CFP: Before Canada: Northern North America in a Connected World, ca. 1000-1800AD

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Before Canada: Northern North America in a Connected World, ca. 1000-1800 AD

Conference at McGill University, Montreal, 26-27 October 2019

This conference will look at the long-distance movement of people, goods and ideas that put Canada in touch with global circuits before there was a Canada. For centuries, the northern half of the continent functioned as an unlikely international carrefour. Long-distance travel under daunting conditions long served to connect far-flung peoples and places. Starting out from the Bering Sea, Thule bands pushed westward across the Arctic rim toward Greenland and down into Labrador, just when Norse seafarers were approaching these same regions from the North Atlantic. Basque whalers and cod fishers from western Europe visited Newfoundland and penetrated into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, coming every summer in large numbers and linking these regions to the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. Indigenous captives from the American southwest as well as Africans caught up in the toils of the Atlantic slave trade found themselves in involuntary servitude in Montreal and Quebec. Well before the age of the railroad and the telegraph, canoe routes thousands of miles long were linking Indigenous nations of the prairies to Europe via Hudson Bay and the St. Lawrence. The connections were obviously economic, but they also had political, cultural and intellectual dimensions. The subject is one that Harold Innis pioneered in the 1930s, but his vision was highly Eurocentric and imbued with the teleologies of settler nation-building. The time is right for a more balanced and decolonized appreciation of spaces and connections.

We welcome submissions from junior and senior researchers working in any relevant discipline, including History, Archeology, Art History, Literature, Geography. Proposals in either English or French are welcome. The program committee will make a selection from the proposals submitted with a view to establishing a varied and coherent program.

To submit a proposal for a 20-minute presentation, please send a 300-word abstract, together with a brief biography by March 15, 2019.

Address proposals to: beforecanada2019@gmail.com
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