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Aller au sommaire du numéro

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Résumé de l'article

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Abstract

The relationship between Québécois cinema, memory and territory has existed for decades. This article demonstrates how Indigenous peoples continue to occupy an important space in the economy of representations (real and imagined) situated within Québécois cinema. In recent years, contemporary documentaries that address Indigenous peoples such as *Québékoisie* (Mélanie Carrier and Olivier Higgins, 2014) and *L'empreinte* (Carole Poliquin, 2015), have changed their general tone (at least superficially) but have nonetheless extended the image which positions the *Amérindien* as a mirror for the fraught identity of the French-Canadians living in Québec. Through the analysis of both contemporary Indigenous and non-Indigenous films, this article identifies the configurations of *this quest for Indigenous identity* in Québécois documentary films and in Arnait Video Production films, through the reconfiguration and re-imagination of intercultural relationships.

Keywords: Indigenous cinema, Quebec cinema, intercultural collaborations, colonialism, Indigenous representation, identity

Nipimuteti
Nikapatati
Nipimishkati
Tshetshi natshiskatan
Joséphine Bacon,
Innu poet[1]

The relationship between French Canadian Québécois cinema, memory and territory has existed for decades. Fifty years ago, documentary filmmaker Pierre Perrault, in his *Discours sur la parole* (1995), wrote that "countries are born within memory" and that in order to build a history, an identity and a collective memory that constantly re-invents itself through spoken words,

it is necessary to walk the territory with the help of a hand-held camera and a tape recorder, which "magnif[y] and heighten […] memory."[2] However effervescent it may have been, direct cinema, or what Perrault called cinéma vécu, born out of the Quiet Revolution and thriving in the liberating social and political climate of those times (roughly between 1960 and 1970), was nonetheless short-lived. The loss of the 1980 and 1995 referendums, the rise of individualism and of other values related to neoliberalism—the collapse of collective values, the evacuation of Catholicism's legitimacy in favor of capitalist efficiency—found their way onto the screen and images of loss, deprivation and confusion over one's national identity were interpolated by Franco-Québécois viewers, who wander aimlessly, searching for a place to belong, despite, and ignoring, their settler colonial status. The considerable increase of migratory flows in Québec over the last twenty years has accentuated this never-ending identity crisis, reviving the quest for the French-Canadian Québécois subject, who, to get out of this predicament, "resorts to an intensive utilization of the past" and of figures that have been identified with the past (such as Indigenous peoples) to reconfigure Franco-Québécois memory and myths.[3]

Profoundly anchored in the imaginary of the Québécois people, Indigenous peoples were presented on screen as metaphoric characters. In several occurrences, and in an act that can be construed as appropriation, they symbolized the relationship between the people and the land. The latter was seen as an immense space that was once explored by the *voyageurs*, *coureurs des bois*, and fur traders that, guided by Indigenous allies, were considered through the overused stereotype of the "guardians of nature."

Furthermore, Indigenous peoples continue to occupy an important space in representational economies (both real and imagined) situated within Québécois cinema. In recent years, contemporary—and controversial—documentaries that address the question of relationships between Québécois and Indigenous peoples, such as *Québékoisie* (Mélanie Carrier and Olivier Higgins, 2014) and *L'empreinte* (Carole Poliquin, 2015) have, at least superficially, changed their tone. Nonetheless, they extend the image that positions the *Amérindien* as a mirror for the fraught identity of the French-Canadians living in Québec, whose homesickness and sense of imagined displacement can be cured through a hybrid identity that allows them to ground themselves in a contemporary multicultural landscape. In Québécois fictions films, the

Indigenous character remains a symbol of proximity to the land as well as one of alienness to the territory, with films such as *Ce qu'il faut pour vivre* (Benoît Pilon, 2008), *Maïna* (Michel Poulette, 2013) and *3 histoires d'Indiens* (Robert Morin, 2014) tackling the subject of intercultural isolation and incommunicability.

Ever since Zacharias Kunuk released his internationally acclaimed feature-length fiction film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* in 2001, Indigenous filmmakers in Québec and Canada have increased their use of film and digital video as a means to represent their own cultures and for political, economic and social aims. Following the revelations about the residential school system and the recent publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, Indigenous filmmakers' works have reflected a diverse yet distinct aesthetic, which does not echo a desire to return to the past or engage in "salvage ethnography," but rather express a desire to build a better and brighter future from the fraught times of the present with the voices of their communities taking center stage.[4]

For the younger generations that hold the challenge of reconciling two cultures and two ways of life—tradition versus modernity—,Indigenous identity is a concept that cannot be understood without individual, communal and sometimes even intercultural healing. Many fiction films such as *Before Tomorrow* (*Le jour avant le lendemain*, Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Piujuq Ivalu, 2008), *Uvanga* (Cousineau and Ivalu, 2014), *Mesnak* (Yves Sioui-Durand, 2012), *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* (Jeff Barnaby, 2013), *Le Dep* (Sonia Bonspille-Boileau, 2015) and *Restless River* (Cousineau and Ivalu, 2019) address, each in their own way, the hurt and difficulties of adapting to an ever-changing world. They show that in order to survive and find one's identity, a balance between the modern world and traditional ways must be achieved. Through the analysis of both contemporary Indigenous and non-Indigenous films and collaborations, this article identifies the configurations of a cinema slowly retracing and re-imagining intercultural relationships. Furthermore, by considering what might be called "clumsy," "naïve" or hopeful explorations of these relationships in *Québékoisie* and *L'empreinte*, and then giving examples of successful intercultural relationships and representations in other Québécois and Indigenous films, we seek to paint a more complete landscape of Québec cinema and its—more or less—evolving relationship to Indigeneity. Needless to say that it is relevant to bring up the

