

## **The Cultural Politics of Ecological Integrity: nature and Nation in Canada's National Parks, 1885-2000**

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Résumé de l'article

Le rapport de 2000 de la Commission sur l'intégrité écologique des parcs nationaux du Canada est un document fascinant qui révèle des relations importantes entre les notions de « nature » et de « nation » au Canada. Sur le plan historique, les parcs nationaux du Canada ont été organisés selon différentes compréhensions de leur rôle et, surtout, de la conception de la nature prônée dans la société à des moments historiques donnés. Ce document offre une vue en quatre périodes de l'histoire pour mettre en lumière les politiques culturelles de l'intégrité écologique comme une condition à laquelle les parcs nationaux du Canada devraient aspirer.

## Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands

### ***The Cultural Politics of Ecological Integrity: Nature and Nation in Canada's National Parks, 1885-2000***

#### **Abstract**

*The 2000 Report of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks reveals important relations between ideas of "nature" and "nation" in Canada. Viewed historically, Canada's national parks have been organized by different understandings of what parks are for, and especially what kinds of role they are to perform for the nation at particular historical junctures. This paper offers a broadly sketched view of that history over four periods in order to shed light on the cultural politics of ecological integrity as a condition to which Canada's national parks should aspire, leading to a discussion of integrity as a specific inflection of national nature.*

#### **Résumé**

*Le rapport de 2000 de la Commission sur l'intégrité écologique des parcs nationaux du Canada est un document fascinant qui révèle des relations importantes entre les notions de « nature » et de « nation » au Canada. Sur le plan historique, les parcs nationaux du Canada ont été organisés selon différentes compréhensions de leur rôle et, surtout, de la conception de la nature prônée dans la société à des moments historiques donnés. Ce document offre une vue en quatre périodes de l'histoire pour mettre en lumière les politiques culturelles de l'intégrité écologique comme une condition à laquelle les parcs nationaux du Canada devraient aspirer.*

*The Canadian psyche nurtures the belief that  
just beyond the country's cities and towns  
exists a wild area that makes Canada a better  
country simply because such wilderness exists.*

EI Panel

#### **Introduction: Unimpaired for Future Generations?**

In the Spring of 2000, a federally appointed Panel on Ecological Integrity (EI Panel) released its report on the state of Canada's national parks. The two volumes, *"Unimpaired for Future Generations?"* outlined the dire state of environmental affairs in the parks. All but one of the (then) 39 parks experienced some form of "impairment," almost all with significant cumulative impacts; 21 parks experienced major or severe ecological stresses (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) including habitat loss and fragmentation, loss of large carnivores, air and pesticide pollution, and overuse (Parks Canada, 2000 1:9). As the Report put it, "ecological integrity in Canada's

national parks is under threat from many courses and for many reasons. These threats to Canada's national sacred places present a crisis of national importance" (1:13).

Viewed through a twenty-first century ecological lens, the state of the parks is shocking. How could the federal government allow these national "sacred" treasures to fall into such a state of disrepair? The EI Panel Report blamed federal ineptitude, and pulled few punches in its condemnation of Parks Canada's record at preserving integrity, defined as "whole and complete biological systems, including species, landscape elements, and processes" (1:14). The Report thus called for large changes to Parks Canada, including increased funding from the federal government, better science in management practices, integration of traditional Aboriginal knowledge into park policy, and better interpretive materials to communicate ecological integrity to park consumers. These are entirely reasonable proposals. Nonetheless, I am compelled to point out that "ecological integrity" has only relatively recently become a guiding concept of Parks Canada's mandate. Is it all that surprising that the parks don't approximate it especially well? As earlier Parks Canada materials often admitted, it wasn't until the 1960s that "people began to realize that preservation and use of parks are not always compatible" (Parks Canada, 1985b). It wasn't until 1988 that Canada's National Parks Act was amended to put "preservation" first in its mandate of preservation, education and recreation.<sup>1</sup> Historical record, in fact, suggests a different story. Throughout the early development of the national parks system, even J.B. Harkin, first Commissioner of the Dominion Parks Branch, saw no particular contradiction between the enhancement of nature and the enhancement of the roads and resorts that are now understood as threatening integrity. Many parks have included resource extraction (mining in Banff, oil and gas exploration in Waterton Lakes, commercial meat production in Wood Buffalo), and until the 1960s, very few were established specifically for purposes of habitat or species preservation.<sup>2</sup>

Simply, Canada's national park system has included changing understandings of what parks are *for*. As ideas of nature have shifted in relation to tourism, economic development, wildlife management and cultural heritage, parks have been subject to a variety of different nature agendas, of which ecological integrity is only the most recent. Yet talk of ecological integrity seems often to *erase* this history by presenting a unified ecological telos. As the following passage from the 1994 *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* demonstrates, the history of the parks' diverse social-natural meanings disappears in a singular emphasis on nature preservation. "For more than a century," it states, "the Government of Canada has been involved in protecting outstanding natural areas .... This extensive experience has enabled Canada to be recognized, internationally, as a world leader in the management of heritage" (Heritage

Canada, 1994 9). Or, as the EI Panel report expands: "Canadians and guests from around the world embrace the notion of use without abuse so that national parks will continue to occupy a position of honour in the Canadian mind, icons that reflect the very soul of Canada to Canadians, and to the world" (Parks Canada 2000, 1:8).

In this paper, I argue that the discourse of ecological integrity is part of a series of changing articulations between nature and nation in the Canadian park imaginary. Although also informed by changing knowledge practices in ecological science, insistence on ecological integrity in national parks also invokes a particular idea of the nation, a specific articulation of ecological ideas with understandings of Canada as a national territory. Indeed, it is *out of* previous articulations of nature and nation in the parks that the telos of ecological integrity achieves its character as a form of historical erasure. The nationing character of national parks has not always centred on ecological principles, but much of the power of "integrity" rests on a notion of unbroken nature that requires precisely the continuity that parks lack. I will, therefore, present a broad history of parks as sites for the enactment of Canadian nature and nation in four overlapping periods, against which present understandings have been formed.<sup>3</sup> In the first (1885-1930), an early articulation of recreation with empire was established. In the second (1914-1945), parks began to serve a more strongly ideological role in the development of Canada as a nation defined on the distinction of its territory. In the third (1945-1985), as enormous increases in automobile tourism fuelled an expansion of the park system, parks came to represent federal economic development for remote regions and came also to be charged with federal-national aspirations. Finally, in the fourth (1980-2000), a weakening of federal support for the parks, in combination with their expansion as sites for global tourism, severed many links previously extant in the parks between nation and nature as *local* natures came to take particular places in globalized chains of signification. In this context, the idea of ecological integrity can be understood as an attempt on the part of the federal government to *reinsert* a federal nationalism into Canada's parks, part of a new articulation of ecological science with national heritage. The paper thus concludes with a discussion of the EI Panel Report and the ways in which its desires for park-nature develop a renewed articulation of *state* and nature under the banner of integrity.

### **1885-1930: National Parks as Dominion Resorts**

In her book *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt notes that the idea of "discovery," in the context of Victorian exploration and travel writing, "consisted of a gesture of converting local knowledges (discourses) into European national and continental knowledges associated with European forms and relations of power" (202). In the process of narrating discovery, the landscape that is supposedly discovered is divorced from the webs of

meaning that precede colonization. The land is aestheticized in a particular way, overdetermined with a significance conferred by the presence of the white discoverer, and *mastered* in the moment of its appearance as having been "discovered." The imperial trope of discovery is thus predicated on the idea that the landscape achieves meaning only when it can be placed clearly in the imaginary of the colonizer. Discovery founds an imperial act to impose a unifying meaning on the landscape, and to erase any others that might have been significant in other discourses that, in many cases, actually helped the so-called discoverer locate the place in question.

