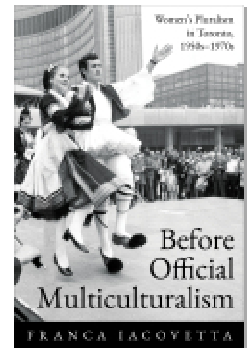
11 Handicrafts, High Art, and Human Rights: Cultural Guardianship and Internationalism



Published by

Iacovetta, Franca.
Before Official Multiculturalism: Women's Pluralism in Toronto, 1950s-1970s.
University of Toronto Press, 2022.
Project MUSE. https://muse.jhu.edu/book/109067.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/109067

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
[172.71.254.233] Project MUSE (2025-04-05 01:47 GMT)

Chapter Eleven

Handicrafts, High Art, and Human Rights: Cultural Guardianship and Internationalism

As co-hosts of United Nations Week in 1957, the International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto's director, Nell West, staffer Violet Head, and the well-connected Anglo-Canadian volunteers mounted a multi-ethnic program that celebrated cultural pluralism as the domestic embodiment of the liberal principles championed by the United Nations including an internationally enlightened form of national citizenship, inclusivity, and global peace. At the afternoon tea that kicked off the program meant to raise public awareness about the UN and encourage support for its causes, young women in "nationality costumes" welcomed people and served them "ethnic" pastries. During the evening concert, Toronto harpist Clara Emerson engaged the themes of international co-operation and goodwill by performing "beautiful compositions" of Old World music that "delighted" the capacity audience. For the occasion, the Institute also booked a "treasure van" of "beautiful handicrafts" from the Canadian Handicraft Guild that included "Eskimo" sculptures, Mexican silver objects, Greek jewellery, and Asian Indian brass objects and incense. The International Night that closed the week featured folk dancers who stepped, twirled, and stomped their way through a lively program.[1]

Middle-class women have long been involved in folklore preservation and promotion[2] as well as liberal causes at home and internationally.[3] It is thus not surprising that the Toronto Institute's middle-class Anglo-Canadian women, who embraced the agency's self-image as a local United Nations that offered a model for the nation organized multi-ethnic folk performances and craft exhibits in support of international causes and cosmopolitan citizenship. Or that the content and descriptions of the folk performances and arts and crafts exhibits traded heavily in female stereotypes and otherwise conveyed conservative gender alignments. In mounting these events, Institute directors like West and (Dutch-Canadian) Tine Stewart, along with volunteers such as Margaret Jennings,[4] collaborated with Anglo- and ethno-Canadian women folklorists. These interactions sometimes fostered cross-cultural bonds of

71.254.233] Project MUSE (2025-04-05 01:47 GMT)

respect among mainly middle-class women, but disagreements and tensions also emerged.

The Institute women's strategy of promoting liberal, democratic, and internationalist values through a cultural-pluralist frame reveals paradoxical elements. Certainly, promoting ethnic handicrafts rooted in Old World traditions in order to encourage respect for cultural differences in the present aligned with the institute movement's popular pluralism. But these women also revelled in the "high" art produced by "master" refugee artists and even tried to replicate the exalted atmosphere of the European art gallery. Similarly, their enjoyment of classically rendered folk music performed in an upscale concert hall stood a little uncomfortably alongside the democratic premise of the participatory folk workshops they organized in the more mundane setting of a high school gymnasium or the basement of a local "Y." The wealthier women's participation in the making of a bourgeois aesthetic that traded in ethnic folk performance and arts and crafts bumped up against their democratic ideals. Such tensions reflected the women's class and racial privilege, but other factors also mattered. A consideration of the real and apparent contradictions of a female cultural guardianship that mined high art as well as folk culture, and used elite venues as well as community spaces, in the service of its pluralist goals also sheds light on the immigrant and refugee artists and craftspeople who participated in the Institute's events.

This chapter examines the relations among the women involved in the Toronto Institute's cultural events, the gendered features of folk-craft production and folk-dance performance, and the relationship between pluralism and internationalism. It explores how Institute women both promoted and mobilized pluralism in support of liberal internationalist ideals and civic engagement at the local and national level; it also looks at the nature of their interactions with their female allies and colleagues. Drawing on the feminist and gendered scholarship that highlights the different roles or symbolism assigned to women and men in pageantry, commemoration, and folk performance,[5] the chapter explores gendered practices. My analysis of the folk performances suggests how modern reform movements that traded in folk culture reinforced hegemonic ideals of masculinity and femininity.[6] The discussion of the "pretty hostesses" recruited for the Institute events addresses the era's ethnic beauty pageants and the young women's efforts to negotiate modernity.[7]

The chapter explores, too, how middle-class women used a folk revival and commemoration to insert themselves publicly as defenders of civic values and ideologies that advance a "modern" progressive agenda, even when it involved some conservative elements.[8] The activities under review occurred against the wider context of a folk revival and the insurgence of liberal internationalism. The second North American folk revival movement of the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s – named as such to distinguish it from the folk revival of the

late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries – was, as Gillian Murphy notes, a fluid, multi-dimensional, and contradictory movement containing overlapping as well as parallel and competing strands.[9] Depending on where one looks, this folk revival shared elements in common with its pre-1945 iteration. Earlier debates over whether folk culture represented a "pure" or static thing to be preserved, or a dynamic entity subject to aesthetic revisioning, were also part of the second revival.[10] In both academic folklore circles and in popular music, Canadian activity and careers again benefited from the networks of a more established American folklore industry. But if the first US folk revival helped to encourage the legitimacy of folklore studies in Canada as both a semi-profession and an academic pursuit, the music strand of the second folk revival was particularly important to Canada's folk music scene, which benefited from an expanding North American music industry that launched the careers of progressive folk musicians. A familiar gender hierarchy in folklore studies saw women folklorists still clustered in less prestigious sectors, such as fieldwork, popular publications, radio programs, and folk-based tourism, while men dominated the professional positions in the museums and universities. Once again, large-scale immigration stimulated research in immigrant folklore studies. Like other "second wave" movements, the post-1945 folk revival had long roots, in this case in the thirties and forties. It also included some still-active first-generation revivalists.[11]

Regarding differences, the post-1945 revival, particularly in folk music, whose left-wing roots in the United States lay in Popular Front and New Deal reclamations of the people's music, was a more urban and mass movement than its first iteration. The sixties conjure up images of the large folk music festivals where progressive and commercially successful artists performed for progressive if mainly white, middle-class, and urban (or suburban) audiences.[12] Although widely viewed as "Old World" or "traditional," ethnic folk festivals also underwent change. Among the long-established ethnic groups who over a few generations had adapted to life in North America, selective retentions, accommodations, and outright changes to the form, content, and other features of their folk repertoire of songs, dances, and crafts had, by the 1950s, produced a "streamlined" and "modern" ethnic folk culture complex.[13] These hybrid forms reflected a less linear path towards assimilation in that, in the construction or invention of an ethnic Canadian (or ethnic American) identity, they combined homeland and hostland elements to produce something new.[14]

As liberal pluralists, the Toronto Institute's women shared with other folk music revivalists an optimistic and culturally pluralist conception of the nation, but they felt no affinity for the radical politics of a Pete Seeger. Their strongest ties were to the ethnocultural and anti-Communist European ethnic and immigrant groups who promoted their respective folk cultures in ways similar to their interwar revivalists and impresarios, even as they modified its form

and content.[15] The fluidity of the folk revival meant as well that the Institute women occasionally consulted or collaborated with folklorists and performers with left-wing views. One such contact was Ruth Rubin, a Montreal-born but New York–based collector and performer of Yiddish folk songs whose work belongs to a larger history of Jewish left-wing folk movements.[16] Another was Edith Fowke (see below).

Then, too, Toronto Institute events reflected to a modest degree the commercialization of sixties and early-seventies folk music: the performers included Canadian folk singers such as Mary Jane and Winston Young, who were part of Toronto's progressive folk scene in Yorkville and who performed at the Mariposa Folk Festival. The repertoire that the folk trio Lynn Ward, Robin Ward, and Craig Allen performed at the Toronto Institute's 1963 Canadiana Week was typical of such performances. It included "This Land Is Your Land" (described as a "Canadian Folk Song"), "Blowin' in the Wind" ("Song of Protest"), "Auction Block" ("Song of Slavery"), "Un Canadien Errant" (French Canadian Song), and "Joy, Joy" ("American Campfire Tune").[17] Overall, however, the eclecticism of the Toronto Institute's folk events, like that of its US interwar predecessors and postwar counterparts, and like that of contemporaneous Canadian multi-ethnic festival venues such as Metro International Caravan and Winnipeg's Folklorama (first held in summer 1970) stood in for a liberal pluralist nation and more harmonious world order.[18]

Handicrafts and High Art

Handicrafts, whether part of a museum-quality collection like that featured at the 1957 UN Week described above, or the saleable wares of craftspeople using traditional or near-traditional methods to produce rural crafts, are a major staple of folk revival movements. Handicraft revival has also involved the application of new technology, such as the replacement of two-shaft looms with more complex ones, to produce more "aesthetically pleasing" and "commercially viable" items that retain certain traditional patterns or other elements.[19] In contrast to fine art, which is usually credited as a creative and contemplative form of work that expresses human emotions, folk crafts are considered the products of applied skill and experience that go into the creation of objects that fulfil a particular purpose, whether utilitarian or decorative. They also constitute very tangible cultural gifts that more "primitive" rural folk can bestow upon modern urbanites. But if the Institute's strategic use of folk culture for nation-building purposes explains the ubiquity of ethnic handicrafts at its events and exhibits, what explains all the fine art that was also present? Even allowing for the blurring of such lines by generations of artists, the mixing of high (paintings and sculptures) and popular (folk) art requires some comment.[20]

