

CAITLIN GORDON-WALKER

# EXHIBITING NATION

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**Multicultural Nationalism (and Its Limits)  
in Canada's Museums**



**UBC**Press · Vancouver · Toronto

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25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in Canada on FSC-certified ancient-forest-free paper  
(100% post-consumer recycled) that is processed chlorine- and acid-free.

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### Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Gordon-Walker, Caitlin, author

Exhibiting nation : multicultural nationalism (and its limits) in Canada's museums /  
Caitlin Gordon-Walker.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-0-7748-3163-5 (hardback). – ISBN 978-0-7748-3165-9 (pdf). –

ISBN 978-0-7748-3166-6 (epub). – ISBN 978-0-7748-3167-3 (mobi)

1. Royal BC Museum – Case studies. 2. Royal Alberta Museum – Case studies. 3. Royal Ontario Museum – Case studies. 4. Multiculturalism – Canada – Case studies. 5. Nationalism – Canada – Case studies. 6. Museum exhibits – Social aspects – Canada – Case studies. 7. Museum exhibits – Political aspects – Canada – Case studies. I. Title.

AM7.G67 2016

069.0971

C2016-905158-7

C2016-905159-5

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### Canada

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens

Set in by Minion, Calibri, and Kozuka Gothic by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Copy editor: Jillian Shoichet

UBC Press

The University of British Columbia

2029 West Mall

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

[www.ubcpress.ca](http://www.ubcpress.ca)

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**PART 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

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## Multicultural Nationalism and the Power of Metaphor

Multicultural nationalism is a nationalist project that is generally presumed to be more benevolent and inclusive than any other. It situates cultural diversity as a central tenet of the nation, claiming that national unity is achieved not only in spite of diversity but, indeed, specifically through embracing and recognizing the value of different cultures present within the national state.<sup>1</sup> Despite an emphasis on inclusion, however, this project also requires the acknowledgment of certain minority histories and cultures in order to illustrate the benevolent inclusivity of a mainstream national culture while at the same time affirming its dominance. Multicultural nationalism thus distinguishes between a dominant national culture and peripheral minority cultures and more generally between cultures that are understood as discrete entities, tied often to a certain time and almost always to a specific place. By framing multiculturalism in national terms, multicultural nationalism implies certain limits to its own inclusivity.

Neither multicultural nationalism nor the limits it implies are clearly defined in policy or practice. Rather, they are articulated through diverse media, including representations of national history and culture found within public cultural institutions. The character of multicultural nationalism and its effects can be understood through an examination of the practices of such institutions, which must respond to various demands for representation and recognition, rather than only through an analysis of specific policies or theoretical debates. In later chapters, I undertake such an examination, focusing on the exhibitions of several provincial-level museums to analyze the operation of a

specifically Canadian multicultural nationalism. In this chapter, I explain more precisely what I mean by the phrase “multicultural nationalism” and establish the manner in which the term inevitably inscribes limits, both discursive and experiential, on its own claims to inclusivity.

## **Multicultural Nationalism**

The idea of multicultural nationalism can be applied quite directly to the politics of multiculturalism in Canada, as Gerald Kernerman (2005) convincingly illustrates. However, I am interested in multicultural nationalism as a broader concept and practice – one that is not only particularly relevant in Canada but also resonant elsewhere, in places like Australia, Britain, the United States, and even the European Union, which have sought to incorporate ideas of cultural diversity and tolerance into their national or regional identities, even as they have rejected particular labels of nationhood or *multiculturalism*.<sup>2</sup>

Multicultural nationalism, as I interpret it, is therefore not only about multiculturalism as it is encountered in official policy within particular nation-states. Rather, it encompasses both a perception of, and a response to, cultural difference – locally, nationally, and globally – in which the national idea is adopted as the primary organizing concept. My definition of multicultural nationalism thus relies on the fact that, despite processes of globalization and claims that the world is entering an age of trans- or even post-nationalism, nations and nationalist thought have not vanished – far from it. Although discourses of globalization, transnationalism, and post-nationalism suggest that the nation is no longer a significant unit of experience, the world continues to be organized as an international system of nation-states, and many people resist strongly any suggestion that their nation might cease to exist or that the nation they desire will not be allowed to come into being. Processes of globalization, transnational migration, and changing understandings of cultural difference and citizenship have led to new conceptions of nationhood and altered articulations of nationalism, but these are not entirely different from earlier forms. While new patterns of migration have led to different state demographics, populations within states have always been diverse, and nationalism has always developed in relation to not only external differences but also – and especially – internal ones (Malik 2012; Marx 2003). It is on this basis that nationalism has often been criticized for its propensity to lead to exclusionary or homogenizing violence aimed at eradicating cultural difference within the boundaries of particular national or nationalizing states.

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Nationally delimited forms of multiculturalism can perhaps best be understood as a specific reaction to the diversity of state populations. They encompass common perceptions of what cultural difference means within the context of particular states, as well as practical responses to questions about how difference should be regulated. Any nationalism that takes multiculturalism as one of its central tenets requires that the nation-state be imagined, or re-imagined, specifically as diverse. While “multiculturalism” is positioned in contrast to more openly exclusionary responses to cultural difference, “multicultural nationalism” is defined as a more civic or political form of nationalism that celebrates diversity and encourages a sense of equal belonging within all of the state’s citizens (Marx 2003; Hechter 2000; Kymlicka 2007; Ignatieff 1995). It is thus placed in opposition to more conventional understandings of ethnic or cultural nationalisms, as rational, enlightened, tolerant, benevolent, and inclusive.