The first national park in Canada was "discovered" in 1883 by workers of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), at that time crossing the Rockies into a newly confederated British Columbia. The site, now the Cave and Basin Hot Spring in Banff National Park, held potential as a mineral bath-spa and was almost immediately penetrated with a potent combination of economic and political interests. CPR general manager William Cornelius Van Horne was anxious to establish a reservation in the mountains as a destination for rail travelers; the profit potential of the hot springs also drew the attention of the federal government of Sir John A. Macdonald. Macdonald was anxious to support the CPR's claim, and in 1887 after the completion of the Railway—and after Van Horne had already begun to erect hotels at Field, B.C. and Rogers Pass—Rocky Mountains Park (RMP) was given royal assent, "reserved and set apart as a public park and pleasure ground for the benefit, advantage, and enjoyment of the people of Canada" (Government of Canada, 1887).

Although Leslie Bella has emphasized the tension between profit and preservation inherent in these unceremonious park beginnings, I would also like to argue for the importance of these events to a narrative of parks in Canadian colonial-nationalist discourse. Here, the park's establishment marked a confluence of two processes. First, in the formal designation of a Dominion "reserve," RMP imposed on the landscape an imperial monopoly of practice and vision enacted by the CPR but legitimated by the state. Capitalism thus intersected with colonialism; the purpose of the park may have been rail tourism, but part of the tourist value lay in the park's status as a *Dominion* park, a place to visit to discover the heart of the newly confederated territory. That representation was quite specific; Van Horne was able to create, largely free from unsightly competition—including that of the Stoney people, who had used the area for generations—the image of an *empty* wilderness, "conquered" by the CPR and the federal government.<sup>4</sup> And as a designated Dominion park, this emptied nature came to signify the wild essence of the developing Canadian nation. As MP Donald Smith said to the House of Commons in 1886, "anyone who has gone to Banff ... and not felt himself elevated and proud of all that is part of the Dominion, cannot be a true Canadian" (cited in Lothian, 1987 22).

Second, the hot springs marked a site of stable commercial development. Lasting "improvements" to the wilderness were part of the westward expansion necessary to an effective confederation. In this project, the CPR had many roles. For one, resource extraction continued in RMP until 1930; the town of Bankhead, only four kilometres west of the Banff townsite, flourished from 1903 to 1922 as a source of coal for locomotives (Gadd). For another, the CPR was courting immigration to the prairies, and campaigned in Eastern Canada and Western Europe to lure souls to turn the rich sod into land once deemed unfarmable.<sup>5</sup> The CPR-built Banff Springs Hotel, however, offered a different *kind* of development along the same rail line: in its active copying of European spas and resorts, it established white upper-class recreational development in the mountains. As Macdonald himself claimed:

I do not suppose in any portion of the world there can be found a spot, taken all together, which combines so many attractions and which promises in as great degree not only large pecuniary advantage to the Dominion, but much prestige to the whole country by attracting the population, not only of the continent, but of Europe to this place. It has all the qualifications necessary to make it a great place of resort. (cited in Bella 14)

Thus, Banff became an elite border to the colonized and settled world, an edge space between the laboriously tillable prairies and the awesomely uncultivable mountains. The CPR's luxury hotels and bourgeois rituals promised a settled civility for an expanding colony, *and* an iconic representation of the Dominion as a timeless place of wild beauty. As Lothian emphasizes, "during the 1890's [sic] life at Banff and the national park was generally one of leisure, highlighted by the arrival and departure of visitors by train from other parts of Canada and the United States" (1976 28). The colonial narration of the landscape was amplified as the park was drawn into webs of travel and exchange, in other words, as it became more clearly a "park" in the minds of travelers. In particular, the park offered tourists a set of Dominion activities in a relatively new kind of symbolic recreational space: "visitors ... found relaxation in the enjoyment of an alpine environment, enhanced by the superlative scenery and the clear mountain air" (Lothian, 1976 28). As a tourist destination, RMP was a site that was not only discovered but that also gained its cachet by inviting travelers to experience that same act of discovery for themselves through riding, fishing and mountaineering. Elite tourists went to the Rockies along with the legions of workers needed to service them. While there, they climbed the Dominion's mythic edge. In the evening, they drank sherry and soaked in the therapeutic spa waters of civilization; during the day, however, they sought out the rugged mountains, re-living white explorers' awe of the undiscovered landscape. Erased from this picture was, of course, the considerable infrastructure (and prior destruction) necessary to transport both tourists and provisions to this (apparent) edge of empire. These absences were part of the active *emptying* of the land that the park

performed; Banff was the core of a "new" nation, and visiting it was an act of (re)discovery, a consumable experience of empire. As one 1887 CPR pamphlet put it:

There will be no hardships to endure, no difficulties to overcome, and no dangers or annoyances whatsoever. You shall see mighty rivers, vast forests ... stupendous mountains and wonders innumerable; and you shall see all in comfort, nay in luxury. If you are a jaded tourist, sick of Old World scenes and smells, you will find everything fresh and novel .... If you are a mountain climber, you shall have cliffs and peaks and glaciers worthy of your alpenstock, and if you have lived in India, and tiger hunting has lost its zest, a Rocky Mountain grizzly bear will renew your interest in life. (CPR in Hart, 1983 25)

The early rail-resort parks—Banff, Yoho, Glacier and Jasper—were clearly intended to be useful and profitable (resource extraction persisted); the federal government leased space to tourist operators and extracted revenue from a variety of commercial interests in the parks. As Robert Craig Brown writes, RMP in particular was not about preservation as much as it was about development: "with the construction of roads and bridges, the establishment of a townsite and the provision of tourist facilities from baths to special hotels, the reservation would *become* a park" (50). But these parks were *also* concerned with establishing designated spaces for ritual colonial experience. "Wild nature" (which included a variety of people) was everywhere in Western Canada; the mountain parks, far from preserving space in which this nature could proceed without interference, created a particular kind of nature space in which all eyes could be directed to the sublime edge of the white, civilized world.

Early tourist providers and guides were, in fact, directly responsible for discovering many elements of the Rocky Mountain landscape and enfolded them into colonial rationality: "to some of these adventurous souls, later park administrators owed the discovery of many places and natural features of the Canadian Rockies which later became famous" (Lothian, 1976 28). As E.J. Hart documents, guides and outfitters were instrumental in transforming the Rockies into a destination for "climbing, hunting and fishing, scientific investigation, exploration or merely sightseeing" (1979 67). It was not just that such guides led parties of travelers to remote locations: these same travelers became the financial motor of Rocky Mountain exploration itself. "Discovery" became a commodity that outfitters were happy to sell, and although some, like the Alpine Club of Canada, protested, even outfitting eventually became part of the CPR's corporate empire (Hart, 1979 80).

## **1914-1945: National Parks and Nation-Building**

Referring to Australian national museums and heritage projects, Tony Bennett writes:

As ways of imagining, and so organizing, bonds of solidarity and community, nations take the form of never-ending stories which mark out the trajectory of the people-nation whose origins, rarely precisely specified, are anchored in deep time just as its path seems destined endlessly to unfold itself into a boundless future. (148)

Standing on Benedict Anderson's understanding of "imagined communities," Bennett describes a process by which modern nations create a sense of permanence by stretching the imagination of the national past into a history of immemorial origins. The nation, despite its arbitrary beginnings and partial claims to the identity of a given space, can appear solid, even destined, if it can stitch its recent history to some "deeper" time and meaning. Nicos Poulantzas understands this nationing act as the creation of a "historicity of a territory and territorialisation of a history" (114). In this process, the space of the national territory comes to be read *only* as a site of national history; alternative ways of understanding time and space are excluded or rewritten to be mere adjuncts to the primary national narrative. He also emphasizes the important role of the state in nationing: state policies *directly* shape the production of a citizenship in which individuals come to understand their belonging in a territory according to a nationally unifying narrative (and not others). As state organs, parks were clearly tools of nationing from the beginning: the very creation of a park involves the imposition on a place of imperial univocity. But, particularly following World War I, the presence of rugged, northern wilderness came increasingly to stand in for the national difference between Canada and its "civilized" British parent. As nature preservation came into prominence in the early twentieth century, the state was charged with the task of developing parks as spaces in which the essence of the Canadian nation could be protected and experienced. Wilderness was important to cultural nationalism, the development and extension of a park system and bureaucracy gave the national parks a specific institutional responsibility in national development. State territory, here, authorized national autonomy.

