

**Being Canadian: Formulating and Branding a National Identity**

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**Abstract**

## Being Canadian: Formulating and Branding a National Identity

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In 2017, Canada will celebrate 150 years of Confederation. Like the 1967 Centennial celebration, the upcoming commemoration can be viewed as a nation-building exercise and an opportunity to redefine or refine Canadian identity. At the centre of the commemoration will be the way the celebration is branded, and at the centre of the branding will be the logo. Within the last 50 years, nation branding has emerged as a prominent marketing phenomenon for both the private and public sectors in many countries across the world. Nation branding, as defined by Melissa Aronczyk in *Branding the Nation*, refers to the use of traditional advertisement techniques and strategies in making national culture into a marketable and monetizable entity. Using the Centennial and Sesquicentennial celebrations as case studies, I deconstruct the notion of “Canadian identity” as a brand, noting the cultural context, political mandate and constructed narratives surrounding the celebrations. A chapter on the Centennial celebration will consist of a Barthesian examination of 1967’s logo, speeches and celebratory events. The Sesquicentennial celebration chapter will focus on the themes and speeches of Canada 150, exploring the rhetorical and visual strategies used in service of governmental nation branding projects.

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## 1. Introduction

In 2017, Canada celebrates 150 years of Confederation. Like the Centennial celebrations 50 years ago, the commemoration is an occasion to define Canadian national identity for years to come. The sheer amount of messaging and yearlong promotional campaign provides the perfect opportunity for the Canadian government to instill a specific idea of Canadian identity. Large-scale celebrations are a type of “participatory cultural performance” and every element, from the logo to the photographic documentation, is an act used to “define a sense of community spirit, and thereby intensify identification with the community” (Davies 147). Within the performance of the Sesquicentennial one will find specific “Canadianisms” – intended representations of Canadian identity that, when combined, formulate a larger articulation of national identity.

The Sesquicentennial follows in the footsteps of the Canadian Centennial of 1967. For the public, the Centennial celebrations are remembered fondly as the seminal year Canada came of age; from a governmental perspective, 1967 is remembered as a successful nation-wide unifying practice. “From an organizational perspective at least, Centennial was a remarkable achievement,” one that broke down barriers and elevated a feeling of optimism and confidence in the country’s future (Davies Abstract). Projecting an image of Canadian unity was an official mandate for the federal government. The Centennial celebrations were “the most comprehensive expensive and extravagant nationalist project ever undertaken by the Canadian state,” used to spread specific notions of “being Canadian” and “Canadian identity” (Miedema 141).

Public celebrations are essential tools in the political operation of nationalism. Large-scale celebrations and public festivities have long been used as ways to cultivate or bolster a sense of national identity (Davies 15). Public celebrations allow participants to liberate

themselves from the “constraints of individual identities” and give themselves over to the jouissance of “collective rejoicing” (Rutherford 239). The temporary abandon of actual social realities leaves room for individuals to accept a shared national narrative, one with a specific vision for the country and specific values for its citizens to take on.

A nation’s anniversary is a type of rite of passage, meant to mark what has passed and what is to come. Participation involves “learned and rehearsed speaking and acting ‘routines,’” that highlight the “contrast between ordinary times and the extraordinary occasion” (qtd. in Davies 18). Such extraordinary occasions necessitate mindful, stylized patterns of behaviour: rituals (Tsang and Woods 3). A ritual is either an “expression of underlying social meaning systems” or is used to construct entirely new ones (Tsang and Woods 4). While “ordinary times” call for instrumental social behaviour to get one through the everyday, “extraordinary times” call for meaning-infused behaviour that teaches individuals certain social values and norms.

In their book, *The Cultural Politics Of Nationalism and Nation-Building*, Rachel Tsang and Eric Taylor Wood argue that rituals are necessary “signaling devices used to facilitate the communication of meaning” among members of a social group (Tsang and Woods 4). They are fabrications that weave their way through society in conjunction with other, equally fabricated, signs. While a nation tries to claim certain values, it too is but a web of signs bound together by discourse. Whether intricate or trivial, whether it occurs face-to-face or via television, whether religious or newly invented, rituals work to establish social norms and values.

So, when it comes to Canada’s Sesquicentennial, what are the social norms and values that are being conveyed? How is Canada’s identity being formulated? What are the motivations and the nation branding tactics being used to disseminate it? Celebrating a country’s anniversary is already a political affair; no such festivity can be deemed without motive from its organizers –

the federal government. It is thus a matter of examining what are the meaning-induced messages that surround the Sesquicentennial. I will work to answer these questions by exploring the cultural context, the political mandate and the constructed narratives surrounding the celebrations. My exploration will make use of theories on nationalism, nation branding, methods of rhetorical criticism and semiotics.

## **1. 1. Literature Review**

### **1. 1. 1. Nationalism**

National consciousness is a relatively new phenomenon, reaching back to the invention of the printing press and coming into its own during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite its youth, nationalism has become a potent idea in the minds of the ruling class and a naturalized idea among its citizenry. In *American Nationalism*, Bart Bonikowski proposes

that nationalism be understood as the self-understanding of individuals and groups framed in terms of their membership in a broader collectivity coterminous with the territorial, social, and legal boundaries of an actual or potential nation-state. This self-understanding is produced through the interaction of individual cognitive schemata, shared cultural understandings contained in various forms of public discourse, and institutional rules and conventions. (9)

The definition is useful for my purposes for it underlines the shared responsibility of both the institution and the individual in manifesting, embodying and disseminating messages of national identity. A governmental institution will apply various messages, tools and techniques to reinforce and legitimize the nation-state. The work is not done in isolation, but alongside their citizens. Nationalism is not imposed, but cultivated; a government institution will depend on its



citizens to develop its national identity and to propagate it. While the construction of nationalism is a shared responsibility, it is not distributed equally, nor is it equally representative. Nationalism establishes a common discursive framework that inevitably excludes certain ideologies and forms of activities; it is intrinsically hegemonic (Kastoryano 75).

Many theories have been proposed to explain the emergence, importance and durability of nationalism. They have focused on the role of the governing institutions, their motivations and strategies; the role of the individual in co-authoring national messages; and the role of the message itself, as a myth that naturalizes social norms and leads to shared cultural understandings.

#### **1. 1. 1. 1. Imagined Communities**

According to historian and political scientist, Benedict Anderson, a country is bound together under a false sense of communion; a citizenry's solidarity is false because its practitioners have never met each other (4). The sense of allegiance members of a "people" embody is imagined; any bond or connection felt between Canadians is not authentic because they don't actually know each other – most Canadians have and will never meet. In spite of its geographic enormity and dispersed population, Canada was strung together not through actual commonalities or personal alliances, but social and political narratives. To establish allegiances with strangers and to overlook prevailing inequalities or social issues for a sense of comradeship necessitates a certain amount of imagination (Anderson 7). Anderson referred to 19<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher Ernest Renan's version of imagining: "the essence of a nation is that all of its individual members have a great deal in common and also that they have forgotten many things" (Renan 11). Such is nationalism: an exercise in imagination and invention.

Anderson developed his nationalism theory around the same time as Eric Hobsbawm. In reading *The Invention of Traditions* and *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, one detects Hobsbawm's absolute distrust of nationalism. While Anderson admired its utopian inspirations, Hobsbawm described nationalism as a disorienting symptom of a poor social state rather than its remedy (Khazaleh; 177). Hobsbawm sought to understand "why and how could a concept so remote from the real experience of most human beings as 'national patriotism' become such a political force so quickly?" (46). He provided but a partial answer in referring to Anderson's imagined communities as a way "to fill the emotional void left by the retreat of disintegration, of the unavailability of real human communities and networks" (Hobsbawm, "Nations" 46).

Operating from a social psychological perspective, Daniel Druckman postulated that nationalism is not so remote an experience. Forming group attachments is part of the socialization process; as one ages, one begins to look beyond him or her self, showcasing socially oriented behaviour such as compassion, altruism, and group loyalty (Druckman 45). Citing Amitai Etzioni, Druckman argued that feelings of group loyalty are not reserved for small group loyalty (family, church, community), but can be transferred to large groups like nations (46). Nationalism is thus not only a question of filling emotional voids, but of fulfilling our roles as social beings. National attachment arises when individuals "become sentimentally attached to the homeland, motivated to help their country, and gain a sense of identity and self-esteem through their national identification" (Druckman 44).

Based on European history, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* traces the historical and cultural conditions that led to nationalism from a materialistic perspective. Focusing on economic and political motivations, he

staggers its development between two stages: popular and official nationalism. Popular nationalism evolved in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe with the arrival of “one of the earlier forms of capitalist enterprise, book-publishing” (Anderson 39). Operating in the local vernacular, the printing press broke the dominant “lines of communication” of the Catholic Church and the Latin language, redirecting them among the general public – mostly the bourgeoisie rich enough to afford books (Anderson 39). They were able to communicate ideas among themselves and about themselves, developing the first morsels of national consciousness (Anderson 44).

The connections made between members of the bourgeois class eventually reached the lower classes. Fuelled by Enlightenment ideals of liberty and equality, and aided by the increasingly affordable printing technology, the proletariat saw themselves as part of the same community that needed to fight against bourgeois injustices. Their solidarity resulted in a wave of political revolutions from the French Revolution that began in 1789 to Hungary’s 1867-gained independence from the Austrian Empire – the same year as Canada’s own Confederation. The stream of popular national movements was cause for concern for Europe’s elite. In reaction, they employed what Anderson coined “official nationalism” strategies, including “compulsory state-controlled primary education, state-organized propaganda, official rewriting of history... and endless affirmations of the identity of dynasty and nation” (Anderson 101). A top-down approach, official nationalism attempted to retain and naturalize the ruling body’s power (Anderson 86). The goal was to make any signs of power appear normal and routine, not elitist.

The emergence of official nationalism coincided with yet another capitalist and technological development: the industrial revolution (Anderson 140). Social constructivist and Anderson contemporary, Ernest Gellner drew the connection between nationalism and the industrial revolution. Industrialism was both the cause of and motivation behind nationalism. For

industrialism to work, the homogenized structure of the factory's workforce needed to be reflected in the wider society. Social roles needed systematizing and diverse communities needed unifying. Nationalism established "an anonymous impersonal society, with mutually sustainable atomised individuals, held together above all by a shared culture" (Gellner 56).

The latest wave in official nationalism took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when colonized nations established their independence using the same methods their European colonizers employed over a century before. Post First World War, Canada felt a jolt of national pride. Having served admirably during the war, Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden made sure Great Britain recognized Canada's effort and pushed for an independent seat at the Treaty of Versailles (1919), as well as at the new League of Nations (United Nations' predecessor). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Canada continued to position itself as a key player in international affairs, with "foreign policy appearing to unite Canadians" (Mackenzie 90). With the latest wave, Anderson argued, the nation became an undeniable – yet illusionary – fixture of public and political life (113). The nation is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 6).

Anderson's inclusion of the printing industry as a catalyst behind imagined communities highlights the importance of media in the emergence, installation, and survival of national consciousness. Canadian communication theorist Harold Innis also explored media's effects on the rise and fall of ancient empires. Societies, Innis explained, have "been dominated at different stages by various media of communication" (Innis 5). Each medium has had important implications on the type of information shared among a society and its "monopoly of knowledge." While providing no specific definition, Innis referred to a monopoly of power as the centralization of information, the suppression of original thought and the passivity of knowledge

consumption (“Monopolies”). Romans used papyrus to build an empire and the bourgeois used the printing press to build a nation. Today, governments use mass and social media to maintain their nation-states.

Innis expanded his theory of the printing press in *The Strategy of Culture*. Published in 1952, the piece is an endorsement of the 1949 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Science (also known as the Massey Commission). The Commission evaluated Canada’s cultural situation and argued for a national agenda to invest in the arts in order to avoid its commercialization and to strengthen national identity. Innis agreed with the final report; he argued for a national strategy to develop a national identity and save Canada from American cultural imperialism. Innis charted the evolution of literature in America, demonstrating its persistent focus on commercialization and its dangerous influence on Canada. By tracking the printing industry’s evolution from the mid 1800s to 1930s, Innis demonstrated that from the beginning, American publishing was concerned with profit and not quality writing. Innis concluded “the effects of these developments on Canadian culture have been disastrous” and called for an “energetic program to offset them” (13).

Both Anderson’s and Innis’ relentless focus on the material aspect of nationalism, specifically the printed medium, overemphasizes the textual construction of the nation. Focusing on the materiality of communications, Innis claimed it is the means of communications, not the content, that determine the nature of western civilisations (Massolin). Anderson believed it was both, that the printing device and the content it produced were important. While rhetorical devices are necessary – as I will soon demonstrate with Maurice Charland’s constitute rhetoric – and useful for my thesis, Anderson’s “focus on the idea that the nation is reproduced and represented textually” is insufficient (Edensor 7). Nation building is not only a political and

economic process, but a cultural one too. Anderson ignored the “plenitude of embodied habits and performances, not to mention more parallel cultural forms,” such as festivities, fashion, and film, that work to produce the nation (Edensor 7).

### **1. 1. 1. 2. Invented Traditions**

Eric Hobsbawm provides some insight into the construction of the “plenitude of embodied habits and performances” (Edensor 7). In *The Invention of Tradition*, Hobsbawm defined “invented traditions” as a set of practices injected with significance “which seek to inculcate values and norms of behaviour by repetition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1). There are three interconnected types of invented traditions: those establishing social cohesion, those legitimizing authoritative institutions, and those inculcating a group with specific beliefs and value systems (Hobsbawm and Ranger 9). Invented traditions are created to replace inefficient or obsolete traditions, occurring more frequently when rapid social transformation “weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions have been designed” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 4). The ephemeral nature of invented traditions is par for the course; as quickly as they are built up to deal with specific social situations, they are torn down when no longer efficient. Hobsawm distinguished between “old” and “invented” traditions, claiming the latter are specific, strongly binding practices and the former are but vague and empty values (Hobsbawm and Ranger 10).

Nationalist traditions, whether singing the national anthem or heading to Ottawa dressed in red and white for Canada Day, are a form of cultural performance. They are collective enactments during which we “reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatize our collective myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others” (MacAloon 1).

An invented tradition injects itself into history, presenting itself as always having been there. Its permanence is arranged, firstly, by writing itself into the history books. An invented tradition will manipulate historical tales and symbols to fit into the nation's narrative. That way, a newly invented tradition is not viewed with suspicion, but as a continuation of the past. Secondly, an invented tradition is naturalized with sheer repetition: once a tradition has been established, it solidifies itself through repetition, demanding recurring and fixed practices.

