

**“IT WAS ALMOST... ALWAYS SUPPOSED TO BE THE INDIAN BAR”:
THE AMERICAN HOTEL AS A CONTACT ZONE**

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DEDICATION

For my grandpa, Ray Gelinis, who was always telling stories. I miss you every day.

ABSTRACT

From the early 1960s, the American Hotel in Fort Macleod, Alberta was a space where individuals from the neighbouring Kainai and Piikani reserves interacted. This thesis examines how the American Hotel served as a contact zone between white settlers and other non-Indigenous peoples of Fort Macleod and Blackfoot peoples. Drawing on archival research and thirteen oral history interviews conducted with individuals from Fort Macleod and surrounding areas, this thesis explores (1) the history of the American Hotel as a contact zone and (2) the planning, curation, and reception of the museum exhibition *Contact Zone: The American Hotel*, which ran at the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge from April to October 2023. Providing additional scholarship to the exhibition, this thesis details the sections of the exhibit and discusses the public reception before concluding with a discussion of colonial haunting in contact zones like the American Hotel.

PREFACE

The oral history interviews conducted for this research were completed with ethics approval obtained from the University of Alberta, Ethics ID: Pro00123647. Interviewees were presented with a Letter of Information to tell them about the benefits and risks of participation in the project. Those who chose to participate signed a Participant Consent Form, allowing them the ability to choose to adopt a pseudonym, what personal information is stored in the archives, and the timeline for having their interview put into and accessible from the archives. After the interview was conducted, interviewees received a copy of the transcribed interview and were given the opportunity to review, redact, and change any of the content. Interviewees then signed a Transcript Release Form, stating that they were able to review the transcript and make changes. Copies of these forms and a list of sample interview questions can be found in Appendix 1.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addition to acknowledging the people that made this project possible, I also want to recognize the land on which this master's thesis was written and researched. I understand that in recent years land acknowledgments have become somewhat commonplace and without real meaning behind them,¹ however, I feel it is important for me as a white settler scholar to acknowledge the land that has made this thesis project possible, particularly since this is a study of place, land, and white settler colonialism. This thesis was written on the traditional lands of the Blackfoot Confederacy, known today as Treaty 7 territory, including the territories of the Tsuu Tina, Piikani, Kainai, and Siksika nations, as well as the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. I have called this land home for most of my life and would not be the person I am today without my experiences with it. I appreciate all that this land has done to provide me a home and I hope that this work has done it, and the peoples that traditionally call this land home, justice.

This thesis project would truly not have been possible without a fantastic network of people who helped me see it through to the end. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor, Dr. Kristine Alexander at the University of Lethbridge. Your support and guidance from the time I met you in the latter years of my undergraduate degree and throughout this graduate work have truly been unmatched and beyond what I could have hoped for. I am so grateful for all the resources – financial,

¹ For more information on the issues with land acknowledgments see Ka'nhehsí:io Deer, "What's Wrong with Land Acknowledgments, and How to Make Them Better," *CBC*, 1 October 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/land-acknowledgments-what-s-wrong-with-them-1.6217931> (Accessed October 2, 2023); Michael C. Lambert, Elisa J. Sobo, and Valerie L. Lambert, "Rethinking Land Acknowledgements," *Anthropology News*, December 20, 2021, <https://www.anthropology-news.org/articles/rethinking-land-acknowledgments/>; and Chelsea Vowel, "Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements," *âpihtawikosisân* (blog), 23 September 2016, <https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/> (Accessed December 11, 2023).

emotional, academic, and personal – that you have afforded me. I have always said that the school where I did my thesis did not matter, as long as it was with you. You have shown me a level of encouragement and compassion I can only hope to pay forward someday. You have always had my back in so, so many ways. You taught me how to listen to my gut, how to do ‘deep work’ and how to reprioritize, while still making time to live my life. For this, and a million other reasons, I will always be grateful.

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I would also like to thank those who were a part of this project in various stages. Blackfoot Elder-in-Residence at the University of Lethbridge, Francis First Charger, for taking the time to share stories and guidance with me when I was still figuring everything out. Dr. Carol Williams of the University of Lethbridge who, despite never actually teaching me in a class, expressed a great deal of interest in this project and showed me kindness and generosity in innumerable ways. Mariah Besplug for her guidance with the

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To all those at the various archives and museums who helped me along the way with research including Ashley Hardwick and Christopher Richmond-Krahn at The Fort Museum of the NWMP and First Nations Interpretive Centre in Fort Macleod, Kim Geraldini at the University of Calgary Archives, Andrew Chernevych at the Galt Archives, and Frank and Emily McTighe at the *Macleod Gazette* office. You all provided invaluable resources for this research, and I greatly appreciate your assistance with this project. I would also like to specially acknowledge Natalia Pietrzykowski at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, who worked tirelessly compiling, scanning, and sending me hundreds of pages of archival files over the course of several months.

I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge the individuals who responded to my call for interviewees and took the time to sit down with me, either virtually or in person, and share their memories and experiences of the American Hotel. This project would truly not be what it is today without your time, emotional labour, and most importantly, for your trust in me to tell these complex and important stories. Thank you to: Lynn Bates, Noel Burles, Richard Collens, Doran Degenstein, Marlene Eaglespeaker, Diane Eaglespeaker, Jake Hirsch, Charles Madl, John Price, Doug Singer, Rosa Smith, Victor Smith, and Kimmy Walters.²

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² In accordance with the signed Consent Forms, pseudonyms have been used where requested.

reader and administrative assistant). Tyler, your excitement in my project from the very beginning was infectious and I am so grateful for the opportunity you afforded me in curating an exhibition to go along with my thesis. You had faith in me, even from our very first meeting where I realized very quickly that I needed to dive head-first back into the research. Kevin, I will always be grateful for your support and genuine interest in all facets of this project. You pushed me to think outside the box and taught me how to conduct fantastic oral history interviews. While I am very much still a novice interviewer, I hope I have done you proud. Dryden, thank you for your tireless efforts in graphic design and clear photographic eye which helped capture the magic and stories of the American Hotel. Jane, you were able to bring my disjointed vision of this exhibition to life and went along with my wacky ideas, thank you for your time and expertise in bringing this research into the exhibition space. Hilary, thank you for your hard work organizing Zoom meetings and proof-reading material, your sensitivity and attention to detail are unmatched. To the rest of the staff at the Galt who asked about my project or took interest in my studies, I see you and I appreciate you. Thank you for providing the space and resources to make this research and exhibition possible.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALCA	Alberta Liquor Control Act
ALCB	Alberta Liquor Control Board
NWMP	North-West Mounted Police
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police

INTRODUCTION: A NOTORIOUS PAST

I think it's one of those places... that we could all learn something from. Okay, fine not all of it is good, but [...] it does have a history, and that history, I feel should be expressed in a way that... can help others understand.³

– Lynn Bates, former Alberta Liquor Control Board official

I first became interested in the American Hotel in the fall of 2019. I was taking an undergraduate Museum Studies course at the University of Lethbridge where we were asked to write a mock exhibition proposal on a topic of our choosing, and I decided to investigate the hotel's history for mine. While I was living in Lethbridge at the time, my hometown of Okotoks was a short drive away, and over the course of my undergraduate degree, I had likely driven through Fort Macleod and past the American Hotel hundreds of times.

Originally a wood-frame structure built in 1892 called the Klondike Hotel, the now brick building became known as the American Hotel in 1900. Like the other hotels of Fort Macleod, the American Hotel was built during the town's "boomtown era" and provided both short-term lodging for farmers and ranchers who came into town to do business as well as those passing through the Prairie landscape.⁴ Over the decades, the hotel served many roles for many owners.⁵ In 1913, a three-story, 45-room addition with a dining room, bar, and ladies' room was constructed, however, with the introduction of Prohibition in Alberta in 1915, the renovation proved to be a poor investment. Eventually going broke, the American Hotel was taken over for "armory uses" at the beginning of

³ Lynn Bates, interview with Ryley Gelinias, December 8, 2022.

⁴ Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, *Main Street Rehabilitation Project Final Report*. 2004: 1.

⁵ For a full list of former hotel owners, see Appendix 2.

1922.⁶ The hotel was largely abandoned until 1928 when John Swinarton and D. Grier purchased it, adding to their local hotel ‘monopoly,’ which included the Empire Hotel and the Queen’s Hotel. The American Hotel, though, remained vacant until after the Second World War. Throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, ownership and the interior layout of the hotel continued to change several times until its closing in the early 2000s.



Figure 1: Exterior Photo of the American Hotel, 13 April 2020

In my research, I found a blog post referencing the hotel’s “notorious” past and was intrigued.⁷ Coincidentally, my grandfather’s family had lived in the town, originally

⁶ “American Hotel in Macleod Taken Over for Armory Uses,” *Calgary Daily Herald*, 6 January 1922, <https://www.proquest.com/hnpcalgaryherald/docview/2252327795/9959EB59F9664F66PQ/1?accountid=12063> (Accessed October 16, 2023): 7.

⁷ Chris Doering, “The Notorious American Hotel,” *Off the Beaten Path with Chris & Connie* (blog), published January 4, 2013, last modified February 1, 2020, <https://www.bigdoer.com/6027/exploring-history/the-notorious-american-hotel/>.

settling in Western Canada in the early 1910s from Charette, Quebec to farm, and I grew up hearing stories of his life there. In the years after he passed, my connection to Fort Macleod seemed to grow, and each time I drove through, I paid close attention to the town and its old buildings, imagining the places my grandfather's family would have visited, trying to remember the stories he told me and my siblings growing up. This all seemed to create a perfect storm, and I ultimately wrote my mock exhibition proposal on the American Hotel as a way of examining the history of Fort Macleod.

While that was just one assignment, the three-story brick building that represented a nuanced and challenging past stuck with me. In the spring of 2020, I completed a History Independent Study research project on the hotel, stumbling across what, at the time, seemed to be an archival gold mine. I found a collection of “disturbance reports” about the American Hotel produced between 1969 and 1971 at the University of Calgary Archives. These reports were written by the manager of the hotel, Arnold Moranz,⁸ and were later donated to the Archives as part of the Swinarton Family fonds.⁹ This collection holds approximately 250 records relating to incidents such as public drunkenness, illegal possession of alcohol, and fighting, at the time when Albert Swinarton owned the Queen's and American Hotels in Fort Macleod in the late 1960s to early 1970s. Detailing various incidents that occurred at the hotel, the disturbance reports described who was at the hotel when and what they were doing, as reported by the white settler owner and manager. Beyond the empirical data I got from the disturbance reports, I also developed

⁸ The archival record only identifies Mr. Moranz as “A. Moranz,” however, from an oral history interview, I learned his first name was Arnold and that he managed the hotel for many years, through several different ownerships.

⁹ Swinarton family fonds, University of Calgary Archives M-1204-6 and M-1204-7. The fonds is listed as a “gift of A. G. Swinarton, [in] 1976-1979.” A. G. Swinarton was the eldest son of John Swinarton, and later ran the hotel after his father's passing.

an understanding of the American Hotel's history through the lens of white settler colonialism. Many of the individuals found in the disturbance reports were listed as living on the "Blood Indian Reserve," and other towns near or on reserves, like Cardston and Gleichen, signalling that at least some of the patrons at the American Hotel during this time were Indigenous. The disturbance reports, while initially helpful in providing some information, only showed a small snapshot of the experiences at the American Hotel, and focused on the negative actions, as defined by the white settler manager, of the hotel's patrons.

With further research, it became clear that the American Hotel could be viewed as a 'contact zone' between the white settlers and Indigenous peoples who interacted there. As scholar Mary Louise Pratt explains in her article "Arts of the Contact Zone," contact zones are "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."¹⁰ Further, in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Pratt defines contact zones as "the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."¹¹ Important to note is the underscoring of "ongoing relations" between groups, recognizing the continual interaction and impact contact zones have. In this way, the American Hotel served – and in some ways, continues to serve – as a contact zone because it was a place where people

¹⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* (1991): 34.

¹¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 8.

of different ‘cultures’ and ‘geographies’ came together, as Pratt describes, in a variety of ways, in contexts of ‘highly asymmetrical relations of power.’

The legacies of white settler colonialism which are intertwined in the history of the American Hotel and the hotel’s continuing role as a site of contested colonial interactions, even after it had closed to the public became clear over the course of oral history interviews. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, many interviewees explained the power dynamics they felt and witnessed between hotel owners, the colonial police force, and local town authorities in relation to the largely Indigenous clientele of the hotel. Several of the interviewees also described the racial tensions they continue to feel almost haunted by within Fort Macleod, and around the American Hotel today. Ultimately, this thesis examines (1) the nuanced and colonial nature of contact zones that are represented by the American Hotel in a variety of interactions and how impacts of that contact continue to be felt in Fort Macleod and across Alberta today, and (2) explores how the accompanying museum exhibition, *Contact Zone: The American Hotel* displayed the American Hotel as a space of interaction and contact.

Methodology

In this thesis, I examine a variety of archival and other primary source documents, in addition to the aforementioned disturbance reports. The Alberta Liquor Control Board (ALCB) records from the Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton include roughly 400 pages of letters, inspection reports, and other documents relating to the American Hotel. These files detail the timeline of ownership between father, John Swinarton, and son, Albert G. Swinarton, tracing the history of the hotel through the larger histories of

Prohibition in Alberta, the Great Depression, the Second World War, and further time periods into the early 1970s. Additionally, Roy D. Tanenbaum's biography of 1980s American Hotel owner and Auschwitz Holocaust survivor Sigmund Sherwood (Sobolewski)¹² titled *Prisoner 88: The Man in the Stripes* explores how Sigmund interacted with the patrons of the hotel and sympathized with the Blackfoot peoples who he recognized as living through similar genocidal practices enacted by the Canadian state. Looking at related legislation, including the Indian Act (1876 and subsequent amendments) and the *Alberta Liquor Control Act* (ALCA) (1906 and subsequent amendments) gave context to the way settler governments sought to regulate the purchase, sale, and consumption of alcohol, particularly for Indigenous peoples. Finally, examining the newspaper archives of the *Macleod Gazette*, *Kainai News*, *Calgary Herald*, and *Lethbridge Herald* showed the geographical reach of stories about the American Hotel and how the hotel was perceived, particularly by the majority white, settler communities outside of the Fort Macleod area.

While these textual sources were helpful in gathering white settler perspectives, and their often negative views of the goings-on at the American Hotel, I knew I wanted to include first-hand experiences in the museum exhibition that would accompany this thesis.¹³ I thus conducted eleven oral history interviews with thirteen individuals over the

¹² Roy D. Tanenbaum, *Prisoner 88: The Man in Stripes* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1998). Sigmund legally changed his last name to Sherwood from Sobolewski at the prompting of his first wife, Iris, to "endeavour to be more British." (p. 68). Sigmund eventually changed his last name back to Sobolewski in 1990 after realizing "going to 'Sherwood' was probably part of a subconscious drive pushing [him] further away from engaging Auschwitz." (p. 219).

¹³ I first became aware of the possibility of turning this research into a museum exhibition at the Galt Museum when I was completing an internship there during my undergraduate degree. Two years later, when I was employed as a Collections Assistant, the Galt's new curator, Tyler Stewart approached me about the possibility again and I agreed to turn some of the research I had done so far, as well as the content from the interviews I would later conduct, into a temporary hallway exhibition.

course of November 2022 to May 2023 to explore the lived experiences of those who had frequented and worked at the American Hotel. I placed a call for interviewees in the *Macleod Gazette*, as well as across social media. I interacted with two Facebook groups including a local Fort Macleod community group, as well as a Calgary and Treaty 7 community group.¹⁴ The Galt Museum and Archives also shared the digital poster on their Facebook page and website, which provided additional traffic.

Interviewees included John Price, a Piikani Elder who had frequented the American Hotel in his youth until the late 1970s; Richard Collens, a non-Indigenous photographer from Calgary who has been photographing the hotel for the past decade; Jake Hirsch, a non-Indigenous son of the owner of the American Hotel in the late-1980s to the early 2000s; Doug Singer, a Blood Tribe member who went to the hotel with his parents in the late-1970s and later when he became of legal drinking age in the 1980s; Doran Degenstein, a non-Indigenous resident of Fort Macleod who experienced the American Hotel on a police ride-along in the 1980s and as a town resident in the 1990s; Charles Madl, the son of a Blood tribe woman and German father who was a co-owner of the American Hotel in the 1990s; Lynn Bates, a former ALCB employee who worked in what he explained were considered “troubled” locations.¹⁵ He worked for the ALCB managing the American Hotel from roughly 1977 to 1979 and identifies as Métis; Kimmy Walters, a Blood tribe member who patronized the hotel in the 1960s and 1970s before she became a bartender there in the early 1970s; Noel Burles, a non-Indigenous Alberta musician who played at the American Hotel on and off for several years starting

¹⁴ I joined the Fort Macleod Facebook group, “Fort Macleod & Area Community Discussions.” For the initial Facebook call out, see:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1757839800899017/permalink/6486086528074297/>.

¹⁵ Lynn Bates, interview with Ryley Gelinis, December 8, 2022.

in the mid-1980s; and Rosa Smith, a Cuban-born co-owner of the hotel in the mid-1980s, as well as her son, Victor Smith, who was a teenager when the family owned the hotel.¹⁶ The majority of interviewees were in their mid-50s to mid-70s, with a few outliers, both younger and older. Of the initial eleven individuals, five identified themselves as Indigenous, either a member of the Piikani or Kainai (Blood) nations, and Métis. I also conducted an interview in May of 2023, after the museum exhibition had opened, with Marlene Eaglespeaker and Diane Eaglespeaker, members of the Blood tribe whose late father, Glen Eaglespeaker, had painted the mural on the exterior of the hotel in the early 1980s.

Ultimately, my goal with these interviews was to hear the stories and lived experiences of people who had interacted with the American Hotel in some capacity. My questions were grouped thematically, starting first with in interviewees' background and connection to Fort Macleod and the American Hotel, and then moving into more specific questions about the key themes of settler-Indigenous relations, colonial policing, hotel ownership, and community perceptions.¹⁷ For many interviews, particularly with Indigenous interviewees, I found that beginning with asking about their connection to Fort Macleod or the American Hotel was enough to get the ball rolling and most of the outlined follow-up questions were answered within the initial story. Centring the questions on the interviewee and their relationships made clear that there was no right or wrong answer – they were just talking about how they connected to the world around them in the context of the American Hotel. As settler scholar Monique Giroux explains, it

¹⁶ As requested in their Consent Forms, pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of some interviewees.

¹⁷ For a full list of the question list used in the interviews, see Appendix 1.

is a common practice among Indigenous peoples that “establishes where [the interviewee] is from and to whom [they] belong.”¹⁸ Admittedly, this technique did not work with every interviewee, and some, particularly the non-Indigenous participants, wanted to discuss matters in a more structured, question-and-answer sort of way, viewing the process as a more formal ‘interview.’

Interviews, in my mind, seem to imply an experience where the researcher and the researched have this cold, clinical relationship where the person being interviewed is only as valuable as their answers.¹⁹ During the interview process, as well as throughout the curation of the museum exhibition, it was important to me to share my ‘authority’ with interviewees.²⁰ This meant recognizing and working to unseat the systems of power that I, as the researcher and a white woman, traditionally hold. I was conscious of this dynamic when interviewing everyone and was concerned for the overall well-fair of all interviewees, but in particular with the Indigenous interviewees, I was very aware of my position as a settler scholar who would be asking Indigenous folks questions that might be uncomfortable or traumatic for them. I was acutely aware of the historical impacts of

¹⁸ Monique Giroux and Roderick McLeod, “Métis in Lethbridge: A Conversation with Elder Roderick McLeod,” in *Racism in Southern Alberta and Anti-racist Activism for Change*, ed. Caroline Hodes and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Athabasca, Athabasca University Press, 2023), 111-131. See especially p. 112.

¹⁹ For more on ways to decolonize methods and practices, especially when working one-on-one with Indigenous interviewees, see Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012); Amanda Gebhard, Sheelah McLean, and Verna St. Denis (eds.), *White Benevolence: Racism and Colonial Violence in the Helping Professions* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2022); Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008); Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); and Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).

²⁰ For more on the practice of sharing authority in oral history interviews, see Steven C. High, “Sharing Authority: An Introduction,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2009): 12-34; Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); and Lorraine Sitzia, “A Shared Authority: An Impossible Goal?” *Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (2003): 85-99.

white settler research and wanted to make sure I was being as respectful as possible, letting interviewees know that they could stop the interview whenever they wanted and could refuse to answer any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering.²¹ This approach helped to create an environment where interviewees were able to speak freely and many had no problem stating when they could not remember something or when they were not sure of specific details.

In addition to the power dynamic of scholar/interviewee, I was also conscious of the sensitive nature of several of the topics I was asking interviewees about. After the first few interviews, I learned to ask more general questions about Fort Macleod and how the people of the town viewed the American Hotel before asking more complicated questions, for instance, about the interactions of colonial police at the hotel. This gave interviewees a chance to understand the scope of the project, and where I was coming from, before talking about more sensitive, often politically charged, and sometimes traumatic topics. Some interviewees brought up instances of sexual and gender-based violence that they experienced or witnessed in Fort Macleod and at the hotel. I recognized that such conversations could be triggering for the individual and while I was there to listen, I did not push for more information than they were willing to provide. As Eve Tuck explains in “Suspending Damage,” I was also cognizant of falling into the scholarly trap of “damage centred” research which portrays, particularly Indigenous communities as “defeated and broken.”²² Additionally, as Tuck explains in quoting bell

²¹ For more on the historical implications of settler research on Indigenous peoples, see Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012); Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 409-427.

²² Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 412.

hooks, I did not want Indigenous interviewees to feel like they could only speak from only a painful place of experience.²³ I asked about a variety of topics and received a variety of responses. I got the sense from some Indigenous interviewees that this was a cathartic experience for them, and they were letting it out, for better or for worse.²⁴ I did my best at the end of each interview to make sure that the interviewee felt safe and heard, often after turning off the recording device, and reminded them of the resources available to them, as listed on the Consent Form, and again explaining that anything they said could be redacted if they so choose.

Logistically, half of the initial ten interviews were conducted virtually, via Zoom or phone call, and the other half, as well as the later interview with the Eaglespeakers, were done in person. Virtual interviews done over Zoom or phone call did feel more emotionally removed to me; however, in most cases, being able to see the interviewee's body language was helpful in adjusting course accordingly. Zoom also allowed me to connect with people who had stories but were otherwise not accessible, including those living out of province or a several hours' drive away. This also allowed for better flexibility in scheduling as interviewees did not need to meet me somewhere, they just had to log onto their device, so we could set a time up that was most convenient for them. Virtual interviews, of course, require a certain degree of technology and technical know-how, and thus, were not a perfect fit for everyone.

²³ bell hooks, *Yearning* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 152, quoted in Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 413.

²⁴ There was one interview in particular that had some good content, but overlapped with stories I had already heard, but I got the sense from the interviewee that they had been holding on to a lot of the grief and trauma of their time at the American Hotel and talking to me was a way to get that out. In this situation, it did not really matter that I was 'me,' a researcher looking to hear stories about the hotel, just that I was a person willing to listen to them.

Alternatively, the five in-person interviews were conducted at a semi-public space that was accessible to the interviewees. Most of the in-person interviews were conducted at the University of Lethbridge Library, in one of the bookable study rooms. These rooms are within the public Library building but were tucked away to give a level of privacy. Given the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and concern for the safety and well-being of myself and interviewees, I made the decision from the beginning of the interview process not to meet at the homes of those interviewed in-person. The interview conducted in May of 2023 with Marlene and Diane Eaglespeaker did, however, take place at Diane's Calgary home. This was mutually agreed upon due to each of us being in different cities and having significant scheduling conflicts.

Not only were the oral history interviews a critical part of engaging in the community with this research, but they also made clear the privileging of white settler perspectives and voices in the archival and primary sources I had looked at previously. In the settler sources, including those previously mentioned archival documents and newspaper articles over the course of the twentieth century, the hotel was largely depicted as a white, settler space that Indigenous peoples came to occasionally, not as an Indigenous space in a white settler community. Yet after conducting the oral history interviews, it became clear that the textual sources I had consulted showed only a small part of the picture: a version of the story in which Indigenous patrons were often negatively stereotyped as individuals who regularly got publicly drunk and caused trouble. The oral history interviews told a much different and broader story about Indigenous peoples' experiences of the American Hotel and the nuances within those interactions. These negative aspects, such as police harassment, physical and gender-

based sexual violence, and discrimination from many of the people of Fort Macleod, were also countered with positive memories of the community Indigenous peoples found there, and the good times they had with friends and fellow patrons.

In addition to getting the opportunity to hear stories of the hotel from the community, my call for interviews also gave me the opportunity to get access into the building with the museum's photographer, Dryden Roesch, and see what it looked like now. In early November of 2022, I was contacted by one of the co-owners of the hotel, a local Fort Macleod doctor, Steven Beekman, by email after he had seen my advertisement in the *Macleod Gazette*. While he did not have any stories to share, we briefly discussed me touring the hotel. I did not hear much more about the possibility of getting inside the hotel until I interviewed Calgary-based photographer Richard Collens, who was also in contact with another of the co-owners, the current mayor of Fort Macleod, Brent Feyter, to gain access to the hotel. Richard had also hit a bit of a block on getting inside, and hoped if I was able to get a tour, he and a few photography friends could come along. Eventually, on December 17, 2022, after a few phone calls and an email conversation with Brent, the photography group, as well as myself, a friend, and the museum's photographer were granted access to the American Hotel.

The interior of the hotel was nothing like I had imagined. While the owners graciously let us into the building, it was clear that demolition work was on-going, and most objects were removed from the premises. On the main floor, *Figure 2*, there was no furniture, no bar, nothing to suggest what a former layout could have been. The entrance to the washrooms had been walled over at some point and someone had created a hole in

the drywall, *Figure 3*, allowing access to the washroom if you squeezed yourself through the studs.



Figure 2: American Hotel Main Floor, 17 December 2022



Figure 3: 'Entrance' to the American Hotel Washrooms, 17 December 2022

Upstairs on the second and third floors, the drywall from the walls had been removed, leaving a wooden skeleton showing that, based on the room size, luxury was not a priority for guests at the American Hotel, *Figure 4*. The rooms were roughly seven feet across and ten feet deep, likely just large enough for a small bed, dresser, nightstand, and if the hotel owner was feeling particularly generous, a small writing desk and chair.



Figure 4: Third Floor Renovations, 17 December 2022

What stood out to me the most was how much of the hotel's interior was already demolished, and how much of the physical history of the building must have been removed. At one point during the tour, Dryden, the museum's photographer was working on the main floor, and I was exploring the upper levels. On the left side of the third floor, the hotel rooms were already pulled back to the studs, however, on the right, there was a small, two-bedroom apartment with a separate washroom and kitchen. As seen in *Figure 5*, the white walls to the right were still standing when I took the photo. By the time I had made my way back downstairs, regrouped with Dryden and ended up back on the third floor, perhaps an hour later, these walls were gone.



Figure 5: Third Floor Staircase, 17 December 2022

Experiencing this really solidified for me that even though I got the opportunity to explore the American Hotel now, I cannot know what it looked like two, three, even ten years ago. There is no way to know what original objects may have remained in the building even a week before I toured it. Like the archival sources I examined, getting to look around the hotel was helpful in the overall scope of learning about the hotel, but it was not enough to give me all the answers about the hotel's history and how it functioned as a contact zone.

