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ABSTRACT

Michael Farnan's *The New Canadian Naturalist* project serves as an investigation into the construction of the wilderness/nature narrative in Canada through an exploration of romantic ideas of the sublime and iconic images of 'authentic' identity such as the cowboy, forestry labourer, the beaver, historic photos, educational tools, and toys and media/advertising stereotypes. Moreover, by taking a closer look at nationalized 'rites of passage' such as camping, tree planting, learning to canoe and even high school bush parties and the 'tribalism' found at large outdoor music and culture festivals, this exhibition and thesis paper serve as an interrogation into the often deployed trope of 'becoming animal' in Canadian cultural representation as an attempt to challenge some of the enduring colonial legacies of our settler past.

The *NCN* focuses on the narratives and ideologies championed by Canadian institutions such as our National Parks and museums representing dominant and 'official' histories. By engaging with the performance or staging of the particular moments and ideologies that take place within these culturally recognized spaces, the *NCN* becomes the embodied site for enactments of - and resistances to - these Canadian articulations of nature, gender, race, and nation. The history of representation *The New Canadian Naturalist* references is the familiarized and dominant Canadian ideology that says people can rediscover their authentic selves in rural and wilderness spaces.

This thesis paper supports an exhibition that includes large-scale painting and drawing, multi-channel video work, as well as a medium format photographic project. Two performance works, *The Beaver on the River*, and the *3rd Annual Power Animal Party*, aka *the P.A.P. Smear*, will also take place in conjunction with the exhibition.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE	page i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	page ii
ABSTRACT	page ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	page iv
LIST OF IMAGES	page v
THE NEW CANADIAN NATURALIST	page 1
REFERENCES	page 36
INSTALLATION AND PERFORMANCE PHOTOS	page 40

Exhibition held at the Gordon Snelgrove Gallery. October 11-21, 2011.
Beaver on the River performance. Saskatoon, SK. October 13th, 2011.
The 3rd Annual Power Animal Party and performance. October 14th, 2011.

LIST OF IMAGES

Figure 1. <i>White Tail Brook.</i> 2011. Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.1
Figure 2. <i>Shooting Guns with the Boys.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.2
Figure 3. <i>Heading Out.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.3
Figure 4. <i>The NCN at the WDM.</i> Production shot from video shoot.	p.5
Figure 5. <i>Bison Hughy. Bales and Bison.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.6
Figure 6. <i>The Legend of Bison Hughy.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.7
Figure 7. <i>The NCN at the WDM.</i> Production shot from video shoot.	p.8
Figure 8. <i>Working. Scott.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.9
Figure 9. <i>Logging Truck.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.10
Figure 10. <i>Feller Buncher.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.10
Figure 11. <i>The Beaver goes Logging.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.11
Figure 12. <i>The General.</i> Oil on Canvas. 84"x66".	p.12
Figure 13. <i>.308.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.15
Figure 14. <i>A man, a saw and a mask.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.16
Figure 15. <i>The Beaver getting thrown out of the P.A.P. Smear.</i> Production still from video.	p.17
Figure 16. <i>Into the Forest.</i> Drawing, mixed media. 108"x144".	p.20
Figure 17. <i>Bison.</i> Oil on Canvas. 84"x66".	p.21
Figure 18. <i>Glen and Jeepers.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.23
Figure 19. <i>Grey/Gay Owl.</i> Oil on Canvas. 36"x48".	p.24
Figure 20. <i>Red Canoe.</i> Oil on Canvas. 84"x66".	p.27
Figure 21. <i>A man, his dog and his canoe.</i> Medium Forma photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.29
Figure 22. <i>The Deerhelper series, numbers 1 through 4.</i> Screen print. 15"x22".	p.30
Figure 23. <i>Tent Trailer at Night.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.32
Figure 24. <i>Tent Trailer in the Morning.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.32
Figure 25. <i>The Beaver at the River.</i> Medium Format photo/Digital Print 36"x44".	p.33