

CANADIAN HISTORICAL MURALS 1895-1939

Material Progress, Morality and the 'Disappearance' of Native People

Between 1895 and 1939 many artists in English Canada responded to nationalist sentiment by producing murals which documented the material progress of Canadians of European ancestry.¹ For these artists, as for most Canadians at this time, material progress would undoubtedly lead to national greatness, to elevated status for the new Dominion within the British Empire, and to important new roles in international affairs. Contemporary texts reflected this position:

Canada stands an easy first among the colonies of Great Britain. Blessed with a climate which conduces to vigorous mental and physical manhood, with a natural wealth unequalled by what has been given to any other country on the globe, and with a vast extent of territory which may yet hold a hundred millions of people, she possesses prospects which most of the nations of the earth might envy, and not prospects only - for the record of her progress during the present century, and especially during the Victorian Era, shows that her wealth has increased a hundredfold. Towns and cities have sprung up. ...Many miles of canals, thousands of miles of railways, and tens of thousands of miles of good wagon roads have been built, and the land is full of the hum of commerce. ...[Canadians] have evinced a faith in their ability to build up on the northern part of this continent, a nation which shall some day stand second to none among the nations of the earth.²

It is not difficult to envisage how Canadian artists might have illustrated texts of this type. Industrial cityscapes and modern forms of transportation immediately come to mind, and, indeed, they appear frequently enough in the murals. However, these artists almost always contrasted their representations of material progress with images of inactive, emotionless Native Canadians. Moreover, while both historical and contemporary Euro-Canadians appear in the murals, Natives are depicted only as figures from the distant past.³ By portraying Natives as stone-age foils to people of European ancestry, the artists not only documented European technological development, but also implied that Native Canadians should acknowledge the inferiority of their material culture, accept the legitimacy of the European presence in North America, and the subsequent assimilation and demise of their own peoples. Thus, the murals strengthened the cultural hegemony of the dominant group and demonstrated a moral purpose for the material progress of modern life.⁴

The earliest Canadian mural program to represent technological develop-



fig. 1 G.A. Reid, *Staking a Pioneer Farm*, 1899, oil on canvas, Toronto : Old City Hall (Photo : Tom Moore)

ments, and to contrast them with images of Native culture, was planned by the Society of Mural Decorators under the leadership of George Agnew Reid (1860-1947) in 1894 for the Toronto Municipal Building.⁵ The subject matter, Ontario history, was chosen "to harmonize" with the location. It was believed that the ensemble would command the viewer's attention in a manner that only mural decoration could achieve.⁶ Unfortunately for Reid and his colleagues, funds were not forthcoming and the plan was rejected. However, Reid donated two panels (*in situ*) to the City in 1899 with the hope of encouraging the completion of the scheme. These panels and the drawings for the uncompleted panels may be examined.⁷ Two of the drawings represent Natives seated on the ground listening to European explorers who stand reading unidentified documents. Thus the Native as nature is addressed by the written word of culture. The other drawings and the two paintings represent European settlers involved in agriculture and industry. In one of the paintings, *Staking a Pioneer Farm* (fig. 1), immigrant workmen survey the locale with mechanical instruments while a lone male Native peers cautiously from behind a tree at the awesome and, to him, inaccessible display of technology. Without such instruments he cannot lay claim to this land, and so he is appropriately placed well into the forested background of the composition.

Canadian history books written between Confederation and World War II support this interpretation of Reid's murals: "A poor and thinly-scattered community of improvident savages has been succeeded by an orderly, industrious, and enterprising people, whose genius and resources embody all the germs of a great nation."⁸ In 1950, modern authors still agreed: "Because of being uncivilized, our Indians could not make use of Canada's good farm land, nor of the



fig. 2 J.W. Beatty, *Governor and Mrs. Simcoe Paddled Up the Credit River*. 1908, oil on canvas, (detail), Mississauga : Mississauga Golf and Country Club. (Photo : Tom Moore)

other rich resources that nature had given her. To use these gifts Canada needed civilized people, and they were already at her door."⁹

A mural by J.W. Beatty (1869-1941), produced for the Mississauga Golf Club in southern Ontario, provides a similar reading. When he returned from Europe in 1908, Beatty declared his intention to study Canadian history and to paint it in mural decoration.¹⁰ That same year he completed *Governor and Mrs. Simcoe Paddled Up the Credit River (in situ)* for the walls above the fireplace in the Club's main entrance. In the central panel the Governor and his wife have just stepped out of a canoe onto a bank of the Credit River, an Arcadian setting bathed in the bright yellow sunshine of an impressionist palette (fig. 2). The Credit River still runs through the property of the golf club. This land once belonged to the Mississauga Natives, but it was turned into farm lots for British immigrants in the mid-eighteenth century. Native people, to both sides of the Simcoes, are seated on the ground in front of birchbark wigwams, seemingly enjoying the balmy weather (fig. 3). They do not acknowledge the arrival of the visitors, leaving viewers to believe that the ownership of the property was never challenged by the Mississauga people.

