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Article

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Abstract: Since their inception in the mid-1800s, Indigenous-oriented welfare policies in Canada have presupposed and entailed a racialized subject: the "lazy Indian." This paper highlights continuities in how Indigenous peoples have been constructed in Canadian welfare policy discourse from 1867 to the present. Through this historical overview, we trace the emergence and recurrence of ethical tropes of "productive" and "unproductive" citizens, which effectively cast Indigenous peoples as non-workers and therefore undeserving of welfare relief. Our analysis indicates that further reform of welfare policies for Canada's First Nations must first puncture the persistent myth of the "lazy Indian" in order to attend to the lasting legacy of colonial dispossession and governance, contemporary barriers to self-sufficiency, and ongoing struggles for politico-economic sovereignty.

Keywords: *Indigenous, social policy, settler colonialism, discourse, political economy*

> One of the finest things about being an Indian is that people are always interested in you and your "plight." Other groups have difficulties, predicaments, quandaries, problems, or troubles. Traditionally, we Indians have had a "plight." Our foremost plight is our transparency. People can tell just by looking at us what we want, what should be done to help us, how we feel, and what a "real" Indian is really like.

> – Vine Deloria, Jr.

In a context in which polar icecaps are shifting more quickly than legislative change for Canada's First Nations, the qualifier *glacial* is an understatement. It is common knowledge that Indigenous peoples in Canada experience higher rates of poverty and are disproportionately represented in social assistance caseloads (cf. Gilmore 2015). At the current rate of progress, scholars contend, "it would take 63 years for the [economic] gap [between Indigenous and

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non-Indigenous people] to be erased" (Silver 2014). Perceptions are equally slow to shift. Despite public pageants of national pride and popular discussion of "reconciliation," negative stereotypes persist (Gilmore 2015; CBC News 2016; cf. Povinelli 2002). For instance, one newspaper commentator suggests that Canadian taxpayers "have been overly generous to First Nations" (Milke 2013), while a 2016 survey registers "a widely-held view among non-Aboriginal Canadians that Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement in terms of receiving special consideration and financial benefits from governments" (Environics Institute 2016). Although these views seem rooted in racially inflected resentment and settler denial (Regan 2010), it is dangerous to dismiss them as such. Rather, such views stage a trope of the "lazy Indian" that has inhabited Canadian welfare policy discourse from its inception and that continues to haunt social policy and popular discourse.[1]

Following recent scholarship (see, e.g., O'Connell 2013), this article contends that welfare policy in Canada has historically reproduced and naturalized existing inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians; characterizations of Indigenous people as non-working (and thus dependent) are (re)produced *in* and *by* social welfare policies. Far from being neutral, federal and provincial welfare policies have tended to presuppose social types—for example "deserving" and "undeserving" subjects—that have become the objects of policy intervention, codified through administrative apparatuses[2] (cf. Monaghan 2013).[3]

Accordingly, our analysis focuses on how welfare policies in Canada have both presupposed and entailed a non-working Indigenous subject: the persistent trope of the "lazy Indian" (Lutz 2008, 31). Not only does this trope recur in early Canadian welfare policies, but it also carries into twentieth century policy formulations. Alongside a succession of patriarchal welfare policies, the past century of Indigenous-state relations has seen the emergence of a legislative framework premised on land title extinguishment, environmental degradation of Indigenous traditional lands, and the creation of reserves and residential schools—all of which has undercut Indigenous productivity, self-sufficiency, and sovereignty. In this historical unfolding, we contend, the trope of the "lazy Indian" has been damningly effective.

This article proceeds as follows: first, we offer a broad-brush overview of state-Indigenous relations from 1867 to the present, which provides context for subsequent discussion of welfare reform; second, we sketch the myth of the "lazy Indian" and examine its salience to welfare policy presuppositions; third, we analyze how early "work for welfare"

1 Cooke and Gazso observe that in specific instances, Canadian welfare programs have been "explicitly shaped by ethnicity" (2009, 356). They suggest, however, that welfare discourse in Canada is "less racialized" than welfare discourse in the US. In contrast, our analysis illustrates that welfare discourse in Canada is simply *differently* racialized than parallel US discourses.

2 In addition to Indigenous groups, historically, "non-deserving" subjects have also included black settlers in Canada (O'Connell 2013).

3 Drawing upon analogous archival material, Jeffrey Monaghan describes how racializing discourse operates by classifying Indigenous actors "according to a racial continuum of white normative society, where conduct associated with the white liberal norm is rewarded, and conduct associated with indigeneity is viewed as a mark of abnormality [and] uncertainty" (2013, 488).

policy discourses depict Indigenous subjects, with an eye to the practical implications of this depiction; fourth, we examine how income assistance policies that deploy "active measures" (1990s to present) have depicted Indigenous subjects; and, finally, we conclude by exploring the present-day pragmatic effects of "lazy Indian" discourse.

Indigenous-State Relations in Canada: An Overview

From the mid-nineteenth century onward, Indigenous-state relations in Canada have been characterized by persistent erosion of Indigenous sovereignty through institutionalized "accommodations." Rather than making space for Indigenous sovereignty and economies, such accommodation has sought to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the nation's settler-colonial structures (notwithstanding steadfast resistance by Indigenous peoples to this violation of their lands and bodies). "As the balance of power shifted," the TRC History observes, Indigenous peoples' "rights to land and self-government were brushed aside, and they were pushed onto reserves and cut off from participation in the dynamic sectors of the economy" (11). In Newfoundland and Labrador, for instance, Inuit and Innu peoples were rendered dependent through Hudson's Bay Company practices, Moravian missions, and subsequent intervention by resource sector corporations and federal and provincial governments (Sider 2014). The historical narrative is defined by domination, exploitation, devastating epidemics, and dispossession of Native people's lands and resources.

