

**Aboriginal Dispossession and Proletarianization in Canadian Industrial  
Capitalism:**

**Creating the Right Profile for the Labour Market**

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## ABSTRACT

The central theme of this paper revolves around the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) from their traditional socio-economic means of production and their subsumption into the industrial-capitalist mode of production. The investigation is a hypothesis about the historical proletarianization process regarding Aboriginal peoples in Canada stemming from dispossession. The analysis utilizes a critical political economic approach primarily in regard the revolutionary power of private property relations as the competitive antithesis to traditional-subsistence economy relations. Positing the facts of Aboriginal proletarianization within a political economic framework is an addition to the critique of capital. The research of the paper is anchored within: the numbered treaty framework and its application, the disciplinary methods of residential schooling systems, assimilation into proletarian ethics, and contemporary statistics about Aboriginal cohorts within the Canadian labour market. The historical research provides evidence about Aboriginal socio-economic dispossession and the contemporary data provides evidence regarding present-day conclusions of the initial industrial-proletarianization processes.

*Keywords:* numbered treaties, residential schools, Aboriginal labour, Aboriginal history, political economy, industrial capitalism, proletarian, Karl Marx.

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## INTRODUCTION

The historical record of Aboriginal dispossession in Canada has been scarcely documented and/or framed within a critical political economic analysis. The prevalent academic critiques have situated critical race theory and/or colonial structures as the primary foundations of Aboriginal dispossession and their subsequent subsumption into the capitalist economic mode of production. Academic research and philosophies based in critical race theory and colonization processes and relations are not without sound academic merit but these academic pursuits can undervalue the salient economic determinants of Aboriginal proletarianization. Critical race theory illuminates socio-cultural clash, e.g. assimilation into white-settler society, as the basis of Aboriginal dispossession and this component is definitely central to the Aboriginal subsumption into Canadian society. Critiques rooted in the methods of colonization illuminate the political aspects of imperial hegemony and specifically in regard to loss of political autonomy amongst local peoples and the dominance of foreign political power. Critical race theory and critiques rooted in colonization have added important insight into Aboriginal dispossession and these cannot be discarded within the overall examination of Aboriginal life under the authority of Canadian-colonial rule. This paper is not an attempt at discounting the validity of the previously mentioned academic discourses and their relevance in Aboriginal life rather this paper is re-focusing the discussion primarily within a political economic hypothesis.

Academic critiques based in racial and colonial analyses are important in order to provide a full-range of the Aboriginal experiences under capitalism in Canada, namely in the timeframe around the numbered treaties, Confederation, and industrial capitalism.

The importance of race and colonization and the effects on Aboriginal life are not taken for granted within a political economic analysis rather the economic analysis provides insight into social science research that may not have been considered. It is granted that critical racial and colonization analyses are important as social and political determinants of Aboriginal socio-cultural dispossession. However, critical race theories and colonization critiques may not thoroughly explain the political motivations behind Aboriginal economic dispossession, up to and including the forced introductions into industrial capitalism. Critical race analysis and colonization critiques may not fully explain the subsequent replication of proletarian ethics amongst generations of Aboriginal peoples, stemming from the numbered treaty-era up to the present. Race and colonization critiques may also miss out on the economic motivations that enhanced Aboriginal dispossession from traditional means of production and the emergence of capitalist modes of production. Race and colonization analyses do not comprehensively address the emergence of private property replication amongst Aboriginal societies which in turn led to the rapid decline of traditional modes of production. Thus a critical economic analysis is a component that lends insight to the greater critiques of critical race theory and colonial rule over Aboriginal civilizations.

The emphasis of this thesis is to posit Aboriginal economic dispossession, proletarianization, and socio-economic outcomes within a critical political economic framework. The critical political economic tradition is based in the critique of capital and the analysis of Aboriginal proletarianization is an addition to the overall critique. The political economic tradition relating to Karl Marx and his basic critiques about industrial capital are being utilized in the thesis to help illuminate the facts of Aboriginal



dispossession and industrial proletarianization. Karl Marx is a prominent historical figure within the critique of capitalism and his ideas about the material processes and creations of proletarian groups uphold some basic relevance within both industrialist and contemporary capitalist relations. The Marxian critique provides general insight into the socio-economic relations that generally establishes proletarianization campaigns under the umbrella of capitalist society. The creation of an Aboriginal proletariat in Canada during the industrial capitalist revolution fits into that criteria. The strict Aboriginal focus is not to be considered a comprehensive analysis of the greater proletarianized masses within the totality of Canadian history and/or the implementation of capitalism. Instead, Aboriginal proletarianization is being dissected as micro-analysis from the greater working classes and not as a complete separation from those cohorts. Rather, Aboriginal cohorts present a unique experience within Canadian industrial capitalism. Aboriginal dealings with the state and their introductions into capitalism have been remarkable in terms of the greater working class histories in Canada. The Aboriginal examples are being emphasised due to their relative modernity and insights into the creation of market-based labouring classes, from the ground-up.

The objective of hypothesizing Aboriginal proletarianization within a critical political economic framework is meant as a project of discovery. It is an attempt at locating a kernel of accuracy within the transformation of traditional Aboriginal producers into that of dispossessed proletarianized 'commodities' within the capitalist labour market. This paper is analysing the emergence of industrial capitalism in Canada and how that particular socio-economic transformation affected Aboriginal communities, their traditional modes of production, and how it determined their socio-economic class

positions within contemporary capitalist relations. The timeframe of the historical analysis is roughly 1867-1960 and the timeframe of the contemporary analysis is roughly 2000-2013. The timeframe of the numbered treaties (1871-1921) is the main emphasis of the historical discussion but this timeframe is not inclusive of Inuit groups and their subsumption into industrial capitalism thus the timeframe is extended to include Inuit history. The contemporary statistics and data of the Aboriginal working masses in Canada (chapter 4) are not necessarily based within an industrial-capitalist framework nor do they necessarily reflect an ongoing industrialization of Aboriginal communities under contemporary capitalism. Instead, the contemporary statistics and data lend evidence and credibility about the determined outcomes of those initial proletarianization efforts amongst Aboriginal peoples under the industrial capitalist framework in Canada, and the data should be read as such.

Aboriginal proletarianization represents a critique of capitalism specifically about the socio-economic impacts of industrial capitalist expansion into Aboriginal territories. The ideas presented by various critical political economic thinkers of the past hundred and fifty years will remain at the base of the overall analysis. The thesis will consistently focus upon the material conditions that fostered the dispossession of Aboriginal societies from their traditional economic structures, i.e. the clash of economic modes of production. The overall economic analysis situates a socio-economic clash between private-property based modes of production and the subsumption of communal-based modes of production. The intent of the historical discussion is to demonstrate that Aboriginal dispossession was a result of industrial-capitalist motivations that inevitably had disastrous results for traditional Aboriginal societies. Furthermore, the intent of the

statistical analysis is to correlate historical dispossession with the resultant class positioning of Aboriginal workers, within the greater working masses, in the contemporary marketplace. The historical evidences of Aboriginal economic dispossession have been coupled with the contemporary struggles of Aboriginal peoples within the Canadian marketplace and the result is a modest comprehension about Aboriginal collisions with private property.

Aboriginal proletarianization in Canada is a subject that has been somewhat vaguely emphasized within political and academic discourses. The historical facts of Aboriginal proletarianization have been largely forgotten and marginalized within contemporary Canadian political economic discussion. For over a century, Aboriginal proletarianization has arguably been the most significant socio-economic phenomenon amongst Aboriginal communities. The histories of Canadian labour are vast and are replete with competing narratives but the economic dispossession of Aboriginal communities remain exclusively underappreciated. Aboriginal proletarianization history is worthy of intensive political study because it encompasses an epochal socio-cultural shift that had lasting results within greater Canadian politics, the greater working classes, and global economic affairs.

Aboriginal proletarianization, and dispossession, was an extraordinary large-scale political venture authorized by the federal government and the project was imperative for the emergence of industrial capitalism across the immense Canadian land masses. The dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from the provisions of their land bases represents the historical moment in which capitalism effectively established a monopoly over economic production. The histories of Aboriginal peoples, since the ratification of numbered

treaties, reveal systemic exploitations and violence concerning the destruction of Aboriginal political autonomies. The subsequent explosion of capital-growth was a direct outcome of Aboriginal dispossession and this indicates the fundamental socio-economic trajectory that Aboriginal peoples have been unable to rectify. The revolutionary mechanisms of capitalism in Canada, under the auspices of the state, have displayed both socially destructive implications and economically industrious tendencies. Aboriginal peoples have been made subject to the sway of these clashing factors particularly within the past hundred and fifty years of capitalist expansion in Canada. The socio-economic motivations that underpinned industrial-capitalist expansion in Canada have been beneficial to the federal government and to private capitalist growth. However, the capitalist expansion has steadfastly remained a quandary for Aboriginal communities both during the time of industrialization and into the modern epoch of capitalism in Canada. It must be clarified that modern capitalism in Canada has changed since the industrial revolution and the relations of Aboriginal peoples to the capitalist mode of production has also changed over the past hundred and fifty years. Therefore, the thesis is essentially discussing the history and legacy of industrial capitalism in Canada in relation to Aboriginal experiences.

The propensity toward social engineering and social discipline were characteristic of Aboriginal subsumption into the Canadian industrial economy and the greater society. Socio-economic absorption was the primary basis for Aboriginal entry into Canadian society and the basis of wide-scale absorption was principally established through land acquisition. Traditional modes of Aboriginal economic production were primarily based within an ethic of mutual subsistence and communal survival as opposed to private

accumulation and individual survival. The eradication of Aboriginal economic subsistence by means of subtracting the lands from the peoples was a vital aspect to the establishment of private property relations in Canada and to the rise of industrial capitalism. The hegemony of capitalism relied on the acquisition of communally-held Aboriginal properties. The economic motivations inherent within the establishment of private property directly resulted in eradication of Aboriginal subsistence-economy competition. Thus Aboriginal peoples became enfranchised into the socio-political mechanisms of capitalism via private property mechanisms. The introduction of money was a primary catalyst within the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from traditional modes of production and communal subsistence.

The proletarianization of Aboriginal peoples was not a mutual agreement between political communities rather this process demonstrated the propensity of private capitalists and the federal government to create growth, establish fresh sources of production, and put labouring peoples into motion as waged-labour. Aboriginal dispossession was a socially engineered process that degraded competing Aboriginal claims to lands and resources within the political project that established Canada. The battle of ideals was prevalent within the withering away of traditional Aboriginal modes of production and this was paired with overt physical destructions. It was imperative that work *discipline* be instilled into the Aboriginal populations in order for their communal work ethics to be re-imagined to fit the capitalist division of labour. Violent disciplinary measures established the proletarian ethic and it also facilitated the power dichotomy relative to the oppression of authority structures and the subservience of labouring classes. The state took immense social liberties with the lives of Aboriginal peoples

across Canada in establishing its society of discipline. Every detail of Aboriginal life was made subject to disciplinary functions and this was justified as a mechanism of civilization. The disciplinary tactics were controlled by state-held management and the churches but it was private capitalist interests that reaped the economic benefits of the harsh measures. The federal government regimented specific social and economic goals that overruled the value of Aboriginal existence. These economic goals were a prime motivator within cultural-assimilation based policies. The creation of a new Aboriginal person was deemed necessary in order for these cohorts to conform to the demands of both the labour market and Canadian society. Proletarianization was in effect the 'final solution' to the Indian problem. Aboriginal proletarianization was engineered to replace distinct Aboriginal identity, in all of its forms, through mass education into proletarian work ethics. The proletarianization of Aboriginal peoples symbolizes the history of industrial capitalism in Canada and it gives evidence to the violence of its legacy.

## CHAPTER 1 – PROLETARIANIZATION: THEORETICAL DEFINITIONS OF THE PROCESS

“If you’re after getting the honey, then you don’t go killing all the bees” (Strummer, 2001).

Critical political economic arguments connect the revolutionary impacts of proletarianization directly within the critique of capital. To state it more exactly, the institutionalization of private property is critically examined and mined for intellectual insights about a particular proletarianization project, in this case it is the Aboriginal examples in Canada. The purpose of utilizing political economic based theory is to provide a practical critique within the descriptive analysis of the history. The analysis of this paper is utilizing several theoretical-practical conceptualizations about capitalism and the state inclusive of their relation to Aboriginal proletarianization. The foremost theoretical-practical concepts to be clarified are: *commodity fetishism, ideology, primitive accumulation, private property, proletarianization, and labour-power*. These concepts are interconnected within the overall analysis as they simultaneously establish and re-enforce each another within the production and reproduction of proletariat classes. The theoretical analysis is provided as an intellectual basis through which empirical knowledge can be better utilized and understood within a practical study. Aboriginal proletarianization is a fact of Canadian history and the importance of any critique is to impart practical understanding that can be utilized within the contemporary condition, i.e. the outcome of that history. It is important to recognize the distinct history of Aboriginal cohorts and their experience under the capitalist mode of production as this history gives insight to the configuration of proletarianized classes in the Canadian context.

## Commodity Fetishism, Appearances, and Ideology

The political economic concepts can be intellectually demanding thus their clarity is imperative for understanding the functions of a proletarianization process. Therefore the discussion begins with the clarification of ideas. This analysis is utilizing the term ‘commodity fetishism’ as related to Marx’s definitions in *Capital*, Volume I. Fetishism is related to “the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things” (Marx, [1867], 1990, p. 165; Zizek, 2008a, p. 19; Balibar, 2007, p. 56; Fraser & Wilde, 2011, p.57; Harvey, 2010, p. 39; Heinrich, 2012, p. 71; Lukacs, [1923], 1971, p. 86). ‘Fetishism’ is established through the melding of dominant ‘ideology’ (i.e. false consciousness) with the practical elements of the production process - masking the social relations that sustain the process - while still maintaining that there is a definite relation of some kind in which value is posited. The fetishism is upheld by an ‘appearance’ due to the misrecognition of what is actually happening amongst a particular social relation, thus it “masks social relations” (Harvey, 2010, p. 41). Marx’s analysis demonstrates the power that appearances have over the function of labour within the commodification process. Fetishism happens when the commodified product is given a character identity that ‘appears’ as separate from its historical formation within the mind and hands of the producer:

the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race ... I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities (Marx, [1867], 1990, p. 165).

Fetishism exists throughout all of capitalist society due to producers and consumers accepting (mistakenly) that the appearance of a commodity has an intrinsic



value based on its own merits and forgetting the labour processes and relations that went into production. The merits (i.e. value) of the commodity ‘appear’ to be completely separated from human intervention (i.e. the work) in the process but the appearance is a misrepresentation that hides the material labour within the process (Heinrich, 2012, p. 73). In capitalist society, the fetishism of commodities fosters misrecognition about proletarian labour because labour is viewed as being disconnected from the value of commodities. The commodity appears to receive a value without production. The working masses that create the physical product are viewed as nothing more than disconnected machines whose labour adds no value to the finished product and this represents the factor of ideology, or false consciousness (Harvey, 2010, p. 40). The labouring peoples that produce the commodity are given no recognition for the value of the final commodity. Furthermore, the producers remain relatively unknown to consumers thus the appearance that producers are disconnected from the commodity persists within the capitalist mode of production.

Commodity fetishism goes beyond false consciousness because misrecognition only masks the material forces at work, it does not stop those forces from working (Heinrich, 2012, pp. 74-75). False consciousness, or ideology, is a part of the fetishism but it does not play the important role. The social interactions that stem out of the ‘appearances’ play the important role. Etienne Balibar (2007) interjects why appearance is everything within the fetishism of commodities:

now fetishism is not a subjective phenomenon or a false perception of reality, as an optical illusion or a superstitious belief would be. It constitutes, rather, the way in which reality (a certain form or social structure) cannot but appear. And that active ‘appearing’ constitutes a mediation or necessary function without which, in given historical

conditions, the life of the society would be quite simply impossible. To suppress the appearance would be to abolish social relations (pp. 60-61)

The appearance that a commodity is worth an intrinsic value on its own merits, apart from a labour process, is a trivial falsity in a society that refuses to acknowledge how labour creates the reason for value of commodities. Jim Stanford (2008) states “productive human effort (‘work,’ broadly defined) is clearly the only way to transform the things we harvest from our natural environment into useful goods and services. In this sense, work is the source of all value added” (p. 71). The appearance is upheld because consumers interact strictly with products and they do not reconcile the work that is imperative to the existence of the commodity and its subsequent value in the market. “The appearance is not an illusion but perfectly real, because it is only through the exchange of commodities that the social relations between producers exist” (Fraser & Wilde, 2011, p. 57). The circulation of commodities is an apparent relation of things with other things because commodities get exchanged for money (i.e. a symbolic thing) and not actual labour, which fosters obfuscation about the production of the commodity.

In essence, workers are buying commodities (i.e. products of labouring individuals) with a symbol that represents the sale of labour-power (i.e. cash wages). This creates the ideology of relations between things and it masks the existing social relations between labouring people. Labour is *always* the material root of commodity production, and therefore value, but it is only within capitalist production that these material forces get lost in the fray of the marketplace. Commodity fetishism, amongst consumers and producers, is enhanced by mass disconnection to the production process. The labouring process appears separate within the production of commodities because producers are globally disconnected from fellow producers. Producers and consumers do not reconcile

the gap. Jacques Bidet (2009) states “fetishism thus exists thanks to this indirect and a posteriori character of the relationship between individual and global production that characterises the commodity system” (p. 266). The commodity thus ‘appears’ as something without production because the labour of the producers is disconnected in the marketplace and is given little account within the merits of the commodity.

The state of ‘appearance’ in regard to the value of commodities becomes a functional mythology within capitalism because it facilitates a definite need. Balibar states “to suppress the appearance would be to abolish social relations” and if the mythological relations were abolished then production would fall into disarray (p. 61). It becomes apparent why money plays an important mystical role within commodity value and production - (if tomorrow the cash system in Canada collapsed and the use-value of labour became the strict value-basis of commodity exchange then true social relations between people would be realized but the market would be in disarray, as no one would understand what values their labour and/or goods would be worth without the historical connections to cash) (Marx, [1867], 1990, pp. 168-169). The capitalist economy works because material labour remains the basis of production, hence value, even if the dominant ideology obfuscates this social relation. The contributions of labour are only negated within social perception but not in actual production. The unknown acceptance of fetishism allows production to continue without fail and capitalist ideology replicates an appearance of relations between things rather than between persons.

Ideology is an ever-present fiction within the lives of capitalist societies. “The most elementary definition of ideology is probably the well-known phrase from Marx’s *Capital*: ‘they do not know it, but they are doing it’” (Zizek, 2008a, p. 24; Marx, [1867],

1990, pp. 166-167). Žižek (2008a) adds to this statement by saying that ideology is “‘false consciousness’, misrecognition of the social reality which is part of this reality itself” (p. 25). Ideology is the trickster within capitalist relations in that it blinds consciousness by misplacing the attentions of the observers and partakers within the social relations. The relations that are imperative within capitalist society are those fueled by economic idealism. The producers are made to be unimportant and the well-being of the total economic system becomes continually vital, politically speaking – this represents an ideology at work.

Furthermore, ideology obfuscates the consciousness of the society about the relations that create and sustain proletarianization. False consciousness establishes a disconnection between the historical directives of capitalism in that the initial violence that divorced producers from owning their means of production is forgotten and has been seemingly rectified by the passage of time. The present situations of proletarianized groups become merely a contingent part of the mode of production and their socio-economic conditions are accepted as facts of working life. More than this, the modern proletariat is offered no alternatives to wage-labour because it is presumed that the sale of labour-power is the sole provider of comfortable survival. The normative acceptance of the wage-relation misrepresents the ongoing exploitation of the proletarianized classes because it ignores the historical violence that transformed local peoples into proletarians, i.e. transforming the possessors into the dispossessed.

The purpose of ideology is to blur social relations from their empirical proofs thus creating a false perception about those social relations. At the root of ideology there are distorted ideas relating to official knowledge. Marx ([1846], 1978) states “the class

which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force” (p. 172, original emphasis). Sumner (2006) adds that “official knowledge has excluded, co-opted, or marginalized other forms of knowledge throughout history ... with the process of privatization, knowledge is moved from the public realm into private control, then priced, packaged, and profited from” (p. 205). Ruling ideas are already distorted because they are the narratives of ruling elites and that is whose interest they represent (Fraser & Wilde, 2011, p. 118). False consciousness is often spread via the intellectual rule by elite social actors. False consciousness is achieved by making it ‘appear’ as though the direction of the society (i.e. function of the state, the economy, foreign policy, etc.) stems from the free will of the general population.

The wage is a good example as to how capitalist ideology relies upon a collective misrecognition that is anchored within a ruling interest. Wage-workers understand that they work in order to receive wages but they misrecognize the power relation they are enabling by selling their labour-power for cash (i.e. private property). The immediate material benefits of selling labour-power for money are clear but the intellectual explanations regarding the historical conditions that created buyers and sellers of labour-power are misrecognized. The proletariat fosters a reverence for money-wages but they misrecognize wages as being the means of their survival, even above their own capacity to labour. Thus they place fetishism onto money by misunderstanding that their labour is both the reason they survive and the reason that the capitalist economy does not collapse. Referring back to Marx, ‘they do not know it, but they are doing it.’

Harold Innis and his staples thesis provide a tangible example as to how commodity fetishism functions within political economic theory. Innis essentially

prescribes the circulation of the commodities apart from the role of human labour. For Innis the commodity appears as a relation unto itself in that the staple seeks a market and potential for exchange without the intervention of human labour. Innis' commodity fetishism is prevalent in his view that the commodity itself appears as the creator of history: "as Carl Berger has pointed out, Innis' history of Canada was history 'dehumanized' – the making of history by human beings, albeit in conditions not of their own choosing, plays no role in (Innis') works" (Berger, 1976, as cited in McNally, 1981, p. 47). The thesis of Innis was based on the commodity as creator of exchange processes and as the deterministic creator of labour relations (McNally, 1986, pp. 163-164). Daniel Drache views the Innis thesis as "one in which the development of the working class is grasped as a reflection of 'the productive forces of each staple'; and in which 'each staple determines its own relationships, labour requirements, and labour markets'" (Drache, 1982, as cited in McNally, 1986, p. 166). From the viewpoint of Drache it is evident how Innis prescribes the commodity with an existence of its own and as the essential driver of social production and labour relations. Innis gives little merit to the role of human labour and definite social relations within the production process or the creation of markets.

The history of cod fish as connected to fisheries, beaver as connected to the fur trade, and wheat as connected to prairie agriculture were three key staples that Innis utilized in his writings to demonstrate the legitimacy of his theory (McNally, 1981, p. 44). McNally (1981) states "each staple product, according to Innis, embodies a complex of geographical and technical factors which uniquely shapes the social organization of the new society" (p. 41). McNally points out that Innis' theory centralized around the production of staples without reference to the labour relations that established the

production of said staples. The staples take an a priori position within the Innis theory, i.e. the staples are formed and conceived before labour relations as things with their own deterministic development. For instance, Innis states “each staple in its turn left its stamp, and the shift to new staples invariably produced periods of crises in which adjustments in the old structure were painfully made and a new pattern created in relation to a new staple” (Innis, 1956, as cited in McNally, 1981, pp. 45-46). McNally (1981) claims that this previous statement is “*commodity fetishism* writ large” because it adequately represents Marx’s formulation regarding ‘a social relation amongst people that assumes, or appears, as the form of a relation between things’ (p. 46, original emphasis). Innis makes the staple *appear* as the creator of definite social relations between people. For Innis, the staple (i.e. cod, beaver, wheat, etc) was not merely a naturally occurring animal and/or plant that was connected to some natural-biological environment rather the staple was driver of production that determined market relations. This separation between human labour, biology, and commodity production entrenched the commodity fetishism of Innis’ thesis.

#### Primitive Accumulation and the Establishment of Private Property Relations

The rationale behind ‘primitive accumulation’ is precisely the creation of proletarian classes and the establishment of private property as the first instances of greater accumulation efforts. The socio-economic engineering of proletariat groups, as drivers of production, is one of the core pillars of capitalist society and it is imperative to capital that labour be available for sale in the market. Proletarian classes do not stem from accidental historical occurrences rather they are made up of local producers that have been purposely dispossessed of their lands, resources, and ownership over their

means of production. The proletarianization process is a renewable historical occurrence in that a single locale of workers is not enough to realize the potential of a mature capitalist accumulation, in the global sense. Thus a mass birth of wage-labouring classes across the globe was imperative for the expansion of the capitalist mode of production. The expansion of the capitalist modes of production and the proletarianization of local workers within historical-colonial situations effectively demonstrates calculated violence that sought to divorce the local producers from ownership over their production.

Creating the initial space(s) of disaster was an essential part in the process of ‘so-called primitive accumulation.’ Primitive accumulation is the veritable starting point wherein a traditional society begins its revolution into dispossession, i.e. a society that has been stripped of its autonomy and sovereignty to rule over their affairs. “So-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production” (Marx, [1867], 1990, pp. 874-875). Marx ([1867], 1990) refers to this process as appearing as ‘primitive’ due to the order in which it occurs (p. 875). The methods of this initial accumulation phase are crude and overtly violent and this is meant to ensure that the final outcome is never in doubt, i.e. total control over the means of production and the producers. The initial ‘primitive’ phase is the point in the historical analysis where active processes are set in motion with the intent of subsuming the traditional society into the burgeoning capitalist society, thus transforming the supposed uncivilized savages into civilized proletarians. Neil Smith (2008) states, “the wilderness and the savage were as one; they were obstacles to be overcome in the march of progress and civilization” (p. 20). Primitive accumulation of capital is the phase in which the obstacles were overcome.



This initial divorce phase is an essential socio-economic step toward full realization of capitalist accumulation. Primitive accumulation is always profitable regardless of the time and effort spent on creating profitable market conditions. The 'history of divorce' is the phase wherein primitive accumulation finds its social directive. It is only after this violent divorce procedure that capital accumulation can be established and then become systemic as a functional mode of production. However, local producers are often unwilling participants within their removal from traditional ways of life and their struggle is often to remain as vibrant producers within the former existence, thus "force is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power" ([1867], 1990, p. 916). The force of violence is a primary social catalyst within establishing economic transition from the traditional to capitalist: "There is here therefore an antinomy, of right against right ... between equal rights, force decides" (Marx, [1867], 1990, p. 344).

Marx bases capital accumulation within its historical context in order to present a logical case as to how capitalism forcibly overtakes its competition. Marx ([1867], 1990) posits that primitive accumulation is shaped through historical violence: "(in) actual history, it is a notorious fact that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short, force, play the greatest part ... as a matter of fact, the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic" (p. 874). Marx's analysis is a harsh rendering of the historical mission that the owners of capital seek for themselves, i.e. to strictly appropriate new lands, property, and labouring peoples upon which to build a framework for accumulation of wealth. Revolutionizing the 'means of production' is the emphasis of the accumulation process and without this step there is nothing to establish privatized rights within

property holdings. Securing the means of production and appropriating means of subsistence is a revolution that is won in “blood and fire” (Marx, [1867], 1990, p. 875).

