, claiming space; a land-claim is an attempt to 'reterritorialize.'¹² It means the political process of creating, in law, new borders and divisions, of marking off rights, privileges and obligations -- what artist Lance Belanger calls 'reclamation' (see Chapter Seven). Territoriality is important for Native Canadians. The 'Indian Reserve' is a territorial space that signifies 'home.' It is a place that enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives; it is a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality; it is a 'frontier of difference.' Home is a place to which we can always return.

For many Native peoples, this home is the Indian Reserve. For that reason, a return home takes place daily or seasonally for social reasons, in order to participate in ceremonies like Powwows and Potlatches, or to attend weddings or funerals and other 'rites of passage.' For many Native peoples this does not mean a return to the margins, in contrast, it is a return to the centre. Thus, by inverting the stereotype of the Reserve as somehow outside the core of the state, a new empowerment takes place.

Endnotes

1. Status Indians: according to the Indian Act a Status Indian ('legal' or 'registered') is a person registered as an Indian or entitled to be registered as an Indian. Two subtypes fall within this definition, 'Treaty Indians' and 'Reserve or non-Reserve Indians.'
2. Non-Status Indians: non-Status Indians are persons who have Indian ancestry, are usually self-identifying, and yet are not considered 'Indians' by the government. Many are not 'legal' by choice, whereas others are disenfranchised Indians who lost their status by 'marrying out'. In the past, such individuals gained the federal franchise and thus the vote (it was not until 1960 that Canadian law finally allowed all Indians the federal vote). Recently the government's Bill C-31 permitted some individuals to regain status, although there are still many who identify themselves as Indians although they remain ineligible for status, particularly individuals who live in urban areas.
3. Métis: The Métis are largely defined as 'people of mixed Indian and non-Indian ancestry.' It would seem, however, the Métis today would see themselves more in terms of a shared socio-cultural heritage. Indeed, the Constitution Act 1982 legally recognized them. Today, almost two-thirds of the Métis live in the Prairie Provinces and the North West Territories, and their provincial organizations indicate their presence and tenacity.
4. Inuit: Originally the Inuit were defined as Indians and consequently were not dealt with separately under the Indian Act. Today, there is an agreed upon definition worked out with the federal government which is based on traditional land occupancy, possession of 'disk' numbers, or the blood quantum.
5. Olive Dickason believes the Indian Act to be a 'total institution' which "with treaties,... touches on almost all aspects of the lives of status Indians, placing them in a separate category from other Canadians" (1992:286). Similarly, Alan Pratt indicates, "No other group of people in Canadian society has been the subject of comprehensive race-specific laws and policies, which have obscured their place within Canada and their rights as Canadians" (1989:20).
6. This idea states that the federal government is responsible for the 'plus' (that is, for 'aboriginality'); whereas, the provincial governments are responsible for the 'citizens'" (that is, equity of service, equal to that enjoyed by others, which Hawkes argues "entails treating all individuals, equally, without regard to race" (Hawkes, 1989:11). Alan Pratt believes this idea is helpful in describing not only the appropriate federal and provincial roles but, the distinctiveness of Native peoples vis-a-vis others.
7. See McMaster (1994b) for further discussion on this law and how Native artist are positioned within this contradictory situation.

8. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital is based on the idea of symbolic power, a form of capital that is not based on economic capital. Symbolic capital could refer to a 'cultural knowledge' which for example Native artists can bring to the field of art.
9. Bourdieu indicates that the site of struggle most often occurs between two principles of hierarchization: the field of cultural production and the field of power. The field of cultural production is based on the principle of autonomy, "(e.g. 'art for art's sake'), which those of its advocates who are least endowed with specific capital tend to identify with degree of independence from the economy, seeing temporal failure as a sign of election and success as a sign of compromise... [The field of power, on the other hand, is based on the principle of heteronomy:] favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically (e.g. 'bourgeois art')." (1993:40).
10. See Howardina Pindell's excellent article on this and associated issues, "Breaking the silence." New Art Examiner October 1990:18-27.
11. Brett, however, slips into his own 'limit of imperviousness' by referring to Guillermo Gomez-Pena, his interlocutor, as a Mexican-American artist. Did he momentarily slip into his dominant position? In other words, Gomez-Pena, being a non-White, could he not be an 'American' artist, or perhaps referred to as 'Mexican' born? Unless, of course, Gomez-Pena has dual citizenship. My objection is that by Brett's own admission as stated above, that White identity is unquestioned, but somehow he questions Gomez-Pena's identity. Can Brett be British-American, American, or British-born American? Would he be a hyphenated American? This is what I mean, in reversing the question: is his own identity as a White European impervious to its own cultural identity?
12. D. Emily Hicks's use of the term, derived from Deleuze and Guattari, writes "When one leaves one's country or place of origin (deterritorialization), everyday life changes. The objects that continually reminded one of the past are gone. Now, the place of origin is a mental representation in memory. The process of reterritorialization begins" (1991:xxxi).

Chapter Four

THE POLITICS IN CANADIAN NATIVE ART

The contemporary Indian artist as documentarian/historian plays an important part in the socio/political/cultural life of his community, re-writing history from the Native viewpoint and illustrating for posterity the present period. The 'new' art is thus, beyond an object of aesthetic pleasure, an important socio-political document (Podedworney, 1986:6).

In 1992 three-major exhibitions devoted to contemporary Native art opened in Hull, Ottawa, and Montreal.¹ This unprecedented gathering of works by contemporary Native Canadian and American artists represents a significant change in the artistic climate for the artists, who until recently occupied a marginal position on the North American art scene. The exhibitions challenged often-heard assumptions such as, the idea that Native artists lack coherent artistic strategies, that their work is of questionable quality, that the work is 'ethnographic' or that it is always driven by extreme political content.

The works contained in these three exhibitions make direct references to the current political and historical realities of Native peoples. However, this is a natural manifestation of the rising tide of Native political consciousness in the last few decades which has provided a nucleus of expression for many contemporary Native artists. In a recent conversation, artist George Longfish (Seneca-Tuscarora)² remarked: "In Canada, you have your art and your

politics; whereas, in the U.S. we have one or the other."³ Longfish's comment is a good starting point for a discussion of how and why Native artists have reached this point over the last fifty years in Canada.

Necessary to the understanding of this development is an overview of Native political milestones and other key events in the country's history, which over this period have influenced the direction and thinking of Native people, including Native contemporary artists. Although Native political consciousness began much sooner in many parts of the country, the Native Canadians who volunteered their services to the war effort during the Second World War were particularly important among the catalysts for creating a new climate for the future. Historically, Native involvement in armed conflicts stretches from the War of 1812 to Vietnam (Staats, 1986), but the temper of the 1940s, more than previous periods, gave a new twist to situations that were to have consequences for the future development of Native politics.

It is estimated that approximately 3,000 men and women from reserves across Canada enlisted (Staats, 1986) to fight with the Allies in World War II. A new generation of restless Native men and women became increasingly influenced by events outside the reserves, and were more apt to adapt to the new conditions their parents struggled to create. As Native people moved across the country in search of a new lifestyle this

resulted in new social pressures as well as conflicts with traditional ways of life. Generations of Native peoples lived in desperate conditions on the reserves, and the experience of leaving home for urban centres or overseas seemed like an adventure. Leaving the reservations opened up new possibilities, new ways of seeing the modern world, and certainly a new understanding, or questioning, of oneself within this new context. Often the adventure must have been short-lived, and the thought of returning home must have caused many to rethink what it was they were returning to. The war changed the world forever, and the lives of Native people in Canada as well.

While Native soldiers were overseas participating in the fight for the freedom and security for all Canadians, other battles raged at home that seemed just as formidable. Goodwill and Sluman point to the struggles of status Indians to confront constantly shifting government policies regarding the state's responsibilities to the indigenous population:

When the voluntary assimilation of Indians did not materialize, the cruelty began ... it became the policy to erode the reserves.... Forced enfranchisement had been another ploy ... but the stubborn Indians, although an endangered species, were not about to follow their buffalo into oblivion.... The average Canadian can have no idea of the merciless and prolonged pressures brought to bear upon Indian people to allow themselves to be legislated out of existence (1984:170).

Although Goodwill and Sluman add that this undeclared war between the government and the Indians had to be suspended as young Native people joined the armed forces, the fundamental

conditions remained. The government continued to work toward the assimilation of Native people, while the newly emerging Native political machinery argued for self-government, an issue which is only now, more than fifty years later, beginning to be addressed seriously by the federal government.

It was during the war years that Native political organizations became more decisive about pressuring the government to change its policies. In 1944 the first ever national congregation of Native people met as a political unit, in Ottawa. The North American Indian Brotherhood (NAIB), which consisted of many independent regional political groups, gave Native peoples an opportunity to voice common grievances collectively. The leaders of these Indian and Métis organizations emerged from among the men returning from the war. Used to being treated as equals, they were more confident, worldly, and outspoken. During these years, Native leaders knowingly disobeyed the law as laid down by the Indian Act of 1927 which banned all political organizational activities by Native peoples (Frideres, 1983:233). The NAIB, was dissolved in 1959, but not before it had made its mark. In 1947 the organization successfully challenged a government standing committee that called for the liquidation of Indian lands and enfranchisement of Indians, wholesale integration, and the diffusion of Indian programs (Goodwill and Sluman, 1984:193).

Native political efforts did not stop there. Native

leaders continued to lobby forcefully for drastic revisions to the Indian Act. This time a special Joint Committee was formed to hear Native people.

As a result of the hearings and investigations, a new Indian Act was introduced by the Liberal government in 1950, and after some additional consultations with Indian groups a revised Act was passed in 1951. This Act did put limits on official interference with Indian cultural activities ... an Indian could no longer be enfranchised without his' consent and the ban on political organizing was dropped (Goodwill and Sluman, 1984:195).

But although the government was forced to relax its opposition to Native political development, Native organizations did not take root again until the mid-1960s.

The growing interest of Native organizations in social and political issues drew attention to Native cultural practices as well. Two non-Native organizations had taken up the challenge to protecting and maintaining Native cultural integrity. Since the beginning of the century, the Canadian Handicraft Guild of Montreal was deeply concerned about the rapid decline of craftsmanship in Canada due to the proliferation of modern techniques of mass production. This problem, along with the use of cultural objects as mere commodities, became a concern with regard to the cultural productions of Native people as well. The Guild provided valuable support for these issues as far away as the Prairies, but its influence was strongest in Eastern Canada. A sister organization on the West Coast appeared in 1940, and was called the Society for the Furtherance of B.C. Indian Arts and

Crafts. "Both ... had a direct line through their membership to the political establishment in Ottawa, and as a result were able to effect a number of major policy changes" (Hill, 1984:18). The long-term success or failure of their efforts, however, has not been judged to date. And while these arts and crafts societies were protective of Native traditions and sensibilities, Native people across Canada were entering a new period of cultural awareness (cf. McMaster, 1993).

The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences tabled a report on the state of national culture in 1950, at a time when the federal government, through the Indian Act, was reconsidering extending religious and cultural freedom to the Native peoples. Sixteen briefs and presentations were submitted to the Commission on the state of Native arts and crafts (McMaster, 1993). There was little attention focussed, however, on Native culture as a whole, because it was viewed as more of an economic than an aesthetic concern. Therefore, no major recommendations were made in the report on the subject, and the Commission was content to shift the responsibility elsewhere in the government. The report gave birth to The Canada Council, whose responsibility was -- and still is -- to encourage the development of the arts in Canada and to support artistic activity. At this time, however, Native artists were not yet part of this picture, as they were not thought of as individual artists.

The fact that Native cultures have been viewed as

existing beyond the margins of mainstream culture has been both scourge and godsend. This banishment has been disastrous for change and development, yet in some ways helpful for maintaining traditions. Unable to find a place within the Canadian cultural establishment, the Native cultural cause has been taken up by others. Because the Montreal Guild and the B.C. Society championed traditional arts and crafts two other institutions in British Columbia took up the challenge for change.

In 1949-50 the University of British Columbia commissioned Mungo Martin (ca. 1881-1962) and Ellen Neel (1916-1966) to restore 'totem'⁵ poles earlier brought onto the campus. This project heralded the beginning of active museum involvement in the promotion of West Coast Native art by living artists, and not just in the salvaging of old art forms. Martin worked at UBC until 1951. Having long established his reputation as a master carver, Martin spent the next ten years as carver-in-residence at the British Columbia Provincial Museum (BCPM, now the Royal British Columbia Museum). This responsibility entitled him to teach traditional carving techniques to several generations of Kwakwaka'wakw carvers, such as his son-in-law Henry Hunt, grandson Tony Hunt, and step-grandson Douglas Cranmer. Martin, who had learned from master carver Willie Seaweed (ca. 1873-1967), has been called the 'slender thread' by members of the U'mista Cultural Society of Alert Bay, B.C. because he was an

important link with earlier traditional masters. Both Seaweed and Martin had trained under the traditional apprenticeship system and contributed to the development of the southern Kwakwaka'wakw style, now practised most notably by the Hunt carvers. Both carved model poles for sale to the non-Native public, but both carved for potlatches as well. Martin died in 1962 and was honoured posthumously by The Canada Council in 1964. In 1957 the UBC Museum of Anthropology commissioned another excellent carver, Haida artist Bill Reid, as well as Douglas Cranmer, to carve six poles and a memorial figure for the institution. Reid worked at the Museum for three and some half years, while Cranmer moved over to the British Columbia Provincial Museum.

Following World War II, Native people across Canada moved into urban centres seeking employment. In these alien spaces they felt the need to gather. For example, in 1951 the North American Indian Club (N.A.I.C.) was formed in Toronto, primarily by whites and urban Natives who had common interests in Indian history, art, craft, and dances. Many of the members had served in the military during the War and preferred to work in the cities rather than return to the reserves (Price, 1978:164). In the later 1950s and well into the 1960s, urban centres became important for the swelling Native populations. In 1959, for example, the first Indian and Metis Friendship Centre was created in Winnipeg. The mandate of these centres was restricted, however, to providing social services and

assistance to Native people in their communities, rather than fostering the arts.

Also in 1957, the Canadian Association in Support of Native People (CASNP) was organized to bring

together a largely non-Native group of influential people to act as a lobbying force for Natives. Although its legitimacy came under attack from Natives several times in its short history, the CASNP did provide the first national organization for Natives, and did [much] to influence some of the policies that emanated from Ottawa (Frideres, 1983:250).

The National Indian Council (NIC), formed in 1954, was the heir to the NAIB, and in 1961 became the official organization for both status and non-status Indians. It proposed:

To illuminate the whole spectrum of Indian arts, crafts, philosophical concepts and aspirations of Indians to the Canadian public, in a way that would provide a positive image to counteract the negative stereotyping of the past. It inaugurated travelling exhibitions of Indian art. There were, for the first time, annual Princess Pageants and exchange visits of Indian students between eastern and western Canada. Powwows were enjoyed again in areas where Indian culture had long languished, giving regained pride and a sense of identity back to people who had almost lost them completely (Goodwill and Sluman, 1984:209).

In 1960 Canadian 'status Indians' were granted citizenship under the Bill of Rights. Over several decades Native organizations had become multifaceted, complex political structures, representative of Native peoples all across Canada. These political organizations now saw as part of their mandate the influencing of government policies, the development of new programs for Indians, and the

administration of some of these programs.

A small public relations brief was released by the Department of Indian Affairs during that same year, which reported how Native Canadians were making a living; in it is a reference to handicrafts:

The traditional arts and crafts are still producing part-time employment for Indians in many areas. Handicraft items include moccasins, gloves, jackets, and mukluks in northern and non-agricultural-hunting areas, potato baskets in the Maritimes and totem-carvings, carved masks, fire baskets and Cowichan sweaters on the West Coast. These provide an important supplementary income for the Indian families producing them (The Canadian Indian, 1960:19).

These observations, however, were not meant to challenge entrenched assimilationist cultural policies. Any changes on that front would have to come from the cultural sector.

Several generations of Native people had suffered from the paralyzing effects of the Indian Act and change was inevitable. It gradually became evident that a new generation of individuals would have to spearhead a kind of 'cultural revolution,' whether it was conscious or not. Among these individuals was the young artist Norval Morrisseau (Ojibwa), whose first commercial exhibition at the Pollock Gallery in Toronto in 1962 was greeted by rave reviews. This was the decisive event that changed the way people were to look at Native art and artists in years to come. The success of Morrisseau in the early 1960s is described by Ruth Phillips:

When Morrisseau came into prominence in the 1960s, the climate of receptivity in the wider art world was considerably different from that encountered by

earlier generations. Though relatively isolated, northern Ontario was tied to a wider southern Canadian society, populated by non-Natives who showed not disapproval and contempt but respect for and strong interest in Morrisseau's 'pagan' past (1993:244).

Morrisseau's white audiences, conditioned to the European notion of 'primitivism' and the appropriation of Native art in Canadian nationalism, saw in him fresh 'pagan' qualities, but as it has been pointed out by many writers (Blundell and Phillips, 1983; McLuhan, 1984), there were serious consequences for Native artists in local communities for representing and commodifying sacred images.

In contrast to the sad realities of Native life, Morrisseau's controversial cultural strategy -- breaking with tradition to salvage Ojibwa culture by becoming an artist (McLuhan, 1984:70) -- constructed a vision for the future, one which many artists have since made their own.

Were Reid, Cranmer, and the Hunts in a similar predicament? The artists on the West Coast come from very different visual traditions, where individual rights to possession of clan symbols can exist. Also, West Coast artists did not have that same long-term interruption or disruption of cultural practices as did other aboriginal people, particularly in the east. The right to express one's clan symbols publicly and for profit is different from claiming ownership of stories or narratives of a people or drawing on a visual tradition that is seen as the property of spiritual leaders. George Longfish offers an updated interpretation of

such a dilemma: owning 'cultural information,' he says, is, basically, understanding certain information and making one's own choices and decisions.⁶

Morrisseau was motivated by his despair in seeing the younger generation losing its ties with traditional Ojibwa culture. He saw the elders dying, young children being removed from the reserves to be educated in the white men's schools, and he took upon himself the responsibility to be the conduit for cultural transfer, as a new communicator or 'image-maker.' In Mungo Martin's case, the tradition for cultural transfer was guaranteed; in Morrisseau's we see a kind of post-traditional or a pre-modern act, with tradition being transformed into a new strategy of modernity. In either case, both are strategies for maintaining a self-conscious link with the past, intended to oppose repeated efforts by governments and other state-sanctioned institutions to sever Native people from their roots and traditions.

The 1960s also produced other individuals who played important roles in spearheading the Native cultural revolution, such as Daphne Odjig, Alex Janvier, Tom Hill, Noel Wuttunee, Gerald Tailfeathers, Carl Ray, Jackson Beardy, in addition to the previously mentioned West Coast artists. Their emergence was buoyed by their convictions about personal identity and by their ease in both the traditional and the modern worlds.

The most significant event in the late 1960s that brought

many of these individuals together was the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67 in Montreal. This international exposition was the first time Indian artists and politicians from across Canada joined in a symbolic forum of 'aboriginality' for all the world to see. Expo 67 presented Canada to the world; the Indian Pavilion had to represent successfully Canada as an important developing country, and one which acknowledged Indians as equals and distinct members of society. The NIC, through the Centennial Commission, provided sponsorship for Native organizational meetings, powwows, and other cultural activities until December 1964, then the Centennial Indian Advisory Committee Celebrations sub-committee took control by March 1965. Expo 67 brought Native peoples collectively into the modern world on their own terms. Andrew Delisle (Kahnawake) was appointed Commissioner-General to reflect its independent status as a pavilion amongst other nations. Native artists such as Norval Morrisseau, Carl Ray, Alex Janvier, Tony Hunt,⁷ George Clutesi, Noel Wuttunee, and Tom Hill were all given commissions to paint murals and panels on the façade of the Pavilion (cf. Brydon, 1991). They responded with enthusiasm and confidence, and their artistic expression came to be seen as modern and sophisticated, speaking out to an international community about who they were, where they came from, and where they were going.

On the West Coast, the Kitanmax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art at 'Ksan opened near Hazelton, B.C. in the mid-

1950s, a product of local initiative and eventual federal funding. The artists' training program at 'Ksan was created in 1967, both to revive interest in Tsimshian (Nisga) art and cultural traditions and to provide graduates with a means to a livelihood. Once the School began, a section of the reconstructed village was opened for tourism in 1970, complete with a craft museum and an interpretation and cultural centre (MacDonald, 1972).

The Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) celebrated the centennial of Canadian Confederation in 1967 with an exhibition entitled Arts of the Raven, which is regarded by many as the turning point in the appreciation of West Coast Indian art. The exhibition presented West Coast art as 'fine art,' not as 'ethnographic art,' or as a selection of curios. The VAG had enlisted the assistance of Haida artist Bill Reid in the organization of the exhibition, which proved to be a catalyst for artistic activity on the West Coast. In the three years following the 1967 Arts of the Raven exhibition, several dozen young Native artists emerged (Macnair, 1980:85).

In 1968 the NIC split in two: the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) made representations for status Indians and the Canadian Metis Society (CMS) for non-status Natives. In 1970 the CMS became known as the Native Council of Canada (NCC), and at the end of 1981 the NIB came to be known as the Assembly of First Nations.

In the summer of 1969 the young Haida artist Robert

Davidson carved and raised a new pole in his village of Masset, Queen Charlotte Islands. This was the first pole to go up on the Queen Charlottes since 1884. The ceremonial raising of the pole heralded the rebirth of Haida culture as a whole. "Like many of his peers, Davidson has sought to contribute monumental works to his village to remind people that aspects of the ancient culture still live" (Macnair, 1980:90). Davidson later constructed a building in honour of his great-grandfather Charles Edenshaw.

The artists on the West Coast responded to these signals of a rebirth. Many of them had to search deep for the elusive artistic tradition, for the art on the West Coast needs a sculptural language to manifest itself. Martine Reid describes this new art as:

A signifier in search of meaning. Clearly, though, it is an art in gestation, soon to emerge in a different context, with new cultural significance. The process is not a decline into non-authenticity or an ascent into rediscovery, but a transformation and another metamorphosis in a long history of change (1993:76).

The impact of Native political organizations has been substantial both for Native people and for the government. For Native peoples, the organizations have provided the means for input into the federal and provincial government policies that affect them. By doing so, they provided the instruments by which to bring about social change. The governments have also found that dealing with organizations has many benefits; although both have similar bureaucracies, the government has

the control.

The introduction of the Liberal government's White Paper in 1969 was protested by all Indian political organizations, especially the NIB, because it proposed to abolish the Indian Act. Basically, the White Paper was an attempt on the part of the federal government to absolve itself of its obligations toward Canada's Native population through forced assimilation. Harold Cardinal's book entitled The Unjust Society, popularly known as the Red Paper (released in 1970), gave voice to the Native community's bitter opposition to the plan. Frideres points out that:

Supporters of the White Paper proposals [were] in essence advocating cultural genocide. They seek the removal of the 'citizen's plus' policy that grants special status to Natives, arguing that Natives cannot truly integrate into White society unless the special status is removed. Yet, as the charter group of Canada, British Canadians have always claimed special status, as have French Canadians, with their entrenched language and religious rights (1983:264).

It would not be far fetched to say that the Native political leadership greatly influenced the thinking and action of Native artists to form cohesive groups to address common issues aimed at negotiating space within the art world. Politicians, for their part, understood the value of using artists and their works to give a cultural identity to their purposes.

In 1970 a group of Native artists in Winnipeg began discussing issues of similar concern. Some had previously met at Expo 67 in Montreal, and realized that once the fireworks

had died down and everyone had gone home, questions still remained about their future. They called themselves the Indian 'Group of Seven', and they consisted of Jackson Beardy, Joseph Sanchez, Carl Ray, Alex Janvier, Eddie Cobiness, Roy Thomas, Daphne Odjig, and later Norval Morrisseau (Martin, 1992:28). Their association lasted roughly until 1976. Unlike the organization at 'Ksan which was interested in reviving art and cultural traditions, this group focused on finding new markets for their work. Without the benefit of institutional backing, however, they never had the same clout as 'Ksan.

The first public art gallery in Canada to exhibit the work of a group of contemporary Native artists was the Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG) in 1972. The title of the exhibition was Treaty Numbers 23, 287, and 1171: Three Indian Painters of the Prairies. Curated by Jacqueline Fry, it included Jackson Beardy, Alex Janvier, and Daphne Odjig. Although the exhibition was intended to exhibit the works by these three Native artists in a critical aesthetic context, the subtext of the exhibition's title suggested otherwise. That is, by exhibiting at the WAG these artists created a kind of political space within which their voices could be heard. Of the three, Janvier had always been the more radical thinker. He had by this time been signing his work using his treaty number (287) for ten years, signifying his view that Indian Affairs saw him only as that.

The occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in the late

winter of 1973 by several hundred Native Americans, generated a wave of Native support from across Canada and the United States. It was the first time in both countries that the national media carried news of such an explosive event in modern day relations between Native and non-Native peoples. Native artists, particularly in the United States, had begun to use their art as a means of reflecting on political tensions. Events such as the occupation of Alcatraz Island (San Francisco, 1969), the 'Trail of Broken Treaties' the subsequent occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington, D.C. (1972), and Wounded Knee II (1973), were sparks that set contemporary Native political/artistic expression ablaze. During this period in Canada, however, political artistic reaction still lay dormant.

Tom Hill prophetically suggested in an interview that, "in the future, art will probably manifest the political struggle more, especially as Indians become more vocal in their demands to be treated fairly" (Hickman, 1975:20). Hill, not wanting to wait any longer for Indians to be treated fairly, organized an exhibition which many view today as a landmark in the development of the contemporary Native arts scene. The exhibition Indian Art '74 opened at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. It was a gathering of a wide range of individual and tribal expressions, bringing new meanings to the term 'Indian art' on economic, cultural, and political levels. Indian Art '74 created a new paradigm that has lasted

to this day, the 'group show' -- a kind of homogeneous, Pan-Indian gathering of artists who were creating universal works that spoke more to a mainstream art community than to individual Native communities. The new Native artists were highly eclectic, borrowing styles from many sources: Native and non-Native, traditional and contemporary. Their intention was to slip into the mainstream, as opposed to slipping or getting tossed out. As a collective, the artists of the 1970s can be seen as the first 'Native modernists.'

This new type of Native artist, as Phillips sees it, is not one who replicates

the visual forms of the past, which are comprehensible only to ritual practitioners, but [one who has] transformed them into new kinds of art in order to explore their meanings in the context of the modern world. This 'appropriation' is legitimate for these artists because it is a means of preserving knowledge for future generations and of uniting the self divided between two worlds (1993:251).

In this statement, Phillips suggests that the contemporary Native artist sees more than one possibility or direction: to create universal works valued by the mainstream, or, in the case of the West Coast artists, to create works that respond to community values.

The rising tide of political and cultural consciousness in the 1970s was felt throughout the country. Seeming to abandon its assimilationist policies, the government responded by supporting Indian centres emphasising a new accord on multiculturalism through the setting up of the Indian Cultural

Educational Centres program. The cultural centres proved their worth to communities across the country. One shining example was on Manitoulin Island, where the First National Native Artists Symposium was held in October 1978.

This and subsequent National Native Artists Symposia -- held in Regina (1979), Hazelton (1982), Lethbridge (1987), and Halifax (1993) -- brought artists together to discuss issues of identity, traditional and contemporary artistic practices, 'centre versus periphery,' 'Native versus non-Native art,' 'art versus craft,' 'museum versus gallery,' and, of course, government funding. The conferences attracted many others in addition to artists, such as government and arts council representatives, curators, anthropologists, sociologists, elders, and commercial gallery owners. At each session, the tensions that heated up through passionate discussions were carried over to the next gathering, which gave each meeting a different character and atmosphere. What these symposia did was to give everyone a chance to be heard, to see the local environment, to see the traditions of their people, and to meet artists, curators, dealers, and others in the field of Native art. More importantly, they created a forum for greater articulation of the definition of Native art and what it means to be a Native artist. Rather than arriving at clear conclusions, the conferences resulted instead in individual affirmations of identity and conviction, which in the end can and do lead to stronger definitions. The National Native

Artists Symposia have proven very fruitful and will continue to have a role in the future development of the Native art scene.

At the start of the 1980s, Native Canadians became engaged in constitutional battles with the federal government. The Federal Liberals were preoccupied with repatriating the Constitution from England. Native political leaders, on the other hand, were stalling these efforts, because they feared the repatriation of the British North America Act would terminate the obligations contained in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, thus dissolving their special rights and status. The Constitution was returned to Canada and, unfortunately for Native people, it did not name aboriginal and treaty rights. Needless to say, Native people across the country protested and held huge demonstrations in large metropolitan areas. Responding to the need for a stronger political voice, the NIB changed its name in December 1981 to become the Assembly of First Nations. In the summer of 1982, the World Assembly of First Nations, the largest gathering of indigenous peoples in the world, was held in Regina, opening a new chapter in Native politics.

