

(Re)Making the Nation(s): Cultural Representations of Indigeneity and the Environment

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Indigeneity and the environment, within the context of the modern Canadian Settler state, has been understood and portrayed in many different ways for a multitude of purposes such as establishing national narratives, celebrating culture, and often times producing commodities. Recently, representations of Indigeneity have undergone more critical study. In the current era of reconciliation, increased education and awareness of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and worldviews is being promoted. This project seeks both to critically analyze past (non-Indigenous) representations of Indigeneity and the environment, notably through the visual medium of the postage stamp and media representations of a specific environmental topic (pipeline expansion and tar sands extraction), while emphasizing the emergence and return-to of other visual mediums, led by Indigenous artists, such as beadwork and urban art in the form of murals which promote both cultural resilience and materializing an Indigenous right to the city and a celebration of the land through the incorporation of natural environments and nonhuman species.

Exploring the human-environment relations and more-than-human geographies of Indigenous peoples as expressed through art and media constitute the main focus of each cultural geography case study. By uncovering the networks of power, distribution, and public performance that underpin each of the topics, which are all connected to distinct forms of nation-making, the various scales of representations of Indigeneity and the environment will be better understood, from 300,000,000 stamps circulating worldwide to coveted back-alley murals. Particular emphasis will also be placed on how Indigenous peoples nurture strong connections to the land and how this connection has been represented in a variety of forms. Utilizing research methodologies such as archival work, interviews, and online media content review, this project seeks to contribute to a growing body of Indigenous histories and geographies, and to bring forth future perspectives that will further the ongoing discourse surrounding reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations and how wounds caused by intergenerational trauma may be healed through cultural resurgence.