### **1. 1. 1. 3. Constitutive Rhetoric**

Maurice Charland tackles the construction of transhistorical narratives in his 1987 article "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois." For Charland, collective identity is rhetorical; it is not a natural property, but a convincing story built out of unrelated historical events and attractive characteristics that have been welded together. If the story is compelling, individuals come to accept and embody its essence ("Constitutive" 134). Charland's constitutive rhetoric is dependent on Michael McGee's "people," Kenneth Burke's "identification" and Louis Althusser's "interpellation" ("Constitutive" 137).

In "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative," McGee sought to understand the concept of a people. He proposed that a people is a continuous process of collectivization that occurs through the persuasive power of rhetoric. It is a political myth, designed by a leader and "infused with an artificial, rhetorical reality by the agreement of an audience to participate in a collective fantasy" (McGee 242). While a people may be a false consciousness, its function is real and important. A political myth is dependent on the goals, intentions and convictions of its creator; it is born with a mission and remains relevant only until the mission is complete. It is for this reason that a people is not a static phenomenon, but continually changing. Myths "remain so long as the rhetoric which defined them has force, and in the end wilt away" (McGee 242).

While McGee described the socialization process as persuasion, Charland described it as interpellation through identification. As “symbol using” animals, any given individual is composed of multiple, ever changing, compatible or competing subjectivities (Charland, “Constitutive” 147). Identification, therefore, is the act of identifying already existing characteristics and drawing upon them to create the “people myth.” McGee’s political myth is an ever-changing discursive process, linking together historical events and various identifications to create collective identity (McGee 242).

Creating a cohesive story, one that individuals are compelled to embody, inevitably requires exclusion. Like a country’s borders regulating who and what enters and leaves, a nation’s myth is equally restrictive of the values and belief systems that live within them. Constitutive rhetoric embraces certain subjectivities, while rejecting others. Incompatible historical events, cultural backgrounds and linguistic affiliations are disregarded as they complicate a political myth’s streamlined narrative.

Once a convincing story has been created and presented to a group of individuals, they undergo interpellation, or the process of collectivization. Interpellation is not a choice. Such is the power of a narrative; its acceptance is naturalized – as are the individuals’ support for the mission or social actions behind the political myth. Once individuals have accepted to be part of a people, they’ve also accepted the social action or mission that comes with it. To clarify, a myth is never fully accepted; incompatible notions, old myths and “objective reality” remain and conflict with the new myth (McGee 247). Indeed, it is not by studying the myth alone that we come to understand a people, we must also take into account the “competitive relationships which develop between a myth and object reality and between a myth and antithetical visions of the collective life” (McGee 246).



### 1. 1. 2. Nation Branding

The tools and techniques used to render the concept of nation natural have changed over time. As have the motivations behind the practice. What started as the bourgeoisie's attempt at maintaining their power is now a government's attempt at elevating its political and economic clout in a globalized world. Branded nationalism, or nation branding is the latest form of nationalism. It combines both rhetorical and marketing techniques to convey and promote a nation's "core idea" to domestic and international audiences (Aronczyk 114).

Like its predecessors (popular and official nationalism), branded nationalism emerged in reaction to the social and economic changes of yet another capitalistic development: globalization. Melissa Aronczyk explained that the practice of branding "nations emerged in the context of the rapid expansions of the scale and scope of capitalist markets" (75). While the first tinges of globalization can be traced back to the printing press, the "cultural affinities and dialogues unleashed by it were modest precursors to the world we live in now" (Appadurai 29). Over the last few decades, the world has been propelled into a globalized state due to the "technological explosion" of the transportation and information sectors, as well as the subsequent increase of cross-border investment, migration, and trade (Appadurai 29).

Globalization theorist, Arjan Appadurai postulated that globalization would lead to an imagined world, demarcated not by imagined communities, but by "scapes" (ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, financescapes, ideoscapes) (33). While faced with an increasing sense of rootlessness and deterritorialisation, individuals would forego their nationalist devotion for nonisomorphic subjectivities (Appadurai 29, 46). Nation branding revolts against Appadurai's scape articulations. It refuses the denigration of the nation, fighting instead to ensure its transhistoric and transnational permanence.

Globalization and the expansion of world markets have blurred the lines between a country's domestic and international realms; more than ever, a nation's commercial markets and policies are intertwined with other countries and coalitions. Canada is no different; "the world must see Canada as a model nation, and this will occur only if Canada has a distinctive brand" (Potter 5). To meaningfully contribute to world politics and to secure investments in such a competitive yet monolithic international market, governments are using traditional branding techniques to "improve the nation's culture and identity by bringing it into alignment with the exigencies of global 'realities'" (Aronczyk 38).

Branding techniques are an ideal defense against the threat of muddled national narratives and diluted citizenship. For nation brand practitioners, nations "are *already* de facto brands, regularly projecting their assets, attributes, and liabilities to a public at large, whether intentionally or not" (Aronczyk 68). Celia Lury described a brand as an intangible act with many moving parts, each setting up relationships between the products, consumers, and producers (1). A brand "functions as a medium of exchange between inner and outer environments, 'producers' and 'consumers'" (50). Its goal is to establish and maintain control over the outer environment. These social diagrams of interactivity between the producers (governing institutions) and its consumers (citizens) are in constant flux and open to negotiation (Lury 3).

The brand is a performative act because it is ever changing. The "brand progresses or emerges in a series of loops," deriving from, but also generating marketing and social-cultural contextual knowledge (Lury 2, 7). Echoing nationalist strategies and goals, brands are sign systems that "engage the consumer in an imaginary/symbolic relationship that fulfills unmet emotional needs" (Oswald 131). Furthermore, a brand is performative because it demands certain behaviours and social interactions from its consumers. In addition to functioning as a medium

between the consumer and producer, it is an interface between the consumer and the product.

Through the brand, the individual is not only given a product, they are given a role to play. Like a form of constitutive rhetoric, the brand provides a narrative that the consumer is compelled to embody. As Adam Arvidsson put it: “with a particular brand, I can act, feel and be in a particular way” (8).

For politicians, projecting a cohesive image has never been more difficult in the age of mass and social media. The multiplication of news sources and the increase in the flow of information globally have disrupted the attempts by political parties at unified messaging. Branding, “introduces a sense of calm and confidence to counter the communications maelstrom” (Marland, “Brand Command” 102). Canadian political communication researcher Alex Marland described the country’s current political climate as one heavily focused on image and message control (“Brand Command” 3). While governments always dabbled in political marketing, whether during an election or when in power, it is the extent to which political leaders have adopted and begun to depend on branding techniques that renders nation branding a new and significant form of nationalist communication.

If the “candidate brand” is the public image of a politician, then the “nation brand” is the public image of a country. Nation branding emerged in the early 1990s, on the heels of the neo-conservative wave brought on by the Regan-Thatcher-Mulroney era. Traditionally, a country’s economic health was based on its national corporations and levels of production. However, increases in free trade agreements, foreign acquisitions and the cross-border production chains resulted in a “growing divergence between corporation and nation” (Porter 21). By the 1990s, a country’s economic value could no longer be defined by its corporate landscape. It could, however, be defined by its citizens. National consciousness – the “sentiments, forms of belief,

and attitudes that made up the collective spirit” – was taken up and manipulated to redefine the “nation as a competitive and marketable” homogenized space (Aronczyk 47). Governments are starting to create their version of a nation, thrusting it on their citizens and then parlaying their devotion into marketable attributes. Nationalism breeds more nationalism since “it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round” (Gellner 54).

The “image of the nation,” which is one “of social constructivism, of ‘imagined community,’” is wholly accepted and perpetuated by its audience (Aronczyk 61). For nation branding, the audience is a nation’s citizens but also possible investors and immigrants. By the early 2000s, a nation’s level of “attractiveness” was deemed a “critical criteria for economic vitality and competitiveness at both macroeconomic and microeconomic levels” (Aronczyk 56). Economic realities are discounted; the gap between the “perceived attractiveness” of a nation and its “actual attractiveness” is presented as a temporal distinction between what is and what is to come (Aronczyk 57).

Nation branding focuses on “the softer side” or narrated side of a nation’s economy; unencumbered by the hard facts of labor costs or export levels, nation branding presents the “cultural face of economic activity” (Aronczyk 162). Nation branding is a central element of a country’s soft-power strategy. Soft power refers to a country’s ability to influence foreign affairs based on the “attractiveness of its culture, political ideals, and policies” (Potter ix). It is opposed to hard power, hinged on military coercion and economic might; a country with soft power shapes other nations’ preferences because they admire its values and ideals (Nye 5).

Soft power is achieved through diplomacy, whether classic or public. The former refers to the management of international relations between attachés, ambassadors and other professional diplomats. The latter threatens classic diplomacy’s privileged intergovernmental communication

structure; diplomatic relations are increasingly performed in the public eye, by nontraditional players and with unorthodox means. Public diplomacy has emerged in correlation with the rise of non-state actors, from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to celebrities associated with the arts and culture industries. Evan Potter, former Foreign Affairs communications strategist and author of *Branding Canada: Projecting Canada's Soft Power through Public Diplomacy*, described public diplomacy as “the effort by the official institutions of one nation to influence the elite or mass public opinion of another nation for the purpose of turning the policies or views of that target nation to advantage” (32). Official institutions now depend on an increasing range of influential non-state actors. Who is managing the diplomatic negotiations is no longer as important as what the negotiations are and how they are performed (Pigman 50).

The 21<sup>st</sup> century world of instant and ubiquitous communication has threatened public diplomacy’s hold on public opinion. Traditional methods such as general communiqués are no longer sufficient, requiring the development of new techniques and attitudes (Porter and Kramer 2). Evan Potter lists several Canadian branding campaigns as examples of public diplomacy initiatives, including “Think Canada” (234). Launched in Japan in 1998, the 5-month campaign hoped to “fill out” Japanese perceptions of Canada “as a creative, industrialized country with world-class technologies” to boost trade and tourism (Potter 234). The campaign included advertising, cultural programming (exhibits, performance and festivals), as well as industrial events (commercial and economic-focused exhibits and seminars) (Potter 235).

The 2010 Vancouver Olympics provides another example of nation branding. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, sports events became more important as state leaders recognized “the power of athletes and sport to promote prestige and recognition abroad” and to strengthen national unity (Potter 91). Hosting the most important international sporting event gave Canada

an enormous platform to present ourselves in a positive light. Initiatives included the Own the Podium project, an investment program to help the most likely Canadian athletes win medals at the Olympic and Paralympic Games; the Cultural Olympiad, a cultural festival to showcase “the best in Canadian” art; and the Olympic torch relay, which “created a pan-Canadian experience that won over visitors and lifted spirits of Canadians from coast to coast” (“Own the Podium”; “Vancouver 2010”; Standing Committee).

Leveraging the attention Canada was receiving in the lead up to the Olympics, the Canadian Tourism Commission launched “Canada: Keep Exploring” to dispel the myth that the country is “breathtaking but boring” (Alphonso). In addition to the country’s strong performance in the wake of 2008’s recession, the media campaign helped secure Canada’s position at the top of FutureBrand’s 2010 Country Brand Index (Alphonso). Simultaneously, an overwhelming sense of national pride swept Canadians as they watched the men’s hockey team win gold and donned Hudson Bay’s red mittens.

Public diplomacy is a staple in democratic politics and nation branding is the method du jour “to communicate with foreign and domestic publics about its policies, values, and culture to advance its national interests and foreign policy goals” (Zhou 870). With its techniques based on brand management and marketing, nation branding helps Canada communicate cohesive and appealing cultural, political, and economic narratives (Potter 7).

Nation branding is a key component of national and international policy (Dinnie 23). Yet, despite its 30-year existence and quick ascension among the most influential governmental ranks, there has been a limited amount of work done in the field. Only in recent years have communication theorists taken an interest in the phenomenon. Sue Curry Jansen, one such communication theorist, wonders why, since nation branding is now an established practice “that

is supported by public policy and funding, and encouraged by international development and trade organizations” (Jansen 121). Canadian theorists who have contributed to the burgeoning field include Evan Potter, Alex Marland, and Melissa Aronczyk. My thesis will contribute to the developing field of nation branding in Canada.

In Aronczyk’s comprehensive *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, she described four stages of nation branding: research/evaluation, training/education, identification and implementation. The first stage involves evaluating a nation’s level of attractiveness based on national and international perceptions. Citizens are then trained to understand what is nation branding and why it is important. Thirdly, a nation’s essence or “core idea” is developed. Finally, the idea is shared through multiple channels as a distinguishing feature of national identity; the essence is meant to “distill the political, economic and cultural interests of the country into a single but mutable proposition” (Aronczyk 114).

### **1. 1. 3. Articulated Myth**

We return then to the concept of “myth” for a myth is a “harmonious display of essences” (Barthes, “Mythologies” 142). American existential psychologist Rollo May points out myth’s contradictory nature; the mythical narrative unites “conscious and unconscious, historical and present, individual and social,” truth and lie (26). For May, myths, being neither wholly fictitious nor factual, are identity builders (26). For Roland Barthes, myth is a type of “speech,” a method or channel through which meaning is made (“Mythologies” 142). Speech is a code system that classifies thought, allowing its recognition but also mutating its form. Language can never wholly translate thought; speech is where the unconscious thought and the conscious expression almost meet. Myth can be seen as creating essences that are not pure, but appear so – they are “isms.”

In *Understanding Media*, Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan explained the “message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs” (9). I find McLuhan’s description of new technologies’ influence on social behaviour and social forms of communications useful. Like Innis, McLuhan helped explain the effective power new media have over a society or, in this case, a government’s changing nationalist strategies. The rise of social media and instant forms of communications necessitated the adoption of branding techniques. McLuhan famously stated that the “medium is the message,” which “means that the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium” (4). McLuhan delineates the content of writing as speech and the content of speech as the process of thought (4). His definition of medium matches well with the “sign system” Barthes described in his 1957 book, *Mythologies*.

*Mythologies* depends on semiologist Ferdinand de Saussure to understand “‘collective representations’ as sign systems” and deconstruct how a modern myth – from wrestling to the proletariat – is created and consumed (Barthes, “Mythologies” 9). Ferdinand de Saussure developed the field of semiology at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Santos 98). While focusing on linguistics, de Saussure classified language as just one sign system of many, including symbolic rites and signals, used to express ideas (Clarke 124). For de Saussure, a sign is the smallest unit of signification, composed of a signifier (word, sound or image) and a signified (meaning) (Santos 98). Their relationship is not natural, but arbitrary and fluctuating; the connection between the signifier and signified is made to feel natural through repetition and social convention.