This history of Indigenous-state relations provides a crucial context for understanding the succession of welfare policies[4] concerning Canada's First Nations. The 1867 British North America Act (hereafter BNA Act), which divided powers between federal and provincial levels of government, represented a crucial step in the juridical undermining of Indigenous sovereignty (Green 2005). Its colonial model did not recognize Indigenous peoples as a constitutionally defined entity, but instead rendered them wards of the state and assigned protection of their lands to the federal government. The subsequent institution of the 1876 Indian Act further eroded Indigenous self-determination, as did the fraudulent practice of granting land tenure to Metis peoples through scrip (Tough and McGregor 2007). With the inception of the Indian Act, federal attitudes toward Canada's Indigenous inhabitants shifted from protection to assimilation. Collectively, such governmental manoeuvres served to transfer control over land and natural resources to external colonial governments, leading to severe impoverishment among Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Assimilationist policy in Canada was founded on the repression of traditional practices and language, land appropriation, and support for a market-based economy (Eisleb-Taylor 2013). Starting in the late 1800s, residential schools contributed to this assault on Indigenous cultural institutions; physical and sexual abuse, malnourishment, overcrowding, and exposure to disease are among the abuses documented in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's inquiry (TRC 2015; see also Barman 2012). In part due to Indigenous resistance, the Indian Act was amended in 1894 to authorize the government "to secure the compulsory attendance

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4 "Welfare" is a somewhat anachronistic term, given the time scale this article discusses. Perhaps "pre-" or "proto-" welfare would be more accurate. For simplicity's sake, however, we will stick with "welfare."

of children at school" through regulation (TRC 2015, 254). TRC writers comment that vocational training was seen as "part of the essential remaking of the Aboriginal character, which was viewed as being inherently lazy," as evidenced by the comments of several education leaders in the 1890s (330). Ironically, this discourse of Indigenous indolence coincided with such schools' exploitation of student labour.

By the late 1960s, the Canadian federal government could no longer ignore the problematic entailments of its settler-colonial relations. For instance, with the proliferation of government-funded social services across Canada after World War II, disparity between services on- and off-reserve became apparent (McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne, and Day 2016). As inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples became increasingly visible, the federal government under Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson commissioned anthropologist Harry B. Hawthorn to investigate the causes and conditions underlying the deleterious social and economic status of the First Peoples of Canada. In his 1967 report, *A Survey of Contemporary Indians in Canada*, Hawthorn suggested that the poor social, educational, and economic outcomes of Canada's "Indians" emerged directly from years of failed government policy—and that these outcomes placed Indigenous peoples in a disadvantageous and socially unjust position within the Canadian state. In Hawthorn's terms, Indians were constituted as "citizens minus": persons lacking the full rights and benefits of citizenship (Canada 1967, 6). The recommendations that emerged from this report were no less paternalistic than their predecessors, however; among other things, Hawthorn advocated for community development programs that would "help people to help themselves" (Canada 1967, 31). Moreover, because the reserve system was seen as creating dependency, Hawthorn favoured moving Indigenous people off of reserves and into urban centres, while concurrently changing welfare and relief systems to encourage independence and ambition (Neu and Therrien 2003).

Following Pearson's resignation in 1968, the incoming Trudeau Liberals interpreted Hawthorn's report as evidence that the differential outcomes of First Nations people resulted from the separate legal status and resultant discriminatory treatment of Indian peoples—rather than from structurally racist government policies and an ongoing process of displacement and dispossession. Accordingly, the administration issued a White Paper that called for the elimination of Indian status, the dismantling of the Indian Act,[5] the transfer of responsibility for Indians and Indian lands to the provinces, and the devolution of the Department of Indian Affairs programs to the provinces and other federal departments (AANDC 1969, Weaver 1981). Although the White Paper acknowledged that the observed social inequality resulted largely from poor federal policy, many First Nations were outraged, seeing the communiqué as yet another indication of the federal government's long-standing goal of assimilating Indians into mainstream society (cf. Coulthard 2014).

It did not take long for First Nations groups to draft several responses rebutting the White Paper. Most notably, in 1970, the Indian Chiefs of Alberta issued a foundational

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5 Titled "An Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of Indian Tribes in this Province, and to Amend the Laws Relating to Indians," 3rd Session, 5th Parliament, 1857.

document entitled *Citizens Plus*[6] (riffing on Hawthorn's discussion of "citizens minus"), which became known as the "Red Paper." The Red Paper rebuked and rejected each of the federal government's proposals, instead offering a First Nations-directed, rights-based approach to a more egalitarian relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples. Although the federal government formally withdrew their White Paper in 1973, owing in large part to collective action taken by First Nations people, the period soon after marked the beginning of a shift in Indigenous-Canada relations. Since that time, Indigenous peoples have been forced to look to the courts to seek transformative change in their relationship with Canada. As Coulthard (2014) describes, the 1970s began an era characterized by a "politics of recognition" whereby Indigenous groups increasingly sought protection of their recognized rights, only to find that those rights would be interpreted by the federal government in very limited ways.

Although the years between 1973 and 1996 saw several watershed legal moments for First Nations in Canada (and improved conditions for many Indigenous individuals), legal recognition did not serve to improve the overall social and economic situation in any substantial way. Indigenous communities continued to face significant disadvantages across a range of social and economic indicators of well-being. Although the proliferation of Indigenous-controlled organizations in this period reflected Indigenous peoples' demands for greater control and self-determination over their affairs, the emergence of such organizations also indexed federal politicians' desires to offload "state responsibilities to other levels of government and to civil society" (Abele 2004, 12). In theory, these groups sought access to government on matters of exercise of their Aboriginal and treaty rights associated with distinct constitutional status. But given the exclusion of Indigenous governments from Canada's constitution, in practice, national, regional, and provincial Indigenous organizations have often became responsible for delivering fragmented programs with unstable funding regimes, scarce resources, and a constraining emphasis on accountability measures. As Neu and Therrien (2003) observe, devolution of federal responsibility in this period essentially involved transferring bureaucratic obligations to Indigenous governments through funding allocations and through requirements for reporting and accountability.

