

# The Ambiguities of Disciplinary Professionalization: The State and Cultural Dynamics of Canadian Inter-war Anthropology

Andrew Nurse

Volume 30, Number 2, 2007

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/800546ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/800546ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

CSTHA/AHSTC

ISSN

0829-2507 (print)

1918-7750 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Nurse, A. (2007). The Ambiguities of Disciplinary Professionalization: The State and Cultural Dynamics of Canadian Inter-war Anthropology. *Scientia Canadensis*, 30(2), 37–53. <https://doi.org/10.7202/800546ar>

Article abstract

The professionalization of Canadian anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century was tied closely to the matrix of the federal state, first through the Anthropology Division of the Geological Survey of Canada and then the National Museum. State anthropologists occupied an ambiguous professional status as both civil servants and anthropologists committed to the methodological and disciplinary imperatives of modern social science but bounded and guided by the operation of the civil service. Their position within the state served to both advance disciplinary development but also compromised disciplinary autonomy. To address the boundaries the state imposed on its support for anthropology, state anthropologists cultivated cultural, intellectual, and commercially-oriented networks that served to sustain new developments in their field, particularly in folklore. This essay examines these dynamics and suggests that anthropology's disciplinary development did not create a disjunctive between professionalized scholarship and civil society.

# The Ambiguities of Disciplinary Professionalization: The State and Cultural Dynamics of Canadian Inter-war Anthropology

Andrew Nurse

Mount Allison University

**Abstract:** The professionalization of Canadian anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century was tied closely to the matrix of the federal state, first though the Anthropology Division of the Geological Survey of Canada and then the National Museum. State anthropologists occupied an ambiguous professional status as both civil servants and anthropologists committed to the methodological and disciplinary imperatives of modern social science but bounded and guided by the operation of the civil service. Their position within the state served to both advance disciplinary development but also compromised disciplinary autonomy. To address the boundaries the state imposed on its support for anthropology, state anthropologists cultivated cultural, intellectual, and commercially-oriented networks that served to sustain new developments in their field, particularly in folklore. This essay examines these dynamics and suggests that anthropology's disciplinary development did not create a disjuncture between professionalized scholarship and civil society.

**Résumé :** La professionnalisation de l'anthropologie canadienne dans la première moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle fut étroitement liée à la matrice de l'État fédéral, tout d'abord par l'entremise de la division anthropologique de la Commission géologique du Canada, et ensuite par le biais du Musée national. Les anthropologues de l'État possèdent alors un statut professionnel ambigu à la fois comme fonctionnaires et comme anthropologues dévoués aux impératifs méthodologiques et disciplinaires de la science sociale moderne, mais limités et guidés par les exigences du service civil. Leur position au sein de l'État a favorisé le développement de la discipline, mais a également compromis l'autonomie disciplinaire. Pour faire face aux limites imposées par l'État au soutien de leur discipline, les anthropologues de la fonction publique ont entretenu différents réseaux culturels, intellectuels, et commercialement-orientés qui ont servi à soutenir les nouveaux développements de leur champ, particulièrement dans l'étude du folklore. Le présent essai examine ces dynamiques et suggère que le développement disciplinaire de l'anthropologie ne crée pas de dislocations entre la recherche professionnelle et la société civile.

In an early essay on history of Canadian anthropology, Douglas Cole argued that the creation of the Anthropology Division of the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) in 1910 marked an abrupt break in disciplinary practice. According to Cole, the establishment of the Anthropology Division introduced a new form of professionalized and Americanized anthropology that displaced an earlier domestic tradition of anthropological writing. In effect, the new state-supported Americanized anthropology broke with what Cole saw as a generalized tradition of socially embedded humanistic scholarship and installed an autonomous social scientific scholarly model.<sup>1</sup> In either explicit or implicit form, subsequent studies into the history of Canadian anthropology have tended to uphold the logic of Cole's argument. In one form or another, the new Anthropology Division was held to usher in an era of professionalized scholarship that differed fundamentally from the amateur work preceding it.<sup>2</sup>

The objective of this essay is both to question and modify this conclusion. I will suggest that the historical dynamics of anthropology's disciplinary development in the first half of the twentieth century present a more complicated picture. The complexity of this picture, I argue, involved two factors. First, the direct connection between anthropology and the state (first through the Anthropology Division and then, after a bureaucratic reorganization of the federal state administrative structures, the National Museum) both advanced and bounded the disciplinary autonomy. In effect, the federal state in Canada contributed to anthropology's professionalization and development as a distinct social scientific discipline but also imposed limits on anthropologists' abilities to control key aspects of disciplinary formation. Canadian state anthropologists occupied an ambiguous professional position as both civil servants and scholars. The ambiguities of this professional status created internal disciplinary controversies about the way in which anthropologists related to other branches of the state, introduced self-imposed censorship with regard to at least some anthropological writing, and drew anthropologists into periodic conflicts with the civil service. Second, the development of professionalized anthropology did not efface a wider social and popular interest in either anthropological issues or the First Nations and folk cultures that were taken as the proper field of anthropological study. Canadian anthropologists supported this interest through a complex series

---

1. Douglas Cole, "The Origins of Canadian Anthropology," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 8, 1 (1973): 33-45.

