KNITTING FOR OUR LIVES[1]: THE APPROPRIATION OF COWICHAN SWEATERS BY THE HUDSON'S BAY DURING THE 2010 VANCOUVER OLYMPICS

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Abstract

In 2010, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) produced a mass-manufactured sweater as a part of the official merchandise for the Vancouver Winter Olympics. The sweater turned into a national media controversy, with reporters and the public questioning whether the HBC committed an act of appropriation. In local and provincial newspapers, representatives of the Cowichan Nation stated that the HBC sweater shared many of the same characteristics as a Cowichan sweater. The Cowichan sweater is a traditional Indigenous hand-knitted item crafted by several Coast Salish bands throughout Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia; the main producers of the sweater are knitters from the Cowichan Nation, located in what is now known as Duncan, BC.

In my paper, I will analyze how the HBC's imitations alter the Cowichan sweater's aesthetics, as well as affect those who create the original garments. I will argue that the creation of the HBC Olympic sweater constitutes as a form of cultural appropriation since the spinoff sweaters have appropriated designs, which derive from traditional forms of knowledge and traditional practices of blanket weaving. Secondly, I will demonstrate that the Cowichan people have an economic reliance on knitting, noting that this art is either a main or supplementary income for families who may already have a high need for economic assistance. Finally, I suggest that such acts of appropriation misrepresent Cowichan peoples and are a continuation of colonization. Without respecting Indigenous traditional practices and disregarding the economic impact of appropriation, there is a perpetuation of oppression for the Cowichan peoples, as well as any Indigenous nation facing appropriation. This is especially important as appropriation of Indigenous cultures

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[1] The phrase 'knitting for our lives' is taken from *The Story of Coast Salish Knitters*, directed by Christine Welsh (Ottawa, ON: National Film Board of Canada, 2000).

continues to occur in Canada, even after the country acknowledged the importance of Indigenous rights and reconciliation.[2]

[2] In order to protect a nation's intangible matters, the United Nations adopted a Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. Many countries, including Canada, did not sign this declaration right away, even though it is not a legally binding law. While at first the Canadian Government could not support the declaration since it "contains provisions that are fundamentally incompatible with Canada's constitutional framework." BBC New, "Indigenous rights outlined by UN," Special Reports, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/6993776.stm. In 2010, Canada finally signed the document, after seeing the "unprecedented involvement of the Four Host Nations and Aboriginal peoples across the nation" during the Vancouver Olympics; however, called the document "aspirational," which gives the connotation that the Canadian Government does not need to abide by the declaration. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, "Canada's Statement of Support," UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1309374239861/1309374546142. More recently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 2015 Call to Action continue to call for Indigenous rights, but with many Indigenous peoples skeptical of the idea of reconciliation. Connie Walker, "Truth and Reconciliation: Aboriginal people conflicted as commission wraps up after 6 years," *CBC News*, http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/truth-and-reconciliation-aboriginal-people-conflicted-as-commission-wraps-up-after-6-years-1.3094753.

Inside the crowded Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) store in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia, the official Olympic merchandise had taken over a full two floors of the building.[3] Between October 2009 and February 2010, both levels were draped in the Canadian national flag's colours of red and white. Taxidermy, cedar canoes, and the HBC's own point blankets contributed to the Canadian symbolism (Fig. 1).[4] Amongst all the merchandise was a popular item sold during the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics: a Chinese-made, mass-produced Cowichan-style sweater (Fig. 2).[5] The HBC sweater had a line of symmetry down the front zipper and employed thick yarn for bands of geometric designs in dark grey, black, white, red, and pale grey. The bands that ran

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[3] Indigenous educator Margaret Kovach states that anyone researching within an Indigenous field must situate themselves within their research. Specifically, non-Indigenous researchers need to explain "…their life context and how they engage with [other] cultures." Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 109. I am a non-Indigenous scholar who first became interested in Cowichan sweaters during the Olympic protest in downtown Victoria on October 30, 2009. My love for the sweaters increased when I interned at the Pacific Northwest Quilt and Fiber Art Museum in La Conner, Washington. At this institution, I helped organize an exhibition on traditional and contemporary Coast Salish fibre arts with insight from the local Swinomish Nation. This exhibition included a Cowichan sweater from the 1920s. I bring to this paper my knowledge and love for knitted items, particularly Cowichan sweaters, as well as a desire to show the artistry of the creators to the public. However, I do lack a cultural understanding of what the sweater means to Cowichan knitters, and therefore I highlight their voices as much as I can in this article. In order to acknowledge my position as a non-Indigenous scholar while simultaneously respecting Indigenous ways of knowing, I have used both settler and Indigenous methodologies through combining traditional art historical visual analysis with consulting oral stories.

[4] Solen Roth, "Culturally Modified Capitalism: the Native Northwest Coast Artware Industry" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2013), 148.

[5] Bruce Constantineau, "HBC defends Games sweater contract decision, design," *The Citizen*, October 14, 2009. Though this newspaper column claims the sweater to be one of the most popular items sold by the HBC, it was written on October 14, 2009, nearly six months before the Olympic merchandise left the stores during the Vancouver Paralympic Games' closing ceremonies on March 21, 2010. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the Olympic sweater was the most popular item sold by the end of the Vancouver Games, but it was a favoured product before the Olympics even began.

around the waist and shoulders used a geometric diamond pattern in black and white. The same design was repeated at the corresponding level on the

Figure 1: Inside the downtown Vancouver HBC store, in the basement floor. Andrew Macaulay. October 1, 2009, Vancouver, BC. Image courtesy of Andrew Macaulay.

Figure 2: Inside the downtown Vancouver HBC store, on the first floor. Andrew Macaulay. October 1, 2009, Vancouver, BC. Image courtesy of Andrew Macaulay.

sleeves. Emblazoned on the front pockets and lower sleeves was a red maple leaf, while two elk heads sat symmetrically on the front of the sweater. The inclusion of Canadian icons on the sweater resulted in a garment that is the epitome of Canadian-ness.

In contrast to the HBC's sweater, the store's lower floor contained a small display of Cowichan sweaters, a traditional Indigenous[6] product from

[6] I will use the term Indigenous unless quoting a source. Aboriginal is a political, all-inclusive term that has been defined by the Constitution Act of Canada to include the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people of Canada. Indigenous is more of an inclusive term, which is used by the United Nations. As Indigenous scholars Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel explain, "Indigenous is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in politicized context of contemporary colonialism." Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, "Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism," *Government and Oppositions* 40.4 (2005): 597.

the Cowichan Nation,[7] a Coast Salish nation located in what is now known as Duncan, British Columbia. This product was the only reference to Indigenous peoples on the two levels.[8] Each sweater has a unique design, thickness, size, and shape, yet they share many characteristics (Fig. 3). For example, all of the sweaters are knit in the round, with double-pointed needles, which therefore create a product with no seams except for the zipper or button that run directly down the middle. The sweaters use of two or three natural wool colours, including white, blackish brown, and grey. They also include a shawl-style collar, a v-neck with extra folded fabric on the back of the neck. Finally, the sweaters have several horizontal bands of designs, often including a geometric pattern repeated in the waist and shoulders and a non-geometric figure in the centre, all of which are continued on the back and on the sleeves.

