

# Memories of Migration: Memory and the Creation of Historical Narrative in the Winnipeg Filipino Community, 1959-2009

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*In this article, I examine the relationship between memory and the creation of historical narratives using the museum exhibit *From Manila to Manitoba*, hosted by the Manitoba Museum in 2010 in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Winnipeg Filipino community. The exhibit, designed and curated by members of a Filipino cultural group based in Winnipeg, had an expressed purpose to deviate from previous community histories by emphasizing the experiences of Filipino youth and more recent waves of immigrants to the city. Through a mix of archival research and oral histories, the curators claimed to have written a history that spoke for the entire community in a grassroots fashion. As I argue, however, the project offered a history that was mediated by the intentions of the curators and written in contrast to existing narratives in the community. This article examines the process of creating this narrative, and analyzes some of the issues in using personal memories via oral histories to create a normative narrative that is meant to represent a community.<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

In 2009, the Filipino-Canadian community<sup>2</sup> marked its fiftieth anniversary in Winnipeg. To commemorate this event, the Manitoba Museum in Winnipeg hosted the exhibit *From Manila to Manitoba*, which was conceived, researched, designed, and curated by members of the Filipino youth group *Aksyon ng Ating*

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks go to the two reviewers who gave me challenging and thought provoking comments. This paper has been presented at the 2013 Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting and at the 2014 Middle Atlantic and New England Council for Canadian Studies Biennial Conference.

<sup>2</sup> For this article, the term “Filipino-Canadian community” will be used in place of “Filipino community” to reflect ANAK’s representation of this community as being both Filipino and Canadian. Personally, I hesitate to use the term Filipino-Canadian, as opposed to Filipino Canadian, as the hyphen turns “Filipino” into an adjective, subverting it in importance to “Canadian.” For the sake of convenience, the term “Winnipeg Filipino community” will not include “Canadian,” although it should be implied. It deserves to be emphasized that this reflects the exhibit’s representation, but not necessarily that of individual community members who may identify more with their Filipino or Canadian identity. This, of course, is affected by a number of things, such as year of arrival in Canada, and the generation of the individual (first, 1.5, second, etc.; see fn. 4).

*Kabataan* (ANAK), from July to September 2010.<sup>3</sup> ANAK is composed of 1.5 and second generation<sup>4</sup> Filipino-Canadians concerned with preserving and promoting Filipino culture among younger generations. The exhibit consisted of transcribed selections of oral histories from community members alongside text describing the history of the community (fig. 1). In addition to commemorating the community's landmark fiftieth anniversary, the exhibit presented a historical narrative that the curators felt was more reflective of the community's experience. Research included oral histories of community members, conducted by ANAK researchers, as well as archival sources.<sup>5</sup> The historical narrative in the exhibit served as a historical intervention in the community's collective memory, and has itself become an event in the community's history.

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<sup>3</sup> The name of the exhibit first appeared in the title of a piece co-authored by Darlyne Bautista, the lead researcher and curator of the exhibit. Darlyne Bautista and J. Udarbe, "From Manila to Manitoba: Family history and Filipino migration to Winnipeg," *Prairie Perspectives: Geographical Essay* 4 (2001), 232-242. *Aksyon ng Ating Kabataan* translates to "Our Youth in Action." The acronym ANAK is significant, too, as it is the Filipino word for "child".

<sup>4</sup> Generation 1.5 refers to those who immigrated before the age of 13, while the second generation refers to those who have at least one parent born outside of Canada. (Philip Kelly, *Understanding Intergenerational Social Mobility: Filipino Youth in Canada* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2014.)

<sup>5</sup> There is no available information regarding who viewed the exhibit, or what visitors' ethno-cultural backgrounds were. Because the exhibit was offered free of charge with admission to the museum, viewers did not have to register to view the exhibit, and there was no guest book available for viewers to write in. This exhibit, being open to the public, can also be viewed as a representation of the Filipino community to the broader civic community. However, as this article is concerned with the presentation of memory within this particular ethno-cultural group, this intercultural element will not be discussed.



Fig. 1: Example of the mix between historical background and transcribed interviews. Photo by author.

As a historical intervention, the exhibit was meant to intervene in two areas. The first was in the collective memory of the community, as the exhibit aimed to expand the historical narrative of the community to shift focus away from 'pioneering' immigrants and community firsts.<sup>6</sup> A major concern expressed by the curators was that existing community narratives (which will be discussed later) focused on the early waves of Filipino immigrants to Winnipeg, but were not inclusive of newer immigrants or Filipino youth.<sup>7</sup> The second area is the

<sup>6</sup> Darlyne Bautista, *Winnipeg's Filipino Health Professionals (c.1950-1970)*, Vol. 1 of *From Manila to Manitoba: Celebrating 50 Years with the Filipino-Canadian Community in Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: ANAK Publishing Worker Cooperative, 2012), xi. This book project, which is projected to include five volumes, is part of the larger project. The same Darlyne Bautista was the main curator of the *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit. Bautista was a forming member of ANAK and identifies as a second generation Filipino-Canadian (Bautista, *Winnipeg's Filipino Health Professionals*.)

<sup>7</sup> When referring to Filipino youth, the specific age range was not specified. As well, it is not clear if the curators included the first waves of Filipinos, many of whom were young, and their children as part of this group.

preservation of Filipino culture and heritage in youth. As a historical intervention that sought to enact change, the exhibit was itself an event in the community's history, one that may affect the way the community remembers itself. By discussing the exhibit as an intervention and moment in history, I will examine how ANAK created its historical narrative, emphasizing that, while claiming to have written a definitive history of the community,<sup>8</sup> ANAK has structured its research and selected oral history segments to narrate a particular version of the community's history. This included shifting the focus from the actions of early immigrants to the experiences of newer generations of immigrants. Differing from community histories that have typically been written by early members of the community, this exhibit aimed to include the voices of other members who might otherwise be left out of foundational memories, upon which other stories of the community's history are built. Here I build upon Alexander Freund's notion of "foundational family stories," those which "emerg[e] as central in the family's communicative memory," to describe the broader stories that serve the base of a community's collective memory.<sup>9</sup>

### **ANAK and the Exhibit**

ANAK was formed in 2006 by a group of educated Filipinos in Winnipeg who had either immigrated to Canada with their families as youth, or were born in Canada to immigrant parents. Describing themselves as "concerned young Filipino-Canadian[s]," their aim is to "bridge the cultural, generational, and social gaps found both in and outside of the Filipino-Canadian community in Winnipeg."<sup>10</sup> ANAK fulfills its mandate by offering scholarships to high school students entering university or college and providing an in-school mentorship program that helps newcomers explore their new cultural surroundings and "share, foster, and preserve our Filipino-Canadian culture and heritage."<sup>11</sup> In

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<sup>8</sup> As will be seen, this project is described as one that "will define Filipino-Canadians in Winnipeg." (Bautista, *Winnipeg's Filipino Health Professionals*, xii).

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Freund, "A Canadian Family Talks about Oma's Life in Nazi Germany: Three-Generational Interviews and Communicative Memory," *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale* 29 (2009), 11.

<sup>10</sup> ANAK, "About," *ANAK Blog*. Posted 6 June 2006.

[http://anakinc.blogspot.ca/2009/03/about\\_23.html](http://anakinc.blogspot.ca/2009/03/about_23.html). The content has since changed since the site was accessed on 23 March 2009, and this quote has since been removed from the page.

<sup>11</sup> ANAK, "Projects," *ANAK Blog*. Posted 23 March 2009.