2. Cf. Regna Darnell, *Edward Sapir: Linguist, Anthropologist, Humanist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) and J.V. Wright, "The Development of Prehistory in Canada, 1935-1985," *American Antiquity* 50, 1 (1985): 421-33.

of social and cultural networks that linked anthropological research to Canada's business and artistic communities.

### The Organization of State Anthropology

From its inception in 1910 until after World War II, the Anthropology Division (and, later, the National Museum) served as the centre of anthropological research and disciplinary development in Canada.<sup>3</sup> The establishment of Canadian state anthropology was tied to a broader historical process through which the modern sciences, social sciences, and humanities developed in Canada.<sup>4</sup> It did not, however, initiate scholarly or social interest in anthropological issues. Instead, the process of disciplinary development initiated through the creation of the Anthropology Division involved a programme designed to disentangle anthropology as a specialized field of scholarship from its connection with either a more general nineteenth-century amateur interest in "relics" and "primitive" peoples,<sup>5</sup> or the broad framework of natural history. In nineteenth-century Canada, anthropological interest and research was tied to a diverse series of different disciplinary and institutional dynamics, including: local scientific, literary and historical societies,<sup>6</sup> private museums, missionary work, the more generalized scholarship of the era associated with "gentlemen" amateurs,<sup>7</sup> and foreign institutions that

---

3. On post-World War II developments in anthropology, see Regna Darnell, "Department Networks in Canadian Anthropology"; Elvi Whittaker and Michael A. Ames, "Anthropology and Sociology at the University of British Columbia from 1947 to the 1980s" and Marc-Adélar Tremblay, "Anthropology at Université Laval: The Early Years, 1958-70" all in *Historicizing Canadian Anthropology*, eds. Julia Harrison and Regna Darnell (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

4. William A. Waiser, *The Field Naturalist: James A. Macoun, the Geological Survey, and Natural Science* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Stéphane Castonguay, "Naturalizing Federalism: Insect Outbreaks and the Centralization of Entomological Research in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 85, 1 (2004): 3; Marlene Shore, "Carl Dawson and the Research Ideal: The Evolution of a Canadian Sociologist," *Historical Papers - Canadian Historical Association* 20, 11 (1985): 45-73; Carl Berger, *Honour and the Search for Influence: A History of the Royal Society of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

5. Donald A. Wright, "W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s-1918," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 2 (1997): 134-154.

6. Léon Gérin, "The Hurons of Lorette," *Transactions of the Ottawa Literary and Scientific Society* (1899-1900): [69]-92 ; Edward Jack, "The Abenakis of Saint John River," *Transactions of the Canadian Institute, Session 1891-1892* 3 (1893): 195-205.

7. John Reade, "Local Meetings and Other Notices," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 5, 17 (1892): 155; George Patterson, "Notes on the Folk-Lore of Newfoundland," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 7, 30 (1895): 285-90.

funded and, at times, directly conducted research.<sup>8</sup> By the early-twentieth century, American and British anthropologists were encouraging the Canadian government to provide direct support for anthropological research. Franz Boas, perhaps the most important American anthropologist of the time,<sup>9</sup> spoke on the need for Canadian anthropology at both the 1906 Congress of Americanists meeting at Quebec City and the British Association's 1909 meeting in Winnipeg. Boas argued that the key problem facing Canadian anthropology was the rapidly evolving character of aboriginal cultures. Concerted research was required, he argued, because the study of Canadian First Peoples could contribute to broader international controversies within the discipline.<sup>10</sup>

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the GSC remained one of Canada's pre-eminent scientific institutions.<sup>11</sup> Established before Confederation, the GSC mandate included the collection of "relics" and anthropological issues occupied the periodic attention of some survey staff.<sup>12</sup> The distinction between anthropological research and other forms of natural history, however, remained poorly defined.<sup>13</sup> The 1907 Department of Mines Act, for example, defined ethnological collection and classification as one aspect of a broad series of GSC objectives that

---

8. On the direct conduct of anthropological research by an American institution in Canada, see Stanley A. Freely et al., "Capitalist Philanthropy and Russian Revolutions: The Jessup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902)," *American Anthropologist* 90, 1 (1988): 7-24.

9. Regna Darnell, *And Along Came Boas: Continuity and Revolution in Americanist Anthropology* (Amsterdam: Johns Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000).

10. Franz Boas, "Ethnological Problems in Canada," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 40 (1910): 529.

11. Morris Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1972* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975).

12. Darnell, *Edward Sapir*, 41; W. Fraser Tolmie and George M. Dawson, *Comparative Vocabularies of the Indian Tribes of British Columbia* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1884). Other GSC anthropological publications tended to be reprinted from other sources. Cf. Rev. Alfred J. Hall, *A Grammar of the Kwakiutl Language* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1889), originally published the year before in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*.