Although the HBC Olympic sweater is not an exact imitation of a Cowichan sweater, it does share many of its traditional qualities. For example, both garments make use of three natural wool tones, the traditional shawl-collar, a centre zipper, horizontal bands of pattern, and symmetrical front animal patterns. The HBC Olympic sweater was in fact so similar to traditional designs that the Cowichan Nation began to launch a

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[7] While the Cowichan name is predominated and many knitters are from the Cowichan area, Sylvia Olsen, the most extensive scholar on Cowichan sweaters, explains "…a proportional number of knitters come from Sooke, Songhees, Saanich, Malahat, Chemainus, Kuper Island, Nanaimo, and mainland communities such as Musqueam, Squamish, and Burrard…" Sylvia Olsen, *Working with Wool: A Coast Salish Legacy and the Cowichan Sweater* (Winlaw, BC: Sononis Press, 2010), 153-154. Because many of the designs come from traditional baskets and blankets, as well as the artistry that occurs from individual knitters, Cowichan sweaters may vary from area to area. However, the characteristics of a sweater, which I mention above, are generally the same. Since the Cowichan Nation is the main nation who protested against the HBC's use of a Cowichan-like sweater, I will focus on this nation as it is a logical point of connection.

[8] Roth, "Culturally Modified Capitalism," 148.

legal battle against the HBC in October 2009. Before turning the debate into a full-out lawsuit, the HBC agreed to sell the traditional sweaters, only at the downtown Vancouver store, in response to these actions.[9]

Figure 3: Jim Ryan. *Cowichan sweater knitters, Duncan, BC.* Date unknown, Duncan, BC. Image G-03197 by Jim Ryan, courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives.

Continuing Tradition with the Cowichan Sweater

The genesis of the Cowichan sweater is complex and multicultural. As historian Sylvia Olsen explains, "There are few objects that provide a more interesting vantage point from which to examine the relationship between Coast Salish and European newcomers." [10] Based on precedents

[9] Mike D'Amour, "Knitters say sweater deal can save them," *The Pictorial*, October 30, 2009.

[10] Sylvia Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 16.

and literature regarding cultural appropriation,[11] or as I define as the taking of another culture, without permission and for profit, based on philosopher Elizabeth Burns Coleman's definition,[12] I argue that the creation of the HBC Olympic sweater constitutes an example of cultural appropriation. There are several reasons for this assertion. Firstly, it is important to note the great value placed on textiles by the Cowichan Nation,[13] since knitting is seen as a perpetuation of blanket weaving.[14] Secondly, the Cowichan people have an economic reliance on knitting, as this art is either the main or a supplementary way of making money for families who already have a high need for income. As a third and final point, I assert that the impacts of appropriation misrepresent Cowichan peoples as nationalistic and patriotic

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[11] Including Deborah Root's *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriating, and the Commodification of Difference* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Michael F. Brown's *Who Owns Native Culture?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Burns Coleman's *Aboriginal Art, Identity, and Appropriation* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005); and James Young's *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

[12] Coleman, *Aboriginal Art, Identity, and Appropriation*, 24. Although for brevity I simply use the term "appropriation" in this discussion, there are other terms that are at play, including expropriation, or the taking property from its owner for benefit, and misappropriation, which is dishonestly taking something for one's own use. Dr. Jason Weems, "Space, Place, Person: Issues of Hybridity and Authorship in the Modernizing World," (presentation, University of California Riverside Art History Graduate Student Conference, University of California Riverside, Riverside, CA, May 17, 2014).

[13] Many scholars, including Sylvia Olsen, Barbara Brotherton, Margaret Meikle, and Barbara Lane, have also found a connection between knitting and basketry for the Coast Salish peoples. For example, both knitting and basket making are constructed row by row from the bottom to top, have distinct animal designs, and often stick with natural materials that are not dyed. Barbara Brotherton, ed., *S'abadeb, The Gifts: Pacific Coast Salish Art and Artists* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Art Museum, 2008), 194. However, due to the limitations of my paper, I will not be discussing how knitting is a continuation of Coast Salish coil baskets.

[14] Some newspaper reporters and researchers, like anthropologist Barbara Lane, have claimed that the Cowichan sweater is also a continuation of a Fair Isle sweater, a designated pattern known for its geometric design, horizontal bands, and limited but still colourful palette. Barbara Lane, "The Cowichan Knitting Industry," *Anthropology in British Columbia* 2 (1951): 17. This may be true, as one of the origins of Cowichan sweaters is that a Scottish pioneer taught the Cowichan knitters not only how to knit, but also the Fair Isle pattern. However, as I will explain in a later section, the Cowichan knitters would have adapted the knitting techniques and patterns to make the process their own.

and are a continuation of colonization practices, since Indigenous forms of knowledge and copyright issues are not respected.

There have been several theories of how knitting emerged for the Cowichan Nation. One theory is that a woman from the Shetland Islands—named Jeremina Colvin—taught the Indigenous women how to card, spin, and knit.[15] Colvin immigrated to the Cowichan Valley, with her spinning wheel, in 1886.[16] A historical account in the book *Memories Never Lost* mentions that being lonely in the Cowichan Bay, Colvin befriended Cowichan Nation women,[17] such as Mary Edwards and Sophia Percy, with whom she would have tea and knit.[18] However, Colvin's daughter, Edith Vaux, later reported that Colvin had only taught the Cowichan women the Fair Isle pattern, not how to knit.[19]

Another theory on the origin of the Cowichan sweater is that the Sisters of St. Ann, a Roman Catholic institution founded in Quebec to promote the education of rural children, brought knitting to the West Coast. In 1858, four Sisters of St. Ann traveled from Montreal to Victoria to open a schoolhouse for the local minority children, including Indigenous,

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[15] Alec R. Merriman, "Indian Sweater Advertise B.C.," *The Cowichan Leader*, May 22, 1948. As explained later in the article, Coastal Indigenous peoples were already spinning wool on spindle whorls well before explorers and settlers arrived. Therefore, Colvin would not have taught the Cowichan women how to spin.

[16] Jan Gould, ed., *Memories Never Lost: Stories of the Pioneer Women of the Cowichan Valley and a Brief History of the Valley* (Duncan, BC: Pioneer Researchers, 1986), 73.

[17] Ibid., 75.

[18] Alison Calder, "Maxims and Contraries: Notes from a Project in Process," in *Material Cultures in Canada*, eds. Thomas Allen and Jennifer Blair, 65-82 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 80, quoted from Barb Brown, "Jeremina's Story," *The Knitter* 71 (2004): 56-57.

[19] *Memories Never Lost*, 76.

black, and bi-racial students.[20] While the Sisters did decide that Indigenous children should be given an elementary education, they felt that it was more critical to civilize them through domesticated and manual work.[21] Knitting became part of the instruction of Indigenous girls during the 1860s, both at St. Ann's Academy in Victoria and St. Ann's School for Indian Girls in Duncan.[22] Indigenous girls were also taught knitting at residential schools beginning in the 1890s, and continued into the late twentieth century.[23] Once at home, girls might have taught their mothers and sisters the same skills they learned in school.

Knitters have reported that knitting is actually a traditional art among the Cowichan people that began well before the first European newcomers arrived. By the 1950s, there was a dispute in Victoria's *The Daily Colonist* newspaper about whether or not knitting was traditional to the Cowichan people: "Controversy rages over the exact origin of Indian sweaters. Aged Indians recall the sweater being knitted in their childhood

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[20] After facing some difficulty in teaching the students, the nuns segregated the school by race, therefore customizing their teachings to suit each group. Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 122.

[21] Residential schools, with their gendered assimilation practices, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was a part of Canada's central goal to "eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious and racial entities in Canada." The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* (Winnipeg, MB: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 5. For more information on the history as well as survivor's accounts, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's website offers the commission's findings that were concluded on December 15, 2015.

[22] In fact, by the 1850s in Europe, as the rich took up the art of knitting, Olsen asserts, "…the craft became synonymous with Christian virtue and civility" after Queen Victoria had made the craft popular. Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 118.