An example of the challenges associated with ongoing paternalistic policymaking is the Band Operated Funding Formula, a national formula developed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in 1987. First Nations schools were expected to conform to the strictures of this federally imposed scheme, despite a paucity of funding: when compared to provincial schools, Indigenous institutions were receiving up to 15 percent less per student by 1996.[7] Likewise, in 1989 funding for the Post-Secondary Education Student

6 The official title of the Red Paper references the *Hawthorn Report,* which defined Indians as "Citizens Plus." In addition to the normal rights and duties of citizenship, Indians were seen as possessing certain additional rights as charter members of the Canadian community. See http://activehistory.ca/papers/the-contemporary-relevance-of-the-historical-treaties-to-treaty-indian-peoples/.

7 See factsheet produced by the Assembly of First Nations on federal funding for First Nations schools: https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/events/fact_sheet-ccoe-8.pdf

Support Program (created in 1977) was capped, despite (or perhaps because of) growing demand—a situation that unsurprisingly resulted in student demand far outstripping available funding.[8] The fact that the 2015 TRC's *Calls for Action* demand parity between on- and off-reserve schooling indicates that this issue has not been resolved. In short, at least three decades of policy devolution have involved attempts to limit federal responsibility for the funding of services in Indigenous communities.

Despite shifts away from overt settler-colonial governance, the Canadian federal government in Ottawa continues to exert a significant degree of control over the lives of Indigenous peoples. The recognition that the Canadian state has historically exerted power over the lives of Indigenous peoples—and has historically marginalized Indigenous communities through various legal-constitutional discourses (Denis 1989)—provides a lens for understanding welfare policy as part of a larger socio-historical and discursive context. In what follows, we trace how welfare policies' deleterious effects emerge through discursive renditions of Indigenous indolence and inability (or unwillingness) to contribute to national economic productivity. Although early welfare formulations of the "lazy Indian" are less evident in recent policy texts, such tropes persist in popular perception and mediated discourse (see, e.g., Gilmore 2015; CBC News 2016).

Constructing the Indigenous (Non)Worker

The trope of the "lazy Indian" (cf. Lutz 2008) endures across early welfare regimes and implicitly informs later neoliberal policies' efforts to "[equip] First Nations people to fully participate in the economy" (AANDC 2017). This section sketches and historicizes the myth of Indigenous indolence while subsequent sections respectively provide a counter-narrative and trace this myth's recurrence in welfare policy discourse. Here, we first revisit Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1904 [1776]) in order to indicate how deeply entrenched the figure of the unproductive Indian is in Western political economic discourse. We then turn to John Lutz's (2008) account of "how Aboriginal Peoples came to be defined as 'lazy'" and how, in turn, "the process of 'laz-i-fying' Indians came to be forgotten" (31). To conclude this section, we identify a further development in this "forgetting"—the way in which the explicitly racial term "lazy Indian" fades while the implicit figure remains, recoded as the "untrainable," the "unwilling-to-work," or the "undeserving" or, conversely, as the "red apple" or "White Indian."

Adam Smith (1904 [1776]) proffers an early depiction of Indigenous political economy, foregrounding the primitivism and poverty of native peoples in contrast to the "civilized and thriving nations" of Europe (I.1.11). He asserts, for instance, that the first Europeans to land in the Americas encountered "a country quite covered with wood, uncultivated, and inhabited only by some tribes of naked and miserable savages" (IV.7.8). Elsewhere, "the savage nations of hunters and fishers" (I.I.4) are characterized by an unsophisticated division of labour and expertise: "Every man does, or is capable of doing, almost every

8 See First Nations Education Council (2009) document on funding for First Nations schools: https://www. afn.ca/uploads/files/events/fact_sheet-ccoe-8.pdf.

thing which any other man does, or is capable of doing. Every man has a considerable degree of knowledge … but scarce any man has a great degree" (V.1.179). The result, Smith suggests, is a subsistence society:

> Such nations, however, are so miserably poor, that from mere want, they are frequently reduced, or, at least, think themselves reduced, to the necessity sometimes of directly destroying, and sometimes of abandoning their infants, their old people, and those afflicted with lingering diseases, to perish with hunger, or to be devoured by wild beasts. (I.I.4)

It is not that Indigenous peoples do not work, Smith further asserts, but rather that they do not save or accumulate—they have no concept of the future:[9]

> every man, by providing himself with food, provides himself with the materials of more cloathing [*sic*] than he can wear. If there was no foreign commerce, the greater part of them would be thrown away as things of no value. This was probably the case among the hunting nations of North America, before their country was discovered by the Europeans, with whom they now exchange their surplus peltry, for blankets, fire-arms, and brandy, which gives it some value. (I.11.56)

For Smith, the figure of "the savage" represents a blight on the potential productivity of the nation—it illustrates what not to do, how not to be, and especially *who* not to be. Moreover, as we demonstrate below, this perception of Indigenous people has uncanny echoes in early social policy discourse in Canada.

Indigenous peoples were also portrayed as primitive in canonical Canadian histories. John McMullen's *A History of Canada* (1955), for instance, ignores the contributions of Indigenous trappers, traders and military allies, instead presenting them as cruel, dirty, lazy and lacking religion (see Trigger 1988). Notably, such rhetoric is not specific to the Canadian situation—rather, it recurs across settler-colonial contexts, whose texts form a larger tropic constellation. Fisher (1992), for example, observes similar formulations of "lazy Indian-ness" in the 1850s and 1860s writings of British settler-colonists in New Zealand, South Africa, and Jamaica. Settlers' deeply rooted perceptions of Indian inferiority were difficult to change; despite evidence to the contrary, settler-colonial texts persisted in depicting Indigenous peoples as lazy and unsuited to manual labour.[10] As our subsequent discussion elaborates, Canadian Indian Affairs Annual Reports (1864–1916) invoke and reinscribe settler-colonial tropes of "lazy Indian-ness" Again, it is worth noting that such depictions undergird twentieth-century welfare policies and, despite emergent counter-narratives, persist in twenty-first century popular discourse.