Support for the belief that Native people did not need land because they would soon disappear, and that they did not deserve land because they could not make "good" use of it, was widespread for decades before and after the turn of



fig.3 J.W. Beatty, Governor and Mrs. Simcoe
Paddled Up the Credit River, 1908,
oil on canvas, (detail), Mississauga: Mississau
ga Golf and Country Club. (Photo: Tom Moore)

the century. Charles Mair's poem "Woodnotes," of 1868, is an early example of this view, and vividly evokes Beatty's mural:

Here is a streamlet by whose side
The Naiads wandered long ago,
Ere old mythology had died,
And mankind's heart was turned to stone.
The Indian sought it year by year,
And listened to its rippling glee;
But he is gone, and I am here,
And all its rippling is for me.¹¹

In 1941 Stephen Leacock's history text demonstrated the longevity of Mair's sentiment:

There is little room for regret that the possession of her soil [has] been transferred to the Anglo-Saxon race, and that the rule of the fierce Indian has for ever passed away. ...We think of prehistoric North America as inhabited by the Indians, and have based on this a sort of recognition of ownership on their part. But this attitude is hardly warranted. The Indians

were far too few to count. Their use of the resources of the continent was scarcely more than that made by crows and wolves, their development of it nothing.¹²

From the turn of the century until the Second World War Canadian muralists set up contrasts between European and Native architecture by decorating the walls of newly-constructed hotels with images of traditional native dwellings. Jock Macdonald's 1939 painting of Northwest Coast houses on the wall of the main dining room of the Hotel Vancouver is an example.¹³ The Native dwellings provide an aesthetically pleasing image of an "exotic" lifestyle, but they are reduced to smaller-than-lifesize structures within the monumental and commercially successful hotel. Moreover, the hotel was part of the urban expansion that forced Northwest Coast Native people to relocate from as early as the middle of the nineteenth century.

Between 1908 and 1912 F.S. Challener (1869-1959) completed a mural with a similar theme for the Royal Alexandra Hotel in Winnipeg.¹⁴ The four panels (no longer *in situ*) represent Native people who have come together in large summer camps to hunt buffalo, trade furs at the nearby Hudson Bay Company Fort, elect leaders, and to carry out spiritual rituals. Of course guests at the hotel knew that the buffalo had disappeared from the prairies several decades before the murals were installed, that Natives no longer lived in camps or practised self-government, and that fur-trading with the Hudson Bay Company was greatly diminished. But it is unlikely that these same guests reflected on government legislation, such as the amendments to the Indian Act in the 1880's which discouraged summer camp meetings.¹⁵ Nor is it likely that they considered the role of the Hudson Bay Company's 1870 sale of western lands to the Federal Government in the expedition of widespread European immigration to the prairies, and the consequent displacement of Native peoples to reservations.

Viewers of the murals might have been more familiar with explanations for such changes in Native lifestyle supplied by contemporary Canadian history texts. They may have read that Native people could no longer hunt buffalo because: "Although vast herds of buffaloes traversed the prairies and forests of his native land, [the Indian's] knowledge had not taught him to use them for the purposes of the dairy, nor subdue them to the labours of the fields."¹⁶ Similarly, Natives could not govern themselves because, "Destitute of any form of local government, they knew nothing of the duties of the magistrate, and were left at liberty to follow the dictates of individual inclinations."¹⁷ A text written in 1912 states that "the Indian saw and felt the forms of British institutions, liked the principle of loyalty to a great King, and admired the strength of British love for law and order and for justice between different races."¹⁸

In 1923 J.E.H. MacDonald (1873-1932) designed a mural which provided another construction of Native involvement with European institutions.



fig.4 J.E.H. MacDonald,
A Friendly Meeting
in Early Canada,
1924, oil and metal-
lic paint on canvas,
Metropolitan Toron-
to Reference Library.
(Photo: Journal of
the Royal Architec-
tural Institute of Ca-
nada [July 1933],
13. Photographer:
Metropolitan Toron-
to Library Board)

In that year, at the suggestion of A.Y. Jackson, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts held an historical mural competition. The theme was "The Settlement of Canada," and the winning work was to have been hung in a railway committee room in the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. First prize was won by MacDonald for *A Friendly Meeting in Early Canada* (fig. 4).¹⁹ In this painting a Native Canadian is surrounded by four Europeans with whom he is conversing. The composition is confrontational and foreshadows the power structure that had developed between the two groups by the time of the painting. On the other hand, the title and the manner in which the Europeans seem to be listening to the Native, suggest that MacDonald intended the negotiations, which surely led to the takeover of Native land, to appear amicable. This view was sustained by contemporary historical literature. "Under the system of responsible government, the condition of the Indians was greatly improved," claimed an Ontario textbook in 1910. "The British Government had been careful to take over the land from [Natives] only after making a treaty with their chiefs and paying them the price agreed on in money and goods. As a result of the honesty and justice of our treatment of the Indians we have had none of the terrible wars which have disgraced the United States."²⁰

Contrasts between Native and European modes of transportation offered

muralists an additional means of glorifying western technology. The earliest program which may have put forth this view was planned by the Society of Mural Decorators in 1894 for Toronto's newly constructed Union Station.²¹ Its theme was "The History of Transportation," but it was rejected and the plans seem to have been lost. Contemporary murals with the same theme may help to reconstruct these plans.

At the turn of the century Frederick Challener and J.D. Kelly (1862-1958) produced a series of monochrome ivory stucco panels in low relief for the *S.S. Toronto*, a passenger ship owned by the Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Company.²² The panels depict Native people accompanying European explorers through forests and over waterways in the late seventeenth century (fig. 5). The work of the Native people was for the most part similar to that of the modern navigation company, as both were charged with guiding passengers through southern Ontario waters, but the size and speed of the commercial craft must have set up an immediate contrast to that of the canoe.