Layering on top of de Saussure’s sign, which Barthes defined as a “first-order semiological system,” a myth is a “second-order semiological system.” Instead of the word, sound or image, the myth has another sign (now called a “sense”) as its signifier (now a “form”)



(Barthes, "Mythologies" 114). When the form is combined with another signified ("concept"), the original sign is coated with new meaning and turned into a "signification" (second-order semiological system) (Barthes, "Mythologies" 114). The sign-turned-signifier/form is emptied of its previous meaning and filled with a signified/concept that has its own solidified meaning, based on culture and emotion, creating a new "truth." While the relationship between a signified and signifier is arbitrary, the relationship between the concept and form is anything but; intention and motivation exist behind every myth. Like McGee's people, the myth is motivated; it has a mission to convey specific ideas and social behaviours (Barthes, "Mythologies" 126).

A myth does not hover above "reality," reflecting it as language does. A myth establishes natural-seeming connections with reality. For Barthes, myth is the most powerful tool to define society as it "operates the inversion of anti-physis into pseudo-physis" ("Mythologies" 142). Like the constitutive rhetoric and the invented tradition, the myth naturalizes social norms and social classes. Society is an infinite series of mythical articulations and a myth is nothing but a series of articulation layered on top of each other. They exude authenticity but are really "formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function" (Barthes, "Mythologies" 119). The connection between a signifier/form and a signified/concept is "a sort of constantly moving turnstile" with each connection exuding different meanings (Barthes, "Mythologies" 123).

For Ernesto Laclau, articulation is a series of independent concepts, themselves discursive products, subjectively linked through discourse. The power of the arbitrary sign is the relative freedom to play with it, to reformulate its connotative meanings. For Laclau, social meanings derive from the "no-necessary correspondence among practices and the elements of ideology" (Slack 121). Laclau's definition of articulation is useful in helping me visualize how myths are

formulated: not as large entities, but composed of several individual building blocks that are, as previously mentioned, bound together through discourse.

All social order, norms and practices emerge from discursive connections made between ideological elements (Slack 121). Dominant and subordinate class formations result, not from determinate factors, but by discourse, whose meanings “are always connotatively linked to different class interests or characters” (Slack 120). The subordinate class discourse is not reflective of their social realities, nor is it self-formulated, but devised by the dominant class. In turn, the dominant class’ ideas and norms are continuously created, challenged and altered by the subordinate class. Society is constantly being formed and reformulated. Laclau identifies this process as hegemony.

For Laclau, a class is hegemonic in its ability to “articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralized” (Slack 121). For, that is exactly the goal of bourgeois ideology (“Mythologies” 142). *Mythologies* is “an ideological critique bearing on the language of so-called mass-culture,” which is defined by the dominating bourgeois class (Barthes, “Mythologies” 126). The dominant class subtly disseminates its views through discourse – as the bourgeois class of popular nationalism, the ruling body of official nationalism did. And now, the governments of branded nationalism do.

## **1. 2. Approach**

In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes described three possible readings one can undertake when confronted by a myth. Reading a myth depends on how the signifier is interpreted or manipulated; one either focuses on its meaning, its form or both. The myth producer starts with an empty form – an image, word or logo – and fills it with a simple meaning (Barthes, “Mythologies” 128). The myth reader focuses on both, viewing them as naturally linked; the

mythical signifier becomes “an inextricable whole made of meaning and form” (Barthes, “Mythologies” 128). The mythologist too sees both the myth’s form and the meaning, but as distinct. The mythologist understands the signifier is composed of two elements that have been mashed together, like a round peg in a square hole; their union is not natural, but is made to appear so through force and distortion (Barthes, “Mythologies” 128).

It is the third role, that of the mythologist, that I will take on. I will work to uncover the Canadian myth of the sesquicentennial, the motivations behind its production and dissemination. I do so through the act of writing. Barthes believed the only way to combat the hegemonic power of myth is through literature and its three forces: *mathesis*, *mimesis* and *semiosis* (Barthes, “Lecture” 6). *Mathesis* refers to literature’s inclusivity and “infinite reflexivity,” the mutated meanings, deficiencies and stereotypes of speech are constantly played with, challenged and altered (Barthes, “Lecture” 7). Literature’s reflexivity is continuous due to its hopeless yet relentless desire to represent the *real*. The real does not exist; everything is representational. This is the second force, *mimesis*. Rejecting the impossibility of such a representation, literature persists in its quest. The third force of literature is *semiosis*, or semiology. Semiology is an aid to manoeuvre through language, highlighting “the impurity of language” and seeking to understand the creation of its signs (Barthes, “Lecture” 11).

My approach is one of reflection through writing. It is fluid, following “the method of language, language reflecting on itself” (Barthes, “Lecture” 15). It is an explorative exercise in rhetorical criticism. In *The Practice of Rhetorical Criticism*, James R. Andrews defined rhetorical criticism as the “systematic process of ‘understanding the basic processes of inception, construction, presentation, and reception of rhetorical messages’” (66). In other words, it “can be understood as an effort to understand how people within specific social situations attempt to

influence others through language” or texts, which is anything from which meaning can be derived – images, speeches, architecture, music, etc. (Selzer 281).

There are several approaches one can take when employing rhetorical criticism, I make use of two: textual analysis and contextual analysis. The former can be defined as a close reading or deconstruction of a text in order to understand how it produces meaning and affects action (Browne 91). The latter involves analyzing a text not in isolation, but as part of a large socio-political environment and as a response to other rhetorical messages (Selzer 292). By analyzing historical events and their cultural contexts, Andrews explained, we can better understand current events (10). His argument supports my decision to first analyze the Centennial celebrations to better understand the current Sesquicentennial brand.

For communication theorist Elfriede Fursich, both content and context are interdependent forms of analysis. In “In Defence of Textual Analysis,” she turned to Roland Barthes to define textual analysis as a qualitative research method that does not only rely on the content of a text, but its context or “underlying ideological and cultural assumptions” (“Mythologies” 240). She stressed the importance of a prolonged and profound analysis “using semiotic, narrative, genre or rhetorical approaches” (Fursich 240).

Thus, rhetoric and semiotics are both subsets of a form of analysis that attempts to uncover the meanings and motivations behind texts, or speech. Seeing language as composed of multiple sign systems, semiotics asks how meaning is made and conveyed from its smallest unit, the sign, to its largest constellation of sign systems. With persuasion at its core, rhetoric focuses on how these meaning-filled texts are used to induce an audience towards a certain ideology or course of action.

### 1. 3. Chapter Breakdown

Using the Centennial and Sesquicentennial celebrations as case studies, I deconstruct the notion of “Canadian identity” as a brand, noting the cultural context, political mandate and constructed narratives surrounding the celebrations. A chapter on the Centennial celebration consists of a Barthesian examination of 1967’s logo, speeches and celebratory events. Taking cues from Barthes’ *Mythologies*, I look into four Centennial events, analyzing how each consisted of a Canadianism used to establish a larger sense of Canadian identity.

The Sesquicentennial celebration chapter focuses on the themes and speeches of Canada 150, exploring the rhetorical and visual strategies used in service of governmental nation branding projects. I explore how the Canada 150 logo emerged as an integral brand material for the both the Conservatives and Liberals. I deconstruct the four themes of the Sesquicentennial (diversity and inclusion, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, the environment and youth). Also, I look at how The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and The Canadian Museum of History are essential components of a government’s soft power and myth-building strategies.

## 2. Centennial Brand

### 2. 1. Canada in the 1960s

Plans for the Centennial Celebrations began as early as 1959, under Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. In 1961, his government passed the *National Centennial Act*. However, Diefenbaker's Centennial plans were short lived as he was voted out in the 1963 federal election. The Liberal leader and new Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson promptly replaced the *Act* with the *Centennial of Confederation Act*, signalling a new approach to the celebrations.

Both Pearson and Diefenbaker were passionate in their quest for a united Canada; they felt a new vision was needed to carry the country through the period of immense social change in Canada and throughout the world. Rapid urbanization, social change, and new ideals of equality and freedom defined western countries in the postwar era. In Canada, social change meant an increase in immigration and multiculturalism, the growth of Montréal and Toronto into cosmopolitan cities, as well as the emergence of youth subculture.

By the 1960s, the long-standing hegemonic influence British culture had over Canada was dissipating. Canadians' move to cultural sovereignty preceded the government's increasingly political autonomy. Starting with the First World War, Canada slowly gained recognition as an independent state, particularly when it came to foreign affairs (Dyer). A definitive move toward independence came during 1956's Suez Crisis. The Canadian government chose not to join Britain in invading Egypt to regain control over the Suez Canal (Tattrie). Instead, Canada's UN delegation, led by Pearson, proposed a Peacekeeping Force to de-escalate the situation (Tattrie). Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his intervention (Tattrie).

Non-English and non-French (still largely European) immigration had dramatically increased since the Second World War; with rising political leverage, the settled communities called for more widespread recognition (Cowie 10). Canada's youth were inspired by the egalitarian and inclusive worldviews of the New Left political movement and of counter-culture; some were even inspired by Marshall McLuhan's "postliterate tribal society" (Kotash). The French-Canadians "were calling for a re-examination of the role and treatment of French-Canada within Confederation" (Cowie 12). Moreover, the 1960s are remembered as a period of immense optimism in which economic growth and technological development left the world with a euphoric sense of hope for the future.

While both Diefenbaker and Pearson understood "the need to fashion new narratives of national identity," they differed in their methods and visions (Spittal 5). During his tenure, Prime Minister Diefenbaker passed the Bill of Rights (the precursor to 1982's Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms), granting First Nations the right to vote federally without losing their treaty status, and implemented new immigration rules eliminating outright racial discrimination (McConnell; Van Dyk). Additionally, his "One Canada" vision included the economic development of northern territories, which he felt "must become our national consciousness" ("Major").

Diefenbaker paired his "practical" dedication to advancing Canadians' individual rights with the "impractical vision of Canada and the Commonwealth that was a throwback to the Victorian era" (Spittal 5). In his victory speech, Diefenbaker declared that his Conservative Party had truly become a "national party" composed of all the people of Canada of all races united in the concept of one Canada ("Victory"). Diefenbaker hoped his "One unhyphenated Canada" would work under the umbrella of the "high moral and democratic values of the British

Parliamentary tradition and the Canadian way of life” (Spitall 17). He found compatibility between the newly formed Commonwealth and Canada’s egalitarian values. For Diefenbaker, Commonwealth members were the defenders of freedom and equality (“Address”). Canadians adopted their principles from Britain as well as France, “the two nations which have stood in the front line of most of the great battles for human liberty” (Diefenbaker, “Address”). While attempting to forge a new Canada, Diefenbaker was not willing to let go of the British traditions and values on which, he felt, Canada’s confederation was based (Spitall 17).

Diefenbaker was trying to create a direct connection between Canada’s European past and his vision of an egalitarian future, between the “Barons of England who won Magna Carta” and our most recent steps toward civil rights (“Address”). All myths depend on the past to provide their substance and legitimacy. As Barthes described, “myth is a type of speech chosen by history, it is a system of communication not based in nature, but in human history (“Mythologies” 109). Historical elements are chosen and further distorted to fill the signifier (the Bill) with a new signified (unhyphenated Canadianism). Barthes used the term “distortion” not in opposition to an undistorted version of the same element, but as a synonym for manipulation; after all, he explained, distortion is “possible only because the form of the myth is already constituted by a linguistic meaning” (Barthes, “Mythologies” 122). For Barthes, distortion begins as soon as thought becomes speech.

When most of the country was pulling away from its British roots, he was doubling down on its importance to Canadian identity. That is not to say there was a deep detestation for Britain and the monarchy. While many Canadians still felt a connection and respect for Britain, there was a growing desire for the country to assert its cultural independence. Diefenbaker’s link between Britain and Canada remained too strong for many Canadians. The country had changed and after



6 years in power, Diefenbaker, “who had neglected the French-speaking members of his own caucus, was indifferent to the signs of change” (D. Smith).

While Diefenbaker could not, nor wanted to fully accept the changing world around him, Pearson embraced Canada’s shifting social landscape. With the 1963 federal election, Pearson became the new “leader” of the Canadian people. As mentioned in chapter one, for Michael McGee, a people is not objectively real but a fiction created by an advocate, only becoming rhetorically real when the audience agrees to participate in that collective fantasy (242). The people’s “advocate is recognized as ‘leader’ only when he transcends his own individuality in the estimation of his audience” (345). Diefenbaker once held that status; exuding a populist image and placing himself firmly as an outsider to the “establishment men” on Parliament Hill, he became the representative for the “everyday Canadian” (Segal). Yet, his unfilled Northern Vision promises, the economic crisis, and his unpopular decision to cancel of the Avro Arrow project, were enough to strip him of his title (D. Smith). Pearson, with his Nobel Peace Prize and messages of unity, became the ultimate Canadian advocate for he was seen as its ideal embodiment.

## **2. 2. Planning the Centennial**

The newly elected Liberal federal government recognized Canada’s changing landscape and its population’s ideological views (especially those of Québec separatism) “posed the most significant and organized of threats to Canadian unity and the legitimacy of the Federal government” (Cowie 12). In response, the Pearson government introduced a new “cooperative federalism” policy and new legislation aimed at strengthening national unity. The Pearson government employed “official nationalism” to make any signs of power appear normal and routine, not domineering. As the country displayed its first signs of deterioration, the federal

government offered “inventive legerdemain” in an attempt to legitimize itself and “appear attractive in national drag” (Anderson 85). The Centennial Commission, assembled in 1963, adopted the government’s new mandate “to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing Canadian population” (Miedema 141).

The Centennial became not only a celebration of 100 years of Confederation, but also a political initiative for the Canadian government to promote a much-needed message of unity. In 1964, the Centennial Commission published a manual outlining the Commission’s objectives. The *Centennial Handbook* stated that the celebrations were a “never-to-be-seen-again chance to achieve unity in diversity, to reach a collective faith in the greatness and future of this Canada of ours” (Miedema 72). Two principles guided the planning: developing “projects to enhance intercultural co-operation and national unity,” and seeking “to bring about a high degree of involvement and participation in Centennial activities by as many people as possible throughout Canada” (Miedema 142).