Marx ([1857], 1993) is careful to abolish mysticism from the equation of primitive accumulation, in that he describes the accumulation process as being inherently material and based in existing social relations between people: “it must be kept in mind that the new forces of production and relations of production do not develop out of *nothing*, nor drop from the sky, nor from the womb of the self-positing Idea; but from within and in antithesis to the existing development of production and the inherited, traditional relations of property” (p. 278, original emphasis). The paradigm of primitive accumulation that Marx establishes rests on competitive forces that exist between antithetical societies and their competing economic modes of production. The antithesis plays itself out within the battles for ownership over the means of production and property. The furthestmost private property battles are found within the struggle over land ownership and common access to natural resources. Foreign lands must be acquired in order for mature capitalist expansion to be successful, on a global scale, and this comes at the expense of local peoples and their common-held properties. Marx ([1867], 1990) situates capitalist economic expansion as having its basis in the ownership of land and the transformation of land from communal to private property (p. 885; Harvey, 2010, p. 294). In this sense, the possession of land is the original power base of capitalism. Land acquisition fuels primitive accumulation and greater global-capitalist expansion.

Rosa Luxemburg takes Marx’s analysis further by positing that primitive accumulation is a renewable economic affair (globally speaking) that is not subject to a singular historic location within capitalist chronological progression; as Marx has been

criticized of affirming. Primitive accumulation is a renewable process that inevitably extends outside its central base toward peripheral societies, i.e. it is carried on through colonial means ([1913], 2003, pp. 348-352). Luxemburg refers to the appropriation of 'natural economy' (i.e. traditional-communal based production) by colonial powers as the inevitable reach of monopolistic capitalism, i.e. spreading globally through colonization. The basic intent of this colonial mission is to subdue the competing producers and this is done most expertly through land appropriation. Luxemburg views the abduction of land as the major blow to the success of natural economies within non-capitalist societies. The process to acquire the land from the Indigenous peoples, or 'native', is won through free market idealism and violent action. Luxemburg ([1913], 2003) gets to the crux of the matter by stating: "each new colonial expansion is accompanied, as a matter of course, by a relentless battle of capital against the social and economic ties of the natives, who are also forcibly robbed of their means of production and labour power" (p. 350). Neil Smith (2008) reiterates this sentiment: "under the banner of benevolent colonialism, capitalism sweeps before it all other modes of production, forcibly subordinating them to its own logic (p. 71). Political force plays its role as the harbinger of the capitalist mode of production. The various colonial projects of the past couple centuries represent the re-ignition of the primitive accumulation process.

The attempts to colonize and appropriate natural economies are a directive of state-driven power, as the ally of capital. The state situates the economic model on the basis of the constant accumulation of capital but it is labour-power that is desperately needed to get things into motion. Thus local peoples are turned into 'rightless' and 'free' proletarians during this process, which may take several decades, and they eventually

make up the source for new labour (waged and non-waged) within capitalistic society (Marx, [1867], 1990, p. 876). “In the history of primitive accumulation, all revolutions are epoch-making that act as levers for the capitalist class in the course of its formation; but this is true above all for those moments when great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled onto the labour-market as free, unprotected and rightless proletarians” (Marx, [1867], 1990, p. 876). Luxemburg further emphasises Marx’s primitive accumulation argument, without rejecting its theoretical premises and conclusions, by adding that the process does not stop with the creation of rightless and free proletarians in a singular moment, or geographical locale. For Luxemburg, primitive accumulation was renewed within colonial projects. Colonization completely ensconced local peoples within the machinations of capitalist accumulation for the purpose of global market expansion. Luxemburg relates social domination of local peoples with the dispossession of their traditional land bases, upon which their economy was based and their socio-cultural lives were arranged.

Luxemburg’s argument encompassed colonial-imperial projects as the empirical proof about the ongoing processes of primitive accumulation and its revolutionary impulses toward communal property dispossession, the world over. “The ultimate purpose of British capital was to possess itself of the very basis of existence of the Indian community: the land” (Luxemburg, [1913], 2003, p. 352). Furthermore, “since the primitive associations of the natives are their strongest protection for their social organisations and for their material bases of existence, capital must begin by planning for the systematic destruction and annihilation of all non-capitalist social units which obstruct its development” (Luxemburg, [1913], 2003, p. 350). The key phrase to identify

in this statement refers to 'basis of existence', that being 'land' but more specifically the natural resources that the land held. Luxemburg is making an argument about survival of a people in the wake of their appropriation into the capitalistic social relation, in that a communal-based mode of production necessarily deteriorates after it has lost access to common-held property, lands, and resources. The argument comes full circle in that capitalism is continually seeking to produce new wealth and this process is enabled via foreign land acquisition. Land acquisition ends with total restructuring of local economies, including the social lives of the dispossessed.

It is inevitable that there be a revolution of identity amongst traditional societies after introductions to capitalism and the new identity must be customised to fit the new mode of survival, i.e. through disciplined indoctrination into the proletarian work ethic. Land acquisition, accompanied by the introduction of private property, necessarily leads to a revolution of social life that is triggered by epoch-making moments. Transformation of the local peoples from being proprietors of communal survival toward becoming the proprietors of individual survival is an outcome of the private property relations inherent under capitalist society. The introduction of private property relations and individual-based wealth establishes individuated relations amongst newly proletarianized classes. It also establishes the need to sell labour in order to subsist. Marx ([1867], 1990) states "that the possessor of labour-power ... must rather be compelled to offer for sale as a commodity that very labour-power which exists only in his living body" (p. 272). People are compelled to sell labour-power by fact that they no longer have means to labour for their subsistence and they have been stripped of access to common-held lands and resources.

The social conditioning of communal-traditional peoples involves the restructuring of communal identification with their land bases and this involves mass-scale 'shock therapy.' This is accomplished through the commodification of individual labour-power on a large-scale. The institutionalization of private property, restricting of common resource distribution, erosion of culture, and the total violence involved with land dispossession is a shock-based system. Capitalism fosters this kind of shock therapy in order for the growth of its markets. Naomi Klein (2007) states: "believers in the shock doctrine are convinced that only a great rapture - a flood, a war, a terrorist attack - can generate the kind of vast clean canvases they crave. It is in these malleable moments, when we are psychologically unmoored and physically uprooted, that these artists of the real plunge in their hands and begin their work of remaking the world" (p. 24). It can be argued that Aboriginal proletarianization was an outcome of socio-economic "shock therapy" that resulted from the collapse of the traditional Aboriginal economies via the eradication of common-held property and natural resources.

The collapse of bison populations is a good example of natural disaster and shock. Amelia Paget ([1909], 2004) states "what the Indians did not owe to the buffalo one can hardly imagine. This noble beast provided them with almost everything they required ... one cannot write of the Indians of the prairies without mentioning the buffalo; and anyone interested in the former must regret the extermination of the latter" (pp. 21-22). It needs to be clarified that the buffalo did not willingly "provide" itself to the Aboriginal bands (it is a fetishism to suggest that the buffalo was a conscious participant in Aboriginal survival) rather it was the direct labour of the Aboriginal peoples, via hunting and socio-economic innovation of buffalo-based products, that led to the use of the

buffalo as a communal means of subsistence. Paget is making a simple economic argument as to the basis of survival for traditional Aboriginal societies on the prairies and that with the decline of buffalo, as a subsistence resource, these communities became economically deficient. The buffalo was transformed by Aboriginal labour into a use-value resource within traditional economic modes of production in that buffalo products facilitated several imperative communal needs: food, clothing, shelter, tools, trade goods, ceremonial items, etc (Paget, 2001, pp. 21-24). The rapid decline of the buffalo populations was a definite “shock” to the economic structures of Aboriginal peoples throughout the prairies. This decline in combination with rampant disease and the waning fur trade had ripple effects that devastated economic security across the Aboriginal communities. The path toward Aboriginal economic dispossession was directly tied to collapse of traditional use-value structures and resources. The demise of buffalo populations is a good example, amongst several, of socio-economic shock and the ensuing vulnerability of the local populations. Klein’s shock therapy model reverberates within Aboriginal economic dispossession as being tied to the opening of new markets and opportunities for capitalist expansion in Canada due to Aboriginal vulnerabilities.

Within Klein’s analysis, local peoples are necessarily put through some form of disaster, natural or human made, in order for their minds and bodies to become occupied with immediate plans of survival. Under this scenario the trust of local peoples becomes entwined with a governing body that promises to oversee an economic deliverance from the tragedy: treaty provisions, money, scrip, and wage-labour fit into this model. A ‘shock’ can necessarily be advanced upon an unsuspecting community by way of political force and direct planning, as in colonization, or it can be an exposure to natural

disaster - as the spread of new diseases and the decline of the buffalo populations demonstrates. It is within those initial moments of shock that the agents of capitalism strike at the roots of the community by remodelling economic production to suit private capitalist growth. In theoretical models, the success of capitalist accumulation resides in the ability to subdue local peoples and their communally held properties and faculties. Disaster capitalism is a facilitator in the process to revolutionize local means of production. It is during a crisis, or shock, that capitalists find avenues of exploitation amongst local communities in order to privatize communally-held resources, or lands. Within the colonial situations, the collapse of traditional socio-economic resources resulted in the loss of control over local means of production and loss of means of subsistence. Primitive accumulation of capital within the Canadian example relied on moments of Aboriginal shock as a component for the permanent establishment of private property relations. Furthermore, economic dispossession connected to 'disaster' opened the door to proletarianization projects.

Primitive accumulation, economic dispossession, and proletarianization are historically entwined within capitalist private property scenarios. Primitive accumulation inevitably leads to the establishment of capitalism as the hegemonic force for economic production and social reproduction. This initial phase needs proletarianized producers in order to realize mature capitalist accumulation. Marx's primitive accumulation was theorized as a one-time process that predated mature capitalist accumulation and it was a sort of pre-history before full blown capitalist accumulation spread globally from the centre to the periphery (Harvey, 2010, p. 306). Whereas, Luxemburg criticized Marx and added a colonization component to Marx's analysis; Marx's colonization critique is



minimal. Luxemburg posited primitive accumulation as being a renewable process that spread via colonial means and imperialist political strategy: “according to Luxemburg’s work, the continuity of primitive accumulation took place mainly on the periphery, in areas outside regions where the capitalist mode of production dominated. Colonial and imperialist practices were crucial in all this” (Harvey, 2010, p. 307). For Luxemburg, primitive accumulation was a process that predated all instances of local dispossession and subsequent proletarianization and this occurred in different geographical locations at different times; depending on the history of local peoples and their interactions with colonial-imperialism and capitalism. Luxemburg situated the primitive accumulation process as a new process in all colonized regions where capital came to dominate as mode of production. Luxemburg was opposed to a singular extraordinary instance of primitive accumulation occurring at one time and place within a European context. Marx posited that primitive accumulation occurred at one time, in Europe, and for him this singular incident was enough to propel capitalist accumulation the world over as an aid within Euro-colonization projects. The Aboriginal examples, in what came to be Canada, under European colonial rule and within industrial capitalist expansion comply with Luxemburg’s treatment of primitive accumulation rather than Marx. This is not to say that Marx’s descriptions of primitive accumulation processes are inaccurate rather it merely posits that primitive accumulation is not subject to a singular incident that occurred in one time and place in history. Colonization represents the renewal of primitive accumulation processes and these projects stand separate from the European working class experience. Colonial primitive accumulation projects are not opposed to the European experiences in regard to dispossession rather colonial examples are case-

specific for each geographical location about how the local peoples were affected by the onslaught of capitalism.

### Proletarians and Proletarianization

The proletarianization discourse has often been convoluted with class positions and wage- labour arguments about who is and isn't a proletarian but these are trivial. Proletarianization deals with dispossession on macro-levels rather than pandering to a specific wage labour classification (e.g. factory workers, service workers, etc). The idea of the Marxian-proletarian is one that has changed over the nearly two centuries since its conceptualization. The universal factors of the Marxian proletarian are twofold: 1.) total expropriation of the producers from the ownership of their means of production and means of subsistence, and 2.) ownership of nothing but one's own capacity to work, i.e. labour-power (Marx, [1849], 2010, pp. 10-13; Marx, [1867], 1990, pp. 270-273; Marx, [1858], 1993, pp. 502-504). The conditions for creating a cohort of proletarians are primarily based in the destruction of the former way of life and this stems directly from the primitive accumulation processes. The means of reproducing a proletarianized cohort is found in replicating the dispossession process throughout generations.

Marx takes a broad theoretical attitude on who is a proletarian and he bases his concept around the industrial complex of the nineteenth century. Marx is somewhat exclusive of a proletarian as being primarily a wage-worker that sells labour-power to another person and receives compensation for this sale via the wage, i.e. paid-labourers strictly made up Marx's revolutionary class (Stiegler, 2010, p. 39). But before Marx, the proletarian was simply a greater member of the impoverished and dispossessed masses of

society, as was utilized by Louis-Auguste Blanqui (Fraser & Wilde, 2011, p. 172). Marx simply clarified that wage labourers were the symbolic representation of those dispossessed masses who would initiate radical social change; thus Marx's overall proletarian project. Marx does pay homage to the sentiment of Blanqui in his theoretical utilization of the term 'masses.' Stiegler (2010) posits that Marx envisioned the working class as being the objective proletarian class of his generation (p. 33). Yet, on a theoretical level the Marxian proletarianization process was more intellectually rich than the fact of wage work. Stiegler acknowledges that Marxian proletarianization was conceptualized as a "*loss of savoir-faire*" which translates to the dispossession of both knowledge and behaviour in general (p. 33, original emphasis).

Marx's theoretical use of the proletariat was unique in that he envisioned a great mass of workers that would eventually arise to power through the machinations of capitalism in the effort to overcome their dispossessors, i.e. eventually leading to the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist/bourgeoisie class. Etienne Balibar (2007) states:

the concept of the proletariat is not so much that of a particular 'class', isolated from the whole of society, as of a *non-class*, the formation of which immediately precedes the dissolution of all classes and primes the revolutionary process. For this reason, when speaking of it, Marx employs, for preference, the term '*Masse*' (mass or masses), which he turns round against the contemptuous use made of it by bourgeois intellectuals in his day (p. 54, original emphasis).

Marx's ([1848], 2004) romantic dialogue in *The Communist Manifesto* states "what the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable" (p. 20). The inevitable victory of the proletariat class, i.e. the masses, is based in subjectivity of the Marxian ideal and it is a theoretical model (not rooted in an exact experience). Marx's romanticism is prevalent

and this is part of his greater mythic-poetic structure of the working peoples and their culmination as a revolutionary totem, i.e. a living-symbolic representation of the revolutionary group ideal. Marx's revolutionary theory focuses on an intriguing slant about the world of work and the wage, in the guise of the proletariat, and this is the location (in the realm of critical theory) where the concept of proletarianization finds its modern roots. For Marx, it was class oppression that led to the proletariat as being an historical force that would have its reckoning. Harding (2009) states that "Marx, especially, portrayed it (the proletariat) as the most oppressed, poorest, most alienated and, therefore, most *indignant* class – almost, it would seem, in exile from society" (p. 105, original emphasis). The righteous indignation and revolutionary fervour were important within the historical project of Marx's proletariat.

The Marxian proletarian is not merely a person borne out of accidental occurrence within capitalistic mode of production, i.e. a worker happens to inadvertently stumble upon a social relation where the sale of her labouring capacity is the essence of survival. Marx's proletarian is stained with historical bases for social reproduction and this was central to the reasoning why a person sold labour-power to capital. Survival was the stain forever pressed into proletarian labour. Marx ([1849], 2010) sums it up: "labour-power is, therefore, a commodity which its possessor, the wage-worker, sells to capital. Why does he sell it? In order to live" (p. 12). 'Survival' appears to be melodramatic but it is not a weakly constructed thought. The wage is the primary means by which an individual subsists under the capitalist mode of production. Marx's proletariat class was a universally imagined connection within the world market and it was based on the

generalized experience of wage-workers, all of whom live under conditions of dispossession and struggle.

The abstract class of the Marxian proletariat comprised a universal commodified social object. For Marx, the proletarianization analysis hinged upon humanity becoming objectified, complete with appropriate cash-value. This objectification represented the essential dilemma of the proletariat in that they were attempting to regain personhood by escaping mass commodification. The worker necessarily became a deskilled object that provided a service to the valorization of capital, i.e. they provide the realization of surplus-value. The individuated skills that workers deployed in their labour are not of particular consequence to capitalism, as an overall mode of production, because these can be moulded to fit any workplace situation. It is this abstract situation of workers as common bearers of value which the owners of capital were desirous to establish during the primitive accumulation phase, in order to facilitate surplus-value (capital) growth. Heinrich (2012) states that “surplus value is the aim of capitalist production (p. 123). Marx ([1867], 1990) further states “human labour-power in its fluid state, or human labour, creates value, but is not itself value. It becomes value in its coagulated state, in objective form”, i.e. as a material commodity (p. 142).

Abstract labour represents the social conditioning arena of the proletariat. In the form of abstract labour, the proletariat necessarily become something intangible as individuals within the widespread division of labour. Abstract human labour is “only the expression of equivalence between different sorts of commodities which brings to view the specific character of value-creating labour, by actually reducing the different kinds of labour embedded in the different kinds of commodity to their common quality of being

human labour in general” (Marx, [1867], 1990, p. 142). The abstract quality of commodification is that it ties workers together under the banner of human labour in general rather than corporeal individuals that can display autonomy of production. Human labour in general represents a fetishism of the proletarianized classes. Workers become relatable to each other through the circulation of the commodified things they have created. The outcome of proletarianized labour is the production of a commodified thing over which the producer has no control and which in the end controls the prosperity of the producer; businesses fail when commodities do not sell which in turn makes congealed labour within those commodities value-less and then workers become expendable. Marx ([1867], 1990) states about the direct producers that “their own movement in society has for them the form of a movement made by things, and these things, far from being under their control, in fact control them” (pp. 167-168).

Marx established a rigid ground for the general aspects of proletarianization but those aspects have been modified and adequately challenged in the past century of critical thought. Proletarianization in the modern sense, as it is utilized throughout the discussion of this paper, is a more fluid and encompassing ideal than Marx’s static definitions. The modern idea about the proletarian (historical and contemporary) is measured through partaking in the wage-labour process in any capacity as objectified labour but it is not strictly limited to wage-work. Unpaid work that exists to maintain the reproduction of the proletariat is just as important within the maintenance of the capitalist mode of production. However, the fact of *dispossession* is the uniform description regarding the social position of proletarianized peoples. Contemporary capitalism has a global market

and the universal proletariat (made-up of local communities) has become an abstract labouring thing via universal dispossession of their means of production.

Hardt and Negri (2001) give a general account of the proletariat as “a broad category that includes all those whose labor is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjected to capitalist norms of production and reproduction” (p. 52). Jodi Dean (2012) reiterates that both classic and contemporary proletarianization is “as a process of exploitation, dispossession, and immiseration that produces the very rich as the privileged class that lives off the rest of us” (p. 18). Hardt, Negri, and Dean’s formulation are not quite rigid as Marx’s utilization of the paid industrial labour force, which excludes multitudes of workers that exist outside the wage-labour force. Hardt and Negri view the proletariat as a class that is not strictly homogenous in its categorizations (p. 53). This universal proletariat adequately represents the stratification of global working peoples under industrial and contemporary modes of capitalism. Hardt and Negri take a step away from Marx by typifying the modern proletariat as being “all of these diverse forms of labor (that) are in some way subject to capitalist discipline and capitalist relations of production” (p. 53). Their proletarian emphasis is more abstractly presented than Marx’s original formulations and this global inclusivity adequately represents the divisiveness of global capital. It is this abstract proletarianization process stemming from dispossession that best describes the Aboriginal histories under industrial capital and colonization.

It is interesting to note that contemporary notions about the proletarianization process are more inclusive of dispossessed groups as opposed to a singular vanguard. Thus solidaristic acts of resistance to capital have been moved away from the control of a labouring vanguard and have been placed into the realm of common proletarianized

groups. Harding (2009) observes that Lenin's proletariat (taken from Marx's formulation) was "the vanguard class ... because they alone were in a position to come to an adequate understanding of exploitation" (p. 103). Lenin narrowed his vanguard scope by stating that "the factory worker is none other than the foremost representative of the entire exploited population" (V.I. Lenin, 1960-1970, as cited in Harding, 2009, p. 104). The modern conceptualization of a proletariat represents the multitude of workers rather than a minute section of paid-workers who by luck of occupation have been bestowed unequivocal privilege. The broad conceptualization of the proletariat, based in socio-economic dispossession, is retroactively applicable and is framed around historical proletarianization processes that Marx's analysis discounted and/or overlooked. Marx's framework of the proletariat, and its revolutionary project, is narrow and is not descriptive of colonial situations. Marx's proletariat is a romantic thing that theoretically aids in the downfall of capital as means of production. Marx's proletariat is imbedded with an historical mission but the history of economic dispossession (in the case of any local cohort group) does not imply such a mission within the fact of being proletarianized. The history of economic dispossession, for any cohort, merely implies that there are possessors and dispossessed and there are historical moments regarding the dispossession process. Thus Marx's utilization of the proletariat as a revolutionary thing, or a vanguard, is not a factor for discussion within Aboriginal proletarianization. Aboriginal proletarianization in Canada correlates to the factor of dispossession and the subsequent exploitation of labour.

For Zizek, the proletariat is a mass of bodies that are becoming other than human, a sort of living dead (*homo sacer*), via their dispossession of legal rights and stewardship



over shared spaces and resources. Derived from Giorgio Agamben, the “*homo sacer*” refers to peoples who have been deprived of determinate legal status and are essentially dead but remain biologically alive (Zizek, 2009, p. 92; Zizek, 2008c, p. 49). The enclosure of commons deprives citizens from participation and it limits legal status due to the ideological nature of private space. The privatized property relations of capital are to the antithesis to the ‘common.’ “The ongoing enclosure of the commons concerns both the relations of the people to the objective conditions of their life processes as well as the relation between people themselves: the commons are privatized at the expense of the proletarianized majority” (Zizek, 2009, pp. 94-95). The expense of the majority happens when people lose their autonomy and commonality at the expense of capitalist property relations. Alienation from social spaces encompasses the modern proletarianization process. Slavoj Zizek (2009) supports Hardt and Negri’s analysis by emphasising their ideas about the ‘enclosure of the common’ as being that element in which the proletariat find their global foundations: “it enables us to see the progressive ‘enclosure’ of the commons as a process of proletarianization of those who are thereby excluded from their own substance” (p. 92). “Generally, the commons refers to those areas of social and natural life that are under common stewardship, comprising collective resources and rights for all, by virtue of citizenship, irrespective of capacity to pay” (Laxer and Soron, 2006, p. 16).

Proletarianization is a state of estrangement. The proletarian necessarily compartmentalizes all individual autonomy within the fact of labour. Proletarian labour is a reconciling between the fact of work and the struggle to subsist. Theodor Adorno and

Max Horkheimer (2011) address the estranged spaces that encompass the totality of proletarian work:

Horkheimer: I do not believe that human beings naturally enjoy working, no matter whether their work has purpose or not. Originally, the position of man is like that of a dog you want to train. He would like to return to an earlier state of being. He works in order not to have work.

Adorno: Philosophy always asserts that freedom is when you can choose your own work, when you can claim ownership of everything awful (pp. 14-16).

The private spaces provided for modern work have become the realm of the ‘awful’, removed from the freedom to choose work, under which workers are made to execute pre-programmed tasks where their autonomy is negated. It is not necessarily true that all workers despise their work but the emphasis is deliberate in that humanity desires to choose/own their work as opposed to becoming a thing that exists for capital gains. It is predominant within capitalism that workers provide labour in order to be set free from the burdens of wage-work. Essentially, the worker is temporarily able to find an autonomy, and humanity, at the end of the shift. Marx ([1849], 2010) summarizes: “and the worker, who for twelve hours weaves, spins, drills, turns, builds, shovels, breaks stones, carries loads, etc. – does he hold this twelve hours’ weaving, spinning, drilling, turning, building, shoveling, stone-breaking to be a manifestation of his life, to be life? On the contrary, life begins for him where this activity ceases, at table, in the tavern, in bed” (p. 12).

Michael Lebowitz (2003) interprets Marx’s reference to proletarian work as a narrative about the dichotomy created by the capital relation itself. This dichotomy ends up in forming a disturbing contradiction within the person of the wage-labourer. “*In the end, we understand the contradiction of capital and wage-labour as that of wage-labour and the human being*” (p. 207, original emphasis). Lebowitz is echoing Marx’s

formulation about waged-labour rather than the totality of modern proletarianized peoples. It is not hyperbolic to state that proletarianization, as dispossession, encapsulates a dichotomy between the proletarian and the human being. The proletarian is not given status and/or value as a worker unless they are working for the cause of capital and even non-paid workers are subject to the same economic motivations, i.e. the wage system. The proletarian is essentially judged according to narrow labour-power skills, employment status, and the price to harness those skills as a commodified thing.

Stiegler acknowledges proletarianization as the process in which knowledge is stripped away from workers. The loss of knowledge results in workers losing their autonomy and becoming strictly commodified producers (Stiegler, 2010, pp. 38-39). Proletarian work is often centralized around an advanced technology and workers are not required to perform independent tasks, instead the worker is trained to facilitate a machine and/or a program. Proletarianized workers are situated into roles according to their narrow aptitudes. Knowledge bases are ever-shrinking as workers become enjoined to the mechanized systems of the labour process. Proletarian labour is disproportionately based on the ideal that narrow skill sets, or none at all, is desirable for managing labour costs. Proletarianization reveals a compelling critique about the stripping away of knowledge bases in favour of mass discipline, in combination with ignorance. Knowledge is imparted and utilized within the building of the machinery and into software that facilitates the labour process.

Bernard Stiegler (2010) posits that “proletarianization is that which excludes (the) participation of the producer from the evolution of the conditions of production, and through which he works.” Furthermore, Stiegler states that “proletarianization is a

process of losing knowledge – that is, also, a loss of savor and of existence” (p. 38).

Stiegler argues that the modern worker is in danger of losing cognition of production and that development of knowledge among workers, and its dissemination, is given no space for actuality. In a Marxian analysis, this situation is desirable for an abstract labouring mass to facilitate the desires of capital. Capital can base a monopoly on access to knowledge if the proletariat is devoid of understanding the creative element of work, i.e. the abilities to independently think and act upon creative instincts. The dissemination of knowledge becomes controlled and a privileged few maintain management over cognitive abilities of the proletariat. Lack of knowledge weakens the labouring capacities of a worker thus handing over intellectual control to capital.