9 Christopher Bracken makes precisely this point, in relation to the constructed figure of "the savage," in *Magical Criticism: The Recourse of Savage Philosophy* (2007).

10 For example, Indians on Vancouver Island were said to be incapable of building irrigation ditches although they had in fact constructed ditches several miles in length, according to reports from the Indian reserve commissioner in the late 1870s (Fisher 1992).

The following excerpts suggest that a cluster of qualities—idleness, indolence, and improvidence—come to be congealed in the figure of the "lazy Indian." In countless documents, colonial administrators repeat the sentiment that Indigenous groups are "naturally indolent" (Canada 1864), idle, and "lazy … when left to themselves" (Canada 1917, 430). One agent, however, contends that "Indians are industrious in hunting and trapping; otherwise they are indolent" (Canada 1917, 451), while another waxes:

> The Indian in his natural state would undergo wonderful privations and fatigue in the chase; but when he had returned to discharge the fruits of the hunt at the door of his lodge, he considered his labours as ended and that he had earned a well-deserved rest … so he is now unwilling to exert himself for a lengthened period, particularly if the results cannot readily be seen (Canada 1897, 40).

Such comments indicate that Indigenous indolence is determined in direct relation to colonially imposed modes of political economy, which presume and impose a narrow definition of "work." In this framing, Indigenous people engaged in traditional practices of sustenance could be deemed "non-working" and therefore undeserving of state support. Agents further expressed a sense that overly "generous" (Canada 1917, 387) state provisions led Indigenous people to indulge their "natural" idleness and improvidence. For instance, Quebec-based Agent C.A. MacDougal remarks that "some [Indians] depend altogether too much upon aid from the department …. They are consequently becoming indolent and poorer" (Canada 1917, 387). Invariably, the recommended solution is reduced welfare support; Agent H. Nichol of Saskatchewan proposes that "the necessity of having to put forth more and more effort from year to year to provide themselves with the necessities of life … is having the effect of making [Indians] more industrious" (Canada 1917, 422). Nothing short of "dire necessity will induce them to work" (Canada 1897, 101), asserts Superintendent B.W. Ross, while Agent A.M. Muckle puts it more crudely: "An Indian is naturally indolent, except when he is hungry" (Canada 1897, 218).

In Indian Agent reports, the counterpoint to indolence is improvidence—"the [Indian] … spends his earnings as he goes along" (Canada 1917, 453)—which agents interpret as an inability or unwillingness to "look to the future" (Canada 1917, 452). "Indians," one agent explains, "are generally improvident and lack application, self-reliance and perseverance, so indispensable … in accumulating the necessaries of life beyond their immediate requirements" (Canada 1897, 208). Again, through rhetorical figuration, the "lazy Indian" comes to bear the blame for his or her own impoverishment. Settlers, meanwhile, are construed as "caring, civilized, and modern persons with the moral authority and knowledge to save Indigenous people from themselves" (Razack 2015, 59).

Indigenous Labour: A Counter-narrative

Recent scholarship on Indigenous political economy in Canada offers a counter-narrative to settler-colonial characterizations of the Indian (non)worker. Juridical undermining of Indigenous political sovereignty, as it emerged, went hand-in-hand with the economic marginalization of First Nation groups—both of which actions were often coded as "caregiving" by a

custodial state that defined Indigenous peoples as "wards." The Indian Act (1876) played a key role in legislating band governments as well as their citizens' actions from birth to death, and its regulations often foreclosed Indigenous political and economic organizing (Abu-Laban 2007). In the early twentieth century, for example, Indians were explicitly prohibited from raising funds for the purpose of collective political representation, and often required a pass from the resident Indian Agent to leave the reserve for work (Abele 2004). The regulation of Native peoples' movements, coupled with cases in which reserves were located away from historic communities, made it especially difficult for Indigenous citizens to respond to changing economies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Lutz 2008). While exhorting First Nations peoples and communities to become self-sufficient, Canadian governing bodies effectively undermined their capacity to do so.

To make matters worse, a series of "native laws implemented by the provincial and federal governments adversely affected 'Indian producers' even more than workers" (Knight 1978, 20). McCormack's outline of the history of the fur trade in Northern Alberta illustrates how the implementation of treaty and scrip structured social, economic, and political relations throughout the twentieth century, and in so doing severely limited Native property rights; federal and provincial regulations severely restricted traditional Native land use practices (McCormack 1984). The 1930 Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, which involved the transfer of control over crown lands and natural resources from the Parliament of Canada to the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, further stripped away Indigenous ownership of resources, transforming them into private property (Tough 1997). Enforced by the RCMP, these regulations served to disrupt Native industries and undermined First Nations' ability to influence economic development in their own territories.

As McCormack (1984) points out, Indigenous peoples' accounts of the past contradict the dominant histories that have constructed them as inherently "lazy" and undeserving. Indeed, Indigenous peoples in Canada have been involved in a variety of wage labour and commodity production for well over a century (Knight 1996 [1978], 194). In British Columbia, Native labour "dug the mines, worked the canneries and mills, laid miles of railway, and did a hundred other jobs," providing the bases of regional economies across the province (23). Similarly, Pentland (1981) argues that, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, "thousands of Canada's Aboriginal peoples were members of the labour force" (61), even if their patterns of behaviour were different from those that "give shape and meaning to a European-style labour market" (61).

