

Introduction - An explanation of the 'Heritage Minutes' and the theories of heritage, nostalgia and nationalism.

For this dissertation, I intend to explore the concept of nostalgia and how it can be combined with the concept of nationalism. I will look at the way these two theories can connect with and aid in the formation of national collective memories. In effect I will be answering two particular questions: how can a nation's past be used as a resource to build a collective national memory in the present and how can a nation's history be reactivated intentionally through the manufacturing of collective memories to serve the needs of the present and act as a nationally unifying tool? With the aim of answering these questions, I will use the 'Heritage Minutes' advertisements.

The 'Heritage Minutes', a national memory project or *lieux de memoire*¹, are a series of seventy-four, sixty second long television advertisements that ran on Canadian television stations. Made in both English and French, they amounted to forty-six hours of programming per month with thirty percent of those hours running during network prime time (Lawlor 1999: 47). The Minutes were produced by the privately owned Historica Foundation, created by Charles R. Bronfman and the CRB Foundation to "enhance Canadianism" (Rukszto 2005: 74). In 1986, Charles R. Bronfman, Canadian billionaire and philanthropist, gave \$100 million endowment to the CRB Foundation which he had set up with the explanation, "the history I learned in school was boring...terrible. I didn't get enough about where we came from, enough about our heroes...we didn't get a sense

¹ French historian Pierre Nora coined the term *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory). Nora argues that these are artificial and deliberately constructed sites where "memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (Nora 1989: 7) and that they are exclusively an occurrence of our modern time, a replacement for 'real' memory which no longer exists. Nora observes that *lieux de memoire* "originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives...because such activities no longer occur naturally" (Nora: 12-19).

of the excitement or romance of history” (Cameron 1995:15). In other words, Bronfman believed that the usual means of passing on collective memories, such as the education system and national celebrations and rituals, had failed and so he took it upon himself to “fill in the gaps” (West 2006: 71).

The ‘Heritage Minutes’ were first aired in 1991 running from that date well throughout the 1990s and are still infrequently seen on Canadian television today. The Minutes feature dramatized scenes of selected episodes in Canadian history and endeavour to encourage the Canadians watching them to assume these episodes as a part of their own personal heritage. As a result, the ‘Heritage Minutes’ can be seen as an attempt to “fill in the gaps of Canadian collective memory using the tools of popular culture” (West: 67). And, indeed, the Minutes are a perfect example of how nationalist narratives can enter the realm of popular culture and the public sphere (Rukszto: 74).

That said, the notion of any form of Canadian collective memory is a fragile one at best. Canadian national identity has long been fraught with plurality leading to a noticeable lack of any unifying national culture or distinctiveness. Perception of who Canadians are, and what Canadian culture is, abound within the nation and Canada is often seen to be characterised more by regionalism than nationalism. Due to a perceived lack of Canadians identifying with any particular form of collective history, Canada can be said to have a rather limited shared collective memory.

Collective memory, or cultural memory, has been described by Marita Sturken as the way a group of people with shared experiences, history and cultural identity construct ways of perceiving themselves (Sturken 1997: 1-6). This definition is remarkable when it is directed toward a Canadian context. Canada has been an independent nation since

1867, but its vast territory, multicultural status, and high immigration prevent its citizens from having much of a ‘shared experience, history or cultural identity’. Many Canadians, including the producers of the ‘Heritage Minutes’, mourn the deficiency of Canadian collective memory, not solely due to the fundamental value of a nation’s past, but also because they see collective memory as “instrumental in bolstering a sense of national identity, and ultimately as a functional component of national survival” (West: 68). In other words, in collective memory projects such as the Minutes, the past is used for the purposes of the present. The decision of how to remember the past is made from a standpoint in the present and in this way it permeates the past with present meaning.

Collective memory is serviceable for the maintenance and structuring of a national group. It would be naïve indeed not to notice the political agenda, or the politics of cultural representation, at work in memory projects such as the Minutes. As Barbie Zelizer reflects, “at the heart of memory’s study ... is its usability, its invocation as a tool to defend different aims and agendas” (Zelizer 1995: 226). In regard to the uses of memory for a nation, the purpose is typically focused on the survival of the group.

Jacques LeGoff explains the difficulties facing a nation which has an evident lack of collective memory, “the known or recognized absence or brevity of the past can ... create serious problems for the development of a collective mentality and identity – for instance in young nations” (LeGoff 1992: 2). In this evaluation, it is important for the strength of the nation that its individuals feel some sort of collective attitude toward it and each other. In times of national turmoil or heightened national disunity, the need for sites of collective memory, or *lieux de memoire*, increases. Nora states, “These bastions buttress our identities, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no

need for them” (Nora: 12). The perception that the ‘Heritage Minutes’ were in response to an apparent threat of national disunity is evident in their slogan “Giving our Past a Future” (Historica website) which implicitly suggests that without the Minutes, or a parallel attempt to revitalize collective memory, Canada’s future as a nation would be in danger of extinction (West: 72). The Minutes, then, were meant to offset the apparent dissolution of the Canadian population and the fragile sense of nationality amongst Canadians. Thomas Axworthy, executive director of the CRB Foundation, explains,

What we remember, what we stress as significant, what we omit from our past, and what we don’t know or understand about the stories of our fellow inhabitants, is critical to our ability to endure as a collective (Axworthy 1997: A 28)

In response to this, Canadian historian Desmond Morton writes, “As Canada once again threatens to disintegrate, a host of history and heritage organizations have emerged or revived with nation-saving concerns” (Morton 1997: A 28). Therefore, this memory project is considered to be not only perhaps entertaining, but in fact crucial for the survival and prosperity of the nation.

Before going any further, I will outline the main theories used in this dissertation, specifically the concepts of heritage, nostalgia and nationalism.

In his work *Theatres of Memory*, Raphael Samuel explains the assumed difference between history and heritage, namely that history is solely concerned with explanation and education, “the realm of critical inquiry”, whereas heritage - the “antiquarian preoccupation” - merely sentimentalizes and entertains (Samuel 1994: 270). Samuel points out that the critics of heritage charge that it “is the mark of a sick society, one which, despairing of the future, had become ‘besotted’ or ‘obsessed’ with an idealized version of its past” (Samuel: 261). However, Samuel argues that “[w]e live... in an

expanding historical culture” (Samuel: 25) and heritage, far from being imposed from above, is instead a popular collection of representations. Heritage is generally accused of lacking authenticity and unashamedly sentimentalizing the past, yet Samuel asserts that

There is no reason to think that people are more passive when looking at old photographs or film footage, handling a museum exhibit...as in any reading, they assimilate them as best they can to pre-existing images and narratives. The pleasures of the gaze...are different in kind from those of the written word but not necessarily less taxing on historical reflection and thought (Samuel: 271).

Taking into account Samuel’s explanation of heritage, it is significant that the Minutes are called ‘Heritage Minutes’ and not ‘History Minutes’. The popularity of heritage rises, according to Samuel, with the onset of social or political upheavals. He uses a British example, saying that the heritage movement in Britain came at a time of economic recession and mass unemployment of 1975 (Samuel: 261). In the case of the Minutes and their contribution to a form of Canadian heritage, they arose during a time of great national tension and uncertainty, when Canada as a nation was certainly ‘despairing of the future’.

The term heritage implies something that is valued and passed on from generation to generation. It also implies that it is something to be preserved and treasured. Finally, national heritage strongly implies national unity. For the ‘Heritage Minutes’ to refer to their interpretation of Canada’s past as “A Part of our Heritage” (Historica website) suggests that all Canadians share the same past and heritage, and also that they all consider this heritage to be worth preserving. For the ‘Heritage Minutes’ to be truly all encompassing of a Canadian heritage – if such a thing can be conceived of - they would have to take into account that the heritage exhibited in the Minutes is unquestionably one that is profoundly focussed on the present and highly selective. The fact is, “all

recollections are told from a standpoint in the present...that demands a selecting, ordering and simplifying” (Samuel 1990: 8). In this way, using the past for the purposes of the present as the ‘Heritage Minutes’ have done, they have altered the concept of heritage to mean something that is not necessarily of personal value to the individual, but rather something that can be utilized to unify the collective in times of division.

Historian David Cannadine writes that “depression is the begetter of nostalgia” (Samuel 1994: 261) but perhaps we could substitute the word depression for the word disintegration. The threat of disintegration in Canada, based partly on the lack of national unity, inspired a wave of nostalgia that can be seen in the ‘Heritage Minutes’ confirming, as Samuel explains, that heritage and nostalgia “shore[s] up national identity at a time when it is beset by uncertainties on all sides” (Samuel: 243). However, it is important to note that nostalgia for the past is usually nostalgia for an *idealized* past and not an accurate one, especially when the notion of national identity is fragile to say the least.