[23] For example, during the 1940s–1960s, the Indian Affairs Branch established a proficiency badge program across Canada for eleven different manual trades, including knitting (Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Society Fonds, Victoria, B.C., 1944, B.C. Archives Accession #MS-1116).

homes…and they often state that the craft is far older than the white man's tenure..."[24] In fact, in a 1985 interview between author Margaret Meikle and the late Cowichan knitter, Anderson Tommy, the latter states, "In newspaper articles, they're saying that the nuns and the Scottish people taught the Indians how to knit, and we just want to prove that it was the Indian people who knit. The white people can't say that they showed the Indians how to knit and fix their own wool like they used to."[25]

It is possible that the answer to the origin of the Cowichan sweater lies somewhere in between, with Europeans teaching Indigenous women and the Cowichan developing knitting themselves. Cowichan women could have learned from the European pioneers but established their own designs. As textile expert Priscilla Gibson-Roberts affirms, the girls were taught how to create plain sweaters, and were not satisfied, so "…they incorporated designs from their former weaving skills into their sweaters."[26] Even if the technique used to create a Cowichan sweater was adopted after colonial contact, Indigenous makers applied their own artistry to indigenize the end product. As philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah reminds us, "Tradition was once an innovation. Should we reject it, for that reason, as

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[24] Brian Loughnam, "All wool and yarn wide- Indian sweaters alluring," *The Daily Colonist*, April 19, 1953. These sweaters were not always referred to as Cowichan sweaters, but were often called Siwash or Indian sweaters in newspaper articles, by consumers, and even by the knitters themselves. Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 7. The anthropologist Barbara Lane was the first to call the products "Cowichan sweaters." Lane, "The Cowichan Knitting Industry," 17.

[25] Anderson Tommy, interview by Margaret Meikle, Duncan, BC, May 8, 1985. BC Archives Accession #T4205:8.

[26] Priscilla Gibson-Roberts, *Salish Indian Sweaters: A Pacific Northwest Tradition* (St. Paul, MN: Dos Tejdoras Fiber Arts Publications, 1989), 1.

untraditional? How far must one go? Cultures are made of continuities and changes…"[27]

Though Cowichan sweaters may not be truly traditional in origin, the sweaters are very similar to the ancient art of Cowichan weaving (Fig. 4). Before European contact, the Cowichan people were weaving blankets, with the oldest found remnants dating between 300 and 500 years old.[28] The Cowichan themselves have an origin story of a raven turning glaciers of ice and snow into mountain goats, which then turned into thread to weave their people together.[29] Generally,

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[27] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Politics of Culture, the Politics of Identity* (Toronto, ON: Royal Ontario Museum, 2008), 24.

[28] Paula Gustafson, *Salish Weaving* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 1980), 16.

[29] *Great Deeds*, directed by Paul Smith (Victoria, BC: Share Our Pride and Royal B.C. Museum, c. 1990s). This film is currently being shown at the Cowichan Nation's Quw'utsun' Cultural Centre in Duncan, BC as an introduction to the Cowichan history and culture for visitors.

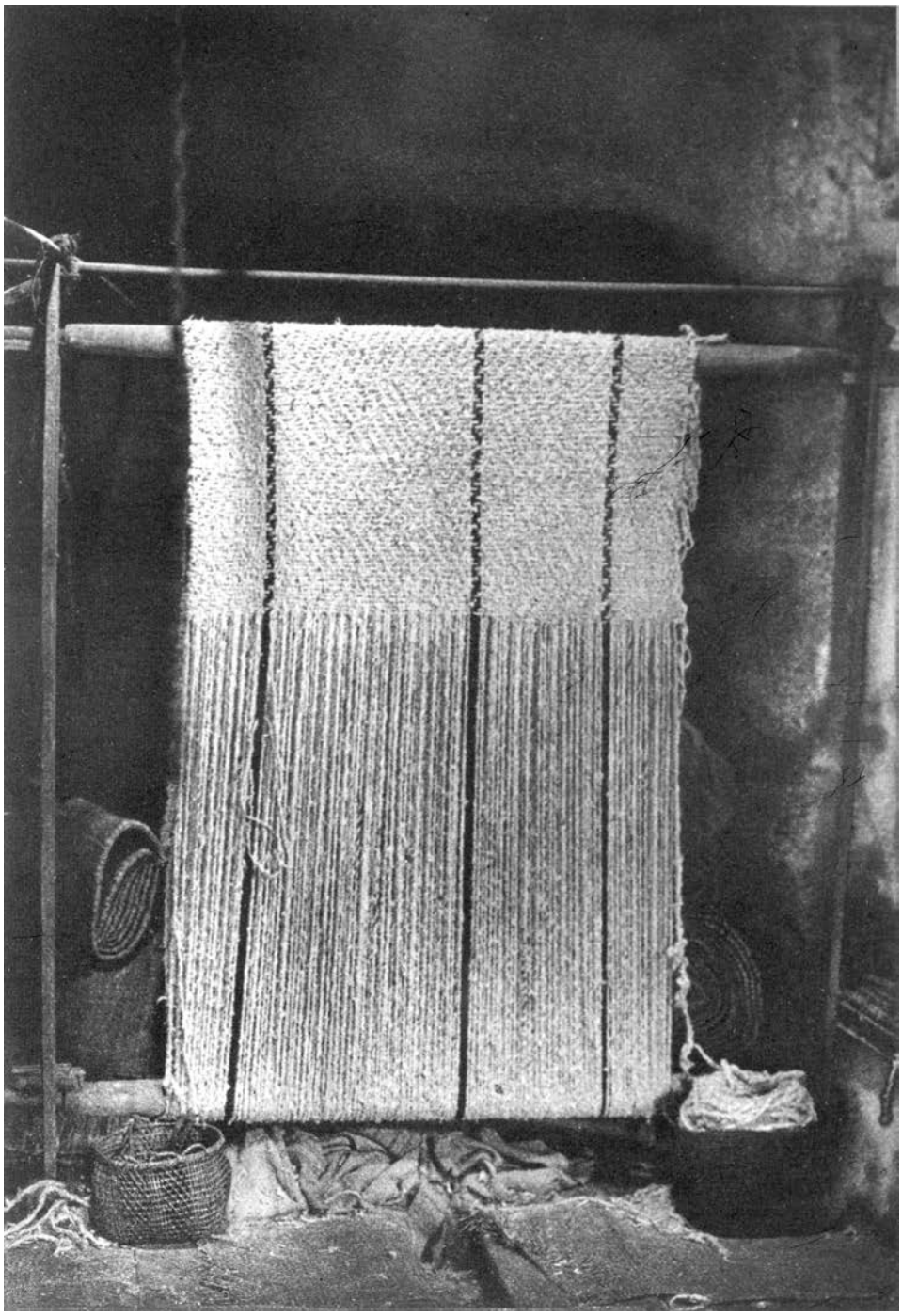

Figure 4: Photographer unknown. *Goat hair blanket, Cowichan*. Date unknown, location unknown. Image D-08939, courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives.

the Coast Salish blankets were either white twill-weave or heavily designed twined blankets featuring repeated geometric patterns.[30] Some of the two colour tone patterns of these blankets, like radiating diamonds and zig-zags, have even carried into the modern-day Cowichan sweater.

In fact, many techniques suggest a link between the blankets and sweaters. For instance, as Olsen describes, "Coast Salish weaving is done using an over-and-under motion of the fingers...creating discrete blocks of different colours separately. This weaving method has much in common with the stitches and graphic pattern structures of European knitting techniques."[31] While blankets had a myriad of uses, such as interior separators, carpet, bedding, insulation, and ceremonial exchange, blankets were mainly used for a kind of jacket or clothing, not unlike Cowichan sweaters.[32] Contemporary knitters use a combination of historic and contemporary tools and techniques, including the spindle whorl or sul'su'tin,[33] for preparing the wool and creating the yarn.