The TRC shows that Aboriginal youth labour was also critical in the resident school system. Underfunding meant that residential schools relied heavily on student labour (TRC 2015): from a very young age, boys were often engaged in construction, maintenance, and farm work, while girls undertook domestic chores like cleaning, sewing, and cooking. (Some schools even ran businesses using student labour.) Through to the mid-1930s, residential schools continued to depend on students for labour and maintenance, and survivors have relayed stories of grueling, relentless, and exploitative working conditions for children and youths (TRC 2015). Despite the rhetoric around providing students with vocational training, they were usually expected to join the lowest economic rungs of

society after leaving school. For example, in 1897, Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs James Smart opined that it would be injurious to Indian students to educate them "above the possibilities of their station, and create a distaste for what is certain to be their environment in life" (cited in TRC 2015, 330).

The denigration and marginalization of Indigenous labour lessened around the time of the Second World War when First Nations peoples joined the war effort; however, during the period of full employment that followed (1950–66), citizenship programs continued the efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples into bottom rungs of the Canadian working class (Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009). Education and training were vehicles to promote capitalist values and to encourage First Nations people to move off reserves (and off the government's liability sheet).[11] Post-war programs were thus a continuation of earlier campaigns to "disavow the historic treaty relationships between the Crown and First Nations and to promote assimilation into white settler society" (Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009, 455). Basic vocational training for First Nations youth and adults, which reproduced notions of First Nations individuals as best suited for unskilled labour, was based partly on the assumption that First Nations citizens come from "a classless society where acquisitiveness and personal ambition are not considered virtues" (448). The tendency toward short-term vocational training of Indigenous peoples—which has persisted into the contemporary era—serves to create a "racially defined underclass" (Mendelson 2006, 24).

The construction of Indigenous people as economically unproductive (Lutz 2008) or only suitable for "unskilled" work (Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009) not only legitimates historic exploitation of Indigenous workers and appropriation of Native land and resources, but also inflects contemporary Indigenous-state relations. As new histories of Indigenous political economy show, "Indian" involvement in the Canadian labour force has been far more extensive than popular discourses suggest (e.g., Finkel 2012; Lutz 2008). Far from languishing in state-sponsored idleness, Indigenous workers have struggled to support themselves, surviving policies that both presupposed and entailed their dependence on welfare relief. Current discussions around increasing the value of people—i.e. as human capital—through neoliberal partnerships (Schild 2000) must, therefore, be viewed within the context of a long trajectory of pernicious policy-making aimed at integrating Indigenous peoples into the lowest economic stratum of Canadian society (Miller 1996). This counter-history challenges narratives that place the responsibility for poverty and unemployment on Indigenous individuals—on the shoulders of the "lazy Indian" (cf. Green 2005, 332).

Work for Welfare: The Early Years

Indian welfare policy is related both to the colonial relationship between the state and First Nations and to the development of the welfare state. The welfare state has been described in terms of three historical periods: from the early 1900s to World War II, post-war to the 1990s, and the 1990s to the present (Eisleb-Taylor, 2013). In the first period, Canadian legis-

11 For example, until 1961, any person with Indian status who achieved post-secondary education could be deemed "enfranchised" by Indian Affairs, thereby losing their membership in their band (Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009).

lators tended to see poverty as a local, private problem. The second period, described as the "Golden Age" of the Keynesian Welfare State (KWS), introduced principles of universality, a sense of shared citizenship, government commitment to social welfare expansion, and a political consensus that market economics together with spending on social provision was the way forward (Pierson 1998 cited in Eisleb-Taylor, 2013). However, as we discuss below, Indian policy of that period extended efforts to exclude Indigenous people from Canadian legal, political, and social institutions. In contrast, the period from the late twentieth century onward has been characterized by global economic crisis and a breakdown of the Keynesian Welfare State political consensus. Governments have been more interested in building human capital and producing knowledge workers for the global economy. Thus, more recent notions of citizenship are based on active participation, rather than passive social rights entitlement.

Examined in a historical light, discourses of Indigenous welfare reform offer insight into how racial presuppositions have inflected Canadian social policy, tending to reproduce the very ills they seek to solve. The oft-heard plea for settlers to rescue Indigenous communities from self-inflicted violence and poverty discourses diverts attention from ongoing Indigenous dispossession, disenfranchisement, and containment (Razack 2015), while obscuring the continuing influence of colonial policies, practices, and discourses (McKenzie et al. 2016). This section sketches the beginning of welfare provisions for First Nations in 1867 and traces reforms through to the neoliberally inflected shifts of the 1990s.

Indigenous welfare relief in Canada: 1870-1944

In keeping with the nation-building objectives of the federal government at Confederation (1867), the bureaucratic "Indian question" focused primarily on three issues: land, civilization, and assimilation. To transition nationally to a self-sufficient agricultural and wage economy, it was essential for the government to achieve wholesale pacification and subjugation of First Nations and Métis peoples. This desired transition was thwarted, however, by Indigenous peoples' limited access to jobs and by federal efforts to restrict their movement: governments' coercive efforts to curb nomadic movement patterns among Indians resulted in "the complete disruption of traditional, seasonal movement patterns," which, coupled with winter hardship and depletion of game led to a situation in which food relief was required to stave off full-blown famine (Shewell 2004, 35). At the same time, a credit advance system created by fur-trade companies fostered trade dependency by tying Indigenous groups to specific companies. As a result of these converging factors, Indigenous communities found themselves increasingly reliant on government relief to address fundamental needs.

In Indian Affairs texts, however, these intervening factors fade away as administrators and agents foreground the supposedly inherent indolence of Indigenous people. A specific social and historical formation, in other words, is laminated onto the characterological figure of the "lazy Indian" and thereby naturalized—quite literally. Deputy Superintendent William Spragge reports, for instance, "the *naturally indolent* character of too many men of Indian blood disposes them to accept offers to farm on shares, which fostering their *disinclination for constant labour* admits of their subsisting, although miserably, while

leading *a life of idleness*" (Canada 1864, emphasis added). While such reports identify a range of impediments to Indigenous thriving, an essential disposition of Indigenous peoples—to be idle, improvident, and indolent—is deemed the determining factor. Here, what is especially interesting is how purportedly descriptive statements were, in fact, performative; Indian Agents presumed to know the character of Indigenous people (as a whole), wrote regional reports on this (spurious if not wholly fictitious) basis, and then drafted policies that reproduced the contextual factors undergirding Indigenous poverty.