This distinction between civic and ethnic nationalisms has an extensive history (Smith 1981, 1986). Considering the historical development of the national idea, Hans Kohn (1944) distinguishes between two forms arising in Western Europe and Germany, respectively. He situates these ideas of nation as two poles, between which all nationalisms have evolved. More recently, civic forms of nationalism have generally been defined in positive terms and associated with firmly established modern democratic states. Ethnic or cultural nationalisms have been described more negatively as being linked with the violence of nationalist conflict, such as took place in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s (Marx 2003; Viroli 1995; Ignatieff 1995). Combining the unifying intentions of nationalism with the pluralizing ambitions of multiculturalism, multicultural nationalism is extolled as a form of inclusive civic nationalism, in opposition to more outwardly violent, exclusionary, or assimilationist nationalisms.

As a form of nationalism, multicultural nationalism implies the existence of three basic, underlying tenets: first, that the multicultural state can achieve unity in its diversity; second, that it can ensure equal and adequate recognition of every individual and every culture within it; and third, that the national idea provides an adequate model for understanding cultural difference on a national and global scale. However, as Anthony Marx (2003) shows in his analysis of the extremely violent histories of Spain, Britain, and France that preceded and enabled the emergence of more seemingly democratic nationalisms in the eighteenth century, all forms of nationalism contain and operate through various forms of violence in order to include and exclude different kinds of people. While the differences among contemporary experiences of diverse nationalisms

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are significant, Marx's argument is a useful cautionary reminder. The underlying premise of my investigation is that multicultural nationalism, like any nationalism, necessarily entails practices of inclusion *and* practices of exclusion.

I do not mean to imply that the violence inherent in multicultural nationalism is just as problematic as the violence in any other type of nationalism. I do, however, want to uncover the ways in which violence operates through including and excluding certain types of difference and defining the ways in which difference can be incorporated, recognized, or understood in the context of the national state. In particular, I want to stress that multicultural nationalism's three main claims, as outlined above, can be sustained only up to a certain point; what is more, these claims prescribe in themselves the structural limits within which their inclusionary objectives can be met. In other words, the operationalization of multicultural nationalism will always draw or assume the existence of boundaries that limit the accommodation of difference within a state. In practice, multicultural nationalism will work to affirm some types of difference and deny the legitimacy of others, encouraging the toleration – even celebration – of difference, but only within certain limits. How these limits are articulated is always open to negotiation, but their basic character is defined by the premise of multicultural nationalism's underlying principle: the inclusion of difference must not challenge the unity, authority, or legitimacy of the nation, or the national state.

This book considers a form of multicultural nationalism specific to Canada, one that exists alongside other more explicitly exclusionary Canadian nationalisms – those based on perceptions of Canada as a resource frontier, a northern wilderness, a British and French settler society, or a nation of hockey and doughnuts, for example. Although the term “multiculturalism” is perhaps less relevant and viewed less favourably now than when it was first used in official Canadian policy, I contend that a general, common-sense understanding of Canada is still firmly rooted in the idea of multiculturalism. For instance, while individuals might identify themselves as diasporic or transnational citizens (see, for example, Gagnon 2000; Fung 1990; Satzewich and Wong 2011), relatively few people define Canada as a diasporic or transnational nation. Discussions of diasporic communities and transnational practices in Canada are often still positioned in relation to multiculturalism, and multiculturalism remains a key term in the default language used to address cultural difference in Canadian society.

Multiculturalism in Canada can be interpreted and articulated in many different ways. It can refer to the empirical fact of cultural difference within the Canadian population, to official law and policy based on a theory of liberal

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multiculturalism, or to critical practice aimed at social justice. I discuss these different understandings of multiculturalism below, but I am primarily interested in multiculturalism as a nationalist project that operates on the basis of, and helps to uphold, particular assumptions about Canadian identity and existing structures of power and authority.

According to Eva Mackey (1999, 16), “pluralism and tolerance have a key place, and an institutionalised place, in the cultural politics of national identity in Canada.” Sunera Thobani (2007, 4) makes a similar claim, writing that there “prevails in Canada a master narrative of the nation, which takes as its point of departure the essentially law-abiding character of its enterprising nationals, who are presented (for the most part) as responsible citizens, compassionate, caring, and committed to the values of diversity and multiculturalism.” Daniel Coleman (2006, 3) argues that this perception is rooted in a particularly British “White civility.”<sup>3</sup> Like Mackey, Thobani, Coleman, and others, I examine the ways in which discourses of tolerance, civility, and cultural diversity operate through both official policy and popular public culture in Canada to legitimize more exclusionary nationalisms (both historical and contemporary) as well as the structures of inequality implied by a more insidious multicultural nationalism. By presenting Canada as benevolent and inclusive, multicultural nationalism subtly obscures ongoing practices of exclusion and violence within, at, and beyond Canada’s borders.

Below, I illustrate how the three main claims of multicultural nationalism are evident in Canadian state policy and in popular and scholarly discussions about multiculturalism in a Canadian context. In subsequent chapters, I look at each of these claims more closely, examining how they are articulated in specific contexts, expressed in regional histories and in celebrations of cultural diversity, both locally and globally.