inadequacy of reconciliation, hybridity and/or interculturalism as solutions for many Indigenous critics, who ultimately see the latter as upholding settler nationhood and instead seek decolonization, Indigenous sovereignty and land reclamation. However, where Québécois/Indigenous film collaborations are concerned, works such as *Mesnak* (Sioui-Durand, 2011) *Kuessipan* (Myriam Verrault, 2019) or *Avant les rues* (Chloé Leriche, 2016), to name but a few, are salient examples of fruitful collaborations that further demonstrates that division is not always the best solution. Finally, the use (and misuse) and perhaps misunderstanding of the word *métis* and *métissage* have also brought forth central debates around the subject of Indigenous identities in Québec, a constituant part of reconciliation.

Je me souviens: Québec, the Nation State, First Nations, Hybridity and Origins

The motto *Je me souviens* (I remember) dates from 1883 and, at that time, was an historical reminder for the French-Canadian people of their perceived failures and glories.[5] More specifically, the motto, inscribed on the coat of arms of Québec City's *Hôtel du Parlement de Québec*, served as an *aide mémoire* for the population living with the consequences of the British conquest of 1760 on the Plains of Abraham and of the Patriot uprising of 1837-1838. The bronze sculptures adorning the *façade* of the *Hôtel du Parlement* had a similar role, as they represented Indigenous peoples, explorers, military officers and other important figures of the French and English regimes and imaginaries. *Je me souviens* is thus attached to the memory of the Empire, to the dream of a nation-state and to the immense spaces that were traversed by the *coureur des bois*, fur traders and other legendary protagonists still alive and well in the Québécois imagine-nation.[6]

Adopted once again at the beginning of the 1960s, during the Quiet Revolution, *Je me souviens* also illustrated French-Canadians' will to build themselves a country outside of theocratic power and give birth to newly re-imagined founding narratives, in which writers, poets, filmmakers, singers and playwrights would function as revolutionary catalysts. However, in contemporary, multicultural and post-referendums contexts, the implementation of this collective project is more difficult to envision for many younger people. It is also less desirable, as it is not a constituent part of their cultural imaginary. *Je me souviens*, in these contexts, thus becomes grounded

in both the past and the future: on the one hand, it mirrors the nostalgia of an aging demographic towards an era where the emergence of Québec as an independent nation-state seemed possible. On the other, the motto expresses the new generation's desire to draw directly from cultural roots to bring life to a new vision of inclusion, one that acknowledges hybridized identities. Consequently, over the last 15 years, a new generation of young Québécois artists have produced works that touch upon this quest of origins, which can be found, for example, in the neo-trad movement of revivalist folk music, nourished by the music of bands such as *Mes Aïeux*, *Les Cowboys Fringants* and *La Volée d'Castors*, or in the prolific work of the singer-poet-storyteller Fred Pellerin. Reading Pellerin's stories or listening to the aforementioned bands' songs, through an incursion into the historic and symbolic past of the Québécois still searching for an imagined country to call their own and through the identification with the territory, lies the foundation for building a new, hybridized, re-imagination of identity.

If part of the Franco-Québécois nation wishes to identify with the territory, what are we to make of the First Nations, Métis and the Inuit, who have inhabited the North American land for the past twelve thousand years and who have walked and defined this land through their thorough understanding of community dynamics and through the relationship they share with the territory? And how do Indigenous representations participate in today's edification of a pluralistic Québécois identity that is constantly digging into the past?

To answer these questions, the numerous articles on this topic written by anthropologist Rémi Savard and surveyed by ethnologist Sylvie Vincent offer some insights.[7] Savard's articles bring to light the profound insecurity of the French-Canadian people, who, facing the colonial yoke of the British Empire, have tried to define themselves as the "absolute oppressed," thus negating their own history as settler colonialists towards the First Nations people.[8] This historic denial, writes Savard, leads to the Indigenous peoples being considered competitors instead of allies by the French-Canadian people, a feeling reinforced by the rising of Québécois nationalism, which elided and eradicated Indigenous presence on its own territory, forcing on Indigenous peoples' assimilation and guardianship rather than on their recognition.[9] From an Indigenous perspective, this issue has also been the central topic of many documentaries, most notably Alanis Obomsawin's *Kanehsatake: 270*

Years of Resistance (1993), which exposes the racism that often lays at the heart of the Franco-Québécois understanding of the Oka Crisis of 1990.

When tracing the history of Indigenous representation in Québécois literature, visual arts and films, Indigenous characters can be linked to the paradigms of both the Self and the Other; they are sometimes considered to be reflecting the colonized state of the French-Canadian subject and is the symbol of a faltering identity, "often in search of Indigenous origins, susceptible of stealing or absorbing *indianity*, just like a praying mantis swallowing her prey."[10]

However, in the last fifteen years, media coverage of several issues relating to Indigenous peoples, such as the murdered and missing Indigenous women; the residential school trauma; the questions of recognition and land claims, accompanied by the occupation of speaking spaces and a cultural renaissance that manifests itself in various spheres—political, economic, academic and artistic—is slowly changing the landscape. Indeed, First Nations and Inuit communities are creating and using ideological (both real and *reel*) tools that borrow from both tradition and modernity to move forward, reconnecting with a culture and identity that were lost in the dark hallways of assimilation, colonization and residential schools.