13. The complexity and ambiguity of anthropology's position in pre-1910 Canadian state science might be illustrated by the career of George Mercer Dawson, one of the best-known Canadian scientists of the nineteenth century. Dawson worked as well on anthropological and archaeological matters, served as an editor of the *American Anthropologist* and as president of the Ethnological Survey of Canada, through which British research funding supported anthropological research in Canada. His obituary in the *American Anthropologist* detailed his contributions to that discipline but conceded that he is best considered as a geologist. My point, of course, is that such specific disciplinary professional identities – particularly for anthropology – did not exist in the nineteenth century. W.J.M., "George Mercer Dawson," *American Anthropologist* 3, 1 (1901): 159-163.

included “geology, mineralogy, paleontology” and the study of the “fauna and flora of Canada.”<sup>14</sup> Within the Department, ethnological collection was organized through the Geological Survey Branch, responsible to the Director who, in turn, reported to the Deputy Minister. No staff, however, were assigned to regularly conduct anthropological research or organize any collected material. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Survey Director, R.W. Brock began to note the absence of trained anthropological staff and the uneven state of the GSC’s ethnographic collection.<sup>15</sup> To address this problem, Brock developed a collaborative arctic ethnography programme with the American Museum of Natural History and mobilized the concerns of British and American scholars in support of his own contention that the GSC needed a “trained scientific ethnologist.”<sup>16</sup>

Brock’s plans for GSC anthropology were both nebulous and precise. After the appointment of Edward Sapir in 1910 as the Survey’s first anthropologist, Brock reported that a new Division had been established. Its mandate included “field work among the native tribes of Canada for the purpose of collecting extensive and reliable information on their ethnology and linguistics, archaeological field work, the publication of results obtained in these investigations, and the exhibition in the Museum of specimens illustrative of Indian and Eskimo life, habitat and thought.”<sup>17</sup> For expertise, Brock turned to Boas for recommendations and settled on Sapir, who had completed his doctorate with Boas at Columbia. He was interested, Brock told Sapir, in appointing someone who could both “carry on the scientific work which should be undertaken” and who could also “build up a strong department.”<sup>18</sup> In effect, Brock charged Sapir with creating a programme of anthropological research and scholarship in Canada.

As the newly-appointed chief anthropologist Sapir moved rapidly to re-organized state anthropology. He adopted a modified version of the

---

14. An Act to Create a Department of Mines, Edward VII, Chap 29 (assented 27 April 1907), in Canada, Department of Mines, Geological Survey Branch, *Catalogue of Publications of the Geological Survey of Canada* (Ottawa: C.H. Parmalee, 1909), 11.

15. *Summary Report of the Geological Survey of Canada for the Calendar Year 1906* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1906), 5-6.

16. V.S. Steffanson, “A Preliminary Report of an Ethnological Investigation of the Mackenzie Delta” in *Summary Report of the Geological Survey Branch of the Department of Mines for the Calendar Year 1908* (Ottawa: C.H. Parmalee, 1909), 190; *Summary Report of the Geological Survey Branch of the Department of Mines for the Calendar Year 1909* (Ottawa: C.H. Parmalee, 1910), 2 and 8-9.

17. *Summary Report of the Geological Survey Branch of the Department of Mines for the Calendar Year 1910* (Ottawa: C.H. Parmalee, 1911), 7.

18. R.W. Brock to Edward Sapir, 3 June 1910, cited in Darnell, *Edward Sapir*, 41.

then-current American sub-disciplinary structure, creating separate departments for archaeology, museum preparation, ethnography and linguistics, and physical anthropology. The language of science infused Divisional discourse and its staff argued that their work marked an important break with the past and the establishment of a new field of scholarship in Canada. Neither Sapir nor the other anthropologists who staffed the Division expressed much confidence in previous work conducted by amateurs. Oxford educated Marius Barbeau,<sup>19</sup> appointed as assistant ethnologist shortly after Sapir, made this point perhaps most strongly. Surveying the state of Canadian anthropology in the 1910s, he argued that “[t]he list of monographs drawn by experts [...] is small and hardly any tribe may boast of a fairly complete record of the various aspects of its anthropology.” The state of research was “anything but adequate” and “important tribes [...] have been neglected on the whole.”<sup>20</sup> For his part, Sapir was in complete agreement. Like other anthropologists of their time, Sapir and Barbeau, accepted the idea that First Peoples were “vanishing” before the on-rush of modernity and that traditional culture was rapidly disappearing. The under-developed state of Canadian anthropology and the low quality of existing research made their work particularly pressing. “There is almost nothing published of great merit,” Sapir wrote in 1911, “on the Nascapie, Montagnais, Abenaki, Algonkian, Ottawa, Cree ... [and] [e]ven the Iroquois have been neglected to a most astonishing extent.”<sup>21</sup>

The research programme Sapir established for the Anthropology Division was organized around two separate but inter-related ideas: publication and interaction with a broader, international community of scholars. Using a Boasian model of publication, Sapir argued that Canadian anthropology could make its most effective contribution to both the preservation of supposedly disappearing aboriginal cultures and anthropology as a discipline through a programme of focused research that preserved diverse representative elements of traditional culture and

---

19. Barbeau was born in 1883 in Ste-Marie-de-Beauce into a locally prominent middle-class family. He was educated at classical college at Ste-Anne-de-Kamouraska before attending law school at Laval University in Quebec City. He later became the first French-Canadian Rhodes scholar, shifting the focus of his studies to anthropology while in England. In 1910 he returned to Canada to take up a position with the GSC's Anthropology Division, remaining there throughout his long life and becoming almost certainly the best-known anthropologist of his time. He died in 1969. For a more extended biographic treatment of Barbeau, see Laurence Nowry, *Marius Barbeau: Man of Mana* (Toronto: NC Press, 1995).

20. C.M. Barbeau, “The Indian Tribes of Canada,” *Man* 13 (1913): 123.

21. Edward Sapir, “An Anthropological Survey of Canada,” *Science* 34, 884 (1911): 791 and 793.

made these available through publication. To support this objective, the GSC established a special anthropological series and published other materials in annual reports and shorter volumes.

