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INDIANS PLAYING INDIAN

Multiculturalism and Contemporary Indigenous Art in North America

Monika Siebert

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Introduction

Indigeneity and Multicultural Misrecognition

On November 2, 2012, No Doubt, a popular contemporary band fronted by Gwen Stefani, released a new music video to its fans on Facebook. Directed by Melina Matsoukas, a Grammy-winning music and commercial video director, "Looking Hot" offered a cowboys-and-Indians-themed narrative to accompany the recent release of their single by the same title. Featuring Stefani in the lead role as an Indian woman, the video rehearsed the classic depiction of American Indians that has been solidified in settler popular culture over the past couple of centuries: Plains warriors astride horses on the background of western prairies, a beautiful captive woman pandering to the cowboy's, and the spectator's, gaze, and the assembly of props complete with feather headdresses, ceremonial staffs, tipis, arrows, wolves, smoke signals, and an array of Indian-chic clothing, all relegating the continent's indigenous peoples to a mythologized American past. The video met with immediate condemnation by scores of commentators, indigenous and non-native alike, as an inexcusable example of cultural misappropriation and a disappointing rehash of the most hackneyed Indian representational stereotypes.[1] And even though it was defended by some of No Doubt and Stefani's most loyal fans as a harmless bit of aesthetically dazzling creative play or a deliberately ironic performance poking fun at Indian stereotypes rather than perpetuating them, just a day after the video's release, the band issued a public apology and removed it from its official website; within days, "Looking Hot" disappeared from the internet altogether.

One more example in a long history of cultural appropriation of indigenous images, "Looking Hot" was not particularly remarkable in itself. Its obvious fascination with Indian nobility, mysticism, and aesthetic and erotic appeal reflected the twisted emotional economy of settler *playing Indian*, with its simultaneous admiration for the glorious Indian past and willful

disregard for contemporary indigenous realities.[2] What is remarkable about the entire incident is how quickly No Doubt issued an apology for "Looking Hot" and removed it from circulation—and how effectively their swift response put an end to the brewing controversy while, ironically, earning the band points for cultural sensitivity. One of the effects of the multiculturalist reformation that occurred in North America in the late twentieth century is that instances of cultural misappropriation and playing Indian of the kind evidenced in No Doubt's video are now readily recognized and condemned, most spectators having been successfully educated into respect for cultural diversity as the very glue that binds North American democracies. And even though such condemnations are routinely met with accusations of political correctness by those contemporary Americans who did not pay sufficient attention in their general education classes, apologies for inappropriate trespasses on others' cultural turf have become the publicly sanctioned norm and are deployed with reliable frequency.

No Doubt's apology is typical of this newly emerged genre, and it supplies clear testimony to how the multiculturalist politics of recognition has helped remake the vocabulary we use when speaking about indigeneity in North America. That it has been shaped by the rhetoric of cultural difference as a social good is evident in the apology statement's emphasis on the band's commitment to "diversity and consideration for other cultures" as well as "respect, unity and inclusiveness"; in its references to "Native American people, their culture and history" and "the Native American community"; and in its presumption that the primary harm experienced by indigenous people today amounts to a sense of insult caused by disrespect for their cultures and can thus be remedied by a respectful recognition of their cultural distinctiveness.[3] Yet, far from undoing the offenses of cultural misappropriation, such apologies bring harm of their own by further solidifying this pernicious approach to understanding indigeneity. Their reliance on the conception of indigeneity as culture obscures the unique political and legal contexts that shaped indigenous historical and contemporary realities; they imply that indigenous peoples are cultural minorities rather than sovereign nations with long political histories. Such apologies exemplify a new but already widespread phenomenon I call multicultural misrecognition, one related to but in crucial ways distinct from cultural misappropriation.

In *Indians Playing Indian: Multiculturalism and Contemporary Indigenous Art in North America*, I explore both the predicament that multicultural misrecognition poses for indigenous nations and people and the innovative ways in which indigenous artists in a range of media have responded to this predicament. As I define it, multicultural misrecognition consists in the sub-

stitution of cultural meanings for political meanings of indigeneity—that is, in the replacement of the concept of *indigenous nations* with that of *indigenous cultures* in contemporary popular, and often also scholarly, discourse. By transforming indigenous peoples into Native Americans, multicultural misrecognition equates them with other ethnic minorities to sustain the myth of America as a refuge to the world's emigrants. It enfolds the many distinct colonized nations into the American polities—Canadian and US—as one more homogenized population group accorded cultural citizenship, that is, the right to national belonging irrespective of their cultural difference rather than as a reward for cultural assimilation.[4] Multicultural misrecognition erases the multidimensional political history of indigeneity in favor of an essentialized cultural difference at a moment when, after decades of activism, indigenous peoples have successfully reinserted the concepts of sovereignty, of nations-within-a-nation, and of government-to-government relations into political and legal discourse in North America, though in different ways in the United States and in Canada. These concepts, however, remain unknown to the broader public, which—schooled on multicultural curricula—admires Native American culture and misunderstands, or altogether ignores, unique indigenous political realities, past and present.