## **Canadian State Policy**

Canada’s population has always encompassed significant cultural difference. This reality reflects its history of British and French colonial settlement of a territory occupied by diverse Aboriginal populations and later immigration from increasingly far-flung corners of the world.<sup>4</sup> Similar to other modern states since the end of the eighteenth century, the Canadian state has responded to difference within its borders by seeking to foster diverse forms of nationalism to define and create a nation that could be seen to represent all of its citizens. As evidenced by the decimation of Aboriginal populations in the past four centuries, by documents such as Lord Durham’s *Report on the Affairs*

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of *British North America* (1838) and the *Chinese Immigration Acts* of 1885 and 1923, and by the residential schooling system for Aboriginal children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, early forms of Canadian state nationalism often relied on practices of exclusion and assimilation to create a more homogenously unified nation. While the legacies of these past events and practices are ongoing, numerous factors have forced the state to seek more inclusive alternatives, especially since the end of the Second World War, when immigration to Canada increased dramatically in both scope and scale, vastly changing the demographic makeup of the Canadian population (Day 2000; Dewing and Leman 2006).<sup>5</sup>

The influence exerted by Quebec has been especially significant in instigating changes to official state policy, in particular leading to the establishment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. Although the commission was intended primarily to “inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races,” it was also mandated to consider “the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution” (Canada 1967, Appendix 1). The commission’s final report included a section addressing cultural diversity more broadly – *Book IV: The Cultural Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups* – and used the term “multiculturalism” for the first time in Canada in an official context (Canada 1969; Haque 2011; Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002).

While the commission ultimately recommended a policy of bilingualism and biculturalism, significant opposition from groups and individuals to the limited scope of this recommendation led the state to instead adopt a policy of *multiculturalism* in a bilingual framework (Haque 2011; Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002). This policy was announced in 1971 and solidified in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* in 1988. In addition, the government sought to foster a nationalist multiculturalism through publications such as *Multiculturalism: Being Canadian* (1987), and *Multiculturalism: Building the Canadian Mosaic* (1987) (Day 2000).

Since 1971, the Canadian state has repeatedly modified how it interprets its multicultural policy. Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel (2002) describe how federal interpretation of the policy shifted in the 1990s from a focus on the preservation of distinct cultures to an emphasis on the economic value of multiculturalism itself. They argue that contemporary ideas about multiculturalism aimed at “selling diversity” represented “a new vision of

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nation-building ... that is focused on the bottom line more than previous articulations of the policy” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, 106). Augie Fleras and Jean Kunz (2001) chart four different phases of interpretation: celebrating diversity, managing diversity, encouraging constructive engagement, and fostering inclusive citizenship. More recently, the notion of fostering inclusive citizenship has been developed further through the language of integration, with the federal government suggesting that integration “is a two-way process, requiring adjustment on the part of both newcomers and host communities ... Ultimately, the goal is to support newcomers to become fully engaged in the social, economic, political and cultural life of Canada” (Burr 2011, 2). A similar emphasis on social cohesion is also evident in what Matt James (2013) refers to as neoliberal heritage redress, a project aimed at acknowledging historical injustices in a manner that neutralizes history’s transformative potential in relation to contemporary antiracist activism.

Despite changes over time in how the concept is interpreted, the basic idea and the language of multiculturalism have remained embedded in official government policy and in policy implementation. In 2007, for example, the government published a policy research initiative document titled *From Mosaic to Harmony: Multicultural Canada in the 21st Century* (Kunz and Sykes 2007). As the title of this document shows, multiculturalism has continued to be framed within an idea of a unified and harmonious Canada and therefore articulated through a particularly Canadian multicultural nationalism. The idea of integration further implies that Canada’s multicultural citizens can be incorporated into a cohesive nation. In its various forms, multiculturalism has been, and continues to be, perceived as a way in which Canada’s diverse population can be unified into a Canadian nation. To Himani Bannerji (2000, 97), the “importance of the discourse of multiculturalism to that of nation-making becomes clearer if we remember that ‘nation’ needs an ideology of unification and legitimation.” In Canada, the idea of multiculturalism is used to legitimize the claim that the nation has found unity in its diversity.

## Unity in Diversity

The claim that Canada has found unity in its diversity, or at least that it can do so, is generally perceived as a cause for celebration, or hope. However, such a claim necessarily imposes restrictions on the type and extent of difference that the nation can accommodate, specifically *because* it defines the unity of the nation as a primary limiting factor. In effect, it demands that any incorporation of difference not threaten the unity, or the perceived unity, of the nation.

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The general sentiment of this limitation is perhaps most clearly articulated by Neil Bissoondath in the popular *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (1994). Bissoondath proposes that the ultimate goal of multiculturalism is “a cohesive, effective society enlivened by cultural variety: *reasonable diversity within vigorous unity*” (1994, 224; emphasis added). He goes on to argue that although Canada has cultural variety, it still must seek unity, “even if that would mean – as it must – a certain diminishment of the first” (Bissoondath 1994, 224).

Concerns about multiculturalism’s potential threat to national unity were articulated frequently in the 1990s, around the time that *Selling Illusions* was published,<sup>6</sup> but questions about what counts as “reasonable,” and even about whether Canadian multiculturalism has already accommodated too much difference, are still frequently asked. Lori Beaman’s *Reasonable Accommodation: Managing Religious Diversity* (2012) considers what is reasonable specifically in relation to religion and includes discussions on such topics as a woman’s right to wear the *niqab* in public and religious diversity in prisons with regards to ideas about so-called shared Canadian values. Phil Ryan (2010) describes the persistence of fears about multiculturalism in Canadian society, particularly their re-emergence after the events of September 11, 2001. He characterizes these fears, both historically and in the present, as constituting a phenomenon of “multicultiphobia,” by which multiculturalism is perceived as a threat to national unity and, more recently, as an encouragement for terrorism (Ryan 2010, 4). While the most extreme sufferers of multicultiphobia would reject multiculturalism altogether, most would suggest that some accommodation of cultural diversity is desirable. Together, their interpretations can be seen to constitute one end of a spectrum of multicultural nationalism.