Nostalgia is a concept that has had much written on it and yet remains difficult to define. As Svetlana Boym observes, “nostalgia remains unsystematic and unsynthesizable; it seduces rather than convinces” (Boym 2001: 13). The term generally invokes reflections of the past when times were ‘good’. Nostalgia, originally referred to as a medical condition, was devised by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in the late seventeenth century to describe the extreme homesickness experienced by Swiss mercenaries. In 1863, Dr. De Witt C. Peters defined nostalgia as “a species of melancholy, or a mild type of insanity, caused by disappointment and a continuous longing for home” (Wilson 2005: 21). The word nostalgia comes from the Greek word *nostos*, meaning ‘return home’, and *algia*, meaning pain or longing (Wilson: 21). Thus,

nostalgia literally translates as ‘homesickness’, although today the term has taken on new meaning and, of course, is no longer considered a medical condition. Today, nostalgia is considered to be an emotion, a wistful or bittersweet yearning for the past.

So easily and ‘naturally’ does the word come to our tongues nowadays that it is much more likely to be classed with such familiar emotions as love, jealousy, and fear than with such ‘conditions’ as melancholia, obsessive compulsion, or claustrophobia (Davis 1979: 14).

Thus, even though an individual remembers ‘the good times’ with nostalgia, it is precisely those memories that cause the feelings of nostalgia. In this way, nostalgia is incurable, as it is not only the past as a place that is being longed for, but also the past as a time. As Linda Hutcheon observes, “time, unlike place, cannot be returned to – ever; it is irreversible. And nostalgia becomes the reaction to that sad fact” (Hutcheon 2000: 3). However, as mentioned, nostalgia for the past is usually in fact nostalgia for an idealized adaptation of the past. In this case, if nostalgia centers on an idealized version of the past, then it is less about the past than about the present. Mikhail Bakhtin calls this idea ‘historical inversion’ and explains that it is an ideal which is not being lived out in the present, and so is instead projected onto the past (Hutcheon: 4). Essentially it is the response to a feeling of an inadequate present by praising an idealized past. Here it becomes very important to note, as Hutcheon reminds us, that to describe something as ‘nostalgic’ is indeed less of a depiction of the thing itself than an attribution of a quality of response. Nostalgia is not something you recognize in an object or event, but rather something you feel (Hutcheon: 6).

Nostalgia has had a history of being used as a protective withdrawal into the past to escape a threatening present or ominous future. Svetlana Boym explains “nostalgia

inevitably appears as a defence mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals” (Boym: xiv). In Canada, in the 1980s and 1990s, the threat of national disintegration and the discord within the country was possibly reason enough for the employment of such a defence mechanism as nationalist nostalgia.

The final concept to be discussed here is nationalism - an ideology that focuses on the nation and can generally be thought of as a tie that binds citizens together through emphasizing the collectivity of their shared pasts for the purposes of the present. This definition is illustrated by Abbas Vali when he writes, “no ideology needs history so much as nationalism” (Hodgkin *Contested Pasts*, 2003: 169). While a nation refers to individuals and society as a collective unit incorporating such factors as shared language, history, and territory, these are not the only factors that make up a nation. National identity, the sense of a country-wide community felt by individuals and societies, is crucially important and nationalism “is not so much a discourse of origin as a discourse of identity” (Hodgkin: 169). Put another way, nationalism is,

The simple manifestation of the natural and spontaneous solidarity that exists among members of a human group sharing a historical and cultural tradition from which the group derives its distinctive identity (Collins 1990: 111).

And as Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone have pointed out in their book *Contested Pasts*, nationalism is very much connected with the notion of contestation. This contestation is the result of the creation of a set of nationalist identifiers which demand the selection and deletion of certain elements or characteristics of the nation. Over time, the criteria of what the nation entails changes and different priorities lead to different conceptions of what that nation is. In addition, rival value systems and political interest groups also serve to create contestation. In a nation such as Canada, as with other

multicultural states, the diversity of ideas of what constitutes the nation can be massive and thus any notion of collective memory in a national context can be problematic (Hodgkin: 170). It is precisely these problems that led respected Canadian historian Ramsay Cook to reflect in an interview that Canada is a “state without a nation”, meaning that it has political organizations but no unifying homogeneous culture (Cook: 1972). Hence, Canadian nationalism, or national culture, is an elusive thing and perhaps due to the variety of identities within Canada, it is in reality more regionalist than nationalist.

This dissertation will be divided into three chapters. Chapter One provides the historical context, outlining what was occurring socially and politically in Canada at the time of the ‘Heritage Minutes’. This chapter delves further into the concept of national identity and discusses the lack of a unifying Canadian cultural memory. Chapter Two consists of the analysis of the ‘Heritage Minutes’ in relation to the theories of nostalgia and nationalism in an effort to explain how a nation’s past can be used as a resource to build a collective and unifying national memory in the present. Finally, Chapter Three will explore how the ‘Heritage Minutes’ have become a piece of Canadian cultural memory in themselves.

Chapter One – Canada’s Identity Crisis

“Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity”
Marshall McLuhan (Cameron: 20).

National culture is a difficult concept, especially in an era of cultural globalization. What makes the concept of the creation of a national culture so remarkable in Canada (but not exclusive to Canada, as many other nations have a lack of unifying cultural identity) is that Canada has always had an evident lack of a singular, unifying national and cultural identity. Furthermore, as Canada does not have a language or symbolic culture shared by all its citizens, it does not “display the congruence between its political, cultural and economic realms required of a nation state...Canada does not have a national culture” (Collins:19-20). In fact, Canada is often referred to as a ‘nation of nations’ and indeed it includes several social groups that employ the language of nationalism, such as ‘Quebec Nationalists’ and ‘First Nations’ (Sherbert 2006: 3). In a country of such cultural plurality, the concept of a universal Canadian cultural identity is controversial to say the least, and most certainly contested by the many social groups within Canada.

As John Ralston Saul attests, Canada is, and has always been, a country of minorities. There has never been a majority, and as far back as the country’s history goes it has been functioning in what Saul calls the “fundamental triangle” of the Natives, the Francophones and the Anglophones (Saul 2000: 18). This, however, seems overly simplified. While technically Saul’s claim to a lack of majority within Canadian history is correct, it ignores the historical and contemporary hegemony of the white Anglo Canadians, which would clearly have an affect on any form of identity construction

within the nation. Furthermore, although Saul explains that Canada is made up of three broad demographic groups, the 'French', the 'English' and the 'Native', each of these groups subdivides into several further categories. For instance, the 'French' no longer refers specifically to the long-resident Quebecois, but also to the more recent immigration of Caribbean, Asian, North African and Middle Eastern Francophones, along with the oft-forgotten French Canadian settlements outside of *la belle province*, such as the Acadians. 'English' Canadian does not refer solely to those Canadians with English ancestry. In fact the history of English Canada reveals mostly Scottish and Irish groups, along with a large number of Germans, Jews and Blacks who came to Upper Canada ('English' Canada) as Loyalists or escapees from the United States. Furthermore, the 'Natives', often perceived by non-Native Canadians to be a homogenous group, are an even more fragmented population. They form forty-five linguistic-cultural groups in Canada with the Crees and Ojibways being the largest (Begin 2000: 174). Compounding all this is the high levels of immigration in Canada, bringing in people from all nations. With this enormous variance of ethnicities and sub-cultures it is clear that the creation of a singular, unifying cultural identity is a challenge, and one that has not always been desired.

In 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced Canada's new policy of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism – a term invented in Canada - was enacted as a policy largely as a consequence of pressures from cultural minorities (Sherbert: xi). Before 1971, Canadian culture was identified as 'b&b' – bilingual and bicultural. This changed with the onset of an official multicultural policy aimed at acknowledging a wider citizenship. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, multiculturalism is

...fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence (*Citizenship and Immigration Canada* website)

Instead of a program of mass assimilation of new immigrants and the pockets of minorities in Canada, the policy of multiculturalism celebrates Canada's diversity, and allows citizens to 'keep their identities'. Trudeau claimed, "although there are two official languages, there is no official culture" (Meisel 1999: 189).

National unity of feeling and identity is undeniably an elusive concept. It implies a sense of belonging to a certain geographic location and loyalty to certain particular values and institutions. It also usually requires the recognition of certain symbols and icons (Gutierrez-Haces 2000: 234). As Trudeau claimed, there is no official culture in Canada but there is *multiculture*, and multicultural Canada is the result of numerous factors. Obviously high immigration over several decades combined with a national acceptance of cultural diversity has a large effect, but also the sheer enormity of the country's landmass which serves to separate citizens by vast distances thus allowing for the creation of variances in culture and pockets of sub-cultures to thrive. These geographical distances lead to a wide variety of lifestyles and inevitably a wide variety of cultural differences across the nation. Another influence on multiculturalism is the effects of post colonialism, which first saw the British take over *Nouvelle France* and then saw Canada legally and loyalty obtain its independence from Britain in stark opposition to its revolutionary neighbours to the south. The peaceful and affable manner in which Canada

separated from its colonizer and gained its independence left within Canada a feeling among some citizens of loyalty to Britain. This feeling of loyalty to Britain, especially visible during the first and second World Wars, was vehemently opposed in Quebec, and Quebec's own post colonial experiences shed light on the form its unique culture has taken.