The Commission called upon Canadians to take control of the celebrations, as well as take on the new, progressive and unified identity the government was trying to promote. They hoped that by personally committing to the celebrations, Canadians would also commit to the new idea of being Canadian. Canadians were asked to do much more than organize events; their mission was not complete at the end of 1967 for the “Centennial and its crowning glory, Expo 67, operated as a catalyst, unifying Canadians and launching them into what promised to be an exciting and prosperous future. (Davies 33).

## 2. 3. Centennial Messaging

### 2. 3. 1. The Centennial Logo

For the Canadian government, the Centennial became the conduit for a “mythical speech... made of a material which had *already* been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication” (Barthes, “Mythologies” 110). The shared sense of Canadian ideals and unity was the result of a reduction of complex histories and relationships into fitting and timely narratives. A logo, as a sign system that both transmits and acquires information, is a “visual shortcut for the meanings associated with” such narratives (Cowin 14). For the Centennial Commission, the logo played a representative role, as a trigger for the specific ideas and emotions they hoped to elicit from citizens, and a functional role, as a reproducible decorative emblem (Cowin and Matusitz 23; Ash).

The Centennial logo was released in 1964 and designed by acclaimed Canadian graphic designer Stuart Ash. The logo consisted of a maple leaf with eleven equilateral, multi-coloured triangles and a single stem: ten for each province and one for the two territories. Each coloured triangle represented a different facet of Canadian identity based on the unique characteristics of each province. As its own sign system, the Centennial logo repurposed an already existing first-order sign system – the maple leaf. The maple leaf’s use as a symbol for Canada can be traced as far back as the 1700s, when the French Canadian settlers adopted it as their emblem.

It is telling there is only one triangle for the two territories; the single triangle is “one of the basic design flaws that betrayed Canada’s intended message of unity” (Darwin 5). Well recognized as part of Canadian fabric, indigenous people and culture were not the focus. Responding to the recently released Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

(1963) and to the rising threats of Québec sovereignty, the Federal government focused on a bilingual nation Canada, whose roots reached back to the arrival of the French and English European settlers. This version of history neglected the original and early presence of the First Nations on the continent (Darwin 7). The indigenous people of Canada were relegated to the back seat, along with all other non-French and non-English Canadians; they were still included and welcome on the Centennial ride, but they were not allowed to drive.

The logo worked to hide the disparity in importance between Canada's multiplying cultural groups. Firstly, while Confederation was a union between four provinces in 1867, the 1967 celebrations were to include all of Canada. Avoiding the distinction, the Celebrations, and therefore the logo, masked the exclusively eastern origins of the anniversary and reached out to the west (Davies 48). The logo was a "graphic representation of Canada and the federal government," hoping to highlight its "diverse collection of ethno-cultural communities" (Cowie 78-79).

The Centennial logo was created as a visual anchor or shortcut for Canadians to identify with the Centennial messaging. The federal government wanted to present Canadians, and the world, with a new vision, to redefine it as "an inclusive, pluralistic and quintessentially modern country" (Cowie 36). The Centennial year was meant as a "time of national stocktaking and rededication for the future" The logo merged and visually represented Canadians' dual commitments: to the celebration and to new ideas of progress and unification. The Centennial logo, branding every event, souvenir and memory of the celebration, was "an aid in promotion of the Centennial" and its messaging (qtd. in Davies 48).

Several versions of the logo were prepared (uni-coloured, black, outlines, etc.) to suit any application. Its simplicity and flexibility was important in its role as a reproducible decorative

emblem. The Commission wanted the logo to be used throughout Canada and by all Canadians. In keeping with their hopes of having the public personally invested in the celebrations, the logo had to be easily reproducible and simple enough for children to draw (Ash).

Accompanying the launch of the logo was a widespread publicity campaign. The series of advertisement and announcements introduced the logo to Canadians while attempting to have them embody its “dynamism, diversity and egalitarian character” (Cowie 86). Through commercials, newspaper articles and events, Canadians were told exactly what the logo was meant to symbolize. The advertisements were the calling cards Canadians freely and eagerly answered, turning them into subjects of the new Canadian ideology. The printed ads addressed the readers directly, asking “What does the Centennial mean to you?” (“What Does Centennial Mean to You?”). The ads were the equivalent of Althusser’s “Hey you there!” scenario during which an individual accepts the subjecthood that accompanies an address (118). Being called upon or “hailed” is to be transformed from an individual into a subject of a collective identity.

One advertisement depicted a fragmented logo alongside a completed one. Beside the fragmented leaf, was written, “What are you planning for Centennial?” (“What Does Centennial Mean to You?”). The text at the bottom of the ad forcefully explained that 1967 “is the year for Canadians everywhere to stop and think about Canada, to look back on how far this nation has come since its rough and rugged beginnings” (“What Does Centennial Mean to You?”). The ad provided the mission for Canadians to embark on that year: “what is important is that you have stopped and thought enough of your country and what it means to you to take up a Centennial project of your own” (“What Does Centennial Mean to You?”). Like a puzzle, the ad suggested, individual Canadians were meant to put the “maple leaf” (Canada) together. The ad was a form of Maurice Charland’s constitutive rhetoric. The ad was a text that worked to create a collective

identity by motivating its readers into action. In accepting that the question “What are you planning for Centennial?” was for them, the readers took on the responsibility of answering it, which, in this case, meant planning a Centennial event. Support for the celebrations became inherent. Canadians, with their celebratory event, were contributing to the unified image the Commission imagined for them.

A second ad implored Canadians to use the logo on their stationery, lapel and pay envelopes (“Take this Centennial Symbol.”). The Commission wanted Canadian to take the logo, therefore the spirit of the Centennial celebrations anywhere and everywhere they went. When they got dressed, when they got paid and when they wrote a letter, the logo was there to remind Canadians of their place in Centennial celebrations and in Canada’s prosperous future. The line between public and private performance, between the public act of celebrating and the mundane acts of everyday life was blurred.

### **2. 3. 2. Expo 67 Opening Speech**

Originally Expo 67 was not an official Centennial event, only later was it associated with the celebration. Yet, it was considered Centennial’s crowning achievement. Encouraged by Commission members and “shaped by the same cultural context as the broader Centennial celebrations,” Expo took on the same nation-building goal: “forwarding an inclusive, pluralist image of Canada” (Miedema 119).

On April 27, 1967, Pearson was on hand to deliver the opening ceremony speech. In the speech, Pearson credited Canadians’ work ethic and ambition for the organizers’ “achievements in planning, organization and construction that are little short of miraculous” (Pearson, “Remarks”). Recognizing Canadians’ industrious and energetic attributes, he was repeating and

further emphasizing some of the traits he listed in his address at the 1965 inauguration of the national flag of Canada.

I mention the creation of the new Canadian flag because it was yet another tactic in the Liberal government's "cooperative federalism" strategy and its surrounding discourse set the groundwork for the Centennial celebrations. With the Union Jack in one corner, the Red Ensign clearly represented Canada's British heritage. Replacing the Red Ensign, the new Canadian Flag, with the maple leaf at its centre, worked as a neutral representation of all Canadians (Matheson and Vachon). According to Pearson, the landmark flag unveiling took place "in this eighth month of our ninety-eighth year as a Confederation" (Pearson, "Address"). Pearson created an alternative calendar that started on the day of Confederation; the date of the unveiling was no longer February 15, 1965, but the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the ninety-eighth year of Canada (Pearson, "Address"). Setting up the timeline was a discursive technique to further underline how the creation of the Canadian flag is a natural part of Canada's linear progress. The new flag became a "transhistorical subject," as if all the events since Confederation were leading up to this one transformative moment (Charland, "Constitutive" 140).

In the 1965 speech, Pearson included a list of criteria meant to define Canada's "God-fearing people:" generous, sensitive, tolerant, compassionate, industrious, energetic, resolute, wise, moral, just and fair (Pearson, "Address"). In his speech inaugurating a new stage in Canada's history, Pearson provided the Canadian people with standards for how to act, describe themselves and represent the nation. Pearson focused on the relationship between French and English Canada, highlighting their equal contributions as Canada's 'founding peoples.'

With the Expo 67 speech, tailored to the cosmopolitan audience and the international theme of the world fair, Pearson alluded heavily to Canada's growing multicultural and

Aboriginal populations. In the speech, Pearson explained how Canada has “always depended upon achieving unity of human purpose within the diversity of our linguistic cultural and social backgrounds” (Pearson, “Remarks”). Herein lies a fundamental Canadian paradox: the simultaneous dependence on and rejection of different cultures and ethnic groups – exploiting the labour, tools and cultural artifacts of indigenous peoples and immigrant workers while discriminating against them. The indigenous people’s linguistic and traditions were ignored and the target of eradication, while their cultural products, such as the canoe and inuksuk, were redefined and incorporated within the Canadian rubric.

Cultural inclusion became a priority for government institutions in the 1960s, when terms like biculturalism and multiculturalism became popular (Burnet and Driedger). Pearson’s use of the word “always” in his Expo speech implied a false permanence in this new idea the government was commandeering (Pearson, “Remarks”). By framing Canada’s unified diversity as an eternal trait, Expo 67 became its natural by-product, a perfect fit for the country (such a multicultural country would obviously host such a multicultural event).

Pearson began and concluded his 1967 speech by discussing pride. In his first sentence, Pearson exclaimed that the opening of Expo 67 was not only a proud day for Montreal but, “above all,” Canada. In the last sentence, Pearson anticipated Expo’s success would make “all Canadians prouder of our own country than ever before” (“Remarks”). His assuredness turned the statement into yet another official invitation for the Canadian people: practice open patriotism and be proud of our nation.

### **2. 3. 3. Centennial Voyageur Canoe Pageant**

One the most popular Centennial events, The Centennial Voyageur Canoe Pageant was originally proposed as a canoe race from Edmonton to Montreal. Centennial Commission project



officer A.J. Charbonneau and Canadian historian Eric Morse suggested a historical pageant to “re-enact the lives of the fur trade voyageurs” (Dean 84). Influenced by Harold Innis’ *The Fur Trade in Canada*, Morse understood the early importance of the canoe for developing the fur trade economy in what is now Canada. For Innis, “Canada emerged as a political entity with boundaries largely determined by the fur trade”; he explained that the early *coureurs de bois*, or *voyageurs*, used many indigenous tools and techniques to survive, including the canoe (Innis 392). The fur economy necessitated long trips into the wild and the canoe was the ideal means of transportation through the land’s abundant rivers and lakes. For Morse, the trade routes established through the fur trade are the “historical skeleton for the nation, and...the explanation for and the proud assertion of our independent sovereignty as a nation” (Dean 85).

The myth of the canoe in Canada, one invoking exploration and adventure, started to develop in the 1950s and 1960s (Dean 18). The myth arose within a small elite group of enthusiasts with the means and positions to widely propagate ideas of the canoe. Morse, filmmaker Bill Mason, and soon-to-be Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau romanticized the rugged voyageurs who would fearlessly traverse the unsettled lands with their canoes. In continuing to publish and make films about their adventures, Morse and his friends pushed the myth into the mainstream; they turned canoeing into an Anglo-Saxon idea of recreational pleasure (Dean 73). With every representation, every re-interpretation, the vision of the noble *coureur de bois* became “less reality than a certain knowledge of reality... the knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made of yielding, shapeless associations” (Barthes, “Mythologies” 119).

The mythmakers took over the image of the canoe, distorting and overturning any reference to its indigenous origins. By suppressing the canoe’s indigenous-crafted narratives, the myth producers had room to fill its concept with their own narratives. They turned the canoe into

Canada's maker and soul mate: no canoe, no exploration, no fur trade, no Canada (MacGregor 5). Mason – who was disappointed when the canoe was not chosen as the symbol on the Canadian flag (MacGregor 5) – observed that when looking at Canada's geography, “you come away with the feeling that God could have designed the canoe first and then set about to conceive a land in which it could flourish” (Mason 2).

Terry Goldie and Eva Mackey have argued that the canoe was an entry point for Canadians to feel connected to the land. European settlers and their descendants worked to *indigenize* themselves through penetration and appropriation (Goldie 15). Penetration refers to “forcible imposition” of the colonizers' culture (traditions, habits, technologies) onto the colonized (Goldie 15). Not as malicious as penetration, appropriation refers to colonizers' desire to adopt certain cultural elements of the colonized as their own (Goldie 15). Adopted “representations of Indigenous peoples” are turned into “cultural heritage” that is “used to bolster settler nationalist mythology... [and] settler innocence, in both the past and the present” (Mackey 152).

The Centennial Voyageur Canoe Pageant was yet another medium through which the myths of the canoe and the voyageur were strengthened. At Morse's suggestion, Charbonneau proposed the Pageant as a natural “tribute to the courage and stamina of the explorers, voyageurs and fur traders, the founders of Canada... the event will be a reminder of the colour and pageantry of Canadian history” (Charbonneau). The publicity pamphlet for the event described voyageurs as “brave men of vision” who created Canada through the participation in the fur trade (Charbonneau). Only the Yukon and Northwest Territories team included Indigenous paddlers, “their presence revealed the fractures and absences of the popularized version of Canada that the pageant promoted” (Dean 97).

The faithful servant of the canoe, the voyageur became every Canadian's forefather (Standing Committee 9). Rugged and tough, in touch with nature and therefore himself, he answered the call of adventure and set out to forge his path in the new world. Using the pronoun "we" in the event's promotional material, the Commission ascribed the same traits to all Canadians (Standing Committee 9). The Pageant paddlers, and Canadians as participating spectators, were not only re-enacting but embodying the traits of the voyageurs: adventurous, strong, ambitious, and hardworking (Dean 93). The Pageant was not a display of historical events, but a reflective performance of the Canadian spirit. The weeks-long performance aimed to establish a "historical and affective claim to the land that constitutes Canada as a nation" (Dean 83).

Over 100 men participated in ten teams (for eight provinces and the two territories), each manning a canoe branded with the Centennial logo. The logo played the role of branding device. Anthropologist Constantine Nakassis asserts that a brand is "citational" in its ability to link together various "semiotic events" (625). The events compose the sum of a brand's articulation. Nakassis defines citationality as a discursive act that "weaves together the multiple 'voices' and identities that inhere those distinct events into one complex act" (626). By bearing the Centennial logo, the voyageur canoes, as well as the history and sense of rugged adventure they evoked, were accepted into the fold of the Centennial discursive event (Nakassis 626). The race and its fellow 1967 initiatives – the dozens of erected statues, the Confederation Train, Gordon Lightfoot's Canadian Railroad Trilogy song, etc. – served as mythical symbols or tokens of memories recalling Canada's past as well as, even if unknowingly, the material brand tokens to its immaterial brand essence (Nakassis 628).