Québécois Documentary Films and Interculturality: Digging to Find Deeper Roots

More than 30 years after Pierre Perrault's *Le pays de la terre sans arbre* (1980), *Le goût de la farine* (1977*)* and Arthur Lamothe's *Mémoire battante* (1983), new identity-based issues have now surfaced for the younger generations who have only learned about the Quiet Revolution through history books and have but a vague memory of the Oka crisis. These questions have multiplied in recent years, in a context where globalization and technological development ensure that we often know more about the people living at the other end of the globe than we do of our own neighbours.

Fittingly, it is from this questioning that young globetrotters and cyclists Mélanie Carrier and Olivier Higgins set out to meet the Indigenous peoples of Québec's Côte-Nord, the very same communities that were previously filmed by Perrault. Produced in 2013, their documentary *Québékoisie* starts by interrogating how Québec might be defined: "It's lumberjacks, log drivers and farmers who built our country and people into what they are today."

However, when reflecting upon this quite folkloric definition of Québécois identity, the two companions admit their total ignorance of the First Nations peoples who have lived on the same land for thousands of years prior to European arrival. Because they want to better understand the connections that unite the Indigenous peoples to the Québécois, along with the causes of the rupture between the two, they hop on their bicycles and travel route 138 right to its end, where the small community of Natashquan is located.

Through conversations, visits in the communities and informal interviews with the Côte-Nord Innu, the silent protagonists met by Perrault in the 1970s are replaced by new generations who do not fear to speak their minds and reveal themselves to the camera. In summary, the interactions between the filmmakers and the Innu underlines the fact that most Innu do not identify themselves as Québécois and that for them, the identity question is far from simple. For the communities' Elders, the answer to the question of identity does not lie in nostalgia nor in recapturing the nomadic way of life that used to ensure their survival; instead, it is about keeping tradition alive, while benefiting from all of the advantages of modernity such as education, technology, medicine, science and comfort. Identity preservation for the Innu is synonymous with language and cultural transmission and with indigenizing modern culture by younger generations who are seeking balance between two very different worlds. For the Elders featured in the documentary, the relationship with the territory is still very much alive; whereas a more sedentary lifestyle and an acquired taste for Hollywood movies, video games and the Internet is the norm with younger generations.

In regards to hybridity, identity and mixed cultures, two testimonies coming from the Indigenous view point stand out. The first one comes from Mario Bacon, an Innu man who works and lives in the town of Chicoutimi, Québec, far away from his community. After finding out that part of his lineage is French, he decides to embark on a journey that takes him to Normandie (France) where his Bacon ancestors once lived. Driven by a present curiosity about his French ancestors (which can be construed as a positive process) rather than a nostalgia for a lost past (which can be seen as, if not negative, then painful), this quest for identity foregrounds the fact that many Québécois and Indigenous individuals living in Québec are *métissés* (of mixed blood). In fact, it is generally thought that a significant proportion (though this is now often challenged) of French Canadians from Québec has

Québékoisie—Mario Bacon (Innu).

at least one Indigenous ancestor in their lineage, an idea that is corroborated by anthropologist (and long-time brother to the Innu Nations of la Côte-Nord) Serge Bouchard, who has spent his life and career researching and writing about French Canadian and Indigenous experiences and relationships. In *Québékoisie*, he shares his observations concerning the founding myths and forgotten history of Québec:

> It was a vast *métis* Nation but we ended up murdering it in our culture, in our collective memory, we became numb to it. We euthanized the Métis in us, as though he had never existed. Why were we never told? And why don't Indians know to what extent they too are a mixed race? When did we split from that memory? And when did we split with our territorial and historical Native American roots?

Along similar lines, in the documentary, Eruoma Awashish, an Attikamekw artist, agrees with Bouchard when it comes to the question of hybridity, stating that culture is something that is constantly transforming and evolving in order to stay relevant and alive. Eruoma Awashish stipulates that for the younger generations, this means finding balance between tradition and modernity and coming up with ways to enrich their culture as well as non-Indigenous cultures. For example, the appropriation of the woven sash (*ceinture fléchée*) by the Québécois, as well as the adoption of the Catholic religion and the use of European glass beads by Indigenous peoples, show how cultures influence each other, both positively and negatively, and at times in unequal and colonial ways. Nonetheless, the artist says she identifies "with Indigenous cultures from Western US rather than with Catholic religion" and that she "will never let the Indian Act decide if her kids are Attikamekw or not."

Following this train of thought, Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul writes, in *A Fair Country* (2008), "that we are far more Aboriginal than we are European" and that "our failure to recognize it prevents us from becoming the strong, confident and progressive country that is our birthright."[11] In *Québékoisie*, Serge Bouchard pushes this argument even further by declaring that "[s]ocieties that start referring to each other as Aboriginals,

Québékoisie—Attikamekw artist Eruoma Awashish.

Non-Aboriginals, Allochtoons […] have lost their collective wisdom and common sense." This notion, however, continues to be contested, pointing to the tensions of historical and cultural re-imagination on the part of white settlers.