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[30] Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 40.

[31] Ibid., 125-126.

[32] Ibid., 95.

[33] The spindle whorls are more significant to the Coast Salish than mere practicality—these objects are also spiritual in nature. The whorls are decorated on the convex side, which faces the spinner when in use, with floral, geometric, or anthropomorphic designs. Brotherton, ed., *S'abadeb, The Gifts*, 159. It is difficult to understand the precise meanings of these images. Some evidence suggests that the creatures are associated with the ancestors, who act as spiritual helpers for the spinner. Gary Wyatt, ed., *Susan Point: Coast Salish Artist* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2000), 19. Due to the pulsating movement of the whorl, the spinner often reaches a trance-like state. Though the spindle whorl is still used by some elderly knitters, most women are using the Indian head spinner, a late nineteenth-century invention that combines a treadle sewing machine with a larger head to resemble a spindle whorl. These are constructed out of rudimentary materials by Coast Salish people. Some machines even include designs on the head, just like the traditional sul'su'tin. Ben and Elsie Canute, interview by Margaret Meikle, Duncan, BC, April 24, 1985. BC Archives Accession #T4205:5. This could suggest that knitters are continuing the spirituality that was found in the spindle whorls in contemporary times through the perpetual motion of the Indian head spinner.

While the tools of knitting may come from both European and Cowichan origins, the designs are distinctly based on the artistic preference of each knitter. Although several authors state that motifs are implemented for their artistic appeal, and therefore carry no meaning,[34] some knitters' stories contradict this statement.[35] For example, the Cowichan knitter Irene Cooper associates beavers with the future when she knits beaver pattern sweaters. By the end of her story, Irene notes, "A lot of these little animals have some kind of description or story, of what is going to happen."[36] Although each animal or pattern may not have a context or importance, for many knitters, these patterns may come with personal stories that would give the design symbolic meaning. While many knitters may borrow their designs from a variety of sources, including designs from wallpapers, lacework, carvings, and other Cowichan sweaters,[37] it must be remembered that, as textile expert Doris Armstrong indicates, "No design is blindly copied. Each decoration is a problem of personal judgment. The true artist might split, dissect, and reduce his symbol until he had evolved the simplest form."[38] While there are generalized standards for Cowichan sweaters, the

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[34] See, for instance, Margaret Meikle, *Cowichan Indian Knitting* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1987), 17; Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 163; and Lane, "The Cowichan Knitting Industry," 26.

[35] Meikle, *Cowichan Indian Knitting*, 17.

[36] Irene Cooper, interview by Margaret Meikle. Duncan, BC, May 2, 1985. BC Archives Accession #T4205:7.

[37] Gibson-Roberts, *Salish Indian Sweaters*, 77.

[38] Doris Armstrong, *Patterns based on Northwest Indian Designs* (Victoria, BC: Indian Arts and Welfare Society, 1966), 2.

knitters do not have to follow the normalized guidelines.[39] Moreover, these design changes are not just for artistic taste.[40] As a Cowichan knitter named Elizabeth explains, "…we purposely leave a coloured stitch knit out of the order of the pattern or something like that…It's a window. It's where the spirits come and go…"[41]

When knitting began among the Cowichan Nation, weaving continued by the community. However, weaving eventually faded[42] while knitting persistently grew. Cowichan sweaters facilitated the tradition of wool spinning the persistence while there was a decline in production of hand-woven blankets. Thus, a textile culture prevailed in the Cowichan identity as producing, teaching, and exchanging textiles endured. This culture is represented through the Cowichan Nation's Quw'utsun' Cultural Centre, where knitters create, hold workshops on, and sell their sweaters.[43] Therefore, the Cowichan culture stakes its claim in the Cowichan sweater due to the nation's value placed on this textile tradition; however, I would

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[39] Gibson-Roberts, *Salish Indian Sweaters*, 78. For example, Tsartlip knitter May Sam adds felted wool tassels to hats and sweaters, uses colourful acrylic yarn, and creates her own patterns for unique subject matters such as penguins. However, Sam does not sell her sweaters at the stores so she can choose her own wools, patterns, and colours in her sweaters. May Sam, "Coast Salish Knitter's Spinning Demonstration," (public lecture, Work'PLACE,' Open Space, Victoria, BC, October 4, 2014).

[40] It is not just designs that make every Cowichan sweater unique. As Olsen expounds, there are many characteristics that knitters modify such as "…the tightness of their stitches, the style of collars or cuffs they produce, and their method of spinning…" which make each sweater one of a kind. Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 20. In fact, Olsen points out that because of the "…considerable variation in construction and design detail, which suggests that the sweaters had no single origin." Ibid., 162. Yet for many knitters, making the sweaters is not about keeping the exactness of designs and traditions, but more a representation of their feelings while they knit. Ibid., 262.

[41] Ibid., 261-262.

[42] Coast Salish weaving did have a revival in the 1960s, but there is less of a weaving industry today than knitting. Gustafson, *Salish Weaving*, 109.

[43] Shaw TV Victoria, "Knitting the Cowichan Sweater," YouTube, news report video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynpvos7UFZo

argue that the knitters place more worth on the textile tradition than the nation does. Individual Cowichan knitters are the dominant owners of the sweater since they have created the sweater and its patterns. The Cowichan knitters directly and legitimately inherited this ownership through their ancestors who created the form of working with wool. This form has cultural meanings and connections. The knitters still hold those cultural links to the wool through hearing their own people's origin stories or listening to elders talk about their sweater experiences in connection with life values, such as hard work and productiveness (Fig. 5). As Cowichan knitter Sarah Modeste explains, "I think knitting links…[the younger generation] to their culture. You lose that, and life is difficult."[44] Therefore, the Cowichan knitters should hold the ultimate rights, including cultural, financial, and representational right of these sweaters, which are clearly connected to Indigenous traditions within the Cowichan Nation's cultures.

[44]Jennifer McLarty, "Cultural icon for Cowichan," *The Cowichan Leader*, June 12, 2002. In fact some knitters, like Sarah Modeste, even teach knitting as a form of healing from residential schools, in the hope "…to reconnect fragmented and abused generations to its culture." Ibid.

Figure 5: Ministry of the British Columbia Secretary and Travel Industry, Film and Photographic Branch. *Indian Sweater Making by The Charlie Family*. 1946. Image I-27571, courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives.

The HBC Sweater Controversy

While copies of Cowichan sweaters are not a recent development,[45] I am focusing on the HBC[46] Olympic sweater for a number of reasons. Firstly, this was the initial time that the appropriation of the Cowichan sweater caused a mass protest from the Cowichan community, nearly leading to a lawsuit from the band.[47] Secondly, the Vancouver Olympic Committee

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[45] By the 1920s, when interest in the sweaters came from outside the Coast Salish community, both companies and private individuals began to imitate the sweater. Marianne P. Stopp, "The Coast Salish Knitters and the Cowichan Sweater: An Event of National Historical Significance," *Material Culture Review* 76 (Fall 2012): 17. One of the more famous imitations came from Mary Maxim, a company that begun in the 1940s by Willard S. McPhedrain. McPhedrian created the first Mary Maxim pattern, No. 400 Reindeer. This pattern's shawl-style collar, hand-knit quality, bottom geometric horizontal pattern, and two-panel animal front motif makes it very similar to a Cowichan sweater.

