

# Introduction

On the 24th of May 1941, the *Winnipeg Free Press's* Saturday magazine section carried an article under the stirring headline: "Red Men Dig Up the Hatchet."<sup>1</sup> It opened with a melodramatic flourish:

The red man's on the war path! From the loghouses [sic] of the once mighty Six Nations, ancient allies of the "King George Men"; from the prairie lodges of tall and stately Blackfeet west to the Rocky Mountain haunts of nomad Stonies, and north to the smoke-stained tepees of caribou-hunting Chipewyans and Dog Ribs in the Land of the Little Sticks, the moccasin telegraph has carried word that the children of the Great White Father are threatened by the mad dog Hitler and his iron-hatted braves. That the time has come for the red men to dig up the hatchet and join his paleface brother in his fight to make the world safe for the sacred cause of freedom and democracy. And Canadian Indians, whose forebears fought encroaching palefaces in their conquest of the New World, are rallying around the Great White Father to protect embattled Britain and stop the spread of Naziism to North America.

The previous autumn, Samuel Devlin, the Indian Agent in Parry Sound, Ontario, had complained to his superiors about the impact that the call-up for compulsory military training was having on his agency.

Only three cases have been so far brought to my notice in this agency of Indians being called to report for medical examination, but that was enough to create a furore and I have been beseiged [sic] by delegations who want me to stretch out a long arm and halt all the functions of government. The Department's circular just received makes it clear that Indians are subject to call the same as other citizens, which I think is no more than right. I have explained at some length to the Indians that there should be no reason why their young men, many of whom have at the moment nothing else to

do, should not be willing to put in thirty days of military training to fit them for their part in the defence of Canada which should be just as much their obligation as it is their white brethren. I expect that they will benefit by it both physically and mentally.<sup>2</sup>

These two quotations abound in rich imagery and complex layers of meaning on the subject of the “Indian” participating in Canada’s national war effort during the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> The concerns expressed and the tone differ profoundly, yet both view First Nations military participation in the conflict alongside their “paleface brethren” as noteworthy and proper.

Both documents, and a host like them, came to my attention while I was conducting research into government policies on recruitment and conscription of Aboriginal people during the Second World War. The symbolism and significance associated with First Nations military service were particularly striking. Why did their participation seem to matter so much to English Canadians, both in the public realm and among Indian administrators, and why did those in both realms seem to view First Nations military service in such a different light? These queries could not be deciphered without first answering two more fundamental questions: What image had English Canadians developed of the “Indian,” and how had the Second World War affected that image, if at all? This was the intellectual genesis of my study, and these questions provide the overarching purpose for the analytical journey that follows.

The original inhabitants of the North American continent have long been a subject of interest, fascination, neglect, and derision for Europeans and later for Canadians. From the time of contact, Western cultures have contemplated, discussed, and mythologized Aboriginal cultures, societies, and physical attributes.<sup>4</sup> In the words of Sherry Smith, identifying and articulating “the meaning of Indianness had pre-occupied non-Indians since the sixteenth century. From that point on, Europeans who visited American shores and those who chose to stay, contemplated ‘Indian’ and used those deliberations not only to define Native Americans but also themselves.”<sup>5</sup> Prior to the voyages of Christopher Columbus in 1492, the world was a known place for Europeans. At its heart was their own continent, with the African shores to the south and to the east the vast steppes of the Russian Empire and the exotic lands of the Orient: India and China. This comfortable Mediterranean-centred worldview was profoundly disrupted by the discovery of the New World. The impact of Columbus’s discoveries on late-fifteenth-century Europe might be comparable in many ways to how contemporary humankind would react to discovering extraterrestrial life. Finding new continents was remarkable in its own right, but the lands were also inhabited, and incorporating these new beings into Europe’s suddenly expanding understanding of the cosmos was not a simple matter.