One of these factors was paternalistic guardianship of Indigenous assets by the Canadian state, justified by a depiction of Indigenous peoples as too "improvident" to manage their own land and monies. By the mid-to-late 1870s, coinciding with the impending slaughter of the buffalo, First Nations in the prairie provinces had begun negotiating treaties and settling onto reserves. Annuity trusts established as a result of land surrender enabled federal control over expenditures from these and other funds for the provision of relief. Given that the funds in question were technically the bands', derived from treaty right, this practice effectively "transformed Indians into beggars of their own monies" (Shewell 2004, 64).

Relief policy throughout this early period of "settlement" and "state-building" was guided by dominant Western Protestant values of self-reliance, deservedness, the moral virtue of work, a view of poverty as an individual shortcoming, and the Department of Indian Affairs' fixation with thrift, parsimony, and accountability. These values, coupled with the constitutional construction of First Nations as an underclass, manifested as a drive to convert them, through workfare policies, into a reliable and self-sustaining working class within the structure of Canadian society. The social policy framework and departmental directives provided relief only in circumstances of extreme destitution and/or in instances where Indians were unable to work and support themselves. For instance, in an 1886 House of Commons debate, Member of Parliament Sir Hector Langevin commented:

> We do not propose to expend large sums of money to give [the Indians] food from the first day of the year to the last. We must give them enough to keep them alive; but the Indians must, under the regulations that have been sanctioned by Parliament, go to their reservations and cultivate their lands. They must provide partially for their wants. And therefore, if, by accident, an Indian should starve, it is not the fault of the Government nor the wish of the Government. (cited in Shewell 2004, 41)

As noted above, similar sentiments recur in Indian Affairs reports; administrators and agents express concern about "mistaken philanthropic impressions" spurring "extravagant" provision of relief (Canada 1895, 374). One superintendent explicitly warns against providing "unlimited" supplies to "indolent and improvident Indians, who are as capable of providing for themselves and families the necessaries of life as other citizens of the community" (ibid.). Another explains, "as soon as immediate needs are supplied they fall back into sloth and inaction" (Canada 1897, 101). Indigenous people, in such renditions, are not unable to work but rather *unwilling*. The poverty of Indigenous communities, then, becomes the inevitable outcome of essential moral lack—a matter of individual dispositions rather than collective dispossession.

In the policy context defined by such views, First Nations people became objects "of the government's fiscal and political objectives" (Shewell 2004, 52). Given the custodial relationship imposed by the state on First Nations people, however, Departmental efforts to curb relief expenditures "could not help but create a dependent condition which was exacerbated by policies that directly or indirectly brought about their economic marginalization" (Shewell 2004, 91–2).

A major shift in Indian welfare policy occurred in the 1913–1944 period, when the Department of Indian Affairs came under the direct control of Duncan Campbell Scott, then-Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. Although destitution and starvation were still baseline criteria for the administration of relief, there was a clear shift in determining eligibility for relief assistance. A few short weeks after Campbell Scott's appointment in 1913, he issued a 70-point policy pamphlet stating: "as a first principle … it is the policy of the Department to promote self-support among the Indians and not to provide *gratuitous* assistance to those Indians who can support themselves" (cited in Shewell 2004, 95, emphasis added). In line with this assertion, Campbell Scott introduced procedural constraints and a formalized process of Indian welfare relief administration. Whereas assistance had previously been provided on a provisional basis, under Campbell Scott's direction, "Indians were to *apply for assistance* and their *circumstances* were to be *investigated* by the Agent" (Shewell 2004, 100, emphasis in original). In other words, a relatively *ad hoc* relief policy was replaced by an extended bureaucratic process involving "application, investigation, approval, exceptions, methods of issue, reconciliation to accounts, and payment of suppliers" (101). The Department pursued further bureaucratization in the late 1920s, instituting a scale of relief benefits for First Nations: Class 1—Adult Destitute Ration; Class 2—Sick Ration; Class 3—Babies artificially fed or malnourished (Shewell 2004, 112). Via this scale of relief benefits—which still informs Indian Social Development policy today—the Department defined and determined a family's relief ration based on the number and age of dependents. Notably, through a half-century of policy changes, "ability to work" remained the central, morally inflected criterion for provision of assistance.

The Depression Era, World War II, and the Rise of Work-for-Welfare

Although federal government expenditures on welfare relief for the general Canadian populace increased substantially throughout the Depression and World War II eras, the same cannot be said for provisions for First Nations. The estimated total percentage of Indians on welfare relief was nearly double that of the non-Aboriginal population throughout this period, but Indians on-reserve received 55 percent, 61.5 percent, and 67 percent less relief than non-Aboriginal persons for the 1932, 1934, and 1936 fiscal years respectively (Shewell 2004, 123). By 1940, "work-for-welfare" and job creation became the predominant features of welfare relief for Indigenous peoples: welfare "would now [only] be available to able bodied Indians if they were willing to undertake specific types of physical labour in the community" (ibid.). The Department's rationale behind implementing work-for-welfare provisions on the reserves was "rooted in traditional prejudices of liberal and classic economics toward

public welfare," such as the fear that welfare relief would undermine an individual's incentive "to seek her or his welfare in the marketplace" (ibid.). Work-for-welfare thus provided another vehicle, as coercive as previous policies, for assimilating First Nations into the Canadian body politic.

