An extensive historiography already surrounds the imperial mania for fairs, exhibitions, and expositions that stretched from the Victorian Era to the years between the world wars. Three decades ago, Robert Rydell highlighted how anthropology at American world’s fairs before World War I was subservient to imperialist and eugenicist ideologies at the “juncture of racism and progress.”[[1]](#endnote-2) Since that work, interest has expanded to include not only the complicity of fairs and anthropology, but the use of expositions to promote imperial and colonial ventures, tourism, and create historical memory for recent arrivals.[[2]](#endnote-3) Some authors have even noted the ways in which “human displays” navigated among entertainment and titillation of European and European colonial audiences, free and unfree performance by “foreign peoples,” and the elaboration of nineteenth-century Western ideas about who could produce - and consume - scientific knowledge.[[3]](#endnote-4) While most of these works tend to note that fairs were a global phenomenon, their frame has usually been limited to a single imperial project if not a single exhibition.

This is an oversight. Exhibition organizers might have seen the promotion of specific local and imperial visions as central to their own fairs but they were connected with one another across regional, national, and imperial boundaries.[[4]](#endnote-5) Fairs were also entangled in transnational European and colonial attention and anxieties around gender roles in both “primitive” and “modern” peoples. This interest in the performance of masculinity and femininity is especially pointed in the fairs that occurred at the Pacific peripheries of the British and American empires. While some analyses have noted the ways in which gender and race influenced the spatial arrangement of these fairs, few have directly compared the way that exhibition photographers intentionally or inadvertently projected gender roles and imperial expectations onto both indigenous and settlers people.[[5]](#endnote-6) Ultimately, images from both the New Zealand International Exhibition of 1906-1907 at Christchurch and the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909 at Seattle captured and exhibited a colonial, trans-Pacific masculinity set in opposition to contemporary anxieties about modernity and manhood.

This masculine anxiety is already apparent in the idealization of both Maori and Indian peoples on promotional materials and their roles in theatrical events during both fairs. In Christchurch, exhibition visitors received a certificate of attendance whose grotesques echoed traditional Polynesian artwork.[[6]](#endnote-7) Even more central is the serene figure of a partially clad and tattooed Maori elder male holding a *taiaha* - a traditional Maori spear. Award certificates distributed to prizewinners followed a similar pattern - a partially-clad Maori male holding or near the iconic *taiaha*.[[7]](#endnote-8) Maori men were exoticized but their warlike, masculine nature is always apparent, even when they are at rest. While the official emblems of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exhibition were feminine personifications of each region gathered together, male indigenous figures were often found in promotional materials and designs. A souvenir handkerchief features an Inuit man kayaking - a vigorous and exotic outdoor activity like dog-sledding that fascinated white Northwesterners - facing a man in Plateau or Plains dress smoking - an activity still gendered as masculine - beneath the bounty of the Inland Northwest.[[8]](#endnote-9) While not as obvious as tipis, tikis, and totem poles, these images of Maori, Alaska Native, and Indian males show a desire for fair organizers to appropriate indigenous virility for the fair itself.  
 Going further, the white, male exhibition organizers in Christchurch designed and built a model *pa* - a traditional Maori fortress - to host indigenous peoples from both New Zealand and nearby island groups. The *pa* genericized Maori cultural and aesthetic difference to present an idealized New Zealand past.[[9]](#endnote-10) The model *pa* alsobecame a site of cultural performance of the sort of Maori masculine activities onto which *pakeha* wished to graft themselves. This is apparent in the frequent photos of Maori men performing the *haka -* a traditional war dance - or floating in *waka* - traditional war canoes - in the adjacent artificial lake. In Steffano Webb’s “Maori performing a *haka* with *taiaha*” - Maori men of all ages are formed into ranks and have raised their iconic weapons into the air at the climax of the dance.[[10]](#endnote-11) But, above them, a telegraph or electrical line draws the viewer’s eyes to the flag of the exhibition waving above the massed group. Contemporary colonial interest in *haka,* mock battles, and the Maori as the mental and physical peak of the “savage races” at the *pa* contrasted with somewhat mocking descriptions of visiting islanders from more remote parts of Polynesia who were noted for their indolence.[[11]](#endnote-12) *Pakeha* responses to depictions of the *haka* and other virile activities can be surmised from frequent attempts to link Maori virtues to their own classical and Biblical (and, therefore, metropolitan) antecedents while claiming that the *pa* “showed the modern pale face how his dusky warrior brother lived in the brave days of old” as opposed to the less-brave days of the present.[[12]](#endnote-13)

