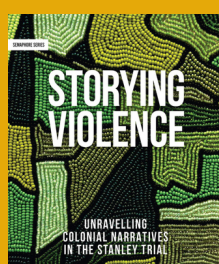


STORYING VIOLENCE

Unravelling Colonial Narratives In The Stanley Trial

BY GINA STARBLANKET & DALLAS HUNT



<https://arpbooks.org/product/storying-violence>

INTRO: THE GERALD STANLEY TRIAL

- On August 9th, 2016, Colton Boushie, a Cree youth from Red Pheasant First Nation on Treaty 6 territory, was asleep in a car with a group of his friends when they drove up on to the farm (still on Treaty 6 territory) of Gerald Stanley, a white, settler farmer, in their search for assistance with a flat tire. An altercation took place ending in Gerald Stanley shooting Boushie in the back of the head at point blank range, killing him. The narratives used during the trial that followed were of colonial reasonability, disruption of wealth and property, virtuousness, industriousness, family values, righteous political and cultural formations, contrasted against the terror of Indigenous mischief, misadventure and unreasonability. Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt carefully map colonial storying and its affective power to shape settler understanding and experience and how these narratives were used to acquit Gerald Stanley of the murder of Colton Boushie.



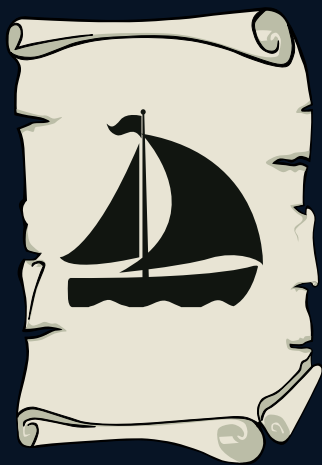
STORYING AS A CONCEPT

- The term 'storying' is used to describe the ways in which narratives function as important political tools. Stories have immense power to shape normative and dominant beliefs while being used by institutions, organizations, and individuals alike. Stories told about the settler experience often serve to justify violence against Indigenous people. Indigenous stories are too often not told in dominant culture unless they are invoked in ways that bolster settler stories. Many colonial tropes about Indigenous people naturalize Indigenous exclusion, immiseration, and ultimately, death.



STORYING COLONIALISM

- Settler colonialism is structurally embedded and ongoing. Using tropes that naturalize Indigenous disappearance, it operates through an eliminatory logic that is heavily racialized and sexualized. Its driving motivation is to usurp Indigenous lands. The settler experience is marked by mythical tropes of virtuousness and righteousness. The values instilled in the colonial story, held by settlers on the prairies and elsewhere in Canada, can work to legitimize violence against Indigenous people at both a societal and institutional level. Here's how.
- The settler story begins with the conceptualizing of colonialism as a respectful, mutually beneficial process in the interest of everyone. In reality, colonialism resulted, and continues to result, in much violence. The quintessential Canadian settler story either highlights Indigenous consent to the theft of their lands, or glosses over it under the guise of partnership and nation-building by imagining colonialism as this respectful, mutually beneficial process. Colonial narratives are crucial to the origin story and national identity of a peaceful, prosperous Canada. To be clear, this identity is imaginary and has been used to rationalize and conceal violence in its name.
- Following the early trade relations Europeans had with Indigenous peoples, in the late 1800s to early 1900s, storying was used to emphasize the importance of permanent non-Indigenous settlement of the lands now known as Canada. Settlement was dependent on Indigenous disappearance. Thus, storying was used by settlers and the Crown to mythologize Indigenous peoples as vanishing, effectively conquered, or absorbed into the Canadian-body politic. Multiple narratives are working together to create the overarching settler story existing as a "reality," thus dismissing other experiences as merely biased, alternate versions. In all realms, these "alternate versions," telling of land theft and genocide, exist as a direct threat to settler ways of life. Indigenous existence, then, is a threat to the settler story.



STORYING THE PRAIRIES

- The project of settler colonialism prompted the Canadian government to story the Canadian prairies as a vast, unoccupied land of opportunity. By blanketing the prairies with settler homes, the Crown could further their political reach. Thus, the Canadian government was incentivizing land-theft. Canada had an idealized vision for permanent settler society driven by racialized logic. In settler colonial states, racialization functions as a means of imposing classificatory grids on a variety of colonized populations, though it's important to note racialization is not a monolithic or decontextualized process. Searching to prosper off white settlement and agriculture, the Canadian government storied the prairies as perfect for the self-reliant, industrious, family-oriented farmer, king of his castle on the plains, protecting his newfound private property. The immigration campaigns the government used were Eurocentric, targeting specific groups (white, male and heteronormative).
- Canada's practice is of dispossession and political subordination of Indigenous people. What better way to dismiss Indigenous land claims than by giving that land to settler farmers and converting it to private property? Once the land "belonged" to settler farmers, Indigenous people could be framed as criminals, or in the case of Colton Boushie, framed as intruders on their own territories. Colonial settlement cannot be divorced from Indigenous dispossession.