In 1911, a new Forest Reserves and Parks Act inaugurated the existence of a legislative connection among the extant parks and reserves;<sup>6</sup> where previously each park was created and governed under separate legislation, now all were part of a collection of lands with identical rights and restrictions. At the same time, the Dominion Parks Branch was created to oversee this new mandate. One can speak, here, of the inauguration of a park *system*. Parks Commissioner Harkin, beginning with almost nothing, transformed a collection of disparate places into a *set* of landscapes to be regulated and developed in relatively uniform ways, including their public presentation as "destinations." In 1914, the Branch issued its first official



publication, regularizing the function of parks. In 1917, Harkin actively campaigned for a national tourist bureau to help promote park travel and entice Canadians to keep their tourist dollars at home.<sup>7</sup> Finally, this period saw the beginning of an expansion of the park system to include a greater diversity of landscapes and a greater geographic representation of parks across the provinces. In 1914, Harkin oversaw the establishment of two new parks, one at Mount Revelstoke in B.C. and the other, the first in Eastern Canada, in the St. Lawrence Islands; many others, stretching to the Atlantic provinces, were created during his tenure (which ended in 1936).<sup>8</sup>

Here, the conceptualization of an increasingly diverse set of nature places as constituent elements of a park system served both to unify the landscapes and, especially with the eastward expansion of the system, to give the parks a stronger sense of being available to all Canadians as Canadian landscapes. At one level, then, park development was an act of rationalized nationalism, an extension of a state-centred understanding of Canadian nature into more and more spaces. Other meanings of these landscapes were displaced and, along with the meanings, a lot of actual *people*, as land expropriation remained a common practice until the 1970s. Parks were, then, about instituting a *chain* of national natures, with relatively identical meanings that the state could facilitate, regulate and promote.

The idea of preservation was important to this rationalization. Among other things, the 1911 Act designated all forest reserves and parks as game preserves. As Janet Foster notes, Harkin thought that wildlife played an important role in national parks as tourist magnets and also that part of parks' responsibility was to protect wildlife "in the larger interests of the Canadian people" (86). In addition, as Tina Loo writes, "instructing tourists in wilderness appreciation was so much easier if a bison or elk got their attention first" (27). In this context, parks came to represent places in which nature was to be protected; the first overtly preservationist parks were, with one exception, created under Harkin, and the Branch began the process of developing about species conservation, predator control, and habitat protection. To be sure, the Parks Branch saw not much contradiction between recreation and preservation; inviting tourists to visit the parks was both a way of increasing park revenue and also a way of exposing more Canadians to parks. During this period, the National Park interpretive service was inaugurated; parks and the large animals within them came to serve a pedagogical role, teaching Canadians about nature as they engaged in recreation in nature.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, for Harkin, parks not only signified "Canada" but also promoted its economic security. He was excited by huge postwar increases in tourist travel as a way of providing fuel for the Canadian economy and recommended "that first class hotels ... be built [at Yoho and Jasper] in the

near future" (1921 7) to accommodate heavier demand for accommodation. He also strongly advocated road construction and infrastructural developments such as a golf course in Banff.<sup>10</sup> In this articulation of preservation, nationalism, and economic expansion, parks were understood as common, national *resources*. At one level, as the parks became more accessible to a variety of users, they came to serve a stronger nationalist function for the whole population and not just its elite. As Harkin noted, "the coming of the motor and the building of motor highways have completely changed travel conditions with respect to the national parks and in a new sense it may be said that Canadians are taking possession of their own country" (1929 6). At another level, as the parks became more regulated,<sup>11</sup> they came to serve a stronger ideological function as sites for the preservation of an environmental public good. Again, in Harkin's words, "the value of great wilderness reservations, therefore, such as are found in the national parks must become even greater and the importance of setting them aside while there is yet time is clearly seen" (9-10). Certainly, he saw the parks' mandate in terms of individual citizens' abilities to engage in a particular kind of educational experience: "The most important service which the parks render is in the matter of helping to make Canadian people physically fit, mentally efficient, and morally elevated" (Harkin, 1915 4).<sup>12</sup> Here, it is not accidental that it was *wilderness* landscapes that came to represent the essence of disciplinary and economic nationhood.<sup>13</sup> For one thing, the emptied national park landscapes of Western Canada were "new" spaces on which the nation could be imprinted without reference to Britain, France, Aboriginal peoples or the United States (even if the idea of originary nature/nation was borrowed from Europe). For another, the Canadian Rockies were quite magnificent; it was not hard to translate Romantic understandings of the sublime to these places, an understanding that had the particular resonance of timelessness and permanence (not to mention of awesome and possibly threatening wilderness) so important to Canada's growing ability to develop a sense of national identity clearly distinct from Europe.

In this context, preserving nature in the national parks came to represent an act of patriotism, visiting the parks an experience of national meaning. As Foster puts it, in this period "National Parks were to preserve the original landscape of Canada, to ensure that every Canadian, by right of citizenship, would own a share of unspoiled country. Indeed, parks had a truly patriotic mission to perform: to instill in all Canadians a love of the country and pride in its natural beauty" (79). It is not at all surprising, then, that the 1930 National Parks Act was founded on the principle that "the parks are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment [and that] such Parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations" (Government of Canada, 1930). As C.J. Taylor notes, the 1930 Act thus

pointed to an increasing link between the idea of parks as national spaces and one of parks as natural spaces that are preserved rather than created.<sup>14</sup>

### **1945-1985: Parks as Spaces of Economic Federalism**

As Alexander Wilson notes, after the end of World War II roads had a huge effect on North American cultures of nature. Although landscape photography had already attuned popular aesthetic sensibilities to framed natures, the rapid expansion of the highway system and a road-based tourist industry oriented to the creation of "scenic" landscapes dramatically shaped North Americans' understandings of desirable nature. Aided by other technologies, especially television, automobile travel encouraged people to understand nature as a stable visual commodity. More precisely, the framing tourist *experience* remained relatively stable, but the view had to change, within certain parameters, in order to remain interesting; this aesthetic commodity could be realized along routes that showed panoramic vistas, through forests that showed sublimely large trees, and into landscapes that appeared as if they had always been empty. Roads, of course, both incited particular travel desires in the car-owning public and enabled them to visit more and more remote areas. In Canada, the expansion of roads saw a reorganization of park tourism: rail travel declined precipitously, and the hotel empire of the CPR suffered as tourists elected to stay in less expensive motels and campgrounds. At the same time, smaller operators began to engage more centrally in the business of tourist provisioning. So long as there were roads and interesting things to see, any site could become a destination. This possibility spelled potential economic development for the region in question even as it harnessed it to a homogenizing tourist network of services, activities, and modes of access to the landscape. Tourist development thus involved withdrawing the land from other forms of economic activity, and particularly from unsightly resource extraction.

In the postwar period, visitation in the parks increased exponentially: Rick Searle notes that "recreation and tourism in the national parks [set] a new record of more than 5.5 million visitors in 1960" (140). For some regions, the prospect of a new national park promised a financial injection into a resource-dependent economy. These motives were clearly at play in the establishment of Fundy National Park in New Brunswick in 1948, a site with almost no preservationist aspirations, but with a golf course and easy access to the famous Fundy tides (MacEachern). Particularly given the ambiguous "enjoyment" mandate of the 1930 National Parks Act, the increase in visitation and public emphasis on the mass recreational benefits of parks had significant impacts. Recreational facilities meant economic development: even as people demanded access, however, in the wake of Harkin's national aesthetic/recreational standard, they also demanded a certain kind of nature experience. Especially with the rise of the

environmental movement in the 1960s, including the formation of the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada (NPPAC, later Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, CPAWS), a strong sense emerged that parks ought to preserve nature because of its specificity as an increasingly scarce commodity. Thus, a tension was in place by the 1960s between preservation and recreation, with preservation often couched in economically instrumental terms by the government, and the same instrumentality vocally resisted by park advocates. A new 1964 parks policy was firm on the exclusion of extraction from the parks, but ambivalent about conflicting obligations "to preserve, for all time, outstanding natural areas and features as national heritage" and to protect parks as sites where "the best and highest resource use" was tourism (National Parks Branch, 1964 5).