[46] Due to time constraints, I was unable to apply for a research ethics approval, and therefore was not allowed to interview any individuals or organizations, including the HBC, during my MA thesis research at the University of Victoria. However, on October 27, 2014, I contacted Michelle Veilleux, public relations manager at the Hudson's Bay Company, to ask for notes, reports, and papers that dealt with the 2010 HBC Olympic sweater, but received no response. After my graduation, I followed up with Veilleux and Tiffany Bourre, director of external communications at the Hudson's Bay Company Corporate by email on October 17, 2016 and December 30, 2016. On January 11, 2017, Veilleux replied with an email that the matter was from 2010, and that no further comment could be provided.

[47] Recently, various clothing companies have created imitations, including Ralph Lauren and Nordstrom's, and therefore the HBC's appropriation is just one part of a greater, ongoing issue. See "Nordstrom removes Cowichan name from sweaters," *CBC News*, news article, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/nordstrom-removes-cowichan-name-from-sweaters-1.2938764; and "B.C. First Nation takes on Ralph Lauren over knockoff sweaters," *CTV News*, news article, http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/b-c-first-nation-takes-on-ralph-lauren-over-knockoff-mmmmsweaters-1.2225767. As anthropologist Valda Blundell explains the challenge of stopping appropriation is "…but one part of a broader struggle on the part of aboriginal peoples to sustain their own cultural forms and transform their relations with the Canadian State." Valda Blundell, "Aboriginal Empowerment and Souvenir Trade in Canada," *Annals of Tourism Research* 20 (1993): 80.

(VANOC)[48] pushed for the Olympics and its sponsors, including the HBC, to support and highlight Indigenous cultures throughout the Games. In order to become a national sponsor for the Olympics, the HBC paid $100 million to be the official Canadian Olympic merchandiser for all the Games held between 2005 and 2012.[49] The HBC benefitted from this sponsorship by associating the company with the Olympic brand and its values.[50]

One of the newest principles that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) included in the Olympic Charter was the inclusion of Indigenous peoples through the Olympic Movement's Agenda 21: Spot for Sustainable Development. As Jack Poole, chairman of VANOC, stated in a 2005 VANOC news release, "If it hadn't been for the full support of the Four Host First Nations in our bid, we likely wouldn't be talking about Vancouver 2010 today."[51] This standard stems from the adoption of Agenda 21 by the IOC in 1999, which according to Olympic scholar Christine O'Bonsawin, "…strengthen[s] the role of 'major groups' in the development and implementation of the Games, including women, youth,

[48] The majority of VANOC was dissolved after their annual report from December 17, 2010. VANOC remained a four-person board that occasionally met until early 2014, when the company's final financial statement was released upon dissolution. Bob Mackin, "What ever became of VANOC?" *Metro*, January 9, 2014. Therefore, even if I had time to complete a research ethics application, it would have been difficult to get a statement from the organization itself. On December 20, 2013, I inquired from Glenn Dingwall, digital archivist at the City of Vancouver Archives, which holds VANOC's records, to access the archives. However, I was informed that the VANOC archives would not be made available to the public until 2025.

[49] Marina Strauss, "HBC tries to build on Olympic momentum," *The Globe and Mail*, news article, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/hbc-tries-to-build-on-olympic-momentum/article4308320/

[50] Although I have found no evidence that the sponsors are required to follow these ideals, sports administrator Chrysostomos Giannoulakis suggests that sponsors would not tarnish the values since enhancing the brand value will result in monetary gain. Benoit Seguin and Norman J. O'Reilly, "The Olympic brand, ambush marketing and clutter," *Int. J. Sport Management and Marketing* 4.1/2 (2008): 65.

[51] Roth, "Culturally Modified Capitalism," 192.

and Indigenous people."[52] Vancouver was the first city to place their bid to host the Games shortly after the IOC's endorsement of Agenda 21, and therefore implemented an Aboriginal Participation and Collaboration program as a part of their bid. While O'Bonsawin states that this program intended to "…achieve unprecedented Aboriginal participation,"[53] it seems that this partnership was not consulted in the selling of Cowichan-like sweaters by the HBC.

In early November of 2007, the local Cowichan Valley newspaper, *The Pictorial*, began a campaign to advocate for the Cowichan sweater to become a part of the official 2010 Olympic uniform. After talking to local members of the Legislative Assembly, Duncan city counsellors, and Cowichan Nation chiefs, *The Pictorial* editors made several phone calls to HBC executives. *The Pictorial*'s campaign sparked the interest of both the Cowichan Nation and the Cowichan knitters. Cowichan knitter Emily Sawyer-Smith was "thrilled" by the idea of making sweaters for the Olympic athletes.[54] While Chief Harry Alphonse of the Cowichan Nation did state he was behind the movement, he voiced that the Cowichan Nation

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[52] Christine O'Bonsawin, "Indigenous Peoples and Canadian-Hosted Olympic Games," in *Aboriginal Peoples & Sport in Canada*, edited by Janice Forsyth and Audrey Giles, 35-63 (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 52.

[53] Ibid., 53.

[54] "Cowichan sweater pitched as the official uniform of the Olympic games," *The Pictorial*, news article, http://www.cowichannewsleader.com/news/Cowichan_sweater_pitched_as_the_official_uniform_of_the_Olympic_games.html

did have a trademark[55] and therefore, "The promotion should be through the [Quw'utsun'] heritage centre."[56] Thus, even before the HBC sweater was created, the Cowichan Nation had serious concerns that the nation and the knitters would lose control of the sweater and its creative design during the Olympics.

When Lydia Hwitsum became Chief of the Cowichan Nation in 2008, she stated that her nation and the HBC were in discussions, and that the HBC hoped to work with the Cowichan Nation and knitters to create Cowichan sweaters on a mass scale.[57] Newspaper articles do not address when the talks began or how long they continued, but the dialogue eventually broke off between the two organizations. The HBC later released a statement in 2009 indicating that, "It was clear that they [the Cowichan Nation] were unable to meet Hudson's Bay Company requirements as a national retailer for consistent quality, speed to market and volume for

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[55] While the Cowichan Nation does have a trademark registered, it is only for the use of the names "Cowichan," "Genuine Cowichan," and "Genuine Cowichan Approved" and not for the actual style or design. Still, the appropriation of the Cowichan sweater style can be considered "… a sort of theft…" as the act of appropriation hurts the Cowichan people culturally and economically. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, 24. Arguably, philosopher James Young states that this type of damage could be "much more serious sort of harm than any theft could be." Ibid.

[56] Mike D'Amour, "Cowichan chief endorses sweater bid, North Cowichan doesn't," *The Pictorial*, November 25, 2007.

[57] Peter W. Rusland, "Olympic Sweater leaves Tribes feeling ripped off," *The Pictorial*, October 9, 2009.

delivery."[58] This conclusion to the conversation led the Cowichan Nation to believe that the Cowichan sweater would not be included in the Olympics.[59]

On October 7, 2009, the HBC revealed their clothing line for the Vancouver Olympics, including the Olympic sweater. Instantly newspaper reporters and the general public criticized the item, and, as *The Pictorial* editors asserted, "Missing the Podium: A sort-of Cowichan sweater seems worse than no sweater at all."[60] A HBC company statement admitted that the Olympic sweater "…nods towards this icon of Canadian fashion, while adding our own contemporary twists including type of wool, colour, pattern complexity and logos."[61] Chief Hwitsum responded to the statement, pointing out that: "Choosing a knit sweater that is both similar in colour scheme and design to our traditional Cowichan Indian sweater disrespects the fact [that] our sweater is a unique piece of art recognized around the world and is a registered exclusive trademark of the Cowichan people."[62]

Chief Hwitsum called for redress from the HBC on October 21, 2009. She was explicit that the sweater was "...an act of cultural

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[58] According to many members of the Cowichan Tribes, such as Dianne Hinkley and Ernie Elliott, the statement that the knitters could not produce enough sweaters was nonsense. As Hinkley states, "I don't think that argument could be backed up at…We started this movement in this Valley. We suggested the Cowichan sweaters for the Olympic uniforms, what, a year ago?" Sarah Simpson, "Silent sweater protest in the works," *The Citizen*, October 14, 2009.