In contrast to such angst-ridden manifestations of multicultural nationalism, less extreme views see the Canadian nation as having already attained unity in diversity, and having done so specifically through multiculturalism. As Richard Day (2000, 6) states, these views consider multiculturalism as an “already achieved ideal.” Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, two of the most prominent theorists of multiculturalism in a Canadian context, exemplify this position. Both Taylor (1993, 1994) and Kymlicka (1995, 1998) describe models of multiculturalism that closely resemble the structure of official state policy. Taylor does so by developing a notion of “deep diversity” to differentiate between the claims of Aboriginal peoples and Quebec and those of other minorities, while Kymlicka differentiates between a national majority (Anglo Canadians), national minorities (Aboriginal peoples and Québécois), and ethnic minorities (everyone else who does not fit into the other categories). Like

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Taylor, Kymlicka describes the differential rights and status that should ostensibly be accorded to each group. Both authors articulate distinctively liberal theories of multiculturalism, which seek to reconcile individual equality with the demands of minority groups and the nation as a whole. In each case, their work serves to legitimize official multicultural policy by suggesting that multiculturalism can successfully recognize the rights of individual citizens, cultural groups, and the nation – in effect, that it can operate as a form of nationalism to reconcile the demands of a diverse citizenry to the overall requirement of maintaining a unified state.

Will Kymlicka has frequently reiterated his support for a liberal theory of multiculturalism. In *Multicultural Odysseys*, he discusses the international diffusion of multicultural discourse and the codification of multiculturalism in international standards, suggesting that the global spread of liberal multiculturalism is both “desirable and beneficial” (Kymlicka 2007, 7). In “The Essentialist Critique of Multiculturalism: Theories, Policies, Ethos” (2014), he articulates an even more pointed defence of liberal multiculturalism. Arguing against those who claim that the worsening situation of minorities in practice can be attributed, at least in part, to liberal multicultural theory, he asserts that the “theories and practices of liberal multiculturalism, far from being the cause of the problem, are still the best remedy to them” (Kymlicka 2014, 2). While this assertion acknowledges that an ideal of unity in diversity (in which everyone shares equally) has not been reached, it still supposes the practical achievability of a nation that can accommodate the claims of a diverse citizenry and celebrate cultural diversity. This perhaps challenges the definition of an essentialist national identity but replaces it with an idea of the nation as essentially multicultural.

As Gerald Kernerman (2005, 92) argues, however, even those who prioritize the value of cultural diversity as part of the nation’s character tend to include a “but clause,” stipulating that such diversity must be contained within the bounds of a unified nation. Arguments that Canada has found unity in its diversity, or that it is at least able to do so, therefore continue to place limits on the difference that can be accommodated – although they do this less obviously than more reactionary assessments of multiculturalism. Because the belief in a unified nation implies the existence, or at least the definability, of a national community based on a commonly shared national heritage and commonly shared national values, this “but clause” often implies that only those aspects of cultural difference seen to accord with these values can be accommodated. As an example, the current website of the Department of Canadian Immigration and Citizenship, while claiming that immigrants are under no

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pressure to assimilate, assumes that they will, as *Canadians*, “share the basic values of democracy with all other Canadians who came before them.”

Various critics argue that the imposition of multiculturalism, both in theory and through policy, seeks to regulate cultural difference in order to ensure that it does not threaten the unity, or perceived unity, of the nation. They disapprove of the ways in which nationalist discourse is used to constrain cultural difference. Gerald Kernerman (2005) and Richard Day (2000) each contend that any attempt to attain or maintain national unity *in spite of* cultural diversity entails a fundamental misunderstanding, since national unity and cultural diversity ought not to be seen as essentially opposed. These authors argue that the quest for national unity should be abandoned. Although they acknowledge the uncertainty that this implies, both authors suggest that the actual demise of the nation is unlikely. Moreover, while they each oppose particularly restrictive interpretations of multiculturalism, neither rejects the idea of multiculturalism altogether. Day (2000, 4), for example, sees a difference between “multiculturalism as state policy, which tends towards management, discipline and uniformity” and “multiculturalism as radical imaginary, which tends towards spontaneous emergence” and has the potential to shape a society that can “escape the limitations of the modern-colonial nation-state.”

Yasmeen Abu-Laban (2002, 465) similarly sees the potential usefulness of an alternative form of multiculturalism, arguing that a “multiculturalism premised on equity, on the notion that cultures are dynamic and differentiated, and on the idea that individuals have multiple identities, allows for a perspective that recognizes the historical and contemporary overlap and intermingling of cultures that have resulted from processes of colonialism, diasporic migratory movements, and more recently the globalization of cultural flows.” Himani Bannerji (2000, 125; 2003, 36), who opposes both “official multiculturalism” as it is articulated by the government and “non-official elite multiculturalism” as it is articulated in the work of Taylor, Kymlicka, and others, proposes an alternative, “popular” multiculturalism “informed with an historical awareness and rejection of socio-economic and political inequalities and marginalizations [that] therefore challenges marginalization as well.”

All of these authors criticize the restrictions placed on multiculturalism by Canadian nationalism as well as the appropriation of multiculturalism *by* Canadian nationalism. While firmly rejecting established narratives of unity in diversity, however, they still see multiculturalism as a fundamental part of Canadian society, albeit in a more flexible and dialogical form. I propose that their work illustrates the other end of the spectrum imagined earlier, where the opposite end is dominated by multicultiphobia. While I acknowledge the

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differences between these perspectives – particularly in how they envision various relationships and structures of power and authority – I also wish to highlight their similarities and explore the ways in which even the most inclusive and benevolent forms of grassroots multicultural nationalism inscribe certain kinds of limits based on a notion of national cohesion.