This misunderstanding has far-reaching consequences. It renders contemporary indigenous activism on behalf of political, legal, and economic self-determination incomprehensible to much of the settler public, which often dismisses such efforts with suggestions that *Indians should just get over it already*. It determines how indigenous cultural production signifies in the public arena. If the logic of multiculturalism prohibits settler Americans from playing Indian, as the "Looking Hot" incident clearly shows, it now requires that indigenous peoples themselves play Indian to help legitimate the multicultural democracies they cannot help but inhabit. The current flowering of indigenous literature, cinema, and visual arts is typically taken as evidence that Canada and the United States have successfully broken with their colonial pasts, characterized by the expropriation and displacement of indigenous peoples, to become thriving nations of many cultures, where Native Americans enjoy full freedom to represent their cultural difference. Widely available Native American art, authenticated and protected by identity licensing laws,[5] bears witness to this representational freedom and the multicultural credentials such freedom implies.

Although certainly a welcome respite from the long history of assimilatory pressures on American minorities, multiculturalism turned out to be to a large extent a false promise to indigenous peoples. While it reinforces a long tradition of Indian representation in the national cultural imagina-

tion, now with added perspectives of Native American artists themselves, it perpetuates those cultural scripts of Indianness that thwart indigenous nations' aspirations to attain a degree of political and economic independence beyond control over cultural representation. Ironically, it becomes the task of those working in the realm of cultural production, the same realm that routinely perpetuates Indian stereotypes, to confront multicultural misrecognition and to rearticulate the political meanings of indigenous history and experience. Herein, then, lies the urgency of the central question addressed in *Indians Playing Indian*: by what means do contemporary indigenous artists capitalize on the possibilities for the creative expression of indigenous specificity offered by multiculturalism while resisting national incorporation via multicultural misrecognition?

I coined the phrase "multicultural misrecognition" to emphasize that the phenomenon it describes grows out of the ideological imperatives of multiculturalism—and the culturalization of social identities in particular—and that such a reduction to culture constitutes a fundamental misunderstanding of historical and contemporary indigeneity. The currently available concept of cultural misappropriation, useful as it is in many important ways, fails to flag the common misunderstanding of indigeneity as cultural identity; on the contrary, in its reference to cultural property rights, it solidifies the perception of indigenous peoples as Native Americans rounding out the American ethnoracial pentagon.[6] As the "Looking Hot" video incident demonstrates, redemptive attention to cultural misappropriation does not identify, let alone correct, this fundamental misperception. Indigenous peoples in North America are routinely mistaken for cultural minorities, even in the absence of inappropriate use of their images or objects of their material culture. Condemnations of cultural misappropriation may result in the removal of offensive materials and practices, but they do not change how the public thinks about indigenous peoples and their historically developed relationships to North American nation-states. By contrast, multicultural misrecognition as an analytical lens allows us to refocus the discussion of contemporary indigenous representation away from condemnations of settler playing Indian and toward the broader and more salient issues of recognition, both cultural and political.

Thus the main insight of *Indians Playing Indian* comes in two parts. While this book offers in the introduction a diagnosis of the contemporary moment and the conditions of representation with which multicultural misrecognition confronts indigenous artists, the weightier point I want to make about the ideological functions of contemporary indigenous art accrues by examples. In the book's five chapters, I explore a wide range of artistic re-

sponses to the predicament of multicultural misrecognition by focusing on sites and texts that explicitly address the dangers of multiculturalist cooptation of indigenous cultural difference on behalf of nation-building in the United States and Canada. Each chapter showcases a different medium—museum exhibition, cinema, digital fine art, sculpture and multimedia installation, and fiction—and explores a specific rhetorical strategy deployed to jam the interpretive mechanisms of multicultural misrecognition and to recover political meanings of indigeneity. While these strategies are distinct in the ways I explore below, they share a common pattern and a common aim: they evoke and engage the stereotypes solidified in settler Indian representation in a rhetorical performance we could call Indians playing Indian. They do so to expose the limitations of the culturalist conceptions of indigeneity and to clear space for the much-needed public recognition of the political historical and contemporary realities of indigenous lives.

Since the political meanings of indigeneity have been so successfully obscured by the pervasive operations of multicultural misrecognition, I turn below to a brief account of the history of recognition of indigenous peoples in North America, an account that highlights the gradual but deliberate shift from political recognition in the early colonial period to cultural recognition in the present. I begin with the contemporary moment and the ideological functions of indigenous misrecognition in the context of multiculturalism. To provide a genealogy of the present moment, I then backtrack to the early colonial period to recover the precedent of indigenous sovereignty in the diplomatic practice of the time and to the early republican period to trace the first attempts at circumscribing this sovereignty in the process of national consolidation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I describe the emergence of modern ethnology and culturalist conceptions of indigeneity and how the popular visual media, from early painting to photography and film, helped first inspire and later disseminate these conceptions. My primary focus in the narrative of these shifts in recognition is on the United States, but I note where Canadian practice diverges in significant ways.[7] I conclude this section by describing some of the many instances and forms of political and legal resistance to the erasure of indigenous nations by American Indian leaders and intellectuals from the early nineteenth century to the present. A thorough understanding of the rhetorical strategies explored in *Indians Playing Indian* depends on a good grasp of the basic facts of indigenous political history in North America. This history serves as a foundation for this art's insistent appeal for the recognition of indigeneity as a unique political phenomenon rather than as merely one more cultural identity among many others.

