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Cultivating Cultures of Attention? The Landscapes of Injustice Project 2014 – 21

Public history is a discipline that eludes easy definition. Nevertheless, as practitioners we must strive to articulate a philosophy of our field that emphasizes the processes—instead of the products—of our work. With this task in mind, my chapter calls on public historians to cultivate what I call "cultures of attention." Building on Thomas Pfau's definition of "attention," I argue that a culture of attention is generated when public historians approach their work with critical self-awareness; when they situate themselves consciously at the confluence between scholarship and activism; and when they facilitate community-academic partnerships with the potential to flourish beyond their own involvement. I root these arguments in tangible case studies provided by *Landscapes of Injustice* (*LoI*), a multi-million-dollar public history project based at the University of Victoria between 2014 and 2021. By using *LoI* to explore concrete examples of what a "culture of attention" might look like in practice, I seek to critique the project itself and to reflect on what lessons might be taken from this generously funded public history initiative. I do so as a former researcher on the project, writing now from the perspective of one who has observed the project since 2017 as an outsider and in the spirit of critical friendship.

Public historians are mostly practicing historians whose attempts at reflexivity generally devolve into "kaleidoscopes of PH [public history] practices and case-s."[1]As Katharine Corbett and Howard Miller write, "the special character of public history derives less from formulaic definitions than from the nuances of contexts of practice."[2] By definition, the quiddity of public history is always in a state of flux, for no conclusive generalization can encompass the ever-expanding forms in which public historical work manifests. Michael Frisch is undoubtedly correct in his assertion that, while we can talk about "doing history, or studying it, or reading and writing and teaching it," there is simply "no way to express concisely the activity of rendering the past comprehensible."[3] Despite these sometimes-produc-

1 Irina Savelieva, "'Public History' as Vocation," *National Research University Higher School of Economics*, Basic Research Program Working Papers, Series: Humanities (2012 – 2013), 3.

2 K.T. Corbett and Howard Miller, "A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry," *The Public Historian* 28, no. 1 (2006): 119.

3 Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 21.

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tive tensions, the ecosystem of academic research requires that scholars set visible goals for their collaborative research agendas whenever they apply for large scale research funding. The impact agenda within academia, combined with a greater emphasis on research outcomes that have a demonstrable impact on people's lives, has meant that a project on the scale of *Landscapes of Injustice* generates a great deal of paperwork that we can analyze in retrospect.

The Landscapes of Injustice Project

Landscapes of Injustice (*LoI*) was a seven-year multi-sector research project funded by a Canadian federal government Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Grant and its home institution was the University of Victoria. It has published widely since its inception.[4] It sought to platform the little-known history of thousands of Japanese Canadians dispossessed of their lands in the Vancouver region in the early 1940s by the Federal Government and forcibly relocated to central Canada. The project followed in the wake of a public apology from the Mayor of Vancouver, Gregor Robertson, in September 2013 that focused specifically on a 1942 resolution passed unanimously by the Vancouver City Council that led to that dispossession. His apology followed similar apologies at a federal level in 1988 and at provincial British Colombia in 2012. The project was granted about 5.5 million Canadian dollars and employed about 20 researchers every year.[5] Although the project was primarily financed by SSHRC, it also enjoys the support of various partner institutions, from Uvic itself to the Canadian Museum of Immigration to the Japanese Canadian Cultural Center.[6] These diverse partnerships are reflected in *LoI*'s structure which includes a Community Council—made up of Japanese Canadian community leaders who advise and guide the project— as

4 Jordan Stanger-Ross and Pamela Sugiman, eds., *Witness to Loss: Race, Culpability, and Memory in the Dispossession of Japanese Canadians* (McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2017); Jordan Stanger-Ross, ed., *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020); E. Adams, with J. Stanger-Ross and the Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective Promises of law, "The Unlawful Dispossession of Japanese Canadians," *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 54, no. 3 (2017): 687–740; Eiji Okawa, and Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective, "Japaneseness in Racist Canada: Immigrant Imaginaries During the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 37, no. 4 (2018): 10–39.

