

B.C. First Nations Studies

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B.C. First Nations Studies documents the history and cultures of First Nations and Métis people in British Columbia from before the arrival of Europeans to the present. It examines the historical foundations of contemporary issues and illustrates how First Nations cultures have adapted to changing world events and environments. Aboriginal people's contributions to British Columbia and Canada are highlighted, and important leaders and role models are profiled.

The introduction to the book, titled "The Voice of the Land Is Our Language," is written in a First Nations voice and provides you, the reader, with an opportunity to understand the values and beliefs that sustain contemporary First Nations cultures. By speaking from within the culture, the introduction expresses a message about the integrity of a world view that has much to offer the whole of society.

The book is organized into four parts and an epilogue. Part One explores the nature of First Nations cultures before the arrival of Europeans, and in particular Aboriginal people's relationship with the land. Part Two examines what occurred when the two groups met, how the forces of colonialism shaped British Columbia as it is today, and how First Nations have resisted those forces. In Part Three, you will come to understand how First Nations are working through governments and courts to redress the legacies of colonialism. Part Four demonstrates the creative spirit which is one of the foundations and continuing strengths of First Nations cultures. The epilogue by John Borrows offers an Aboriginal perspective on the challenges communities face as they regain their place as self-governing nations.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE TEXT

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Quotations and excerpts that express First Nations views about the topics and issues discussed in the text.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Excerpts from historical and contemporary documents pertaining to First Nations issues.

PROFILES

Biographical information about key First Nations individuals and organizations, past and present.

CASE STUDIES

More in-depth explorations of particular First Nations experiences on an issue. The Case Studies are designed to encourage you to develop parallel examples pertaining to First Nations in your local community.

Photographs and Maps

Selected photographs and maps from diverse sources contribute an important visual record of First Nations history and cultures.

Vocabulary

Definitions of terms and concepts that are important to understanding the text. A glossary at the end of the book lists the vocabulary for quick reference.

A word about names

In this book we use the terms First Nations and Aboriginal to refer to the original people who inhabited what is now British Columbia, and to their descendants. In the past the name Indian was mistakenly used, and it is still entrenched in our government, as in the Indian Act. The names Native, Indigenous, and First People are also sometimes used.

The term Euro-Canadian is used to mean the large segment of the early Canadian population with British and French ancestry. This does not imply that people from other cultural backgrounds were absent, but because the majority of early immigrants came from Europe, the newcomers are collectively referred to as Euro-Canadians.

The Voice of the Land Is Our Language

by Carrie J. Reid


First Nations people in British Columbia have enduring values and beliefs that are as relevant today as they were in the past. We have a great responsibility to protect not only our families, but also the land in which we live. Families are responsible for maintaining a connection to the land, to honour and respect the way we live today, and to remember our past. First Nations' histories impart a sense of belonging and a way of holding on to the values that sustain us. Instilled within our languages are the ties to land, family, community, and the great respect and honour we have for all nations.

Every culture has a world view that determines a people's basic beliefs of how to act in society. These beliefs are so fundamental that people usually do not realize that they have them because they form a piece of who they are. Traditional First Nations view the world as an integrated whole, balancing physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. These beliefs make up who a person is and how he or she functions in society and within the environment. The life forces that exist in mountains, rivers, plants, animals, people, and spiritual beings are all interrelated. First Nations civilizations

recognize the importance of community—of people working together for the common good. The group is emphasized over the individual.

Our people live in an oral culture. Our histories are contained within the oral traditions of our stories and songs. Our recorded history exists through our crests, house posts, petroglyphs, baskets, blankets, and paintings. Children are taught at a very young age to



 Haida poles proclaim the importance of family histories.

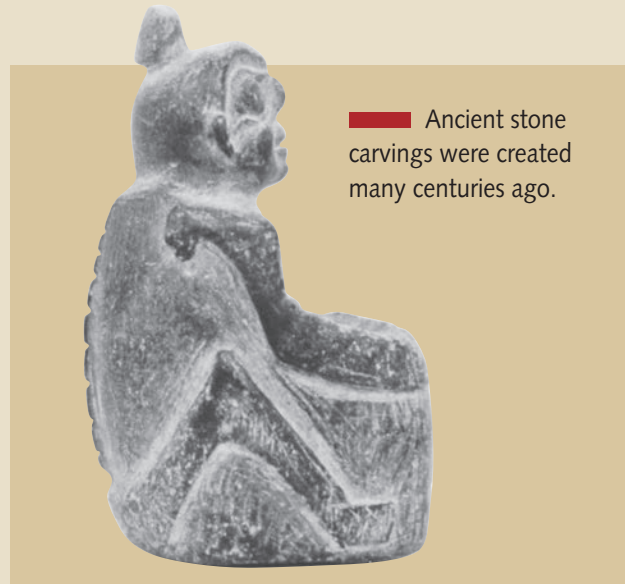
listen. They are taught to listen to stories as they weave, carve, and knit, and as they dance. The whole being of the child is involved in hearing the story. Stories are the primary teaching tool in our cultures. The stories have been told for generations and continue to be told today.

There are many significant pieces to oral traditions. While there is sometimes room for innovation and creativity, it is important that the people trained to carry the stories retell them accurately, in order to pass down the histories, traditions, laws, and the various technologies to future generations. The stories are not just stories. They are our foundation, our identity, and our culture. Oral history requires a total commitment to culture.

First Nations people have always existed on this land. Creation stories often speak of a being that combined both human and supernatural characteristics to bring order to the world and knowledge to the people.

Agnes Edgar, Nuxalk

Now I want to talk about the creation. In the beginning there was an ocean covering the entire [Bella Coola] valley. This was as Alquntam had planned it. But Raven didn't like it that way, so he changed it around so people could get around in the valley. You can still see mussels upriver at Stuiie. The ocean that used to cover the valley left them there. This place was ready for human beings after Raven changed it around. The river flowed then and Raven came poling upriver in his canoe. He put a good sign on Nuxalk. After he was done, he came drifting downriver playing with his pole. He was pretending to let the pole slide along side of the canoe. When he got to the mouth of the river he threw his canoe pole at the mountain. It's the upper part of that mountain that is still now called "used to be a canoe pole." (skukutll) ¹



■ Ancient stone carvings were created many centuries ago.

Among First Nations, stories carry different meanings as an individual journeys through the stages of his or her life. Stories also have many historical components. In stories we find references to ancient history, recent history, and modern times. Stories tell about the importance of the land and stewardship, as well as about leadership responsibilities and the philosophies of governance.

Governance

All First Nations cultures have organized governments with different governing systems, some hereditary and some appointed. In these systems, a leader is recognized for his or her ability to take care of the people through the stewardship of the land and its resources. The sharing of accumulated wealth raises the esteem of a leader and his or her group.

Every First Nations culture has a word that describes its own laws, and these words are generally complex, encompassing more than one concept. In Nisga'a, for example, the word is Ayuuk, and it refers to the system of justice that people must follow from birth to death. Within these legal dictates there is a constant goal of balance and harmony within the community. This is governance.

Spirituality

First Nations have an important tie to the land that goes beyond the need for food and shelter. The land and its forces contain the belief systems and world views of First Nations cultures. The relationship

■ A hat with
potlatch rings and a
crest-bearing Chilkat
robe signify
hereditary rights.



between the living world and the spirit world is vital in First Nations cultures.