Even if Indigenous protagonists sometimes identify with the terms *métis* (which for most people in Québec means of mixed-blood or mixed ancestry) and *métissage*, the question of *métissage* and of the definition of who are *métis*—mixed-blood—or Métis in Canada is far more complex than what is presented in the documentary, which fails to acknowledge a reality that transcends Québec borders. On this subject, author Chris Andersen criticizes Saul's book *A Fair Country* (called *Un pays métis* in French) and its declaration that Canada is a Métis civilization, making general statements that do not consider or speak of the "Métis people's territory, history, events or culture" or that refers to the Métis as an "individual or group associating with the original core in the Red River region."[12] Indeed, for Andersen and other scholars such as Brenda Macdougall and Darryl Leroux, the term Métis is not only misused, thus reducing aboriginality to an incomplete identity, but for Leroux, the term has become a way for Eastern Canadian individuals and associations (in Québec and the Maritimes) to claim Indigenous rights—for example hunting and land claims—in the name of a (sometimes very) distant or made-up ancestor, going as far as taking these issues to court without considering the impact these claims have on Indigenous identities:

> To be clear, there is widespread consensus among Métis political organizations and intellectuals that the Métis constitute a distinct Indigenous people—and, further, that these Québec-based organizations are not Métis at all. "It's very damaging," Jesse Thistle told CBC Radio last year. The fact that new claims to a Métis identity have piled up so quickly has led to widespread confusion among non-Indigenous people, who don't tend to know how Indigenous peoples traditionally recognize kinship and belonging.[13]

Furthermore, while Andersen prefers looking at Métis in "political terms of historical, people-based relationships—rather than in post-colonizing terms of mixedness," according to Leroux, Eastern Canadians have, for the most part, very little knowledge or interest in these kinds of relationships, and their act of self-indigenizing is often tied to economic motives.[14] Along the

same lines, in her article on the *Daniels Decision* (2016), Brenda Macdougall questions the efforts of the Supreme Court bent on defining "Métis and Non-Status Indians by a new form of legal and historical fiction but in this case based on a criteria of mixedness," thus not taking into account the ways in which Métis peoples define themselves today.[15] However, Law professor Sébastien Malette, along with anthropologist Michel Bouchard and historian Guillaume Marcotte in their prize-winning book *Les Bois-Brûlés de l'Outaouais. Une étude ethnoculturelle des Métis de la Gatineau* (2019), "conclusively demonstrates that a Métis community emerged in early nineteenth century Québec" through "strong scholarly commitment to archival and ethnographic evidence."[16] Furthermore, responding to Leroux's discourse, Malette warns people against explanations that do not take into consideration each individual's personal history and relationship to their roots:

> It is first useful to understand that crafting an explanation about the origin of ethnic identity via the act of impugning motives to all of its bearers, constitutes a double fallacy (i.e. abusive generalization and genetic sophism). More precisely, while certain Québécois Métis may express ideas we might disagree with, this doesn't allow us to move on directly to the conclusion that *all* Métis with roots in Québec have evil and secretive or even ignorant motivations, further positing that the genesis of *all* Métis people in Québec is rooted in such false claims and even malice. Each case must be analyzed separately without prejudice. The generalizations found in Leroux's rhetoric seem abusive.[17]

Therefore, it is clear that Canada's colonial legacy is complex. The actions of representing, defining and encaging Indigenous peoples in a very narrow box, mostly through political language and more specifically in a historical perspective that does not consider the ever-changing landscape that composes Indigenous identities contributes to this confusion about identity. This is especially the case in Eastern Canada, where the term Métis has come to signify a way of interpreting the sharing of cultures and genetics, some people taking advantage of the term for their own personal gain and others claiming an Indigenous ancestry that was for a long time associated with loss and shame but can now be celebrated.

Of course, not all Canadians claiming Indigenous ancestry are frauds. Perhaps because the question of identity in Québec has always been and remains ever-present, the Québécois use the term *métissage* in a very fluid way in order to explain their connection to the territory and to their history. In the documentary films mentioned in this article, it is clear that the term *métis* is not used in the sense given by Leroux, Mcdougall or even Malette and is rather used to describe mixed-ancestry or mixed-blood. Moreover, while there are important and salient questions about who gets to use the term, it is important to note that, whether accurate in its usage or not, *métis* is a term that is part of the contemporary Franco-Québécois imaginary.

Indeed, this idea of a hybrid society where the reconstruction of the Québécois and Indigenous peoples' history must be put forward is also suggested in Carole Poliquin's documentary *L'empreinte*. Narrated by the popular Québécois actor Roy Dupuis—star of the television series *Les filles de Caleb* (Jean Beaudin, 1990-1991) and of the film *Séraphin, un homme et son péché* (Charles Binamé, 2002)—, the documentary follows Dupuis on an identity quest of his own, as he wants to confirm his *indianness*. The first part of the documentary develops some interesting themes related to the subjects of hybridity and of Indigenous influences in Québec. Dupuis seeks the advice and opinions of an array of experts (historians, economists, judges, mediators, anthropologists) who all confirm the fact that, historically speaking, the *franco-amérindienne* alliance distinguishes itself from the Spanish and English conquests that led to the cultural genocide of the Indigenous peoples of America. Furthermore, these experts suggest that this alliance between the fur traders, explorers, voyageurs and Indigenous nations has clearly left its mark on the French-Canadian society.

To corroborate this fact, the respected and acclaimed Innu poet and Elder Joséphine Bacon candidly explains in the documentary how Indigenous peoples took under their wing the French settlers that first came to Canada, sharing knowledge that would help them survive for decades to come. We are told that because of all the interracial marriages and day-to-day communication with the fur traders who lived with Indigenous peoples, the Québécois continued to maintain multiple values and ways of thinking and of doing things that were directly influenced by Indigenous ways of life. However, when in the second part of the documentary, ex-judge and mediator Louise Otis explains how the Québécois judicial system is the only one to integrate

L'empreinte—Innue poet Joséphine Bacon and Québécois actor Roy Dupuis.

mediations conducted by a judge and tax lawyer and professor Luc Godbout insists that Québécois society is based on the idea of community, just like those of the First Nations, both audiences and film critics such as film reviewer René Lemieux remain unconvinced:

> In reality, *L'empreinte* should not be described as a socio historic documentary but rather as an audio-visual work where the audience is bombarded with symbol after symbol of a fantasy-like Québécois culture. […] All those Québécois are put on screen with the presumption of proving with facts that "our people" are tolerant and solidary egalitarians. The argument would have been better served if we had not had the impression that this entire project is but a pretext used to nourish the Québécois myth of progressiveness.[18]

In the same way, Métis writer Chelsea Vowel criticizes the documentary, declaring that:

> Roy Dupuis, Carole Poliquin and Yvan Dubuc have an entire film about the Québécois-as-Métis called L'empreinte. In interviews, Dupuis has stressed

> that the French did not come to Québec as conquerors, and that they were charmed by the "sexual liberation of les sauvagesses" (Indigenous women). Much like Ralston Saul, Dubuc and Poliquin claim that Québec's tolerance for differences (Islamophobia and a penchant for continuing to champion the use of blackface aside), consensus seeking, and love of nature all come from the mixture of cultures; European and First Nations.[19]

These fantasies play themselves out in many ways in cinema by engaging in the process of hybridized re-imagination, not considering that this idealized road to reconciliation is shown once again to be paved with the best of intentions, which carry the "burden" of a white Settler province (Québec) perhaps not yet ready to take full responsibility for the impacts of its colonization.

Québec Indigenous Cinema and New Forms of Hybridized/ Imagined-Nations

Over the last few decades, Québécois cinema has engaged in what Martin Allor calls "cultural *métissage*." Allor notes that:

> the cultural *métissage* effectuated through recent Québec cinema and television is both industrial and discursive in nature. Narrative cinema and television do not simply reflect the tensions between the pragmatic and public and the affective and personalized movements of the discourses of *l'identitaire* in Qu[é]bec. They are centrally productive of their unstable articulation.[20]

At the time Allor wrote this analysis, the role of Indigenous peoples in Québec were largely off the cultural map—if present at all, they took the form of the Other, such as during *la crise d'Oka*. However, the paradigm outlined by Allor aids our thinking of the new forms of *métissage* that have subsequently emerged as part of a Franco-Québécois cinematic imaginary. This shift from colonial otherness to a more hybridized form of inclusion, both as Indigenous peoples and as part of a newly shared form of historical imagination, can be traced through a long history of shifting understanding of what colonialism in Québec and Canada actually are. In thinking about the role of nostalgia in Québec in a hybridized world, one of the things which is intriguing is Québec's status as both a coloniser and a postcolonial nation-state. Indeed, there are some broad similarities

between Canada and other postcolonial nations, but it is these similarities that foreground profound differences. Historically, the Québécois national colonial imaginary emerges with the infamous Durham report of 1839, which, like many colonial ideologies, argued for the complete assimilation of the French-Canadians for their supposed benefit. Because of this traumatic past, Québec has never totally escaped a colonial mentality or fully acknowledged its own complicity in colonialism even as, through the Catholic church, it essentially undertook the goals of the Durham report and placed them on Indigenous peoples. In this mentality, one of the European nationalities that colonised the country (the Québécois) feels colonised by the other invading nationality (the English) while the English in Québec often claims colonised status at the hands of these very same people, who feel colonised by the rest of English Canada. While all these white colonial subjects argue about who colonised whom first, the Indigenous peoples, who were colonised by both groups, are left out of the equation. This dissolution of a clearly defined nation-state has led some to call Canada the first post-modern State. Charles Levin, for example, uses the quandaries posed by the ambiguities as a salient example of the consequences of existing in these postmodern circumstances:

> Although Canada is officially a "duality", the number of possible Canadian nations is far greater, since not only the province of Québec, but *all* the provinces secretly want to become "independent". Moreover, the Aboriginals are divided among themselves over how many nations they comprise, and whether these belong to Canada, or to some larger aboriginal nation which is also part of Canada, though not actually belonging to it. Each of this growing number of nations wants to have nothing to do with the others: and each bitterly opposes the attempts of the others to leave.[21]

Recent cinema in Québécois culture has been as a site where radically shifting notions of Québécois national identity in the twentieth century have been publicly negotiated within a newly reconfigured, hybridized public sphere. Many types of media and discourses feed the public sphere itself and the rise of both new forms of a Québécois imaginary and of Indigenous media has allowed for new, yet at times contradictory discourses in the public sphere. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor describes the mass mediated public

sphere in the following manner, which provides one with a salient map of how these new kinds of re-imaginations are mediated:

> What is a public sphere? I want to describe it as a common space in which the members of society meet, through a variety of media (print, electronic) and also in face-to-face encounters, to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about those matters. I say "a common space" because, although the media are multiple, as well as the exchanges taking place in them, they are deemed to be in principle inter-communicating. The discussion we may be having on television right now takes account of what was said in the newspaper this morning, which in turn reports on the radio debate of yesterday, and so on.[22]

In this model, Québec's newly forming, hybridized culture of nostalgia includes Indigenous peoples, francophones of European descent and immigrants as active participants in the creation and dissemination of the cultural meanings of texts through a re-imagination of, and engagement with, new articulations of an alternative public sphere. A key example of this new form of hybridized imagination is found in the work of the Inuit film collective Arnait, which bridges both Québécois and Inuit cultural formations in a new, hybridized form.[23] Arnait Video Production Collective is located in Igloolik, Nunavut. The first women's Inuit filmmaking collective, Arnait arose both as an off-shoot of, and a response to, Isuma Igloolik Productions. Founded in 1991, the collective engages in the collective production of films and videos from Inuit women's perspectives. Arnait's founders, Marie-Hélène Cousineau, a Franco-Québécoise from Montréal, and Madeline Piujuq Ivalu, an Inuk from Igloolik, collaborate on most of Arnait's productions, in spite of the fact that they did not have a shared language between them at the initiation of the collective. Other important players in this collective are Elder Susan Avingaq (executive producer, writer and set designer) and Lucy Tulugarjuq (producer, director, actor and writer). More recently, Arnait has also been involved in another kind of intercultural sharing through the archiving, digitizing and remediation of their works through the Department of Film and Media's Vulnerable Media Lab at Queen's University (the Arnait archive is deposited in the Queen's University Archive) and through the SSHRC funded Archive/Counter-Archive project. This collaboration between the