By the mid-1940s, however, the department grew increasingly aware of the limitations of work-for-welfare regimes within First Nations communities, given the geographic isolation of many communities and the lack of available jobs within reasonable proximity. Moreover, the artificial nature of work-for-welfare programs meant that the skills and job-readiness training delivered on-reserve rarely, if ever, matched the needs of the labour market and local economy. While not overtly acknowledged by the federal government, the under-preparation of First Nation citizens in residential schooling often precluded their entry into the wage labour market. These factors meant that rates of dependency on welfare relief among First Nations people remained stagnant and the total cost of assistance in the on-reserve context rose steadily throughout the period immediately after WWII. As demonstrated thus far, the administration of welfare relief on reserves up to the 1950s was "punitive and paternalistic" long after more progressive changes had occurred in programs for the non-Aboriginal population (Abele 2004, 16). This disparity was attributable, in part, to Canada's ongoing construal of its Indigenous peoples as "civic problems, economic liabilities, and political conundrums" (Green 2005, 334). According to Knight (1996 [1978]), the late 1950s and '60s saw the beginnings of a "welfare economy" on Indian reserves, with soaring unemployment resulting from a decline of jobs in traditional industries coupled with an increased working-age population.

From Welfare to Work: 1990 - Present

In recent decades, the Canadian state's assimilationist desires have not dissolved but merely shifted forms: its emphasis is increasingly economic. While national pageants embrace a politics of recognition, a new-but-not-novel array of programs redoubles efforts to recruit all Canadian citizens to the wage economy. In short, an earlier political economic opposition between "productive" and "unproductive" citizens persists, and its lines of distinction are no less racialized today (though they are less overt). Within this context, Indigenous welfare is at once over- and underdetermined—Indigenous people are targeted by a disjointed barrage of policies and nonetheless slip through the ever-widening gaps of the Canadian social security net. This section attends to policies addressing Indigenous welfare in Canada over the past three decades. As above, we focus on how the figuration of the "lazy Indian" manifests in welfare discourse and policy, with extra-discursive implications.

Canadian welfare policy reforms in the 1990s reflected a broader shift away from passive to active welfare, described as a shift from *welfare state* to *social investment state* (Saint-Martin 2007). In the latter, social policy becomes a tool to advance economic development by improving the employability and future productivity of welfare recipients. Policy-making comes to involve implicit calculations about "the expected profitability" of any given group "in which money is invested" (Saint-Martin 2007, 292), and policy-makers accordingly draw a distinction between "worthy" (deserving) and "unworthy" (undeserving) recipients

of social assistance.[12] Active measures of welfare include mandatory participation, job search assistance and preparation, and financial incentives programs (Eisleb-Taylor 2013). In the Canadian context, these frameworks erase Indigenous economic exceptionality while retaining the original emphasis of welfare and/or workfare policies: to integrate Indigenous people into the broader Canadian economy in order to reduce their dependence on federal welfare relief (again, disregarding the historical and ongoing factors that preclude Indigenous independence/self-sufficiency). In short, there are startling continuities in the discourse and aims of welfare policies pertaining to Indigenous people from 1870 to the present—continuities that, we contend, hinge on the presumed figure of the "lazy Indian" and all that it entails.

From Passive to Active (Measures)

At the federal level, band governments commonly administer social assistance for those living on reserves in Canada, using funds transferred from the Department of Indigenous and Northern Development Canada (INAC), formerly AANDC.[13] Following over a century of welfare reform precedent, INAC has deployed programs designed to reduce Indigenous peoples' reliance on social assistance by improving their ability to enter the labour market. Underlying this policy strategy is the presupposition that entry into the broader Canadian economy is the solution to Indigenous welfare reliance. The perceived problem is Indigenous peoples' exclusion from the labour force—because they are unable, unprepared, or unwilling to work in the wage economy.[14] To address the presumed problem of Indigenous inability and unpreparedness, the federal department responsible for employment and training, currently Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC),[15] introduced a series of programs designed to move Indigenous people into the wage labour force, including the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) and its more recent iteration, the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS). At the same time, Industry Canada introduced business development programs meant to encourage economic self-sufficiency, such as those offered by Aboriginal Business Canada (ABC). In this context, however, "economic self-sufficiency" is narrowly defined; it refers to the thriving of Indigenous businesses in the broader national economy or acquiescence to corporate-government partnerships in economic development—the conversion of In-

12 This distinction was also key to late-nineteenth and twentieth century welfare reforms in the US (Hudson and Coukos, 2005), and more recent European reforms regarding welfare provision for migrants (van Oorschot 2000, 2006; van Doorn 2015; Keskinen et al. 2016).

13 AANDC was renamed INAC in 2011, under the direction of Harper's Conservatives, but reassumed the acronym AANDC in 2015, under Trudeau's Liberals (Lum 2015).

14 Likewise, in the early noughties in the UK, "work to welfare" discourse depicted the unemployed as "those who 'won't work', rather than those people for whom there are few jobs to apply for, who face barriers to work, including various and multiple forms of discrimination, and/or who do not consider paid work as being an important part of their identity" (Grover 2007, 536).

15 Previously Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC).

digenous subjects from "unproductive" to "productive" citizens, to revisit Adam Smith's still-consequential categorization. Once again, official policy depictions displace historical and structural constraints, pinning them to the person of the Indigenous (non)worker. In contrast, we concur that Aboriginal rights to self-determination and compensation for the loss of land are inseparable from discussions about social welfare (Shewell, 1991).