Spirituality exists in every aspect of life—from stewardship to everyday practical matters. Prayer is not something one does at a certain time or that one needs to stop one's job to do. The concept of spirituality is to be always mindful and grateful for life and what it provides.

Feasting and extreme physical challenges accompanied by sacred rituals provide methods of connecting to the spirit world. These rituals are not taken lightly; specialists are trained in these fields from birth. First Nations cultures acknowledge that individuals can be trained to receive special power from animals, plants, the spiritual world, or other life forces.

In many First Nations traditions, dreaming is a connection to the other world. In Tahltan culture, for example, hunters often dream into the future in order to discover things about their next hunt. Dreams can contain messages from late ancestors, provide teachings, warn of danger, and bring together the many psychic realms of our existence.

Aku, of the Dunne-za culture

*One time I dreamed about a Trail to Heaven.
I went halfway up and someone met me.
The person gave me something white.
He was one of my relatives.
I knew him a long time ago.
I was worrying.
How could I sing as well as he did?
He sang this song to me in the dream.
The next morning I woke up.
I had this song.
I could sing it the way he did.²*

Aku talks about honouring and maintaining his relationship with his ancestors and learning songs that he will in turn teach to his children. He is humbled



Inside the walls of the longhouse, our crests record our stories.

and grateful in receiving his gift.

Cross-Cultural Protocols

Individual nations do not live in isolation. First Nations trade with neighbouring villages as well as with more distant nations. They trade surplus food and materials for items that cannot be locally obtained and



also harvest goods specifically for trading purposes. Relationships extend beyond simple trade to social interactions. First Nations people gather together for family meetings, winter dances, feasts, and potlaches. Sometimes they will gather at central locations to pick berries, gather wool, or to fish. Gatherings are greatly anticipated throughout the year and often bring together people from different nations for social or political reasons.

Gatherings often involve political resolutions or decisions regarding the environment. Other gatherings are based on enjoyment, where competitions are held and there is much laughter. Competitions may include races, challenges of physical strength, or gambling. In times past, lahal, also known as slahal, the bone game, or the stick game, was widely used for gambling. Even today, lahal is almost universal among First Nations cultures, and is used for gambling and for fun.

Many gatherings are associated with food

Women's hands create the finest of weaving and fabrics.



■ If we respect it, the salmon returns year after year.

harvesting. For instance, different Okanagan groups gather each year at key salmon fishing sites. These gatherings can last throughout the spawning season.

Other gatherings have trade as their primary focus. Every year St'at'imc, Tsilhqot'in, and Okanagan people journey long distances to Secwepemc territory where they harvest resources together.

The concept of family that is central to First Nations people extends beyond the nuclear family and, in many cases, transcends nations. A family is composed of sons, daughters, mother, father, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, all the people who live in your house and all the people who are in your clan, in your nation, and in other nations. There is a sense of responsibility to everyone in the community and towards allied communities. When people from different villages come together it is a time to reconnect with loved ones. People also interact culturally with their trading partners, exchanging songs, knowledge, expertise, recipes, and stories. Trading relationships can be strengthened through marriage, and gatherings

provide an opportunity to determine potential matches.

First Nations people believe in the individual's right and responsibility to make his or her own choices according to what will allow each person to function as a human being within society. Direction may be given but answers come from inside, not from someone on the outside. Knowledge is gained by example. In this way, protocols exist to ensure that people meet together in an acceptable and positive manner.



■ The copper is a symbol of wealth and power.

Chief Walter Wright of Kitselas

Excitement swept the men who stood on the shore.

Was all well, or was this a ruse?

But from the canoes came the assurance. "It is well. We come as friends. As friends we wish to stay and be your guests."

Dressed in his Cape of Ceremony, shaking his rattles, dancing his greeting, Loot-Quitzy-Ampty-Wich – Lightning – Head Chief of the Eagle Totem, came to meet his guests.

And here, as his honoured friends, the Kitselas and Tsimseans stayed for ten days.

Feasts, ceremonies, and dancing filled the days as the Eagles and the Crows lavished entertainment on their guests.

As the days sped a great friendship sprang up between the Eagle Chief and Neas Hiwas.³

Chief Wright illustrates how important protocol is in meeting guests and entertaining them. Because the proper protocols are followed, "great friendship sprang up" between nations.

Conflict Resolution

While trade is important, conflict is an inevitable part of life. In First Nations communities, each nation has its own way of dealing with conflict. The following is a common practice among the Tahltan.⁴

During parts of the year many people may live in the same dwelling, requiring them to find ways to get along and deal in healthy ways with disagreements so as to live in harmony with others. It is very disrespectful to disagree with someone else's point of view. To disagree is to tell them your view is better, devaluing the other person.

When there is potential for confrontation, people try to be passive in outward actions and inward feelings. They do not respond in anger. If they respond

in anger they are not being respectful to themselves or to others. To show anger is to show immaturity. The ability to be calm and not get angry is an important quality in many First Nations communities. Elders go to great lengths to teach youth not to respond in anger because it is believed that when one is angry one will hurt the spirit of another being.

Should someone say something disrespectful, the person who receives the disrespectful comments cannot respond. If he responds, he is being more disrespectful than the person who made the comment and is carrying on a second disrespectful action. If an Elder or someone else is present, it is their responsibility to politely stop the rude behaviour. If no one is present to stop the speaker, the person must politely listen, without commenting in a negative manner. The person may pray to the Creator for guidance on how to help heal the anger being displayed towards him, and it becomes his responsibility to establish harmony between them.

If one person is upset with the conduct of another, that person may talk about the second person to a third person. His "talking about" has clearly defined boundaries. The person doing the talking must do so in a culturally appropriate way. For example, if a man is upset about the conduct of a younger man, the older man may talk to friends about the young man's conduct, taking care that the discussion is not malicious or negative. The intent is to send a message to the young man that his behaviour is unacceptable and he needs to change to fit in with the expectations of the community. A good friend of the young man will relay the message to him and it now becomes his responsibility to respond appropriately.

If the advice is not taken, then one or more Elders from the community may visit and tell him stories, not directly telling him he is doing something wrong. They will tell him stories about similar cases and what the consequences were. It then becomes the young man's responsibility to listen to the stories and deduce the lesson to be learned. If the young man listens and

changes, then harmony has been established.

Should the young man not listen, the Elders need to make a decision. If the actions of the young man are not going to hurt the village they will let him learn from his experiences. If the young man's actions will cause harm, then the Elders have a range of options from which to choose. They could ostracize the young man so that no one is allowed to speak his name. When he is encountered in the village people will look the other way and he will become a non-person. This puts a considerable amount of pressure on him to conform to the expectations of the society in which he lives. If this does not work, he could be banished from the community. He will either starve or have to travel to another community and hope that they will accept him.

Stewardship of the Land

The land is a provider, sustaining life in its many forms; as such, it must be treated with the utmost respect. Many ceremonies, cultural values, and economic activities pay tribute to the land and ensure that people will not jeopardize the availability of the resources for the future. The concept of sustainability was, and continues to be, a characteristic of First Nations cultures. There is a sense that all life is equal. There is a sense of humility and appreciation for a land that is bigger than we are. There is a sense of wonder, humour, and history.

When First Nations people say land, we mean nature: rivers, oceans, mountains, valleys, and all the life that inhabits them. In the First Nations world view, people are integrated with the natural world, not separate from it.