Another example of this theme is provided by the murals in Toronto's Commerce Building (*in situ*) designed by Arthur Crisp (1881-1974) in 1931.²³ The program begins with a depiction of a Native person in *Freight and Travel By Canoe* and ends with *The Empress of Britain. The Last Word in Ocean Travel*. As the American steel magnate Andrew Carnegie had said about his nation's technological development just a few decades earlier, "The old nations of the earth creep on at a snail's pace; the Republic thunders past with the rush of the express."²⁴

A similar reading may be taken from a mural scheme executed in 1930 by Adam Sheriff Scott for the resort hotel at Lucerne-in-Quebec (now Chateau Montebello).²⁵ In one of thirteen panels (*in situ*) representing local history, Champlain is "taking an observation with the astrolabe on the Ottawa River in



fig. 5

F.S. Challener, Title unknown, c. 1900, stucco, Toronto: Rosedale Public School. (Photo: Records, Archives and Museum, Toronto Board of Education. (Photographer: Tom Moore), detail



fig.6 C.W. Jefferys, *Homage to the Chaudière*, 1930, oil on canvas, Ottawa: National Archives of Canada. (Photo: *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* [Oct. 1930], 350. Photographer: Metropolitan Toronto Library Board)

fig.7 C.W. Jefferys, *Building the Rideau Canal*, 1930, oil on canvas, Ottawa: National Archives of Canada. (Photo: *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* [July 1933], 130. Photographer: Metropolitan Toronto Library Board)



fig.8 C.W. Jefferys and F.S. Challenger, *Title unknown*, 1929, oil on canvas, present location unknown. (Photo: *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* [June 1929], 209. Photographer: Metropolitan Toronto Library Board)

fig.9 F.S. Challener, *Fort Rouillé*, 1928, oil on canvas, Toronto: City of Toronto Archives. (Photo: *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* [Sept./Oct. 1929], 4. Photographer: Metropolitan Toronto Library Board)



1613," while a number of awestruck Native people observe him. As a later Canadian historian claimed, "[Natives] took no effective steps toward the building of craft that could be used on the two oceans that washed their shores. Had they done so, they would in all probability have come in touch with other civilizations and their whole isolated life would have been changed."²⁶

Murals by C. W. Jefferys (1869-1951), installed in the writing room of the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa in 1930, also demanded recognition of the superiority of European technology and waterways management. Depicting the building of the Rideau Canal, one panel represents a Native offering tobacco in ritualistic homage to the spirit of the Chaudière Falls (fig. 6).²⁷ In another, English soldiers use mechanical equipment and massive blocks of cut stone to build a canal which will control the water for commercial purposes (fig. 7).²⁸ The viewer might quickly suppose that the Native's unscientific attempt to control nature would result in failure, while that of the Europeans would produce the desired effect.

The superiority of European trade and commerce provided subject matter for many murals. In 1928 Jefferys and Challener produced two panels (present location unknown) for the *Manoir Richelieu*, a French chateau-style hotel at Murray Bay, Quebec.²⁹ On both sides of an archway of the central lounge they depicted the arrival of Europeans in the Murray Bay area. In one panel Native people sit on the ground, at the edge of the forest, offering furs to the French (fig. 8). While one Frenchman makes the trade, others are preparing timber for construction. In the second panel, kilted immigrants from the British Isles have arrived; the Natives - and the French - have disappeared.

In 1928, Challener completed *Fort Rouillé* (fig. 9), a mural for the offices of Loblaw's, a major Toronto food company.³⁰ Once again a reading of the work



fig.10 F. Haines and H. Palmer, *The Settlement of Canada*, 1929, oil on canvas (detail), Toronto: Canadian National Exhibition. (Photo: Diane Falvey)



fig.11 F. Haines and H. Palmer, *The Settlement of Canada*, 1929, oil on canvas (detail), Toronto: Canadian National Exhibition. (Photo: Diane Falvey)

depends on a number of contrasts. First the artist sets image against site. The office of a twentieth-century trading company is furnished with depictions of Native people engaged in trade with Europeans of the late eighteenth century. The mural's composition emphasizes this contrast, as Native people sit in a random arrangement on the ground, at the edge of the forest, while a military man stands in front of them. His body forms a bold, vertical, compositional element, which is mirrored in the upright posts of the fort's wall and aligned with the ship's sturdy mast. European civilization is represented as strong and stable, while Native culture is linked to the chaos of nature.

A further contrast between past and present is set up by the fact that Fort Rouillé sat on land which became the site of Toronto's Industrial Exhibition in

1879 (now the Canadian National Exhibition).³¹ From the middle of the nineteenth century Canadians shared in the western world's enthusiasm for public exhibitions of agricultural, natural and manufactured products.³² When native artifacts were exhibited at Canadian fairs they were presented as obsolete precursors of the work of "civilized" people. Indeed, in 1897 O.A. Howling suggested that a Canadian exhibition of that year should "logically exhibit first the traditions, arts and modes of life of the native tribes, the *palimpsest* [italics mine] upon which European colonization has written the later histories."³³ Similarly, the exterior of the Canadian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair of 1939 was decorated with two totem poles carved by Kwakiutl artist Mungo Martin, while the interior was treated with murals depicting Canada's industrial, trading and leisure activities.³⁴

A year after Challener's 1928 Loblaws mural was produced, two instructors from the Ontario College of Art, Fred Haines (1879-1960) and Herbert Palmer (1881-1970), designed a mural (*in situ*) for the Dominion Government Building at the Canadian National Exhibition.³⁵ *The Settlement of Canada* was represented on eight rectangular panels placed on the interior of the octagonal drum of the glass dome. In one, two Native Canadians hunt buffalo against a background of the wild prairie (fig. 10). In another, a Canadian of European ancestry guides a plough pulled by two large white oxen (fig. 11). While the buffalo population had been reduced to the point of extinction by the 1880's, agriculture was an ongoing and economically successful aspect of the Canadian eco-



fig.12 A. Lismer, *The Humberside Mural*, 1927-1931, oil on panel, Toronto: Humberside Collegiate Institute. (Photo: Records, Archives and Museum, Toronto Board of Education. Photographer: Tom Moore)

nomy. Visitors to an exhibition which was largely concerned with the display of material progress and its moral implications, were clearly led to accept the futility of the Native way of life.