5 The details above are all taken from M. James, J. Stanger-Ross, and the Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective, "Impermanent Apologies: on the Dynamics of Timing and Public Knowledge in Political Apology," *Human Rights Review* 19 (2018): 289–311.

6 For a full list of all the project's partner institutions, see "Partner Institutions," *Landscapes of Injustice*, accessed on August 15, 2023, http://www.landscapesofinjustice.com/partner-institutions/.

well as research clusters dedicated to producing museum exhibits, public-facing websites, and primary- and secondary-level teacher resources.[7] In the first phase, which was more research-focused, the project held a "Spring Institute" every year, and in which I myself was an active participant between 2015 and 2017.

On the first day of the very first Spring Institute in 2015, after a presentation entitled "How Property Matters to the *Landscapes of Injustice* Project" by geographer Nick Blomley, a particularly spirited dialogue ensued when a history professor from the University of British Columbia challenged the project to articulate its purpose and intentions more cogently.[8] His concerns centered on *LoI*'s ability—or inability—to address the elephant(s) in the room: what was the point of the project's historical research? Why should we bother re-hashing a relatively well-known period of Canadian history? What tangible justification could there be for the diversion of government funds to an endeavor like *Landscapes of Injustice?*

Unlike most other SSHRC projects, *LoI* was designed to undergo a drastic transformation partway through its seven-year mandate. By 2018 the project had shifted definitively from its focus on research-based work to a new emphasis on public-facing dissemination. Extant research clusters broke down and re-formed into new groups focused on connection and "knowledge mobilization"; the research was converted into museum exhibits, public presentations, educational resources, and media releases; and the project's overall focus changed from uncovering historical evidence to revealing the past's present-day implications to a national audience.[9] This unusually explicit structural metamorphosis makes *LoI* a fascinating case study. We have much to learn from a project that so explicitly embodies the processes—from research to public-facing product, from university campus to kitchen-table conversation, or from jargon to transformative dialogue—of public historical work.

The first lesson we can take from *LoI* is that the processes I just mentioned are malleable and in constant flux. For most of its duration the project hovered—at times uncertainly, but most of the time productively—between scholarly research and the kind of on-the-ground, social-justice-oriented interventions public historians often find themselves in a position to make. It is here in this liminal space—between research and what we might call advocacy or activism—that I would like

7 For detailed information on the project's structure and research clusters, see "Project Office," *Landscapes of Injustice*, accessed on August 15, 2023, http://www.landscapesofinjustice.com/project-office/.

8 Nick Blomley, "How Property Matters to the *Landscapes of Injustice* Project" (presentation, *Landscapes of Injustice* Spring Institute, Victoria, B.C., April 27–May 1, 2015).

9 "Project Structure," *Landscapes of Injustice,* accessed on August 16, 2023, http://www.landscapesofinjustice.com/what-we-do/#land-project-structure.

to dwell, not only because the project speaks so fruitfully to the matter but also because it is a tension I regard as fundamental to the practices of public history. Consider for a moment *LoI*'s position in its broader political milieu. Recent developments in both Canada and the United States regarding immigration, nationalist insularity, and discriminatory public policy propelled the project's work to a new and unexpected level of relevance. And yet *LoI* was at its core a university-based, research-driven, and institutionally funded project with a limited ability to intercede in current affairs. One compelling answer seems to arise in the cultivation of what I call a "culture of attention." Like the field of public history, a culture of attention does not lend itself well to concise definition; rather, we can identify three constitutive elements that cumulatively engender a mode of attending to the past through public historical work. First, we must actively probe the needs, purpose, and philosophy of our field. Secondly, public historians must consciously situate themselves at the confluence between research and advocacy. In this liminal space we can mediate productively between the inherently political nature of our work. That space is where a culture of attention can pay dividends. Thirdly, and most importantly, we must forge community-academic partnerships that can flourish beyond our direct involvement. Removing ourselves from our own equation, though a difficult task, is necessary to foster engagement that is durably meaningful.

A Culture of Attention?