Recognizing Indians: From Politics to Culture

Multicultural misrecognition as a coinage derives from the concept of the politics of recognition, the ideological and ethical heart of North American multiculturalism. The politics of recognition—that is, recognition of diverse cultural identities in the context of constitutional democracies via the concept of cultural citizenship, a group-based right—is a contemporary phenomenon. It was institutionalized in the 1982 Canadian Constitution, in a clause defining Canada as a nation of multicultural heritage. In 1992, the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor theorized it as an ethical obligation and a human right in a seminal essay, which gave the concept of "The Politics of Recognition" its name.[8] Although absent from US foundational legal documents, which famously enshrined the concept of individual rights, in practice it currently pervades public discourse on social relations in the United States as well. A fighting creed during the so-called culture wars in the 1980s, by the 1990s, the politics of recognition had been appropriated by the American democratic states as a tool of nation-building, multiculturalism having replaced the earlier melting-pot ideology. By 1997 the preeminent American sociologist of race and ethnicity, Nathan Glazer, would famously, though reluctantly, claim that *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*.[9]

Contemporary American multiculturalism emerged in the late twentieth century in the wake of the new social movements advocating on behalf of equal political and cultural rights for a variety of minority groups. It promised representational liberation to all of America's historical and contemporary others and depended on a far-ranging appreciation of cultural distinctiveness, rather than cultural assimilation, as a crucial constitutive of the American past and present. Multiculturalism put a premium on difference as a resource that promised to expedite national integration, and it admitted previously marginalized groups to the national imaginaries. Thus it quickly became the dominant model for social relations in North American states that were fashioning themselves as nations of immigrants nurturing their diverse cultures while pledging allegiance to a specific political ideal of representative democracy. Suspended immediately after 9/11 in favor of mobilizing pronouncements recalling the early twentieth-century cry "Americans All!" deployed in the context of the increased immigration of people seen as racially other, multiculturalism was quickly redeployed in public discourse as a way to distinguish North American democracies, and the United States in particular, from fundamentalist Islamic states (Yúdice 340).

In the twenty-first century, multiculturalism operates in changed conditions, characterized by the war on terrorism, an increased concern with

national security and the policing of borders, heated debates over immigration reform, and renewed attention to class difference and the redistribution of resources brought on by a series of severe economic downturns. Yet through all of these adjustments to changing geopolitical, economic, and social conditions, and despite the fact that it is frequently criticized for its pernicious ability to deflect questions of socioeconomic inequality (for example, by Žižek, San Juan, Fraser, and Benhabib) and political representation (for example, by Povinelli and Yúdice) in favor of the celebration of cultural difference, multiculturalism remains crucial to the self-representation of Canada and the United States as fully credentialed contemporary democracies. However, because of its dependence on culture as the main conceptual reference point, multiculturalism presents a unique set of problems for indigenous peoples, who have experienced a history of colonization rather than one of immigration. While the multiculturalist politics of recognition has offered a way to break with the more shameful aspects of the colonial past in the United States and Canada and granted previously marginalized groups access to the settler national imaginaries, it has led to a fundamental misperception of indigenous peoples and their relationship to the American nation-states and other American population groups. And while this misperception bolsters the settler states' projects of national consolidation, ironically, it undermines the explicit imperative of the politics of recognition as formulated by Taylor: the ethical obligation to properly recognize all population groups for who they are. Devoid of the acknowledgment of the unique political distinctiveness of indigenous nations, the multicultural mandate of inclusiveness continues, rather than puts an end to, colonial coercion.

Diplomacy, Treaties, and the Political Conception of Indigeneity

Apologies for cultural misappropriation, such as that of No Doubt following the release of the "Looking Hot" video, are informed by a contemporary understanding of recognition as tied to cultural citizenship. And yet, while explicitly linked to multiculturalism's conceptual presumption about the primacy of culture to the formation of the modern self and social identities, multicultural misrecognition of indigenous peoples as Native Americans has a historical genealogy. It stems from two contradictory yet related developments: the long history of European and American depictions of the continent's indigenous peoples, which has resulted in the hypervisibility of Indians in the settler national imaginaries; and more than two centuries of federal policies that have made contemporary indigenous nations invisible

and their political history on the continent unknown to the general public. However, uniquely in North America, formal recognition of indigenous political separateness, or sovereignty, reaches back to the first decades of European arrival on the continent. It furnishes an extended precedent for the international diplomatic exchanges of recognition, one that the North American multicultural democracies prefer to leave in the past and that indigenous nations insist on resurrecting, commemorating, and acting upon. Its formal expression is a record of several hundred treaties concluded between European, and later American, *governments and indigenous nations*. Today, these historic treaties are often considered in contradictory terms; they are evoked to assert the recognition of indigenous sovereignty in international law, on the one hand, and pointed to as evidence of a deliberate limitation of this sovereignty in US and Canadian legal and administrative practice, on the other.

This contradictory perception begins to make sense if we keep in mind the distinction between the treaties concluded in the early colonial period—that is, prior to 1776—between indigenous nations and European states, and those negotiated with the US federal government through 1871, when the US Congress unilaterally put an end to treaty-making. In the context of international law and diplomatic practice at the time, colonial-era treaty-making between indigenous nations and European governments testified to the commonly accepted understanding that the former were politically separate entities exercising self-government and control over their territories. Early treaties regulated trade, political alliances, and land cessions; as such they functioned to recognize the prior rights of indigenous nations, even if the actual agreements involved relinquishing some of those rights. The pervasiveness of treaty-making practice, manifested in the large number of treaties, "gives clear evidence," argues historian Howard Berman, "of broad European recognition of the international personality of the indigenous peoples of that time and place" (131).[10] Importantly, Berman points out, these treaties did not constitute political recognition for North American indigenous nations, because "as political communities created by the original inhabitants, Indian societies possessed inherent, preexisting sovereign rights and conducted political relations in their own interests on the international plane" (131). By contrast, the very same treaties were the source of European rights on the continent, for they served as the formal recognition of spheres of influence in America by legitimating territorial and trade claims of European states against each other while also specifying their economic and political relationships to the indigenous nations.