The Institute women's promotion of ethnic handicrafts, a category that also included Indigenous crafts, drew on a form of bourgeois women's cultural activity dating back to the late nineteenth century. The prominence of middle-class "native-born" Anglo-American women in the early-twentieth-century folk revival movement in the United States, observes Kristin Hoganson, "owes much to the belief that women's realm included cultural guardianship," and the protection of "folk culture in particular."[21] Wealthy clubwomen and emerging female folklorists as well as those from regionally based handicraft institutions or city galleries participated in efforts to preserve and promote ethnic folk crafts. As the captions and souvenir programs of the handicraft exhibits mounted in venues such as the Albright-Knox Gallery (Buffalo) and the Boston Museum attest, an immigrant-gifts ethos (see chapter 10) informed this work. The banner that accompanied the Boston Museum's handicraft shows in 1919 read "The Nations Come to America Bringing Gifts."[22]

The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century international folk revival movement whose origins were in Europe enhanced its appeal among US women much enamoured with the cosmopolitan world of European elite travel and its exotic entertainments. Such sentiments also spread from Europe to the wider colonial world, including in India, where, as Hoganson notes, British male officials collected Indian arts and crafts and, in a classic example of imperialist nostalgia (lamenting the loss of the way of life they helped destroy), promoted local customs and mounted folklore exhibits. Such staging of folk exhibits in early-twentieth-century Europe, India, and elsewhere represented an "invention of tradition" as much as it did an attempt at cultural preservation.[23]

As pluralism took hold among leading reformers, they promoted ethnic handicrafts as desirable gifts to be poured into the American treasure chest and as a means of earning an income. In Chicago, Jane Addam's Hull House held classes in such crafts as pottery, weaving, and woodworking, and immigrant women demonstrated their traditional craft skills on the stage alongside folk singers and dancers. South End House in Boston had a lacemaking shop and New York's Greenwich House ran a handicraft school. Drawing on the ideas of arts and crafts pioneer William Morris, settlement house workers also sought to preserve handicraft skills in an industrial age by running spinning and weaving classes for younger women, who, they hoped, would develop an appreciation for their ethnic heritage even as they acculturated to the American mainstream. Similar patterns obtained in the interwar international institute movement. Founder and long-time head Edith Terry Bremer dispatched handicraft instructors to Institute affiliates to assist immigrant women in maintaining craft-making traditions. The central body also supplied individual Institutes with instructional materials for producing crafts and costumes for Old World holidays.[24]

In Canada, too, there is a long history of Anglo bourgeois women's involvement in handicraft preservation and promotion. These privileged,

accomplished, and well-travelled club women saw their efforts to revive the declining production of domestic crafts (such as hooked rugs and needlework), and to create an urban tourist market that would offer rural women a fair remuneration for their labour, benefiting the women and their impoverished communities as well as retarding rural depopulation. The women who created a handicraft committee within the Montreal branch of the Women's Arts Association of Canada (WAAC, est. 1894) were influenced by the wider British and American handicraft movements in which both leading male artists (like the British socialist William Morris) and female reformers (such as Addams and Bremer) played prominent roles. In 1905, the handicraft committee of WAAC's Montreal branch left the WAAC and formed the Canadian Handicraft Guild.[25] The Guild's middle-class Anglo women combined a sense of noblesse oblige and patriotism with an emerging commitment to cultural pluralism. They sought to retain, encourage, and educate the wider public about the handicraft traditions that new immigrants brought from their homelands, and to sell ethnic crafts, whether Doukhobor embroidery or Czech pottery, to Canadians. They imported specialized materials from Europe and hired immigrant craftswomen to run craft classes for immigrant children and women [26] The Guild's participation in the interwar folk festivals organized by J.M. Gibbon for the Canadian Pacific Railway – and which contained a major ethnic handicraft component both in terms of selling crafts and featuring craftspeople on the stage accompanied by folk singers – boosted its national profile.[27]

The Guild's remit also included Indigenous crafts. According to Ellen Easton McLeod, Guild women played a critical role in encouraging an "Indian" arts and crafts movement through collection and education, and by creating an urban market for the crafts, which settler cultural "experts" had elevated to an art form. By the 1950s, Guild leaders attributed the thriving cooperative arts and crafts industry in the North largely to their efforts. A sculpture-collecting trip through the North led to the Guild's first major Inuit art show in southern Canada, held in Montreal in 1949. To the members' delight, the show sold out in three days.[28] The Institute, as noted at the outset of the chapter, occasionally booked a Guild exhibit for an event, though the featured crafts were usually provided by the ethnocultural organizations, patrons, and the craftspeople themselves.

Men, too, were involved in handicraft revivalism, including J.M. Gibbon. While best known for organizing the interwar folk festivals on behalf of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Gibbon also headed the Guild in the early 1940s. Considered the founder of professional folklore studies in Canada, Marius Barbeau, the Quebec anthropologist and folklorist with the National Museum (now the Canadian Museum of History), played a role in the revival of textile handicrafts in his home province.[29] Similarly, men headed some of the post-1945 immigrant and ethno-Canadian arts and crafts organizations courted by the

71.254.233] Project MUSE (2025-04-05 01:47 GMT)

Institute women. Nonetheless, as suggested by the examples of the Institute and Guild, women's strong association with handicraft preservation and promotion carried into the period (1950s to 1970s) under review.

Indeed, a familiar gender hierarchy characterized the Institute events that featured ethnic handicrafts, be it an Ethnic Week, a human rights reception, or UN event. For such occasions, lecturers were often recruited to provide the attendees with information both entertaining and edifying. The absence of professional credentials or titles for the ethno-Canadian or immigrant women who gave lectures on the exhibits attests to their rank as community experts. Bronka Michalowska (a painter) provided the historical and cultural context for a Polish Week exhibit featuring handmade dolls from different regions of Poland, as well as rugs, paper cut-outs, wood carvings, embroidery, and fine lacework. Stase Prapuolenis did likewise for a Lithuanian Week exhibit, "Amber Work, Dolls in National Costumes, Embroideries, Handwoven Articles, Leatherwork, Silverwork, Woodwork."[30] While the male heads of the cultural associations who sometimes supplied the crafts might speak to journalists in lofty tones about their homeland's arts and crafts traditions, the women lecturers were community interpreters and instructors who explained the items on display to those in attendance. The (fewer) men who delivered lectures, such as H.N. Milnes, a professor of German literature at the University of Toronto who spoke at a German Week, were academics who addressed more intellectual themes.[31]

The texts of the handicraft lectures delivered by women like Michalowksa and Prapuolenis are not available, but they likely combined information about regional specialties and production methods with references to the remarkable talents and ancient traditions passed on through the ages.[32] The observation applies to today's folkcraft marketing. A 2014 website on Polish crafts pitched at middle-class tourists uses a familiar mix of history, folksy (or anti-modernist) language, and nationalist rhetoric to promote crafts like the crocheted lace that is a regional specialty of the women lacemakers of Koniaków, a village in the Beskid Mountain range in southwest Poland.[33]

West and colleagues similarly emphasized the quality of the handicraft exhibits in their invitations to potential co-sponsors, donors, and hosts. In an invitation to host a Latvian Ethnic Week, West told Mayor Nathan Phillips that, in addition to the hostesses and the banquet, he could expect a "very good" folk art exhibit.[34] When Pearl McCarthy, long-time art critic for the Toronto *Globe and Mail,* praised the handicraft exhibit for a Croatia Week as "one of the best exhibits of folk art" she had seen, a delighted West used it in subsequent efforts to recruit co-sponsors and dignitaries for other events.[35]

Rather than immigrant crafts, the crafts featured during the Canadiana Weeks were more likely to be a mix of rural and Indigenous "Canadian" (though rarely Québécois), their inclusion a visual testimonial to a rich pluralist history of the

different peoples, regions, and cultures that came to comprise Canada.[36] The hooked mats exhibited by the Grenfell Mission's Labrador Handicraft Group during the inaugural Canadiana Week showcased the cultural gifts produced by successive female descendants of the English and Irish fishers who settled the remote areas of northern Newfoundland and Labrador in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Wilfred Grenfell, the British medical missionary who arrived in 1892 to bring health services to this poor region, was credited with stimulating industrial development in the region and creating a local handicraft industry that allowed residents to sell their hooked mats made out of silk stockings, knitted items, and other crafts to North American shops. Distinguished by their simple scenes or colourful images, the woman-made Grenfell rugs were now designated an artistically worthy expression of the people of Atlantic Canada.[37] Similarly, a 1962 Canadiana Week exhibit of "patchwork quilts" made by "United Empire Loyalist women 150 and 100 years ago" was a testimony to Canada's lengthy history of accepting refugees, and to the cultural benefits obtained through the acquisition of such delightful handicrafts.[38] In the 1964 Canadiana Week, Indigenous peoples were added to the colonial mix through an "Indian and Eskimo" handicraft display.[39]

The selling and buying of handicrafts bring together the paradoxical elements of tourist-oriented folk festivals that make them such dramatic expressions of what Michael Kammen has called "nostalgic modernism" (and others liberal anti-modernism), representing a simultaneous embrace and suspicion of capitalism. The ethnic crafts were gendered insofar as women generally made the fine lacework, handstitched embroidery, handwoven shawls, and hooked rugs while men tended to produce the larger wood carvings, silverwork, leatherwork, and sculptures. But both women and men produced the jewellery, silhouettes, straw crafts, amber work, small wood carvings, and sculptures. The acquisition of folk crafts also differs from that of "ethnic" food, which is consumed mainly in the moment, though bringing home edible products would become a feature of the middle-class vacation.[40] Still, the purchase of a straw doll, embroidered textile, or crocheted lace as a souvenir can, to paraphrase cultural theorist Arjun Appadurai, imbue the consumable "thing" with a cultural meaning beyond its material constituents. Here, the transaction involves a social interaction between crafts-maker and tourist, and between a (constructed) simpler past and a complicated present filtered through a discourse and politics of authenticity. Depending on whether the souvenir is on permanent display or brought out to punctuate a vacation narrative, it can become an occasional or constant reminder of the tourist's temporary time-travelling into the past.[41]

A 1972 Institute craft show that transferred this cultural exchange to Toronto and a follow-up survey offer some insight into the immigrant craftspeople involved. The impetus came from an Institute craft committee composed mainly of IODE volunteers chaired by Frances Bander, who sat on the Institute board.