With this goal in mind, let us apply the notion of "attention" to the processes of public history. Consider for a moment the sometimes-competing tendencies that have no doubt contributed to the difficulties public historians face in defining their work. As Frisch argues, the field grew in part out of a desire to "create, legitimize, colonize, credentialize, and protect" non-academic history jobs, leading to the common perception that public-facing historical work is always carried on outside the university.[10] Conversely, the field has waged a fierce battle against the notion that scholars are the judge and jury of knowledge-production (leading to the other common understanding of public history—namely that its participants are not a small coterie of elbow-patched academics but a broader public from all walks of life). Carl Becker's famous pronouncement that "Mr[s]. Every[wo]man" could vanquish any historian with his convictions, or Raphael Samuel's assertion that if "history was thought of as an activity rather than a profession, then the

10 Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, xxi.

number of practitioners would be legion," seem to render the professional historian obsolete, a relic of a less democratic past.[11] And yet this zero-sum game—in which the empowering of Mr[s]. Every[wo]man somehow renders the historian passé—hardly provides a way forward for community-academic partnerships.

Thomas Pfau's notion of attention offers several solutions to this dilemma of authority. Firstly, we can note that his belief that attention constitutes "a habit of focused seeing" and already carves out a place for the historian. Historians are trained to engage in sustained, intensive research in a way that may be outside the purview of the interested non-academic.[12] Consider, for example, the relationship between the Community Council and the rest of the *Landscapes of Injustice* research collective. At the 2016 Spring Institute, a member of the council whose family was violently uprooted from their home on Saltspring Island in the early 1940s reflected on her limited ability to research this traumatic personal history. "Reading through the archival documents," she confessed, "is not good for my health."[13] For this member, the role of the project is to shoulder this heavy burden, to engage intensively with her difficult past, and to situate it within a broader context of dispossession. We cannot remain passive spectators when listening to her words. Rather, the academics and public history professionals in a scenario such as this one ought to listen intensively to the stories of survivors. In other words, it is our job to give attention—and to give it generously—to those involved and to the potential meanings of their past. After all, Pfau's definition of the term is rooted in the everyday colloquialisms of "paying attention" and "taking an interest." Thus, unlike some types of jargon, "attention" does not presume to encompass a particular expertise or specialization: anyone can pay attention to history but few would claim that this action encompasses every aspect of history-making. Rather, attention is a first step, a beginning, and one that cannot be accomplished fruitfully in the context of public history without collaboration. As such, the call to academics for assistance in uncovering personal histories initiates a process that can only be carried out with the participation of those most intimately involved. Attending to these voices hardly renders the academy obsolete (to the contrary, it arguably creates a role only the public historian can fill) but it does demand partnership.

11 Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *The American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (1932), http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/1838208?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents; Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994), 17.

12 Thomas Pfau, "The Art and Ethics of Attention," *The Hedgehog Review* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 37; Thomas Pfau, "On Attention," *Salmagundi* 194 (2017): 145 – 63.

13 Mary Kitigawa, "Community Council Presentation" (presentation, *Landscapes of Injustice* Spring Institute, Victoria, B.C., April 28 – 30, 2017).

Indeed, without community reciprocation, we may devolve all too easily into the act of merely taking an interest.

For a large, government-funded history project grounded in institutional discourse like *Landscapes of Injustice*, perhaps entirely avoiding the perils of interest is impossible. As Pfau reminds us, the very nature of grant-writing, of funding agencies, and of publicity-garnering can sometimes render "humanistic inquiry" susceptible to "confus[ing] means with ends."[14] Indeed, Samuel's admonition to historians—that "however jealously we protect the integrity of our subject matter, we cannot insulate it from ourselves"—might be expanded to include the institutional pressures that inevitably seep into and shape our discipline.[15] What is perhaps most interesting about LOI is that in its foundational design and documentation it consciously promised to avoid such pitfalls.

The Catch-22: Mediating Between Advocacy and Research

Landscapes of Injustice, like many public history endeavors, faced an ongoing challenge. In its application for a Partnership Grant from Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the project was required to outline its "Connection" goals.[16] In keeping with SSHRC's emphasis on knowledge mobilization, *LoI* promised to "inspire and institutionalize the public memory of a critical historical episode"; to "stimulate deep and sustained public engagement" with a difficult period of Canadian history; and to "ensure" that the next time a diverse Canada faces a national emergency, "[it] will do better."[17] In other words, the project pledged to ignite at least some form of social change, to intervene meaningfully in public memory, and to shift entrenched paradigms of discourse. SSHRC funding, however, is primarily intended to "promote and support postsecondary-based *re-*

14 Thomas Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 15.

15 Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (Verso Books, 2012, orig. 1994), 430.