[http://anakinc.blogspot.ca/2009/03/projects\\_23.html](http://anakinc.blogspot.ca/2009/03/projects_23.html). The Mentorship program is currently available in four public schools in Winnipeg. The program is described on ANAK's blog: "The program aims to facilitate reciprocal learning through the cultural integration of newcomer youth to Winnipeg and the exploration of Filipino heritage by our 1.5 and second generation mentors. This learning takes place via mentorship, partnership, literacy/academic projects and activities." Accessed 6 August 2015.

addition to the museum exhibit, ANAK has also collaborated with the research project “Filipino Youth Transitions in Canada,” led by geographer Philip Kelly at York University.<sup>12</sup>

The exhibit was part of a larger oral history project to commemorate the community’s anniversary, which is intended to include five published volumes of oral history.<sup>13</sup> This project is a direct reflection of the group’s mandate to share and preserve Filipino-Canadian heritage,<sup>14</sup> and a major motivation of the group was the lack of historical research on the community.<sup>15</sup> In addition to responding to the existing literature, ANAK also wanted to construct a historical narrative that was more inclusive of newer immigrants and Filipino youth. In referring to two histories of Filipino-Canadians written by older members of the community,<sup>16</sup> Darlyne Bautista, the head curator and then-President of ANAK, states, “These works celebrate and offer teachings through a shared immigrant narrative. Now, with the outlook of a new emerging generation of Filipino-Canadian youth, this discussion is evolving.”<sup>17</sup> That the experiences of young Filipinos were “evolving” the discussion suggests that ANAK did not see these histories as representative of the community’s experiences. However, the exhibit did include the memories of older generations as part of the larger narrative. The use of an oral history methodology<sup>18</sup> led Bautista to confidently assert that their project “will define Filipino-Canadians in Winnipeg through a chorus of voices and experiences interpreted and told by one Filipino-Canadian to another.”<sup>19</sup> Further, Bautista states that they did not wish to privilege one narrative over another:

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<sup>12</sup> Filipino Youth Transitions in Canada, York Centre for Asian Research, accessed 29 April 2013. <http://www.yorku.ca/ycar/fytic.html>. The research findings can be found in Kelly, *Understanding Intergenerational Social Mobility: Filipino Youth in Canada*.

<sup>13</sup> The first volume was released in 2012: Bautista, *Winnipeg’s Filipino Health Professionals*. For a review of this book, see Jon G. Malek, “A Timely Recording of Winnipeg’s Filipino Voice: Review of Darlyne Bautista’s Winnipeg’s Filipino Health Professionals (c. 1950-1970),” *Oral History Forum d’histoire orale* 33 (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Bautista, *Winnipeg’s Filipino Health Professionals*, vi.

<sup>15</sup> ANAK, “About the Project”, [www.anak.ca](http://www.anak.ca). Accessed 23 March 2011 (As of April 2013, this section of the website appears to be offline). Also, Bautista, *Winnipeg’s Filipino Health Professionals*, 11. It should be acknowledged that ANAK has actively sought to correct this absence. It has offered, with the University of Winnipeg, two Philippine Studies Summer Institutes (2007 and 2010), which have brought in experts in Filipino history.

<sup>16</sup> Gemma Dalayoan, Leah Enverga-Magsino and Leonnie Bailon, *The First Filipino Migrants in Manitoba (1959-1975)* (Winnipeg: Published for the Manitoba Filipino Writers Guild, 2009); Eleanor del Rio-Laquian and Aprodicio A. Laquian, *Seeking a Better Life Abroad: A Study of Filipinos in Canada, 1957-2007* (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Bautista, *Winnipeg’s Filipino Health Professionals*, ix.

<sup>18</sup> My distinction between an oral history project and methodology is discussed in detail later.

<sup>19</sup> Bautista, *Winnipeg’s Filipino Health Professionals*, ix. Emphasis added.

[The published oral history series] represents a grassroots perspective of a shared common experience. There are no celebrations of politicians or community ‘firsts’ written here. Instead, it explores common themes that illustrate the historical intersect lived between the Philippines and Canada. This series highlights the patterns and perspectives of the Filipino-Canadian identity that continues to evolve over time and through waves of migration.<sup>20</sup>

Terming the project as “grassroots” distances the exhibit’s narrative from previous ones, which Bautista suggests were focused on community pioneers and leaders. Of course, the definitive claim of the project should be treated cautiously. Through its editorial powers in selecting segments of interviews, and by intentionally leaving out certain narratives for a more grassroots-level history, ANAK offers a version of history that privileges a different segment of the community.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, oral histories are often mobilized to disrupt normative narratives,<sup>22</sup> not to create them as the exhibit attempted. What the exhibit demonstrates well is how varied the community’s historical experiences are, and how complicated the negotiation of the community’s collective memory is. It is also important to note that, while Bautista is clear that the curators wanted to move away from narratives that emphasized the early pioneers and community leaders, there is not an explicit discussion on their motivations. It could be deduced that these narratives leave out the experiences of youth,<sup>23</sup> or do not include later developments in the community. Certainly, the community’s

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>21</sup> This point raises a number of questions in regards to the sharing of authority between ANAK and the project’s research participants, as well as the wider community, that do not fit the scope of this article. For more on sharing authority, see: Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the craft and meaning of oral and public history*. (New York: SUNY Press, 1990); Steven High, “Sharing Authority in the Writing of Canadian History: The case of oral history,” in *Contesting Clio’s Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History*, eds. Christopher Dummitt and Michael Dawson (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, 2009a), 21-46. In 2003 (Issue 1), the *Oral History Review* had a Sharing Authority issue, including a commentary by Michael Frisch, the originator of the concept. The *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue D’Études Canadiennes* had a special issue in 2009 on the subject. Some pertinent articles from this issue include those by Lisa Ndjeduru, Steven High, Elizabeth Miller, Stacey Zembrzycki, and Alan Wong.

<sup>22</sup> Joan Sangster, “Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History,” *Women’s History Review* (1994); Pamela Sugiman, “Interpreting Wartime Narratives of Japanese-Canadian Women,” in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, ed. Veronica Jane Strong-Boag, Mona Lee Gleason, and Adele Perry, (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Although here one should ask whether or not the initial waves of community ‘pioneers’ did not also include youth.



pioneers are celebrated in the exhibit; however, they form the beginning of a larger exhibit.

## **The Winnipeg Filipino Community**

The understanding of ‘community’ used in this article is that socio-historical process advocated by John C. Walsh and Steven High as being an imagined reality, social interaction, and process.<sup>24</sup> This definition relies less on the physical boundaries of a community, or on the structures that house its activities, and focuses more on the imaginative aspect that scholars such as Benedict Anderson have theorized.<sup>25</sup> In its broadest sense, ‘Winnipeg Filipino community’ will refer to those individuals of Filipino descent living in Winnipeg; more specifically, it discusses that segment of the community that is actively concerned with the history and memory of Filipinos in Winnipeg. Such ethnic communities have qualities similar to Anderson’s national communities, and have internal divisions on a variety of issues, such as political beliefs, religious affiliations, generational differences, and class distinctions. These internal divisions need not be insurmountable rifts as they represent the ongoing process of community creation, re-creation, and negotiation, as we shall see.

This fluid nature of community dynamics is represented in the process of creating historical narratives. As these narratives draw upon collective memories, which are fluid and can have multiple meanings, it is possible for multiple histories to co-exist. Thus, when a community’s younger generation writes its own history, it will differ from earlier narratives as it draws upon different memories and experiences.<sup>26</sup> However, tensions may arise as new narratives appear. As I will later demonstrate, collective memory and the community’s historical narrative are foci upon which discussion and tensions meet as competing voices emphasize different points. The debates surrounding historical narratives are a part of community dynamics, and collective memory is integral to

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<sup>24</sup> John C. Walsh and Steven High, "Re-Thinking the Concept of ‘Community’," *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 32 (64) (1999), 257.

<sup>25</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London; New York: Verso, 2006 [1983]).

<sup>26</sup> While this article’s examination of the *From Manila to Manitoba* is situated within broader community formation processes, the focus is specifically on the creation of historical narratives using individual and collective memories. It differs from other community studies such as Royden Loewen, *Family, Church, and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and New Worlds, 1850-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal: MQUP, 1992); Talia Blokland, "Bricks, Mortar, Memories: Neighbourhood and networks in collective acts of remembering," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25 (2) (June, 2001). This article is part of my PhD dissertation research that examines the larger history of the community’s historical development.

group identity as it serves as the foundation upon which a community forms its histories. What is included and excluded by these collective memories has repercussions in how segments of a community feel represented. In the case of *From Manila to Manitoba*, the exhibit's curators felt that foundational memories that emphasized early Filipino immigrants left out the experiences of newer immigrants and Filipino youth.

In addition to responding to current historical narratives within the community, the curators were also responding to the body of academic scholarship about the community. Darlyne Bautista stated "Filipino-Canadian youth who long to learn about their heritage and culture in Canada have a limited number of avenues to explore."<sup>27</sup> The literature on Filipinos in Canada is well represented within the social sciences and humanities, but not as well developed within historical studies.<sup>28</sup> The Filipino community in Canada is much younger than other Asian communities; for example, whereas Chinese immigration to Canada predates Confederation, Filipino settlement in Winnipeg did not begin until 1959.<sup>29</sup> The lack of attention from historians, however, has resulted in a

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<sup>27</sup> Bautista, *Winnipeg's Filipino Health Professionals*, xi.