#### Labour-Power and Commodification

‘Labour-power’ is the term that encapsulates the mental and physical capacities each worker has ownership over. For Marx, subjective labour-power represents that element which becomes commodified. Labour/work is accomplished through the application of mental capability and/or physical force over an object. In essence, “work” changes an objective thing into something other than its original form. Workers apply direct application of their subjective labour-power in order to affect the object at hand. Labour-power is devoid of realizable value until it is put into motion by its owner. Marx ([1867], 1990) presents the definitive description of labour-power: “we mean by labour-power, or labour-capacity, the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the living personality, of a human being, capabilities which he sets in motion whenever he produces a use-value of any kind (p. 270). Labour-power is an individual concept but it is shaped by a direct need, i.e. use-value, within a specific

community. Labour-power is the element where commodification is typified because it is the subjective product that the worker sells to capital. The historical outcome of the commodification process results in a restructuring of social character and identification. Lukacs ([1923], 1971) states “the objectification of their labour-power into something opposed to their total personality (a process already accomplished with the sale of that labour-power as a commodity) is now made into the permanent ineluctable reality of their daily life” (p. 90).

Georg Lukacs notes that commodification of the worker necessarily results in the loss of a communal bond due to the establishment of the atomised person in the sphere of production. Lukacs brings the argument back to the origins of proletarianization. The atomisation of work under the capitalist division of labour leads to disassociation from a community, in that the worker’s commodification exists for inorganic purposes. Workers become estranged from pre-existing (traditional) communal ethics when their labour-power no longer produces that organic economy (Lukacs, [1923], 1971, p. 90). The atomised worker develops isolated connections within the social world and this reflects the commodification of labour-power. The social imagination/narrative that connects the individual to the community becomes totally revolutionized through commodification of labour-power.

The worker can no longer struggle for the benefit of community/common because she must work for the benefit of self. Inevitably the communal relation crumbles under these atomised work processes and capital reaps the benefits of this crumbling: “the fate of the worker becomes the fate of society as a whole; indeed, this fate must become universal as otherwise industrialisation could not develop in this direction. For it depends

on the emergence of the 'free' worker who is freely able to take his labour-power to market and offer it for sale as a commodity 'belonging' to him, a thing that he 'possesses'" (Lukacs, [1923], 1971, p. 91). Lukacs critiques the rise of private property and its place as the dominant social identifier of the proletariat and the society in general. Working in order to realize private property represents the revolution of 'work as production of common need' versus 'work as producer of private wealth': a question of use-value in opposition to surplus-value. The fate of the society and the citizenry follow along with the fate of the land. The determined role of the commodified worker is to become enamoured with private property and to replicate that structure. Lukacs adds clarity about the sources of power that enforce this private property replication: "thus capitalism has created a form for the state and a system of law corresponding to its needs and harmonising with its own structure" (p. 95). The structure is private property and the replication thereof.

## CHAPTER 2 – CASH REGULATES EVERYTHING AROUND ME: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF MONEY

“In Canadian society, power comes from the crackle of the almighty dollar bill”  
(Cardinal, [1969], 1999, p.122)

Aboriginal proletarianization on a macro-level did not occur in Canadian chronological history before the age of capitalist industrialization. Primitive accumulation of capital began to take shape amongst Aboriginal populations before the time of numbered treaty frameworks but the numbered treaty process rapidly enforced industrial expansion into Aboriginal lands. The Aboriginal communities were thrust into the process of industrial capital accumulation without knowing the situation. The numbered treaty framework displays various marked connections to an industrial capitalist transformation of Canada. The historical discussions surrounding Canadian treaty-era history have scarcely examined the impetus of capitalistic intrusions and their effect on Aboriginal socio-economic outcomes. In particular, how monetary functions were patterned with economic dispossession and proletarianization intentions. The Crown and federal government laid out monetary terms wherein Aboriginal societies were directed into replicating core capitalistic traits and these inevitably played a role within proletarianization and capitalist expansion into their lands. Not all Aboriginal bands were incorporated into treaty provisions hence further clarification is desirable regarding Métis and Inuit communities; (modern treaties do not warrant discussion as they do not comply with the timeframe). Métis and Inuit bands were often excluded from numbered treaty provisions but these communities were still affected, in similar manners as the treaty bands, by the onslaught of industrial capitalism and federal government legalities.

The rise of industrial capital in Canada and the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from their traditional land bases and economic resources was a historically cumulative process. The cumulative process of colonization can be regarded as a primitive accumulation phase that established full blown capitalist relations amongst Aboriginal communities. The full blown capitalist accumulation phase (i.e. as primary mode of production amongst all peoples) came to fruition during, and after, the rise of industrial capitalism and the expansion of Canadian federal authority into all the traditional lands and territories held by Aboriginal peoples; the Inuit bands being among the last communities to experience primitive accumulation tactics. It was during initial phases, i.e. pre-treaty, that private property ideals were incrementally introduced into Aboriginal life by way of mercantile trade and the fur-trade economy. These initial primitive accumulation tactics of capital did not radically alter the economic structures of Aboriginal peoples until the economic resources of the Aboriginal populations collapsed and those communities became economically weakened.

The Crown and Euro-settler communities had been recipients of relatively sociable trading partnerships and social interactions with Aboriginal bands for centuries before the rise of industrial capitalism. Aboriginal communities had been introduced to mercantile trade relations, colonial models of government, Euro-settlement, state-sanctioned legality, micro-level treaty, and private enterprise during the fur trade period; (that history is well documented in other places and will not be analysed in this discussion). These initial social and business ventures did not alter traditional-subsistence production models within Aboriginal societies because these endeavours did not hamper the effectiveness of Aboriginal economic modes of production; not until the end of the



nineteenth century. However, the primitive capitalist socio-economic relations established during the fur trade era laid groundwork for extensive and expansive political economic relations between the communities. These relations became increasingly hostile and unbalanced over the generations. The amicable socio-economic relations eventually broke down and were drastically altered by: the collapse of the fur trade economy, the scarcity of local animal populations, the decline of Aboriginal subsistence economies, the rise of global-European industrialist expansion, and emergent antagonistic attitudes toward traditional Aboriginal economic sovereignty. These drastic socio-economic changes happened within connected timeframes and they established a shift of power that afforded the Crown with opportunities to dictate terms; it became almost impossible for Aboriginal bands to effectively mount a concerted fight against the power of the law. The clash between Aboriginal and Euro-colonial-settler interests became centered within diverging modes of production (private-property-capitalist versus communal-traditionalist) and formal legalities.

The Canadian political movement was burgeoning at the middle of the nineteenth century and Crown-held lands were being consolidated into the hands of central political powers; the Province of Canada 1841-1867 is an example. The Canadian political movement post-1867 positioned its desire toward total absorption of Aboriginal lands as these lands became central to the unification of Canadian-colonial economic interest. The Canadian political project was an historical situation that Aboriginal peoples were hard-pressed to escape, or rectify, due to their decreased socio-economic capacities. Aboriginal peoples were becoming progressively destitute, from the middle to end of the nineteenth century, and this allowed the Crown to seize total command of all economic structures.

Colonial economic hegemony had been expanding for several decades before 1871 but this growth reached an apex in Canada with the numbered treaty framework. In correlation to colonial-economic expansion, the historical dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from their lands reached its crux during the treaty era (1871-1921). The treaties were offered to First Nations bands as a means of securing immediate supplies for their survival but the price tag that the Crown sought was exorbitant, as it reached into the social lives of all Aboriginal peoples and not just the First Nations that signed treaty. The gates of the West were effectively opened via treaty and the Aboriginal communities were hard pressed to deny access.

The treaty framework is intriguing because it was the primary legal structure which spelled out the complete subsumption of agreed upon Aboriginal lands and traditional territories, “forever”, into the hands of the federal government. It is also important because it was the initial structure that displaced most Aboriginal communities, including non-treaty bands (including Métis), from their traditional land resources. The treaty framework was situated between two historical socio-economic distinctions: 1.) diminished Aboriginal political autonomy connected to collapse of traditional modes of subsistence and economic structures, and 2.) expanding Euro-colonial political power within global systems of economic trade, namely the industrial-based forms of capital-accumulation. The growing European economic hegemony had direct results throughout the colonies. The Canadian federal government, in accordance with the British Crown, understood the economic potential for capital-growth and surplus that lay dormant within the Aboriginal lands and resources.

Aboriginal peoples were indelibly tied to the socio-economic transformations within greater Canada. Confederation was the initial political movement that laid out the political platform wherein Canada was to become a unified “nation” and where competing land claims were nullified. However, it was the numbered treaty process that allowed corporeal political expansion to find its basis. The numbered treaties surrendered formal control of traditional lands to the federal government and these were immense tracts of lands. Aboriginal lands were subsumed into the greater political order and this inevitably allowed industrial-capitalist expansion to be realized within Canada. Those bands excluded from treaty framework were also indelibly affected by the seizure of lands/resources, the formation of Canada, and the hegemony of industrial capitalism.

The introduction of cash currency, tied to industrial-capitalist relations, inevitably altered subsistence modes of production toward the acceptance of private property relations. The impact of the money system and its direct correlation to private property incentive was not a trivial outcome of the treaties rather it was a fixed motivation within the treaty provisions and it was a revolutionary movement. Institutionalized private property, in the form of cash, represents an epochal moment of departure from traditional Aboriginal subsistence. Traditional modes of subsistence were redirected into socioeconomic endeavours that benefitted owners of capital and the federal government.

The social aspects of money and wealth accumulation, in the form of lands and resources, have been the fundamental remnants of the numbered treaty provisions, for all parties involved. Money introduction and indoctrination represents departure points wherein Aboriginal societies began to replicate private property motivations. Furthermore, the creation of labouring peoples that readily accept and replicate money-

associations (wages) is first conditioned by induction into a universal money system. The introduction and then replication of a money system on a cross-cultural level is indicative of the transitional movement wherein communally-based subsistence producers are transformed into individuated and dispossessed producers. The pursuit of an individualized subsistence is a mainstay within capitalist-based economies and it represents the antithesis to communal subsistence.

The socioeconomic histories of Aboriginal peoples in Canada provide good evidence about their proletarianization processes, specifically when positing those histories within the framework of the cash economy. The introduction of money on a macro-level amongst Aboriginal groups was the required precursor toward the creation of a proletarian ethic and ultimately it resulted in the acceptance of wage-relations (private property) as the new means of subsistence. The macro-level introduction of the cash economy amongst Aboriginal groups was primarily established through the numbered treaty framework: i.e. the negotiations, agreements, provisions, dichotomies, and socio-economic outcomes. The numbered treaty process marked an epochal turning point in both Aboriginal socioeconomic subsistence and within the establishment of capitalist production in Canada.

#### First Nations Numbered Treaties: Annuities, Status, History, and Discussion

Harold Cardinal ([1969], 1999) posits that: “the treaties are outstanding for what they *do not* say rather than what they do say” (p. 29, original emphasis). The treaties do not specifically mention labour, wages, cash economy, or the onslaught of capitalism into Aboriginal societies. Yet, the subsequent history demonstrates that the widespread

payments of private cash inevitably led to new modes of economic subsistence and production models among Aboriginal communities. Proletarianization was not an advertised goal within the treaty making process by the federal government but the movement of Aboriginal peoples into the cash economy was a definite objective and it aided the ease of economic transition. Aboriginal proletarianization was a desirable outcome that stemmed from state-held notions beyond the scope of treaties but the treaty process was the veritable 'mise en scene' in which the actors were set-up to fulfill their roles. For instance, the treaties were drenched in cash provisions (that were "forever" static and quickly became depreciated) and these cash sums laid the groundwork for the gradual eradication of the Aboriginal subsistence models. The socio-economic agreements of the treaty process and their subsequent economic relations were not inadvertent outcomes within that framework. The Aboriginal examples in Canadian history demonstrate radical economic shifts that were representative of the creation of a money-economy and the proliferation of a proletarian ideal.

There was no universal acceptance of cash-money systems by Aboriginal bands, as means of subsistence and as currency, before Canadian Confederation (1867) and the numbered treaty framework (1871-1921). The systems of Aboriginal economies, before the push toward Confederation, were based on: trade between bands, subsistence hunting, fishing, trapping, and the arrival of new goods coming via the expansive fur trade. The fur trade eventually broke down as a means of economy whilst traditional economic supports also collapsed (e.g. buffalo populations) and new diseases were abundantly spreading amongst the bands. Aboriginal peoples became increasingly impoverished and several communities actively began to search for a provisional substitute to make-up the

deficiencies within traditional economic models. J.R. Miller (2009) gives weight to this estimation by stating:

In 1870 Canada and its newly acquired West were poised uncertainly on the brink of an era of negotiation to legitimize and facilitate settlement of the Prairies. A potent symbol of the changing times were the new Dominion's plans for railway construction across the West. There was great uneasiness among Native peoples in the region about their future with Canada. Inter-tribal wars and epidemic disease had taken their toll among First Nations. The shrinkage of the bison resource, on which all Western Aboriginal peoples relied, was a cause for worry about the sustainability of their way of life in the future (p. 149).

Confederation and treaty-making arrived together at the appropriate moment in history for the Dominion of Canada to claim a monopoly over socioeconomic power. The seizure of total power by the Dominion government was based within the wealth that natural resource exploitations could provide. The land-bases of the Aboriginal bands, i.e. Western Canada, became the fascination of the federal government and the Crown. "For Canadian authorities, though, the chief significance of treaties was that they focused on one major commodity – land. Indian people surrendered their land and in return received annual payments, assistance for agriculture, schools, and reserves" (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000, p. 25). The exchange of money for land was an ideological ruse from the outset of the negotiations in that it placed Aboriginal leaders in the precarious position of being arbiters of private land value. Hence, a private property relation was taking place. The Aboriginal communities had no conceptualization about the monetary value of their communally-held lands and resources and in this way the treaties represent obfuscations to the truth of the negotiations. The acceptance of money on the part of the Aboriginal signees essentially spelled the treaties as the bill of sale for traditional lands and Aboriginal leaders were made unaware of that fact. Furthermore, the signing of treaty spelled the end of Aboriginal traditional society in its totality.

The acceptance of treaty was a logical escape from the immediate poverty and socioeconomic breakdown of the traditional Aboriginal economic structures. The price to be paid was indecipherable to those Aboriginal peoples who agreed to treaty relations, particularly those withheld from positions of leadership, but these communities perfectly understood their precarious state of economic affairs. The signing of treaty was perhaps a foreseeable outcome for Aboriginal groups due to the beleaguered positions their societies were facing at that time. Chief Ahtahkakoop (Starblanket) (in Christensen, 2000) tersely surmises the death of the traditional Aboriginal subsistence economy: “We always lived and received our needs in clothing, shelter, and food from the countless multitudes of buffalo that have been with us since the earliest memory of our people. No one with open eyes and open minds can doubt that the buffalo will soon be a thing of the past” (as cited in Penikett, 2006, p. 64). The words of Ahtahkakoop were correct in more ways than he could have ever imagined. The total Aboriginal economic ways of life were finished and a replacement was readied by governmental powers that clearly understood the precarious situations. The Aboriginal peoples that agreed to ‘share the land’ by signing treaty did not conceive of the relations to which they became engaged, specifically in terms of private property and capitalist socio-economic processes and relations. The most overt relation that immediately changed Aboriginal social life was the cash annuity.

The individualized treaty annuity quickly took over the role of the social buffalo and this set a precedent amongst Aboriginal communities in terms of private property replication. The treaty annuity was the necessary ideological lubrication that sealed the deal of the Aboriginal signature. Antony Penikett (2006) claims that treaty annuities were

a practical calculation on the part of the federal government, seeing that “the government had already calculated that the development from revenues on surrendered lands would more than offset the cost of treaty annuities” (p. 67). The opportunity for the federal government to strike a cheap deal was readily at hand and they captured this historical fortuity.

There are no examples of Aboriginal economic systems in Canada pre-1871 that were wholly based on cash transactions but this relation changed drastically post-Confederation and numbered-treaty. The persuasive allure of the treaty agreements were draped in the provisions of cash that were provided to the Aboriginal peoples. The upfront cash and annuity promises proved to be lubrication, even bribery, for the treaty signatures (Adams, 1989, pp. 63-64). It is safe to assert that the Aboriginal peoples were in an economically vulnerable position and their bargaining powers were diminished at the time of treaty. Those Aboriginal bands and individuals that were shut-out of treaty annuities were doubly at risk for socio-economic collapse and peoples were forced to find other means of immediate economic provisions; they were treated as afterthoughts.

Treaties Number One and Two set the precedent for the subsequent treaty negotiations. The allure of cash was ever-present within the negotiations. Initially a three dollar payment was given upfront to the signees with the annuity also being set at three dollars but these provisions were subsequently changed to five dollars in 1875 (Miller, 2009, pp. 164-165; Daugherty, 1983, p. 18). Wayne E. Daugherty (1983) states “each Indian man, woman and child was given a gratuity of three dollars and an annuity of three dollars, or a total of fifteen dollars per family. The annuity was to be paid in goods, but could also be paid in cash if it was deemed to be in the Indians’ interest” (p. 12). It



should be noted that all members of the family were given the equal cash payments thus the concept of money was passed onto successive generations by the swipe of the pen. The monetary conditions outlined in the numbered treaties solidified the creation of a universal money system across Canada and this provided an advantage to the growing business communities. Cash currency would effectively establish the circulation of commodities amongst all communities within Canada.

The numbered treaties established the annual delivery of a prescribed increment of cash to all members of the signing bands. Furthermore, the recipients of those funds needed a place to spend that cash and non-Aboriginal private traders, large corporations, and the general business community seized on that opportunity. The trading of cash for commodities and commercial goods is not as mundane as it appears because this economic model represented a negation of traditional trade-based (use-value-trade based) economic structures amongst Aboriginal bands. The dispensing of cash to privately-owned merchants was indicative of increasing private property relations amongst Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal peoples became engaged in the capital-based economy as consumers of privately-owned commodities by use of the cash provisions.

The treaties that followed Treaty Number One and Treaty Number Two are slightly different in terms of cash payment and annuity to the signees; which is why the provisions in One and Two were eventually altered. Daugherty (1986) states that “in terms of monetary awards, each Indian received an immediate cash payment of twelve dollars and an annuity of five dollars. Each chief was to receive an annual salary of twenty-five dollars and each subordinate officer (headman), not exceeding three to each band, would receive fifteen dollars per year” (p. 42). A side-note that needs mentioning

is that certain Saulteaux chiefs initially asked for more cash to be given than was finally agreed upon. These chiefs specifically asked for fifty dollars a year for each chief, twenty dollars a year for each council member (headman), and they wanted an upfront cash payment of fifteen dollars and an annuity of ten dollars for each band member (Daugherty, 1986, p. 31). This shrewd negotiation tactic perhaps suggests that these particular chiefs had a basic knowledge about the importance of cash in the local trade posts. It also suggests that certain chiefs and headmen had an inflated self-importance regarding their privileged positions in the community, as they envisioned their monetary values to be higher in comparison to the general population. It is also revealing that all the chiefs and headmen negotiated a cash compensation that was notably higher than the rest of their community members and this undoubtedly created a schism within the egalitarian notions of the band. There are no historical reports about chiefs insisting that every member receive an equivalent annuity to that of the chief, or headman, rather the assenting chiefs willingly accepted that their monetary values were inherently superior to the general population.

It is notable that chiefs and headmen were paid more annuity-cash than the rest of the band members because this clearly establishes a hierarchy of cash payments and numerical values among the band members. The treaty annuity discrepancy bears no historical merit in terms of traditional band roles, work load, and/or band solidarity. The chiefs had no historical basis to define such marked value-difference between themselves, the headmen, and the rest of the community members. The annuity discrepancy established a noted difference between chief, council, and general band member. The cash-based hierarchy would inevitably link the traditional systems of power within a

monetary-based value, in that a chief was defined according to a monetary value, as was a general band member. Post-treaty, it would be monetarily advantageous to be part of the ascribed leadership roles. It would also be well known throughout the band that the chief and headmen had more access to individual cash, which they could spend on supplies and other commodities in greater proportion.

This incremental cash advantage and hierarchical separation can perhaps be viewed as a proto-class distinction within the economic structure of the treaty bands. The intent by both the chiefs and the federal government to dispense additional cash to chiefs and headmen indicates a deviation from traditional-communal economic structures. It is also likely that it weakened socio-political solidarities. The leaders of treaty-based communities were inevitably viewed as being monetarily richer than the rest of the members and the value of band membership was placed into a monetary struggle based on individual cash worth. The chief was worth more than a headman and a headman was worth more than the common band member. There is no distinctive argument, or oral memory, in the history of Aboriginal communities that would ever establish such a competitive numerical value placed upon communal roles. It is only with the implementation of treaty annuities that hard cash-values become unavoidably prevalent.

The money differentials amongst treaty bands created a socio-political hierarchy that reiterated and strengthened the adverse affects of federal legislations that governed Aboriginal life; those legislations initiated before the treaty process and those initiated in the midst of the process. These legislations were bent on weakening Aboriginal political and economic structures by way of enfranchisement into mainstream Canada. Thus it was no coincidence that these legislations were put into practice during the initial movements

of Confederation and the negotiation and implementation of numbered treaty. The federal government became the paternal-authoritarian dictatorship in its dealings with Aboriginal groups during treaty-era and its policy initiatives served this purpose. In particular, *'The 1869 Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians ...'* and the *'Indian Act, 1876'* set a standard for the decay of Aboriginal political autonomy.

The two *Acts* established rather intriguing social powers and in specific the powers that were given to males and to the chief proved to be detrimental to political freedoms amongst the Aboriginal bands. The treaties helped enforce the negative aspects of federal legislation. Firstly, the term “band” was a suspicious term as it was specifically framed and defined in terms of money, private property, and Crown authority: “The term ‘band’ means any tribe, band or body of Indians who own or are interested in a reserve or in Indian lands in common, of which legal title is vested in the Crown, or who share alike in the distribution of any annuities or interest moneys for which the Government of Canada is responsible” (Indian Act, 1876, s. 3.1). Secondly, the term “Indian” was only applied to males and women who married Indian males (Indian Act, 1876, s. 3.3). It is also telling that Aboriginal (Indian) peoples were not considered as legal “persons” under the legislation, and this designation “precluded Indians from contracting, voting, standing for office, or owning real property” (Indian Act, 1876, s. 3.12; Blair, 2008, p. 207). The *Indian Act, 1876* is the prime example regarding Aboriginal political subordination. The *Indian Act 1876* carried forth many powers that were decreed by The *Enfranchisement Act of 1869* (*'An Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians, the better management of Indian affairs, and to extend the provisions of the Act 31<sup>st</sup> Victoria, Chapter 42'*). The fact that Indians could not “own real property” but could own the property of cash and

commodities purchased with said cash is revealing. In essence, they could shop but they could never own a shop. It also meant they lost access to any communal land holdings.

The powers of chiefs and council become more rigidly exclusive among First Nations bands due to the sweeping powers of these *Acts*. The chief was given the power to adjudicate who was an “Indian” and this was premised under the clause that dealt with the division of annuity money. Only those members with “one fourth Indian blood” were to be deemed worthy of annuity money and the chief was the final authority on who met this criterion (Enfranchisement Act, 1869, s. 4). Women who married non-Indian men lost their Indian status and so too did their children (Enfranchisement Act, 1869, s. 6; Carter, 2001, p. 53). Women became the full property of men as “it was assumed that women were dependent subjects who derived rights from their fathers or husbands” (Carter, 2001, p. 53). The election of chiefs also became a strictly male-oriented political power, in that only men could vote and this would assume that only men would run for leadership (Enfranchisement Act, 1869, s. 10; Indian Act, 1876, s. 61; Carter, 2001, p.53). Thus it follows logically that all the political rights of Aboriginal women were negated by these *Acts*. Furthermore, if a woman could not vote, could not run for office, and could not partake in official band governance then it is apparent that they would never have as much numerical cash value as the males of the community, under the dissemination of treaty annuities. Aboriginal women were established from the outset of treaty negotiations to be politically unimportant within the decision making of their communities and all their political rights and representations were annulled. Aboriginal women were made to be the subservient class within a subservient group of peoples and this is a divisive element of both the federal legislations and the treaties. A stratified

gender system was put into place alongside a quasi-class system amongst Aboriginal bands and this was a federal government design in the interest of colonial social custom.

Money and property were ever-present ideals within the frameworks of The *Indian Act, 1876*, the *Enfranchisement Act* of 1869, and the numbered treaties. The numbered treaties followed along the lines of these policy frameworks and these *Acts* stripped the Aboriginal bands of their complete political rights. The Aboriginal bands were designated for enfranchisement and the treaties in themselves were part of that overall effort as they stripped the lands and rights from the individual bands “forever.” The numbered treaties sustain uniform clauses regarding land cessation, payments of upfront cash, and hierarchical annuity values. All numbered treaties agree to the same terminology regarding land: “...do hereby cede, release, surrender, and yield up to the Government of the Dominion of Canada for Her Majesty the Queen and her successors forever, all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever, to the lands included within the following limits...” (Laliberte, et al, 2000, p. 513; Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000, p. 25; Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 176; Penikett, 2006, p. 63); (on a side note, the ideology of the word “forever” in the treaties is quite troubling as forever is an unapproachable quantity that suggests the infinite. The insistence upon the term “forever” demonstrates a hyperbolic claim regarding the private ownership of the ceded lands and the subordination of the Aboriginal peoples that inhabited those lands).

It was specifically during the negotiations of the numbered treaties that money as the new medium of circulation and exchange became introduced to Aboriginal communities on such a grand scale (Miller, 2009, pp. 164-165). In researching the Treaty Number 9 negotiations (1905), John S. Long looked at the examples of the Moose

Factory Ojibwe and Cree communities and their first introductions with money as currency. Long (2010) states that “at moose Factory the made beaver was the only standard of currency, but tokens had been replaced by chits and certificate ... Most of the Ojibwe and Cree who encountered the treaty commissioners in 1905 had little or no experience with paper currency” (pp. 347-348). Furthermore, Long identifies that “cash was almost unheard of in the Northern posts” (p. 348). Again, Long examined the Fort Hope negotiations and states “the majority of Indians had touched paper money for the first time; all their trading had been done heretofore with small sticks of different lengths” (pp. 293-294). This economic conditioning and unawareness about money was prevalent at the time of all treaty negotiations amongst the invested Aboriginal communities. The particulars of the treaty moneys given cannot be overlooked as a leading contributor to the proletarianization of Aboriginal peoples, even amongst those that were excluded. Those cash-based particulars lay the foundation for the implementation and acceptance of a new economic system.