[59] Peter W. Rusland, "Olympic Sweater leaves Tribes feeling ripped off," *The Pictorial*, October 9, 2009.

[60] "Olympic sweater knock-offs missed great opportunity," *The Pictorial*, October 7, 2009.

[61] Constantineau, "HBC defends Olympic sweater." This statement appears to claim that the HBC did not do anything wrong because they made slight changes to the original Cowichan sweater concept. However, the revisions are so trivial that the sweater design still clearly came from an appropriated idea. Although this is far from the realm of my paper, it does beg the question of just how different an artistic design has to be before it is not considered appropriation.

[62] Sandra McCulloch, "Olympic sweater controversy heating up," *Times Colonist*, October 14, 2009.

appropriation…" and that "…some people believe the Bay's sweater is an authentic Cowichan."[63] Because of the sweater's registered trademark, Cowichan Tribes band manager Ernie Elliott noted that the "…Cowichan Tribes will seek legal advice to determine if it will launch legal action against HBC."[64] Meanwhile, individual Cowichan knitters such as Dianne Hinkley began to plan a silent protest where demonstrators would wear Cowichan sweaters to the torch relays in Victoria and Duncan that would take place on October 30 and October 31, respectively.

On October 28, HBC representatives, VANOC representatives, and the Cowichan Band Council met in the Cowichan Nation territory to discuss a remedy. Elliott reveals that the HBC's first proposal "…was asking us if we'd be willing to knit the sweater that they've brought out as part of the Olympic team uniform but our knitters won't do that because it's like copying someone else's pattern."[65] Eventually, a compromise was made between the parties: knitters would have an opportunity to sell their sweaters at the downtown Vancouver HBC store, alongside the imitations. In addition, the HBC would provide signage explaining the history of the Cowichan and their sweaters, but only in the downtown Vancouver store. Adding insult to injury, Hwitsum declared, "…the Bay representatives didn't apologize…"[66]

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[63] Peter W. Rusland, "Chief takes sweater concerns to minister," *The Pictorial*, October 21, 2009.

[64] Bruce Constantineau, "HBC defends Olympic sweater," *Vancouver Sun*, October 9, 2009.

[65] Sarah Simpson, "Olympic agreement in sweater controversy," *The Citizen*, October 30, 2009.

[66] Sandra McCulloch, "Bay, band settler sweater dispute," *Times Colonist*, October 29, 2009.

Although the HBC and the Cowichan Nation made a deal, some scholars, like philosophers Herbert Marcuse and Albert Memmi, might interpret this agreement as simply a continuation of colonizing processes and practices. As Marcuse explains, tolerance, or allowing other ideas that are different from your own to be heard, both "supress[es] the alternatives" and "institutionalize[s] inequality."[67] This is because tolerance grants the freedom to speak, but does "not make the transition from word to deed, from speech to action."[68] Without action, such as protests or lawsuits, Marcuse believes that the oppressed are powerless as they are kept within the hierarchical structure of society.[69] Therefore, the compromise between the HBC and the knitters made any threat of action, through lawsuit or protest, completely stop in lieu of the opportunity for knitters to sell their sweaters at just one HBC store. According to Memmi, the only way for the oppressed to become unexploited is to adopt their own system. Memmi thinks that working from within the colonized system will only end with the colonized "adopting his [colonizer's] ideology, even with regard to their own

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[67] Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," Publications, online book, http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/60spubs/65repressivetolerance.htm

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid. *Vancouver Sun* journalist Stephen Hume discusses in his opinion article, "Olympic fakes? Why are we so surprised," how ironic terrible it is that the Cowichan Nation might not have enough evidence for a lawsuit against the HBC, yet the Olympics can easily sue a company with the name Olympic. As Hume states: "The last report I saw cited more than 50 cases in federal court alleging Olympic trademark infringements." Stephen Hume, "Olympic fakes? Why are we so surprised," *Vancouver Sun*, October 10, 2009. Although this article is an opinion piece, and therefore should not be trusted as factual or accurate, Hume does bring up the point that the Olympics Committee has the money to own many trademarks and to easily sue. Even organizations like *The Olympian*, a newspaper from Olympia, Washington, which began in 1860, was being blocked by the US Olympic Committee for trademarking the newspaper's name. Tom Chivers, "US Olympic Committee tries to block *The Olympian* newspaper trademarking name," *The Telegraph*, October 12, 2009.

values and their own lives."[70] Though there was an agreement between the HBC and the knitters, this deal clearly left the colonized system, and therefore the colonizer, victorious. For example, instead of learning from its mistakes of appropriation, the HBC created another Cowichan-like sweater for the 2012 London Summer Olympics.[71] This product, however, caused no extensive publicity in the media or by the Cowichan Nation. This is possibly as a result of the likelihood that the Cowichan Nation and artists knew they would not be treated fairly in this instance, as they had received an unfair arrangement in the past.

Economic Harmfulness of Appropriation

For years, many Cowichan families have barely scraped by while they knitted and executed other types of work. Eric Olsen, Tsartlip Nation co-owner of a former sweater shop, states that, "…sweaters saved [my] people from suffering and starvation brought about by colonization."[72] Considering the time it takes to make a sweater, the knitters would make the equivalent of below the minimum wage. During the 1960s, Norman Lougheed, the original owner of the Cowichan Trading Company in downtown Victoria, would pay the knitters between $14 and $20 per sweater.[73] The Cowichan

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[70] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1965), 16.

[71] After the deal between the HBC and the Cowichan Nation, Mark Kinnin, the vice president of the Olympics and global sourcing for the HBC, claimed that he agreed to have "…a long term relationship with [Chief] Lydia and the Tribes in producing products for our Hudson's Bay Company line." D'Amour, "Knitters say sweater deal can save them." There is no evidence through my research that the HBC continued to work with the Cowichan Nation in a later time.

[72] Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 25.

[73] Ibid., 230.

Trading Company, and other businesses, would force knitters to use the wool sold in their stores.[74] Therefore, even if the knitters received top dollar, they would also have to deduct their payment for the wool. Even more recently, the knitters only earn about $75 per sweater, and spend $30 on the material, while local stores sell these sweaters for around $200.[75]

Although knitters do not make much money creating these sweaters, the women[76] continue to knit.[77] The fact that knitting fits in with so many other elements of Indigenous life, such as allowing knitters to work during evenings or at home while taking care of their children, is one reason women proceed.[78] Some knitters want to turn their sweaters into a business, but are faced with the financial challenges of starting up a commercial enterprise. According to Olsen, "The Indian Act prevents Native people on

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[74] Forcing knitters to use a certain store's wool was common practice by the 1950s. Though many knitters tried to continue making wool themselves or buying from Sarah Modeste's wool carding business, many stores refused to buy the sweaters unless the wool was from their own store. May Sam states that this system still occurs today, with some companies rigging the procedure by forcing knitters to buy two bags of wool instead of one bag per sweater. May Sam, "Coast Salish Knitter's Spinning Demonstration," (public lecture, Work'PLACE,' Open Space, Victoria, BC, October 4, 2014). With two bags of wool, the knitters not only have to spend more of their earnings on wool, but also constantly have an extra bag of wool as it only takes one bag to make a sweater.