<sup>28</sup> Within Geography, the work of Philip Kelly stands out significantly. See: Kelly, *Understanding Intergenerational Social Mobility: Filipino Youth in Canada*; Philip F. Kelly, "Filipino Migration and the Spatialities of Labour Market Subordination," *Handbook of Employment and Society: Working Space* (2010), 159-176; Philip F. Kelly, *Filipinos in Canada: Economic Dimensions of Immigration and Settlement*. (Toronto: Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement, 2006); Philip F. Kelly, "Canadian-Asian Transnationalism," *The Canadian Geographer* 47 (3) (2003), 209-218; Philip F. Kelly and S. D'Addario, "Understanding Labour Market Segmentation: Filipina Healthcare Workers in Transnational Toronto," *Atlantic Metropolis Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia* 19 (2004). Works in Sociology include those by Anita Beltran Chen, *From Sunbelt to Snowbelt: Filipinos in Canada* (Calgary: Canadian Ethnic Studies Association, 1998) and Roland Sintos Coloma et al., ed., *Filipinos in Canada: Disturbing Invisibility* (Toronto: UTP, 2012). Glenda Bonifacio, a professor in Women and Gender Studies, has recently released a monograph, *Pinay in the Prairies* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), and also has published on Filipina immigration to Canada. This list is not exhaustive but should give a sense of the peculiar absence of historical writing on this ethno-cultural group in Canada.

<sup>29</sup> While the era of Filipino immigration to Canada has not shared in the same level of racial exclusion as Chinese, Japanese, or South Asians, there were geographical restrictions on their immigrant prior to the 1960s. The first known (recorded) Filipino migrant was in 1924 (Jon Malek, "The First Filipinos in Canada, revisited," *Pilipino Express*, 16 July 2015. Accessed 6 August 2015. <http://pilipino-express.com/history-a-culture/it-s-all-history/3000-the-first-filipinos-in-canada-revisited.html>; Library Archives of Canada, RG 26 Vol. 19 – Immigration from the U.S. by Month), however by the 1960s Filipino immigration was minimal. Canada, and the US, had listed Filipinos as an inadmissible class of immigrants and, in reaction, the Philippines threatened reciprocal sanctions against Canadian and American business immigrants in the 1960s (Patricia M. Daenzer, "An Affair Between Nations," in *Not One of the Family: Foreign domestic workers in Canada*, ed. Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulus, 86 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).) As one Department of Foreign Affairs Briefing explained, "Citizens of the Philippines are regarded as Asians under the Canadian Immigration Act and Regulations and as such their



literature limited in historical breadth. Furthermore, the literature on this community focuses on major urban centers, in particular Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal.<sup>30</sup> This literature often dwells on experiences related to the Live-in Caregiver Program; Filipino immigration to Canadian cities is highly influenced by this program, with the exception of Winnipeg, which receives roughly 3% of its Filipino population through this stream.<sup>31</sup> While there is some academic work on the Winnipeg community,<sup>32</sup> it does not compare in volume and breadth to that on other cities. As a result, the broader literature on the Filipino-Canadian experience is incomplete as the Winnipeg community's voice and experiences have not been included in the wider body of knowledge, and is itself little understood. To fill this silence, members of the Winnipeg community have conducted historical projects of their own.<sup>33</sup>

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admissibility as immigrants is governed by Section 20 (d) of the Regulations which restricts their admission to first degree relatives of Canadian citizens. As a non-Commonwealth Asian country, the Philippines do not enjoy the benefit of a special immigration agreement with the Canadian Government similar to the ones concluded with India, Pakistan and Ceylon providing for a small annual intake of persons who would not otherwise be admissible. The net result is the virtual exclusion of Philippine citizens as Immigrants since compared to other groups, for instance the Chinese and Japanese, there is practically no one in this country eligible to sponsor their entry for permanent residence." (Canadian-Philippine Relations: Consular and Immigration Problems with the Philippines, 15 August 1957, Library and Archives Canada RG 25 3279 – Department of Foreign Affairs re Canada-Philippines). Following the liberalization of Canadian immigration policy, in particular the Points Program of 1967, all such restrictions were removed and Filipino immigration to Canada began in earnest.

<sup>30</sup> Tom Lusi, "Filipino Immigrants in Canada: A Literature Review and Directions for Further Research on Second-Tier Cities and Rural Areas." <http://geography.ryerson.ca/hbauder/Immigrant%20Labour/FilipinoSettlement.pdf>. Posted 8 February 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Philip Kelly, Understanding Intergenerational Social Mobility: Filipino Youth in Canada.

<sup>32</sup> Annalee Lepp, David Millar and Barbara Roberts, "Women in the Winnipeg Garment Trade, 1950s-1970s," in *First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History*, ed. Mary Kinnear (Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1987); Cleto M. Buduhan, "An Urban Village: The Effect of Migration on the Filipino Garment Workers in a Canadian City," (M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1972); Catherine J. Fillmore, "Experiences of Migration, Settlement and Work among Filipino Domestic Workers," *Oral History Forum* 16-17 (1997), 39-70; Johsa Manzanilla, "Citizenship Notwithstanding: An analysis of social exclusion narratives by Filipino postcolonial diaspora in Winnipeg" (M.A. Thesis, International Institute of Social Studies, The Netherlands, November 2009); Shirley Camia, "Stitching History: Filipina Garment Workers in Winnipeg" (M.A. Thesis, Ryerson University, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> In addition to the *From Manila to Manitoba* project, see Dalayoan, Enverga-Magsino and Bailon, *The First Filipino Migrants in Manitoba (1959-1975)*. There was an accompanying oral history project to this publication, Gemma Dalayoan, Leah Enverga-Magsino and Leonnie Bailon, "The earliest Filipino immigrants in Manitoba (1960-1975): An oral history project/Final report for the Provincial Archives," (Winnipeg: Heritage Grants Program, Dept. of Culture, Heritage & Citizenship, 1999), available at the Manitoba Legislative Library.

## The Exhibit

It should be noted that, although the exhibit was labeled as an oral history project, it is more the case that it used an oral history methodology. Unlike other oral history projects that integrate audio recordings of the interview, in part or in full, into the exhibit, the *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit did not engage viewers aurally.<sup>34</sup> Quotes from interview transcriptions were meant to complement the historical narrative being created through text and images of archival sources, such as newspapers. The question of transcribing and what role it plays in oral history is a debated topic, however, as Francis Good argues, “editorial intervention, at any level, only becomes problematic when the reader is not given information that explains the process and the source of changes.”<sup>35</sup> An integral aspect of oral history is the openness of the process.<sup>36</sup> Little about the process of creating this exhibit is discussed and complicates the claim that this historical narrative is representative of the entire community’s experience. The very act of selecting segments of transcribed text brings something into being that may not have been intended by all participants. Knowing the process from interview to transcription to creating the exhibit is necessary for viewers to understand in what ways the narrative, and exhibit, is a “constructed artefact.”<sup>37</sup> Had the exhibit instead been set up as a series of listening stations where museum goers would sit down and listen to or watch an interview, the exhibit experience might have been much different; instead of a linear history of the community, it would have been experienced as a series of individual testimonies and life histories.

The exhibit was conceived by ANAK, and received support and funding from the Manitoba Heritage Grants Program, the Philippine Heritage Council of Manitoba, and the Oral History Center at the University of Winnipeg. The research for the exhibit was conducted by members of ANAK, with Filipino

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<sup>34</sup> For examples of such exhibits that make oral interviews more accessible, see Anna Green, “The Exhibition that Speaks for Itself: Oral history and museums,” in *The Oral History Reader* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 416-424. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) and Steven High, *Oral History at the Crossroads: Sharing Life Stories of Survival and Displacement* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014). Thanks to Professor Tina Chen for suggesting this difference to me at the Canadian Committee on Migration, Ethnicity and Transnationalism Graduate Student Symposium at the University of Manitoba in June, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Francis Good, “Voice, Ear, and Text: Words, meaning, and transcription,” in *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 370.