By contrast in Seattle, whole “primitive” and “exotic” spectacles were reconstructed along the Pay Streak - from Plateau Indian tipis to the mountains of Alaska and the Yukon to Chinese theaters to Wild West shows to model villages of “primitive” Filipinos.[[13]](#endnote-14) The Pay Streak also represented the shadow-self of the restrained Beaux Arts main exhibition in the exotic and quotidian amusements it offered middle-class white visitors. Igorot people from the Philippines - frequently referred to as “Igorrote” in the period - were already an established fixture in representations of empire beginning with the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Photographers of that exhibition, like the Gerhard sisters, appreciated one the “Fair’s central missions” and captured series of images that showed “‘savage’ Igorot dances [giving] way to a more ‘evolved,’ Western culture.”[[14]](#endnote-15) While official and licensed photographers for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition - Frank H. Nowell and his employee Orville J. Rognon or Seattle booster-photographer Asahel Curtis - seem to have shared the same racist hierarchies as the Gerhard sisters, their obsessions with the Igorot reflected an interest in not only racial hierarchy but seemingly fixed gender roles across cultures. With few exceptions, images of groups of or individual Igorot women are depicted engaging in domestic crafts, tending to older children and holding onto that supreme prop of domesticity - an infant.[[15]](#endnote-16) At the same time, groups of or individual men are shown engaged in the manly enterprise of war or - at least - a close imitation. “War dances” and “mock combats” are foregrounded. Masculine props are not farming implements needed to “tend” the small, model rice paddies surrounding the village but spears, shields, and clubs. In addition, these same images focus on the striking “natural” physiques of shirtless and loin-clothed bodies - even during a cool Seattle summer. Advertisements for the Igorrote Village quoted the *Seattle Times* in referring to the tableau as “a vital issue in living bronze” - clearly connecting the color of indigenous skin to a medium of classical sculpture.[[16]](#endnote-17) While intentionally exhibited as cultural and material inferiors, Igorot male physical forms echoed the “new ideal of the male body” which had held sway since the bodybuilder Eugen Sandow arrived in North America in 1893.[[17]](#endnote-18)

Nowell captured this most clearly in the image he titled “Igorrote men in mock combat.”[[18]](#endnote-19) On the viewer’s left, an Igorot man holds a shield in his left hand and spear aloft in his right. Despite taking aim at another Igorot man opposing him a club and shield, the former’s smile might be a sign that this is staged - an act. The staging forms two triangles. The first begins with the spear, continues down the shield and legs of the second man and returns to the first man’s hand. The second begins at the apex of the second man’s club, meets the ground at the rear foot of the first man and continues to the rear foot of the club-wielder. Both of these triangles frame the first man’s taut and well-developed pectoral and abdominal muscles. The lines of each triangle also follow the clearly defined musculature of each man’s limbs - which are drawn apart by their poses to, again, resemble statuary. This is “primordial masculinity” of the kind that so enthralled Theodore Roosevelt during his safari of the same year.[[19]](#endnote-20) These men, though, placed lower on the racial hierarchy by imperial culture do not yet suffer from the nervous weakness and fatigue of neurasthenia - the disease of modern, industrial civilization.[[20]](#endnote-21)

Though not exposing idealized, primitive bodies as the Maori in New Zealand or the neighboring Igorotte Village, Inuit at the Pay Streak’s Eskimo building did exhibit other virile activities. Frank H. Nowell’s image poses the Inuit workers in front of the building’s mock, plaster icy peaks.[[21]](#endnote-22) In contrast to the relatively lightly-clothed Maori and the nearly nude Igorot, the Inuit are in unseasonably warm *annuraaq* (traditional clothing) which would be suitable for a chilly Arctic midnight but not a sunny day near Puget Sound. A dogsled team screens the line of men who themselves screen the women and children behind them. The masculine primitive and the masculine arts of animal husbandry, transportation, and commerce are clearly foregrounded over the domestic. Images and performances of Inuit could be considered “captives to Seattle’s imperial fantasies” but the photographer’s eye was also captive to the gendering of work in American society.[[22]](#endnote-23)