Having secured funds from several IODE branches to explore the idea of establishing an annual craft show and permanent shop, the committee held a large craft show in spring 1972. More than forty craftspeople, most of them women, participated in the show, which also included seventies-era "hippie" crafts, including macramé, thus further blurring the lines between traditional and modern. The craftspeople helped with setting-up and the organizers distributed the tickets through their networks, albeit with modest results. The Institute took its usual 15 per cent cut of the total sales.[42]

Most of the twenty-seven people who completed the questionnaire meant to determine the viability of a permanent shop were European women. They included makers of Finnish wooden angels and crocheted caps, Swedish handwoven rugs, Hungarian doilies, Danish ceramic jewellery, and Spanish lace and embroidered cushions. The non-Europeans included a Korean woman (pictures with natural materials), a Ceylonese woman (batik and wall hangings), a Mexican man (flowers and other items), and an Asian Indian man (jewellery). All but two respondents had sold something, the value of which ranged from $9 to over $100. The responses indicated overwhelming support for more craft shows and a "boutique." No one objected to the inclusion of contemporary items of the tie-dye variety. The mostly positive comments – one participant, who made close to $100, said "I enjoyed it!" while another, who made about $25, "was very pleased" – suggests that these craftspeople craved a larger audience and potential market. As do their few critical comments. The Korean woman expressed appreciation for the "opportunity to show my skills," but stressed that "we need more visitor[s]." A Polish woman (earnings of $25) suggested more advertising and limiting the products to "handcrafts made in Canada." Other suggestions included holding an annual Saturday Bazaar before Christmas.[43]

The questionnaire's purpose offered little space for the articulation of broad cultural goals, but the respondents' strong desire for more opportunities to sell their wares certainly spoke to the challenge faced by newcomers who, far from being quaint rural folk figures, were struggling to earn a livelihood in an urban metropolis. It may explain why no one objected to the folksy content of the publicity materials, which conjured images of folk making useful but delightful objects, such as ceramic jugs and shawls, according to Old World specifications. In the end, however, the Institute's own financial crisis kept it from becoming a more active player in the urban craft market.[44]

The significant presence of fine art also on display at many Institute events may have contradicted the institute movement's primarily folk-oriented brand of pluralism, but it underscores my argument about a modern nation-building campaign taking precedence over a consistent commitment to folk revivalism (see chapter 10). The Institute women's comfort at mixing "high" and "low" art reflected a shared assumption among liberal-minded but culturally privileged women, at least some of whom visited museums on their travels abroad, that

high art also fell within the purview of their cultural guardianship. It is captured in West's letter to the head of a Kiwanis Club she hoped to recruit as a co-sponsor for a Ukrainian Week: using a circular logic, she promised that both the fine and folk art would be "exceptionally good" because "the Ukrainians have a number of well-known artists and their folk art is advanced and colourful."[45]

The display of fine art, whether produced by academically trained refugee artists (or less-skilled hobbyists), or borrowed from owners and art groups, reflected as well the pronounced Eastern European profile of the Institute's membership and of the ethnic contacts that West and others nurtured. Many of the artists featured in the 1963 Hungarian Week exhibit – which included paintings, miniatures, and sculptures on loan from local art patrons and artist-owned work that was on sale – had earned academic credentials before escaping Hungary following the Second World War or in the aftermath of the failed 1956 revolt. A Hungarian Canadian doctor and his wife lent some of their paintings for the exhibit, the market value for which ranged from $30 to $2,000, the latter for a painting by early-twentieth-century modernist József Rippl-Rónai.[46] The exhibits occasionally included an artist with a left-wing sensibility, though the painting themselves did not necessarily deliver an obvious working-class or radical message. The painting by Russian Canadian Paraskeva Clark featured in the 1963 Canadiana Week exhibit, for example, was entitled *Swamp, 1939*. It depicted a swamp in Haliburton, northeast of Toronto.[47]

As self-perceived aficionados of fine art who also understood its value as a class marker of worldly sophistication, the Institute women's promotion of newcomer artists sometimes verged on the paternalistic. For them, the Canadian treasure chest could absorb the artistic traditions of elite homeland cultures as easily as it did the folk craft. The appropriative element contained in that stance smacked of Anglo snobbery, though the artists' own blurring of high and popular (or commercial) art also played a role.

Consider Dora de Pédery-Hunt (1913–2008), the Hungarian sculptor who became Canada's leading designer of medals and coins. She was the daughter of a Catholic middle-class Budapest family whose physicist father had carried the bronze elephant she sculpted as a master's degree project when they fled Hungary for Germany in 1944 to use as proof of her artistic credentials. In Toronto, de Pédery-Hunt first worked as a live-in domestic and then a high school art teacher. By the time of the Institute's 1963 Hungarian Week, whose arts and crafts exhibit featured two of her sculptures, de Pédery-Hunt was enjoying success as a sculptor, thanks in part to the support of influential friends such as the sculptors Frances Loring and Frances Wylie, and Alan Jarvis, who as director of the National Gallery of Canada purchased one of her sculptures. Having turned to medallion art following a trip to Brussels in 1958, de Pédery-Hunt also designed commissioned medals for cultural and sports organizations. Later, she produced a series of bronze sculptures commemorating leading Canadians,

including feminist crusader Nellie McClung.[48] De Pédery-Hunt was also a commercial designer, and West recruited her to design a new Christmas card for an Institute fundraiser in 1963. Announcing it in the *Intercom*, West referred to "the internationally known sculptress" creating "a new, very unusual design" and encouraged people to buy copies of the card.[49]

Just as composers blurred the line between folk and classical music, some of the paintings and fine art objects displayed at Institute events featured folk themes. Certain paintings reportedly shown at the 1963 Hungarian Week contained female folk images. These included *Forest Maidens*, by Béla Iványi-Grünwald (1867–1940), who later abandoned his folk-themed pastoral paintings for impressionist landscapes, and *Peasant Woman*, by Eduard "Ede" Telcs (1872–1948), a Jewish Hungarian artist who became a sculptor and medallist. (Thanks to Raoul Wallenberg, Telcs had escaped deportation to a Nazi death camp.) The exhibit also included *Gypsy Caravan*, by Gyula Rudnay (1878–1957), whose paintings and tapestries hung in the Hungarian Parliament. The exhibit's handicrafts included decorative items lent by their owners, such as a mosaic tray, an antique "bread cutting woman" (breadknife), and "braedery" (scenes made with braided wool).[50]

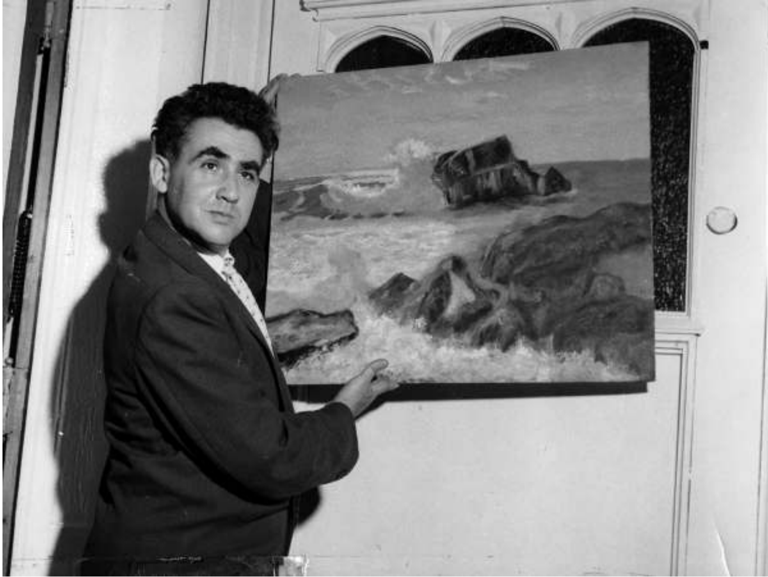
There were also efforts to replicate the rarefied atmosphere of the European art gallery in specially designated rooms at the Institute. With the support of West and board members such as Irene Ungar, a professionally accomplished woman and prominent figure within the Polish Canadian community, the well-to-do volunteers from the Toronto Junior League took the lead on this endeavour. In 1961, they formed a cultural committee with a mandate to meet "the need for cultural exchange" in "a fast-growing city" by holding monthly shows of "works by new Canadian artists" and to help newcomers "interpret Toronto's "more established cultural forms" through occasional Canadian exhibitions. In promoting pluralism as a means by which to acquire an appreciation of the city's diverse artistic traditions – and a more "cosmopolitan" outlook – the committee both celebrated and appropriated elite European culture for the same reason it did folk culture: to advance a civic and nation-building project. Their efforts, the committee claimed, would help prevent the "unchecked" spread of "misunderstanding and intolerance" and sow "the seeds of a great city whose cultural and social life are the products of the many nationalities represented in its citizens."[51]

As well-heeled cultural matrons from Toronto's upper-class neighbourhoods,[52] these Institute women also promoted commemoration ceremonies in an effort to attract more attention to and elevate artists' work. Beginning in 1961, they mounted art exhibits into the room-turned-gallery-space dedicated to the memory of Arturo Scotti, an intellectual and journalist who had served on the Institute board and supported the idea of using culture to promote inter-group harmony. A refugee of Italian origin from Istria, Scotti co-founded

71.254.233] Project MUSE (2025-04-05 01:47 GMT)

Women sell candelabras, decorative cards, and knick-knacks at the Institute craft show in 1972. Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.

