

ADVENTUROUS CHILDREN: CREATING A CANADIAN IDENTITY IN *KAYAK*: *CANADA'S HISTORY MAGAZINE FOR KIDS*TM

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In 2004, the History Society launched a magazine for Canadian children called *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*TM in English, with a corresponding French version called *Kayak: Navigue dans l'histoire du Canada*TM. The magazine can be found in school and public libraries across Canada, with a circulation of over 36,000, in French (30,000) and English (6,000) (CNW 2013). With a format that combines fiction and non-fiction picture-book-type stories, cartoons, and photographs, the magazine is colourful and full of adventurous Canadians of all ages and heritages. Storylines in the magazine focus on the experiences (often adventures) of children and teenagers from across the country at different points in Canada's history. Through these stories, an image of Canada is portrayed which, in turn, helps to create a Canadian identity with which children can relate. The image of Canada and sense of Canadian-ness portrayed are complex in their use of stereotypical caricatures of what it means to be Canadian alongside considerations of the past and present diversity of Canada's population. In addition, fantasy-style storylines, characters and talking animals are used as story-telling devices. Overall, the magazine has a dynamic feel, with bright colours, dialogue, drawings, and photographs, and a comic-book appearance.

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There has been much written on what constitutes a Canadian identity, with no consensus or conclusion. I take a social constructivist perspective that what it means to be Canadian is something that is continuously evolving, and changes depending on geographic place, historical era, and personal background. In the case of *Kayak* magazine, adults, mainly men, are interpreting what it means to be Canadian and communicating that idea in ways that those adults believe will appeal to children.¹ What is not known is how the child readers are interpreting and responding to that portrayal of Canada and Canadian identity. With a target audience of children aged 7 to 12 years, Deborah Morrison, president of Canada's National History Society and

publisher of *The Beaver: Canada's History Magazine*, argues that *Kayak* is intended to speak "with the voice of the next generation and [be] unabashedly Canadian" (28); however, what constitutes being Canadian is not elaborated upon.

In general terms, identity is how one sees oneself. It is connected with the way the world is experienced in terms of its social, economic, political, and cultural influences. Although several researchers point to the need for further research on how self-identity is developed among children (for example, Carter 257; Corenblum 368; Agirdag 198) and to the debate over the nature of identity formation (for example, Brubaker & Cooper), the importance of childhood and adolescent experiences in creating identity is generally accepted. Côté points to the interdisciplinary nature of identity formation: three interrelated levels of analysis are "(1) social structure, which can include political and economic systems; (2) interaction, comprising patterns of behaviour that characterize day-to-day contacts among people in socializing institutions like the family and schools; and (3) personality, which encompasses terms like character, self and psyche, including subcomponents like ego identity" (417). The narratives in *Kayak* reinforce, in particular, the first level of analysis by providing an interpretation of the history of Canada's social structures. In addition, reading literature helps children to acquire the vocabulary needed to describe themselves, their family, and their friends; pictures and photographs provide similar tools to help visualize and categorize the people around them (Christensen & Aldridge 25-30; Roethler 95-96). For children who are developing their sense of racial-ethnic identity, the impact of images, photographs, and literature is perhaps even more important. As these children develop their sense of belonging to their racial-ethnic group (i.e. in-group belonging), they are influenced by not only their family and community, but also by representations in literature and popular culture (Corenblum 357-72). Indeed, Corenblum notes that "by age 11, racial-ethnic identity was chosen as being more important to [the children surveyed] than identities associated with the majority culture such as being a student, being a classroom member, or being Canadian" (369). Burke notes that the "formation of identity is inextricably linked to powerful meaning-makers in a child's young life" (58). While Burke is referring to children's engagement in virtual play worlds for elementary-school children, such as *Minecraft*, *Webkinz*, or *Club Penguin*, this point holds true for the print magazines and books that continue to attract children's attention. One significant difference between many of these online worlds and children's magazines such as *Kayak* is their orientation towards consumption. Many virtual worlds are linked to products and teach children to become consumers and gamblers (King & Douai 2014; Burke 2013). *Kayak*, on the other hand, has relatively little advertising, and what is included is usually related to education-based television shows. *Kayak's* stories provide context for personal and family stories; indeed, "cultural narratives about national history, ethnicity, religion, and politics shape the personal stories people live by, and how personal stories can sustain or transform culture" (McAdams & McLean 237). Care, therefore, needs to be taken in the creation of and telling of such stories since repetition of images, nar-

ratives and representations creates a cumulative effect such that positive, negative, and absent images will become part of a reader's schemata (Roethler 97).