Thesis Structure

As an accompaniment to the museum exhibition, *Contact Zone: The American Hotel*, which was ran at the Galt Museum and Archives from April 23, 2023, until October 8, 2023, the layout of this thesis support paper loosely follows that of the exhibition. This first chapter introduced the archival research and interview methodology. It also explored the concept of a contact zone as an analytical lens which will be used to examine the American Hotel throughout this thesis and in the museum exhibition.

Chapter 2 consists of a brief overview of the colonial history of museums, particularly in Canada, and an examination of how museums themselves can serve as contact zones in their own right. This chapter looks at how museums have been deeply tied to the colonial agenda from the early nineteenth century and how many of these institutions continue to exist as sites of colonial extraction and display. This chapter also explores how museums are created and maintained as contact zones, which often results in social, spatial, and racial segregation. I end this chapter with a discussion of the Galt Museum and Archives, where *Contact Zone: The American Hotel* was displayed, and

how museums, such as this one, are working towards decolonial practices with varying degrees of success.

Chapter 3 focuses on a discussion of the museum exhibition itself. This section enlarges on the exhibit's main themes, using images and text from the exhibit, along with related scholarship, to explore the curatorial process of creating *Contact Zone: The American Hotel*. This chapter will also detail revisions made to the exhibit as a result of the interview with Marlene and Diane Eaglespeaker and the larger public reception of the exhibition from the press. Chapter 3 concludes with an evaluation of the responses to the interactive section of the exhibition which asked visitors about contact zones in their lives.

Finally, the concluding chapter sums up the main argument of the thesis and exhibition, that the American Hotel is a contact zone, recognized by exploring the legacies of white settler colonialism in the hotel's history. This chapter also underscores the ways in which, as settler scholars, curators, and individuals, we remain haunted by the impacts of colonialism in ways that are not always known to us. Drawing on the theories of Avery Gordon and Amber Dean, a discussion of colonial haunting in the context of the ghost stories told about the Devil haunting the American Hotel works to remind us of the continual harm of colonial haunting and unsettle the deeply rooted white settler colonialism found in contact zones across southern Alberta.

CHAPTER 2: THE COLONIAL LEGACY OF MUSEUMS

[I]t's so unfortunate that things have to be like that. And even the Fort [Museum] has never welcomed any... you know, they have little token programs they do with the First Nations [...] they talk about the written word [...] of the RCMP and they did their own picture on how things were.²⁵

– John Price, Piikani Elder

Introduction

The museum itself, can, in many ways, be recognized as a contact zone. A product of the eighteenth century age of Enlightenment, museums have a long history of bringing cultures together, frequently with one group observing the ‘Other’ through a collection of often looted artefacts removed from their cultural context and presented by curators who have little understanding of the significance of those items.²⁶ As a result, museums can feel unwelcoming to those from the cultures being ‘displayed’ and inaccurately depicted in these spaces.²⁷ This in turn raises questions about *who* is telling these stories and deciding what is representative of cultures which are often outside of

²⁵ John Price, interview with Ryley Gelinias, November 21, 2022.

²⁶ For more critical studies of the colonial nature of museums, see John Willinsky, *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Gerald T. Conaty, “The Development of Museums and Their Effects on First Nations,” in *We Are Coming Home: Repatriation and the Restoration of Blackfoot Cultural Confidence*, ed. Gerald T. Conaty (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2015), 37-69; and Margareta von Oswald and Jonas Tinius (eds.) *Across Anthropology: Troubling Colonial Legacies, Museums, and the Curatorial* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020).

²⁷ For more scholarship on cultures not feeling welcome in museums, see C. Aaron Price and Lauren Applebaum, “Measuring a Sense of Belonging at Museums and Cultural Centers,” *Curator: The Museum Journal* 65, no. 1 (2022): 135-160; Alice Anderson and Michelle A. Mileham, “Welcome to the Museum: Reflecting on Representation and Inclusion in Museum Evaluation,” *Curator: The Museum Journal* 63, no. 4 (2020): 597-603; Kevin Coffee, “Cultural Inclusion, Exclusion and the Formative Roles of Museums,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 23, no. 3 (2008): 261-279; Emily Dawson, “‘Not designed for us’: How Science Museums and Science Centers Socially Exclude Low-Income Minority Ethnic Groups,” *Science Education* 98, no. 6 (2014): 981-1008; Richard Sandell, “Museums as Agents of Social Inclusion,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 17, no. 4 (1998): 401-418; Stacy Douglas, *Curating Community: Museums, Constitutionalism, and the Taming of the Political* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017); and Sandra Bonnici, “Belonging: Co-Creating Welcoming and Equitable Museums,” *American Alliance of Museums* (blog), November 22, 2019, <https://www.aam-us.org/2019/11/22/belonging-co-creating-welcoming-and-equitable-museums/>.

their own. As a white settler scholar and curator, these were concerns that I grappled with throughout the creation of this exhibition, particularly because I remain acutely aware of how often such exhibits are produced without input from the communities being represented. Thus, throughout the course of this research, it was crucial for me to work with the individuals who had agreed to speak with me about the American Hotel and to centre the exhibition around their memories and perspectives. Importantly, this also meant being receptive to challenging feedback and being willing to make changes as a result of this collaboration.

Colonial Legacy of Museums

Museums have a contentious history, from early curiosity cabinets and colonial looting to more recent harmful misrepresentations and erasure of cultures. As Robert R. Janes states in the prologue to *We Are Coming Home: Repatriation and the Restoration of Blackfoot Cultural Confidence*, “museums have always been biased in their outlook and activities. Museums have never existed in a social or political vacuum, despite conventional claims of neutrality.”²⁸ Similarly, as Eilean Hooper-Greenhill states, “[m]useums have always had to modify how they worked, and what they did, according to the context, the plays of power, and the social, economic, and political imperatives that surrounded them. Museums, in common with all other social institutions, serve many masters, and must play many tunes accordingly.”²⁹ For much of their existence, museums – as producers of history – have been products of the larger social and political worlds in

²⁸ Robert R. Janes, “Prologue,” in *We Are Coming Home: Repatriation and the Restoration of Blackfoot Cultural Confidence*, ed. Gerald T. Conaty (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2015), 3-20.

²⁹ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.

which they exist. Enlightenment-era museums were tied up with empire and racism from the very beginning. The British Museum, notably called “that nationalistic temple of culture,”³⁰ by Hooper-Greenhill, originates with Hans Sloane, a doctor from North Ireland and the ‘father’ of the British Museum, whose collecting was financed by the British slave trade.³¹ After marrying a sugar plantation heiress, Sloane used the funds made from the enslavement of Jamaican peoples to expand his collecting across the globe – a pursuit which created the material foundation of the British Museum.³²

Museum staff are also products of the world around them, and the work they do is shaped by the structures and legacies of large-scale processes like slavery, white settler colonialism and capitalism. As scholar Wayne Modest explains:

I struggled and struggle with people who want to think the colonial as just a moment in time that has passed. This has created a false distance between the reckoning with colonial afterlives and the work of the museum as a cultural institution, even though the afterlives and legacies of colonialism in the present continued to structure relations or hierarchies which govern our lives today.³³

The ‘legacies of colonialism’ which Modest is describing impact and shape our everyday lives, as well as the institution of the museum. For much of its history, the museum was a place to display ethnographic artifacts gathered by colonizers, often those returning from faraway places attempting to educate and ‘collect’ culture from around the world.³⁴ Even as social and political expectations of museums are changing, it is critical to remember and recognize the colonial pasts of museums because, as scholars of settler colonialism

³⁰ Hooper-Greenhill, 1.

³¹ Hooper-Greenhill, 20.

³² “Sir Hans Sloane,” The British Museum, n.d., <https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/sir-hans-sloane>, accessed November 15, 2023.

³³ “Museums are Investments in Critical Discomfort: A Conversation with Wayne Modest,” in *Across Anthropology: Troubling Colonial Legacies, Museums, and the Curatorial*, eds. Margareta von Oswald and Jonas Tinius (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), 65-74. See especially p. 67.

³⁴ Tony Bennett. “Museums and ‘The People,’” in *The Museum Time-Machine: Putting Cultures on Display*, ed. Robert Lumley (London: Routledge, 1988), 63-84. See especially p. 64.

remind us, “[u]nderstanding settler colonialism as a structure exposes the fact that colonialism cannot be relegated to the past.”³⁵ In the museum context, the structures of white settler colonialism remain inherent in the objects in the collections, the fonds in the archives, and, in many cases, in the practices of museum staff and curators. This is why museums working towards decolonization need to engage with the communities whose histories they are representing and give voice to stories that work against the colonial narrative. Without taking such involvement seriously, museums risk perpetuating their colonial and exclusionary practices.³⁶

The process of ‘collecting’ – and often times exploiting – Indigenous and other non-settler cultures, particularly in the geography of Western Canada is still a relatively recent practice that was often materially supported by the white settler state. As Alison K. Brown explains,

Museums collecting on the Canadian Prairies during the early twentieth century could not have occurred without the involvement of DIA [Department of Indian Affairs] officials. DIA control of reserve communities extended to managing the activities of visiting anthropologists and researchers, and Indian agents sometimes

³⁵ J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “‘A Structure, Not an Event’: Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity,” *Lateral* 5, no. 1 (2016), n.p. For more on the scholarship of settler colonialism as a structure, see Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409.

³⁶ The Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba has recently faced substantial backlash from communities for removing and censoring LGBTQ+ exhibits as well as internal discrimination against museum employees of colour and other minority groups who work within the CMHR. For more on the situation at the CMHR, see: Kelly Geraldine Malone, “Embattled Canadian Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg Has History of Controversy,” *CBC*, 12 July 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/canadian-museum-human-rights-winnipeg-history-controversy-criticism-1.5646802> (Accessed November 14, 2023); Sarah Pets, “Gail Asper ‘very troubled’ by Allegations of Discrimination at Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” *CBC*, 19 June 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/glen-murray-cmhr-lgbt-censorship-allegations-1.5619639> (Accessed November 14, 2023); and Jeremy Nuttall, “How do you decolonize Canada’s museums? It’s a transformation that’s finally getting underway,” *Toronto Star*, 10 November 2021, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/how-do-you-decolonize-canada-s-museums-it-s-a-transformation-that-s-finally-getting/article_2c61c28e-428a-5ad7-bef1-781ab81803b6.html (Accessed November 14, 2023).

used their authority to encourage or limit First Nations participation in scientific studies.³⁷

As Brown explains, the Canadian government, through the Department of Indian Affairs, worked to control how Indigenous cultures were shared with non-Indigenous researchers and, in turn, the Indian agents on reserves often played a pivotal role in the information museums received. The impacts of this involvement shaped the way Indigenous peoples were presented in museums throughout the twentieth century, as well as how non-Indigenous museum visitors understood Indigenous cultures and ways of life, the echoes of which are often still felt to this day. Given such a foundation, it is easy to see why Indigenous peoples, and other groups, particularly people of colour feel unwelcome and misrepresented in museum spaces which claim to know their cultures.³⁸

While many museums across Alberta and Canada are working towards decolonial practices, some have difficulty renouncing their place as colonial spaces. As scholar Kelsey R. Wrightson states:

[I]f museums are not just reflective of the outside political context but also constitutive of national narratives and identities, and therefore instrumentally related to the political ideologies outside the museum, the absence of this critique of the colonial politics of recognition within museum studies means that museum practice may be implicated in the reproduction of these conciliatory but still fundamentally colonial relations.³⁹

Museums, particularly those reliant on funding from the colonial state and white, affluent donors, may feel unable to criticize the ways in which they are 'reflective' of and implicated in colonial 'national narratives,' and, as a result, are actually reproducing the

³⁷ Alison K. Brown, *First Nations, Museums, Narrations: Stories of the 1929 Franklin Motor Expedition to the Canadian Prairies* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014): 92.

³⁸ For more scholarship on cultures not feeling welcome in museum spaces, see footnote 26.

³⁹ Kelsey R. Wrightson, "The Limits of Recognition: The Spirit Sings, Canadian Museums and the Colonial Politics of Recognition," *Museum Anthropology* 40, no. 1 (2017): 36-51. See especially p. 37.

white settler colonial past in the present and future. Thus, museums in Canada are often effectively white, affluent spaces, where settlers come to learn, through the lens of the white curator, about cultures outside their own.⁴⁰

In order for museums to move toward a decolonial future where the authoritative voice of the curator is reduced, re-imagined or even removed, in favour of the voices of the community being represented, museums and their staff need to be aware of what scholar Michel-Rolph Trouillot recognizes as silences in the process of producing history. These silences, he explains, happen “at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the moment of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance).”⁴¹ In the case of museums, some of these ‘moments’ have likely already happened in a colonial context – the moment of fact creation and the moment of fact assembly. However, the two remaining ‘moments,’ fact retrieval and retrospective significance are moments where previously neglected voices can be added back.

In other words, Indigenous communities who had objects, culture, and knowledge stolen from them and categorized away into the colonial museum repository and archive without their perspective now have the opportunity, with the making of the narrative and

⁴⁰ For more on the colonial history of museums, see: Brian Durrans, “The Future of the Other: Changing Cultures on Display in Ethnographic Museums,” in *The Museum Time-Machine: Putting Cultures on Display*, ed. Robert Lumley (London: Routledge, 1988), 143-168; Charles Saumarez Smith, “Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings,” in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 6-21; Ludmilla Jordanova, “Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums,” in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 22-40; Nicholas Thomas, *The Return of Curiosity: What Museums are Good for in the 21st Century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016); and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁴¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995): 26. Emphasis in original.

the making of history, to change the story being told in museums. This practice has begun in many museums with the hiring of Indigenous and other people of colour in curatorial roles, community-led collection and repatriation work, and the involvement of Elders who share traditional Indigenous knowledge. By engaging with Indigenous communities in these ways, listening to community feedback, and employing BIPOC staff, museums have the opportunity to work towards shifting the narrative and – in many instances – turning the white settler colonial narrative on its head.

Such work is being undertaken by the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta, where *Contact Zone: The American Hotel* was on display. Founded in the mid-1960s, the Galt’s mandate focuses on the history of Lethbridge and southwestern Alberta through, as its most recent mission statement explains, the importance of community and belonging: “Our community-centred approach and our commitment to reflecting the world around us deepen the sense of belonging for our communities.”⁴² While in recent years, the Galt Museum and Archives has worked towards being a more inclusive and representative place, they, like many museums across Canada, are still in the early stages of what will likely be a long and difficult process. In 2022, the Galt’s involvement with local Indigenous communities led to the receipt of a Blackfoot name, *Akaisamitohkanao’pa*, meaning ‘eternal gathering place,’ and the transfer of a painted tipi, symbolizing a “continued partnership with the Blackfoot Nation and recognition of our commitment to the community and reconciliation.”⁴³ Added from 2021, the Galt’s

⁴² Galt Museum and Archives Annual Report, 2022, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b857e8b7c93275e337e599e/t/641dfd273758d348ba92331b/1679686961137/2022+Annual+Report+-+Web.pdf>.

⁴³ Galt Museum and Archives Annual Report, 2022.

Annual 2022 Report included a new section outlining several “Community Impact Statements,” including the following:

- Redefining Museum: Meaning is created from challenging our traditional ways of working.
- Reconciliation: Actively standing in reconciliation, truth is heard and acknowledged, and respectful and healthy relationships are nurtured.
- Gathering Place: A beautiful, safe and comfortable space where everyone feels welcome.
- Platform for Inclusion: Diverse voices are elevated.⁴⁴

While these are important steps in the right direction, museums like the Galt must continue to work towards decolonial practices beyond diversity in hiring and inclusive programming – as the Community Impact Statements describe – *actively* working toward change, truth, and reconciliation throughout the community.

The Curatorial Process

Throughout the process of curating *Contact Zone: The American Hotel*, which was displayed at the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta from April 23, 2022, until October 8, 2023, I undertook a collaborative approach. While there are likely ways I could improve on this technique if I were to curate the exhibition a second time, I, along with the staff at the Galt Museum, worked hard to ensure that the voices of the interviewees were the primary focus. Building on Trouillot’s insights, it was important to me to recognize the colonial nature of the *sources* and *archives* which were already existing and to emphasize the *narratives* and *history* that were created with the interview content. Ultimately, the exhibit sought not to centre the white settler colonial sources and archival information, but to uplift the narratives developed within that recognition of the

⁴⁴ Galt Museum and Archives Annual Report, 2022.

white settler colonial legacy of museums and curatorial work and to name and critique the racism that happened around the American Hotel, and that continues in Fort Macleod today.

While the exhibit features information from the newspaper articles, archival documents, material culture, and scholarly sources I consulted, it was clear that the oral history interviews had opened up richer, deeper, and less settler-focused questions about the history of the American Hotel and the town that surrounds it. As a result, I made certain curatorial decisions – such as grouping ideas from the interview thematically – in order to create a cohesive exhibition for visitors that focused on words spoken by the people I interviewed, rather than on the voice of a single curatorial authority and the white settler-created sources I found.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that, as the curator, I was choosing the themes discussed and which exact quotes were used to illustrate these ideas. For example, I knew that I did not want to shy away from exploring what was quickly becoming a story about segregation and racism that stemmed from white settler colonialism. This issue went all the way back to Fort Macleod's roots as a police fort, whose first white inhabitants in the late nineteenth century had been tasked with 'managing' whiskey traders and ensuring the Indigenous peoples there would sign of the Numbered Treaties.⁴⁵ It was crucial for me to refer to this history in the exhibition, even

⁴⁵ For more on the colonial history of police forts and the NWMP, and the involvement of these forces in Indigenous lives, see: Phyllis A. Arnold, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Edmonton: Canadian Social Services Ltd., 1974); Ronald Atkin, *Maintain the Right: The Early History of the North West Mounted Police, 1873-1900* (London: Macmillan, 1973); and Dwayne Trevor Donald, "Forts, Curriculum, and Indigenous Métissage: Imagining Decolonization of Aboriginal-Canadian Relations in Educational Contexts," *First Nations Perspectives* 2, no. 1 (2009):1-24. For more on the involvement of these forces in the lives of Indigenous peoples, see: James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Indigenous Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2019); Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with Walter Hildebrandt, Sarah Carter, and Dorothy First Rider, *The True Spirit and Original*

though it could be difficult for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples to be reminded of. At the same time, one of my goals with this exhibition was not to reproduce the white settler colonial narrative of conquest and valour, where Fort Macleod was seen as a flourishing settler community in the West, heralded as “the centre of the NWMP and the ranching industry in southwestern Alberta.”⁴⁶ Not only does this narrative provide a partial interpretation of the history of Canada’s colonial police force, it also excludes and silences Indigenous perspectives, ignoring the destruction and displacement that occurred as a result of the town’s settlement.

Throughout this process, I was also aware of the contradiction of presenting this research at a museum – a place often criticized for its contributions to colonialism. Lethbridge itself, the city in which the Galt Museum is situated, is not that far from Fort Macleod, nor is its history of colonial settlement dissimilar. Both are largely white, settler towns in southern Alberta, and both continue to navigate, with varying degrees of success, Indigenous-settler relationships. Operated by the Galt Museum, the Fort Whoop-Up site in Lethbridge has a colonial history not unlike Fort Macleod’s. In the Galt’s 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, Fort Whoop-Up is described as:

[A]n interpretive centre that critically tells a story of trade, politics and the colonial relationship with Blackfoot people. Fort Whoop-Up is a replica of an original fur trading fort built in the late 1800s. We tell the story of the buffalo robe and illegal whisky trade, the years leading up to that time and the years that followed. We tell the story of this region and the people here from the mid-1860s to the early 1890s. It is a complex story that includes the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), other First Nations, Métis, Canadians, Americans and British.

Intent of Treaty 7 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996); and Lesley Erickson, *Westward Bound: Sex, Violence, the Law, and the Making of a Settler Society*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011.

⁴⁶ Donald G. Wetherell and Irene R. A. Kmet, *Town Life: Main Street and the Evolution of Small Town Alberta, 1880-1947* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995): 3.

Given that one of the reasons for the NWMP were sent to the territory that is now southern Alberta was to deal with the ‘illegal whisky trade’ happening at places like Fort Whoop-Up, the two Forts are intrinsically linked. As such, from a geographical and social standpoint, Fort Macleod and Lethbridge have similarities in this white settler colonial history and I was aware that sharing these stories of the American Hotel, those which were often critical of policing and capitalism, and which highlight continuing instances of racism in a place like Fort Macleod, and similarly, Lethbridge, may face some community pushback.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Across Canada, and the world, many museums, archives, and galleries are working towards practices of decolonization in their institutions. Much of this work is a result of pushback from the communities who have been exhibited and displayed through a colonial lens for far too long. As contact zones in their own right, museums illuminate, recalling Pratt, the “highly asymmetrical relations of power” that exist in such spaces.⁴⁸ This recent recognition in how museums are viewed, and subsequently, the roles they play, was part of the reason I wanted to share this research as an exhibition. While digging up and highlighting the colonial history of the American Hotel in such a public way is, for white settlers, often an uncomfortable task, as Modest explains, “this discomfort is a generative space for us to imagine another kind of museum practice in the

⁴⁷ For more on settler colonialism and racism experienced in Lethbridge, and across southern Alberta, see Caroline Hodes and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (eds.), *Racism in Southern Alberta and Anti-racist Activism for Change* (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2023).

⁴⁸ Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” 34.

future,”⁴⁹ as well as another kind of *future*. Societal change is made in naming and addressing the inequalities around us. My hope, in exploring the American Hotel as a contact zone in the past and looking at how the legacies of settler colonialism continue to haunt us in the present, is that the social, political, and economic “asymmetries” made clear in contact zones like the American Hotel, and across southern Alberta, can be recognized and we can begin to address them moving forward.

⁴⁹ “Museums are Investments in Critical Discomfort: A Conversation with Wayne Modest,” see especially p. 69.

CHAPTER 3: THE CONTACT ZONE ON DISPLAY



Figure 6: Overview of Main Hallway Exhibition Space, 23 April 2023

Contact Zone: The American Hotel Exhibition Development

Contact Zone: The American Hotel opened 23 April 2023 in the main floor hallway space of the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta. This particular space in the museum was chosen because it was important to me, from the beginning, that this research be as financially accessible to as many people as possible. Accessing this thesis or related research in the archive itself comes with its own barriers that I wanted to remove for those who wished to learn more about the American Hotel and this history of southern Alberta. Similarly, it was essential that there were not going to be additional financial barriers for visitors, which meant situating the exhibition in a part of the museum where admission fees were not required.

Figure 6 shows the layout of the exhibition, looking North. The exhibition space is uniquely formatted with several doors, openings, and since it serves as a hallway, it was important to not block the path of visitors and staff moving from one end of the museum to the other. Given that this is a main thoroughfare, groups accessing the meeting and boardrooms at the north end of the building, as well as school groups going to the classroom would be walking through the exhibition space as well. As a result of this, the exhibition's introduction section begins on the left-hand side, as seen in *Figure 7*, and continues down the left wall which includes an interactive board, and the first thematic section titled 'Gathering Space,' before turning and coming back up the right wall, continuing with the next thematic sections, 'Gender,' 'Authority,' and ending with 'Haunting.' The television and sitting area can be viewed in any order and initially showed a video tour of the American Hotel interior as of December 2022 before later

featuring a slideshow about the late Glen Eaglespeaker and the *End of the Trail* inspired mural he painted for the outside of the building.

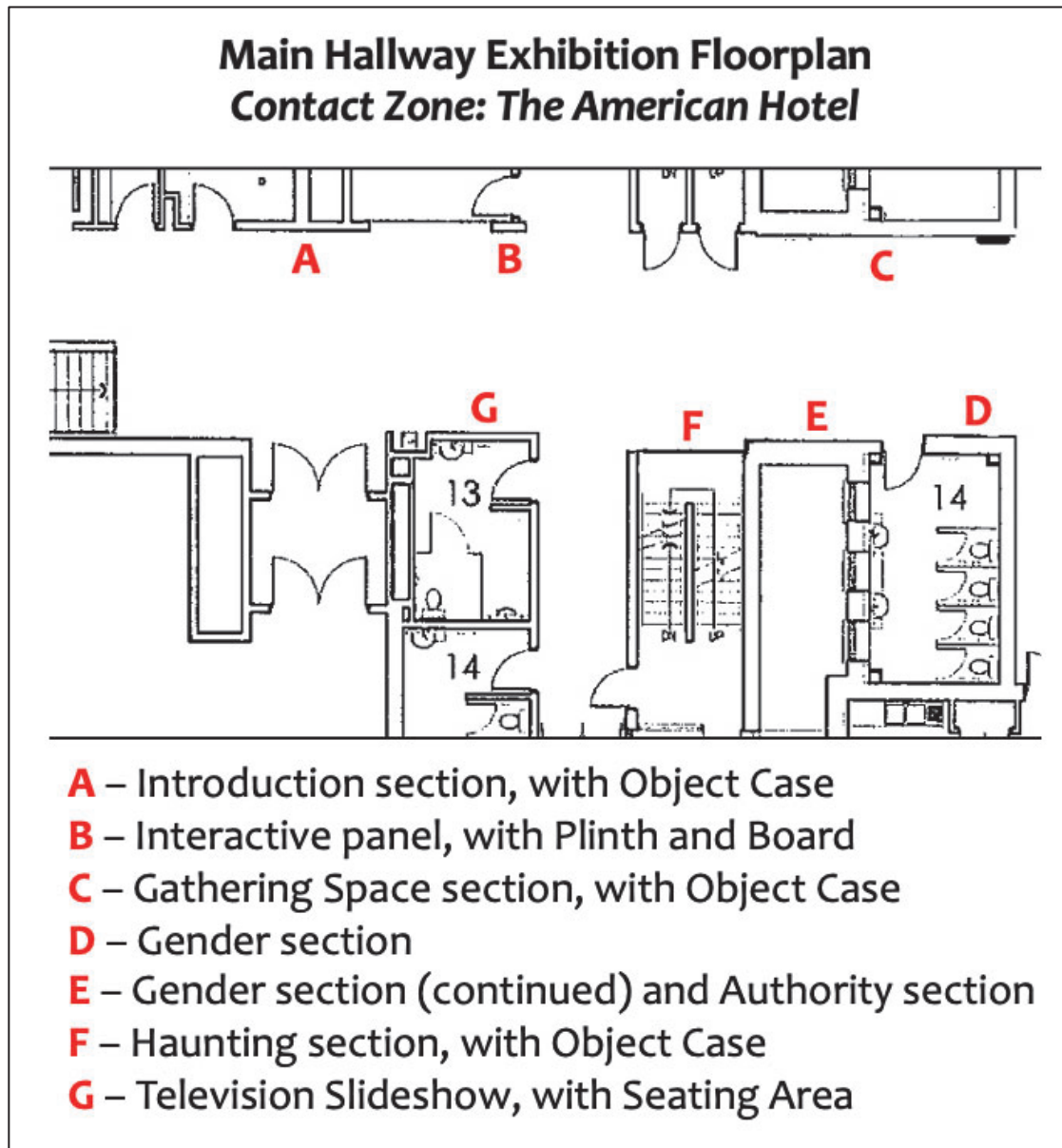


Figure 7: Aerial Map of Exhibition Space

The Makings of a Contact Zone



Figure 8: Exhibition Introduction, 23 April 2023

Assuming that visitors are entering the museum from the main entrance, the Introduction section is the first part of the exhibition visitors see when they walk into the space. As *Figure 8* shows, the section includes my curatorial statement, explaining the background of the exhibition and my role within it. I wanted to give museum viewers a sense of where the information in the exhibition was coming from and briefly explain why it was organized the way that it was. At the bottom of this statement panel there is a language advisory which acknowledges the use of terms like “Indian” and “Native” in some of the interview quotes that are featured in the exhibition. From interactions with Blackfoot Elders and other interviewees, it was clear that clarifying the intent of language and actions is an important part of building relationships between settlers and Indigenous

peoples in a good way, and while several interviewees, including those who identified as Indigenous, used such language, I decided that a language advisory would help create a welcoming and inclusive environment. The exact wording was collaboratively discussed with some of the Galt staff, including curator, Tyler Stewart, administrative assistant/editor, Hilary Squires, and Indigenous curator, Camina Weasel Moccasin, and myself. The language advisory was included at the bottom of the Introduction Curatorial Panel, *Figure 9*, as this was the place that we hoped it would receive the most views. The formatting of the Introduction section is like that of the rest of the exhibition, where I, as the curator, give context to the thematic background, but mainly focus on interview quotes and involvement from the communities to provide detailed information to visitors.