An immigrant craftsman (probably of Mexican origin) selling paper flowers and other handmade decorative items attracts potential customers at the Institute's 1972 craft show. Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.



Refugee artist Edward Volkman holds up his painting of a seascape, c. 1963. Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.

(with Gianni Grohovas) the Italian-language newspaper *Corriere Canadese*. Scotti's interest in raising the Italian Canadian community's plebeian profile, and uniting the immigrants across regional origin and politics through the promotion of Italy's grand cultural traditions and contributions to the world, clearly resonated with the women and men of the art committee.[53] Two years later, they raised considerably more funds for the dedication of a gallery to the memory of John Collingwood Reade, the popular radio broadcaster who had produced some of the Institute's concerts. Ungar chaired the memorial committee, which commissioned de Pédery-Hunt to create a bronze memorial plaque for the gallery, and established a bursary for a promising new Canadian student to attend the Royal Conservatory of Music. Reade's wife Elizabeth, who had been involved in the fundraising efforts, joined the Institute's arts committees. Later, she chaired the Institute committee for Metro Caravan '69, working closely with Elizabeth Isserstedt, then female president of the Institute board, and others.[54]

The art shows held in these galleries drew between 200 and 350 people on opening night. A Czechoslovakian exhibit co-sponsored with the Toronto Branch of the Czechoslovakian Society of Arts and Sciences featured the art of three "outstanding" refugees of the 1948 Communist takeover, including

the diplomat-turned-artist Jaroslav Sehnoha. The Institute art director, Judas Buda, a Hungarian refugee painter who had exhibited in England and Paris before coming to Canada in 1958, surely wrote the enthusiastic review for the *Intercom*. Offering an unusually heavy dose of Canadian boosterism that would have pleased the Institute women, he reported that while Sehnoha had already earned a grand master's pedigree in Europe, his "artistic talents" had been "fully developed in Canada," a country that was supposedly "unfavourable towards all types of cultural endeavour." He ended by noting the "good" attendance and reporting that a number of paintings had sold to "eager buyers."[55]

Overall, the Institute exhibits showed more works by men than women, but there were several one-woman shows. One of them featured Zoya Lisowska, a Ukrainian portrait painter and illustrator who had exhibited in Italy, Geneva, Munich, and Rio de Janeiro before settling in Geneva. A main subject of her European paintings was children, including refugee children.[56] Folk themes featured in the work of Stephania K. Haller, a former professor of Budapest's Academy for Industrial Art and "a proud protagonist of the representational and impressionistic schools of art" who worked mainly in aquarelle (watercolour). The flyer for her 1970 show described her as excelling in "the charming depiction" of "village scenes and national costumes," the "sparkle of light and vibrant color" capturing "the romance and music of Hungary in a manner that only one steeped in its unique traditions may successfully communicate."[57]

One of the few non–Eastern Europeans to get a show in the Scotti gallery was Italian ceramicist Aldo Covello. Unlike most artist biographies, his self-written profile noted that he had completed his training in Canada at Toronto's Ontario College of Art. It also unapologetically reported that he was supporting himself by working as a sign painter.[58] Another Southern European, T.J. Schembri, a modernist painter from Malta who had spent the war in East Africa as an Italian-language interpreter with the British Armed Forces, expressed his appreciation for the public exposure his show received, including on a television show, by donating a Cubist-inspired oil painting to the Institute. He, too, injected a dose of reality by also thanking the Institute counsellors for helping his wife find a job.[59]

The limits on the Institute's support for artists became abundantly evident in 1971, when the Canadian Czechoslovakian Artists Association lobbied director Stewart to mount a "massive" two-week art show in a high-end venue like the O'Keefe Centre with an opening-night concert featuring classical music. Stewart rejected the proposal on the grounds that the fee, which Elizabeth Reade had costed at double the $2,000 estimate given, was "quite beyond our reach."[60]

Concert Halls and Gendered Performances

West and colleagues prioritized modern nation-building goals over a singular pursuit of folk revivalism. But they were deeply enamoured of the European

folk music that had been shaped by an elite cadre of classically trained, and politically conservative, nationalist composers claiming, in the face of growing urbanism and industrialization, to have captured the essence of their nation's (rural) folk. As such, they were liberal anti-modernists who revelled in the haunting melodies performed by choral groups and chamber ensembles whose repertoire of folk songs, sacred music, and orchestral arrangements blurred the line between classical and folk.[61] This more elitist form of women's cultural guardianship, like the promotion of fine art, is evidenced by the role played by West, Jennings, and others in bringing certain folk concerts to Massey Hall, an upscale concert hall that was home to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

In 1955, West and Jennings, then both with the Institute's precursor, the New Canadians Service Association, helped to organize two sold-out concerts by the Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus. A male ensemble of musicians who sang and played the lute-shaped bandura instrument, the Ukrainian Bandurists entered the United States as refugees in the late 1940s, settling in Detroit. The Detroit Institute joined with prominent Ukrainian American groups to co-sponsor North American tours. A concert poster introduced them as "The Only Chorus of Bandurists in the Free World" whose resettlement "in America" meant their "unusual" music "lives again to delight you and add its beauties to our culture."[62] Besides West and Jennings, the Canadian patrons of the 1955 tour, which involved several Canadian cities, included Jennings's lawyer-husband and James Duncan, head of Massey-Ferguson, a leading agricultural implements manufacturer. The few ethno-Canadian patrons were Jewish Canadian Mayor Nathan Phillips and his wife, and the soon-to-be provincial secretary and minister of citizenship of Ontario, Ukrainian Canadian John Yaremko. The endorsements plastered on the concert poster included one by US Senator Margaret Chase Smith, a moderate Republican best known for a 1950 speech that criticized McCarthyite tactics. Smith, who wrote of the "beautiful" music that emanated from the men's "hearts and souls," also had some immigrant credentials, given her English-born father and French Canadian mother. Another came from Liberal member of Parliament and senior minister Paul Martin Sr., architect of the 1947 Canadian Citizenship Act, who called the concert "a unique and memorable musical experience." West and Jennings's involvement in the 1955 concerts may have also facilitated the founding of the Toronto Institute one year later.[63]

A later example was the 1961 concert, also sold out, by the Kapoustin Ensemble, an international group of 100 European performers. It was funded by Robert Kapoustin, a Yugoslavian businessman whose first venture as a cultural impresario evidently occurred at the behest of his choreographer wife, Tatiana. In an endorsement the Institute women would have loved, the Kapoustins said their "mammoth" ensemble was inspired by the many ethnic folk performances they enjoyed during an earlier visit to Toronto. Tatiana, who evidently initiated

the Institute's unusual collaboration with a "Communist" group, held rehearsals for three months at the Institute's College Street auditorium. Echoing Institute views, husband Robert told reporters that, to thrive, the ensemble had to overcome the "hermetic" pride of individual ethnic groups and work together.[64] West said of such concerts that she hoped the emotionally uplifting performances would become a regular feature of the Toronto concert scene.[65]

By transporting an urban middle-class Anglo-Canadian audience to the quaint charms or heroic splendour of an earlier era in Europe, concerts like those given by the all-male Bandurists, the mixed-gender Kapoustin Ensemble, and Liga, a Latvian eight-women choral ensemble, could create a therapeutic space in which the immigrants' complicated past and difficult present were held at bay. Invoking the lyrical and romantic language of the past, the program of the 1955 Bandurists concerts portrayed the Bandurist as "a troubadour" who plays his one-of-a-kind hand-carved and hand-painted wooden instrument as "he sings ballads of an ancient nation in words and melodies handed down for more than a thousand years."[66] The text fit the culturally essentialist position adopted by the anti-Communist Ukrainian Canadian Committee (UCC). In opposition to the left-wing Ukrainian Canadians interested in cultural exchanges with Soviet Ukraine, the UCC, as Kassandra Luciuk explains, declared that only the art that predated Soviet Union control, and not the "living" art produced by artists in the territory of Ukraine, was valued.[67] In their colourful boisterousness, the Kapoustin Ensemble's many troupes projected a kaleidoscope of whirling dervishes that could similarly serve to erase the immigrants' complicated pasts and gloss over the harsh material realities of their lives.[68]

Such performances risked turning the performers into tourist folk figures. Descriptions and images abound of smiling and costumed folk dancers who energetically twirled, clapped, and stomped their way through a folk dance such as the Hungarian csardas, a courting dance of eighteenth-century origins popularized by Roma bands in Hungary and neighbouring regions before being made a national dance of Hungary. With the women dressed in traditional wide skirts of bright red or yellow that swirled as their male partners, dressed in embroidered wide-sleeved shirts and vests, spun them around, the dancers performed to a musical score that shifted from a slow and melancholic opening to an upbeat tempo during which the couples whirled in dramatic fashion. An "elite" rendition of a folk dance occasionally took place in mundane surroundings. Professional Canadian ballet dancers Marilyn Kantor and Michael Drabik performed a ballet csardas to the music of classical composer Léo Delibes's ballet *Coppélia* during an Institute folk pageant held in a high school auditorium.[69]

Like historians of pageantry, scholars of folk-dance performance have documented the markedly different portrayals of male and female figures, whether romanticized heroes and heroines or metaphorical representations.