<sup>36</sup> Some recent examples of this openness in practice is Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, eds., *Oral History Off the Record: Toward an Anthology of Practice* (New York: Palgrave and MacMillan, 2013); Steven High, *Oral History at the Crossroads* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014); Stacey Zembrzycki, *According to Baba: A collaborative oral history of Sudbury’s Ukrainian community* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014);

<sup>37</sup> Good, “Voice, Ear, and Text,” 370.

youth volunteers conducting twenty-three interviews with community members for the project.<sup>38</sup> The youth were paired with older community members who had similar experiences of immigration to encourage a deeper discussion in the interview and to create a broader sense of community through shared experience.<sup>39</sup> To prepare the volunteers for the oral interview process, ANAK worked with the Oral History Center at the University of Winnipeg to draft an interviewer handbook.<sup>40</sup> This handbook provides a brief introduction to oral history, methods for conducting oral interviews, and instructions for transcribing the interviews. In some cases, members of the museum exhibit's main research team performed follow-up interviews to elicit further details.<sup>41</sup> According to the interviewer handbook, participants were gathered by referrals and through advertisements in community media outlets. Out of an anticipated fifty participants, ten would be selected to represent each decade between 1960 and 2010. The actual number of interviews differs from the intended fifty, and the division of the twenty-three interviewees was not stated. Interviews were digitally recorded, and will be deposited at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, presumably after the five volume book series is completed (although this is not clear).<sup>42</sup>

The *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit was on display in the Festival Hall at the Manitoba Museum in Winnipeg, Manitoba.<sup>43</sup> Upon entering the hall, a large, two-piece poster board greeted the visitor. The first piece had the words "This is our story" sprawled across images of Filipinos who were interviewed for the exhibit. The other piece bore two statements, one in English and the other in Filipino. The English statement read: "Together, we bring our heritage forward to

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<sup>38</sup> The age profile of these youth interviewers was not available to me and, for the most part, access was not given to the process behind the design and development of the exhibit. I attempted to connect with the head curator Darlyne Bautista, but the dialogue eventually closed down and I was informed she would not be able to meet with me to discuss the exhibit. The Oral History Center provided me with access to the interview hand guide and some meeting notes with ANAK – many thanks go to the Center for this. A list of the research team is available on the *From Manila to Manitoba* blog: ANAK, "Research", *From Manila to Manitoba Blog*. Posted 6 June 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Bautista, Winnipeg's Filipino Health Professionals, vii.

<sup>40</sup> ANAK, Filipino-Canadian Community in Winnipeg Oral History Project and Exhibit, Interviewer Handbook (Winnipeg: Oral History Center, June 2009). According to this handbook, the project worked "under the supervision" of the Oral History Center.

<sup>41</sup> Bautista, Winnipeg's Filipino Health Professionals, 3.

<sup>42</sup> ANAK, "Interviewer Handbook."

<sup>43</sup> This exhibit was also reviewed by Jim Mochoruk in the 2011 edition of the *Oral History Review*. In this review, Mochoruk described the organization and content of the exhibit, and commented on how "What is perhaps the most remarkable feature of *From Manila to Manitoba* is that it is patently far more than just a triumphalist narrative of those who have succeeded in their adopted home" (2).

a new generation of Filipino-Canadians who will gain strength in the knowledge and pride of our community in Winnipeg.” After this welcoming quote, there was an untranslated quote in Tagalog spread across a map of the globe: “*Ang hindi marunong lumigon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi mak-ararating sa paroroonan,*” which translates as “The one who does not know where he/she came from, will never reach his/her destination.”<sup>44</sup>

These two statements reveal the intention of the curators to intervene in the community’s history and suggest that they were targeting a specifically Filipino audience. The English statement in particular indicates that this curators were concerned with a critical moment in the history of the Winnipeg Filipino community – the maturing of 1.5 and second generation Filipinos. While these quotes are not mutually exclusive – indeed, they are complementary – they convey two different, untranslated messages. The first quote, in untranslated English, refers to the Filipino community moving forward with their lives in Canada, while the second quote, in untranslated Tagalog, emphasizes the need to remain connected to its Philippine heritage. Moreover, the choice to not translate the Tagalog (or English) quote is significant as it can be seen as a means of staving off Anglo assimilation; by resisting translation, the museum curators kept the message almost exclusively to Filipinos. Although it is difficult to gauge how many viewers would have recognized the Tagalog quote, its presence in the exhibit could be expected to have resonated at least with those born and raised in the Philippines. It would also expose youth to this saying, further resisting Anglo assimilation through exposure to traditional Filipino values.

The physical design of the exhibit was key to its message, offering an interpretation of the Tagalog quote while emphasizing the strong connections that Canadian-Filipinos have to the Philippines. The Winnipeg Filipino community was represented through a series of poster boards along three walls of Festival Hall, while three temporary walls faced opposite and bore poster boards relating the contemporary history of the Philippines (fig. 2 and fig. 3). Thus, the positioning of the exhibit’s poster boards also reflected ANAK’s conception of Filipino-Canadian identity. While one faced the main panels (moving forward), one’s back was always facing the history of one’s homeland (keeping grounded in their heritage), reflecting the two welcoming quotes. The physical spacing of the exhibit’s poster boards reflected the idea that Filipino-Canadians inhabit two cultural lives at once, one Filipino and one Canadian, referred to by Philip Kelly and Tom Lusi as the “transnational habitus.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Thanks to my Ninang (Godmother) Emmie Joaquin (and also editor of the *Pilipino Express* news magazine, to which I am a contributing author) for clarifying for me that this was an old Tagalog saying.

<sup>45</sup> Philip F. Kelly and Tom Lusi, “Migration and the Transnational Habitus: Evidence from Canada and the Philippines,” *Environment and Planning A* 38 (5) (2006), 831-847.



*Fig. 2: Example of the poster boards depicting the Winnipeg Filipino community's development. Photo by author.*





Fig. 3: Example of poster boards depicting events in the Philippines, positioned directly opposite Fig. 2. Photo by author.

On one of the panels representing events in the Philippines, a letter from a Winnipeg resident to Ferdinand Marcos, the President of the Philippines who declared Martial Law in 1972, offers suggestions for national development. The letter's author felt that he maintained a connection with his home country even though he had been living in Canada for a number of years, referring to himself as a "fellow-countryman" of Marcos and stating that his "heart and soul belong to the Philippines."<sup>46</sup> It is not clear from this letter whether the author supported President Marcos and Martial Law; observations from my own research and placement in the community suggest that there is a divide within the community on the legacy of Marcos. On the one hand, some praise him for Philippine economic development,<sup>47</sup> while others criticize him for the rampant corruption

<sup>46</sup> The letter can be found in Vic M. Biluan, "An Open Letter to Pres. Marcos," *The Silangan*, November, 1977.

<sup>47</sup> The effect of President Ferdinand Marcos on the Philippine economy has been contested, though, with recent work accusing his period of martial law, marked by corruption and cronyism, of undermining the long-term development of the national economy. Robyn Magalit

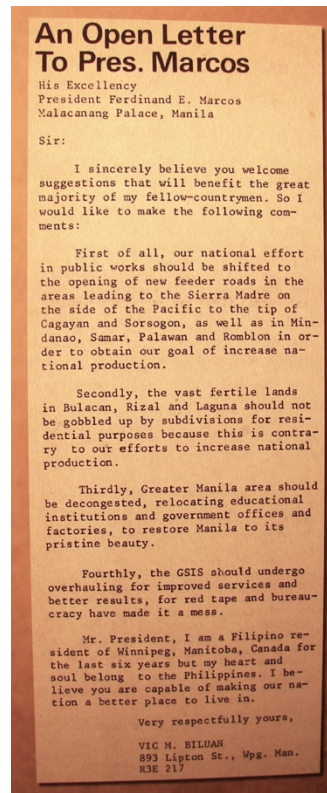


and human rights abuses that occurred under Martial Law. The letter (see fig. 4) offers a subtle critique of economic development policies and the “red tape and bureaucracy” of government institutions which had made them “a mess.” The inclusion of this letter is revealing – especially as it is on the board representing affairs in the Philippines, but was written by a Winnipeg resident – and seems to fit into the subtle criticism for Martial Law governance that the exhibit takes. The letter itself is included in a section of the exhibit titled “The Promise of Independence [after the Second World War],” an ironic title concerning the issue of Martial Law, which was imposed a little over two decades after the war. Furthermore, the next set of panels on development in the Philippines was on the fall of Marcos following the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, a opponent of Martial Law who had returned to the Philippines in 1983 after years of exile in the U.S. The visuality of the exhibit is important, too, as the curators included a picture of the deceased Aquino, whose body was not cleaned for his burial, but rather left in the same state as his execution. With another image of a Filipino protestor holding a placard reading “Marcos wanted for murder,” the tone is quite hostile to Marcos and this aspect of Martial Law (fig. 5). Thus, the inclusion of a negative interpretation of Marcos’ presidency further emphasizes that the historical narrative created by the exhibit is not necessarily definitive; by not including more positive interpretations of this Philippine leader, the narrative privileges one viewpoint over another.<sup>48</sup>

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Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine state brokers labor to the world* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Anna Romina Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes: The transnational labor brokering of Filipino workers*. (Rutgers University Press, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, in a post on the project’s accompanying blog, it is stated “I can go on forever about Martial Law and its implications to Filipinos living outside of the Philippines as an intro to what multitudes more can be said about People Power and Philippine politics, but I leave that for you to learn and discover.” ANAK, “Nostalgia Pili-Peg: People Power, Martial Law and Winnipeg,” *From Manila to Manitoba Blog*, Posted 5 December 2009, [http://manila2manitoba.blogspot.ca/2009/12/nostalgia-pili-peg\\_8918.html](http://manila2manitoba.blogspot.ca/2009/12/nostalgia-pili-peg_8918.html).