16 "Application for a Grant: *Landscapes of Injustice*," Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, October 21, 2013.

17 "Application for a Grant: *Landscapes of Injustice*," 2; 7; 8. For SSHRC's emphasis on knowledge mobilization see "Connection Program," *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada*, last modified May 3, 2023, accessed on August 1, 2023, http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/umbrella_programs-programme_cadre/connection-connexion-eng.aspx.

search and *research training* in the humanities and social sciences."[18] As such, SSHRC applications require extensive literature reviews, explanations of research methodologies, detailed theoretical frameworks, and exhaustive breakdowns of personnel, travel, and equipment costs. These research-oriented stipulations inevitably demarcate the types of interventions that a recipient like *LoI* can make in public discourse. Put differently, direct advocacy is rarely within *LoI*'s purview.

We are left, it seems, with a quandary. On the one hand, funding agencies like SSHRC require their recipient projects to specify and produce products—be they museum exhibits, media publications, documentaries, or public presentations—capable of generating some kind of social transformation. On the other hand, these products are limited in scope by a myriad of pragmatic considerations, from the mid-term review SSHRC conducts to ensure the appropriate use of its funds to the constraints applied by the partner institutions that match SSHRC's contributions and provide support to *LoI*.[19] This tension between ideal and reality is worth pondering, for it is far from a unique phenomenon. John Milloy, the former Special Advisor to the Chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), reminds us that the archive is not a "site of quiet scholarly activity" but rather "one of contestation. Political dynamics often determine what is possible and how those results will be achieved, indeed, even what those results might be."[20] His warning cannot help but resound loudly in the ears of those attempting to justify and disseminate public historical work. If even quiet scholarly activity is inevitably political, it follows that historians working in the public realm have a particular duty to think through the ramifications of their research.

In thinking through these tensions, I suggest we heed David Neufel's argument that "public history does not lend itself well to direct advocacy." Rather, he maintains, public history can facilitate "participants and observers working together in the construction of new sets of relationships, the reframing of existing understandings to better reflect belief in what is right, and the recognition and pursuit of multiple visions of a future."[21] Though he writes within the specific context of practic-

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18 "Funding," *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada*, last modified May 3, 2023, accessed on August 13, 2023, http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/index-eng.aspx?tab=0&aID=1&pID=0&pedisable=true (emphasis added).

19 For a breakdown of the ways in which partner institutions (including the University of Victoria and various Canadian museums) support *LoI* through financial contributions and human resources, see "Application for a Grant: *Landscapes of Injustice.*"

20 John Milloy, "Doing Public History in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *The Public Historian* 35, no. 4 (2013): 13, http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1525/tph.2013.35.4.10.pdf.

21 [63] David Neufeld, "Ethics in the Practice of Public History with Aboriginal Communities," *The Public Historian* 28, no. 1 (2006): 121, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/pdf/10.1525/tph.2006.28.1.117.pdf.

ing public history with Indigenous communities, Neufel implicitly hints at an answer to our broader quandary. By maintaining a reflexive awareness of our own limitations we can situate ourselves productively at the confluence of two disparate yet intimately related ways of approaching the past. In other words, public historians can cultivate cultures of attention in the liminal space we find between the methodical process of research and the often-urgent practice of activism. But what does that liminal space look like in practice? And how do we know it when we see it? To answer these questions I turn to something I myself experienced as part of the 2015 Spring Institute of the *LoI* project, a historically informed walk through a part of Vancouver locals once referred to as Japantown, or Nihonmachi. This area was once the heartland of those people whose dispossession and removal the project was designed to highlight and in some senses redress.