While the concept of multiculturalism and cultural tolerance is valued in Canada, the Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future noted in 1991 that,

While Canadians accept and value Canada's cultural diversity, they do not value many of the activities of the multicultural program of the federal government. These are seen as expensive and divisive in that they remind Canadians of their different origins rather than their shared symbols, society and future ...Multiculturalism is often blamed for the lack of a clear national identity (Meisel: 191).

This quote raises an interesting question: if Canada is historically a nation of minorities and has never had a clear, unifying national identity, what led to the rise of an identity crisis in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s? Why did the lack of Canadian identity become an obsession with policy makers and some parts of the political and cultural elite? There are several reasons for the rise of groups, like the Citizen's Forum, to become concerned about the lack of Canadian identity at this time. The rising strength of the movement for Quebec sovereignty is a key reason, along with the heightening American influence within Canada through the introduction of the 1988 free trade agreement and the American ownership of many Canadian businesses. The broadcasting of a large volume of American television in Canada was of enormous concern and led the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) to publicly announce in 1985, "For every hour of Canadian drama on our English TV screens there are 45 hours of American drama. No

wonder we are being culturally swamped' (Collins: 13). The increase of foreign immigrants who were neither English nor French speaking added to the concern for the lack of Canadian identity as the introduction of new cultures highlighted a gap in the place of a single Canadian culture. However, perhaps the most important reason for a Canadian identity crisis to arise in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the realization of Trudeau's pluralistic, multinational policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This policy changed the way Canadians were asked to see themselves, from bilingual and bicultural to multilingual and multicultural. Toward the end of the 1980s, this identity crisis became a fixation for Canadian policy makers, academics and some parts of the political and cultural elite. As Collins explains, the political and elite members of any nation are best able to preserve and exert their privileges and prerogatives under a guise of nationalism. Put plainly,

If a national self-image and a nationalist movement require a conscious intelligentsia to come into existence then, reciprocally, a conscious nationalist intelligentsia requires a nationalist movement in order to be able to survive and reproduce itself (Collins: 332).

This is not to say that the cultural and political elite in Canada were not sincere in their concern for their nation. However, they had, as the quote from Collins reveals, the largest reason to be concerned. As Canada is a highly regionalist country, it was the political and elite members of the nation, specifically those involved at the federal level, who stood to lose the most of their power if the nation dissolved into regions, or lost any sense of its already indistinct national identity under the official policy of multiculturalism. A national, unifying identity was much sought-after in the late 1980s and early 1990s and this is a large reason why Canada's identity crisis occurred at that particular time.

The policy and reality of multiculturalism served to allow many subcultures to exist in Canada, but left a gaping lack of cultural unity and overarching national identity. In order for Trudeau's policy to function, much had to be forgotten first. Of course there is a Canadian history, but it is one of colonial ties and regionalism, not a nation-wide history based on a policy of multiculturalism. For Canadians across the nation to relate to this policy and its brand of schizophrenic national identity, Trudeau's period in office saw the deliberate eradication of many repositories of an older collective memory based on regional, not national, collectivity. As Collins confirms, "Trudeau's goal for Canada involved a painful forgetting and that cauterization of memory is painful indeed" (Collins: 131). The pain of forgetting comes from submitting to an enforced policy of pluralism which necessitates the loss of regional culture. This itself causes an identity crisis, as Canadians are then reduced to defining themselves by what they aren't, instead of what they are. Using a tactic of denunciation - Tony Wilden, in his boldly titled book *The Imaginary Canadian* refers to Canada as 'Notland', stating it is "not English, not American, not Asian, not European, and especially not French" (Wilden 1981: 1) - does not actually shed light on what Canadians *are* and, as the Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future pointed out, the lack of a singular unifying national culture and identity is divisive. This divisiveness within Canada based on the lack of a singular national identity can be seen no where better than in the case of Quebec sovereignty association.

During the 1960's, advocates for Quebec separatism began to emerge and in 1976 the Parti Quebecois (PQ) was elected to office under Rene Levesque. In 1980, the PQ held a referendum on the issue of initiating a more independent relationship with the rest of Canada called sovereignty association. The federalist government as well as many

provincial premiers encouraged Quebecers to defeat the PQ proposal, promising ‘renewed federalism’ if they did. The results favoured against sovereignty association by 60 percent to 40 percent (Dyck 2000: 92). The PQ failed to win the majority vote - they did obtain the majority of French-speaking votes but not the majority of French and English speaking votes combined. However, 40 percent is significant and is a clear indication that French-speaking Quebec did not identify with an overall Canadian culture, which is a vague concept to begin with. With the 1987 Meech Lake Accord Quebec was to achieve the recognition as a ‘distinct-society’ within Canada, but the failure of the Accord in 1990 led to another call for a referendum on sovereignty association in 1992. For the next three years, the PQ kept adjusting its concept of sovereignty and delaying the date of the vote until it thought it would be accepted by the majority of the Quebec public. The referendum was held in October 1995 with an astonishing outcome of 50.6 percent to 49.4 percent against sovereignty association (Dyck: 93-94). The results of the 1995 referendum were not reassuring to those who wanted to keep Canada united.

These referendums and the looming threat of national fragmentation they brought helped spur on a wave of pseudo-nationalism in what Monique Begin describes as Canada’s “unending quest for identity” (Begin: 177). Out of these concerns came the recognition that Canada is essentially a nation of regional differences bound together through state-enforced national unity and that “the question of Canadian identity...is not a ‘Canadian’ question at all, but a regional question” (Frye 1971: i). Here the regional is proposed as the true place for the formation of cultural identity in opposition to a national unifying collective Canadian culture. Linda Hutcheon adds, “Canada can in some ways be defined as a country whose articulation of its *national* identity has sprung from

regionalist impulses” (Hutcheon 1988: 4). However, with the identity crisis of the 1980s and 1990s in Canada, the desire for the unifying potential of a national cultural identity was growing and becoming evident in many ways, most apparently through the medium of television.

It seemed that the lack of Canadian cultural identity and its fragile national circumstance was seen as a perfect platform for independent or private businesses and companies to utilize for their purposes. If Canadians were so concerned about the absence of their collective culture and had such low national esteem, these businesses and companies exploited the situation by producing television commercials aimed at emphasizing, not only their particular product, but their corporate nationalism. Canadians will always remember the famous Molson beer advertisement, indeed it has become its own collective Canadian cultural memory, which featured ‘Joe Canadian’ and ‘the Rant’. The advertisement begins with a reluctant looking actor walking out onto an empty stage and addressing an unseen audience. In a plaid shirt and jeans, Joe – the ‘average Canadian’- gives a speech, beginning quietly and meekly and building into a crescendo while images relating to Canada flash on a huge screen behind him.

Hey, I’m not a lumberjack or a fur trader.
I don’t live in an igloo, or eat blubber or own a dog sled,
And I don’t know Jimmy, Sally, or Suzie from Canada, although I’m certain
they’re really, really nice.
I have a Prime Minister, not a President.
I speak English and French, not American, and I pronounce it ‘about’ not ‘a boot’.
I can proudly sew my country’s flag on my backpack.
I believe in peacekeeping not policing, diversity not assimilation, and that the
beaver is a truly proud and noble animal.
A toque is a hat, a chesterfield is a couch and its pronounced ‘zed’, not ‘zee’ –
‘zed’.
Canada is the second-largest landmass! The first nation of hockey! And the best
part of North America!
My name is Joe and I am Canadian!