Perhaps it is unsurprising that white men in both Christchurch and Seattle sought to embrace and consume the physical existence of their human and non-human imperial possessions. In Christchurch, the old, so-called *pakeha Maori* Gilbert Mair posed for a photograph with the mixed ancestry ethnographer Maggie Papakura and five older Maori men that was perhaps captured by photographer Samuel Heath Head.[[23]](#endnote-24) The aged Mair is draped in two bird-feather cloaks and holds a *mere* - a weapon which was usually endowed with chiefly power - while the Maori hold *taiaha* which draw the viewer’s eyes toward the seated *pakeha*. This play-acting at indigneity does not seem to be either simple dress-up nor mere imposition of colonial power. Instead, by focusing on a physical symbol of governance passed from generation to generation, Head was showing Mair possessing Maori *mana* held within the *mere* for the old or newly arrived *pakeha* viewers. Despite his frail appearance - and somewhat ambivalent relationship with the Maori - Mair was performing and Head was recording the ascendance, appropriation, and replacement of indigenous masculinity by white colonial masculinity.

Similar appropriation of indigenous symbols occurred in Seattle by the Arctic Brotherhood, one of many upper-class fraternal organizations. During the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, President Taft - usually presented as an opposite to the active masculinity of his predecessor Theodore Roosevelt - was inducted into the Arctic Brotherhood by Seattle boosters. Posing for a Nowell after his induction, Taft wore ceremonial robes, which were visibly adapted from an Inuit *annuraaq,* while seated next to his membership certificate*.*[[24]](#endnote-25)Unlike an Inuit *annuraaq*, however, this robe is not made of skins but velvet or another fabric with a slightly iridescent effect and fringed with pure white fur and embroidered with the symbol of Arctic Brotherhood. Nowell has positioned his subject so that the symbol is nearly level with an identical symbol on the membership certificate, both of which showed a crossed Stars-and-Stripes and Canadian Ensign beneath the legend - “No Boundary Line Here.” Nowell captures an American president appropriating not only indigenous dress but the resources of another white colonial power for imperial economic might.

Beyond direct appropriation or confrontation with indigenous masculinities, these fairs were also arenas for photographers to capture white masculinity as defined by the sporting contests of the era. If some aspects of primal and “primitive” masculinity could be admired by male photographers, the “primacy of the white male body” needed to be reasserted against a “host of challenges that might weaken, confine, or tame it.”[[25]](#endnote-26) Christchurch organizers - coming off the triumphant 1905 tour of the All-Blacks - originally planned for a rugby tournament; however they decided against it due to summer weather conditions.[[26]](#endnote-27) Instead, they replaced it with an “Axemen’s Contest” at the Sports Ground to draw “young giants, fit pioneers of a new bush country” to demonstrate their woodcraft skills by chopping timber in a variety of conditions.[[27]](#endnote-28) An image of the contest, captured by an otherwise anonymous photographer, shows white men arranged in neat rows chopping logs underhanded before a distant audience.[[28]](#endnote-29) Unlike their indigenous counterparts, these competitors wore modern dress; however adapted to the conditions. A careful viewer can see that they are in varying states of undress against the heat - forearms are exposed by rolled up sleeves while shirt buttons are opened to expose chests. Further emphasizing that not only the physical skills but qualities of white masculinity were on display is the accompanying report to the photo which effusively list each competitor’s height, weight, and age in an otherwise narrative recounting of the day’s events.[[29]](#endnote-30) But there is some ambiguity, the *Press*’s report enjoins readers to appreciate is as there “could be no manlier sport” before launching into a paean to the axe penned by an unidentified Canadian poet who happened to be no strapping male pioneer but the sentimental author Isabella Valancy Crawford.[[30]](#endnote-31)