In the early 1980s the entire country became affected by economic pressures. Some Native artists, whose fortunes had risen quickly as a result of increased interest in the Native movement, disappeared almost as fast, never to be heard from again. Others steadfastly retained their status, both within

the Native and non-Native communities, and managed to transcend the constraints of recessionary times, sometimes by concentrating on experimental work, as in the case of Edward Poitras.

Nevertheless, in the 1980s there developed a prodigious number of Indian/Native/Amerindian/Aboriginal/Indigenous/First Nation group exhibitions, proving the strong support existing within the Native community. This decade of solidarity was extremely important, not only for attracting newer and younger artists, but also for the discussions that ensued at artists' conferences. Furthermore, it stimulated scholarly writing on issues and further strengthening the visual and expressive resolve.

As national attention increased, so did international awareness, particularly in the United States. A number of Canadian artists exhibited and lived briefly in the U.S., such as Carl Beam and Luke Simon. As a demonstration of solidarity to open new spaces, Native American artists were now included in Canadian exhibitions such as New Work by a New Generation, at the Regina's Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery. This project was jointly organized by the Mackenzie and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, during the World Assembly of First Nations in Regina in 1982. Exhibitions, like New Work, focused on individual artists or on artistic movements or schools; 'Native content' was not always a prerequisite.

In the 1980s there was an emancipation from an

established stereotype -- that all Native artists drew their subjects from myths and legends. Several artists exploded this notion and began showing that their works were based on other issues and ideas. The idea of using art to confront political issues was not new, as Alex Janvier had proved nearly a decade earlier. These younger artists such as Clifford Maracle, Robert Houle, Carl Beam, Edward Poitras, however, found new ways of expressing the political moment. Their works were no longer conceived as vehicles for Native cultural expression; instead they were making audiences aware of the confusing and complex realities of Native life. That reality manifested itself in an increasing number of lobby or special-interest groups, whether it was Native, treaty, status, non-status, Metis, Native women, youth, friendship/cultural/detox centres -- the list growing ever more complex -- each with its own agenda.

In the mid-1980s, at a time when Native cultures across Canada became increasingly strong, when cultural centres and artists' cooperatives proved their worth, when media and other forms of Native communications matured enough to be able to provide news and information about the Native community both locally and to an international audience, major sources of government funding were severed. Indeed, many important Indian newspapers became nonexistent as well as Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's popular weekly radio programme Our Native Land, to name a few. There is bitter irony in the fact that these

communication strategies, created with government assistance to help overcome the devastating effects of assimilation, were now again used against the Native community. The 'low-tech' moccasin telegraph, as it were, was now the major means of communication.

At the Third National Native Artists Symposium in Hazelton, a special lobby group for the artists was created not only to organize future symposia, but to press for changes in the way national cultural agencies and institutions represented contemporary Native art. As a result, the Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA) was born, its membership consisting mainly of professional artists. Since its inception, it has worked closely with the Indian Art Centre at the Department of Indian Affairs providing input into the development of the Centre's programs as well as organizational structure. Most recently, SCANA provided collaborative support for the Canadian Museum of Civilization's major 1992 exhibition, INDIGENA: Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples on Five Hundred Years.

Just as the 1990s were beginning, two major events took place that captured the imagination of Native communities across the country. First there was the courageous stand of a Cree Member of the Manitoba Legislature, Elijah Harper, whose decisive vote against the Meech Lake Accord sent the country into a political tailspin; and second, there was the stand-off at Oka, Quebec, between Mohawk warriors and the combined

forces of the Quebec provincial police and Canadian army. Both events provided very tense and yet liberating moments. Almost overnight Native peoples everywhere rallied into action. As a demonstration of a new consciousness and affirmation of identity, artists also seized the moment by participating in several exhibitions that displayed their solidarity with Native political leaders and with those manning the barricades at Oka. For the first time, Canadians everywhere became aware of Native people's growing restlessness and resentment over the government's repeated manipulation of Native issues.

Over the past decades, the field of Native art has not only expanded, but has also become more complex in its subdivisions. Individual artists are becoming more aware of their multiple and shifting tribal and individual identities, a necessary reaction against a century of government pressures aimed at assimilation and acculturation. Native artists and other cultural workers have contributed greatly to the reclaiming of the past -- the traditions, the language, and the arts. The Native political machinery has played an important part in this process, and by giving voice and identity to the cultural movement, has propelled it forward. Many Native people have returned either periodically or permanently to their roots (home) and communities and have become more committed to the retention and preservation of their cultures. As a result, cultural workers, some of whom are artists, are able to articulate the language of culture,

that is, they have become actively involved in the religious and everyday practice of their local culture. They realize that understanding themselves means understanding their cultures.

Today, the objectification of cultural identity, the key to this new consciousness, is being repeatedly played out on a national level by a new type of artist: one who can freely move and live on or off the reserve, and who recognizes the unlimited potential of art to express, poignantly and critically, personal or universal, local or pan-tribal, issues and situations. Although these new artists have emerged from different backgrounds and have been shaped by various circumstances, they are largely acknowledged as the voice of the people. Whether they find comfort in the mainstream, in the local Native communities, or somewhere in the liminal zone between the two, we can be sure that they will be leading the way, charting new courses for Native cultural identity and challenging the dominant discourse, whether it comes from outside or inside the Native community.

Political organization and activism have done much to improve average Canadians' understanding of the historical injustices imposed upon Aboriginal Canadians, and this has created sympathy for change. With recent historic developments in Native self-government, it will be critical for organizations such as SCANA and others to begin formulating new strategies for the inclusion of art and culture in the

Canadian cultural landscape, which includes major national and provincial institutions. Lobbying efforts must be actively continued by the Native arts community if the policies of provincial and national cultural institutions are to reflect the realities of this community properly. Indeed, the museum community has transformed its mandates for the inclusion of aboriginal peoples to tell their story. When will the art institutions become conscious of their exclusionary practices? Perhaps a new cultural landscape configured by both urban Native artists, and artists on the reserves and the rural communities may be just around the corner. They will have to break down the doors and walls of art institutions if any kind of structural change is to be realized.

Endnotes

1. INDIGENA: Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples on Five Hundred Years at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull (Quebec); New Territories: 350-500 Years After at four locations in Montreal (Quebec); Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (Ontario).
2. Longfish, born on the Six Nations reserve, has been living in the United States for over thirty years. He was one of the artists included in the INDIGENA exhibition.
3. Private conversation with Longfish, April 1992.
4. This was undeniably a sexist era and the reference is specifically patriarchal in tone and reality. It was not until Bill C-31 did Native women have any right to decide on their (dis) enfranchisement.
5. The preferred term these days is simply 'poles', since not all poles refer to family, clan, or personal totems.
6. Private conversation with Longfish, April 1992.
7. Tony Hunt and his father, Henry, were commissioned to carve a pole which still stands at the Expo site.

PART II: Chapter Five
SITUATING NATIVE ARTISTS:
IDENTITY AND STRUGGLES OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Introduction

In this and the following chapter I will look at the way the political construction of identity has affected the lives of five individuals and how they have negotiated the spaces of struggle within the field of art. These individuals are all contemporary Canadian Native artists: Daphne Odjig, Alex Janvier, Jane Ash Poitras, Edward Poitras, and Lance Belanger.* In my capacity as Curator of Contemporary Indian Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC), I have become familiar with the work of all these artists. Edward Poitras has been a good friend and colleague since the mid 1970s. Three artists, Alex Janvier, Daphne Odjig, and Lance Belanger, I have known since the late 1970s. Janvier and Odjig I met at the First National Native Artists Symposium on Manitoulan Island in 1978;¹ Belanger was a student of mine at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC), University of Regina, in the late 1970s. And more recently, I became more aware of Jane Ash Poitras who I met in the mid 1980s. In these

* Note to the reader. A reference number located next to an artist's quote should be read as follows: DO:034 (i.e. Daphne Odjig:line 034). Full references in Appendix I-V.

two chapters, I discuss each artist in the separate sections in the order of their ages, with Odjig being the eldest and Belanger the youngest.

At the outset, I would like to explain my methodology, especially my reasons for selecting these particular artists, and also I will provide a brief description of seminal works I believe reflect their subjectivities which will help us better understand them.

I begin this brief introduction with Edward Poitras who has been a good friend and colleague since the mid 1970s when we first met in Saskatoon where he was enrolled in the Indian Art programme of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College (SICC).² Since then I have closely followed his exciting career, and feel I know him the best. Over the next couple of years I will curate a project and a major exhibition of his work.³ For this discussion, I chose two works, Offensive/Defensive (1989, figure 6) and Treaty Card (1993, figure 7), in which he deals with the issue of 'identity politics.' In each case, Poitras is the subject/object of representation.

I caught up with Janvier in the summer of 1993 as he was just completing his massive dome project at the CMC. None of the interviews makes reference to the dome painting, which honoured his life-long achievement in the arts, for my interest was focussed on how he got to this point. Janvier stands in the role of elder to younger Native artists, so I

chose therefore to allow him to speak about whatever he wanted, then decide later if the material was applicable. Janvier's consistent abstract-painting style conceals much of his subjectivity. Two important works, however, reveal a duality in his life: No One Understands Me (1972, figure 2), implies personal struggles, while Alberta Rose (1977, figure 3) affirms his "identity within the context of his land, people and personal life" (Martin, 1992:33).

Daphne Odjig is the most senior woman artist I know. We spoke over the telephone in late 1993. I was comfortable with this approach and I think she was too because it allowed both of us to concentrate on the interview. In retrospect I would not have done this with the others. She was pleasant and willing to talk about her experiences, although she hinted she had gone over this in her biography with author and anthropologist Roz Vanderburgh of the University of Toronto (1992). I found her to have a very warm personality, outgoing, and at times self-effacing. Her greatest work, to-date, and one that drew on her life is The Indian In Transition (1978, figure 1): "[She] moved from depicting legends to translating Indian experience" (McLuhan, 1985:31).

I have had the pleasure of watching Lance Belanger, a former student of mine, mature into an exciting artist. The youngest of the group, he is extremely articulate, often surprisingly so, with his original perspectives. I interviewed

him at his Ottawa studio during the summer of 1993. It is the Lithic Spheres (figure 8) project that more recently characterizes his practice and one that he addressed throughout the interview.

I tracked down Jane Ash Poitras (no relation to Edward) while she was in Ottawa installing an exhibition of her works at the CMC in May 1993. I have closely watched how her quick moving demeanour has influenced her life and art, which at times is both ambiguous and startling; yet, her biography is at once sad and filled with joy and hope. Two works are important in this discussion, they include: Return to the Land of Ancient Moccasin from Deserted Wooden Houses (1986, figure 4) and Shaman Never Die V: Indigena (1990, figure 5).

All these artists were intriguing and well worth the effort to speak to. Too often, the voice of the artist receives very little currency; instead, the artists' works are supposed to 'speak for them.' An aspect of my critique of Art History is that the standard analysis of the art object reflects a view that its identity is already fully formed. Instead, a critical perspective in a new art history must see the objects not as finished works that reflect a subjectivity that has been formed elsewhere, but as part of the process of constructing that identity. This is the reason I chose to interview these artists, because I could not read their subjectivity off their works, per se. I wanted to know what

were their lived experiences, how did they view the process of producing art. Following these interviews, I concluded that such an exercise is important; that is, I have found the medium (artistic process, experience, vision) as important as the message (art object).

While as a group these artists vary in age, cultural identities and spatial geographies, they have all been nationally and internationally recognized, and thus I felt confident they could speak to the issues I am concerned with in my inquiry as identity issues. Other Native artists in the performing, literary, and musical milieus are equally articulate, but due to time and length constraints I chose to focus on visual artists in this thesis. Someday, perhaps, there can be a comparative analysis that would bring artists working in different expressive media together. For now, I seek to engage in familiar spaces.

To summarize thus far, then, in Part II (Chapter 5 and 6) I situate the artists through their own statements and lived experience within the discursive spaces of Native art and culture; moreover, the significance of their cultural identities in articulating their 'being and becoming' aboriginal become major themes. With this in mind, then, this chapter examines how the artists address the first two of four major issues -- identity, struggle, aesthetics, and the spatialized politics of identity -- the latter two issues to

be taken up in the following chapter. Within the body of this text and with the exception of the issue of 'struggle,' each artist has been given an opportunity to articulate an issue.

A. Identity

There were several questions to which I wanted answers as I conducted the interviews: Who are these artists? What is their context? How are their biographies constructed? How do I characterize each of them? How do I situate them in various spatial identities? Do they occupy certain historical, gender, and political spaces? And, is any of them 'founders' or 'radicals'?

1. Daphne Odjig:

Daphne Odjig was born 1919 on the Wikwemikong (Odawa) Reserve, Manitoulin Island, Ontario. As a consequence of being the eldest of those I interviewed, she has had a longer life history. Likewise, she would be considered as a vital link to an important yet frequently overlooked period of the early twentieth century.

I would like to begin by suggesting that rarely do any of us reflect on or question our cultural identities at a young age, although we do begin to form distinctions of 'otherness.' In fact, most of us are quite secure in our social spaces especially where there is little tension or associated

anxiety. Odjig confidently states that "being on the reserve we knew we were Indian people. I felt secure then. I had no objections. I was proud. I'm an Indian. We were Indian children. This is an Indian school, this is an Indian reserve" (DO:470).⁴ In her youth, was she aware of the difference between the legally bounded spaces of the Reserve and non-Reserve? As well, who were considered Indians and non-Indians? There was a remembered moment of her pre-teen years when she indicated to her younger brothers that they indeed were Potawatomi. Amazingly, only recently did this memory come to light when University of Toronto anthropology professor Roz Vanderburgh was researching Odjig's biography; Vanderburgh, she says, "got a lot of information through the Bureau of Indian Affairs ... that's how she discovered my ancestors, from my grandfather's side, [they] came up from New York state, I think. They were Potawatomi, I always thought that I was ... Odawa and Potawatomi and Ojibwa" (DO:410). I wanted to question: although in one sense there is potential for making new familial and tribal relations, how much of a difference does the discovery of an additional identity make at such a late date in her life? Has this awareness changed her work? What access -- politically, culturally, socially -- does she now have to Potawatomi culture? Is she still, culturally, Odawa/Ojibwa? As she got older, it seems, this secure sense of identity was threatened.

Odjig grew up close to 'small town' Ontario in the 1930s and 40s. She has very few fond memories as a teenager and young adult, and describes the milieu as "terrible" and narrow-minded:

... I don't know what [the people] are like now, [but] it was really bad. It didn't do anything to instill any pride in you that's for sure. You were nothing, less than nothing, even some of my [non-Native] relatives from my mother's side of the family. I'm sure they were ashamed that [I] married an Indian (DO:238).

As well, her early experience of attending the Catholic Indian Day School at Wikwemikong, which lasted until grade 8, did very little to reinforce a Native cultural identity she had grown up in. Instead, she was intentionally made to dislike being an Indian through the denigrating fashion of state sanctioned church practices of insisting that all Indian children become civilized (cf. McMaster, 1992). In spite of the physical and mental cruelty inflicted on her and others, in retrospect she is glad to have had those experiences, because, as she says, "they make good stories." Nevertheless, what do these experiences do to a person? Is one intact because of them? Are these experiences considered mistakes we learn from? In recent years we hear numerous reports regarding Indian children attending boarding schools who were physically, sexually, and mentally assaulted, and have never fully recovered to become full, active, and healthy adults.

Had she ever been ashamed of being an Indian? She

replies: "Absolutely." After she left the Reserve at the age of eighteen, her favourite saying was "When I come back again in the next life ... I don't want to come back as a Catholic or an Indian.' That's how bad it was" (DO:147). Being Indian was the last thing she wanted to be. (As late as the 1970s, Jane Ash Poitras went through a similar stage.) Indeed, Odjig remembers these critical and trying times, recalling a moment in particular when she washed her face with milk hoping it would make her "lighter" (DO:203). What pressures and influences compel one to change identity? Do these forces still persist?⁵ The logic seems to be: if one changes ones outer appearance then perhaps the inner self will also change.

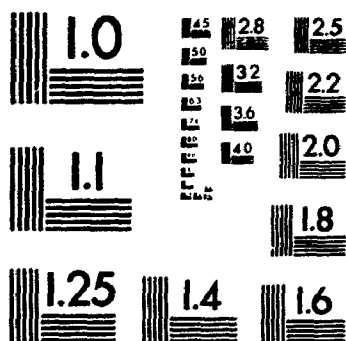
Furthermore, at the age of twenty she worked at a war plant in Toronto where she safely avoided the embarrassment of revealing her cultural identity, saying she was Italian, French, Spanish, anything but an Indian. She says,

[The employees] would ask me "Are you French (or Spanish)?" And I would say "Yes".... Whatever they asked me ... [I] thought I was, to avoid any confrontation or any explanation. As a young person you want to be accepted. The strangest thing [is that] no one ever asked me if I was [an] Indian; I thought to myself ... years later, that maybe being Indian was so low that they didn't want to ask me that (DO:183).

Does she remember when the hurting stopped? It was usually when she returned home. She credits her first husband, himself a Mohawk, with instilling a sense of pride in her cultural identity to overcome her resentments. In spite of all

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PM-1 3 1/2"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT



PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

the bad memories, her return home to Wikwemikong invariably brought back comfortable feelings about her late husband, who had died in 1960. She says: "When I think about it, he would be so proud to see what is happening today; but, he didn't live to see the day" (DO:233). Coming home made her feel sheltered and accepted, especially during the 1960s when she began to witness the 'awakening' of her cultural identity. She recalls,

... as a child up until the time I left the Reserve, I never saw a powwow until I went back in the 60s. I never [have] Indian danced. Nothing. I sure missed a lot. I really feel bad about that. But then again, [today] I get enjoyment out of going ... and watching a powwow (DO:306).

'Coming home' to a place of acceptance is an apt metaphor for reinforcing one's cultural identity; indeed, this is a recurring theme amongst these artists.

Finally, I asked her about her thoughts concerning the construction of aboriginal identities, such as Indian and Métis. She demonstrates only partial understanding when she says, "a legal native person ... was always one that was ... on the band list or ... from the Reserve. Most Native people are on band list, aren't they? You see I don't know too much about this" (DO:410).

Clearly, it was painful for Odjig to remember her past; but, she was equally concerned about endowing future generations of Indian children with positive reinforcements to

understanding their cultural identity.

2. Alex Janvier:

Alex Janvier is Dene, born 1935 on the Cold Lake Reserve, Le Geoff, Alberta. He attended the Alberta College of Art in the late 1950s and was one of the first aboriginal artists to do so. Since the early 1970s, he has worked out of his studio on the Reserve and has become one of Canada's senior artists. To understand how identity issues affected Janvier we must understand an earlier period.

Situating himself as a victim of a century of government intervention through policies of assimilation, he recalls that as a young graduate he "had no idea what was happening" (AJ:052). Only upon reflection in his adult life did he understand the devastating effects of government policies upon him and other Native people. Though his children and more recent generations do not identify with comparable situations, he nevertheless thinks that his generation and that more specifically he carries a burden of guilt for failing to articulate these struggles (AJ:079). As a result, his opposition to various forms of government control have continued to the present which is often articulated within his work and lectures.

If the 1960s are a period of gradual "awakening" for Odjig, Janvier's awakening was more surprising. It was more

like a jolt of reality. During the mid-1960s, while he was employed by the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa, a Mohawk woman and professional model to whom he was close asked him:

'Alex, what are you? Are you an Indian first or are you Catholic first? Which are you?' And I answered 'Catholic'. And she laid right into me. And made me realize just where the heck I really was, it was like a shock, an announcement to my system. I was so deep into it I couldn't see ... [I had been] led into a garden path. And I started to believe ... [and act] like a 'little brown white man'. That's what that woman caught me doing (AJ:123).

The realization was a point of return, a reflection, a mirror. A slap to the face? Suddenly feeling empowered (embarrassed?) he desired to return to the imaginary space of his youth when he was eight years old, back to his roots, back to his community, prior to government and church interference that decentered him and his people. He wanted to start all over again. Being decentered by the church was one thing, but by an Indian woman was quite another, he says calmly, and "I still owe a debt to her." Indeed, this awakening helped clear his immediate uncertainties.

Furthermore, this turning point made him realize that having allegiances outside the struggle he had to decide whether to continue being "a little brown white man," or risk accusations of being something else. Today there is greater legitimacy to harbouring multiple identities. But, during the 1960s, legitimation as an 'Indian' was more exclusive among

peers, you became part of the movement, part of a communitas⁶ that was struggling to articulate its condition.

Soon thereafter, he returned home both in spirit and in body. "I think the seed started [in Ottawa.] I started to look around. I had to go back ... and find some old man out there to help me" (AJ:123). Janvier lived for a while in suburban Edmonton, where, he says "I was married, I had a car, house payments, car payments, kids on the way ... I was just a suburbanite." Now about thirty four years old, the burning questions that began in Ottawa continued to haunt him: Who was he? What was he doing? Why? For whom? For one thing, he felt powerless to change the system, to react against the priest or the Indian agent. Suddenly, he saw the struggle. He says:

I suddenly realized ... I didn't know who in the hell I was I was really not aware of what I wanted to be ... then [it] dawned on me the things that my father had said ... it was quite a thing to realize ... to come to the realization that I was powerless, the lack of power that was my total dilemma. I had no power ... that's when I think I woke up (AJ:079).

The futility of certain actions and the struggle to articulate this position led him to seek new possibilities. As a result, he returned to the Reserve, back to his 'roots.' He saw in this return, a return to essences, 'the spiritual.' This is where he could begin.⁷ It was around this time he painted No One Understands Me (1972, figure 2) in which he enunciates the current situation both for him and many other aboriginal

peoples. It was also at this time that he decided to become a full-time artist.

The 'return home' after experiencing life elsewhere is a frequent theme among many Native peoples and it continues to be articulated in numerous ways. For Janvier it was a way to achieve power over the self, to centre himself, to be self-confident. Native elders, he says, are waiting patiently for many others to come home because they see it as a continuity, a principle, a practice, of passing on traditions.

[N]obody is never too old to become an Indian again anyway.... Even [to] those old guys it's not too late for them to move back to their roots, to move back to their essence, their spiritual ... That's how you get those old guys to start coming back on side again. Making them believe in their role because they still have the stories and the knowledge. They have the language, they have the knowledge but they have nobody to tell it to because nobody sits down long enough to make them come to terms. So I think this is the way (AJ:485).

Indeed, this is a dilemma. How does the Reserve culture compete with urban life? How do elders pass on their stories, knowledge and language to those too detached and apathetic to listen? Either this process is not occurring or it's too slow as elders slowly die, and along with them their highly sought after traditional knowledge. Although this may seem contradictory it would seem that the struggle between modernity and a traditional way of life is inevitable: Is this a world-wide phenomenon of maintaining an identity within the modern world? Although this is beyond the scope of this thesis

it is a question with which Janvier and others struggle. So, what is more exciting? Janvier adamantly says, "like a lot of artists, we do have a responsibility" (AJ:485) to ensure that the traditions continue to live. As we shall see, Janvier begins to separate himself from more contemporary artists in this regard. Would some call him a 'cultural broker'? Ironically, he has called himself the "first Indian modernist"; no doubt, this has more to do with his painting style than his actions.

Janvier speaks positively about the possibility of return, that "we can all eventually become Indians." Assuming that his stringent requirements of learning the traditional language and religion are achieved, "[N]obody is ever too old to become an Indian again." So, in order to learn the ways of the elders, the traditions, it's never too late! Everyone can return home to learn? Yes, he seems to say, but one has to be willing to associate with one's roots. Being and becoming an Indian seem to conjoin without question, Janvier's cultural argument is that it has nothing to do with legalities. Is there a hint here at essentialism? He does not say directly, although he does occasionally allude to being Indian as a "God-given right." His other painting, Alberta Rose (1977, figure 3) speaks of his home, his people, and his identity, in a more joyful tone.

Today, Janvier ponders the difficulty for younger Native

artists in decolonizing their thinking about identity. It is a theme with which he is familiar, because in earlier years he was often asked by Reserve Indians, "are you becoming a white man?" He says, "It's a fundamental, good question on the Reserve" (AJ:204), to which he says there is only one answer, which is, "no, I am an Indian" (AJ:219). Essentialist? To him, yes, but we know, of course, that there are other possible answers. He makes an a priori, primarily cultural, argument, with a claim that "subconsciously and in every cell" every North American Indian knows he or she is an Indian (AJ:219).

Diana Nemiroff characterizes Janvier's recent work as providing "the structural underpinning for a politicized narrative of native identity" (1992:162). It would seem that his later work carries more representational imagery because he wants to get across many of these issues, which would otherwise go undetected in his characteristic modernist style of painting. Previously, viewers had to read the labels and judge for themselves the content of the work, political, aesthetic or both.

3. Jane Ash Poitras:

Jane Ash Poitras was born 1951 in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. In 1956 at the age of five she was placed in a foster home in Edmonton. She speaks of these early years, the problems of growing up, and being so constantly misunderstood

that many thought her to be "retarded." One young Indian girl she tells of was actually sent to a school for the retarded. Ash Poitras hints that so many Indian children were given up for adoption because many adults died of tuberculosis and many children were left without families (JAP:155). What was it that made Social Services decide this action was the best for Indian children? Was it their Otherness?

In so far as Indian people like Ash Poitras were clinically segregated, I was also curious to know the first time someone told her she was an 'Indian' since she was adopted into a white family. She says:

I was walking down the alley and the kids started to throw stones at me and call me 'Chinamen, Chinamen, dirty Indian, dirty Indian and all this, right?' And I went home crying to Grandma: 'Why are they calling me this?' 'Well, you know,' she said 'the Social Worker told me that you only have a little, tiny bit of Indian blood in you, just enough to make you strong and that you're not an Indian, you are mostly French and so when those kids tell you that, you tell them you're French'.... I wanted to have blue eyes and blond hair. I used to curse myself in the mirror, I used to almost put my fist through the mirror in the bathroom. I was so mad because I had brown eyes, black hair, my skin was dark ... I was really not happy with myself as a child, because I wanted to be like those other guys. I didn't want to be the 'Indian'" (JAP:240).

Being labelled by children as an Other while having her adopted mother complicate the issue further by diversion, Ash Poitras was more confused and angry about her Otherness. She knew that she embodied difference -- in a sense, the self was

not self but other. As a moment of self-consciousness, she struggled with a mirror of a true reality: she was given an identity by someone else. She was being invented. This discourse of otherness experienced by many non-Western peoples and prior to any empowerment strategies promoting cultural pride caused anxiety to people like Ash Poitras. She wanted to be assimilated into some other identity because being Indian was a "fate worse than death." Seeking acceptance from her new foster family, compounded by her struggle to use of a new language (English), spilt over into the school system. The resulting opinion was that she was retarded.

Today, we use not the term 'handicap' but 'difference.' To give an example: at one time new immigrants were all homogenized into a Canadian version of the 'melting pot.' Difference was somehow to be made unproblematic. Analogously, the Indian was being transformed from a 'savage' into a 'civilized' human being. This systemic violence against Native people lasted from seventy five to one hundred years, depending on in which part of the country one lived. As a result survival became critical. Ash Poitras represents one example of this recurring theme of struggle, first resisting assimilation, and then struggling for acceptance because of one's difference. During her teen years, she galvanized her resolve against this de-centering process that confused her understanding of herself; she says, "I knew one thing, I knew

I wasn't white" (JAP:197).

Shortly thereafter, she realized that 'becoming an Indian' had its advantages, as opposed to the devalued status she had been used to. For example, she quickly discovered being a 'treaty Indian' guaranteed her rights.⁸ During this time, she was also trying to locate her real parents, she says:

I realized that I really wanted to see my mom and dad. I wanted to know who I was really, and Nora [Yellow Knee]⁹ helped me. Nora knew that, she said 'You don't even know, you don't even know who the fuck you are, you dumb Indian!' And I said 'What do you mean?' She said 'What's your band number?' And I said 'What the fuck is a band number, I don't belong to no band?' She said 'Have you ever looked in the mirror?' She said 'You're probably some damn treaty Indian' (JAP:350).

The search for a 'real' identity, confused by the further discovery of a legal identity, which she calls the "fringe benefits of being a treaty Indian" (JAP:234), was amusing. Cultural identity is one thing, she says, but having legal advantages is another; it as a business arrangement. To her cultural identity is 'magic'; it is having connections with people. In contrast, the advantage to being treaty is the access to money, and the potential for getting education scholarships. Drawing these clear distinctions between legal and cultural identities, she says "everyone's an Indian who wants to be an Indian" (JAP:261). The legal, treaty and Bill C-31 identities are business arrangements largely related to

money matters and accessing dollars for certain programs.

In the same way that the 'cultural' reinforces identity so does the question of 'gender.' Of all the artists I interviewed only Ash Poitras made any reference to this issue. I found out that her foster home was full of boys, a situation she quickly adapted to, and that her elderly foster mother found very little time to pass on 'feminine' ideas. Hence, growing up in a masculine environment she became more a boy than a girl; yet, she has always remained committed to her heterosexuality and her role as a woman (i.e. a theme of motherhood in her work). Truly, she is glad to be living now when prevailing notions of constructed gender identities are commonplace. One rather amusing moment she remembers was a time when a very close male friend of hers, who grew up around women, gave her lessons on 'being a woman,' or at least his idea of what a woman should be, like having painted finger nails, shaving her legs, etc (JAP:095).