The treaty process was a large-scale federal governmental effort to integrate Aboriginal peoples into the burgeoning cash economy. The political economic agenda of the federal government was followed through with universal precision amongst all the bands that touched the pen and gave their consent to cash annuities. For the federal government, the universal replication of the cash system was an essential component of the treaty relationship. The universal replication of the cash system served to undermine traditional notions of communal property. For the Aboriginal peoples, the adherence to the cash-based system of economy introduced notions of private property. Private

property created the general conditions of alienation that separated the producers from the ownership of their means of production and subsistence.

Treaty Number One upward to Treaty Number Eleven does not include radically different terms and agreements regarding ceded lands and annuity moneys. What makes the numbered treaties so intriguing is not only the introduction of money but also the large-scale land grabs that were seized by the Canadian government in one swoop. Never before had this scale of land been in discussion by the federal government or the Aboriginal bands. Wotherspoon and Satzewich (2000) state “the numbered treaties tend to be different from previous ones in that they tended to involve the surrender of much larger tracts of land. They were also different in that land transfers were paid for via annuities to aboriginal peoples” (p. 22). The reasoning for such large-scale land grabs was settlement and capitalist development (Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 176; Hall, 2010, p. 546). Anthony J. Hall (2010) states:

The establishment of the reserve system (via numbered treaty), in turn, was meant to clear the way for the form of privatized land tenure outside the reserves that was essential to financing and operation of the Canadian Pacific Railway. By connecting the Great Lakes-St Lawrence watershed to the Pacific Coast, the CPR was meant to give the British Empire a rail link on the Pacific Rim, a region that, even in those years, was emerging as a dynamo of the global economy. It was also meant to make the Dominion of Canada a viable transcontinental polity within the larger framework of a modernized British Empire. Accordingly, the negotiation of the first of the numbered treaties and the integration of British Columbia into Canada were different facets of the same imperial strategy (pp. 406-407).

The escalating economic factors were ever-present within the treaty negotiations not merely on the Aboriginal side but primarily on the side of the Dominion of Canada and the Crown. The Aboriginal peoples and their communal resolve represent the symbolic component of the land-grab process. The federal government could not simply eradicate



the bands through violence but they could accomplish this feat through legislations that led directly to erosion of traditional economies and political bodies. The paltry annuities were the paternalistic gesture that swayed the immense Aboriginal stumbling-block into the cash economy. The cash that was given to the Aboriginal peoples in guise of treaty and scrip was petty money and this was the design of the federal government and the private interests that were negotiating the terms; a systemic cheat was put into motion.

The Aboriginal proletarianization process followed closely after the introductions and indoctrinations of money on a mass level, across Aboriginal communities in Canada. There are no subtle areas about the introductions of Aboriginal peoples into the cash-system and the power of money as a revolutionary agent. The creation of the commodity-based economy was essential to capitalist accumulation and industrial growth in Canada, during the mid to late nineteenth century, and those societies which were 'natural based' became usurped into that ethic. Rosa Luxemburg ([1913], 2003) states "(a) condition of importance for acquiring means of production and realising the surplus value is that commodity exchange and commodity economy should be introduced in societies based on natural economy as soon as their independence has been abrogated, or rather in the course of this disruptive process" (p. 366). Luxemburg is addressing the dispossession of producers from their means of production which results in eventual proletarianization of those local producers. The abrogation of Aboriginal societies was a vital component within the primitive accumulation process and it escalated 'Canadian' society into becoming concentrated within global industrial capitalism. The 'disruption' of Aboriginal economies was fundamental for industrial capitalist accumulation in Canada as it was the exploitation of Aboriginal lands that aided an economic ascendancy of state-capitalism.

## Métis Dispossession: Land, Scrip, and Historical Discussion

The proletarianization of the Métis peoples correlates with the treaty framework and federal legislations surrounding Aboriginal (“Indian”) group membership/status as well as similar social, political, and economic factors. The Métis were socio-economically connected to the fur trade and to traditional Aboriginal modes of economic production for centuries. In terms of status, the Métis were not subject to any legal difference between their communities and those of First Nations prior to the authoritarian intrusions of the federal government. The collapse of traditional provisions and the fur economy affected the Métis communities in the same manners as it did the First Nations. Furthermore, the legislations around status (namely *Indian Act* and numbered treaty) isolated Métis from traditional Aboriginal-communal ties. The Métis were mainly isolated from the treaty provisions but this does not equate to them being unaffected by the cash system, the creation of Canada, and the burgeoning industrial capitalist framework. Métis were intentionally isolated from their Aboriginal status, creating a dichotomy, and were forcibly separated from traditional modes of subsistence. The isolation left many Métis communities with no alternative for subsistence other than the capitalist marketplace.

The history of the Métis and treaty inclusions are littered with conflicting intents. “Prior to 1870, Métis had not been dealt with as a separate group”, i.e. from other First Nations bands, but this was to change post-1870 (Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 180). During Treaty Number Three negotiations certain Saulteaux bands desired for the Métis (“Half-Breeds”) peoples to be included in the benefits of the treaty. J.R. Miller (2009) states “in fact, the Saulteaux tried unsuccessfully to convince (Alexander) Morris to

include the Métis – ‘those that have been born of our women of Indian blood’ – in Treaty 3” (p. 168). The Métis were excluded from treaty negotiations essentially because of the faulty racial mythologies of that time surrounding “Indians” and “Half-breeds” and blood quantum (Long, 2010, p. 81). The federal government political intent was a major factor in the Métis exclusion. The racial mythologies and federal government intent enhanced a false dichotomy between concrete Aboriginal solidarities. Post-treaty, the Métis were essentially cut off from their ancestral ties to First Nations community, land access, resources, and rights. This was the design of federal legislation.

The *Manitoba Act* played a role in negating Métis treaty inclusion, in that specific titles given to Métis in the *Manitoba Act* of 1870 not only provided them with statutory recognition but also gave them a specific claim to land (Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 36; Miller, 2009, pp. 144-145; Long, 2010, pp. 240-241; Canada, 1996, Volume 4, chapter 5, section 2.1). The main reason for Métis treaty isolation is purposely vague but it can be surmised as being connected to federal government frugality. It is probable that mythological racial dichotomies between “Indians” and “half-breeds” was a convenient excuse to remove the Métis from the fiscal equation of treaty land claims and enfranchise them into mainstream Canadian society.

Métis peoples were given ‘scrip’ by the federal government in place of treaty rights and provisions. The allotment of lands and scrip entitlement changed the socio-economic plane for the Métis. Métis titles to land and legal Aboriginal communal membership were negated within the numbered treaty process and scrip was the means of creating private property owners in place of their ties to communally-held property. The problems with Métis scrip came via the cash incentives offered by private buyers and

private property dealings that desired to get the land holdings to which the Métis were entitled (Hall, 2010, p. 206). A great deal of Métis land allotment scrip was not properly handled by the federal government and the money scrip, in the place of concrete land allotment arrangements, were given to Métis individuals without concern for their economic security. Métis rights to their communally-held lands were simply negated.

The Métis populations were issued scrip in order to purchase individual-private homestead lands from the Crown but the inherent problem was the cash value of the scrip. The cash value of this scrip allotment was set at the prices of \$160 for adult populations and \$240 for children (Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 180; Laliberte, et al, 2000, pp. 518-528; Long, 2010, p. 241). The cash value of the scrip led many individuals to sell their scrip to private buyers at a deflated price of its real market value. John S. Long states “money scrip, a kind of credit line with the federal government, could be sold at a discount to the speculators who followed the commission (i.e. the Treaty No. 8 commission, in this case). The head of a half-breed family of six might parlay his money scrip valued at \$1,440 into a \$400 cash windfall” (2010, p. 34).

The money scrip eventually proved to be a failed system of private land allotment and it became a way to procure quick cash payments among several Métis families. Scrip gave cheap access to lands for those private investors who bought the scrip at sweetheart prices. Wealthy land speculators and banks made a mockery of the land system by offering to buy the scrip for cash-in-hand. Ron Bourgeault (2000) “documented almost every Métis scrip given out in the NWT in 1885 and 1900” and these immediately were purchased by wealthy investors, furthermore “the institutions that are now major Canadian banks were the ones that profited greatly” (p. 224). Frideres & Gadacz (2001)

state that “there is also no doubt that most of the land scrip issues to Métis were eventually owned by the banks and financial agents (p. 182). *The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* further states that “distributing Métis land entitlements as scrip created opportunities for unscrupulous land agents and even government officials to defraud Métis landholders” (Canada, 1996, v. 4, c. 5, s. 2.1). Métis families sold scrip mainly due to immediate socio-economic woes and to secure dire provisions. The hopes about future returns on land investment and land acquisition could not immediately provide sustenance, which was another downfall of the scrip provision. The collapse of traditional Aboriginal subsistence economies dealt tragedy to Métis communities and the allure of cash payment was too powerful to resist for individuals that were economically vulnerable (Adams, 1989, p. 76).

John S. Long (2010) states that during Treaty Number Eight some Métis were in fact included into treaty negotiations, as they were given choice to identify as ‘Indian’, but the temptation of money scrip lured many away from the treaty process (p. 34). Long further states that “faced with the choice of treaty or scrip, the latter option provided a tempting one-time bonanza” (p. 34). The scrip was worth more as cash-in-hand than treaty annuity, treaty signing bonus, and treaty annuity accumulation over decades. Métis peoples could not have conceptualized the long-term land values under the private capitalist economic system. Métis were also negated as direct negotiators of the treaty terms and this may have steered many away from treaty. Several Métis families and individuals were put into a precarious position in terms of the immediate cash boon of scrip. The cash option given to the Métis by the banks and land acquiring capitalists, including government officials, was a temporary relief to immediate economic concerns

(Canada, 1996, v. 4, c. 5, s. 2.1; Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 181). Nevertheless, scrip paved the way for entire groups of Métis individuals to be subsumed into the cash economy as consumers of commodities and private property holders on levels that were unprecedented at any previous time in their histories. Métis scrip was a tool of establishing private property relations and capitalist gain because the federal government did not put a clause on the re-sale of scrip. The great majority of the scrip was sold to private non-Métis interests and even those Métis that purchased land with scrip became private property owners which negated their ties to communally-held property. Scrip did not provide any long-term escape from the industrial capitalist economy for either those that sold it for cash or those that purchased land. Métis were whole-scale dispossessed of their ancestral lands and had no recourse to survival other than wage-economy. Scrip may have provided access to some private land ownership and/or immediate cash but it did not provide anything more than this in terms of economic survival. It was already apparent at the end of the nineteenth century that homesteading did not provide long-term solutions for community survival alongside the burgeoning industrial capitalist economy. Homesteading was a private property relation that kept some families with basic subsistence but it could not provide for the total means of a community, particularly Aboriginal hunting-based communities that had no previous knowledge of the agricultural practices that sustained successful homesteaders.

The issue of Métis scrip served to enhance the position of the Métis as a core group of burgeoning proletarians and consumers in the wage-labour market. The Métis isolation from treaty provided a means for Métis to be made aware of the waged labour options, particularly near the end of the nineteenth century: “It is estimated that by the

end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Métis made up nearly three quarters of the Hudson Bay Company's labour force" (Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 36). This does not mean that Métis peoples were better equipped at dealing with the onslaught of global capitalism and proletarianization it merely suggests that many Métis individuals may have had no other recourse for survival beyond private wage-based employment. Métis communities were in need of immediate provisions due to the failure of scrip provisions, collapse of fur trade, removal from Indian status, and the loss of communal lands.

The ideal of private property, as opposed to communal property, was prevalent throughout the federal government handling of scrip and Métis land dispossession. The traditional-communal economies of the Métis alongside that of the "Indian" bands were radically altered during the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The motivation for Métis to become simple landowners, of individual private property, was a desire of the federal government and not necessarily of the Métis. The federal government capitalized upon the economic vulnerability of Métis by demanding that their communities follow a new basis of property relations. Howard Adams (1989) defines the economic state of affairs at this time:

The Métis, likewise, were close to starvation, since their means of livelihood had practically disappeared, and in 1878 they began petitioning the federal government for assistance. As Riel had stated, these lands belonged to them once through original title, twice for having defended them at the cost of their blood, and thrice for having cultivated and inhabited them. The Métis had requested assistance in obtaining seed grain and farm implements, but, instead, they were asked by the federal government to pay two dollars per acre for their own farms which they had improved and developed. Between 1878 and 1884, the Métis submitted 84 petitions to Ottawa requesting better conditions and better services. Not one was answered (p. 77).

The insistence by the federal government for the Métis communities to forcibly pursue the structure of private property while in the midst of communal economic disaster is what Naomi Klein (2007) directly refers to as “disaster capitalism” (p. 6). The entirety of the federal government venturing into economic affairs with Aboriginal bands through treaty and/or scrip can be included under the moniker of ‘disaster capitalism.’ The Métis and First Nations were economically deprived and vulnerable at the end of the nineteenth century and the federal government wielded an authoritarian economic and political power over Aboriginal communities. The federal government had gained the power to drive economic matters into alignment with its political interests and it did so with Aboriginal peoples and their economic resources.

Klein (2007) states that disaster capitalism is essentially “orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities” (p. 6). Klein further states that “shocked societies often give up things they would otherwise fiercely protect” (p. 20). In the case of the Métis and First Nations, their communities were in states of shock and disaster and their economic ties to the lands were made mostly redundant by the sweeping powers of federal legislations, treaty, and scrip. The disastrous state of economic affairs, at the end of the nineteenth century, amongst Aboriginal bands essentially broke down their political ability to resist. The federal government stepped in and utilized the factors of disease, starvation, and total economic collapse to further strengthen its authority over Aboriginal populations. Ultimately, the Métis and the First Nations bands did not have the socioeconomic power to protect their traditional values and these bands were placed under the general directions of the federal government in all things social, political, and



economic. The widespread economic collapse of Aboriginal economies was a catalyst that allowed industrial capitalism to become universally accepted within Aboriginal communities.

The forcible introductions to money and private property presuppose the intentional decline of the traditional economic models and their replacement with a new economic standard. For Klein (2007), economic shock therapy takes the competitive initiative when economic disaster is apparent within a community and this is an underlying aspect for capitalist growth (pp. 10-12). Marx ([1857], 1993) theorized that monetary growth and expansion of the capitalist mode of production further exacerbates the disaster of ancient/traditional communities: “Monetary greed, or mania for wealth, necessarily brings with it the decline and fall of the ancient communities. Hence it is the antithesis to them. It is itself the community, and can tolerate none other standing above it” (p. 223). Marx is re-stating his essential thesis that class struggle is an ongoing social reality that transforms the socio-economic affairs for those that interact with capitalism. Marx is briefly demonstrating how capitalism in itself is a bastion for violent overthrow of traditional modes of production. Capitalism cannot accomplish that task on its own because it needs a physical representation to achieve its end. The Aboriginal societies were facing economic collapse and dispossession and that situation aided the expansionist motives of the federal government. Private capitalist expansion was given state sanctioned superiority post-Confederation and post-treaty.

Under the capitalist mode of production, the ethic of monetary accumulation is the ideal upon which ‘community’ is structured. Within the Aboriginal examples, the ongoing quest for subsistence (post-treaty annuity and scrip) was no longer to be found in

the direct resources and provisions procured from land access instead subsistence needs were found in money provisions and private property relations (i.e. the consumerist model). The treaty annuity was a main catalyst of capitalistic economic conditioning in that the cash-annuity represents a significant antithesis to the economic structures of the ancient/traditional community. The treaty annuity and Métis scrip became the means that alienated Aboriginal producers from traditional provision because these cash payments directly challenged and weakened communal work models and structures. The annuities became a form of individual-subsistence and the failures of scrip provision led many Métis individuals into private employment and/or private land ownership. The Métis scrip and treaty annuities weakened the communal work-ethic that was based upon subsistence provisions for the community rather than individuals. Private property was quickly introduced into Aboriginal communities and private relations became immediately replicated post-treaty and post-scrip.

#### Consumerism: The Fortune and Position of The Hudson Bay Company

The consumerism within Aboriginal communities was introduced and fostered by the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) and their influence had lasting results that aided in the proletarianization process. The HBC initially established a profitable “debt system”, pre-treaty, that relied on lending of credits for the purchase of commodified European commodities within their stores (Laliberte, et al, 2000, p. 241; Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000, p. 27; Adams, 1989, p. 48). The HBC debt system was a simplistic introduction to the functions of both money-credit and monetary values of commodified goods. The lending of credits established reliance upon the HBC for commercial goods, often amongst peoples that were economically destitute thus establishing a prototypical

‘disaster capitalism.’ “The company’s (debt) system was designed to destroy any capability the Indian might possess of emancipating himself from the bondage of ‘an avaricious group of trading monopolists’” (MacDonnell, 1857, as cited in Adams, 1989, p. 48). The HBC credit system established a debt-ridden model which was contrary to customary gift-giving and/or use-value trade models amongst Aboriginal bands. The HBC debts were carefully calculated, in monetary terms, and the debts were eventually paid off through appropriated work in the fur trade, or via some other form of labour sale (Adams, 1989, pp. 26-28; Laliberte, et al, 2000, p. 241).

It must be recognized that the fur trade began to incorporate aboriginal labour and family support in such a way as to foster dependency on schedules and quotas created in accordance with the company’s (The HBC) needs ... the company’s willingness to feed starving Indians was predicated by its desire to extract from the Indians particular use values through tasks such as producing implements, food, or furs (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000, p. 154).

The HBC was an economic opportunist that sought profits within the economic dispossession prevalent amongst Aboriginal bands. The HBC played a prominent role in transforming the economic trade routines of the Aboriginal bands, which were its primary customers in many posts. Mass consumerism and the methodical usage of labour were the HBC’s furthest contribution to Aboriginal life.

It is important to note the economic position of the HBC, post-treaty, was as the main beneficiary of moneys received by the First Nations who signed treaty and also the Métis who acquired money from the sale of scrip. The Hudson Bay officials played a key role in making sure that annuities were provided in the form of dispensable cash as “an annual payment in exchange for the surrender of land” and furthermore it appeared that “company officials saw an annual payment as a potential source of stable future revenue”

(Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000, p. 27). The HBC was the only retailing business where this newly acquired cash-currency could be exchanged for goods. The HBC role in the treaty negotiations was a demonstrable conflict of interest. John S. Long (2010) speaks about the Hudson Bay's boom from treaty moneys: "after the payment, which followed the signing of the treaty, the Hudson's Bay store was filled with an eager crowd of traders ... and soon the camp was brightened by new white blanket coats, gay handkerchiefs and shawls, new hats and boots, which latter they wore as if doing a great penance (pp. 293-294). Alexander Morris specifically writes about the fruitful situation for the HBC regarding the frivolous spending on commodities by newly acquired treaty signees:

As soon as the [treaty] money was distributed the shops of the HBC and other resident traders were visited, as well as the tents of numerous private traders, who had been attracted thither by the prospects of doing a good business. And while these shops all did a great trade – the HBC alone taking in \$4,000 in thirty hours – it was a noticeable fact that many took home with them nearly all of their money (Morris, 1880, as cited in Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000, p. 27).

The HBC committed a surreptitiously brilliant form of capitalist trade with their lobbying for the treaties to be paid in cash and then providing an immediate locale of commercial goods where these cash windfalls could be spent. It is also notable that the HBC supply stock was made up of the goods that were promised in the treaty provisions (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000, p. 28). Samuel Stewart was a key official in the Department of Indian Affairs who was present for the signing of several treaties and he was an eye witness to the HBC windfall after the treaty annuities were paid. Stewart (1905) states "it may be said that the HBCo. did a big business after the treaty money had been paid. From appearances nearly all the money paid out by us was soon in the hands of the Company" (i.e. The HBC) (as cited in Long, 2010, p. 181).

The HBC had a keen business interest in the treaty negotiations from the beginning and their input skewed the balance of power; on one side were Aboriginal peoples attempting to retain some sense of communal survival and on the other were the British Crown, The Dominion of Canada, and private HBC interests. All these groups were fighting for control of lands, resources, and moneys. The influence of a private, for profit, corporate enterprise represents the salient ideological quality inherent in the treaty negotiations. The HBC was not simply a merchant operation that sold goods to traders. The HBC was also a land acquiring enterprise in itself (Luxemburg, 2003, p. 390). Alexander Morris ([1880], 1971) even went as far as to say that the HBC were the “former rulers of these vast territories”, i.e. regarding large tracts of the West (p. 285). “In 1863 control of the Hudson’s Bay Company fell into the hands of entrepreneurs who were as interested in land development as they were in furs” (Miller, 2009, p. 133). The HBC took advantage of the tenuous situation of the treaty negotiations by promoting itself as an aide to help fuse relations between the state and the Aboriginal bands. However, the HBC agenda was never a position of neutrality as they were an active partner with the federal government within the privatization of Aboriginal lands (Luxemburg, [1913], 2003, p. 390). Miller (2009) provides clarity regarding the HBC stance during the treaty negotiations:

Given the company’s close ties to First Nations and its desire to see the West peopled with farmers so that it could sell its extensive holdings in the fertile regions, the eagerness of the HBC to facilitate Canada’s project was hardly surprising. It was Hudson’s Bay carts and boats that moved treaty parties between negotiation sites and HBC posts such as Fort Qu’Appelle, Fort Carlton, and Fort Pitt that served as venues for talks ... The HBC and its personnel were intimately engaged in the Plains treaty talks from 1871 to 1877 (p. 161).

The HBC was a shrewd business enterprise that helped facilitate the treaty negotiations. The HBC intentions in the negotiations were perfectly understood: they wanted to accumulate profits, strengthen their monopoly, and build on their wealth. Potential for surplus profit was the HBC's motivating concern in the treaty matters and this was well understood by the federal government, yet the HBC was openly encouraged to be an active part of the process. The fur trade was essentially finished during the time of the treaties and the HBC was capitalizing on the moneys that were being distributed to Aboriginal communities via treaty annuities and sale of scrip. This propensity toward cash-only trade represented a new era of business transaction, cash circulation, and commodity exchange among Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In its effect, the seed of cash-only exchange was planted for the next generations and a consumerism meme spread throughout Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal proletarianization relied on the mass distribution of moneys among their various populations. From the outset, money was not a neutral cultural symbol relating to simple commodity exchange. The capability of money to become accumulated, in vast numeric quantities, established stratified economic class situations and this represented challenges to communal use-value production. Within traditional Aboriginal economies it was evident that subsistence trade goods were next to impossible to accumulate in large numeric quantities, as opposed to money-based capital. Thus Aboriginal economies never established defined class antagonisms based on the ownership and production of commodities. However, the implementation of cash inevitably led to class antagonisms being subtly introduced into Aboriginal communities. The acceptance of money came with a price tag in terms of what was given in exchange,

i.e. land, resources, autonomy, freedoms, solidarities, etc. Money introduced competitive social aspects that Aboriginal societies had never before experienced and their cooperative based models were made redundant.

It is probable that the Aboriginal peoples who received treaty annuities, sold scrip, or even began to work for cash wages at HBC did not fully understand the relation in which they were entering. They would have viewed cash (paper and coin) as nothing more than another symbol of trade, similar in nature to animal pelts (e.g. the made beaver) during the fur trade. The aspect that they did not foresee was that money, in itself, masks the social relations that establish its power as a revolutionary economic agent. The simple appearances of money as coin and paper symbols of trade create a 'fetishism' because that is the vulgar display of money and it says nothing about the power relations that fuel the currency-system. The fetishism resides in that fact that money can be used by its possessor as a medium which allows the purchase of commodities (of whatever kind) all the while the possessor is made unaware how this relation came to be hegemonic (Marx, [1867], 1990, p. 187; Heinrich, 2012, p. 77). The moneys that Aboriginal peoples received were also disconnected from the labour process, as they were not wages, and this also would have lent confusion about capitalist money-relations. It must be understood that during this time in history Aboriginal communities had little conceptualization of money-systems, capitalism, global trade, wage-labour systems, commodities, and private property relations. Money-annuities were simply viewed as an outcome of the treaty bargain and the sale of scrip was a means to secure immediate provisions. These various Aboriginal communities could not foresee the

relations that they were entering via consumerism and the mass reliance on the purchase of subsistence commodities.

The treaty annuity was inherently a cash-based consumerist model that served to replace traditional modes of hunting, fishing, and use-value trading. This consumerist model had economic roots pre-treaty to a minor degree in the fur trade. But even in the fur trade scenarios the commodities of private trading companies were paid for by Aboriginal trappers via a (use-value) product of their labour: e.g. pelt, skin, or hide. But post-treaty it became increasingly important that consumer-based goods supplanted the traditional-subsistence provisions of the hunter due to the eradication of essential subsistence means (e.g. buffalo). The annuity payments, as well as scrip, completely alienated Aboriginal producers from the total ownership of their production because annuity recipients purchased ready-made goods that were created outside of Aboriginal communities and outside of Aboriginal labour. The cash could only be spent on consumer-based commodities and this was not a model that had any basis in Aboriginal economic organization, i.e. pre-treaty. Thus the Aboriginal peoples spent their annuities and scrip-money at the shops of private trading companies because these were the only places the currency had any realizable value. The companies and traders that provided commodified goods to Aboriginal peoples cultivated a keen consumerism amongst the relative Aboriginal bands and this escalated beyond the fur trade history (Ray, 2000, pp. 169-170). Due to the annuity framework, First Nations peoples were guided into a strange consumerism model wherein they had no control over the production of the commodities and they had no means to labour within the production of their cash flow.



The commodity goods purchased with individual-based treaty annuities had no basis in First Nations labour and this changed their labour dynamic. The alienated producers slipped into the role of strict consumerism, as opposed to self-sufficient producers, because the cash-annuity was not a labour-based payment rather it was a direct outcome of the treaty relation. The access to this labour-less cash facilitated the circulation of private commodities amongst First Nations individuals in ways that had not been necessary under subsistence models. It also diminished traditional work roles because the cash economy, based in the purchase of commodities, began to take prevalence over traditional-communal roles that revolved around the hunt and communal co-operation. The First Nations treaty annuities and the Métis scrip presented alienation from traditional production models and it enhanced the dependence of Aboriginal communities upon a cash-based system of production; i.e. private property relations. Consumerism became a vital part of economic survival amongst Aboriginal communities post-treaty as it became an increasingly imperative way to access essential subsistence commodities. Private commodified goods, produced by foreign labour, supplanted self-produced goods by Aboriginal labour and the annuities supplanted the traditional economic work roles. Over the process of time, the prices of commodified goods and services began to drastically inflate whilst the treaty annuities remained “forever” fixed within the treaty framework. Thus First Nations economic dispossession and impoverishment were relatively inflating parallel to the inflated prices of subsistence commodities; (there is no space to discuss commodity inflation and connection to relative wages during this time in Canadian history). Métis individuals isolated from treaty became wage-workers and consumers of private commodities via wages. Aboriginal

communities were left out of the industrial-capital accumulation process and they were also left destitute by the collapse of their traditional resources, loss of land access, and economic bases. On top of these tragic events, it was private capitalist companies that reaped the main benefit from the annuities and the scrip provision that is until the annuities became valueless and wage labour was imperative.