## Equality and Recognition

In addition to the nation's potential to achieve unity in diversity, another claim of multicultural nationalism is that it enables the equal and adequate recognition of every individual and his or her particular culture within the nation-state. This claim is also apparent in official Canadian policy. The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1988) states that the Government of Canada will “ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their cultural diversity.” The website of Citizenship and Immigration Canada claims that “Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging” (CIC 2012a, n.p.). Although contemporary implementation of multiculturalism policy has in many ways shifted away from recognizing particular cultures, acknowledging that people often consider their identities as multiple and within global and transnational settings, the claim of equal recognition remains significant (Kunz and Sykes 2007).

Charles Taylor's (1994) seminal essay “The Politics of Recognition,” first delivered as an inaugural lecture for the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University in 1992, describes a universal need for recognition with two principles. The first principle requires a politics of universal equality of dignity that recognizes everyone's right to an identity and ensures the equal treatment of all citizens; the second principle requires a politics of difference that recognizes everyone's right to a *distinct* identity and ensures non-discrimination through differential treatment. According to Taylor, these two seemingly contradictory principles can be reconciled through a communitarian form of liberalism, which implies that every individual, as well as every particular culture, can be recognized.

Taylor (1994, 25) maintains that to be recognized adequately, each person should be recognized as he or she would understand his or her own authentic self. In practice, however, this does not always happen. For a start, the claim that multicultural nationalism can allow every culture to be adequately recognized implicitly makes a distinction between those who can give recognition

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and those who should receive it (Mackey 1999). In other words, just as a politics of unity in diversity implies the possibility of defining a single unified nation, the discourse of recognition implies a division between those who can more easily be seen to belong to this nation and those who continue to be also partly excluded – that is, who may belong to the nation, but only in ways deemed acceptable as defined by the state, by national institutions, by recognized members of the national community, or by some understanding of commonly held national values. A politics of recognition practised within a framework of multicultural nationalism thus implies that those who are perceived to properly belong to the nation and uphold its commonly held values are capable of granting (or withholding) recognition and, what is more, have the authority to do so. Such a politics of recognition allows implicitly defined ideal national subjects to authorize which forms of difference – and which specific differences – are to be recognized and deemed acceptable.

Because it is founded on a principle of universal equality within the context of a specific state, a multicultural nationalist politics of recognition necessarily requires that those who claim the authority to give or withhold recognition ensure that nothing is recognized that might threaten the rights of any other individual, culture, or group within the nation. As a result, the recognition of each person's culture and his or her right to practise it is limited by claims about national values that are allegedly able to ensure the equal rights of all individuals. As an illustration, Citizenship and Immigration Canada highlights the following statement on its website: "Some Canadians immigrate from places where they have experienced warfare or conflict. Such experiences do not justify bringing to Canada violent, extreme or hateful prejudices. In becoming Canadian, newcomers are expected to embrace democratic principles such as the rule of law" (CIC 2012b, n.p.). The claim that every member of a nation can have his or her identity and culture recognized imposes limits on the type and extent of difference that can be recognized, specifically because it defines the authority of the nation as a primary limiting factor.

Once again, these limits are articulated in various ways. Susan Moller Okin's essay "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" (1999), although not specifically about Canada, is one of the more widely known arguments that the claim for recognition by minority groups can be used to justify certain cultural practices that violate universal rights to equality, and thus that there should be strict limits in terms of which cultures are given recognition. Okin (1999, 22) argues that women in multicultural societies who belong to what she considers to be patriarchal cultures "might be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct (so that its members would

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become integrated into the less sexist surrounding culture) or, preferable, were encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women.”

Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) argues that similar sentiments persist, as in more recent discourse about whether Muslim women need to be saved from the patriarchal cultures that are argued to oppress them. Such discourse is evident in discussions about the potential use of Sharia law in Canadian society and about whether Muslim women should be allowed to wear a *hijab* or *niqab* in certain public situations. Both Sharia law and the *hijab* or *niqab* are interpreted by some as signs of the oppression of Muslim women. But the discourse, especially about what clothing is appropriate, or “allowable,” in Canada reveals much about the allocation of authority, for it suggests who gets to make decisions about what constitutes proper behaviour within the national society. Most notably, in this case it denies the authority of Muslim women. A similar allocation of authority is evident when the discourse of saving Muslim women is used in the defence of the “War on Terror” and military action in the Middle East, rather than only as an argument against multiculturalism (Abu-Lughod 2002).

More reactionary arguments about the need to limit the recognition of particular cultures within a multicultural society often suggest that limits should be based on loosely defined but assumedly superior national values. Arguments closer to the middle of the spectrum, such as those made by Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, suggest that limits should be established based specifically on the principles of liberalism. For these and other liberal multiculturalists, claims for recognition or accommodation made by individuals and groups on the basis of culture should be evaluated according to an established framework of liberal values. According to Taylor (1993), the reconciliation of demands for equality with demands for what might be seen as “special” accommodation requires a particularly communitarian form of liberalism. For Kymlicka (1995) and others, such as Andrew Robinson (2007), a more conventional liberalism already provides the means for reconciling these potentially competing claims. In explaining how liberal principles are compatible with demands for accommodation, Robinson (2007, 9) develops a theory of liberal multiculturalism based on what he calls the “foundations of meaningful life.” He proposes a number of more specific principles that could be used to guide practice, based on his analysis of existing consensus within liberal multicultural theory and his examination of particular case studies.