The Arnait Video Collective at Queen's University. From left: Lucy Tulugarjuk, Susan Avingaq, interpreter Rhoda Kayakjuak and Madeline Ivalu, with Marie-Hélène Cousineau on the screen. Credit: Arvin Zhang.

Inuit collective and the academic world enhances the visibility of the collective in academic networks and beyond. This initiative has facilitated multiple events, such as curated screenings and workshops with the Elders, as well as an exhibition of their works at the Queen's Agnes Etherington Art Centre in 2020. These events have led to academic and community-based outreach foregrounding Arnait's vast diversity of works.

Arnait has directed, produced and co-produced over twenty works since its founding. However, two of their feature films are of special interest in our analysis of hybridized culture in Québec: *Before Tomorrow* and *Uvanga*. *Before Tomorrow* is set in the mid-nineteenth century and tells a fictional story, recounting the tragic effects of a smallpox outbreak in Nunavik. The film is based on Jørn Riel's Danish novel *Før Morgendagen* (1975), which is set in premodern Greenland. Arnait adapted this novel because of the plot's resonance with the local experience of colonialism and because of the ways in which the film provided an opportunity to expose a tangible connection to historical and ongoing interchanges between the Inuit of the east coast of

Canada and the Inuit of western Greenland. Debates about cultural transfer and language policy are implicit in Arnait's adaptation of Riel's work. Cousineau read Riel's novel in French as it had not been translated to English (or, for that matter, Inuktitut or Greenlandic). Cousineau, moreover, does not speak Inuktitut, while Ivalu and several other Arnait contributors do not speak English or French. Contemporary Québécois language debates, tied to the politics of the nation-state and of the *pure laine* Franco-Québécois, are thus implicitly challenged by *Before Tomorrow*. The multiple languages of Arnait's creative culture, reflected in the genesis and production of *Before Tomorrow*, problematize the debates surrounding language that have played a central role in Québec's status in Canada since the late 1950s and the kinds of often unquestioned assumptions of inclusion and exclusion that emerge from this kind of cultural imaginary. In the film, language barriers are transcended through other forms of communication. In fact, *Before Tomorrow* contains relatively little dialogue: what is shown is far more important than what is said. Arnait's process-oriented production strategies thus appear to overcome the limitations posed by entrenched debates about language. The reception of *Before Tomorrow* thereby reflects the emergent processes of cultural hybridity in Québec, though not without problems. For instance, *Before Tomorrow* was not selected for the *Édition 2008 de la semaine du Cinéma du Québec à Paris*, as it was not considered representative of Québécois filmmaking, though funded in part through the Québec provincial government, co-directed by a Québécoise and set in northern Québec. The issue at stake, according to Cousineau, was one of language: as the film was not shot in French, it was not sufficiently "Québécois" to represent the province. Despite this lack of quasi-state sanctioned recognition, its production practices and themes resonate highly with the new-found practices of imagination a Québécois nation tied to the land, recognizing the Indigenous Other and mapping the two cultures' shared trajectories and traumas through historical re-telling.

This practice of hybridization and re-imagination is also present in Arnait's second feature *Uvanga*. The film is set in contemporary Igloolik, emphasizing ethnic and cultural hybridity, insider-outsider identity politics, inter-generational learning and passing on of traditions and the juxtaposition of metropolitan Canadian/Québécois modernity with lived experiences in a Nunavut small town. In this way, it evokes mechanisms common to

many minoritarian and Indigenous cinemas as well as it reflects staples of Québécois art-cinema, namely the tropes of the "voyage of discovery," harkening back to *les voyageurs*, and the road movie. The co-directors express that their film has intentional and direct connections with contemporary life as experienced by them and others:

> The characters [...] were not inspired by anyone in particular, but there are many families like theirs in the world today: separated, mixed-blood children discovering their roots and identities; Grandparents connecting with newly found Grandchildren; and adults trying to mend broken relationships. This story could have taken place anywhere, but the one we are telling takes place in the North in a remote community on Baffin Island.[24]

As Montréalaise Anna returns North with her teenage son Tomas to visit Tomas's family, wounds are opened as Tomas, Anna and the community are forced to revisit the circumstances surrounding the death of Tomas's father Caleb. The film's opening does not make this clear, however; like Tomas, the viewer is left on the outside to learn as events unfold who is who in the community as well as what the road and object of discovery will be: the film, then, is as much a narrative journey as it is about newfound notions of hybridized identity. As such, as viewers, we are consistently asked to refute such spectacularization as we witness the landscape first via a plane's arrival at an airfield, and then through the smudged windows of a car. These cinematographic strategies are indicative of the film's non-judgemental and non-moralizing ethical stance: viewers are offered a composite of hybridized perspectives, and though these perspectives may be ascribed to particular viewpoints, their amalgamation and simultaneous co-existence is repeatedly emphasized as central to the reality that the film seeks to embody. *Uvanga* also contributes to the reconceptualization of discourses of culture and heritage and how they operate in Indigenous filmmaking. Moreover, the works of Arnait function as a means to delineate new forms of connection and nostalgia, mapping out both a series of links between Inuit and Québécois/Canadian histories, while simultaneously paying attention to details of difference and recognizing the colonial history that lies at the heart of the relationship between the two peoples.