Thank you.
(Begin: 177-178)

In this speech, Joe addresses issues of common Canadian stereotypes (“I don’t live in an igloo”) as well as the common Canadian resistance to being compared to American (“I believe in peacekeeping, not policing”). The very slogan of the product – “I am Canadian” – does not in fact relate merely to the product, but to the intended consumers. In its construction of what Canadians are and are not, the advertisement seeks to find a common ground to suit all Canadians and define the texture of Canadian identity. The ‘I am Canadian’ advertising campaign was begun by Molson in 1994 and “tapped into the subjugated nationalism lurking in the Canadian psyche at a period when nationalist sentiment was thought to be all but extinct” (Sugars 2006: 125). However, the ‘subjugated nationalism’ that this ad recalled was a strictly Anglophone version and the ad alienated many of the Canadians whom it professed to unite. To begin with, the advertisement only ran in English Canada. Although the monologue makes a nod to Quebec by mentioning the use of the French language in Canada, Molson’s *Canadian* was not marketed in that province. The ad also disassociates itself from native Canadian culture through its rejection of eating blubber or owning dog sleds. Most strongly, however, is the ad’s form of refutation about what Joe, and therefore Canadians, are not. ‘I am Canadian’, might as well be ‘I am not America’ and the denial of being a lumberjack or fur trader might as well be declaring ‘I am not colonial’. As popular as the Molson ad campaign was within English Canada it did not create a unifying and, more importantly, all encompassing, national consciousness. Of course, the entire point of this ad campaign was to sell beer to the targeted Canadian audience (likely a white, Anglo, male audience).

To this extent it is not surprising or important that the ad did not create a sense of national identity. What is interesting about it is that while poking fun at outside stereotypes about Canadians it actually bought into a series of other insider stereotypes that reflected white, likely male, Anglo Canadian ideas of Canadian identity. It is also interesting that the ad campaign worked, suggesting that its target audience both recognized and were willing to laugh along with jokes about Canadian the identity crisis, suggesting they did not take it as seriously as the political and cultural elite of Canada.

The campaign did, however, help to reemphasize the identity crisis 1980s and 1990s and the very real threat of the disintegration of the country on a more public stage by attempting to humorously expose some unifying characteristics of a (white, Anglo) Canadian. The popularity of the ad in English Canada and the rejection of it in French Canada exposed the unifying potential of a mutually agreed upon national cultural identity, collective cultural memory and shared national consciousness. The Historical Foundation's 'Heritage Minutes' can be seen as an effort to create a Canadian collective conscious in a more serious manner, yet still utilizing the medium of television. As this chapter has illustrated, Canada's identity crisis in the late 1980s and early 1990s developed out of several causes, most notably Trudeau's policy of official multiculturalism and the strength of the Quebec sovereignty movement, which revealed that Canadians did not have much cultural memory to speak of as they were not a singular group with a similar way of perceiving themselves. The fractured Canadian identity led to a feeling among some Canadians, particularly Charles Bronfman, of the need to create a unifying cultural memory of Canada's collective past. The next chapter

will consider how the 'Heritage Minutes' employ nationalism and nostalgia in an attempt to do so.

Chapter Two – An analysis of the ‘Heritage Minutes’ in relation to the theories of nostalgia and nationalism.

“One way of offsetting the appeal of separatism is by investing tremendous amounts of time, energy and money in nationalism...A national image must be created that will have such an appeal as to make any image of a separatist group unattractive.”

(Pierre Trudeau 1968: 193)

The unifying potential of a shared national consciousness is undeniable and subsequently the ‘Heritage Minutes’ can perhaps be perceived as a nation-saving quest fought with the tools of collective memory to forge unity in the face of disunity. As Canada endured its bout of identity crisis in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, and the threat of national disintegration heightened with referendums on the future of Quebec’s relationship to the rest of Canada and social uncertainty, a wave of officially endorsed nationalistic nostalgia could be detected. Svetlana Boym explains, “nostalgia inevitably appears as a defence mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals” (Boym: xiv). When the accelerated rhythms and upheavals are on a national scale, nationalistic nostalgia is the result. Through analysing some of the ‘Heritage Minutes’ this chapter will examine how they attempted to use the nation’s past as a unifying tool and how they aimed to revive the nation’s concept of heritage and create a national image and identity that served the needs of the present through the manufacturing of certain prescribed collective memories.

This is not to say, however, that the Minutes were successful in their quest, and indeed, that judgement is not the purpose of this study. The concern here is simply to show how the concepts of nationalism and nostalgia were put to use within the Minutes.

Much has been said about their format and content, and Elspeth Cameron calls them a “vitamin pill” notion of history, writing that they are,

Sugar-coated, concentrated, easy-to-swallow, and good for the health of the nation. They were designed as an alternative to the history Bronfman (and many others) found so ‘boring’ and ‘terrible’ (Cameron 1995: 17).

There are historical inaccuracies in the Minutes, and while they are an important issue, they will not be discussed here and are outside the remit of this dissertation. On the other hand, it may be safe to assume that the Minutes are perhaps not exclusively concerned with the telling of truths, but rather with the objective of creating Canadian cultural unity - or at the very least creating something ‘exciting’ about Canadian history.

As previously mentioned, all retrospectives are made from a perspective in the present, and so are tainted by that stance. As Samuel confirms, “Memory is historically conditioned, changing colour and shape according to the emergencies of the moment... It bears the impress of experience, in however mediated a way” (Samuel: x). This is especially true of collective, or national, memories. This in turn can then transform a nation’s collective past into a resource to be used for the express purposes of the present. The ‘Heritage Minutes’ are the nostalgic response to feelings of an inadequate present by idealizing a unified past, which can best be seen in their slogan “Giving our Past a Future” (Historica website). Evidently the fact that Canada never truly had a unified past, to either idealize or give a future to, is beside the point.

In order to use the nation’s past as a unifying tool and create a set of collective memories of the past for the purposes of the present, the Minutes first had to identify a set of common connotations of Canadianism that “allow individuals to see themselves in stories about ‘their’ social/historical contexts” (Lawlor: 86). These connotations of

Canadianism draw on nationalist characteristics, which oscillate between occasional blatant stereotypes or vague representations, and combine them with dramatized examples of their occurrences in Canada's history. The portrayal of what a Canadian is through the examples of Canadians in the past utilizes nostalgia by idealizing the past over the inadequate present. As Boym explains, nostalgia is not solely concerned with the past and can be "retrospective but also prospective. Fantasies of the past [are] determined by the needs of the present" (Boym: xvi). As the 'needs of the present' for the 'Heritage Minutes' was the threat of the nation's disintegration and the vague sense of national consciousness in the country, the Minutes first had to define what a Canadian was and then cause Canadians to identify with their definition, thus attempting the creation of collective national memories.

In the *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, Peter Karl Kresl explains six criteria for a topic to be considered part of Canadian studies. The six thematic patterns can be found in the 'Heritage Minutes' and each corresponds to the Minutes' creation of a set of Canadian identifiers. These patterns are: northerness and survival; proximity to the United States; French/English colonial past; geography and regionalism; role on the world stage; and sociological characteristics (Kresl 1997: 90). It should be noted, however, that this is not a wholly definitive list, and is missing such critical categories as aboriginal issues and the topic of immigration, among others. Nevertheless, Kresl's list is helpful for this analysis and was selected because it gives a set of classifications for Canadianism. Therefore, using Kresl's criteria and Nuala Lawlor's work on Canadian identity and the 'Heritage Minutes' as a basis, each of these themes and their manifestations in the Minutes will now be examined to demonstrate how the nation's past

experiences can be used as a resource to build collective national memory in the present and how the memories of these experiences of the past can serve the needs of the present by acting as a national unifying tool.

Northernness and Survival

The 'Heritage Minutes' make frequent use of the theme of northernness and survival, and indeed they are not the only promoters of this theme. In her introduction to *Canadian Culture*, Elspeth Cameron notes that "snowy landscapes, blizzards, igloos, icebergs, northern lights, etc...weave in and out of Canadian artistic productions" (Cameron 1997: 12). The notion of a harsh northern climate and the struggle for survival is a common Canadian theme, and the physical effort to survive against an unforgiving environment is portrayed in the Minutes as a collective endeavour, rather than an individual one.

Three Minutes in particular coincide with the theme of northernness and survival; *Sanguenay Fire*, *Soddie* and *Midwife*. The first Minute depicts the efforts of a rural Quebec family in their attempts to save themselves and each other from the devastating 1870 fire in Quebec. The second Minute recounts an immigrant family on the plains of the prairies as they attempt to carve a life out of the earth, planting crops and building homes from the same hard ground. The third example of physical hardship portrays a nineteenth-century midwife struggling through an anonymous but snowy and unkind rural landscape to deliver a child. Each of these Minutes exhibits that the Canadian landscape is the obstacle that needs to be overcome in order to survive. They perpetuate the impression that the identity of Canadians is found in their capacity to rise above the

physical hardships caused by northerness (Lawlor: 49). This theme is depicted as a unifying attribute for Canadians, especially as it exhibits scenes from different areas of the country which nevertheless struggle with a common concern. It encourages Canadians to embrace a national identity which includes the ability to survive in harsh landscapes through the help of others.