Walking Down Powell Street: Advocacy and the Presence of the Past

During *LoI*'s first Spring Institute in 2015 members of the research collective were invited to take a guided tour down Powell Street and past Hastings Park, an incongruous sprawl of green-space in the midst of otherwise urban surroundings.[22] Had we wandered through this neighborhood before the Second World War, our group would have encountered what Vancouverites referred to as "Japantown" or "Nihonmachi." Had we walked down Powell Street during the 1940s we would have witnessed Japantown's forced fragmentation, a process that included incarcerating Japanese Canadians in former horse barracks at Hastings Park. Today, the Powell Street area is home to a vibrant but marginalized community fighting the often-deleterious effects of gentrification.[23] And yet, as public historians, many of us visited not with the intent of directly interceding in these injustices, but rather with an eye to crafting another narrative about Japantown and the dispossession(s) it embodies. As this tour of Powell Street suggests, *LoI* has flirted with—but never fully participated in—direct advocacy. The latter is instead exemplified by, for instance, Wendy Pederson, an activist featured in a documentary shown at the 2017 Spring Institute called *The Right to Remain*, directed by Greg Masuda. As a long-term res-

22 This explanation of the tour is based on my personal attendance as part of the 2015 *LoI* Spring Institute.

23 "About: The Right to Remain," *Revitalizing Japantown: A Unifying Exploration of Human Rights, Branding, and Place*, accessed on April 16, 2023, http://www.righttoremain.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/20151102.1856_rjcatalogue_web.pdf.

ident of the downtown eastside neighborhood, Pederson has a firsthand awareness of the dispossession and forced relocation of her neighbors.[24] She advocates on behalf of her community by leading pickets outside of high-end restaurants that contribute to gentrification; enlisting legal assistance for forcibly evicted tenants; and engaging directly with the politicians and bureaucrats who represent the City of Vancouver. In other words, her work targets manifestations of past injustices by directly addressing present-day inequities. Though admirable, this type of on-the-ground intervention is undoubtedly outside the purview of *LoI.* There is a telling difference between viewing a documentary about Pederson's activism and participating directly in her work and the work of those like her. This difference highlights a fundamental friction within public history to which I have already alluded: namely, the tendency of the historian to render the past distant versus the tendency of the "every[wo]man" (a category to which historians also belong) to treat the past as intimately and urgently entangled with everyday life. Without oversimplifying the matter, we may note that Pederson's advocacy is dependent on the latter paradigm—on the immediacy, or the presence, of the past. I am borrowing here, of course, from the title of Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen's well-known monograph, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life.* After interviewing hundreds of Americans, Rosenzweig and Thelen concluded that for most "the past" was neither absent nor distant, but rather "ubiquit[ous]" and "connect[ed] to current-day concerns."[25] This intimate relationship with past events is precisely what public historians rely upon when they seek an audience and what the advocate—rightfully and necessarily—often addresses in his or her work. And yet, as Rosenzweig admits, this "emphasis on the firsthand, the experiential, the intimate, and the familial [can also] be confining."[26] For historians, the presence of the past may be somewhat discordant with historical understanding.

For those who participated, the Powell Street area and its environs stimulated a powerful process: some participants recalled raising a totem pole or having large get-togethers in Oppenheimer Park (a green space located on Powell Street), while others simply noted that in the neighborhood "there's always someone there to

24 "*Right to Remain* documentary explores development pressure on Vancouver's DTES," *cbc.ca*, last modified August 7, 2015, accessed on August 1, 2023, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/the-right-to-remain-documentary-explores-development-pressure- on-vancouver-s-dtes-1.3183890.

25 Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life,* ed. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 18.

26 Roy Rosenzweig, "Everyone a Historian," in *The Presence of the Past*, 186.

have a conversation with about what's happening."[27] As a resident of the downtown eastside, Pederson has an intimate familiarity with the places that inform these memories, a stake in what Robert Archibald calls the "shared remembrance" of her community.[28] If we follow Pfau and define remembrance as the "engaging of an idea or conception in such a way as to recognize ourselves to be implicated," the import of Pederson's lived experience in the Powell street area becomes clear: effective advocacy, it seems, is bound up in the shared remembrance of a place.[29] Though we cannot presume to engage places like Powell Street with the same familiarity as advocates like Pederson, public historians can still follow her example in making a community's remembrance an integral aspect of their work.