This understanding of early treaty-making has persisted among North

American indigenous nations and is embodied in the Guswenta, or the Two Row Wampum Belt. The Guswenta is a record of a treaty negotiated between the Haudenosaunee, known to the Europeans as the Iroquois Confederacy, and Dutch settlers in the Hudson Valley in the early 1600s. Represented by a wampum belt featuring two purple beaded stripes, one depicting the Haudenosaunee and the other the Europeans, running parallel to each other on a white background, the Guswenta is glossed by Haudenosaunee elders as a record of an agreement to coexistence guaranteed by the mutual policy of noninterference. To this day, the Guswenta and the principles it represents are upheld by the indigenous nations of the American Northeast as the originary formulation of settler-indigenous relations on the continent. A fixture of political memory and of present practice among the Haudenosaunee, the Guswenta has been recently memorialized at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, in a bronze sculpture titled *Allies in War, Partners in Peace* and donated to the museum by the Oneida Nation of New York. Tellingly, the sculptor placed the Guswenta in George Washington's right hand.[11]

When the United States emerged as a political entity in 1776, it inherited the practice of treaty-making from the British Crown. Treaties served several important purposes for the newly proclaimed republic. They helped the recently constituted government to establish and assert its political legitimacy with regard to England, France, Spain, and other governments competing for influence in America. As Frederick Hoxie observes, "ironically, Indian treaties were originally a badge of sovereignty for the national government" (90). Successful treaties allowed the federal government to avoid costly wars on its frontiers and assert its authority over that of the individual states. Treaty negotiations offered opportunities for the new nation to demonstrate in practice its political philosophy via the concepts of the contract as a model for social relations and of free consent to enter such contracts regarding political associations (Konkle 3). While the United States was solidifying its existence as a political entity and staking claims to territorial sovereignty in North America, many of the indigenous nations continued to carry on diplomatic relations with European courts and governments through the end of the Napoleonic era (Berman 187).

However, even while engaging in treaty negotiations in order to consolidate its political existence, from its beginnings the United States deliberately limited indigenous sovereignty in order to exert sole control over land and natural resources. The process of such limitation begins in 1783 with the Treaty of Paris, when representatives of the United States managed to exclude indigenous nations from peace negotiations following the Revolu-

tionary War, both as participants and as potential claimants to American territories.[12] It continued with the US Constitution, which in the Commerce Clause differentiated Indian tribes from both the states and the foreign nations, thus circumscribing their status as sovereign nations upheld in treaties. This definitional limitation progressed further with the Marshall Court decisions in the 1830s, which asserted native title to the land but defined indigenous nations as "dependent domestic nations," effectively sealing the removal of indigenous nations from international diplomacy. It culminated in the abrogation of treaty-making in 1871 and concluded with the assertion of the US Congress's plenary power over Indian nations in the 1903 *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* decision.[13] This trajectory exemplifies a shift in US-Indian relations from recognition of both parties' political sovereignty to the subjection of indigenous nations to US colonial rule.

Treaty-making stopped in 1871, but the complex dynamic of recognition continued to structure indigenous-settler relations, though it shifted to a different plane. The abrogation of the treaty process effectively denied the indigenous nations their sovereign status, allowing for their treatment as colonized people and for consolidated efforts at integrating them into the US administrative, political, legal, social, and cultural matrix. These efforts included establishing missionary and federal agents on reservations; education in boarding schools; administrative acts such as the 1887 General Allotment Act, which aimed to put an end to collective landownership on reservations, the 1885 Major Crimes Act, which sanctioned federal incursions into tribal jurisdiction on reservations, and the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act, which, for the first and only time in US history, extended (or, as its critics would charge, imposed) US citizenship on an entire population group without their consent.[14] In a historical precedent to contemporary multiculturalism, the Indian New Deal era's official cultivation of Indian cultural difference coupled with the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act was part and parcel of the federal project to integrate Indian peoples into the administrative and economic fabric of the United States (Pfister). This process of administrative integration continued via the federal termination and relocation policies of the post–World War II years, which in a reversal of the Indian New Deal aimed to end tribalism by reorganizing terminated tribes as corporations and by encouraging the migration of individual Indians to American cities. During this extended period, from 1871 through the 1950s, indigenous peoples ceased to be viewed as citizens of independent nations and became members of minority groups to be assimilated into American society as individual bearers of rights and obligations (political citizenship), and eventually, by the second half of the

twentieth century, as members of yet another ethnic group comprising the multicultural nation (cultural citizenship).

Art, Anthropology, and Cultural Conceptions of Indigeneity

As the idea of the Indian nation and the indigenous nations themselves were being politically and literally undermined, settler artists began to create images of Indians that cast them in an elegiac mode, nostalgically commemorating a civilization lost to the inevitable historical progress manifest in the proper settlement of the continent and the eventual emergence of modern democracies. Partners in diplomacy from the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries, indigenous peoples increasingly became subjects of a representational resurrection that cast them as emblems of a noble but vanishing race, as ethnological case studies—at first in civilizational development and later in cultural difference—or they were reinvented as First Americans.