Proximity to the United States

The 'Heritage Minutes' exhibit an awareness of Canada's proximity to the United States, and the idea of outside cultural influence on Canada is an old one indeed, from its colonial roots to its present existence in the shade of its southern neighbour. In fact, the aspiration for a nation-wide Canadian identity is often "framed as a negative response to American cultural dominance, and echoes the rejection of British cultural domination" (Rukszto 1997: 151). With a neighbour whose authority inundates the globe, Canada appears powerless to resist American cultural influence. In a book entitled *The CRB: The First Decade*, creative director Patrick Watson explains that the Minutes act in response to American cultural domination, pointing out that the cultural and media imperialism of the United States prevents Canadians from forming their own shared cultural memories,

Unlike its massive neighbour, the United States – whose cultural presence throughout the world exceeds that of any other, and whose constant outpourings of national mythology have been surging across the Canadian border since the earliest days of television – Canadians have not been given to make popular myths about their heroes and passages. We know more about the great figures of American exploration, industry, and culture than about our own (Kelly 1996: 14).

The Minutes take advantage of the fact that Canadians know so much about American culture and so little about their own by constructing Minutes that highlight Canadian

heritage and stress that it is not American heritage. The Minute entitled *Basketball* is a great example, which imparts to the viewer that a Canadian invented basketball. James Naismith's invention is used in the Minutes to emphasize that one of the most popular sports in the United States is actually a Canadian invention, and so highlights once again that Canadian identity is often identified by what it is not. This example also reverses the usual equation by stressing Canadian contribution to American culture rather than vice versa. Likewise, Minutes such as *Underground Railroad* and *Sitting Bull* emphasize Canada's racial tolerance in implicit but discernible opposition to that of the United States. It is worth mentioning here, however, that the notion of Canada's racial tolerance is contestable. Canadian history also contains episodes of racial prejudice, perhaps simply in different form than that of the United States. The use of American racism to contrast Canadian tolerance in the Minutes is a good example of how nostalgia can sometimes whitewash history, thus making for an idealized version of the past.

Perhaps the most obvious Minute that portrays Canada's awareness of its proximity to the United States is *Steele of the Mounties*. The Mounties are iconically Canadian – a 'friendly' police force which has many stereotypes attached to it. The dimwitted yet charming popular image of the Mountie serves to hide the violence in the RCMP past, possibly in yet another contrast to the United States, which are supposedly more violent. This Minute, in which Superintendent Sam Steele of the RCMP arrests and evicts an American gambler from the Yukon, creates direct comparisons between Canadian and Americans. It stresses Canadian moral superiority in contrast to that of America, and so emphasizes the cultural differences between the two neighbours. By

defining what Canadians are not – in a typically Canadian fashion - the Minutes attempt to portray what Canadian collective identity is.

French/English Colonial Past

This particular thematic pattern makes up the largest of Kresl's six categories in the number of 'Heritage Minutes' that fall under it, and indeed it is safe to say that the French/English situation in Canada at the time of the Minutes was the country's most pressing concern. Nuala Lawlor explains that the Minutes that deal with this topic can be subdivided into three further categories: those which depict colonial leaders, those which emphasize French/English co-operation in the founding of the nation, and those which illustrate Quebec life. She argues that the purpose of each subcategory was to "discredit any belief that Quebec and French-speaking Canadians [were] victimized by the rest of Canada" (Lawlor: 67).

The first subcategory depicts the colonization of North America and founding of Canada by European explorers and includes such Minutes as *Naming of Canada*, *Nicollet* and *Governor Frontenac*. The second subcategory, which stresses the collaboration between French and English Canadians in the past, is illustrated by Minutes such as *Baldwin and Lafontaine*, *Hart and Papineau*, and *Etienne Parent*. Finally, the third subcategory, which provides images of Quebec provincial life, is apparent in such Minutes as *Jacques Plante*, *Rocket Richard* and *La Bolduc*.

There has been much criticism of the 'Heritage Minutes' which present the French/English relationship (ex. Cameron and McGinnis - 1995, Rukszto – 1997). The Minutes on the colonial leaders are presented humorously, making each event portrayed

into a joke. The Minutes on the second subcategory are limited in their portrayal, and only show the collaboration of French and English elite males in their efforts to achieve political success, ignoring working class French and English relations as well as French and English women. Lastly, the Minutes representing images of Quebec life are superficial as they do not delve any deeper than athletic or artistic depictions (Lawlor: 70-71). That said, these 'Heritage Minutes' do succeed in highlighting Canada's dualistic past and they draw attention to the importance of that unified past for the present nation. Despite the criticism against them, these Minutes do emphasize that the history of Quebec is in fact the history of Canada, and they are inclusive in their portrayal. No other province or territory is singled out in the Minutes as Quebec is, and in the individual attention paid to it Quebec is enveloped within the nation of Canada as a whole. Here we can see how the Minutes are intentionally using the nation's past as a resource for the needs of the present.

Geography and Regionalism

Kresl's fourth theme of Canadian studies to be found in the 'Heritage Minutes' is its fixation on place. Canada's vast territory assuredly plays a large role in any form of its national sense of unity or cultural identity. Accordingly, Bronfman is quoted as saying "if some countries have too much history, Canada has too much geography" (Kelly: 8). The difference of Canadian regionalism to Canadian nationalism has been detailed in Chapter One. Suffice to say here, as Lawlor so eloquently puts it, "regional self-definition is inevitable for a country which covers almost ten million square kilometres" (Lawlor: 72). In regard to Canadian geography, the country is divided into four sections; Atlantic,

Central, Prairie and Pacific. The differences in lifestyle and culture between a Canadian from Nova Scotia, for example, and one from Alberta are vast. Although there are, of course, cultural differences within the regions of Canada, the Minutes seek to minimize the regional differences through stressing commonalities as well as implying that Canadians should adopt the experiences of their fellow countrymen from other far-away parts of the nation as part of their own Canadian experience.

The Minute *Emily Carr*, for example, portrays British Columbian artist Carr as she paints Canada's western forests. This Minute, however, is geographically vague enough as to suggest that the appreciation of Canada's natural beauty is a country-wide experience that unites all Canadians, not just those appreciating the beauty of British Columbia. The Minute ends with Carr's nationalistic dialogue "This is my country. What I want to express is here and I love it" (Historica Website – *Emily Carr* Minute).

Although a Canadian from the flatlands of the Prairies may not be able to identify with the landscape of mountainous British Columbia, they are encouraged to contemplate that 'other' region as part of their country, indeed 'A Part of [their] Heritage' (Historica Website).

Another example of the use of the theme of geography and regionalism in the 'Heritage Minutes' is found in the Minute *Sir Sandford Fleming*. Sir Sandford Fleming was a nineteenth-century engineer and inventor who initiated the building of three railroads and invented the concept of standard time. This Minute emphasizes Canadians' ability to maintain a unified nation despite the geographical boundaries of space and place. In the dialogue of the Minute, Sandford exclaims, "We're not just building a railroad, gentlemen. We are building a country" (Historica Website – *Sir Sandford*

Fleming Minute). The use of nationalism and nostalgia to serve the needs of Canada's uncertain present are clear here, where in an idealized past national unity can easily be achieved through hard work.

These examples from the 'Heritage Minutes' exhibit the fact that the Minutes tend to define Canadian national identity as the collection and dissemination of its regional identities. Even Minutes, like *Emily Carr*, which observe specific areas of the country, are contextualized within the larger national representation (Lawlor: 73-74).

Canada's Role on the World Stage

The manner in which Canada is represented on the world stage is the fifth of Kresl's themes, and the depiction of Canada in a global perspective is usually in opposition to that of the United States. Lawlor believes that the difference between Canadian and American representations is that Americans encourage the individual and confrontation, whereas Canadians value the collective and co-operative (Lawlor: 75).

In the Minute *Valour Road*, the presumed value that Canadians place on the collective and co-operative can clearly be observed. This Minute depicts three Canadian soldiers who all won the Victoria Cross for their actions in World War I and all grew up on the same street in Winnipeg, which was subsequently renamed Valour Road in their honour. Although this Minute commemorates the efforts of three men, it unmistakably points out that these are only three out of 50,000 Canadians who died in the war. This Minute "replaces individual identity with group validation" (Lawlor: 76) thereby emphasizing the importance of the group (read: nation) over the individual. In this manner, the 'Heritage Minutes' construct a Canadian characteristic which is self-

fulfilling – by valuing the collective over the individual, Canadians become more collectivized and this allows for a heightened sense of national unity.

Other Minutes, including *Steele of the Mounties*, *Peacekeeping* and *Sitting Bull*, stress the ‘Canadian’ characteristics of compromise, mediation, and tolerance. Altogether, these Minutes attempt to give Canada as a unified nation a proud and respectable image on the world stage as well as give a sense of significance to the concept of Canadian nationalism.