Documenting Powell Street: Research and the Distance of the Past

As a newly-minted research assistant in *LoI*'s Community Records cluster in 2015, I documented the changing demographics of Powell Street in the 1940s by scanning community directories (address information books akin to the modern-day phone book) for Japanese Canadian surnames. Many of these names were from within the Powell Street block. Mrs. M. Yokoyama, for example, lived at 56 Powell Street in 1941 and worked as a barber. By 1944, however, her home was listed as "vacant."[30] As a research assistant, it was my job to notice and document this change over time. The tangible injustices that almost certainly resulted from Mrs. Yokoyama's forced dispossession—her home's rapid devaluation, her neighborhood's loss of a local business, the fragmentation of her social and familial networks—were largely outside my purview. Although discovering the erasure of Mrs. Yokoyama's name from city records was egregious enough to unsettle me, even palpably so, this moment paled in comparison to what I experienced in the comparatively simple act of walking around the neighborhood. This sense of historical dissociation, however, is not inherently a bad thing. Research is perhaps one of the more accre-

27 Wendy Pederson, "A Resident Advocate's View of the Downtown Eastside," *State of Vancouver: Frances Bula on City Life and Politics*, last modified February 20, 2009, http://www.francesbula.com/uncategorized/an-resident-advocates-view-of-the-downtown-eastside/.

28 Robert R. Archibald, *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community* (Lanham: Altimira Press, 1999), 24.

29 Pfau, *Minding the Modern*, 38.

30 "British Columbia and Yukon Directory: 1941," *British Columbia City Directories*; "British Columbia and Yukon Directory: 1944," *British Columbia City Directories*, accessed on May 30, 2023, https://bccd.vpl.ca/.

tive processes of history-making; it requires adding new layers of comprehension and interpretation onto extant knowledge. Though this process can become detached and sedentary it can also allow us to return to our base understandings, to pause and examine with clarity our background assumptions. Effective public history work requires a willingness to utilize one's research for practical purposes.

Any process of learning, even if it is only undertaken by the researcher, can be transformative in and of itself. As professionals united by a common interest in intervening in the public realm, we have a responsibility to ensure that our public(s) are not harmed or marginalized by our research processes. This duty has not always been fulfilled. Indeed, the practice of public historical work with Indigenous groups in particular has been deleterious. Insidious elements of "fervent advocacy" have sometimes mixed with poor research practices to produce work that is far from collaborative, and it is only very recently that scholars have begun working "with" instead of "on" or even "for" Indigenous communities.[31] One might add that those who performed this distorted version of public-historical work forgot that the self-implicating type of remembrance that Pfau speaks of is necessary for true advocacy. Perhaps worse, they were not reflexively aware of this limitation.

What About Our Legacy? Cultivating a Culture of Attention

At the 2017 Spring Institute, attendees were asked to reflect in small groups on their vision for *LoI*'s future. Among the questions asked were the following: how do we translate research into public communication? Who needs to be connected to *LoI?* How do we ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts? What does success for the project look like?[32] The last question, in particular, stimulated reflective ruminations on the project's legacy. Participants in the discussion variously noted that *LoI* must act as a "cohesive resource," not just a "cohesive project"; that the research collective must look beyond its own temporal existence to the needs of future students and researchers; and that, in order to avoid devolving into a "very good set of individual knowledge silos," the project must practice continuous and intensive integration with an eye to the future of

31 Neufeld, "Ethics in the Practice of Public History with Aboriginal Peoples," 117; Carlson, Lutz, and Shaepe, "From the Archives and the Field."

32 Sense of Direction Panel, Landscapes of Inequality, Spring Institute (2017).

its findings. Both implicitly and explicitly, these concerns centered on sustaining *LoI*'s work beyond the duration of the project's funding.