Avigail Eisenberg (2006) also investigates the intersection between theory and practice and undertakes to develop the groundwork for a normative guide to help assess the identity claims of particular groups. Focusing on a series of

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legal cases and critiquing what is known as the “distinctive culture test” used in Canadian courts to assess the validity of particular identity claims, she acknowledges the deficiencies of the existing system but argues in favour of developing “fair criteria by which the identity claims of minorities, including Aboriginal peoples, can be fairly assessed” (Eisenberg 2006, 50). Eisenberg does not stipulate what these criteria should be. Others such as Michael Ignatieff (2001) and Ronald Niezen (2003) propose that a discourse of universal human rights should provide a framework for assessing claims for recognition and accommodation of minority groups and Aboriginal peoples.

In contrast, other authors argue against the use of liberal principles to define the extent to which claims for recognition or accommodation should be acknowledged and that the application of any framework – based, for instance, on a discourse of universal human rights – must be operationalized through a process of dialogical negotiation (Bannerji 2000; Day 2000; Fish 1997; Parekh 2000; Tully 1995, 2006). These arguments seek to challenge the imposition of an established system of values to determine the limits of accommodation. Nevertheless, even these calls for greater dialogism imply the continuing need to prescribe limits on the kinds of accommodation claims that will be recognized. For example, James Tully (1995, 24) argues that the claims of different perspectives can be accommodated on the basis of principles of mutual recognition, continuity, and consent, suggesting that this must be done through a continual process of open dialogue, or more precisely, “multilogue.” While this model rejects the imposition of pre-existing criteria to determine the validity of specific claims, it assumes the limiting condition of a willingness to participate in an open and respectful conversation.

Although positions on the extent to which cultural difference should be recognized in multicultural societies vary widely, as with those addressing a politics of unity in diversity, they are different more in degree than in actual form, and they all operate within the bounds of what I perceive to be multicultural nationalism. On some level, they agree that every member of the nation has an equal right to be recognized as an individual and as part of a cultural group, and to have his or her culture recognized – at least up to a point. They all suggest that this point should be defined by the nation in some way – by the national state, by some conception of shared national values, or more dialogically by recognized members of the nation.

In doing so, these positions often implicitly treat culture as an object: as something people have or something to which they might belong (Tully 1995). They seek to recognize people’s diverse cultures and the cultural diversity of the nation, conceptualizing culture “in terms of particular ethnic, national,

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and linguistic groups as discrete and bounded entities” (Dhamoon 2009, 20). This common perception stems from the assumption that the nation is both able and authorized to recognize every culture within it, which necessarily relies on a concept of cultural *diversity* in order to make sense of cultural *difference* within the nation. The importance of this distinction between diversity and difference is illustrated by Homi Bhabha (1994), who describes the two as follows: “Cultural diversity is an epistemological object – culture as an object of empirical knowledge – whereas cultural difference is the process of the *enunciation* of culture as ‘knowledgeable,’ authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification” (Bhabha 1994, 35). Using the concept of cultural diversity to define cultural difference inevitably reifies culture and leads to the perception of different cultures as relatively cohesive and bounded units. While recent policy initiatives and literatures about multiculturalism increasingly seek to acknowledge the fusion of cultures and interaction between individuals of different cultural backgrounds, the underlying framework of multicultural nationalism remains centred on an idea of cultural diversity (Kunz and Sykes 2007).<sup>7</sup>

### Cultural Diversity and Methodological Nationalism

The third claim of multicultural nationalism stems from an assumption that its conception of cultural difference as reified cultural diversity can be universally used to make sense of cultural difference, not only within the nation but also on a global scale. In this case, the concept of cultural diversity is articulated within an understanding of the world as international; within this understanding, multicultural nationalism encourages the perception that culture exists in relatively static and bounded units that can be conflated with particular nation-states. Multicultural nationalism thus leads people to categorize others not only as having or belonging to a particular culture but also as having or belonging to a specifically *national* culture. In doing so, it fosters the claim that the national idea provides an adequate – even ideal – model for understanding cultural difference. This claim is less obvious than the other two claims of multicultural nationalism and is much less clearly articulated in various discussions about multiculturalism. It is perhaps easiest to discern this claim when we consider the *lack* of acknowledgment it has received. In other words, the fact that the language, definitions, and categories used to articulate the goals of a nationally delimited multiculturalism are so often taken for granted is what most clearly illustrates the presumption that they have a wider applicability.

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Multicultural nationalism's tendency to frame cultural difference in terms of diverse national cultures arguably is structured by what Ulrich Beck (2007, 688) defines in the context of class analysis as "methodological nationalism." Within this framework, multiculturalism is often seen as something that occurs within particular nation-states and, whether within a state or on a global scale, often conceived of in nationalist terms.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, even when larger regional identifications are made, they are based on an idea of nations: of cohesive and bounded communities, each with a shared culture and values. While people might be identified on the basis of regional origins rather than national ones (for example, Asian Canadian rather than Japanese Canadian), these regions will be considered as similar to nations.

Once again, this claim is reflected in official state policy, such as the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act's* (1988) statement that the government aims to "recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin ... and enhance their development," and in the following description of the Canadian population by Citizenship and Immigration Canada:

The majority of Canadians were born in this country and this has been true since the 1800s. However, Canada is often referred to as a *land of immigrants* because, over the past 200 years, millions of newcomers have helped to build and defend our way of life. Many ethnic and religious groups live and work in peace as proud Canadians. The largest groups are the English, French, Scottish, Irish, German, Italian, Chinese, Aboriginal, Ukrainian, Dutch, South Asian, and Scandinavian. Since the 1970s, most immigrants have come from Asian countries. (CIC 2012b, n.p.)