Similar works are now emerging in Québec. Yves Sioui-Durand's production *Mesnak* (2011), the first feature-length Indigenous film made in Québec,

also proposes a form of hybridized identity through the story of a young Indigenous boy who, having been raised by a Québécois family in Montréal, decides to travel to the reserve of Kinogamish to get to know his estranged mother. Inspired by the classic Shakespearian drama *Hamlet* (1603), the playwright-turned-filmmaker Sioui-Durand indigenizes the tragic story of the Prince of Denmark in order to reflect the contemporary realities of life on an Indigenous reserve. In doing so, all the elements of the traditional Innu culture are incorporated in an aesthetic where the old and the new intersect. Elements such as spirituality—and more specifically relationships to the deceased and connection to the territory (shown through earthy tones of orange and brown)—coexist with more recent markers of Indigenous life (i.e. consequences of colonialism) in a community: corruption, alcoholism, drug usage, violence, suicide and sexual abuse. The languages used by the protagonists—who jump from French to Innu in a second's notice—mirror a desire to be heard by a wide and diverse set of publics, all the while remaining faithful to the land they are spoken on. The constant movement back and forth between French and Innu also conveys the reality of younger generations, who juggle with the two languages in order to better fit into a technologized world, where the vocabulary of the land is no longer enough to insure emotional and physical survival. Featuring an all-Indigenous cast, as well as a Québécois and Indigenous production team who filmed on Innu territory, *Mesnak* is described by Indigenous film critic André Dudemaine as a "well-rounded tale offering a mythic-political perspective of commitment, in accordance with Indigenous tradition and present-day exigencies."[25] Therefore, the identity quest presented in the story has less to do with the desire to go back to traditional ways of life than it has with the ability to feel this symbolic sense of coming home through values such as family, community and physical and emotional security. The territory is no longer romanticized as it was—and sometimes still is—by non-Indigenous filmmakers. Instead, it is seen for what it is: a space that allows one to reconnect with culture and language. In the same way that the Indigenous Other presented itself as a mirror for the colonized/colonizing white filmmaker, the tale of Hamlet creates connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous identities through ahybridized re-imagination of the Indigenous Self.

Alternative media practices also inform us of ways in which Indigenous peoples in Québec reconnect with the land without a return to the mythological

and colonial nostalgia of white settler Québécois filmmakers. For example, scrolling through the incredible body of work (documentary and fiction) produced by the filmmakers of the Wapikoni Mobile, we find that themes such as cultural re-appropriation, healing, as well as family and community dynamics are at the heart of many Wapikoni productions.[26] The training program is built to inspire Indigenous youth to create and tell their own stories, using contemporary tools and indigenizing them, not simply copying mainstream styles of filmmaking. Through films such as *Wabak* (Kevin Papatie, 2008), *Blocus 138-Innu Resistance* (Réal Junior Leblanc, 2012) and *La tonsure* (Meki Ottawa, 2012) emerges a will to heal both past and present scars that can be cured through storytelling and remembrance. In these short films, territory is also seen as a space for healing, not only because it holds the stories of the past but mostly because of its potential to bring contemporary tales to life. For these Indigenous youth, *the symbolic home of the soul* can be found in the use of the medium, the camera functioning as a modern-day *talking stick* (a traditional instrument of Indigenous democracy) allowing them to speak up, tell their stories and make their voices heard.[27]

The explosion of hybridized productions over the last few years in Québec, therefore, does not speak to a firmly re-imagined identity, but to its ongoing and productive destabilization, which can be traced back to the rise of both the quest for international markets and transnationalism and to the concurrent but perhaps somewhat paradoxical and complex re-imagination of inclusion.[28] In finding new connections and new nostalgias—looking simultaneously inward and outward—Québécois and Indigenous cinemas do not simply strive in a neo-liberal manner for new forms of inclusion: they speak to the ongoing radical instability of identity and national imagining. By postulating the central role of hybridity in the new notion of "the Québécois", they also reconfigure many of the entrenched collectivist myths about Québécois identity. Undercutting collective, homogenous myths is not something that must only happen in Québec because of its history of inhabiting and imagining the position of both colonizer and colonized, but also because identities themselves are never stable, collective nor unchanging. By recognizing the changing nature of Québécois identity, these films also point to new forms of coalitional politics of shared interests, while acknowledging decolonization and the hierarchies that nonetheless underpin these relationships. However, the sense of searching for a new sense of Self and

self-understanding, so central to all these films, speaks to the fact that the individual, like the nation, is always in a state of becoming.

Authors Biographies

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Scott MacKenzie is Professor and Head, Department of Film and Media, Queen's University. His books include: *Cinema and Nation* (w/Mette Hjort, Routledge, 2000); *Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95* (w/Mette Hjort, BFI, 2003); *Screening Québec* (Manchester University Press, 2004); *The Perils of Pedagogy: The Works of John Greyson* (w/Brenda Longfellow and Thomas Waugh, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013); *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures* (University of California Press, 2014); *Films on Ice: Cinemas of the Arctic* (w/Anna Stenport, Edinburgh University Press, 2015); *Arctic Environmental Modernities* (w/Anna Stenport and Lill-Ann Körber, Palgrave, 2017); *Arctic Cinemas and the Documentary Ethos* (w/Anna Stenport and Lilya Kaganovsky, Indiana University Press, 2019); *Process Cinema: Handmade Film in the Digital Age* (w/Janine Marchessault, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019); *Mapping the Rockumentary: Images of Sound and Fury* (w/Gunnar Iversen, Edinburgh University Press, 2021) and *New Arctic Cinemas: Media Sovereignty and the Climate Crisis* (w/Anna Stenport, forthcoming, University of California Press, 2023).