Jane Ash Poitras's work reflects not so much her gender as much as a cultural identity, more recently her work delves into Native spirituality. Robert Enright (1992:10) describes her and her work as:

[consistently compelling us to] question our aesthetic, political and cultural beliefs. In a way, her practice -- for all its eclecticism and stated syncretism -- is a destabilizing one; she yanks together traditions and ways of thinking that more often than not settle uncomfortably into one another.

Two paintings, I determine, reflect her lived experience: the first, Return to the Land of Ancient Moccasin from Deserted Wooden Houses (1986, figure 4), relates to her representation of contemporary Indian realities; the second, Shaman Never Die V: Indigena (1990, figure 5), enunciates her strong spiritual identity. Both these works are created in more than one panel, reflecting her fragmented and multiple experiences.

4. Edward Poitras:

Edward Poitras was born 1953 in southern Saskatchewan, raised both in the city of Regina and on the Plains Cree Reserve called the Gordon Reserve. His father was Metis (pronounced "met is")¹⁰ and his mother Plains Cree; yet both came from the Gordon Reserve. Poitras's story is about what he terms this curious "mix."

He begins by indicating that when the treaties were signed in the late 1800s, there were Metis people already living on Gordon's; today, he says "there are mixed-bloods out there; the same with Fort Qu'Appelle [and] Peepeeksis" (EP:085). I was particularly intrigued with his use of the term 'mixed-blood' when referring to those whose cultural identity is neither Indian nor Metis, but both. This would mean that only Indians and mixed-bloods live on the Reserve. Who are these mixed-bloods? What is their position in relation

to others? How does he see himself in relation to the mixed-bloods and Indians? What is their power? He stresses that 'blood quantity' is no issue. No doubt this is in keeping with the rapidly changing times, where increased mixing of families by marriage and other factors make the subtle distinctions in identity blur and blend, meaning that new hybrid identities are formed, a point he raises in later discussion on the formation of 'New Tribes.'

Is the Gordon Reserve a microcosm of the modern world, where the complexities of identity and the contradictory nature of 'purity' play themselves out? Poitras states with delight, "actually my father even though he was Metis, he was still a treaty (Indian)" (EP:070). In conversation with Poitras over the years, he has continued to signify his identity in this manner, "a Metis with a treaty card."¹¹ One of his most recent works, Treaty Card (1993, figure 7) toys with this contradiction. His point is to introduce the contradistinction of a system called the Indian Act created by the federal government for a group it called 'Indians.' I would argue that this self-labelling is Poitras's way of resisting official coding practices: Does this position marginalize him in relation to those that live on the Reserve? Was his father's cultural identity weakened or strengthened by his inclusion as a Plains Cree? What resulted for others in similar positions? There is little doubt Poitras is not an

unusual case.

As a result of his situation Poitras found himself growing up within spaces of conflicting identities. So how was he defined by others? He says that, "I was seen as Metis; but, then when I was in the city I was being called an Indian by the others. I was getting it from both sides" (EP:094). Consequently, this caused him to repeatedly shift his identity from one context to the next. How he felt was one thing, how others viewed him was another, suggesting that Reserve and urban politics were parallel tending always to marginalize the minority Other (the mixed-bloods and Metis). As a child he was made painfully aware of his difference. It was not until his early twenties, however, that identity become an issue. Conscious of his difference he sought to submerge it, as had Daphne Odjig in an earlier period. Her poignant story told of denying her cultural identity. This repudiation process is no doubt painful. Hence, what is part of this process? Change one's appearance by changing one's physical identity? For example, Black Americans today have a field-day poking fun at pop-star Michael Jackson's repeated transformations. Michael Taussig calls this process (after Walter Benjamin) 'mimesis,' the compulsion to become the Other (1993:xviii). What kinds of mimetic transformations do others go through? Indeed, Poitras is so concerned with his contradictory status he says, "I think maybe there [were] a couple times where I said I was

Indian, but it didn't seem right (Laughs) ... I'm Metis .. I am. Well, with this treaty card, I am [Indian]" (EP:177). His other work, Offensive/Defensive (1989, figure 6), playfully addresses these contradictions. In this work he uses turf, as metaphor for identity, to indicate the (un)sustainability of identities in different spaces (urban and rural).

In 1974 Poitras enrolled in the Indart '74 programme in Saskatoon, where he found others his own age with similar artistic interests. These students had differing circumstances and reasons for being there. Many were from Reserves, others were from urban areas. The identity of each individual would have been strengthened by this common social space. Likewise his amusing story of self-consciousness when expressing his Indianess didn't seem right, because it did not roll off his tongue smoothly; it is a tale of seeking acceptance. Furthermore, questions about "what nation he was from" or "what language did he speak" intensified uneasy feelings. Interestingly, in their day these questions were both rhetorical and real, for they constructed a social space to which if one wanted entry one answered unequivocally. We recall a similar story of peer pressure when Janvier was confronted by the Mohawk woman to decide who he was. These were 'passwords' into a new socio-political space. Herein lies a further problem faced by people whose 'authenticity' or truthful origins become a point of contention -- the legal

versus cultural status. For Poitras, these questions were not so much about the 'legality' of his identity, rather, they were directed towards his cultural identity. Did he have what it took to be an 'authentic Indian,' like having a 'tribal' identity or even better, the ability to speak Indian? These issues are profound for anyone born and raised outside the discursive space of the so-called First Nations territory, the Reserve.

Eventually, Poitras learned to handle his contradictions by making the fine distinction: "I knew I was a Metis ... I felt a lot closer to the Indian people than the Metis people. I had stronger love of my mother's family than my father's family" (EP:141). Indeed, Poitras has learned to balance these identities and articulate them through his work. One work in particular, Offensive/Defer sive (1989), plays on these contradictions.

5. Lance Belanger:

Lance Belanger, the youngest of all the artists I interviewed, articulates his situation very differently. Born 1956 in New Brunswick, he spent much of his time alternating between there and the predominantly white neighbourhoods of New England. Reserve life was relatively insignificant in the formation of his identity. He says "I was conscious of Tobique Reserve and my family, but it didn't mean anything at the

time" (LB:043).

Belanger's high school experience was uneventful, except that when he played football his nickname was "Métis",¹² which never meant anything to him. Then, as now, he doesn't place too much emphasis on 'difference':

Métis meant nothing to me other than the fact that it meant half-breed to my mother. But, of course, later Métis meant a whole different race of people. But I can say for a fact these questions of me looking for myself in terms of being different, or somebody else, was never quite there. Much the same reason that I don't look at myself as being any different today (LB:068).

I would argue that by the time he reached his late teens, which would have been the early 1970s, conditions for Indians and other minorities had changed enough in places where the racial struggles of the Civil Rights Movement had greatly increased awareness of Blacks and other minorities, such as Indians. Consequently, 'being' and 'becoming' Indian were not as problematic as they were, say, in Daphne Odjig's time. I would also argue that his notion of difference was not political; rather difference had little to do with the cultural and more to do with being accepted as a person.

During the 1970s when the search for one's Indian identity was all the rage, it became fashionable to claim some lineage to an Indian tribe. (Identity politics went from the sublime to the ridiculous.) Ever heard of someone saying their "grandmother was a Cherokee princess"? In spite of the

excitement of those days, many Indians began to just want to be 'Indian' and part of a Pan-Indian communitas. Belanger says "I don't think [Pan-Indianism is] really problematic. It's something that I'm just not too willing to participate in. I think that it's a lot of fun actually for different people from different tribes to get together and powwow" (LB:097). He is not a willing participant within the discursive space of Pan-Indianism, after all he is secure with his own spatial identity. Pan-Indianism, he agrees, is a social space, a kind of liminal space accessible to all Indians. The Powwow has become a sort of Pan-Indian activity, which Belanger regards as not being part of his tradition. The powwow as a discursive space to reinforce identity is also a space Belanger believes builds or repositions 'displaced' identities.

Finally, he clarifies his position on identity: "I'm not really needing to reinforce any popular notion of what I am as an Indian and in fact some of those popular notions I really don't participate in. You know I don't need to have the feathers and the beads to have that sort of cultural reinforcement" (LB:097). In short, identity for Belanger is unproblematic; yet, he says others like his sister have been affected by racist attitudes (LB:064). Indeed, much of Belanger's recent work has little to do with his identity, rather, his project is to make a political space for the now extinct Taino Indians of the Caribbean through the Lithic

Spheres project.

* * * *

All these artists are separated by time and space, yet each has had to construct, negotiate, and maintain his or her cultural identities individually. Native American artist Jimmie Durham has said that the great socio-political struggles for Native peoples was 'invisibility,' stating that the idea was "not to plead the case for more visibility but to attempt a tentative investigation into the ramifications of the 'presence of the absence/absented Indian body' in American discourse" (1992:424). This invisibility can be closely associated with another platitude regarding Native people, that is situating them in the 'past.' Until the 1960s, this discourse was a commonly held one. As we shall see next, struggles for these artists go beyond the field of art, but their struggles are linked to larger systemic processes of which the art world is ultimately a part.

B. STRUGGLES

During all the interviews I was particularly interested in the artists' backgrounds, what the circumstances were of their growing up, what had influenced them, and what some of their struggles have been. As would be expected I received a diversity of responses, though there were common themes. Within this section, I will draw out issues articulated by

these artists in their struggles to be who they are. The specific discussion of the field of art as a site of struggle will follow in the next chapter. I am interested in these particular issues because of their influential nature upon the artists lives which reflect a subjectivity and on the art which is so fundamental to the process of constructing their identity.

We must first ask: What kinds of struggles have these individuals experienced that have been so influential upon their lives? Foremost amongst all their struggles has been resistance to government intervention in the everyday lives of aboriginal peoples. The numerous struggles undertaken by these individuals stem from this. I pointed out in Chapters 3 and 4 the enormous power the government has had over all aboriginal peoples -- Indian, Inuit and Métis. Government intervention continues today, even though aboriginal peoples across the country have struggled for various forms of control. In short, if we can understand this historical situation, then we may be able to see just how effective government intervention has been as we proceed to consider other issues.

What then are other examples of struggles these individuals have undertaken? Underlying this long list is the fact of 'racism,' which, I argue, segregates peoples into certain spaces as a part of a strategy of 'divide and conquer.' A second theme is the question of modernity and its

effects upon aboriginal daily life? The list begins to fragment into further categories: church, identity, acceptance, stereotypes, appropriation, aesthetics, Native art politics, adoption, mixed marriages, reverse racism, articulation, power, the work force, the self, dominant discourse(s), the blood quantum, and returning 'home.'

In this last section, I will consider the artists together rather than individually, because of my heavier use of cross-referencing, but will pick up the cadence for the last chapter.

* * * *

Alex Janvier is the only one of the five who directly spoke of the historical and on-going struggles with the government (No One Understands Me); although equally influenced by its policies, all the others made only passing references. Only Lance Belanger spoke directly of current strategic concepts like 'reclamation' (the Lithic Spheres project) and its implications for aboriginal self-government and cultural self-empowerment.

Janvier's criticism is directed not so much at white people (since he is married to one), rather it is levelled against institutions (AJ:039) the Department of Indian Affairs being a case in point, where he once worked in the mid-1960s. He refers to the "system that used to degrade my grandfather, my father, and myself. I think I belong to the generation that

was supposed to be crushed by ... Indian Affairs" (AJ:046). Does he still harbour indignation? Keep in mind he does talk from experience, which includes time spent in a Catholic boarding school. Similarly, situating his father and grandfather, he goes on to suggest that his father, at least, could sustain his family without government assistance, by 'living off the land.' Janvier in turn, lives not off the land, but, off his art work, with little or no government assistance.

Janvier situates himself as 'victim' of government intervention through its policies of assimilation, saying he had no idea what was happening:

I didn't choose to be in the victim roles ... by church and by government sponsorship, I was led into that sort of thing.... I was never able to conceptually realize what was really happening to me. There was no way of knowing. When you're in it, you can't see, it's only after (AJ:052).

The struggle for articulation, for unloading the burden of guilt was resolved within his artistic practices, particularly during the late 1960s and 70s. The question arises of how long this idea of victimization can continue to be used before the victims take control of their situation? Janvier says, "I think from here on it's going to be upward, my children are certainly not in the same victim roles like I have been" (AJ:052). Perhaps we can ask what this new generation will have to struggle through? Will they articulate the struggles

Janvier had difficulty with? Indeed, he does give his own generation some credit for this resolution:

Yeah, your mother and I were probably the same generation. But the thing that happened there, is that all of us stood up [and] learned to say 'No'! We learned to dissipate the onslaught of the policies, whatever the Department of Indian Affairs had in mind ... We ... that generation of mine said 'We had enough. We can't go on.' And we were very low, we were the bottom. You couldn't go any lower" (AJ:052).

It is to be remembered that since the late 19th century the government gave the responsibility to churches for the education of Indian children. For many Indian people this was a sad period. Children were forcibly removed from their homes and taken to schools at the age of six and remained until they were sixteen (McMaster, 1992:79-80). Daphne Odjig's memories of the church's tremendous influence in her community is only negative:

They told us [what] to wear. I couldn't wear a dress that had short sleeves because it wasn't decent ... They had a lot of control in that community that they don't have today. It's a changed community now and it all started in the 60s. The Christian religion did a lot of damage (DO:268).

The church not only damaged the children's self-esteem, but also sought to erase any sense of unique cultural identity they had; Odjig says "my favourite saying was, 'When I come back again in the next life ... I don't want to come back as a Catholic or an Indian.' That's how bad it was (DO:147).... As a child, I always [said] we were from a lost generation"

(278). Furthermore, the church's control extended far into the community affecting their everyday lives:

But other things were underground, some of the old people practised the sweet grass that the church did not know; they had a lot of other things going. They [weren't] able to put out that fire because it was far too strong. So as children, we talked a lot about spirituality and stories. Our grandparents would tell us stories of a native nature. But then again the old people would then go to church because it was a thing that they had to do. If they didn't go to church then the preacher would be down to see why they weren't going (DO:278).

Mandatory attendance was strictly enforced: "Four times on Sunday: seven o'clock low mass, high mass at twelve o'clock, two o'clock vespers and seven o'clock benediction. They were powerful" (DO:297). Odjig's struggle was the community's as well: "It was difficult for a lot of people ... grandparents [who] ... wanted to tell the children about their native culture but due to the church's strength and hold on them, it was a sin." (DO:306).

Quite apart from her idealistic childhood discussed earlier, Odjig greatly disliked being an Indian, because of the denigration of Native cultures by the churches and their extreme insistence that Indians become civilized. Yet, in spite of the physical and mental cruelty inflicted on her in school, she is glad to have experienced it: What does this do to a person? Does it make one stronger? Are these mistakes we learn from? She inverts this experience in a trickster-ish fashion and says "they make for good stories". These stories,

of course, are expressed in her massive painting The Indian in Transition in which she enunciates the historic tensions between aboriginal and Euro-North American peoples.

The everyday life of aboriginal people, when not being controlled by government policy and church complicity, is highly complex. But what about the everyday life in general? What were its influences? Likewise, aboriginal people speak of the struggle to uphold traditions in the face of modernity's powerful influences. The effects upon each individual's life were equally complex. Here Odjig recounts how difficult it was in the 1940s to seek employment:

[During my] first interview ... [it] really hit me when the lady asked me if I was Indian, of course I said yes. And you always knew the tone ... that I'm not going to be hired. It was from then on that I said to myself 'well, if I'm going to exist in this land, I'm going to have to suppress my feelings about being Indian and say that I'm something else than what I'm not.' That was the only way that I got through. I could never owe up to who I was because in those days there were so many others that did the same thing too (DO:250).

Definitely there were everyday struggles. The remembered pasts for people like Odjig are tragic. For them, the lived experience is often difficult to recount.

In contrast to Odjig's painful recollection of colonial repression, both Janvier and Jane Ash Poitras both idealize and desire the past before European contact and influence (see Alberta Rose and Return to the Land of Ancient Moccasin...), yet realize the ephemerality of this dream. For example,

Janvier speaks of

our caring love of the land ... Mother Earth.... We lived off the land a long, long time ago. We lived on a very simple philosophy: [live] just for today. We never planned for tomorrow because we were getting look after.... [These philosophies] weren't just handed down by mistake (AJ:385).

While at the same time he sees the decline of traditional culture: "In two generations, we have literally done away with the Indian way of life. We didn't do it" (AJ;016).

Similarly, Ash Poitras proceeds to explain in words and through her painting, Shaman Never Die V: Indigena, why Native peoples have suffered such enormous losses: "everything from T.V. from food to everything that we do, it has pulled us so far away from what we are really supposed to be" (JAP:096). Accordingly, if aboriginal people can recover what was lost -- "time, ritual, ceremonies, dreams" -- they may be able to regain a stronger sense of self, which may be the reason her works reflect this preoccupation: the recovery of a Native spirituality. How are these losses of memories and traces to be resolved by other Native people? What is the next stage for the Native artist? Will this articulation be, to continue romanticizing the past? For other artists as for Ash Poitras the struggle against modernity to maintain traditions is a central theme of art work.

Ash Poitras speaks of primordial peoples, Janvier talks of his father and grandfather: the spiritual versus a lived

reality. In both examples, they hold European colonization responsible for so many problems. How then are some of the problems resolved? Janvier suggests we recover the original languages and spiritual "gifts"; Ash Poitras suggests reaching deep into the roots of our consciousness to recall our "powers of awakening", or spiritual power. Both artists' work strongly evoke these ideas. Odjig's tragic recollections, on the other hand, are not reflected in her work, although The Indian in Transition shows the negative effects of colonization, instead she shows us her "spirituality." Indeed, Janvier and Ash Poitras also agree that to overcome many struggles Native spirituality is key.

Another struggle of everyday life, especially for minorities, is stereotyping. For Native peoples the stereotype they are coopted by is the West's fascination with 'cowboys and Indians.' Hollywood has consistently used minorities, like 'Indians,' in negative roles as the cultural 'Other.' Indeed, during the late nineteenth century this myth was played out in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Shows, which re-created the myth (game) of the 'American West' that included the notion of the good guy conquering the bad guy. This is a master narrative most aboriginal people would like to forget. Odjig recounts an all too familiar story:

... You didn't want to be identified [as an Indian]
... like when we went up north in Manitoba, they'd
have these movies, 'cowboys and Indians'.... I

always remember the children there clapping for the cavalry. They didn't identify with those Indians [because] ... they (emphasis mine) weren't those kind of Indians; so, they always sided with the cavalry. I got a kick out of that (DO:183).

Such a powerful medium, both as an ideological and propaganda tool, that film-makers routinely manipulated audiences whether they were consciously aware or not. The power of stereotypes. As a young girl, Odjig recalls other derogatory remarks. She says:

What was there to be proud of. When I went out, the Indians were dirty [and] drunk all the time, they were lazy. I used to think to myself 'My dad wasn't lazy. How can they say these things?' My dad was such a busy man. We were all busy, we gardened, we farmed. We had our own food (DO:497).... [As well] Indian girls were [considered] loose" (DO:512).

To this end, young aboriginal people often avoided being thought of as 'Indians.' Odjig painfully remembers these experiences all too well. Likewise, she remembers one little girl she met in northern Manitoba in the 1960s who said, "I'm not really Indian, I'm just dark." Odjig herself remembered that as a young girl she washed her face with milk, because she wanted to be "lighter, just like the teachers" (DO:183). For younger Indians stereotypes can be amusing, but for older people like Odjig who could barely tolerate their abusive consequences, the difference is enormous.

The contradictions of everyday life, the questions of colour (racism), the desire of the Other, and the discovery of a cultural identity. What about desire of an other? The desire

of wanting, having, being an Other -- 'fraternizing with the enemy.' Does this predicament manifest itself in Indian societies? What are the problems where one culture crosses into another -- what are the difficulties in learning about the cultural Other? What are some ways of having others learn about who you are? Interestingly, all these artists now or at one time married or lived with someone non-Native! Edward Poitras was the only one to directly address it as a struggle. Spouses from different cultural spaces, the problems of performing together, the practices of everyday life, the feelings of discomfort, how are mixed marriages resolved? Poitras says:

being married to a white woman ... living with Robin, it's been difficult because I felt uncomfortable trying to do certain things, yet deep inside I've wanted to involve her (EP:313).... It's interesting. It's almost like so many of us have chosen spouses that are non-Native, maybe to solve these problems [naturally] (EP:334).

Poitras suggests that perhaps this is one way to resolve many cultural issues, by creating a kind of dialogic space that is more positive than negative. Is he saying, that in order to be able to speak to the issues, you have to know the Other? The struggle then, is to break through culturally constructed boundaries while retaining a strong sense of self.

While those in mixed marriages often struggle to cross sensitive areas resolving cultural and racial differences, the politics of race continues to be perpetuated. Equally damaging

is 'reverse racism.' Edward Poitras perceives school yards as spaces where difference is played out, children being told or learning from adults, 'difference' constructed as 'natural' and is rationalized as such, Poitras says Native children are now setting standards regarding authenticity. Who or what motivated them to do so? He says,

my daughter, right now, in Saskatoon is going through that with one of her friends.... My daughter, Ruth's daughter, my daughter, she's very 'fair', she's also 'Treaty Indian.' But her other little friend has been telling her she's not dark enough, stuff like that. It's hard on the child (EP:327).

How do mixed-marriage issues manifest themselves in later life? Using Poitras's observation, it would be skin colour.

Until now, the relations of struggle were external. Briefly I want to point out that struggles are often encountered within Native (art) communities. This should come as no surprise since we regularly see in the media reports of conflict in areas of the world where border struggles of various kinds take place between neighbours. Within Native (art) communities issues over 'blood quantum,' 'authenticity,' Bill C-31, can be securely predicted. Within the Native art world these issues transcend aesthetic issues of integrity and quality, to being questions of racial purity -- Who is more authentic? Edward Poitras recalls that INDIGENA inadvertently raised such issues among the participants, saying there were reactions among "some artists who wanted to have a 'full-

blood' show (he laughs)" (EP:304). It would seem that some of the artists misunderstood the main point of the INDIGENA project, because, ironically, it was created to problematize the questions of identity, 'purity,' and 'indigenous-ness.' Having mixed bloods in the show was about the results and complexities of colonization. His Treaty Card, a wall installation, plays with such absurdities. Instead, it seemed there was no interest in articulating the problem and to decolonizing the artists' minds. Currently, the critical discourse amongst Native people is in its infancy, and until it becomes sophisticated it will remain in a semi-private form.

* * * *

On the whole, each of the artists has experienced the struggles of everyday life, each articulating his or her identities differently, and each coming to differing resolutions. Now, moving from the everyday into the discursive field of art and aesthetics, I want to examine in the next chapter how the issues of this chapter are played out and articulated in this field.

Endnotes

1. I was particularly heartened to see Odjig and Janvier honoured by their peers for their contribution to Native art at the Halifax conference of the National Native Artists Symposium in the fall of 1993.
2. The Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College had just opened at the beginning of the 1970s. I was hired in 1972 to help assist the Native American artist Sarain Stump. The following year, I left the College to enter art school.
3. In 1995 Edward Poitras and I will represent Canada at the XLVI Venice Biennale. The Biennale project will be folded into the larger exhibition of his works.
4. See Blundell and Phillips (1983) who report on an alternative view of Odjig's childhood reminiscences where she states that Indian heroes were non-existent, instead they were taught in school they were savages. Consequently, Odjig sees the value of inspirational models, that perhaps she may be able to fulfil such a role that was missing in her youth.
5. Consider for instance pop singer Michael Jackson who has reportedly used special bleaching agents to lighten his skin. No doubt other non-whites have a history of wanting to change their physical features in order to be 'accepted'. Indians are no different. To-date, physical change, as plastic surgery suggests, is the furthest point we have reached in achieving a kind of 'alterity.'
6. For Victor Turner the communitas is an unstructured community of equal individuals who submit to general authority. In 'closed' or 'structured' societies it is marginal or inferior individuals, or the outsider, who symbolizes the communitas (1969:111). Communitas is always contemporary whereas structure is past. It is spontaneous, immediate vis-a-vis the norm governed, institutionalized, abstract nature of social structure. Turner suggests that the products of the communitas are art and religion, rather than legal and political structures. "Communitas transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency" (1969:128).
7. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1991) says that a return home is an empowering strategy for a "re-departure." In this re-departure the subject supposedly becomes self-consciously aware of, and is able to more confidently deal with, life's uncertainties.
8. During the mid-1980s women and others began to regain special Indian status under Bill C-31, a bill that reinstated any Indian person who had lost or was denied status because of discriminatory sections of the previous Indian Act.

9. Nora Yellowknee is from the Bigstone Band, Alberta. Jane met her when Jane was about twenty six years old. Nora is a kind of 'bosom friend' who often said to Jane, "Don't give me that sort of crap." Jane characterized her by saying, "I couldn't bluff her."
10. Métis, the original French word, is pronounced "mā tē"; today, in Saskatchewan and other prairie provinces the Anglicized form is used, pronounced "met is".
11. In an exhibition at the Ottawa School of Art in 1993 called Three Lemons and a Dead Coyote, Poitras further problematizes this 'treaty card' issue. In one piece, he places his treaty card at the centre of a Maltese-like cross. On closer inspection, he has altered his photograph by painting his face like a clown, suggesting of course, the coyote or 'trickster-ish' manner to subverting his legal status.
12. Belanger pronounces this term in its original way; whereas, Poitras and others from the prairies appropriate, use and pronounce it differently (see note #7); thus the distinction is made in the use or non-use of the accent above the 'e'.

Chapter Six

SITUATING NATIVE ARTISTS:

THE FIELD OF ART AND ITS SPACES OF STRUGGLE

Introduction

To continue with my investigation of the artist, instead of examining their lives outside of the field of art, I will, in this chapter, interrogate their subject positions within the field of art. Finally, I will examine how each of them has learned to negotiate and create space within the discursive field of art.

A. The Field of Art

What are aesthetics? Better still, what are aboriginal aesthetics and how are they articulated? Is there a culturally-specific, Pan-Indian, or other aesthetic that is expressed by these artists? How do they frame art issues? Do they draw from a specific intellectual tradition? Do Western classifications subvert their identities? These are some questions indirectly suggested. As expected, articulations vary considerably. Some reflect Modernist values, others conceptualize their works as a 'bridge,' others consider what they do as a strategy to border crossing, while others understand their work as a syncretism of possibilities. None of these artists go into any detail, instead, their ideas can be seen as proposals for further study and analysis.

Again, my analysis of the issues will be undertaken through each individual artist, with some cross-referencing, and finally concluding with a summary of the major issues.

1. Daphne Odjig:

The most senior of all these artists, Odjig is unperturbed by the influencing factor of her cultural identity. She says: "I think that that is my biggest accomplishment, knowing who I am and proud... It's so nice to say 'I'm Indian.' Whereas about thirty or forty years ago you suppressed that. You were so unhappy inside" (DO:331). Understanding this perspective, we will see how surprisingly differently her aesthetic philosophy is articulated.

In the 1960s she discovered new artistic possibilities. Encouraged by her family and community, in particular the Pelletier family of Wikwemikong who had begun to promote Native art, she began painting with a renewed spirit, saying: "... they thought it would be nice to show people our stories [and legends] through our work ... I did this ... sort of bridging a gap between native and white cultures" (DO:516). It was during this period that artists like Odjig focussed their attention on the beauty of their cultural identity, and sharing it with non-Native audiences. Despite the pride in her culture, it was a short-lived perspective. She says: "I did that for a period of time but I wasn't too satisfied with it because I thought it was narrowing my vision a bit. I wanted

to express my own feelings as a Native person, to express my own spirituality" (DO:516).

The reigning discourse during this period of 'art for art's sake' was also adopted by many Native artists who presumably understood it as an entry into the discursive field of art. I would argue they were coopted by this discourse in order to be 'accepted.' Odjig says: "Acceptance, because they didn't view the work of Native artists as pure art as such ... They viewed it more as an ethnological expression. You know that yourself" (DO:059).¹ This discourse continues today, and some Native artists continue to buy into it rather than seek to subvert and challenge it. In spite of this, one significant exhibition in 1972 at the Winnipeg Art Gallery called Treaty Numbers sought to make space by allowing contemporary Native artists to express themselves publicly. Regardless of its political-sounding title, Odjig says it focussed instead on Native spirituality. It is this strategy I wish to briefly explore: the spiritual/political dimension of these early artists, with particular attention to Odjig's philosophy.

In the early phase of her career, Odjig speaks of the lack of role models, which is why the appearance of Norval Morrisseau in the early 1960s was so important for her, and others. Morrisseau created a new space for Native artists. But, before contemporary Native art, before legend painting, Odjig expressed only the 'self,' that is to say, nonspecific, unidentifiable with any specific culture. This was true of her

contemporaries. Why was there a pressure against a culturally identifiable art? Modernism, the market, the audience? After all, the 1960s was a period of cultural 'awakening,' when pride in one's Native culture dominated young and old alike.