71.254.233] Project MUSE (2025-04-05 01:47 GMT)

As ethnomusicologist Henry Spiller notes, staged folk-dance performances can reinforce hegemonic gender ideologies by "making prescribed behavior appear not only essential but aesthetically beautiful as well."[70] With dance performance often coded feminine, one might expect to find homophobic utterances aimed at "foreign" men who pranced on the stage in flowing sleeves and pantaloons made by bigoted Canadian men and youth. But my research generally confirms the argument made by folk-dance performance experts like Marcia Ostashewski that the athletic prowess of male dancers who showed off their acrobatic talents with audience-pleasing jumps, spins, and squats projected an exuberant manliness.[71]

The masculinity projected by the Bandurists was that of the romantic balladeer whose songs of the brave and hypermasculine Cossacks reinforced their own heterosexuality. The 1955 concert program included the compositions of Hnat Khotkevych (1877–1938), the twentieth-century modernist writer, scholar, theatre director, and classical composer credited with saving the "ancient" art of bandura music from decline in the 1920s. The men performed centuries-old songs about freedom-loving Cossacks fighting the oppressive Tatars and Turks, the Russian tsar, and other enemies. As Ostashewski observes, the romanticized Cossack that informed Ukrainian nationalist ideology and the folk performances transplanted to Canada and elsewhere idealized the Cossacks as a democratic "brotherhood" and ignored those who became mercenaries and landowners or otherwise deviated from the heroic Cossack image. The program also featured *dumas*, or epic (rhyming) poems of Cossack origins that were recited or chanted to the accompaniment of the bandura. The "Song of Chumaks," for example, heralded "the men who centuries ago, brought the salt inland from the sea." A song like "The Lone Tavern," a courtship song about a young tavern girl who regrets running off with the Cossacks who had promised that "life will be gayer with us than in your mother's house," reaffirmed the men's heterosexual masculinity while offering them a mild rebuke. The evening ended on a solemn but climactic note with "Play, O, Bandurists" with lyrics by Taras Shevchenko, the nationalist poet revered by Ukrainians across the political spectrum, and whose own poetry contributed to the romanticized image of the Cossack.[72]

The choreographed movements that folk dances assign to women, who usually assume the role of the passive or coquettish but "wholesome" love interest of men, require them to perform gestures coded as submissive and female. In the interwar settlements, workers promoted mainly European folk dances (or American renditions of them) among girls and young women as a safe, healthy, and morally virtuous alternative to the often African American–influenced popular dances of the day. In the many descriptions of female folk dancers who performed in Toronto Institute–related events, it was their slim and lithe young bodies, their smiling and made-up but wholesome-looking faces, and

Greek performers in national costume dance at an outdoor concert at Nathan Phillips Square in front of a large crowd, Toronto City Hall, 14 July 1970. York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC34485.

their hairdos festooned with decorative ribbons, a crown of flowers, or festive kerchiefs, and not their talents or skills, that received most attention.[73]

In ways that echoed the beauty pageants that became popular in this period, audiences informed by the era's heteronormative gaze turned the women performers into what some feminist scholars have called symbols of race (or ethnicity) and nation. Attractive and friendly, these young women were expected to embody the idealized values, concepts, and behaviour of their given group or community.[74]

Folk Workshops

As members of a cultural elite that went to the symphony, theatre, and art galleries, Institute women like West, Jennings, and Bander felt at home in the polished folk performances that occurred in Toronto's bourgeois venues. As popular pluralists, they believed that participatory folk-dance workshops held in community spaces where ordinary people practised each other's folk-dance routines could help to foster mutual trust and a democratic outlook among

Canadians, new and old. Brief presentations on the cultural heritages of the dances, they added, would make the experiment more meaningful for the participants. An awareness of the need to create an environment conducive to making friends explains the related focus on having fun.

The plans that led to the first folk-dance workshop brought together a loose collection of women, and some men, who agreed that folk cultures could promote "good citizenship."[75] West and Jennings began with a proposal to the Co-ordinating Council of Citizenship for Metropolitan Toronto, a multigroup community organization on which they sat as Institute representatives, to organize a folk pageant for the tenth anniversary of Citizenship Day, held each year in honour of the Canadian Citizenship Act. With West as council chair, and Jennings as chair of its citizenship committee, the proposal carried. The familiar allies on the planning committee included social worker Charity Grant, an Institute board member, Jean Kotick of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, Ivy Krehm, group worker and folk-dance instructor at University Settlement House, and some YWCA staffers. The men included Institute staffer Richard Kolm, Andrew Thompson, a Liberal member of the Ontario legislature and Institute board member, and some YMCA staff.[76]

The Institute's "ethnic" collaborators included Alma Kopmanis of the Baltic Women's Council, who became an Institute friend, and Betty Madsen, the Danish Canadian owner of a folk school located outside Toronto and organizer of the Madsen folk festivals (see chapter 10). Having arrived in Canada and then married another Dane in 1937, the now-widowed Madsen headed the folk school she founded with husband John in 1945 and had links to the movement in Europe. The Madsen school taught choral singing and handicraft classes in woodcarving, sculpture, ceramics, and leather to people of various backgrounds. Madsen's immigrant-gifts populism mirrored that of the Institute. A typical festival program declared that Canada was "rich beyond imagination in Folk Lore treasures gathered from every part of the world," and that by "weaving these treasures into one colourful tapestry, we will all gain and add to the culture of this new and wonderful country." [77] The school's commitment to using folk activities to help people become "better citizens" capable of making "a real contribution to human relations in Canada"[78] resonated with the Institute's non-denominational but generally Christian worldview, though the organization did not publicly adopt Madsen's explicitly Christian vocabulary.[79]

The biggest recruit was Edith Fowke, then probably the best-known Canadian folklorist in Canada. An ardent nationalist and popularizer who began collecting rural folk songs in southwestern Ontario in the 1940s, the prolific Fowke was at this time broadcasting *Folk Song Time* (1950–63), the first of several popular CBC radio programs she hosted on Canadian folk songs. (In the early 1970s, she began teaching folklore studies at York University.) The Institute women shared with the Saskatchewan-born Fowke an interest in popularizing

folk cultures for nationalist ends, but also differed from her in certain respects. For example, the Institute's folk-culture repertoire had no place for the industrial songs and workers' songs of protest that Fowke had begun to collect and publish. As a socialist of the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) persuasion, and a feminist, Fowke's politics differed markedly from that of West and colleagues. However, as Pauline Greenhill notes, Fowke was more conventional in her selection and analysis of folk traditions than her involvement in various progressive political and social movements, including pacificism, would suggest. Further, Fowke, whose work was shaped by British and US models of folklore study, did not approve of collecting the folk cultures of immigrants, or what she called "the multicultural groups," because they were first-generation imports. To count as Canadian folklore in her books, the songs had to have survived at least one entire generation in Canada.[80] But she was clearly curious enough to join the planning committee. The Institute women were avowed anti-Communists, but unlike Helen Creighton, the Nova Scotian folklorist who branded Fowke a Communist worth watching,[81] they never red-baited Fowke.

Several months into their work, the planning committee abandoned its initially ambitious plans to celebrate Citizenship Day with a "mass" event. Those plans had involved a "parade of national costumes," a mega-concert in Maple Leaf Gardens, then the city's largest arena, and a dance at the Palais Royale, an imposing Moroccan-style structure on Lake Ontario that housed one of Toronto's few remaining large dance floors. On Jennings's recommendation, the committee agreed to postpone plans until sufficient funds could be raised to mount "an imposing presentation."[82] And she and West pursued alternative plans for a series of dance workshops to be held in venues across the city. The Central YMCA hosted the first one in June 1957. An ethnic- and gender-mixed group of about a dozen folk-dance instructors, choreographers, and choir leaders participated.

The Institute considered the first workshop a success in that 350 people representing two dozen ethnic groups, including folk troupes from Hamilton, Niagara Falls, Buffalo, and Syracuse, had participated despite insufficient publicity. But problems had arisen. The workshop, which the Institute hosted with the YMCA's Square Dance Group, ran an ethnically mixed program of sessions that involved troupe demonstrations and dance-alongs; these included Canadian and US square dances, European folk dances, and some vocal music sessions featuring Serbian and Ukrainian folk songs. Fowke ran a group singalong that featured Canadian songs. But various glitches caused confusion, embarrassment, and tensions, and hampered the dancing. The failure to provide "a prominent Ukrainian choir leader" leading a folk-singing session with the requested mimeographed copies of song lyrics written phonetically so that non-Ukrainians could participate had caused an uproar, prompting a profuse apology to the choirmaster. To make amends, the Institute planned to invite him to repeat the session at their next event. Keen to maintain cordial relations with

other folk-culture contacts, the organizers agreed that even those folklorists who, like Rubin, had cancelled at the last minute, be invited to all future events.[83]

The report on the event also criticized the Canadian and ethno-Canadian troupe leaders and members for sticking to themselves following their own dance demonstrations instead of joining in the other group dances, thereby failing to become acquainted with the cultures of "others." For future workshops, it noted, the instructors, interpreters, and demonstrators must be made to understand their role as "the hosts through which the initiated will gain a knowledge, understanding and insight into their ethnic heritage." In short, they were to "help their guests enjoy themselves by learning one of their national dances, rather than performing for a sit-down audience."