### Proletarianization of the Northern Communities and the Inuit

The focus of this analysis has strictly examined those Aboriginal communities that were affected by the processes surrounding the numbered treaties and their introductions to the cash economy. But it is important to note that the numbered treaty process, and the fallout, was not the strict means by which Aboriginal communities became subsumed into the capitalist mode of production. The Northern Inuit communities are a prime example about the movements of cash and the social relations that follow money-introduction, up to and including the social revolution that money creates and reproduces (e.g. the class structure). The experiences of the Inuit within the cash-culture and the resulting capitalist mode of production are not radically different than that of their Southern cousins. The point worth noting is that Inuit introductions to capitalism did not rest upon 'sacred' treaty arrangements between the state and the Inuit bands rather it was a relation that was unapologetically based on subsuming a solitary group into the capitalist economic structure.

The collapse of the traditional Inuit economic structures based in subsistence hunting and fishing began in and around the early twentieth century. It was during this time that the Hudson Bay Company, combined with the federal government, sought

economic gains by facilitating the supply of commodified goods to Northern communities (Mitchell, 1996, pp. 90-91; Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 269). The HBC eagerly facilitated the social transition of the Inuit from being active producers of self-subsistence into consumers of commodified goods and then into wage workers. “The company’s focus had shifted to retailing, Inuit achieved new status as consumers, and the fur trade gave way to an economy built around government services and administration” (Mitchell, 1996, p. 93). The HBC actively loaned credits to Inuit individuals and in this basic way they helped create a class of consumers that purchased manufactured goods and supplies. In return, these initial Inuit consumers spread the ideals of thrift and cash value amongst their communities (Mitchell, 1996, p. 92). It was during these initial credit/cash transactions that Inuit peoples began to move away from traditional means of production and into the private social relations that cash provided. Wage labour was then introduced as the basic means of procuring commodified goods and a new work ethic was encouraged by the HBC and the federal government.

The industrialization of the North guided the Inuit bands into a mass acceptance of the wage based economy, consumerism, dispossession of their traditional lands, and increased centralization of community. The rapid urbanization of Inuit further connected them to wage labour systems, as being the only means to survival, and this urban push was solidified by the other social benefits that came with town and village life. Frideres & Gadacz (2001) affirm that “improved educational and medical facilities in the small towns of the Arctic attracted Inuit. There was also the possibility of wage jobs in these settlements. As a result, for the next two decades (between the 1940’s and 1960’s) there was a steady migration of Inuit from the tundra to these settlements” (p. 269). Mitchell

(1996) affirms the persuasion of Inuit migration by claiming that the “increasing availability of such services as welfare, schooling, and medical care provided strong inducement for more and more of the approximately seven hundred groups of Inuit scattered across the North to ‘settle’ in forty permanent administrative centres” (p. 118). The urbanization efforts were promoted by the federal government as the chance for progress and being a positive step toward Northern inclusion into the Canadian way of life. Major reconstructions of the Northern economy began to take place in the 1960’s and an entire way of life was supplanted within the short span of a couple decades. Mitchell states that “centralization was the prerequisite for political, economic, and ideological transformation” (p. 118); Mitchell is referring to the influx of diverse Inuit bands toward town and village life. The Inuit migration toward a centralized existence in the 1960’s effectively led to the demise of their traditional modes of production and fortified the emergence of capitalist economy in the North (Frideres & Gadacz, 2001, p. 270).

During the age of urbanization, the Inuit peoples began to adopt a hybrid economy within the newly populated towns and villages and this economy was centered on wage labour, welfare, and traditional hunting and fishing (Mitchell, 1996, p. 120). This economic transitional period was central in the total social restructuring of the Inuit peoples within the towns and villages. The traditional Inuit means of production became completely transformed by rapid industrialization and urbanization. The private property model was spurred on by wage-labour, and other cash funds such as welfare and these became essential for gaining subsistence goods. Subsistence goods increasingly began to be hoarded among individuals that could afford them and they were no longer a

communally-held property (Mitchell, 1996, p. 132); “The nuclear family had become the economic unit in ‘the fields of acquisition, distribution, and consumption,’ and ‘money and imported goods are never shared outside the household, even between the nearest relatives’” (Mitchell, 1996, p. 132). Private property commodities bought with cash and hoarding of goods soon became the normal state of affairs for Inuit individuals and their family members. The family structures were radically transformed from kinship groups into nuclear family bases and this perfectly fit the mould of the capitalist mode of production, as a single wage was never substantial enough to provide for needs of community (Mitchell, 1996, p. 126). The individuated worker and immediate family provisions became high priority under cash economy relations. The emergence of private property among the Inuit affirmatively concluded their arrival as revolutionized peoples more so than any other political project to date.

The first introductions to private property, and the functions of cash, among Inuit came through their work for the HBC. The labour relation as employee and employer necessarily changed the Inuit view of work and communal ownership of subsistence goods. Mitchell states that “the HBC had to teach the Inuit to become trappers instead of hunters, and with this went a whole new attitude towards work and the products of labour ... the benefits of employment tended to be regarded as private property” (p. 131). It followed from these wage labour beginnings that the Inuit communities began to become individuated as producers, in that they no longer produced the communal means of subsistence for the need of the kinship group, instead the Inuit workers began to produce the means of subsistence for a select amount of individuals. Furthermore, the Inuit wage labourers began to produce for their employers, first and foremost, rather than the

community and they effectively sold their labour-power instead of having direct ownership over it. The Inuit adopted capitalistic work ethics and as a result their traditional modes of production dwindled because of mass proletarianization.

Dispossession and discipline are the central Aboriginal narrative under Canadian paternal authority. The Inuit experiences with the federal government and private capital have not been different from their Southern neighbours, in their political scope and economic outcomes. Peter Kulchyski (2004) sums up the traditional Inuit experience, as well as the general Aboriginal experience, within industrial capitalism:

In Canada, for over a hundred years a whole trajectory of social, political and economic policies has been developed to assimilate hunters. The cumulative effects of these policies have been nothing short of tragic for northern Aboriginal communities. It is the modernizers, those who think they can build northern suburbs that will replicate southern realities in the subarctic and arctic, who are the true paternalists and romantics here: they still have a naïve faith that sporadic wage work on projects that will last one or two decades offers a future for Aboriginal communities (p. 2).

The mass effects of the capitalist system have transformed Aboriginal socio-economic realities around what Kulchyski views as romanticism, i.e. wage labour patronage within resource extraction development leading to long-term community survival. The narrative that Kulchyski presents is a universal amongst Aboriginal communities in that the wage-labour system has been preached for over a century as the gateway to economic progress, growth, and overall civility. The purveyors of capitalistic-faith have touted labour discipline, work ethic, and resource development as the economic salvation for Aboriginal communities and this approach has led to further subservience to the capitalist mode of production amongst Aboriginal cohorts. The results have been the universal dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from their traditional economies and entrenchment into capitalism-based roles as dispossessed masses.

## The Function of the Cash System within Aboriginal Societies

The replication of the cash system within Aboriginal communities represents the historical moment when Aboriginal economies ceased to be subsistence-based. This radical historical transformation was masked by the vulgar aspects of money, i.e. it could be used to procure commodified things, but the transformation was affirmed through the spending of that cash on commodified products. The fact that the annuities were authorized by a central agency (i.e. the federal government) in return for land acquisition demonstrates the true intentions of the annuity. The treaty annuity was in many ways representative of a bill of sale, or at least this is how the federal government treated the transaction. Métis scrip also functioned in a similar manner due to the fact that scrip was draped in private property relations.

The treaty annuities, and money scrip, represent examples of commodity fetishism. The annuity was a thing that masked true social relations because the annuity, in many ways, spelled the end of traditional structures. The fetishism does not exist in the fact that Aboriginal peoples could procure subsistence goods with the cash from annuity and/or scrip. The fetishism resides in the fact that whenever Aboriginal peoples procured cash from annuities or scrip to buy subsistence goods/things they were in reality affirming the relation that caused the demise of their traditional economic structures; ‘they did not know it, but they were doing it.’ The annuities were imbedded with the total dynamics of the treaty relationship, i.e. land acquisition for one side and dispossession on the other. Annuities were given in exchange for surrendered lands and the future socio-economic accumulation inherent within those lands was radically transformed in terms of economic exploitation. The transference from common lands into privately owned lands

established vast wealth for the federal government, including private businesses, and it left Aboriginal societies economically destitute; this is a continual legacy of treaty and scrip. Money was a bearer of private property interactions, wherein there were possessors and dispossessed, and the treaty annuities confirmed this social relation. The annuity masked the total impact of the treaties and the history of the annuities bears this to be evident; (the annuities became worthless but the value of the surrendered lands kept rising). Aboriginal peoples bought goods (things) with an annuity or scrip-money (thing) but this was merely the facade of the real social relationship. The real social relation was the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from the land. The transformation of those surrendered lands into accumulation of capital is an outcome of the treaty legacy.

John Loxley (2010) posits that “treaties extinguishing Indian title robbed Native People not only of their rights to land but also of their right to that share of surplus in industrial capital ventures corresponding to land rents (p. 102). The social power of money and land ownership was not a part of the understanding amongst Aboriginal communities at that time in history. Aboriginal peoples did not understand that cash-money was more than a symbol of trade (like a stick, chits, pelts, or the made beaver) and that land-spaces could be privately owned. Money presupposes radical transformations of social behaviours on all sides of its circulation and distribution, i.e. as owners, buyers, sellers, consumers, workers, etc. Hall (2010) describes the complete social conditioning of space and behaviour that is inherent within capital-based economic modes of production:

There is virtually no realm of geography, no function of biology, no form of human association or creativity that is safely off limits when it comes to the propensity of capital and capitalists to commodify and commercialize every facet of nature susceptible to privatization. The overwhelming



preoccupation of those on the most advanced frontiers of this process is to seek the subordination of almost all types of relationship to the most privileged set of relationships concerning buyers and sellers (p. 149).

For Hall, the main distinction of capitalism is its thoroughly engaging propensity to own every facet of natural space and transform it into a cash-based resource, including relationships. The transformation of natural spaces into private spheres of capitalist ownership represents the backdrop against which the Aboriginal multitudes became the *dramatis personae* of the marketplace. The transformation of natural spaces into private enterprise also transforms the relations between the actors that occupy those spaces. The Aboriginal examples, post-treaty, give credence to the type of social transformation that Hall describes. In Canada, the entirety of natural spaces were transformed from being subsistence-based into capitalist-based. Hall estimates that Aboriginal peoples were handed promises of advancement and prosperity when they signed treaty but in turn they were given “the Faustian bargain” (p. 546).

The cash that First Nations peoples received from treaty annuities was an arbiter of their introduction into industrial capitalist relations. The numbered treaties opened up areas of the Prairies, the West, and the North that housed fertile natural resources. The exploitation of natural resources in Aboriginal lands was the foundation upon which Canada built its industrial economy. The deprivation of these resources from Aboriginal stewardship ultimately placed the Aboriginal communities at the bottom of the division of labour. Aboriginal peoples were totally dispossessed of their land titles, up to and including cultural ties to the land, and this vast dispossession was in itself the historical basis of proletarianization.

At the time of the treaty negotiations a diversity of animal populations were scarce, the fur trade was dead, mercantile capitalism was at its end, and industrial capitalist growth was burgeoning in Canada. The Aboriginal bands who entered into the treaty relation, even without knowing it, were at the forefront of a new economic epoch. The economic situation in Canada was quickly becoming based within industrial-capitalist structures. The situation of Canadian society post-treaty was signifying a determined class distinction which was detrimental to Aboriginal societies. As Marx ([1849], 2010) proclaimed in 1849:

*Thus capital presupposes wage labour; wage labour presupposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally bring forth each other. Does a worker in a cotton factory produce merely cotton textiles? No, he produces capital. He produces value which serve afresh to command his labour and by means of it to create new values. Capital can only increase by exchanging itself for labour power, by calling wage labour to life. The labour power of the wage-worker can only be exchanged for capital by increasing capital, by strengthening the power whose slave it is. Hence, increase of capital is increase of the proletariat, that is, of the working class (p. 22, original emphasis).*

The next logical step for the federal government after the signatures had dried on the treaties was to complete the desired enfranchisement of Aboriginal communities into Canadian society; thus making them real “persons” via proletarianization. Capital growth was dependent on Aboriginal land dispossession and it correlates that Aboriginal peoples were guided into the wage economy via their land dispossession. In this way, Aboriginal labour-power was called to life and capitalist interests reaped untold benefits.

The prerequisite for the proletarianization process was the instillation of a mass obedience to authority structures and a discipline to wage labour ethics. The Aboriginal peoples were to become adequately disciplined to fit the model of their new identity, i.e. the proletarian. This radical identity shift was viewed as being a natural progression

within their overall economic progress: Aboriginal peoples were less than a 'person' within their traditional modes of production but as newly made proletarians they would become proper human beings. The proletarian ethic of discipline was viewed as a springboard for the natural, biological, evolutionary process and in this way capitalism was even viewed as a force for positive natural selection (Hall, 2010, pp. 527-530); (this evolutionary slant was *not* scientifically based). "The commercial factors governing the disappearance of distinct peoples have most often been treated as if they embody the inevitable outgrowth of progress or natural law, rather than the result of the priorities and decisions of powerful human beings (Hall, 2010, p. 707). The dispossession of Aboriginal peoples post-treaty was based in a social engineering entrenched into education systems. In this way powerful human beings ensured that Aboriginal societies were eradicated and that proletarians were 'naturally' selected for the labour market. The increase of capital-growth in Canada did result in the increase of proletarians, as Marx stated, because the economy of Canada was largely built upon the exploitations of natural resources that the West had in abundance and workers had to be moved into those territories. The eradication of Aboriginal title was a precursor to capital-growth and it had outcomes that paved the way for Aboriginal proletarianization. Thus, capital brought forth Aboriginal proletarians via dispossession and Aboriginal proletarianization brought forth the increase of capital via the opening of the West for business and Euro-ethnic settlement.

## CHAPTER 3 – COMPLETE CONTROL: MAKING THE SOCIETY OF DISCIPLINE IN CANADA

“In capitalist societies, education, whether secular or religious, the teaching of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary integrity of workers decorated after fifty years of loyal and faithful service, the fostering of love for harmony and wisdom, those aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo, instill in the exploited a mood of submission and inhibition which considerably eases the task of the agents of law and order” (Fanon, 2004, pp. 3-4).

### Establishing the Disciplinary Society

The Aboriginal peoples, at the end of the nineteenth century, were viewed by the federal government, the Christian churches, and the citizenry of Canada as ‘uncivilized’, which can be interpreted as meaning economically stunted. The motivation for the federal government, and the agencies it utilized and/or employed, was to find an operational solution that would bring about the end of supposed Aboriginal incivility and idleness. The economic and social ideals that favoured an industrial capitalist proletariat were implemented as the solution that would bring forth a desired cultural shift. Thus a bureaucratic model that was based in proletarian work-discipline was proposed as the deliverance from Aboriginal savagery and into proper Canadian citizenry. John S. Milloy (2003) notes that:

“Enlightened” Canadians would have “to elevate the Indian from his condition of savagery” from their “present state of ignorance, superstition, and helplessness.” They would then reach the state of civilized Canadians: one in which their “practical knowledge” and labour would make them “useful members of society,” “intelligent, self-supporting” citizens (p. 25).

The cultural notions of a structured and individually focused work ethic were espoused as a central tenet of Canadian society. The work ethic was compliant to a rigid obedience to authority. The classic proletarian work ethic was moulded from social disciplinary

functions rooted in strict compliance to work, order, and authority. The proletarian work ethic can be summed up as: the application of subjective abilities and knowledge within a specific trade or employment position wherein a wage is received in return for the sale of labour. Milloy alludes that an Aboriginal individual could become an acceptable citizen through trained and focused labour, i.e. the transformation of “work” into a proper wage-based trade. The labour model that established a proper civility was to be found in the authority of Canadian schooling and workplaces. Capitalistic ideals about school and work, i.e. reproducing proletarian ethics, were ever-present in the Canadian disciplinary society. Aboriginal communities were trained to become productive proletarian workers and this was meant to negate their cultural tendencies toward supposed sloth. Stanford (2008) posits that “like a farmer trying to motivate a donkey, effective labour discipline typically needs both carrots (or incentives) and sticks (or punishments)” (p. 101). The disciplinary measures of sticks/punishments were the prominent motivation for the Aboriginal cohorts to accept the proletarian work method.

The theoretical ideas about the ‘society of discipline’ stem from the writings of Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri (2001) and they proclaim that the disciplinary society is:

that society in which social command is constructed through a diffuse network of *dispositifs* or apparatuses that produce and regulate customs, habits, and productive practices. Putting this society to work and ensuring obedience to its rule and its mechanism of inclusion and /or exclusion are accomplished through disciplinary institutions (the prison, the factory, the asylum, the hospital, the university, the school, and so forth) that structure the social terrain and present logics adequate to the “reason” of discipline. Disciplinary power rules in effect by structuring the parameters and limits of thought and practice, sanctioning and prescribing normal and/or deviant behaviors (p. 23, original emphasis).

The society of discipline sets the stage for excluded peoples, or out groups, to become absorbed into the body politic, in that the majority of society tends to react to the

authority of social institutions in uniform fashion. The citizenry will tend to follow, or at least be aware/observe, the edicts of the dominant institutions and these notions get replicated among social groups by the appeal to authority and punishment. The generations that follow effectively produce a monoculture that has its bases in authority reverence and fear of reprisal. Hardt and Negri take care to mention that discipline is typically reinforced by sets of social mechanisms that go beyond the predominance of institutional structures and their edicts (p. 329). The citizens, in themselves, have the final effect on distributing mass cultural subjectivities upon one another, and specifically upon excluded members; a person is “excluded” because they do not replicate the dominant notions of the “included” group. The cultural replication of ideals/notions resides in the authority of the majority population to perform certain tasks, believe certain ideals, carry on certain notions, etc, and then frame the general citizenry within those narrow parameters. The framing of the “citizen” depends on a plea to the majority and that being a populist notion of social normality. This successive reproduction necessarily structures the ways in which cultural notions are performed and observed in a given body politic. For instance, the reproduction of a rigid and socially structured work ethic is necessary to sustain the economic system of any particular society. Economic ideals and correlating work ethics are mass subjectivities that must be replicated amongst the citizens. This replication is accomplished in order for economic production to thrive and to be realized over successive generations.

The society of discipline fostered by capitalism rests on the social replication of values, notions, mores, etc, like any other society. The reproduction of these social phenomenon stems from what Richard Dawkins cites as ‘memes.’ Memes arise through

the replication of a cultural notion (e.g. songs, ideas, advertisements, stories, fashions, laws, customs, beliefs, words, slogans, etc) to the point where it *appears* that the notion was a pre-existing natural occurrence rather than a socially engineered phenomenon. The most successful meme seemingly has no original point in history in which it can be contextually understood; in this way a meme can become representative of a coercive ideology. The historical creation of the original idea has been negated through the passage of generational replication. “Cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission in that, although basically conservative, it can give rise to a form of evolution” (Dawkins, 2006, p. 189). Dawkins (2006) further states that “just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation” (p. 192). Public imitation allows the passage of cultural notions throughout the citizenry and these notions become reinforced by way of a mass appeal and/or acceptance as the standard. It makes no difference what the meme is, if it is deemed “good” or “bad”, the only thing that matters is if the meme can become replicated or not. The meme is put into motion if the public accepts it and imitates it on a general level.

The interesting thing about memes, as with all cultural notions, is that they are not static and they can be done away with at a moment’s notice depending on the power of the competition. The competitive aspects of memes arise when a new one directly challenges the conventionally accepted notions. The revolutionary moments in cultural shift stem from meme competition. “If a meme is to dominate the attention of a human brain, it must do so at the expense of ‘rival’ memes” (Dawkins, 2006, p. 197). The

competition factor will logically result in the decay of older ideas, values, conventions, etc, and these will be replaced and updated by new standards. The evolutionary aspect of memes resides in the willingness of the intellect, from individual to the collective, to validate and spread the meme and then coerce behaviours accordingly. Competition represents interesting dilemmas for memes in that competition is not always on a level playing field. For instance, the disciplinary society of capitalism develops dominant social institutions in order to get its memes engaged throughout the citizenry and this is often achieved through dictation and coercion from a top-down approach. The citizenry may re-enforce the institutional meme but that does not mean that they have authored the meme, or even morally approved of the meme. Dominant institutions hold an authoritative sway over the accepted notions within a culture and their role cannot be neglected. Meme competition is often initiated when a revered institution makes a new decree that overrides a previous one, even those of a rival society, and then the general populations re-enforce the spread of the meme. The general citizenry is usually not in a privileged position to deny any new decrees that are dictated to it from the arguments of authority. Thus new cultural notions often get replicated and become commonplace by way of forceful engagement and engineered behaviour. Institutions and populations both have their part to play in the spreading of memes but that is relative to the meme.

The classic proletarian work ethic is a meme that arises from social imitation guided by institutional authority structures and figures. The wage-labour work ethic (proletarian) is a mass cultural subjectivity in that it demands the same general agreements by all workers: workers accept that they will sell their labour-power for a determined time to a specific employer and in return they receive the agreed upon wage.



Capitalism cannot work as an economic mode of production without a basic social agreement regarding labour and wages among the majority of the citizenry. Citizens must accept that their basic survival and subsistence will only come through the provisions of the wage and this meme must spread over a large labouring context, or else wage labour fails as a system of production. It is generally effortless to delegate work roles, and economic classes, in capitalist society once the proletarian work-ethic-meme has been accepted amongst both the institutions of power and citizenry. Capitalism is a particularly brilliant authoritarian mechanism for spreading an imitable work ethic and division of labour wherein work roles and classes are replicated over generations.

The social implications of the wage were not always pervasive in Canada and the case studies regarding Aboriginal dispossession are recent enough to establish decent evidence as to how meme competition can alter the socio-economic production of societies. The modern fact of mass proletarianization amongst Aboriginal individuals was guided by institutional pressures that were ignited via meme competition. The social outcome was that the proletarian work ethic acted as a conquering force masked within the ideal of 'progress.' The proletarian model was central to the burgeoning industrial capitalist economy in Canada, during the late nineteenth century and beyond, and the Aboriginal peoples were annexed into that structure through disciplinary means. The Aboriginal populations were made subject to the authority of the new mode of production and their traditional work manners fell by the way side because those traditional work ethics were not consistent with the demands of classic proletarian work ethics. The revolution of Aboriginal workers from their traditional labour roles into proletarianized roles represented the modus operandi of industrial capitalism within colonized societies,

the world over. This represents a critique of proletarianization as a phenomenon of capitalist society.

### The Society of Discipline Administered via Education

The federal policies regarding ‘enfranchisement’ were put into place to successfully negate the implications and character of treaty negotiations (i.e. agreements between equally invested partners) thus making these legislations symbolic relics of an uncivilized time. The federal government policies sought to force Aboriginal peoples into “Canadian” life via labour-market roles and nuclear family groupings. The designated policies of the federally enforced assimilation principals (e.g. the *Indian Act*, the residential schools, the reservation system, etc) were methods of instilling disciplinary obedience among captive audiences. These social systems and policies were levelling mechanisms that were given institutional authority in order to solve “the Indian problem.” The ‘problem’ existed because there were slovenly ‘Indians’ where there should have been hard working ‘Canadians.’ A central component of the Indian problem was the perceived lack of work-ethic, lack of motivation to labour, and lack of obedience to authority amongst Aboriginal societies. “By the early reserve years, government officials were convinced that, like the men, Aboriginal women were ‘lazy’ and ‘indolent’ with plenty of spare time” (Carter, 2001, p. 64). The traditional Aboriginal work models and manners were viewed as being defective in regards to providing acumen about economic advancement (i.e. civilization). A cultural work ethic corresponding to private production was noticeably absent from the Aboriginal communities and this is what crystallized the “Indian problem”, in economic terms.

It stood to reason amongst Canadian government officials that they could instill a proper work ethic amongst Aboriginal generations to come through an appropriate education system. The first attempts at large scale Aboriginal education system implementation was the 'industrial' school of the late nineteenth century, which later morphed into the 'residential' school. Miller (2003) proclaims "it was revealing that Ottawa's first concerted attempt to organize Indian education after Confederation was termed 'industrial' schools. The requirement that students carry out half a day's work would mould them for the Euro-Canadian world of work, in which clocks, whistles, and schedules were becoming dominant" (p. 252). The presence of clocks, whistles, and schedules were in themselves disciplinary objects and authority measures that Aboriginal students were made to implement into their work manners and observe in their minds. Milloy explains the curriculum of the industrial schools as providing "training for boys in husbandry, agriculture, and mechanical trades and for girls in domestic arts and science including dairying, needlework, and cooking" (p. 13). The industrial schools were fundamentally similar in curriculum to residential schools and it was only after 1923 that the term "residential" was implemented across all Canadian schools for Aboriginals (Milloy, 2003, pp. 51-52). The industrial schools prominently displayed an authoritarian urge to clampdown upon the spread of traditional Aboriginal values. The overarching project of the industrial schools was to prepare Aboriginal youth with basic skills for their new work roles in the hopes they acquire the habits, manners, and customs of civilized life (Milloy, 2003, p. 13).

J.A. Macrae (Indian Affairs Inspector of Schools in the North West, 1886) viewed the uncivilized situations of the Aboriginal student/worker as stemming from the lack of

proper evolutionary time for the Aboriginals to pass through the appropriate stages: i.e. from pastoral societies, to agricultural, to manufacturing, to commerce and trade (Macrae, 1886, as cited in Milloy, 2003, p. 27). According to Macrae, the 'Indian' was not ready for the rapid industrialization of Canada and they would have been made extinct if it were not for the benevolence of the federal government and its civilization projects (Macrae, 1886, as cited in Milloy, 2003, p. 27). Thus, according to Macrae, the violent integrationist measures and severe disciplinary models imposed on the Aboriginals were implemented for their survival in the contemporary Canadian society and competitive capitalist marketplace. It is accurate to state that the work models and production ideals of traditional Aboriginal societies would never abide capitalism and that no time was available to adequately prepare Aboriginal peoples for impending wage labour and nuclear family roles. However, it is historically blatant that Aboriginal peoples did not expect, or desire, a rapid enfranchisement into capitalist production as the sole means to their survival; they did not bargain for capitalist integration during treaty negotiations or in any other legal capacity. The dispossession of everything associated with Aboriginal life was established by federal government power structures that were beyond the political reach of Aboriginal communities. The federal government implemented the mechanics of the proletarianization process, through violent disciplinary measures, in order to provide its desired result.