Once the initial sensationalism had subsided somewhat, there began a process of determining the nature of these novelties, discovering their capabilities, and determining where they ought to fit in the world Europeans knew. Intellectual and spiritual questions arose that significantly influenced how the colonizing powers conducted themselves in the Americas. Were the *indios*, as Columbus casually termed them, rational beings?<sup>6</sup> What manner of technologies did they possess? How were their societies organized? From whence had they originated? Were they a lost tribe of Israel? Were they even descendants of Adam, possessing a soul and thus capable of conversion to the Christian faith? Europeans, however, did not ask such questions in a vacuum; instead, they learned about, judged, and defined the inhabitants of the New World based on their own criteria and within their own frame of understanding.<sup>7</sup> They did not ask “what manner of people are they?” but rather “how are they different from us?” Europeans measured the indigenous peoples of the Americas against what they viewed as the Old World’s greatest virtues: “the twin criteria of Christianity and ‘civilisation.’”<sup>8</sup>

These unresolved questions so troubled King Charles V of Spain, whose subjects had been making war upon and enslaving *los indios* for more than fifty years, that in 1550 he suspended all colonial expeditions until the matter could be resolved by the country’s greatest thinkers and theologians.<sup>9</sup> A great debate was held at Valladolid with the intent of constructing Christian laws to govern Spain’s interaction with the indigenous peoples. The issue under discussion was whether it was just and proper for the King of Spain to wage war against the indigenous nations of the New World in order to bring them under his rule and begin instructing them in the Christian faith. Two great theologians presented contending perspectives before a panel of ecclesiastical judges. Arguing for the humane treatment of the indigenous population of the Spanish colonies was the Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, who believed that the “Indians” were sufficiently rational and virtuous to be instructed in the Christian faith without violence and cruelty. Opposing Las Casas in the debate was Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, who portrayed the New World’s inhabitants as depraved and uncivilized. He proclaimed that Spain’s conquest and enslavement of *los indios* were not only just measures, but necessary preconditions for the education and conversion of such barbarians.

For Sepúlveda, the bestial nature of the New World’s people was enough to condemn them, but, to further strengthen his case, he drew on Aristotle’s theories of natural slavery. This classical doctrine claimed that part of humanity was born to be slaves and that it was right and indeed good for them to be so. Therefore, in conquering and enslaving the Aboriginal inhabitants of the New World, the Spanish were helping them to see and fulfil their true destiny. Even Las Casas argued his case within an Aristotelian framework, primarily differing over the necessity of violence and brutal

labour in Spanish colonial mines. Despite the erudite pleas of the debaters, the judges were unable to reach a definitive conclusion, and, in practice, Spain used both approaches in its interaction with the New World's *indios*. Of significance for this study, however, is that no "Indian" appeared before the ecclesiastical court, either as witness or evidence, and that the entire conceptual, philosophical, and intellectual framework in which the discussion was conducted was European. Spain had judged the "Indian" by the yardsticks of European religion and civilization and had found the "Indian" wanting.

Europeans did not universally condemn the indigenous people of the New World. For some there was much to admire in the people whom the French and English referred to as *sauvages*, or savages. Through the latter half of the seventeenth century and extending up to the early nineteenth century, this savage became increasingly idealized and romanticized by thinkers, writers, painters, and travellers. Though the "noble savage" is most commonly associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the mid-eighteenth century, he was simply the best known publicist for what was by then a long-standing and widely recognized notion across Europe.<sup>10</sup> The concept came in many forms but essentially articulated the notion that human beings had once lived in a state of wild grace, free from the corruption of civilized society. The noble savage, as with Spain's Aristotelian *indios*, was developed and constantly reconfigured by Europeans to fill their own needs, frequently having little to do with the New World. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the noble savage helped to revive faith in the inherent goodness of human nature and its potential for progress.<sup>11</sup> By the latter half of the eighteenth century, with the French Revolution on the horizon, it served as a useful whip with which to flog European societies for their decadence and inequities, while at the same time providing a model democrat. In the postrevolutionary period, itinerant high-born Europeans travelling to the New World saw in the noble "Indian" warrior and hunter a reflection of the inherent and natural aristocracy they yearned to see rekindled in the Old World.<sup>12</sup> Though its popularity among the intellectual, artistic, and literary elite waned during the nineteenth century, the idea of the "Indian" as a noble savage would remain an enduring element of popular notions of First Nations people in Western cultures.