Similarly ambiguous feats of strength pitting white imperial bodies against one another marked the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. During the fair, army soldiers and navy sailors faced each other in a series of athletic competitions meant to show who had their “hearts in their work.”[[31]](#endnote-32) In addition to footraces, tugs-of-war, and other traditional athletics at the sports ground in the main section of the exhibition, John Cort’s arena on the Pay Streak hosted the wrestling portion of the event. While no image of the soldiers’ and sailors’ match appears to survive, another wrestling bout was shot by Frank Nowell.[[32]](#endnote-33) In the center of the image, the referee appears to be breaking up the two shirtless wrestlers. The competitor on the right, though thinner, appears to have a more defined musculature than his stocky opponent who lies partially sprawled to the left. His superior (white) physique appears to have led to his triumph as he still has his opponent’s left leg in a lock. Meanwhile, the masculine and virile nature of the scene is heightened as an almost wholly male audience - with the exception of a row of middle class women at lower right - fill the bleachers behind the ring. The direction of virtually every gaze is fixed on the fighters and motion-blur indicates that many of those closest to the action have been excited and are turning to their neighbors or gesturing with their hands. While no hulking bodybuilder, the winner is a man whose physical development demonstrates not only strength but “control, heroism, and virility” as he dominates his opponent.[[33]](#endnote-34)  
 The images from both Christchurch and Seattle demonstrated the many ways in which white colonial men on the Pacific Rim appreciated and appropriated both indigenous and white, normative masculinity. Ultimately, even had they wanted to, neither Nowell, Webb, nor their other contemporaries could stage large-scale images of masculinity which were entirely free of the feminine and domestic. In documenting “primitive masculinities,” indigenous divisions of labor and feminine power did not always match white and colonial expectations of the “ideal” division of labor or power. Behind Gilbert Mair, perhaps intimately involved in the staging of the apparent transfer or possession of *mana* by a *Pakeha*, stand Maggie Papakura equally dressed in ceremonial attire. Indeed, her cloak and the one draped across Mair’s lap share a visual similarity. Inuit women and children might be partially obscured by dogsleds and Inuit men in the wide shot of the Inuit workers at the Eskimo building but they are present and cannot be erased from the image. Even white sporting events were undergoing a sea change as traditional masculine spaces and activity began to gain women competitors and spectators. At the Axemen’s Carnival, many of the distant audience were visibly women. Though the white bodies on display were selling empire and expansion of the timber industry, it was not merely holding a mirror to the desires of elder politicians and imperialists. While the Pay Streak promised to titillate with the exotic and manly, it was not closed to women who – in groups or accompanied by men –watched men demonstrate the superiority of their strength and physique. One of the most well-known images of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition perhaps represents that irony. During the fair, the Mountaineers - middle-class boosters and outdoor enthusiasts - summited Mount Rainier with the expositions’s official flag.[[34]](#endnote-35) Asahel Curtis - Mountaineer, Edward Curtis’s brother, and photographer-booster of Puget Sound - was on hand to document the moment. But the crowd that conquered the mountain and filled its summit crater was not only made up of men. Women, too, were taking part in virile, outdoor sports. The camera might tell lies to us but it always leaves a trace of the real.