*Fig. 4: Letter to President Ferdinand Marcos from Winnipeg resident. Photo by author.*

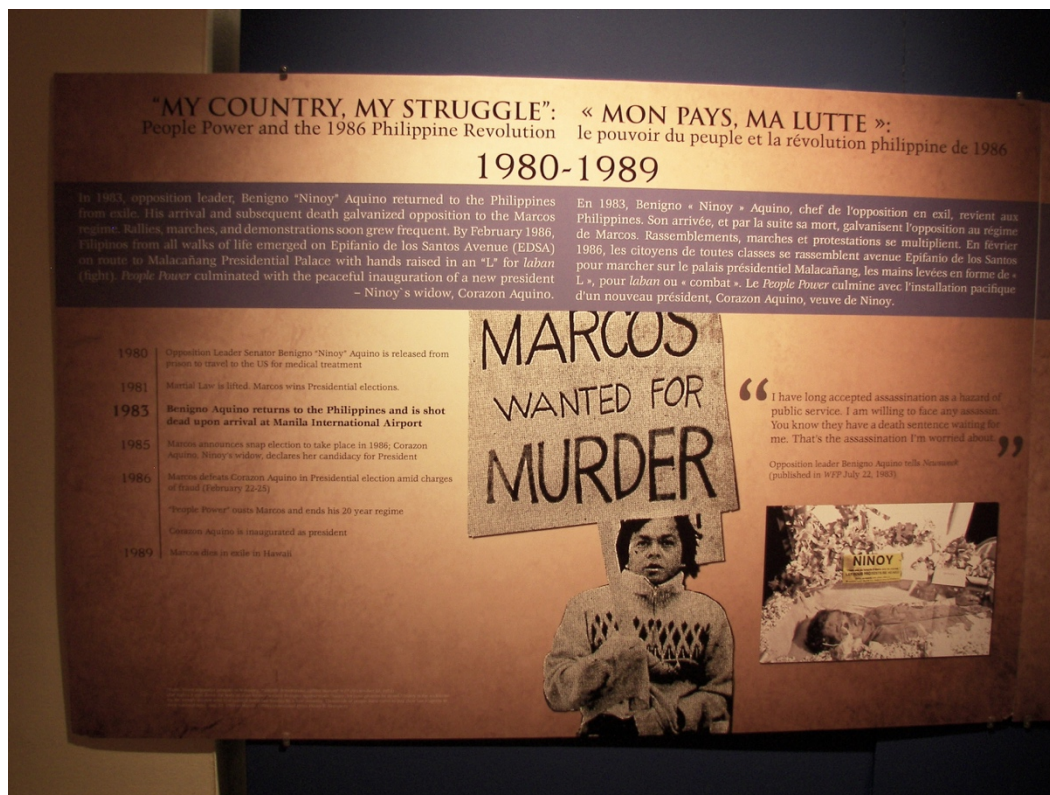


Fig. 5: Poster board, depicting events in the Philippines, shows protests following the killing of Benigno Aquino, pictured in state. Photo by author.

The organizers identified three major periods of the community's history in Winnipeg. These are Winnipeg's first Filipino-Canadians (1950-1974), the growth and unification of the Winnipeg Filipino community (1976-1999), and the last ten years of the community (2000-2010). The first period of 1950-1974 presents the history of the first Filipinos to Canada: the first waves were professional (health and education professionals), followed by manual labourers such as garment workers. The second period of 1976-1999 presents many issues that surrounded the integration of Filipinos into Winnipeg. Of particular notice is the inclusion of racism that was experienced by the community. The sense of tension (described in one panel as a "powder keg" of racial tension), though, is brought to a sense of solution in the final section depicting the last ten years ending in 2010. Here, the history of the Winnipeg community and the Philippines is brought together on the final wall, physically representing the idea of a "Filipino transnational family" and a Filipino-Canadian identity co-existing. There is a sense of sacrifice within this collective memory of Filipino immigration to Canada, one that the curators presented as painful in its geo-spatial rupture as families split, but hopeful in the opportunities for familial prosperity that the

sacrifice may engender. The exhibit also included memories of integration into Canada, including experiences of racism that Filipino-Canadians experienced growing up in Winnipeg (fig. 6 and fig. 7). In the chronological organization of the exhibit, these experiences are placed in the middle as an important event in the development of the Winnipeg community. If one were to read the exhibit as a crystallized historical narrative, the placing of racism is interesting because of what it seems to suggest. While the narrative does not claim there are no similar experiences anymore, racism is presented as an experience the community has faced and overcome. While writing about a different ethno-cultural group, Pamela Sugiman notes how Japanese women engage in a “sanitization of memory,” engaging in a “process of healing” to mask powerlessness and emphasize one’s dignity and self-respect.<sup>49</sup> It is interesting that the curators included a frank discussion on racism, as this topic does not always factor into community narratives.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Sugiman, “Interpreting Wartime Narratives of Japanese-Canadian Women,” 257.

<sup>50</sup> While traditional community narratives, specifically those referred to by ANAK, may not deal explicitly with racism, it is a topic that the community discusses. The Filipino news media in Winnipeg occasionally discusses the issue. It was a topic in the first community newspaper, *The Silangan*, and in some current newspapers: <http://pilipino-express.com/features-sp-1157189368/anak/1783-anti-racism-strategies.html>; <http://filipinojournal.com/ugly-heads-racism-thrive-along-ethnic-lines/>.



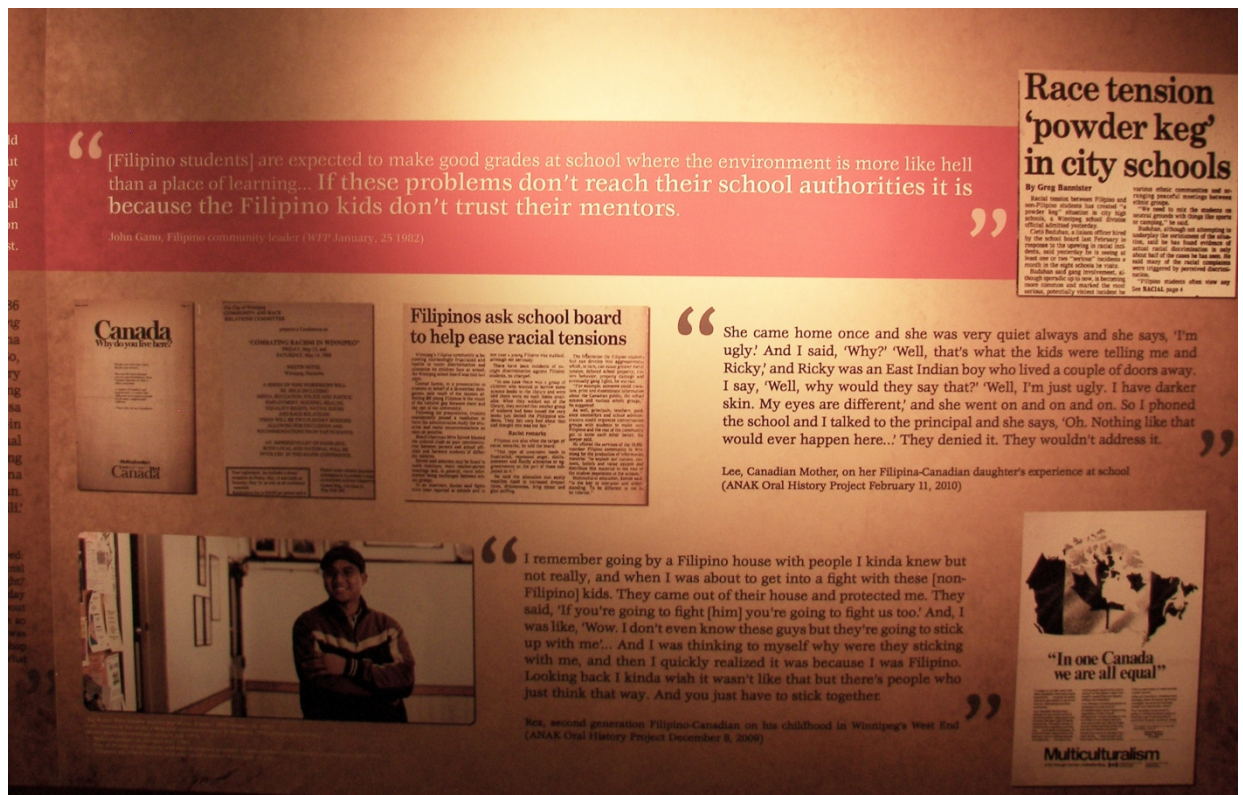


Fig. 6: Poster boards discussing experiences of racism in Winnipeg. Photo by author.