The conceit of resurrection through the artist's imaginative abilities originated in the early nineteenth century with George Catlin, the painter of numerous portraits known as the Indian Gallery and the multivolume *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians* (1841), who routinely fashioned himself as an Indian redeemer while taking rhetorical pleasure in descriptions of Indian death.[15] Catlin's amateurish representational rescue efforts found their scientific counterpart in 1879 with the establishment of the American Bureau of Ethnology, a federally funded institution charged with the mandate of salvage ethnography.[16] With the government's funding, ethnographers fanned across the American West in an effort to describe, transcribe, translate, and record the presumably last and fast-fading remnants of authentic Indianness. Collectors followed, the most notorious and rapacious among them being Gustav Heye, the Indian enthusiast whose enormous collection eventually joined the Smithsonian Institution as the National Museum of the American Indian. In the process, the politics of indigenous recognition ceased to be strictly political and moved from the diplomatic stage to a variety of cultural stages—the World's Fairs, the private collections of curiosities, the museum, the gallery, the national statuary, and the silver screen—where the exhibits of indigenous material culture testified to the civilizational progress of so-called Man.

The mandates of salvage ethnography continued to animate the work of later artists. For example, the American photographer Edward Curtis authored numerous portraits of noble but presumably vanishing Indians in the early twentieth century; today ubiquitous in coffee-table books, in cal-

endars, on wall posters, and on T-shirts, they remain the most widely circulated images of American Indians in the world.[17] Filmmakers Robert Flaherty and H. P. Carver directed, respectively, *Nanook of the North* (1922) and *Silent Enemy* (1934), pseudo-ethnographic films that readily translated the settler society's powers of destruction into those of artistic resurrection by recreating on celluloid the vanished authentic Indian worlds.[18] In popular entertainment, the *Wild West* shows staged by Buffalo Bill Cody from 1883 until the development of cinema helped disseminate the idea of the Indian as an emblem of ancient nobility throughout North America and Europe. Theatrical re-creations of the recently fought battles of the Indian wars, often featuring actual participants—most famously Sitting Bull—reenacting their days of military glory, these shows encouraged in the general public a perception of Indians as historical anachronisms obsessively taking pride in their past and stubbornly refusing to adapt to modernity (Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 66). However, in an ironic foreshadowing of the imperatives of multicultural misrecognition, participation in these shows likely taught indigenous actors that playing Indian in ways that were recognizable to the settler publics might be the best preparation for American modernity.[19] Further, a range of what we would today call "media initiatives," under the auspices of John and Rodman Wanamaker, a father and son from a family of financiers and owners of department stores in Philadelphia and New York, melded the ideological imperatives of the Catlin-Curtis and Cody projects with an important new twist. While staging the departure of the Indian from the American political scene and preserving the images of his noble race, the Wanamakers, through the efforts of their "agent for culture and education" Joseph Kossuth Dixon, birthed the transformation of the vanishing Indians into the First Americans.[20] Dixon pressed the agenda of Americanizing the immigrants arriving in large numbers in the early twentieth century, through the displayed examples of the Indian. Additionally, the idea of First Americans served to extend the United States' historical genealogy into antiquity—combining the best of the Indian noble race and the best of Western modernity—and helped rewrite the colonial conquest into the nationalist narrative of progressive historical evolution and a political future as a universal democracy.

These representations of the Indian in popular visual media in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emerged during an era of profound epistemological reshuffling, especially with regard to dominant conceptions of human difference. Major political, economic, and social changes around the turn of the century—such as an end to slavery and the Indian wars, Reconstruction, increased immigration from new regions of Europe, urbani-

zation, and the development of mass popular culture—effectively undermined the dominant concepts and hierarchies, such as slave/master and savage/civilized, that had previously organized knowledge and social reality (Evans 4). As race was increasingly circumscribed to skin color, the anthropological concept of culture gained currency in specialist as well as popular discourses (5). Scholars usually credit Franz Boas with bringing about this shift from race to culture and from evolutionary diachronic models of civilization, which aimed to account for change, to contextual synchronic models of cultures, which offered static representations of diverse ways of life and modes of thinking (Elliott xxv). Inspired by Boas's culture concept, ethnographic conventions in genres raging from scholarly writing to amateur visual representation left no room for depictions of indigenous political agency, whether historical or contemporary. Instead, this new ethnographic approach transformed living historical peoples into objects for scientific study and aesthetic contemplation, objects that served as emblems of the modern American civilization's past.