Ruby Dunstan, Nlaka'pamux

In our language there are no words for environment because we have always been taught that it is part of our everyday living. Our everyday



■ The land heals us with its bounty of plants.

teachings from our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents show us how to look after the foods that we depend on and that are part of the environment, and that's also part of spirituality.

First Nations view the environment as a holistic natural phenomenon, where any action has an accompanying reaction. This principle underlies all physical and spiritual matters. Through having an understanding of one's environment, rules and patterns are established for living in a manner that best suits one's needs. This ensures that the bountiful harvest of the land remains intact for future generations, and all life will continue to live in harmony. The values and beliefs that emerge from this perspective guide the behaviour of the community in relation to the surrounding environment and in relation to each other.

Despite cultural differences within various First Nations, there is one principle that unites all people: a respect for the surrounding environment, from the land to the sky with its heavenly bodies, to the waters with their many creatures. Respect, created and maintained by social customs, rules, and beliefs, is prevalent throughout First Nations cultures.

Everything is connected and nothing exists in isolation. Consider, for example, gathering mountain goat wool. For it to be collected at the right time of the year, there must be a thorough understanding of ecosystems. If there isn't, then blankets aren't woven and people are cold. If people are cold, more wood must be cut. If more wood needs to be cut, more tools are needed. To build new tools takes time and resources ... and on it goes.

Knowledge of natural resources involves more than simply understanding a single piece of information. It is necessary to understand the whole and the interrelatedness of the parts. It is necessary to understand that all work is important and to trust that the community will come together for the greater good.



Traditional knowledge teaches the purposes of every plant.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Can you think back to an earlier time in our world? Can you think back far enough to imagine the lushness of the land, uninterrupted by highways and buildings? Can you imagine the silence that was possible? Do you think, that, even for a minute, when Maquinna met Cook, he thought that their values would be so different? Can you understand that First Nations people could not even conceptualize that “giving is wealth” was not a universal concept?

What happened next in our world has taken our people to places that were unexpected and at times unbelievable. The balance of this book will take you from our past into the present. Our history is ancient, abounding, and real. We have complex, dynamic, and evolving cultures that have adapted to changing world events and environments. We face new and varying conditions and circumstances yet retain key values and beliefs within our cultures. Our values and beliefs are diverse, durable, and relevant. They are eloquently expressed in our languages and through our ties to the land.

Carrie J. Reid is mostly Salish and works as a private contractor, primarily in the fields of justice and education. She lives with her son Xwulq'sheynum on lands reserved for Indians in Qualicum Bay.



Spindle whorls, the disks used for spinning wool, carry powerful images.

Relationships to the Land

The history of the First Nations people in British Columbia is as rooted in the land as are the great trees of the forests. Although the First Nations of the province are many and diverse, they have at least one thing in common: they have an enduring relationship with the land, a bond so strong that it defines who they are.

In general, Western society views the ownership of land and resources as an individual right. Property or land ownership is based on the right to purchase land, holding it in what is termed fee simple, that is, owning land that can be sold or passed on to inheritors. In practice, some individuals or corporations own land, while others who are landless pay land owners for the right to live on or use the land. In the traditional First Nations view, ownership of land is interpreted in a very different way. It is the extended family, the group, or the community that holds rights to the land, not individuals. There are no landless people in this system, as every member of the community shares in the rights and responsibilities of using and taking care of the land.

Through more than two hundred years of European contact and colonization, the differences in these two views have caused tension and conflict between First Nations people and colonists from other lands. The forces of colonization have threatened the integrated relationship the First Nations have with the land. The First Nations of British Columbia have seen their people marginalized and discriminated against;

they have seen oppressive laws attempt to assimilate them; and they have seen their land taken away from them without battle or treaty. Together they have worked to have their title to the land recognized and the loss of the lands compensated for.

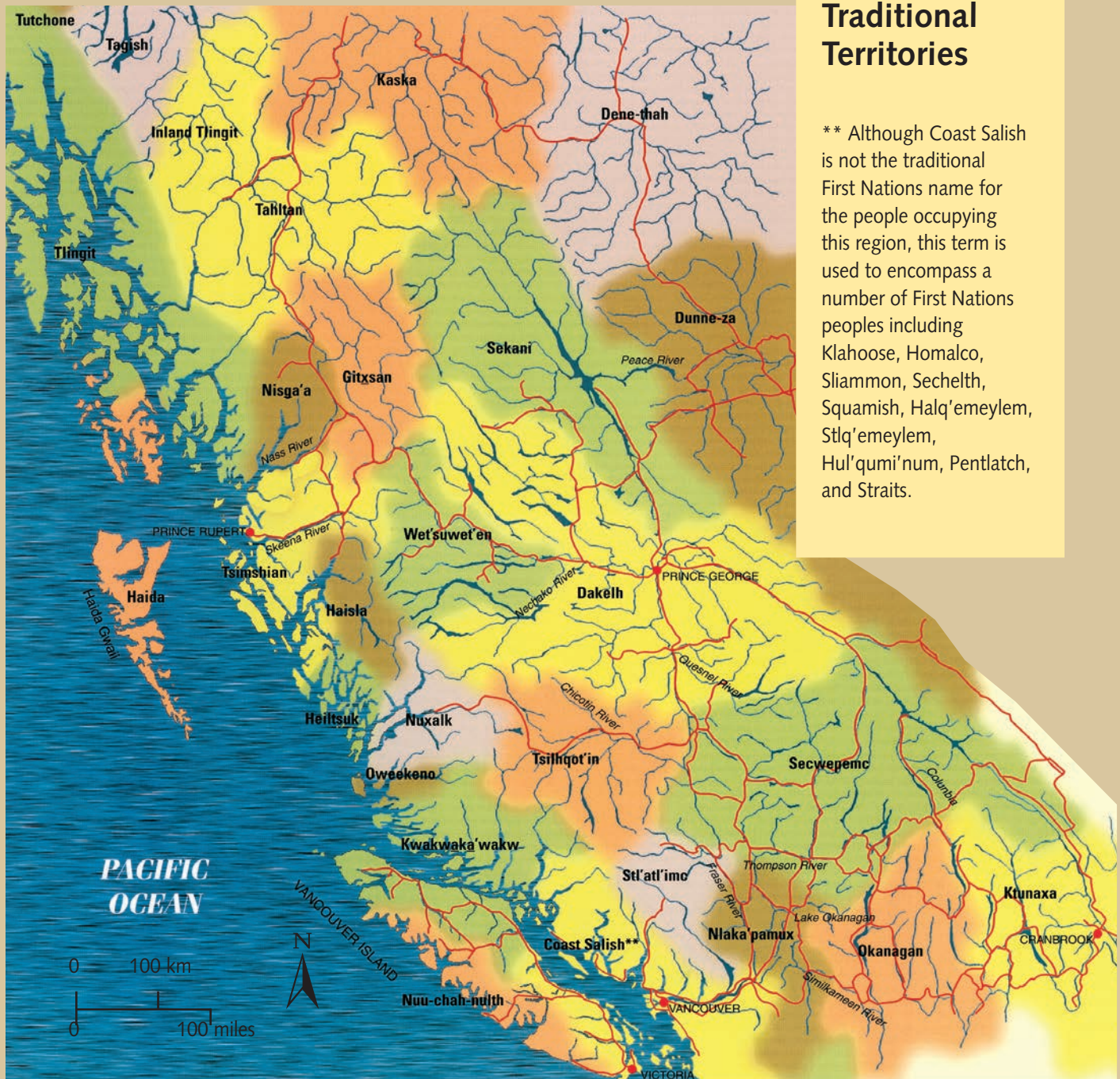
Today there are more than two hundred First Nations bands in British Columbia. The continuity of their relationship with their traditional territories has not been broken, despite the pressures put on them. Their oral traditions—the important narratives passed on from generation to generation—reinforce and remind First Nations people of their connection with the land. Today, this connection is still strong, and all across the province, First Nations people return to the land to harvest the same resources as did their ancestors. Of course, some of these resources no longer exist or have been depleted, some of the technologies of production have changed, and now people may travel by speedboat or skidoo to reach their territories. What have not changed are the ties to the land expressed in the oral tradition and verified by modern experiences.