Sociological Characteristics

Kresl’s final criterion is the Canadian preoccupation with its sociological foundations. As a ‘discovered’, colonial nation of immigrants and natives founded by Europeans, Canada has a mixture of sociological backgrounds which often allows Canada to be describe as “unit[ed] out of difference” (Rukszto: 150), or as a cultural mosaic in opposition to the United States’ cultural melting pot. The fact that Canada’s eagerness to accept unassimilated immigrants is largely out of necessity caused by Canada’s low population growth, rather than a heightened capacity for racial tolerance, is perhaps beside the point (Lawlor: 78). The ‘Heritage Minutes’ attempt to depict Canada as a nation founded on immigration and mixed ethnicities that came together to create one culture.

The Minute entitled *Orphans* is the clearest in its attempt to emphasize the importance of immigrants in Canada while at the same time stressing Canadian’s tolerance for newcomers. In this Minute, groups of Irish children who were orphaned on the crossing from Europe are adopted by French-Canadian families. During the adoption

process the children are told “you’re a Canadian now” and are given new French names. The Irish children refuse to accept the new names and maintain that they must keep their Irish names “in memory of our homeland”. The French-Canadians declare “we accept that” (Historica Website – *Orphans Minute*). The *Underground Railroad* also emphasizes the racial tolerance that the Minutes use in attempt to unite Canada, as the escaped slave declares, “We’re free, we’re in Canada now” (Historica Website – *Underground Railroad Minute*).

Elsbeth Cameron and Janice McGinnis have argued that “Canadian audiences are destined to read the Minutes in a culturally conditioned manner” (Cameron 1995: 12). This is because the Minutes contribute to a narrative of Canadian nationalism that has already been seen, and Kresl’s thematic patterns of Canadian studies are just one example of this. For the ‘Heritage Minutes’ to use the nation’s past as a unifying tool and create a set of collective memories of the past to serve the needs of the present, the Minutes first had to identify a set of common connotations of Canadianism. As the ‘needs of the present’ for the Minutes was the threat of the nation’s disintegration and the vague sense of national consciousness in the country, the Minutes first had to define what a Canadian was and then cause Canadians to identify with their definition, thus attempting the creation of collective national memories.

In regard to the creation of these new definitions, the Minutes portray an interesting depiction of the use of silence and omission in memory. Luisa Passerini remarks that “any operation aiming to cancel memory cannot help being also as effort to produce another set of memories, to replace the previous ones” (Passerini 2003: 241). If this is the case, inversely any production of a new set of memories must be also be an

effort to cancel old memories. Here, then, the past is being re-worked, or idealized, into a form that is acceptable and supportive to the aim of the new set of memories. Cameron illustrates this, explaining that “the ‘historical’ moments selected appear in such a light as to emphasize positive aspects of ... contemporary issues or to present an idealized vision of a Canadian society” (Cameron 1995: 19). Clearly, in the ‘Heritage Minutes’ the new set of memories seek to define the Canadian past through the issues of the present, “current issues – such as gun control, women’s rights, separatism...are read backwards onto history” (Cameron: 19). This act silences the actuality of the past in order to portray an idealized version for the purpose of constructing a desired collective memory for the sake of present and future.

This chapter has discussed how the ‘Heritage Minutes’ used the nation’s past as a resource to build a collective national memory in the present. Chapter Three will now consider how the ‘Heritage Minutes’ have become a part of Canada’s cultural memory in themselves.

Chapter Three - A consideration of how the 'Heritage Minutes' have become a piece of Canadian cultural memory.

The popularity of the 'Heritage Minutes' amongst Canadians is remarkable and the Minutes have been appropriated in many ways. In a particularly interesting turn of events, the Minutes have actually become pieces of Canadian cultural memory themselves. In seeking to present to Canadians a series of highly selected and dramatized episodes of their shared national history, the Historica Foundation in effect *made* Canadian history by *making* Canadian history, through the production and distribution of the 'Heritage Minutes'. The Minutes, "highly visible and widely consumed" (Rukszto 2005: 74) are familiar to the Canadians who watched television during the 1990s, and their very existence has created a link among Canadian citizens that leads to a shared relationship and consequently an aspect of collective culture. This chapter will explore how the 'Heritage Minutes' have inadvertently become pieces of Canadian cultural memory themselves. This will be seen through the creation of 'Mock Minutes', *facebook* groups and high school history projects. Through unconsciously becoming aspects of Canadian cultural memory themselves, the 'Heritage Minutes' drew on the nation's past as a resource to build a collective national memory in the present, but quite unintentionally became pieces of Canadian cultural memory on their own, and in some ways coincidentally acted as a nationally unifying tools.

'Mock Minutes' became a common occurrence on Canadian comedy shows after the original airing of the 'Heritage Minutes', and indeed due to the high visibility of the original Minutes, this seems to have been predictable. The Historica Foundation's website explains, "The Minutes have been a familiar part of Canada's cultural landscape

for more than ten years. So familiar, in fact, they have been imitated and parodied by comedians” (Historica website). The ‘Mock Minutes’ are satirical versions of the Historica Foundations’ Minutes and can be seen on Canadian television programs such as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, *The Royal Canadian Air Farce*, and *The Rick Mercer Report*.

These parodic skits follow the same visual framework of the Minutes, lasting sixty seconds and closing with the “A Part of our Heritage” image. They range in purpose from simple jokes to political or social criticisms, and Rukszto explains that the ‘Mock Minutes’ communicate “the truths that cannot be accommodated within the heritage discourse but that speak to the complexities of national identity in contemporary Canada” (Rukszto: 81). In this way, the ‘Mock Minutes’ force their viewers to question what gets incorporated in the real ‘Heritage Minutes’, and therefore fits into the CRB’s view of Canadian identity, and what gets left out, perhaps to be included in the ‘Mock Minutes’ instead.

In accordance with this, the ‘Mock Minutes’ also force viewers to consider the effects of nationalism and national heritage. In a ‘Mock Minute’ about Lucien Bouchard and the Bloc Quebecois, produced by the crew of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, an example of how the ‘Mock Minutes’ utilize the nature of nationalist discourse is exemplified. This Minute portrays a weeping mother bringing her troubled young son to a therapist. The son plays with a maple leaf and quickly becomes more and more agitated until he tears it up into little pieces. He then plays with two dolls, hitting the bigger one with the smaller one and shouting ‘vive le Canada’. The therapist diagnoses the situation, saying that the boy “seems to have some sort of block, a mental block, a bloc Quebecois, if you will”. This ‘Mock Minute’ describes the Quebec separatist movement and English-French

relations in the language of heritage (Rukszto: 83). Instead of emphasizing a shared background and mutual respect, as well as the potential for national unity and provincial co-operation, displayed in the 'Heritage Minutes', the 'Mock Minutes' show Canadian political heritage as being rife with disunity, regionalism and on the verge of dissolution. In place of 'enhancing Canadianism', as was Bronfman's original goal for the 'Heritage Minutes', the 'Mock Minutes' subvert Canadian national pride. However, in doing so, they have created a point of commonality among Canadians nationwide. Canadians can recognize the satire at play in the 'Mock Minutes' and these minutes have become, in a small way, a culturally unifying phenomenon. This is through their ability to highlight the "realities of Canadian life against representations of imagined Canadian greatness" (Rukszto: 85) and also through the humour they employ whilst doing so. While Canada is more regional than national, and therefore the concept of a national Canadian identity is fragile, 'Mock Minutes' stressing the absurdity of Canadian national heritage are perhaps more unifying than the reality of any national heritage itself. This is because, "what people laugh at, how and when...is absolutely central to their culture" (Palmer 1994: 2). Fascinatingly then, the 'Mock Minutes' have perhaps done more to create a sense of unity, national identity and collective memory in Canada than the 'Heritage Minutes' ever could, through their ability to unify Canadians with humour about their pending disunity and lack of national identity.

That said, the 'Mock Minutes' are base allusions to the 'Heritage Minutes', and as Linda Hutcheon explains, "even in mocking, parody reinforces [the text parodied]" (Hutcheon 1985: 75). Obviously then, the 'Heritage Minutes' had an effect on Canadian culture. Hutcheon explains that parodies take the object of their study very seriously, and

this can be seen in the mirror-imaging structure and style of the ‘Mock Minutes’ to the ‘Heritage Minutes’. Thus, “the anti-nationalist message of the ‘Mock Minutes’ is enabled by the original’s message of national unity” (Rukszto: 87) and have, inadvertently, become pieces of Canadian cultural memory through their very efforts to portray Canadian cultural memory.