Recent interpretations of multiculturalism seek to acknowledge the possibilities of transnational or diasporic identification. But in practice, underlying assumptions often remain rooted in a nationalist concept of cultural diversity. For example, *From Mosaic to Harmony: Multicultural Canada in the 21st Century* begins with the statement that "Canada's multicultural diversity is a product of three cultural drivers: Aboriginal peoples, the English and French 'Charter' groups, and immigrants from around the world" (Kunz and Sykes 2007, 3). It thus identifies the cultural difference within Canada's population as cultural diversity stemming from people's *real* place of origin. The tendency to describe citizens on the basis of their places of origin is even more evident in Citizenship and Immigration Canada's claim that even the "ancestors of Aboriginal peoples are believed to have migrated from Asia many thousands of years ago" (CIC 2012b, n.p.).

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The supposition that the national idea provides an adequate means for understanding cultural difference can therefore be seen to establish limits to the ways in which cultural difference can be recognized and incorporated into a nation because it defines the legitimacy of the nation, or rather the national idea, as a primary limiting factor. It encourages cultural difference within a state to be perceived in national terms and implies oppositional relationships between distinct national groups. A Canadian nation and a Quebec nation are thus represented as two national solitudes.<sup>9</sup> Aboriginal peoples are sometimes constituted as a third national group on par with these, and at other times are categorized as a particular national minority, with differences between various First Nations often being ignored in both cases. Métis are the only group officially recognized in Canada as having a hybrid culture, defined as deriving from a specific mixture of European and Aboriginal ancestry. Finally, all other minorities are generally represented with regard to their singular nations of origin.

I do not wish to imply that this nationalist framing is always or only a negative thing. Many people identify strongly with a national cultural heritage or maintain ties to nation-states other than Canada. Moreover, claiming national status is an important strategy for asserting rights to self-determination, as these rights have been associated with the rights of nations since the 1945 United Nations Charter. In Canada, this is especially relevant for Quebec and First Nations; one of the main criticisms of Canadian multiculturalism is that it detracts from the sovereignty claims of these two groups (Taylor 1993; Nugent 2006; First Nations Circle on the Constitution 1992, cited in Ames 1994; Cairns 2000).

Within the Canadian multicultural nationalist context, however, in which inclusion and recognition of difference must not challenge the unity or authority of the national state, nationally defined groups and inter-national oppositions within Canada are all seen to exist necessarily *within* the context of a unified Canadian nation-state. As Kernerman (2005, 55) writes, “Canadians have not yet realized that the strategy of combating one type of nationalism with another produces yet more nationalism.” As a result, an overarching Canadian nation is perceived as having the best claim to legitimacy and granted authority over the sub-national groups within it; the nation allows these groups a certain amount of sovereignty, but only up to a point.

## **Discipline and Dialogism**

Although I have just described the three implicit claims of multicultural nationalism and the limits they inscribe, it is important to note that “multicultural nationalism” has never been clearly defined, as either a policy or

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a theoretical principle. While the concept is expressed in part through state policy and in part through theoretical discourse, it is not a coherent doctrine that people consciously follow. Like other forms of nationalism, it has come to comprise instead a kind of common-sense understanding of what a particular nation is and how its society functions.

Multiculturalism in Canada has always been a national project. It has become incorporated into a national paradigm, like any other element of nationalism, through the words, beliefs, and actions of the state, national institutions, and citizens. As a national project, multicultural nationalism sets the limits within which cultural difference can be included, recognized, and articulated within the nation, providing a framework for regulating how people should live as cultural subjects and how they should engage with other members of society. In the first instance, multicultural nationalism operates as a system for managing cultural diversity; in the second, it regulates interaction between subjects and defines their relationships to each other within a context of cultural difference (Day 2000; Bannerji 2000; Hage 2000; Brown 2006). Because it defines how a national society should work, multicultural nationalism constitutes a form of disciplinary power (Mackey 1999; Day 2000).

The concept of discipline I invoke here is derived from the work of Michel Foucault (1975, 1977), who explains the mechanisms of disciplinary power most extensively in *Discipline and Punish*, first published in French as *Surveiller et punir*. The element of Foucault's notion of discipline that I draw on principally is the encouragement of self-regulation (in terms of one's behaviour) mainly through non-physically coercive means. Foucault (1977) details the emergence of modern disciplinary society, in which such self-regulation has become commonplace. He describes how the organization of space and time, especially in relation to specified activities and the threat of constant surveillance, has led to the construction and internalization of a sense of individuality whereby subjects impose a regulatory discipline upon themselves, controlling their bodies and restricting their actions in accordance with societal expectations.

To understand how multicultural nationalism operates as a form of disciplinary power, it is most illustrative to consider how the implied limits of multicultural nationalism establish the parameters within which citizens are expected to express and relate to cultural difference. Immigrants can keep their cultural identities and continue their cultural practices, but they must do so in ways that do not threaten the unity, authority, or legitimacy of the Canadian nation. These limits are incorporated into popular representations and understandings of what it means to be a "good Canadian" and a desirable immigrant. They define which spaces to inhabit, which activities to undertake,

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when to be where, and how to behave. Meanwhile, as Kernerman (2005, 102) describes, a discourse of mutual recognition fosters a sort of multicultural “panopticism.” Citizens are encouraged to regulate their actions and integrate themselves into an inclusive Canadian citizenship, thereby sharing fully in the rights and obligations that these restrictions imply. While there is no law that specifies how an immigrant should be a good Canadian subject, there is an expectation that he or she will fit into the nation-state in particular ways and establish “appropriate” relationships, as implied by official immigration and multicultural policy and by less official – but strongly authoritative – interpretations found in public cultural institutions.