CONTACT ZONE: THE AMERICAN HOTEL

Curated by Ryley Gelinus



The American Hotel, 2020
Courtesy Ryley Gelinus

Much like the American Hotel itself, this exhibition has been a community effort. Over the course of six weeks, I conducted ten oral history interviews with eleven community members. In my attempt to gather the story of the American Hotel over its lifetime, I spoke with former owners, patrons, Elders, bartenders, musicians, and community members.

In my view, there is no one authoritative history of the American Hotel and it is my hope that the quotes and stories compiled from my interviews will speak to the collective history of the American Hotel in a way that unpacks the complexities of the building and the community found within it.

—Guest Curator, Ryley Gelinus

Language Advisory: In some interviews, the words "Indian" and "Native" were used to describe Indigenous peoples. To honour the voices of community members, quotes within this exhibition have not been altered to remove these words. Some who used this language clarified the historical or personal context of this language, referring to themselves and their communities in a non-malicious manner. It is not the intent of the curator or the Galt Museum & Archives to promote the use of this language in a derogatory way.

Figure 9: Introduction Curatorial Panel

The first object case of the exhibition, which holds an oil-lamp chandelier, shows one of the few remaining objects from the hotel and signifies the lack of existing historical research done on the American Hotel. The chandelier, *Figure 10*, which hung in the lobby of the hotel in the 1930s is one of three objects relating to the history of the hotel in the collection of the Fort Museum of the NWMP and First Nations Interpretive Centre in Fort Macleod. I found this particularly interesting, especially given the fact that several interviewees, including Piikani Elder John Price who is quoted in the epigraph for this chapter, brought up a lack of engagement with the Blackfoot community by the Fort Museum. This chandelier, and the two other objects relating to the hotel, the American Hotel ledger and Macleod Hotel rulebook which mentions the American Hotel, were from before Blackfoot peoples were allowed on the premises. Looking at the Fort Museum's collection, none of the hotel-related objects hinted at the American Hotel's Indigenous history. Arguably, this provides some information about the degree to which the Fort Museum is working – or not working – towards decolonial practices and illustrates the value of this thesis in examining the American Hotel as a contact zone.

The Fort Museum was originally built in 1957 to “stimulate the downtown core, driving Tourism [sic] for both the Museum and Historic Main Street and to protect the 2 original buildings on site.”⁵⁰ While the “Fort Museum Information Overview” document describes that research requests are being submitted and objects are being reviewed for donation, it seems the majority of the museums focus is on its interpretative programs such as the March of the Redcoats and the NWMP Musical Ride, cheerfully described as

⁵⁰ The Fort Museum of the NWMP and First Nations Interpretive Centre and The Fort Macleod Historical Association, “The Fort Museum Information Overview,” accessed November 14, 2023, <https://nwmpmuseum.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/The-Fort-Museum-Information-Overview.pdf>.

“the ONLY on-site re-enactment of the NWMP Musical Ride in all of Canada!”⁵¹ While an official museum mandate is unclear, what is clear is the emphasis on highlighting the history of the NWMP, often at the expense of Blackfoot histories works, as Trouillot describes, to “help select the stories that matter.”⁵²



Figure 10: Object Case, Introduction, 23 April 2023

⁵¹ The Fort Museum and the NWMP and First Nations Interpretive Centre and The Fort Macleod Historical Association.

⁵² Trouillot, 52.

Chandelier

ca. 1920–1930

Courtesy The Fort Museum of the NWMP and First Nations
Interpretive Centre, FM.2010.25.1

This oil chandelier hung in the American Hotel until its temporary closure in the 1930s. Like the fragmented history of the hotel, not much is known about the chandelier other than it was given to Jim Furman by the unnamed owner of the American Hotel. It is one of the few objects in a museum collection relating to the American Hotel.

Figure 11: Didactic Panel, Introduction

The Introduction section also includes an archival photo of the American Hotel from the 1970s, *Figure 12*, which is part of the Galt Museum's *Lethbridge Herald* collection. The photo is one of the only archival photos from before the *End of the Trail* mural was added in the 1980s, and it shows a sign claiming the hotel to be "Fully Modern." Catalogued as from 1974, this photo illustrates that the hotel was seen, and run, as a well-to-do establishment, presumably with all the amenities of "modern" life. While it is not clear what this modernity looked like for hotel visitors, this photo is interesting because in later photos, and at the hotel in person today, the iconic *End of the Trail* mural is visible and the signage claiming the hotel to be 'modern' is now covered with a board proclaiming "Native Art," presumably for sale or on display within. Not only does this show different priorities, but it also highlights the ways in which hotel owners were working to appeal to their Indigenous clientele. The didactic label, *Figure 13*, explains some of this history of the exterior of the building to visitors.



Figure 12: Archival Photo, Galt Museum and Archives, Introduction

Fort Macleod's American Hotel, 1974

Galt Museum & Archives, 19991060003

This image of the hotel shows the east side of the building before the mural painted by Glen Eagle Speaker was installed in 1981. The text along the top of the building also reads 'Fully Modern,' which is later covered by a sign stating 'Native Art.'

Figure 13: Didactic Panel, Introduction

Finally, the Introduction section featured a text bubble, *Figure 14*, which provided visitors with the definition of a contact zone – the exhibit's central analytical concept.

Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and

grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.”⁵³ The American Hotel, I argue, was a contact zone amongst the non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples in and around Fort Macleod where individuals and communities came together at the hotel to interact. Importantly, as Pratt notes, given the colonial background of Fort Macleod, these interactions often took place between individuals of different, or “asymmetrical,” genders, socio-economic statuses, and racialized identities. Organizing the museum exhibition around this concept made it possible to explore the nuances of these interactions and to explore the continuing legacies and hauntings of white colonial power today.



Figure 14: Contact Zone Definition Bubble, Introduction

⁵³ Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” 34.

The remainder of the Introduction section was filled with several quotes from interviewees, *Figures 15, 16, and 17* explaining how the American Hotel was widely viewed as the Indigenous bar in Fort Macleod, while the Queen’s Hotel was seen as the white bar. As the interviewees explained, this racial segregation was socially implied and physically reinforced. Each of the quotes were chosen to provide different perspectives on the separation occurring in the context of the American Hotel, and to give visitors an initial understanding of how some members of the town viewed the hotel.

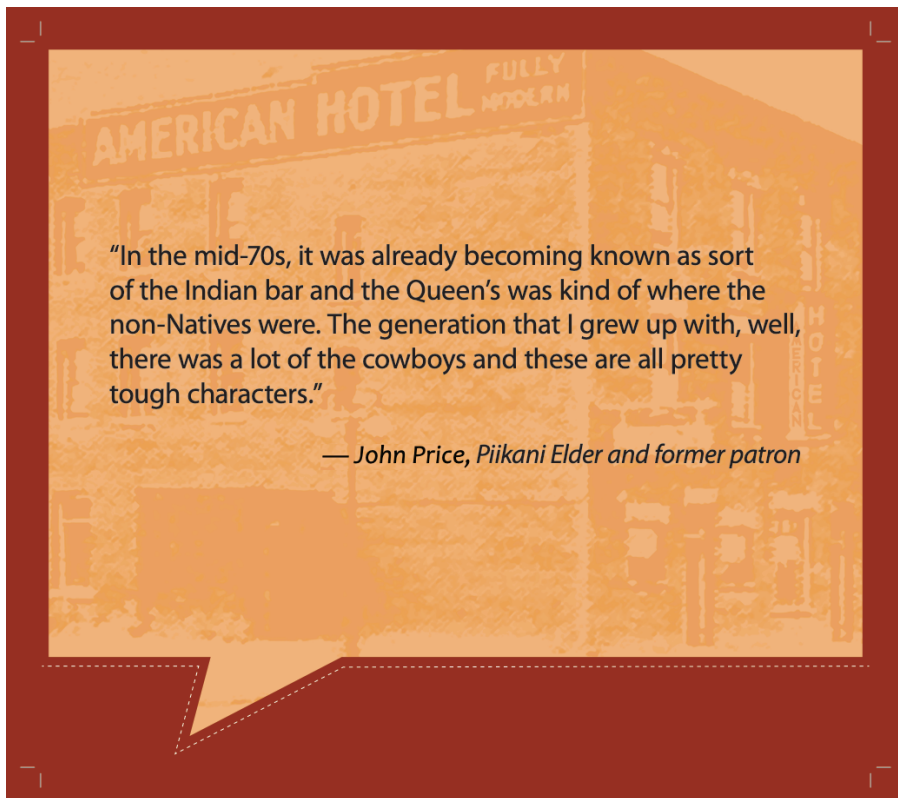


Figure 15: Interview Quote 1, Introduction

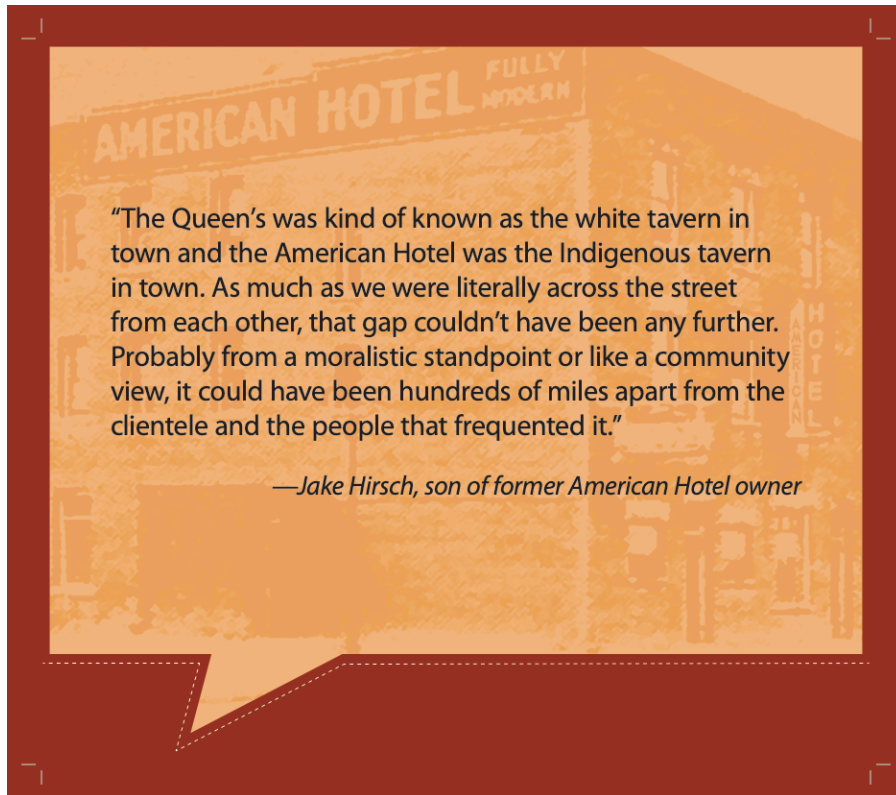


Figure 16: Interview Quote 2, Introduction

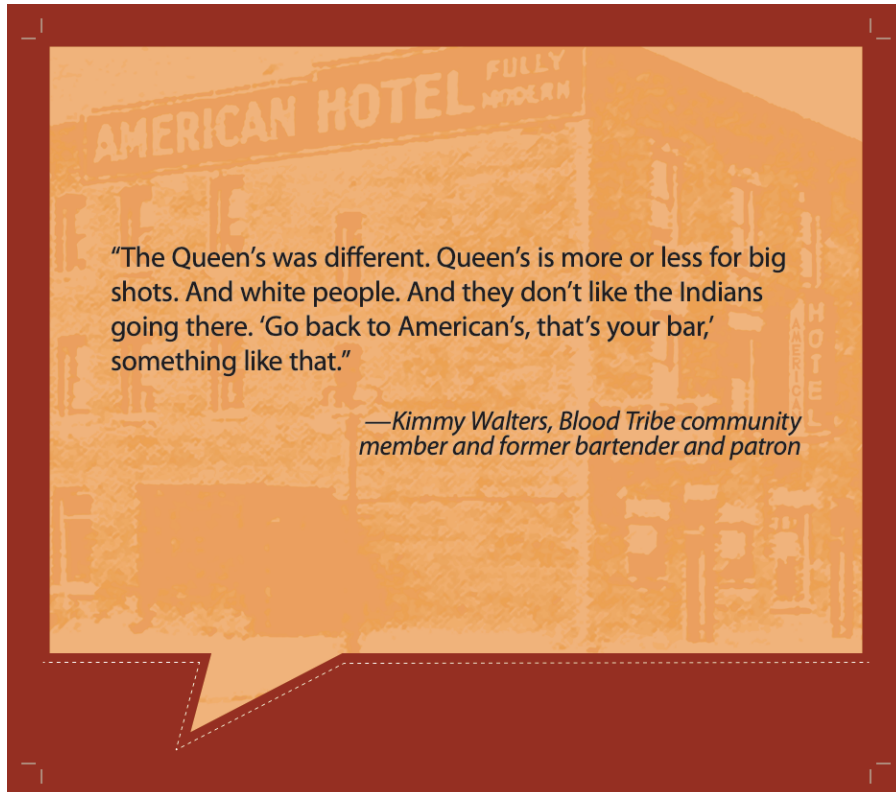


Figure 17: Interview Quote 3, Introduction

The American Hotel as a Gathering Space



Figure 18: Gathering Space, 23 April 2023

As the next section of the exhibition space explored, *Figure 18*, the American Hotel served as a gathering space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous patrons over its lifetime. Along the top of the wall runs a timeline, *Figure 19*, which features important dates in the hotel's history as well as the various changes to colonial laws that impacted the hotel's ability to serve alcohol, including the beginning and end of Prohibition in Alberta and referendums on the Piikani reserve to allow alcohol on reserve. These dates are important because they show the connection between the hotel's history and the social and legal changes that were happening simultaneously. While the American Hotel was built much earlier, the interactions and contact between white settlers and Blackfoot

peoples in the hotel bar did not legally begin until the mid-1960s with a referendum which allowed members of the Piikani nation to consume alcohol off-reserve. However, as some interviewees described, there was interaction prior to this change with bootleggers and bribed bouncers.⁵⁴ It is also important to note that the ALCB's rules on alcohol consumption only applied to white settlers, not Indigenous peoples, who remained prohibited from publicly consuming alcohol under the Indian Act. In 1951, however, the Indian Act was amended and, for the first time since 1876, legally allowed Indigenous peoples "to consume alcohol in public drinking establishments but did not allow for any other purchase, sale, possession, or consumption of intoxicants either on or off reserves."⁵⁵ It was not until the late 1950s to early 1960s that the Act was amended again, allowing provinces to grant full drinking rights on the condition that each band hold a referendum to decide if the majority of residents were in favour of allowing the possession and consumption of alcohol on-reserve, as shown in the timeline at the top of the Gathering Space section, reproduced in *Figure 19*.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See interviews with Doran Degenstein, Doug Singer, and Kimmy Walters for more information.

⁵⁵ Megan Schlase, "Liquor and the Indian Post WWII," *B.C. Historical News* 29, no. 1 (1996): 2.

⁵⁶ Schlase, 2.

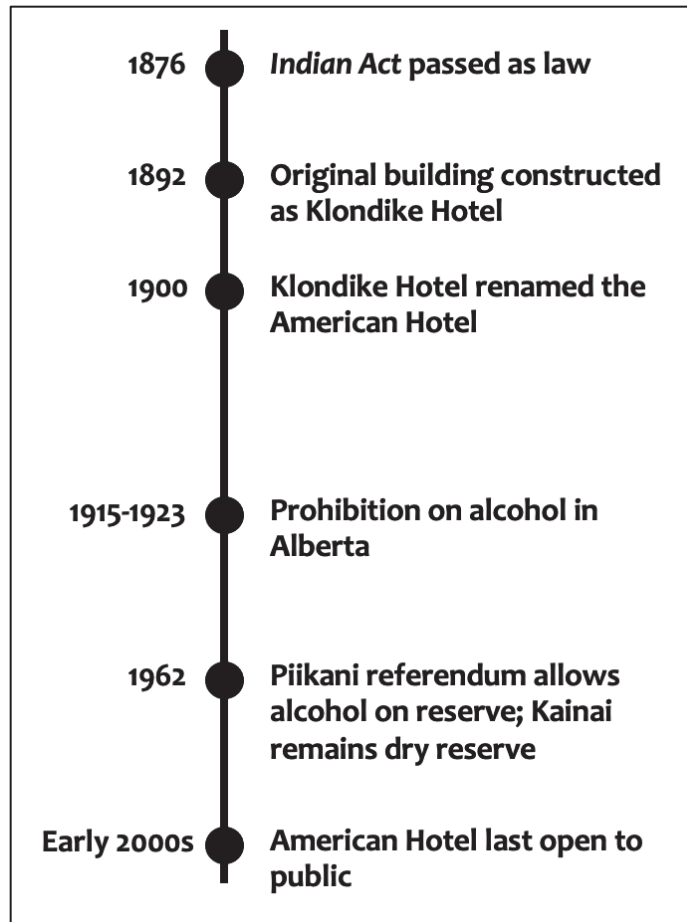


Figure 19: Reproduction of Timeline, *Gathering Space*

While there is more to the history of the American Hotel than a history of alcohol consumption, it played a major role in why people came to the hotel, especially in the later years when rooms were no longer rented out. Important to the concept of the hotel as a contact zone, the consumption alcohol is also crucial to the understanding the American Hotel as an “Indian” space.⁵⁷ The serving, and often over-serving, of alcohol to clientele furthered the asymmetrical power relationships between owner and patron, often

⁵⁷ Similarly, as Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson explain in *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011), “the most common Canadian stereotype with respect to Natives alleged and innate predilection for alcoholism and related behaviour that speaks to a basic absence of self-control.” (p. 37). Instead of understanding alcohol use and addiction in a social context, it becomes a personal problem, a genetic problem one is merely predisposed to.

to the point of needing to involve colonial authorities. As Cree scholar Harold R. Johnson explains, “[d]rinking is part of the colonial experience.”⁵⁸ In fact, the early licensing of beer parlours across the province “offered Alberta a way to make beer immediately available in almost every settlement in the province,” undoubtedly easing the process of white settler expansion into places like Fort Macleod.⁵⁹



Figure 20: Gathering Space Curatorial Panel

The Gathering Space section of the exhibition provided visitors with a nuanced picture of the hotel as a contact zone where individuals came to gather, converse, drink,

⁵⁸ Harold R. Johnson, *Firewater: How Alcohol is Killing My People (And Yours)* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2016), 34.

⁵⁹ Sarah E. Hamill, “Liquor Laws, Legal Continuity, and Hotel Beer Parlours in Alberta, 1924 to c. 1939,” *Social History* 49, no. 100 (2016): 591.

fight, and, ultimately, spend their money. Some of these interactions created a negative reputation for the American Hotel in the eyes of the white settler townspeople who bought into stereotypes of Indigenous drunkenness. As scholar Megan Schlase explains, the mid-twentieth-century colonial laws which allowed Indigenous peoples to publicly consume alcohol at places like the American Hotel meant that, for some, the goal was to “consume as much [alcohol] as possible in the time available to them.”⁶⁰ Schlase further details that “[t]he concentration of Native alcohol consumption within beer parlours also meant that Natives who drank tended to be muchmore [sic] in the public eye than those who did not,” resulting in a negative perception of Indigenous peoples who interacted and consumed alcohol at the American Hotel.⁶¹

Bookending the section are two framed photographs from Calgary photographer Richard Collens, who has been photographing the hotel for almost a decade. I first interacted with Richard over email; he responded to my call for interviewees explaining that while he did not have any stories to share, he was interested in the project and wanted to share some photos he had taken. After our conversation in late November of 2022, he came to tour the interior of the hotel. “Plum Purple Perspective,” *Figure 21*, was taken during that tour in December 2022, and “The Shady American,” *Figure 22*, was taken by Richard on one of his trips through Fort Macleod. He explained that the hotel is “a bit of a muse for me [...] I don’t go through Fort Macleod without taking a picture of that hotel.”⁶² While Richard did not have much to add in the way of stories about the American Hotel, including his photographs in the exhibition was, in my mind, a new way

⁶⁰ Schlase, 4.

⁶¹ Schlase, 4.

⁶² Richard Collens, interview with Ryley Gelinias, November 30, 2022.

of further engaging in the community. They also provided visitors with a different perspective and new medium to explore the significance of the hotel.

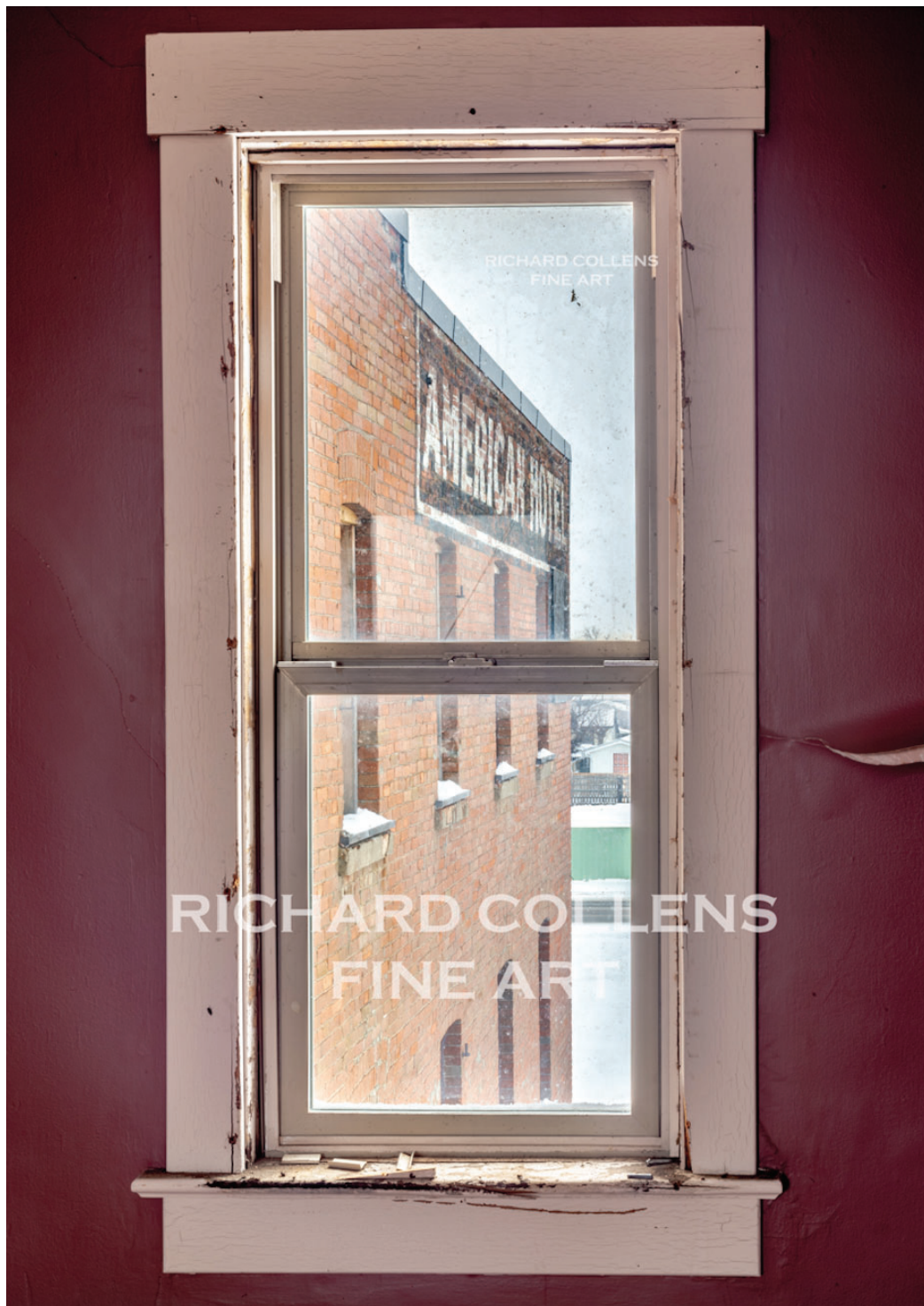


Figure 21: "Plum Purple Perspective," Richard Collens, Gathering Space



Figure 22: "The Shady American," Richard Collens, *Gathering Space*

Several interviewees countered their memories of bar fights, police profiling, and racism with stories of singing, dancing, and listening to music – either from live musicians or on the jukebox. Musician Noel Burles described his first time playing at the American Hotel in the 1980s. Unbeknownst to him, he had been hired by a former hotel employee and when he showed up to play, the owner at the time, Sigmund Sherwood, was not keen on paying him to perform and turned on the jukebox instead. Noel explained the response from the Indigenous patrons:

[O]ne of the boys [... was] playing pool, he was a big boy, looked up, looked around, picked up the eight ball and he just slammed it into the hole, walked over, unplugged the jukebox and every Indian in the bar walked down, into the dance floor, sat down and said, 'Play.' We played there many, many times after that.⁶³

This example shows how the American Hotel was a site of interaction and unequal power between owners, patrons, and, in this case, an outside community member. Sigmund was trying to assert his authority over Noel and the Indigenous patrons in the bar, however, he was overruled. In the exhibition, a faux jukebox, *Figure 23*, constructed of a tablet on a stand with an image of a jukebox, was loaded with a playlist, *Figure 24*, consisting of songs and artists either referenced by name in interviews or that fit the genre and time

⁶³ Noel Burles, interview with Ryley Gelinias, December 14, 2022.

period of 1950s country music that was consistently brought up as *the* music of the hotel, even in the later years.