A further way that the ‘Heritage Minutes’ have unconsciously become pieces of Canadian cultural memory, whilst trying to portray Canadian cultural memory, is through the popularity of mass communication tools, such as the website *facebook*. This website allows its members to join public discussion groups online where people can meet virtually to exchange news and thoughts. There is a group on this site called *Heritage Minutes* which discusses exactly that. The fact that the ‘Heritage Minutes’ from the 1990s has a group dedicated to it on *facebook*, a decade after its era ended, speaks to the level of inclusion the Minutes have in Canadian collective cultural memory. The group’s page describes itself to its 2,898 members thus,

Do you feel like Heritage Minutes were a necessary part of your education (and development as a person)? Do you believe that it doesn’t matter what the situation is, its never a wrong time to throw in some dialogue from a Heritage Minute? Did you learn all you need to know about Canadian history from these extremely well acted, realistic 60 second shots? (*facebook* website)

This sarcastic introduction to the *facebook* page is followed by a list of all the Minutes’ titles and a link to the Historica Foundation website. Also on this website is a link to a discussion board with topics such as: ‘What is your favourite Heritage Minute?’, ‘Heritage Minutes – patriotic or propaganda?’ and ‘Heritage Minutes that still need to be done’. Perhaps most interestingly, however, are the ‘Heritage Minute’ quotations that appear all over the website. Members of the group are invited to quote their favourite

lines from the Minutes. Under the title ‘What’s your favourite Minute quote?’ there are two hundred and eleven quotes from the Minutes posted by *facebook* group members, the most common one being from the Dr. Penfield Minute “Dr. Penfield, I smell burnt toast!” (Historica Website – *Dr. Penfield Minute*).

The amount of posts by members directly quoting the Minutes’ dialogue, or else discussing the quotes, is significant. Group members have left messages such as “...so easy to drop into a conversation or joke...how do people from America have fun with their historical moments?!” (*facebook* website). This posting is taken from the *facebook* page and exhibits how the Minutes have gone beyond their intended purpose of ‘enhancing Canadianism’ to become a part of Canadian cultural memory that Canadians nationwide can use to recognize and relate to each other and differentiate themselves from Americans. In accordance with this, another member writes, “I can’t think of a single Canadian I know who doesn’t crack up at the recitation of ‘Now the people will know we were here’” (*facebook* website). These two messages posted on the group page are merely two of many that express similar feelings toward the ‘Heritage Minutes’. As cultural memory is defined in this essay as the way a group of people with a shared background construct ways of perceiving themselves (Sturken: 1-6), then the manner in which the ‘Heritage Minutes’ are being remembered, referred to, and utilized on *facebook* as implements of cultural perception unmistakably permit them to be recognized as pieces of Canadian cultural memory.

Finally, the recreation of ‘Heritage Minutes’ in Canadian high school history projects is worthy of mention in relation to how the Minutes inadvertently created a Canadian collective memory. The Historica Foundation’s website has a page dedicated to

lesson plans which invites: 'Make your own Minute'. On this page are the instructions to teachers across Canada detailing the method of Minute-creation and the tools and equipment necessary for their production. It also supplies the teachers with a list of topic ideas for the Minutes their students could select to create. What is significant here is that education in Canada is controlled provincially, not federally. This means that what a student studies in Saskatchewan, for example, can be very different from that of a student in Prince Edward Island. It must be noted, however, that the 'Heritage Minutes' are not affiliated with any provincial education program. Nevertheless, as each province varies in its curriculum for students, there is not often a project like the 'Heritage Minutes' lesson plan which can be implemented nation-wide and tailored to suit each province while still discussing the nation as a whole. The topics for selection provided by the Historical Foundation all focus on nationally inclusive topics, not provincial ones.

A quick search on youtube.com website reveals the high number of student Minutes that have been created and shared. They come from students all over the country and vary from serious topics of Canadian history (ex. the Terry Fox legacy) to light hearted pop culture subject matter (ex. the stereotype that Canadians have a penchant for apologizing). The fact that classrooms across the nation used the 'Heritage Minutes' as a foundation for lesson plans in Canadian history highlights the extent to which the Minutes have become included in Canadian cultural memory. Although used this way, the Minutes are arguably not exactly 'enhancing Canadianism' through their own content, they are in fact uniting students across the country by having them share in a common school project. Thus the content of the original 'Heritage Minutes' vignettes may not be

acting a unifying cultural memory, but the resulting school projects that have been created because of them are.

The original 'Heritage Minutes' have grown into more than they were initially intended to be. The Minutes sought to use their content to depict selected and dramatized aspects of Canadian shared national history in order to build a unifying national cultural memory. However, by appropriating the framework of the Minutes, as the 'Mock Minutes' and the high school history lesson plans have, and by using the Minutes as a topic of Canadian pop culture as the *facebook* group has, the 'Heritage Minutes' themselves quite unintentionally became pieces of Canadian cultural memory, and in some ways coincidentally acted as a nationally unifying tool apart from the Historical Foundation's original objective.

Conclusion

This dissertation has investigated the concepts of nostalgia and nationalism and has discussed the way these two theories can connect with and aid in the formation of national collective memories. Through analysing the Historica Foundation's 'Heritage Minutes' this dissertation has suggested that Canada's past has been used as a resource in an effort to build a collective national memory in the present, and that selected episodes of Canada's history have been reactivated – and to some extent distorted - intentionally through the manufacturing of collective memories to act as a nationally unifying tool in a time of national disunity.

Elsbeth Cameron explains that the 'Heritage Minutes' read "contemporary values both backwards onto history and forwards to articulate nationhood" (Cameron 1995: 13). It is no great surprise, then, that the Minutes came into the Canadian cultural landscape during a period of political and social instability when aspects of the nation were threatened and questions about the definition of Canadian identity and nationalism proliferated. The Minutes present selected occurrences of Canada's past from a position highly influenced by their contemporary circumstances. As a result, it is noticeable that there are several Minutes detailing past co-operations between English and French Canadians, for example, but markedly few Minutes involving Aboriginal issues. Thus the Minutes can be considered a reaction to their current events and are deliberate in not only what they depict, but also how they depict it. They utilize nostalgia, as their very existence can be described as "a defence mechanism [occurring] in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" (Boym: xiv).

The Canadian nation being depicted by the 'Heritage Minutes' is a promising one.

A Canada characterized by responsible government and by compromise among conflicting rights and privileges and inventive problem-solving; a Canada inhabited by hard-working, self-sacrificing citizens from an array of ethnic groups interested in maintaining peace, order and good government (Cameron: 18).

By projecting a romanticized view backwards onto the past and portraying how past national crises were overcome, to the continued benefit of the nation, the Minutes themselves become the nostalgic response to feelings of an inadequate national present by praising an idealized national past. That the Minutes are not wholly historically accurate – the historical consultant for the Minutes, John Herd Thompson, maintains “what we are guilty of is not ‘inaccuracy’ but *oversimplification*” (Cameron:19) - allows for speculation that they were primarily intended, not to just explain historical events and facts, but to promote Canadian national unity and identity.

Collective memory projects such as the ‘Heritage Minutes’ try to avoid rigid definitions and grand narratives (evident in the “A *Part* of our Heritage” slogan) as they cannot fully resolve the pressure between competing national identities. However, they do still exhibit present-mindedness which is an unavoidable aspect of remembering the past. In order to construct a set of unifying Canadian cultural memories, the Minutes first had to identify a set of current Canadian national characteristics around which to form the collective memories. This dissertation has exhibited these characteristics through the use of Kresl’s six criteria for Canadian studies and also through Nuala Lawlor’s work on the construction of Canadian identity.

The unifying potential of a shared national consciousness is undeniable, however when analysing memory projects like the ‘Heritage Minutes’ it should be remembered that for each ‘memory’ that is included, another is discarded or distorted. This points to

the fact that no collective national memory will ever be completely inclusive. Marita Sturken has described collective, or cultural, memory as the way a group of people with shared experiences, history and cultural identity construct ways of perceiving themselves (Sturken 1997: 1-6). This definition is significant when used in a Canadian context, as Canada's vast territory, multicultural status, and high immigration restrict its citizens from having much of a 'shared experience, history or cultural identity'. As a result, the 'Heritage Minutes' can be seen as an attempt overcome this lack of national identity and, indeed, the 'Heritage Minutes' are a perfect example of how the past can be enlisted to serve present interests, allowing Canada's past to be used as a resource to build collective national memories intended to act as nationally unifying tools.