Odjig says:

[When] the powwow came out we were trying to show what was beautiful about Native culture, and we wanted to show that in our art also. I suppose the only way we could express that was through our stories and legends of the people. Although, before that, I myself expressed myself as a person. I wanted to do my own thing because long before that I was dealing in oils and things like that" (DO:059).

So important were transformations during the 1960s for all Native peoples that artists played an important part in the articulations. As a result, cultural pride and its link with the past were remembered through expressions of tribute.² Is it possible, then, to link the spiritual with the political? It is a paradox.

For Odjig, the personal was only the private, not the political: "... my dreams ... my subconscious. It all goes back to my childhood again ... I don't make too many political statements in my work.... My work is more personal" (DO:107). Yet, one can argue there are traces of socio-political issues within a number of her works. For example, she indicates that there are "some elements of environmental concerns, social ills, things like that" (DO:107). Regarding the political as being detrimental to her acceptability, she concedes an allegiance with her "white audience." She feels it is the only

way for them to remain responsive. Nevertheless, they will still have to understand who she is and her apolitical perspective. Can they understand her culturally-specific work? Or, are they more personally-specific? Of her work she says "To be able to do this, you have to have this experience within yourself, within your dreams.... Otherwise, I could not put it out on paper or put it in visual form.... I call it my other life ... my spirit travelling in other areas and in other spaces" (DO:186). Again, I must point to artists like Morrisseau who opened spatial possibilities for many to be able to work in a manner where dreams are so important, thus allowing Odjig to be committed to such an approach.

Indeed, she struggles to articulate and distance herself from the political. She relies not on experiences alone, which we discovered were rather traumatic, instead she seeks refuge in another reality: "Some of these profound things have not come out in my work but some dreams have come out in my work ... experience has never come out in my work" (DO:275). Furthermore, believing her work can be read this way, she says: "My work is totally [me]. I have done situations like that large mural [The Indian in Transition 1978, figure 1] ... everybody says it was a political statement. I wasn't even thinking in those terms of being political. I was just thinking in terms of history about our native people" (DO:279). Asked what she thought about work being done today, she responded positively yet her words are punctuated with a

warning. She says:

A lot of it is very political. I think that you have to watch that a little bit. I don't think [Alex and I] were that political. I don't think that we would have got anywhere with the general public because they can be ... resentful. They know all the hurts that happened in the past with our people, they know all this. They don't want it all shoved down their throat's day after day. We want to go ahead. I'm ... for showing the beauty of our culture (DO:291).

As she justifies being apolitical, she seeks alternatives. Is this a traditional view? Is she still holding on to Modernist ideals, where art is about the 'good,' the 'beautiful,' and the 'universal'? She continues:

Sometimes artists have to go through these phases though. You have to get it out and then they'll turn to something else. They made their statement, they feel good about it. I suppose there is nothing wrong with it but if it goes on and on and on, I don't think that's very good (DO:291).

As we shall also see in the ideas of Lance Belanger, both share views about the political nature of an artist's expression. Is it true, that as a young artist, one may be politically motivated, then as one matures the work becomes more visually sophisticated? Can the work still be political? Belanger thinks it can be.

2. Alex Janvier:

Janvier speaks of 'links' and 'bridges' when he says "without realizing at some point that I was a carrier to that link. And then, now we know that there are bridges completed again, and a lot of people started crossing" (AJ:275). I would

argue these linkages are more than just temporal, but spatial and discursive as well. The temporal linkages are to traditions, the spatial, to Native and non-Native communities, both urban and rural, and the discursive to art, anthropology and other discourses. Though Janvier is modest and self-effacing he remains a strong link: "You know, there are bigger links than I am -- [Norval] Morrisseau, Daphne Odjig ... and Bill Reid" (AJ:275). This modesty is because the other artists are older; of other younger artists, or those now deceased, he makes no mention. Janvier makes particular note of the important work Haida artist Bill Reid has done, reviving his tribal art forms. He sees artists like Reid as 'carriers' building new bridges for the next generations to cross over: "They even make me feel proud" (AJ:275). This is a kind and traditional thought.

In my conversations with Janvier he was both critical of contemporary events and insistent on the responsibility contemporary Native artist must accept. He talked about the superficiality of some contemporary Indian art, particularly in the United States: "there are some ... pretty high talent Indians, who are borrowing, re-translating what's going on, in the Southwest[ern United States], making headlines out here.... In that sense they may be very popular temporarily. But it's a temporary thing" (AJ:294). Pointing to the Southwest where artists become instant successes, because they can 'borrow' and 'translate' styles and ideas from anywhere,

he criticizes this, believing they should know more about who they are, that is, "live their roots" (AJ:294). In order to "talk the talk" one must have had to "walk the talk" (AJ:016), in other words you must have had the experience. Knowing one's foundations allows one to speak with confidence. The question becomes, if one knew one's roots more and used this knowledge in the works, would it be okay to become successful? Or, does one rethink one's entire approach to artistic production? How does one negotiate the discovery and advancement of culturally-specific knowledge?

Janvier argues as follows for a true Native art, one that is grounded in understanding one's history. He says:

[Artists have to] rediscover their roots that they're painting about. Start living their roots. I think that this is like I say very vital, very important, that we start going back to the very root of the foundation that made you a Plains [Indian].... [The artists] can read all the wordy books in the world but the main thing is that you are a North American Indian. You belong to something so special. What we are talking about is blood, more precious than oil.... [It's a] fundamental God-given right being North American Indian (AJ:314).

In a way, he is proposing a history, an art history. But, is it idealized? Is access to roots this easy? Are there alternatives? I would argue that books and other media, like visual art, produced by Native people can articulate many of the issues he addresses. Creating a Native art is a fundamental issue for Native artists, but how easy is it to have access to culturally-specific intellectual traditions, especially for those on the margins of the Reserve? Janvier

leaves us needing answers.

3. Jane Ash Poitras:

Ash Poitras' work currently focuses on the 'shamanic' (figure 5, Shaman Never Die V: Indigena),³ that is, ideas about the supernatural and the spiritual. Her acquaintances are medicine people. Her imagery speaks to these experiences. All this has happened in the last five years or so, making it difficult to compare her with Janvier, who speaks from an important and lengthy experience. Nevertheless, like him, she is connected to a specific community.

Pointing out the role of the artist in Indian society, she says, "there are some artists that are shamans and all shamans are artists; but not all artists are shamans" (JAP:076). Unfortunately, this quote remains the only reference to the shaman/artist. This statement avoids references to past practices, yet there is a relationship between past and present. How are the two related? The suggestion that inspiration comes from another reality, one that Odjig and Morrisseau articulate, which is ambiguous. She goes on to speak about the contemporary artist.

Can the shaman/artist exist within the contemporary art world? Commenting on the discursive space of today's artist, Native and non-Native, she says:

The minute the artist fixes himself he becomes stagnant and complacent, he becomes boring and predictable. An artist should never stop and never get too comfortable. He should always be on the

cutting edge and there should always ... be some tension.... I mean, it keeps him sharp and that's the sign, I think, of a great artist (JAP:076).

Is this a Modernist argument, the idea of the avant-garde and 'cult of the artist'? I do agree, nonetheless, that artists should be ever vigilant in their practice. The world moves too fast for most people, especially the lucrative art market. Furthermore, she acknowledges the existence of many types of artists and practices:

There's good ones and there's big ones but sometimes the little ones on the outside world, the people that might not give them recommendation or acknowledgement.... Not everyone who gets recognized gets recognized. There are some people who get recognized who shouldn't get recognized ... but the thing is the work speaks for itself" (JAP:076).

Were shaman/artists concerned about being recognized? Probably not! But, she does bring the Native artist into a modern discursive space.

4. Edward Poitras:

Edward Poitras says identity does have some influence upon his work. I want to argue that identity, subordinate as he says, is played out strategically and as a guileful ruse in his everyday life. Asked about being a Native artist, he said it was a strange and problematic designation. How then does he identify himself: as an artist, Indian artist, Native artist, or Metis artist?

How can one become an Indian artist? Poitras says that training in an Indian art programme made him an Indian artist;

similarly, he wouldn't be one if he went to regular art school where, he says, he would be just "an artist who happens to be Indian" (EP:084). He might have something there. Certainly it is an interesting perspective! Does this mean that where one receives training is a considerable influence in how one sees the world? Poitras seems to think so. Furthermore, do language and camaraderie of like-minded souls create a unique perspectival ethos? Admittedly, training does provide knowledge about a subject matter: one is trained to see particular perspectives; one is influenced; one learns the language: both visual and aural. Also, one comes in contact with others (Natives) in similar situations where each influences the other. Could white, or other artists of colour, become Indian artists if they were trained at the SICC? Could they consider themselves as Indian-trained artists who happen to have white ancestry, or artists knowledgeable about Indian art? Most Native artists trained in mainstream universities or art colleges, learn various practices and nonetheless bring with them differing consciousness often elicited in their work. Has Poitras purposely complicated an already identity-prone subject area through a clever discursive move?

What is so interesting about Poitras is his shy but clever, ruse-like demeanour. I strongly believe it has to do with one aspect of his identity as Native/Metis, that is, a proclivity to play or be played by 'trickster,' to be a nomad, or to be someone who crosses many boundaries. Again, this is

demonstrated in Treaty Card (figure 7) where he paints his face as a clown (trickster). Which brings us to the question: do his art and aesthetic imitate his life? He has said, my art shows my 'mix,' meaning constantly negotiating within differing spaces. If it meant taking from here and there, he's all for it. To illustrate: he tested his interest by drawing upon several sources in one installation, called Black Horse Offering, where he used of two significant texts: the Bible and Black Elk Speaks. He says:

What I was trying to do was to take two visions: ... Revelations, which I see as being a vision [similar to] Black Elk's vision. In both of them there were four horses.... I tried combining the two black horses from both visions, combining the symbols. So the character in Revelations riding the horse held a scale ... a kind of judgement scale.... In Black Elk's vision the black horse had this bow and arrows, which was the power to destroy, and this cup of water was the power to make live. In the exhibition what I did, was, [to] use the bow. It became the scale with the arrows on one side, and the cup of water on the other side.... It was set up [so when] the water evaporated from the cup, everything shifted. It was like the power to make live was 'leaving', and the power to destroy was 'coming' into effect. I felt the timing was correct because Oka was happening at the same time (EP:284).

In the interview, we did directly raise questions of appropriation, or attempt to answer a question like this: What is wrong with whites appropriating from Indians, but not the reverse? Poitras freely uses his sources, therefore he would obviously not have a negative position. This is the nature of the Metis -- the 'mix' -- where sources can be freely used, i.e., Metis have an acknowledged right to European and Native

iconographies (unlike the nebulous 'half-breed'). As a result, artists who do this must hold their criticisms against whites appropriating from Indians, because they too live in glass houses.

Accusations of cultural appropriation are in some ways misguided. What purposes do they serve? Who are the winners/losers? What's gained/lost? Does it enlighten? Can artists from two cultures work to resolve such issues? Lance Belanger has definite ideas concerning the creation of dialogic spaces for such activities. Both these artists see the validity in crossing borders, that's what nomads do, they also need to draw from various sources to make sense of the complex world around them.

Finally, asked if he saw his work as political, he answered rather ambiguously. He begins by saying, "Oh, definitely." But, then, he changes his tone: "I think more in the recovery of history, looking at history again, reeducating whoever happens to be exposed to it ... but then, I'm getting tired of that" (EP:106). What is he getting tired of? The politics or the repeated attack on the historical text? Poitras said he saw himself as being a "product of history" (EP:115). What did he mean? Did history produce him? Could we extend that and say that history created the 'Indian,' the stereotype, the object, and therefore that is how his identity has become inscribed? If he has been written, is he now subverting that narrative through his artistic strategy?

5.Lance Belanger:

As indicated elsewhere, Lance Belanger had few if any struggles with his identity; in consequence he exhibits no resistance to being classified as a Native artist. He says: "[being an Indian artist] means a lot to me because being a Maliseet person is the best thing that I could be" (LB:144). Does such classification give him an identity within the complex art world by saying he's not affected by language and terminology? He contends that it has something to do with coming to terms with himself: "Like in the early 80s when I was politically hot, [young and corrupt (his own words)] ... the overt political-ness is no longer there. Now it gets a lot deeper. It can only get that way through time. So those things kind of move over" (LB:651). Nevertheless, to yield to politics, does it mean maturation? Is politics an attempt to resolve and establish a space for an identity? Similarly, does one become tired and pass the fight onto younger artists? The argument is, of course, that politics never die, only our approach changes and the politics are refined, as Belanger says: "I have no choice but to be really subtle about things. The concepts are becoming that much more subtle. It's not a campaign. I have no political campaign any longer. Although I have some concerns, I need to address them in the finest way that I know" (LB:662). With identity firmly established he can now engage in other strategies, like his current Lithic Spheres Project (figure 8).

The Lithic Spheres Project brings Belanger into a new mode of thinking. A mode that allows the gradual articulation of identity and space. This project concerns the extinct Taino of the Caribbean. For him they are still alive and it is his passion they remain so. So what is his strategy? Before proceeding to answer, there is one other question that becomes critical. Is Indian art only about aesthetics? Belanger adds, it is also about politics, the politics of re-articulation or offering new perspectives to an already well-defined system. As a result, he can give his 'artistic strategy' a Native (Maliseet) view:

When I look back at things that I've said in 1982 ... doing hard-core political stuff, it was to say that art was one more part of a complex whole. Yeah, I don't want to go to Costa Rica to work around these [Taino] objects, simply because they're perfectly round and beautiful, but there is something else there. I don't really know what that is. But, I know enough to be able to want to do it. And that's enough to simply say that I'm aware that it's there, and I would like to work around that. In my own way project what that is (LB:447).

His aesthetic has Modernist implications when he says, "my assessment is going to be based on pure enjoyment and awe" (LB:415). Furthermore, he says, "what I'm doing, it's to ... appropriate, but what I try to give back [is] as much as I can in terms of outside understanding of Taino culture" (LB:144). By appropriating Taino lithic forms, he also smooths over the surface and reworks them in his own way, to create new spaces and identities for the Taino. Questioned about the artistic integrity of this appropriation, he suggested that simple

re-creation of the stones was not his approach, but "the protection of what that process may have been. My job is not [scientific] ... my job is to go in there and appreciate what they are" (LB:447). Is there a fear of the unknown? Does he create an intellectual 'overlay' that says to appreciate them only regardless of the truth is attainable? Belanger is experimental, trying new ways to articulate his approach, although not quite knowing his goal, he prods on, hoping to find a personal answer.

If, as Belanger sees it, Native art is integral to the everyday life of aboriginal people, then its articulation can be at once political, spiritual, cultural. This, I believe, is the foundation for a contemporary Native art practice; therefore I will now conclude with a discussion of how these artists articulate these discursive spaces.

B. Creating New Spaces

We have moved from, i) situating the artists within the issue of identity, to ii) the various types of struggles they experienced within everyday life, and iii) then to how specific issues of personal interest are resolved within artistic practices. Finally, iv) we want to know how these five artists have created new spaces of 'possibility' in which their identities can be expressed.

1. Daphne Odjig:

For Daphne Odjig the turning point in creating space for herself and succeeding generations of Native people was the period of the 1960s. During this period she saw the emergence of the Powwow as a cultural force, and art as a force for personal articulation.

The 1960s was an 'awakening' for her and the Indians of Canada, when all began feeling a genuine pride in their aboriginal identity (DO:030). Concurrently, the growth of urban Friendship Centres across the country created further opportunities for Indians to partake in the process of self-empowerment. Why the 1960s? Odjig responds, "I don't know. Maybe people were just getting fed up" (DO:090). If dissatisfaction was centred on the past and their status, a way of overcoming such situations was to attain voice. Preferably a political one; but, if that is not fully possible then the cultural must find ways of creating the space of articulation.

Within this cultural ethos of awakening, Odjig proceeds to discover a personal space of being a visual artist. She and others quickly discovered the field of art to be an unkind and politically unfriendly space. She recalls: "We had a lot of opposition. You know, we weren't [considered] artists: we were just 'recording things of the past' or 'hung in museums' [that] sort of thing.... You were searching for acceptance" (DO:030). As a discursive field, fine art could not comprehend

the goals of these artists. I would argue that contemporary non-Native artists, mainstream artists, or the 'gate-keepers,' feared being displaced, first by women then by non-Western artists. More significantly, there were relatively few Native artists around, which made them rather insignificant in political terms. We could say that for Odjig the discovery of the field of art was a rude awakening.

During this time, she now realizes, there were more younger Native artists becoming interested in the arts (DO:030); yet, it was not until the late 1970s that a larger and politically active group of Native artists emerged and was able to make any kind of impact.

Odjig's generation created the space in which succeeding generations could indeed feel few pressures about their cultural identity. She draws a picture of the younger people: "I guess a lot of it comes from the situation that they (young Indian people) grew up in too.... [Some] never had the advantages of knowing Indians, knowing their background, knowing their culture until later on in life" (DO:041). Yet, she sees difference, predominantly the understanding of the self: "You see I've always known I was an Indian, but I was made to be ashamed of it. These other ones they were probably never made to be ashamed of it" (DO:041). Definitely by the 1970s the cultural landscape had shifted enough, everywhere, for Native people to articulate their position. Janvier sums it up this way: "I was like ... thirty-three ... when suddenly

I realized here I was ... I didn't know who in hell I was.... It was quite a thing to realize,... to come to the realization that I was powerless ... that was my total dilemma. I had no power ... that's when I think I woke up" (AJ:079). Both these senior artists' use of metaphors of awakening is very striking; it expresses not so much the harsh realities they faced, as their determination never to fall asleep again.

2. Alex Janvier:

Alex Janvier's struggle follows from a process of self-realization through to the creation of a critical and intellectual understanding of his traditional spaces that are expressed by an artistic strategy.

Known for his clever wit and critical observations, since the 1960s, Janvier was the first Native artist to understand the potential of critical positioning, which are reflected in his works. In those early days at boarding school and then working with Indian Affairs, the cultural and political awakening of the 1960s, Janvier and other artists critically established a 'voice' for Native people. Interestingly, during my conversations with Odjig about the ground-breaking exhibition, Treaty Numbers in 1972, she countered my argument that Janvier's art was evidence of its political nature. She slyly asked, "Was his [art] quite political then?" (DO:597). My argument was, that Janvier signed his work "287" instead of his usual name, which to my mind was a political statement;

because, it expressed his sense of having been a numbered Indian within the eyes of Indian Affairs, which is supported both by Janvier's own statement that he was "coming to [realize his] powerlessness" and the strong rebuke made by the politically-astute and conscious Mohawk woman/model from Montreal in the mid-1960s. Furthermore, Janvier once suggested to me in another conversation that his employment with Indian Affairs was very tenuous. I attribute his continued acerbity to this turbulent period.

Janvier's artistic practice embodies a paradoxical intention. During the 1960s the dominant style was abstract art, which was interpreted as a form of art free of politics.⁴ Janvier decided to become an abstract painter. Within this milieu, I would argue, he was situated squarely within a highly political-cultural space, a space which would influence his deeper emotions and thus his practice. The abstract quality of his work became a facade for a more critical self.

In my recent discussions with him he continued to be a strong cultural critic of institutions. For example, here's his mischievous attack of scientific narratives: "The other thing that I've pick[ed] up in the museum was what were those Indians doing in crossing the Bering Strait? 'Oh, they were following game!' Oh, that means one morning sixty million buffalo decided to cross the Bering Strait?" (AJ:200). Scientific institutions are part of the art system and have historically provided the only narrative. Immediately, Janvier

counters the scientific discourse, by asking what is wrong with narratives that tell aboriginal peoples who they are, and where they came from? Younger Native artists have a Janvier to thank for creating a very important and politically-discursive space within the field of art.

Janvier has never given up on this approach; it only got more sophisticated, even after his return 'home' to the Reserve in the early 1970s. Tired of the urban cultural life, he quickly established an interest in understanding his traditional Chipewyan culture, a cultural space that allowed him to speak Chipewyan (Dene) and to participate in various traditional practices. It is within this context, I want to argue, that a second critical narrative emerged: the articulation of a Native (Dene) point of view.

Janvier's philosophy of living off the land and calling it 'Mother' indicates an alternative attitude to nature, especially when he says that we human beings get "looked after" (AJ:385). The basis for this relationship is his concept of a 'gift handed on' to each generation (AJ:385). His return to this philosophy marks a return to Dene spirituality that guides his life and his art. He sees it not only as a responsibility but a commitment, unlike the Catholic system which permits people to return over and over again to be absolved of their sins (AJ:385). It is a struggle of the spirit, of a way of life: on one hand you take ownership and responsibility for the struggle, on the other you are relieved

of the right to struggle. Janvier believes this struggle has something to do with our present way of living, the easy and pleasurable way of living that makes us forget these fundamental philosophies of the land. His work signifies this philosophy, his paintings are beautiful, as abstract in style as they were in the 1960s, but as always there is the paradox that they contain not only a formal language but also a philosophy that is manifestly critical.

Janvier continues to reminisce in a regretful way about the past, about how newer generations are allowing the traditions (history) to slip away. He frequently harkens back to his childhood memories. In spite of it all, he continues to have confidence in future developments. Here he gives the example of the 1965 powwow at Wikwemikong, which was previously nonexistent. As a result of local initiative and determination, the community has continued to maintain this cultural expression. His regrets may be short lived, because contemporary Indians are showing others that to bring about new ideas and possibilities it will be overly romantic to continue looking back into the past (AJ:343).

3. Jane Ash Poitras:

Like all the other artists, Jane Ash Poitras is no stranger to experiencing displacement. As I noted earlier, she was adopted by a non-Native family. Like many others, her experiences concern the search for comforting social spaces:

familial, cultural, and artistic.

"Who are you?" is an innocent question that can be answered in many ways, particularly during this 'fragmented' and wholly 'decentered' period in her life. But for Ash Poitras the anxiety followed her into adulthood. How do you answer such a question? Do you avoid it? Tell untruths? Or, do you try and find out? With a bit of good fortune she had friends who were aggressive and caring enough to help:

Nora said, 'You should find out where your people are. Your mom could still be alive.' ... She just told me exactly who to call, so I made the phone call and it was just like that! (snaps finger) Irene went to the files and came back to the phone and said 'Jane, this is who you are' (JAP:129).

I would argue that this discovery is not so much 'who you are' as that's already established, but 'What is your origin (parents)?' and, 'What are the circumstances of the separation?' There's a contradiction to saying 'this is who you are,' as if, who one is now, is not the right person! It almost demands one to make a choice, instead of building on to the existing self; therefore, would it not be more appropriate to say: 'this is also who you are' or 'this is another side of you', or 'this is an additional biographical element previously unknown.' 'This is who you are' is more biologically deterministic, that is, that social phenomena can be explained by reference to biological or genetic characteristics.⁵ For Ash Poitras it was a moment to make new connections, new spaces, new relations, from old disconnections. Asked how it was to make such connections, she

said:

[I]t's incredible because ... it's like a big celebration ... I really did have a mother. You get to feel like you have real cousins.... And then you find out about yourself and your people.... They were all extremely poor; but, they were happy.... they were also very different from the overall secular world, the outside white world I was familiar with (JAP:137).

Finding her relations -- 'the blood argument' -- is like going home and finding familiar spaces. Ash Poitras now becomes part of a new, long lost, severed family, who see her as part of their own. There is, much happiness and celebration. She is able to see how they live and in what conditions -- conditions, she is also very familiar with. She speaks of her relatives as 'real': "real cousins not white (foster) cousins, real blood cousins, cousins that have the same blood." After discovery of another aspect of herself that was denied, she soon discovers they too are very different. They have a world or environment they're used to, and now she has to understand and try to fit in, again. What accommodations are made? How long can this bliss last? Will these new connections be in a position to accommodate both worlds and perspectives?

Altogether, there is a confusion of where 'home' is -- home is comfort. Can one have many homes? Yes! Ash Poitras talks of her new family and the difficulty she has in leaving, they ask her "are you going home?" She realizes this new space is like home, in fact, she calls it 'heaven,' but knows she'll have to leave it. Each makes accommodations to make the other feel accepted, comfortable, respected.

Indeed, Ash Poitras's next question is how to build upon this new spatialized identity, how to strengthen the connections. Already, she has been asked to contribute to the sociality of the Reserve, by extending invitations to bring medicine people up from the United States. She finds a renewed interest that this begins to influence her practice as an artist and an Indian. Her work has taken new directions since this meeting. For example, her work no longer merely reflects Native spirituality as embodies its complexities.

4. Edward Poitras:

Like Belanger, Edward Poitras is very much a border-crosser. His early accounts of growing up with a Metis identity on an Indian Reserve, then living in a predominantly urban white environment on the south Saskatchewan prairies, give an indication of his displacement. Poitras's life and work epitomize the notion of place and the politics of identity.

Poitras's identity is both urban and rural, Indian and Metis. It is also about the Plains where he grew up, which is why he says his connection to the land is important. His spatialized identity is the Plains. It is where he feels at home, comfortable, for that reason he chooses to live in Regina rather than larger urban areas like Toronto or New York (EP:425).

He talks about cultural identity being an issue when he

was a younger artist, in the same way it was for Belanger; then, he moved on to see how this related to nature, to see how important it was, to see the relations:

... questions of identity. When I first started showing my work, it was an identity issue ... mixed, natural, manmade objects. That's how I saw my life. As I grew up, I saw this connection with nature. Even now, it keeps coming up, like thinking of new works. Even this morning talking to this curator, I saw his face and I kept thinking about the land. The windows in this building, what's on the other side? What I wanted to do with the windows in the building was change them, so that I could look out the window and see the prairies, rather than the city. I wanted to change the cityscape into a prairie landscape. I have a very strong desire to change my own landscape (EP:238).

Poitras is attracted to the Prairie landscape, its people, its weather. He's talked of leaving but always returns (EP:267). He's not nomadic enough, although he frequently leaves for various reason, he just as quickly returns. He does not want to move his home, just his body. The desire to change his landscape is an interesting metaphor, for I believe it establishes a stronger spatial identity, in that it allows him liberties and opportunities to position himself in various sites.

Poitras continues to insist on his connection to land. To him there are differences in environments -- city/country, noisy/quiet, traditional/modern -- but his attitude toward the land remains unaltered. It is the spiritual, historical, and physical connection that gives Native people their identity. To lose sight of this notion has serious implications for identity, for example, it would invalidate reasons for 'land-

claims' which Belanger further articulates.

Accordingly, we must ask: What is the 'land'? What does it consist of? Is belief in the land as a 'spiritual force' important? How is it articulated by the Native artist? What's the significance of an understanding of the land, when Poitras says the world is getting smaller? With lightning advances in communication, what does this mean in our understanding of the land? Does it mean people don't have to move their homes to travel elsewhere? Is it the new form of transportation? Whatever the situation, Poitras does not feel isolated. Why?

Poitras grew up in a place where his identity as Metis was marginalized to that of the Indian; conversely, in the city he was referred to as an Indian. I would argue this is a 'nomadic subjectivity,'⁶ that is, one whose allegiances constantly shift. Do others share similar circumstances? He seems to think there are people who could be identified as such. What would be the similarities if a group could assemble? Are they agents unconnected to a Reserve or other Indian community? Would this be the 'New Tribe' Poitras once talked about? Poitras once thought of this idea, saying he talked "with some traditionalists and stuff like that, actually they like the idea.... It was a place for the marginal people (laughs).... It was a place for people who were adopted as children.... It was a great idea" (EP:064). A group of unconnected, displaced individuals, coming together as communitas. What would be their make up? Who would be a

tribal member? How would they define a 'tribe'? Is it marginal groups? In the past, present? Are they nomads or sedentary? Would they have a special language? What would be their tactics for survival? Why would they be segregated? Poitras says it's a place for adopted children. Unfortunately this idea has yet come to fruition.

Predictably, Poitras continues seeking other spaces and identities. For instance, he says that being aware of other indigenous peoples 'opens up' possibilities into areas previously not considered, how about Siberia? (EP:254). This 'call to consciousness,' of like to like, gets even more complex. Why is Poitras interested in other indigenous peoples around the world? Is it shared commonalities like colonization, where sovereignty over one's territories becomes a reality? Witness, for example, the friendships between Native North Americans and Australians, the aboriginal people of Hokkaido (Japan), the Sammis, the Hawaiians. Each share in being colonized and each struggles for control over their mental and physical spaces. More importantly for Poitras is the connection and exchange. They too make for good stories!

Poitras has reached a critical stage where he can now move out and beyond his local frames of reference. He's a border crosser, moving into the global space, striving to feel comfortable, striving to be unselfconscious. Is border crossing the future? He doesn't want to wait that long; therefore, he acts now. The global space is the new frontier

for individuals more conscious of themselves and others. It is wanting to know what is good; it is about wanting to know what knowledge is stripped away and suppressed; it is wanting to understanding the dynamics of the world and where one fits; it is about the discovery of the self and the local. The bridges into other spaces are slowly being created.

5. Lance Belanger:

Lance Belanger is a new type of Native artist. Not easily decentered, he seeks an articulation based on accommodation yet built on strong foundations of reclamation. It is a strategy for creating new spatial identities.