The complaints about insufficient media publicity were also pointed. As promised, CBLT-TV (CBC Toronto) sent a cameraman to the event, but his shooting reportedly interfered with the program, creating "problems and jealousies," and the station never used the footage. Leon Kossar, the Ukrainian Canadian journalist and folk festival enthusiast, the report added, had written an "excellent" article on the upcoming workshop in his *Toronto Telegram* column, "New Canadian Interests," but never followed up. At the *Toronto Star*, Eric Geiger, author of the "New Canadians" advice column, gave the workshop only a passing mention despite being sent plenty of material. The conservative *Globe and Mail* ignored the event altogether. The failure of the *Canadian Scene*, a private anti-Communist outfit that distributed translated news items to the ethnic press, to get the materials to the editors in good time furthered hampered the coverage.[84]

The organizers nevertheless agreed that, despite its flaws, the workshop had generated enough goodwill to justify holding additional ones. Meanwhile, measures could be taken to address the problems, such as recruiting people experienced with the ethnic press to handle the publicity. Overall, the folk-dance workshops attracted less attention than the splashy folk festivals and musical extravaganzas. Still, the slim evidence on subsequent workshops, some of which appeared as part of a folk festival program and others independently, suggests that, while difficulties continued, the Institute drew uneven but reasonable crowds in the few hundreds. The folk workshop that kicked off the United Nations Week program at the Central YMCA in the late 1950s involved a larger than usual number of performers and attendees. (No estimates were given, but the numbers may have nudged towards 500 people.) The follow-up report also indicated a higher degree of active participation among the mixed crowd in the square, folk, and ballroom dances.[85]

Debating Scripts

Unlike the workshop goals, which generated consensus, the script of the folk festivals planned by the folk-culture planning (former Citizenship Day)

71.254.233] Project MUSE (2025-04-05 01:47 GMT)

committee caused friction between the Institute members and their female folklore allies. Certainly, there was plenty of agreement: the audiences had to be moved as well as entertained; a prominent host would help attract wider media attention; and some audience participation, such as group singalongs, would help produce "a feeling of identification" with the program. Agreement over ensuring respectable standards of performance and high-quality acts without sacrificing "authenticity" meant recruiting juries and holding auditions to find "professional" productions with "commercial" appeal. There was agreement as well on projecting liberal pluralist themes.

However, the Institute folks disagreed with their folk allies over the script and format. Institute representatives (such as West, Jennings, and Kolm) insisted that only a historical "citizenship pageant" format could properly narrate the story of Canada's steady progress towards modernity as expressed through industry and pluralism. A pageant format, they added, would easily include all the groups by grouping them together as they came to Canada originally, not singly, but in waves that would begin with the English, Scots, Indians (!), and French, then the Western Europeans, followed by the Southern Europeans along with the "Oriental peoples." Having presented Canada's history as a succession of gift-bearing immigrants, the show would then "blend" the individual groups into a large, impressive, and uplifting finale. Institute members also advised working through the "ethnic groups" to secure the performances. Indeed, having already met with some of their affiliated cultural groups, West et al. reported on what was offered. In addition to the European folk-dance troupes, mixed-gender choirs, a gymnastics group, and a children's ballet group, the Chinese Canadian Association promised performers for a Chinese drum dance and lion dance.[86]

Both Fowke and Madsen disliked the idea of working through the Institute's ethnic group members. Fowke suggested they first choose a compelling theme, then find a writer to produce an appropriate script, and only then select the folk acts that best fit the script. This approach, she claimed, would allow the writer to produce a quality script, which would make it easier to convince a director of stature, such as theatre director Dora Mavor Moore, to take on the project. Fowke's emphasis was on professionalism, but it may have also reflected a reluctance to let "the multicultural groups" decide the show's form and content. Madsen's pragmatic approach – to audition the available troupes and select the most appropriate ones, and then build a script around them – leaned towards the Institute's strategy but did not prioritize its ethnic contacts.[87]

Fowke and Madsen also disagreed with the Institute's pageant format and suggested alternative ways of depicting immigrant contributions to Canada. Arguing that the "rigidity" of the pageant formula would "restrict audience appeal," Fowke proposed instead an industry-by-industry approach that highlighted "those groups which contributed most to the particular industries." The proposal likely reflected Fowke's interest in working-class folk songs, though it

hardly amounted to a call to celebrate the decidedly left-wing, if also commercial, folk music scene associated with musicians like Pete Seeger or events like the Winnipeg Folk Festival.[88] An Institute friend, Mira Ashby of the Croatian Women's Organization, agreed with Fowke about moving away from the pageant model, but her friendly suggestion of a province-by-province theme fell flat. When Madsen suggested updating the history by turning the stage into "a busy air terminal" and having each group step out of "an enormous plane," one of the male committee members, Herman Geiger-Torel, a German-born television producer, opera director, and sometime Institute collaborator, dismissed it as the same-old mosaic variety approach, but offered no alternative. University Settlement House staffer Krehm, who supported the Institute position, proposed a four-act pageant whose grand finale would offer "a glimpse into the future" by showing how Canadian folk song and dance already had incorporated "new Canadian" culture.[89]

As with other iterations of this debate, the Institute representatives claimed that their surveys of "interested people" showed a clear preference for the historical pageant, and insisted that a historical theme best served everyone's interest.[90] On this, as on later occasions, the Institute position triumphed, but their rigidity over the matter arguably created unnecessary friction with their folklorist allies. Indeed, it appears that, following the first folk-dance workshop and the Institute's one and only participation in the Madsen folk festival, both of which occurred in June 1957, neither Fowke nor Madsen worked closely again with the Institute.

Liberal Internationalism and International Beauties

The interwar US Institutes had supported the League of Nations out of a belief that internationalism offered a remedy for the mistakes that led to the First World War, including the marginalization of ethnic minorities. Likewise, the post-1945 Institutes, including Toronto's, believed that support for the United Nations and its principles of collective security, international diplomacy, and humanitarianism could ensure peace in a postwar world made scarier still by the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. Key Toronto personnel like West provided some continuity between the two periods. The Toronto Institute's position also aligned with that of the post-1945 Canadian government, which supported the United Nations as a way of aiding in the rebuilding of war-torn Europe, establishing security stability, and maintaining allies in an increasingly polarized world. In support of the UN's dual mandate, Canada pledged to participate in interventions meant to avert war and to encourage world peace through a commitment to economic development, social justice, and human rights.[91]

The promotion of a pluralistic Canadian citizenship that also embraced an interest in global affairs and support for international causes informed much

Institute activity. For example, its stamp club did so through its house activities. These included building a library of stamps and journals related to the UN's work, and holding its annual International Stamp Mart, which combined the auctioneering and exchange of stamps with lectures on campaigns aimed at alleviating Cold War tensions and promoting international cooperation and peace. The 1962 event celebrated the Philatelic Crusaders for Peace Organization's campaign aimed at "interjecting something positive into this world of disunity and nuclear threat" by posting "beautiful" stamps commemorating national and regional landmarks on letters sent to heads of state and other world leaders. First launched in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1960, the campaign then shifted to Athens, Rome, and elsewhere. The 1962 event also highlighted a campaign begun a few years earlier to rally support for the combined efforts of Egypt, Sudan, and UNESCO to save the ancient monuments of Nubia and related artifacts before they were flooded by the building of the Aswan High Dam.[92]

A central aspect of the Institute's notion of citizenship was that "native-born" Canadians, and not only newcomers, had to undergo a process of "re-education" that would instil in them a respect for cultural diversity.[93] It found expression in the events organized in support of the United Nations and international charitable organizations like the Save the Children Fund. Likening their efforts to eliminate mutual suspicions and promote harmonious relations "into the social life of [the] metropolis" of Toronto to "the kind of integration that the UN is attempting to effect in the world," Institute leaders endorsed the United Nations Association in Canada (1946), a founding member of the world federation of member nations. Through its central body and local branches, UNA-Canada sought to raise public awareness about the UN and encourage ordinary Canadians to support its goals, including through fundraising efforts for charities like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Initially led by James Thompson, moderator of the United Church, the UNA-Canada membership was composed mainly of middle-class Canadians, including civic-minded professors, teachers, clergy, elected politicians, and journalists. As Tara Brookfield notes, men dominated the UNA leadership, but women formed the backbone of many local branches.[94] The Institute women's support of UN causes once again involved working with a cross-cultural and mixed-gender planning committee that included representatives of civic and citizenship groups, settlement houses, ethnocultural groups, the YMCA, and the YWCA and other women's groups.