Beauvais suggests that the "hidden adult" (i.e. the writer, editor, artist, and so on) perpetuates adult-oriented normative values and "falsely present[s] these adult norms as reassuringly fixed" (75). At the heart of much writing for children, including *Kayak* magazine, is a "didactic discourse [that] solidifies these 'norms'" (Beauvais 75). Similarly, the use of children's literature for nation-building purposes by governments, whether intentionally or not, has been well-documented, especially with regards to school textbooks (Axelrod 26; Tagwirei 44-48; Goodson 5). *Kayak* magazine is published by Canada's History Society and is supported with funding from the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage, as well as from corporations such as The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and TD Bank Financial Group (TD). The Canadian government, HBC, and TD have been the main sponsors since the magazine's launch. All three have vested interests in the creation of a strong Canadian identity among young people who will eventually become decision-makers and consumers.

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Based on responses from focus groups of children, the format of the magazine is designed to appeal to children. Described by Morrison as "advertising-friendly" with an educational focus, "edu-tainment" with "a unique and positive advertising environment that will enable corporations to blend philanthropic objectives with consumer advertising" (28), the magazine has relatively little advertising as compared with more mainstream magazines, and much of the advertising is education-oriented (i.e. ads about TVO Kids programming). The focus is firmly on stories of Canada, which are told in a variety of modes. At the same time, the use of ongoing stories that continue from one issue to the next, comic-strip-style techniques, fiction and non-fiction narratives, and short snippets of information all work to encourage children to read the magazine on a monthly basis. Using the first four years of *Kayak* as a case study, I explore the ways in which *Kayak* uses comic-style artistic and story-telling techniques to portray Canadian history in general, with a focus on how children and teenagers are represented as active historical figures in Canada's past.

READING STRUCTURE AND FORMAT

It is through structure and format that the magazine's content is framed, both visually and textually. Image and identity are created both by what is included in the magazine and what is left out. There are three main modes used in the magazine over the first four years of publication: the comic or graphic novel format; feature stories that follow a picture-book-type approach (i.e. primarily prose with a few illustrations); and what I call 'sound bites,' an image next to a short paragraph about an event or a person. Each mode uses different techniques to create different versions of Canadian identity. In addition, analysing the various cover layouts and images helps

in understanding what image and identity of Canada is being created.

122 Since its start, the magazine has used the comic or graphic-novel type of story, usually for the serial fantasy-style stories that span several issues. For example, in the first four years, there are two different serials that use the graphic novel format: *Snowball Earth* and *The Card Shop*. Starting with the first issue, the *Snowball Earth* series of comic strips provides the reader with very small glimpses of Canada's history through the eyes of two children, Gabe and Allie, who are trying to save the earth from ice monsters or spirits by travelling back in time to find powerful artifacts. Gabe and Allie need to know their Canadian history in order to successfully defeat the ice spirits and monsters. By telling the stories in this way, the focus is on turning points or key moments in Canada's history, but there are no explanations of why a particular historical moment is important. For example, in issue 6 (2005), the reader learns that a politician named Thomas D'Arcy McGee was assassinated on April 7, 1868, and that although Patrick James Whelan was convicted and hanged for it, no one is sure that he really was the culprit. From the images, the reader gets a glimpse into the street scenes and clothing of the time, albeit in a comic-strip/graphic-novel mode. For a reader who may not immediately understand all the words, such as 'assassinate', the image of the gun going BANG will help in understanding the story. While the moments of Canadian history that are depicted are action-filled, there is no depth or context to the events being portrayed. In the story referring to McGee, for example, there is no mention of who he is, why he is important to Canadian history, why he was assassinated, nor the impact of his death.² Although the children, Gabe and Allie, are shown as strong-willed, determined and brave, they do not face realistic situations, which raises the questions of how history fits with science fiction or fantasy stories, and how a graphic novel or cartoon style of story-telling works for teaching history.