<https://colonialfamilies.wordpress.com/tag/canada/>



Red Pheasant's Treaty 6 Medal

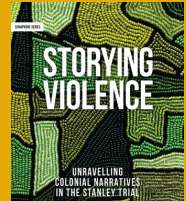
STORYING THE TREATIES

- One of the primary mechanisms the Canadian government has employed to conceal or 'soften' land theft in the prairies has been through the proliferation of one-sided, Eurocentric interpretations of the numbered treaties. Negotiated between 1871 and 1921, the numbered treaties have not been implemented in accordance with the way they were understood by Indigenous people. Popular assumptions surrounding the numbered treaties operate to bolster settler perception that both the land and Indigenous political authority have been surrendered long ago, and that treaties were one-time transactions with little bearing upon contemporary settlers who reside in the prairies. This presumption is entirely inconsistent with Indigenous laws and worldviews. It is now well-recognized by historians, anthropologists, and political scientists that the written version of treaties only captures parts of the conversations that took place during the treaty negotiations, and also distorts much of what was actually discussed.
- Settler treaty mythologies can be understood as the selective construction and misrepresentation of treaties that originate from, but are also continually reproduced through, Canadian institutions and society. Whether the myth of a one-time transaction, willing assimilation, economic development deal, or the notion that Indigenous people agreed to passively submit to the Crown, settlers have been mythologizing the treaties for over a century now and the myths have substantial material implications in the present. Narrow representations of treaties work to enable land theft and violence against Indigenous people in the prairies.

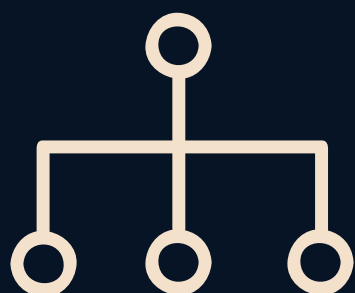


<https://canlitguides.ca/canlit-guides-editorial-team/an-introduction-to-gender-and-sexuality/>





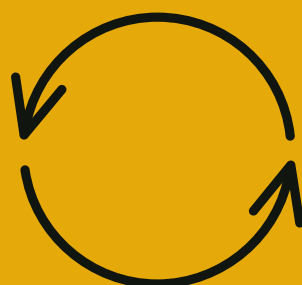
STORYING "RACE"



- The creation of permanent settler society necessitated the institution of more marked racial hierarchies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Where intimate and marital relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people were fruitful during the fur-trade, the project of nation building would require a proper separation of "races." 18th and 19th century scientific theories of "race" provided justification for European rule over "uncivilized" people, serving as the foundation for racial hierarchies.
- Racial classifications provided the explanation and rationalization for the subordination of groups of people Canada and its settlers deemed to be inferior. Racial classifications are not only ideological, but they also explain why white settlers are allowed to hold inequitable resource status and power over others. These social hierarchies had to be entrenched and reproduced, naturalized and normalized as the ongoing narrative of the prairies. This is part of the process of storying.

RE-STORYING

- A narrative can be told with gestures, misdirection and allusions, like a magician's performance. The task in *Storying Violence* was to unravel colonial narratives, and to story the often silenced, elided, or effaced histories of ongoing colonial violence. Colonial stories are addressed in the book not to give them more validity but to deconstruct their presumed neutrality and trace how they were crafted to serve a particular political purpose.
- This book is not only an act of disruption but an act of re-storying too, a refusal of the dominant ways Indigenous people are understood. In refusing settler narratives, Starblanket and Hunt are offering a resurgent history of Indigeneity in the face of settler colonialism.
- The authors want to foreground the incredible courage of the Boushie and Baptiste families in the wake of indescribable tragedy, the activist, on-the-ground work of Colton's relatives and the continual, dogged advocacy they do for and with their relations.
- Lastly and specifically, the authors foreground "that Indigenous youth went swimming and felt joy in their ancestral territories one day, that they asserted their presence on lands that have been a part of them since before they were born, and that, acting as an agent of history, as the culmination of centuries of settler colonial rage and entitlement, Gerald Stanley, and eventually his supporters, worked and have continued to work to stifle that joy. We refuse to let them."



BIBLIOGRAPHY



Starblanket, G., Hunt, D. (2020). *Storying violence: Unravelling colonial narratives in the Stanley trial*. ARP Books.

STORYING VIOLENCE: THE FILM

nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up

<https://www.nfb.ca/film/nipawistamasowin-we-will-stand-up/>



<https://www.nfb.ca/film/nipawistamasowin-we-will-stand-up/>



Colton Boushie
(<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/colten-boushie/article32451940/>)



Colton's mother (left), Debbie Baptiste Colton's sister (right), Jade Tootoosis
(<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/debbie-baptiste-colten-boushie-five-years-1.6132604>)



Left: Gina Starblanket
(<https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/igov/people/faculty/starblanket-gina.php>)



Right: Dallas Hunt
(<https://english.ubc.ca/profile/dallas-hunt/>)

Thanks for reading!