The moral qualities of material progress also provided Arthur Lismer (1885-1969) with a subject when, in 1927, he was commissioned by the Literary Society of Humberside Collegiate in Toronto to produce a mural for the school's auditorium.³⁶ The location of historical murals in schools was considered by Lismer and others involved in the mural movement as crucial to the raising of a national consciousness.³⁷ For this commission, Lismer chose to represent Canadian history in five panels (four of which are in the school's new auditorium). In the first (fig. 12), reading from left to right, early explorers arrive, Montcalm sits in defeat under a towering image of Wolfe waving a British flag, and General Brock, the hero of the War of 1812 against the United States, stands in the forefront on an elevated section of ground. A single male Native stands below the military heroes, indicating his passive acceptance of the events by smiling, placing one hand over his heart, and lowering the axe in his right hand.

In the second panel several unidentified European explorers stand on a hill scanning vast amounts of land. Well below the explorers, and seated on the ground, are a Native man and woman. The man sits on a bearskin thus demonstrating his association with the wild aspects of nature. Similarly, the Native woman is modelled on one of Gauguin's Tahitian female figures, and so is associated with the "untamed" aspects of a primitive culture's sexual practices. The students of Humberside Collegiate might easily have made a similar reading, as the 1930 edition of their own history text, *History of Canada for High Schools*, explained that "the Indian was, as it were, a part of the landscape."³⁸

The remaining three panels of the Humberside mural do not include representations of Native people. The third and central panel is occupied by a large hill with seated and standing personifications of Truth, Beauty, Wisdom, Courage and Motherhood. It is the most prominent panel in the series, drawing the other panels, and the viewer's eye, toward it by means of the dominant triangular peak of the hill. In the fourth panel, apparently as a result of Truth, Wisdom, Courage, etc., a European woman holds a child on her lap, a young boy reads a book, and pioneers settle the land with axes and scythes. Significantly, and in contrast to the axe held by the Native in the first panel, the tools of the settlers are poised for action. As English Canadians knew from the time of Confederation, "The Indian retreated before the axe of the settler"³⁹; and "Patches of forest were occasionally cleared [by Natives] ... at an enormous sacrifice of time and labour ... production results which are now exceeded by a single backwoodsman in as many days."⁴⁰ Finally, in the fifth panel (installed in 1932 and no longer extant) was a frieze of "Canada's youth" arranged in front of images of twentieth-century material progress, such as ploughed fields, an aviator and skyscrapers.



fig. 13 Auditorium, Jarvis Collegiate Institute, Toronto. (Photo: *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* [June 1931], 239. Photographer: Metropolitan Toronto Library Board)

The most extensive Canadian historical mural program which took material progress as its subject was produced by George Agnew Reid as a World War I memorial for the auditorium of Toronto's Jarvis Collegiate between 1929 and 1930 (fig. 13).⁴¹ It is *in situ* except for one panel. On the north wall Reid painted *Patriotism and Sacrifice* (to the left and right of the stage in fig. 13). Here people of European ancestry - soldiers, farmers, school children, men in academic gowns, boy scouts and girl guides - pay homage to the British and Canadian flags and refer to acts of patriotism and sacrifice that were made by Canadians during the War. On the east wall was *Ericson Discovering North America, 1000 A.D.* (not extant). On the south wall above the balcony is *The Discoverers, 986-1610 A.D.* In a frieze the width of the auditorium European explorers sit at desks studying maps and globes before setting out for North America. Below the balcony, in a frieze of equal length, is *Champlain Ascending the Ottawa River, 1615 A.D.* On the west wall are *John Cabot. Discovery of North America, 1497*; *Jacques Cartier. Discovery of the St. Lawrence, 1534*; *Hudson's Bay Company. Fur Trading in James Bay, 1668* (fig. 14); *United Empire Loyalists Ascending the St. Lawrence, 1783* (fig. 15); and *Alexander Mackenzie. Discovery of the Pacific, 1798* (visible to the left of *Patriotism* in fig. 13). Surrounding all of the panels are small painted scrolls with the names of famous Canadian inventors, politicians and industrialists of European ancestry.⁴²

In now familiar compositions, the Europeans in the historical panels are



fig.14 G.A. Reid, Hudson's Bay Company. Fur Trading in James Bay, 1668, 1930, oil and encaustic on canvas, Toronto: Jarvis Collegiate Institute. (Photo: Records, Archives and Museum, Toronto Board of Education. Photographer: Tom Moore)

fig.15 G.A. Reid, United Empire Loyalists Ascending the St. Lawrence, 1783, 1930, oil and encaustic on canvas, Toronto: Jarvis Collegiate Institute. (Photo: Records, Archives and Museum, Toronto Board of Education. Photographer: Tom Moore)



actively engaged in acquiring land, organizing trade, and commanding large sailing vessels, while the Native people are situated at the edge of the forest or on the ground, passively accepting the arrival first of Cartier and then the Loyalists (fig. 15). Enthusiasm and vigour are expressed by Native people only at the arrival of the Hudson Bay Company's ship (fig. 14), as they welcome the material progress of a commercial shipping company.⁴³ Also, Natives appear only in scenes which can be dated no later than the early nineteenth century (with Cartier, Champlain, the Hudson Bay Company and the Loyalists), while Europeans appear in both the historical scenes and in the contemporary representations of *Sacrifice* and *Patriotism*. (Logically, some of the approximately 4000 Native Ca-

nadians who served in World War I could have appeared in these two panels.⁴⁴)