The colonial societies that developed in North America owed much of their image of the "Indian" to this European intellectual and cultural lineage. However, their ideas would also increasingly reflect the greater intimacy of contact and conflict with the First Nations from the late eighteenth century onward. The sometimes-bloody skirmishes between settlers and indigenous people did not endear the "Indian" to Euro-Americans, yet the newcomers developed a grudging respect for Native warriors, both as allies and as adversaries. While the First Nations remained militarily potent and politically

significant, they were able to force Euro-American people and governments to negotiate the nature of the relationship with them. Richard White's seminal work, *The Middle Ground*, reveals how this process worked in the region of the Upper Great Lakes and the Ohio River, where a culture developed that was neither distinctly indigenous nor European but a unique hybrid built through accommodation by both parties.<sup>13</sup> As the fur trade and settlement frontier moved west, this middle ground would be replicated again and again, although as Ted Binnema has argued, this process occurred within what he calls the "common and contested ground" of broader intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic relations.<sup>14</sup> After the War of 1812, the First Nations never again had the power to maintain the middle ground with the newcomers for so long a period. Without this power, Americans and Anglo-Canadians were freed to define First Nations people as "Indians" and to force them to live with the consequences.

The noble savage was much less prevalent in the United States and British North America throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. In both jurisdictions, the expansion of settlement across the continent provoked war with the Aboriginal peoples of the West. Clashes between the American army and Plains tribal groups, in particular, rekindled North Americans' perceptions of the "Indian" as bloodthirsty and savage. Such characterizations helped to legitimize the seizure of Aboriginal lands. These processes were paralleled, albeit to a lesser degree, in Canada by the Northwest Rebellion of the Métis and the reluctant involvement of the Plains Cree. As a result of the high-profile nature of Plains First Nations resistance in the later decades of the nineteenth century, their physical attributes, cultural activities, and modes of dress came to dominate popular conceptions of the "Indian" in North America. As a result, all "real Indians" invariably appeared tall and physically impressive, with piercing eyes and a hawklike nose, dressed in buckskins and eagle-feather headdresses.

With the extinguishing of the frontier and the shunting of the defeated tribes onto reserves, the threat to civilization's domain over the whole continent receded. As it did, hate and fear gave way to pity among North Americans. The noble savage returned, riding upon a wave of nostalgia for a great people seemingly fading into oblivion – a vanishing race. The entire history of Euro-American interaction with Aboriginal people "increasingly proved to Whites ... that civilization and Indianness were inherently incompatible."<sup>15</sup> The notion that the "Indian" was dying out had been a pervasive aspect of Canadian and American common sense about the "Indian" for so long that it required "no justification apart from periodic recitation."<sup>16</sup> The idea had been based on very real demographic decline resulting from the ravages of war, deprivation, and disease; however, contrary to popular belief, the population of the First Nations reached its nadir around the turn of the century in both the United States and Canada and then began to

rebound. Nevertheless, data to the contrary rarely dented the armour of myth and the potent sentimentality that infused the trope of the vanishing "Indian."<sup>17</sup>

The first few decades of the twentieth century in North America witnessed the rise of mass media to a prominence and diversity previously unimagined. By the Great War, the print media reigned supreme, benefiting from a concomitant rise in literacy rates in Canada and the United States, and would not be superseded until well after the Second World War. To the printed word was added the immediacy of radio broadcasts and the remarkable visual impact of motion pictures, first in silent form and later in sound and colour. All three would become powerful vehicles for the articulation and dissemination of political thought and socio-cultural norms. Newspapers and movies proved most important for keeping the image of the "Indian" a common, if irregular, visitor to the cultural landscape in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century.