### **Bounding Autonomy**

When recruiting Marius Barbeau to the Anthropology Division, GSC Director Brock emphasized the scholarly importance of the new positions in anthropology. "There are," he told Barbeau, "well known anthropologists in America who have been doing original work for some years since making their Ph.D.'s [sic] who would welcome this opportunity for it affords unlimited scope for valuable scientific work."<sup>22</sup> The general trajectory of state anthropology in the interwar era seems to confirm this assessment. Years later, Barbeau looked back on his first years as a state anthropologist as a time of pioneering disciplinary development.<sup>23</sup> Museum collections were built, extensive research projects were developed for the Northwest Coast and Eastern Woodlands culture areas, and a raft of new publications were produced. The connection between the state and anthropology served the discipline well in other regards, too. For example, after Diamond Jenness<sup>24</sup> succeeded Sapir as chief anthropologist in 1925, he oversaw the introduction of antiquities legislation for the Canadian arctic, his key area of ethnographic expertise. In effect, the new legislation gave the National Museum's chief anthropologist—at the time, Jenness himself—authority over who could and could not legally conduct archaeological research in the Canadian arctic. In this case, anthropology's connection with the state augmented its authority and backed it with legal force.<sup>25</sup>

At other times, interaction with the state proved more problematic. Two problems, in particular, affected the practice of state anthropology.

---

22. Canadian Museum of Civilization, Marius Barbeau Fonds, [hereafter Barbeau Fonds], B-Mc-3527, R.W. Brock to Marius Barbeau, 27 December 1910.

23. Marius Barbeau, *I Was a Pioneer*, National Museum of Man, Oracle Series no. 44 (1982).

24. Jenness was a contemporary, colleague, and school mate of Barbeau's. Of middle-class background, Jenness was born in New Zealand and came to Canada first in 1913 to work as an ethnologist with the Canadian Arctic Expedition and later joined the regular division staff, taking over direction of the Canadian state anthropology after Sapir's departure. He died in 1969. For biographic details, see Stuart E. Jenness, ed., *Arctic Odyssey: The diary of Diamond Jenness, Ethnologist with the Canadian Arctic Expedition in Northern Alaska and Canada, 1913-1916* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991).

25. Jenness lamented the fact that this authority extended only over the territories and urged other anthropologists to promote similar legislation for the provinces. University of Toronto Archives, Thomas McIlwraith Papers, [hereafter McIlwraith Papers], box 79, file 2, Diamond Jenness to T.F. McIlwraith, 26 May 1939.



First, individual publications required the sanction of the civil service. In most instances, this did not present problems. But, because research materials were housed in the National Museum and collected with its funding and under its auspices, the federal state, in effect, owned anthropologists' research materials. Publication through venues other than the federal state required bureaucratic approval.<sup>26</sup> Internally, anthropologists reviewed each other's prospective publications—a mechanism that served as an informal peer review process—but civil service superiors exercised a final veto. Among themselves, anthropologists used originality as a key publication criterion. Barbeau, for example, urged Sapir to reject one prospective publication conducted by another member of the Division because the author reprinted some material from a previously published source.<sup>27</sup> Civil servants used other criteria, including the production cost and potential public response to publications. Because the state funded anthropology publications, it could exercise significant control over that process.

The most serious disagreement between anthropologists and their bureaucratic superiors occurred over the prospective publication of T.F. McIlwraith's monograph on Bella Coola. McIlwraith, a graduate of Cambridge, was hired on contract after World War I to complete a study of the Northwest Coast Bella Coola.<sup>28</sup> After spending two seasons in field research, McIlwraith organized his research into an extensive monograph that ran into immediate problems. McIlwraith's frank descriptions of sexual life upset the Deputy Minister who ordered the text revised. Jenness reported the Deputy Minister's decision to colleague: "[t]he Deputy announced very emphatically that *if the department published any report that aroused criticism of the institution all anthropological publications might thereafter be banned* [...] the Canadian government could publish nothing that might offend a 12-year-old school-girl."<sup>29</sup> Jenness was emphatic on the matter as well: he could not and would not bring the text back for further assessment. "[Y]our MS," he told McIlwraith, "must be rendered completely innocuous to the most sensitive old maid before I submit it again for publication." Instead, he

---

26. Barbeau Fonds, B-Mc-3543, Marius Barbeau to R.W. Brock, 6 February 1914.

27. Canadian Museum of Civilization, Sapir Fonds, [hereafter Sapir Fonds], box 425, file 20, Marius Barbeau to Edward Sapir, 2 May 1912.

28. John Barker, "Introduction" to John Barker and Douglas Cole, eds., *At Home with the Bella Coola Indians: T.F. McIlwraith's Field Letters, 1922-4* (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 5-6.