[75] Scott Stanfield, "Carrying on Tradition," *The Citizen*, August 15, 1999.

[76] While most of the knitters are female, there are a few Cowichan knitters who are male. Knitting is also a family activity, where wives, husbands, and children often all join in at different times of the process. Stopp, "The Coast Salish Knitters," 16.

[77] There has been a steady decline in production of Cowichan sweaters made by Indigenous knitters. As Olsen explains, there was once honour in knitting, but by the 1980s, many knitters prevented their children from learning the skill because of the financial and artistic hardship. Sylvia Olsen, "'We Indians were sure hard workers': A History of Coast Salish Wool Working" (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 1994), 139. As Cathy Robertson, head of sales and marketing for the Quw'wtsun' Cultural Centre, states, "I won't say it's a dying industry but there are less people doing it because basically they are not making enough money from it." Gerry Bellett, "Cowichan-like sweaters makes its way into Lauren's line," *Vancouver Sun*, November 7, 2002.

[78] John Sutton Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal White Relations* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 109.

reserves from qualifying for bank financing…" which means many Cowichan knitters were unable to gain loans to have a role in the business profits from their knitting.[79] Although this has not stopped some knitters from opening their own stores, many Indigenous shops lack the money to compete with non-Indigenous companies.[80]

By the late 1970s, Cowichan sweaters were beginning to turn into a fashion sensation all over North America, Europe, and Asia; therefore, imitations increased, making it harder for the knitters. As art historian Deborah Root points out, appropriation "…is generally possible only in an economic system that is more powerful than the one subject to appropriation."[81] Thus, it is the economically powerful who make more money with imitations. As the British Columbia Automobile Association (BCAA) magazine, *West World*, claimed, "…knitters are finding it harder and harder to sell the sweaters, especially in a slow tourist year, because other knitters are making a very similar product faster, cheaper, and at a more consistent quality."[82] These imitations do not create a new category of artwork, but instead add to an existing market; it is important to note that, in the previous production system, all proceeds were originally distributed

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[79] Olsen, "'We Indians were sure hard workers,' 112. This is still the case today. According to banking reporter Grant Robertson, "…hundreds of Canadian Indigenous groups lack the ability to borrow against their homes, due to century-old federal land ownership laws enshrined in the Indian Act. A small number of reserves in Canada have started creating their own land codes as they push toward self-government, a move that includes the ability to use property as an asset that can be used as collateral for a loan." Grant Robertson, "First nations new focus for Canada's banks," *The Globe and Mail*, June 15, 2011. According to Olsen, it was not until the 1980s that funding was available for Indigenous entrepreneurs looking to start a business. Olsen, "'We Indians were sure hard workers,' 113.

[80] Ibid., 114-115.

[81] Root, *Cannibal Culture*, 76.

[82] Peter Ladner, "Cowichan Sweaters: Made in Korea?" *West World*, Nov/Dec 1980.

among various Indigenous knitters' families.[83] Now that the sweater has become marketed as a significant fashion garment, Olsen asserts that many consumers do not possess the skill to identify "…the distinction between authentic and imitation sweaters."[84] Often the customers did not realize the Indigenous elements that constitute the design, and in fact many preferred buying brand clothing lines because they were familiar with these companies.[85] Because the knitters could not compete with the machine-made and cheaper imitation sweaters, many knitters either stopped knitting altogether or began making lower-quality sweaters as well as buying cheaper commercial wool to save time and money.[86]

The Vancouver Olympics could have provided an opportunity for Cowichan knitters to sell their sweaters in a chain store throughout Canada. Selling the actual Cowichan sweaters instead of the HBC sweater would have provided the knitters with an opportunity to gain a large financial

[83] Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*, 36. Many consumers have actually gotten use to the imitation styles. In fact, in the early 2000s, the Quw'utsun' Cultural Centre, seller of original Cowichan sweaters, began receiving hundreds of complaints from customers saying that the sweaters were defective and imperfect. This grievance was due to the fact that many consumers were used to the mass-market sweaters, even though the inconsistencies in the wool, knitting, and designs demonstrate the uniqueness of the artist's sweater. May Sam, "Coast Salish Knitter's Spinning Demonstration" (public lecture, Work'PLACE,' Open Space, Victoria, B.C., October 4, 2014).

[84] Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 286.

[85] Ibid. It was possible to find important information on consumers' opinions on Cowichan sweaters by looking at online blogs. For example, two Indigenous women's fashion blogs, Urban Native Girl and Urban Native Mag, mention "the great Cowichan debate." Both authors own Aritzia imitation sweaters, and point out the cheap price, snug fit, modern design, and popularity of the Aritzia sweaters among celebrities. However, both blogs also reveal that they did not realize that Aritzia was copying their designs from the Indigenous knitters' sweaters, and instead bought their sweaters based on capitalistic brand awareness rather than respecting Indigenous rights. The information on the blogs came from Lisa Charleyboy, "The great Cowichan debate," Urban Native Girl Blog, personal blog, http://www.lisacharleyboy.com/the-great-cowichan-debate/, and "Holy Cowichan," Urban Native Magazine Blog, personal blog, http://urbannativemag.com/holy-cowichan/#!prettyPhoto/8/

[86] Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 291.

boost. For instance, the HBC received a profit of $94.9 million for the sales of their Olympic clothing line between 2009 and 2011.[87] With the Olympic sweater being one of their most popular items, there is a chance that this product itself would have contributed quite a bit in sales. Although the Cowichan knitters may not have been able to make as many sweaters as the Chinese factories, the knitters could have made significant income, depending on the amount the HBC would have paid them. Selling the actual sweaters would have also gained the knitters and their art more international press and attention. For example, during the Game's opening ceremony, the Canadian athletes wore their uniforms, which included the HBC sweater. This opening ceremony was one of the most watched Winter Olympic events, with 65.7 million American TV viewers alone.[88] It should also be noted that the controversy over the Cowichan sweaters was only covered by Canadian media.

Continuing Colonization with Appropriation

Philosopher Elizabeth Burns Coleman maintains that the issue of appropriation is not just about problems over property, but also concerns over sovereignty, since a people are not completely sovereign until they have

[87] Ashley Smithers, "The Reinvention of Two Retail Icons: Management Presentation," Slideshare, online HBC presentation, http://www.slideshare.net/ashleysmithers/hbc-ipo-roadshow-london-des-v29-1

[88] Robert Seidman, "Most-Watched Opening Ceremony Ever For Non-U.S. Winter Olympics; 47% Higher Torino," TV by the Numbers, news article, http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2010/02/13/most-watched-opening-ceremony-ever-for-non-u-s-winter-olympics-47-higher-than-torino/41949/

the rights to control their own culture.[89] As the anthropologist Valda Blundell states, "Cultural autonomy signifies a right to cultural specificity, a right to one's origins and histories as told from within the culture and not as mediated from without."[90] Philosopher Arjun Appadurai clarifies that governments or states want to control minority cultures through "systematically, museumizing, and presenting all the groups within them in a variety of heritage politics," while minority cultures are looking to create their own states through representing and selling their own objects, technologies, and finances.[91] By having complete sovereignty, Indigenous people may then choose to commodify or sell their own designs to others, without relinquishing their monetary, representational, or creative rights

Sovereignty would also allow Indigenous people to have complete representation of themselves. Appropriation often sanctions misrepresentation since an outside culture, group, or company is in control of another culture's product. Misrepresentation of the Cowichan people and their art occurred in several ways because of the HBC Olympic sweater. For example, the design of the HBC sweater includes several red maple leaves, alluding to the Canadian flag, as well as the word "Canada" knitted on the back. The maple leaf is also used by the Cowichan knitters, but this often has a different meaning when knitters choose to use it.[92] While

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[89] Coleman, *Aboriginal Art, Identity, and Appropriation*, 21.