Figure 23: Close Up of Jukebox, Gathering Space, 23 April 2023

Playlist for Exhibition

1. Charley Pride – “I’m Just Me”
2. Charley Pride – “Kiss an Angel Good Mornin”
3. Glen Campbell – “Try A Little Kindness”
4. Hank Williams – “Hey Good Lookin”
5. Hank Williams – “I Saw The Light”
6. Jim Reeves – “Adios Amigo”
7. John Denver – “Take Me Home, Country Roads”
8. Ian Tyson – “Four Strong Winds”
9. Johnny Horton – “Battle of New Orleans, In 1814”
10. Lefty Frizzell – “Saginaw, Michigan”
11. Waylon Jennings – “I’m a Ramblin’ Man”
12. Waylon Jennings – “Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys”
13. Waylon Jennings – “Only Daddy That’ll Walk The Line”

Figure 24: Jukebox Playlist, Gathering Space

The object case in the Gathering Space section, *Figure 25*, held the other two objects relating to the hotel on loan from the Fort Museum in Fort Macleod. The first object was the American Hotel ledger from 1913, which, as the guest ledger didactic panel, *Figure 26*, explained, detail some of the early history of the hotel, and what it would have looked like to visitors in 1913. This panel also included a quote from Charles Madl, a former co-owner of the hotel who described what he recalled from an old, now lost, photograph of the American Hotel's interior in these earlier years. This object case also contained a hotel 'rules' book for the Macleod House in the late 1880s. As the didactic panel for the handbill, *Figure 27*, explains, while the rule book does not explicitly mention the American Hotel, it was included because of the humorous regulations imposed by early hotels in the town, likely not dissimilar to those of the Klondike (later American) Hotel. These rules reflect the types of boarders who stayed at places like the Macleod House and the town's other hotels, gunslinging cowboys who were coming West in search of gold and settlement.

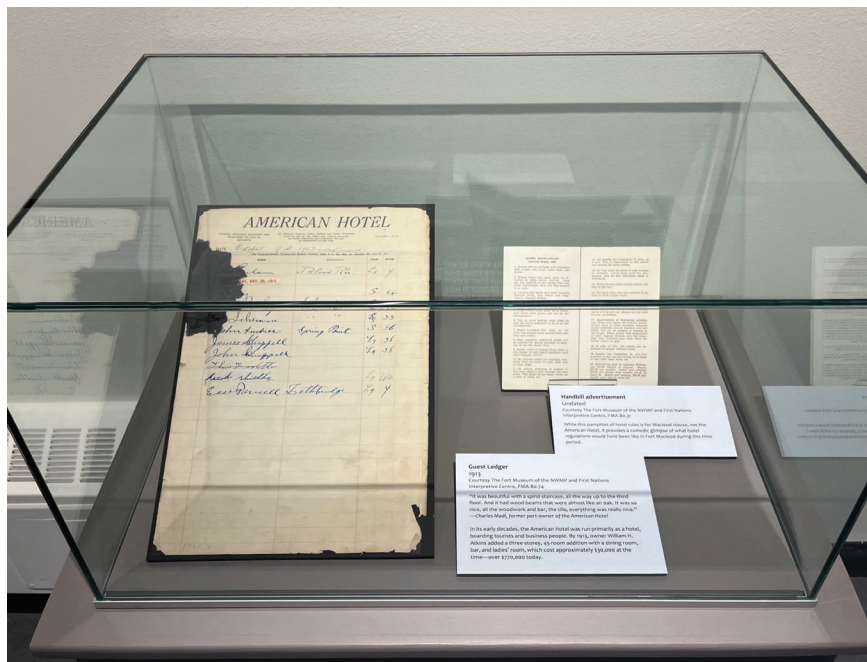


Figure 25: Object Case, Gathering Space, 23 April 2023

Guest Ledger

1913

Courtesy The Fort Museum of the NWMP and First Nations Interpretive Centre, FMA.80.74

In its early decades, the American Hotel was run primarily as a hotel, boarding tourists and business people. By 1913, owner William H. Atkins added a three-storey, 45-room addition with a dining room, bar, and ladies' room, which cost approximately \$30,000 at the time—over \$770,000 today.

“It was beautiful with a spiral staircase, all the way up to the third floor. And it had wood beams that were almost like an oak. It was so nice, all the woodwork and bar, the tills, everything was really nice.”

—Charles Madl, former part-owner of the American Hotel

Figure 26: Didactic Panel, Gathering Space

Handbill advertisement

Undated

Courtesy The Fort Museum of the NWMP and First Nations Interpretive Centre, FMA.80.31

While this pamphlet of hotel rules is for Macleod House, not the American Hotel, it provides a comedic glimpse of what hotel regulations would have been like in Fort Macleod during this time period.

Figure 27: Didactic Panel, Gathering Space

The quotes chosen for this section illustrate how the American Hotel functioned as a gathering space and detailed the sense of community patrons often found there. Exploring the hotel as a contact zone, some of the interviewees discussed the racial and social tensions felt, *Figure 31*, for instance, while others detailed how they saw the American Hotel as a “haven” for Indigenous peoples in town, *Figure 32*. My focus with the selection of these quotes was, ultimately, to use them to describe the hotel as more than just a bar. This was a belief that most interviewees had and compiling them here showed visitors that not only was the American Hotel a bar, but it was, as the interviewees explained, a “community hall,” a “cultural hub,” a place where Indigenous peoples could come and enjoy themselves. The American Hotel, as a gathering space, was a contact zone that worked to build community, even through some of the more difficult and violent experiences.



Figure 28: Interview Quote 1, Gathering Space



Figure 29: Interview Quote 2, Gathering Space

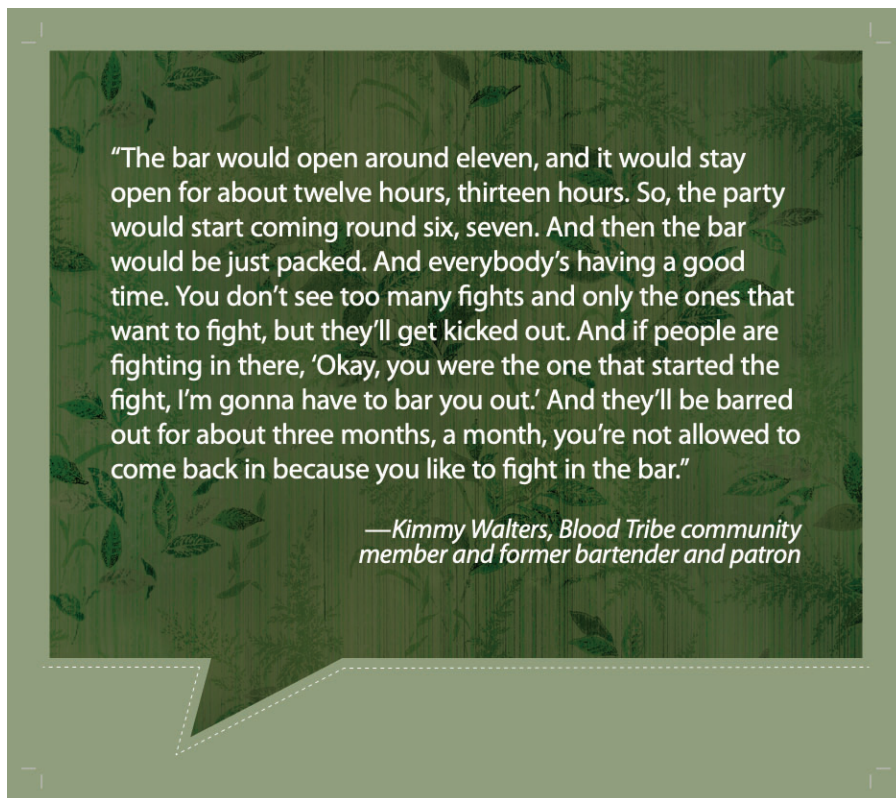


Figure 30: Interview Quote 3, Gathering Space

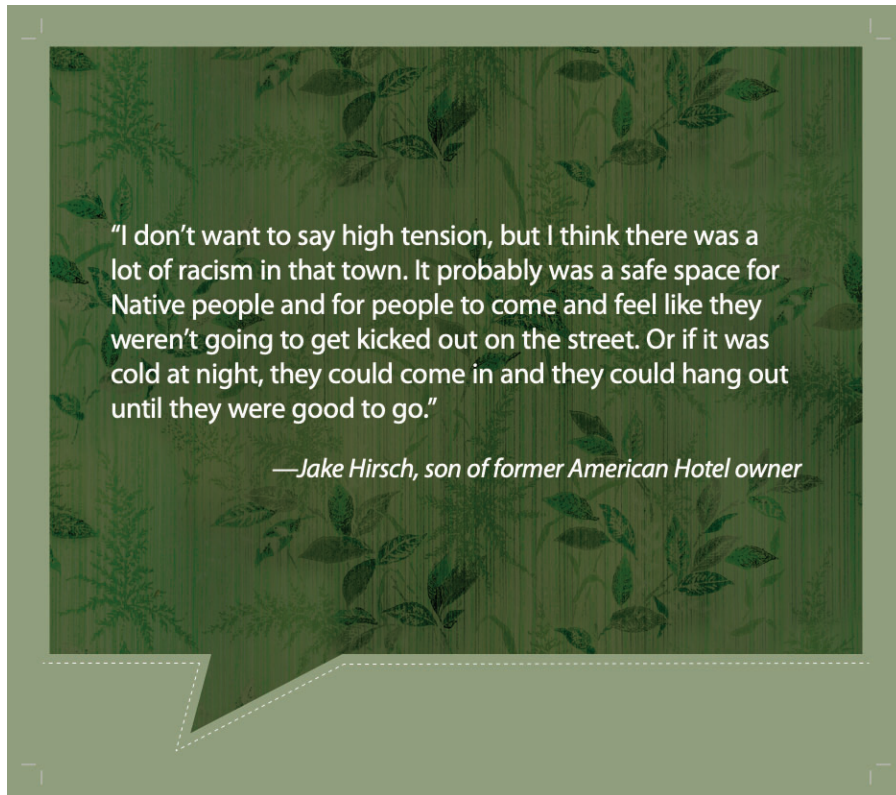


Figure 31: Interview Quote 4, Gathering Space

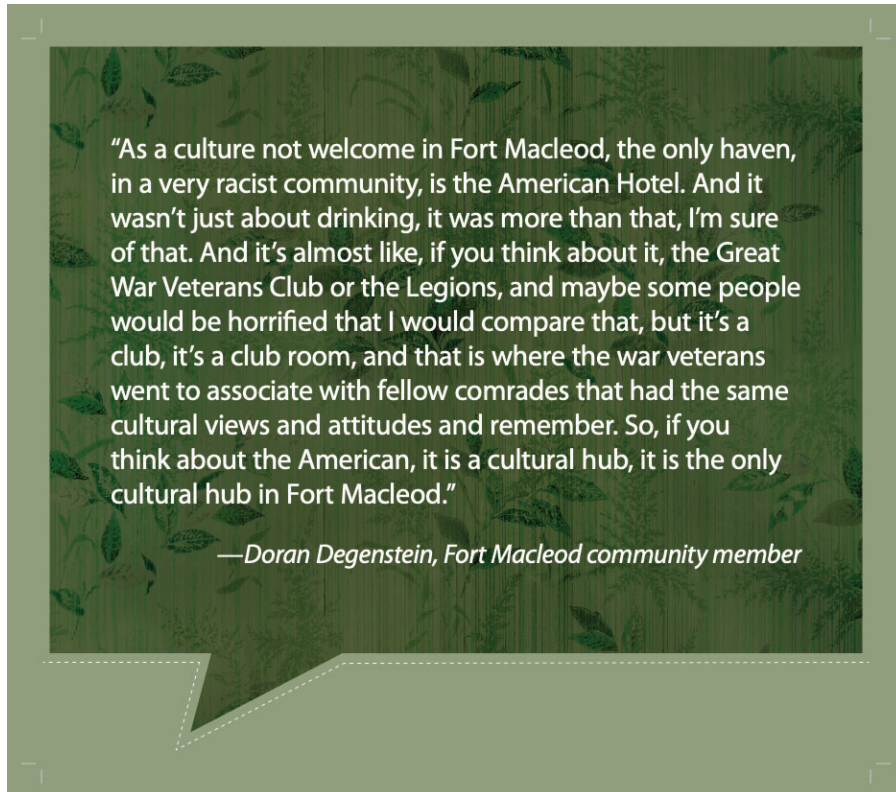


Figure 32: Interview Quote 5, Gathering Space



Figure 33: Interview Quote 6, Gathering Space

While there was not the space to fully explore the timeline of ownership over the American Hotel's lifetime, referencing the two main families I found in the archival scholarship was important in recognizing different types of owners and how they impacted the hotel's reputation and interaction with the larger community. A newspaper clipping from 1928, *Figure 34*, described the American Hotel's newest owner, John "Jack" Swinarton whose family would run the American Hotel, as well as the other hotels in Fort Macleod, notably the Queen's Hotel, for the next four decades. After the John Swinarton's death in 1943, his wife Margaret and son Albert took over the hotel empire in Fort Macleod and continued to run the hotels into the 1970s. As the didactic panel, *Figure 35*, accompanying this newspaper article explains, the Swinartons and the Sherwoods, another family which owned the American Hotel from 1981 to 1984, were

the two most discussed owners in the archival scholarship. The families were often discussed by interviewees and are involved in later sections of the exhibition, so they were introduced as a point of reference in the larger timeline.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1928
THE LETHBRIDGE HERALD
PAGE FOUR
NEWS OF THE DAY FROM SOUTH ALBERTA AND SOUTHEASTERN B.C.

Hotel Deal At Macleod Closed

American Hotel Bought By Swinarton and Grier For More Accommodation

(From Our Own Correspondent.)
MACLEOD, Oct. 16.—A property deal of considerable importance has just been completed in Macleod in the sale of the old American hotel, a fine large brick building which was built in 1913 by Tommy Atkins and latterly owned by the Calgary Brewing Company. The hotel has been closed for a number of years, but the new owners, Messrs. Swinarton and Grier, who are also proprietors of the Queens and Empire hotels, are going to reopen it early in the spring to provide more accommodation for their growing business. They are very short of accommodation in the Queens hotel down town, and the American will be furnished and fitted up in the most up-to-date hotel style, with every convenience and comfort for the traveling public. The hotel is conveniently situated, especially for tourist traffic, on the west end of Main street, right on the through thoroughfare of the Red and Blue trails.

Figure 34: Newspaper Article, Lethbridge Herald, Gathering Space

Although the American Hotel changed hands several times in its history, two owners came up several times over the course of the interviews and research. The Swinarton family owned the American, as well as other hotels in Fort Macleod. After the death of John “Jack” Swinarton in 1943, his wife Margaret Swinarton owned the building and leased it to their son, Albert Swinarton, until the mid 1970s. In early 1981, Sigmund and Ramona Sherwood purchased the American Hotel and owned it until the spring of 1984.

Figure 35: Didactic Panel, Gathering Space

Gender and Sexual-Based Violences Experienced in Contact Zones

The American Hotel, while functioning as an Indigenous gathering place, could also be a dangerous space – particularly for Indigenous women who often experienced the hotel as a contact zone that resulted in colonial violence. As told through the interview quotes in this section, the American Hotel was not infrequently the site of gender- and colonial-based sexual violence. Two interviewees described instances of physical and sexual violence that they encountered or witnessed first-hand at the hotel. While not all these stories made it into the museum exhibition due to their graphic nature, it was important for me to include quotes which articulated these events and explored what it could be like, as an Indigenous woman, at the American Hotel. Examining the hotel through such stories, in the lens of a contact zone where the asymmetrical balance of power was related to one’s gender often meant the attempted destruction of Indigenous peoples, especially women, as a result of white colonial powers.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ For more on how settler colonial orders view Indigenous women as a threat to colonialism that must be eradicated, see Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).



Figure 36: Gender, 23 April 2023

One of the interview quotes in this section, *Figure 38*, also describe what it was like to be a female owner of the hotel and the interactions with a new group of people who were, stereotypically, cast as aggressive, violent, and drunk. In my conversation with Cuban-born Rosa Smith, she explained that she had never interacted with Blackfoot peoples before, or really any Indigenous peoples until working at the hotel. While she and her husband ran the hotel together, he was often away on business and left her in charge

of the bar – a job she was at initially frightened of doing.⁶⁵ This particular story is interesting because it further shows the gender imbalances within the asymmetrical power structure of a contact zone. As has been seen with other, white, male owners of the hotel, they have, largely, held the power over the Indigenous patrons. However, in this situation, Rosa, a non-white, female owner, felt like she did not have that same power over the patrons and was afraid. In this case, one's gender adds another layer of nuance to the manifestation of the American Hotel as a contact zone.

⁶⁵ Rosa Smith, interview with Ryley Gelinis, December 28, 2022.

GENDER

Gender made a significant impact on a person's interactions with the American Hotel, in addition to racial and economic factors. Over the years, there have been many women who managed or owned the hotel, either with partners or on their own. Women, particularly Indigenous women, interacting with the hotel often faced gender- and sexual-based violence that their male counterparts did not.



Above: "American Hotel owners," January 28, 1981
Courtesy *The Macleod Gazette*

Left: The American Hotel Sign, 2023
Courtesy Dryden Roesch



Figure 37: Gender Curatorial Panel

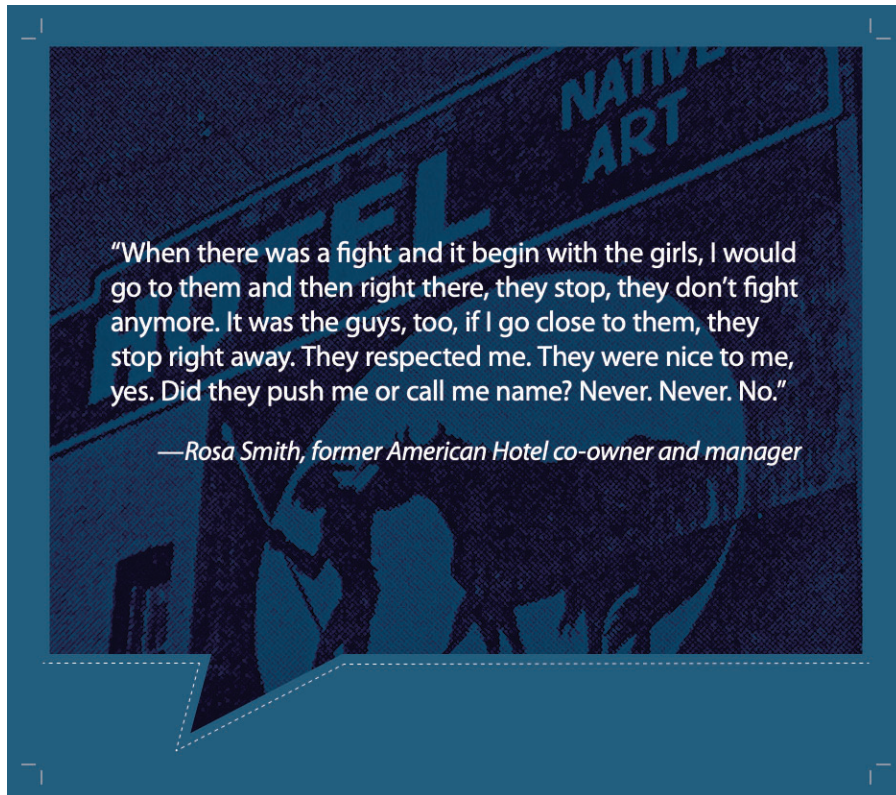


Figure 38: Interview Quote 1, Gender

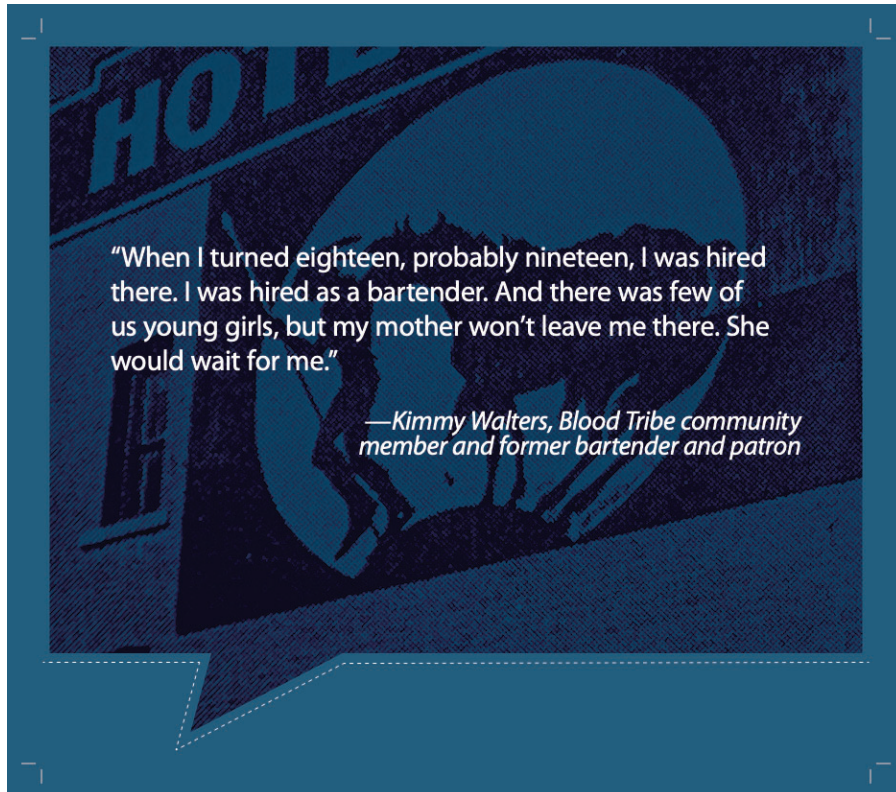


Figure 39: Interview Quote 2, Gender

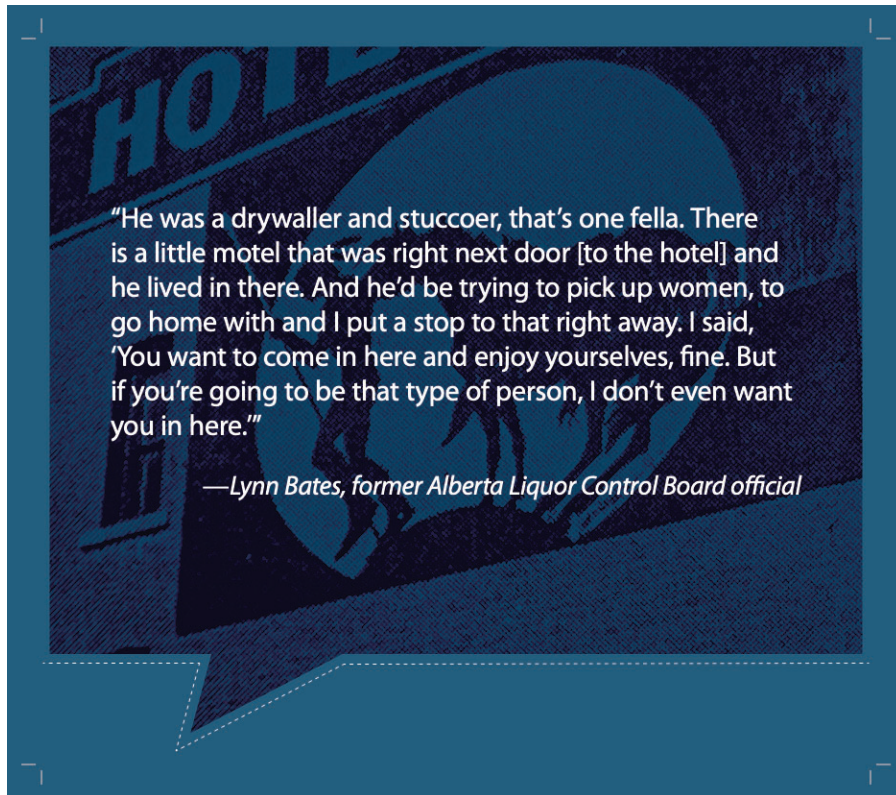


Figure 40: Interview Quote 3, Gender

Opposite a doorway, the exhibit's discussion of gender continued with copies of two pages from the *Alberta Liquor Licensing Act* (ALCA), showing the additional levels of state control over women, and especially Indigenous women in places like the American Hotel. From the 1958 *Act*, Section 31, (Figure 41) beer could not be served to or consumed by men and women together, and if the licensee wished to serve men and women together, they had to create separate spaces for each within the tavern and receive written approval from the ALCB.⁶⁶ In 1967, Section 31 (Figure 42) of the *Liquor Licensing Act* was amended to state that the ALCB could, at any time, designate part of the licensed premise to serve men only, women only, or both together.⁶⁷ The first of these

⁶⁶ Government of Alberta, "An Act Respecting Liquor and the Selling Thereof under Government Control," SA 1958, chapter 37, <https://canlii.ca/t/53tnb>.

⁶⁷ Government of Alberta, "An Act to Amend *The Liquor Control Act, 1958*," SA 1967, chapter 45, <https://canlii.ca/t/53vts>.

Acts was put in place before the 1960s referendum to allow Indigenous peoples to consume alcohol publicly, as outlined on the timeline in the Gathering Space section, and thus only applied to white women. As the didactic panel, *Figure 43*, explained, the amended *Act* from 1967 gave the ALCB the authority to segregate the premises as they saw fit, based, notably, on “location, conduct, and regulations.”⁶⁸ This amendment was put into place after Indigenous peoples were allowed into bars and taverns and impacted Indigenous women wanting to access alcohol.

1958	LIQUOR LICENSING (PART II)	Chap. 38	207
<p>(2) Subject to subsections (3) and (4), no beverage room licensee whose premises are or will be situate within a city shall serve beer or permit beer to be served to or consumed by men and women together on the premises of the licensee.</p> <p>(3) Where in a case to which subsection (2) applies a beverage room licensee or an applicant for a beverage room licence desires to serve beer to both men and women, the Board may in writing allow him to establish in his hotel a separate licensed beverage room premises for each, subject to such conditions as the Board may prescribe.</p> <p>(4) Where in a case to which subsection (2) applies a beverage room licensee or an applicant for a beverage room licence, desires to serve beer to both men and women on the same licensed beverage room premises, the Board may, subject to such conditions as it may prescribe, allow him to establish in his hotel a licensed beverage room for the sale of beer to women and to women and the male escorts thereof.</p> <p>(5) With due variations in the matters of detail, the provisions of this Act applicable to the location, suitability, conduct and regulation of the licensed premises of beverage room licensees apply to the separate licensed beverage room premises established pursuant to subsection (3) or (4).</p> <p>(6) The Board may in its discretion order in writing that one or other of the licensed beverage room premises of a beverage room licensee be closed as a beverage room and thereafter it shall not be used as a beverage room and shall not be re-opened as a beverage room except with the written permission of the Board.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Beer Vendor's Licence</i></p> <p>32. On application therefor being made in the prescribed form by a beverage room licensee or by an applicant for a beverage room licence, and on payment by him of the prescribed fees and on compliance with this Act, the Board may, subject to Part III, issue a beer vendor's licence to the applicant.</p> <p>33. A beer vendor's licence shall not be issued unless the applicant is a beverage room licensee or with the issue of a beverage room licence to the applicant.</p> <p>34. A beer vendor's licence is authority for the licensee named therein</p> <p>(a) to purchase beer from the Board and to have and keep beer so purchased in that part of the hotel set out in the licence, and</p> <p>(b) to sell beer in closed bottles to persons not disqualified under <i>The Liquor Control Act, 1958</i>, for consumption only in a place where it may lawfully be consumed.</p>			

Figure 41: 1958 Liquor Control Act

Chap. 46	LIQUOR LICENSING	1967
<p>(2) With respect to any beverage room licence issued in connection with premises located in a city, the Board, by endorsement upon the licence, may from time to time designate:</p> <p>(a) that part of the premises where beer may be served to men only;</p> <p>(b) that part of the premises where beer may be served to women only;</p> <p>(c) that part of the premises where beer may be served to men and women together;</p> <p>due consideration being given to the purpose and requirements of this Act in respect of the location, suitability, conduct and regulation of the licensed premises.</p> <p>Amends s. 34 6. Section 34, clause (a) is amended by adding after the words “to purchase beer” the words “, of such maximum alcoholic strength as may be prescribed by the Board.”</p> <p>Amends s. 56 7. Section 56, subsection (1), clause (b) is amended by adding after the words “Mounted Police” the words “and city police forces”.</p> <p>Amends s. 60 8. Section 60 is amended</p> <p>(a) by striking out the word “only”,</p> <p>(b) by renumbering the section as subsection (1) and by adding the following subsection:</p> <p>(2) Notwithstanding section 73, where the licensed premises are located in a hotel or motel which provides food service to the rooms of all its guests, the holder of a dining lounge licence may sell and deliver liquor purchased by the glass to a <i>bona fide</i> registered guest</p> <p>(a) in the guest room occupied by him in the hotel or</p> <p>(b) in the motel unit occupied by him, if the unit has been approved, in writing, by the Board for such service,</p> <p>for consumption there in accordance with this Act and <i>The Liquor Control Act, 1958</i>, and the regulations, by persons who are not disqualified under <i>The Liquor Control Act, 1958</i> from consuming liquor.</p> <p>Amends s. 64 9. Section 64 is struck out and the following is substituted:</p> <p>Entertain- 64. (1) On application therefor being made in the prescribed form and on payment of the prescribed fees and on compliance with this Act and the regulations, the Board may issue to a dining lounge licensee or lounge licensee authorization to provide live entertainment for the patrons of his licensed dining room or licensed lounge if, in the opinion of the Board,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">320</p>		

Figure 42: 1967 Liquor Control Act

⁶⁸ Government of Alberta, “An Act to Amend *The Liquor Control Act, 1958*.”