29. McIlwraith Papers, box 79, file 2, Diamond Jenness to T.F. McIlwraith, 30 January 1930.

suggested that McIlwraith consider shorter reports or summaries as a way of publishing his results.<sup>30</sup>

The second problem lay in how the complicated relationship between the state and anthropology was perceived by First Peoples. To a greater or lesser extent, all Canadian state anthropologists were interested in the development of Canadian "Indian" policy. Sapir used his position to urge federal authorities to adopt economic development plans for British Columbia First Peoples<sup>31</sup> and Jenness later wrote a series of studies exploring the process of arctic governance.<sup>32</sup> Federal authorities acted on few of these recommendations, but were interested in the views of anthropologists on other matters. From the perspective of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), the most pressing matters were the aboriginal response to the ban on the potlatch and the status of reserves as viable aboriginal communities. In the interwar era, the ideal of assimilation continued to guide federal "Indian" policy.<sup>33</sup> In 1918, Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, and a leading advocate of assimilation, asked Barbeau to undertake a study of the Lorette Huron reserve, at which Barbeau had conducted field research several years before. Scott's request was part of a broader transformation of "Indian" policy intended to promote more coercive measures in order to hasten the pace of assimilation.<sup>34</sup> Scott had known Barbeau since 1915, when he had drawn Scott's attention to health problems among Northwest Coast First Nations. Scott seemed to have been impressed because he solicited Barbeau's views on the response to the anti-potlatch law, among other matters.<sup>35</sup> Barbeau's Lorette report, in the DIA's view, appears to have been intended to justify dis-establishment of the reserve and convert Lorette's legal status from a reserve to a regular Canadian town.

---

30. Ibid. McIlwraith's monograph was eventually published by the University of Toronto Press in 1948. For a fuller discussion of this chapter in the history of anthropological writing and publication, see John Barker "Introduction: T.F. McIlwraith among the Nuxalk (Bella Coola Indians)" to T.F. McIlwraith, *The Bella Coola Indians* reissued ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, [1948] 1992), ix-xxxvii.

31. Sapir Fonds, box 429, file 59, Edward Sapir to Duncan Campbell Scott, 20 December 1917, [copy].

32. Cf. Diamond Jenness, *Eskimo Administration in Alaska, Canada and Greenland*, 5 vols. (Montreal: Arctic Institute of North American, 1962-8).

33. For an overview, see J. Leslie and R. Maguire, eds., *The Historical Development of the Indian Act* (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1983).

34. On Scott, see E. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986).

35. Barbeau Fonds, temporary box 52, Duncan Campbell Scott file, Duncan Campbell Scott, 19 July 1915.

Barbeau was skeptical about state policy with regard to First Peoples, even while he shared the idea of Native peoples as a “vanishing race.” In 1914, he had criticized the shifting framework of federal policy because, he alleged, it amounted to the theft of aboriginal land.<sup>36</sup> With regard to the Lorette reserve, however, he shared the DIA’s view. His wide ranging report examined social, economic, political, historical and cultural dynamics and reached the conclusion that the Lorette Huron could no longer be considered authentic aboriginal peoples. “In matters of habit and behaviour,” Barbeau concluded, “the younger generation has been entirely [E]uropeanized. Huron customs and language have long ago disappeared and only scattered remnants of the past may be detected [...]”<sup>37</sup> In his view Lorette was not an isolated case. Barbeau concluded by recommending that the government consider new legislation “covering all such cases as will eventually crop up” and eliminating the need for reserve-by-reserve assessments before dis-establishment.<sup>38</sup>

The controversy surrounding Barbeau’s report highlighted the problematic position of anthropology as a branch of the state. During a 1920 debate over proposed amendments to the Indian Act, one Member of Parliament read passages from the report to justify the introduction of more coercive policies toward First Peoples.<sup>39</sup> This may or may not have been Barbeau’s position,<sup>40</sup> but his conclusions bent easily in this direction. The report troubled other anthropologists. James Teit, a British Columbia amateur anthropologist who had worked with Boas and on contract for the Anthropology Division, complained that Barbeau’s report hurt the cause of aboriginal rights. Sapir shared Teit’s concerns with Barbeau and raised another: Barbeau’s work for the DIA jeopardized the Division’s mission. It would become impossible for anthropologists to conduct fieldwork among First Peoples if they were viewed as “spies” for the DIA.<sup>41</sup> The success of anthropological research required anthropologists to maintain their distance from other branches of the state.<sup>42</sup> The

---

36. C.M. Barbeau, “Les Indiens du Canada depuis la découverte,” *Mémoires de la Société Royale du Canada* Sec. 1 (1914): 392 and 395.

37. Barbeau Fonds, box 91, file 3, C.M. Barbeau, “The Indian Reserve at Lorette (Quebec): A Report Concerning Its Proposed Disestablishment,” TS [1919], 1-2.

38. *Ibid.*, 19.

39. Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*, 13<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 4<sup>th</sup> session, vol. 5, 1920 (Ottawa: Thomas McIvey [King’s Printer], 4036.

40. Barbeau later claimed his views had been misrepresented. See: Barbeau Fonds, box 173, Marius Barbeau, “En quête de connaissances anthropologiques et folkloriques dans l’Amérique du nord depuis 1911,” Abstract of a course offered by the Faculty of Letters, March–October 1945, TS (1945), 35.

41. Sapir Fonds, box 425, file 23, Edward Sapir to Marius Barbeau, 16 July 1920.

42. The idea of autonomy from the state was equally important to Sapir’s mentor Franz Boas. In 1919, Boas had created a controversy within American anthropology when he

conclusions that they drew frequently in their published sources—that aboriginal peoples were “disappearing”—could not be mobilized in support of public policies that reflected that conclusion.