The use of images and words in a comic style to portray complex stories has become common in recent years. While graphic novels have traditionally been seen as merely simplified versions of prose, they should be seen as a completely different medium, one which can be used for any genre, including historical narratives (King 201; Whitlock 966; Gardner, "Autography's" 1; Gardner, "Archives" 787-789). Since the publication of Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in 1992, the use of non-fiction graphic texts (defined here as "fully-developed non-fiction narratives told through panels of sequential art" (King 189), similar to comics) to teach history has blossomed, following a trend in using images to allow students to see history in pictures (Chaney 181-83). Spiegelman's *Maus* was perhaps the first in this medium to draw attention to how historical memory is created through graphic novels and memoir (Adams 46-47; Buhle 316-17). Little research, however, has been done on how children and teenagers are represented in such non-fiction graphic texts that are written specifically for young people, and how this representation affects the way in which children understand the history of Canada and develop a Canadian identity (Seixas 10). Given the visual nature of graphic texts, these images must be analysed in terms of repre-

sentations of race, class, sexuality, and gender. When sensitive issues are portrayed as images, they may come across as more overt and have the potential of being offensive (Christensen 227; Rifas n.p.; Greyson 131). In addition, the popularity of graphic texts in schools (Lankshear and Knobel 118; Crawford & Weiner 3-5; Frey & Fisher 19-24; Mallia par. 1-7; Morrison, Bryan, & Chilcoat 758-759; Snowball 43; Schwartz & Rubinstein-Avila 40), including *Kayak*, which is in many Canadian school libraries, makes it essential to look at how the sequential images of comics or graphic novels are 'read,' and consider why they are different than prose or picture books, and to do so in the context of creating a Canadian identity. Unlike prose, graphic narratives are read in non-linear ways: between and across gutters, word and image both in tandem and isolation, symbols and signs representing what might be represented by words in traditional narratives (such as movement and sound), and so on (McCloud 24-26; Gardner, "Autography's" 3; Donovan 195; Whitlock 966; Drucker 121-23; Bredehoft 872; Heiligmann & Shields 42).

Kayak's longer and more detailed feature stories are usually presented in a more traditional mode, the storybook format, which is primarily a textual narrative with an illustration. Unlike the graphic narratives, the visuals do not add to the telling of the story, but rather illustrate a scene. The feature stories are usually fictional narratives, with the characters taking part in some historical event, like the Halifax explosion in 1917,³ or living in a particular part of the country in the past, such as the Yukon during the gold rush. In these stories, the main characters are usually children or teens who do something heroic. In the story of the 1917 Halifax explosion, for instance, a young boy saves his mother and then his father's boss, even though his father was killed in the explosion (Benjamin 18-24). The story is told in the third person, with a young boy as the main character, who is outside playing at the time of the explosion, allowing readers to identify with him and imagine themselves as heroes. At the same time, readers are learning about a significant event in the history of Nova Scotia. In another example, the story of the Lost Spike, readers learn about the building of the Grand National Railway and the labour of Chinese immigrants (Yee 18-23). Although the story's characters are fictional, Yee creates a vivid image of the harsh life, discrimination and lack of protection faced by the Chinese workers in Canada. The story ends with the third and fourth generations established as well-educated Canadians with good jobs. The story is supplemented with a few facts and figures in sidebars.

Many of the historical events, however, are recounted through very short 'sound bites' in a truncated manner that lacks depth. The 'sound bites' allow the editors to squeeze a number of stories into a relatively small space. They are reminiscent of the clips broadcast on the evening news or via Internet news services, with an image and the highlights of the story. For example, in issue 14 (2007) on Canada's natural resources, approximately ten pages are dedicated to short paragraphs about the different resources. The spread begins with an overview (as told by Gabe and Allie) which establishes the importance of these natural resources to Canada's history. For

children with short attention spans, these stories can hold their interest and encourage further research.