In 2003, AANDC (now INAC) implemented the "Active Measures" (AM) program, which was linked to Income Assistance (IA) and sought to encourage "a recipient to become more self-sufficient through work" by integrating training and pre-employment supports into the IA program design. The shift could be described as a move from "work for welfare" programs to "welfare-to-work" initiatives. At the time, it was believed that the Active Measures program would shift "passive" relief to more active engagement with initiatives that build job-readiness skills. This shift was prompted by policymakers' concerns that "the IA [Income Assistance] Program has remained largely a passive program that simply awards benefits to those who meet income and family structure eligibility requirements" (AANDC 2007, 50).[16] The program description emphasizes that Active Measures, unlike its predecessors, adopts "a *proactive* approach that will focus on *identifying clients' individual employment readiness* and overcoming current *barriers to employability*" (AANDC 2017; emphasis added). The rhetoric of this excerpt is telling: echoing the program title, "proactive" promises a shift from earlier programs; "identifying [a] client's individual employment readiness" suggests policy solutions should target "individuals," characterized as neoliberal "clients"; and "barriers to employability," in its bland generality, obscures the fact that "barriers" are historic, structural, and resistant to further neoliberal remedy. In the discursive formation constituted by these welfare policies, the figure of the "lazy Indian" appears absent. Yet the assumptions bundled into that characterization—of an essential inability, unpreparedness, or aversion to work on the part of Indigenous people—persist in policy presuppositions and underwrite critiques of program "passivity."

Canadian citizenship now comes with responsibilities as well as rights—for example, "taking responsibility for oneself and one's family."[17] Such rhetoric is echoed at the provincial level; for example, the Alberta Works website outlines some of the principles for income support, including encouraging personal responsibility:

> Benefits and services focus on assisting Albertans and their families to participate successfully in the workforce, and to have sustainable employment, to the greatest extent possible given the individual's situation. … Albertans are supported to become independent through a system of supports that focus on employment as the route to independence.[18]

16 The inadequacies of the Income Assistance program were further discussed in 2009, in an "Impact Evaluation" that identified stagnant dependency rates (i.e. +/- 36% in 2007/08) and an increase in the number of Income Assistance recipients over a 25-year period (AANDC 2009).

17 See Government of Canada website: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/discover-canada/read-online/rights-resonsibilities-citizenship.html

18 See Alberta Works website: http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/AWOnline/IS/4754.html

In order to qualify for funding, the "expected to work" client must undertake activities leading to self-sufficiency. Thus, increasingly, social policy is developed within a framework that assumes individuals must exercise responsibility in order to exercise their social rights (Eisleb-Taylor 2013).

As we have noted throughout our discussion, Indigenous groups have not been passive in the devolution of programming to provinces and First Nations over time. Rather, they have used the legal system, activism, and political consultations to bring attention to what nation-to-nation dialogue might entail. The Indigenous Rights, Recognition and Implementation framework, announced in early 2018 by the Trudeau government, is seen as separating issues of service delivery from issues of historical dispossession, yet again:

> Within the new process, lands, territories, and resources outside the reserve are delinked from fiscal relations, except for any own-source-revenue (OSR) from resource extraction on traditional territories. This approach is premised on training First Nations to integrate into the market economy and further erode federal fiduciary responsibility to First Nations (King and Pasternak 2018, 5).

The result is unlikely to help develop a strong economic base for First Nations. Thus, as our broader discussion indicates, welfare policies, while aiming to engender Indigenous self-sufficiency, have tended to ignore how colonial history and related state practices have constrained the ability of Indigenous groups to foster a culturally based political economy (see Taylor and Friedel 2011). Most recently, the recoding of the "lazy Indian" as an "undeserving" and "passive" welfare recipient performs this historical erasure through the naturalizing force of official policy discourse. While Indigenous welfare programs in Canada have shifted substantially since their inception, they have uniformly presupposed a typified Indigenous subject upon whom responsibility for Indigenous poverty is conveniently pinned.

Conclusion

The emergence of a neoliberal welfare system in Canada has entailed significant collateral damage, not only to prior settler-colonial institutional frameworks and powers but also to an already beset Indigenous political economy: the supposedly "kinder, gentler contemporary colonial relationship of the past few decades" (Green 2005, 334) has further effaced Indigenous divisions of labour, social relations, ways of life, attachments to the land, habits of the heart, ways of thought, and the like (Harvey 2007, 23). Our understanding of the effects of neoliberal-inspired changes to welfare policy and processes on Indigenous peoples suggests that although the state has not managed to move out of the "Indian business," it has managed to shift Indigenous social policy from a focus on universal rights as entitlements to a focus on programs involving the development of flexible, wage labourers. In part, the troubling effects of this shift are rooted in the concerns expressed by Turner (2006), that liberal theories do not adequately address the legacies of settler-colonialism, honour the unique nature of Indigenous rights, or accommodate and respect Indigenous voices on their own terms. But these changes are also rooted in the narrative that Indigenous peoples

are inherently lazy and therefore "undeserving," which obscures a long history of racist policy and legislation in Canada. As we have shown in this paper, the typification of individuals and groups through work and welfare discourses is not only socially enacted but also performatively construed. In short, the vulnerable positioning of Indigenous groups is rooted in the legacy of historical State-Indigenous relations in Canada and naturalized through attendant narratives.

The neoliberal myth that individuals can "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" ignores how certain groups enter a state of precarity—a politically induced condition in which they become differentially exposed to poverty, injury, violence, and death through the failure of social and economic networks of support (Butler 2009). It is critical, therefore, to ask *how* Indigenous peoples have become "disadvantaged" relative to other Canadians and, more specifically, what role social policy plays in perpetuating this disadvantage. Facile dismissal of an enduring colonial relationship invariably adds to the uninterrogated figure of the "lazy Indian," which persists in policy assumptions and in popular discourse.

In advocating for a new social model for Canada's Aboriginal peoples, Abele (2004) recommends creating serviceable funding regimes that make possible holistic and long-term program planning and delivery. However, acknowledging the impact of land dispossession and the privileging of colonial-capital interests in a contemporary sense requires us to recognize that welfare and relief efforts are "imbued with the histories of colonizing and colonized populations and with the power relations between these now contemporary communities" (Green 2005, 331). From this view, attention must be paid to how welfare-dependent Indigenous populations (individuals and communities) have been produced through processes of disenfranchisement and, central to this paper's concerns, naturalized through historical and contemporary welfare policies' discursive figuration of the Indigenous non-worker: the "lazy Indian."

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