Like Poitras, Belanger is a frequent border-crosser. It becomes his spatial identity. As John Fiske would say, he has a 'nomadic subjectivity.' For Belanger, the question is not "Is there a Native art community?" but "What does the Native art community consist of?" In other words, is it confined only to Native artists, or is it willing to open up its borders to other artists? He insists on the latter. As an example, he has begun working with artists across various boundaries, whether they're Indian from other cultural spaces, or non-Natives. He says, "I think this Native community is a lot bigger than just Native artists, you've got a broader issue here in terms of racism, in terms of accessibility, and it is so good to work with Japanese, Black [artists]. It's about time we started to make that transition. Start looking at some bigger things"

(LB:541). His practice opposes a gate-keeping mentality as a fear being rearticulated by Indians. Is it a new form of reverse ethnocentrism? Conceding that gatekeepers are good for some things, yet for contemporary art practice he regards exclusiveness as destructive. Belanger, suggests that by expanding the community to include others, there can be possibilities (new spaces) where common issues are articulated and resolved: like, racism and marginality. I would call this a progressive articulation.

Belanger speaks of crossing borders, of working with others, seeing results. There is no fear. It is positive. He cares not who they are as long as they'll work with him; he speaks honestly and directly about working with others; he says, "I'm really anxious to climb out of my crib and start bumping around with the other toddlers" (LB:498); he feels that if gate-keeping abounds it can only result in stagnation for Native art and artists. The Native art community must move on, become border-crossers, see who they can play with. Only this way can, they become stronger. He says "When you talk about our community, I think it's about time there should be growth in our community" (LB:464). It needs an injection of new blood; although there is a qualification, that younger Native artists are developing, there is still a sense that other non-Native identities are needed. Belanger talks of 'stabilization' as a negative and conservative point of view, which leads to 'stagnation' -- believing that Indians can't

stick to each other forever -- otherwise you'll have a lot of 'in fighting' leading inevitably to ruptures. An example he gives was the last Native artists' conference in Halifax (1993), where he saw the artists gathered for one big "party." He strongly resists this as a conference objective, rather they should be about opportunities for articulations. He feels this approach of working together frightens people; but he believes it has value.

Janvier agrees that Native artists must cross borders, but they must also continue building stronger foundations. Belanger calls this a mental and physical approach to achieving 'reclamation.' It is simply taking ownership and responsibility over territory and the intellectual transformation which is the strengthening of identity -- a 'spatialized politics of place'. Belanger says:

I can achieve my own reclamation in terms of my intellectual ... [and] ... physical territory with the use of pre-Colombian lithic spheres.... This idea of identity, of how you view yourself is a process that is surrounded by reclamation ... in terms of territory, physical territory ... political empowerment ... intellectual reclamation ... (LB:213)

His Lithic Spheres project is about the 'identity politics of place,' because he has chosen to reclaim the identity of the long extinct Taino. As earlier pointed out, his project is to make a political space for the now extinct Taino Indians. Their mysteriousness ('extinctness') allows him opportunities for personal interpretation, like creating his own ceremonies, and "planting" their identity around the world. This is his

artistic strategy, his 'aesthetic of tricks.' He is reclaiming an intellectual and physical space for the Taino. It is reclaiming lost knowledge of who they are, by fixing them into our consciousness, which now become 'traces' within our memory.

Reclamation. This includes territory leading to political empowerment, the creation of political organization. As well, it includes intellectual empowerment to decide upon one's own historical narrative. Belanger speaks of 'intellectual reclamation' which is about a dialectical strategy, saying that to acquiesce to other knowledge about 'self' is disempowering; it decentres. Western epistemologies and methodologies decentre through analysis. The alternative is to 'centre' oneself through an exploration of the self.

Belanger belief that "we don't need to know the details about our ancestors ... [only] that they were there" (LB:213), suggests a stronger concern for a self that needs more articulation. He sees his artistic practice firmly situated within the practices of everyday life. For example, his strategy to reclaim an identity for the Taino is being done through filmic strategy, which he sees as being much different from scientific/archaeological.

He speaks of his work being situated in the finest galleries in the world (the Western hemisphere) (LB:341). What he means is that his project is located in spaces outside the normal institutional spaces, they are natural, they are

outside. To see them is to travel great distances: they are the glaciers, the sand beaches, or some valleys in Hawaii. This is his idea of reclamation, of self-empowerment. Yet it is not only about reclaiming land, but what comes with it: space and identity. It is a process of liberation where one no longer feels or thinks in terms of confinement. This freedom is sovereignty.

To this end, aboriginal rights are articulated as 'sovereignty.' And artists, Belanger says, must be vigilant and assertive about articulating notions of sovereignty. It must be an important part of their consciousness, where ever they go, because it strengthens the identity of the self. Belanger means it in the same way Robert Houle means it when he says 'sovereignty over subjectivity.' When sovereignty is exercised and understood, it places the self in a very different attitudinal situation, unlike our impoverished ancestors who were heavily controlled by legislation. Aboriginal rights allow Indians to make choices. How they are articulated is critical to self determination and consciousness.

* * * *

To summarize then, what have been the strategies and operations employed by each artist to create a spatial identity? We can conclude that all have, in some form or another, created space within the field of art. For example, for Odjig, and even more so with Janvier, one of their

strategies has been to experiment with massive murals, which in their physicality establish a spatial presence. As well, during the 1970s both travelled to Europe to either exhibit or create new works in situ: Odjig went to Sweden (1973) and Israel (1973) and Janvier travelled to Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Belgium and Holland (1977). Their union with the "Indian Group of Seven" helped create spatial presence in Canada, well before the more radical groups that developed later. Edward Poitras' ruse-like strategies question identity, continually, due in part to his own multiple identity (or, as he says, his 'mix'). Poitras' strategy is to challenge himself by experimenting with as many disparate elements as possible, eventually discovering their connections. Yet, he remains firmly rooted in his aboriginal identity. Jane Ash Poitras affirms aboriginality and spirituality, and believes in the healing powers of ceremonialism in a practice she calls 'traditional ritualized art.' Finally, Lance Belanger's strategy is to create a spatial identity for the extinct Taino Indians of the Caribbean by 'planting' lithic spheres in various sites around the world. These sites he refers to as galleries.

Endnotes

1. Odjig, quoted in Elizabeth McLuhan (1985:29), said: "My aspiration is to excel as an artist in my own individual right, rather than to be accepted 'because' I am an Indian." McLuhan also comments on the difficulty for Native artists to find acceptance within the mainstream.
2. The opposite seemed to be true in the United States, although a number of Native artists were expressing similar kinds of sentiments, there were others who chose to be politically motivated. These artists were primarily students and graduates of the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. They were clearly and directly addressing issues of past injustices, the war in Vietnam, etc. This approach did not invade Canada as a whole until the 1970s, with the exception of Janvier who had been politically motivated since the mid-60s.
3. Although this work is not specifically about the shamanic, it is part of a series of works that speak to general issues regarding aboriginal spirituality. This work created specifically for the exhibition INDIGENA: Indigenous Perspective on 500 Years addresses numerous issues, but the consistent idea is the survival of spirituality amongst aboriginal peoples.
4. Abstract expressionism's greatest advocate Clement Greenberg (1965) defended this approach to painting against representationalism, as an art that called "attention to art [instead of using art to conceal art].... It was the stressing ... of the ineluctable flatness of the support that remained most fundamental in the processes by which pictorial art criticized and defined itself under Modernism." To be representational was to "alienate pictorial space from the two-dimensionality which is the guarantee of painting's independence as an art."
5. Or, would it be a socio-biological argument which "attempts to explain man's social organization with reference to genetic constitution and population constraint"? "Determinism attempts to emphasize the causal primacy of social structure to the exclusion of the autonomy of 'free will' of the human subject" from Dictionary of Sociology. New York: Penguin, 1988.
6. Fiske's notion of 'nomadic subjectivities' can be understood as agents freely moving among various subject positions. However, he indicates there are contradictory situations in which the individuals can be seen as either social agents (active agency) or social subjects (subjectivity). The quest for agency is to negotiate the contradictions and to construct relevances and allegiances from among them. (1989:24).
7. Robert Houle (1991) first used this notion to suggest that in order for aboriginal peoples to overcome government interference in every part of their lives, and to achieve a more substantial position in their own affairs, they had to assert their liberation. Supposedly, Native artists were part of this articulation.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSIONS

"[T]here is more to life than politics. If we are totally immersed in the political, we miss what is going on here and now." This is what Madan Sarup (1993:108) thinks post-structuralists are saying, particularly Lyotard. This thought is irresponsible, especially at this juncture in time when aboriginal peoples, and other post-colonials, have been struggling to establish spatial identities based on politics. For them politics is a crucial matter. The post-modern rhetoric of 'playfulness' overlooks the struggles of aboriginal people, including Native artists, to create spaces within various discursive practices.

There may, of course, be life after politics. This thought is not lost on any of the artists I interviewed. Indeed, many of them were either fatigued or disinterested. Lance Belanger, for example, puts it this way: "I have not a political campaign any longer. Although I have some concerns, I [do] need to address them in the finest way that I know" (LB:662). I would argue this disinterestedness is a result of the gains made by previous generations of Native artists to make space for younger artists. As we have seen, the struggles on the part of Native artists to negotiate a political space within the field of art and everyday life has been distinct.

To this end, older artists, like Odjig and Janvier, long understood the contradictory nature of their identities of being both aboriginal and artists, as a near oxymoron. Especially tricky is Edward Poitras's assertion that the fact that he was trained in a Native art program actually made him a 'Native artist'; while had he been trained in a mainstream art school, he would have been an artist with Native ancestry (EP:086). It is with some of these ideas in mind that it was important to examine the routes (tributaries) travelled by these artists, for without experiencing the first steps in the process and creating political spaces where their voices could be heard they would not be enjoying their status today within the field of art.

As Native artists, both individuals and groups, entered the mainstream art world, they had to become cognizant of its spatial politics and discursive practices. They had to learn how to play its games. They had to recognize, for instance, what or who is in or out; they had to understand the art world's selective practices, such as the market which routinely separates 'high' from 'low' art; as well, they had to know how certain standards set by the 'high' effectively segregate various arts communities.

As we have seen these artist have endeavoured to create spaces for themselves within the art world, individually and within groups (communitas). For example, it wasn't until Expo

67 in Montreal that a number of Native artists first came together as a group to show the world who they were. Although, they were fairly innocent of the implications of their new visibility, Expo 67 has provided them with an important opportunity to proclaim their cultural identity to the rest of the world. The Indians of Canada Pavilion was created specifically to inform the world of the existence of aboriginal people; it became an important political space to articulate, in a unified voice, their cultural identity as 'Indians.' Speaking with a cohesive voice was a fundamental strategy.

As some of the older artists, like Odjig and Janvier, have said, the 1960s was an important turning point for Native peoples in Canada. They were part of a group on the leading edge creating new kinds of spaces for today's younger artists. It was also a time when several Native organizations were also becoming more visible, making the public and governments aware of issues facing Native peoples. Their combined impact on Canadian society continues to be significant. Aboriginal political organizations have worked very hard to sell the idea of 'self-government'; on the other hand, with the political efforts by Native artists to make spaces within the field of art through group exhibitions, new questions have to be asked like: Is it still necessary for Native artists to make statements in big (group) shows? If so, then, what is this

'consensual' approach that distinguishes their strategy from other artists? Is it their history that bonds Native artists together? Do they continue to have some 'connectedness' that unites them?

It is important to realize all these artists are well known to me. Following this project, however, I now feel I know them much better. I asked them numerous questions, many of which do not appear within the body of this text. I was particularly interested in the spaces where their identities were constructed (what I have called a 'spatialized politics of identity'), and the negotiated spaces within the field of art for their artistic practices. I wanted to know how they articulated the issues, and of course, their similarities and differences. In addition, I wanted to see the implications on their everyday lives of having a strong identity formation, arguing that this has residual effects upon their artistic practice.

My purpose has been to investigate the struggle for Native (Canadian) artists to be inscribed within the field of art, and to better understand their struggles. As I have demonstrated, only in the past twenty to thirty years have contemporary Native artists recognized this volatile field of cultural production. Prior to that, many of them worked in relative isolation, creating works mostly for personal and at times public use. As well, I wanted through this thesis to

show the artist as central to the discussion to a degree commensurate with the importance of their work. In other words, I was interested in the 'process of identity construction' for a clearer understanding of how the artists' subjectivity is reflected in the work of art. Which is to say, that the focus was not on the finished object, but on the artistic practice as a process which constructs, interrogates, and reconstructs an identity. Therefore, I did not place great emphasis on the analysis of the art object, which is part of orthodox Art History; rather I was interested in the artists' 'lived experience.' This, I believe, is very much the difference between Western and aboriginal cultures. Perhaps one of the tasks of artists and scholars of Native art history is to educate Westerners about a perspective that is largely uncelebrated or little understood. Only by finding out who the Native artists are, can we come to better appreciate and understand his or her works. These issues may not be resolved, but the data presented hopefully brings the questions into sharper relief.

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Plates

DAPHNE ODJIG:

Fig.1 The Indian in Transition 1978
 acrylic on canvas
 8 ft. X 27 ft.
 Collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization

 (facing page)



ALEX JANVIER:

Fig.2 No One Understands Me 1972
 acrylic on canvas
 92.5 cm X 122.3 cm
 Collection of the Indian Art Centre, Indian and
 Northern Affairs Canada

 (facing page)



ALEX JANVIER:

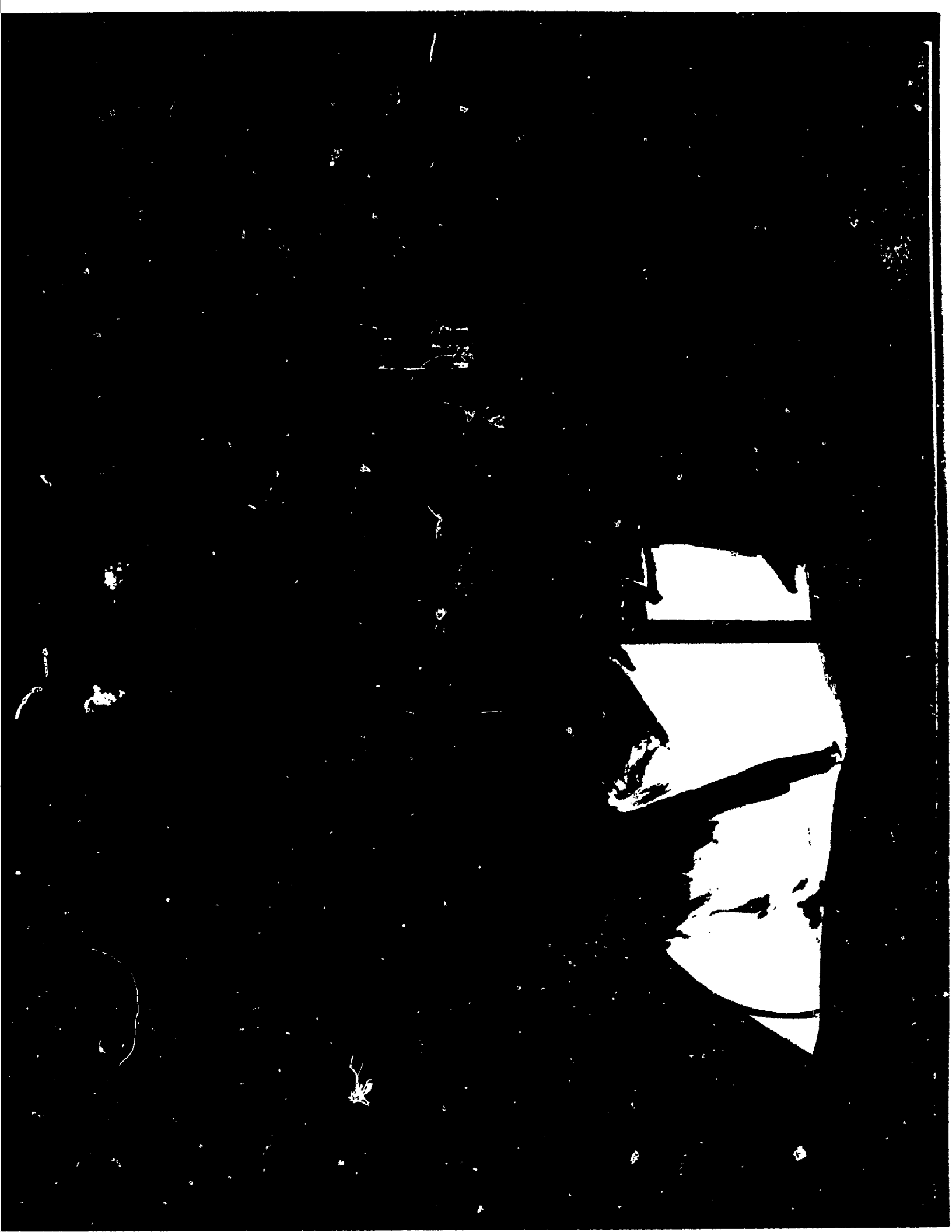
Fig.3 Alberta Rose 1977
 acrylic on canvas
 91.4 cm X 60.9 cm
 Collection of the artist

 (facing page)



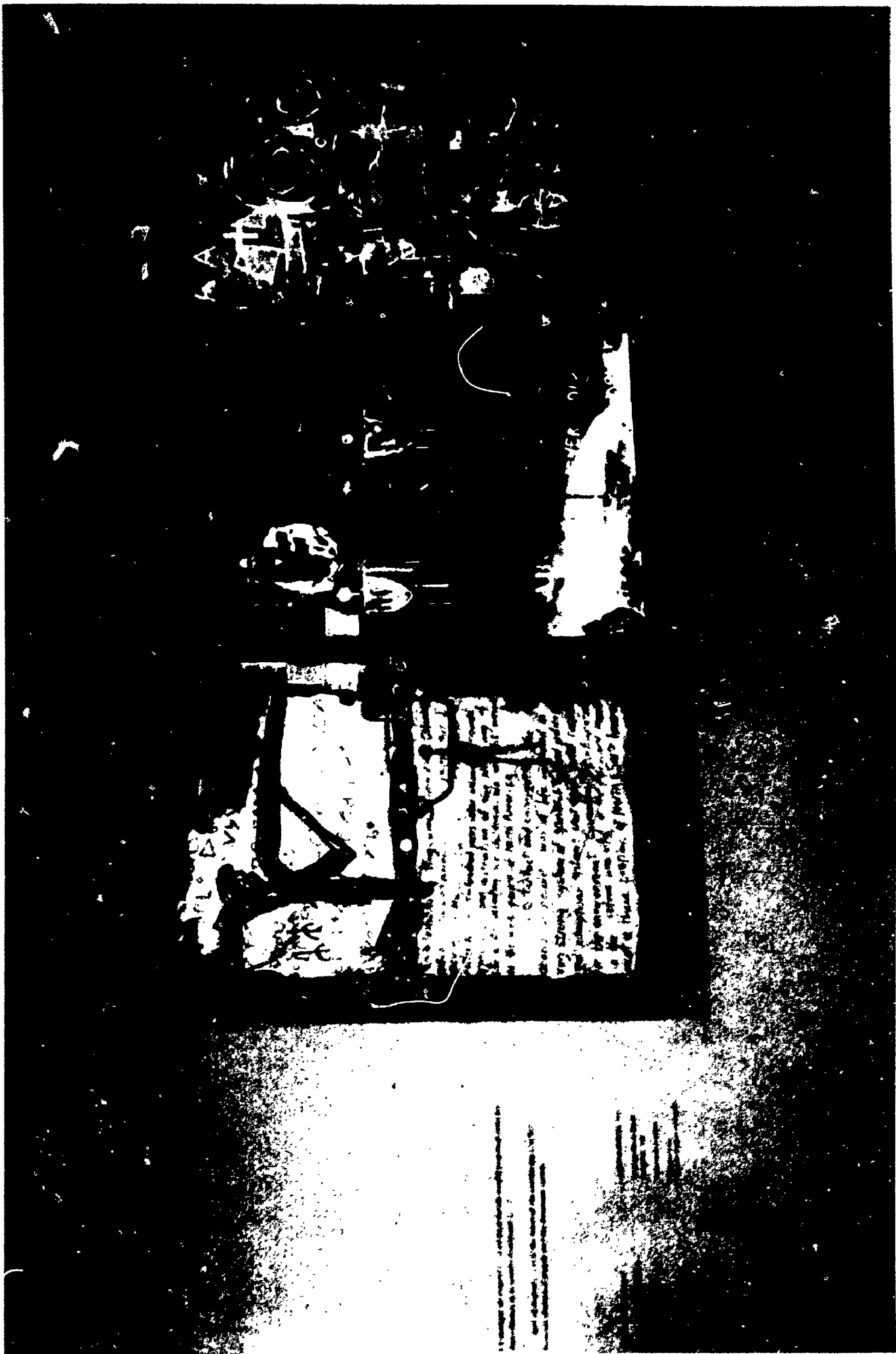
JANE ASH POITRAS:

Fig.4 Return to the Land of Ancient Moccasin from
Deserted Wooden Houses 1986
two panels, oil on canvas
167.64 cm X 111.76 cm, each panel
Collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization
(facing page)



JANE ASH POITRAS:

Fig.5 Shaman Never Die V: Indigena 1990
three panels, mixed media on canvas
106.5 cm X 76.2 cm, each panel
Collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization
(facing page)

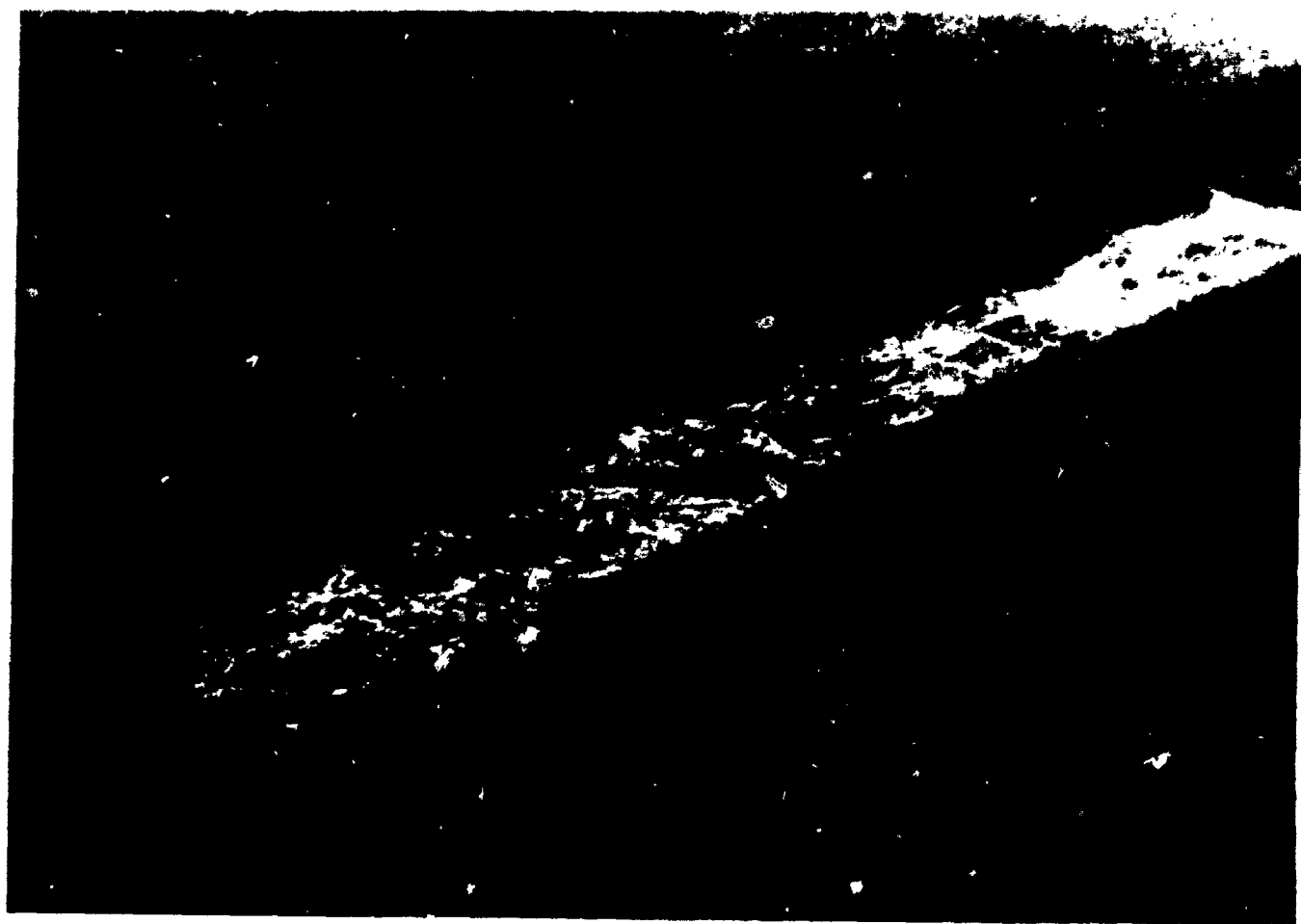


Plate

EDWARD POITRAS:

Fig.6 Offensive/Defensive 1989
site-specific installation
Collection of the artist

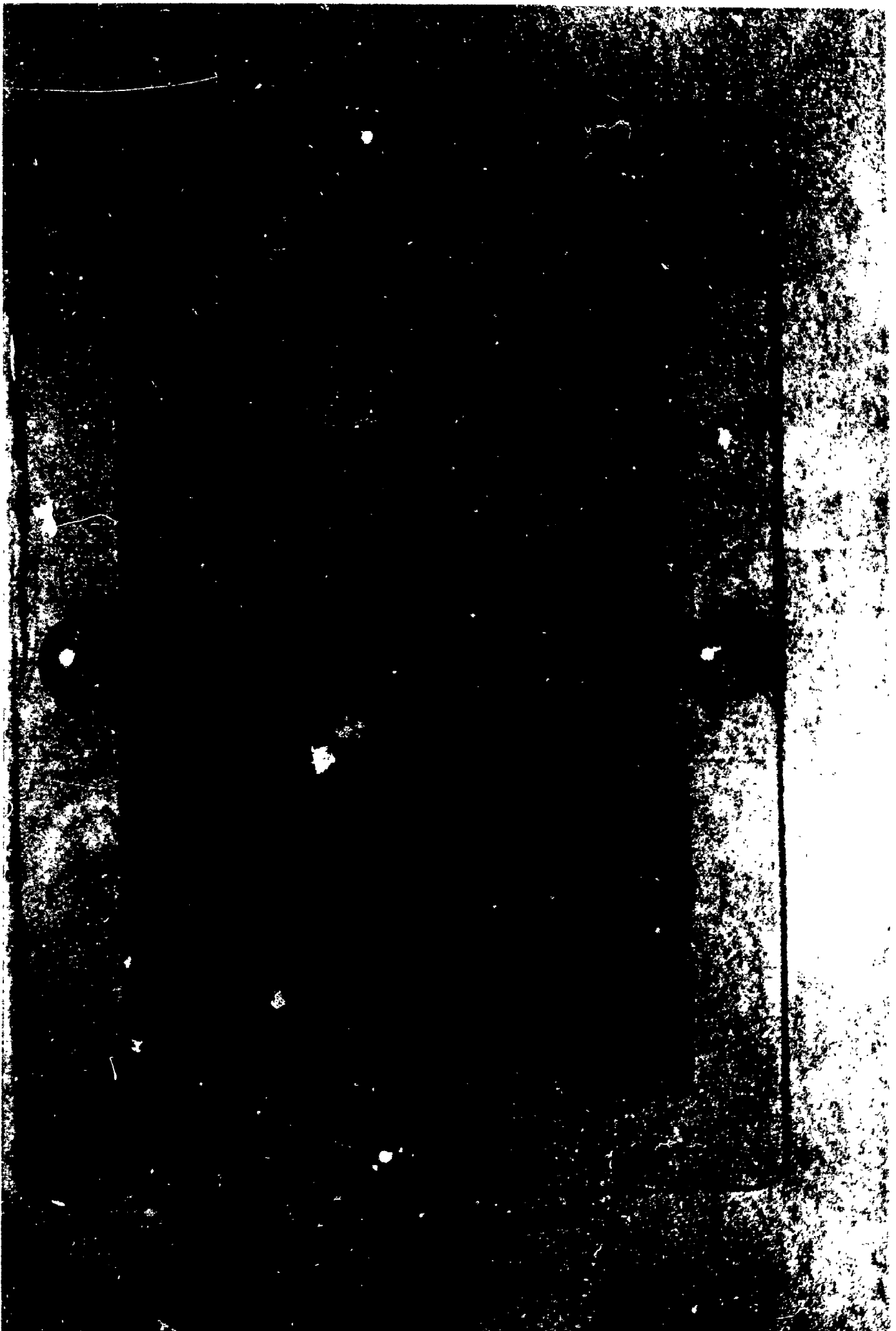
(facing page)