### 2.3.4. The Confederation Train and Caravans

From January 9 to December 5, 1967, an eight-coach train adorned with the Centennial logo and tooting the first notes of the national anthem, made its way from British Columbia to Nova Scotia before reaching its terminus in Montreal. A Canadian Government Exhibition Commission project, the Confederation Train was a “rolling Centennial project” meant to bring the celebrations right to Canadians’ door – or station – step; over 9 million Canadians visited the train and its supplementary road-based caravans (Aykroyd 123). Stopping in over 50 cities, the train consisted of six display cars, each exhibiting an historical period of Canada’s past. Visitors would start from the rear of the train and make their way forward. From the first car depicting aboriginal culture and Jacques Cartier-lead explorers’ history to the last car that focused on the postwar period of progress, the exhibition attempted to answer, “What is Canada?” (Graham 19). The Confederation Train’s format, linear as only a train would allow, alluded to a progressive form of storytelling. Similar to Pearson’s alternative calendar, the train was the physical manifestation of a Canadian timeline with every historical event a purposive step in the country’s foreordained formation.

In *The Anniversary Compulsion: Canada's Centennial Celebrations, A Model Mega-Anniversary*, Peter Aykroyd, the Commission’s Director of Public Relations, argued “of all Canadian symbols, trains best represent national unity” (123). He cited the much-extolled story of British Columbia’s agreeing to enter the Confederation on the condition that a railroad be built across the Rockies (123). However, as Maurice Charland clarified in “Technological Nationalism,” British Columbia only asked for a wagon road (“Technological” 200). It was the federal government that wanted to build the railway, believing “that a nation could be built by binding space” (Charland, “Technological” 201). The rail was Canada’s steel skeleton, whose

force could forge a connection powerful enough to mask the distance between the western province and the rest of the country. The heroic tales of construction, the visionary men behind the scenes, the scenic views enjoyed by train travelers, and the distinct horn of a CPR train are all part of a narrative that “constituted those in Canada as Canadians, united in the national project and under the political authority of a national government” (Charland, “Technological” 202).

The need for a railroad followed the desire for an expanded Confederation. The Fathers of Confederation, especially Sir John A MacDonal and George-Etienne Cartier, used the railroad as a both a material and rhetorical tool for nation building. Like Ancient Rome’s roads that allowed the transportation of its laws – and army - from the centralized bureaucracy in the capital to its outskirts, the railway allowed for the expansion of Eastern Canadian (European) economic and political systems.

Both the canoe and the trains are instances of “the discourse of technology in Canada” (Charland, “Technological” 196). The symbol of the canoe was held up by the descendant of European settlers as a means for them to establish a legitimate-appearing claim to the land of Canada. Similarly, Charland argued the rhetoric behind the train belonged to the governing state that sought to “legitimate itself politically by constituting a nation in its image” (“Technological” 197).

The rhetoric of technological nationalism did not end with the train, but continued on with the use of radio and television as conduits of national identity. The use of such controllable and unilateral modes of communication was ideal in extending governmental power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Charland, “Technological” 214). While presenting itself as an unbiased medium for nation building and for multiple avenues of communication between citizens, technological nationalism offered “ultimately a state in which listeners are subject to a discourse which can

only be produced by specialists” (Charland, “Technological” 216). In essence, “technological nationalism combines the idea of technological progress with the sentiments and goals of nationalism” (Adria 46).

### **2. 3. 5. The Bowsman Biffy Burning**

If Expo 67 was a nod to Canada’s cosmopolitan character and the Centennial Voyageur Canoe Pageant was a look back to Canada’s formative past, the Bowsman Biffy Burning was a signal of Canada’s advancing technical infrastructure. A quaint, if not odd signal. On December 31, 1966, the people of Bowsman, Manitoba, gathered for what can only be described as an epic bonfire – with wooden outhouses as kindle. On the eve of Canada’s Centennial, the small farming community gathered for a parade – “with toilet paper decorations and outhouses pulled on trailers” – that concluded in the burning of their antiquated “biffies” (Dyck).

The Centennial Commission’s assurance that “it’s not important how large or small your project is” was taken to heart in Bowsman (“What Does Centennial Mean to You?”). The idea for a biffy burning started a few months prior, when a sewage treatment plant opened near the town, allowing indoor plumbing for the first time. When the city council was discussing how the town could celebrate the Centennial, one councillor jokingly suggested to usher in 1967 “not with a bang but a blaze” using the obsolete outhouses (Dyck). The suggestion was considered a joke, until the Commission and Winnipeg’s CBC news station enthusiastically endorsed the idea (Berton 11).

What could be disregarded as nothing more than a whacky celebratory event was, in essence, a symbol of Canada’s move to modernization; after all, “what better image for a country leaping from rural isolation to international acclaim than a humorous, scatological purification ritual” (Ackerman). The Biffy Burning was itself a rite of passage, one that marked Canada’s full

transformation into a modern state, fully equipped with the technological advancement the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century promised.

The participants too, even if sarcastically, understood the transitional symbolism of the event. A 1967 article in the Winnipeg Tribune covered the “wackiest funeral... for the 33 outside toilets, victims of an advancing civilization” (Treymayne). A local reverend leading the ceremony remarked how the privies served early settlers well in Canada’s first 100 years, but were not needed for its second (Treymayne). While the event was argued as a symbolic burning of the past in favour of an exclusive acceptance of its urbanized future, I would argue that to accept one is not to negate the other. When devising a national identity, one chooses elements (events, values, personalities, etc.) from its past, present and future as building blocks. Nation building is inherently exclusive, but its selectiveness is not temporally limited; the blocks can point to a nation’s past or present, as long as they fit into the larger narrative the people’s leader is formulating.

The biffy burning was one of the many “instruments in the construction of a sense of national identity, or belonging, and some kind of continuity with particularly selected past events toward a shared destiny” (Varga 831). Additionally, the event represented the Canadian government’s openness to possible Centennial events. The Commission encouraged spontaneous, yet joy-filled events that reminded Canadians the celebrations were not only for them, but also by them.

#### **2. 4. Conclusion**

The Centennial and Expo 67’s messaging and themes were “powerful symbolic statements that both reflected their socio-political context and became in turn important tools in efforts to shape it” (Miedema 200). Before the Centennial, themes like multiculturalism lay

dormant or partially utilized until the Canadian government brought them together as “incipient political myths, visions of the collective life dangled before individuals in hope of creating a real ‘people’” (McGee 243). Recalling the adventurous voyageur or the industrious worker is a tactful nationalist method and the second step in Michael McGee’s “collectivization process” (243). McGee defines four stages of creating the people: the dormant “seeds of collectivism”, their organization into myths, the people’s belief in the newly formed myths, and finally, the myths’ rhetorical decay (243).

Like invented traditions, the Canadian myths projected through the Centennial did not appear from nowhere, but were formulated based on already established subjectivities, symbols and historical events. The fur trade was always part of Canadian history; however, not until the Centennial was the trade and its employees transformed into vehicles for the myth of adventure, courage and ruggedness. The gathering and organization of themes like multiculturalism and Canadian wilderness mark the first and second stages of the collectivization process. Such themes are further ratified when the people accept them and publicly exemplify their corresponding behaviour – the third stage of the process (McGee 243).

The fourth stage refers to myths’ transitory existence. Myths respond to “specific problems in specific situations” (McGee 243). A myth is “an abstract, purified essence, it is a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function” (Barthes, “Mythologies” 119). Once the social situation changes or the problems are resolved, myths are no longer relevant. The people of British imperial Canada transformed into the people of a united, forward thinking, bilingual Canada. The Centennial myths were both an effect and affect of the times.



Centennial marked the subtle beginnings of nation branding, with the emergence of mass media and the use of the same myth-making rules described in *Mythologies*, published ten years earlier. I do not believe the Canadian Commission thought of the Centennial as a brand nor do I want to reduce the celebrations' messaging to one term. However, the comparison is useful in viewing the 1967 celebrations as a precursor to nation branding initiatives the Canadian government takes on for the Sesquicentennial.

### **3. Sesquicentennial Brand**

#### **3. 1. Canada in the 2000s**

At the 2016 Liberal Biennial Convention in May, Liberal Canadian Heritage Minister, Mélanie Joly perfectly described how globalization and global interconnection has changed over the last 50 years:

In 1967, Canada had to build a village to show Canadians the world. People wanted to discover their planet, they were eager to connect to foreign cultures, ideas and ways of living. Since then, the world has come to Canada. Canadians are more than ever connected, knowledgeable and aware, 24/7, all continents, thousands of cultures and languages.” (“Sesquicentennial”)

Joly laid out the contemporary dilemma of nationalism and a cause of nation branding. The rise of 20<sup>th</sup> century globalization, traced back to the 1980s with the first free trade deals, led to the expansion of world markets and an upsurge in immigration. Coupled with the rise of instantaneous modes of communication, globalization has instigated the dissolution of nation-oriented mentalities. Enter nation branding, a strategy to counteract the growing irrelevance of national boundaries. A “positive nation brand provides a crucial competitive advantage” for countries competing for the “attention” of investors, tourists and immigrants (Dinnie 18).

Nation branding’s vocabulary, heavy with business-based concepts, is a consequence of globalization. For Melissa Aronczyk, nation branding is both an effect and affect of the process; how we think and discuss nationalism and national identity “has been reorganized by distinct understandings of globalization and neoliberalization” (11). National identity, as a myth that binds a people together, has been “mobilized as a competitive resource” to distinguish a country

in an increasingly interconnected world (Aronczyk 11). The form of nation building that took place during in 1967 “has been both extended and transformed by the phenomenon of nation branding” (Aronczyk 9).

### **3. 2. Planning the Sesquicentennial**

When it came to planning the Sesquicentennial it seems that, in many ways, history was repeating itself. Preceding both anniversaries were two remarkably similar stories: the rise of a Conservative government after years of Liberal rule, their attempt at redefining Canada’s ideals in their image, and their ultimate defeat at the hands of the Liberals before their vision could be realized.

Planning the Sesquicentennial started under Conservative leader Stephen Harper. Like Diefenbaker, Harper ran and governed as a populist leader. He presented himself as a Tim-Hortons-drinking-hockey-dad-from-the-suburbs, condemning the Liberals – especially his 2011 opponent, Michael Ignatieff – as intellectual, Starbucks-drinking elites (Delacourt). As if taking up Diefenbaker’s cause, Harper pursued long-forgotten Canadianisms, such as Arctic expansion and monarchism (Taber). In a 2011 *Globe and Mail* article, journalist Jane Taber expounded Harper’s plan “to recast the Canadian identity, undoing 40 years of a Liberal narrative and instead creating a new patriotism viewed through a conservative lens” (Taber).

Early plans for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary mirrored the same themes and symbols the Conservatives pursued since gaining power. In 2011, then Canadian Heritage Minister James Moore proclaimed the upcoming Sesquicentennial would “be an occasion for reflecting on what we have achieved as a relatively young country, and it should be an opportunity to promote a strong sense of pride and belonging for all Canadians” (Standing Committee). A year later, a Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage entitled “Canada's 150th Anniversary in

2017” was released. The report mentioned the “Road Map to 2017” list of historical anniversaries the government wanted to focus on in the lead up to the Sesquicentennial. Presented by Minister Moore to the committee, the list included the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War of 1812, 175<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Rebellions of 1837-1838, and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First World War (Standing Committee). Moore is quoted as saying that such historical events provide Canadians with “strong symbols and solid institutions; rights and duties of citizenship, a shared commitment to fellow citizens and the rule of law” and “should be acknowledged and celebrated in a big way” (Standing Committee). One large-scale initiative Moore did undertake was changing the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau to the Canadian Museum of History. Announcing a \$25 million renovation and mandate change, the Conservatives planned to reopen the museum in 2017 (Geddes).

Beyond the museum, grand speeches and \$12 million spent on advertisement, the Conservative government had yet to unveil concrete event or infrastructure funding plans (Levitz). Nor would they have the chance to. Like in 1963, a federal election put an end to the Conservatives reign and anniversary plans. In 2015, the Liberal party won a majority in what was called a stunning political comeback, climbing back from a 34-seat defeat in 2011 to a 184-seat majority (Blackwell).

Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau won on a rhetoric of hope and optimism. Trudeau continued to focus on positive traits that are “at the heart of what makes us Canadian” such as compassion, diversity and hard work (“Thanksgiving message”). His speeches and positive tone differed from Stephen Harper, who was reproached for playing into identity politics with his strict law-and-order agenda, anti-terrorism legislation and new versus “old-stock Canadians” differentiation (Hepburn; Gollom). In his acceptance speech, Trudeau exclaimed, “we beat

negative, divisive politics with a positive vision that brings Canadians together” (“We Beat Fear”).

Following the election, the new Canadian Heritage Minister, Mélanie Joly, took the reins of the Sesquicentennial planning. Despite the Standing Committee’s recommendation for a by-partisan Commission, the Liberal government kept the Department of Canadian Heritage in charge. Joly made her first statement detailing the department’s Canada 150 projects in March 2016. The Liberals doubled the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program budget to \$300 million and announced \$180 million for both Signature and community-based initiatives (Foote; Hannay, “Ottawa”).

At the Liberal Biennial in May and again at the 150-day countdown to the 2017 celebrations launch in August, Mélanie Joly further elaborated on the “Government of Canada’s vision for the 150th anniversary of Confederation” (“Countdown has Started”). She listed the four themes that would define the celebrations: diversity and inclusion, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, the environment and youth (“Countdown has Started”). By organizing the celebrations around general themes, the Liberal chose to underscore shared values and bonds over historical events, much like Pearson’s Liberals did in 1967 (Davies 10). The celebrations’ “presentist orientation” reflects the messaging that has come to define the Liberal government since Trudeau took leadership (Reynolds). More specifically, the celebrations’ themes match the major platforms Justin Trudeau campaigned on during the 2015 election.

Delving deeper into the theme of reconciliation with indigenous peoples, Trudeau repeatedly stressed for “a renewed nation-to-nation relationship” with the First Nations, Inuit and Metis populations (J. Smith). He proclaimed that it is “both the right thing to do and a sure path to economic growth” (“Thanksgiving Message”). In December 2016, he released a 5-point plan

to “repair this most important relationship” that included the symbolic inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, as well as the legislative implementation of all 94 recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (J. Smith). Joly reiterated the government’s commitment “to a renewed partnership, one based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership” while announcing reconciliation as one of the four Sesquicentennial themes (“Sesquicentennial”). Whether or not the federal government initiatives translate into substantial change is of no consequence to nation branding. Results or “reality” are replaced by “perceived attractiveness”; importance is allocated to “rhetorical reality,” like that of McGee’s people (Aronczyk 56; McGee 242).