This investigation takes up the story of English Canada's image of the "Indian" as the country and world began its freefall into what would become known as the Great Depression. By the 1930s the idea of the "Indian" had become such a familiar aspect of Canadians' experience that even those who had never seen "real Indians," let alone experienced their diverse cultures, could draw on an extensive mental framework of visual impressions, assumptions, and stereotypes at the mere mention of the word. This mental framework had been shaped from childhood by school textbooks, dime-store novels, Wild West shows, and Hollywood's steady stream of silent films and "talkies." It was refashioned, promulgated, and reinforced through experience and hearsay in day-to-day conversation and in the mass media. This framework was immediately accessible and contained a profusion of potent, yet frequently ambiguous and contradictory, ideas. It is the evolution of this framework in English Canada, along with the impact that the Second World War had upon it, that forms the central purpose of this book.

Part of the rationale for examining this subject is that it does not fall neatly within any one field of history, but rather between several different fields, and has thus been largely overlooked in Canadian historical literature. Though the study of Canadian history has become increasingly rich and sophisticated in recent decades, its practitioners have also become somewhat fractious and ghettoized. This process has not gone unnoticed within the discipline and was in fact the cause of some passionate, and even rancorous, debate through the 1990s.<sup>18</sup> I do not accept the notion that the discipline is hopelessly sundered, let alone dead, as Jack Granatstein contends.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the boundaries between fields of study have ossified, and intercourse across them has withered to varying degrees. As a result, between many fields there remain voids, rarely trodden, where subjects that do not fit comfortably within the boundaries languish.

The image of the “Indian” in Canada during the 1930s and 1940s is just such a subject. It falls within a void at the intersection of three historical fields: war and society, Native studies, and race/ethnicity. The war-and-society historiography in Canada has shown a recent interest in broader trends toward the study of the image, perception, and memory of war, with such excellent works as Jonathan Vance’s *Death So Noble* and Ian Miller’s *Our Glory and Our Grief*.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, this approach has not yet spilled over into the Second World War nor into matters of ethnicity and Native people. Indeed, apart from the prominent body of writing on the internment of Japanese Canadians in the Second World War, the war’s impact on ethnic minorities and the First Nations is still very limited. Although there are some works available on the Great War,<sup>21</sup> one of the only works available on ethnicity during the Second World War is a collection of essays entitled *On Guard For Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*, which contains nothing about First Nations people.<sup>22</sup> Several good articles have been published on the First Nations during the Second World War, but each is relatively narrow in focus and does not explicitly or systematically investigate the attitudes of the dominant society.<sup>23</sup>

Historical writing on Canada’s First Nations has focused heavily on the contact and fur trade periods, leaving the twentieth century relatively underrepresented. Ken Coates and Robin Fisher, in the introduction to their collection of essays, *Out of the Background*, lamented that, “despite the proliferation of fine writing in the field, enormous historiographical gaps remain. Academics have documented comparatively little about twentieth-century developments related to First Nations (particularly the post-Second World War period), despite the fact that there is no shortage of detailed government and other records relating to the era.”<sup>24</sup> They might have included the war years with their emphasis on the post-Second World War period, but the oversight is in keeping with the general neglect in the historiography. This omission seems all the more remarkable considering the tendency of scholars in the field to treat the Second World War as an important watershed. J.R. Miller set the tone in his major survey, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, where the war marks the end of the “era of irrelevance.”<sup>25</sup> Yet those who acknowledge the conflict in this fashion largely gloss over the event itself, offering little examination of the characteristics and historical processes that made it a significant turning point in Native history.<sup>26</sup> Two recent doctoral dissertations, by John Leslie and Hugh Shewell, have thankfully begun to give shape to these neglected years.<sup>27</sup> However, both focus primarily on the development and implementation of Canadian Indian policy and social welfare into the postwar period and generally downplay or ignore the larger context of a country at war and even Native military service.

Sadly, there has been little interaction between the study of the history of race and ethnicity and the study of Native history, and the former’s greater

theoretical sophistication has had a negligible impact on the latter. Steve High notes that there has been “an implicit understanding that Amerindians are somehow outside the conception of ‘ethnicity.’”<sup>28</sup> In many regards, this is fitting given the profoundly different historical experience of First Nations people, their distinct constitutional status, and their relationship with the dominant society. However, it is unfortunate that this topical division has impeded conceptual cross-fertilization. The outcome, according to High, is that, “from its biological origins, the concept of ethnicity has expanded to include socially constructed identities. Despite the general acceptance of ethnicity as a social construct, historians have been slow to explore its meaning. They have been even slower to locate Amerindian peoples within its boundaries ... Ethnic studies has, therefore, not yet become a major player in the study of aboriginal peoples.”<sup>29</sup> There remains strong potential for the theoretical and methodological fertility found in the race and ethnicity historiography to enrich our understanding of Canada’s relationship with the First Nations, especially in the twentieth century.