EDWARD POITRAS:

Fig.7 Treaty Card 1993
 wall installation
 Collection of the artist

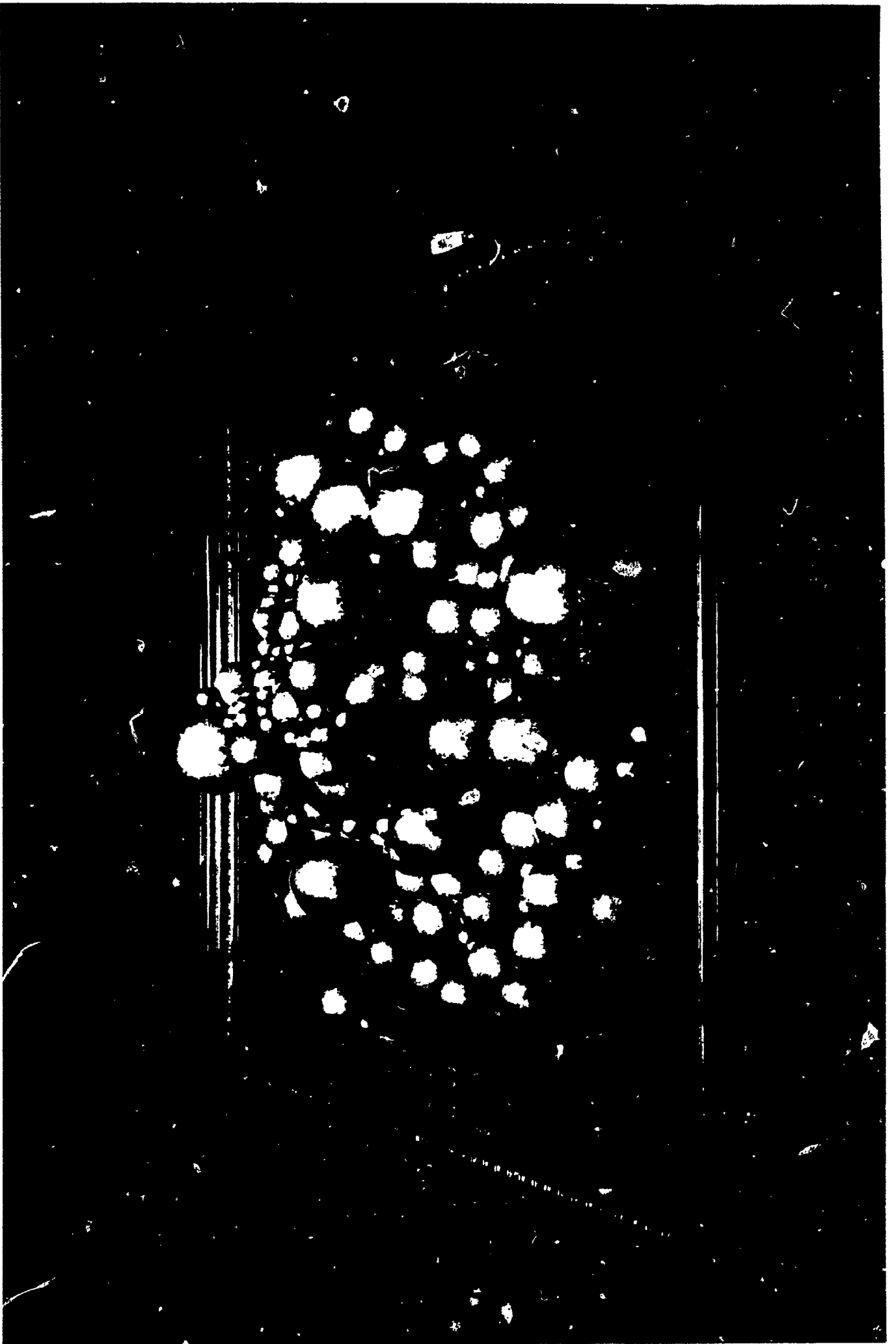
 (facing page)



LANCE BELANGER:

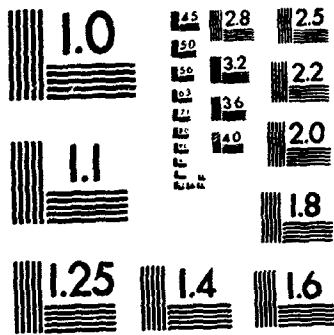
Fig.8 Lithic Spheres 1991
 installation, mixed media
 145 cm X 145 cm X 30.5 cm installed
 Collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization

 (facing page)



3 of/de 3

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT



PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

Appendix I

Exerpts from Artists Interviews

1. DAPHNE ODJIG:

- 020 GERALD: No, he (Janvier) doesn't. So, for crazy people like me doing interviews it's very good. But as he said "you were a link". I'm not sure he considered himself a link, but a lot of people do. Certainly I was interested in how you linked up ... not necessarily how you see it, but how others saw you as a link to the past during a period of time when tremendous changes were happening, to you and to other native peoples in Canada. These are the kinds of things I'm interested in discussing with you tonight.
- 030 DAPHNE: I think that Alex was a part of that too, because I think Alex was painting at the time Norval and I were on the scene. I think Alex was ahead ... in Alberta. He was becoming quite well-known. You know a lot has happened since the 60s. I view the 60s as an 'awakening'. Artists were feeling their way in the middle and the late 60s. I think that being in Winnipeg I was a part of that scene, when the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood was really going strong; also at that time, the people at home. I just happened to be there in the early 60s when the first powwow gatherings were becoming more intense. Native peoples were starting to come out and express themselves, but long before that I had always painted. Art was all around me as a child: my grandfather, my father and the native women were making quill boxes. You couldn't help but be creative in those days. I used to watch the old ladies do their quill work and my grandfather carving out his tombstones. My dad painted in his own manner. This was all going on years and years ago. Then in the 70s, things started to develop in Manitoba. As I said, I was a part of that thing, watching what was happening, and gaining some acceptance to the galleries that existed at the time. We had a lot of opposition, you know: "we weren't 'artists', we were just recording things of the past or hung in museums sort-of-thing." You were searching for acceptance. Around that time, more and more young people became interested in the arts.
- 059 GERALD: Why do you say 'acceptance'?
- 059 DAPHNE: Acceptance, because they didn't view the work of Native artists as 'pure' art as such ... as the school system or fine art. They viewed it more as an 'ethnological' expression. You know that yourself.
- 065 GERALD: Yes. Did you feel that during the 60s the struggle for acceptance really began?
- 068 DAPHNE: Yeah, and when the powwow came out we were trying to show what was beautiful about native culture. We wanted to show that in our art; also, I suppose the only way we could express that was through our stories and our legends of the people. Although before that, I expressed myself as a person. I wanted to do my own thing, because long before that I was dealing in oils and things like that.
- (...)
- 083 DAPHNE: Yeah he was, but I was there before that when they were first talking about it, because I was at a meeting with Rosemary. They were dominated by the church there. The church made all the decisions. I remember the priest coming to a meeting, he got up to speak, Rosemary told

him to sit down and says "You were not invited to this meeting so you have nothing to say, you can sit and listen." That's when it really began.

090 GERALD: Why do you think it began then?

090 DAPHNE: It seemed to be happening all across Canada. I don't know? Simultaneously it was happening in Manitoba, Ontario, and everywhere. To say why it began in the 60s ... I don't know? Maybe people were just getting fed up.

(...)

146 GERALD: Were you ever ashamed of being who you were?

147 DAPHNE: Absolutely. After we (Daphne and her husband) left, my favourite saying was "When I come back again in the next life, I don't want to come back as a Catholic or an Indian." That's how bad it was. Too many restrictions: the church and so many things we were supposed to be. I couldn't fathom the catechisms; I couldn't understand what it all meant. I was just like a 'parrot'; I would just parrot these things not knowing exactly what it all meant. When I look back on my life, I think I should have really taken advantage of it. Although, I think that it was good for me. I look back on my life and say "I'm glad this all happened". What has happened has made me what I am. How lucky I am to have experienced all this because my life certainly has not been dull. Anything but dull! If I were a writer, I think some of the stories and feelings I had would be a fantastic book, but I'll just leave it to the writers and tell them what I want.

165 GERALD: I'll see what I can do. What years was that? What years did you leave the reserve, the point were you made to feel this way?

168 DAPHNE: I was about 18 when I 'vanished' from the Reserve. But I always say "I was an immature 18, not like the 18 year old girls today". I was [still] playing with dolls when I was 15, 14. Totally different.

173 GERALD: You were probably 'making' dolls.

174 DAPHNE: Played with dolls and making dolls from the Eaton's catalogue.

176 GERALD: This period probably lasted quite a long time, not wanting to be Indian or being thought of as that.

178 DAPHNE: It did. I didn't want to be part, because I had so many hurts in me. I just wanted to be left alone; I just wanted to be Daphne.

182 GERALD: But obviously people saw you that way. It was hard to avoid that identity.

183 DAPHNE: I was taken for everything Italian, French, Spanish. When I moved to Toronto as a young girl and I worked in war plant. I was just about 20. You know, they would ask me "Are you French?" I would say "Yes." They would ask me if I was Spanish and I would say "yes". Whatever they asked me, I was, just to avoid any confrontation or any explanation. As a young person you want to be accepted. The strangest thing [was that] no one ever asked me if I was 'Indian'. I thought to myself, years later, maybe being Indian was so low that they didn't want to ask me that.

- 193 GERALD: Or, the fact that there were few Native peoples in urban areas.
- 194 DAPHNE: There were not that many Native people in the city at that time. There were a few from home that I knew. I'm sure, as you say, they probably never met a Native person.
- 198 GERALD: It was probably a question of people making you feel ashamed. There was this sense that the Indian was 'invisible', so there was no thought or talk of it. The only Indian around was the Indian in the movies, they were 'real live Indians', they didn't vanish. Those are the kind of things I think people thought about.
- 203 DAPHNE: That's right. You didn't want to be identified with anything like that. Like when we went up north in Manitoba, they'd have these movies, 'cowboys and Indians' sort of thing. I always remember the children clapping for the calvary; they didn't identify with those Indians that were portrayed in the movie -- violent. They weren't those kind of Indians. So, they always sided with the calvary. I got a kick out of that. One little girl up there said to me "I'm not really Indian, I'm just dark." I remember when I was a young girl, I use to wash my face with milk just because I wanted to be lighter like the teachers. We had white teachers. I had nuns. They were all French and English. They taught us our manners and everything.
- (...)
- 223 GERALD: When did you stop feeling ashamed?
- 223 DAPHNE: I had to go home for that, things were happening. Of course, I always keep in touch by mail. But going home, that's what was happening: the rebirth of our culture and being proud. I had to go home for that. My first marriage, my husband was part Mohawk (I don't know the other nationality -- white), he was very proud of his ancestry; he would try to build confidence in me by trying to make me feel proud. I said "No, I don't want anything to do with it. I've just had too many bad memories and bad things that have happened to me, I don't" When I think about it today, he would have been so proud to see what is happening today; but, he didn't live to see the day.
- 237 GERALD: Was that a bit of an argument between the two of you?
- 238 DAPHNE: No, no, not at all. He wouldn't [?] the situation. He wanted to tell our friends so much that I was of Native descent. Knowing what the people were like in the area where my mother had lived or where her mother lived, they were so narrow, bigoted, and gave snide remarks. Those small Ontario towns were terrible in the 30s and 40s. I don't know what they are like now. It was really bad. It didn't do anything to instill any pride in you that's for sure. You were nothing, less than nothing! Even some of my relatives from my mother's side of the family (who were non-Native), I'm sure they were ashamed that I married an Indian.
- 249 GERALD: That must have really tough in those days.
- 250 DAPHNE: Oh, it was really bad in those days. I've never really been back in that area for a long time. In those days, after my mother died, I was of the age I could get out to work. For my first interview, it really hit me when the lady asked me if I was Indian. Of course, I said yes. You

always knew the tone of the voice that I was not going to be hired. It was from then on that I said to myself "well, if I'm going to exist in this land, I'm going to have to suppress my feelings about being Indian and say that I'm something else than what I'm not." That was the only way that I got through. I could never owe up to who I was, because in those days there were so many others that did the same thing. You would talk to people in the generation that grew up in about that type of atmosphere. They too had to pass; I guess they call that 'passing': you were either French or Spanish, anything [but an Indian].

- 268 GERALD: So, the church was influential on everyone's life?
- 268 DAPHNE: In the community [of Wikwemikong] it sure was. They told us to wear. I couldn't wear a dress that had short sleeves or a low neck because it wasn't decent. They had a lot of control in that community they don't have today. It's a changed community now. It all started in the 60s. The Christian religion did a lot of damage.
- 275 GERALD: The traditional Ojibway religion, was it wiped out or did it go underground?
- 278 DAPHNE: It was always there, [but] we couldn't do the powwows because there was no powwow singing or sweet grass ceremonies. As a child, I always say "we were from a lost generation." But other things were underground, some of the old people practised the sweet grass that the church did not know, they had a lot of other things going. They were able to put out that fire because it was far too strong. So, as children we talked a lot about spirituality and stories. Our grandparents would tell us stories of a 'native' nature. But then again, the old people would go to church because it was a thing that they had to do. If they didn't go the preacher would be down to see why they weren't going to church.
- 293 GERALD: That's similar to my childhood. My grandmother told us stories all the time, with no books. She was a really great storyteller; but, on Sundays she would be off to church.
- 297 DAPHNE: Four times on Sunday. Seven o'clock was low mass, high mass at twelve, vespers at two, and benediction at seven. They were powerful.
- 299 GERALD: There was a sense of Indianess in the old people, of being proud; or, maybe they did not even know it because they were just living it, as it was the Indian way. We now look back on it and say "Indians have been doing it for ever, only some things were outlawed."
- 306 DAPHNE: You see, as a child and until the time I left the reserve, I never saw a powwow. It wasn't until I went back in the 60s. I never Indian danced, nothing. I sure missed a lot. I really feel bad about that. But now, I get enjoyment out of going and watching a powwow. Also, I didn't know anything about the sweat-lodges then. I learned more about that after the 60s. It was difficult for a lot of people, especially the old grandparents who wanted to tell the children about their Native culture, but due to the church's hold on them, it was a sin. I can always remember the priest pounding his fist on the pulpit telling everybody they were going to hell (Father [name?], I can always remember that); as well, always having to go to confession. I always wondered what the hell I was going to tell in confession, so I had to make up lies. I was sinning just as much in the confessional box as I was [in?]. Now you see why I never want to come back as a Catholic or as an Indian. Of course, now, I've

changed my mind about being Indian. I'm happy what I am, I'm glad; at least, I've found myself. I knew there are some Native people still to this day who will not [confess?]. They want to be left alone because it was so miserable for them.

331 GERALD: As an artist, it seems that your cultural identity is very important to you, that discovering and understanding identity is very important.

335 DAPHNE: Of course, it is. I think that finding myself and knowing who I am is one of my biggest accomplishments. I've been asked "What do you consider your biggest accomplishment in life?" I think that that knowing who I am and being proud. It's so nice to say "I'm Indian." Whereas 30 or 40 years ago, you suppressed that. You were so unhappy inside. But due to the situation, you just couldn't [be proud].

(...)

403 GERALD: Identity is a different kind of issue in Canada. I'm wondering if you have picked this up in the past, where Indians struggled over their identity: who is and who is not an Indian, or a Metis. What you think about those issues?

410 DAPHNE: I've never given it too much thought. A 'legal' Native person to me was always one who was on the band list or from a Reserve. Most Native people are on band lists, aren't they? You see, I don't know too much about this. I have to go back to when Roz (Vanderburgh) did my book, she got a lot of information through the (United States) Bureau of Indian Affairs. She discovered my ancestors, my grandfather's side, who came up from New York state, I think. They were Potawatomi. I always thought that I was. I guess we are Odawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibwa. I always had an inkling of that years ago when I was a little girl, because I remember the Potawatomis from the States coming up to the Reserve and meetings at the house because they were settling land claims in New York state at that time; but, the Canadian Potawatomis were left out of all this. They were trying to regain this.

433 GERALD: And you recall that?

433 DAPHNE: I recall that. I think that I was probably about twelve years old. I remember two or three meetings between Potawatomis from the States coming up to Wikwemikong. My brothers don't remember because they were younger. They never believed me when I said "I think we got Potawatomi blood in us." They would say "No, we don't, we don't." I think they know now since the book came out because Roz delved into this.

444 GERALD: Could you tell me other ways you may have struggled with your identity, particularly prior to the 60s. You feel that the 60s was an 'awakening' period in you and other Native peoples.

448 DAPHNE: It seems all through my life I was always trying to gain acceptance and to be accepted as a person. I used to say "Why do you treat me this way, if you knew me I think you would like me? So what if I'm Indian." It used to bother me; I used to squelch a lot of my feelings. After I got married, at parties I would hear derogatory remarks made about Indians, but I never had the courage to say "I'm an Indian". In the B.C. community I lived, there were no other Indian friends that I could get support from. That was always a struggle. Now, it's so totally different

from what it used to be. I'm happy with who I am. I'm proud to say I am Indian. In those days I didn't dare, you were just living another life, you weren't you.

466 GERALD: This period of the 60s was a very interesting time, it was an awakening period for you and others.

470 DAPHNE: All this didn't really happen until after I left. Being on the Reserve, we knew we were Indian people. I felt secure then. I had no objections, I was proud I was an Indian. We were Indian children. This is an Indian school. This is an Indian reserve. It was only after I left the Reserve that all this happened.

477 GERALD: You were away from the comfort of the home, the security of the community, and you were thrust into a new space. You were all alone.

479 DAPHNE: It was a real shocker.

480 GERALD: I think many Native peoples encountered those situations.

482 DAPHNE: For sure, I had cousins in Toronto, too, who never ever said they were Indians because they encountered so [much prejudice].

(...)

512 GERALD: What were some stereotypes thrown at you?

513 DAPHNE: Indian girls were loose. There were so many things.

516 GERALD: I'm particularly interested in the 1960s when you started to paint, especially when you started to discover that you could use your talents in many ways. You said you were painting and doing other work before that, but somehow the 60s did something to you? What happened?

522 DAPHNE: The encouragement I had from my family, Rosemary, and the Pelletiers who promoted Native art, thought it would be nice to show people through our work stories and legends. I did this as a sort of bridging a gap between Native and white culture. We wanted to show the beauty of our culture. I did that for a period of time, but I wasn't too satisfied with it because I thought it was narrowing my vision a bit. I wanted to express my own feelings, my spirituality, as a Native person.

(...)

597 GERALD: There was a very important exhibit curated by Jacqueline Fry at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in the early 70s, called Treaty Numbers, that you were in. To me it was a turning point, as was Expo '67, for Native peoples. Treaty Numbers spoke of the question of 'legal' identity. What I'm interested in is how you saw your art at that time? What was going through your mind with this exhibition? How was your art being used at this point?

613 DAPHNE: The Winnipeg Art Gallery was the first public art gallery to give some interest in Native art. That, was one of the features that we were proud of. It also gave me a chance to do the work I loved doing, that is, something on the subconscious level: images of my dreams and things like that. My whole show, the paintings that I did were of this nature, was to gain some appreciation of that type of work, which was completely

of my feelings. It had nothing to do with legends.

- 628 GERALD: How did it connect up with the thesis of the exhibition which was about treaty numbers, which in a way was about identity?
- 632 DAPHNE: It was of Native thinking too! As Native people we believed in spirits and the subject matter was on that level.
- 639 GERALD: So yours wasn't as political as perhaps as Alex's?
- 642 DAPHNE: Was his political then?
- 642 GERALD: Well, I think the statement of the treaty numbers and what he was doing at the time, instead of signing his name Alex Janvier, he just wrote the number 287, which was his treaty number. In a way, it was a political statement, about him being numbered, a numbered Indian. That, was his identity. So, in a way it was a political statement about identity. Jackson Beardy, however, I'm not exactly sure...
- 651 DAPHNE: His were stories from his people, legend stories. Typical of what Jackson used to do.
- 654 GERALD: Was it similar to what you were doing?
- 655 DAPHNE: Jackson? ... No, mine was totally different.
- 656 GERALD: No, I'm not thinking stylistically, but the same sort of reason to do the works ... a pride in your community, your people, your identity ...
- 661 DAPHNE: Right!
- 661 GERALD: Because, if it was the first show and not too many people were familiar with contemporary native art, I think Jacqueline was not only interested in your works culturally as Native peoples, but that you can create art...
- 667 DAPHNE: Art for art's sake.
- 668 GERALD: Or, that you could use identity in ways to express through art. What other ways have you used art, and for what purposes have you seen yourself as an artist, as a Native artist perhaps?
- 677 DAPHNE: I have always wanted to show pride in our Native culture. I didn't have any role models or support when I was a young girl. I know how important it is. I would have had more courage and strength if I did. I hope that what I am doing, especially for the younger ones coming up, that it gives them some pride in their culture. It's always nice to say "a Native person has done this; a Native person worked on this one". It gives them something to hold on to. That was the problem in those days when I was younger, I had no back up. There was nobody to look up to and have an argument with, to say this one is doing this and this one is doing that. This one is a doctor, this one is a lawyer. There was nothing, nothing.

(SIDE TWO) ...

- 027 GERALD: There are young kids and there are old kids. There was a

period of time you indicated to me that was particularly difficult in discovering a part of yourself. It was the greatest thing you thought happened to you, and it happened much later in your life. Certainly, young kids have a quicker opportunity now to discover their identity.

033 DAPHNE: Yes, I always say I was born too soon. If I had the advantages and the support that a lot of these young people have today my life would have been totally different. I thought I had it made.

038 GERALD: Would you think other Indians are at this point of being Indian, that is, thinking about 'being or becoming' Indian?

041 DAPHNE: I suppose if they are genuinely proud of being Indian I can't see anything wrong with it. If they are just imitating? If they are not Indian, and say they are Indian, that is a different matter. Perhaps, all along they have wanted to do this.

(...)

104 DAPHNE: Sometimes I view my paintings as a celebration, a celebration of life.

106 GERALD: They work in a different way don't they? Do they work for different audiences?

107 DAPHNE: Yes they do. I find my work does. Sometimes when I do a piece of work I think white audiences will understand this because it reflects my dreams and life experiences, which are totally different than theirs. I have elements of environmental concerns, social ills, things like that. And especially of my dreams, from my subconscious, it all goes back to my childhood again. We talked about the spirits, we talked about Native thinking and spirituality. I'd say people wouldn't understand this. It's surprising the number of people who will come to me and say they understand what I am trying to say. I don't make too many political statements in my work, it's more personal. My work is more personal.

(...)

279 GERALD: Do you think there are some things about being Native, Potawatomi, or Ojibwa, that shouldn't come out in your work, or, in other artists, you think they shouldn't be doing?

283 DAPHNE: I think as a person, like myself, I'm my own guide. I know and feel what I can do in my work. I know and feel what I don't want to come out in my work. My work is totally myself. I have done situations like that large mural (*Indian in Transition*, 1978), which was a statement that everybody says was a political statement. I wasn't even thinking in those terms. I was thinking of history, particularly about our Native people.

291 GERALD: What do you like that's being done today?

292 DAPHNE: I think a lot of the work is very exciting, but a lot of it is very political. I think that you have to watch that a little bit. I don't think in Alex and my day we were that political. I don't think that we would have got anywhere with the general public because they can be resentful. They know all the hurts that happened in the past with our people, they know all this. They don't want it all shoved down their throats, day after day. We wanted to go ahead. I'm more for showing the beauty of our culture. Does that make sense to you?

Appendix II

Exerpts from Artists Interviews

2. ALEX JANVIER:

- 013 GERALD: Do you feel we are at a stage where you can voice those dilemmas or questions?
- 016 ALEX: Well, I can't address the entire dilemma in its entirety, but I can certainly talk about the walk. I think that is the best way. To talk about the walk. I have a right to talk, as I did the walk. In that sense I can talk in that area, from experience, from the things that I learned about life as a kid. It's a lot different than my father's and my grandfather's life. In two generations, we have literally done away with the Indian way of life. We didn't do it.
- 028 GERALD: Are we fully or partly responsible for our own demise?
- 029 ALEX: The easy way out is to blame the white man. I like doing that; but on the other hand, we are sick from that business, too. We have become ill as a result of taking on the weight of colonization.
- 035 GERALD: Some people say we've taken the question of being victim too far, that we delight in being victims, that we no longer stand up and say "Look, I am also responsible for ..."
- 039 ALEX: Yeah, well I am responsible too. I have learned in the last few years to say "No!" One of the things, when the victor steps on my foot, I tell him "Get the hell off my foot, you're hurting ..." I push him a little. If he continues to stand ... This is my attitude towards, not so much the white people, but with institutions.
- 045 GERALD: The system?
- 046 ALEX: The system that used to degrade my grandfather, my father, and myself. I think I belonged to the generation that was supposed to be crushed by Indian Affairs.
- 048 GERALD: Yours and your father's generation, I think there was the two ...
- 048 ALEX: Not so much my father's, because they were still within resources of being on their own. I'm the one in the most helpless situation.
- 051 GERALD: My mother's generation also belonged to that time.
- 052 ALEX: Yeah, your mother and I were probably the same generation. But the thing that happened there is that all of us stood up and learned to say "no"; we learned to dissipate the onslaught of the Department of Indian Affairs policies. That generation of mine said "We had enough. We can't go on." We were very low; we were at the bottom. You couldn't go any lower. I think from here on it's going to be upward. My children are certainly not in the same victim roles like I have been. I didn't choose to be in the victim role, by church and government sponsorship, I was lead into that sort of thing. Without realizing what was happening to me, I was never able to conceptually realize what was really happening to me. There was no

way of knowing. When you're in it you can't see, it's only after.

(...)

079 ALEX: I was something like thirty-three or thirty four when I suddenly I realized I didn't know who in the hell I was. I mean, I was married, I had a car, house payment, car payments, kids on the way, and I suddenly realized I was just a 'suburbanite'. That's all I was, and I was painting the hell out of a paint brush and sort of became famous. That's when I suddenly came to the realization that I was really not aware of what I wanted to be, then it dawned on me the things that my father had said. I didn't have grandparents, they were dead before I was born. I only had my father and mother, and a really strong, strong conditioning. They spoke the language and lived the way they had lived a long, long time. Also, it was quite a thing to come to the realization I was powerless. The lack of power was my total dilemma. I had no power. I had no power to change anything in the government or in Indian Affairs. I couldn't shake the priest off my back. I couldn't even face the Indian agent, the representative, the agent on the reserve, the guy who lorded all over my father and myself. That's when I think I woke up...

(...)

112 ALEX: I mean, it's the generation that decided not to get buckled under. I think what happened was we all stood up one day. I think that the point of realization started a little earlier than that. I was down east in those days, I wanted to try New York and become an important painter in my day. On the way down I stopped in Ottawa and I got a job here with the government, of all people, a part of Indian Affairs. I ran into a certain model from Montreal, the most sought after model of her day.

123 GERALD: One who will remained unnamed ...

123 ALEX: Yeah. I went around with her for quite awhile. There was one question that she delivered to me. She said "Alex, what are you? Are you an Indian first or are you Catholic first? Which are you?" I answered "Catholic." She laid right into me. It made me realize just where the heck I really was, it was like a shock, an announcement to my system. I was so deep into it I couldn't see, I was lead into a garden path. I started to believe and acting like a little brown white man. That's what that women caught me doing. I still owe a debt to her. I still see her once in a while. We're good friends. But I think the seed started there. Then, I started to look around. I had to go back in the west and find some old man to help me... and make a come back. That's a hell of a revelation, a personal odyssey of mistakes. It's an amazing trek, treacherous most of the time, without really knowing...

(...)

204 ALEX: I know. I see in traces of the work. There are a lot of Native artists very much in trouble who probably haven't met someone like I met in Montreal. They still are looking. In a lot of ways we get awfully sensitive about things like that, in my case I guarded it so well. It never could surface, it wouldn't surface. They probably tried to reach me. Other people in my tribe have tried to reach me, to try make me realize that I was going in the wrong direction, because I used to be asked "Are you becoming a white man?" It's a fundamental, good question on the Reserve.