Fig. 7: Poster board depicting experiences of racism in Winnipeg. Photo by author.

A striking example of the contrasting histories of the community is the short history of the Manitoba Filipino community by Gemma Dalayoan et al., *The First Filipino Immigrants in Manitoba (1959-1975)*.<sup>51</sup> Published in 2005, *The First Filipino Immigrants* covers the initial waves of Filipinos to Manitoba, emphasizing these community pioneers. It shares a similar method with ANAK of interviewing Filipino immigrants to Manitoba and used their testimony as a major source.<sup>52</sup> Motivated by the same literature gap as ANAK, the authors introduce the purpose of their study in the Preface:

The Filipino community has emerged as one of the most vibrant communities in Manitoba. However, there is a dearth of written information about Filipinos and their significant contributions to all aspects of life in Manitoba. This lack of knowledge about Filipinos in Manitoba and the

<sup>51</sup> Dalayoan, Enverga-Magsino and Bailon, *The First Filipino Migrants in Manitoba (1959-1975)*.

<sup>52</sup> These interviews were performed independently of each other and no collaboration between the two projects took place.



desire of the Manitoba Filipino Writers' Guild [the sponsoring organization of the publication] to highlight the contributions of the earliest Filipinos for posterity purposes have inspired and propelled the Guild's members to start documenting the experiences of the first Filipino immigrants, the trail blazers, who paved the way for the present and future Filipino immigrants in Manitoba.<sup>53</sup>

It is clear this book was envisaged as an act of commemoration to the first waves of Filipino migrants, something ANAK sought to avoid.<sup>54</sup> The text highlights some of the struggles experienced by the early Filipino-Canadian community, such as economic integration, but contentious issues such as racism do not factor into the analysis. It is possible that the authors wanted to avoid such controversial pasts, or did not want to rekindle tensions with the broader Manitoban community;<sup>55</sup> it is also possible that the authors wished to focus on the positive aspects of Filipino experience in Manitoba. Nevertheless, the absence is compelling when compared to the relative prominence the subject received in the *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit, and such contrasts demonstrate what divisions, as well as similarities, arise in community historical narratives as different aspects of collective memory are called upon.

Whereas the first panels depicted how labour migration created a sense of dislocation in Filipino families, and the middle panels describe some of the issues of integrating into Canadian society, the final panel depicts how migration *unites* it once more. The celebratory tone that the exhibit takes at this point is striking, given the goal of the organizers to avoid typical narratives celebrating community pioneers. It is at this endpoint that one of the last panels of the exhibit, "On being Filipino *and* Canadian," returns the exhibit to the English passage presented at the beginning of the exhibit to the new generation of Filipino-Canadians (fig. 8). Throughout the exhibit, the importance of remembering one's Filipino heritage while integrating into Canadian society was emphasized. It will be remembered that the closing poster board stated "for many, the 'Filipino' identity is *not an everyday connection to the Philippines, but a very real bond to those who trace their experiences there.*"<sup>56</sup> This exhibit and the broader oral history project are

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<sup>53</sup> Dalayoan, Enverga-Magsino, and Bailon, *The First Filipino Migrants in Manitoba* (1959-1975), 7.

<sup>54</sup> Personal conversations with members of the Filipino-Canadian community have suggested that this emphasis on the first comers and pioneers of the community is because this cohort of Filipino immigrants is aging quickly.

<sup>55</sup> Such motivations are recorded by Pamela Sugiman, "'Life is Sweet': Vulnerability and Composure in the Wartime Narratives of Japanese Canadians," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43 (1) (Winter, 2009), 186-218.

<sup>56</sup> ANAK, "On Being Filipino *and* Canadian: A new generation constructs and 'imagined' identity." *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit. Emphasis added.

meant to intervene within the community's history, and may continue to shape the lives of Filipino-Canadians who come across various aspects of the project. The *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit is but one event in the development of this community's narrative. It presented itself to a community that directly, or indirectly through family, experienced immigration.

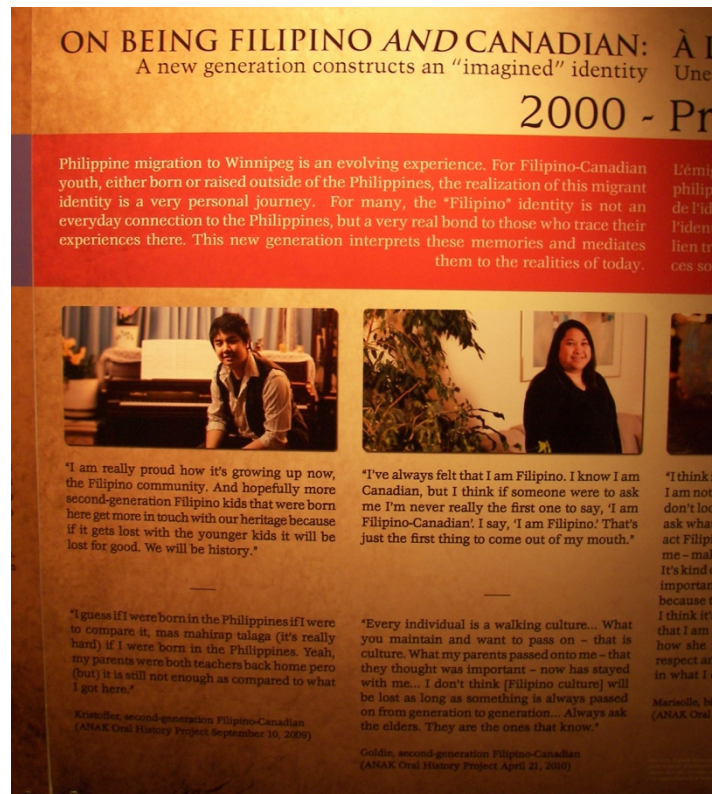


Fig. 8: One of the final poster boards, bringing the exhibit, and historical narrative, to a conclusion. Photo by author.

## History and Memory

While claiming a definitive narrative, ANAK's version of the community's history was constructed through the editorial authority of the curators. This was in response to the particular questions or problems they felt needed to be addressed – or left out – and particular life histories were used to create this narrative. As this historical narrative responded to what the curators felt was relevant, it was bound to differ from existing narratives, emphasizing that memories of a community can differ, and even compete with each other, while each remaining valid. The *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit is an ideal example of what happens when memories – normally fluid, dynamic, and regularly negotiated – find a crystallized

expression in the form of stories or life histories. While history refers to the past as a series of events, it simultaneously refers to how those events were experienced and, further, how those events and experiences have been written about and understood.<sup>57</sup> Memory, whether collective or individual, might be used to refer to this interpretive understanding of history, although it is important to note that memory and history are not quite the same. The writing and telling of history, especially life histories, are structured around “causal and redemptive narratives”, which serve to structure one’s experiences and make sense of them.<sup>58</sup> Pamela Sugiman argues that this is a way to give meaning to narrators’ life histories. She argues that “The power of linear thinking... make[s] tempting such causal reasoning.... The linear sequence facilitates attempts on the part of some narrators to regain composure and return to their present lives and current identities.”<sup>59</sup> In discussing the loss of French peasant life, Pierre Nora wrote that there is a gulf between history and memory. He argued that “memory is life,” and that it “remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.” History, on the other hand, lies on the other end of the gulf of experience. It is the “reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, while memory is a daily, lived engagement with the near past, history is a representation of that past, recorded for analysis and criticism. The creation of a linear narrative emphasizing causal elements is the process of crystallization discussed by Alexander Freund.<sup>61</sup> With each re-telling, or “situational crystallization,” the memories are mobilized to emphasize certain elements within the memory that suit the purpose of what Freund calls the “communicative situation.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, these situational memories will find different expressions depending on the audience, the context of their re-telling, and who is conveying the memory.