*The Liquor Licensing Act, 1958
and An Act to Amend The Liquor Control Act, 1967*

Liquor laws across Canada often differed province to province. In Alberta, legislation was controlled by the Alberta Liquor Control Board which continues to develop liquor-related regulations. The 1958 Act specifies who was allowed in a beverage room and how an applicant could go about obtaining a license to serve both men and women in the same beverage room. The 1967 amendment required applicants to designate which particular part of the licensed premises that served men and women separately or together.

Figure 43: Didactic Panel, Gender

Whether it was restricted access to alcohol or harassment in the parking lot, women – especially Indigenous women – experienced the American Hotel differently than their male counterparts did. As this section explored, there are nuances within contact zones, and the American Hotel is no different, with interviewees explaining the gender-based and sexual violence and discrimination that they faced at and around the hotel. Looking at the hotel as a contact zone through the lens of gender is important in recognizing these differences and how one’s interaction with the space and people around it differs based on gender.

Figures of Authority Within a Contact Zone

AUTHORITY

As a contact zone, the American Hotel was the site of unequal power relationships. This was seen between different types of patrons but also between hotel ownership and patrons. Most notably, these power imbalances occurred between patrons and local authorities.

Subject to strict and changing laws on the consumption of alcohol in provincial law as well as within the Indian Act, Indigenous patrons have described race-based profiling in and around the American Hotel. Some patrons felt police overstepped their roles to satisfy the racially-charged concerns of the citizens of Fort Macleod, but also to control Indigenous populations who travelled to the hotel from neighbouring reserves.



Figure 44: Authority Curatorial Panel

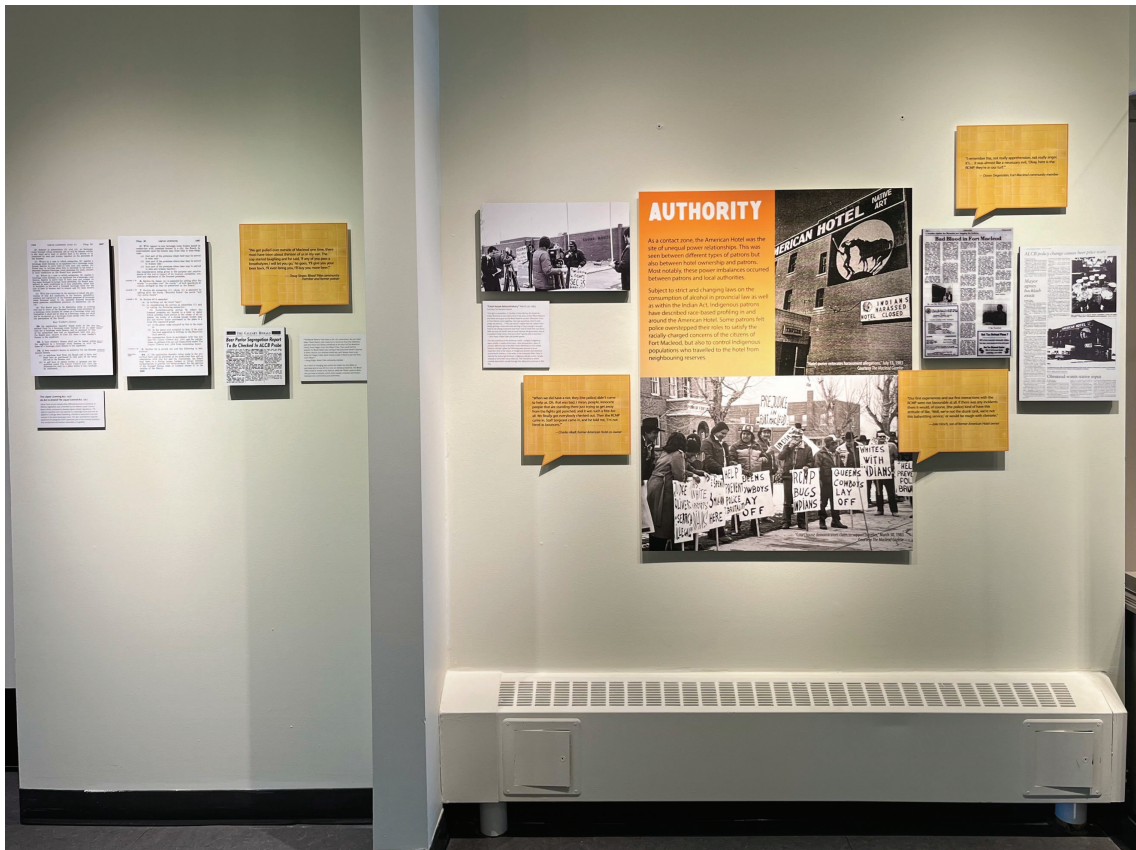


Figure 45: Gender (continued) and Authority, 23 April 2023

Focusing on the interactions between patrons, hotel owners, and the local colonial police force, the next section of the exhibition dealt with the issue of authority. As the curatorial panel, *Figure 44*, explains claims of harassment, discrimination, and racism were leveled at police and citizens of Fort Macleod. On the left side of *Figure 45*, the Authority section begins with a 1966 newspaper article, *Figure 46*, detailing the segregation experienced at the Queen’s Hotel under the Swinarton ownership, which may have been the catalyst for Indigenous patronage at the American Hotel. After the referendum in the 1960s which allowed Piikani peoples to consume alcohol off of the reserve, Cordell Swinarton, the manager of the Queen’s Hotel and brother of hotel owner Albert G. Swinarton, introduced an informal policy “of having Indians drink at the

American Hotel and not at the Queen's [... as] a control measure when the Peigan Indians had drinking privileges and the Bloods didn't."⁶⁹ Cordell Swinarton further explained that "[w]e wanted to retain the American for the Indians and the Queen's for the tourist types."⁷⁰ Given these comments, and those made by my interviewees, it is possible that this segregation, initiated by a white settler business owner in the 1960s, became a community-recognized rule at the American Hotel that persisted decades until the hotel closed in the early 2000s.



Figure 46: Newspaper Article, *Calgary Herald*, Authority⁷¹

⁶⁹ "Beer Parlor Segregation Report To Be Checked In ALCB Probe," *Calgary Herald*, 13 May 1966, <https://www.proquest.com/hnpcalgaryherald/docview/2253711815/C1A3359D758F41CBPQ/1?accountid=12063> (Accessed October 16, 2023): 1.

⁷⁰ "Beer Parlor Segregation Report To Be Checked In ALCB Probe," 1.

⁷¹ Material republished with the express permission of *Calgary Herald*, a division of Postmedia Network Inc. For more on reprinting permissions in this thesis, see Appendix 6.

The Calgary Herald, May 13, 1966
As a result of changing laws within the *Indian Act*, the ability to purchase alcohol was left to a vote on individual reserves. The Blood Tribe voted to remain a dry reserve, while the Piikani voted to allow the purchase of alcohol, which often caused confusion and friction between the communities and authorities.

“The Blood Reserve had voted to be a dry reservation. But our sister tribe, Piikani Nation, had voted not to be dry so they [my relations] said that there was always somebody at the door [of the American Hotel], from Peigan, from the Piikani Tribe. That would tell the owners if a Blood Indian was coming in because they weren’t allowed in there. And so, our relatives would say, we’d always have to go bribe the Peigan Indian some money to get in there to say that they were Piikani.”
—Doug Singer, Blood Tribe community member

Figure 47: Didactic Panel, Authority

Cementing how the hotel would be recognized by the settler community going forward and solidifying the power imbalance between the Indigenous patrons and largely white settler owners of the American Hotel, this article demonstrated how figures of authority were created and maintained in the contact zone of the hotel. Portions of the exhibition section, continued on the right side of *Figure 45*, featured newspaper articles and photographs which detailed the mistreatment and police harassment of patrons at the hotel, further exemplifying the asymmetrical relations of power between these (mostly white settler) authority figures and the Indigenous patrons.

Given the colonial nature of the RCMP, particularly in Fort Macleod as one of the original NWMP forts in the West, it was critical for me that interactions with the police were included in the exhibition. I knew that the often fraught, often racially charged relationship between Indigenous peoples and the colonial police force was one of the most significant aspects of the history of settler-Indigenous relations in southern Alberta

and especially in the context of the American Hotel, and I did not want to sugar coat what many interviewees had shared was a difficult relationship to navigate. The content included in this section contains minimal curatorial revisions to portray an accurate history of the American Hotel, which discusses the racial profiling, derogatory comments, excessive surveillance, and other practices that the RCMP participated in in the context of the hotel.

Interviewees explained that the police frequently waited outside the hotel, ready to pull patrons over, even if they had not been drinking. Building on scholar Janaki Bakhle's work, Jeffrey Monaghan explains that this "surveillance is the 'first weapon' at the disposal of colonial authorities. It is meant to place an increasingly large number of individuals under systematic monitoring."⁷² Numerous interviewees alluded to the fact that such police surveillance occurred *because* the majority of hotel patrons were Indigenous, again, recognizing the white settler colonial legacy that assumes Indigenous peoples are inferior, unable to "hold their alcohol," and just drink to excess.⁷³ The settler police suspicion, and almost expectation, that Indigenous patrons leaving the American Hotel were driving drunk pervaded many interviewee accounts and was included in the interview quotes in this section. As scholar James Wilt describes, the "consumption or alleged consumption of alcohol by Indigenous people is more visibly leveraged by the

⁷² Jeffrey Monaghan, "Settler Governmentality and Racializing Surveillance in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 38, no. 4 (2013): 496.

⁷³ Police in Canada, including the RCMP, have a long history of unfairly targeting Indigenous peoples and other people of colour and dealing in these groups racially motivated ways. For more on such interactions, including instances of police neglect, Starlight tours, and other abuses of power, see: Elizabeth Comack, *Racialized Policing: Aboriginal People's Encounters with the Police* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2012); Sherene H. Razack, *Dying from Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries into Indigenous Deaths in Custody* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Kara Granzow, *Invested Indifference: How Violence Persists in Settler Colonial Society* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020); and Gülden Özcan, "The Colour of Policing in Lethbridge," in *Racism in Southern Alberta and Anti-racist Activism for Change*, ed. Caroline Hodes and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2023), 183-203.

white settler state to justify everything from police violence, to gentrification and displacement, to the trivialization of Indigenous death.”⁷⁴ Eventually, as other interview quotes in this section explain, by the 1990s, the RCMP eventually became less active in their approach and seemed to ignore the issues happening at the American Hotel altogether, telling hotel owners that they were not ‘bouncers’ or ‘babysitters.’

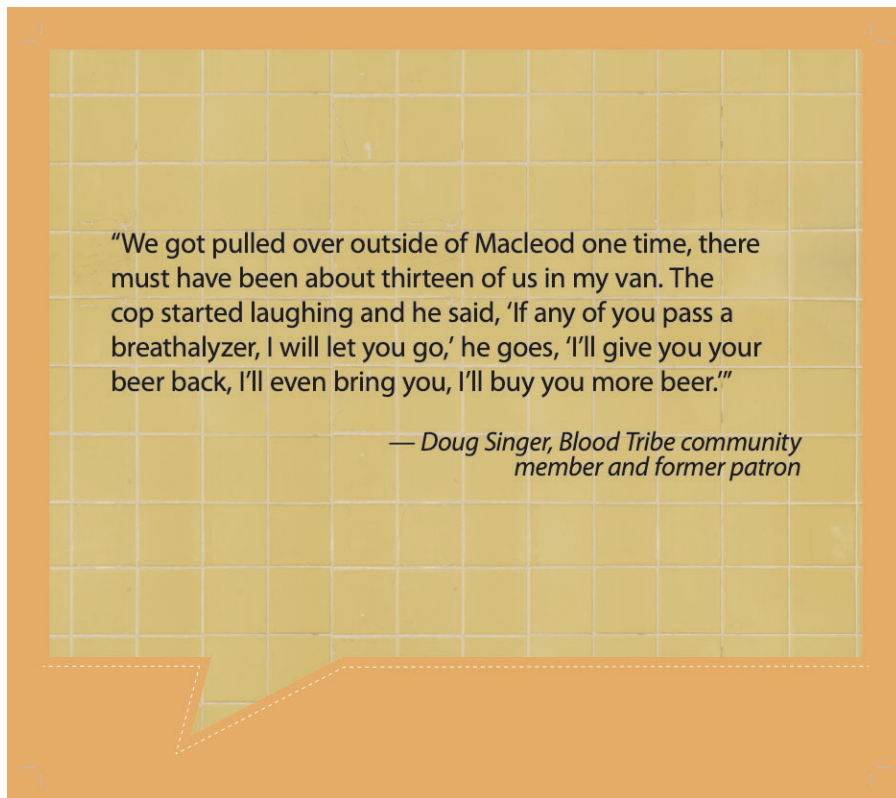


Figure 48: Interview Quote 1, Authority

⁷⁴ James Wilt, “Tracing the Geography of Canada’s Racist Liquor Control Policies,” Canadian Dimension, August 10, 2020, <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/tracing-the-geography-of-canadas-racist-liquor-control-policies#:~:text=The%20racist%20history%20of%20liquor,quash%20efforts%20towards%20self%2Ddetermination>

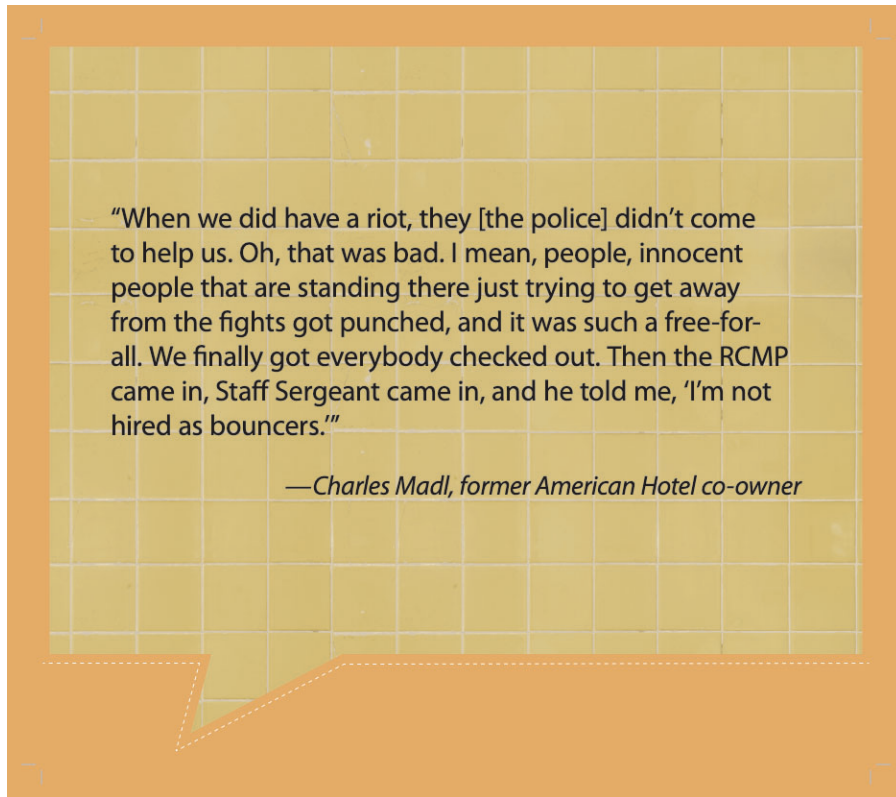


Figure 49: Interview Quote 2, Authority



Figure 50: Interview Quote 3, Authority



Figure 51: Interview Quote 4, Authority

By 1983, tensions came to a head when the ALCB charged Sigmund and Ramona Sherwood with allegedly allowing an intoxicated person to remain on the premises of the hotel. This prompted the temporary closure of the American Hotel, as well as a protest in Fort Macleod by Indigenous and non-Indigenous patrons who, as seen in the images on the Authority Curatorial Panel, *Figure 44*, had had enough with police surveillance and interference. The signs held by protesters explained their sentiments, decrying: “Prejudice in Fort Macleod,” “RCMP Bugs Indians,” “Queens Cowboys Lay Off,” “Help Prevent Police Brutality,” among others. Sigmund, a Polish Roman Catholic Auschwitz survivor, believed himself attuned to issues of racial profiling, particularly from figures of authority and the “on the streets of ‘civilized nations.’”⁷⁵ Having lived through a

⁷⁵ Tanenbaum, 194.

genocide, Sigmund sympathized with the Blackfoot peoples who he recognized as experiencing similar genocidal practices by the Canadian settler state at the hands of the RCMP. As a result of the charges against the Sherwoods, a group of thirty mostly Indigenous protestors marched to the Fort Macleod Provincial Court House in March of 1983 in support of the Sherwoods and against the unfair regimes of the RCMP more generally experienced in the town. As the didactic panel, *Figure 53*, for one of the protest images, *Figure 52*, included in the exhibition explained, the Sherwood protest was just one of many happening across Canada. Indigenous peoples had reached a breaking point when it came to the treatment from the RCMP and the Canadian government, and this protest was another example of their resistance and resilience against the colonial state.



Figure 52: Archival Image, Macleod Gazette, Authority

“Court house demonstrators claim to support hotelier,” March 30, 1983

Courtesy *The Macleod Gazette*

The very existence of the American Hotel—a largely Indigenous space amidst a mostly white town—also represented a place of protest. With the rise of the Red Power Movement in the United States in the late 1960s, the following years proved to be an important time in the history of Indigenous protest and resistance across North America. In the wake of the proposed *White Paper* in 1969 by the federal government, Indigenous people across Canada refused to have their voices silenced. This resistance to settler colonial destruction carried through the 1980s and continues to this day.

“You got to remember, in the 80s, in the mid-70s, the American Indian Movement was really active in this area, on the Piikani Reserve and there were guys on the Blood Reserve as well. Whenever three or four Natives were together, the cops would just, they’d really shake you down [...] They just weren’t happy that the Indians were finally getting a voice and were starting to [say] enough is enough, they’re not taking it anymore and that’s kind of what that was about. With the way the RCMP used to treat Natives, the generation was at a pushback state where they just weren’t gonna take it anymore.”

—John Price, Piikani Elder and former patron

Figure 53: Didactic Panel, Authority

The remainder of the Authority section contained two newspaper articles, *Figures 54 and 55*, which explained the legal battle between the Sherwoods, the ALCB, and local RCMP, and detailed how the town’s mayor and other local representatives were responding to it. Over the course of several months, the *Kainai News*, one of the first Indigenous-run newspapers in Canada started in the late 1960s, published several letters-to-the-editor and newspaper articles following the protest and subsequent delay and eventual dismissal of the case. The American Hotel was ordered to close for six days in July of 1983, but it was reopened early on the fourth day of the license suspension. The two articles included in the exhibition, both from the *Kainai News*, detail these events and show how, in understanding the American Hotel as a contact zone, the power structures, like those put in place by the ALCB and enforced by the local authorities, unfairly

targeted the Indigenous patrons of the hotel, and the owners who are sympathetic to these issues.

Page 4
KAINAI NEWS
February #2, 1983

A hotelier claims the Mounties are bugging his Indians

Bad Blood in Fort Macleod

When he bought the American Hotel for about \$500,000 in 1981, realtor Sigmund Sherwood, 59, tall, gregarious and Polish-born, was told to expect trouble from the mostly Indian clientele. A survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp, who has always prided himself on his lack of prejudice, Mr. Sherwood nevertheless went ahead and moved his family from Calgary to Fort Macleod (population 3,129), 100 miles to the south, into the 70-year-old, red-brick establishment, on which he spent \$85,000 in renovations. Alas, the American's gross revenue declined from \$450,000 in 1981, to \$380,000 in 1982. Mr. Sherwood doesn't blame this on the Indians; he blames it on the local RCMP.

Last week Mr. Sherwood, a grey-haired man, six-foot-one, and his wife Ramona, 52, a petite Cuban with flaming orange hair, complained to the Fort Macleod

Police Commission that the Mounties "raided" the hotel 250 times last year. The couple also placed an advertisement in the Calgary Sun headlined "Harassment," asking for advice on "how to cope with this type of police interference." Local MLA LeRoy Fjordbotten, minister of agriculture, has promised the Sherwoods he would take up the matter with Solicitor-General Graham Harle.

Built in 1913 in anticipation of the railroad, the American was the second hotel in Fort Macleod; the first was the sandstone Queen's (circa 1903), which remains the major competition. When prohibition arrived in 1915, the Queen's the first hotel west of Winnipeg to have telephones stayed open, but the American closed until the 1930's. Originally a stately edifice with baths in each of its 24 rooms and a luxurious dining chamber, the American

was reopened in the later years of the Depression as a modest hostelry for traveling salesman. Guests used the kitchen to cook their own meals.

When the public drinking ban was lifted from Indians in the late 1950's, the American, which stands one block away from the Queen's at the main intersection of town, became the favourite night spot among members of the nearby Blood and Peigan reserves, which now have populations of 5,700 and 2,000, respectively. Locally, the Queen's is known as a mixed bar with a 50-50 Indian-white clientele, while the American has attracted 90 per cent to 95 per cent Indians for 20 years.

Mr. Sherwood, formerly from Toronto, had been selling real estate in Alberta for about three years when he asked to sell the American. He spent several months trying, but encountered customer reluctance when they learned of the race of the clientele.

Finally, in December 1981, Mr. Sherwood decided he liked the "million dollar view" of the Oldman River valley from the hotel's living quarters, packed his wife, three children and himself in to the family Lincoln Continental, and drove from Calgary to Fort Macleod to live.

Throwing themselves wholeheartedly into catering to their Indian customers, Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood bought books and read up on the Blood and Peigan bands and made trips to the reserves to get to know the people. They bought \$10,000 worth of Indian paintings, which they hung on the walls of the 117-seat tavern. They installed a big television screen and a pool table, laid new carpets and painted the guest rooms.

The newly-opened bar offered a home away from home for the Indians. The Sherwoods allowed sing-songs in the Blackfoot language and such touches as, last Christmas Eve, a free buffet for Indians. The hotel sponsors the Peigan band's junior hockey team, has donated money towards education and has paid to bail out jailed Indians.

Mr. Sherwood says it is a "small minority" of the town's 18 RCMP officers who have been harassing his clients. He says police enter the tavern between five and 12 times a week, constantly checking customers for identification and intoxication. Last December, he says, seven officers walked from table to table asking Indians to pull back

their hats to show their faces. Mr. Sherwood says he has heard an officer refer to Indians as "animals" and on one public occasion complained that natives are "pampered" in the American. "What is wrong with pampering customers anyhow?" Mr. Sherwood asks.

Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood have been called before the Alberta Liquor Control Board in Edmonton, accused by authorities of serving drunks and minors. ON one occasion, the ALCB closed the hotel for three days. Mr. Sherwood, who says he makes \$100,000 a year from real estate dealings without the hotel revenue, claims the RCMP are constantly parked outside his premises, but that the Queen's is ignored.

"They have harsh, unforgiving rules for Indians and another set for whites," he says. "We are obviously don't want to risk our licence or our livelihood. But if they really want to nab us, they can always find one person who is drunk or underage."

The Indians themselves, reluctant to aggravate relations with the police, are remaining quiet on the issue. Everett Soop, 39, the Blood band councillor responsible for investigating the matter, says Indians

have a tendency to become so used to RCMP harassment that they don't even think of complaining. He intends to talk to the RCMP this week. "We want to talk to both sides," he says.

Prejudice works both ways." Wendell (Rex) Black Rabbit, 23, a Blood Reserve ambulance driver who only occasionally goes to the American, says he was picked up by police there last December on the pretext he was responsible for a break and enter. He was later released at the police station. Given such treatment, he says, Indians think twice now about going to the American.

RCMP Staff Sergeant Donald Nassichuk, 45, isn't willing to discuss the matter because of a March 23 court case in which the hotel stands charged with allowing an intoxicated person to remain on the premises.

The staff sergeant does contend, however, that relations between the police and the Indians are harmonious. In fact, he was made an honorary member of the Headdress Society and presented a headdress two years ago.

Marilyn McKinley



Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood and the hotel



KAINAI NEWS

BOX 120
STANDOFF, ALBERTA, T0L 1Y0
PHONE 737-3784 or 737-3785

Canada's Leading Indian Newspaper

EDITOR.....Jackie Red Crow	CO-EDITOR.....James Goodstriker
ADVERTISING AGENT.....Vernon Frank	ADVERTISING ASSIST.....Anne Blood
CIRCULATION CLERK.....	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....Caen Bly
CARTOONIST.....Everett Soop	REPORTER.....Larry Applegarth
TYPESETTER.....Debbie Melting Tallow	

TRAINEES	CORRESPONDENTS
Sandra Scout	Delores Magee - South
Gloria Black Plume	Peigan
Paul Melting Tallow	Lynne Dusenberry Crow
Blaine Blood	Bloods

Kainai News is published bi-monthly by the Indian News Media Society. It's published on the 15th and 30th of every month.

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S. Sgt. Nassichuk

Got Tax Refund Plans ?

85% of your expected refund paid within a few days, taxes prepared at no extra cost.

Ben Tax Discount Center

604 A 3rd Avenue South
Lethbridge 329-6751

Figure 54: Newspaper Article, Kainai News, Authority

Letters to the Editor

Police Harassment

Dear Editor

Recent articles in the press described the plight of restaurants trying to cope with redtape, government interference and bankruptcies. We in a small hotel business in rural Alberta showed a dramatic decline of business in 1982. Our town of Fort Macleod of 3,100 inhabitants suffers more from unemployment than ever. My wife and I are the owners of "American Hotel" in Fort Macleod and we cater mainly to Native Canadians from Blood and Peigan reserves. However, our biggest problem is Police Harassment.