READING STORIES IN IMAGE AND WORD

The concepts of multiliteracies and multimodality inform this research; the world is read through images, symbols, colours, signs, body language and in the gaps and margins as well as through printed text. Visual modes of knowing are often more powerful than words, moving beyond language alone, to include the juxtaposition of images and words to create new meanings (Gee 26; Duffelmeyer 170; Fein & Kasher 794). Borrowing from Waksman and Hanauer (55-56), the images in *Kayak* serve at least two social functions: pedagogical and instrumental. The pedagogical functions of text-picture relations include the development of a child's emotional and moral understanding of his or her community, the development of cognitive and artistic abilities, and the development of basic knowledge. The instrumental functions of the text-picture relationship are intended primarily for rhetorical persuasion for economic reasons; in other words, to encourage children (or their parents) to pick up the magazine and buy it. The various images in the magazine perform almost all of these functions.

Examination of the various covers of *Kayak* over the four years affords insights into what the editors perceived as being appealing to children. Nearly all the magazine covers show at least one image of a child or teenager and include topics or famous people recognizable to many children. For instance, the inaugural edition (December 2004/January 2005) has two children, Gabe and Allie of *Snowball Earth*, in an action-figure pose on either side of an alien creature. Canadian pop star Avril Lavigne's name is prominent, as are the initials FLQ (Front de libération du Québec)⁴ and the name Wolverine. At first glance, it may not be recognizable as a history magazine. It is clearly aimed at children, but its historical content is not obvious. Not many children would recognize FLQ, but they might know the character Wolverine. The cover of the second issue is a bit different with a young woman wearing an 'old-fashioned' dress and large hair ribbon, but also wielding a fly-swatter against a fly as large as herself. The caption "Fly Swat Contest 1912" and the dress make it clear that the story will be historical. The other stories highlighted on the cover are about Canadian actor Jim Carrey, 'Canuck' Tsunamis, and why women are 'people' too (February/March 2005). Issue 19, from 2008, is in a similar vein. The cover highlights "New France Heroes You Need to Know" and "Jaw-Dropping Battle Scenes." This cover has no children on it, but has a comic-style heroic depiction of historical figures such as Samuel de Champlain ('Father of New France'), Jeanne Mance (Canada's first lay nurse), and Comte de Frontenac (governor of New France 1689-90) (January/February 2008). Sometimes the style of the drawings evokes a stereotypical image of the period in which the stories being told took place. For example, the cover for an

issue on spies (March/April 2008) is drawn in a black, grey and dull yellow colour scheme, with a curvy figure of a woman in the background. The colour and style evoke the feel of a 1950s and 1960s era spy novel or black-and-white film. The topic of spies is one that is likely to be appealing to some children, especially given the continuing popularity of the 2001 *Spy Kids* series of films and the proliferation of spy toys (i.e. Spy Gear toys that are widely available). In southern Ontario, the former WWII school for spies, Camp X, was in the news at the time as efforts to turn it into an historic site continued (see, for example, Forsyth n.p.). All magazine covers are products of editorial decisions, serving the purpose of drawing the reader into the magazine (which is essential to marketing and sales) and differentiating it from other magazines; however, cover images also can be seen as cultural symbols (Pompper et al. 274; Han & Rudd 49; Cerulo 566). With history in schools and in popular perception often seen as boring, there is a need to portray history in new ways, but this raises the question of what those portrayals teach the child readers.

Some of the images do not accurately represent the Canadian historical context. For example, the cover of the May/June 2007 issue on archaeology features Gabe and Allie wearing the stereotypical clothes of an archaeologist/adventurer, bringing to mind British adventurers in their pith helmets, facing the skull of a dinosaur with huge teeth, an image that could be frightening, but is alleviated by the smile on Allie's face. The pith helmet can be seen as a symbol (or an iconic sign) (Morgan 147) of British explorers in the 1910s and 1920s in Africa and other hot places, but not Canada. The image operates as a signal to the reader that archaeology and palaeontology involve exciting adventures and exploration, but it does not work on a pedagogical level to teach children about what such explorers in Canada wore. A similar problem occurs in issue 38 (December 2011), in which an image of boys wearing hats with raccoon tails suggests that this is something that children in the nineteenth century regularly wore. However, the image represents the Disney version of the American icon, Davy Crockett, who was depicted in the 1950s television series wearing a 'coon hat (Roberts & Olson 244). Such images have the potential to create misperceptions among the child readers about the reality of life in Canada at those points in time.