A reading of the Jarvis mural program is clear: Native Canadians, because they were materially unprogressive, began to "disappear" in the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was at about that time that the reservation system was set up, along with policies that designated the reserves as training centres in which Natives could learn to "become white" and subsequently receive the corresponding benefits.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Canadians of European ancestry, because they were materially progressive, were able to survive and flourish, to inherit the lands of Native peoples, and to play a key role in World War I. In 1918 Canada received imperial and international recognition when she proudly signed the Treaty of Versailles independently of Great Britain.

Furthermore, the Jarvis murals offer evidence, as do all the murals discussed, of the new Dominion's ability to link morality with technological advancement. According to the murals, Canada had assimilated a materially unprogressive people, and, as anyone of European ancestry knew, the main justification for imperial power was the civilization of inferior cultures.⁴⁶ It was "the white man's burden" to fulfill God's purpose. Since Canada had assumed her share of the civilizing process, she had, indeed, attained the maturity of the mother country.⁴⁷ It was only appropriate, then, that as W.A. Sherwood had argued in 1893, "The art of the nation should reflect the genius of the race."⁴⁸

MARYLIN MCKAY

Nova Scotia College of Art and Design

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Notes

1 Many Canadians, including artists, were familiar with historical mural decoration in Europe, Great Britain and the United States. They discussed its ability to instill nationalistic sentiment, and urged support for Canadian counterparts. See C.H. MACINTOSH, "Cabot and other Western Explorers," *Canadian Magazine* (Dec. 1896): 156; G.A. REID, "Mural Decoration," *Canadian Magazine* (Apr. 1898): 501-508; F.S. CHALLENGER, "Mural Decoration," *The Canadian Architect and Builder* (May 1904): 90-92; A.R. CARMAN, "Wall Paintings in Europe," *Canadian Magazine* (Feb. 1906): 307-312; J.W. BEATTY, "A Canadian Painter and his Work," *Canadian Magazine* (Apr. 1906): 551; A. LISMER, "Mural Painting," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (July 1933): 133.

2 J. COOPER, "Canada's Progress in the Victorian Era," *Canadian Magazine* (June 1897): 152.

3 Until the early twentieth century, Canadian artists of European ancestry represented the contemporary Native. Champlain satisfied the curiosity of Europeans by depicting the Natives he had seen as "exotic". From the mid-seventeenth-century French-Canadian ecclesiastical artists portrayed the Native as recent convert. As land was cleared for the use of immigrants in the late

seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries British topographical artists represented Natives as uncivilized elements of nature by confining them to the forested areas of townscapes. William Berczy painted the Mohawk Joseph Brant just after the American Revolution, when Brant and his followers had moved to Canada as a demonstration of loyalty to the British government. From the 1840's Paul Kane documented artifacts and customs of Native people before, as he believed, they became extinct. In the early twentieth century the work of Edmund Morris and some of the work of Emily Carr had similar motivations. After Confederation, as Native people were moved onto reservations, artists such as Frederick Verner and Frances Hopkins painted Native camps against the setting sun, and Natives paddling into the mist, metaphors of the contemporary situation. Since the early twentieth century few Canadian artists have represented the contemporary Native. Indeed, since c. 1980 the representation of Native people has been taken up by Native artists.

4 An interesting discussion on the morality of material progress in the United States as an aspect of antimodernism is provided by T. J. JACKSON LEARS, *No Place of Grace. Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

5 For details of the Society's efforts to decorate the Toronto Municipal Buildings, see R.M. PEPALL, "The Murals by George A. Reid in the Toronto Municipal Buildings (1897-1899)," (M.A. Thesis, Concordia University, 1982); R.M. PEPALL, "The Murals in the Toronto Municipal Buildings: George Agnew Reid's Debt to Puvis De Chavannes," *The Journal of Canadian Art History* 9, no. 2 (1986): 142-166.

6 For Canadian views on harmony of site, subject matter and style in mural decoration, and their relation to British and American views, see, for example, J. MAVOR, *Notes on the Objects of the Toronto Guild of Civic Art and on the Exhibition of Prints and Mural Paintings with Condensed Catalogue*, Toronto: Rowsell and Hutchison, 1898; G. Reid, "Mural Decoration," *The Canadian Architect and Builder* (Jan. 1898): 14; J.E.H. MACDONALD, "Interior Decoration of St. Anne's Church, Toronto," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (May/June 1925): 90.

7 Reid's drawings for the proposed City Hall murals are in the collection of the London Regional Art and Historical Museums, London, Ontario.

8 J. MACMULLEN, *The History of Canada From its First Discovery to the Present Time* (Brockville: McMullen & Co. 1868), xxx.

9 D. DICKIE, *The Great Adventure. An Illustrated History of Canada for Young Canadians* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons [Canada] Ltd., 1950), 20.

10 *The Toronto Globe* (Nov. 21, 1908), quoted by D. M. FARR in *J.W. Beatty 1869-1941* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1981), 22.