During its first year of operation, the Institute co-hosted United Nations Week, held each October in honour of the organization's founding, with the Toronto branch of UNA-Canada. The program followed a familiar format of Sunday teas, luncheons, lectures, exhibits, and concerts. (Local UNA branches across Canada mounted a similar set of festivities.) The Institute's 1957 program included lectures by local UN leaders, who delivered the UN's main message

about avoiding "future cataclysms of the human race" by "settling our differences through negotiations." UN fieldworkers reported on the distribution of emergency medical supplies to the most recent child victims of war and the development of community-based services to promote long-term health. There were also non-denominational church services as well as films on UN agencies and an exhibition of UN posters that reported on the agency's work.[95]

The concert led by harpist Clara Emerson and the Guild handicraft exhibit borrowed for the Institute's 1957 UN Week (described in the chapter's introduction) suggest how the Institute used UN events to garner support for its immigrant-gifts pluralism. Both concert and exhibit were meant to symbolize (English) Canada's long-standing respect for cultural diversity and inclusivity. The "spectacle" of the woman harpist, who performed Old World music on an instrument of ancient origins, and one whose angelic sound, in the context of Christianity, has long linked it, symbolically, to the sacred, engaged the theme of global harmony through the purifying force of "heavenly" music.[96] The crafts collected from immigrant and Indigenous communities across central Canada provided a familiar, and problematic, representation of Canadian diversity in which the absent white collectors assumed the role of benevolent saviours of endangered traditions. The International Night that closed this UN Week offered a familiar multi-ethnic line-up of classically trained singers and musicians and folk troupes. Ironically, unless an exception was made, a luncheon address held at a local private men's club would have excluded the female organizers.[97]

Canadian support for the UN was, to quote Tara Brookfield, "erratic." Having peaked during the Suez peacekeeping mission promoted by Lester Pearson in 1956, it waned in the 1960s, though many Canadians continued to donate generously to UNICEF.[98] The Institute did not host another UN Week, but it continued to support UN causes including charitable ones. The Institute's most successful fundraising drive came in 1960, but in support of the Toronto Branch of the Canadian Save the Children Fund (SCF, est. 1922), a branch of the international charity. It did so through participation in a Festival of Nations. An international fair initiated by a group of diplomats from SCF member nations, the 1960 festival was modelled after "successful" fairs held in London, Paris, and other "world centres." Overseeing the plans was Canada's first woman senator Cairine Wilson, a liberal and a humanitarian who had long advocated for refugee admissions and the liberalization of immigration laws. The publicity materials described the SCF's services, from family reunification and distribution of "millions of meals and tons of clothing" to needy children, to improved medical aid in hospitals and support for orphanages in Europe and elsewhere. West and colleagues endorsed the SCF's child sponsorship program, which encouraged sponsors to communicate with the child and learn about their family and village, as a fine experiment in compassionate global citizenship. No

doubt, they expected Canadians rather than financially strapped newcomers to become sponsors. For the 1960 festival, Senator Wilson convinced Ottawa to permit all "foreign goods" that could be defined as "gifts," such as handicrafts, to enter the country duty-free, which meant lower prices for the items.[99]

The fair was held in Casa Loma, an imposing castle-like mansion in Toronto, and included a familiar line-up of ethnic folk performances and sales booths of "quality articles" reflecting the "national arts and crafts" traditions of the participating groups. In this context, the commodification of handicrafts, or the domestic tourism being promoted, served a higher global goal. To mount the event, the Institute women secured free newspaper advertising, food donations, and building materials, as well as donations from local businessmen, a few companies, including Bell Telephone and British American Oil, and several banks. (Donations ranged from $250 to $1,000.) They also extended the one-day fair by another day after the invited craftspeople refused to participate unless they had more time to sell their crafts. No total is recorded, but the correspondence suggests the fair raised a decent amount (perhaps several hundred dollars).[100]

By the 1960s, the events mounted in support of the United Nations and other liberal causes included beauty pageants. Cultural historians and scholars of sexuality have shed light on the paradox of staging ethnic, multicultural, and interracial beauty contests. The hybridized presence of "non-hegemonic" women conveying such values as inclusivity and international goodwill, they note, was intimately linked to a spectacle that used the allure of attractive young female bodies (a growing staple in the era's popular culture) to attract audiences and make money.[101] The Institute ran neither a Miss UN nor a Miss International Institute beauty contest, but Metro International Caravan, the popular ethnic folk and trade show the Institute helped to launch in 1969, did so (see chapter 10). The "international beauties" representing the "world city" pavilions competed for the title on the festival's final day. Held in the rotunda of the new City Hall, the winner of the first Miss Caravan pageant was twenty-year-old Miss Kiev/Maria Hlushko, a secretary of Ukrainian origins born in Germany who reportedly dazzled in both traditional costume and modern party dress.[102]

The Institute's practice of recruiting, again through the ethnic groups, young women to perform as "hostesses" for their well-intentioned events produced similar results. The in-house photographs and newspaper items capture hundreds of "pretty attendants" in "nationality dress" serving hors d'oeuvres or pastries at a Citizenship Day reception, a UN luncheon, or a dinner for the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Indeed, photos of hostesses were more likely to be published and thus spread news of the Institute events. One of the two photos that accompanied the Toronto *Globe and Mail* coverage of a 1961 SCF fundraiser held in the "handsome house" of Mrs W.D. (Isabel) Ross – an Institute IODE volunteer and widow of a former Lieutenant Govenor of Ontario who lived on Crescent Road in tony Rosedale[103] – shows three women representing

71.254.233] Project MUSE (2025-04-05 01:47 GMT)

The original caption read in part: “Camera fan Mayor William Dennison makes like an ordinary tourist as the Miss Caravan contestants gather together in Nathan Phillips Square yesterday for the opening night ceremonies of the week-long festival.” York University Libraries, Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, Toronto Telegram fonds, ASC60821 (photographer Jac Holland, 25 June 1971).

SCF nations. Two of them were married, a Budapest-born woman dressed in a “Hungarian gown” and an Italian woman with an Anglo last name (Macmillan) in “a festive Italian dress.” The single woman, Irene Skuba, wore the dress of an unspecified region in Czechoslovakia. The second photo, which showed two women, one of them Dutch, featured one of only two Black attendants uncovered by this research. Similarly attired, she is described as Loretta Lesmond of the West Indies.[104]

That the Institute women ran an active roster of hostesses is not surprising for the period, but, ironically, the transactions commodified them as so many pretty ethnic gifts. Take West’s matter-of-fact response to a request from the Ontario Citizenship Branch (OCB) for attendants to host a citizenship exhibit being organized at the Canadian National Exhibition in August-September 1960. After consulting her list of contacts, West noted that her Croatian

contact (Ashby described above) had two or three Croatian "girls," her Italian contact (Mrs S. Di Giacomo) a probable "three or four girls," and her Swiss, Dutch, Estonian, Ukrainian, Austrian, and Swedish contacts a few girls each. She also named two "Latvian girls" who could host in September. Her contact in a Lutheran Church–based immigrant aid society, she added, could provide some "German girls," but they would need help in securing costumes. After giving the OCB staffer the information for the contacts from whom she had not yet heard, she expressed disappointment in failing to recruit any girls from her "Chinese contact." The appreciative OCB staffer replied, as did others, that the girls "would bring some much needed colour to the exhibit and stimulate greater interest generally."[105]

The ubiquitous presence of these "pretty attendants" at Institute events had a doubled-edged impact. On the one hand, the familiar sight of these women, who wore conservative ethnic dresses and did not don a bathing suit or walk the runway,[106] arguably contributed to the process of legitimizing the public display of cultural difference and, by extension, internationalism. Expected to strike up conversations with strangers as well as smile and serve the "ethnic pastries," they were considered cultural ambassadors, or intermediaries, in their own right. Indeed, Institute staff encouraged them to become members so they could pick up lessons in pluralism and develop some leadership skills. Occasionally, staff provided these attendants with orientation sessions.

Further, it seems clear that many of these young women volunteers were active, even proud, members of their respective ethnocultural organizations and thus took seriously their role both as representatives of their ethnic heritage and as modern young Canadians participating in a pluralist experiment. The same could be said of the few young male hosts.[107] The women expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to participate in Institute affairs, reportedly saying that it afforded them an opportunity to develop and refine skills relating to "tact, patience, [and] sympathy," and good training for future jobs in the professions or the service industry.[108] In contrast to many, but by no means all, of their middle-class Anglo-Canadian counterparts, these immigrant youth were not experimenting with counter-cultural lifestyles during the sixties and seventies, but rather negotiating a hybridized identity as an ethno-Canadian in a pluralist city.[109]

The strategy of utilizing "pretty attendants" to enhance the attraction of progressive causes was fraught with flawed logic and contradictions. Young women like Susan Borsi, a Hungarian hostess for 1963 Hungarian Week who matched her traditional ethnic costume with a fashionable modern beehive hairdo, embodied a mix of ethnic nostalgia and urban modernity that echoed Institute-style pluralism. Along with the performances described above, she offered a visual example of what happens when, as anthropologist Liisa Malkki

argues, an internationalist logic that is assigned a moral quality, such as liberal invocations of internationalism, is projected onto a “local” case of cultural difference, such as post-1945 Toronto and Canada. In effect, it provides a means by which to contain, or domesticate, the offending differences that might otherwise threaten the logic of the nation-state.[110] Or put another way, using “lovely” costumed women to “add colour” to well-intentioned fundraisers did less to focus attention on the global inequities and injustices that produced the “need” being acknowledged than contribute towards the therapeutic function that a gifts-and-spectacle pluralism can perform. The inherent contradictions are perhaps highlighted by a revealing anecdote involving a man who approached a hostess at an Institute event and, upon receiving confirmation that she was indeed a hostess, asked her to sew a loose button onto his jacket.[111]

Far from being static folk (and domestic) figures, young women like Borsi were negotiating the pull of the era’s beauty culture within the confines of limited budgets. As Abril Liberatori observes, the era’s ethnic beauty pageants combined pageantry and spectacle to display the embedded connection between ethnicity and femininity among immigrant communities abroad while the beauty sections of ethnic newspapers skirted the line between feminine aesthetics and practical exigencies by telling women how to look beautiful for less. Class and other differences also shaped these young women’s outlooks. As someone likely of middle-class urban origins, Borsi’s engagement with modernity would have differed from the rural Southern Italian women who immigrated to Ontario and Buenos Aires after the Second World War. As Liberatori’s research documents, for many of these women, commercial culture abroad signified an escape from the backward and unmodern Old World and an entry into a new commercialized, modern society. Her interview subjects read the popular Italian-language women’s magazines (*Donna* in Ontario and *Femirama* in Buenos Aires) and the women’s pages in newspapers for ideas, bought sewing patterns, and prided themselves on producing a fashionable wardrobe on a budget.[112]