First Nation

A community of Aboriginal people who identify themselves as a distinct cultural group and who are the descendants of the original inhabitants of the land that is now known as British Columbia. Each First Nation has a name for itself, such as the Stó:lō Nation.

Traditional Territories

** Although Coast Salish is not the traditional First Nations name for the people occupying this region, this term is used to encompass a number of First Nations peoples including Klahoose, Homalco, Sliammon, Sechelth, Squamish, Halq'emeyem, Stlq'emeyem, Hul'qumi'num, Pentlatch, and Straits.



This map shows the traditional territories of the First Nations of British Columbia. The boundaries between the territories are not distinct, indicating that the territories overlap.¹

The Land

In the First Nations world view, people are integrated with the natural world, not separate from it. The land has great variety, and so the people are very diverse, for the land has shaped the people. It determines where and how they live.

In this chapter you will learn about the different regions of the province: the coast, the southern interior, the northeast, and the northern interior. You will discover how many types of geography have shaped the societies of many different First Nations. You will see that they have all adapted to the land in diverse ways, yet they all hold one thing in common: the land defines who they are as a people.

The Shape of the Land

The place which today we call British Columbia is a land of many different climates and habitats, but there is one constant: this is a province of mountains. The land is dominated by a series of mountain chains running roughly north-south, from the Coast Mountains in the west to the Rocky Mountains in the east. Between the mountain ranges lie valleys and plateau regions such as the Cariboo, the Okanagan Valley, and the Rocky Mountain trench. On the coast, the would-be valleys are flooded by the sea, forming islands and fjords.

If British Columbia is a place of mountains, it is also a place of water—of rivers, lakes, channels, and

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Chief James Wallas, Kwakwaka'wakw

The Transformer started off again down the coast and had not gone far when he met a man standing all alone on a beach. He asked the man, "What do you want to do with your life? What do you want to be?"

"I want to be something to help my people," answered the man.

"Then how would you like to be a big cedar tree? Your people could weave mats and clothing from your bark and use your wood for their lodges."

"No, I don't want to just stand there. I want to help my people in another way."

"Would you like to be a big boulder?" asked the Transformer.

"No! That's worse than a tree and doesn't help my people much."

"How would you like to be a big salmon in the bay that your tribe could catch and eat?"

"No, I do not wish to be a salmon."

"How about a river? Then the salmon would swim up the river and your people could catch them easily and live on them."

"Yes, that would be fine," said the man. "I would like to be a big river." The man suddenly found himself falling backwards. The Transformer had put his hand on the man's forehead and given him a little push. When he hit the ground he became a mighty river—the Nimpkish.

The people were really happy then, because every summer lots of fish came up the river to spawn—Sockeye, Coho, Spring—all the best salmon. Later on there was a large camp located at that spot. ¹



■ Columbia Lake, north of Cranbrook, is in Ktunaxa (Kootenay) territory in southeastern B.C.

a wide array of food sources, from large sea mammals to small molluscs. Rivers and lakes, too, offer a variety of foods, including fish.

This land and its resources shape the lives of the people who have lived here for thousands of years. The mountains create barriers for people, but they also act as landmarks and natural boundaries. Their peaks and ranges enclose many river systems, both large and small, and these watersheds are a logical way of defining territories. The territories of many First Nations of B.C. are based on the boundaries formed by watersheds.

For thousands of years, First Nations people have inhabited the valleys, plateaus, and coastline of this mountainous land, and they have adapted to the variations in climate, topography, and resources in different ways, resulting in a wide variety of societies. Separate First Nations languages are spoken by

distinct groups. Of the sixty First Nations languages in Canada, half are found in British Columbia.

Each First Nation developed a unique relationship with the territory it inhabited. To a large degree, this relationship dictated the social organization and governance system. Generally speaking, interior people

inlets. These waterways, formed by the mountains, define the land and its people. A large part of B.C. is drained by four major river systems: the Fraser, Skeena, Columbia, and Peace. These rivers and their valleys provide living space, transportation routes, and habitat for fish.

Many of the abundant resources found in the province come from the mountains, including forests, food plants, minerals, game, and fur-bearing animals. The waters are equally rich, especially with fish like the Pacific salmon and oolichan. The ocean provides

Watershed

All the land drained by a particular river or lake; a drainage basin.

shared many similar features of social organization, as did the people of the coast. Interior societies generally had flexible governing systems, while those on the coast had much more structured governance.

Interior societies were democratic and usually did not have a class system. Family groups associated together to form an identifiable group, sometimes referred to as a band. Their own name for this group usually referred to some feature of their territory. For instance, the Secwepemc people living near Skola'ten (Williams Lake) were the “People of Skola'ten.”

Interior groups had a head chief as leader, but usually he acted more as a father or advisor than a powerful ruler. He consulted with the Elders whenever important decisions were made. For some First Nations of the interior, this position was hereditary, usually determined patrilineally; for others, the leader was elected according to his abilities and held a temporary position.

The head chief was not the leader in all activities of the group. The person most qualified, or the one who had been specifically trained, was chosen to direct a particular activity. For instance, the best hunter would lead hunting expeditions; the bravest and most skillful warrior would lead warfare; the greatest orator would deliver speeches.

The people of the coast have many different characteristics, but they share some common features which people who study cultures call the Northwest Coast culture. These societies had strict social codes to follow, with a rigid hierarchy whereby chiefs were ranked in importance, and a class system was made up of chiefs, nobles, commoners, and slaves.

Elder

A person whose wisdom about spirituality, culture, and life is recognized. First Nations people and communities seek the advice and assistance of Elders in various areas of traditional as well as contemporary issues. As a sign of respect for First Nations Elders, the term is often capitalized.

Patrilineally

Based on kinship with the father or descent through the male line.

The Regions of B.C.

Many factors influence how people adapt to living in their chosen territories. The latitude, physical geography, climate, and altitude all affect the types of animal and plant resources found in a specific area. They also determine how people will harvest and use these resources. The relationship of the people with their natural world determines where they choose to live and affects how they organize their societies. B.C. can be divided into four broad geographical regions: the coast, the southern interior, the northeast, and the northern interior.

■ Skill, knowledge, and respect are required to harvest cedar bark from the coastal rainforests.





Geographic Regions of B.C.

The Coast

The First Nations people who live on the coast of British Columbia have adapted to a wet, mild climate influenced by the Pacific Ocean. The temperature usually stays above freezing in the winter and below 20° C in the summer. The annual rainfall in some locations is more than 400 cm a year. This results in many cloudy days, and fog often blankets the mountains.