Last year R.C.M.P. entered our premises (uninvited) at least five times and as many as twelve times each week. My wife who is the registered manager considers a total of about 250 visits to our hotel by police as a conservative estimate. You can imagine what effect this produces on our business. On one occasion seven uniformed policemen entered as a group, uninvited around 10:30 p.m. on a busy Friday night. They walked from table to table in our 117 seat tavern asking clients to pull back their hats to show their faces, to see if clients were intoxicated or were juveniles.

I travel extensively the Province of Alberta from the Montana border to the North West Territories and if such a raid of seven policemen would occur in a "white only" bar it would provoke a riot. Why are we subject to this continuous campaign of harassment by police to discredit us in the eyes of the A.L.C.B. Inspectors? There is a continuous stream of police reports often exaggerated or based on wrong assumptions to the A.L.C.B. Some police officers (a small minority of the force of eighteen) will tolerate certain infractions in another hotel in town, frequented by white men, or in the Legion and yet vigorously report and levy \$100.00 fines against Native

Canadians in our bar for the very same infractions committed by Whites.

Even on Christmas Eve, traditionally celebrated by Native Canadians who are predominately Catholics, we had two visits from the police who apparently did not like our custom of serving food on Christmas Eve. Why are we harassed? Is it because we lend money to bail Indians out of jail? Is it because we redecorated the tavern with 40 paintings of Indian artists, reflecting Indian culture and customs?

Is it because we offered to pay fees for two adults from Peigan Tribe to study for welding at Lethbridge Collegiate Institute? Is it be-

cause we donated money for the newly formed Blood Band Board of Education? Is it because we permit conversation and singing in Blackfeet language in our Tavern? Is it because we sponsored the Junior Hockey team of the Peigan Tribe? Recently R.C.M.P. met with newly elected Blood Tribe Council and a police spokesman retorted that "Indians are pampered" in the American Hotel.

We arrived in Fort Macleod "no hand ups". We hadn't seen Indians in our lives before purchasing the American Hotel two years ago, but we treat them as equals, as clients, and besides what is wrong with "pampering" customers anyhow? Especially when customers represent 97 per cent of our business,

what can we do if we are confronted with police officers who refer to Native Canadians as "animals."

We realize it is an "up-hill" battle, if our enemy is "prejudice and hatred". If the police are determined to get us even if we abide by every single rule and regulation, we will lose anyhow, and eventually our license will be suspended with resulting financial hardship. It is a Catch 22 situation. We would appreciate any advice or help you can render for the American Hotel.

*Yours very truly,
Sigmund L. Sherwood
Hotel Co-Owner*

Figure 55: Letter to the Editor, Kainai News, Authority

Haunting and a Present-Day Contact Zone



Figure 56: Haunting Curatorial Panel

While the American Hotel has been closed to the public for a number of years, the building itself stands as a reminder of the interactions between the Indigenous patrons and white settler figures of authority. The image chosen for the Haunting section’s main curatorial panel, *Figure 56*, captured on our tour of the hotel in December of 2022 represents the idea that even decades later, and vacant, the hotel can still be recognized as a contact zone. The selection of quotes for this section are reflections on the American Hotel today, including what has and has not changed over the years, and how the building and the town continue to be ‘haunted,’ both literally and figuratively by their colonial past.

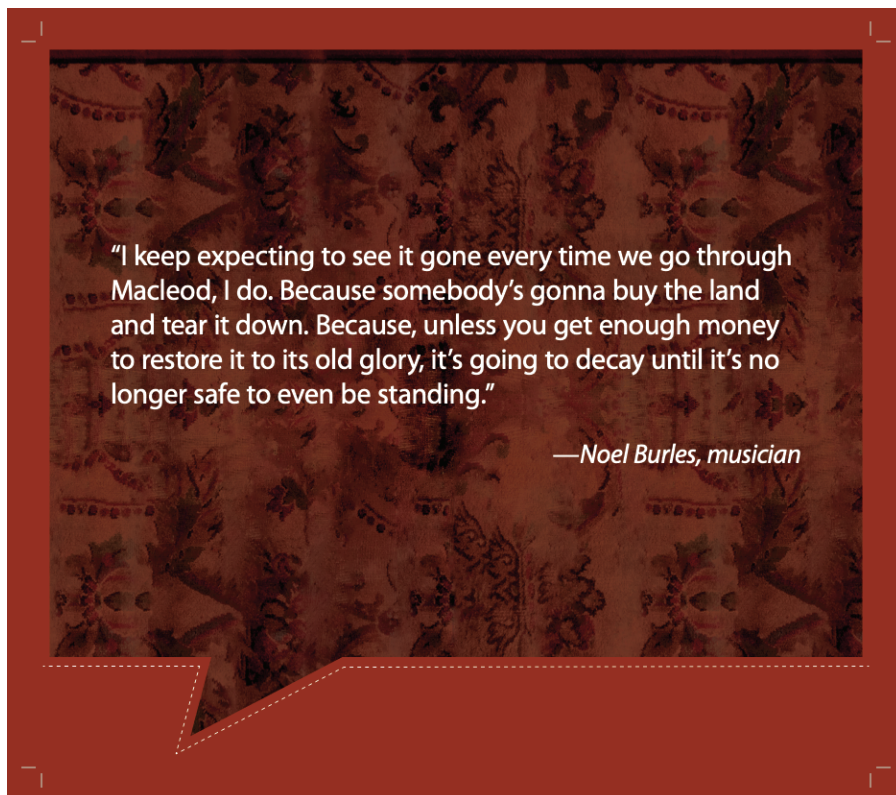


Figure 57: Interview Quote 1, Haunting

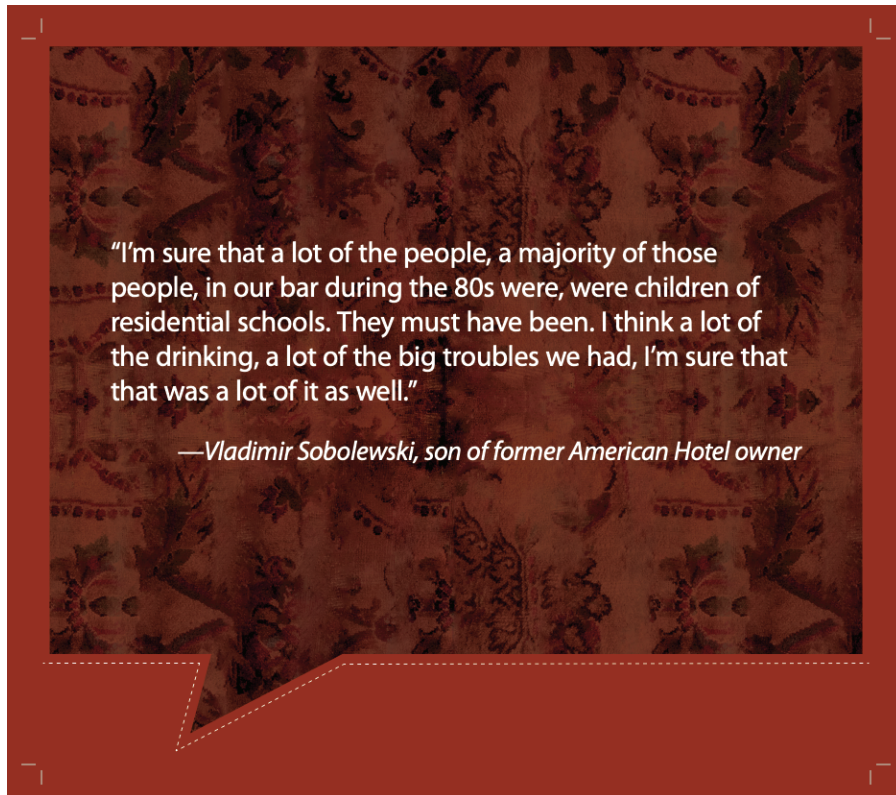


Figure 58: Interview Quote 2, Haunting

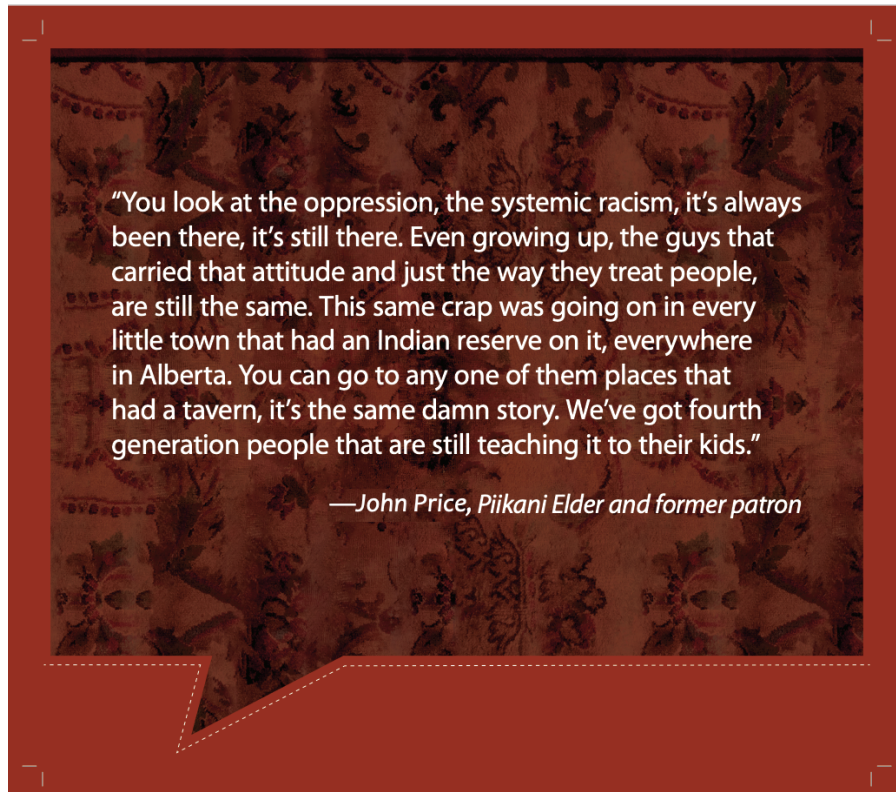


Figure 59: Interview Quote 3, Haunting



Figure 60: Haunting, 23 April 2023

The object case in the Hauntings section, *Figure 60*, was filled with photographs and objects collected during the tour of the American Hotel which continued to tell the story of the hotel. Leftover bricks from the basement and exterior of the hotel, a scrap of wallpaper found on the second floor, a beer bottle cap and keg lid from the main floor cold room, and two pieces of broken tile, one a blue-green from the men’s washroom and another a dusty pink from the women’s washroom are reminders of the hotel’s past and work to tell the stories of the interactions there.

The tiles, in particular, sparked my interest, as the accompanying didactic panel, *Figure 62*, explains, because of the stories told to me by almost every interviewee of the Devil disappearing into the washrooms after coming into the hotel and buying everyone a

round of drinks. For many, the American Hotel was haunted by a sort of evil – one described by some as the Devil – that lingered there. In the context of the hotel as a contact zone, this is an interesting concept because it shows the lasting impacts of colonialism, slavery, and genocide, as Pratt explains, which play a role in creating places where peoples and cultures come together in the “aftermaths” of such events.⁷⁶ Perhaps those who experienced the hotel cannot quite name the malaise that they felt at the hotel and continue to feel in recalling the memories of that place, and so they describe it as something more supernatural.



Figure 61: Men's Washroom of the American Hotel, Haunting, 17 December 2022

⁷⁶ Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” 34.

Bathroom tiles

2022

All items on loan courtesy Ryley Gelinas

“Some there noticed a man going into the bathrooms, and somebody would say, ‘Did you see that?’ Or if somebody’s in a bathroom, and they’ll notice a man coming in, in a black trench coat, and he’s a handsome man. And he’s loaded with money. He’ll go into the stall and this person will look under, ‘Who’s that guy? Who is he?’ They’ll notice a tail, swinging. Hooves. And that guy, ‘Oh my God, oh my God.’ I’m drunk, and I’m sober now... comes out, ‘There’s a guy in there.’—I’m just getting shivers talking about it—they’ll see somebody coming out, from the bathroom and walk out the door, with a tail. With hooves. ‘Did you see that? There was a guy that walked out from the ladies’ washroom, that had a tail.’ And who’s that? The devil himself.”

—Kimmy Walters, Blood Tribe community member and former bartender and patron

Almost every community member that I talked with recounted some version of this story. A man in a trench coat walked into the American Hotel, bought everyone a round of drinks, walked into the washroom, never to be seen again. With each new telling, I got a few new details: hooves, a tail, flashing money around, the men’s washroom, the women’s washroom. By the end, I had a detailed story and a fear of the washrooms of the hotel. When I got the chance to get inside, I made sure to gather these tiles to represent that story.

Figure 62: Didactic Panel, Haunting

Throughout this section of the exhibition, the fragments and scraps of materials represented the nuanced and complex past of the American Hotel, and they too, had a story to tell. In *Figure 63*, for instance, the grandeur of the wooden staircase is contrasted by the peeling paper on the ceiling and the exposed brick walls around it. To me, it gives a glimpse at what the American Hotel could – and may, at one point – have been, not

unlike the colonial idealization of settling the West. At the same time, it shows that this idyllic vision is, ultimately, not a sustainable reality. Eventually, structures like the American Hotel and white settler colonialism that built it begin to show their cracks and crumble, leaving remnants of the idealized possibilities to haunt and linger.



Figure 63: Staircase of the American Hotel, Haunting, 17 December 2022



Figure 64: Close Up of Object Case, Haunting, 23 April 2023

The final object in the case at the time of the exhibition opening was a contemporary ‘American Hotel’ T-shirt purchased from Doug Singer, one of the individuals interviewed, shown on the right side of *Figure 64*. The front right pocket-area reads “BARRED OUT FOR LIFE” and the back has a screen-printing of the late Glen Eaglespeaker’s *End of the Trail*, the iconic mural on the exterior of the American Hotel. During the interview, Doug explained that he had been making and selling T-shirts like this, with references to the old bars he used to frequent for friends and family during the COVID-19 pandemic. From a curatorial standpoint, including the shirt seemed like an opportunity to showcase how the memories, emotions, and experiences of the American Hotel continued to be relevant for those who had previously been patrons and I agreed to purchase one for the exhibition.

American’s Hotel T-Shirt

2022

Designed by Doug Singer

On loan courtesy Ryley Gelinas

“Years later, we were with an older gentleman and another friend of mine and [the hotel] was packed. And people were starting to fight over the pool table, who was up next and everything, and [my friend] said ‘Let’s go over there and stop the fighting now, and flip over that big heavy pool table.’ So, three of us went over there and we flipped over the pool table and all we heard was the owner, the lady, yelling ‘Singer, you’re barred for ninety-nine years.’ And I said, ‘Too long, ninety-nine years.’ The next day we were back in there. They wouldn’t let us in, we pretty much had to sign a pledge to get back in there. They finally let us back in.”

—Doug Singer, Blood Tribe community member

Figure 65: Didactic Panel, Haunting

A few weeks after the exhibition opened, however, Marlene Eaglespeaker, the daughter of Glen Eaglespeaker, contacted the museum to express her family's concerns about having the T-shirt on display. Unbeknownst to me, there had been an ongoing conflict between Doug and the Eaglespeakers who had asked that he stop making the shirts, partly due to perceived copyright issues with the mural, but also because the Eaglespeaker family is actively working to move away from the negative stereotypes and harmful behaviours that they believe the American Hotel represented. In this way, the hotel, even after it has closed, continues to be negotiated as a contact zone, acting as a site of interaction between memory, stereotype, and settler colonialism.

In early May of 2023, I met at the Galt Museum with Marlene as well as Tyler Stewart, the Galt's curator, and Darrin Martens, the Galt's CEO and Executive Director, to get a better understanding of the Eaglespeaker family's concerns and how I could remedy them. After an in-depth discussion about the exhibition and the history of Glen's artwork, we decided to remove the T-shirt from the exhibition, as shown in *Figure 66*. At the end of this conversation, we also decided that it would be beneficial for me to interview Marlene and any other members of her family to learn more about her father's art and how he came to paint the mural. This was all context I had hoped to learn about during my initial interview phase in November/December 2022, but was unsuccessful in getting in touch with anyone from the Eaglespeaker family. The information from our interview, which took place at the end of May 2023 with Marlene and her sister, Diane Eaglespeaker, was later added to the exhibition to give further context to the history of the mural and the hotel.



Figure 66: Close Up of Revised Object Case, Haunting, 24 August 2023

Several photographs were chosen for this section to represent the haunting nature of the hotel and the lingering impacts of white settler colonialism. These include another image by Richard Collens titled “Shape Shifting,” *Figure 67*, which captures the American Hotel’s second-floor staircase shot with a long exposure, creating an eerie, literally haunting feeling. The ornate, wood staircase stands alone, surrounded by demolition debris, partially obscured by the photography technique.



Figure 67: "Shape Shifting," Richard Collens, Haunting

This section also includes a photograph of a plaque on the exterior of the building, *Figure 68*, which serves as the only reference to the American Hotel’s history on the building itself for passers-by to view. Beneath the main plaque there is a smaller one that credits “partial funding” for the plaque from the now defunct Alberta Historical Resources Foundation and Alberta Lotteries. As explained in the didactic panel accompanying the photo, *Figure 69*, this plaque leaves much of the history of the American Hotel – particularly the Indigenous history – out. The photograph of the plaque is included in the Haunting section because it shows the implications of colonial haunting on a place; there is a deeper, more nuanced story about the American Hotel than it simply being a wooden structure with a different name until someone re-built it, however, if you are not looking for that story, if you are not aware of that history, you will not see it – much like the impacts of white settler colonialism and the history of the hotel as a contact zone.



Figure 68: Plaque on Exterior of American Hotel, Haunting, 17 December 2022

Plaque, 2022

Courtesy Dryden Roesch

Despite the extensive significance of the American Hotel to the town of Fort Macleod and the neighbouring Piikani and Kainai (Blood) tribes, the only acknowledgement of the building's history is a small plaque, recognizing the building's construction and subsequent renaming.

Figure 69: Didactic Panel, Haunting

The Past and Future of the American Hotel



Figure 70: Seating Area and Video Tour, 23 April 2023

At the south end of the exhibition space there was a sitting area and slideshow set up for visitors to sit and reflect on the exhibit, as well as see a video tour of the first floor of the American Hotel as of December 17, 2022. The first version of this slideshow, *Figure 70*, ran from the exhibition's opening in April 2023 until July 2023 and featured additional interview quotes intermixed with video clips from the tour of the American Hotel and the exhibition's logo. The quotes consisted of those which were initially chosen for each of the five thematic sections, but were ultimately too long, repetitive of other quotes in that section, or otherwise did not fit neatly into a theme.⁷⁷ Including them in this first version of the slideshow gave the opportunity for more stories to be shared and created an additional visual component for the exhibition. The slideshow was accompanied by one final didactic panel, *Figure 71*, which was placed to the left of the television and discussed my experience in touring the hotel, giving visitors some points to reflect on as they watched the slideshow.

⁷⁷ For the full original slideshow, see Appendix 4.

On December 17, 2022, I got the chance to take a look inside the American Hotel. Most of the objects in this case are from that trip. The contents of the building had mostly been removed by that point, a few stray beer caps and scraps of wallpaper littered the floor of what had essentially become a construction site. While they are tangible representations of the building, they would not be missed in the grand scheme of things.

As I walked around the hotel, I found myself recalling the stories I had heard, trying to figure out where the bar would have been, where the pool tables would have sat. It was difficult to do in such a large, empty space and no real clues.

At the time of this exhibition opening, the American Hotel is undergoing an extensive renovation with plans to reopen as Christian low-income housing.

Figure 71: Didactic Panel Accompanying Video Tour of American Hotel

One element that I wanted to draw visitors' attention to at the end of the exhibition was what the future plans were for the American Hotel. Upon touring the hotel, I learned that the hotel was now owned by a group of individuals in Fort Macleod, including the mayor of Fort Macleod, Brent Feyter. The group was, I was told, renovating the hotel, and turning it into "Christian low-income housing."⁷⁸ While I found this to be a somewhat shocking revelation, I was not able to fully articulate my thoughts on the matter for the didactic panel and decided to let visitors draw their own conclusions after getting a better picture of the conflicts between the Indigenous history of the hotel and the settler colonial nature of religions such as Christianity.

⁷⁸ Steven Beekman, email message to author, November 17, 2022.

The Christian basis of the American Hotel renovation project, particularly in a space that for many was “almost... always”⁷⁹ coded as Indigenous, felt to me like what Owen Toews describes in *Stolen City: Racial Capitalism and the Making of Winnipeg* as a “project for reviving a mode of colonialism – the state-sponsored Christianization of Indigenous [peoples].”⁸⁰ Throughout the latter decades of its existence as a public space, the American Hotel was largely seen and used as an Indigenous space, and if it were to continue to be so in the future, it is unclear to what extent Indigenous residents would have to prescribe to the “Christianization” that Toews details. While it is not yet clear who will be living in what will become the ‘new’ American Hotel, or if they will be successful in their renovations, in ending the exhibition with this point, it was my hope that museum visitors would recognize how the impacts of colonialism including – the dispossession and attempted erasure of Indigenous peoples – continues to haunt the American Hotel, and southern Alberta, today.

Public Reception of the Exhibition and Concluding Thoughts

Twenty years after closing its doors, the American Hotel continues to play a role in the relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples, and it is my hope that *Contact Zone: The American Hotel* was successful in exploring the nuances of these relationships. While such interactions remain rooted in on-going structures of white settler colonialism and centred on land dispossession, by acknowledging the colonial history of museums, shifting the power imbalances, and recognizing the values in

⁷⁹ Noel Burles, interview with Ryley Gelinias, December 14, 2022.

⁸⁰ Owen Toews, *Stolen City: Racial Capitalism and the Making of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2018): 15.

Indigenous knowledge, memory, and stories, we can work to deconstruct asymmetrical structures of power. Listening to community feedback and adding to the exhibition after it had opened was one way I worked towards this practice.



Figure 72: Seating Area and Eaglespeaker Slideshow, 24 August 2023

After sitting down with Marlene and Diane Eaglespeaker in May of 2023, it was clear that the information they shared about their father, Glen Eaglespeaker, and his art was important to the history of the American Hotel as a contact zone and to the history of Fort Macleod and southern Alberta more broadly. While the exhibition was already installed, finding a way to include this new content and create something constructive from the community feedback I received was something I wanted – and needed – to do.

After some conversation, the Galt’s curator, Tyler Stewart, suggested that we replace the previous slideshow with a new one dedicated to Glen Eaglespeaker, his art career, and the story of how he ended up painting the iconic *End of the Trail* mural in the 1980s. By this point, the exhibition had been open for half of its run time, so we felt that enough visitors had seen the original slideshow, and it provided a way to include all the important information about Glen without having to shoe-horn a small didactic panel in somewhere.

The new slideshow, *Figure 72*, which debuted in July 2023 and ran until the exhibition closed in October 2023, included several quotes from Marlene and Diane about their father, his art career, and the creation of the mural.⁸¹ The slides provided a mix of background information on Glen and his art, quotes from the interview, and related information on the origins of James Earle Fraser’s original *End of the Trail* sculpture, which served as the inspiration for Glen’s mural. The original sculpture, which depicts an image of a defeated Indigenous warrior and his horse, is recognized by some Indigenous communities as representing the downfall and destruction of Indigenous peoples resulting from white settler colonization in America. As Shannon Vittoria of the Metropolitan Museum of Art explains, “Fraser intended the work as a pointed commentary on the damaging effects of Euro-American settlement on American Indian nations confined on government reservations. Seated upon a windblown horse, Fraser’s figure slumps over despondently, embodying the physical exhaustion and suffering of a people forcefully driven to the end of the trail.”⁸² Reception of the original sculpture is

⁸¹ For the full slideshow, see Appendix 5.

⁸² Shannon Vittoria, “*End of the Trail*, Then and Now,” The Met, February 19, 2014, <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2013/the-american-west-in-bronze/blog/posts/end-of-the-trail#:~:text=Despite%20its%20appeal%20as%20a,nations%20confined%20on%20government%20reservations.>

divided, with some arguing that it shows “the Indian’s decline as a necessary step in America’s westward ‘march of progress’” and others recognizing the human destruction caused by settler expansion, particularly across the West.⁸³ Including this background information in the slideshow provided context for visitors who may not recognize the colonial implications of the work and to help explain why the Eaglespeaker family is planning to have the mural removed from the exterior of the building.

Though it was an unexpected element to add to the exhibition, I am grateful that the Eaglespeaker family expressed their concerns with the exhibition and were willing to sit down with me and give feedback, as well as provide me with additional information to help enrich the exhibition and the history of the American Hotel for museum visitors. While I understand it is not Indigenous peoples’ responsibility to educate settlers about their culture, having the privilege of discussing such elements with Marlene and Diane generated a more well-rounded exhibition and nuanced presentation of the history of the hotel.

For instance, Marlene and Diane explained that for their family, the *End of the Trail* mural represents a settler colonial history of death and destruction that occurred as a result of settler-Indigenous interactions at the American Hotel. Contracted by 1980s hotel owner Sigmund Sherwood, Glen Eaglespeaker was commissioned to paint his version of the *End of the Trail*. Marlene explained that her father initially had some concerns about using the imagery in the mural, wondering what “people” would think.⁸⁴ Reflecting on it now, Diane described the meaning of the *End of the Trail* iconography to the family, why

⁸³ Vittoria.

⁸⁴ Marlene Eaglespeaker, interview with Ryley Gelinas, May 21, 2023. It is unclear if Marlene was referring to what Indigenous peoples or the townspeople would think of the mural.

they view it as a harmful image, and why they want, ultimately, to remove it from the building:

We, as Aboriginal people, when we pass over, our belief is that we can cross to help the ones on this side, for whatever and it's called Sun Dancing, we're crying for a prayer. And so we help people. So the *End of the Trail* has always been like the end, right? It can be interpreted in lots of different ways, it's like the end of a cycle, the end of life, the end of meaning, of whatever that person's going through. Because you see it a lot in art and, you know, it's usually a depiction of a warrior like he's at the end of his, he's done, he's dying. So, when I very first saw it on the building, I'm going, 'What the heck? Why would Dad paint that?' [...] How Native people look at it now is like, the end of us. And I want to take it down. Because it's not the end of us.⁸⁵

In varying ways, the mural has marked – and continues to signal – the hotel as an Indigenous space and clearly identifies the legacy of the American Hotel to townspeople and Indigenous patrons. At the same time, for the Eaglespeaker family, the mural is not representative of a positive history or a safe space for Indigenous peoples in Fort Macleod. This, again, shows the nuances present in the history of the hotel.

In addition to the Eaglespeaker family, the museum exhibition was received in differing ways by the public, particularly by the press. News coverage of the exhibition from the *Lethbridge Herald* largely focused on the hidden history of the American Hotel, explaining to viewers that there was a deeper story, particularly in the interactions between the white settler townspeople of Fort Macleod and the Blackfoot patrons of the hotel.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, *Bridge City News*, although acknowledging the ways in which colonial hauntings exist within the hotel, focused more on the literal ghost stories that

⁸⁵ Diane Eaglespeaker, interview with Ryley Gelinas, May 21, 2023.

⁸⁶ Alejandra Pulido-Guzman, "Galt Exhibit Examines History of Fort Macleod Hotel," *Lethbridge Herald*, 22 April 2023, <https://lethbridgeherald.com/news/lethbridge-news/2023/04/22/galt-exhibit-examines-history-of-fort-macleod-hotel/#>.

were shared.⁸⁷ Both of these news outlets provided information to the public on what the exhibition explored and, ideally, brought visitors into the museum to engage with the exhibition, think critically about the history of white settler colonialism in southern Alberta in the context of the American Hotel, and to examine the contact zones and colonial ‘hauntings’ that appear in their lives.