In this respect, works that examine the construction and application of notions of race and imperialism, such as Edward Said’s classic monograph, *Orientalism*, are perhaps most pertinent.<sup>30</sup> His influential and controversial book explored how Europeans constructed the Orient through academic study, imaginative creation, and the colonial bureaucracies developed to administer and exploit the relationships between the West and the East. The process of creating the Oriental other was fundamental to western Europe’s burgeoning sense of itself and its power, as well as to defining the region as an exotic but subordinate place amenable to Occidental rule. Closer to home, similar approaches have been used to good effect by Kay Anderson in examining how race and the spatial location of an internal other have been imagined and shaped. In *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, she argues that

“Chinatown” is not “Chinatown” *only* because the Chinese – whether by choice or constraint – have lived in enclaves. Rather “Chinatown” is in part a European creation. Like the idea of a Chinese race, “Chinatown” has possessed a tradition of imagery that has lodged it firmly in the popular consciousness of Europeans (and indeed of the Chinese themselves). Moreover, the premise of a uniquely Chinese race and place has shaped and justified practices that have inscribed it further in European society and space. For more than a century in cities such as Vancouver in Canada, assumptions about Chinese “difference” have informed the policies of powerful government institutions towards the Chinese enclave and its inhabitants, in ways that demonstrate the considerable material force and effect of beliefs about a Chinese race and place. In an important and neglected sense, the “Chinatown” belongs as much to the society with the power to define and shape it as it does to its residents.<sup>31</sup>

More recently, James W. St. G. Walker's subtle case-study approach, entitled "*Race, Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada*," explored the intersection of cultural notions of race with Canadian society's institutional legal and court structures.<sup>32</sup> Walker destroys the myth of "the law" and the judiciary as external, impartial umpires, revealing their intimate relationship to broader cultural currents like race – to ideas so basic and self-evident to members of Canadian society as to be common sense. Though examining divergent topics, these studies presume that the mental framework of knowledge and assumption was designed and created by the dominant society for its own consumption and to meet its own requirements. It enables the members of this society to make sense of the world around them, to impose meaning and order on chaos. However, such beliefs were not benign abstractions because imagining the other as inferior and subordinate was simply the first step in realizing their subjugation and control. These and other such works sparked questions about the power, pedigree, and pervasiveness of the idea of the "Indian" in English Canada and about how the dominant society imagined, represented, defined, and ruled First Nations people in the twentieth century.

There is a small body of literature that explicitly deals with Euro-Canadian attitudes toward, and images of, Aboriginal people in Canada, but it remains very limited and all but nonexistent for the twentieth century.<sup>33</sup> The writing on Canada is not nearly as extensive and well developed as it is on American and European images of the "Indian," where such classic works as Robert F. Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian* and Brian Dippie's *The Vanishing American* mark only the starting point of a rich field.<sup>34</sup> By far the best work to date in this genre dealing with Canada is Elizabeth Vibert's meticulous *Trader's Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbian Plateau, 1797-1846*.<sup>35</sup> Vibert unpacks the jumble of culture, gender, class, and race assumptions evident in the writings of early European fur traders in the continent's northwestern interior, producing a nuanced understanding of the encounter relationship.

There are two Canadian works that overlap with my study chronologically, conceptually, and methodologically. Daniel Francis's *The Imaginary Indian* is the better of the two and introduces many of the issues discussed herein.<sup>36</sup> His important study, which takes Canadians' imagined Indian as its focal point, is a fascinating trek through the long construction and use of the image. His book is structured in four sections based on the progression of the "Indian" image from its seizure and presentation by the dominant society to its eventual appropriation and implementation. Unfortunately, this structure produces an ahistorical and overly rigid impression of the imaginary Indian that is largely divorced from its historical context. Moreover, *The Imaginary Indian* covers such a broad sweep of time that it can only skate across the surface of a deep and complex process. The

complexity and nuances of English Canada's image of the "Indian" can be best understood in light of the historical particularities in which it existed because only thus did it have meaning.