A familiar meme amongst federal policy makers at the end of the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth, was the enforcement of an immediate restructuring regarding the work ethic amongst Aboriginal individuals. Nicholas Flood Davin was among the first to make official recommendations about implementing the education of

industry as the only solution to the Indian problem. Davin's *Report* in 1879 demonstrates how an Aboriginal work ethic was to be crafted and systematically replicated. "Davin's advice was that the problems posed by Western Aboriginal people could be solved 'only by educating Indians and mixed-bloods in self-reliance and industry'" (Davin, 1879, as cited in Milloy, 2003, p. 32). Davin's policy ideas were to be utilized as a template for Aboriginal education within the industrial and/or residential schools for decades to come. Davin's educational attainment model strictly focused on the production of wage workers through capitalistic ideals (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000, p. 120; Fiske, 2001, p. 170). Davin and Duncan Campbell Scott's disciplinary model for the residential schools "were part of a network of institutions meant to be servants ministering to industrial society's need for lawfulness, labour, and security of property. Education in general, of course, had such a mandate" (Milloy, 2003, p. 33). Milloy further mentions that Aboriginal schools were structured in direct correlation to the lower-class schools that housed unruly white children in which "crime, poverty, disparity, and disorder" were meant to be eradicated from the lower-class populations (Titley, 1974, as cited in Milloy, 2003, p. 33). The residential and industrial schools were authoritarian-based indoctrination centres that instilled a curriculum suited to the needs of the individuated wage-worker, and housewife, within the capitalist mode of production. "It was clear ... that the schools constituted a basis for the low cost production of native labour power (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000, p. 121). Davin put into place a framework where "prompt and persistent obedience to authority, order, and discipline were virtues of civilization (Milloy, 2003, p. 43). Davin was an influential policy analyst and he effectively established a framework

for the industrial and residential schools but it was the poet Duncan Campbell Scott who took the ideal of Aboriginal enfranchisement to its zenith.

Duncan Campbell Scott was a professional civil servant, starting 1879, who was a bureaucrat for half a century in the Canadian Indian Department and eventually he became the head of the Department in 1913 (Hall, 2010, p. 674; Long, 2010, p. 110). Scott's writings and policy ideas shine as exemplary in defining the terms of the eradication of the national 'Indian problem.' Scott's describes his firm belief: "I want to get rid of the Indian problem ... our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department" (Scott, 1907, as cited in Hall, 2010, p. 674; Miller, 2009, p. 223). Scott eerily noted this ideal as being the "final solution to the Indian problem" (quoted in Hall, 2010, p. 676). Scott had no misgivings about what he viewed to be the "problem" and that was the inability of the Indians to contribute to economic considerations. J. R. Miller (2009) states that "Scott's behaviour towards them (First Nations) always seemed to be determined by prosaic considerations of economy ... (and) if First Nations would not voluntarily do what Indian Affairs knew to be best for them, then compulsion had to be applied" (p. 222). "Compulsion" can be read here as meaning 'discipline.' Scott viewed the Aboriginal individual and their communities as a money-object, meaning that he was persistently attracted to the budgetary aspects of the Aboriginals as federal government dependents. Scott was not overly concerned about the humanity of the Aboriginal bands because to the Department these "Indians" had become monetary figures on a piece of paper that were not technically viewed as legal 'persons' - so it did not matter that Aboriginal societies were destroyed in the process. Scott wanted

to eradicate the need for the Department of Indian Affairs, and its budgetary demands by way of treaty rights, and the best way to accomplish the task was to remove the Indian peoples from the mathematics (Titley, 1995, p. 38). Thus the problem was not essentially “the Indian problem” rather it was the Indian Affairs budgetary problem and it represented a classic fiscal-conservative downsizing initiative. Essentially, enfranchising the Aboriginal populations into Canadian economic structures was the final solution to the fiscal obligations of the treaties, including any other economic ties to distinct Aboriginal communities. The total negation of treaty provisions was a desired fiscal end and it would further transform traditional Aboriginal lands into becoming safe Canadian-European homelands.

Scott encapsulated the political position of the federal government regarding the economic merits of the Aboriginal bands. Scott believed ardently in training Aboriginal peoples to accept the work-customs of industrial capitalism. Ideas about how to spend money, deal with expenses, and working in agricultural situations was inherent in the education practices that Scott preached. “Scott expressed his eagerness that the Indians adopt agriculture, or at least cultivate gardens, and that ‘habits of industry and thrift’ be encouraged” (Titley, 1995, p. 38). Amongst the Aboriginal bands, Scott was attempting to replicate both the disciplined work ethic of the European immigrants and their social notions regarding private property relations. The work ethics of the European masses, which were already exposed to industrial capitalism, were central to Scott’s philosophy and these were made as strict policies amongst the Department officials. Scott controlled the Indian Affairs Department with a heavy hand and he chastised any officials who were not on board with his estimations about the Aboriginal populations (Titley, 1995, p. 39).

Scott viewed his position as being one of historical importance in that he was a force for civilization triumphing over social backwardness. It was this fanatical impetus, combined with his spend-thrift personality, which determined his policy initiatives regarding the work-customs and schooling of the Aboriginal bands. The paternal guidance of the federal government was an authoritarian imposition upon Aboriginal life and its severe disciplinary model served as a vehicle for radical cultural change (Titley, 1995, p. 36). Scott was the leading faith-preacher within this radical cultural competition.

Scott viewed the education system as a main driver toward: civilization, proper work ethics, hygienic cleanliness, correct religious practice, and suitable economic instruction. The boarding school policy was generally agreed upon, in 1905, as the most favourable policy for the mass education of Aboriginal students. Scott mentions that one of the main purposes of the boarding schools was to destroy the traditional hunting and trapping economies of the Aboriginal children and to further end the dispersion of traditional economic values. Duncan Campbell Scott and Samuel Stewart state:

The Indians are all hunters, they come in with their winter's catch of furs during the month of June and leave for the woods again not much later than the first week of July. Day schools cannot, therefore, be of any practical utility as a means of education ... We are of the opinion that any benefits which arise from Indian education must come from adequate boarding schools situated in favourable localities and our recommendations must lie along this line (Scott & Stewart, 1905, as cited in Long, 2010, p. 313)

Scott wanted strategic placements of the schools in areas that were easily accessible for gathering larger numbers of Aboriginal children. Scott viewed traditional subsistence values (hunting, trapping, communal property, co-operation in work, etc.) as an impediment to both modernized education and proper work manners. Scott envisioned his "solution" to be implemented within children's educational attainment. Peggy Blair



(2008) states “that the goal of civilization was best achieved if Indians were separated from their traditional activities” (p. 236). Eradicating the traditional economies meant total removal of children from their economic situations and placing them into boarding schools during months when the hunt was pursued. This effort was meant to indoctrinate the Aboriginal children into a new mode of civility. Indian Affairs Minister Frank Pedley (1909) echoed Scott’s idealism in the overall project:

It must not be forgotten, that we are working in a material that is stubborn in itself; that the Indian constitutionally dislikes work and does not feel the need of laying up stores or amassing wealth. The idea which is engrained in our civilization appears to be that a race must be thrifty and must surround itself with all manner of wealth and comfort before it is entitled to be considered civilized. The Indian has not yet reached that stage, and it is doubtful if he will – were such desirable (as cited in Miller, 2003, pp. 185-186).

For both Scott and Pedley, economic advancement was the primary indicator for the proof of civilization. Childhood education was the political arena wherein traditional work ethics and cultural values would be stopped and where new ideas and memes could be practically implemented.

The boarding schools were placed into the immediate charge of religious denominations, Catholic and Protestant, and a pact between church and state became official policy. The churches doled out ‘proper’ moral teachings that replaced Indian narratives and ceremonies whilst providing the Aboriginal children with basic working class skills (Titley, 1995, p. 77); “In effect, a disciplinary apparatus was created to socialize the population into the role of wage-laborers” (Harvey, 2010, p. 147). Titley (1995) states that the boarding schools were “deliberately located at a distance from reserves and close to centres of white settlement. Both types of schools aimed ‘to give a plain English education, adapted to the needs of the working farmer and mechanic’” (p.

77). The children were educated into disciplined gender roles in which the girls were taught domestic skills and the boys were taught manual trades (Titley, 1995, p. 77). The educational outcomes of the boarding schools were apparent in that they were preparation for enfranchisement of Aboriginal girls as nuclear-family homemakers and boys as working class labouring-providers. These new economic roles fit the mould of both Canadian society proper and the disciplined nature of industrial capitalist workplaces.

The violent situations replicated in the residential schools perfectly correspond to Marx's ([1867], 1990) description about capitalist disciplinary ethics moulding traditional societies into wage-labourers: "Thus were the (traditional) folk first forcibly expropriated from the soil, driven from their homes, turned into vagabonds, and then whipped, branded and tortured by grotesquely terroristic laws into accepting the discipline necessary for the system of wage-labour" (p. 899). Marx's estimation describes the situations that Aboriginal peoples faced under the patronage of the Canadian government and the Christian churches.

### Assessing the Legacy of the Residential Schools

The industrial-capitalist economic realities in Canada were violently thrust upon entire generations of Aboriginal youths. The violence of the boarding school system presents a tragic insight within the history of Canadian labour and social life. The methodology of bringing about Aboriginal proletarianization through aggressive educational means was brutal in its formulation and its delivery. The educational systems were eventually "successful" in their desired outcome; depending on how "success" is defined and who is framing the question. From the positions of the federal government

and business it assuredly stands that the residential schools were beneficial in positioning the Aboriginal communities as cheap commodified labour and enfranchised members of the body politic. It has not served as detrimental to capitalism, or Canadian liberal-democracy, that new formations of cheap labour were whole-scale introduced into the Canadian marketplace. Aboriginal proletarianization has served a definite purpose for capital as part of the unemployed surplus-labour population; those workers that are the cheapest to employ, easily exploited, and in desperate economic situations. The fact that the residential schools provided Aboriginal men and women with basic work-skills was a positive for business. Poorly skilled workers inevitably fill job positions that are not desirable for higher skilled workers, under-skilled workers receive fewer wages, and these workers inevitably depress wages for all workers. As Marx ([1867], 1990) claims:

The industrial reserve army, during the periods of stagnation and average prosperity, weighs down the active army of workers; during the periods of over-production and feverish activity, it puts a curb on their pretensions. The relative surplus population is therefore the background against which the law of the demand and supply of labour does its work. It confines the field of action of this law to the limits absolutely convenient to capital's drive to exploit and dominate the workers (p. 792).

The relation between industrial-residential schooling and depressed wages is not the focus of this analysis rather the point is that the desires of the capitalist mode of production were boosted by this proletarianized cohort. In the eyes of private businesses and the federal government, the residential schools were a boon to production and they were a complete success in terms of grooming new competitive dimensions amongst already existing wage labour classes. Capitalism and liberal-democracy in Canada have not lost any merit as a political economic system due to their violent exploitations of Aboriginal peoples. The violent conditions in which these proletarianized cohorts were

created were/are a political blight but it is one that is historically downplayed and has been justified as being beneficial to the Aboriginal communities.

The success of residential schooling projects hinged upon the educational ideals that were agreed upon in the treaty negotiations. At the time of the numbered treaties, several First Nations chiefs were actively seeking “Euro-Canadian education to adjust, to adapt, to cope with change” (Miller, 2003, p. 407). It appears that there was a level of communal desire, agreed upon by Aboriginal leaders, to actively encourage the youth to learn the cunning of Euro-Canadian values. This was not an erroneous intention on the part of Aboriginal groups due to the fact that it was initially based on supposed mutual benefits; The *Indian Act* and enfranchisement were kept as convenient secrets by Alexander Morris within treaty negotiations and this aided in the ideology of ‘mutual benefits’ that was preached by Morris and other agents (Miller, 2009, p. 181). The Aboriginal leaders could not have foreseen the immense physical and psychological damages that were to await the children within the schools, for successive generations. The educational pursuits were initially perceived as a necessary upgrade to the skills and knowledge bases of the Aboriginal communities and the leaders viewed education as a positive step toward beneficial social relations, As Miller (2009) states “it was clear in treaty negotiations that First Nations were interested in gaining access to ‘the cunning of the white man’ for their young. It was equally obvious that over time the government tried to whittle down its commitment in education” (p. 185).

The systemic problems within the residential schools came with the implementation of enfranchisement policies that were bent on identity eradication. From the outset, the schools displayed overt moral failures within their methods of educational

delivery and they consistently leaned toward the violently abusive (Milloy, 2003, p. 77). Death was a common occurrence for the children (Milloy, 2003, p. 78; Hall, 2010, p. 676). The rampant violence was widespread throughout the schools and the reports of appalling conditions were well-known but were ignored, even up to the level of Duncan Campbell Scott (Milloy, 2003, p. 101). Scott justified the deaths and appalling conditions as necessary for his idealistic final solution: “It is readily acknowledged that the Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by habiting so closely in these schools, and that they die at much higher rates than in their villages. But this alone does not justify a change in the policy of this department, which is geared toward the final solution to the Indian problem” (Scott, 1909, as cited in Hall, 2010, p. 676). The moral failures were built into the system from the highest positions of authority. The schools were not educational systems rather they were institutions of rampant discipline and punishment. The disciplinary model had morphed into a systemic abuse model:

the children were not being adequately fed, clothed, or taught and that discipline often crossed the line into abuse. The vision of life and learning in the ‘circle of civilized conditions’ had not become a reality. The promise that children would receive the ‘care of a mother’ and an education that would elevate the child ‘to a status equal to that of his white brother’ remained unfulfilled (Milloy, 2003, p. 107).

The residential schools and the education systems they incorporated were oxymoronic as failed-successes. They did succeed in their capacities to revolutionize the existing identity of the Aboriginal individual and initiate the process toward building the “civilized” individual, i.e. the proletarian. The moral repugnancy of the schools does not negate the fact that they were fundamentally victorious in their main projects, i.e. eradicating traditional economic modes of production and building a submissive character within Aboriginal communities. The failures of the residential schools reside in

the fact that there was no limit to the abuses experienced by the children at the hands of authority figures, at all levels of government, church leaders and members, and general society. The education in the residential schools was academically insignificant, the curriculum was simplistic, the teachers were poor and abusive in their jobs, and the system did nothing to impart social advancement for Aboriginal peoples. The ultimate “success” came in the form of the proletarianization of the collective Aboriginal communities, via eradication of their traditional identity. The residential schools bear no pleasant historical claims and they are simply notable for their standard of disciplined-abuse, which resulted in distinct socioeconomic outcomes.

It stands that the education of Aboriginal peoples in residential schools was not an economic disaster for the federal government whilst being a social tragedy for Aboriginal peoples and a national crime for which the federal government and the Christian churches were directly responsible; subsequently facing no criminal prosecution. The Aboriginal educational system and its outcomes worked in the direct favour of those authoritarian figures and institutions that oversaw the process. The federal government, for over a hundred years, had gone as far as to deny culpability for its policy-making within the residential schooling existence and experience (even though the federal government had access to all the official information about their role in the industrial and residential schools): “Before 1998 the government of Canada held firmly to the position that it was not accountable, legally or morally, for any wrong doings done to the students of Indian residential schools or to their families and communities (Hall, 2010, p. 680).

It has only been in recent years that the federal government and the churches have become somewhat revealing about their roles and legacies in the schools. The Harper

apology of June 2008 admitted that the federal government guided the functioning of the residential school systems. The apology revealed that there were visible members of the government and churches that were responsible for the abuses and the violence. Albeit, the Harper apology stated nothing about the role of justice in the process nor did it adequately provide any judicial reckoning to the Aboriginal communities that were socioeconomically destroyed; “if there is one thing that Mr. Harper’s ‘apology’ proved that could be considered groundbreaking or new, it’s the idea that there can be crimes without criminals” (Krebs, 2008, as cited in Hall, 2010, p. 681). The highest political offices of the Canadian government issued a blanket cure-all that was meant to absolve their culpability. It is no coincidence that the federal government offered cash sums as the means to mend the wounds of those that suffered, i.e. to those individuals that were still alive. The tossing of cash toward communities filled with grieving peoples is indicative of the merit of the apology and the general Canadian mentality toward Aboriginal suffering. The cash solution harkens back to the treaty negotiations when those destitute Aboriginal communities were exploited and entered into abusive arrangements with the federal government. The cash cure-all presented to the residential school survivors was once again that same Faustian bargain that was originally presented in the treaty-making process. The acceptance of basic cash sums, without any other legal framework at the root, equated to full acceptance of the terms laid out by the federal government and it absolved the matter of justice once and for all time. It is a tragic irony that money can also symbolically represent the universal commodity of a people’s suffering; specifically when it is handed out as an object that is meant to undo all historical ills. To rephrase Cardinal: ‘In Canada, justice comes from the crackle of the almighty dollar bill.’

## CHAPTER 4 – LOST IN THE LABOUR MARKET: ABORIGINAL COHORTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY ECONOMY

Conservatives ... often make a religious fetishism of individualism. Many seem to have absolutely no awareness of how fortunate one must be to succeed at anything in life, no matter how hard one works. One must be lucky to be *able to work*. One must be lucky to be intelligent, physically healthy, and not bankrupted in middle age by the illness of a spouse (Harris, 2012, p. 61, original emphasis).

### The Subjective Branding of Aboriginal Labour-Power

Aboriginal labour-power has been subjected to stigmatization for nearly two centuries within Canadian social perception and the labour market. The stigma originates from Aboriginal peoples being positioned in historically biased labour settings and from being placed within a framework based on inequitable competition with non-Aboriginal counterparts. The work structures of traditional Aboriginal societies were not compatible with industrial capitalism thus Aboriginal peoples' work manners were reengineered and restructured to fit the capitalist mode of production via proletarianization, within brief time periods. Aboriginal proletarianization was noticeably dissimilar and historically separate from Euro-settler-proletarian experiences nevertheless the value of the Aboriginal worker was assessed according to the settler experience (this paper has only discussed the Aboriginal histories). The proletarianization of Aboriginal peoples was designed and judged according to a European model and Aboriginal peoples were designated to replicate the work ethic and style of Euro-settler-workers; with little to no prior knowledge of Euro-proletarian work manners. The proletarianization of Aboriginal peoples was ripe with faulty racial biases, mythologies, and misguided notions about Aboriginal inferiority and these stemmed from a false comparison to settler communities.



These negative social markers have carried over into contemporary scenarios and they have scarcely been recognized as a determinant for success in the labour market.

The radical socio-economic transformation of Aboriginal peoples has taken place in recent history and this represents a marked difference to European-settler labouring groups who may have come to Canada with pre-existing knowledge about capitalism, wage labour roles, private property, proletarianization, etc. Aboriginal peoples have had a relatively short history with money systems, Euro-styled education systems, and the capitalist mode of production (to name a few determinants) and these factors have put Aboriginal cohorts at a competitive disadvantage. It was inevitable that Aboriginal cohorts would fall short within the Canadian labour market particularly when compared and scrutinized according to the maturity of their Euro-proletarian counterparts, for whom the market catered. Aboriginal peoples have not been afforded any grace period regarding the historical situations into which they were subjected and the social biases, and abuses, that were inherent in their proletarianization have been discounted.

The *a priori* claims about 'lazy Aboriginal work-ethic' are rooted in commodity fetishism more so than the empirical evidence. Aboriginal peoples have been historically branded with an erroneous social stigma and this has enhanced a persistent degradation of Aboriginal labour-power in the Canadian labour market. This social marker has resulted in Aboriginal workers being kept at a distance from both private and public employers. At present, the negative branding of Aboriginal labour-power has resulted in consistent market devaluation, even when all the components of individual labour-power are equal. The fetishism persists within subjective commodity branding and popular memes about Aboriginal labour. The fetishism stems from the stereotypical claims that have usurped

the evidence pertaining to Aboriginal labourers. The memes are *a priori* because they have their existence prior to experience or observation and they are passed down as generational stereotypes. The stigma has become a separate phenomenon that has overcome and surpassed any relation to its subject, i.e. Aboriginal cohorts. The stigma-branding of Aboriginal labour-power is now a social relation unto itself and it is not limited by the historical relations that established the proletarianization and subsequent class positioning of Aboriginal labourers. Yet, the branding does affect the employability of Aboriginal workers regardless if the claims are without evidence.

Naomi Klein (2000) states about modern commodity production: “corporations may manufacture products, but what consumers buy are brands”, the emphasis being upon the buying of a subjective ideal rather than an objective thing (p. 7). Branding is not strictly limited to inanimate commodities. Employers are consumers of commodities and they consume the labour-power of workers. Individual labour-power is subject to popular social markers and all the subjective qualities that make up a “brand.” The Aboriginal “brand” of cohort labour has been historically criticized as an inferior sort.

Aboriginal workers have been unable to overcome this subjective ideology about their labour-power. This ideology has biased the opinion of competitors, business leaders, management, labour leaders, and public employers. Furthermore, the discussion regarding Aboriginal labour has been dominated by mainstream discourses which have rejected historical reasoning about the socio-economic struggles of Aboriginal communities within the Canadian context. The mainstream discourses have reinforced pessimistic stereotypes about Aboriginal labour and this has led to an exclusion of Aboriginal workers from mainstream labour-solidarity projects, further enhancing the

struggles of Aboriginal workers. Laxer & Soron (2006) state “divisions emerge between workers who are the ‘ins’ and those who are the ‘outs’ ... labour market inequalities make the formulation of solidaristic labour movements more difficult” (p. 29). Aboriginal workers have represented and maintain an “out” group in the Canadian labour market and as a cohort of workers they do not affectively know their rights as a solidaristic collective within the labour market structure.

Aboriginal workers in the modern economy have been fully proletarianized and Aboriginal cohorts have been following the Euro-proletarian model (via schooling and structure of labour) for several decades. Yet, the credibility of their labour-power value still remains a mysterious topic amongst business, public, and labour leaders. Aboriginal workers are often judged according to deflated standards. A 2002 Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC) survey shows that there is a widespread aversion toward hiring Aboriginal labour:

In its 2002 Viewpoints survey, the CLBC asked business and labour leaders whether hiring more Aboriginal people can help them meet their skill needs. For Canada as a whole, business and labour leaders seem united in their views that hiring Aboriginal workers is generally not considered an important solution to solving their skill needs. Only 13% of business leaders and 21% of labour leaders mentioned that it is *very important*. This finding suggests that, at a national scale, a disconnect exists between the potential skills contribution to be made by an increasingly educated and mobile Aboriginal workforce, and the perception of some business and labour leaders on this contribution. Such disconnect may also explain why the Aboriginal unemployment rate remains high despite measurable gains in education (as cited in Lamontagne, 2004, p. 6, original emphasis).

The ‘disconnect’ is separate from the objective abilities that Aboriginal workers are presenting. The ‘disconnect’ exists due to negative subjective notions that surround Aboriginal labour as a unified brand. The branding of commodities is a subjective meme based within the social replication of perception. “Products are made in the factory ... but

brands are made in the mind” (Landor, date unknown, as cited in Klein, 2000, p. 195). Klein (2000) states that brands are built upon image, personality, advertising, feelings, emotions, corporate consciousness, and “psychological/anthropological examination of what brands mean to the culture and to people’s lives” (pp. 6-7). The Canadian marketplace has not demonstrated significant signs of improvement regarding its biases about Aboriginal labour-power appeal, branding, or hiring. “*The main labour market challenge (of Aboriginal workers) is not lack of will to work, (it) is finding jobs*” (Lamontagne, 2004, p. 6, original emphasis). It can be argued that the work is not overtly present due to the cynical connotations that come along with being noticeably Aboriginal.

Aboriginal workers and their work-ethic are consistently viewed in universal terms in that the multitudes of Aboriginal workers are not seen as being distinct from each other. Aboriginal workers are represented as an abstract body without deviation. Aboriginal workers are made subject to universal connotations and discriminatory attitudes in terms of their desirability as workers. This stigmatized universality places Aboriginal cohorts in an abstract categorization that overlooks individual skill and places all emphasis upon the entire cohort body. The outcome of this relation is that it miscalculates historical accuracies about collective Aboriginal proletarianization (these are made contingent) and it places individual Aboriginal experience, and skill, as void. The commodity fetishism surrounding Aboriginal labour-power is as Zizek (2008b) states: “what I am, my concrete social or cultural background, is experienced as contingent, since what ultimately defines me is the abstract universal capacity to think and/or to work” (p. 149). However, the ability of Aboriginal workers to individually think and/or to work continues to be stigmatized with universally pessimistic

connotations by the Canadian mainstream. Aboriginal cohorts are put at a double disadvantage in the labour market: 1.) Aboriginal workers are assessed as a contingent-thing devoid of personal deviation, and 2.) individual labour-power is devalued due to cynical perceptions about cohort work ethic, skills, and abilities.

### Employment Statistics and Discussion

The growing Aboriginal populations across Canada present several challenges for the labour market. The pressing challenges among these cohorts are rooted in educational attainment and employment. Under the capitalist economic model, advanced postsecondary education is the goal toward increasing quality of wage-labour (i.e. advancing labour-power skills) and this inevitably leads to a higher standard of living for workers, as the ideal. Yet, this simplistic explanation negates the specific histories of Aboriginal communities in Canada and it conveniently overlooks the social barriers and stigmatization that Aboriginal peoples have faced, for centuries, in relation to their struggle within mainstream Canadian existence. Educational attainment and employment levels remain a significant concern for Aboriginal peoples but there may never be a levelling (parity) mechanism within the Canadian economy that is acceptable for the entirety of Aboriginal peoples, or employers.

The statistics and data in the discussion are relative to the economic progress that proletarianized Aboriginal workers have attained within the modern economy. However, the stats and data reveal the lasting effects of those historical proletarianization projects. The statistical information is a part of the overall narrative of dispossession and proletarianization. The data is a useful tool for providing tangible evidence to the level of economic struggle that Aboriginal communities are facing in the modern economy. The

struggle is not without history and some of those topics have been previously discussed. According to the Statistics Canada Census 2006 there were 1,172,790 people that identified as an Aboriginal person and between the years 1996 - 2006 this population grew by 45% (2008a, p. 9; Government of Canada, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore, “new data from the National Household Survey (NHS) show that 1,400,685 people had an Aboriginal identity in 2011, representing 4.3% of the total Canadian population. Aboriginal people accounted for 3.8% of the population enumerated in the 2006 Census, 3.3% in the 2001 Census and 2.8% in the 1996 Census” (Statistics Canada, 2011a, p. 4).

These populations are booming across the country and the increases are not likely to be hindered in the decades ahead. In terms of population employment in 2006, it was reported by Statistics Canada that there were 819,855 Aboriginal peoples over the age of 15 that were eligible for the workforce, 517,375 were already in the labour force, 440,920 were actively employed, and 76,455 of the peoples in the labour force were actively unemployed (Statistics Canada, 2011b; Wilson & Macdonald, 2010, p. 7). This same Statistics Canada research stated that 302,475 Aboriginal peoples over the age of 15 were not in the labour force, as of yet. In 2006, The Aboriginal labour force employment rate was at 53.8%, and the total unemployment rate was at 14.8% (Statistics Canada, 2011b; Government of Canada, 2009, p. 6). In contrast to the general, non-Aboriginal, populations of Canada there is a marked difference between the employment and unemployment rates, during this brief time period. Non-Aboriginal Canadians register a 62.7% employment rate and a 6.3% unemployment rate (Statistics Canada, 2011b).