Although the immediate postwar years established the idea of parks as sites for economic development, and of parks as sites for a particular kind of nature-consumption, it wasn't until the late 1960s that the federal government began to articulate an overt connection between regional economics and park *nationalism*. In 1968, a national conference on the state of the parks included an opening address by Jean Chrétien.<sup>15</sup> While he stressed the importance of "preserving, for the benefit of present and future generations, significant natural features of our national heritage" (11), he also insisted that "some recreational potentialities can be considered to have national significance in that their size and nature make development by the nation desirable" (12).<sup>16</sup> Here, Chrétien stated clearly the stakes of the problem: "Too much development in a park means that it is no longer of any value as a source for recreation or as a source of a conserved environment" (13). He also identified a growing trend within the new Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau: to conceive of preserved parks as a form of federal award to the regions, a privilege bestowed by Ottawa on remote areas. More than that, these were awards with federalist strings, as parks were not only economic injections but symbolically loaded bearers of unity. Even in that early speech, Chrétien was able to say that the federal government "put a high priority on the need to establish more such parks in the two central provinces—Québec and Ontario. Such additional parks would meet a great need, and *their role in helping to forge a richer Canadian union is of fundamental importance*" (10, emphasis added).<sup>17</sup>

Trudeau was hardly subtle in this regard. Both wilderness enthusiast and staunch federalist, his actions on park development revealed a potent combination of state interventionism and rhetorical nationalism based on notions of an inherently "Canadian" wilderness nature. On the one hand, the equitable distribution of national parks offered a promise of economic stimulation in the regions, especially in regions suffering extractive resource decline. On the other, the strategic location of national parks across the country offered a symbol of national unity at a time when

Trudeau needed weapons in his anti-separatist arsenal. Despite problems of land acquisition in central Canada, one of Trudeau's first steps was to establish the first national park in Québec. La Mauricie, located in a Laurentian recreational area already popular with many Québécois, was not coincidentally in Chrétien's riding. Other parks and reserves followed rapidly, and took federal park presence to the very edges of the territory: Forillon on the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula; Pacific Rim on the west coast of Vancouver Island; Gros Morne in Newfoundland; Pukaskwa, the only national park of any real size in Ontario; and three parks in different areas of Canada's North, Nahanni, Kluane, and Auyuittuq. It is hard, here, to avoid the obvious conclusion: for the visitor, the park was a site in which the virtues of the nation could be (re)discovered. As a Parks Canada newsletter put it at the beginning of Trudeau's second term,

National parks are also a source of pride and an expression of Canada's identity. "Our shared natural and cultural heritage, the North, and the concept of wilderness, are facets of the national parks which evoke the spirit of the nation. Through visiting and reading about our national parks, more and more Canadians are learning to appreciate and to value the diversity of our land" (1980 1, internal quote from A.T. Davidson, ADM, Parks Canada).<sup>18</sup>

During this period the idea of parks as sites of *federal* nature came to some prominence. First, alongside increased visual consumption of parks from ever-larger segments of the population came increased park centralization: policies and procedures governing conduct, infrastructural development, and even aesthetics were regularized, providing greater uniformity across diverse landscapes. In this imposition, Trudeau was quite heavy handed. For example, he continued the practice by which the federal government expropriated land from local residents in order to move them from inside park boundaries, to create emptier wildernesses.<sup>19</sup> In addition, in 1973 his government engaged in a reorganization of the National and Historic Parks Branch that included the decentralization of the Branch into five administrative regions and a division of responsibilities between the regions and Ottawa (Lothian, 1977 28). Perhaps most significantly, he oversaw the development of the first master plan for all national parks in Canada (26). On top of its role in strengthening federal control, the new 1970 National Parks System Plan offered a rearticulation of the relation between park nature and nation. Specifically, this was the first state document to describe the totality of the national parks in terms of their specific "representation" of Canada's 39 terrestrial "natural regions." The mandate of natural area representation, and the conceptualization of natural diversity in terms of a finite array of types of landscape physiognomy, continues into current policy; it especially guides the choice of sites for park establishment. As the most recent System Plan states,

when the system is complete, future generations will be able to experience in our national parks the biophysical diversity of

Canada—examples of the Pacific coast, the Rockies, the boreal plains, the tundra hills, the Precambrian shield, the Arctic islands, the Atlantic coast and each of the other distinctive natural regions that define our landscape and shape our history. (Heritage Canada, 1997 4)

Here was—and is—an idea of parks that shifted the definition of the nature of the nation from an iconic or political focus to an ecological one. By understanding Canada as a series of 39 quasi-ecological regions, Trudeau's System Plan effectively removed economics and politics from considerations of "representation" and from public desires for national park nature. In their place was an understanding of the natural essence of the territory of Canada as a collection of different kinds of ecosystems. Indeed, here was a radical shift from a view of parks supporting recreational experiences of national citizenship to one of parks embodying ecological national heritage.

Of course, an ecologically informed discourse of "natural areas" did not fall from the sky into national policy in 1970. As Loo documents in her careful history of wildlife conservation, Parks Canada and other government institutions, both federal and provincial, had long since engaged in debate over the influence of science in protected species management. Harkin's assertions of the benefits of parks as sanctuaries for wildlife in the early 1920s were virtually unfounded in empirical evidence: as Loo notes, wildlife conservation proceeded with a heavily productivist rationale throughout the Depression. With the increased professionalization of wildlife biology, including the creation of a Dominion Wildlife Service that recruited university-trained biologists for the first time (Loo 123)—part of what Sandlos calls "the expanding role of science in the postwar federal wildlife bureaucracy" (2007 239)—came more serious and systematic attention in parks management "to numbers, food, shelter, migrations, reproduction, diseases, parasites, predators, competitors, and uses of the wild creatures ... being managed" (Lewis in Loo 124). Although gradually incorporating larger questions of habitat into understandings of wildlife populations and responding to varied struggles in Canada over land use, "it was not until the 1960s that [government biologists] began to take the first concrete steps toward assessing and protecting [habitats] systematically" (183). Certainly, the rise of an environmental movement aware of complex relations between and among organisms and their environments influenced the move in Parks Canada toward an understanding of parks as ecosystems. As John S. Marsh wrote in a paper originally presented at the same conference at which Chrétien spoke in 1968, quality park "wilderness experiences" were contingent on "wilderness areas [being] of a character and size that allows them to function as ecological units" (131). In addition, as Lothian notes, although the National Parks Branch established an Education and Interpretation service in 1959 "stressing preservation of [the parks'] fauna, flora and

geological features," the growth of the interpretive service in the 1960s and 1970s was part of an increased public understanding of parks as ecological entities rather than recreational sites (1981 134, 144).

It is therefore fair to say that Trudeau's National Parks System Plan was partly a product of a developing ecological view within the science practices of Parks Canada: park spaces shifted from being containers for wildlife to being habitats that supported (or failed to support) a range of organismic relationships. Parks also became elements of larger ecosystems rather than bounded and self-sustaining natures; in this way, parks could "represent" a larger whole, a terrestrial region—or, as a 1981 Parks Canada newsletter put grandly, a "Terrestrial Natural Area of Canadian Significance"—the importance of which was cast in scientific rather than political terms. But the idea of natural regions as the basis for park system planning was also political. The development of a discourse of park nature as a collection of ecological regions was conceptually equivalent (and contemporary) to the development of discourses of official multiculturalism, and both, in the midst of struggles over cultural difference in Canada, represented a way of containing conflicts over diversity in favour of a more neutral conception of coexisting plurality. If Canada was an ethnic mosaic, in which (supposedly) no one culture is more important than others, then why not a natural one, too? Both discourses shifted Canadian nationalist representations away from a foundational French-English conflict toward a Canada unified in diversity. The idea of enumerated natural regions "of Canadian significance" redrew the idea of national nature toward a more decentralized view in which every part of Canada was a piece of a whole that required all of them.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, however, this "multinaturalism" recapitulated earlier notions of empty wilderness by moving understandings of the essence of the territory further from politics and culture, and closer to a human-less notion of preserved nature. In this new System Plan, then, ecological diversity came to be conceived as an inherent and original feature of the land that comprised the political territory of Canada.