From a branding perspective, the Sesquicentennial is part of Melissa Aronczyk’s fourth stage of nation branding: implementation (77). A nation branding campaign not only communicates a national identity, but also works to have its citizens embody that identity (Aronczyk 77). Evolving from the private industry’s marketing strategies, nation branding’s first public sector foray was in tourism. Branding practices then expanded with the goal to increase a country’s trade, investment, and soft power (Botescu and Georgescu. 21; Potter ix). Nation branding operates in much the same way as tourism advertising, as a series of campaigns composed of rhetorical and visual strategies to “make and market distinct political values, individuals, and objectives” (Aronczyk 9). The campaigns, logos, and slogans, come together to form the “totality of the nation brand” (Aronczyk 67). For a campaign to be successful, national citizens must come to “live the brand—that is, to perform attitudes and behaviours that are compatible with the brand strategy” (Aronczyk 76). A nation-wide anniversary is an ideal opportunity to reinforce the Liberals’ vision for Canada among its citizens and the world.

The celebration of a country’s anniversary can be seen as a large campaign, one with

built-in support and loyalty from citizens as it engages in a “repertoire of conventions associated with patriotic display” (Rutherford 223). Describing Canadians’ reaction to the 1914 declaration of war, historian Robert Rutherford argued that the mass celebrations that took place all over the country were not the repercussion of a “herd instinct,” but rooted in a “social memory connected to national identity” (248). Canadians understood the declaration of war as a moment of historical importance and “framed their collective responses accordingly” (Rutherford 248). The Centennial and the Sesquicentennial are steeped in a similar collective consciousness. Canada 150 is one in a long line of “mass demonstrations of support”; even if history is not the focus, the passage of 150 years is significant enough for most Canadians to recognize (Rutherford 223).

In *Celebrations*, William Johnston described anniversaries as effective traditions that help “governments... cultivate national identity” (39). For Johnston, commemorations and anniversaries are useful tools to reinforce a collective sense of national sovereignty (22). The Sesquicentennial, like the Centennial, is a less politically charged way for Canadians to come together and renew their membership to Canada, as expressed by the Liberals.

Crafting the themes in the image of the Liberal government platform is a branding tactic that ensures citizens are embodying their values throughout the celebratory events. The choice to forgo a Sesquicentennial commission is another such tactic. Maintaining control through the Canadian Heritage department allows the Liberal government to shape the celebrations and control their surrounding narrative. Mélanie Joly’s consistent presence as the “face” of Canada 150 facilitates the management of its communication. As spokesperson for the Sesquicentennial, Joly repeats the same researched and carefully crafted messages as Trudeau and other governmental departments. That is the goal of a brand, to provide “consistent and simple messages across media platforms” so customers develop an emotional preference and loyalty

over alternative choices (Marland “Political Communication” 4). The face of a brand is essential “because the people delivering the brand act in a manner that reflects the promised values” (Dinnie 16). In this case, a brand’s spokesperson can be compared to McGee’s leader of the people. While the spokesperson of the Canadian people is Trudeau, Joly – as an “equally rare trifecta: handsome, approachable, with an almost ruthless optimism about her” – is his exact counterpart and stand-in (Patriquin).

To further illustrate my point, I will compare Canada 150 speeches and events with other speeches Trudeau and Joly have given to demonstrate the similarities between the celebrations’ messaging and the larger Liberal platform. The comparisons will be divided based on Sesquicentennial themes and projects. Additionally, I will focus on the Sesquicentennial logo as the heart and “face” of the brand.

### **3. 3. Sesquicentennial Messaging**

#### **3. 3. 1. The Sesquicentennial Logo**

In the preceding chapter, I alluded to the idea that the Centennial messaging was a brand. I made the comparison between a myth and a brand; as a “mental construction that evokes a wide array of meanings,” a brand works in much the same way that a myth does (Santos 95). Like the myth, a brand is greater than the sum of its parts, a malleable articulation that works to create social relationships between producers (the government), their products or services, and their consumers (citizens) (Lury 2). The brand organizes the activities and social interactions one can expect when engaged with the company, or in this case, government. With corporate brand concepts dominating governmental thought, the comparison between nationalism, myths and branding has never been stronger. At the heart of a brand is its logo. Once a guarantor of quality, the logo has taken on a much more active role in establishing the value of a brand (Lury 76). The



logo provides visibility to the mental construction that is a brand, to the web of signs the brand pulls together. It is the “face” of the intangible brand. Its creation and design point to specific values a company wants to encompass. The Sesquicentennial logo points to the country’s political brand, as first crafted under the Conservatives, and then the Liberals.

In 2013, the Canadian government presented five tentative logos to the public. Completed in-house, it was evident that the government spent little time on them. While the public’s reaction was less than positive, the graphic design community was especially vocal in expressing its concern over the amateurish, government-produced designs (Ferrerias). Canadian designers wanted proper recognition and asked the government to hire a professional graphic designer. Instead, the Canadian government announced it would hold a student contest. Choosing not to employ a designer was a sign, a tip of the hat to fellow “everyday Canadians” that Harper was one of them. The strategy behind the Sesquicentennial logo was a political exercise in walking fine lines, trimming costs and presenting a populist image.

The student competition fit in with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s slightly bland, middle class populist image (Berger 51). His approach as a “dull but competent economic manager” extended to the arts (Marland, “Political Communication” 71). Harper’s governmental priorities followed those of Mulroney’s in the 1980s: trim government spending down to the bare necessities. In a 2008 *Globe and Mail* article, following cuts to arts and culture, Harper explained that while investment is necessary, they needed to walk “a fine line” to avoid “funding things that people actually don’t want” (Bradshaw). Harper was not interested in creative and artistic experimentation, but mass approved art.

The contest promised a \$5,000 reward and the chance for the winner “to be part of Canadian history” (“Design Contest”). (The first incarnation of the 1967 logo was also the result

of a design competition; when the submissions proved unsatisfactory, the government commissioned Stuart Ash. In the blog post, “History Repeating Itself – Recollections of the 1967 Centennial Logo Contest,” the graphic designer implored the government to learn from his experience and hire a professional.) The winning submission was a stylized maple leaf, composed of 13 diamonds for each province. The four diamonds in the centre represent the original provinces of Confederation (Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) (“The 150 logo”).

Designer Ariana Cuvin made two versions, a multi-coloured iteration for Canada’s diversity and a red outlined option to show “pride and unity” (“Biography of Ariana”). While the logo was a product of practical and cost-effective design, Cuvin’s statement fit the Liberal’s Sesquicentennial brand of unity in diversity. The government kept the logo, but invested \$55,000 in a rebranding strategy (Daubs). The strategy included the subtle variation in the logo’s colours, the predominant use of the outlined version, and a purple and red heavy colour palette for the promotional material. The original colours of the four base diamonds were red and orange; they were changed to match the red of the Liberal logo. The predominant use of red is no surprise; named one of the national colours in 1921, red is synonymous with Canada while purple traditionally represents royalty and also connotes success, creativity, and wisdom (Matheson and Vachon; Gillet). The use of the outlined version allows for more flexibility in its promotion; like the Centennial logo, the Canada 150 logo needs to be a reproducible item.

A short animated video released by Canadian Heritage on their social media networks in early December 2016 sees the logo take the shape of a boat, wind turbine, snowflake tree, etc. – representing Canada’s four corners and four seasons (“Canada 150 Logo”). The video ends in spring, with the logo starting as a seed and blooming into a fully-fledged symbol, ready for the

celebrations and a new “season” in Canadian history (“Canada 150 Logo”).

A commercial released in late December 2016 pans across the wall of a modern apartment, where calendars, photos, and notes are pinned to the wall. The Sesquicentennial logo is subtle in its appearance, taking shape by a red thread that zigzags across the wall and links the multiple trips and excursions. As an anonymous Canadian sleeps on a sofa, the narrator suggests we better rest now to get ready for Canada 150. The commercial is light on thematic messaging; instead, it has a decidedly touristic focus, mentioning the “thousands” of events to take part in across the country.

On the Canadian Heritage website, the logo is described as composed of “celebratory gems,” arranged in the shape of the “iconic maple leaf” – an ever enduring Canadian symbol (“The 150 logo”). Canadian Heritage appreciates that the “motif is recognized at home and abroad as distinctively Canadian, and it fosters feelings of pride, unity and celebration” (“The 150 logo”). The 2017 logo is remarkably similar to its predecessor and can be considered its latest update. Logos continuously evolve to reflect current aesthetic and social preferences while remaining recognizable enough to “trigger, in consumers’ minds, the whole host of emotions and images the company represents” (Cowin 11). In this case, the emotion and images stretch back 50 years, to the joy and contagious positivity felt during the Centennial.

### **3.3.2. Diversity, Youth, and Innovation**

The Sesquicentennial themes, engaging youth and diversity share an economic focus both Joly and Trudeau have alluded to. In May, Joly expressed the government’s desire to give youth “the tools to fully invest in themselves so they can reach their full potential and give back to their communities” (“Sesquicentennial”). Joly subtly hinted at a desire for Canada’s next generation to be the social and economic innovators our country needs: “we need policies that encourage

science, innovation and research” (“The Canadian Opportunity”). In June 2016, the government put forth an Innovation Agenda meant to build Canada as “a global centre of innovation” and promote “an entrepreneurial and creative society” (“Building Inclusive Canada.”).

Former Research in Motion co-CEO and one of the Sesquicentennial’s private-sector partners, Jim Balsillie was less subtle in acknowledging that for Canada to become an innovative hub and “to play a great role in the global stage,” we will need “active participation of all citizens in their communities” (Foote). For Aronczyk, “reinterpreting its various claims to diversity through the logic and ethics of business priorities” should be the act of nation branding in Canada (114). Branding a nation is to convert traditionally inward-looking, self-describing characteristics, such as diversity, into outward-looking selling points.

When it comes to diversity, Joly reiterated what Trudeau has mentioned time and time again: “we want to celebrate our diversity” because “Canadians understand that diversity is our strength” (“Sesquicentennial”). Indeed, the expression “Diversity is Canada's Strength” has been included in Trudeau’s podium signs, in his national statements and in speeches made around the world. If any word has emerged as the key term in Trudeau’s economic, political, and cultural policies, it is “diversity.” Trudeau’s dependence on the concept as a selling point for Canada was evident during his address at the World Economic Forum Signature Session in Davos in January 2016.

Traditionally attended by leaders in politics, business and academia, the World Economic Summit’s mandate is to tackle global issues through entrepreneurship and global governance (Duchesne). The Forum is a stage off of which soft power is exuded, where political and private sector entities come to discuss shared issues while amassing support and influence through their compartment and – at times hyperbolic – messages. With over 2,800 delegates from all over the

world attending, the Forum was Trudeau's first post-election opportunity to tout the "new Canada" on such a large, global stage (Duchesne).

In his Davos speech, entitled "The Canadian Opportunity," Trudeau used the occasion to rebrand the Canadian economy from one that is heavily reliant on natural resources to one that is dependent on its country's confidence and diversity. Written for the Forum's "Fourth Industrial Revolution" (digital and technology revolution) theme, the address was one way to establish the innovation and technology industry as a natural fit for Canadians because "diversity fosters new ideas" ("The Canadian Opportunity"). Trudeau stated that in Canada, we understand that diversity, experimentation, and new ideas go hand in hand ("The Canadian Opportunity"). With his speech, Trudeau shifted Canadians' understanding of diversity from a key descriptor of their identity into an economic asset. A remarkable achievement considering diversity was thought of as a liability for Canada's "brand."

In 2005, international branding agency Interbrand released a report entitled *Branding in Canada*. They listed diversity, humility and lack of competitive spirit as reasons why Canada's "brand" has gone largely unnoticed in the international community (qtd. in Aronczyk 116). Brands work to eliminate diversity, distilling information into cohesive narratives; additionally, Canada's politeness, modesty, civility and "reluctance to brag and promote, has become a very serious national liability" (Aronczyk 118).

Harper attempted to curtail such liabilities and make Canada more competitive, removing regulations to facilitate investment and infrastructural projects. Trudeau continued suit – though with a different approach. When it comes to Canadian's perceived modesty, Harper relied on a "tough" image. In Davos, Trudeau espoused our remarkable confidence, our belief in progress and our understanding "that confident countries invest in their future" ("The Canadian

Opportunity”).

Trudeau’s definitive speech in Davos added a new dimension to Canada’s already established myth of diversity. Since the Centennial, Canada’s pride as a functioning multicultural society has been at the centre of what McGee calls our “vision of the collective life” (243). Now, it is part of our global brand. Under Trudeau’s direction, diversity is not only the praised reason for Canadians’ sense of compassion, but also for their sense of innovation and entrepreneurship.

“In 2017,” Joly added, “we want to celebrate and continue to build a welcoming country where everyone can reach their full potential” – which, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, means mastering the science and technology sectors (“Sesquicentennial”). Traditionally a more isolated industry, the information and communication technology industry is now ubiquitous. From manufacturing, to health and education, every industry is in one way or another dependent on the “tech sector.” As the sector continues to grow in importance around the world, so does Canada’s need to continue to invest in its growing tech economy. To do so, Canada, long defined by its natural resources and manufacturing industries, needs to further cultivate an “innovation culture,” one that takes places on the national stage and is internationally recognized.

Events pertaining to the theme of youth include forums, travel opportunities and art-based projects like the touring National Youth Orchestra. WE Are Canada, led by the Toronto-based international charity WE, asks youth to take a “pledge to continue building a stronger Canada by taking action in four areas that are fundamental to our Canadian identity” – the four areas being the four themes of the Sesquicentennial (“We Take Action”). Other projects, like INNOVATION 150 - Perimeter Institute, have a decidedly innovative focus. The project offers “youth, families, and communities across the country to experience innovation first-hand” (“Signature Projects”).

The focus on Canada's next generation of workers ensure they grow up with a naturalized sense of the tech sector's importance in the country, as well as a sense of their own potential to enter and thrive in that sector. Creating more job opportunities for Canada's young people and investing in youth are both part of the Liberal government's platform ("Opportunities For Young"). The government has expressed their desire to help youth "reach their full potential" and, appealing to their sense of patriotic duty, "give back to their communities" (Reynolds).