11 C. MAIR, *Dreamland and Other Poems* (Montréal: Dawson Brother, 1868), 64.

12 S. LEACOCK, *Canada. The Foundation of Its Future Montreal* (privately printed, 1941), 19.

13 J. ZEMANS, *Jock Macdonald* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Artists Series, 16), fig. 3.

14 These murals are now in the collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. See also C. MCFADDIN, "The Murals of F.S. Challenger," *Canadian Art* (Nov./Dec. 1963): 338-344.

15 For a brief discussion of the effects of the Indian Act on Native rituals, see J.R. MILLER, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens. A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989): 175, 189-190, 192-194.

16 MACMULLEN, *History of Canada*, xxiv.

17 MACMULLEN, *History of Canada*, xxviii.

18 J. CASTELL HOPKINS, *The Story of our Country. A History for Four Hundred Years* (Toronto: J.C. Winston Co., 1912), 65.

- 19 See Public Archives of Canada, *Minutes Books of the Royal Canadian Academy* (MG 28, I, 126, vol. 1): 273 (458) 10 Feb. 1923; Public Archives of Canada, *Scrapbook of the Royal Canadian Academy* (MG 28, I, 126, vol. 15): 125, 127. The painting, now in the collection of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library, was exhibited at the Forty-Fifth Exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, held at the Art Gallery of Toronto, 22 Nov. 1923- 2 Jan. 1924. Five subsequent competitions were to have been held on the same theme, but there are no records indicating that they took place; nor does Macdonald's mural seem to have been installed in Ottawa.
- 20 *Ontario Public School History of Canada* (Toronto: Morang Educational Co., 1910), 247-248.
- 21 M. MILLER, *George Reid. A Biography* (Toronto: Summerhill Press Ltd., 2nd ed., 1987), 1-71. In 1920 plans for a mural on the history of transportation for Union Station were revived, but again not executed: *The Rebel* (Jan. 1920): 157-158.
- 22 BEATTY, *A Canadian Painter*, 553; MCFADDIN, *Murals*, 341. Four panels were donated to Rosedale Public School in Toronto c. 1917 where they remain.
- 23 See K. HALE, "The Career of Arthur Crisp," *Saturday Night* (13 May 1933): 3.
- 24 Quoted in LEARS, *No Place of Grace*, 8.
- 25 H. LAWSON, "The Log Chateau-Lucerne-in Quebec," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (Jan. 1931): 13-22. In the mezzanine of the restaurant are *Papineau speaking at the Village of St. Charles* and *English Troops Capture the Liberty Pole and bring it to Montreal*. In the bar are *The First Raft on the Ottawa 1806*; *The Heroic Stand of Dollard at Long Sault 1660*; *Old Time Sugaring Party 1881*; *Defeat of the Rebels at St. Eustache*; *Monseigneur De Laval, First Bishop of Quebec presented to King Louis XIV*; *Jacques Cartier lands at Gaspé*; *Richelieu and the Company of One Hundred Associates*; *Champlain Taking an Observation with the Astrolabe on the Ottawa, 1613*; *Building of the Carillon Canal, 1829*; *Seigneurial Custom, Planting in May*, and *English Trading in Hudson Bay, 1665*.
- 26 G.P. de T. GLAZEBROOK, *A Short History of Canada* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 8.
- 27 The murals are now in the collection of the National Archives of Canada. See R. STACEY, C.W. Jefferys (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Artists Series 10, 1985), 20, fig. 3.
- 28 F. H. BRIGDEN, "Exhibition of Fine and Graphic Arts. Canadian National Exhibition - 1930," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (Oct. 1930): 350-351; LISMER, *Mural Painting*, 130.
- 29 "Decorative Paintings for the Manoir Richelieu," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (June 1929): 208-209.
- 30 The mural was donated by Theodore Loblaw in 1933 to the City of Toronto, Accession No. A75-169. See *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (Jan. 1929): 4. Challenger had done an earlier version of the same subject for the King Edward Hotel in Toronto before 1906 (present location unknown). See BEATTY, *A Canadian Painter*, 548. Robert Pilor's mural, *First Traders of New France*, completed for the High School of Montreal in 1926 (present location unknown), had a similar theme and composition. See *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (Sept./Oct. 1926): 185.
- 31 J.H. ROBINSON, *Once Upon a Century. 100 Year History of the 'Ex'* (Toronto: J.H. Robinson, 1978), 9.
- 32 See for example, "Canada at St. Louis," *Canadian Magazine* (Nov. 1904): 33-42.
- 33 O.A. HOWLING, "The Canadian Historical Exhibition, 1897," *Canadian Magazine* (June 1986): 167.
- 34 J.G. PARMELEE, "Canada's Participation in the World's Fair," *Canadian Geographical Journal* (July 1939): 85-97.

35 The murals, in storage for years, were restored between 1979 and 1986 and replaced in the original setting. See D. FALVEY, "The Case Study of the Low-Pressure Treatment of a Large-scale Canvas Mural Painting: *The Settlement of Canada* by Frederick S. Haines," *Papers of the 8th Triennial Meeting of ICCROM* (Sydney, Australia, 1987): 153-159. Haines' panels replaced eight others produced in 1928 for the Empire Marketing Board's participation in the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Canadian National Exhibition. Painted by Maurice Grieffenhagen, they depicted "epochal happenings in the various countries of the Empire." See SINAITICUS, "Canadian National Exhibition," *Construction* (Oct. 1928): 327-334.