Figure 74: Interactive Section, 23 April 2023

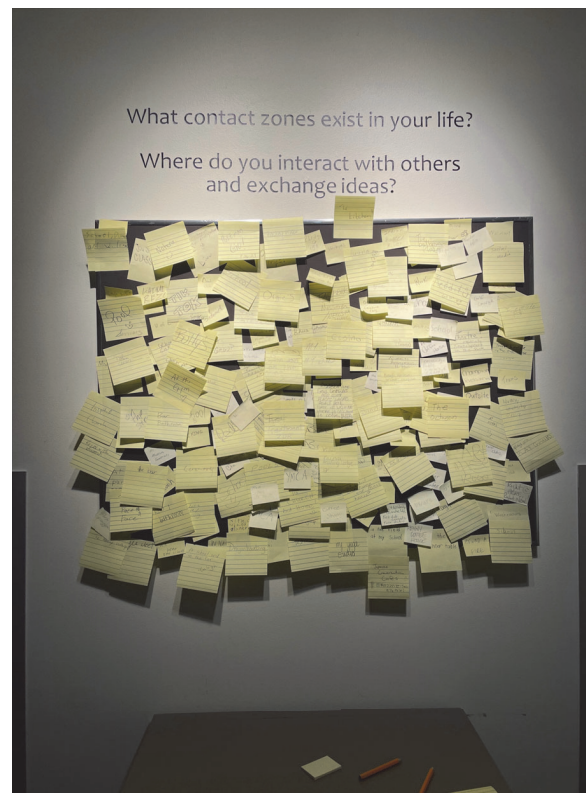


Figure 73: Interactive Section, 30 September 2023

In addition to working with individuals in the initial creation of the exhibition, getting feedback and ideas from the community while they were viewing the exhibition is also an important part of engaging with the topics being discussed. It also provides other

⁸⁷ Micah Quinn, “History of the American Hotel on Display at Galt Museum,” *Bridge City News*, 21 April 2023, <https://bridgcitynews.ca/history-of-the-american-hotel-on-display-at-the-galt-museum/>.

visitors an opportunity to relate to the exhibition in a different way; by seeing additional examples of contact zones in the lives of others, they can recognize them in their own lives. As such, this section of the exhibition gave visitors the opportunity to reflect on two prompting questions that were included on the wall above: “What contact zones exist in your life?” and “Where do you interact with others and exchange ideas?” It was interesting to see the range of answers over the course of a few months. *Figure 73* shows the board at the opening of the exhibition in April while *Figure 74* shows what the board looked like five months later in September. Responses ranged from everyday spaces like school, work, home, and church, to more specific places like “big Katies house in stand off [sic],” homeless shelters, Galt Gardens, and “lunch after Line Dancing with Senior ladies [sic].”⁸⁸ What these responses from museum visitors and community members say to me is that while places like the American Hotel are no longer acting as contact zones in the way they used to, there are countless instances of interaction and contact in our everyday lives if we look hard enough for them.

Interestingly, while there were several responses which highlighted public places – work, school, places of worship, restaurants and bars, fitness centres – as zones of contact, there were also responses which took a more nuanced and non-physical approach to answering the questions. Different modes of public transportation were listed, as well as less place-specific answers like “around a fire,” “walking on trails,” and “in the field at school.”⁸⁹ While there are no wrong answers to the questions asked in the exhibition, it is the responses, which focus less on the place and more on the *interactions* between

⁸⁸ Interactive panel with comments from museum visitors, *Contact Zone: The American Hotel*, 2023, Galt Museum and Archives, Lethbridge, Alberta.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION: COLONIAL HAUNTING AND THE DEVIL HIMSELF

ME: We're gonna have to go smudge it! [laughs]
DE: It's gonna take ten of us to smudge that place! [laughs]
ME: We'll have a walk through and chase all the ghosts out of there.
DE: It's gonna take forever!
ME: All day job. [laughs]⁹⁰

– Conversation between Marlene and Diane
Eaglespeaker about the American Hotel

Since its construction in the late nineteenth century, the American Hotel has been many different things to many different people. For its owners and managers, the hotel has been a source of income and, to varying degrees, a place of community. Indigenous patrons sometimes found it to be a place they could gather in a hostile settler town. The settler inhabitants of that town understood the American Hotel as an Indigenous space and frequently regarded it with apprehension, suspicion, and distrust. The settler police force viewed it as a convenient location to track and interrogate Indigenous peoples who they considered a threat to colonial laws and existence. These interactions, in the context of the American Hotel, provide a lens through which to understand the relationships between settler and other non-Indigenous peoples and Indigenous peoples in southern Alberta.

In museum spaces, as in Canadian society more broadly, as Chapter 2 explained, the path to decolonization in museums is long and difficult. While some museums across Canada are working towards inclusivity and highlighting histories that question and denounce the country's colonial legacy, many continue to uphold and reinforce the white settler colonial agenda today. Highlighting the voices of community members in the

⁹⁰ Marlene and Diane Eaglespeaker, interview with Ryley Gelinas, May 22, 2023.

curation of *Contact Zone: The American Hotel* is a small step towards understanding and displacing the authority of museums. As we have heard from activists and scholars, there needs to be truth before there can be reconciliation and uplifting Indigenous voices to speak about their interactions in the context of the American Hotel is one way in which this is done. Additionally, I hope that in sharing how being open to feedback and making changes, even after an exhibition is open to the public, sets an example for other white settler curators to develop a sense of empathy and understanding for the communities being represented by our exhibitions, particularly in those instances of communities and cultures outside our own.

Colonial Haunting

While I am proud of this research and how the exhibition turned out, there is still work to be done and the impacts of white settler colonialism continue to haunt our interpretations, exhibitions, and research practices until we address them. Introduced in her 2008 book, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery Gordon explains this concept of ‘colonial haunting,’ as:

register[ing] the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence done in the past or in the present. But haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done. [...] haunting was precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done.⁹¹

In other words, the spectres of colonialism make themselves known when they can no longer be ignored, showing up in the ‘cracks’ of society. Colonial haunting, thus, shows

⁹¹ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xvi.

how white settler colonialism is still very much a part of Canadian society, and once we recognize this, we remain ‘haunted’ until we do something about it.

Over the course of the interviews, several people brought up stories of the Devil at the American Hotel. In the Haunting section of the exhibition, I shared a quote from one of the interviews detailing how the Devil walked into the bar, bought everyone a round of drinks, and disappeared into the washroom, never to be seen again. Between how often the Devil was repeatedly brought up, unprompted, in the interviews and in the number of questions about the story – both from the media and museum visitors – I received, it was clear the connection between the American Hotel and the Devil resonated with many people. It was not until I was reviewing the earlier interview transcripts that I finally understood the significance of the connection. John Price, a Piikani Elder, and my very first interviewee explained that: “the devil was [...] the evil [...] that] the American kind of represented.”⁹² For those that heard the stories about the Devil coming into the bar, that ‘evil’ – alcohol, white settler colonialism, racism – was represented by him. And if the Devil was haunting the American Hotel, so too were the impacts of alcohol, settler colonialism, capitalism, white supremacy, and racism, to name a few. Thus, it seems easier to understand the concept of something more abstract, like colonial haunting, if there is a ghost story – and a literal ghost – to go along with it.

In the case of interviewees who brought up the Devil, a belief in him could be seen to represent an understanding of the unbalanced nature of contact zones, and a recognition of the impacts of white settler colonialism which continue to linger. These zones of contact are not merely sites of interaction; they are places of *unequal structures*

⁹² John Price, interview with Ryley Gelinas, November 21, 2022.

of power. Kimmy Walters, a Blood Tribe member and former patron and bartender, whose version of the Devil story was included in the exhibition, explained in her interview: “I heard rumors, about the Devil himself [at the American Hotel], he took lives, and I believe that.”⁹³ Similarly, the impacts of white settler colonialism have resulted in the displacement and death of hundreds of thousands of Indigenous lives. Echoing this sentiment, Kimmy connects the literal haunting of the American Hotel by the Devil with the figurative colonial haunting that remains in such places, and the memories of the destructive nature of white settler colonialism.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, when asked about the Devil at the hotel, Noel Burles, a non-Indigenous musician, agreed that while he heard the stories, “I kind of went, ‘Right.’ And that kind of went in this ear and out that ear, because it’s, no, that’s not, you know, had he been there, it’d have burnt down.”⁹⁴ While my intention with this comparison is not to create a strict binary between Indigenous and non-Indigenous views on whether or not the Devil exists and was at the American Hotel, it is interesting that John and Kimmy, who are both Blackfoot, recognized the harms of colonial and literal haunting, through the legacies of colonialism and the Devil, in the context of the American Hotel, while Noel, a non-Indigenous person was unable – or perhaps unwilling – to see the legacies of damage in these lingering hauntings if it does not create a larger problem that impacted him and other non-Indigenous peoples. In other words, if the Devil burnt the hotel down, he would be out of a job, and the ‘evil’ of the hotel would be put to an end, but if the Devil merely enticed people to drink, that would not really affect his life much and colonialism’s affects would continue to be felt.

⁹³ Kimmy Walters, interview with Ryley Gelinias, December 10, 2022.

⁹⁴ Noel Burles, interview with Ryley Gelinias, December 14, 2022.

The Ghosts of Colonialism Past, Present (and Future?)

These impacts of white settler colonialism, in the past and present, linger, like ghosts and their stories, in places such as the American Hotel. And, as Gordon explains, “[f]ollowing the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located.”⁹⁵ The interactions happening at the American Hotel today are not the same as they were in the mid- to late-twentieth century, however, they remain entrenched – haunted – in the core tenets of contact zones. Recall that Pratt describes contact zones as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.” The impacts of such contact zones experienced today, in Fort Macleod and across Alberta, are the ‘aftermaths’ that Pratt is referring to. For Indigenous peoples, the impacts of white settler colonialism are an everyday reality. Settler colonialism is an on-going structure that continues to impact lives, especially Indigenous lives, across this country.

In order to move towards decolonization, as laid out by countless Indigenous scholars over the last few decades,⁹⁶ Gordon explains that “we must learn how to identify

⁹⁵ Gordon, 22.

⁹⁶ For more on paths to decolonization, see J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “‘A Structure, Not an Event’: Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity,” *Lateral* 5, no. 1 (2016); Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 409-427; Sheldon Krasowski, *No Surrender: The Land Remains Indigenous* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2019); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Robyn Maynard, *Rehearsals for Living* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2022); Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Rachel Flowers, “Refusal to Forgive: Indigenous Women’s Love and Rage,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 4, no. 2 (2015): 32-49, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22829>; Joshua Whitehead, *Making Love with the Land* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2022); and Billy Ray Belcourt, *This Wound is a World* (Okotoks: Frontenac House, 2017).

hauntings and reckon with ghosts, must learn how to make contact with what is without doubt often painful, difficult, and unsettling.”⁹⁷ Examining places like the American Hotel and sharing that first-hand knowledge in the museum exhibition *Contact Zone: The American Hotel* is just the first step in ‘reckoning’ with the colonial legacy of southern Alberta, and Canada. The colonial hauntings are clearly evident in the history of the American Hotel, as Piikani Elder, John Price stated:

[T]his same crap was going on in every little town that had a[n] Indian reserve on it, everywhere in Alberta. You can go to any one of them places that had a tavern, it’s the same damn story. [...] [I]t goes back to a lot of that is Alberta was founded [...] on the legacy [...] of guys from the Ku Klux Klan [...] Saskatchewan and Alberta, we’re the same. And that shit is still here [...] we’ve got fourth generation people that are still teaching it to their kids.⁹⁸

The impacts of white settler colonialism and systemic racism, and as John detailed, white supremacy, at the American Hotel and across the Prairies more generally link back to those original interactions – and the understanding that settler peoples have not made enough of an effort to change that. Without this acknowledgement and subsequent change, the recognition of “something-to-be-done,” as Gordon explains, “the ghosts return, demanding a different kind of knowledge, a different kind of acknowledgment.”⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Gordon, 23.

⁹⁸ John Price, interview with Ryley Gelinias, November 21, 2022.

⁹⁹ Gordon, 64.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW MATERIALS



Letter of Information

Community Members

Title of the Study: American Hotel Research Project

Principal Investigator: Ryley Gelinas
MA Graduate Student
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
ryley.gelinas@uleth.ca

Principal Supervisor: Dr. Kristine Alexander
Associate Professor
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
kristine.alexander@uleth.ca

Welcome to the American Hotel Research Project. This project seeks to spark memories and to record stories about the American Hotel in Fort Macleod, Alberta. The project is led by Ryley Gelinas, a Master of Arts in History student at the University of Lethbridge. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you require to make an informed decision on participating in this research.

Invitation to Participate and Purpose of Study:

You are invited to take part in a semi-structured oral history interview that will take approximately 60-120 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked about your memories relating to the American Hotel in Fort Macleod, Alberta. The decision of the interview time and place is up to you. The interview may also be completed over the phone or Zoom/other electronic means, if this is most convenient for you. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed at a later date. This is done to ensure that none of the information provided in the interview will be missed.

Voluntary Participation:

You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. Before we begin the interview, we will review this letter to ensure that you are fully comfortable with your participation, and I will answer any questions you may have. You will then be asked to sign the official American Hotel Research Project Consent Form.

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 23 September 2022

1

Benefits:

By sharing your memories, your experiences will be recorded as part of the historical record, which will help to shape future historical research. Your stories will be recorded for yourself and future generations to listen back to. To this end, you will have the option to place your interview audio file and associated documents (e.g. transcript) in the Galt Museum and Archives. With your consent, some or part of your interview may also be used in publications, articles, and presentations by the Principal Investigator, and an in upcoming museum exhibition at the Galt Museums and Archives about the American Hotel.

We are unable to provide any compensation – payment or in-kind – for your participation.

Risks:

The interview process is not intended to raise risk of physical or psychological harm and involves no deception. However, sharing one’s memories can be an emotional experience, especially if it touches on a difficult moment from the past.

At points during the interview process, you may:

- Feel psychologically or emotionally stressed, demeaned, embarrassed, worried, anxious, scared or distressed (e.g. description of painful or traumatic events)
- Experience psychological or mental fatigue (e.g. intense concentration required)
- Experience cultural or social risk (e.g. loss of privacy or status or damage to reputation)

Your safety, comfort, and well-being are of the highest concern to me. **You have the option, at any point, to take a break, ask for clarification, stop the recording, or refuse to answer a question.**

If you are experiencing distress or would like to discuss the issue with someone other than the Principal Investigator, below are some counselling services and other resources that may be helpful to you.

Distress Line of Southwestern Alberta..... (403)-327-7905 or (888)-787-2880 (toll free)
Lethbridge Counselling Services..... (403)-942-0452
Native Counselling Services of Alberta..... (403) 329-6140
Sik-Ooh-Kotoki Friendship Society..... (403) 328-2414

After the Interview:

When the interview is finished, a short de-briefing session will give you another opportunity to ask questions about your participation. You may also be invited to engage in another interview at a later date, time and venue mutually convenient to both of us.

Information about the Study Results:

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 23 September 2022

Based on consent you have given, information you share will help historian and the general public to better understand the history of the American Hotel and the community of Fort Macleod. Information from your interview may be shared in academic publications. The results of this research project may be publicized on web-based and/or social media platforms and in the mass media, as well as in conference and public talks and museum exhibitions.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

The information that you will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this research. The only person who will have access to the research data is the Principal Investigator. Your interview may be used verbatim in presentations and publications but you can decide if you would like your actual name to be used in the research or if you would like a pseudonym to be used throughout the interview and resulting research documents.

Data Storage:

All printed/paper information you share in this interview will be treated as confidential, and to this end, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the supervisor for a minimum period of 5 years.

Withdrawing from the Project:

If at any time during the interview, you wish to discontinue your participation, please inform me. In this event, you will cease to be contacted for further research, for example, follow-up oral history interviews. If you decide to withdraw, you will be asked to notify me to either maintain the information and data you have shared in the study or remove and destroy your data.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or require more information about the study itself, you may contact the Principal Investigator or the Primary Supervisor at the contact information mentioned herein. The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or how the research is being conducted, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615. Please keep this form for your records.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter and for considering your participation in the American Hotel Research Project.

Sincerely,

Ryley Gelinias

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 23 September 2022

3



Letter of Information

Blackfoot Elders

Title of the Study: American Hotel Research Project

Principal Investigator: Ryley Gelinas
MA Graduate Student
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
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Principal Supervisor: Dr. Kristine Alexander
Associate Professor
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
kristine.alexander@uleth.ca

Welcome to the American Hotel Research Project. This project seeks to spark memories and to record stories about the American Hotel in Fort Macleod, Alberta. The project is led by Ryley Gelinas, a Master of Arts in History student at the University of Lethbridge. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you require to make an informed decision on participating in this research.

Invitation to Participate and Purpose of Study:

You are invited to take part in a semi-structured oral history interview that will take approximately 60-120 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked about your memories relating to the American Hotel in Fort Macleod, Alberta. The decision of the interview time and place is up to you. The interview may also be completed over the phone or Zoom/other electronic means, if this is most convenient for you. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed at a later date. This is done to ensure that none of the information provided in the interview will be missed.

Voluntary Participation:

You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. Before we begin the interview, we will review this letter to ensure that you are fully comfortable with your participation, and I will answer any questions you may have. You will then be asked to sign the official American Hotel Research Project Consent Form.

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 23 September 2022

1

Benefits:

By sharing your memories, your experiences will be recorded as part of the historical record, which will help to shape future historical research. Your stories will be recorded for yourself and future generations to listen back to. To this end, you will have the option to place your interview audio file and associated documents (e.g. transcript) in the Galt Museum and Archives. With your consent, some or part of your interview may also be used in publications, articles, and presentations by the Principal Investigator, and an in upcoming museum exhibition at the Galt Museums and Archives about the American Hotel.

You will receive an Elder honorarium of \$300. You will need to provide your mailing address and Social Insurance Number (SIN) to the Principal Investigator so your cheque can be processed.

Risks:

The interview process is not intended to raise risk of physical or psychological harm and involves no deception. However, sharing one’s memories can be an emotional experience, especially if it touches on a difficult moment from the past.

At points during the interview process, you may:

- Feel psychologically or emotionally stressed, demeaned, embarrassed, worried, anxious, scared or distressed (e.g. description of painful or traumatic events)
- Experience psychological or mental fatigue (e.g. intense concentration required)
- Experience cultural or social risk (e.g. loss of privacy or status or damage to reputation)

Your safety, comfort, and well-being are of the highest concern to me. **You have the option, at any point, to take a break, ask for clarification, stop the recording, or refuse to answer a question.**

If you are experiencing distress or would like to discuss the issue with someone other than the Principal Investigator, below are some counselling services and other resources that may be helpful to you.

Distress Line of Southwestern Alberta..... (403)-327-7905 or (888)-787-2880 (toll free)
Lethbridge Counselling Services..... (403)-942-0452
Native Counselling Services of Alberta..... (403) 329-6140
Sik-Ooh-Kotoki Friendship Society..... (403) 328-2414

After the Interview:

When the interview is finished, a short de-briefing session will give you another opportunity to ask questions about your participation. You may also be invited to engage in another interview at a later date, time and venue mutually convenient to both of us.

Information about the Study Results:

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 23 September 2022

Based on consent you have given, information you share will help historian and the general public to better understand the history of the American Hotel and the community of Fort Macleod. Information from your interview may be shared in academic publications. The results of this research project may be publicized on web-based and/or social media platforms and in the mass media, as well as in conference and public talks and museum exhibitions.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

The information that you will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this research. The only person who will have access to the research data is the Principal Investigator. Your interview may be used verbatim in presentations and publications but you can decide if you would like your actual name to be used in the research or if you would like a pseudonym to be used throughout the interview and resulting research documents.

Data Storage:

All printed/paper information you share in this interview will be treated as confidential, and to this end, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the supervisor for a minimum period of 5 years.

Withdrawing from the Project:

If at any time during the interview, you wish to discontinue your participation, please inform me. In this event, you will cease to be contacted for further research, for example, follow-up oral history interviews. If you decide to withdraw, you will be asked to notify me to either maintain the information and data you have shared in the study or remove and destroy your data.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or require more information about the study itself, you may contact the Principal Investigator or the Primary Supervisor at the contact information mentioned herein. The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or how the research is being conducted, you may contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615. Please keep this form for your records.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter and for considering your participation in the American Hotel Research Project.

Sincerely,

Ryley Gelinias

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 23 September 2022

3



Participant Consent Form

Community Member

Title of the Study: American Hotel Research Project

Principal Investigator: Ryley Gelinias
MA Graduate Student
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
ryley.gelinias@uleth.ca

Principal Supervisor: Dr. Kristine Alexander
Associate Professor
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
(403) 332-4623
kristine.alexander@uleth.ca

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you take part, you will have the project explained to you, and you are free to ask any questions about anything you do not understand. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you have knowledge about the history of the American Hotel and/or the Town of Fort Macleod more generally. The purpose of this project is to gather memories and to record stories about the American Hotel in Fort Macleod, Alberta. The Principal Investigator may use this information in their master's thesis. This includes a written support paper, and in a museum exhibition at the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta.

What is the reason for doing the study?

The goal of this study is to understand the way people interacted with each other and with the larger community at and around the American Hotel from the 1950s to the 1980s. Your experiences and stories will help better understand these interactions and how those around it viewed the American Hotel.

What will I be asked to do?

You will take part in at least one semi-structured oral history interview that will take approximately 60-120 minutes. The decision of the interview date, time, and place is up to you. The interview may also take place over the phone or Zoom/other electronic means, if this is most convenient for you. You may turn off your camera.

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The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim at a later date by the Principal Investigator. This is to ensure that none of the information provided in the interview is missed. These files will be stored on a password-protected computer.

You will receive a copy of your interview transcript within 90 days of your interview date and will need to approve the content by signing a Transcript Release form.

You may request electronic or print copies of any published work that references your interview. You may also request a copy of the entire thesis from the Principal Investigator, if you desire. If you have any further questions or concerns about the study, please contact the Principal Investigator at any time. This research may continue beyond the life of this particular project.

Please select as many options as apply:

You would like to receive copies of any book chapter, article, or other published work that references your interview.

You would like to receive a copy of Ryley Gelinas's entire MA dissertation.

What are the risks and discomforts?

The interview process is not intended to raise risk of physical or psychological harm and involves no deception. But, sharing one's memories can be an emotional experience, especially if it touches on a difficult moment from the past.

At points during the interview process, you may:

- Feel psychologically or emotionally stressed, demeaned, embarrassed, worried, anxious, scared or distressed (e.g. description of painful or traumatic events)
- Experience psychological or mental fatigue (e.g. intense concentration required)
- Experience cultural or social risk (e.g. loss of privacy or status or damage to reputation)

Your safety, comfort, and well-being are of the highest concern to me. **At any point, you may take a break, ask for clarification, stop the recording, or refuse to answer a question.**

If you are experiencing distress or would like to discuss the process with someone other than the Principal Investigator, below are some counselling services and other resources that may be helpful.

Distress Line of Southwestern Alberta..... (403)-327-7905 or (888)-787-2880 (toll free)
Lethbridge Counselling Services..... (403)-942-0452
Native Counselling Services of Alberta..... (403) 329-6140
Sik-Ooh-Kotoki Friendship Society..... (403) 328-2414

It is not possible to know all the risks that may happen in a study, but we have taken all reasonable safeguards to reduce any known risks to you.

COVID-19 Related Risks: Where the research will take place in person, we will adhere to all current public health and safety guidelines, as outlined by Alberta Health Services.

What are the benefits to me?

While there may not be any direct benefit to you, by sharing your memories, you are recording your experiences as part of the historical record, which will help shape future historical research. Your stories will be recorded for yourself and future generations to listen back to. To this end, you will have the option to place your interview audio file and associated documents (e.g. transcript) in the Galt Museum and Archives. With your consent, some or part of your interview may also be used in publications, articles, and presentations by the Principal Investigator, and in an upcoming museum exhibition at the Galt Museums and Archives about the American Hotel.

Do I have to take part in the study?

Being in this study is your choice, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

If you decide to be in the study, you can change your mind and stop being in the study and/or withdraw some or all your responses no later than **February 28, 2023**. After that point we cannot remove your responses from the study because the Principal Investigator will be finishing and defending their dissertation and it may not be possible to withdraw your information or data. To withdraw from the study, please contact the Principal Investigator at ryley.gelinas@uleth.ca

Remember, at any point during the interview process, you may refuse to answer a question that you are not comfortable with.

Will I be paid to be in the research?

We are unable to provide any compensation – payment or in-kind – for your participation.

Will my information be kept private?

During this study we will do what we can to keep all information you provide private. No information relating to this study that includes your name will be released outside of the researcher's office or published by the researchers unless you give us your express permission. Sometimes, by law, we may have to release your information with your name so we cannot guarantee absolute privacy. But, we will make every legal effort to keep your information private.

The Principal Investigator's Thesis Defence, and any presentation, exhibition, and/or writing that may result thereof, or any further work on this topic by the Principal Investigator may reveal your identity.

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Should you prefer confidentiality, you may use a pseudonym (fake name), and we will not reveal your identity. We will assign a pseudonym when we transcribe your interview. If you would like to choose your own fake name, please state this below.

Please select as many options as apply:

_____ You would like use to use a pseudonym for *scholarly publications and/or articles* relating to this research.

_____ You would like use to use a pseudonym for *public presentations and/or exhibitions* of this research.

_____ You would like use to use a pseudonym for *all aspects* of this research.

What will happen to the information or data that I provide?

The information you provide will be part of Ryley Gelinias's Master's thesis at the University of Lethbridge. It may also be used as part of public or academic presentations, in news or academic publications, museum exhibitions as well as for examples during teaching. Only with your signed consent will you be identified in this work.

While the data is being used, it will be encrypted and stored in password-protected electronic files by the Principal Investigator. A final copy of the thesis will be housed in the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta. The Principal Investigator will hold another copy confidentially.

After the study is done, we will store your data for at least 5 years. With your consent, study information will be stored in a secure data repository for future research. Before files are transferred to the repository, you will be given the opportunity to review the materials. The Galt Museum and Archives may ask you to sign separate waivers and/or consent forms when data is transferred to those repositories.

If you wish, any personal information (i.e., your name, address, telephone number) that could identify you will be removed or changed before sharing study data with other researchers.

Please select one (1) option:

_____ You *would like* to remove or change any personal information (i.e., your name, address, telephone number) that could identify you before sharing study data with other researchers.

_____ You *would not like* to remove or change any personal information (i.e., your name, address, telephone number) that could identify you before sharing study data with other researchers.

Any researcher who wants to use this data must have the new project reviewed by an ethics board and sign an agreement ensuring your confidentiality and restricting data use only to the approved project. Your data may be linked with other data for research purposes only to increase the usefulness of the data, as subject to scientific and ethical oversight as mentioned above.