Freund’s analysis of how a family reproduces and re-enacts its memories in an oral interview can be applied to the memories of an ethnic community. One important distinction, though, is that while family memories often reflect foundational memories that are commonly shared,<sup>63</sup> the *From Manila to*

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<sup>57</sup> Susan A. Crane, “Writing the individual Back into Collective Memory,” *The American Historical Review* 102 (5) (1997), 1372.

<sup>58</sup> Sugiman, ““Life is Sweet,”” 201.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” *Representations* 26 (Spring, 1989), 8.

<sup>61</sup> Freund, “A Canadian Family Talks.”

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Freund, “A Canadian Family Talks,” 11. The example in Freund’s analysis was the life experience of a family’s Grandmother in Nazi Germany.

*Manitoba* exhibit reflects foundational *community* memories. There is a shared memory<sup>64</sup> of migration and integration, however each family unit within the community has had their own experience of this foundational memory which can have multiple variables, including the time of arrival in Canada, their reasons for leaving the Philippines, as well as their generational and socio-economic position. Differences in these variables may lead to tensions as individuals attempt to place their experiences within larger community narratives. In using oral histories to construct a narrative, ANAK has imposed a structure and meaning that may not have been intended by each participant. Thus, while there may indeed be a gulf between history and memory, there is still an integral relationship between each; memory, while remaining active in Nora's conception, is a foundation for historical narratives. Nora conceived this process as memories becoming disassociated with daily life, and Freund conceived it as the crystallization of these narratives. Memories, when in the minds of individuals, are fluid – sometimes in the fore, sometimes in the back of one's consciousness – and the utterance of memories crystallizes them into a narrative, the act of which includes giving them structure and meaning.<sup>65</sup> History, in the example of this exhibit, is seen to impose a coherent narrative on individual and collective memories that is not otherwise present. The very imposition of meaning and structure in the creation of a narrative counters the claim that this history is definitive, and celebrates the fact that it is only one aspect, or one interpretation, of the community's history.

The final boards in the exhibit, such as one pointing to a “new generation construct[ing] an ‘imagined’ identity,” emphasizes the development of a Filipino-Canadian identity. The exhibit did not give a description of what this identity might be, however there are clues to how the curators conceived it. One board stated “For many, the ‘Filipino’ identity is not an everyday connection to the Philippines, but a very real bond to those who trace their experiences there. This new generation interprets these memories and mediates them to the realities of today.”<sup>66</sup> Some of the oral histories also hint at what this identity is, with one participant stating that second generation Filipino-Canadians have a responsibility to maintain their Filipino heritage, otherwise “it will be lost for good. We will be history.” A second participant stated that her identity is less “Filipino-Canadian” and more “Filipino” – “‘I am Filipino.’ That’s just the first thing to come out of

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<sup>64</sup> ‘Shared memory’ refers to the ability of an individual or group to be able to express and compare memories with those of contemporaries in a shared language and with comparable themes. See T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, “The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics” in *Commemorating War: The Politics of Memory*, eds. T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 18.

<sup>65</sup> Sugiman, “‘Life is Sweet’.”

<sup>66</sup> ANAK, “On Being Filipino and Canadian,” *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit,

my mouth.” Based upon these testimonies, as well as the general message intoned by the exhibit, the definition of a Filipino-Canadian being presented by ANAK appears to be one that is an active member of Canadian society, but also one that has a strong sense of Filipino heritage and values. This, too, can be a contested definition. In response to a newspaper article by Bautista titled “Filipino? Canadian? Striking a balance,” one commenter, presumably a Filipino-Canadian, stated “If you have canadian [*sic*] citizenship you are a canadian of filipino descent.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, the emphasis between Filipino and Canadian is a topic of debate.

ANAK took the opportunity presented by the community’s fiftieth anniversary to put forward a historical narrative that emphasized newer generations of Filipinos and shifted attention away from community pioneers. As well, there was a normative element to this presentation that emphasized the importance of Filipino heritage in the community’s youth. It is perhaps in recognition that Filipino youth are the next leaders of the community that the emphasis on maintaining a Filipino identity is predominant throughout this exhibit, as anticipated by the opening Tagalog quote. But, at the same time as this new Filipino-Canadian generation is acknowledged, there is a stark reminder of its Filipino heritage. As the (Filipino) visitor turns from the last panel to face the back, which represents the homeland, he/she is presented with a simple art installation (fig. 9). Among six rows of draped bamboo sheets sits a wooden table with a mirror on its top. When the viewer looks into the mirror, their own reflection can be seen along with the words *sabay* (together), *tanggapin* (accept/embrace), *nakaraan* (past), *kumilos* (act upon/engage) and *kinabukasan* (future) written upon a board hanging from the ceiling. The message harkens back to the opening Tagalog quote, creating a sense of completion to the exhibit. As if to emphasize the Filipino viewer, the words on the mirror remain untranslated. The choice of the bamboo is also important. In the Philippines, as with other tropical climates, bamboo is an abundant material used in the construction of traditional houses due to its resilience in tropical climates, making it an apt form of commemoration for a community adapting to a new environment while referring to its Philippine heritage.

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<sup>67</sup> Darlyne Bautista, “Filipino? Canadian? Striking a Balance,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, Posted 3 March 2010. <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/westview/filipino-canadian-striking-a-balance-141282193.html>.



*Fig. 9: Art installation, facing the final panels, closing the exhibit. The mirror which one would look into is on top of the table in the bottom-middle of the picture. Photo by author.*

The theme of maintaining one's Filipino heritage throughout the exhibit has a degree of performativity, suggesting that certain acts must be continually enacted.<sup>68</sup> As Judith Butler conceived of gender as “in no way a stable identity” but rather “an identity tenuously constituted in time”, so too does an ethnic identity appear to be.<sup>69</sup> The continued emphasis on maintaining a Filipino identity suggests that a Filipino-Canadian identity, as the curators understand it, is the “stylized repetition of acts through time.”<sup>70</sup> In this sense, it is not enough to merely be of Filipino descent or to identify as Filipino; such an identity must be continuously reaffirmed through performing particular acts socially recognized as being “Filipino.” One such performative practice is familial. One panel in the exhibit stresses the role of family “for many Filipinos,” stating it is “an essential social institution that is either inherited or gained through ritual.” It goes on to

<sup>68</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40 (4) (Dec., 1988), 519-531.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 519.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 520.



explain that factors such as gender, birth order, and location will affect the nature of family. While this theme does not directly affect the historical narrative being constructed, it does highlight the historical intervention ANAK intended, and demonstrates how this normative narrative attempts to shape Filipino youth.

The intervention that the exhibit represents is a distinct ‘memory-event’<sup>71</sup> in the development of this community. A memory-event treats narration and the presentation of memories as an event in itself – not just a description of an event – that can affect the memory being represented. That is, as a real and concrete expression that is meant to shape the community’s memory of itself and its immigration experience, this exhibit has itself become a part of that memory. There was no documented feedback on this exhibit by which to gauge community response, but nevertheless this exhibit mobilized large segments of the Filipino-Canadian community in Winnipeg, including the volunteer research team from ANAK, the interviewees, the Philippine Heritage Council of Manitoba (a sponsor of the exhibit) and all those who did visit the exhibit.

This nature of the exhibit as being crystallized and unchanging highlights how living memory, with which individuals and groups interact and engage on a daily basis, relates to expressions of memory. As Freund demonstrated, the very act of telling or recording a memory crystallizes it into a narrative with a sense of meaning and coherence.<sup>72</sup> However, this crystallized memory has the potential to influence and indeed become part of the community’s living memory. One of the researchers and interviewers for the exhibit told a local community news magazine, the *Pilipino Express*, that “the interviews made me look back at my own immigration experience, which was mostly negative, since it was associated with homesickness and culture shock. Knowing their stories made me feel proud that I learned to adapt to a new country.”<sup>73</sup> While the effects of the exhibit as a memory-event may continue past its closure, the exhibit itself came to an end. Events are temporally finite; while the memory of the event may continue to influence individuals and groups, the opportunity for community members to view and engage with the exhibit has ended and it has now become part of the community’s memory.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Francesca Cappelletto, “Long-Term Memory of Extreme Events: From Autobiography to History,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropology Institute* 9 (2003), 242.

<sup>72</sup> Freund, “A Canadian Family Talks.”

