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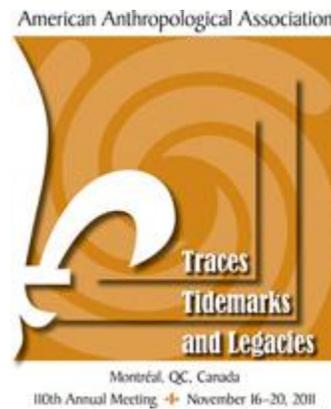
American Anthropological Association

110th Annual Meeting November 16-20, 2011, Montreal, QC, Canada

Conference Theme: Traces, Tidemarks and Legacies

Sarah Green, 2011 Executive Program Chair

Traces, tidemarks and legacies are words that evoke the shifting and changeable character of differences that nevertheless persist, perhaps in altered form, as differences. Traces leave hints and reminders of half-forgotten things, relations and thoughts. Tidemarks leave indicators of where things have got to so far: this might be a strongly guarded distinction or just a line in the sand that disappears or shifts location the next day. Legacies imply pasts (imagined, asserted or remembered) that become entangled with the present and potential future, both informing and perhaps defining new differences. The traces, tidemarks and legacies of past and possible future distinctions -- partially remembered, partially re-created and partially invented (by anthropologists as much as by anybody else) -- make the world a multiply occupied place. And it is this process of how differences are made, marked, removed, maintained and altered within that multiply occupied place that is the focus for the 2011 theme.



The topic is important now because we are living through a time when most distinctions -- between disciplines, places, environments, peoples, objects, biological and non-biological entities, times, languages, beliefs, epistemologies and ontologies -- have been thoroughly challenged, both intellectually and morally. Indeed, the distinction between the intellectual and the moral has itself been repeatedly questioned. Yet these challenges have not led to the disappearance or reduction of differences. Moreover, massively increased communication, interaction and the ability to blend entities that were never blended before has not led to the disappearance of differences, either. Nevertheless, something significant has happened; the meaning and location of differences, both intellectually and morally, have been rearranged. The 2011

theme invites participants to reflect on how all fields of anthropology, whose own locations have also been rearranged, are engaging with these shifting realities in which we live, within and across disciplines and regions.

Montréal is an ideal location in which to consider such matters, given its rich history of being a multiply occupied place. Montréal's residents are actively engaged with questions of making, marking, removing and remaking differences. This not only involves the city and its own traces and tidemarks but also the city's internationally renowned cultural, performance arts, media and design sectors, all of which are making significant contributions to the transnational debates about how to rearrange the traces, tidemarks and legacies that confront the world today.