The second noteworthy study is a short monograph by Ronald Haycock entitled *The Image of the Indian: The Canadian Indian as a subject and a concept in a sampling of the popular national magazines read in Canada, 1900-1970*, which was published in 1971.<sup>37</sup> This interesting study examines a select group of prominent magazines read by Canadians, including American periodicals, to determine the attitudes expressed about Native people and to trace the changes in those views. He arbitrarily divides the seventy years at 1930 and 1960 but argues that the "changes were ... evolutionary" and tries to maintain a chronology within each period.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, he chooses to define all the articles examined within a cumbersome framework of five categories that he finds suitable to his evidence for 1900: religion, customs and manners, travelogue, popular history, and contemporary Indian affairs. The explanatory value of this structure proves limited once he moves beyond his first time frame. Haycock's findings, though vague and restricted by his approach, are in several respects similar to my own.

This book builds upon the foundation of this historiography, while pushing off in some different directions. It examines the notions of First Nations people prevalent in English Canada during eighteen difficult years of depression, war, and peace. There are more than just historiographical reasons for doing so. First, much of the work published to date examines such issues across broad chronological landscapes. A sharper concentration makes possible a disciplined examination of an extensive base of primary source material, both published and archival. Moreover, it enables an intensive and deep reading of this material and thereby a gateway into the complexities of the dominant society's image of the "Indian." This construct can then be located within its peculiar historical context, which is essential for something so intricately interconnected with English Canada's cultural landscape. Second, the hardships, challenges, and threats that the Great Depression, the Second World War, and postwar reconstruction represented for Canadians provide an often highly charged crucible in which to explore their discussions of First Nations people. Societies under strain are often forced to reexamine and reimagine themselves, their values, and their wider world. The image of the "Indian" provides a window onto this process and is most useful therefore not as a means of revealing indigenous peoples, cultures, and experience but of understanding the desires, anxieties, conceits, and assumptions of Canadians. In defining the "Indian," English Canadians were also defining themselves, and when delineating where the First Nations should fit in their society, English Canadians were trying to articulate the kind of society they believed they possessed or hoped to achieve.

In this sense, then, this book is not a work of Native history even though First Nations people form the subject of much of what is discussed. Rather, it is an examination of an aspect of English Canada's cultural history. Therefore, the emphasis remains on the dominant society's perception of the "Indian" or of various events, rather than on the First Nations' experience, except where indigenous people enter the story to directly affect English Canadians' "Indian" image. Nor is the perception of the *indigène* among francophone Canadians examined. The pattern of interaction between French-speaking Canadians and the First Nations has been influenced by a very different historical relationship and a unique intellectual and cultural milieu. It requires its own analysis by someone with the linguistic and cultural fluency to comprehend its subtleties. Henceforth, the term Canadians refers to English-speaking Canadians unless otherwise indicated.

The present work draws a distinction between the images of the "Indian" articulated by English Canadians in the administrative structures of the state and those expressed in the broader public realm. Each of these two mental frameworks, or images, was separated from the other by differing needs and intimacy, but both operated within a single cultural system of knowing, defining, and ruling indigenous peoples. Within the larger public or administrative image of the "Indian," a broad range of representations, stereotypes, and assumptions emerged. In some cases the patterns of characteristics, temporal setting, visual imagery, and cultural utility of these representations coalesced into fairly coherent subimages or archetypes, such as the persistent "drunken-criminal" image common to the public realm. These are noted and designated with quotation marks for ease of reference where they occur, but such distinctions are of necessity somewhat arbitrary, and the boundaries of these archetypes were rarely sharply defined. Tracking the development, waxing, and waning of these images is a prominent part of this book.