<sup>73</sup> “From Manila to Manitoba: Manitoba Museum presents first-ever exhibit on Filipino immigrants,” *Pilipino Express*, June 16, 2010, <http://www.pilipino-express.com/news/875-from-manila-to-manitoba.html>.

<sup>74</sup> I want to emphasize that this suggestion is made cautiously as there is no empirical evidence to back this up. In theory, those who visited the exhibit or were involved with it, as well as those who may come across the printed oral history segment of the project, may also engage with it and its materials.

It is clear, then, that the exhibit – an expression of history – based on oral histories of the community – an expression of memory – represents a passage from memory to history in the sense that this exhibit has now, in all appearances, been archived.<sup>75</sup> In their article on community, Walsh and High advocate against community narratives that present straightforward histories of a community. Their notion of community is one full of divisions, conflicts, complex relationships, and fluctuating variables. To be fair, the space afforded by a museum venue will alter the inclusion of material, however one may still question the narrative produced. For example, the progression of the early community seems to be along the lines of workers moving to the city and integrating. It does not include much of the contested issues the community faced such as the organization of an umbrella community organization<sup>76</sup> or the ways in which the community attempted to overcome differences to determine their future.<sup>77</sup> The decision to minimize the experiences of the pioneers of the community has considerable consequences on the resulting narrative, making the silence surrounding its justification more pressing. In terms of presenting a historical narrative, key aspects of the community's early development are left out, presenting at times an uncomplicated history that presents the Filipino community's formation as inevitable and uncontested.

ANAK presented a version of this memory that seeks to unite the community; however, to a member of the Filipino-Canadian community, it might be situated within the realm of a contested space. In their discussion on the politics of war memory, T. G. Ashplant et al. state that “the articulation of memory involves struggles to extend, or alternatively to limit, the arenas [of articulation] within which specific memories are able to circulate, and hence make

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<sup>75</sup> Five years after the exhibit, it can be argued that this exhibit has been archived, although not in a publically accessible place. In June 2014, ANAK presented selections of the exhibit focused on youth at a special display at the United Way in downtown Winnipeg. The exhibit, “review with United Way support,” was in conjunction with an ANAK-sponsored youth forum. A poster for the event posed the question “Winnipeg youth tell us which side of you ticks, the *filipino one* or the *canadian one*.” Both events were hosted at the United Way on 580 Main Street, Winnipeg. The exhibit, which was made of selections from the *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit, highlighted the experiences and testimonies of youth interviewed for the project.

<sup>76</sup> The debate surrounding the issue of creating an umbrella Filipino cultural association in Winnipeg created some dissent among other groups that did not want to submit to such an organization. The *Silangan*, which ran from 1977-1982, documents some of the issues that the Philippine Association of Manitoba had in such regard.

<sup>77</sup> For example, in 1977 the Philippine Association of Manitoba held a conference to discuss the role of Filipinos in Manitoba, and to identify the needs of the community. In March 2015, a similar event was hosted by the Philippine Heritage Council of Manitoba in an attempt to re-evaluate the values of the community and to envision its future. These events demonstrate how the community is constantly changing and responding as new needs and concerns arise.

claims for recognition.”<sup>78</sup> ANAK, being composed of younger Filipino-Canadians, has extended – and, ironically, limited – the scope of the community’s history by smoothing the early history of the community, while injecting some of the complexities such as youth negotiating and balancing their Filipino heritage and Canadian identity. Yet, in a way, ANAK has indirectly acknowledged the importance of these earlier generations by beginning the exhibit with their immigration and in the broader *From Manila to Manitoba* project, as Volume 1 of their book project is about the early waves (1950-1970) of Filipino immigration to Winnipeg. I again want to be clear that I am not stating what the historical narrative presented in this exhibit should have included. I mean to draw attention to the crystallization of memory into narrative that this exhibit represents, the selective and performative elements of this process, and its consequences, in an attempt to better understand the relationship between memory and history in such cases.

By bringing attention to other elements of the Filipino community’s history in Winnipeg, the exhibit also acknowledged that there is a tension within the community surrounding memory. A portion of the community wishes to keep silent on contentious issues such as racism, while another believes such issues should be acknowledged. In a recent history of Filipino immigration to Canada, Del Rio-Laquian and Laquian have noted that the debate surrounding immigration and racism is silent.<sup>79</sup> And yet, there are elements that the curators also left out intentionally, deeming them sensational. In addition to consciously avoiding celebratory narratives of community firsts,<sup>80</sup> the curators and research team “chose to consciously replace the sensationalism of ‘third-world’ poverty, of youth gangs, and of crippling racism into a more meaningful, culturally relevant discussion of economic development, youth identity formation, and resiliency.”<sup>81</sup> The decision to exclude third-world poverty differs from ANAK’s choice in their 2010 Summer Institute on the Philippines at the University of Winnipeg where the “crisis of poverty and underdevelopment” was mentioned on the Institute’s course fact sheet.<sup>82</sup> While the exhibit did have content on racism, the decision to leave out elements with which members of the community – especially the youth – may have identified further emphasizes the authoritative power of the curators.

In discussions of community, and of collective memory, points of contention are inevitable and part of the negotiation of individual and group

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<sup>78</sup> Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, “The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration,” 17.

<sup>79</sup> Del Rio-Laquian and Laquian, *Seeking a Better Life Abroad*, 37.

<sup>80</sup> Bautista, Winnipeg’s Filipino Health Professionals, xi.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., xii

<sup>82</sup> ANAK, “Migration and Development in the Philippines,” *ANAK Blog*. Accessed 5 September 2015. <http://anakinc.blogspot.ca/p/migration-and-development-in.html>.

identity.<sup>83</sup> In this instance, the tension comes from an issue of who and what to emphasize. This can be understood as different generations defining what issues are important to them, as literature on other ethno-cultural groups suggests youth sometimes become concerned about the negative experiences of immigrant parents. In her analysis of the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre in British Columbia, Kirsten McAllister describes the relationship between the older and younger generations in the community, as the elders need to die/decay and give into/find rebirth in the next generation of Japanese Canadians for its memory to live on.<sup>84</sup> As she states, it is “not simply the end of an era, but something inevitable,” a transferring of leadership.<sup>85</sup> In their own way, these historical narratives and memories are both valid at once as they each respond to questions raised by each generation. This is one of the qualities of memory and history, where multiple and competing memories can exist at the same time and both be valid to their audience.

## Conclusion

ANAK took the fiftieth anniversary of Filipino immigration to Winnipeg as an opportunity to present its history of the community. The exhibit curators had many motivations, including a lack of academic research on the community, the preservation of Filipino culture and heritage in youth, and a desire to intervene in the existing historical narratives of the community. The physical structure of the exhibit suggests the importance that the curators placed on maintaining a Filipino identity while becoming active Canadian citizens. While the *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit and book project might be better described as using an oral history methodology, rather than being an oral history project, the selections of interviews from community members give a certain voice to community members. Furthermore, while it might be problematic for ANAK to claim that the use of interviews has given a definitive nature to the historical narrative,<sup>86</sup> they demonstrate the varied experiences of Filipino immigrants to Winnipeg and some of the issues involved with expressing collective memory. Employing a theoretical framework that understands memory as being fluid and living, and history as the crystallization of memories into a structured narrative, I have used the *From Manila to Manitoba* exhibit to better understand the process of narrative

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<sup>83</sup> Walsh and High, "Re-Thinking the Concept of 'Community,'" 255-274.

<sup>84</sup> Kirsten Emiko McAllister, *The Terrain of Memory: A Japanese Canadian Memorial Project* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 139-144.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>86</sup> Despite this, the curators felt a sense of responsibility in their purpose. Bautista states of the research, “We are honoured and humbled to have been entrusted with these narratives [from community members]. We present it [sic] here in a way I hope that we as Canadians can appreciate in their value.” Bautista, *Winnipeg’s Filipino Health Professionals*, xii-xiii.

creation, and the relationship between memory and history in this process. The narration of a memory crystallizes it, and the curators have selected segments of testimonies to structure its own historical narrative, one that intentionally moves away from emphasizing community leaders and pioneers and draws attention to later generations of immigrants, as well as the experiences of Filipino youth. There is a strong normative element to the narrative that emphasizes the need of youth in particular to maintain their Filipino identity. This exhibit has emphasized the process of the creation of historical narratives, and draws attention to the relationship between memory and history. The claim of ANAK that their narrative was definitive is reflective of the desire of ethnic communities to continually rewrite their history so that it is more relevant to younger generations and to the community in general. Using this exhibit, we have seen how vital individual and collective memories are to the continual negotiation of the past, and the creation of historical narratives.