1. Robert Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1984), 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. A sampling include Matthew F. Bokovoy,*The San Diego’s World’s Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Nancy J. Parezo and Don D. Fowler, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1-12. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Bernard Kernot, “Maoriland Metaphors and the Model Pa.” in *Farewell Colonialism: The New Zealand International Exhibition Christchurch, 1906-07*. John Mansfield Thomson, ed. (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1998), 64 discusses how, for example, New Zealand fair organizers intentionally aped the anthropological displays at the 1904 St. Louis Fair. Rydell, 199 highlights how Arthur W. Lewis ran several concessions at different world’s fairs from St. Louis until Seattle. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. Manish Chalani, “The Pay Streak Spectacle: Representations of Race and Gender in the Amusement Quarters of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 100 (1), 23-36 discusses some of the spatial, architectural, and other representations of race and gender in the pay streak at the A-Y-P. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. “Certificate of Attendance," *New Zealand International Exhibition 1906,* Christchurch City Libraries Digital Library. Last modified October 20, 2014, <http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Heritage/Digitised/1906Exhibition/Certificate/C81115284.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. Image from Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tonarewa printed in Jock Phillips, “Exhibiting Ourselves: The Exhibition and National Identity,” in *Farewell Colonialism: The New Zealand International Exhibition Christchurch, 1906-07*. John Mansfield Thomson, ed. (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1998), 23. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. [souvenir handkerchief for Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition], *Collections Catalog,* Washington State Historical Society, last modified October 20, 2014, <http://collections.washingtonhistory.org/details.aspx?id=119958> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. Kernot, 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. "Maori Performing a *Haka* with *Taiaha,* New Zealand International Exhibition Christchurch 1906-1907,*” Photographic Collections*, National Library of New Zealand, last modified October 20, 2014, <http://tapuhi.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/spydus/NAV/GLOBAL/OPHDR/1/1381941> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. J. Cowan, *Official Record of the New Zealand International Exhibition of Arts and Industries, Held at Christchurch. 1906-7, A Descriptive and Historical Account* (Wellington, NZ: John Mackay, 1910), 308-309 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. “Maori Pa,” *Press* (Christchurch, NZ), April 16, 1907. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
13. Chalani, 27-28. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
14. Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 268-270. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
15. “Igorrote woman holding a baby in the Igorrote village, Alaska-Yukon-Pacific-Exposition, Seattle, Washington, 1909,” *Alaska Yukon Pacific Photographs,* S.E. Meldrum AYPE Photograph Album. PH Coll 61,University of Washington Digital Collections, last modified October 20, 2014, <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ayp/id/691> is a particularly striking example by an amateur photographer S.E. Meldrum in showing “primitive” domesticity. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
16. “Igorrote Village,” *Star* (Seattle, WA), August 28, 1909. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
17. John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
18. “Igorrote men in mock combat, Igorrote Village, Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition, Seattle, 1909,” *Alaska Yukon Pacific Photographs*, Frank H. Nowell Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition Photographs. PH Coll 727, University of Washington Digital Collections, last modified October 20, 2014, <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ayp/id/114>. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
19. Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 212. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
20. Kasson, 10-11. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
21. “Eskimos with Dogsleds, Eskimo Exhibit, Pay Streak, Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, Seattle, 1909,” *Alaska Yukon Pacific Photographs*, Frank H. Nowell Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition Photographs. PH Coll 727, University of Washington Digital Collections, last modified October 20, 2014, <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ayp/id/15> [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
22. Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 119 for some of the ways in which indigenous people resisted or reforged this imperial vision. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
23. “Photograph of a group at the 1906-1907 International Exhibition in Christchurch,” *Photographic Collections*, National Library of New Zealand, last modified October 20, 2014, <http://tapuhi.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/spydus/NAV/GLOBAL/OPHDR/1/1149490>. Note the lack of clarity about the provenance of the photo though it does appear in several other forms on the same site and in the same collection. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
24. “President Taft posing in his Arctic Brotherhood Parka,” *Alaska Yukon Pacific Photographs*, Frank H. Nowell Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition Photographs. PH Coll 727, University of Washington Digital Collections, last modified October 20, 2014, <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ayp/id/1233> [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
25. Kasson, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
26. Phillips, 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
27. Cowan, 388. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
28. Cowan, 389 captioned “An Axemen’s Competition in the Sports Ground.” See: <http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Heritage/Publications/1906InternationalExhibition/OfficialRecord/1906ExhibitionRecord.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
29. Cowan, 388. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
30. “The Axemen’s Carnival,” *Press* (Christchurch, NZ), January 18, 1907. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
31. “Soldiers and Sailors to Fight in Arena,” *Star* (Seattle, WA), August 28, 1909. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
32. “Wrestling Match in the Arena,” *Alaska Yukon Pacific Photographs*, Frank H. Nowell Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition Photographs. PH Coll 727, University of Washington Digital Collections, last modified October 20, 2014, <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ayp/id/331> [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
33. Kasson, 76. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
34. “On the Summit of Rainier,” *Collections Catalog,* Washington State Historical Society, last modified October 20, 2014, <http://collections.washingtonhistory.org/details.aspx?id=102616> [↑](#endnote-ref-35)