This climate creates ideal conditions for the temperate rain forests which cover the mountain slopes, providing lush vegetation dominated by coniferous trees. The greatest of these trees, the

western red cedar, is considered a special gift from nature by First Nations. Its characteristics make it one of the most useful materials available. Bill Reid, the renowned Haida artist, once wrote about the cedar:

*If mankind in his infancy had prayed for the perfect substance for all material and aesthetic needs, an indulgent God could have provided nothing better.*²

On most of the coast, the mountains rise out of the ocean, creating intricate waterways that form a maze of channels, bays, and inlets. Hundreds of

islands, from tiny rock outcroppings to giant Vancouver Island, provide protection from the ocean winds. As well, thousands of rivers and streams rush down the mountains, flowing into the ocean directly, or combining into major rivers such as the Nass, Skeena, Kitimat, Kitlope, Dean, Bella Coola, Klinaklini, Homathko, and Squamish. These and other rivers empty into the ocean at the heads of long, narrow inlets or fjords. Most of these fjords have steep sides with little shoreline, but the head of the inlet flattens out to a floodplain built up of silt carried by the river. The estuaries formed at the juncture of fjord and river create rich habitats for a great deal of wildlife as well as living space for people.

The southern coast, the region that surrounds Georgia Strait, has a different climate and therefore a unique environment. This area lies in the rain shadow of Vancouver Island, including southeast Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and the Fraser Valley. Generally it has flatter land and a drier climate, and, consequently, different vegetation.

Resources on the Coast

The principal resources on the coast have already been mentioned: from the forest, the cedar, and from the ocean, the salmon and the oolichan. However, there is a great wealth of other resources available in the coastal environment. In the ocean are deep sea fish such as halibut, sole, cod, and red snapper. Herring spawn near the shore in spring, and their roe is considered a delicacy. Along the intertidal zone are shellfish, cockles, clams, mussels, oysters, and abalone. A dark green seaweed growing on exposed rocky shores, known to scientists as porphyra, is another important resource for harvesting. Crab, octopus, and sea cucumber add to the list of foods from the sea.

The thick bushes and shrubs that grow beneath the giant conifers offer a variety of plants, including berries like huckleberry, salal, and salmonberry. A wide range of medicinal plants come from the rainforest,



In the coastal forests, the plentiful cedar was easily split into timbers and planks for buildings, while the bark could be processed in different ways to make strong baskets or soft clothing.

from the licorice fern whose roots are chewed to soothe coughs to the formidable devil's club, which was used to cleanse and purify the body and soul.

The underbrush of the rain forest is an ideal home for fur-bearing mammals and deer. Their meat is a source of food, while their furs, hides, and bones are useful for clothing and tools. Most common are the black bear and the black-tailed deer. Smaller mammals such as river otter, mink, wolverine, and marten also

Oolichan

The oolichan (also spelled eulachon) is a small fish important for its oil. It spends adulthood in the ocean and returns to fresh water to spawn in the early spring. It was the first harvest of the year for the First Nations after the winter supplies had been exhausted.

Intertidal zone

An area which is under water at high tide and exposed at low tide.



■ The Pacific salmon is a key resource in British Columbia. There are five species: sockeye, coho, spring, chum, and pink. The salmon is hatched in the fresh water rivers and streams of the province, makes its way to the ocean where it spends its adult life, then returns to the fresh water to spawn, and complete the cycle.

inhabit the forest.

The region around Georgia Strait offers a drier and warmer climate, so a greater variety of plants and animals live there. One important plant which grows here but not in the rest of the coast region is the camas bulb. This plant is a member of the lily family, and its egg-shaped bulb is an important source of starch.

People of the Coast

The coast has the greatest number of distinct First Nations in Canada. Nine different First Nations live along the north and central coasts and on the west coast of Vancouver Island: Haida, Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Haisla, Xai-Xais (Hai-Hais), Heiltsuk, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuxalk, and Nuuchahnulth. Along Georgia Strait, on Vancouver Island's east coast and



■ Salal, a member of the heather family, is one of the most common shrubs in B.C.'s coastal forests, in places forming a dense ground cover. It has evergreen leathery leaves and pinkish bell-shaped flowers followed by deep blue berries. First Nations people eat the berries fresh, boil them into a syrup, or dry them into cakes.



the opposite mainland, including the Fraser Valley, seventeen different First Nations live. All are members of the Coast Salish language group.

The abundant resources available to the First Nations of the coast and the mild coastal climate resulted in the development of highly structured societies. People had time away from resource gathering to develop complex social and artistic customs.

The First Nations of the coast adapted to their ocean-front environment by organizing in resource-use units, generally composed of extended families. Also known as a house group, each resource-use unit had a number of territories that provided resources throughout the year, including salmon fishing grounds, hunting territories, and berry harvesting grounds. Some groups also had oolichan camps,

Oolichan processing at Fishery Bay, near the mouth of the Nass River. Thousands of people gathered here in February and March to make the valuable oolichan grease. Oolichan was known as the “saviour fish,” because it saved people from starvation. Its rich oil or grease is extremely nutritious and valuable; it is eaten as an accompaniment to many foods, and used as a medicine and preservative.

Resource-use unit

The resource-use unit is the basic group which has stewardship over the resources in a particular territory. First Nations express this in different ways. For some it may be a family grouping; for others it may be a broader social organization such as a house group.

Extended family

The term extended family usually refers to a large family group of several generations who live and work together. Often it will include several siblings and their families living with parents and perhaps grandparents.



■ Salmon fishing on the Fraser River. The fisher sits directly above a pool and spears the salmon with the long three-pronged spear. The technology used to build this platform over the river was sophisticated, especially in times before the advent of European materials and tools. Date and location unknown.

which were usually shared by a number of families. These seasonal territories were usually close together, depending on local conditions. Each group had a hereditary chief who was responsible for his people and the appropriate use of their territories and resources. A number of these groups were aligned together in collectives often referred to in English as “tribes.” They lived together in one large winter village under the leadership of a head or village chief.

Most First Nations on the coast followed similar seasonal patterns, or seasonal rounds, when they moved from location to location as the resources became available. Winters were spent in large villages of as many as thirty cedar longhouses lined up in one or two rows facing the ocean. Feasts, potlatches, and winter ceremonies occupied much of the time spent here.

As spring approached, people moved to various spring resource camps. For many people, this meant congregating in large groups at oolichan processing camps. Many tribes gathered at the mouths of the major oolichan rivers, the Nass, Kemano, Bella Coola, Klinaklini (Knight Inlet), and Fraser. Major trading routes extended from these gathering sites across mountain passes into the interior. As well as oolichan camps, some people went to halibut and seaweed

Seasonal round

Also known as the annual round, this term refers to the pattern of movement from one resource-gathering area to another in a cycle that was followed each year. Spring, summer, and fall saw the people moving to a variety of resource areas while during the harsher winters they gathered in winter villages. The abundance of resources also determined how often people moved. In areas that had a greater abundance and variety, people could stay in one location for longer than in areas where resources were scarcer.

camps or seal camps. By June, the salmon were returning, so people spread out to their individual salmon camps. These were at the mouth of a river or sometimes on a lake. People remained at salmon camps until fall. Eventually the cycle was completed as everyone moved back to the winter villages.