The public and administrative images are not the sum total of distinct discursive threads that might be explored in the Canada of this or other periods, but they do provide an entry into what are arguably the two most critical. Exploring how the "Indian" was discussed by those responsible for the state's management of Native people, among the most heavily administered segments in Canadian society during this period, is self-evidently necessary. But comprehending the larger national cultural environment in which Canada's relationship with the First Nations was created or allowed to exist is also essential. At least in theory, the civil servants of Indian Affairs laboured on the behalf of Canadians to achieve goals with which the wider society agreed.

The working image of the First Nations developed by the officials of the Department of Indian Affairs (Indian Affairs Branch, or IAB, after 1936) will be referred to herein as the "Administrative Indian." This agency was not

the sole government body involved in Indian administration in Canada during this period, but it was the single most important actor, functioning almost like a mini-government in the breadth of services it provided and powers it exercised. Moreover, it was responsible for the overall direction of Canadian Indian policy, subject only to the intermittent and fleeting interest of Parliament and the public. Officials of the Indian Affairs Branch developed an image of their charges that was unique unto themselves and not representative of all government departments. Similarly, though somewhat interrelated with broader public notions, the working image of the First Nations evident in the IAB was distinct from that of English Canadian society. Indeed, the gulf between the two may never have been wider than it was during the period under investigation.

The material utilized for the analysis of the “Administrative Indian” was derived from a range of Indian Affairs records during the period. For instance, the first chapter covering the 1930s examines the internal correspondence in the school files of Record Group 10, the archival group holding material on Indian administration at the National Archives of Canada. In later chapters on the official image of the “Indian,” the focus shifts to correspondence files dealing with Status Indian enlistment and conscription, Indian policy reform, and the postwar Parliamentary review of the Indian Act. In reality, the “Administrative Indian” might successfully have been extracted from virtually any substantial file in Indian Affairs records. Even relatively mundane matters – like appointing teachers to Indian schools, ensuring that Native men and women received national registration cards to avoid losing their jobs, or contemplating the establishment of indigenous advisory councils to supervise the use of community centres on reserves – offer avenues into the official image of Indian Affairs’ charges. The emphasis is on internal memos and letters between IAB headquarters’ personnel and field staff. Such correspondence was less likely to be guarded than public-policy statements, and in any event, the focus is on the distinct corporate language used in conversation between Indian Affairs officials in the 1930s and 1940s.

Alongside the “Administrative Indian,” this book examines the image of the “Indian” in the nation’s print media: the “Public Indian.” Newspapers and magazines can be fruitfully mined for the common sense of the day because they “purport to deal in fact, not fiction.”<sup>39</sup> This was not the only site in which the “Indian” was publicly constructed and negotiated, but it was one of the most important alongside the older medium of literature and the newer forums of radio and cinema. Nevertheless, during this period the print media had yet to be surpassed in significance by film, radio, or television and remained the principle forum for public discussion. In addition, both film and literature sources reflected a relatively small intellectual elite and have already been the subject of scholarly attention.<sup>40</sup> There is

another advantage to periodical sources: They appear regularly and predictably in a structured format, unlike film and literature, which tend to be episodic, occasional, and eclectic. The consistency of dailies, weeklies, and monthlies establishes a baseline, thus providing a continuity that is essential for measuring change over time.

Traditionally, historians in Canada have viewed newspapers in a relatively narrow and limited fashion – as fonts of a particular political perspective and perhaps as enclaves of the usually white, male, middle-class journalists and their values. Historians tended to focus primarily on the editorial content and occasionally scanned the principal news page for the headlines, selectively checking small periods of time to find press response to particular events. I view and use the print media in a more holistic fashion. In the first instance, much of the material was not produced by journalists or editorial boards but comprised letters from concerned citizens, essays written by academic or self-styled specialists, poems submitted by amateur writers, and artwork produced by illustrators for advertisements or satirical cartoons. But more fundamentally, newspapers were not simply sources of opinions. They were also reflections of the cultural values and norms of the society in which they operated; they not only shaped and reinforced opinion, but also drew from an existing cultural toolbox, employing language and imagery that their readership would recognize. At their core, the print media were about communication. To be successful, dailies, weeklies, and monthlies had to engage their readership in a meaningful and mutually intelligible dialogue.