LoI wound up in 2021, and the project director has delivered several keynote lectures summarizing the gestation and evolution of the project as well as its eventual outcomes in the form of academic publications, exhibitions, and other aspects of engaged research.[33] One particularly notable organic development within the *LoI* framework was the Scholarship and Activism Forum which emerged in 2017 and was a response to the challenges set out by key voices in 2015. The Forum was a student-led initiative that encouraged research assistants to interview scholars or activists whom they admired and post reflective blogs about their interviews. Envisioned as an ongoing, accretive process of learning, the *S&A* Forum sought to benefit not only current research assistants but also those students who were to be hired in the future. The goals of the Forum were simple but fruitful: as the *S&A* website noted, "success in this project will be sustained engagement and an extended knowledge of the subject for project members."[34] In other words, the Forum was intended as a sort of growing legacy for future students, a chronicle of what the editor-in-chief called the "concerns" and "conversations" that inevitably arise when working for such a large, complex project. Their interest in "tracing" these dialogues through the project and "capturing them" speaks to the need to create a record not only of research but also of the introspective and often disquieting process of wrestling with its present-day implications. This task of "thinking *with* history" instead of simply about it, as Tosh reminds us, "enables us to 'orient ourselves in the living present.'"[35] By attending to the questions and concerns of future *LoI* employees, the Forum initiated a process through which research assistants might think with history in a collaborative atmosphere. It has been, along with a project-defining engagement with activists and artists, one of the more positive outcomes of the LOI.

Conclusion

Public History involves an especially acute awareness of the permeable boundaries between the academy and the public, between the expert and the neophyte, and between the audience and the teacher. We are contributors to a "shared authority,"

33 Jordan Stanger-Ross, "LANDSCAPES OF INJUSTICE," Vancouver Historical Society, recorded September 23, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vv2KRw6oLvo.

34 "A Forum for Debate on the Relation Between Scholarship and Activism," *Scholarship & Activism Forum*, accessed on June 19, 2023, https://scholarshipandactivism.wordpress.com/.

35 John Tosh, *Why History Matters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), 6.

as Frisch has phrased it, and as such our profession rests on a foundation of collaboration, partnership, participatory knowledge, and the transformation of historical practice and methodology. Our work is variable but these underlying ideas are constant. At its best *LoI* has demonstrated many of these elements throughout its lifespan as an engaged research project. The qualities of attention that I have sought to highlight here, drawing on Pfau's work, are emblematic of how the project has been conducted. Through distributed authority and a wide interpretation of collaboration and publication, the project delivered on its potential and endeavored to accommodate its early critics and responded to their legitimate concerns in creative ways.

One of the reasons I find the notion of "attention" so compelling is its simplicity. And yet, like the profession it complements, attention also contains submerged and profound complexities. Its significance is rooted not in esoteric or veiled meanings but rather in an everyday phrase most school-children or university students hear at least once: "pay attention." As Pfau reminds us, this oft-used colloquialism indicates that "attention is something we can only 'give.'" One cannot bargain for attention, nor demand it. Rather, the concept carries with it an "underlying ethos… of generosity rather than some claim staked in conceptual or quantifiable form."[36] Attention, moreover, is inherently communal. In the world of artwork, attention requires a piece for the viewer to examine; in the world of public history, it requires a community to engage. If the community is offered the opportunity, in turn, to attend to and transform the processes of history-making, then a culture of attention can emerge. And once our internal research forums or our art exhibits or our community-academic partnerships have been forged, our cultures of attention can endure beyond our own interventions.

LoI's legacy, then, only ever depended partially on the completion of its various goals. Undoubtedly, the project's merit can be measured in metric terms by looking at the attendances at the exhibitions, or the impact of the scholarly and outreach publications. Our cultures of attention, however, are not necessarily contingent upon the same deadlines and requirements as these products. Rather, they hinge upon our willingness to be transformed by the public realm in which we work—a realm that public historians are also part of. In this sense, *LoI*'s legacy rests in the cultures of attention it has begun to cultivate. The relationships forged between Japanese Canadian elders and budding scholars; the reciprocal exchanges of knowledge fostered at the Spring Institutes; the interdisciplinary research communities that will endure beyond *LoI*'s duration: such are the fruits of a project rooted in public history principles. It is the process that matters.

36 Pfau, "The Art and Ethics of Attention," 38 – 39.