Notes

1. Joséphine Bacon, *Bâtons à message, Tshissinuatshitakana* (Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2009).
2. Pierre Perrault, *L'oumigmatique ou l'objectif documentaire* (Montréal: l'Hexagone, 1995), 16-17.
3. Christian Poirier, *Le cinéma québécois: à la recherche d'une identité? Tome 1–L'imaginaire filmique* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2004), 23.
4. Residential schools for Aboriginal people in Canada date back to the 1870s. Over 130 residential schools were located across the country and the last school closed in 1996. During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools often against their parents' wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has a mandate to learn the truth about what happened in the residential schools and to inform all Canadians about what happened in them.
5. Gaston Deschênes, "La devise 'Je me Souviens'," *Encyclopédie de l'Agora* (2012), http://agora.qc.ca/documents/quebec_-_etat--la_devise_je_me_souviens_par_gaston_deschenes (consulted on 5 January 2019).
6. Deschênes, "La devise 'Je me Souviens'".
7 Sylvie Vincent, "Identité québécoise: l'angle mort. Synthèse des textes de Rémi Savard publiés dans les journaux," *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 40.1-2 (2010): 13-24.
8. Vincent, "Identité québécoise: l'angle mort," 16.
9. Vincent, "Identité québécoise: l'angle mort," 16.
10. Hélène Destrempes and Hans-Jürgen Lüsenbrink, "Images de l'Amérindien au Canada francophone: littérature et image," *Tangence* no. 85 (2007): 6.
11. John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (Toronto: Penguin, 2008), 6.
12. Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 5-6.
13. Darryl Leroux, "Self-Made Métis," *Maisonneuve, Quarterly of Arts, Opinion and Ideas* (2018), https://maisonneuve.org/article/2018/11/1/self-made-metis/ (consulted on 27 January 2022), and_Brenda Macdougall "The Power of Legal and Historical Fiction(s): The Daniels Decision and the Enduring Influence of Colonial Ideology," *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 7.3 (2016): 6.
14. Andersen, *Métis*, 11.
15. Macdougall "The Power of Legal and Historical Fiction(s)," 6.
16. This statement comes from John Borrows and is found on the back cover of the English edition of *Les Bois-Brûlés de l'Outaouais. Une étude ethnoculturelle des Métis de la Gatineau*, Michel Bouchard, Sébastien Malette and Guillaume Marcotte, eds. (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2019).
17. Sébastien Malette, "The Eastern Métis and the 'Negationism' of Professor Leroux: 'Aiabitawisidjik wi mikakik'," *Voyageur Heritage* (2017), https://voyageurheritage.wordpress.com/2017/11/13/the-eastern-metis-and-negationism-in-the-academy/ (consulted on 15 January 2022).
18. René Lemieux, "Tout est à refaire: critique du documentaire *L'empreinte*," *Trahir* (2015), https://trahir.wordpress.com/2015/09/06/lemieux-empreinte/ (consulted on 15 January 2022).
19. Chelsea Vowel, "Settlers claiming Métis heritage because they just feel more Indigenous,"

Rabble.ca (2015), https://rabble.ca/indigenous/settlers-claiming-metis-heritage-because-they-just-feel-more (consulted on 15 January 2022).

20. Martin Allor, "Cultural *métissage*: National Formations and Productive Discourse in Quebec Cinema and Television," *Screen* 34.1 (1993): 74.
21. Charles Levin, "Canada as an Unidentified Historical Object of International Significance," in *Jean Baudrillard: A Study in Cultural Metaphysics* (London: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 201.
22. Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 259.
23. Scott MacKenzie and Anna Westerstahl Stenport, "Arnait Video Productions: Inuit Women's Collective Filmmaking, Coalitional Politics, and a Globalized Arctic," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 31.3 (2016): 153-163. See also Karine Bertrand, "Le collectif Arnait Video Productions et le cinéma engagé des femmes inuit: guérison communautaire et mémoire culturelle," *Revue canadienne de littérature comparée*, 44.1 (2017): 36-53.
24. See the director's note on the *Uvanga* website, http://www.arnaitvideo.ca/uvanga.html (consulted on 15 January 2022).
25. André Dudemaine, "Ce que racontent les paysages," *24 Images* no. 155 (2011-2012): 43.
26. Often described as a socio-cultural intervention project, The Wapikoni Mobile is a nomad film and music studio created by documentary filmmaker Manon Barbeau in 2004. The Wapikoni Mobile has been travelling to Indigenous communities in Quebec and beyond since 2004, giving Indigenous youth the opportunity to make short films or music videos on a subject of their choice. The Wapikoni short films are available for viewing online on the studio's website: http://www.wapikoni.ca/ (consulted on 15 January 2022).
27. Although the talking stick has been used in many indigenous cultures, it is often associated with the Northwest Coast Indigenous Nations. In the context of this article, the use of the term talking stick comes from Indigenous filmmaker Kevin Papatie, who once declared that for him, the movie camera is a modern-day talking stick, as can be read in Karine Bertrand, "Kevin Papatie et le renouvellement de la langue algonquine à l'écran," *Intermédialités* no. 4 "Re-dire" (Fall 2011): 1-7.
28. Scott MacKenzie, *Screening Québec: Québécois Moving Images, National Identity and the Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 171-180.