- 218 GERALD: Well, I think that it's valid question. We all have different answers to that question.
- 219 ALEX: No, there's only one answer. We may all answer it differently but there's only one answer. We all know that subconsciously, it's in every cell in every North American Indian. When we go to powwows, you hear some song, and it's going good, you know it. You're dancing and you know that's going good. Some cell in me agrees to that. Then all the other cells inside of me concurs with that, and then next thing you know I'm dancing like a fool, I'm making a fool of myself, but I'm having a good time and I feel good and I don't know why. It felt so damn good in a long, long time. This particular girl, it started in Ottawa, an Ottawa powwow, the last place I thought would be any ...
- (...)
- 270 GERALD: Yeah, but they're not interested in identity. The museum in way says "Look, we have this collection of objects that we're taking care of, which we either stole, bought, or someone gave to us." But yet, there is a connection with our people, the Native peoples of Canada, and you are continuing that tradition.
- 275 ALEX: Well, it was a 'link' that was missing.
- 276 GERALD: It couldn't happen. You were a link, a vital link, I think that's to the future.
- 278 ALEX: Without realizing at some point that I was a carrier to that link, now we know that there are bridges completed again and a lot of people started crossing. You know, there are bigger links than I am - Morrisseau, Daphne, people like that --- and Bill Reid. I think Bill Reid totally redid the totem history, reversed it. I remember when I first met that man, well, the totem history was almost at a breaking point and this man somehow cemented that together, they didn't have the break like we did, like the rest of us but they were at a low ebb, too. When I saw the comeback that man made, look at what he's done and what they're doing rather than he's done, what they are doing now. They even make me feel proud.
- 294 GERALD: That it's there.
- 294 ALEX: That it's there. When you see those boys working and listening to them, they talk in confidence. They know exactly what they're talking about and that's nice to hear. I think every part of where I've been, people are beginning to be a little more honest and they're starting to really talk about it, the way they feel, the way they're painting their feelings, they are not just borrowing. I mean, there are some pretty high talent Indians borrowing and retranslating. What's going on in the Southwest, they are making headlines out here, but if you go to the Southwest, you can almost see where a painting can even be traced to a name. In that sense they may be very popular. But it's a temporary thing. So even those ones, they have to address what we were talking about, they have to come to terms with ...
- 313 GERALD: They have to come to terms with themselves, to discover ...
- 314 ALEX: To rediscover the roots that they're painting about -- start living their roots. I think that this is like I say, it's very vital and

important that we start going back to the very root foundation that made you a Plains Cree. We know what the Plains Cree like. Chips have always associated with the Plains Cree through the centuries. In fact, we speak your language as well as you guys speak it ... fluently ... just like they were bilingual before the word was popular.

(...)

383 GERALD: What are some of the other questions that you think need to be answered, or questions that should be brought up particularly what Native artists should be thinking about?

385 ALEX: Well, the other thing I think is our caring love of the land. Of course, there are new words ... call it the 'environment' but in our sense it's Mother Earth. We lived well off the land a long, long time ago, and we lived on a very simple philosophy: we lived just for today, we never planned for tomorrow because we were getting looked after. We get looked after as tomorrow would be another day. These are the philosophies that were handed down. There weren't just handed down by mistake, I don't think. They were handed down to the ---?island--- [400] ... the life ... it was given, handed ... that's a gift. So it's up to me to guard that sort of thing. And the other thing I would like to say it is fundamentally, it's probably an item ... contact expression - respect for the Spirit. If I don't respect myself like I haven't done that from age eight to age of thirty-four. I went through hell. Pretty reckless living but nevertheless the point is that when I returned to that Spirit, a lot of us say the Great Spirit.

417 GERALD: That's interesting how you put it - it balances your life out. When what I know of ... what I've heard people talk about is a reverence for the earth and a reverence for the spirit. And supposedly people say that's the mother and the father, the male and the female, or whatever but it sort of creates a balance.

425 ALEX: But without getting into other people's meanings of it. I'm talking about the way North American Indian understands. How my grandfather and father understood. They were very essential... I think that is exactly where we have to go through again, to start healing again. It's not so much [that we] just run to a medicine man and get cleaned up, and then start living the same old rotten way all over. I don't think that was the way it was. I learned that from the Catholic system, you take confession and go back and do the same sins over again. Because it's fun, you know.

(...)

485 ALEX: I think I put it quite simply by saying, "I talk my mind." I start living the fundamental [bus passes by] ... nobody is never too old to become an Indian again anyway.

493 GERALD: Good thought.

493 ALEX: Even those old guys, it's not too late for them to move back to their roots, to move back to their essence, to their spiritual way of living. That's how you get those old guys to start coming back on side again, by making them believe in their roles, because they still have the stories and the knowledge. They have the language; they have the knowledge. But, they have nobody to tell it to because nobody sits down [with them] long enough. So, I think this is the way. And sure like a lot

of artists we do have a responsibility, that I know.

- 509 GERALD: Give me some examples of the kind of responsibilities artists have today.
- 512 ALEX: Well, first of all, one of the cornerstones is being honest to your 'song' and the tribe, that you may not offer anyone by playing with things that are sacred. The old people have powers as far back as I can recollect. I've always been astonished by what the creator gave us. That's what's carried us this far because we did not play with or disrespect it (religion); it has carried us this far and it is up to our generation not to destroy it. It's up to us to carry that on to the next generation. Also, we have to realize that the generations before us have had their ill-founded dilemmas as well. The coming of the fur traders ... they just literally took your lives, played with them, and diseased them. It's outright insulting, they (the Indians) had to live with that and they had to forgive them.... Luckily in those days the medicine people could take care of things like that. What they went through and the choices they made, whether to live out in the wilderness like they had before or compromise and start buying things from the fur traders. That's a tough a choice as today. Today it's about art, at that time it was about a very fundamental ... ? ... Later on, they had to make decisions about sending us to schools. That was another tough choice because they could foresee that we would become a weak people by losing our language, which a lot of us have. Fortunately for me, I still speak it (Dene) fluently; but, it's less fortunate for my children who understand it but can't speak it. It's not their fault. I didn't carry out the things that my parents had asked me to do.
- 563 GERALD: You also know that you have to realize things are changing so fast. I've heard elders say the same thing about their children. They say, "the children are going to school and are not in the same position as I was when I was younger, so I've got to do it differently now." I know one man who says he has rights to stories. The only way he thinks his children and others will get to know the stories is to publish them, spread his voice. He says "That's one way I know how."
- 573 ALEX: Well, if you stay true to yourself then the craft is no problem.
- 577 GERALD: That's what I think he was saying.
- 578 ALEX: It's a method of disseminating your energies so that it carries your art onto the next generation.

(SIDE TWO)

- 343 ALEX: I remember I went to Wikwemikong (Manitoulin Island, Ontario) in 1965 for their first powwow. They had to borrow all the singers and the lead dancers from the west (prairies) so it would look like a powwow.... Luckily we were westerners. Luckily the Plains Cree still had their culture. You know why I think the Crees have survived? Because they were the most ...
- 328 GERALD: stubborn?
- 325 ALEX: they were the longest in contact with white people.

324 GERALD: with white people?

324 ALEX: Yeah, through the fur trade.... As a result they knew their enemy. Whereas, some of the others didn't know. The Crees are always eloquent, always diplomatic. Even the poorest guy on the reserve, he's 'on the ball.' I've seen the worst bum on the street in St. Paul (Alberta), a Cree guy ... he asked someone for 10 cents and some guy gave him a quarter. The Cree gave him fifteen cents because he had only asked for a dime. It really shook the heck out of the guy, the giver, the donor.... But I think that's characteristic.

(...)

205 GERALD: No, it's more than that. As I was saying, it has to do with tradition, of the kinds of things we as Native peoples have been through. As you said, the historians are still trying to tell history their own way.

200 ALEX: [while I was painting the mural at the museum, I would talk to the guides and ask them], "what were those Indians doing in crossing the Bering Strait? They were following the game. Oh, you mean that one morning sixty million buffalo decided to cross the Bering Strait (chuckle). The Indians had to follow because they always follow the game."

Appendix III

Exerpts from Artists Interviews

3. JANE ASH POITRAS:

- 076 JANE: There are some artists that are shamans; all shamans are artists, but not all artists are shamans.
- 077 GERALD: Exactly, but the situation is that artists are always moving back and forth between something, always moving between communities. they're never stable.
- 080 JANE: Not only physically but mentally.
- 081 GERALD: There's never a fixed spot that an artist is in.
- 081 JANE: The minute an artist fixes himself or herself, they become stagnant and complacent, boring and predictable. An artist should never stop and get too comfortable. He should always be on the cutting edge, there should always ... be some tension ... it keeps him sharp. That's the sign, I think, of a great artist. There are a lot of artists out there on different levels. There's good ones and big ones. Sometimes there are little ones that people might not give recommendation or acknowledgement. They are incredible. Not everyone who gets recognized should get recognized ... but the thing it is the work that speaks for itself.
- 088 GERALD: I've been researching identity because I felt it was extremely important. I also found it very contentious. I don't think it was as contentious in the old days, a hundred years ago or more; but recently in the field of art, it has become extremely contentious to the point where people are saying, "Well, you're not Indian or, you're not treaty ... you're Métis or you're this or, you're that." People using identity in a condescending way, right?
- 096 JANE: Yeah. They're using it to make wars. The thing is that it's wrong. It was never meant to be used that way. That's sort of a Western mentality by using all kinds of things to make wars, whether its religion, politics, business politics, or traditions. They like to fight and kill each other ... killing women and children. But in all sincerity, I think a long time ago primordial people weren't so much warlike. I think all over the world this war-like behaviour came because man stopped using their 'powers of awakening.' When they stopped using these transpersonal power skills they became complacent, they became lazy, they became cognitive. Man outsmarted himself by thinking he could figure anything out, he became arrogant and materialistic.... Now we have all these problems and everyone wants to talk to us (aboriginal people) as authorities and condition everybody. Okay, the only time you're operating on these higher levels of consciousness, these higher planes of magic ... call it metaphysical planes. We all have them, each and every individual, each child uses them, and now we have conditioned children to stop using them. What happens when the ego gets lost? ... 'Man' gets caught up with his ego, his arrogance, his pride and all this stuff gets in the way and somebody gets hurt. A long time ago our ancestors in antiquity, in primordial times, put themselves into a space, a trance-like, sub-conscious state, to release their ego, that was bursting out of them.... As they were in that state they found out about things like ---?---, realizing that state gives them

healing.... But you see today, because the way society is created. everything from T.V. to food, everything that we do has pulled us so far away from what we are really supposed to be. It's the only the odd individual now who has been able to come back to this side; but the majority, the 99.9% of the people in the world today are way over there, miserable, because basically they're ---?---. So this thing about the mind and consciousness ... these abilities. I mean, Gerald, like these people that come from life-after-death experiences or from out-of-body transport, these things they see, they are seers, what they see is so phenomenal. What put them in a position to be able to see that way? With Native people, they created time, ritual, ceremonies, and dreams. They usually don't wish upon anybody to have a tragedy in their life ... or, to force them into that state. But the thing is, it's the most powerful state to be in, the spiritual state. You can use it to get a different kind of understanding.

(...)

150 JANE: Yeah. She (my foster mother) was crying, she was good. I remember her scolding me because she was so upset that I didn't know how to climb steps. "What's wrong with you, child? Why don't you know how to climb steps? This here little kid doesn't know how to climb steps, I wonder why." Right! It never occurred to me until later, because what she told me was that ... They said I was retarded. The Social Service people said, "she's just a retarded Indian." I later met another Indian (Janalee) like me from Fort Chipewyan (Alberta) who had the exact experience. They put her in a school for the retarded.

154 GERALD: A similar experience?

155 JANE: Exactly. She was born the same year I was ... she could be my sister. She's from Fort Chip and is a real big fancy lawyer in Toronto. When I met her for the first time, she said, "Are you Jane Ash Poitras?" I said "Yeah." We had the same story. She came away in tears. She said, "I'm the same way. They put me in a retard school, and now, I'm a lawyer." I said, "How old are you?" She said the same age as me. I said, "Maybe we're sisters." She said, "No, because I've gone back to Fort Chip and we're not, but we're probably distantly related." What was interesting was the Social Services in those days ... what I think happened, Gerald, is that they didn't know what to do with all these Indian kids, because our parents were dying from TB. Our parents lost track of some of us and when they found us, they didn't know what do with us? ... Janalee and me want to do a research study to find out how many Indian people were put in retarded schools. Janalee was saved, somehow she got out, I don't know what happened. I can't remember her story. But I know that my story was that Mrs. Runck was the lady who fostered me in.

(...)

197 GERALD: Did you know you were different than the rest?

197 JANE: I knew that I wasn't white; but, I was being told I was white. I knew I wasn't, and I knew I wasn't Chinese.

199 GERALD: Had you seen Chinese people?

199 JANE: Yeah. I knew I looked like Chinese but I knew I wasn't. I kind of knew that. I knew in the back of my mind. I'm not dumb. I grew up on 96th

Street (Edmonton, Alberta) where there were Indian drunks all over the place. I said, "Those are my people" ... So, my role models were Indian drunks. Now when I go there, I don't think I'm rich because I'm always down there helping my people.

(...)

238 GERALD: Do you remember the first time someone told you you were an Indian?

239 JANE: That was in grade one.... I was walking down the alley and the kids started throwing stones at me, calling me "Chinamen, Chinamen, dirty Indian, dirty Indian and all this, right?" I went crying home to Grandma, saying, "Why are they calling me this?" "Well, you know," she said, "the Social Worker told me you only have a little tiny bit of Indian blood in you, just enough to make you strong. You're not an Indian, you are mostly French. So when those kids tell you that, you tell them you're French." I kind of thought that that was not going to wash under the table. So from that point on I hated myself. It was like Daphne Odjig, the same story. I wanted to have blue eyes and blond hair. I used to curse myself in the mirror. I used to almost put my fist through the mirror in the bathroom. I was so mad because I had brown eyes, black hair, my skin was dark. I looked at myself and said, "Well, now all those glorified blond hair, blue-eyed kids, they're so pretty on T.V." I watched Walt Disney and the kids were so pretty, you know, in the bus advertisements, that little boy with the blond curly hair. You know, the whole bit. I thought, "How come I can't be that?" I was really not happy with myself as a child, because I wanted to be like those other guys. I didn't want to be "Indian." So inside, you know, I felt ummm ... then I thought I would become ... blond haired and blue eyed.

(...)

344 GERALD: ... Does it necessary make you an 'Indian' because you look like one? I think people fight with that, and I'm interested in this idea.

345 JANE: Joshua's (Jane's eldest son) an Indian. He doesn't look Indian.... I've met some real fine Indian men down in the Southwest who have black hair -- but what makes an Indian? I've seen Indians ... I would be sure they have Indian blood definitely. The only time I really became a Native person was when I was in high school at a spiritual ceremonial called 'Red Path.' Then I was an Indian. It was real neat...

349 GERALD: What identity were you looking for?

350 JANE: I realized I really wanted to see my mom and dad. I wanted to know who I really was. Nora [Yellowknee] helped me. Nora: "You don't even know ... who you are, you dumb Indian."

Jane: "What do you mean?"

Nora: "What's your band number?"

Jane: "What the fuck is a band number, I don't belong to no band?"

Nora: "Have you ever looked in the mirror? You're probably some damn treaty Indian"

Jane: "Well, so what's it to you?"

Nora: "Well, here you are still paying your way through school. If you're a band, treaty Indian, you know, they'd pay for everything, you can get scholarships and with your grades, you know, you could take pride in your

accomplishments."

By then I already had a microbiology degree, I had already graduated and everything. I said, "Pardon me! What? Scholarships? Money? I've got rights! Well, maybe I will be an Indian (laughs). So then I thought I would be Indian, get the money and run with it and go be white, right? It was like a real introduction, because everything that happened from that point on, you know, talking to the band councillors, talking to the chief, talking to my aunt, I realized, "Oh, my gosh. There's other people out there like me." I couldn't believe it.... Nora was just classic traditional Indian and she was the first Indian I ever saw in university other than myself. I was shocked. Another one! another Indian! (laughs)

(SIDE TWO)

- 112 JANE: Sacred Heart School gym, which is kind of ironical because I went to that school and played volleyball and basketball in that gym. I felt comfortable already. By then, Sacred Heart and that area of town was very much into Native people, because the Native community was there. It was like a great feeling because everybody was ---?---. It was my first introduction to Indians other than the drunks on 96th Street. It was like lighting up fire under me.
- 118 GERALD: So what happened?
- 118 JANE: Well, you know, I got into the drumming and dancing. I danced. It was amazing, my first powwow and I round danced. Nora was really good because she just dragged me into the circle. "Come on, Jane," she says, "come on ... you can dance ... (I am a good dancer, I love dancing.) You mean you can't do this kind of dancing? Don't give me that shit." So, I got up there on a dare and I really enjoyed myself. What happened? It was sort of magical, of going into another realm ... the beating of the drums. (I lived in this really nice apartment on the 26th floor of the College plaza with all the professional people. Everybody there was professional, I was a student. There was the odd student at the college plaza, but I liked the people there and they liked me. I was doing art work back then so they thought that was kind of neat.) So, I went to my nice apartment with the drums still in my head, I continued dancing all night long by myself. I went to bed early that morning. When I got up, I was happy for the first time in my life, real happy.
- 128 GERALD: Happy? Which way? Weren't you were happy before?
- 128 JANE: Well, I was happy before but it was a different kind of happy. This was a happy where I felt, "Well, I'm an Indian."
- 129 GERALD: Really?
- 129 JANE: Yeah, ... these dancers, this drumming and singing, there's a whole bunch of them out there (laughs)! It was like, 'you're not an alien.' Then I knew. Nora said, "Well, you should do this and that. You should find out who your people are. Your mom could still be alive." She told me exactly who to call, so I made the phone calls, and it was just like that! (snaps finger) Irene (?) went to the files and came back to the phone and said "Jane, this is who you are."
- 134 GERALD: There was a file on you? I guess when you started out you

didn't know where you were, or how you ended up with Mrs. Runck?

134 JANE: I phoned Irene (?), she still remembers that phone call. I've phoned her since. She was in Cold Lake when I asked her, "What do I do?" She said "I'll phone up north and phone your aunt. I'll have your aunt phone you or you can phone her." It was within ten minutes that my aunt was phoning me back.... We spent an hour on the phone and she was telling me all this stuff. Then she immediately jumped on a train and came to see me.

137 GERALD: How was it to connect with your other identity?

138 JANE: It's incredible because ... it's like a big celebration. All of a sudden your saying, "this is my real mother, this is my mom's younger sister." I really did have a mother. You also get to feel like you have real cousins, not white foster cousins ... real, blood cousins, cousins that have the same blood. You find out about yourself and your people. You find out they're really nice people (which they are). They spent all long time with me from that point on. We did a lot of things together. She (real mother) was extremely poor. They (the family) were all extremely poor; but, they were happy. They had more spirituality and more happiness and more richness than all the rich people in the world. That's one thing I found. I mean, they had so little and I grew up with very little myself, that I knew they were happy. They joked a lot. Everything was funny to them, everything.... When I went to stay with Eliza (?) and Josephine (?) in Fort Chip, I sleep on a straw bed, which was probably there for fifty years, but it was the most comfortable bed I slept in. They didn't have running water, nothing like that. The water was drawn to the house. It was like going back in time. Everything was slowed down. You had time to enjoy your breakfast, time to enjoy the morning. Everything was a heightened reality but slowed down. People studied each other and knew about each other. There was always compassion. Very much like the old lady, Grandma (Mrs. Runck), who fostered me in.... This was different from the outside white world I was familiar with.

155 GERALD: It's almost a double discovery of finding another part of you ... a part of you that was hidden.

157 JANE: Like every time I go back to Chip, it's very hard for me to leave because they all ask me the same question, "You're not going home are you? When are you going home?" You don't want to say you're going home, right? They want you to stay.... You want to stay because it's so comfortable. It's easy to stay, but then you have another life. It's like going to heaven. You want to stay in heaven, but you know you have to go back.

(...)

226 JANE: All that being a treaty Indian meant to me was that I qualified for some things I wouldn't have ever been able to afford myself. So it helped me. It helped me with my medical health care; it helped me with my glasses. I was still poor when I became an Indian (laughs). Before I found out about all this stuff, I was very poor and had been all my life ... it eased the pain because I then qualified for scholarships.

232 GERALD: Was it much of a pain?

232 JANE: It eased the poverty pain, because I could get my teeth fixed, and I could get glasses.

- 233 GERALD: Not everybody qualifies for that?
- 234 JANE: No, they don't. They can get them if they have a family that's going to pay for it. I didn't even have a family. I had no one. I couldn't go to my mom and dad and say "Gee, mom. I need this fixed." Grandma (Runck) had no money, and she wasn't going to share with me even if she did, because her kids wouldn't allow it. So, I had nobody basically. There was no financial support at all. When I became a treaty Indian, I found out they could get their teeth cleaned, and the government picked up the bill. You could get a university scholarship and they pick up your apartment and food stipend. I started to eat better, and started having better health. I got rid of my bronchitis. I couldn't afford penicillin. I just walked around sick all the time, coughing. What was interesting was what Nora said to me, she said "Jane, if you fill out these forms, they'll take care of you." And they did. The minute I let them know who I was, they said, "you're going to university." ... I started to get a six hundred dollar cheque a month for food and rent. It was like gold. Then I found out there were other fringe benefits of being a treaty Indian.... Nowadays, it's also different because of Bill C31; but at that time, there was a lot of money around so I took advantage of it.... I kind of thought it was an extension of welfare because I grew up on welfare all my life (laughs). So it was nice because you are cut off from welfare when you're sixteen years old. After that, you're on your own. But the thing is they don't give you any alternatives, they don't save off a huge amount of money to send you to school or anything. So if you want in and most kids today ... I mean they are very few kids that get out of the ghetto and get into school.... What was interesting about Indian Affairs was that they made it feasible for kids to go to university. It didn't matter if your parents had money or not, there was always money to get you in. Once you were in and could convince Indian Affairs you had a certain grade point average, they would continue the support.... I didn't ... I thought it was more of a business arrangement. That's how that card went, it's a business. I didn't look at it as an identity thing. The identity part comes in the magic.
- 259 GERALD: A second ago, you used the phrase the "C31 Indian." That's an identity for you? Is it positive or negative?
- 261 JANE: No, I think that what happens is that everyone's an Indian who wants to be an Indian. Bill C31's have just as much right to [be Indian]. The whole thing is about money. The treaty card and the Bill C31 and all that, it's a business agreement. It's about accessing certain money, certain programs. "You have to be an Indian in order to get this business loan from this organization in order to build economic development for Native people." There are certain opportunities out there extended only to Native peoples. It's like getting into university you have to have sixty-five percent in English to get into university. That's the same thing if you want to go this route. There's certain criteria ... So, to me it's all very much like the Indians make an agreement with the government. the thing is that the government will not operate on ... and profit, which is what they were trying to do. Get rid of all the treaty Indians then and they didn't have to pay the money. But the Indians got smart and turned it around on them. The government doesn't know what to do with all these Indians. Some people, like the prime ministerial people, want to abolish Indian Affairs. If that happens the conditions will get worse and worse. So right now we have to act very fast to make sure that we aren't just washed aside, and we become the greatest poverty people in the whole world. It's up to individuals like you and me to keep on voicing and to make sure our rights are there for future generations.

Appendix IV

Exerpts from Artists Interviews

4. EDWARD POITRAS:

- 093 GERALD: What was it like growing up on the [Gordon] Reserve? What were you seen as?
- 094 EDWARD: I was seen as Metis. But when I was in the city I was being called an Indian by others. I was getting it from both sides. It wasn't until 1974, when I was going to school in Saskatoon, that it became a real issue. What did I refer to myself as?
- 098 GERALD: Were you on the Reserve all this time?
- 098 EDWARD: No. I grew up in Regina, Fort Qu'Appelle, and Labret (Saskatchewan). During the summers I'd be out on the reserve, or down in Fort Qu'Appelle...
- 100 GERALD: When you were growing up in Regina, you felt different or were made to feel different? Let's put it that way. I guess we're made to feel different. But, you didn't feel different?
- 102 EDWARD: Yeah. You were made to feel different.
- 103 GERALD: When did that start? Was it when you were young?
- 103 EDWARD: When I was very young.
- 103 GERALD: By Indians and whites?
- 104 EDWARD: In the cities [the pressure] wasn't so much from Indians, it was whites. In the city the families were Indian and Metis. I did have some friends who were white, who accepted me for who I was.
- 107 GERALD: So what did you do as you were growing up?
- 107 EDWARD: I alternated back and forth between 'Indian and cowboy' (laughter).
- 108 GERALD: Whatever side won, or was advantageous (laughter).... We'll get into that later, Eddie, because I think you're still doing it (laughter).... Were there things that you tried to forget about? Obviously it did hang over your head all the time.
- 111 EDWARD: Oh, no. No I didn't really do anything to forget about it. It's just the way it was.
(...)
- 141 GERALD: How did that influence you as a Metis, because that's how you felt ... like a Metis?
- 141 EDWARD: Definitely! I knew I was a Metis.

142 GERALD: But is this not an issue for Indians?

142 EDWARD: Oh yeah, but still ...

142 GERALD: Was there an identity issue there?

143 EDWARD: ... still, some of the stories in that book (Dee Brown's Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee), there were Metis people who chose to fight with Indian people. With some the adults like the Bent Brothers ... I felt a lot closer to the Indian people than the Metis people. I had a stronger love for my mother's family than my father's family.

(...)

172 GERALD: I want to say who I am, so, by talking about these things I was really hoping ... to know who you are. I think it is interesting to see what influences it (identity) has on your art or anything else, because I think that's how art is used... I'm interested in how you developed, not necessarily as an artist, but as a person, that's most important. Somehow we get constructed, when we start young all of a sudden things happen, our life is in motion.

What were your influences? Like Indian art (Indart program in Saskatoon), maybe we can start from there. What happened after when you met Sarain (Stump)?

177 EDWARD: Yeah, I met Sarain and other students. It was an exciting time then, Sarain was a really big influence, because I felt a really strong acceptance from him, like him calling me his younger brother and stuff like that. I think there were a couple times where I said I was Indian, but it didn't seem right (laughs)... I'm Metis! ... with this treaty card. But I was also asked, "What nation? or "What language do you speak?"

183 GERALD: These are the kinds of things that are often contradictory that sets life in very peculiar directions. One is often asked questions like that. When people ask me those questions, I say "Well, I understand Cree and I speak some, but I'm not a fluent speaker, but, does that make me any less of who I am?"

185 EDWARD: Yeah, exactly.

186 GERALD: What do you think of yourself, do you think of yourself as an Indian?

187 EDWARD: Yeah, but you know it's just a word, it's so vague.

188 GERALD: Let me tell you of the people I met during those times who were writers and students who said they were Indians. But, who was I to say whether they were or not? It wasn't up to me. I think it's a sense, a feeling, of who you are. Maybe they were Indians from way back ... I don't know. But during that period (1960s and 1970s) particularly, I think a lot of people were developing a sensibility of their being Indian, or of being Native American.

192 EDWARD: I think more than anything I see myself as being a Native American, not a Native Canadian but Native American, because I see America as [the continent].

(...)

237 GERALD: I still think there are people who want to define you and others. In one sense you have an advantage of being an artist because you're dealing with those issues all the time, in your work and life. But what about the others who don't? What's their situation?

239 EDWARD: I don't know. I know when I first showing my work like that show (Contemporary Art by Saskatchewan Indians, 1980) at the Shoestring Gallery in Saskatoon, I started making pieces for that show which for me it was important to mix the materials. You know, mixing bones [from the] natural and unnatural world, bones with circuits and transistors. It was all to show my mix. Like that violin (title unknown) with all that little circuits and beads.

(...)

251 EDWARD: Yeah, South America. It's a real mix of everything. I think that was another important thing about the [Ind]Art Program was that it made us more aware of other nations across the Americas.

253 GERALD: That's what was so interesting about Sarain, because he understood that there were Indians beyond the local area. He was always off to Mexico. He was way beyond all of us. But it was good ... it was real good.

254 EDWARD: Yeah. Now it's so very open. I have this Greenlander (Marieu ?) staying at my place which sort of opens up my mind into spaces like Siberia and northern Europe.... so it just keeps spreading out.

313 GERALD: What I'm interested in is not a political correctness but in trying to find out all these contradictions, because we're faced with them constantly. How do you tackle some of these contradictions?

315 EDWARD: Like being married to a white women ... which by the way, tomorrow we're both going to a rain dance, which is nice.

316 GERALD: I once asked this guy at a rain dance: "I'd like my wife to see this." He then said, "Well, why don't you bring her?" I said, "I think she'd feel unwelcome, since she's not Cree." He said, "Oh, it doesn't matter, what matters is that she needs to see who you are."

318 EDWARD: Exactly! So if anything, maybe the past ten years living with Robin has been difficult, it was because I felt uncomfortable trying to do certain things, yet deep inside I've wanted to involve her.

320 GERALD: Does she want to be involved, that is another point?

320 EDWARD: Exactly! She would like to dance pow-wow and do the whole thing.

321 GERALD: Sometimes spouses don't want to get involved, at least they'd be aware. But, it works both ways. It's a sort of a balance. Therefore, I'm wondering how you're trying to resolve the balance?

322 EDWARD: I'm not solving it. It's other people who are solving it for me. There is this one family who have invited us out to the Reserve, which made me feel really good because I didn't have to make the first move. It was them who were asking Robin to start dancing at powwows (laughter).

325 GERALD: That's really good. I think that's super of them because someone insecure wouldn't do that.

Edward you have children, what about children who are a mix of Native and non-Native?

327 EDWARD: Actually, my daughter in Saskatoon is going through that with one of her friends right now. You know my daughter, Ruth's and mine, she's very 'fair,' she's also a Treaty Indian. But, her little (Indian) friend has been telling her she's not dark enough, and stuff like that. It's hard on the child.