The use of cartoon images of children is one that helps readers to better relate to the representations being portrayed. Scott McCloud argues that cartoon images possess a universality that is not possible with photographs (31). Cartooning both simplifies and amplifies the world. Simplified images of people creates a sense of universality. For example, "the more cartoonish (iconic) the face, the more it promotes association between the viewer and image" (Whitlock 976), but this style also amplifies difference and runs the risk of drawing on stereotypes. Indeed, in *Maus*, Art Spiegelman's use of animal images allows him to avoid representations of the human face in his memoir of the Holocaust. At the same time, the animal characters may help the reader to deal with the trauma being represented (Whitlock 977-78). Whitlock describes the representations of personal and traumatic events in graphic novels (or autographics,

as she calls it), as holding troubled memories in “boxes of grief” (977). She argues that we are able to engage with this grief and trauma of others, because comics “free us to think and imagine and see differently” (978). In *Kayak*, some traumatic stories are told in the comic format once the *Card Shop* feature is introduced. For example, in a story of the British Home children, a young boy and his little brother travel back in time to 1896 and become part of a group of Home children just arriving in Halifax.⁵ Once at the receiving home, the boys are separated. When Jamie, the older brother, tries to find his brother William, Jamie comes to appreciate that he loves his little brother in spite of their differences. The story brings to life the reality of what many of these children faced: separation from siblings, slave-like labour on farms, inadequate food, and generally poor treatment. In the comic, the backstory is provided by the owner of the Card Shop. Once the boys travel back in time, the story continues in the first person. The images tell the story just as much as the words do, such as the distress felt by the boys as they are separated, or Jamie running away to find his

126 brother only to discover that his brother had been sent to another family. The cartoon images of the boys allow readers to see themselves in the situation. The reader makes inferences about the experiences of the Home children. Ill health, for example, is suggested by the fact that the doctor wonders why Jamie and William are so healthy; and the travel conditions are portrayed as very difficult in two frames. Just after arrival in Halifax, a girl says she does not care how they travel the rest of the way, and the last few days on the ship were ‘horrendous’, followed by a frame in which a boy says the train is even worse than the ship. The reader must make inferences and connections across the gutters between frames; similarly, although the images are not detailed, they suggest context and emotions without explicit description (Issue 23, 2008).

READING IDENTITY

National identity is something that must be imagined and created; this is often done through the telling of stories. For many adults, this story-telling may be done through the ways in which national news stories are framed and how historical events are memorialized. For most children, however, the stories of nation come via school texts and lessons. In *Kayak*, each issue is developed around themes that span a range of topics, from politics and prime ministers, to sports, health, weather, geology, science, and popular culture. Both the fiction and non-fiction narratives are used to tell the history of various real events. For those knowledgeable about Canadian history, most of the stories will be familiar ones. Underlying all the themes are obvious didactic lessons, which children today can learn from history and apply to their own lives. Indeed, *Kayak* is explicitly didactic in its mandate to educate children about Canadian history. While the stories told are often ones that reinforce many of the traditional narratives of Canada and create an image of Canada as white and middle-class, there is an effort to include both the diversity of immigrants to Canada and the

stories of Canada's First Peoples.

The didactic model of story-telling becomes more explicit when the *Snowball Earth* series comes to an end in 2006. The magazine held a contest to decide on the next series of comic-style stories. Readers voted for one of four sample stories (*Fur Trade Stories*, *The Card Shop*, *Our Wild West*, or *Snowball Earth II*); in the end, *The Card Shop* series replaced *Snowball Earth* (Issue 9). In this new series, there is more historical detail in the stories, but the narratives are not as action-filled, and they always contain a lesson in character. In each story, a greedy or selfish child learns a 'valuable lesson' from a historical figure. The mysterious owner of the Card Shop, the only recurring character, hands the child just the right card intended to convince him or her to become a more compassionate and caring individual. In issue 12 (November/December 2006), for instance, Al Mai, winner of a \$200 prize, wants to spend his money on a special limited-edition collector card set rather than buy his brothers any holiday gifts. When Al Mai arrives at the Card Shop, the owner gives him Dr. Norman Bethune's card, which has the word "Selflessness" on it. When Al hears that Bethune gave up his profitable medical practice to go to China in 1938 to help the poor, Al calls Bethune a "chump;" Al is then sent back in time, where he lands as a worker in China building a hospital, but Al avoids work and makes sure he has food even if others do not. Bethune takes Al under his wing to teach him how to become a hospital helper. Al learns that Bethune was an "amazing" man who gave the poor everything he had. The lesson Al learns is, "When you give things away, you get more back" (27-31). In these stories, there is a clear emphasis on ethics, which as Wayne Booth (qtd. in Beauvais 84) has argued is something that cannot be ignored in children's literature. The focus here is on a 'nice' Canadian identity: selfless, modest, and altruistic individuals who work to make the world a better place, an image of Canadians that has become a stereotype and which is reinforced (and sometimes mocked) not just in literature, but also in advertising campaigns and in popular culture (Allain 4; MacGregor 276-79). This image fits with Paul Rutherford's argument that "Canada as a peaceful nation" (qtd. in Allain 9) is one of three views of Canada. Of the other two representations identified by Rutherford, "Canada as a natural space" and a victimized Canada which lacks a cultural identity, only the idea of Canada as a natural wilderness is seen in the various stories contained in *Kayak*. Arguably, *Kayak* is attempting to rectify the third image of Canada as a nation without an identity through its articles and stories.