### **1980-2000: Globalization, Localization and Ecological Federalism**

John Urry observes, in his analysis of the contemporary "tourist gaze," that globalization has not, in fact, had the effect of imposing a McDonalds-like uniformity on all landscapes. Instead, "the effect of globalisation is often to increase local distinctiveness" for reasons including everything from "the increased ability of large companies to subdivide their operations and to locate different activities within different labour markets" to "the resurgence of locally oriented culture and politics especially around campaigns for the conservation of the built and physical environment" (153). Looking at the global tourist industry, it is clear that, while tourism

may impose a regularity of visual consumption on the landscapes thus consumed, much travel concerns the ability to find new experiences and different kinds of landscape from those of the tourist's everyday experience. Thus, in both types of service offered and types of landscape to be experienced, tourist destinations need increasingly to be *extraordinary*; their appeal lies in their unusual specificity—within particular bounds—and not in their resemblance to other places. Globalization has also had the effect of creating what Arjun Appadurai has called global/local “ideoscapes.” As people's cultural imaginations cross regional and national borders (aided by mass air travel, media and other technologies, and migration), so too do their maps of spatial meaning. Local places that are geographically quite distant can achieve new kinds of conceptual connection as people draw new lines connecting them, and with increasingly specialized itineraries in mind. Niche tourist guides abound: one can develop a world travel map oriented exclusively to wine-growing regions, dead rock stars' graves, and the sex trade, to name only a few. Indeed, as particular places come to be recognized and to develop themselves as important sites in particular global networks, their attachments to webs of meaning at other scales may become proportionately less important.

In this context, Canada's national parks have experienced dramatic transformations. A combination of federal neglect and global resignification has considerably undermined Trudeau's strong national-federal natures. Although his agenda for the parks had effects well into the 1980s, culminating in the 1985 celebration of the National Parks Centenary, as the economic growth upon which the Liberals had relied to fund the parks faltered, so too did the promise of parks as sites for federal economic development. In particular, Brian Mulroney's Conservative government held neither with a policy of government spending as an aid to regional integration, nor with the ideological value of wilderness as a tool of national unity. It insisted that parks be run as businesses, that they pay their own way through user fees, and that many services be contracted out to private companies. In 1985, for example, Environment Minister Suzanne Blais-Grenier spoke at a Heritage Day gathering in Ottawa and made her government's position clear: “It is around this quiet determination of Canada's individual and corporate citizens that the government intends to concentrate its approach to a second century of heritage preservation. We wish to renew the co-operative spirit that built this land and focus it upon the continuing task of preserving the uniqueness that is Canada” (Parks Canada, 1985a 1). Mulroney was not particularly a cultural nationalist and had little interest in developing the parks as sites for a Canadian “experience.” Certainly, as Blais-Grenier's emphasis on “Canada's individual and corporate citizens” indicates, he was not interested in financial outlay on nationalist space. He cut \$30 million from Parks Canada's budget; the interpretive service was particularly hard-hit, as were



fledgling research projects on park ecology. Responding to the holes in the slashed Park Service, local "parks partnership" organizations moved in to help with fundraising and public education. Despite the potential of these local groups to help integrate park lands into local communities, they did not fill the large financial gap, and parks were forced to engage in aggressive marketing to attract tourists.

At the same time, environmental politics witnessed a forceful explosion in Canada, both internationally around the Rio Summit and also more locally, oriented to preserving wild spaces against the continuing threats of logging, mining and oil exploration. One of the most pitched environmental battles of the 1980s concerned Gwaii Haanas at the southern tip of Haida Gwaii, off B.C.'s West Coast. In one of the first of many battles over the temperate rainforests, the Haida Nation, supported by environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, successfully struggled against powerful international logging interests to establish a national park reserve that is now Gwaii Haanas (May). The reserve is also a tribal cultural park containing several sites that are particularly sacred to the Haida people, including the village of Ninstints.<sup>21</sup> Certainly, both local groups and larger environmental interests influenced the movement of many of the parks toward a more strongly preservationist agenda during this period. Caught between federal withdrawal and this environmental agenda, the "profit versus preservation" dilemma became particularly acute. Parks were now required to manage their natural resources with greater attention to ecological detail, but with no funding available for research, restoration or public education. Many of the parks experienced a significant deterioration in both ecology and infrastructure, and the morale in the Parks Service was at an all-time low (Searle). Parks Canada was desperate for money, and its attempts to justify claims for greater federal expenditure were occasionally ludicrous; although rationalization of the parks as economic goods was not new, now, even the good of ecological health was a fiscal bonus. One 1988 report included the argument that "the benefits that Canadians derive from the conservation of significant Canadian examples of natural and cultural resources, such as improved health and fitness, can be measured in terms of what Canadians are willing to sacrifice for resource protection in order to gain a certain level of well-being" (Environment Canada 10).<sup>22</sup>

In this context, individual parks courted a more intensive international tourist trade to make up revenues. Despite the efforts of the System Plan to spread the nature-value of the nation more equitably around the country, two of Canada's national parks developed (more accurately, redeployed) a particular prominence in these more globalized tourist webs. The first, Banff, had had an international presence right from the start, and with the widespread availability of relatively low-cost airfares had parlayed its once-elite spa appeal into desirability as a stop on a tour of North America that also included the Grand Canyon and Yosemite. This international

iconicity had little to do with the CPR (which eventually sold off its hotels to the US multinational Fairmont chain, which resold the chain to Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud) and a great deal to do with the town of Banff's appeal as an accessible scenic destination in the middle of the Rockies. Recent estimates suggest that Banff receives over five million visitors per year; between 1986 and 1996 alone, retail space in Banff townsite grew by 104 percent and office space by 125 percent (Searle 47). The second park, Prince Edward Island, is famous for something that has nothing to do with its representation of the Maritime Plain ecological region: it is the location of Green Gables House, publicized by Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*. Although the house inside the national park is not Green Gables (Montgomery lived there at one point in her life), both the house and the surrounding landscape are portrayed as if it were. Montgomery's life is memorialized on a walking trail through "The Haunted Woods," a place in the novel, with quotes from her novels, making the actual landscape seem as if it were really the same as the fictional one. Thus, PEI National Park is famous not for what it preserves (marram grass banks) but for what it creates artificially; it is far more famous as a simulacrum than as an ecosystem. As Patricia Cormack and Clare Fawcett note, Montgomery and Anne

have become progressively more detached from the particular geographic area of Prince Edward Island. Anne dolls can now be found in souvenir shops throughout Canada [including in Banff], Anne fan clubs thrive in Japan, and the central Canadian landscape has been used by Sullivan Entertainment to represent Prince Edward Island. (702)

We have, here, a decline in the idea of parks as sites for federal-national citizenship, and a concomitant rise in the idea of parks as sites of unique landscape experience (even simulated experience) in a more diverse g/local web of itineraries. The international environmental movement actually aided in this process. The politics of preserving particular landscapes such as Gwaii Haanas relied heavily on an environmental discourse by which the place was absolutely unique and had no equal either locally or in the world. At the same time, many of these intense campaigns for preservation occurred, at least in part, on an international media stage: it wasn't just the Haida Nation lobbying the Canadian government, but the Sierra Club sending around the world fantastic images of magnificent trees. Thus, perhaps ironically, as park places came to be attached more firmly to environmental ideas, their essence became both localized, in their ability to preserve particular places, and globalized, as their ecological particularities came to be circulated internationally on television, in magazines, and on the Internet (Sandilands, 2002).