This generalized outline of the seasonal rounds varied depending on the resources a group had within its territories. For instance, whale hunting was central to the Nuu-chah-nulth living along the west coast of Vancouver Island. The importance of this resource resulted in cultural patterns, seasonal rounds, and spiritual practices that were different in many ways from other coastal First Nations.

The ownership of each territory was inherited not by individuals but by the extended family group that formed the resource-use unit. Transferring the inherited territorial rights from one generation to the next was the principal purpose of the potlatch. This all-important public ceremony, which combined dances, songs, crest masks, and great quantities of food and many gifts, was the ultimate expression of the coastal people's relationship with the land.

The Southern Interior

This expansive region covers the southern part of the province, from the eastern slopes of the Coast Mountains to the peaks of the Rocky Mountains. Between these extensive mountain systems is a series of shorter ranges running parallel in a northwest direction, dividing the landscape into a sequence of valleys. Thus are the Okanagan, West Kootenay, and East Kootenay regions formed. A network of rivers and lakes fills the spaces between the mountains. Two great rivers, the Fraser and the Columbia, each have major tributaries such as the Thompson and the Kootenay, which in turn form networks of lakes and tributaries.

The varied landscape creates many different habitats, although most regions have a dry climate with a wide range of seasonal temperatures, making



■ Camas, a member of the lily family, has a blue flower and a sizable bulb that was traditionally a staple food item for First Nations people. Harvested from May to July, the sweet-tasting bulbs were traded as a delicacy.

the southern interior the hottest and driest region of B.C. Much of this region is forested, frequently with dry and open forest made up largely of pine, or in wetter areas, with broadleaf deciduous forests. Dry grasslands prevail in the arid lower altitude basins of the Fraser, Thompson, and Okanagan rivers, where it is too dry for trees to grow. In the southern Okanagan Valley the climate is dry enough to be classified as desert. In contrast, the climate and the vegetation on the western mountain slopes in this region are similar to those on the coast. Of course, the winters are much colder so there is more snow than there is on the coast.

Resources in the Southern Interior

There is a great diversity in plant and animal life throughout the southern interior due to the variability of the topography and climate of particular valleys or highlands. Plants were probably used more for food by the First Nations people of this region than in other

regions of the province. Some groups are believed to have had up to half of their diets provided by vegetable foods. Important plants, in addition to berries, were camas bulbs, “wild potatoes” (“Indian” potatoes, *Claytonia lenceolata* or Western Spring Beauty), and in the southern Okanagan, bitter-root (*Lewisia rediviva*). A variety of other plants were also used, such as tree lichen, which was cooked in pits; mushrooms; the inner bark of trees; and nuts like hazelnuts. Some plant products were important trade items, including bitter-root, camas bulbs, Indian hemp fibre, dried berries, and a local form of tobacco.

Salmon and deer were the major animal resources used by the people of the Southern Interior. All the rivers—even though they are hundreds of kilometres from the Pacific Ocean—have runs of salmon that make their way up the Fraser or Columbia River systems. Deer, elk, and moose supplemented the diet, and also provided materials for clothing.

People of the Southern Interior

Most of the First Nations people who live in the southern interior are speakers of Interior Salish languages. There are four such nations. Two, the Nlaka’pamux (previously known as the Thompson) and the St’at’imc (Lillooet) live in the transitional zone between the coastal region and the interior plateau. This mountainous area, in the rain shadow of the Coast Mountains, surrounds the Fraser Canyon and nearby tributaries. The Secwepemc (Shuswap) territory covers a large district from the Fraser River to the Rocky Mountains. The traditional territory of the fourth group, the Okanagan, occupies the Okanagan valley and extends south into what is now the United States. Previously an Athapaskan-speaking people, the Stuwix, lived in the Nicola Valley. Apparently they moved into the area generations ago, perhaps from the Tsilhqot’in. Today they do not exist as a distinct group, having been absorbed by their neighbours, the Nlaka’pamux and the Okanagan.

The Ktunaxa (Kootenay), who live in the southeast corner of the province, speak a language unrelated to any other language in the world. The traditional territories of the Ktunaxa Nation, like those of the Okanagan, existed long before the border was created between Canada and the United States, and extend into what are now the states of Montana and Idaho. Their territories also extended across the Rocky Mountains, and three or four times a year they travelled to the eastern slopes of the Rockies to hunt buffalo.

Because most plants were only ready to harvest at certain predictable times of the year, and salmon returned at about the same time each year, the First Nations of the southern interior had a well-defined seasonal round for resource gathering.

Spring was the time for gathering the green shoots of plants like balsamroot, fireweed, cow parsnip, and “Indian celery.” By June, Saskatoon berries are ready for picking, and the wild potato can be dug. In the past, this plant was one of the most important sources of carbohydrates. The round fleshy tubers, dug from shallow soil with a digging stick, grow at higher elevations in grassy slopes, but only in moist areas. People would gather in large numbers where the plant was abundant, such as the Potato Mountains near Lytton. Some First Nations people replanted their wild potato meadows to ensure a crop the following year.

By August, the salmon began to appear in the rivers, and families gathered at their various salmon camps to harvest and dry the fish for their winter supplies. Summer lodges were built of a framework of poles covered with tule mats. In the fall, hunting for deer, elk, caribou, bear, mountain goat, and beaver became the main activity.

Most winter villages were built in the lowlands beside major rivers or lakes, where it was somewhat

warmer than in the highlands. The people built unique pit houses, highly adapted to the land and climate.

The Northeast Region

The northeast region of British Columbia, which stretches along the Peace River, is separated from the rest of the province by the Rocky Mountains. Indeed, this area has more in common with Alberta to the east or the Northwest Territories to the north than with the rest of B.C. However, defined as it is today by the natural boundary of the mountains and the human boundaries of provincial borders, it is a unique region composed of three different, overlapping landscapes: the foothills of the Rockies, the muskeg of the north, and the prairies of the east. This region is a rich hunting ground for large mammals such as moose, elk, caribou, and deer.

The northeast region of British Columbia covers two different ecosystems, the Boreal Plains and the Boreal Taiga. The Boreal Plains district is the western tip of a large area of plateaus, plains, and lowlands that extends eastward across northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, and the southern Northwest Territories. It is generally flat, except where large rivers have cut into the earth, forming steep-sided banks. The continental climate creates a wide seasonal temperature range, with summer highs rising to about 20°C and winter lows averaging around -20°C, although record colds have dipped to nearly -50°C. The Peace River lowlands region which takes in the Peace River watershed has a milder climate than the rest of the region, with less snowfall.

The Boreal Taiga lies north of the Boreal Plains. It is made up of expansive muskeg lowlands drained by



Elk meat is one of many animal resources that First Nations people rely on the land to provide.

the Liard River watershed, which eventually joins the Mackenzie River in the Northwest Territories. Here the temperatures are extreme. Cold Arctic air contributes to long, frigid winters. The summer weather is affected by the meeting of Arctic and Pacific air masses, and, while temperatures can get as high as 36°C, there can be unstable weather with a heavy cloud cover.