A key sense of Canadian identity lies in its image of being 'The North,' and this image has often been used to define what it means to be Canadian, not only in geographic terms, but also as part of the mythology and culture of Canada (Hulan 179-87). While the magazine regularly includes references to the North and Canada's wilderness, some full issues are dedicated to the topic. In issue 14 (2007), the theme is Canada's natural resources. The various stories emphasise the idea that these resources are "national treasures" that have supported both First Peoples and European settlers. The establishment of Canada's identity as rooted in nature is

made explicit: “Is there anything more Canadian than nature? We don’t think so!” (“Nature’s Bounty” 6), because, as the article explains, Canada’s history is rooted in its resources. The magazine acknowledges that many of our resources, such as cod, buffalo, walruses, and whales, have been overhunted. In the same issue, the feature story relates a fictional tale of two brothers, aged 11 and 19, who work as coal miners in Nova Scotia. The awfulness of the work is not disguised (including the coughing up of black phlegm), but neither are the details elaborated upon. Additionally, two articles, one about David Suzuki and the other on Grey Owl, discuss issues of conservation. In this way, connections between past and present are made. A similar perspective is taken in another thematic issue (Issue 2, 2010) which focuses on Canadian nature and wildlife. Although there is some repetition with the issue on natural resources, the stories are different. Given that there likely is turnover in the readership, the repetition would not necessarily be noticed by the average reader. For those who read both issues, the three years between them is a long time, and the similarities present in each will work to reinforce a Canadian identity tied to nature.

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For children who live outside the large urban centres, the North may be part of their everyday reality, which in turn means that they will be able to relate to those portrayals of Canada. For city children, the wilderness may seem mythical if they have never ventured beyond the borders of the city. For the government, however, there may be an underlying reason to promote a northern Canadian identity: a new round of nation-building. In the twenty-first century, with global warming changing the coastlines and northern waterways, a sense of a Canada that definitively includes those northern borders may become increasingly essential if Canada as a nation-state is to remain strong (Canada’s Northern Strategy).

A racialized Canadian identity is one that is not well-developed in the early years of the magazine. *Kayak* was created in 2004, a period during which reactions against Muslims were still strong and a reassertion of a Canadian identity as a settler nation was occurring (Arat-Koc 32). Sedef Arat-Koc notes that after 11 September 2001, there was a “re-whitening of Canadian identity and increased marginalization of its non-white minorities” (32). While there is an acknowledgement of multiculturalism in *Kayak*, the focus is on European immigrants. Some stories include the experience of Japanese and Chinese immigrants, as well as Natives, but there is an underlying feel that these stories are exceptions to the norm. In spite of Canada’s pride in its multicultural policies, the events of 9/11 laid bare the tensions that exist in Canada beneath a surface of tolerance. As Arat-Koc and others have argued, “Tolerance [...] involves a fundamental inequality of power between those who tolerate and those who are tolerated” (40). A scan of magazine covers over the period reveals slightly more white faces than non-white, with a significant number of covers with animal characters instead of people, and a few covers with both people and animals. In addition, the caricature style of the magazine’s art tends to emphasize stereotypes. For example, one of the few images of a First Nations person appears on the cover of a thematic issue on sports (Issue 10, 2006). The image depicts a Native man with a

shaved head, feathers, and face paint, holding a lacrosse stick. He is wearing only a loin cloth and is very muscular. Despite the large image on the front cover, there is little inside the magazine about lacrosse. A similar warrior-like image of a Native man appears on the 2008 (Issue 19) cover for the theme of “New France Heroes You Need to Know.”