36 In 1965 the four large panels of the mural and some of the border were removed from the auditorium and remounted in a classroom. Some of the border became the property of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, but the two sections of the fifth and smallest panel and some of the border were discarded. Recently the four large panels were restored and moved to the school's new auditorium.

For a history of the Humberside murals, see a letter from J.B. Wren to A. Lismer (Toronto, 21 Feb. 1927), Humberside Collegiate Records, Archives of the Toronto Board of Education; The Minutes of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto (1927), 272; The Annual Report of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto (1929), 21; L. DARROCH, *Bright Land. A Warm Look at Arthur Lismer* (Toronto: Merritt Publishing Co. Ltd., 1981), 93-96; T. HIDAS and J. POULOS, eds., *Humberside: The First Century* (Winnipeg: Josten Publications, 1992), I. HODKINSON, *Arthur Lismer's Drawings for the Humberside Mural. Development of a Grandiose Patriotic Theme*, Kleinburg, Ont.: McMichael Canadian Collection, 1992.

37 *School Art Leagues* (Toronto: Education Department of Ontario, 1899), 7-9; J.G. HODGINS, *School Room Decoration* (prepared for the Education Department of Ontario) (Toronto: Warwick Brothers and Rutter, 1900), 5; G.A. REID, "School Decoration and Picture Study," *The School* (Apr. 1914): 479-482; LISMER, *The Toronto Star* (13 Dec. 1926): 1; LISMER, *Mural Painting*, 133; "Mural Painting in the Public Schools," *Construction* 10, no.7 (July 1917): 227.

38 D. MCARTHUR, *History of Canada for High Schools* (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1930), 9.

39 M. LAWSON, *History of Canada* (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1906), 131.

40 MACMULLEN, *History of Canada*, xxiii.

41 For a history of the Jarvis murals, see *The Annual Report of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto* (1929): 22; *The Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto* (1929): 686; G.A. REID and L. CLAIRE, *Descriptive Notes of Mural Decoration in Jarvis Collegiate Institute Auditorium*, Toronto (privately published, 1930); G.A. REID and L. CLAIRE, "Mural Decoration in the Jarvis Collegiate Institute, Toronto," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (June 1933): 239-245; M. MILLER, *George Reid*, 130-132; H. MEDLAND, *Minerva's Diary: A History of Jarvis Collegiate* (Belleville: Mika Press, 1979), 126-130.

42 M. MILLER, *George Reid*, 166, states that Reid studied five (unidentified) Canadian history texts as a basis for the preparation of the Jarvis panels. At the same time, the Jarvis panels are probably a condensed version of a mural programme designed by Reid and other members of the Toronto Guild of Civic Art for the Ontario Legislative Building in 1902. The programme was never executed, much to Reid's disappointment, but a list of thirty planned subjects includes all of the Jarvis subjects. See J. MAVOR, *Notes on the Objects*, 1; M. MILLER, *George Reid*, 90; F. BAYER, *The Ontario Collection* (Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1984), 94.

43 A panel with the same subject matter, English trading in Hudson Bay 1665, was executed by A. Sheriff Scott in 1930 for the Château Montebello. See H. LAWSON, *The Log Chateau-Lucerne*.

44 J.R. MILLER, *Skyscrapers*, 217.

45 Assimilation of Native peoples had been attempted from the time of settlement, particular-

ly by religious institutions, but after 1836 it became official government policy in Upper Canada, and was adopted federally in 1876. See MILLER, *Skyscrapers*, 103-104.

46 For contemporary views of Canada's material progress and her share of "the white man's burden," see, for example, J. COOPER, "Canada's Progress in the Victorian Era," *Canadian Magazine* (June 1897): 152; B. CAMERON, "The North-West Red Man and His Future," *Canadian Magazine* (Jan. 1900): 214; N. PATTERSON, "Thirty-Six Years of Dominion," *Canadian Magazine* (July 1903); N. RANKIN, "The Tragedy of the Red Man," *Canadian Magazine* (Feb. 1914): 406; E. BRAITHWAITE, "Canada as a World Leader," *Canadian Magazine* (July 1922): 175. G. W. MITCHELL, "Saviour of the Nordic Race," *Canadian Magazine* (June 1923): 138-140; A. LISMER, "Canadian Art," *Canadian Theosophist* (15 Feb. 1925): 177-178.

For more recent analyses of these views, see C. BERGER, "The True North Strong and Free," in P. RUSSELL (ed.), *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966); C. BERGER, *The Sense of Power. Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

47 With regard to Canada's developing maturity within the Empire, it is interesting to note that the murals of 1887, installed in the Dominion Government Building at Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition, and depicting "epochal happenings in the various countries of the Empire" were replaced in 1928 with murals depicting the material progress of Canada. See SINAITICUS, *Canadian National*.

48 W.A. SHERWOOD, "The Influence of the French School upon Recent Art," *Canadian Magazine* (Oct. 1893): 641.

Résumé

LA FRESQUE HISTORIQUE AU CANADA DE 1895 À 1939

Progrès matériel, moralité et «disparition» des peuples autochtones

Entre 1895 et 1939, plusieurs artistes du Canada anglais se firent l'écho du sentiment nationaliste en illustrant par des peintures murales le progrès matériel du nouveau dominion. Comme la plupart des Canadiens de cette époque, ils croyaient que le progrès matériel conduirait inévitablement à la grandeur nationale, à un statut plus élevé pour le nouveau dominion au sein de l'Empire britannique et à un rôle nouveau et important sur la scène internationale. Afin d'illustrer ce thème, ils représentèrent des Canadiens de souche européenne engagés activement dans l'exploration, la colonisation et les réalisations modernes en technologie et en architecture. L'effet était rehaussé par la présence d'indigènes immobiles et impassibles. De plus, alors que les figures d'«Euro-canadiens» sont aussi bien contemporaines qu'historiques, les autochtones apparaissent ex-

clusivement comme les vestiges d'un passé lointain.