This particular mode of Indian representation, one obscuring the political history of indigenous nations in favor of the conceptions of the vanishing noble race or of Indians as First Americans, has proven enduring; it has morphed into the full-fledged multicultural misrecognition of the present moment. The goal of the meticulous representational resurrection of indigenous worlds as yet unchanged by European colonialism or encountering that change still from the position of their own epistemological strength survives in contemporary examples such as Kevin Costner's 1990 *Dances with Wolves*, Bruce Beresford's 1992 *Black Robe*, or Terrence Malick's 2007 *The New World*, to offer just a few better-known cinematic instances. As with their precursors, these films nostalgically re-create precontact indigenous societies only to ultimately depict their destruction. The inevitability of that destruction, now blamed regretfully on European colonialism rather than on the necessity of civilizational progress, and the belief in the redeeming potential of the settler representational media remain virtually the same. As with their predecessors, these films refuse to represent any connection between historic indigenous peoples and their contemporary descendants. By the early twentieth century, Boas's anthropology had freed indigenous peoples from the earlier evolutionary narratives only to trap them in the static representations of their presumably authentic but now vanished cultures. The mainstreaming of multiculturalism and its politics of recognition in the late twentieth century solidified the hegemony of the Boasian culturalist understanding of group-based human difference. The films mentioned above and my opening example of No Doubt's apology for their "Looking

Hot" video are just some of the many available examples of the hold this culturalist conception of indigeneity has on the contemporary settler public.

By contrast, contemporary feature films by indigenous filmmakers often insist on just such a connection and continuity between indigenous pasts and presents, as in an example I discuss in chapter 2, the Inuit Isuma Productions' 2001 feature *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*, which frames the story of a precontact Inuit band with outtakes depicting Inuit filmmakers, producers, and actors engaged in the performance of their usable past. No more mere objects of settler redemptive efforts, the Inuit appropriate the settler representational medium and conventions to confront multicultural misrecognition with aesthetically savvy interventions. The appeal of indigenous peoples as First Americans survives in many of the contemporary Canadian and US public narratives of multicultural democratic consolidation, such as, for example, the National Museum of the American Indian, which opened in 2004 on the National Mall in Washington, DC. However, as I discuss in chapter 1, it has to compete there with the political conceptions of indigeneity asserted in the tribal galleries curated by members of contemporary indigenous nations.

Indigenous Political Resistance

Indigenous nations and people have always resisted this incorporation by political erasure and cultural resurrection, and they typically have done so by evoking the historic treaties, and the political sovereignty they presumed, as an emblem of their status on the continent. While the general settler discourse on Indians shifted from politics to culture, many indigenous nations have never stopped acting and speaking as independent nations. The early chapter of indigenous resistance to US federal efforts to limit indigenous sovereignty unfolded in the courts, the press, and the public lecture circuit in the early nineteenth century as the Cherokee Nation, along with the Seminole, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Nations, resisted attempts to remove them to Indian Territory. In the context of arguments about the inherent racial difference and inferiority of American Indians current at the time, indigenous intellectuals, such as William Apess and George Copway, understood that any articulation of indigenous difference functioned ultimately to justify political disenfranchisment of indigenous nations. Instead, they used the evidence of the treaties concluded with the US government to argue for their prior recognition as political sovereigns. But the histories of indigenous nations they penned included accounts of the successful appropriation of European and American institutions, such as representative

government, press, and plantation slavery, as a way to show these nations' ongoing fitness for nationhood and thus to write them into the political future on the continent (Konkle 6). Before the era of cultural difference as a social good, indigenous intellectuals used evidence of acculturation as an argument for preserving indigenous political sovereignty as recognized in the treaties.

Following the 1871 halt to treaty-making, the 1903 assumption of plenary power by the US Congress, the pacification and confinement to the reservations of Plains nations, the allotment of tribal lands, and the resulting demographic crisis in Indian Country, American Indian intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century could hardly hope to successfully argue for indigenous political independence. Nevertheless, against the then-dominant vanishing-race discourse, they insisted on inserting indigenous people into settler modernity. American Indian ethnographers, anthropologists, folklorists, and writers such as Ella Deloria, Archie Phinney, Zitkala-Sa, Arthur S. Parker, Charles Eastman, and Francis La Flesche politically supported the Americanization of Indians through educational and economic assimilation via boarding schools, allotment of tribal land, and US citizenship. In the written accounts of tribal societies, they deployed the culturalist model, thereby contributing, however unintentionally, to the settler public belief in the moribund nature of indigenous traditionalism. However, while operating firmly within the Boasian model, far from dutifully recording Indians' vanished pasts for future generations' study and nostalgic admiration, these writers questioned the model's usefulness for articulating indigenous modernity, on which they unequivocally insisted (Elliott 127). Caught between the earlier social Darwinism and the Boasian culture concept, in order to account for historical and cultural change—that is, for indigenous entry into settler modernity—these writers often had to rely on the earlier civilizational progress narrative (147). Their choice between history and culture, in other words, was political, a gambit calculated to resist the vanishing facilitated by the conceptual models of modern ethnology. While, in the spirit of the period, they took up the project of accounting for indigenous difference in terms of culture rather than unique political status, as writers and activists, they argued for the continued presence of indigenous peoples as equal citizens in a modernizing United States.[21]

Indigenous sovereignty reemerged during the 1960s and 1970s in the political rhetoric of pan-Indian organizations, such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), and the broader American Indian Movement (AIM). In response to the success of the federal termination policies,[22] NIYC and NCAI defined sovereignty and tribalism in their political platforms as foundational concepts

for indigenous activism in the twentieth century.[23] In a series of widely publicized actions, such as fish-ins, road blockades, and occupations of federal property and lost historic indigenous lands, AIM activists invoked the authority of the treaties to remind the federal governments and the general public about the inherent sovereignty of indigenous nations and the historic recognition of that sovereignty in North America.[24] In the context of the United States' repeated attempts to discount these treaties as anachronisms, AIM political activism attempted "to re-establish treaty documents as powerful and authoritative and as binding on the contemporary settler nation" because it saw them as legal precedents for the reassertion of indigenous rights to land and other resources (Allen, *Blood Narrative*, 19–21). This strategy paid off: insistence on the recognition of the enduring legality of the treaties bore fruit in American national politics when, in 1970, President Nixon officially ended the termination policy. It continues to pay off as every US government from the Clinton administration to the current Obama administration customarily reiterates its commitment to tribal sovereignty and to the government-to-government relationship with indigenous nations, even though they rarely act on it.[25] In the 1970s and 1980s, treaty-based activism in US legal courts resulted in the upholding of the provisions of several historic treaties,[26] the important effect of these court battles being the repeated reassertion of tribal sovereignty and treaty rights, and their solidified legal precedent.[27]