This communication went on at many levels, from consciously opinion-driven editorials to the more subconscious responses evoked by advertising, photos, and satirical cartoons. Unpacking this diverse and complex communicative process required an intensive examination of the periodicals selected. For this book, I canvassed each daily paper from cover to cover for significant time periods: typically one to two months several times within a year. Similarly, every single issue of all weeklies and monthlies was examined for entire years. Throughout, careful attention was paid to the context of national and international events and moods. Every single reference to Native people in editorials, letters to the editor, news stories, cartoons, poems, photo essays, short stories, and advertisements was noted and copied. A broad sampling of newspapers and monthly magazines was used as the source base for analysis of the “Public Indian” to compensate for any idiosyncrasies of one periodical. The periodicals sampled were selected from different regions of English Canada and ranged from major urban dailies and rural weeklies to academic quarterlies and popular monthlies, such as *Saturday Night*.<sup>41</sup> Some, such as the weekly *Cardston News*, were chosen from communities in close proximity to Indian reserves where interaction with the local indigenous population was significant, and others, like Toronto’s *Globe and*

*Mail*, were chosen from populations with little contact. The result was literally thousands of pieces of evidence from which to reconstruct the image of the "Indian" as it was publicly discussed in Canada during the 1930s and 1940s.

When read together, this mass of material provides a remarkably rich source for extruding the prevailing common sense about the "Indian." The starting point is the content of the various pieces of data, which are fascinating and informative in and of themselves. But reading more deeply, a series of patterns becomes observable. The frequency, relative to other news, with which "Indian" topics appear hints at the waxing and waning of public interest. So too does the salience of their placement within the periodical: Did "Indian" stories warrant a large headline on the front page, or were they buried in the minor stories on the ninth page? The type of story in which the "Indian" appeared can also be informative. Frequently, the "Indian" was the subject of amusing, exotic, or educational human-interest pieces, the fluff that helped fill the paper on slow news days. At certain times, however, Native people and topics became worthy of hard news stories in the primary or secondary headlines. Even more occasionally, editors turned their pen to pontificate about the "Indian" in an editorial. Finally, there are patterns in the tone of the language used in discussing indigenous people or issues that reveal a great deal about the dominant society's conceptualizations of Native people and their place in Canadian society. Stories and editorials might be sympathetic or derogatory, examine the "Indian" in a serious light, or make them the butt of droll humour. News and editorial content are augmented with the equally rich, evocative, and often visually dramatic material derived from cartoons, photographs, and advertising. How "Indian" subjects were utilized to make Canadians laugh, how they were visually represented, and how "Indian" characteristics were capitalized upon to sell products say a great deal about the dominant society. Layering these distinct patterns one on top of the other enables a remarkably three-dimensional reconstruction of the "Public Indian."

A few final comments must be made about the methodological use of newspapers in this book. First, extensive use is made of quotations from the evidence in reconstructing the image of the "Indian" because in many cases the tone, tempo, emphasis, meaning, and double meaning can only be conveyed through the words used at the time. Second, no American or British publications were considered in the sampling. This decision does not imply that English Canadians were free from the intellectual and cultural influence of their imperial parent or the colossus to the south. Far from it, common sense about race had long been shaped by ideas imported from abroad, particularly by the British experience of empire and the American struggles over race. Some of the most commonly read periodicals in Canada during

this time were American, including *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, and *Life*. Nevertheless, this book treats the material in the Canadian print media as part of a conversation among and between Canadians. Therefore, only periodicals generated in Canada for consumption by Canadians have been considered. Any foreign contributions made to that dialogue will no doubt be reflected therein. Finally, though undoubtedly there were regional and rural/urban differences, this book does not investigate them. Much more intensive comparative research would be required to draw any such conclusions. Instead, the focus is on the commonalities in language and imagery that cut across regional boundaries. It is this overlap in the depiction of the characteristics, imagery, stereotypes, and assumptions that provides a view of the core elements of the "Public Indian," a figure recognizable to the majority of English Canadians during the 1930s and 1940s.