En représentant les autochtones comme les faire-valoir préhistoriques des colons d'origine européenne, les peintres muralistes canadiens non seulement donnaient plus de force à leurs représentations du progrès matériel, mais montraient aussi qu'il ne restait aux autochtones qu'à reconnaître l'infériorité de leur culture matérielle, la légitimité de la présence européenne en Amérique du Nord et l'assimilation et l'extinction inévitables de leurs propres nations. C'est ainsi que les peintures murales servirent à renforcer l'hégémonie culturelle du groupe dominant et à fournir une justification morale au progrès matériel de la vie moderne.

Alors que la décision de juxtaposer les deux cultures a pu être un trait de génie sur le plan de la composition artistique, cette façon de représenter les premiers habitants n'était pas des plus nouvelles. En effet, à la fin du XIX^e siècle, les manuels d'histoire en usage dans les écoles du Canada, aussi bien que la littérature populaire déclaraient de manière non équivoque que les autochtones étaient inférieurs sur le plan technologique. En conséquence, on laissait entendre qu'ils étaient d'accord pour remettre leurs terres sans discuter aux explorateurs et colons européens qui, ils le savaient, pouvaient les utiliser d'une manière plus productive. De plus, on affirmait que la population autochtone diminuait et finirait par disparaître.

Le premier programme canadien de peintures murales à employer cette description des autochtones comme moyen de mettre en valeur le progrès matériel des Canadiens de souche européenne, a été réalisé en 1894 pour le *Toronto Municipal Building*, sous la direction de George Agnew Reid. Elles montrent des Canadiens d'origine européenne faisant l'arpentage des terres à l'aide d'instruments mécaniques, pendant qu'un Amérindien les regarde, prudemment caché derrière un arbre, suggérant par là, non seulement son émerveillement devant la technologie, mais aussi sa disparition éventuelle.

Plusieurs autres peintures murales présentèrent des variations sur le même thème. *The Settlement of Canada*, faite en 1929 par Fred Haines et Herbert Palmer pour le *Dominion Government Building* de l'Exposition nationale du Canada, à Toronto, montrait le contraste entre la réussite de l'agriculture et la futilité de la chasse au bison comme méthodes efficaces de production alimentaire. Certaines illustrent l'acceptation volontaire par les autochtones de la prise de possession de leurs terres par des immigrants européens: *Governor and Mrs. Simcoe Paddled Up the Credit River*, réalisée par J.W. Beatty, vers 1908, pour le *Mississauga Golf and Country Club* dans le sud de l'Ontario, *A Friendly Meeting in Canada*, faite par J.E.H. MacDonald en 1923 et la murale peinte en 1928 par C.W. Jefferys et F.S. Challener pour le Manoir Richelieu au Québec. Les cinq panneaux réalisés par Arthur Lismer, de 1927 à 1931, pour le *Humberside Collegiate* à Toronto montrent bien que la mainmise énergétique des Européens sur les

terres des autochtones au XVII^e et XVIII^e siècle a conduit directement au progrès matériel de l'époque moderne.

Sur les murales faites par Challener pour le *Royal Alexandra Hotel* de Winnipeg, entre 1908 et 1912, tout comme sur les tableaux de maisons de la côte Nord-Ouest peints en 1939 par Jock Macdonald, pour la salle à manger de l'Hôtel Vancouver, l'architecture européenne est présentée comme supérieure à l'architecture autochtone. Le contraste entre les modes de transport autochtones et européens mettait en valeur la technologie occidentale dans des murales produites par Challener et J.D. Kelly, avant la Première Guerre mondiale, pour le navire de ligne S.S. *Toronto*, par C.W. Jefferys pour l'hôtel Château Laurier d'Ottawa, en 1930, par Adam Sheriff Scott pour le Lucerne-en-Québec, en 1930, et par Arthur Crisp pour le *Commerce Building* de Toronto, en 1931.

C'est l'efficacité du commerce européen qui était mise en contraste avec l'économie de traite des autochtones dans la murale de Challener *Fort Rouillé*, terminée en 1928 pour les bureaux de la chaîne alimentaire torontoise Loblaws. Le vaste programme mural réalisé par George Agnew Reids, entre 1929 et 1930, pour le *Jarvis Collegiate* de Toronto montre que la mainmise sur les terres autochtones au XVII^e et XVIII^e siècle a conduit, non seulement au progrès matériel du XIX^e et XX^e siècle, mais encore, et c'est le plus important, à la nouvelle position occupée par le Canada sur le plan international, comme en fait foi le rôle important joué par le pays pendant la Première Grande guerre.

Si l'on en croit ces oeuvres, le Canada a assimilé un peuple sans avenir sur le plan matériel, et, c'est bien connu de quiconque a des ancêtres européens, la principale justification du pouvoir impérial était la civilisation des cultures inférieures. Selon la formule anglo-saxonne, c'était le «fardeau de l'homme blanc», le devoir de réaliser la volonté de Dieu. Puisque le Canada avait assumé sa part du processus de civilisation, il avait atteint la maturité de la mère patrie. Il devenait naturel, alors, que «l'art de la nation soit le reflet du génie de la race».

Traduction: Élise Bonnette