[90] Blundell, "Aboriginal Empowerment and Souvenir Trade in Canada,"72, quoted from Loretta Todd, "Notes on Appropriation," *Parallelogramme* 16 (1997): 24.

[91] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 39.

[92] Cowichan knitters may also employ the maple leaf design to intentionally reference Canada and Canadiana, as this type of national reference is often sought after by tourists.

the knitters may employ a leaf pattern for the design's aesthetics, or as a reference to a family pattern, the HBC design uses the red leaf to foster national pride. This feature on the HBC sweater may give the impression that the Cowichan people[93] are friendly towards Canada and its government. However, this could be a misrepresentation of Cowichan people, and may even help ignore concurrent or later Indigenous protests, such as No 2010[94] and Idle No More,[95] both of which opposed Canadian Government policies. This design feature could also lead customers to assume that the sweater was made in Canada, even though it was produced in China. If consumers knew that Cowichan sweaters are traditionally made generically by 'Canadian First Nations,' then the customers may erroneously believe that the HBC sweaters were created by Indigenous peoples.

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[93] Or perhaps Indigenous people in general. If a tourist did not realize that these sweater styles are particular from the Cowichan people, the sweaters' designs could look generically 'Native-looking.'

[94] The information that follows about No2010 comes from (Zig Zag, "No Olympics on Stolen Land," Olympic Resistance, personal blog and newspaper archive, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/olympics/no-olympics-stolen-land/6314). The No2010 Movement was founded in 2007 by Kwakwaka'wakw artist and author, Gord Hill aka Zig Zag. The anti-Olympic campaign opposed the Vancouver Olympics since it was a threat to Indigenous people, the poor, and the environment. Much of the debate was not only pointed towards VANOC but also the provincial and national governments who helped fund the Olympics rather than using money for other uses. The movement stopped soon after the Vancouver Olympics were finished.

[95] The information that follows about Idle No More comes from (Febna Caven, "Being Idle No More: The Women Behind the Movement," *Cultural Survival*, online publication, http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/being-idle-no-more-women-behind-movement). Idle No More is an ongoing protest movement founded in 2012 by Nina Wilson, Sylvia McAdam, Jessica Gordon, and Sheelah McLean. The three Indigenous women and one Indigenous-ally began the protest after Bill C-45, which called for the removal of protections of forests and waterways, was presented in Canadian parliament. The movement became more about building Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood as rallies, flash mobs, and hunger strikes were held throughout Canada and the world.

Conclusion

While the media caught the outrage from the Cowichan Band Council during the HBC Olympic sweater scandal, the newspapers did not report much on the individuals who were truly affected: the knitters.[96] Like the range of diversity in the sweater's designs, the knitters had various opinions on the controversy, as well as general thoughts on appropriation. Cowichan knitter Emily Sawyer-Smith believed the HBC was "…taking something away from what was originally Cowichan's."[97] Others were upset by the loss of the financial help they would have received; as knitter and Cowichan Nations' Lands Research Director Dianne Hinkley notes, "It could have had a huge economic impact on people that are living hand to mouth."[98]

However, some knitters do not mind the imitation sweaters. For example, Cowichan knitter Sarah Modeste states, "It's quite exciting to see one of the sweaters in *Elle*…It's factory wool and factory made. But if it gives publicity to our product, I'm all for it."[99] In fact, some newspapers

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[96] Due to time constraints, I did not interview any Cowichan knitters myself, but instead took quotes from newspaper articles, books, and older interviews. Much could be gained from the future endeavor of interviewing knitters to understand their reactions to the HBC controversy as well as their financial outcomes. Oral history is an important way of decolonizing, by having Indigenous voices have an equal standing. As Indigenous knowledge researcher Leanne Simpson states, oral storytelling provides two distinct benefits. First, it "…becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism…" and second, it develops into a "…vehicle for the creation of free cognitive spaces." Leanne B. Simpson, "Theorizing Resurgence from Within Nishnaabeg Thought," *in Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg, MB: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011), 33-34.

[97] Sandra McCulloch and Lindsay Kines, "Olympic Cowichan Sweater won't be knit by First Nation," *Times Colonist*, October 8, 2009.

[98] Simpson, "Silent sweater protest in the works."

[99] Olsen, *Working with Wool*, 281.

reported that due to the deal with HBC, the controversy's publicity led to a raise in sales of Cowichan sweaters. As Cowichan knitter Dora Wilson explains, "I think our Cowichan sweater became more popular then, and my sister Charlotte and I have had many orders for our Cowichan sweaters..."[100] However, as anthropologist Solen Roth points out, "Some galleries had stocked up in anticipation of the Games and were left with much more inventory than usual...[the] Olympics…[were] not particularly known to bolster non-Olympic retail sales."[101]

Even if there was an increase in economic opportunity, the spinoff belies the real winners from this exchange: the businesses. The highly-skilled knitters merely receive the equivalent of minimum wage or below.[102] With cheaper mass-produced imitation sweaters competing with the originals, an undiscerning customer is likely to choose the cheaper option, especially considering that the fashion which generates most of the sweater orders predominantly affects young people.[103] If the Cowichan sweater was more broadly recognized as a unique cultural object, it would more easily bear a mark-up and the Cowichan knitters could more fairly earn a living wage. The economic well-being of the knitters, and therefore the future of Cowichan sweaters, is at risk. The issues of intellectual property and the integrity of creative rights need greater attention and measures should be taken to protect them.

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[100] Krista Siefken, "Cowichan sweaters a national icon," *The Pictorial*, March 28, 2012.

[101] Roth, "Culturally Modified Capitalism," 170.

[102] May Sam, "Coast Salish Knitter's Spinning Demonstration" (lecture, Work'PLACE,' Open Space, Victoria, BC, October 4, 2014. Also see footnote 71.

[103] *The Story of Coast Salish Knitters*.

By unravelling the narrative yarn of the history of the Cowichan sweater at the Olympics, I have determined that Cowichan sweaters are an important continuation of Coast Salish textile culture. The Cowichan Nation, and primarily the knitters, are the owners of this creative form, and we need therefore to acknowledge that appropriation by other parties does not respect Indigenous rights, including cultural, financial, and representational rights. If the sweater is reconstructed, the companies creating the imitations, as well as the consumers, should recognize the cultural heritage, and the cultural specificity embedded in the Cowichan sweater; it is important to keep the teaching of the sweater alive[104] Resolving these complex issues must also consider the future economic and cultural well-being of the Cowichan Nation. As Cowichan knitter Sarah Modeste states, "Clothes making has always been part of our way of life. It's embedded in our culture…It's part of who we are."[105]

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[104] One solution to making appropriation less damaging is for the Canadian Government to force corporations to ask for the right to use the Cowichan sweater design from the Cowichan Nation. Without consent, Blundell claims that companies are violating the "…collective rights that aboriginal peoples ought to have over their own expressive cultural forms." Blundell, "Aboriginal Empowerment," 80. However, this answer has various flaws. Several questions need resolving, such as who the company would have to contact and if it would be the band councils or individual knitters who would hold these rights? Another option would be educating consumers on what they are buying. The website "Authentic Indigenous" has recently been created by the Aboriginal Tourism BC to educate consumers in buying authentic Indigenous artworks. A further investigation is needed by scholars not only to assess the effectiveness of various appropriation solutions, but also to examine different methods to keep the teaching of the sweater alive.

[105] Jennifer McLarty, "Cultural icon for Cowichan," *The Cowichan Leader*, June 12, 2002.

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