Appendix - The 'Heritage Minutes' plot summaries

1. *Emily Carr* – depicts British Columbian artist Emily Carr as she describes her passion for the Canadian wilderness.
2. *La Bolduc* – recalls the singer Mary Travers whose songs brought hope to the French Canadians in Quebec during the Great Depression of the 1930s.
3. *Paul Emile Borduas* – Quebec artist and voice of the Quiet Revolution, Borduas reflects on the issues facing Quebec in the 1940s.
4. *Stratford* – describes the origins of the Stratford Festival and its influence on other popular Canadian festivals.
5. *Baldwin and LaFontaine* – two politicians from Upper (English) and Lower (French) Canada depict French/English collaboration in 1841.
6. *Etienne Parent* – illustrates the efforts of journalist Etienne Parent in 1838 to encourage non-violent change in Quebec.
7. *Hart and Papineau* – recalls the introduction of freedom of religion laws in Quebec in 1832.
8. *J. S. Woodsworth* – portrays the introduction of the social-security system in Canada in 1926.
9. *Responsible Government* – discusses the movement toward independent democracy and self-government in Canada.
10. *Expo '67* – the Montreal Expo unified the country in its national pride and celebration of Canada's 100th birthday.
11. *John Humphrey* – portrays Canadian author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, John Peters Humphrey.
12. *Lucille Teasdale* – re-enacts the life of one of Canada's first female surgeons, Teasdale, who practiced medicine and set up hospitals in Uganda.
13. *Pauline Vanier* – depicts how one family worked toward changing Canada's immigration policy and assisting refugees in World War II.
14. *Water Pump* – demonstrates how the Mennonite community in south-western Ontario inspired scientist to design a water pump to filter water in developing countries.

15. *Bluenose* – remembers the undefeated Nova Scotian schooner in its last winning race against an American ship in 1938.
16. *Flags* - illustrates the selection of Canada's national flag.
17. *Grey Owl* – depicts British author Archibald Belaney who initiated world-wide awareness of Canada's aboriginal culture.
18. *Les Voltigeurs de Quebec* – recalls the origins of Canada's national anthem in 1880.
19. *Sam Steele* – portrays Superintendent Sam Steele of the Northwest Mounted Police during the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898.
20. *Winnie* – remembers the black bear who traveled to London (UK) as the mascot for the Second Canadian Infantry Brigade in World War I and inspired the stories of Winnie-the-Pooh.
21. *Joseph-Armand Bombardier* – depicts the beginnings of Bombardier's career as an innovator and entrepreneur.
22. *Joseph Casavant* – illustrates how blacksmith Casavant built the world most popular musical organs and was one of Canada's first entrepreneurs.
23. *Le Reseau* – recalls the invention of the longest microwave radio relay in the world, which forever changed Canadian telecommunications.
24. *Nat Taylor* – remembers the Canadian who revolutionized the movie-going industry by creating multi-movie theatres called 'multiplexes'.
25. *Jacques Cartier* – dramatizes one possible way Canada may have got its name through the meeting of Cartier and the Iroquois people in 1534.
26. *Jean Nicolle* – portrays Nicolle's futile search for the Asian sea and a route to China which ended in the discovery of Lake Michigan in 1634.
27. *John Cabot* – re-enacts the voyage of explorer Cabot and his discovery of cod fish in Newfoundland in 1497.
28. *Vikings* – imagines the destruction and rediscovery of a Norse settlement from 980 A.D. in eastern Canada, proving that the Vikings were the first Europeans to North America.
29. *Inuksuk* – depicts the building and purpose of the standing stone inuksuks.

30. *Louis Riel* – dramatizes the last thoughts of Metis leader Louis Riel before his execution.
31. *Peacemaker* – tells the Iroquois legend of the Tree of Great Peace and the origins of the Iroquois Confederacy.
32. *Sitting Bull* – portrays Sioux leader Sitting Bull and his decision to remain in Canada rather than return to the United States in 1877.
33. *Maurice Ruddick* – describes the efforts of Ruddick to keep up the spirits of miners trapped for 8 days in the 1958 mining disaster in Nova Scotia.
34. *Superman* – depicts Montrealer Joe Shuster’s creation of the comic book hero Superman in 1931.
35. *Frontier College* - celebrates the founding, in 1920, of Canada’s first institution committed to equal education and improving literacy rates.
36. *Joseph Tyrell* – re-enacts geologist Tyrell’s discovery of dinosaur fossils in the Alberta badlands in 1884.
37. *Marconi* – tells of Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi as he receives the first transatlantic radio message in Newfoundland in 1901.
38. *Marshall McLuhan* – a dramatic explanation of some of McLuhan’s famous theories on communication, mass-media and culture.
39. *Myrnam Hospital* – recalls how a town of Ukrainian immigrants in Alberta built a free hospital in the 1930s and initiated a step towards Canada’s universal medicare system.
40. *Sir Sandford Fleming* – depicts the efforts of the chief engineer of the Canadian Pacific Railway as he builds railways and invents the concept of standard time.
41. *Dr. Wilder Penfield* – celebrates Montreal neurosurgeon Dr. Penfield who revolutionized the techniques of brain surgery and made huge advancements in the study of the human brain.
42. *Andrew Mynarski* – commemorates pilot officer Mynarski who was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously for his bravery in saving others during World War II.
43. *Avro Arrow* – recalls Canada’s greatest aeronautical achievement, the CF-105 jet fighter.

44. *Dextraze in the Congo* – portrays Brigadier-General Jacques Dextraze and his UN peacekeeping mission in the Congo in the 1960s.
45. *Governor Frontenac* – dramatizes the determination of Frontenac and the people of Quebec as they resist against and Anglo-American invasion in 1690.
46. *Halifax Explosion* – commemorates Halifax hero and train dispatcher Vince Coleman as he struggles to save others in the 1917 Halifax Harbour explosion which killed thousands.
47. *Home from the Wars* – describes the initiation of veteran housing in Canada.
48. *John McCrae* – celebrates famous Canadian doctor, soldier and poet of World War I who penned “In Flanders Fields”.
49. *Juno Beach* – re-enacts how Canadian musician and broadcaster Johnny Lombardi boosted morale on the Normandy beach.
50. *Marion Orr* – depicts Orr’s efforts in the RCAF during World War II and how she became the first woman in Canada to run a flying school.
51. *Mona Parsons* – honours Parsons for her bravery in assisting downed Allied airmen in Holland to return to Britain during World War II.
52. *Osborn of Hong Kong* – re-enacts how Warrant Officer John Osborn sacrificed his own life to save the lives of others.
53. *Tommy Prince* – remembers the most decorated Aboriginal soldier in Canada’s history.
54. *Valour Road* – commemorates three soldiers who all won the Victoria Cross in World War I, and who all grew up on the same street in Winnipeg, which was subsequently renamed ‘Valour Road’.
55. *Vimy Ridge* – recalls one of the greatest battles in Canadian military history and a turning point in World War I.
56. *Nitro* – re-enacts the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway in British Columbia in the 1880s and the use of Chinese labourers.
57. *Orphans* – depicts the adoption, by French Canadian families in the 1850s, of Irish children orphaned on the Atlantic crossing.
58. *Saguenay Fire* – recounts the struggle of one family to save themselves and their farm animals from the massively destructive fire of 1870.

59. *Soddie* – portrays the incredible hardships and efforts endured by settlers in the Canadian prairies in the 1890s.
60. *Syrup* – a dramatic re-enactment of a family of Atikamekw natives showing a family of French-Canadians how to make maple syrup.
61. *Underground Railroad* – remembers the more than 30,000 escaped American slaves that came to Canada and freedom between 1840 and 1860.
62. *Basketball* – commemorates Canadian James Naismith as the inventor of basketball in 1891.
63. *Jackie Robinson* – depicting how African-American baseball player, Robinson, was allowed to play professionally in Montreal in 1947 despite his colour.
64. *Jacques Plante* – recounts how Plante broke with hockey traditions and invented and wore the first goalie mask in 1959, literally changing the face of hockey forever.
65. *Maple Leaf Gardens* – remembering the construction and history of one of Canada’s most beloved buildings.
66. *Maurice ‘Rocket’ Richard* – depicts legendary Canadian hockey hero Richard who scored 5 goals and 3 assists to lead the Montreal *Canadiens* to a 9-1 victory over the Detroit Red Wings, setting an NHL record.
67. *The Paris Crew* – portrays a team of Canadian rowers who competed and won in the World Amateur Rowing Championship in Paris in 1867.
68. *Agnes Macphail* – commemorates Canada’s first female MP and her courageous efforts to reform the Canadian penal system in 1935.
69. *Emily Murphy* – remembers Murphy’s 1929 victory at the Privy Council in Britain which allowed Canadian women to be recognized as “person’s under the law”.
70. *Jennie Trout* – honours Trout, one of the women responsible for the advancement of women in the medical field and the first woman licensed to practice medicine in Canada in 1875.
71. *Laura Secord* – dramatizes Secord’s heroic effort to warn British officers of an American attack during the War of 1812.
72. *Midwife* – recounts the importance of midwives in Canadian history.

73. *Nelly McClung* – celebrates McClung’s struggle to achieve the right for women to vote in Manitoba in 1916.

74. *Rural Teacher* – remembers the work of young female teachers in rural Canada in the late 1800s.

All ‘Heritage Minutes’ plot summaries are based on viewing the ‘Heritage Minutes’ on the Historica Foundation website (*History by the Minute*).

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