Michael Mendelson (2004) reports that:

*relative* unemployment rates of Aboriginal people was a bit worse in 2000 than in 1991 and 1996 over two and-a-half times that of the total population. This means that we have not made progress in five years in improving the labour market position of Aboriginal peoples relative to the general population. So the good news is that things have not gotten much worse relative to the general population despite a large increase in the Aboriginal identity working age population, but neither have they gotten better (p. 18, original emphasis).

Mendelson's research speaks to the dynamics of the Census data between 1996 and 2001 and his message is clear in that employment levels are not improving relative to the population increases for Aboriginal peoples. This basic data is introducing evidence that Aboriginal workers are not meeting the employment gains that are available to non-Aboriginal workers.

The employment and unemployment data for 2010 was not radically different than in 2006 for the majority of Aboriginal workers. The rate of those employed was 53.7% and the unemployment rate was at 14.3% (Usalcas, 2011, p. 11). The stagnation of employed wage-workers in the Aboriginal communities is troubling especially when considering that this workforce is youth-oriented: "In 2006, 25% of the working-age Aboriginal population was aged 15 to 24 years compared to 16% of non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people also had a higher share of their population in the 25 to 54 age group" (Usalcas, 2011, p. 14). The outcome of the wage-labour stagnation equates to generations of Aboriginal workers living in relative poverty.

The Canadian labour market has faced tremendous amounts of policy challenges within the past couple decades and this has directly reflected the socio-economic movements among Aboriginal peoples. These economic shifts are continuing to challenge reactionary labour barriers that have yet to materialize a general acceptance of

greater Aboriginal influx. The contemporary Canadian labour market is not coping well with mass amounts of Aboriginal workers actively seeking waged labour. It is possible that Aboriginal workers are facing social barriers within the labour market in regards to equitable treatment about the classification of their labour-power(s). Statistical trends suggest that these norms in the marketplace are continuing to reinforce a resistance to Aboriginal employment at all levels of work. The result has been a direct entrenchment of Aboriginal communities into a lower-class, a continually impoverished class, and this is the status quo of recent Canadian labour history in regard to Aboriginal workers. Wage-work is not as readily available to Aboriginal cohorts compared to the general population and this statistical trend seemingly runs parallel to both dominant free-market idealism and trade-union activist idealism.

The labour market in Canada, in theory, is based on blind free-market supply and demand functions wherein employers actively seek out the available labourers to fill the available work-roles. The free-market model posits that available labour-power for sale is primarily selected according to the needs of businesses, the skills of the labourer, and the functioning of that labour in the job at hand. The free-market model supposedly eliminates discriminatory-based hiring policies concerning ethnicity and/or the gender of the hired workers; the human factor presents a problem to the discriminatory aspects within the free market and this factor may never be rectified. However, this free-market model is failing to materialize its underlying ideal in relation to the current trends of Aboriginal employment. The labour market in Canada has established a patterned behaviour in terms of abstaining from utilizing the Aboriginal labour force. Ben Brunnen (2003) states “the labour market challenges facing Aboriginal people do not stem from an



unwillingness to participate in the labour market, but rather from a lack of success in securing and retaining employment” (p. 10). The “lack of success” is not accidental. Brunnen believes that increasing the educational attainment levels amongst Aboriginal peoples will settle this behavioural discrepancy in the market and will lead toward parity in the job market (p. 10). Social barriers need to be removed before this can occur.

The attitudes of a great number of the general public in Canada are stagnant in regard to the overall respect and treatment of Aboriginal workers. The attitudes of the general population toward Aboriginal workers is worth noting as this is a subjective factor that few government policy initiatives, mainstream political bodies, trade unions, business leaders, and the proprietors of the free market model are willing to consider as a determinant to the employability of Aboriginal workers. The factor of a false consciousness, i.e. ideology, needs some recognition in this discussion. The opinions of the general population bear some responsibility in terms of Aboriginal career opportunities. In 2003, the Canada West Foundation performed a telephone survey entitled *Looking West 2003* (also the name of the subsequent publication by Berdahl) and the subject matter of this survey was meant to engage the general public about Aboriginal employment issues (Berdahl, 2003, pp. 28-29). The survey received answers from a total 3, 202 residents living in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. One of the questions asked:

Which of the following statements comes closest to your own views: low Aboriginal employment levels are because of discrimination against Aboriginal people; low Aboriginal employment levels are because Aboriginal people do not have the education and training required to get jobs; low Aboriginal employment levels are because Aboriginal people are not willing to work (Brunnen, 2003, p. 13)?

“Not willing to work” was second in terms of popular opinion across the board in all these provinces with an average of 30% of the total respondents choosing this answer; Saskatchewan having the highest percentage of this opinion about Aboriginal workers (Brunnen, 2003, pp. 12-14; Berdahl, 2003, pp. 28-29). “Discrimination” was the least favoured answer, by far, with around 10% of the total respondents being of this opinion. Furthermore, within the same survey the questionnaire asked about the ‘best policies to increase Aboriginal employment levels’ and 38% of the respondents answered “creating positive incentives for Aboriginal people to get off welfare” (Brunnen, 2003, pp. 12-13; Berdahl, 2003, pp. 28-29). The attitudes of these respondents, those regarding the “welfare” incentive, are a detriment to local Aboriginal workers. These respondents display little understanding about the relevant socioeconomic issues that are maintaining relative Aboriginal poverty and unemployment.

Furthermore, an Ipsos Reid opinion poll published in 2013 reiterates the negative stereotypes of mainstream Canadians regarding Aboriginal socioeconomic issues. The main opinion findings were: 1.) 64% nationally share the view that Aboriginal peoples receive too much support from Canadian taxpayers, 2.) 62% nationally share the view that Aboriginal peoples are treated well by the Canadian government, 3.) 60% nationally share the view that most of the problems of Aboriginal peoples are brought on by themselves (this number is up 25 points from 35% in 1989, according to Ipsos Reid), and 4.) 63% nationally share the view that the Federal government must act now to help raise the quality of life of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (pp. 2-4). It is of some importance to note that in Western Canadian provinces (namely Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba) these percentages were much higher than the national levels, except on the ‘quality of

life' question where the Western provinces showed a negative support for quality improvement. The opinions of Western Canadians in reference to Aboriginal issues are generally negative and this correlates to job-hiring practices. The Ipsos Reid poll demonstrates quite clearly that pessimistic opinions, across the board, bombard Aboriginal peoples on a daily basis in mainstream Canadian society, not excluding the labour-market. These dominant stereotypical opinions only serve to hinder Aboriginal labour-force improvements and overall socioeconomic success amongst Aboriginal communities. The Aboriginal employment numbers are going to stagnate if overwhelming popular opinion remains fixed in the centuries-old belief that Aboriginal peoples are lazy, tax burdens, who get everything free from the government, that they are solely culpable for their problems, and that they consistently need the government to control their lives.

These particular surveys demonstrate that a great number of Canadians, especially in the West, are choosing to believe in a banal mythology rather than identifying the applicable socioeconomic issues and positing those issues within empirical justification. It is discrimination to state that majority of Aboriginal peoples: lack work-ethic, choose not to work for a living, cause their socioeconomic problems, have been treated fairly by government, and need powerful incentives to get off welfare subsistence. The data does not support these previous claims. These polls suggest that many Canadians are trapped in an ideology about Aboriginal workers.

A great number of Canadians have not considered the evidence at hand and they remain ignorant about the historical factors that have led to Aboriginal disparities. Many Canadians cannot reconcile the biases that persist against Aboriginal peoples in Canadian

society. A cross-section of Canadians is not investigating the Aboriginal histories and the outcomes of those experiences within modern socioeconomic reality. This type of ideological fascination was critiqued by Marx ([1867], 1990) in *Capital* when he discussed the idea of the ‘two sorts of people’: “one, the diligent, intelligent and above all frugal élite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living ... thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth and the latter sort finally had nothing to sell except their own skins” (p. 873). Marx is debunking the popular myth that ardent ‘work ethic’ and free will are the sole providers of wealth and/or relative poverty for social groups more than engineered factors and resulting social privileges that guide social interaction. There are numerous determinants to consider within Aboriginal socioeconomic dispossession but stagnant ideas about lazy work-ethic are without merit.

In reference to Aboriginal labour history, the popular Canadian opinion is that Aboriginal peoples were left out of Canadian economic abundance because they simply did not have the desire to work for their keep and that they had no desire to work hard like Euro-settler communities. Thus, Aboriginal peoples “had nothing to sell except their own skins” which they were/are too lazy to accomplish in the competitive marketplace. The data refutes these claims as being historically inaccurate in relation to accumulation of wealth within Canadian society. It has been mentioned in this paper how Aboriginal peoples were forcibly dispossessed of their means of production and subsistence and these determinants cannot be separated from the present outcomes. Yet, an ideology has persisted for centuries across Canada when it comes to Aboriginal work ethic.

Aboriginal workers have not been fairly analysed by their skills, abilities, potentials and/or by what they have achieved in the workforce, against the odds. Instead

they are judged by popular opinions anchored in a false consciousness regarding poverty, work ethic, and demeanour. Harold Cardinal ([1969], 1999) recognized this false consciousness in 1969 when he wrote:

There are white men who believe that the lack of economic advancement among Indians is caused by their unwillingness to grasp opportunities presented them. More, perhaps, believe that all Indians really want is handouts, a welfare existence. Some will tell you that the problem is simpler, that the Indian just naturally is too lazy to work or that Indians lack the imagination and creativity to do anything for themselves. No thinking could be more viciously stupid and wrongheaded (pp. 58-59).

Cardinal reiterates Marx's 'two sorts of people' critique and together they both refute the popular myth about Aboriginal workers; specifically regarding stereotypes about work-ethic amongst lower class populations. Rather, it can be stated that Aboriginal workers have historically lacked proper access to skills training, sound education, and apprenticeship in comparison to their Euro-ethnic counterparts. The data bears this pattern as being contemporarily systemic. The systemic pattern has led to a decreased value for individual Aboriginal labour-power in the job market and as a cohort these workers have struggled with overcoming their systemic disadvantages.

Aboriginal employment issues have become a growing socio-political campaign throughout government rhetoric and policy language for decades, even centuries. The recognition for increasing amounts of 'skilled' Aboriginal labour has raised concerns pertaining to present situations in Canada's job market. The relative Aboriginal influx into post-secondary institutions has added a modern dimension to the changing face of the Aboriginal working classes. There is a dilemma amongst Canadian workplaces, educational institutions, and public policy networks regarding proper accommodations for the growing Aboriginal workforce. Policy makers do not know what to do with the

challenges that Aboriginal cohorts are presenting. The populations of Aboriginal peoples are growing and their demand to find employment is growing but the quality and quantity of the work is stagnant.

On the topic of stagnation, Francois Lamontagne (2004) finds that the majority of Aboriginal peoples in the labour force are working in public administration and construction: “Aboriginal people are over-represented in public administration – which includes local government such as Band administration –, mining and oil and gas extraction, and construction” (p. 5). Lamontagne also found that “Aboriginal people are notably absent from management services, finance and insurance, and professional, scientific and technical services. This is not surprising since a large number of the jobs found in these sectors require advanced university and/or college degrees, a requirement that is at odds with present Aboriginal educational attainment levels” (p. 5); as a side note, the Canadian skilled workers of the recent past did not require the contemporary educational attainment levels that workers must now acquire, except in the natural science and some health fields. The evidence suggests that thousands of Aboriginal workers are not being properly introduced, educated, and recruited to the various types of wage-labour positions available in the market. Particularly, Aboriginal peoples are making little headway into jobs that require advanced education, across a broad spectrum of skill-sets, and this trend does not bode well for the dynamic potential amongst Aboriginal workers. The problem may be one of opportunity in those fields but the correlation is unclear.

Increasing the levels of postsecondary educational attainment is often touted, in popular Canadian economic theory, as the guarantor that will lead to greater successes for

Aboriginal workers in the marketplace. The post-secondary argument is one that touts advanced skill training amongst the Aboriginal workers as the key to the 'good life.' Therefore an increase of skill-sets, across the population, should correlate to increasing employment rates and access to opportunities for Aboriginal workers. The empirical reality of the jobs being presented, the stagnant employment rates, and the pay being offered to Aboriginal workers bears a critique that suggests the post-secondary model may be askew as the sole determinant of labour success. The model may not be actively materializing into positive economic situations the way economists and policy researchers are suggesting. There are some exceptions to be noted but the focus of the data is concerned with broad range of skill-sets and the outcomes amongst all Aboriginal workers within the labour market. At present, there is not a major statistical criterion where the Aboriginal working-class is showing wide-scale gains toward parity with their non-Aboriginal competitors. There are major gaps within workforce equations in terms of skill, education, representation, opportunity, recruitment, and wages.

Statistical trends demonstrate that Aboriginal minimization is status quo within the greater Canadian labour force. It currently stands in Canada West that increasing the amounts of Aboriginal educational attainment may not necessarily be leading to increasing amounts of employment and opportunity. The evidence is not solid regarding a fixed correlation within the increased educational attainment for Aboriginal students consistently leading to better quality and quantity of employment. There are also disconnections between the growth of private capital and business expansion in Canada and the growth of economic stability amongst the Aboriginal communities. The

Aboriginal quality of life in many communities is not significantly increasing on par with the growing Canadian economy but there is no room to discuss this claim.

Postsecondary education is the perceived building block for sustainable economic success under the parameters of the current Canadian job market. It is logical then, under the modern dynamics of the capitalist economy in Canada, that higher amounts of educational attainment should equal greater labour potential. The problems, as have been mentioned, are diverse and are not totally in the hands of the Aboriginal workers in terms of career opportunities and access to specific areas of employment. According to Statistics Canada (2008b), *Educational Portrait of Canada, 2006 Census*, Aboriginal postsecondary numbers were in a state of statistical fluctuation, meaning relatively unknown across the spectrum of “postsecondary” completion. The statistics Canada questionnaire changed during the 2006 census year, as opposed to previous years, and only *university* graduates became applicable for data compilation in the *Census*. Thus the *Census* reports:

an estimated 555,400 adults aged 25 to 64 identified as an Aboriginal person. One in three (34%) Aboriginal persons had not completed high school and 21% had a high school diploma as their highest educational qualification. At the same time, an estimated 44% of the Aboriginal population were postsecondary graduates in 2006. An estimated 14% had trade credentials, 19% had a college diploma and 8% had a university degree. Because of changes in the questions, comparisons between 2006 and 2001 are only possible for university degrees. In 2006, 42,900 Aboriginal people (8%) had a university degree. This compares with 26,300, or 6%, in 2001. However, Aboriginal people were still much less likely to have a university degree than non-Aboriginal people in 2006 (8% compared with 23%). This gap is somewhat larger than it was in 2001 (6% compared with 20%) (p. 19).

It needs to be reminded that these numbers are seven years out of date as of 2013 and it is likely that the university completion and enrollment numbers have changed in the past



seven years but that remains relatively unknown. However this study does state that an 'estimated 44% of the Aboriginal population were postsecondary graduates' and bear in mind that 'postsecondary' is not exclusive to university graduates. The study does show that the Aboriginal university completion numbers were on the rise between 2001 and 2006 (an increase of 16,600 university graduates) but that these numbers showed a decrease in parity with the general population. The 2006 *Census* study showed that Aboriginal postsecondary completion levels broke down thusly: 36% of Inuit peoples had achieved postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree, 50% of Métis peoples had achieved postsecondary completion, and 42% of First Nations peoples had achieved postsecondary qualification (pp. 20-22).

Aboriginal postsecondary success rates and enrolment numbers are on the rise in Canada but statistical trends still indicate that most Aboriginal communities systematically suffer from poor access to quality education and that this rise in postsecondary graduates is still nowhere on par to the general population of Canada (Richards & Vining, 2003; Wilson & MacDonald, 2010, p. 4; Kroes, 2008, p. 4). John Richards & Aidan Vining (2003) further posit that educational attainment is the essential component to income growth: "given the strong relationship between education and levels of incomes, it is safe to assert that in contemporary industrial societies, no community or group can collectively avoid poverty unless a majority of adults have completed high school, and a plurality have higher education levels" (p. 201). The amount of accuracy in the previous statement by Richards and Vining in regards to Aboriginal peoples is up for critique due to the generalized scope of the question they ask and the answer they seek. Their blanket statement may be historically accurate for the

majority of non-Aboriginal populations but it does not include a historical analysis about the maintenance of the poverty cycle amongst Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

A significant section of Aboriginal peoples in Canada are facing a crises pertaining to cyclical poverty, low employment rates, income gaps, and lower educational attainment rates. It is the popular ideal that an increase in educational attainment will inevitably lead to a systemic eradication of these pressing issues. Academic learning is imperative within every community in Canada and it can be argued that students now enter postsecondary education with the hopes of obtaining full-time, well-paid, employment after graduation. The topic of education and its relation to quality and quantity of employment needs more explanation and analysis. The popular economic theory posits that the road to eradication of communal poverty is through increasing amounts of adult postsecondary graduates. This approach absolutely eradicates the low levels of educational attainment, which is a positive trend, but it does not automatically equal eradication of low levels of employment, underemployment, income disparity, and quantity and quality of employment. The duality of low-wage jobs, as the primary source of income, combined with lower pay for equal work for Aboriginal cohorts is present within the Canadian labour market. The resistance of private businesses and public employers to adequately employ Aboriginal workers on the same level as non-Aboriginal counterparts presents a theoretical conundrum to the free-market model, including the popular opinions of economists and policy makers. The barrier conundrum is pervasive.

The data on wage-gaps is suggestive of barriers that hinder Aboriginal workers from reaching their full potential. Among the general population of Aboriginal workers there remains a significant income-gap when compared to that of non-Aboriginal

workers. “In 2006, the median income for Aboriginal peoples was \$18,962 - 30% lower than the \$27,097 median income for the rest of Canadians. The difference of \$8,135 that existed in 2006, however, was marginally smaller than the difference of \$9,045 in 2001 or \$9,428 in 1996” (Wilson & Macdonald, 2010, p. 3); although Statistics Canada has slightly different numbers for the Aboriginal median income in 2006 being at \$22,366 and the non-Aboriginal being at \$33,394 (Statistics Canada, 2006). These numbers get more elusive as to the explanations when examining the individual Aboriginal groups. Métis peoples were the highest income earners making \$27,728, next were Inuit peoples making \$24,782, and last were First Nations (status) peoples making \$19,114 (Statistics Canada, 2006; Wilson & Macdonald, 2010, p. 10; Pendakur & Pendakur, 2008, pp. 18-19). The reasoning of this income gap between Aboriginal groups is based on opinion that Métis peoples have faced a relatively less difficult, historical, integration into the economy than have Inuit and registered First Nations peoples (Wilson & Macdonald, 2010, p. 9). This is a conjecture and may prove difficult to establish as universal fact but in some cases it may indeed be true. Nevertheless, the intra-Aboriginal income gap is intriguing but not as intriguing as the gap between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The immense difference in median income between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal is stunning and the cause is not based in a single determinant.

University graduates are the only group of Aboriginal workers that are relatively on par with their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Wilson & Macdonald, 2010, p. 3); ‘university’ does not encompass all postsecondary graduates. This does not mean that all postsecondary graduates will lessen the gap rather it means that university graduates have the best chance at making a decent wage when they find full-time employment; if they

happen to do so. Yet, the Pendakur & Pendakur (2008) findings run somewhat contrary to Wilson and Macdonald: “We find little evidence of high returns to education for Aboriginal people in any of our groups. Although Aboriginal incomes do rise with increased education, this finding suggests that even those Aboriginal people with high levels of education face considerable economic disparity” (p. 31). Pendakur & Pendakur have done extensive regression models and have looked in-depth, over a long period of time with several different control factors, at the data and still find no objective areas where Aboriginal workers are closing the income-gap in mass representation; perhaps a few workers are making a dent but by no means is that the universal situation. They attribute this to a “sticky floor” model rather than a “glass ceiling” (p. 24).

The Pendakur & Pendakur research refers to standard income opportunities among the top percentile of Aboriginal workers when all positive factors are present. Less income disparity is present among this top percentile when all criteria are met but the opportunities remain difficult to access for all Aboriginal workers, even if the skill-sets are equivalent with non-Aboriginal workers. Pendakur & Pendakur found that the majority of Aboriginal workers are lacking advanced education, skills, and due to this they are continually stuck at the bottom of the division of labour, where the income disparity is overtly commonplace (p. 26). The initiatives by governmental agencies to hire a specific quota of Aboriginal workers under the moniker of a ‘representational workforce’ highlight the negatives of the ‘sticky floor’ concept. Nevertheless, a miniscule quantity will be employed within these sought after government-administration jobs and these few may approach income parity but the majority at the bottom of the percentile will never get similar opportunities, even if they have the education (Pendakur &

Pendakur, 2008, p. 27). The gap is persistent and Pendakur & Pendakur end the 'sticky floor' discussion by bluntly stating: "there is little evidence that Aboriginal income disparity is much smaller for highly educated Aboriginal workers" (p. 27). The income gap is continual at all levels according to their regression models but it is those Aboriginal cohorts at the bottom of the wage-earnings that are more susceptible to being treated unfairly, as a superfluous commodity, and living in cyclical poverty. The bottom percentile encompasses the majority of the contemporary Aboriginal working class and this is a group that is increasing in number and need within Canadian society.

In their previous research on wage-gaps, Pendakur & Pendakur (2002) found that "(pay) inequity is seen to be on the rise at the same time as larger and larger numbers of Canadian-born minorities (Aboriginals and other minority groups) can be seen entering the labour market" (p. 510). They also found that among these Canadian-born minorities Aboriginals fared worse than other "visible minorities" (p. 510). Peter George & Peter Kuhn (1994) examined "full-time and full year employment" in relation to Aboriginal earning potentials and they discovered that there are indeed differentials in the wage-gaps between "Native-White" earning potentials. They estimate that there is a significant wage-gap between individuals having "exclusive Aboriginal origins" and their non-Aboriginal counterparts (i.e. 'White') (p. 21). Bear in mind that the research by George & Kuhn is from the 1990's and the income disparity has fluctuated between rising and falling in the past two decades. Yet, the income-gap continues to resist the influx of Aboriginal workers even when all determinants are equal.

The Canadian labour-market is currently facing problems regarding employment implementation from the increasing populations of urban Aboriginal peoples. Ben

Brunnen (2003) found that Aboriginal unemployment rates in the West are more than three times than that of the general population and this data portrays an active failure on all sides in the push toward greater Aboriginal labour parity (p. 22). This failure may also spell a crisis situation for Canada West if Aboriginal workers cannot be properly mobilized and utilized within the labour market at all levels of employment, for years to come. It is possible that the labour-market will suffer from a lack of employees if Aboriginal unemployment rates remain static in the West. Alberta and Saskatchewan bear specific mentioning, although Aboriginal peoples in Alberta have the lowest unemployment rates in the West at 15% this is still three times higher than the general Albertan population that stands at 5% (p. 7). Saskatchewan sits at the top for Aboriginal unemployment (between 20% and 23%) and if labour policies do not address this problem then the supposed economic boom will continue be a status quo bust for Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan (Moran, 2006, p. 71; Brunnen, 2003, p. 7).

Don Moran (2006) argues that it is a responsibility for organized labour to deconstruct the social barriers in the modern workplace in order to better accommodate the growing Aboriginal working classes. 'Responsibility' in material practice means being inclusive of Aboriginal cultural values and ideas and providing a place for Aboriginal leadership and/or partnerships. Moran states that "unions need to prepare for an influx of Aboriginal workers in the workplace and examine their own union structures if there are barriers to participation" (p. 72). Moran presents a specific analysis to the roles that barriers are playing for Aboriginal participation in Canadian workplaces. Cultural barriers consistently uphold status quo hiring policies, they reinforce stereotypical workplace norms, and they degrade labour-power value. The role of

organized labour has to be that of a leader and not a laggard in regard to confronting workplace bigotry. The various unions have to actively remove their barriers in this regard and have to create space for Aboriginal-based solidarities. Confronting bigoted attitudes is a necessary component in achieving a 'representative workforce.' Organized labour can play a positive role in restructuring workplace politics by recruiting Aboriginal workers and growing their skill-sets but they can also play a detrimental role if they are hesitant in expanding beyond their traditional bases.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW), and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) have recently made some inroads in attempting to tear down workplace barriers across Canada Saskatchewan. CUPE (2011) has actively created a 'Representative Workforce Strategy' in Saskatchewan and this has led to creating partnerships with government and other local unions (CUPE Research, 2011; Moran, 2006, p. 76). The specifics of the strategy include: 1.) creating active partnerships with employers, provincial government, health regions, school divisions, universities, and other unions, and 2.) creating 'equity plans' in accordance to Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) that aim at the hiring policies and practices of public workers (2011, pp. 9-14; Moran, 2006). These strategies and plans are still in their infancy and have yet to be adopted by a broad array of public employers but this does give an indication of the type of activism that labour unions can achieve. The concern about the CUPE strategy is that it has not been broadly accepted by Aboriginal groups, it has not been able to facilitate many partnerships with Aboriginal workers, and it has faced stiff resistance from First Nations employers (Moran, 2006, pp. 74-75). Nevertheless, the strategy is being put into practice within Saskatchewan and it is an

important precedent for inclusion of Aboriginal issues and representation in the workforce.

The CAW is making incremental progress by proposing anti-harassment programming and no discrimination clauses, providing caucuses for Aboriginal workers, providing conference space for Aboriginal workers, recognizing March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and providing an affirmative action position within the National Executive Board (“Aboriginal Workers & Workers of Colour”, 2013). The CAW has specific Aboriginal caucuses in British Columbia, Manitoba, Toronto, and Windsor. The material changes that these programmes have spawned are unknown and the CAW has not done much research to back up their proposals. Thus it would appear that the CAW is making progress but there is not strong evidence that their programming has initiated monumental changes.

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) states that it is implementing change in two specific areas: 1.) the promotion of Aboriginal Rights and anti-Racism in respect to Aboriginal workers, and 2.) working with Aboriginal workers to strengthen their voices and presence in the Canadian labour movement (“Aboriginal Workers”, 2013). Again, the numbers about the Aboriginal peoples affected by the CLC proposals are not clear and the change that the CLC has implemented remains vague. The language of Canadian trade unions sounds positive and many are actively acknowledging the existence of Aboriginal working class issues. But the actual implementation of full-scale partnerships, increasing employment opportunities, and activism is unknown. These unions are promoting modern employment models and that is an intellectual positive. But, if Aboriginal peoples cannot access unionized jobs at parity rates and are simply tokenized



within these unions then Aboriginal workers will remain powerless in the activity of the unions. There remains a responsibility within these unions to do a better job at partnership, recruitment, involvement, education, and active employment within their Aboriginal-centric programming. Nevertheless, it would seem that many recognizable unions in Canada are acknowledging Aboriginal workers and their issues. There is marginal change as of present but the voices of Aboriginal peoples are slowly being heard amongst mainstream labouring bodies.