The 1993 election of Jean Chrétien saw a return to an idea of parks as sites for the production and dissemination of national identity. In the first place, he reaffirmed an agenda of park creation to represent Canada's terrestrial

ecosystems.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, although the Liberals' record on other environmental issues was, in many respects, worse than the Tories', Chrétien was involved in the creation of more national parks than any other Prime Minister in Canadian history. He also actively promoted a stronger link between the more ecological elements of the parks' mandate and the overarching idea of national heritage: the Parks Canada Agency was moved, for example, from the Ministry of the Environment to the Ministry of Canadian Heritage. The 1994 Parks Canada *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* demonstrated this idea of parks as sites of federal-national nature and was given added legitimacy by emerging the global ecological narratives. It attempted, for example, to forge a relationship between the parks and the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity, attaching the expansion of the park system to the international goal of preserving 12 percent of a country's land mass and promoting a link between global sustainability and citizenship. "Heritage places," stated the document,

contribute to broader sustainable development and conservation strategies by [...] promoting a conservation ethic, citizenship values based on a respect for the environment and heritage, ecosystem and cultural resource management [and] generally demonstrating conservation principles and approaches set out in various relevant United Nations Reports. (Heritage Canada, 1994 8)<sup>24</sup>

Beginning in the mid-1990s, a growing park "ecological federalism" attempted to find a new place for the parks among competing discourses of heritage, ecology and economy. The parks continued to struggle with the tension between attracting tourists and preserving landscapes, some of which are attractive to visitors for reasons that are fairly antithetical to ecological goals (e.g., golf courses and serviced car camping facilities). Still, advocates found new purchase for preservation in the idea of ecological integrity: here was a legitimate language through which to justify not only the creation of more parks, but their development in ways consistent with sound principles of environmental management. Perhaps more importantly, in Canada the ground was already broken for an articulation of ecological integrity with *national* integrity. Although ecological integrity is essentially a biological understanding of landscape, it is not a large leap from a notion of preserving biological diversity to one of preserving that biological diversity for reasons of national heritage. The history of the national parks already included, in a variety of forms, a strong concept of parks as sites recording national/natural origins. Ecological integrity, by borrowing a globally legitimated environmental discourse to the task of narrating the parks, could thus also offer a strong nationalist rationale to the imperative of preservation.

## **2000: Ecological Integrity and Historical Erasure**

It is widely accepted that the term ecological "integrity" was first used by Aldo Leopold: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community" (224-25). The first official mention of it for Parks Canada was 40 years later, in the 1979 revised National Parks Policy, and the term was legislated into mandate in the 1988 Amendment to the National Parks Act: "Maintenance of ecological integrity through the protection of natural resources shall be the first priority when considering park zoning and visitor use in a management plan" (Government of Canada, 1988<sup>25</sup>). The concept of ecological integrity does not carry a precise and agreed-upon meaning, either scientifically or politically. For Heritage Canada in 1994, for example, it was easily paired with "commemorative integrity" to produce a rather vague concept of heritage that rested on the equally vague goal of preserving both natural and human history. With its enshrinement as a legal responsibility, however, "the problem of usefully defining [ecological integrity] in the context of National Park management" became a pressing issue, not least because it was clear to those involved in implementing the legislation that the concept of integrity expressed "important values associated with the management actions being undertaken, but [it did] not provide clear guidelines for these actions" (Woodley, Kay and Francis viii, vii). Indeed, Stephen Woodley of the Canadian Parks Service acknowledged the slipperiness of the term in 1993 when he wrote:

For national parks, we propose a definition of ecological integrity that recognizes both ethical judgment and quantitative elements provided by ecosystem science .... Ecological integrity is defined as a state of ecosystem development that is optimized for its geographic location, including energy input, available water, nutrients and colonization history. For national parks, this optimal state has been referred to by such terms as natural, naturally-evolving, pristine and untouched. It implies that ecosystem structures and functions are unimpaired by human-caused stresses and that native species are present at viable population levels. (157-58)

As part of a constellation that includes terms such as "pristine" and "untouched," integrity is clearly related to wilderness as a space free from, or emptied of, human traces. Unlike wilderness, however, ecological integrity carries with it a weight of scientific authority that is understood as leading logically to specific policies that are designed to protect an ecosystem or restore it to a particular state. It is explicitly an interventionist goal, predicated on the fact that the mere existence of park boundaries is usually not sufficient to "protect": indeed, in ecological integrity, parks are not so much repositories of nature as sites of potential within larger ecosystemic units that necessarily exceed park boundaries. By this definition, parks *cannot* by themselves protect integrity. Ecological

integrity is also a move beyond the idea of "natural areas," as the ecosystem concept creates an idea of nature as a space that must be understood and managed scientifically, even if societal desires are recognized as part of the management problem. As Woodley writes in a more recent essay, "as a management end point, ecological integrity is a significant advance from the notion of 'natural' in that it forces the use of ecosystem science, in combination with societal wishes, to define and decide on ecosystem goals" (2009 114). In short, the inclusion in Parks Canada legislation and policy of the concept of ecological integrity represents, particularly since 1988, a move toward understanding parks as places with a worth and direction defined in scientific terms and painted on a larger canvas than parks alone. Although the term is clearly tempered with questions of value, the emergence of ecological integrity as a "first priority" for planning and management was a significant change.

The Panel on Ecological Integrity, struck by Heritage Minister Sheila Copps in 1998, confirmed this direction. Including the collected expertise of a variety of natural and social scientists as well as a year's worth of consultations and workshops held in nine different parks, it was mandated to "assess the strengths and weaknesses of Parks Canada's approach to the maintenance of ecological integrity in Canada's national parks and, based on this assessment, provide advice and recommend how best to ensure that ecological integrity is maintained across the system" (Parks Canada, 2000 Appendix A 1). Among its key findings, the Panel called for more and better science in park management practice: "With notable exceptions, all levels of Parks Canada lack a well-established culture for conducting, using, and appreciating science as part of park management, interpretation and regional integration" (1:9). It was also clear that ecological integrity required not only the better scientific tools for "inventory, research and monitoring" but also—interestingly, given Parks Canada's view that "ecosystems should evolve in the absence of most human intervention"—active management practices, "where there are reasonable grounds," said the Panel, "in order to compensate for past actions" (1:9). Aboriginal relationships to park landscapes, which the Panel termed "naturalized knowledge and values," were considered key to management for integrity: "Ignorance of naturalized knowledge has contributed to the decline of ecological integrity in many parks. A process of healing is needed to develop trust and respect and to facilitate two-way communication and education between Parks Canada and Aboriginal peoples" (1:10). And finally, updated interpretive programs were necessary in order to communicate ecological integrity to the general public: "public support for protecting ecological integrity will come from strong messages emphasizing the positive aspects of ecological integrity" (1:10).<sup>26</sup>

There are more things going on in the Report than can possibly be addressed in this paper. The idea of ecological integrity as an ideal state of

nature that excludes most human use—but not some “naturalized” Aboriginal use—is, for example, fraught with problems, including the perpetuation of an opposition between tradition/nature and modernity/culture that has, in many circumstances, locked Aboriginal peoples into an association with nature against which their contemporary economic and political desires are often deemed illegitimate (Braun). The opposition has also tended to exclude all other forms of knowing nature from the realm of relevant park expertise, including that of the people living adjacent to—and recently removed from—the parks themselves (Samson). Relatedly, the presentation of ecological integrity as a relatively coherent concept (even though there is agreement on the lack of consensus about its meaning) to which science and Aboriginal knowledge both contribute has the effect of erasing the power inequality between the two. As the Panel makes clear, science defines integrity, and Aboriginal “naturalized knowledge systems” are able to contribute to integrity provided that their “systems” are congruent with a meaning and valuation of nature already defined elsewhere (according to the Panel, the two views are inherently the same anyway: science and Aboriginal knowledges both “improve responsibility for the natural world” (Parks Canada, 2000 4:3).