A challenge in a country like Canada, with its vast regional differences and significant indigenous and immigrant populations, is to find a unified sense of what it means to be Canadian: “within the multicultural, multiprovincial, multilingual, and multiregional nation of Canada, there are very often different identities—and group formations that want to express their distinctiveness and/or want to be part of the recognized national culture” (de B’éri & Middlebrook 29). The editors attempt to meet this challenge by including diversity in the magazine’s stories, but it is a weak diversity, one that largely relies on stereotypes and popular culture to attract readership. For immigrant children, one’s racial-ethnic identity is developed simultaneously with the creation of a Canadian identity, with the two often in opposition to each other: either one is Canadian or one has an ethnic identity. This process is complicated by the developmental changes children and teens undergo (Costigan et al. 261; Côté 417) and by the fact that this process is often shaped by how others perceive and judge one’s ethnic group generally (Costigan et al. 261; Corenblum 357-78; Christensen & Aldridge 25-30; Roethler 95-96). Indeed, as Dei points out, identities are created in relationship with others rather than in isolation. One’s identity is created both at an individual level in terms of selfhood and at a group level in relation to those around one (Dei 241-42). As a result, *Kayak*’s portrayals of the various ethnic groups in the magazine’s stories and images have an impact on how readers create their own identity as Canadians (or not). However, every time one story is told, it may “render another experience invisible” (Dei 242). Although choices must be made in terms of the Canadian identity/ies represented, effort must also be made “to capture as much as possible the diversity and multiplicity of the human experience” (Dei 242). There is no questioning, however, *Kayak*’s inherent narrative of Canada that accepts Whiteness as the norm, along with the historical baggage of privilege that that narrative carries. In other words, despite attempts to be inclusive, there remains an underlying sense that stories of “others” are always juxtaposed with White settlers. Perhaps this lack of questioning is due to an effort to make the complex stories of heterogeneous communities accessible to young children, with a resulting lack of depth in many of the stories. Nonetheless, there will be an impact on the creation of a Canadian identity among readers. As Dei states, “[f]ormations of identities have always included processes of inclusion as well as exclusion. Language, religion, culture, and ethnicity are redefining the boundaries of racial groupings, as well as strategies of political/social action” (254). Because of the diversity of heritages, races, ethnicities, languages, religions and the like, what it means to be Canadian requires perhaps more imagination than other national identities (Edwardson 185). Arguably, *Kayak* is helping new generations to imagine a new national identity, one that encom-

passes this diversity alongside the more stereotypical images that many Canadians continue to regard with fondness, stereotypes that are recurring and often subliminal (Mackey 89-91). For example, the thematic issue on “Coming to Canada: Four Centuries of Stories” (Issue 23, 2008) included the life stories of five children who immigrated to Canada, such as then-Governor General Michaëlle Jean, who came from Haiti. The comic format of other stories also helps in the effort to undertake the imaginative work of creating national identity: “Comic books, as a visual medium, engage this act of imagination, in turn facilitating the mental construction of the nation and national identity” (Edwardson 185). Yet, the difference between national and ethnic identity seems to be blurring; in recent years, more people have begun to indicate an ethnic identity of “Canadian” on their census forms (Lee & Edmonston 79-80).