### Educational Attainment Statistics and Discussion

Increased levels of educational attainment is touted as being the key to higher standards of employment, living, and well-being in Canadian society; and as chapter 3 discussed, Aboriginal peoples have had historically precarious relationships with Canadian school systems. Education also facilitates the replication of proletarian work ethics and ideals thus some discussion about educational attainment is warranted in the discussion. Public policy concerning Aboriginal employment and education is slowly realizing the overwhelming realities of Aboriginal socioeconomic issues and there is potential to influence policy change. The popular theoretical idea regarding postsecondary education leading to meaningful employment and wide-scale poverty eradication is the main approach being discussed by policy-makers at all levels of government. Thus it is the path being taken by the majority of involved actors but this approach may be askew, as has been previously mentioned. University educational attainment is growing amongst Aboriginal populations however not at par with the general population. But this statistical trend demonstrates a willingness amongst Aboriginal individuals to pursue advanced education in the hopes of finding economic

success within the labour force. The increasing numbers of Aboriginal PSE graduates is an optimistic step specifically for Western Canada due to high levels of Aboriginal population in those provinces, particularly urban centres.

Ben Brunnen (2004) states that “the proportion of Western Canadian Aboriginals with a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, increased from 20.4% in 1996 to 28% in 2001” (p. 4). Jeremy Hull (2005) reiterates this number by stating that “between 1996 and 2001 the proportion of the registered Indian population with some type of trades, college, or university certificate or degree increased 20% to 24%” (p. xv). Brunnen and Hull both identify an increasing level of educational attainment among Aboriginal populations. This is indicative of the desire within Aboriginal communities to participate in higher learning at the postsecondary level. The PSE increase demonstrates that Aboriginal educational attainment is showing signs of improvement but at the same time these numbers are still relatively low and not yet at parity with other Canadian groups (Hull, 2005, p. xv). It needs to be mentioned that among Aboriginal youth, across Canada, there still persists a high percentage steadily above 50% of high school incompleteness rates (Drost, 1994; Brunnen, 2004; Mendelson, 2006).

Postsecondary education completion and enrollment levels among Aboriginal students are on the rise. Michael Mendelson (2006) states that “assuming about 2,000 to 2,500 Aboriginal students currently graduate each year, achieving parity in the Aboriginal young adult population would require approximately doubling Aboriginal students’ university enrolment from current levels to double the number of graduates” (p. 29). Mendelson further states that in order to close PSE parity gaps there needs to be a more responsive attention from the provincial and territorial governments. Select

provinces would have to triple and quadruple their Aboriginal graduation rates in order to catch up to the success rates of the greater Canadian population (p. 21). Low high school completion rates are the fundamental hindrance that fuels the Aboriginal PSE graduate disparity.

Parity, in terms of Canadian PSE graduation rates, will remain unequal between the mainstream (Euro-ethnic) and Aboriginal populations for some time to come if high school completion rates remain stagnant. The time it will take to double the postsecondary graduation rates among Aboriginal peoples is unknown and is dependent upon young people engaging education at all levels. It is common knowledge that low high school completion rates effectively equal low postsecondary completion rates and this cycle will have negative impacts on income-disparity and employment opportunities; the 'sticky floor' persists in educational attainment. Mendelson concludes his analysis by stating that "if there are to be more Aboriginal PSE graduates, there must be more Aboriginal high school graduates" (p. 30).

Walters, White, & Maxim (2004) state that male postsecondary grads have better employment chances than do female postsecondary grads (amongst Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), and furthermore that the *lowest*, full-time, employed Aboriginal postsecondary graduate is the *university* graduate (p. 296). They go on to further state that "Aboriginals, both male and female, have better employment prospects if they have graduated from a trades or college program than from a university" (p. 296). These statistics are especially troubling when considering that most First Nations grads at the university level will graduate from the social sciences, education, recreation, and counselling: enrolment levels amongst Aboriginal students are 55% of registered men

and 70% of registered women in these academic fields (Hull, 2000, p. iii; Hull, 2005, p. xviii). Hull (2005) states that “education and social sciences account for more than half of both Aboriginal men’s and women’s university qualifications” (p. xviii). Hull has also found that 32% of registered First Nations women, found among the trades and college PSE students, are enrolled in some form of commerce, management, and administration, not exactly a specific trade. First Nations men make up the majority of the trades grads with 59% enrolment for registered First Nations men and these men are mainly enrolled in engineering technologies and some form of trade (2000, p. iii; 2005, p. xviii). Hull (2005) is careful to point out that among younger Aboriginal students there are some changing trends and this suggests that the range of programs that Aboriginals are studying has been expanding in recent years (p. xviii).

Michael Mendelson (2006) points out a positive sign within Aboriginal PSE graduates, particularly in Saskatchewan. Mendelson states that in Saskatchewan “the gap between Aboriginal university graduates and those from the total provincial population is among the lowest in Canada (p. 21). Mendelson points out the successes of Aboriginal-targeted university level education, specifically the First Nations University of Canada (previously SIFC) and the Gabriel Dumont Institute. The Western provinces have ever-increasing Aboriginal PSE enrolments and graduation rates but the statistics find that a strong percentage of Aboriginal PSE grads are not becoming fully engaged within the labour market. Walters, White, & Maxim (2004) found that male and female Aboriginals *university graduates* reported the *lowest* levels of full-time employment and the highest levels of unemployment when compared with other university graduates (including other minority groupings and “white” students) (p. 290). Helmar Drost (1994) goes even

further to reiterate the previous point with his analysis that “for Aboriginal men, we have found no evidence that vocational education and skill-training at the post-secondary level produces any rewards in terms of lowering their likelihood of unemployment” (p. 59). Drost also found that Aboriginal women specifically gain more employment opportunities from *university* education (not inclusive of all postsecondary) than do Aboriginal men and that Aboriginal men with a university degree do not provide enough statistically significant evidences to alter the unemployment rates on a large scale (pp. 59-60). Drost’s findings are nearly twenty years past and there have been incremental improvements on his research but his findings are still not completely irrelevant amongst Aboriginal cohorts.

There is some good news regarding Aboriginal PSE earning potentials amidst the highly negative Aboriginal PSE and unemployment findings. Walters, White, & Maxim’s (2004) study on Aboriginal PSE graduates concluded that Aboriginal trades and college grads, male and female, have earning potentials that are on par with their non-Aboriginal counterparts (visible and non-visible minorities). Aboriginal university PSE grads also have good earning potential when compared with that of the non-Aboriginal grads (p. 295). The statistical analysis of Walters, White, & Maxim carefully points out the catch-22 situation, i.e. the unemployment rates for Aboriginal PSE graduates. Aboriginal PSE graduate earning potentials being on par with their counterparts is worth mentioning as a positive sign within the Canadian labour market. This earning ‘potential’ would be a step toward eradicating cyclical poverty if unemployment rates, underemployment, and wage-gaps, were to decrease substantially.

Education *appears* as the most fundamental aspect for the architecture of a successful labour-power in the labour market and employability in the Canadian job market but the subject of barriers remains persistent. Genevieve Kroes (2008) finds three areas where increasing Aboriginal success rates for PSE would directly affect long-term change for Aboriginal peoples, it would: 1.) increase employability and labour market prospects, 2.) contribute to Canada's overall productivity, and 3.) foster more positive intergenerational cycles (p. 5). It is repeated in the research of Kroes that PSE increases and success rates begin at the primary and high school levels; (wherein the replication of a proletarian ethic is fostered). Thus it is imperative that the quality of education being delivered to Aboriginal students be highly improved (p. 5). The present educational system across Aboriginal communities is not meeting the needs of the Aboriginal peoples in those communities, both rural and urban.

R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (2004) researched the role of barriers in the quality of educational systems among Aboriginal students and communities. They report:

the biggest problem Aboriginal university students face is discrimination, which is a significant disincentive to higher learning. To Aboriginal people, the university often represents an impersonal and hostile environment in which their culture, traditions and values are not recognized ... Aboriginal people are expected to leave their culture behind and assume the trappings of a new form of reality (p. 13).

Discrimination in the form of identity nullification is a social barrier that inhibits the full potentials of the Aboriginal student while at school but also at work. The socialization of Aboriginal students within educational systems represents a cultural clash and this is where social barriers are first encountered; a continuation of the residential school history. The schooling curriculums and the experiences within Canadian educational institutions are falsely viewed as non-cultural. This 'non-cultural' ideology represents a

closed-door to Aboriginal input but it remains open to classic Eurocentric ideals about method of delivery, perspective, and method of learning. Verna Kirkness & Ray Barnhardt (1991) believe that coercive socialization is always applied in bringing aberrant students into the fold of the institutional milieu. Many Aboriginal students are not coping well with the negation of their cultural identity and worldview during the process of schooling and education. R.A. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (2004) find that the quality of education amongst Aboriginal communities has been hindered by significant historical, social, geographic, demographic, cultural, and personal barriers (pp. 11-16).

The educational systems across Canada pose direct challenges to Aboriginal communities because the systems are not facilitating an integration of Aboriginal ideas and cultural values. Under current models, the identity of the Aboriginal student has to become usurped into the dominant multitude in order to gain the benefits of the system. This usurpation process begins at the initial stages of public school entrance and then continues into postsecondary and carries into the workplace. Allan Blakeney (2001) refers to this usurpation process as “integration with the economic mainstream” and according to Blakeney this process erodes the comfort of the Aboriginal individual within the urban setting (as cited in Richards, 2001, pp. 24-25). Thus a different approach that allows for inclusion of Aboriginal cultural identities, as an enhancement to the curriculum, could establish a more satisfying school experience for Aboriginal students. This model could also be applied to Canadian workplaces as a progressive step.

Yatta Kanu’s (2005) report on the role of teachers and Aboriginal curriculum within high schools demonstrated that:

A rich body of Aboriginal cultural knowledge, values, and contributions needed to be learned and understood by others; curriculum and learning have to be culturally relevant for all students, not only students from the dominant cultures; the integration of Aboriginal perspectives would greatly improve how Aboriginal students felt about themselves and their backgrounds; integration may lead to school success and school retention among Aboriginal students; Canada is a multicultural democracy where everyone should be fully included and represented; a good number of students, including a high proportion of Aboriginal students, do not have adequate knowledge of the issues affecting Aboriginal lives: the school would provide the opportunity for complex analyses of these issues, compared with the so-called authentic and accurate representations of Aboriginal peoples that students heard at home or on the media (p. 54).

Kanu envisions a high school environment where Aboriginal culture, issues, and perspectives are instilled into the teacher's role and that teachers can become "cultural brokers and curriculum integrators" (p. 65). Kanu emphasises a curriculum in which teachers (non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal) are able to maintain a cultural openness that allows Aboriginal students to learn about their identity, heritage, history, issues, and perspectives. Furthermore, non-Aboriginal students would become familiarized with Aboriginal academic knowledge and this might bridge solidarity between social groups.

Michael Mendelson (2009) envisions a First Nations school board model for on-reserve First Nations students as being an essential bureaucratic step toward realizing more successful K-12 graduates. "In short, and to be as explicit as possible, if First Nations are to have a school *system*, and not just a collection of schools, full control and ownership of schools must be vested in First Nations school boards and not in individual Bands" (p. 8, original emphasis). The school model that Mendelson suggests makes sense in regard to First Nations having control over their educational systems on-reserve and being able to plan a system around the needs of their student bodies. The First Nations school board would necessarily create educational partnerships between the bands. The



First Nations school board would allow local bands to have access to a centralized governance body that would establish funding models for the day-to-day activities of on-reserve school (Mendelson, 2009). It would also establish a united voice for educators, families, and students alike in regard to meeting the needs of the on-reserve school system. This model has limited scope as it is meant strictly for on-reserve First Nations students but it is often these students that have poorest access to adequate schooling funds and tools. Nevertheless, a similar urban model would also be of high benefit as most Aboriginal youth are now being born and raised in urban settings.

It is imperative that schooling models for urban Aboriginal students pay direct attention to the area of cultural heritage. The current public academic models need to make space available in order to encourage long-term inclusion of Aboriginal-learning philosophies, history, and cultural teaching. The Canadian Council on Learning (2009) published findings on this subject in their study entitled *The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada*. Their key findings were broken down into age groupings and some of the key findings for youth (ages 6-18) are:

- Nearly one-third (31%) of off-reserve Aboriginal youth participated in social clubs or groups outside of school, a key source of informal learning, compared to 21% of Canadian youth.
- Four in ten Aboriginal youth living off-reserve reported interacting with Elders at least one hour a week outside the classroom, which is considered a key source of learning about culture and traditions (2009, p. 2).

The key findings for young adults (age 19-34) are:

- In 2006, 40% of Aboriginal people aged 20 to 24 did not have a high-school diploma, compared to 13% among non-Aboriginal Canadians.

- In 2006, 41% of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 had completed a post-secondary certificate, diploma or a degree. Although this rate was lower than that of non-Aboriginal people (56%), Aboriginal people were on more equal footing when it came to rates of attainment at the college level (19% versus 20%) and the trades (14% vs. 12%).
- The wider discrepancy in PSE attainment can be attributed to attainment rates at the university level; only 8% of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 had completed a university degree compared to 23% of non-Aboriginal Canadians (p. 2).

Canadian public education systems condition the dominant ideas that students learn and these are carried forth into the labour market; in effect a replication model for proletarianized workers. Aboriginal perspectives need adequate space within the public curriculum and this does not have to come at the expense of natural sciences, maths, critical learning, writing skills, etc. It is plausible to fund Aboriginal-centric learning programs within urban public school systems, especially when government deems it socially acceptable to provide funds for specific religious and language educations under the public system. The evidence is demonstrating that Aboriginal youth are being isolated within the current public school system. Modest curriculum changes do not mean systemic overhaul of all public systems, local school boards, divisions, and their budgets rather this equates to a reasonable shifting of cultural focus within schools and neighbourhoods that have significant Aboriginal populations. In essence, this is a proportional representation of public learning. The outcome would mean adding, replacing, and/or modifying cultural-historical based subjects within the current curriculum, adding extra-curricular programming, and cultural-based opportunities for the students and staff. Richards & Vining (2003) state that Aboriginal-centric schools already have a model “inspired by the precedent of distinct public school systems in

many provinces based on language and religion, (Allan) Blakeney has proposed an Aboriginal-based system in cities that have large Aboriginal communities” (p. 210).

Blakeney (2001) suggests:

I see it as next to impossible for us to be able to create reserves which provide an appropriate economic base for all or most of the growing population of Aboriginal people. We know that some will wish to remain [on-reserve] ... We know that some will move to the cities and integrate with the economic mainstream. We know that some will move back and forth – a transitional group ... [Aboriginals] leave the reserve because there is no economic opportunity for them and particularly for their children. It seems to me that they return to the reserve because on the reserve they experience a sense of place ... and also because on the reserve they have a level of cultural comfort (as cited in Richards & Vining, 2003, p. 210).

The research of Richards & Vining not only display arguments for Aboriginal-centric programming but they also found that socioeconomic factors play a part in the quality of education being delivered to children in poorer neighbourhoods. The patterns that develop within large urban areas display a segregation based upon income and ethnicity. Aboriginal peoples make less income on average and many cannot afford to live where they choose in the urban settings. As a result, these peoples are situated in neighbourhoods that offer affordable rents, thus creating a new ‘urban rez’. In relation, William F. Tate IV (2008) performed two case studies about the ‘geography of opportunity’ and African-American youth in Dallas and St. Louis neighbourhoods. Tate observed that there are a multitude of determinants that affect learning and behaviour within lower-class communities. Namely: medical risks and factors about poor nutrition, poor access to quality food, hunger, an over abundance of fast-food and alcohol-based businesses that negatively affect health, psychological factors relating to adolescent development and cognitive outcomes, business and economic motivations, political motivations, and social structures including spatial dimensions of opportunity.

Furthermore, Tate cites evidence about poverty as relating to neurological development for lower-class youth: “neuroscientists hypothesize that brain development is negatively altered by the environmental conditions associated with poverty (Farah et al., 2006). Because poverty in cities generally is concentrated, this emerging research in neuroscience may well inform research associated with neighborhoods and education-related processes” (p. 400). Tate relates these findings to African-American youth in specific neighbourhoods with poor educational development in relation to social opportunities due to the surrounding environmental factors: “Neighborhood conditions have been linked to the college aspirations of African American children. Stewart and colleagues (Stewart, Stewart, & Simons, 2007) found that living in a disadvantaged and resource-poor neighborhood is a negative influence on the college aspirations of African American students, above and beyond individual-level attributes and neighborhood controls” (p. 400). For Tate, the ‘geography of opportunity’ within lower-class neighbourhoods was a major factor within educational attainment success, further employment opportunities, and overall civic and social successes for African American youths in these neighbourhoods. Tate ends his analysis by stating “The stakes are high. An uneven geography of opportunity, left unaddressed, generally grows” (p. 409).

The quality of schooling within lower-income urban neighbourhoods is usually sub-par compared to that of the middle class schools. Richards & Vining state “the analogue in Canada is the growth of Aboriginals living disproportionately in very poor urban neighbourhoods and attending schools whose academic outcomes are, in general, below those in non-poor neighbourhoods” (p. 209). This research suggests discrimination at play and the replication of social barriers. The researchers are equating class and

income as social determinants of quality schooling in urban neighborhoods. There is evidence to suggest that these forms of class struggle and ethnic segregation in poorer urban neighbourhoods will foster sub-par educational attainment levels, lower test scores, lesser job skills, poorer quality of life, and relative disconnect to educational benefits. Social class plays a significant role in providing some students access to higher quality schooling experiences whilst trapping a section of the urban population in poorer quality school experiences.

Economic class stratification is a social reality among Aboriginal students and workers. It has been previously stated that there are various wage-gaps within the Aboriginal working classes and a new economic middle-class is starting to form within this cohort. The physical separations of the Aboriginal middle-class from that of the Aboriginal lower-class is a new phenomenon within these communities and it may produce social dissonance and/or polarization among these cohorts. On the other hand, this growing middle class may also produce better social and political representation for Aboriginal issues but the trade-off is that they might leave the lower-class issues behind in the process. The class dynamics are just starting to materialize among this cohort. As for the Aboriginal middle class, Terry Wotherspoon (2003) foresees a clash of identity amongst those workers that have access to higher wages and better social privileges when compared to those that do not:

There remain numerous contradictions and dimensions associated with Aboriginal people's class locations ... Professional, managerial, and entrepreneurial work tends to be highly individualistic and fragmentary, often producing isolation or tensions to balance personal, family, cultural, and community obligations with career demands. Aboriginal people in these positions frequently strive to maintain a powerful sense of commitment to indigenous communities. The privileged positions that they occupy, relative to many of their urban counterparts, can also produce

pressures to reconcile personal success with concerns for social justice and effective action to ensure that Aboriginal people as a whole can gain meaningful opportunities within Canadian society (pp. 162-163).

Wotherspoon's analysis raises important points about the internal relations that are multiplying among Aboriginal cohorts. The distinctions are yet to fully materialize for this cohort in terms of the intra-class relations but it is inevitable that economic stratification will shape a new phase of Aboriginal life in Canada.

Wage gaps are not the only socioeconomic gaps affecting Aboriginal communities as there is also education funding gaps that are maintaining a lower level education system. First Nations students, on and off-reserve, are feeling the effects of the gap. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) (2010) reports that since 1996 the national funding formula of the department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) has been capped at 2% per year. The First Nations populations have been growing over that timeframe and many on-reserve schools are terribly underfunded. First Nation schools require at least a 6.5% increase within the national funding model in order to adequately provide essential schooling services. Currently the services that are being hit the hardest on-reserve are: libraries, technology (computers and data systems), sports and recreation, vocational training, First Nations languages, and all school board-like services. AFN further reports that in 2009-2010 the AANDC national budget for schooling was \$1.56 billion and this leaves a \$620 million gap which would go far beyond the 2% stagnation. Since 1996 the cumulative shortfall in funding has been \$1.2 billion in necessary funds. In comparison, provincial and territorial schools have experienced a 4.1% increase per year over the same timeframe (p. 1). The funding gap is leaving First Nations student bodies, both on and off reserve, far behind the mainstream populations in terms of access to quality of education, particularly in contemporary

scenarios. The side-note to this report is that there has been some infusion of funds for First Nations students as of the Canada Federal budget 2012. CBC News (2012) reports that the 2012 Federal budget has announced a *First Nations Education Act* and has allocated \$275 million to build and renovate schools “on reserve”. The long-term effects of these measures have yet to be determined.

## CONCLUSION

The research in this paper has studied the historical proletarianization of Aboriginal communities under Canadian industrial capitalism and the stemming outcomes. The research has utilized a critical political economic base and has situated the Aboriginal histories and empirical research within this framework. The theoretical ideas of various writers within a critical political economy setting have been moulded to fit the analysis of the Aboriginal histories. The purpose of utilizing critical economic categorizations is to situate the history of Aboriginal dispossession and subsequent proletarianization within the critique of capital. The socioeconomic revolution of traditional-Aboriginal societies into private-property based society has scarcely been analysed within a critical economic perspective, thus the reason for this paper.

The thesis has utilized specific research and data pertaining to Aboriginal history as an attempt at clarifying the dispossession process. Namely, the numbered treaty framework and the residential school systems have been used to demonstrate the foundations of Aboriginal proletarianization. The data has been expanded to include specific Métis and Inuit histories. Finally, the paper has utilized contemporary statistical data about employment and educational attainment. The purpose of this data is to situate Aboriginal cohorts within the modern economy and lend evidence to the legacy of industrialization and the replication of proletarian ethics among these cohorts. Furthermore, the statistical data has demonstrated the contemporary spread of private property relations (e.g. cash, wages), its pervasiveness, and expansion within Aboriginal communities.



Aboriginal cohorts have shared histories and hostilities in regards the violence of the state and the capitalist mode of production, in the Canadian context. The numbered treaty process began the industrialized revolution that dispossessed Aboriginal peoples from their traditional land bases, resources, and modes of production. The dispossession was further carried out and finalized through disciplinary schooling systems that facilitated proletarianization for the labour market. The purpose of the schooling experience was the complete usurpation of Aboriginal identity into the Canadian identity, i.e. the proletarian identity. Usurpation was accomplished via the disciplinary instillation of a rigorous proletarian work ethic. The integration of Aboriginal peoples into modernity was best realized through burgeoning capitalist social relations, e.g. wage labour. The modern statistics bear out this usurpation as being a “success”, in that Aboriginal peoples have been dispossessed of their modes of production and modes of subsistence and have been transformed into labouring-commodities. Aboriginal communities are fully engaged as workers in the contemporary labour market and they have accepted the wage as means to survival. The dispossession of Aboriginal peoples is a fact of history and its continuation presents a critique of capital that maintains political relevance.

Aboriginal societies are facing unique struggles in rectifying wage-labour scenarios with ancestral identities. In combination to workplace scenarios, public schooling and post-secondary attainment also pose a challenge to ancestral identification via forced introductions to proletarian replication. Aboriginal cohorts are facing widespread barriers within the labour process due to their ancestral identity and therein are the contexts of the contemporary class struggle. Aboriginal labour is continually marginalized and confronts overt degradation in the labour market via negative public

opinions about work ethic, skill, and intellect. The barriers are systemic and are tied to historical biases regarding falsified notions about Aboriginal work demeanour.

Aboriginal workers are consistently viewed as a uniform-thing, as a cohort, rather than a group comprising dynamic individuals. This bias has fostered a stigmatization of Aboriginal labour in the labour market. Career opportunities and labour market success have been limited due to the stigma.

The Aboriginal populations are young and growing in numbers across Canada. Their historical socio-economic dispossession has fostered relative poverty that remains stagnant. The federal government has created the modern socio-economic scenario and capitalism has advanced the Aboriginal dispossession. Aboriginal peoples are aware of the socio-economic challenges that lay before them and they are responding with incremental results in the labour market; as this is the main option for survival. Aboriginal cohorts face a consistent lack of respect within the labour market and this social disdain stems from the historical struggles that mainstream Canadians have heaped upon Aboriginal peoples. Age old barriers in the workplace, including many other social arenas, are persistent and stereotypical cultural memes about Aboriginal labour have proven difficult to eradicate. Cynical ideas about Aboriginal work-ethic have negatively affected the labour-power of individual workers among this cohort.

Aboriginal students are showing increasing levels of post-secondary educational attainment and they are seeking employment at levels appropriate to their training. High school completion rates remain below parity. The high school completion discrepancy is a concern especially if there is to remain increasing post-secondary success rates. Post-secondary completion, and the skills obtained therein, is touted as the major factor in the

Canadian job market for mainstream Canada. Yet, Aboriginal post-secondary success is demonstrating that the post-secondary path has been mildly successful for Aboriginal cohorts. The barrier conundrum is pervasive. Post-secondary educational attainment remains important for the success and skill of Aboriginal cohorts within the job market but it is not the only determinant that plays a factor in that success.

The central focus of this paper has been about the radical shift away from traditional communal production systems, the forced integration into private property production systems, and the socio-economic outcomes of that clash. The research has situated the conflict of economic philosophies as a central element that undermined traditional Aboriginal communal economies in favour of private-property capitalist economies. The research in this paper has not focused on solutions to the historical situations that Aboriginal peoples have faced, or are facing, in Canadian society under the capitalist mode of production, during any of its phases. The thesis has hypothesized the historical socio-economic factors that helped establish the proletarianization of Aboriginal peoples and its outcomes. Whatever advice has been mentioned about challenging the barriers, various gaps, and parity issues has been utilized to demonstrate the persistence of those issues and their resistance to change.

Contemporary Aboriginal workers are in a unique position because they have been subsumed into the demands of the labour market, along with dominant education institutions, whilst attempting to re-establish traditional-communal solidarities. These cohorts desire to remain indelibly linked to their ancestral histories and they are not desirous to assimilate their cultural-identities completely within proletarian ideals. Thus they are re-imagining ancestral identities and communal roles within global capitalism.

Aboriginal cohorts across Canada are undertaking a cultural awakening and this poses new interpretations for their traditional identities and for their position in the greater working masses in Canada. Aboriginal communities are taking incremental steps to command their social, political, and cultural projects and this shift has yet to realize its full potential within Canadian society. Aboriginal citizens are posing economic, cultural, and political challenges to the greater Canadian labour market, the overall population, and the totality of political debates. The future is unwritten for these cohorts.

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