Please select one (1) option:

- You agree that the digital recording of your interview will be transcribed and used by the Principal Investigator in their dissertation, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations and stored at the Galt Museum and Archives after the project is completed for immediate use by future researchers.
- You agree that the digital recording of your interview will be transcribed and used by the Principal Investigator in their dissertation, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations, and stored at the Galt Museum and Archives but would like to request a hold be put on your interview and transcript where the information cannot be accessed by future researchers until ten years after the interview date.
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- You agree that the digital recording of your interview will be transcribed and used by the Principal Investigator in their dissertation, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations, but would like your interview and transcript to be destroyed following the completion of the dissertation.

What if I have questions?

If you have any questions about the research now or later, please contact the Principal Investigator by email at ryley.gelinas@uleth.ca or by phone at [REDACTED]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office at reoffice@ualberta.ca and quote Ethics ID Pro00123647. This office is independent of the study investigators.

How do I show my agreement to be in this study?

By signing below, you understand:

- That you have read the above information and the Letter of Information and have had anything that you do not understand explained to you to your satisfaction.
- That you will be taking part in a research study.
- That you may freely leave the research study at any time.
- That you do not waive your legal rights by being in the study
- That the legal and professional obligations of the investigators and involved institutions are not changed by your taking part in this study.
- That you agree to the data being stored as part of a data repository.

<i>Research Participant:</i>	
_____ Name (please print)	_____ Pseudonym (if using)
_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Mailing Address	
_____ Phone Number	_____ Email Address

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (Principal Investigator):

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature

Date

Location of Signing

A copy of this information and consent form will be given to you to keep for your records and reference.

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 26 October 2022

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Participant Consent Form

Blackfoot Elder

Title of the Study: American Hotel Research Project

Principal Investigator: Ryley Gelinias
MA Graduate Student
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
ryley.gelinias@uleth.ca

Principal Supervisor: Dr. Kristine Alexander
Associate Professor
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
(403) 332-4623
kristine.alexander@uleth.ca

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you take part, you will have the project explained to you, and you are free to ask any questions about anything you do not understand. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you have knowledge about the history of the American Hotel and/or the Town of Fort Macleod more generally. The purpose of this project is to gather memories and to record stories about the American Hotel in Fort Macleod, Alberta. The Principal Investigator may use this information in their master's thesis. This includes a written support paper, and in a museum exhibition at the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta.

What is the reason for doing the study?

The goal of this study is to understand the way people interacted with each other and with the larger community at and around the American Hotel from the 1950s to the 1980s. Your experiences and stories will help better understand these interactions and how those around it viewed the American Hotel.

What will I be asked to do?

You will take part in at least one semi-structured oral history interview that will take approximately 60-120 minutes. The decision of the interview date, time, and place is up to you. The interview may also take place over the phone or Zoom/other electronic means, if this is most convenient for you. You may turn off your camera.

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 26 October 2022

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The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim at a later date by the Principal Investigator. This is to ensure that none of the information provided in the interview is missed. These files will be stored on a password-protected computer.

You will receive a copy of your interview transcript within 90 days of your interview date and will need to approve the content by signing a Transcript Release form.

You may request electronic or print copies of any published work that references your interview. You may also request a copy of the entire thesis from the Principal Investigator, if you desire. If you have any further questions or concerns about the study, please contact the Principal Investigator at any time. This research may continue beyond the life of this particular project.

Please select as many options as apply:

You would like to receive copies of any book chapter, article, or other published work that references your interview.

You would like to receive a copy of Ryley Gelinas's entire MA dissertation.

What are the risks and discomforts?

The interview process is not intended to raise risk of physical or psychological harm and involves no deception. But, sharing one's memories can be an emotional experience, especially if it touches on a difficult moment from the past.

At points during the interview process, you may:

- Feel psychologically or emotionally stressed, demeaned, embarrassed, worried, anxious, scared or distressed (e.g. description of painful or traumatic events)
- Experience psychological or mental fatigue (e.g. intense concentration required)
- Experience cultural or social risk (e.g. loss of privacy or status or damage to reputation)

Your safety, comfort, and well-being are of the highest concern to me. **At any point, you may take a break, ask for clarification, stop the recording, or refuse to answer a question.**

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Do I have to take part in the study?

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Remember, at any point during the interview process, you may refuse to answer a question that you are not comfortable with.

Will I be paid to be in the research?

As a knowledge keeper, you will receive an Elder honorarium of \$300. **You will need to provide your mailing address and SIN (Social Insurance Number) to the Principal Investigator to process your cheque.**

Will my information be kept private?

During this study we will do what we can to keep all information you provide private. No information relating to this study that includes your name will be released outside of the researcher's office or published by the researchers unless you give us your express permission. Sometimes, by law, we may have to release your information with your name so we cannot guarantee absolute privacy. But, we will make every legal effort to keep your information private.

The Principal Investigator's Thesis Defence, and any presentation, exhibition, and/or writing that may result thereof, or any further work on this topic by the Principal Investigator may reveal your identity. Should you prefer confidentiality, you may use a pseudonym (fake

name), and we will not reveal your identity. We will assign a pseudonym when we transcribe your interview. If you would like to choose your own fake name, please state this below.

Please select as many options as apply:

- You would like use to use a pseudonym for *scholarly publications and/or articles* relating to this research.
- You would like use to use a pseudonym for *public presentations and/or exhibitions* of this research.
- You would like use to use a pseudonym for *all aspects* of this research.

What will happen to the information or data that I provide?

The information you provide will be part of Ryley Gelinas's Master's thesis at the University of Lethbridge. It may also be used as part of public or academic presentations, in news or academic publications, museum exhibitions as well as for examples during teaching. Only with your signed consent will you be identified in this work.

While the data is being used, it will be encrypted and stored in password-protected electronic files by the Principal Investigator. A final copy of the thesis will be housed in the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta. The Principal Investigator will hold another copy confidentially.

After the study is done, we will store your data for at least 5 years. With your consent, study information will be stored in a secure data repository for future research. Before files are transferred to the repository, you will be given the opportunity to review the materials. The Galt Museum and Archives may ask you to sign separate waivers and/or consent forms when data is transferred to those repositories.

If you wish, any personal information (i.e., your name, address, telephone number) that could identify you will be removed or changed before sharing study data with other researchers.

Please select one (1) option:

- You *would like* to remove or change any personal information (i.e., your name, address, telephone number) that could identify you before sharing study data with other researchers.
- You *would not like* to remove or change any personal information (i.e., your name, address, telephone number) that could identify you before sharing study data with other researchers.

Any researcher who wants to use this data must have the new project reviewed by an ethics board and sign an agreement ensuring your confidentiality and restricting data use only to

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the approved project. Your data may be linked with other data for research purposes only to increase the usefulness of the data, as subject to scientific and ethical oversight as mentioned above.

Please select one (1) option:

- You agree that the digital recording of your interview will be transcribed and used by the Principal Investigator in their dissertation, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations and stored at the Galt Museum and Archives after the project is completed *for immediate use by future researchers.*
- You agree that the digital recording of your interview will be transcribed and used by the Principal Investigator in their dissertation, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations, and stored at the Galt Museum and Archives but would like to *request a hold* be put on your interview and transcript where the information *cannot be accessed by future researchers until ten years* after the interview date.
- You agree that the digital recording of your interview will be transcribed and used by the Principal Investigator in their dissertation, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations, but *would not like to have the interview and transcript deposited into an archive.* In this case, only the Principal Investigator will have access to your interview and transcript after the dissertation is completed for a period of 5 years.
- You agree that the digital recording of your interview will be transcribed and used by the Principal Investigator in their dissertation, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations, but *would like your interview and transcript to be destroyed following the completion of the dissertation.*

What if I have questions?

If you have any questions about the research now or later, please contact the Principal Investigator by email at ryley.gelinas@uleth.ca or by phone at [REDACTED]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office at reoffice@ualberta.ca and quote Ethics ID Pro00123647. This office is independent of the study investigators.

How do I show my agreement to be in this study?

By signing below, you understand:

- That you have read the above information and the Letter of Information and have had anything that you do not understand explained to you to your satisfaction.
- That you will be taking part in a research study.
- That you may freely leave the research study at any time.
- That you do not waive your legal rights by being in the study
- That the legal and professional obligations of the investigators and involved institutions are not changed by your taking part in this study.
- That you agree to the data being stored as part of a data repository.

<i>Research Participant:</i>	
_____ Name (please print)	_____ Pseudonym (if using)
_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Mailing Address	
_____ Phone Number	_____ Email Address

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (Principal Investigator):

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature

Date

Location of Signing

A copy of this information and consent form will be given to you to keep for your records and reference.

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 26 October 2022

6



Transcript Release Form

Title of the Study: American Hotel Research Project

Principal Investigator: Ryley Gelinas
MA Graduate Student
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
ryley.gelinas@uleth.ca

Principal Supervisor: Dr. Kristine Alexander
Associate Professor
Department of History
University of Lethbridge
kristine.alexander@uleth.ca

Thank you for your participation in being interviewed for the American Hotel Research Project. As direct quotations from your interview may be used throughout this research in academic work as well as public talks or exhibitions, we would like to give you the opportunity to verify the accuracy of your responses and/or of the interpretation given to them.

After you have had the chance to read and revise your transcript to acknowledge that it accurately portrays what you said, please sign the below statement confirming your acceptance of the transcript.

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this research, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Ryley Gelinas, the Principal Investigator. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Ryley Gelinas to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Principal Investigator

UofA Ethics ID: Pro00123647
Version Date: 12 September 2022

1

American Hotel Interview Questions

- Background Information
 - Tell me about your life, where you were born, where you grew up.
 - What was your family life like?
 - What is your connection to Fort Macleod?
 - How long have you lived in/interacted with Fort Macleod?
- Fort Macleod
 - What is/was the perception of the American Hotel in Fort Macleod?
 - Has it changed over the years?
 - Part of this project is looking at relationships between settlers and white people in Fort Macleod and people from the neighbouring Blackfoot communities. What does that relationship look like to you in the context of Fort Macleod? Of the American Hotel?
 - How do you think this relationship has changed over time? From your perspective, has it gotten better or worse?
- American Hotel
 - What is your connection to the American Hotel in Fort Macleod?
 - What memories do you have of the American Hotel?
 - Being at the hotel, hearing stories about it, etc.
 - What sort of feelings and emotions do you have towards the American Hotel?
 - Why do you think those emotions come up?
 - What, if anything, do you remember of the hotel ownership of the time(s) you interacted with the hotel?
 - Do you know who the Swinarton family was? If so, what do you know about them?
 - Do you know who Ramona and Sigmund Sherwood are? If so, what do you know about them?
 - What was the environment/atmosphere at the hotel/bar room like in your time at the hotel?
 - Describe what it was like when you walked it, smells, sights, the energy of the space, etc.
- News Stories
 - The hotel made the news several times over its lifetime, what, if any, memory do you have of hearing or reading about these instances?
 - Key articles to bring up (*depending on situation of interview and how it is going*): police harassment of Indigenous patrons, protest of March 1983, license suspension, new stricter ownership in 1984, etc.
- Wrap Up
 - What other memories do you have that might be beneficial to this research?
 - Are there any other stories that you think are important to document or that you'd like to share?
 - Can you think of anyone else I should talk to who might have knowledge about the American Hotel?

APPENDIX 2: HOTEL OWNERSHIP TIMELINE

<u>Year</u>	<u>Owner</u>
1890s	Unknown, originally called the Klondyke Hotel. ¹⁰⁰
1900	Tom Wilton, changed name to American Hotel. ¹⁰¹
1900	H.H. Nash, former Indian Agent. ¹⁰²
1901	Tom Aitkins. ¹⁰³
1905	W. H. Atkins and Bob Kellock. ¹⁰⁴
1908?	J. Price, exact ownership period unknown. ¹⁰⁵
1913	W. H. Atkins, added forty-five room addition to hotel. ¹⁰⁶
1915-1924	The Calgary Brewery, closed during Prohibition. ¹⁰⁷
1928-1943	John Swinarton, hotel vacant until after World War 2. ¹⁰⁸
1943-1949	Margaret Swinarton, legal owner after husband's death. ¹⁰⁹
1949-1953	Margaret Swinarton "actually owns three-quarters and Mr. [Albert] Swinarton one-quarter."
1953	Last lease agreement with Margaret listed as owner, Albert presumably took over ownership. ¹¹⁰
1977-1979	Known only as "Oliver," full name unknown. ¹¹¹
?-1981	Veltri/Lucente Hotels Ltd., Italian hotel family. ¹¹²
1981-1984	Sigmund and Ramona Sherwood. ¹¹³
1984-1995?	Margo and Alex Dera, on-and-off ownership. ¹¹⁴
1989-2005?	Hirsch family, owner was sister of Margo Dera. ¹¹⁵
1990s-?	Charles Madl, co-owner, possibly with Hirsch family. ¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁰ *Fort Macleod – Our Colourful Past: A History of the Town of Fort Macleod, from 1874 to 1924* (Fort Macleod: Fort Macleod History Book Committee, 1977), 101.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Promethean Heritage and Cultural Services, "2019 Fort Macleod Heritage Inventory," accessed through e-mail correspondence, November 13, 2019. See especially p. 80.

¹⁰⁶ *Fort Macleod – Our Colourful Past*, 101.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Land title in Margaret Swinarton's name, Alberta Liquor Control Board fonds, Provincial Archives of Alberta GR1974.0412/1355 Box 79.

¹¹⁰ Lease agreement listing Margaret and Albert Swinarton, Alberta Liquor Control Board fonds, Provincial Archives of Alberta GR1974.0412/1355 Box 79.

¹¹¹ Lynn Bates, interview with Ryley Gelinis, December 8, 2022.

¹¹² Doran Degenstein, interview with Ryley Gelinis, December 6, 2022.

¹¹³ "American Hotel Owners," *Macleod Gazette*, 28 January 1981: 1.

¹¹⁴ "New Hotel Owners Provide Strict Supervision," *Kainai News*, June 1984: 5; and "Weekends at American Hotel are 'Rocking' again to 'Sound & Company' lowest prices in town Alex and Margo are back as new owners American Hotel, Fort Macleod," *Kainai News*, 5 October 1988: 7.

¹¹⁵ Jake Hirsch, interview with Ryley Gelinis, December 2, 2022.

¹¹⁶ Charles Madl, interview with Ryley Gelinis, December 6, 2022.

APPENDIX 3: EXHIBITION NEWSPAPER HANDOUT

THE
DAILY GALT

VOL. 1 NO. 1

LETHBRIDGE, AB

PLEASE TAKE



Contact Zone: The American Hotel Now Open at the Galt Museum and Archives

By Ryley Gelinas

The latest exhibition at the Galt Museum & Archives has just opened, examining the history of the American Hotel in Fort Macleod, Alberta. The exhibition will be open for viewing from April 22 until October 8, 2023.

The American Hotel, a now vacant building, was once a place of interaction between the settlers of the town, the colonial police force which helped found the fort and the Indigenous peoples living in town and on surrounding reserves. In this way, the American Hotel can be seen as a contact zone, a space in which social, racial, and cultural differences and similarities were constructed and reinforced.

Through a combination of objects, archival sources, newspaper articles, and oral history interviews, this exhibition portrays the American Hotel and its history as a contact zone from the 1950s to the 1980s through changing ownership, exploring patron interactions and examining police intervention.

This curated newspaper contains a collection of archival news stories over the lifetime of the American Hotel. Some are featured in the exhibition, while others are additional reading for this further interested in the history of the hotel. Some creative liberties were taken with the design and graphic creation of this newspaper, however, all of the newspaper clippings found within it are from real newspapers.

Copyright is held by original newspapers, sections reprinted with permission.

Throughout the research for this thesis and museum exhibition, I found several newspaper articles which showed, admittedly, often settler, reactions and responses to things happening at the American Hotel. I wanted a way for visitors of the exhibition to get a chance to read more about these events and for those who were unable to read newspaper graphics on the walls, the ability to take a piece of the exhibition home with them.

The Galt Museum's graphic designer, Dryden Roesch, did a fantastic job of compiling news articles from several different newspapers into one cohesive bundle. Due to poor quality, most of the articles had to be transcribed and re-formatted to be legible, however all content remained the same, including the occasional spelling mistake in the original.

APPENDIX 4: ORIGINAL SLIDESHOW

“In the 1960s, with the collapse of residential school, the permit system, and allowing First Nations people to access alcohol, for the first time since 1873 legally, there is going to be huge cultural turmoil. And the American Hotel was probably one of the biggest witnesses to that.”

—Doran Degenstein, Fort Macleod community member

“In its heyday, everybody had a really good time there. Like during the weekends and stuff but, there was also the people that drink in there during the week, the addictions and [that was] when it was really rough. Like there were nights it was rough in there.”

—Doug Singer, Blood Tribe community member

Figure 76: Slide 1 and 2, Tour Slideshow

“You look back at it, there was a lot of good times there. Like every other party place, there was heartbreaks and whatnot happening in there, but the bars were pretty cliquey back in the day, too. Even from both [of] the reserves and that, once in a while [there would] be little conflicts that were kind of coming up from there and, everybody had to test their ability to scrap or whatever, or just to get the reputation.”

—John Price, Piikani Elder and former patron

“But if you wanted to raise hell, it was always the American that you went to.”

—Lynn Bates, former Alberta Liquor Control Board official

Figure 77: Slide 3 and 4, Tour Slideshow

“[There was] this car and there’s a man in there, he was old. And he’s waiting and then he would pick up women. And now, a lady will walk out, she’s pretty drunk, and staggering down the street and the old man would call her. And she would walk over there, and talk to him and just get in. He’ll drive off with her and I would be looking at that and I’ll be thinking, ‘What is he doing? What is he doing? Where is he taking her?’ Sometimes I would recognize that lady, that girl, and maybe an hour, or half an hour, he’ll just drop her off and... or sometimes she won’t even get dropped off. I don’t know where this man would take her, but it’s always the same person. And sometimes he’ll be driving around back and forth, back and forth.”

—Kimmy Walters, Blood Tribe community member and former bartender and patron

“The relationship between the American Hotel and the people from Macleod wasn’t very good. They didn’t like the Indians being there. They had... different reasons for treating the people the way they were but that stems from a long time ago.”

—Charles Madl, former American Hotel co-owner

Figure 78: Slide 5 and 6, Tour Slideshow

“My mom was just so much the community mom. Like there were so many kids that would come and hang out [at the hotel], kids that came from troubled homes, kids that came from normal homes. We had Mormon kids that came over whose parents would absolutely lose it if they ever found out that they were hanging out there.”

—Jake Hirsch, son of former American Hotel owner

“Oh, they [the police] were always on us. And the check stops were always set up heading back to the reserve. You’re travelling there, maybe you hadn’t even been drinking but they wanted to check or whatever. You’d never see them do that in other bars. And they were always driving around the American’s bar. And we had brought that up before to them at check stops like, “Why don’t you have check stops going the other way, why is it always back to the reserve?” And you’re always stopping people going back to the reserve, rarely see stopping people heading the other ways. One [police officer] told me in Blackfoot, spoke my language to me, told me, if I was drinking a lot of wine that night. And I told him that was pretty racist, what he told me. And he told me not to get smart with him.”

—Doug Singer, Blood Tribe community member and former patron

Figure 79: Slide 7 and 8, Tour Slideshow

“Drunk driving, impaired driving was handled a lot different then. It was, ‘You know what, drive careful. Get home to the reserve. Stay there, don’t get out on the highways again.’”

—Doran Degenstein, Fort Macleod community member

“Only the Native people would show. And that was their bar. And you have to accept the fact that when they came in, that was our source of money. When I joined the Native religion, I wanted to get rid of the hotel so bad. Because I’m helping people to feel bad. You know, by drinking, and I quit drinking and seeing other people... I [was] coming in the door every day and hoping that people would change.”

—Charles Madl, former American Hotel co-owner

Figure 80: Slide 9 and 10, Tour Slideshow

“There was a number of youth in Fort Macleod that acted as a goon squad. And they would harass and beat up Indians and would just basically try and discourage them from being in Fort Macleod. So [my friend] tells the story of him and [his wife] and it doesn’t even sound like they were really, at that time, inebriated or anything, they were just there, and their ride home hadn’t showed, and they were starting to worry a little bit because it was dusk. I won’t name the fine citizens of Fort Macleod that accosted them, they are still alive. And they ran for their well-being. And guess where they ran to? The American Hotel. When he told me that story, I thought, how many times does this play out? I never thought of it at the time, ‘Oh, he just goes to the American.’ But that’s what made me realize the American was more than a drinking establishment.”

—Doran Degenstein, Fort Macleod community member

“I was scared of the Natives, in the beginning. Because I never was in a town where they were, I never met them. But now in the hotel, I know that they were, they will do no harm to me, and they were nice people.”

—Rosa Smith, former American Hotel co-owner and manager

Figure 81: Slide 11 and 12, Tour Slideshow

“My perception of that town is definitely that it never really grew. I think it was always kind of like, one of those towns. [...] Every small town has got some type of an interesting history and you’re not the only town that experienced racism. Now perhaps there’s a different perception of it because we were unique in the way of that we did have two different reserves that were close by and we had a very large Indigenous population, not every town could speak to that experience. I also remember it being [...] a really racist town and I don’t think Indigenous kids got a fair shake and I don’t know if I blame the white kids, either. I think you’re a product of your environment.”

—Jake Hirsch, son of former American Hotel owner

“When I was in, in Fort Macleod, the Natives weren’t spoken very well of, you know what I mean? They were drunks, they were this, they were that. I’m really hoping the perception has changed.”

—Vladimir Sobolewski, son of former American Hotel owner

Figure 82: Slide 13 and 14, Tour Slideshow

“We felt that [the police] encroached on our business [and] that they would unfairly target a lot of times. People had this fear that if they drove off, they would be pulled over in a matter of seconds because they would just assume that whoever left our hotel would be drunk or would be driving intoxicated. And when we looked at that from a standpoint of like, are they unfairly targeting at us, it wasn't coming from like a naïve standpoint or an ignorant standpoint, it was coming from like, okay, we can literally see across the street [to the Queen's Hotel], the cops aren't there. The cops aren't hanging out around the corner trying to catch people driving off at night.”

— Jake Hirsch, son of former American Hotel owner


“The American was just as bad, maybe more so, he'd [the owner] just get them drunk. He'd, if they had money, he got it all. And if they were a little overserved, oh, no big deal. It was the only place that they could drink. And [when] they did speak in their own language [...] he wanted English. He didn't know what they were talking about. He didn't like that. Well, they could have been planning an uprising or whatever.”

—Noel Burles, musician


Figure 83: Slide 15 and 16, Tour Slideshow

APPENDIX 5: REVISED SLIDESHOW

American Hotel, 1974



American Hotel, 2022



The American Hotel & The End of the Trail

“A lot of them outsiders didn’t know the name of the hotel, but they knew where the mural was.”
– Diane Eaglespeaker

To many people, the American Hotel is a southern Alberta landmark recognized by the *End of the Trail* mural installed on the exterior in the early 1980s. Painted by the late Glen Eaglespeaker, his family now views the mural as a reminder of the negative stereotypes which continue to face Indigenous peoples today.

Glen Eaglespeaker’s daughters Marlene and Diane, spoke about their father’s art career and their concerns with keeping the mural on the building as it currently goes through renovations.

Figure 84: Slide 1 and 2, Eaglespeaker Slideshow



Courtesy Calgary Stampede

Born in 1927 in Cardston, Alberta, the late Glen Eaglespeaker began his formal artistic training at Lethbridge Community College. While his art career took him abroad, travelling to Europe and the States, he continued to return to the Blood Reserve to partake in cultural activities, including the Horn Sun Dance. He also emphasized the importance of Blackfoot culture to his children and portrayed culture in his artwork.

In 1978, Eaglespeaker moved back to the Blood Reserve to care for his elderly parents. He continued to create and infuse his artwork with the Blackfoot culture around him.

A few years later, Eaglespeaker was commissioned by American Hotel owner Sigmund Sherwood to paint a version of the iconic *End of the Trail* image as a mural on the exterior of the building.

Figure 85: Slide 3 and 4, Eaglespeaker Slideshow

“My father [Glen], sometimes he would go have a beer [at the American Hotel], but he wanted to meet the owner. You know, my father was that kind of person and he’d go with my brothers, they’d go have a beer. So they got to be friends with [Sigmund] Sherwood and Ramona Sherwood and they got to talking and the next thing, he was commissioning artwork from my father.

That’s how that started. He was kind of skeptical some, I know they were talking about it, the idea *End of the Trail*. You know, he was wondering what people would think.”

– Marlene Eaglespeaker

The iconography of the *End of the Trail* dates back to the 1890s when American sculptor James Earle Fraser depicted what critics have viewed as a defeated Indigenous man on horseback, symbolizing the destructive powers of the colonial government, and the implicit decline and eventual disappearance of Indigenous peoples from the land.

Ultimately, Eaglespeaker painted his version of the *End of the Trail* in 1981 because it was what Sherwood had requested, likely, as Diane explains, as “an artistic novelty.”

Figure 86: Slide 5 and 6, Eaglespeaker Slideshow

“We, as Aboriginal people, when we pass over, our belief is that we can cross to help the ones on this side, for whatever and it’s called Sun Dancing, we’re crying for a prayer. And so we help people. So the End of the Trail has always been like the end, right?”

It can be interpreted in lots of different ways, it’s like the end of a cycle, the end of life, the end of meaning, of whatever that person’s going through. Because you see it a lot in art and, you know, it’s usually a depiction of a warrior like he’s at the end of his, he’s done, he’s dying. So, when I very first saw it on the building, I’m going, ‘What the heck? Why would Dad paint that?’”

– Diane Eaglespeaker

Given the history of the work, and the complex history of the American Hotel, the Eaglespeaker family recognizes a social and cultural change that is happening within Indigenous communities and is working with the new owners of the American Hotel to remove the mural.

“How Native people look at [the mural] now is like, the end of us. And I want to take it down. Because it’s not the end of us.”

– Diane Eaglespeaker

Figure 87: Slide 7 and 8, Eaglespeaker Slideshow

“End of the Trail is kind of like a mascot image, or it’s become like a mascot for Fort Macleod. But it symbolizes a real negative stereotype against Native people. We’re going through that change where we’re dealing with healing right now, a lot of our youth are affected by this.

I think the End of the Trail pinpoints, places blame, like, ‘This is where all the Natives go. This is what they’re doing [...] This is where you’ll find them.’ [...] It’s like any art installation, it either fits a time or it doesn’t. It’s done that work, and it’s played its role.”

– Marlene Eaglespeaker

“He [Glen] had that ability to be able to see with an artist’s eye what he wanted and what he needed to do, how he needed to do it, what he was going to do it with. I remember finding him just sitting and looking, you know, just looking around or just staring in one place looking around and it’s like, you know he’s thinking about something, you know he’s going to create, right.

A lot of people in Fort Macleod, they don’t know him. He died a long time ago. And so that town is really changing. So like my sister said, it’s come to an end of an era. And we need to take it [the mural] down. It doesn’t need to go back up anywhere.”

– Diane Eaglespeaker

Figure 88: Slide 9 and 10, Eaglespeaker Slideshow

APPENDIX 6: REPRINT PERMISSIONS

Most of the photographs in this thesis were taken by the author. Those which have been reprinted have been included with written permission from the rights holder or were obtained as public access sources.

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- *Figure 54* – *Kainai News*
- *Figure 55* – *Kainai News*
- *Figure 67* – Richard Collens

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- *Figure 12* – Galt Museum and Archives
- *Figure 34* – *Lethbridge Herald* (1922)
- *Figure 41* – *Alberta Liquor Control Act*
- *Figure 42* – *Alberta Liquor Control Act*