The 150-day countdown to Sesquicentennial was presented as a youth-themed event. The event featured various b-boys and contemporary dancers, as well as Inuit throat singers, performing to the Canada 150 "national soundtrack" (Butler). Blending orchestral and hip hop genres, the soundtrack is itself an "innovative" mix of Canada's "diverse" musical landscapes (Reynolds). Following her speech, Joly took a selfie with the dancers and attendees. As Joly, wearing a casual white and black polka dot dress, knelt down to take the photo with her phone, two dancers in the foreground shot up the peace sign. Officials, dressed in suit jackets and ties, were relegated to the back. The selfie signalled Joly and, by extension, the government's engagement in social media, millennial, and 21<sup>st</sup> century culture. The seemingly impromptu and casual selfie stood in contrast from the "rigid stage management associate with Prime Minister Harper" (Marland, "Brand Command" 133).

### **3. 3. 3 SESQUI, Parks Canada, and the Environment**

SESQUI, a \$9.5M federally funded "signature project" for Canada 150, combines both the innovation and environment themes of the celebrations (Dacre). The travelling, "immersive media experience," showcases "the best in Canadian arts and innovation" ("Signature Projects"). The Sesqui Domes are meant as "hubs of celebration" featuring films and live events. The feature film, called "On This Land We Stand," features Cirque du Soleil dancers set in Canada's

“stunning landscape” (Dacre). Calling back to the Centennial, organizers took inspiration from the “films made that tried to break the mold” and the architectural advancements made during Expo 67 (“Sesqui”).

When referring to the environment theme, Mélanie Joly hoped Canadians would not only celebrate Canada’s land – a long idealized feature of the country, as previously described through the prism of the canoe and noble voyageur – but, would understand the human impact and effects of climate change (“Sesquicentennial”). Joly, as representative of the Canadian government, encouraged “Canadians to develop a sense of pride and a closer connection to nature” (“Sesquicentennial”). The notion of Canada as a land of untouched wilderness has long stood in contrast to the string of exploitative projects – from the depletion of Atlantic cod and, most recently, the Alberta oil sands – the federal government has undertaken or allowed. Harper’s record on the environment, which includes promoting oil pipelines and stripping much of the Navigable Waters Protection Act, was nationally and internationally condemned. Trudeau, on the other hand, was praised for his leadership at the UN climate change conference in Paris (Cullen and Mas).

The conference was also an exercise in public diplomacy, offering Trudeau the opportunity to exert soft power for his stance on climate change. Trudeau exclaimed, “Canada is back, and here to help,” positioning himself in direct opposition to Harper’s policies (Fitz-Morris). He assured attendees that Canada “will take on a new leadership role internationally” (Fitz-Morris). He pledged to reduce 2005-level greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030, acknowledging the importance of taking action on climate change (Cullen and Mas). Also in attendance was Canada’s Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna.



Upon taking office, Trudeau added “Climate Change” to her title to signal his dedication to the climate change cause.

Attending the Paris summit was in McKenna’s mandate letter; upon taking office, Trudeau sent open letters to all his cabinet ministers detailing what their goals and expectations were. In addition to developing a “pan-Canadian framework for addressing climate change” and treating “our freshwater as a precious resource that deserves protection and careful stewardship,” McKenna’s duties included developing the National Parks system so that Canadians can “learn more about our environment and heritage” (“Minister of Environment”). McKenna was also tasked with making Canada’s National Parks free to all visitors in 2017, an announcement she made in January 2016.

McKenna’s involvement points to the all-encompassing nature of nation branding. Governmental departments do not execute one strategy independently but use “a very comprehensive strategy bringing in all the players’ governments whether it’s city governments, national governments, tourism authorities, inward investment, outward” (Aronczyk 67). The Canada 150 celebrations and the free entry offer feature so prominently in McKenna’s mandate because both help to promote the environment as a core Canadian theme. For Trudeau to deliver on his promise that all of Canada will take a leadership role in fighting climate change, he needs to reinforce the importance of the environment among all Canadians. By doing so, Canadians are more likely to support his climate change fighting efforts.

### **3. 3. 4 Toronto International Film Festival**

Evan Potter lists The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) as one of Canada’s most powerful cultural institutions for both trade and diplomatic purposes (121). Exercising soft power

is a key component of nation branding, and international cultural relations are an efficient and “lower-risk form of international relations” (Potter 102). Our most potent means to exercise soft power is through culture. Developing a sense of national culture has long been a priority in Canada. So often overshadowed by our southern neighbour, the arts are a widely circulated and well-received sector for Canada to project its own distinct image at home and abroad (Potter 103). For Canadian John Ralston Saul:

culture is... the face of Canada abroad. To the extent that foreign policy is dependent on... an identifiable image and a sense at all levels of what we stand for, what kind of society we are, what we sell – that policy is dependent on our projection of our culture. (qtd. in Potter 34)

Communication theorist Zoë Druick saw 1949’s Massey Commission as one of the first documents to promote Canadian culture as “not only a nation-building project, but... the basis of membership in an international cultural community” (“International Cultural Relations”). Taking its cues from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), who saw film as an important medium in advancing mutual understanding among nations, the Massey Commission endorsed the production of Canadian content not only for national audiences, but international ones (Druick, “International Cultural Relations”). Druick argued that Canadian cultural institutions such as the Canada Council for the Arts and the National Film Board were shaped by this UNESCO-led discourse, emphasizing “national culture in an international framework” (“International Cultural Relations”).

Today, Canadian culture is as much a focus of the trade and cultural industries as it is public diplomacy. For Evan Potter, nowhere is this more apparent than in our film and television industry (119). Cultural trade commissioners, Canadian embassy attachés, and industry

employees work together to promote the country's cultural scene, to ensure Canadian programming gains larger audiences, and to showcase our national stories (Potter 119). Trudeau didn't go to the 2017 Davos Summit, but Joly did; she was the only cultural minister in attendance to "pitch" Canadian content (Lewis). Canadian Heritage is currently working on a cultural export strategy; in an interview with the Toronto Star, Joly explained that "2017 will be the year of Canadian content; clearly, we want to export," and that the government has moved from a position of protectionism to one of promotion (Lewis). When it comes to Canadian culture, the government's priority is not only one of patriotism, but of exportation.

It is no wonder that the government is contributing \$1.3 million for the TIFF-led "Canada on Screen" signature Canada 150 project. In 2016, TIFF generated \$189 million for the Canadian economy with over 500,000 general public viewers, 5,500 industry delegates and 1,300 media reporters in attendance ("Canada's Top Ten"; Waite). As one of the most recognized and important film festivals in the world, TIFF "is able to brand Canada" by taking "advantage of a captive audience" (both at the festival and through worldwide publicity) to promote Canadian talent and Canada's reputation among the international community (Potter 120-121).

The yearlong "Canada on Screen" project "will showcase the most significant moving-image productions ever made in the country" (TIFF News Release). One hundred and fifty feature films, shorts, documentaries, music videos and commercials will screen throughout Canada (TIFF News Release). The project is an extension of TIFF's annual Canada's Top Ten Film Festival, during which Canada's "best films of the year" are screened at TIFF's Toronto headquarters, Los Angeles and further abroad ("Annual Report" 34). Touring the festival internationally, TIFF actively seeks to expand their reach "by taking TIFF programming global" and "championing Canadian talent abroad" ("Annual Report" 34).

### 3.3.5. The Canadian Museum of History

Over 1.2 million people visit the Canadian Museum of History each year, making it the country's most-visited museum ("About"). Standing atop the Ottawa River and located directly across from Parliament Hill, the museum is a high-profile institution meant to exhibit not only Canada's history but also its national values to citizens and international tourists.

"Historiography is always a creature of current politics" and museums are inherently political (Taylor). Benedict Anderson listed the museum as an essential tool – along with the census and the map – in shaping how the nation is imagined (164). The museum and the nation-state emerged together in an interdependent play for power. The choices in which items are displayed and how they are framed serve specific purposes that are always changing based on the political climate of the day. Mihály Vilma-Irén further elaborates on Anderson's idea, asserting the triad "hold the nation together fulfilling an internal function, on the other hand, playing an external role as well, they show the others how strong and united one's own community is" (37). For Vilma-Irén, the national museum is paradoxical in its purpose; the museum betrays the historical "national treasures" it houses by putting them on display as "products meant for mass consumption" (39).

As such, a museum's exhibition or gallery can be compared to Roland Barthes' myth. In *Mythologies*, Barthes based his analyses on advertisements and the signification of the commercial image. He expanded his theory in a later publication, *Image-Music-Text*. Advertisements are myths composed of images and linguistic messages; the linguistic messages are meant to filter the images' multiple possible meanings and interpretations (Barthes, "Image" 39). As Barthes put it, an ad's linguistic caption helps "me," as the reader, "choose the correct level of perception, permits me to focus not simply my gaze but also my understanding"

(“Image” 39). With 1,200 images, 1,500 artifacts and 225,000 words, the new Canadian History Hall will be filled with small myths (“Canadian History Hall”).

In 2012, Minister Moore announced the Canadian Museum of Civilization, open since 1989, would be rebranded as the Canadian Museum of History; in addition, its Canada Hall would undergo a \$25 million overhaul before opening to the public in time for Canada 150. The announcement accompanied an amendment Moore introduced to the 1990 *Museum Act*, which set the museum’s new mandate (“Bill C-49”). The amendment resulted in a transfer of authority to the government, to a narrower national (versus international) focus, and to a de-emphasis of critical research and study (“Bill C-49”). For Moore, the amendment ensured the enhancement of “Canadians’ knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada’s history and identity” (Geddes).

Despite reassurance from museum staff and those working on the Hall’s renovation that the government was not interfering, academics feared the transfer of power would allow the government to shape the museum’s exhibitions as they saw fit and would lead, as Melissa Aronczyk and Miranda Brady argued, the museum to reflect the government’s “twin pillars of monarchism and militarism” (166). The fear was well founded. Aronczyk pointed to previous cultural initiatives and institutions that had undergone the same treatment; the Conservative-led War of 1812 and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee campaigns were “particular ways of selling history to the Canadian public, one that reflects the Harper government’s broader efforts at information management and control” (Aronczyk and Brady 168).

Indeed, the announcement was made the same year as the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of War of 1812, an event the Conservatives spent \$28-million to commemorate despite relatively low Canadian support (Geddes). Lyle Dick, President of The Canadian History Association wrote an

open letter to museum president Mark O'Neill expressing his concerns. Dick feared the government selectivity in choosing certain historical events over others marked "a pattern of politically charged heritage policy" (Dick).

The museum organized an extensive, cross-country consultation tour called My History Museum. I attended one such session in Toronto. After hearing from noted history and geography specialists on what they would like the museum to focus on, we were divided in groups and encouraged to share our ideas. A representative sat at our table, writing down our comments on her notepad. Despite her receptivity, I wondered how many of our notes and concerns would be distilled into actual museum objectives.

The Liberal Canadian Heritage Department's involvement in the overhaul remains unclear. While there is a clear connection between the Museum and the Canadian 150 celebrations (the 150-day countdown took place on the museum's front steps and the Hall will still open on Canada Day 2017), Canadian Heritage has not made any announcements regarding the museum's renovations (Geddes). Nor would they given their approach to Canadian identity and history. Their relative silence on the museum's renovations is no less political. It is a calculated decision, based on their thematic approach and interest in Canadian values over history. Such an interest relieves them of the obligation or desire to take a stance; it would be off-brand to do so.

With the renovation, Canadian history, "from the beginnings of human presence" to today, is sequentially divided in 18 "chapters" within three galleries (Leblanc). Hoping to "humanize a story of such immense scale," the curators chose the concept of the "Human Experience" as guiding principal when selecting which artifacts are included and how; they wanted to offer a "personal connection" to the many artifacts that will be on display (Ogden). If

the museum is looking a human experience, Joly hopes for a human connection (Ogden). For Joly, the Sesquicentennial offers a connection between Canadians and the world based on “knowledge and acceptance of others here at home to show the world the best of Canada” (“Sesquicentennial”).

### **3. 4. Conclusion**

On August 4<sup>th</sup>, at the official 150-day countdown to the 2017 celebrations, Joly reiterated the Sesquicentennial’s four themes and encouraged “all Canadians to join in the celebrations by getting involved right now” (“Countdown Has Started”). Like in the lead up to 1967, the government encouraged Canadians to organize their own Canada 150 activities. However, the spontaneity of the Centennial celebrations, which allowed for an event as quirky as the biffy burning, has been replaced by a stricter “on-message” affair. By preceding the call-to-action with specific guiding themes, the character of Canada 150’s “Community” or “Signature” events were predetermined. Underlining the Canadian government’s attempt at mobilization were very specific criteria for not only what the celebration should be, but also the values Canadians should embody.

Through the Sesquicentennial, the Liberal platforms of diversity, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, the environment, and youth were prioritized as pan-Canadianisms, as myths. That is not to say the themes emerged out of nowhere; like the Centennial, the Sesquicentennial myths are formed from already established subjectivities, symbols and historical events. Stirred on by legends of the first encounters with European settlers and of canoe wilderness travel, the environment and indigenous culture have long been considered fundamental to Canada’s origin story. More recently, most Canadians have come to understand or appreciate the growing impact of climate change and the challenges indigenous peoples face – while some remain ambivalent to

mitigating the loss of Aboriginal culture (Neuman; M. Smith). Diversity and inclusion were established as Canadianisms with the new Canadian flag, Pearson's Expo 67 speech, and Pierre Elliot Trudeau's 1971 declaration that multiculturalism would be an official government policy. The focus on Canada's youth was an interesting tactical choice for the Liberals: the Sesquicentennial would serve an educational purpose not only to inform but also to shape the next generation, ensuring they grow up with a naturalized sense of these four themes.

The 2017 celebrations are yet another conduit for the Liberals to share their government's brand, no different than the Conservatives' would-be strategy. While the Conservatives wanted to celebrate a "strong, proud and free" Canada and its history, the Liberals redirected the celebrations, opting for a thematic approach (Hannay, "Canadians Patriotic"). Their messages were different, but their strategy was the same: to present and reinforce specific Canadianisms through public-sanctioned and supported celebratory events. Such is nation branding's prevalence; it is now widely accepted on both sides of the aisle. Governments, the business sector and even media outlets recognize branding as a normal and necessary practice on both the domestic and international level (Aronczyk 114).