But the element on which I would like to focus is the intersection of park-nature and nation that undergirds the Report’s discourse of integrity, as the EI Panel did not spare the nationalist rhetoric: these are Canada’s “sacred” spaces, after all. In the first place, the Report—conducted under Chrétien—was a clear extension of the ecological federalism described above. What was different, though, was the pronounced emphasis on science as the primary knowledge system to guide the future of the parks. In part because of growing recognition of the impossibility of preserving integrity in parks the size of Prince Edward Island or Point Pelee, parks moved from being representatives of an extant national nature to being zones for uncovering the buried potential of national nature, places where integrity was impaired but, with the concerted cooperation of Federal, Provincial, Territorial and Aboriginal governments, and the inclusion of regional lands and bodies in the ecological picture, possible. The knowledge privileged to do the uncovering—the assessment, monitoring, and (“where there are reasonable grounds”) intervention—is science, and that science is to be directed by Parks Canada. To be fair to the Panel, its mandate was not that flexible: it was to report to Parks Canada on how to best achieve a management goal that had already been mandated in federal policy. But the effect of the Report was to sanction the centralization of environmental knowledge even further. The unruliness of the parks, their “impairment,” “stresses,” “nonconforming activities,” and “inappropriate infrastructure”—in other words, their history as institutions that have served a variety of purposes and continue to do so irrespective of mandate—were, apparently, an invitation to federally dominated planning and management, not (for example) a more democratic process of

consultation about what a larger swath of Canadians want from both the park system and individual park spaces. The dominance of a scientific understanding of integrity, despite the ethical judgments that, as the Panel admits, lie at the heart of any desire for an ecosystem, had the effect of legitimating the dominance of the federal government to tell Canadians, rather than ask them, what parks should be.

In the second place, the EI Panel accomplished its naturalization of federal scientific dominance by erasing the fact that parks have not always been about safeguarding representative bits of the natural world. Reading the Report, it is as if the point of the parks has always been preservation; ecological integrity is thus just the most advanced way of doing what the parks have always really done. The Report states, with typically blanket use of the present tense, that the parks'

role in Canadian society is far greater than their actual area within the Canadian landscape. These are the places where Canadians protect, study and learn about the living diversity of nature; where Canadians celebrate their identity as citizens of a uniquely wonderful land. Just as national historic sites and other cultural heritage places help root Canadians in a shared and diverse history, so do national parks and other protected areas help root Canadians in the geographic and biological diversity that defines the Canadian people. (1:3)

Particularly in its insistence that "there is no dual mandate" and that a "proper" interpretation of the National Parks Act of 1930 reveals that something like integrity had been the primary goal of Parks Canada for the preceding 70 years (2:5), the Panel disregarded the fact that, for most of the history of the parks, goals very different from preservation had been at least as important as protection, that a large number of the parks had been added to the system for reasons that had little to do with ecology, and that even the most ardent early park advocates saw no conflict between recreation and preservation until at least the 1960s. The effect of this erasure of the parks' history is a naturalization of integrity as the destiny of Canadian national parks. The EI Panel took on the role of bearers of the nation, showing the "true" purpose of parks through the clouds of poor management and, apparently, inaccurate interpretation and implementation of the 1930 Act. This stance is significant. Rather than admit that the insertion of ecological integrity into the Parks Canada mandate is new and difficult given the complex history of most of the parks in the system, the Panel chose to appear as the midwife of a transhistorical essence: the nature ideals have always been there, but there has been something obscuring them. This logic demonstrates one of the strongest forms of ideological nationalism yet to be enacted in and through the parks. Perhaps especially in the midst of a globalization that adds both ecological and ideological pressure to their existence, the EI Panel's assertion of integrity (mandated federally and comprehended by experts) as essential to park-nature (experienced as

"sacred" by a receiving public) ties nature to nation in what Homi Bhabha would insist are profoundly pedagogical ways.

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha offers that

the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of the anxiety of its irredeemably plural modern space – representing the nation's modern territoriality is turned into the archaic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism. The difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One. (149)

It is not difficult to see this displacement in the Panel's logic. The present of the parks (and of the nation) is exceptionally messy. These landscapes are not only cross-cut with a complex history but are increasingly figured as sites in g/local geographies that both overarch and undercut the nation entirely. In this context, the discourse of ecological integrity restores Tradition to the parks. As a new-and-improved window on the essence of Territory, it claims the authority to define the nation in ways that resist challenge. In the first place, ecological integrity offers a mode by which the parks can be re-unified, this time as a series of places whose primary goal is to represent, in as "unimpaired" a state as possible, the timeless origins of the nation. Impairment is, however, really history; the relations by which parks have been created, used, abused, and manipulated demonstrate the changing ways in which nature has been figured as part of the imagined territory of Canada. Thus, to the extent that ecological integrity erases the messiness of that history in its quest to orient the parks along a singular preservationist thread, it erases the fact that Canada is historical rather than timeless. Ecological integrity gives the nation the natural patina of the immemorial: not only are alternatives to the parks erased in the blanketing of the landscape with ahistorically preserved "origins," but alternatives in the parks are rendered mere deviations from the essential goal of revealing to Canadians the nature that "defines the Canadian people."

That the discourse of ecological integrity is articulated with a heavy emphasis on expert management is also significant. In this move, the essence of the national park (and thus the territory of the nation) is placed out of the reach of most Canadians' ability to comprehend it. The truth of nature lies below the surface, and can only be accessed through the increased application of expert-driven principles to the particular territories that comprise the parks. These principles can then be taught to visitors in a one-way process of disseminating the truth of integrity. Effectively, the value and meaning of the parks come to lie only within the ken of scientists legitimated by the federal government; not only is the truth of the park-nation increasingly singular, but it is also increasingly monopolized by the state, lending a greater quality of legitimacy to the state as the bearer of the nation.<sup>27</sup> Much as some of the goals of the Ecological Integrity Panel may be praised, such as its condemnation of untrammelled economic



growth in park-spaces, there is a price to its potent combination of scientific univocity and nationalist naturalization. In its overdetermining move to create a narrative of the Canadian nation—in which Tradition and Territory are absolutely identical and unified through Preservation—we lose the richness of the history of the parks, their location both historically and currently in conflicting and overlapping global and local meanings. In this loss, we forget the fact that parks are always already forms of erasure that involve colonial assumptions about the relationship between nature and civilization. In this loss, we forget the fact that the messy present of the parks is part of their history, and not a diversion from their perfect(able) origins or futures. In this loss, finally, we bypass an important view of the ways in which nation and nature are part of the gendered, racialized, and class relations involved in the ongoing struggle for the representation of Canada, including its natural landscapes.