The rivers that begin in the Rocky Mountains etch

Muskeg

A swamp or bog, consisting of a mixture of water and partially decomposed vegetation, often covered by a layer of sphagnum or other mosses.

their way across the rolling hills and prairie. Three major tributaries of the Peace River—the Omineca, Finlay, and Parsnip rivers—are deep in the mountains, breaking through the Rockies in a narrow pass near present-day Hudson's Hope. The Pine River forms a more southerly passage through the mountains, providing an age-old transportation route for First Nations people. Today a highway and an oil pipeline cross through Pine Pass. Once the Peace River reaches the foothills and plains, it widens out and cuts into the earth. The northern section of the Boreal Taiga is drained by the Liard River.

Resources of the Northeast

The northeast region is laced with rivers and streams which join the Peace or the Liard river, but these are Arctic rivers and salmon do not live in them. The richest resource for people living here is the wealth

of large mammals. This area has the greatest density of moose in the world. Mule deer abound, as do caribou, elk, grizzly, and black bear. Beaver find the perfect habitat in the myriad lakes and streams of the muskeg. On the plains, wood bison once lived, though they no longer do. Many other smaller animals and fish species such as Arctic grayling, trout, whitefish, and northern pike add to the resources of the region.

People of the Northeast

The people who traditionally inhabited this region belong to the Athapaskan language family, which was spoken from Alaska to the southwest United States. Three Athapaskan-speaking groups lived in the northeast region. Farthest north was the southern limit of the E'cho Dene or Slavey people's territories. Their large territories in the Mackenzie River watershed included parts of the Yukon, the Northwest Territories,



■ A northern-style canoe on the Taku River.

and northern Alberta. The Dunne-za (previously known as the Beaver) inhabited the foothills and forests between the Liard and Peace rivers. In the mountainous regions to the south were the Sekani people.

The First Nations people of the northeast traditionally led highly mobile lives. Moose was their principal resource. The Dunne-za also hunted or snared rabbits, beaver, bear, muskrats, and marmots for food and furs. Other large mammals—elk, caribou, and wood buffalo—were hunted when available.

Birds like grouse, ducks, and geese added to the diet, as did fish. While meat made up a large part of their diet, a wide variety of berries such as chokecherries, huckleberries, and saskatoons were harvested, as were some roots.

The Northern Interior

The northern interior covers a large part of British Columbia, and also extends into the Yukon territory. The environment of the northern interior is similar to most of northern Canada, being part of the great Boreal Forest which stretches across the continent as



■ An abundance of fur-bearing animals in the northern interior led the people to develop skills in making clothing from furs. This young woman, photographed around 1897 in Hagwilget Canyon, is weaving lynx strips.

far as Newfoundland. Spruce and fir dominate in an area where the climate is cold and precipitation is low. Because the climate is harsh, there is less diversity of plants here and fewer people live in this region than in the rest of the province.

The land of the northern interior is made up of mountains and plateaus, interspersed with many lakes. Due to the low evaporation rate of water in the cold climate, the soil is often very moist where poorly drained, resulting in large expanses of muskeg or peat bogs.

The central area of this region lies east of the Coast Mountains and stretches from the rolling lands of the Chilcotin and Cariboo Plateaus to the southern two-thirds of the Nechako Plateau. This area has a typical continental climate with cold winters and warm summers. It lies in a rain shadow of the Coast Mountains. Two major river systems, the Fraser and the Skeena, drain this region, providing abundant quantities of Pacific salmon.

North of the central plateaus, the boreal region extends across the province to the Rocky Mountains and north into the Yukon. The plateaus of the southern sections give way to a more mountainous terrain, punctuated with a series of wide valleys and lowlands.

Resources of the Northern Interior

The vast northern interior, with its harsher climate, generally has fewer resources available than the more southern regions. Moose are the most widespread member of the deer family throughout the northern interior. Caribou are common in the northern areas, while mule deer occur in large populations in the southern plateaus. Cougars, black bears, coyotes, and wolves are also common. Many smaller fur-bearing animals are found, including lynx, fisher, muskrat, marten, and mink. Beaver thrive in the many ponds and lakes of the region and porcupines abound.

People of the Northern Interior

Most of the First Nations in the northern interior belong to the very large Athapaskan language family. In the Yukon Territory, seven languages from the Athapaskan family are spoken: Gwich'in, Han, Kaska, Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Tagish, and Upper Tanana. Inland Tlingit is spoken in northwestern British Columbia and southern Yukon. Tlingit, also spoken in this area, is very distantly related to the Athapaskan language family.

The Athapaskan-speaking people living in most of the northern interior are known as Yinka Dene, which literally means "the people on the land." In some dialects, the equivalent term Yinka Whut'en is preferred. The Dakelh people, who live throughout most of the central interior, are also known in English as the Carrier.

The Tahltan people live in the Stikine watershed. East of them, on the Upper Skeena River, are the Gitksan, who occupy lands that are transitional between the ecosystems of the northern interior and the coast. Their language and culture are closely related to the Tsimshian and Nisga'a. Their neighbours to the southeast are the Wet'suwet'en, who are related to the Dakelh people, but have also adapted many aspects of the Northwest Coast culture of the Gitksan.

In most of the northern interior, people adapted to the harsh climate and more limited resources by developing a very flexible society. The basic social unit was the extended family, which moved about during the year according to the season and the availability of game. Theirs was a mobile society, ready to hunt, fish, and trap to gather resources as they travelled throughout a large territory.

Dakelh society, whose territories extend across the central province from the Bulkley River to the Rocky Mountains, was more structured than some others of the northern interior. Its clan and potlatch system regulated Dakelh resource territories called *keyoh*.

CASE STUDY

How the Kwakwaka'wakw Adapted to their Environment

The Kwakwaka'wakw of northern Vancouver Island and the nearby mainland coast live in a rugged landscape of islands and channels, mountains and inlets. The climate here, like on the rest of the coast, is mild and wet. By looking at the way the Kwakwaka'wakw settled and used their territories, we can see how they adapted to their environment.

Kwakwaka'wakw people in the past did not need to travel great distances to obtain most of the food and materials they required. The mountains made it difficult to travel by land, so cedar canoes were the mainstay of life on the coast.

A wealth of resources from the land and the sea was concentrated in their territories. This region had beaches where shellfish, crab, seaweed, and other intertidal resources thrived. Seals, sea lions, and deep-water fish abounded in the ocean. Along the shore a wide range of trees, bushes, and plants offered wood, berries, shoots, and roots.

More than any other resource, however, salmon were the principal resource for the Kwakwaka'wakw people. Salmon runs in this region were prodigious. Half a million salmon spawned on Gilford Island alone. The Nimpkish River had runs of over a million sockeye and 300,000 coho. In most years people could harvest more than they required for basic subsistence. They stored food for over the winter and still had a surplus to trade. The readily available supply of resources was able to support a relatively high population. As well, it gave the Kwakwaka'wakw, like other First

Nations of the coast, the precious commodity of time, which gave rise to highly-evolved technologies and complex social structures.

Kwakwaka'wakw people living before Europeans arrived had strict laws to follow. First there were the laws of nature, which dictated the way they interacted with their land. Most of the resources became available at specific times of the year, so the Kwakwaka'wakw people adapted their lifestyle by moving to different sites depending on the season. Their settlement patterns included a variety of resource gathering sites which they returned to year after year.

The other set of laws was their social organization, which developed as an efficient way to manage the resources. Before European contact there were thirty tribes in the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation. Each tribe was made up of a number of resource groups called numaym, meaning "one kind." The numaym is the central unit of Kwakwaka'wakw society, each with its own resource camps and hunting territories within the tribal territory. As well, each numaym has hereditary rights to its own crests and its own narratives, songs, and dances, which are performed at potlatches.