When the Liberals abandoned the overt connection to Confederation and its anniversary, the Sesquicentennial moved away from a birthday celebration to a political project, one steeped in nation branding strategy and with a specific mission: to establish long-lasting Canadianisms in their own image. Like Roland Barthes' myth and McGee's people, nation branding relies on history (recent or old) and established cultural symbols to create an attractive image of a stable and competitive country (Aronczyk 11). When it comes to forming a nation's brand, especially one for a country as diverse as Canada – often charged with not having an identity – "different parts of a nation's identity come into focus on the international stage at different times, affected



by current political events and even by the latest movie or news bulletin” (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 58).

As spokesman for Minister Joly, Pierre-Olivier Herbert explained in a January 2017 *Globe and Mail* article, the celebrations are “our chance to reaffirm our social contract – rooted in our two official languages, our attachment to pluralism as well as our continued efforts towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples” (Hannay, “Canadians patriotic”). Indeed, to live in Canada’s “imagined community” and to agree to be part of the Canadian “people” is to sign a social contract. With the Sesquicentennial, the Liberals have rewritten the contract, redacting and expanding certain sections while adding others.

#### 4. Conclusion

Easily dismissed as fixed and objective, Canadian identity is anything but. Accompanying the legislative rules and political systems that steer a country are the historical narratives that form its people. Identity is an assemblage, composed of fluid and adaptive myths. Canada operates on nationalist sentiment; there is a connection one feels to the geographically bordered land that is this nation. It is, as Benedict Anderson described, an imagined community of friends and fellow citizens. A passport or birth certificate demarcates where one lives, yes, but allegiance to that country is established rhetorically, and performed through prescribed habits, perspectives and various cultural forms (tradition, film, music, etc.). Such is nationalism, the establishment of a common discursive framework meant to bond individuals into a shared collective and naturalize social norms, ideologies and classes. However, nationalism's framework is narrow; it presents only "the dominant vision of society, leaving aside views held by marginalised groups" (Rocher 7).

I found a through line between the exercise of nationalism and what I describe as its most potent tools: Michael McGee's people, Maurice Charland's constitutive rhetoric, Roland Barthes' myth, and Eric Hobsbawm's invented traditions. While different in many ways, all four concepts share characteristics of articulateness, purposefulness and exclusivity.

A "people" is an ever-changing discursive process, linking together historical events and various identifications to create a collective. McGee argues that individuals are persuaded to join a collective, implying that there is an "uncontaminated" version of the individual, one free of subjectivities. Charland, citing Althusser's interpellation theory, argues that persuasion is unnecessary because the narrative presented to an individual seems so common sense that acceptance is a given. Constitutive rhetoric uses already established subjectivities to create a

cohesive story, one that individuals don't need to be persuaded to accept, but are compelled to embody. The narrator appeals to their audience based on an identity they already have. Their narrative is a story with the audience as its main character.

Myth is a classification of thought, an ideology that is presented to a group as natural. Myth can be broken down to a series of articulations, drawing from social, historical and cultural elements to formulate social order, norms and practices. For Barthes, like for McGee, Charland and Hobsbawm, the elements of a national identity already exist. While McGee and Charland, argue articulations are formed through discourse (and susceptible to socio-cultural situations and audience reactions), for Barthes, they are formed through formalized semiotic processes of connotation.

Articulations are neither natural and necessary, but nor are they arbitrary. The purpose behind a myth, constitutive rhetoric and people is well established. This is most evident when it comes to invented traditions. Hobsbawm's traditions can be defined as the newly established beliefs and habits that seek legitimacy by masking their youth. They are formed based on a desire to establish certain ideologies and social behaviours. Once the purpose has been met or becomes obsolete, a tradition and a people can be replaced or changed. While the same can be said for Barthes' myth and Charland's constitutive rhetoric, their obsolescence and mutability are much less immediate.

Invented traditions are also exclusive; incompatible historical events or cultural subjectivities are ignored when creating the perfect tradition. A similar characteristic exists in a people, constitutive rhetoric, and myth. While Barthes did claim that "myth hides nothing: its function is to distort not make disappear," the myth suppresses and empties out existing signs in favour of new ones ("Mythologies" 121).

I was interested in exploring this assemblage to better understand the process of constructing a nation's identity. I chose the Centennial and Sesquicentennial as benchmarks to determine how nationalism operates in Canada. Celebrating a country's anniversary is an invented tradition. It is a rite of passage necessitating specific patterns of behaviour and rituals (namely celebratory, commitment-yielding ones). I compared the Centennial and the organization of the Sesquicentennial to trace how the operation of nationalism has changed over the last 50 years.

The Centennial was more than an anniversary; it was a political project for the Canadian government to promote their messages of unity, progress and diversity. At a time of political and social transition, when the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture was splintering, the Centennial offered a unique opportunity to share the newest notions of Canadian identity – of unity in diversity and of progress – among its citizenry. The emergence of youth culture, rapid urbanization, increased immigration, and Québec's sovereignty movement rendered some of Canada's longstanding myths obsolete and necessitated new ones. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism warned, "Canada, without being fully conscious of the fact, is passing through the greatest crisis in its history. The source of the crisis lies in the Province of Québec" (Durocher). Emerging from the province's Quiet Revolution, the rise of Québec's "neo-nationalist-inspired, and in some cases separatist-oriented, political parties," posed the biggest threat to Canadian nationalism (Durocher).

As its sequel, the Sesquicentennial is an equally political initiative meant to establish specific myths about Canada. Additionally, incidental as it may be, the celebrations are a continuation of the Conservative-Liberal power struggle to determine who becomes our canonical leader and reformer of Canadianisms. The Centennial, while having elements of branding in its

advertisements, was only a precursor to the branding initiatives the Canadian government took on for the Sesquicentennial. Underpinning the Centennial celebrations was a message of unity and openness, necessitated by the increasingly divided Canadian landscape. With the Sesquicentennial, the Canadian government, along with nations all over the world, “realized what companies have known for decades: that national identity ‘sells’” (Aronczyk Interview).

Nation branding is a new form of nationalism. It is both a result and reaction to 21<sup>st</sup> century global dynamics, born out of and well suited to the globalized nation. Because they see a nation as a type of brand, the branding consultant’s task is not to create, but to make use of existing subjectivities to uncover and cleverly manipulate the nation brand (Aronczyk 68). In this sense, they operate in much the same way as myth producers and constitutive rhetoricians do. This form of nationalism is more outward looking; nation branding aims to satisfy citizens, but more importantly, potential investors and allies. A “positive nation brand provides a crucial competitive advantage” for countries competing for the “attention” of investors, tourists and immigrants (Dinnie 18).

The Centennial and Sesquicentennial were motivated political initiatives. “As a patriotic diversion, the 150<sup>th</sup> [served] as a fine prop for Mr. Trudeau’s politics”; criticism and doubt were forgotten as most of the nation let their guard down in favour of collective rejoicing (Martin). Leveraging the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary moment, the ruling body took this auspicious opportunity to redefine national identity in their own image. The celebrations were taken up as a nation branding campaign, one styled by the Liberal government to implant a specific version of Canadian identity (in the form of the four themes) to its citizens and to foreigners. The Liberals overtly made use of enduring Canadian myths, such as compassion and environmental consciousness, to expand the country’s brand in Canada and abroad.

Barthes saw myths as condensed systems of connotation that could be and were exploited by advertisements and culture itself. The same can be said about the Sesquicentennial themes. Diversity and inclusion, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, the environment and youth are Canadianisms; they are romanticized stereotypes the Liberal government has condensed and upheld. The government has created what it wants to sell.

I recognize that to use such terms such as “nation branding” can appear pessimistic. My intention is not to express cynicism. If one believes that our social self is a series of articulated subjectivities, then one cannot be pessimistic because the construction of a social identity, including a national one, is par for the course. I do understand a national identity is a subjective social construct necessitating various discursive devices and tools. The tools of nation branding, rooted in private industry marketing practices, have grown in importance and influence among nation-states in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nation branding is now a common practice among all government parties in countries across the world. It, like the nationalism it serves, is not necessarily bad nor is it radically new. Trudeau’s message of unity and reconciliation is positive, it encourages compassionate behaviour rather than divisive tendencies.

I understand that national identity is valuable. History may be the stories we tell ourselves, but those stories are necessary to create unity, or the emotional and comforting bond Canadians create with one another – from coast to coast to coast. The emotional bond is comforting as it gives people a sense of home and a sense of pride in where they live; it is useful in maintaining the Confederation, but also supporting its individual citizens.

Arguing how and why individuals build group loyalty, Daniel Druckman explained that the confidence we feel towards the larger group we associate with is tied to our own self-confidence; nationalism is embedded in individual identity (44). Thus, national pride and loyalty

is a deeply personal and sensitive emotion. I find the recent onslaught of “Only in Canada” type articles particularly interesting. Appearing on websites such as *The Huffington Post* and *Buzzfeed*, the articles feature images and anecdotes that range from comical to heartwarming; they play on stereotypes such as Canada’s extreme winters and Canadian politeness, to show what a quirky, unique and, ultimately, wonderful place Canada is. In the aftermath of Trudeau’s much celebrated election there was a definitive increase in such articles. They are an innocent take on Canadians’ own need to self-boost, rather than antagonize.

I also understand that national identity can be dangerous. Nationalism is inherently exclusive and “the mere classification of people into groups evokes biases in favour of one's own group” (Druckman 48). That bias can remain benign or can push individuals to extreme acts. There is a distinction between patriotism and a more hostile, skeptical view of the “other” (Druckman 46). Sociologist Craig J. Calhoun explains that there are three dimensions to nationalism: “as discourse,” the rhetorical construction of cultural understandings; “as project,” the execution of nation-centric movements or policies; and, “as evaluation,” the “ideologies that claim superiority for a particular nation” and are “often given the status of an ethical imperative” (6). When taken too far, nationalist sentiment can lead to problematic discourse, encouraging exclusive anti-immigration views, international isolationism, and irrational protectionism.

Canada is not exempt from such claims of superiority. From the Chinese head tax of 1885, to Stephen Harper’s “old-stock Canadians” identity politics, and Québec’s “Charter of Québec Values,” attempts at group protectionism come in all forms. The charter pointed to the more hostile practices nationalism can encourage. Introduced in 2013 by the Parti Québécois, the charter would have prevented civil servants from wearing religious symbols in public institutions. The charter spurred a debate between “those who considered it as a legitimate way to confirm the

secular nature of the state and those who considered it to be anti-immigrants” (Montigny and Tessier 273). Deriving from a history of protectionism, the charter was another attempt to protect Québec’s culture and existing social order, defined as secular and modern. Leader of the Parti Québécois, Pauline Marois was confident the charter would unite the Québécois because they were moving “forward in the name of all the women, all the men, who chose Québec for our culture, for our freedom and for our diversity” (Richer).

While the charter proved popular, it was ultimately rejected when the Parti Québécois lost the provincial election of 2014. Though Diefenbaker and Harper’s visions for Canada were well supported, they too were eventually replaced. Trudeau’s brand is no different; while many continue to support and embrace the Liberal’s party’s theme for the Sesquicentennial, resistance persists. However strong a myth is, not everyone succumbs to it and those who do may later reject it. McGee and Charland argued that the myth of a people and a constitutive rhetoric is never fully accepted. There are too many simultaneous subjectivities or myths to fully commit to one (McGee 246). McGee further elaborated that there exists “competitive tensions” within a people; individuals are constantly struggling between myth and reality (246).

For all their strategy and strength, constitutive rhetoric and nation branding are no guarantee of success. Case in point: the myths of two Sesquicentennial themes, the environment and reconciliation with indigenous people, were weakened when Trudeau approved the Trans Mountain and Line 3 pipelines, and rejected the Northern Gateway pipeline. The decision was met with celebration and concern; celebration for its economic benefits, and concern because approval of the former two will make it difficult for the country to meet its Paris climate commitments (Tencer). Furthermore, the decision came under fire for failing to properly consult



with indigenous peoples (Tencer). Many cannot square the seemingly opposite motivations. From these contradictions arise a resistance towards the national narrative.

Writing this thesis, I was confronted by my own “competitive tensions.” I consider myself a proud Canadian, one that cherishes this country, its history and beauty. As a friend put it, I am the ideal Sesquicentennial supporter. I, the French Canadian whose family has been here for centuries, should be the “old stock Canadian” to which Harper was referring. Yet, I resist that term. I know the history I am taught is not whole, missing are the stories of those deemed not important enough. I know the land I write this thesis on was taken from indigenous peoples through coercion and deception. I also know that this country’s beauty is threatened by environmentally toxic development projects (whether the next suburban subdivision or pipeline).

I recognize the need for nationalism, yet I fear it. For me, the danger of national rhetoric is the mistaken assumption that nation-wide traits are intrinsic – and its accompanied hostile sense of protectionism. When traits are mistaken for intrinsic, one doesn’t want to contaminate them. This is a catch-22, for the myth’s mission is to overturn “culture in natural, or, at least, the social, the cultural, the ideological, the historical in the ‘natural’” (Barthes, “Mythologies” 165). For Roland Barthes, “myth is a type of speech chosen by history”; in turn, myth distorts history into the “natural” (“Mythologies” 110). Indeed, in addition to articulation, purposefulness and exclusivity, the tools of nationalism and its nation branding share a common dependence on history. A form of distortion is transhistoricity, the establishment of a timeline from the past to the present that creates a direct correlation between history and identity. Such a timeline is not real, but based in discourse. What gives a people or invented tradition strength is the belief by its practitioners that it has always existed. If a people was forged throughout time and has stood the test of it, its existence seems undeniable.

Such ideologies need to be resisted. I am constantly critical of those stories we tell ourselves, of the narratives we try to spin. My dual Canadian existence, one that exercises cautionary pride, derives from my belief that nation identity should live in a fluid space, allowed to change and adapt as needed. Like our own individual identities that are constantly renegotiated, our collective identities need to be unshackled from this false sense of protectionism. Slack defined articulation three ways: epistemologically, politically, and strategically. It is the latter two I am interested in: politically, articulation is the structure of power between the dominant and subordinate classes; strategically, it is “a mechanism for shaping intervention within a particular social formation, conjuncture or context” (113). Within this definition, the powerful and political articulations of nationalism, with the weight of history behind them, come up against challenging forms of intervention. As an articulation, national identity is political, yes, but it is also strategic. There is a political side, meant to establish social order, conformity and compliance. Yet, within this web of signs can occur interventions to break apart and reformulate them.

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