330 GERALD: These are similar thoughts I have with my daughter. I think they are questions I'm concerned with. What do I do? My daughter is part of me and part my non-Native wife, she's going to have to face these situations. What do I do to help her be aware who she is, what does my wife do? In that sense there has to be some balance. So what do other Native people think about identity? Who made it an issue?

334 EDWARD: It's interesting. It's almost like so many of us have chosen spouses that are non-Native, maybe it is to solve these problems in a natural way.

(SIDE TWO)

041 EDWARD: No, I never really felt alone. I'm just that kind of guy, you know, a 'loner' (laughs).

048 GERALD: Artists have that same sense.

048 EDWARD: I like the way things are turning out.

049 GERALD: This being a loner, being in-between, as are other people, is what you were thinking about a couple of years ago when you said you wanted to establish a new tribe? What was that all about?

052 EDWARD: Yeah. Actually back then it would have been with this Brazilian-Indian friend of mine, he came up with it. No, I had already written about this thing. Anyway, he was a refugee and came up here. All of a sudden he felt he was no longer Indian, coming to North America and all of a sudden and no longer being an Indian, no longer having a people. Instead, he was a 'landed immigrant.' You know yourself you don't really stop being an Indian. But, where do you fit in? With Domingo Cisneros, he's been around for so long that it was natural that he'd be in some of these (Indian) shows. Normally he probably wouldn't have been in these shows. I got the idea of creating a new tribe. I talked with some traditionalists who actually liked the idea.

066 GERALD: This new tribe is metaphorical. It's not like everybody has a treaty number, or is called this or that. It's more the metaphor that was so fascinating. I look back on it now and ask, was it for people who were marginalized?

070 EDWARD: Exactly! It was a place for the marginal people (laughs).

071 GERALD: Groups of people who are not connected up to a reserve or any

community. There is a kind of malaise about it, a twenty-first century kind of community for marginalized native people's whose identities were mixed, lost, or fragmented. That's what I thought.

075 EDWARD: Yeah, it was a place for people who were adopted as children.
(...)

109 GERALD: What kind of politics are you using?

110 EDWARD: I think more in the recovery of history, looking at history again, re-educating whoever happens to be exposed to it. But then, I'm getting tired of that.

113 GERALD: You're still using it though?

113 EDWARD: Oh, yeah, exactly.

113 GERALD: For instance, the Billboard project in Saskatoon. You keep going back. As well, there was the Pile of bones (1985) project you did at Indian Affairs (Hull, Quebec).

115 EDWARD: I've often seen myself as being a product of history, but when I first saw that picture, I thought it would be a nice billboard.

(...)

TAPE #2, SIDE ONE:

084 GERALD: What about being a Native artist? How do you see yourself?

086 EDWARD: This word is very strange. For me, going through a Native art program I identified as being a Native artist, or even, an Indian artist. I thought that because there was an Indian art programme I was being trained to be an Indian or Native artist. Maybe, if I had gone through a regular university art programme I wouldn't have felt that way, I would've felt like an artist with Indian ancestry. But now, I feel like a Native artist (laughter), because that is how I was trained.

097 GERALD: Conversely, I was trained as a Western artist. I'm not a Native artist because I was trained as a Western artist, therefore, I really am a Western artist who happens to be Native.

099 EDWARD: For me, I was trained in Western and Eastern Canada, so I'm a bit of both (laughter).

103 GERALD: Seriously, if you were trained as a Native artist, were you trained with an understanding of culturally-specific knowledge?

106 EDWARD: No, but in the Indian Art programme we looked at a lot of different cultural areas, we learned how different the land was. There was really nothing specific, although I identified with the Plains where I grew up. That's where I'm coming from.

119 GERALD: About growing up, did you grow up primarily in urban areas?

120 EDWARD: A bit of both. Before entering elementary school I was out on

the (Gordon) Reserve, Fort Qu'appelle, and Alberta for a little bit. My parents were quite young, so we moved just about every year. I never made strong ties with any specific group of kids.

(...)

281 GERALD: Let's continue with your sensibility of minimalism. I think one work this idea came through was the one you did for the Cent Jours (1990) exhibition in Montreal. Could you explain that work for me?

284 EDWARD: It was called Blackhorse Offering. The information for that came from two books, the Bible and Black Elk Speaks. What I was trying to do was to take two visions: Revelations, which I see as being a vision [similar to] Black Elk's vision. In both of them there were four horses. With the four horses in Revelations, black, white, red, and a very pale, sickly-looking horse (which was death). In Black Elk's vision, another group of horses: black, white, sorrel, and bay (which again was a certain colour). I tried combining the two black horses from both visions, combining the symbols. So the character in Revelations riding the horse held a scale. You could say it was a kind of judgement scale. That's what it's usually associated with. In Black Elk's vision the black horse had this bow and arrows, which was the power to destroy, and this cup of water was the power to make live. In the exhibition what I did, was, [to] use the bow. It became the scale with the arrows on one side and the cup of water on the other side. The way it was set [so when] the water evaporated from the cup, everything shifted. It was like the power to make live was 'leaving', and the power to destroy was 'coming' into effect. I felt the timing was correct because Oka was happening at the same time. The rest of the objects from Black Elk's vision I tried to fabricate, such as: making a pipe, finding a white goose wing to make a fan. Then it was arranging them, putting them in a proper place. For me it was a challenge to assemble all these objects really quick. I enjoyed that. Whereas, if I was living, like say, a hundred years in the future, would somebody be able to assemble all these objects again?

339 GERALD: I like the idea of various perspectives. When I talk about a culturally-specific knowledge it isn't one we can draw from and say "it's from this," rather there's a sense it comes from everywhere. For example, knowledge comes from books, like the Bible, or this and that. How your work develops is a combination of all those elements. Yes, it is Métis, Metis, mixed, it's a coming together.

348 EDWARD: When I think of my great-grandmother on my mother's side and great-grandmother on my father's side, I have these memories of them being very strong Christians; whereas, there husbands were total opposites (laughs). I have this memory of my grandmothers going through their rosaries; whereas, my great-grandfathers were into hunting, they weren't obsessed with Christianity. It was strange growing up in Catholic schools and not growing up Catholic. I remember the first day I got the strap. I often thought that if you could take that idea and turn it around; take their own knowledge and use it against them, it would be a good trick.

372 GERALD: What do you mean turning it around on them?

373 EDWARD: I thought that if you could figure out Revelations, and then retell the Christians their stories that they've totally missed the boat on understanding: the beliefs, cosmologies, understandings of nature.

(...)

- 419 GERALD: When you make a change, at first it's hard to resist, but then you say, "Well, here I am, I should try and make the best of it." I find, in retrospect, that I was always glad to have gone through the experience, because I can look back with really fond memories. You have to take those chances. I guess you learnt it quite early?
- 425 EDWARD: After being in the city all these years, I still feel connected to the land. I believe there's a Creator outside. The difference is that [in the country] it's more quieter. I think the way things are going now with technology, like with Tele-thons, where they're using computers, the world is getting smaller. I'll never have to leave the prairies to make it as an artist, because of the telephones and airplanes. They can get me to someplace real quick. So, I'll never have to move to Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, or New York.
- 445 GERALD: So the question of 'marginality' has no significance for you?
- 446 EDWARD: No. I've never felt isolated. The only problem is the amount of money it takes to fly away from here.
- 451 GERALD: In feeling 'connected,' do you feel 'unconnected'? Where you'd like to make a connection.
- 453 EDWARD: I've often thought about the pow-wow circuit, the spiritual aspect. I've often romanticized about it to a certain extent. I've also seen it as a big commitment to make to move into that direction. It has to be with a certain amount of commitment. I'd love to be a pow-wow dancer. In fact, I have my grandfather's outfit. But, to make a commitment to become a part of that, or a part of another thing, is difficult. However, if I were to make a commitment to get into the whole spiritual thing, I would have to clean up my act. I'm not ready for that yet (laughs).
- 473 GERALD: I can appreciate that, because it's a big commitment.
- 474 EDWARD: Yeah, a really big commitment, almost like getting married (laughter).

Appendix V

Exerpts from Artists Interviews

5. LANCE BELANGER:

- 038 GERALD: Were you on the Tobique Reserve until you were fourteen?
- 038 LANCE: No, well I was back and forth from the Reserve and New England. Staying with my father, staying with my grandparents all that time. My sister ended up going back at thirteen, she is a year younger than I, and she's been there ever since. I continued to travel south, looking for something. Anyway, I ended up coming back to Canada when I was eighteen, finishing high school, going to Manitou College and then going on to study with you in Regina (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College).
- 043 GERALD: Did you grow up in a white community in New England?
- 043 LANCE: It was predominately white, but even at that time there were very few Puerto Ricans or people of colour around. I did the usual high school things, like playing football. I was pretty engrossed in that society. I was conscious of the Tobique Reserve and my family, but it didn't mean anything at the time.
- 047 GERALD: What I'm interested in is the sudden discovery when someone says to you 'You're an Indian,' something like that. Did that ever happen to you?
- 054 LANCE: Oh, yeah that happened quite a bit, it must be because of my skin.
- 055 GERALD: Do you recall when somebody 'placed' you, because identity talks about being recognized by someone else? You always have an other, there is always someone you meet whose perception of you and your perception of yourself are two different things. The question was, at the point when you were aware of your Maliseet origins and one living in the United States, were you carrying around those kinds of issues? or, when was the first time when somebody made you aware that you were not from that community, or that you were different, by trying to place you somewhere?
- 064 LANCE: That's really hard to say. I recall my sister being affected by racist attitudes, by the teachers for instance. She would cry about things the teachers were telling her. For me, I didn't really absorb [any of it]. I think that it was because I was tough when I was a little kid, [I used to] get into a lot of fights and so on. That's probably the reason. I believe it was just a response.
- 068 GERALD: Because you were Lance, the person, trying to survive?
- 068 LANCE: Well, it could have been because of other issues, but as I said, I can't recall exactly, but I recall being singled out. Even when I played high school football, my football name was 'Métis,' because my mother said why don't you use Métis instead of Crusher. Métis meant nothing to me other than it meant 'half-breed' to my mother. But, of course, later, Métis meant a whole different race of people. But I can say for a fact these questions of me looking at myself in terms of being

different, or somebody else, was never quite there. Much the same reason that I don't look at myself as being any that different today. But that's been part of the exploration, which is in fact, looking at what it is -- trying to be as truthful to yourself as you can about how you see yourself and what you're posturing in. What I try to avoid is sensationalizing about it, or doing it in a popular way, because it's something that everybody else seems to be doing. In other words, when I leave somebody I don't have to say 'good-bye' in a native language, if that's the only word I know. It's not necessary for me to do that, because I think that the inherent responsibility towards what it is, is there. And I think that because of my family, because of when I was small, because of the language that I heard, and the attitudes of my family, have made me a little bit resilient. Even in my work, I've tried to avoid being overt. Reflecting upon a cultural idiosyncrasy as opposed to wanting to reflect more of an assessment of the issues as they are because I see them, but also as an active participant in those issues. Those issues can be almost anything at all because I have the inherent responsibility, and right to assess, of being a participant in a world forum, not just as a posture from one particular cultural group. Those are the things that I'm interested in. I'm interested in the pre-Columbian because I'm interested in some 'reconciliation of history,' and the need to assess that history which is based on not what we are lead to believe. As you know, Jose Barreiro (Cornel University) has written this book called Reading Chronicles. A lot of Indian people are 'going back' in an attempt to reconcile an alternative perspective, by developing an alternative perspective to [mainstream] American history. And I'd like to participate in that as much as I possibly can, by trying to do that through my work.

95 GERALD: You mentioned earlier about 'Pan-Indianism,' do you feel that it is or is not problematic?

97 LANCE: Well, I don't think that it's really problematic. It is something, however, that I'm just not willing to participate in. I think it's a lot of fun for people from different tribes to get together and powwow. I think that's pretty good. It's not something that I really like to do, because powwows were never really part of my family's tradition. There are other things that were going on, and those other things are the things that I feel most comfortable with trying to explore. Yeah, so that's kind of what I meant. You know what I'm trying to say, I'm not really needing to reinforce any popular notion of what I am as an Indian, in fact, some of those popular notions I really don't participate in. I don't need to have the feathers and the beads to have that sort of cultural reinforcement. I don't! I think I'm one of the fortunate ones that have not been that far displaced, not to know where it is that I come from; but many others, I think, have a reason to powwow. Having a powwow together is a good idea. That type of stroking is good for you and we all need to have that.

110 GERALD: But, then again, in a sense you do participate.

110 LANCE: Well, I participate in a lot of exhibitions with other artists that portray notions about what Indians are all about, but at the same time, these artists are actually drawing attention to what that is; they may be doing that in respect to their own work; they may be doing that as vehicles of communication for viewers. Whatever the motivation, there are other things going on there besides just looking at paintings that have feathers on them. I think INDIGENA was a good example of that. It was an exhibition where people had a lot of very concrete and in-depth things to

say through their work. There may have been a lot of things embedded in back of the paintings, but you have to look for that.

(...)

144 GERALD: Interesting. What is being an Indian artist to you, or do you see yourself a native artist?

146 LANCE: Well, it means a lot to me because being a Maliseet person is the best thing that I could be. I like it and I just like Indian people generally. I would much rather be with Indians than with anybody else. It's just where the commonality really does exist, I must admit. It's different and diverse as the approaches in art may be. This whole thing about difference in the arts and, whether or not, we actually have an art historical process. I believe we certainly do have that. It's difficult to deal with the purity of productivity that is in the backdrop of Western-European influence. Which is why I'm saying that... again I go back to pre-Columbian ... I go back to pre-Columbian but I go back with the intent of appropriation ... there is no question about what I'm doing, it's to prompt, I mean, I appropriate; but, what I try to give back is as much as I can in terms of outside understanding of Taino or Arawak culture. At the same time, I can use these particular objects, their placements and posturing, to relate more to contemporary illustrations of the way that I'm thinking about what's going on in Canada and the world. For instance, in Thunder Bay while I was there I did a workshop with one other person. I was supposed to do a workshop with others but I didn't. In my hotel room I made a bunch of small concrete looking spheres. Then, I went to the International Friendship Gardens (Thunder Bay) where they have something like sixteen really huge twenty-thousand dollar concrete memorials to the various cultures of Thunder Bay (because it's a multicultural town): Filipinos, Italians, Germans, Hungarians, and others. There are different cultures that spent that much money to do these monuments in a park. However, there was no Indian representation except for this one guy who was sleeping under a tree but that won't work!

167 GERALD: Did you find out if he was dead or alive?

168 LANCE: Well, what I did was I made sixteen concrete spheres and so without telling anybody this was my workshop. I then went to the park and placed a sphere at each monument, strategically. I didn't cement them to the monument because I didn't want to get in trouble with the city, but I placed them there and documented each of the monuments. When I was leaving from the airport I called the CBC and did a radio interview. I told them what I did. The I took off. So, I don't know what the ramifications were but that was my way of utilizing these pre-Columbian looking spheres in terms of making a statement about 'inclusion.' I wanted the Taino people included in the park, and since the surrounding Reserves were not included, then I was going to do it for them.

(...)

206 GERALD: The other question I have deals with culturally-specific knowledge and your interest in pre-Columbian knowledge. This seems to come through with the people that are no longer on this earth, somehow there's a sense of 'revival' in their identity, a culturally-specific knowledge perhaps, of the Taino and the Maliseet. How do you articulate that?

213 LANCE: The thing about this is that there is one way to look at it

right now, and that is from purely an archaeological perspective ... but, I don't want to view Caribbean indigenous cultures from that perspective. I have extreme difficulties with that. I would much rather formulate my own thinking, but in the formulation of my own thinking, it's not to say that I'm going to relate culturally-specific interpretations of these people of long ago. For me, it's to protect the mysteries of their lives, just like attempting to protect the mystery that surrounds the objects they created. So, the intent for me is not to assume a Western scientific methodology, but to carry to that methodology a parity, and to carry forth a mechanism that allows for the protection of what they represent and the people they come from, to enjoy them simply for their aesthetics and beauty, as opposed to dissection. So what I've been doing is private. I mean, last week I went to a Pictou glacier and brought some of these spheres with me. I took some glacial silt, but what I left there were these spheres. I've been doing that now since I've been travelling with the Smithsonian. They are private ceremonies. 'Planting' these spheres in different parts of the Western hemisphere is almost a topographical survey, if you want to call it that, or it's a mental approach to 'reclamation.' I can achieve my own reclamation in term of my intellectual and physical territory with the use of pre-Columbian lithic spheres. I think about these people at the same time as I'm making these plantations. It's to spread them out a little bit I suppose. As personal as that is to spread out, what I understand of them and of what I understand of these objects, and how I'm using them as far and wide as possible.... It's a reclamation period. I mean, that's what I think we are all going through is reclamation. This idea of identity, of how you view yourself, is a process that is surrounded by reclamation. I mean, so we have reclamation in terms of physical territory. Indians are fighting back for their land. We have reclamation in terms of political empowerment in reforming our own political organizations. We also have intellectual reclamation, and our enemy is involved in that intellectual reclamation, because there are people who would prefer to tell you what we were before. What is disempowering is allowing them to use their own methodologies to assess, analyze and pinpoint you. I don't think that it should be that way what so ever. That's that area that I can't listen to. I'd much rather do that exploration for myself. As I say, there is an alternative perspective here. There are Western scientific methodologies but we also have Indian mentalities. It's not to say that if we had not been touched all these years that we would not have gone back and started doing the same thing. I don't know, maybe not. Maybe we would have simply enjoyed that particular time and space that existed there for a particular reason, and gone through the normal changes in time and place like in any other living creature. We have made those adaptations and this is what I think may have happened. So for me to presume that is also for me is to presume that in my work it's much the same thing. We don't really have to know the details about our ancestors. We just have to know that they were there. There were certain things that they did that allowed us to be what we are now, why do we really need to know any more than that? Which is why I want to go into Costa Rica to do this film I've been thinking about all this time. It would parody the Western scientific methodology, but this is still much about art. This is still totally within the confines of my artistic output. You don't have to classify it any other way. This is part of it. The art is not a separate thing, it becomes a whole of what you are, it's one part.

(...)

320 GERALD: You have this interest in the pre-Columbian, whether it's all

as a state of mind or as an area, you see this as a project, whether it's one, two, ten years or a lifetime? I think there are several stages that are possible, do you see that? Do you see this, and if so, what are some of the things that you would like to continue? You are not discrediting but making people aware of the archaeological project, of the Taino as a people and protecting them by talking about them, placing intellectual borders around to protect them until such time in the future. To me this is a project that is life long, that you can work on. I'm fascinated by that, because it is protecting something; but what are we protecting? What are we protecting it from? At the same time at what point is access available and how is access going to made?

341 LANCE: Well, I've had some of the finest galleries in the Western hemisphere to deal with, because of the work that I am showing. The galleries that I show in now are like galleries that nobody can go to unless one hike for four hours to get to the deposits (the glacier), or if you go down into one of the isolated black sand beaches, or the little valley on the big island in Hawaii.... it's a private thing. I'm documenting it for prosperity ... is prosperity the word? But yeah, it's a question people should ask about what they are doing in the contemporary vein. I mean, the Denmark show (Indian Time, 1994), what are we really doing there? Are we talking things that are ---?---, in other words, that's a good question, I don't really know. It really does depend upon your venue. I think the venues are really key here. And yeah I do think that I'll spend a lot of my time thinking about it. I mean, I really get caught up in it, but there are other questions here. I can use the Taino lithic spheres as icon. Well we're talking about a methodology that really should be questioned. They're (archaeologists?) digging on Tobique and nobody on the Reserve knows why they are doing it, but the politics of that dig is that they need to bring archaeologists in to say that Indians have been on that Reserve for so many years. Consequently, they have a jurisdictional right to enter a lands claims negotiation with the government. I say, "well, why do we need archaeologists for that?" Like, there is something fundamentally wrong there if you can't verify it with the people who have been there all this time. You know they are from there! So, it's like one mechanism supports the other. This past year I met Dr. David Jacobs at Tonto National Park in Arizona and you know, what an asshole! We were talking about the lithic spheres in Costa Rica and what these things are like ... they are so abundant that people have them in their yards, perfectly spherical in shape. This guy tries to tell me that these are not man-made objects, that they are natural formations. Well, how the hell can you say that to me when you've got so many of them ... perfectly round within three-quarters of an inch? But what he is really telling me is that the indigenous peoples in Costa Rica did not possess the technical knowledge to be able to create these objects. So, he is disempowering this race already. What's going on in archaeology is that in having to deal with the objects of a people very much alive, enters a new conceptual framework for them to work from. That is opposed to the direct study of objects they now have. To try to study the intellect of the people and incorporate aspects of their own assessments of people's spiritualism, to put them on plane and be able to make speculations about the reasons why ... why were these people doing certain things? It allows them a platform to continue dealing with people that are still alive now, so that they can come in and talk with you and say "well, here's what I know about you on spirituality, here's what I know about your ephemeral thoughts because this is the way it was before." It's extremely derogatory. As I say it's disempowering the people from the types of knowledge they possess. It's almost like a mental rape. Yeah, those are

the things I'm concerned about. Those things I'd like to be able to counter. The only way for me to do that is through my work, to provide an articulate and alternative platform, in the best way I can think of doing, without falling in the same trap. To that is to develop a protectionism around the integrity of what exists there without really identifying what that integrity is. The Canadian Museum of Civilization, I mean, you've got the same situation; but, you are talking about people who have spent a lifetime in a study. You've got to remember, archaeology is only as old as the turn of the century. I think that there is a lot of benefit to gain from understanding the details of other cultures. I'm just not sure what that benefit is but it's got to be there because it's just so popular. Maybe it's just a question of man's need to understand what is around him. And even to understand what's around you, for me, would be enough, as opposed to being able to dissect as well. So the need to know is okay if you can understand that. You are aware that there is something there but you don't have to really know exactly what the details are about it.

403 GERALD: Have you benefitted from archaeology?

403 LANCE: Well, in the sense that I've been able to go to the Dominican Republic and see objects in museums that I like. Without that, I may have never seen these lithic spheres. So, I think in that sense I've benefitted from it.

406 GERALD: It's kind of an irony I guess.

407 LANCE: Well, yeah I suppose it is because without one the other would have never happened, but who knows. I really don't know, I can't say. I mean that's a good question.

408 GERALD: I can certainly see the questions that you point out. One can benefit from the other, but at the same time choosing archaeologists as experts to indicate one's 'rootedness' is kind of ludicrous. Why can't you take a people's history or story of themselves ... to talk about rootedness?

415 LANCE: Well let's back step, because this addresses the other question you have about what I've benefitted from. I don't think it's a matter of who does the interpretation. I know that if I went around to Reserves in Canada, with the Museum in the back of me, saying "What do you really want from museology?" I know what I would've heard, but let's do that, let's go through the entire process of establishing our own museums, because we want to do the interpretation ourselves. Let us interpret. There are some museums, like Gila River (Indian Reservation, Arizona), that have their own interpreters. They have Indian people from there that interpret the objects, and take you on tours. You get a different sense of what it is. I think that should really happen a lot, frequently, on a grander scale. Because ultimately, you don't want to bury objects ... you do want to deal with them, and in some cases a lot of objects are meant to be dealt with, in other cases they're not. So maybe it's really a question of the interpretation. So, I'm allowing myself that flexibility to interpret these objects, but what I'm saying is that my interpretation is not going to be an assessment based on a methodology, my assessment is going to be based on pure enjoyment and awe, you know, of mysteries of things that I will not attempt to understand, that I know exist there. For me, that's good enough! I think that maybe it's a mentality I share with other Indians. You see what I'm saying? It's not to be held under a microscope.

440 GERALD: There seems to be some kind of 'formalism' to that, in a sense appreciating it from an aesthetic; to me, you go beyond the aesthetic. On the one hand your saying, "to appreciate it as awe, but not on a scholarly level," but yet, you're going beyond that for some "whacked out" reason (laughter). You've transcended the aesthetic. That's why I say it's a project, that there's other consequences for looking at this group of people.

447 LANCE: Well, I hope so, because the aesthetic is not, it shouldn't really be confined. This is like discussions we've had years ago, in doing contemporary Indian art. Well, is it a purely an aesthetic thing we do? I don't think it is. I never thought it was. Earlier when I look back at things that I've said in 1982 when we were doing hard-core political stuff. It was to say that art was one more part of a complex whole. Yah, I don't want to go to Costa Rica to work around these objects, simply because they're perfectly round and beautiful, but there is something else there. I don't really know what that is. But, I know enough to be able to want to do it. And that's enough to simply say that I'm aware that it's there, and I would like to work around that. In my own way project what that is. Somebody asked me when I was giving a lecture a couple of months ago: "Where's the artistic integrity of what you do, because your reproducing in contemporary materials, don't you think you should try to recreate how they made the stones?" I said, that's not it. That's not the artistic integrity here, the artistic integrity is the protection of what that process may have been. My job is not to go in there with a scientist and look at objects in the jungle and recreate some type of quarry, production line, to produce these things. That's not it! Let's just accept the fact that they made them somehow. My job is something else. My job is to go in there and appreciate what they are. That's the integrity of what this is all about. Again, it's not to look at it from a mechanical or Western methodological perspective.

(...)

651 GERALD: How do you feel about being classified as a Native artist?

652 LANCE: Well, I don't have any problems with it anymore. I think that the whole idea about language and terminology is not something I'm affected by, I use what ever word is used interchangeably. Because, it's been a long time for me as you know. Like in the early 80s when I was politically hot, politically young, politically corrupt, and I'm not there anymore. So like the overt political-ness is no longer there. Now it gets a lot deeper. It can only get that way through time. So those things kind of move over.

661 GERALD: You said political reality isn't there?

662 LANCE: No. Like the political overtness, and political-ness of work, is not something I'm doing anymore. I have no choice but to be really subtle about things. The concepts are becoming that much more subtle. It's not a campaign. I have not political campaign any longer. Although I have some concerns and I need to address them in the finest way that I know. So, in other words, we were really doing a lot of political art in the early 80s, and I'm not doing that anymore. Although quite a few artists are becoming very political, as recent as INDIGENA, and that's pretty good!

677 GERALD: Each one goes through different stages.

- 677 LANCE: Yeah. But you know we were doing that. Lucy Lippard picked that up ten years ago. And now, as I say, it's becoming a lot more refined.
- 682 GERALD: Its a refined politics?
- 682 LANCE: Its a refined politics. So now I just don't have to paint stuff, I can juxtapose seal skin and acylic. Or, I can make lithic spheres and put them in 'European' frames. That frame (he points) I made from scratch, because I've been buying tools.
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(SIDE TWO)

- 541 GERALD: Is there one or several Native art community(ies)?
- 540 LANCE: I think there is a couple, because the people I met in Halifax in SCANA are much different than the ones I met out in Calgary at the ANPAC meeting. Although (Tereas) Marshall was out there, for me it was really good to meet Marshall and Dana Claxton. I met Paul Wong there. I think this Native community is a lot bigger than just Native artists, you've got a broader issue here in terms of racism, in terms of accessibility, and it so good to work with Japanese, Black [artists]. It's about time we started to make that transition. Start looking at some bigger things.
- 528 GERALD: What do you mean by 'transition'?
- 527 LANCE: I mean, like, the SCANA type community is pretty small, and we've got a lot of things going for us, because we can access money a little easier, because we're the ones, the First Nations, inherent here! We'll get the first crack at smething that pops up. But I think that our particular histories is not a history that totally belongs to us anymore, we're still a part of that history that is with other people. When I think of the Black community in Glace Bay, these guys came up through the underground railroad, and they've been here for 150 years. They've got a really secularized community up there. Why can't we do work with them? I think those histories, those social histories, are the same -- the social/political histories -- then, again we've got something else to deal with, within us. Our roots are a lot deeper here, and this idea of reclamation, the way I'm approaching reclamation makes me a little different. But, as I say I think this is a good community, I'm really surprised at the quality of art that is being produced by people like Dana Claxton, I was really amazed.
- 507 GERALD: So in a sense when your talking about transition and reclamation, you seem to be talking about crossing boundaries, you talk about Paul Wong, and other artists out there, artists of colour, artists of any colour -- white or black or pink or whatever. 'Transition,' is that what you're talking about? Artists who are moving into new territories and hoping they're going to move into your territory?
- 498 LANCE: I think there is a lot to share, because I think purely for aesthetics too. I look at these guys work, I spoke with them, this is what I said: "I'm really anxious to climb out of my crib and start bumping around with the other toddlers." By that, I want to work with Paul, Dana Claxton, Monika Gagnon, on projects. I'm thinking of doing a project with these guys, doing a four or five month residency at Dakota Lodge (Stoney

Reserve outside Banff) for instance, where we can get together and do a bunch of things together. Do our installations outdoors, different things at Banff, video, photography, whatever, just working with them and spending time with them. They want to do this project, so we're talking about this project with Panchayat (means "council" in East Indian; and Mingwan is Maliseet, meaning rainbow) now. We've got dough to do that... Instead of being political there's no real platform, but there is a mean and want to do specific art projects together.

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