Sapir was also upset that proper bureaucratic procedures had not been followed when the DIA enlisted Barbeau expertise. The report—the research for which included field research and a public hearing—had been undertaken without his knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Behind the scenes, Barbeau later recalled, his report triggered an internal controversy about the DIA’s use of state anthropologists and the boundaries between applied and pure research conducted under the auspices of the state.<sup>44</sup> The result was new guidelines. Sapir ordered all communication between different branches of the state and the Anthropology Division to be routed through the office of Chief Anthropologist. There was, he told Barbeau, “to be no communication through Indian Affairs sent to the Department without the consent of proper authorities.”<sup>45</sup> In effect, the autonomy of anthropology necessitated limiting the degree to which individual anthropologists were able to communicate with other branches of the state and determine the ways in which their work as anthropologists could be used.

### The Crisis of Folklore Research

From its inception, the evolution of state anthropology in Canada had been tied to an international disciplinary matrix through direct encouragement, financial support for research, and a model of disciplinary development. Within the broad framework of Canadian anthropology, this connection was no where more true than in the case of folklore studies. In 1909, the British Association had urged the Canadian government to make the study of traditional Euro-Canadian culture part of the state anthropology’s mandate.<sup>46</sup> After World War II, folklore studies became a central element of a re-organized mandate for the

---

publically criticized unnamed anthropologists who had undertaken secret missions in Central America for the American government under the guise of professional activities. Boas charged that these anthropologists had “prostituted” their scientific credentials and fractured the bounds of “decency.” He viewed their action as an affront to “professional ethics” and argued they had forfeited their ethical claims to professional status. On this controversy, see Geroge W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* Phoenix edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 273-4.

43. Sapir Fonds, box 425, file 23, Marius Barbeau to Edward Sapir, 7 July 1920.

44. Barbeau, “En quête de connaissances anthrpologiques”, 36.

45. Sapir Fonds, box 425, file 23, Edward Sapir to Marius Barbeau, 16 July 1920.

46. “Anthropology at the British Association, Winnipeg Meeting, August 25th to September 1st, 1909,” *Man* 9 (1909): 171.

National Museum.<sup>47</sup> The initial mandate of the Anthropology Division, however, ignored folklore in favour of a strict focus on First Peoples. The Division began folklore research after Franz Boas suggested that a study of traditional French-Canadian culture would complement work he and his students were doing in the United States. Boas also promised to publish the research results in *The Journal of American Folk-Lore*.<sup>48</sup> Within the Anthropology Division, there must have been some expectation of opposition from senior civil servants because Boas wrote directly to Brock to explain the anthropological importance of the project and encourage GSC support for it.<sup>49</sup> Barbeau became the key proponent of folklore research. Sapir initially supported the research programme but he had not conceived of folklore studies as a permanent aspect of the Division's mandate. By 1918, he was urging Barbeau to devote his full attention to First Peoples that was, he said, "after all our proper work."<sup>50</sup> Barbeau later recalled that civil servants in the Department of Mines and scientists within the GSC were either indifferent or hostile to developing a folklore programme.<sup>51</sup>

To some extent, on-going support from American anthropologists and British musicologists compensated for the indifference of state institutions in Canada. Barbeau initially relied, for example, on American publication venues to see much of the material he collected in rural Quebec into print.<sup>52</sup> In the 1920s Harold Boulton, the British musicologist, provided encouragement and support for Barbeau's work and offered to publish traditional songs in collections that he was producing.<sup>53</sup> Within Canada support for folklore as a field of study and research emerged in the 1920s as a public venture that linked the work of anthropologists working within the state to other state agencies, the tourist industry, and the arts. There was, in fact, an on-going interest in Canada in traditional popular culture that dated back to the mid-nineteenth century tied to the same diverse institutional base that had supported research and study into traditional aboriginal culture: private

---

47. Carmen Roy, *An Introduction to the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies*, National Museums of Canada, Mercury Series no. 7 (Ottawa: 1973).

48. "Marius Barbeau Interviewed at the National Museum of Canada, 1965", TS transcribed by R. Landry, 1982, 20. A transcript of this interview is on file at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

49. Barbeau Fonds, M-Mc-2611, Franz Boas to R.W. Brock, 14 January 1914, [copy].

50. Sapir Fonds, box 425, file 22, Edward Sapir to Marius Barbeau, 7 October 1918, [copy].

51. "Marius Barbeau interviewed at the National Museum of Canada", 50 and 53.

52. Cf. Marius Barbeau, "Contes populaires canadiens," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 30, 115 (1917): 1-140.

53. Barbeau Fonds, B-Mc-3131, Harold Boulton to Marius Barbeau, 1 January 1924.

museums, local societies, and “gentlemen” amateurs found folklore fascinating. In French Canada, interest in traditional culture was also tied to nationalists who saw it as representative of the cultural essence of French-Canada.<sup>54</sup> International travelers and the developing tourist industries that accommodated them also found traditional culture a source of on-going interest.<sup>55</sup>

Barbeau found many of the same sources continued to offer support for his work. In the 1920s and 1930s a variety of other museums and state institutions were interested in both encouraging further work on traditional French-Canadian culture and in developing their own collections of folk art, including the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, the McCord Museum in Montreal (which had long collected traditional French-Canadian arts and crafts), and the Royal Ontario Museum.<sup>56</sup> A similar pattern was evident with artistic institutions and private collectors. In the 1920s and 1930s Barbeau collected a range of traditional French-Canadian crafts for the National Gallery, including a crucifix, gilt figures, carved angels, and textiles.<sup>57</sup> At about the same time, he helped the noted collector Charles S. Band to develop his private collection of traditional arts and crafts.<sup>58</sup>

---

54. Cf. J.M. Lemoine, *Canadian History and Quebec Scenery* (np: 1865); Honoré Beaugrand, *New Studies of Canadian Folk Lore* (Montreal: E.M. Renouf, 1904); Ernest Gagnon, *Chansons populaires du Canada* (Québec: Bureaux du "Foyer Canadien", 1865). For a broader historical treatment of the development of folklore studies in Canada, see C.H. Carpenter, *Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and Their Place in Canadian Culture* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Folklore Studies Paper no. 16, 1979), 205-17.