### Notes

1. The phrase “ecological integrity” also entered legislation in 1988. The EI Panel Report claims, however, that “a proper reading of the National Parks Act of 1930 reveals that even before 1988 there was no dual mandate” (2:5). This statement is both quite inaccurate in my reading and, as a result, quite interesting. Although the 1930 Act includes the requirement that the parks be maintained “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” (indeed, this clause is largely unchanged in the National Parks Act of 2000), it is historically suspect to equate a 1930 conception of “unimpaired” with a 1988 one of ecological integrity, and simply incorrect to suggest that there wasn’t (and isn’t) a tension between preservation and recreation that has had different textures at different historical moments. The question of *why* the EI panel insisted on erasing that past is the subject of the final section of the paper.
2. The earliest exceptions are tiny Elk Island (AB), established in 1907 for wildlife conservation and tinier Point Pelee (ON), established in 1920 as a sanctuary for migrating birds. Wood Buffalo is an anomaly in the system in many respects: it was established in 1922 as a wildlife refuge, but its buffalo herds have been exploited at various points in its history for purposes other than preservation. Four others—Buffalo, Menissawak, Nemiskam and Wawaskey—were established in Alberta and Saskatchewan as buffalo or pronghorn refuges; all were abolished in the 1930s and 1940s. See Sandlos (2003) and Brower (2008).
3. I am painting with broad strokes and focus on the overarching park “system.” It is important to point out, however, that different parks have different relationships to nationalism, and for different people. For example, Banff may be iconically “national” to Canadians but not to millions of Japanese and German tourists, and not to the First Nations woman who was arrested for picking berries on park land that she claimed as part of her traditional subsistence right. Gwaii Haanas is actually the preserve/sacred ground of two nations, Canadian and Haida; Pacific Rim National Park Reserve (still not a park) is similarly contested by two nations, Canadian and Nuu-Chah-Nulth. Francophone Québécois visitors barely seem to notice that La Mauricie is a federal park. And it is very hard to see “Canada” over “Newfoundland” in Gros Morne, especially where one waggish sign in the museum marking the province’s confederation reads “1949: Canada joins

- Newfoundland." For this reason, the park-nationalisms I present are overlapping: they are general and shifting discourses, not discrete and bounded entities. There are also other ways of periodizing the parks (see, for example, Searle 131-32).
4. On the emptying of the wilderness for the sake of parks, see, of course, William Cronon's essay "The Trouble With Wilderness" (1996).
  5. The Dominion Lands Act of 1860 promised 160 acres to any man willing to stake ten dollars on his ability to cultivate 40 acres.
  6. The Act drew a distinction between Parks and Forest Reserves: the former were understood primarily as resource conservation areas, where the latter (a smaller set) were considered "public parks and pleasure grounds." The Act was amended in 1913 to clarify and specify the definition and regulation of parks.
  7. For an excellent discussion of the role of national parks in the development of US national identity during this period, see Marguerite Shaffer, *See America First* (2001).
  8. These included the four now-defunct prairie wildlife reserves (see note 1), Point Pelee, Kootenay, Wood Buffalo, Prince Albert, Georgian Bay Islands, Riding Mountain and Cape Breton Highlands (Prince Edward Island followed soon after in 1937). After Harkin's departure from office, there was not another similar push for park creation until the late 1960s.
  9. Harkin's annual reports as Commissioner showed this new articulation. His Report for the 1920 fiscal year began with a discussion of the revival of tourism in the period immediately following World War I. In this discussion, he nodded to the emergence of a Canadian national identity and the role of parks in promoting it: "As was anticipated, the cessation of the war with all its attendant anxieties produced in many the desire for change and recreation and, possibly because of the part she had played in the conflict, hundreds of thousands turned their eyes toward Canada" (1921 7). In 1928, he went further: "This widespread interest in national parks reveals the awakening of a new consciousness, the development of a national pride in the beauty of the country and a recognition of the value of these great public reservations" (1929 9).
  10. At the same time, he clearly understood parks as "sanctuaries" for wildlife, even if his motives were (as perhaps they must be in a fiscal report) as much economic as preservationist (e.g., in his 1920 Report, he suggests the use of park buffalo for leather, wool and meat and estimated the average price of a muskrat skin from Point Pelee): "the continued increase in all forms of wild life is very gratifying. It affords incontrovertible evidence of the value of sanctuary protection" (12). And in 1928: "The success of national parks of this continent as game sanctuaries has been firmly established during the past ten years. Their usefulness in this respect is now widely recognized not only at home but abroad and many countries are supporting the creation of similar national parks as the best means for the conservation of wild life" (1929 10). It is also worth noting that, following the passage of the Migratory Birds Act in 1917, the National Parks Branch took responsibility for the management of wildlife on federal lands. Discussion of bird conservation and education is also in Harkin's annual reports.
  11. 1928 saw the first meeting of park superintendents with a goal of implementing "uniform control of the parks generally."
  12. See Loo on this on this disciplinary park modernism. In addition, of course, parks served a clear ideological function as *punitive* sites in both World Wars; as Bill Waiser has traced extensively, "enemy aliens" and conscientious objectors were forced to labour (often in appalling conditions) in many of the western Canadian parks. Here, "outsiders" to the nation-state were to demonstrate their

responsibilities to the state through character-building work on and in a distinctly national space; they were, literally, building the nation as they were proving themselves worthy of national consideration.

13. Canadians, of course, have long since held that our wilderness, or our views of wilderness, make us distinct: Northrop Frye's idea of the "garrison mentality," for example, was later part of an influential articulation of ideas of wilderness with a distinctly anti-US left-nationalism. Although there is something to be learned about parks from this debate, I will leave its discussion for elsewhere. For a discussion of the rise of wilderness-consciousness in North America, Roderick Nash's classic text *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967) is indispensable; although it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider them, there were differences between the United States and Canada in both the timing and the nature of this developing sentiment.
14. On top of the principle of park inviolability enshrined in the Act, which protected against resource extraction but not tourist infrastructure—the latter was not seen as a threat—Harkin advocated a national standard for park establishment, requiring a site to possess either outstanding scenic beauty or "unusual" recreational quality. For example, during this period the Parks Branch promoted the establishment of golf courses. Taylor's discussion of the 1930 Act considers this tension in detail.
15. At the time, he was Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in Trudeau's cabinet.
16. Searle documents Chrétien's handling of a proposal to expand Village Lake Louise in the early 1970s. Only when confronted by huge opposition did he back down from his plans to accept the proposal. But even as he relented, he stated that national parks "should be accessible to those Canadians who have neither the health, the advantage of location, the physical stamina, the time or the money to explore the vast roadless wilderness zones" (143).
17. The idea of parks as not only "national" places but also as rewards to distribute across the country actually began under Harkin's regime: one of his long-term desires was to have a park in every province, and under Trudeau the federal government finally achieved it.
18. Not surprisingly, the following paragraph noted that, on top of national pride, national parks contributed an estimated \$636 million to the Canadian economy and 29,000 jobs, "many of them in economically depressed areas."
19. Expropriation was especially controversial in the 1969 creation of Kouchibouguac National Park in New Brunswick.
20. Richard Day has shown, quite brilliantly, some of the many problems with this kind of multiculturalist image.
21. The success of this bi-national co-management venture is an open question (Porter-Bopp).
22. A 1987 Task Force Report on Park Establishment went so far as to argue that national parks should not necessarily be established in each of Canada's 39 natural regions, but could instead be counted as *elements* in a "flexible" system that would include other forms of heritage preservation, i.e., privately-funded ones. It stated that "protection of Natural Areas of Canadian Significance (NACS) should be pursued in the context of completing a Canadian system of protected areas, recognizing that national parks are not the only means for serving the national interest, and that many public and private agencies can contribute to the goal. This will require flexible ownership arrangements, cost-sharing among

- contributing agencies, new partnership agreements as well as strategic alliances to build political support" (Minister of the Environment ix)
23. Nine marine ecosystems were also included by this time.
  24. In addition, the document presented a rather idiosyncratic conceptual convergence between a notion of parks as sites of heritage preservation and another of parks as sites for ecological integrity. Frequently deploying the phrases "cultural and natural heritage" and "ecological and commemorative integrity" as if the terms belonged together unproblematically, the document goes so far as to say: "Though a distinction is often made between places that are of cultural heritage significance and places of natural heritage significance, people and their environment cannot be separated. Therefore, protection and presentation of natural areas recognize the ways in which people have lived within particular environments. Likewise, efforts to protect and present historic places recognize where biophysical factors have been influential in Canada's development and history" (17-18).
  25. One of the more obvious flaws with this wording from an ecological perspective, the limitation of protection to "natural resources," was amended in the 2000 National Parks Act to include "natural processes" as well.
  26. Other key findings concerned such issues as: the translation of the EI Panel mandate into concrete actions; the development of a comprehensive national protected areas strategy; the cultivation of multi-level cooperation from landowners, governments, and First Nations; the implementation of park user policies based on assessed criteria of appropriateness; the limitation of the parks' "built environments," and the development of a "supportive financial framework" alongside new management practices. The Report, in two volumes, is clearly a lot to think about.

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