Still, the juxtaposition of traditional rural folk heritage and urban modernity that these young costumed women embodied could threaten to turn them into anachronistic objects of amusement. That tendency was evident at the folk ball held at the upscale Royal York Hotel to kick off the 1965 Nationbuilders show, a multicultural musical extravaganza held at the CNE grandstand (see chapter 10). The organizers booked a glamorous ballroom in the hopes of attracting more Anglo-Torontonians to the event. The images accompanying the *Globe and Mail*’s coverage of the ball showed traditionally costumed ethnic women gyrating to the latest dances with Canadian men who, dressed in modern suits, moved in more subdued fashion. The photographer who shot a young German woman in ethnic garb dancing the twist with a suited “Anglo” man pumped up the traditional vs modern, or modernist vs anti-modernist, clash by including

in the frame two older ethnic women watching the woman's dance moves with obvious disapproval.[113]

Human Rights

The movement for human rights received a major boost in the aftermath of the war and the Holocaust, culminating in the UN's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Institute's modest efforts to support the cause by addressing anti-immigrant racism and prejudice in Toronto owe much to the work of Daniel Hill, the African Canadian sociologist, social worker, and human rights pioneer. The son of an African American minister and a social worker, a war veteran, and a graduate of Brown University, Hill arrived in Canada after the war with a strong social conscience. In 1953, he married Donna Mae Bender (Hill), a white US civil rights activist who worked for a time with the Toronto Labour Committee for Human Rights, which documented instances of racial discrimination to pressure the Ontario government to enact more comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation.[114]

With a master's degree in sociology from the University of Toronto in hand, Hill, as research director of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, first spoke at the Institute on the subject of "population trends" in April 1957. After holding other positions in the social welfare field and obtaining his PhD from the University of Toronto (1960) with a groundbreaking dissertation on Blacks in Toronto, Hill became director of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) in 1962. The OHRC, which administered the Ontario Human Rights Code (enacted 1962), was the first public agency of its kind in Canada. Under Hill's active leadership, it became a major enterprise, but it began life in a downtown office with a handful of employees.[115]

Unlike the Jewish Canadian, Japanese Canadian, African Canadian, and Caribbean-born human rights and civil rights activists, Institute personnel never became prominent actors in the postwar human rights movement. But they did try to raise an awareness about the Ontario Human Rights Code, which was posted on their bulletin board, by organizing panels, a dinner, and a conference, and by publishing articles on the bill's principles of equity and anti-racism. One such *Intercom* article highlighted the concept of "mutuality" imbedded in the code. It argued that the need to create "at the community level" a climate of understanding and mutual respect in which all people, regardless of racial, religious, or cultural background, are made to feel equal in dignity and rights, applied as much to the new Canadian as the "native-born." Each group, the article added, had "a rich contribution" to make to the province's and the nation's well-being, and permitting them to do so was "a prerequisite for the development of a truly healthy Canadianism."[116]

A dinner held in honour of the Ontario Human Rights Commission on 18 October 1963. Commissioner Daniel Hill (far left) and others stand by an exhibit of Jamaican crafts, embroidered clothing, and a cloth calendar commemorating Jamaican independence (1962). Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.

In May 1964, the Institute co-hosted with UNA-Canada a conference that brought together youth groups from across the metropolitan area to address the spread of hate literature and how to eliminate it. Capturing the mood of the conference, one contributor explained that, by means of isolating individuals or groups such as racialized immigrants, hate literature sought to "deny them human rights and dignity that are the common heritage of all Canadians."[117] By the time the *Intercom* published a three-part series on the OHRC's work five years later, Institute director Stewart and colleagues could detect the early signs of a racist backlash against the post-1967 racialized immigrants that would reach crisis proportions in the 1970s. In response, the *Intercom* urged members to apply the code's principles to their everyday life, to inform the Commission of any discriminatory practices observed, and to convince their ethnic organizations to observe the (December) anniversary of the UN's

71.254.233] Project MUSE (2025-04-05 01:47 GMT)

Invited "ethnic leaders" and members at the Ontario Human Rights Commission dinner at the Institute on 18 October 1963 are listening to a speaker (likely Daniel Hill). Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights and establish a Human Rights Committee that could educate their members on the issues.[118] But there were no signs of plans to intensify such efforts before crippling problems shut down the Institute in 1974.

Can we attribute the Toronto Institute's disappointing record on human rights activism to the limited, even naive, "handicrafts and human rights" or "multicultural spectacle as democratic internationalism" approach to anti-racist work entirely to cultural pluralist ideology? As US critical race scholars like Ellen Wu note, the growing influence in US society of cultural pluralism – which rejected older biologically determinist racist theories – allowed certain racialized "others," such as Asian Americans, to lay claims of belonging to the nation. Institute acknowledgment that racialized migrants differed in terms of national, regional, or ethnic origins, and, most especially, group-defined cultural

practices, reflected progressive thinking. It also aligned with the general shift in the social sciences post-1945 away from biology and towards psychology.[119] One of the articles to appear on the subject in the *Intercom* came from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, a liberal organization and Institute ally that promoted the ideals of "brotherhood," social justice, mutual respect, and dialogue. The author, John Gillin, explained that (anthropological) research had discredited the biological concept of race by showing that human groups do not possess "true hereditary homogeneity" but instead differentiate according to social-cultural features. Using Peru as an example, he noted that Peruvians and Indigenous peoples have been erroneously viewed as separate races on the basis of differences in clothing, language, and customs (the latter being modified versions of Spanish and Indigenous customs) despite the fact that both groups possessed mixed racial ancestries. The differences between them, he stressed, denoted "socio-cultural division." Gillin concluded by stressing the need to educate parents and other child-minders to raise the next generation of children without "building" into them "unnecessary attitudes" towards other human beings.[120] I use Gillin's essay here to suggest that pluralism did allow for the possibility of more incisive anti-racist activity than that engaged in by Toronto Institute personnel.

Not that their US counterparts necessarily did better. In keeping with their view of human behaviour, institutions, and values as group-defined entities, the Institutes used a language of culture, not race, in their assessments of clients. But their practices often reflected dominant racial hierarchies and a colonial gaze. For example, some US Institutes, including Philadelphia's, hosted a club for "American Indians." While the scant references to them suggest inactivity or negligence, the clubs' presence alone speaks to the paradoxical way that Indigenous peoples were both reduced to just another ethnic group and treated as a race that stood outside US life.[121]

Differences in racial status also likely help to explain the differing treatment the Milwaukee Institute meted out to their Dutch members, who arguably enjoyed an uncontested whiteness, and their Puerto Rican members, who did not. A 1958 report praised a newly formed Flying Dutchman Club composed mainly of newcomers who participated in several community events, including the Institute's annual folk ball, where they nominated someone for the Nationality Queen contest. In predicting a rapid adaptation to US life, head group worker Willette Pierce did not explicitly reference their whiteness, but an assessment of her positive evaluation should consider the Institutes' long history of dealing with European groups, and a general perception that, as Western Europeans, the Dutch were "closer" to American values than other groups.[122] By contrast, Pierce's report on the Puerto Rican fiesta her staff mounted with a local "Mexican church" suggests, at best, ineptitude at dealing with racialized migrants. The festival, which included a Puerto Rican orchestra, dancing,

and food, followed a familiar format. But Pierce's report on the difficult lessons learned – particularly that Puerto Ricans did not like egg salad sandwiches "for a dance" – indicates the absence of consultation with a group they aimed to integrate into their "democratic" ways.[123] Native Americans and Puerto Ricans, unlike unnaturalized European, Asian, and Latin American clients, were US citizens. However, the Institutes' perception of them, shaped as it was by the colonial gaze of the "Greater United States,"[124] was that of racialized foreigners in need of special attention – though, overall, Puerto Ricans received far more attention than did Native Americans.

Finally, the Toronto Institute's failure to develop a robust anti-racist campaign reflected its limited, and increasingly scarce, resources as well as an evident lack of interest among a still heavily white immigrant membership to actively take up the call.

Conclusion

A focus on the Institute's Anglo-Canadian middle-class women and the cultural events and fundraisers they mounted in support of "good" citizenship, internationalism, human rights, and charitable campaigns reveals their public embrace of a long-standing association of bourgeois women with cultural guardianship and with liberal internationalism. A commitment to modern nation-building goals rooted in pluralist concepts of immigrant integration, international community, and cosmopolitan citizenship fuelled their organizing. Enthusiastic participants in certain strands of the post-1945 folk revival, they seemed equally keen to promote fine art as folk crafts. Their enjoyment of classically influenced folk concerts that occurred in the exalted surroundings of a concert hall was palpable, but, so, too, was their investment in the democracy-building, gym-based folk-dance workshops. Connecting all this activity was an immigrant-gifts pluralism that used the cultural gifts of immigrants, no matter their status, as a means by which to manage ethnic relations and garner support for cultural diversity and a pluralistic Canadian identity. These women also understood the importance of collaborating with Canadian and ethnic folklore allies, though the debates over cultural scripts could put them in conflict with them.

Like the artists and artisans, the performers (ethnic hostesses, dancers, musicians, and beauty contestants) were subjected to a heterosexual and objectifying tourist gaze, but the female performers and hostesses were more likely to be reduced to "pretty" symbols of pluralism. Their own daily struggles to make ends meet explain why the immigrant and ethnic craftswomen and men jumped at the opportunity to sell their wares, though a desire for some recognition of their skills also mattered. Finally, the seeming inability of the Institute women to mount more sustained campaigns in support of human rights exposes the limits of a popular pluralism forged within a white European context.