55. On the early use of traditional culture in Quebec tourist promotion, see Frank Abbott, "Cold Cash and Ice Palaces: The Quebec Winter Carnival of 1894," *Canadian Historical Review* 69, 2 (1988): 167-202. Virtually all nineteenth-century international travel accounts of Canada address the issue of traditional culture. Cf. C.D. Arfwedson, *The United States and Canada in 1832, 1833 and 1834*, vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 339-40; Henry James, "Quebec (1871)" in *Yankees in Canada: A Collection of Nineteenth-Century Travel Narratives*, ed. James Doyle (Downsview: Ont ECW Press, 1980), 125-6, 128, 130-3; H. Beaumont Small, *The Canadian Handbook and Tourist's Guide Giving a Description of Canadian Lake and River Scenery and Places of Historical Interest* (Toronto: M. Longmoore, 1867).

56. C.J. Taylor, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Canada's National Historic Parks and Sites* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); Barbeau Fonds, B-Mc-5864, Marius Barbeau to C.T. Currelly, 15 December 1930, [copy]; C.T. Currelly, *I Brought the Ages Home* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, [1956] 1976), 235, 276, 285.

57. Barbeau Fonds, B-Mc-3618, Eric Brown to Marius Barbeau, 11 September 1928; Barbeau Fonds, B-Mc-3619, Eric Brown to Marius Barbeau, 3 October 1928; Barbeau Fonds, B-Mc-3626, Eric Brown to Marius Barbeau, 17 February 1931.

58. Barbeau Fonds, B-Mc-1161, Charles S. Band to Marius Barbeau, 2 December 1932; Barbeau Fonds, B-Mc-1181, Marius Barbeau to Charles S. Band, 1 November 1933.

Perhaps the most significant centres of support for folklore, however, were Canada's developing artistic community and tourist promoters. A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer, for example, two influential members of the Group of Seven, accompanied Barbeau during his 1925 field research along the Beaupré coast, where they helped him assess the merits of traditional carvers.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, professional musicians found traditional songs a potentially interesting and lively source of material for composition and harmonization.<sup>60</sup> Tourist promoters had some of the same interests but were also interested in the commercial uses of traditional culture. In the late 1920s, Barbeau began to work with the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR), then staging a series of folk music festivals at its different resort hotels across Canada. His involvement in the festivals developed out of his work in the early 1920s with Canadian branches of the American Folk-Lore Society (AFLS). Barbeau had helped re-organize the inactive Canadian branches of the AFLS in order to support publication and develop interest in traditional culture. In so doing he found a body of amateur scholars that were both interested in traditional culture and had been conducting their own research, some of which he managed to have transferred to the National Museum.<sup>61</sup> He also found that there was an interest in more than folklore scholarship. Along with Barbeau, other enthusiasts among amateurs and musicians began to organize folk music recitals in 1919 under the name "Veillées du bon vieux temps," in which they found there was a considerable interest.<sup>62</sup>

For its own reasons, the CPR took over this idea in the late 1920s and began to stage what was, in effect, a folk festival at Quebec City. The programme combined traditional music song by amateurs with modern renditions given by professionals and demonstrations of folk craft production. Music that Barbeau had collected was performed at the 1927 Canadian Folk Song and Handicraft Festival, held at the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City. Through Barbeau's efforts, the National

---

59. Marius Barbeau, "Two Master Carvers of Ancient Quebec," *Dalhousie Review* 16, 3 (1936): 290.

60. Marius Barbeau, Harold Boulton and, Arthur Somervell, *Twelve Ancient French-Canadian Folk-Songs* (London: Boosey & Co, 1927); Marius Barbeau, Paul England, and Healey Willan, *Chanson canadiennes (French Canadian Folk-Songs)* (Oakville: F. Harris Music, 1929).

61. C.M. Barbeau, "Folk-Lore" in *Report of the Department of Mines for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1921* (Ottawa: Department of Mines, 1921), 24; Diamond Jenness, "Division of Anthropology" in *National Museum of Canada. Annual Report for 1928*, Bulletin no. 62 (Ottawa: 1929), 10.

62. "Marius Barbeau Interviewed at th National Museum of Canada", 38.

Museum was one of the sponsoring agencies.<sup>63</sup> The 1928 program was larger featuring a wide range of music harmonized especially for the occasion and listing Marius Barbeau as one of the festival's two musical directors.<sup>64</sup> Barbeau was not always impressed with the artistic dynamics of the festivals but the audience and press responses were enthusiastic.