130 The underlying ideology in *Kayak* loosely combines a nationalist approach with a humanist perspective that places emphasis on the ways in which people, no matter where they are from or what language they speak, are more similar than different. According to Lalonde et al., a humanist-style ideology that highlights similarities fits with Canada’s multicultural policy and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (130-31). At the same time, the social construction of national identity through popular culture artefacts like *Kayak* responds to the “needs of the present” (Osborne 152), rather than preservation of the past, and change as those needs change. Related to this is the development of a foreign policy agenda that includes human security. This agenda, much like that of the Pearson⁶ era of peacekeeping, helps to create a positive Canadian identity that in turn works to strengthen nation-building efforts in the domestic sphere where regional and ethnic diversity continue to have the potential to pull apart Canada as a nation (Ozguç 38-39). In addition, the image of Canada as a philanthropic country is apparent in many of the later stories. For instance, a 2012 double issue (issue 39) highlights both historical and contemporary efforts to make the world a better place through aid, inventions, and volunteerism. Much as the image of the Mounties did for an earlier era (and continues today to a degree), the image of Canadian peace-keepers helps to create an identity that “brand[s] Canada as a boy scout and a non-colonial power” while disguising the facts of Canada’s treatment of First Nations peoples that was, at best, an example of “internal colonisation” (Ozguç 48) and, at worst, a case of genocide. Because many of the images of Canadian identity are tied to the geography and landscapes of Canada, geographic locations and their place names are important in the imagining and conceptualization of a national identity: “Stories take place in settings: they also make places” (Osborne 152). In terms of *Kayak*, therefore, with so many of the stories embedded in place and space, this construction of identity through the stories of places and the people who live in them has the potential to shape the identity of Canadian children.

CONCLUSION

Although the stories of Canada told in *Kayak* may be incomplete and, at times, ambiguous, the magazine functions as an accessible, engaging, and child-friendly introduction to Canadian history that provides one way in which children can develop a Canadian identity. The ongoing challenge for the authors and publishers is to ensure that this identity is truly inclusive and accurately representative of life at various points in Canadian history. Paul Buhle argues that using graphic texts to teach history follows a trend of seeing history “in pictures” (15). It is this visuality that helps to lend such texts a sense of authenticity. However, Adams also argues that when authors attempt to represent “the unutterable” (i.e. the traumas experienced by First Peoples, Home children, or the Chinese and Japanese in Canada), ambiguity is necessary in those representations. He believes that it may be more effective to disrupt unitary and fixed meanings through ambiguity and obliqueness. Yet, questions of authenticity also arise as a result of these effects (Adams 37-38). Like Canada’s history itself, the way in which *Kayak* works in creating a sense of Canadian identity is not linear; it is multi-layered, ambiguous, and incomplete.

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NOTES

1. In the first edition of *Kayak*, the four main members of the design team were men: the Founding Editor was Aron Slipacoff, who has also edited *chickaDee* magazine and currently owns a communication company; the founding art director was Glenn Toddun; and the illustrators were Jan-John Rivera and Kagan McLeod. Four of the five contributors to the first issue were men: Paul Yee, Félix Maltais, John Houston, and Patrick Dare, with Charlotte Gray as the only woman. Three of the four historical advisors on the issue were women: Catherine Carstairs, Margaret Conrad, Joanne Burgess, and Bill Waiser. Both Carstairs and Conrad remained advisors throughout the period examined here. Other members of the team changed over the years. In 2006, Jill Foran became the editor of *Kayak*, remaining in the position until 2011.
2. McGee, an Irish immigrant, was a Father of Canadian Confederation, as well as a journalist, editor, and politician.
3. On 6 December 1917, a French cargo ship full of munitions collided with a Norwegian ship and caught fire. The ship drifted closer to the harbour as townspeople gathered to watch. Twenty minutes after the collision, the ship exploded killing some 2,000 people, injuring 9,000 and devastating the city. The following day, a snowstorm began that lasted several days and hampered rescue and relief efforts.
4. The FLQ was a Quebec revolutionary movement in that operated from 1963 to 1971 and was involved in over 200 bombings. In what is called the October Crisis, during the fall of 1970, the FLQ kidnapped British trade commissioner James Cross and Quebec politician Pierre Laporte. Cross was released about two months after Laporte was murdered in October 1970.
5. Between 1863 and 1939, over 100,000 British, Irish and Scottish children were sent to Canada as part of a Child Immigration program. Though the program was intended to rescue children from poverty, many families never intended their children to be sent away permanently nor that siblings be separated. Most of these children experienced exploitation and abuse. (See Home Children 1869-1932, Library and Archives Canada, Government of Canada.)

6. Considered to be one of the most influential Canadians of the 20th century, former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 and was widely known for his international diplomacy, among other accomplishments.

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