The implications of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* address complementary expectations. The act does not require Canadian citizens to be good multiculturalists; it sets out the aims and responsibilities of the Canadian state but does not outlaw the intolerance of diverse cultures. That said, Kernerman (2005, 101) argues that “just as the object of liberal governance is the construction of the normalized liberal subject, multicultural governance has the purpose of constructing normalized multicultural citizens within a taxonomic regime of identity and diversity.” The ideals of multicultural nationalism are thus conveyed through various media in ways that encourage citizens to be tolerant, to celebrate Canada’s cultural diversity, and to revel in the perception that such diversity is a product of Canada’s historical and contemporary benevolence and inclusiveness.

Multiculturalism’s appeal for tolerance has been widely criticized. As Richard Day (2000, 104) points out, it is “only when one is in the presence of what appears to be intolerable difference that tolerance becomes necessary.” The call for tolerance thus reinscribes a distinction between those who can tolerate and those who must be tolerated. Ghassan Hage (2000), considering the nationalist articulation of multiculturalism in the context of Australia, argues that the call for citizens to be tolerant of diverse cultures in fact serves to uphold existing White power structures within Australia. He writes:

If we can differentiate between practices of tolerance and practices of intolerance, it does not follow that this difference is that between tolerant and intolerant people. This is not to minimise the differences between thresholds of tolerance among the population, but to highlight the fact that it is not simply a divide between good, tolerant people and bad, intolerant people. Rather, it is a difference of capacity of tolerance between people who equally claim the capacity to manage national space. Both are about realising a vision of national space through tolerance and intolerance, through the exclusion of some and inclusion of others. (Hage 2000, 93)

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Eva Mackey (1999) and Himani Bannerji (2000), among others, present similar arguments to show how discourses of tolerance and inclusion serve to uphold the power and privilege of a core White Canadian nation.

The distinction between those who tolerate and those who need toleration positions the idea of tolerance as central to the disciplinary character of multicultural nationalism. On the one hand, it encourages people to ensure that their behaviour is tolerable. On the other hand, it operates as a form of governmentality through which citizens are disciplined to be tolerating subjects (Brown 2006). While the disciplinary impetus of multicultural nationalism often goes beyond a liberal notion of tolerance to encourage the celebration of cultural diversity and the establishment of intercultural understanding, it continues to uphold the structure of power implied by the need to maintain national unity in a multicultural context. It perpetuates a societal order in which members of a core majority may recognize, tolerate, celebrate, or seek to understand the cultural difference of minority groups. At the same time, members of those minority groups are expected to fit themselves into an allegedly already established national society.

That said, multicultural nationalism is not only disciplinary – it is also dialogical. Here, I do not mean to position dialogism as a positive alternative to discipline. Although disciplinary power often upholds existing structures of inequality and is generally framed quite negatively, it is not in itself an inherent evil. At the same time, although dialogism implies a mutual engagement and is often framed more positively, it does not necessarily lead to polite and harmonious conversation. Dialogue can encompass confrontation and disagreement as easily as it can entail pleasantries and understanding, and participants in a dialogue are rarely on equal footing. By describing multicultural nationalism as dialogical, I am referring to the fact that it is maintained through processes of dialogue. Moreover, it is maintained not only through dialogue between knowing subjects but also, in a wider sense, through dialogue among people, texts, policies, laws, state institutions, cultural organizations, objects, representations, events, and so on. The character of multicultural nationalism (including its limits), is under constant negotiation, although always within the confines of the assumptions that underlie it.

The dialogical nature of multicultural nationalism can be seen in Charles Taylor's (1994) model for a politics of recognition, which seeks as an ideal a mutually negotiated recognition of subjects' identities, and even more clearly in arguments such as those made by Gerald Kernerman (2005), Richard Day (2000), and James Tully (1995) – that the limits to cultural difference should be more open and, specifically, should be negotiated through a perpetual

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process of interaction and dialogue. One of the most explicit models for a dialogical multicultural nationalism is provided by Tully (1995), who uses the metaphor of Haida artist Bill Reid's sculpture *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*. Reid's sculpture depicts a sea-going Haida canoe filled with diverse subjects. Raven sits in the stern of the canoe. Bear sits in the bow, facing backwards. Next to Bear is the human Bear Mother and their two children, Good Bear and Bad Bear. The other occupants of the canoe are Beaver, paddling industriously; Dogfish Woman, mysterious and aloof; Wolf, with his teeth embedded in Eagle's wing; Eagle, who in turn attacks Bear's paws; Mouse Woman, who hides beneath Raven's tail; Frog, crouched on the gunwales, half in and half out of the boat; the Ancient Reluctant Conscript, a figure of survival described in Carl Sandburg's poem "Cornhuskers" (1918); and the human sitting in the centre, who may or may not be the Spirit of Haida Gwaii. While all but the Ancient Reluctant Conscript are Haida characters, Tully envisions the occupants of Reid's canoe as representative of the Canadian population, whom he imagines as engaging in a mediated dialogue and negotiation for rights and recognition, each from his or her own particular position.

Although I have distinguished generally between different expressions of multicultural nationalism and the role of discipline and dialogism, I want to resist defining different approaches to multicultural nationalism as disciplinary or dialogical. Discipline and dialogism are implied in all articulations of multicultural nationalism, although to widely varying degrees. The dialogue that is called for by proponents of a more open multiculturalism, for instance, remains disciplined by the limits within which that dialogue is often expected to occur – that is, as a relatively rational and polite conversation. The limits of a more disciplinary multicultural nationalism, on the other hand, can always be challenged and thus renegotiated. In every instance, existing structures of power and authority shape the character of disciplinary power and dialogic exchange, and in turn are influenced by them. In other words, discipline is experienced differently by different people, and dialogue does not occur outside of society and politics but, rather, within contexts of unequal relations of power: the words of some have more authority than the words of others.