This particular history of indigenous recognition, with its twinned efforts at political erasure (and indigenous resistance to that erasure) and cultural resurrection, has led to disparate conceptions of indigeneity in the spheres of legal and diplomatic practice, which take the political nature of historical and contemporary indigeneity as a given, and in the sphere of popular culture, which remains wedded to the understanding of indigeneity as culture or ethnicity. It explains why settler entertainers issue earnest apologies for the offenses of cultural misappropriation to "the Native American community" at the same time as presidential candidates reaffirm government-to-government relations between the US federal government and indigenous tribal governments as a routine gesture in their political campaigns. More importantly, however, this history offers an archive of historical facts that are encoded in a variety of ways in contemporary indigenous art. Reading contemporary fiction by indigenous writers or appreciating contemporary indigenous visual art, whether in the museum, gallery, or movie theater, with this history in mind allows for an interpretive insight that breaks with the vastly limited understanding—misunderstanding, really—encouraged by multicultural misrecognition.

Because the multiculturalist politics of recognition encourages the exploration and celebration of cultural differences as a form of patriotic citizenship, cultural production in all of its varied forms provides a vast interface for exchanges of recognition between settler and indigenous participants, enabling interventions to be made on a much larger scale than in other realms of social engagement. Contemporary settler publics flock to museums, art galleries, and cinemas in far larger numbers than they do to Supreme Court hearings or meetings of political caucuses involving indigenous political and legal issues. Broad engagement with cultural production allows for intervention right where multicultural misrecognition takes place, at the source of the predicament, so to speak. Contemporary indigenous artists have capitalized on the current interest in their work to confront multicultural misrecognition. They do so by orchestrating fruitful interpretive impasses that play with cultural stereotypes of Indianness, and thus exploit the disjunction between culturalist and political understandings of indigeneity—and their coexistence and dissonance in contemporary public discourses. These conceptual impasses disrupt the interpretive mechanisms of multicultural misrecognition by making such misrecognition explicit and by shining light on its ideological ramifications. Because cultural production is the sphere where the culturalist conceptions of indigeneity are most commonly and forcefully perpetuated, it is here where they can be most effectively confronted. As spectators and readers, we can appreciate these confrontations—provided we are able to pry ourselves away from the interpretive mandates of multicultural misrecognition and instead consider indigenous cultural production in its proper political context. The varied forms of art explored in my book teach us how to do just that.

To demonstrate how the disjunction between the culturalist conception of indigeneity and the political conception of indigeneity operates in public forums, I turn first to the most visible recent engagement with the question of contemporary indigenous representation: the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, DC. Chapter 1 focuses on what I call the dialectic of recognition—that is, the tension on display at the museum between the recognition of indigenous peoples as sovereign nations and their recognition as First Americans. First written into law in 1989, the NMAI was conceptualized in the 1990s in wide-ranging collaboration with indigenous communities across the Americas. Since its opening in 2004 it has been at the center of ongoing debates over the forms of contemporary indigeneity and its recognition by the state and federal governments and by the general public. The NMAI straddles the period of the

emergence of multiculturalism, its mainstreaming in the late twentieth century, and its reassertion in the early twenty-first, functioning as a kind of barometer of contemporary indigenous representation. I propose that this tension between culturalist and political conceptions of indigeneity constitutes the NMAI's most valuable and enduring contribution to contemporary debates over indigenous recognition, because it both maps in detail the workings of multicultural misrecognition as a rhetorical predicament faced by contemporary indigenous artists and highlights some of the strategies these artists and curators have developed to confront this predicament.

In chapter 2, "*Atanarjuat* and the Ideological Work of Indigenous Filmmaking," I move from the public space of the museum, constructed via multiple curatorial agencies and responding to the mandates of both settler and indigenous constituencies, to a different kind of collective effort at indigenous recognition. I turn to *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*, the Igloolik Isuma Productions' debut feature, because it is the first film written, directed, acted, and produced locally by indigenous filmmakers to gain international recognition and accrue a complicated reception history as simultaneously a quintessential Inuit and Canadian film. Thus it offers an opportunity to explore indigenous negotiation of multicultural misrecognition in the context of full indigenous creative and administrative control in Canada, a country that, unlike the United States, wrote multiculturalism into its constitution but, like its neighbor to the South, displays marked reluctance to acknowledge the political ambitions of indigenous nations beyond the scope of the Canadian federation. I suggest that in *Atanarjuat*, Isuma's filmmakers deploy their own brand of the dialectic of recognition by elaborating a concept of contemporary indigenous authenticity as a deliberate performance that facilitates a variety of political projects for multiple constituencies, speaking simultaneously to the specificity and universality of Inuit history and the present.