## Conclusions

Since the establishment of the Anthropology Division of the GSC in 1910, Canadian anthropology had evolved in a range of directions. One direction was a new emphasis on scholarly training, professionalization, and scholarship. As the complicated history of disciplinary development in folklore suggests, however, scholarly professionalization was only part of anthropology's interwar history. The Canadian Folk-Song and Handicraft Festivals of the late 1920s did not last into the depression. They were, the CPR discovered, financially difficult to manage in an era of economic crisis. Smaller concerts and other events, however, continued throughout the era with frequent requests submitted to the National Museum for assistance with music or in finding performers. Whatever the exact form, these concerts illustrated an important dynamic in the development of Canadian social sciences: the degree to which specific aspects of the social sciences remained matters of broader popular interest and concern. The evolution of professionalized anthropology in Canada did not break fundamentally with earlier traditions of amateur interest; indeed in specific areas it worked with non-scholarly communities to sustain, promote and develop fields of scholarship that held little interest for the state.

The history of anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century is not directly comparable to the histories of other social sciences. Unlike sociology, history, and political economy,<sup>65</sup> anthropology did not develop a solid basis in the academy until after World War II. The difference and the degree to which anthropology remained tied to the state affected disciplinary practices and the publication process. It established for anthropologists, an ambiguous identity as both professional scholars and

---

63. *Canadian Folk Song and Handicraft Festival: Annotated General Program, Under the Auspices of the National Museum of Canada, Saturday Matinee* (Quebec: 1927).

64. *Canadian Folk Song and Handicraft Festival, Chateau Frontenac* [programme] (Quebec: 1928), 11.

65. Shore, "Carl Dawson and the Research Ideal"; Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English Canadian Historical Writing since 1900*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986); Ian M. Drummond, *Political Economy at the University of Toronto: A History of the Department, 1888-1982* (Toronto: Faculty of Arts and Sciences, 1983).



civil servants that, at times, created intense controversy and necessitated some degree of self-censorship. It also produced a periodic sense of isolation among state anthropologists. As Diamond Jenness explained to Thomas McIlwraith in 1928: “[h]ere in Ottawa one meets no one from one year’s end to another who has the least interest in anthropology.”<sup>66</sup>

Yet, if the history of anthropology is not directly comparable to other social sciences, the historical processes in which it was involved still raise important matters of consideration. In *The Last Intellectuals*, Russell Jacoby laments the demise of the public man of letters and the confinement of intellectual activities to the academy.<sup>67</sup> Other studies have raised similar questions about the rise of scholarly authority and the situation of social sciences in the university in the twentieth century.<sup>68</sup> The history of anthropology suggests that scholarly professionalization and disciplinary methodological autonomy did not displace a wider interest in the subject matter of the social sciences. They also suggest that the connections between professional scholars and a wider public were not severed, at least for the discipline of anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century.

Instead, networks of cultural and amateur interest in the work of professional scholars remained a vibrant point of contact that tended to support, rather than detract from, disciplinary development. One can raise ethical questions about the ways in which folklore was used by tourist industries or the use of scholarship in support of repressive legal restrictions relating to First Peoples.<sup>69</sup> This need not, however, serve as the only connection between scholars and a wider public. The connection between scholarship and popular interest in social scientific issues, I will suggest, could be, and was, mobilized in a variety of different directions and for a myriad of different reasons.<sup>70</sup> What is important is that this interest existed, that it developed a symbiotic relationship with at least this evolving social science, and that it could mobilized in support of both

---

66. McIlwraith Papers, box 79, file 2, Diamond Jenness to T.F. McIlwraith, 24 September 1928.

67. Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

68. For example, see Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

69. I have attempted to raise some ethical dilemmas about anthropological research methods in Andrew Nurse, “Marius Barbeau and the Methodology of Salvage Ethnography in Canada, 1911-51” in *Historicizing Canadian Anthropology*, eds. Harrison and Darnell, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 52-64.

70. Ian McKay, *For a Working-Class Culture in Canada: A Selection of Colin McKay’s Writings on Sociology and Political Economy, 1897-1939* (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1996).

scholarly and cultural aims. As we assess the historical development of social sciences in Canada, it seems important that we both understand and map the intersections of scholarship and social concern.

Such processes, one could argue, are not matters of purely historical concern. It could, in fact, be argued that the contemporary social sciences in Canada are affected by a wide range of cultural processes and modes of interaction with a non-scholarly public that involve much more than the weight of history. They involve, as well, the shifting ideology, methodological and discursive boundaries through which disciplinary and cultural authority are constructed and challenged. In key cases, the perspectives of disciplinary anthropologists have shifted dramatically. The idea of First Peoples as a “vanish race”, for example, is so alien to the contemporary discipline that its discussion is viewed as a matter of history by practising anthropologists. Instead of simply noting this transition, however, more needs to be done. A history of twentieth-century Canadian anthropology (or, more generally, the social sciences) should assess the dynamics of shifting ideological perspectives but also address the frequent and on-going interaction between disciplines, Canadian culture, and society. In so doing, I believe, what we will discover is that disciplinary professionalization did not isolate anthropology (or, other disciplines) in the academy. Post-World War II disciplinary development in anthropology enhanced anthropology’s autonomy. It also offered new points of social engagement in the courts (often in support of aboriginal rights), state policy formulation, and the media, among others. I doubt anthropology is unique in this regard. Understanding the implications of this process constitutes a possible next agenda in the history of Canadian anthropology and social science.