Historically, settler Indian representation has been carried on particularly prolifically in the visual arts, from early American painting and photography to the first moving pictures and beyond, resulting in a vast encyclopedia of images and visual representational modes that helped develop the discourse of the vanishing Indian and that continue to subtend interpretive mandates of multicultural misrecognition. The examples of the NMAI and *Atanarjuat* reveal that the creative appropriation of these images of Indian past constitutes an effective strategy for disrupting multicultural misrecognition. Digital fine art is a genre that engages with the settler visual, and in particular the photographic, archive more extensively than other forms of contemporary cultural production and thus allows for a comprehensive in-

vestigation of the rhetorical uses of this archive in the context of the multiculturalist appetite for visual displays of indigenous cultural difference. Thus, in chapter 3, "Palimpsestic Images: Contemporary American Indian Digital Fine Art and the Ethnographic Photo Archive," I explore the work of Dugan Aguilar, Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, and Pamela Shields, three contemporary digital artists/photographers who deploy a similar strategy of multifaceted layering of settler archival images and photographic conventions, an approach I call palimpsestic representation. I argue that palimpsestic representation allows today's indigenous artists to capitalize on this ideologically weighty visual inheritance to evoke the truth of indigenous historical experience obscured in settler photography precisely by incorporating fragments of the settler visual archive into their works to reveal contemporary indigenous realities as saturated with officially suppressed political histories.

Even as it capitalizes on the subversive potential of the settler photographic archive, palimpsestic representation remains wedded to a settler representational system. So in chapter 4, "Of Turtles, Snakes, Bones, and Precious Stones: Jimmie Durham's Indices of Indigeneity," I turn to an artist and a body of work that explore the utopian possibilities of what I call insubordinate indigenous art—that is, art that signifies outside of settler technologies of meaning, even as it is aimed against them. Durham's is a playful yet serious utopianism that never loses sight of its vision even as it pays careful attention to the rhetorical complexities of contemporary exchanges of recognition. One of the earliest indigenous critics of multiculturalism, Durham remains largely unknown to the American public and is very rarely a subject of scholarly analysis. It is a pity, not only because of the acutely insightful commentary he has offered on the impact of multiculturalism in the art world but also because his sculptures and multimedia installations deploy a rhetorical strategy—indexical representation—that is particularly effective in exposing and subverting multicultural misrecognition. By using found objects such as animal bones, turtle shells, and precious stones as indexical rather than symbolic or iconic signs, Durham dips into a different kind of archive available for indigenous self-representation. This archive of what I call indices of indigeneity allows the artist to bypass, to some extent, the settler signifying systems and to experiment with a utopian possibility of unfettered indigenous self-representation, even as his astute critique of the American rhetorical ground defined by multicultural misrecognition undermines such utopian potential of indigenous art.

The last of the case studies turns to the genre typically seen, along with the museum, as paradigmatic of European modernity: the novel. Unlike

Durham's turtle shells and coyote skulls, which help stage strategic escapes from settler interpretive frameworks, the novel embeds indigenous writers in the representational medium perhaps most inhospitable to traditional tribal forms of creative expression, which are rooted in orality, performance, and a far more complex conception of chronology than the one that underwrites standard Western narrative fiction. In chapter 5, I examine the deployment of what I call the gruesome authentic in LeAnne Howe's 2001 novel *Shell Shaker* as a strategy of forestalling multicultural misrecognition and as part of a larger narrative experiment to enact indigenous cosmology via the western medium of literary fiction. American Indian literature has been at the foreground of what critics have described as the American Indian Renaissance, which dates back to the early 1970s and is very much in evidence today. While many contemporary American Indian writers have met with critical success and wide readership, Howe's work is known only to a few specialists in the field of American Indian literature. Part of this neglect has to do, in my view, with the radically experimental nature of her narratives and with her unwavering allegiance to the political conception of indigeneity. For the very same reason, I believe it is critical to introduce Howe to the larger scholarly and general publics.

While I elucidate the consequences of multicultural misrecognition for indigenous artistic expression, ultimately my aim is to identify and describe medium-specific formal strategies that American Indian artists have developed to remind American settler publics about their peoples' long histories on the continent and their ongoing status as sovereign nations rather than as ethnic minority groups clamoring for inclusion in American nation-states. I also seek to model a critical approach that acknowledges the opportunities multiculturalism presents as well as the dilemmas it poses for contemporary indigenous artists. While I begin my discussion with the National Museum of the American Indian and Isuma's debut feature, *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*, textual sites that have achieved global circulation, I also introduce a wide range of artistic media and some lesser-known figures in hopes that other scholars will expand their teaching repertoires to include these or similar voices. Settler representation of North America's indigenous peoples has historically unfolded in a variety of media, and so have contemporary indigenous responses; we should pay attention to as many of them as we can. And as we do so, we should strive to retrain our interpretive acumen away from the pervasive imperatives of multicultural misrecognition and toward the complex and innovative ways in which contemporary indigenous art makes available the rich political histories and complex contemporary realities of indigenous experience in North America. When we

refuse to pay attention to the political, we are risking misapprehension of the complicated pasts and the potential futures of both indigenous and settler nations in North America, along with the fundamental conditions and possibilities of their inextricable relations. My book is an attempt to listen to the political in contemporary indigenous art in an interpretive mode that itself resists multicultural misrecognition.