The organizational structure of the numaym allowed the resources to be harvested in an efficient manner. Tribal territories were divided into individual areas for each numaym. Most of the sites were concentrated within a relatively small range. For example, the Mamalilikulla tribe has traditional

territories at the mouth of Knight Inlet, including a number of small islands, sections of larger islands such as Turnour and Gilford, and the northern shore of Knight Inlet. From east to west this is a distance of about 70 kilometres. Within this territory were a variety of resource sites: halibut fishing grounds, salmon rivers, berry grounds, clam beds, and hunting and trapping areas. The Mamalilikulla tribe was made up of eight different numaym.

The Kwakwaka'wakw seasonal round had three major periods. First was the winter ceremonial season. About the end of November, members of a tribe's numaym gathered together in the tribal winter village. For the Mamalilikulla, this was on Village Island. Great cedar longhouses with painted house fronts and totems standing before them displayed the crests of the chiefs of each numaym. Each numaym had its own property within the village. At the centre stood the largest house, which belonged to the head chief of the tribe. These massive buildings provided both living space and the arena where potlatches were held. As well as participating in potlatches, people spent part of the winter months creating the many items that were needed both for the coming year's resource gathering and for potlatches. This was the time for weaving cedar mats or crafting bentwood boxes. Canoes could be finished and totem poles or masks carved.

Spring arrived, bringing the second period of the seasonal cycle. Most Kwakwaka'wakw people moved to



■ The distinctive house frame of the Kwakwaka'wakw people at Mamalilikulla.

oolichan fishing camps at the head of Kingcome Inlet or Knight Inlet. The Mamalilikulla travelled up Knight Inlet along with members of eight other tribes. They all lived in close quarters along the river banks where they trapped or dip-netted the tiny rich fish. Although the Klinaklini River is in the territory of one tribe, the Tenaktak, it was shared during oolichan season by the others.

People spent the greater part of the

year at their individual camps to catch and process salmon. From spring until late fall, the salmon dictated where the people lived. Usually this was at the mouth of a salmon river, where salmon could be trapped in intertidal stone traps or in wooden traps placed across the river. Other activities accompanied this major occupation. Food such as berries and roots could be gathered from areas near the salmon camps as they ripened. Fall activities included hunting and trapping. Much trapping was done along the shore and river banks, while hunting more often took men to the mountains for deer and mountain goat. You can see how the environment

shaped the lives of the Kwakwaka'wakw. The abundance of salmon and cedar supported a large population. The coastal geography dictated a canoe-based society, allowing people to be highly mobile on the water. The seasonal availability of foods meant people travelled to different sites throughout the year. To efficiently manage the resources, a highly structured political system developed, with the potlatch at its core. This system, hand in hand with the extra time allowed by the abundance of resources, created an artistic tradition that today is one of the most highly regarded in the world.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The great diversity in the geography of what we know today as British Columbia led to an equally great diversity of First Nations societies, each with a unique identity and relationship to the land. The province can be divided into four regions according to the topography, climate, and vegetation: coast, southern interior, northern interior, and northeast. The coast, with its mild climate, is characterized by many inlets and passages bounded by steep mountains and valleys blanketed with lush temperate rain forest. The southern interior, the hottest region in the province, is built from a series of parallel mountain ranges, lakes, and plateaus laced with a network of interconnecting rivers which eventually form the Fraser and the Columbia rivers. The northern interior, the largest region, has a sub-Arctic climate with broad expanses of boreal forest clothing its plateaus and mountains.

The northeast is the only region of the province east of the Continental Divide, meaning its rivers, including the Peace River, drain into the Arctic Ocean. The resources of these regions vary, but in all except the northeast, the Pacific salmon is a key resource. Large game animals such as deer, moose, and elk were also vital to the survival of most First Nations, especially in the northern interior and northeast, where moose abounded. People adapted their settlement patterns and the structure of their societies according to the places they lived. Coastal nations, who primarily depended on the salmon resource, developed highly structured political and social systems, while those of the interior, whose principal resource was the moose or deer, generally had more flexible and egalitarian societies.

Living on the Land

Although varied living environments created different settlement and life-style patterns, there are some aspects of traditional culture that are shared by all First Nations. Every group has a rich oral history which explains the origins of the people and their spiritual relationship to the land, which includes the responsibility of stewardship of the resources. Governing systems developed which ensured the stewardship was maintained from generation to generation.

First Nations people respect and co-exist with nature. The resources from the land and the sea which they use are more than just food or materials; they are viewed as gifts from the natural or supernatural realms. As a result, if you travel to any First Nations community, you are likely to find Elders who still do as their ancestors did, thanking the animals or plants for sharing their gifts with people. This is a different world view from that typical in western European cultures.

This chapter will examine how First Nations people harvested resources, the technologies they developed for preserving and using the resources, and how resource management was conducted.

Harvesting Resources

With such a diversity of people using an abundance of different resources throughout British Columbia, a wide variety of technologies were developed and used for harvesting and processing the resources. The rich and varied material cultures of the First Nations of B.C. show the high degree of skill the people had to effectively use the natural resources at hand.



■ The bark of red cedar is used for weaving baskets. Here, Gwen Point of the Stó:lō Nation is collecting bark.

Stewardship

Stewardship is the care and management of the local resources. It implies a responsibility to respect and protect the resources in return for using them.

Material culture

Material culture refers to objects that are made and used by a group of people. As a field of study, it includes the techniques for making objects, how they were used, and how they connected with the daily lives and beliefs of the people.

Gathering Plants

Plants were an important raw material for many aspects of First Nations' daily, ceremonial, and spiritual life. Hundreds of different plants provided food, as well as materials for medicine, tools, dyes, containers of all sorts, fuel, and fibre.

Most plants could be easily harvested by hand or with simple tools. Berries were picked and placed in woven baskets. Digging sticks were made to collect root vegetables and trees were felled by chopping with adzes or controlled burning around the base. In some areas, plants were tended to ensure a better crop; for example, on southern Vancouver Island, where camas fields were maintained by controlled burning.

Sometimes materials were harvested from living trees. One cedar plank might be split off a standing tree. Barks were gathered in the spring when the sap was running, making it easier to separate bark from wood. Cedar bark was pulled off in long, narrow, vertical strips, and in the interior, the bark of trees such as birch and pine was cut off in sheets. Long roots were dug and pulled from the ground.

Harvesting certain plants was often a group activity, especially when they had to be picked in the

short period when they were ripe, or were collected in large quantities.

The harvesting of plants usually involved a spiritual element. Many groups celebrated a First Fruit ceremony in which the first berry of the year was welcomed and thanked in a ritual. Whenever they took a resource, First Nations people thanked the plant for giving of its bounty. Today many First Nations people continue this practice when they gather plant materials.

Fishing Techniques

Many skills were required to catch and preserve a good supply of salmon, whether they were caught in the ocean, at a river's mouth, or in the fast-moving waters of a river canyon far inland. Usually catching the fish was a cooperative effort involving a family group operating a fish trap. People needed to have an intimate understanding of the ways of the water, to be able to read the tides and winds on the ocean, or the currents and eddies on the river so they could successfully harvest the salmon.

Some salmon were caught in the open ocean using trolling hooks or nets, but most were caught in the tidal waters near the shore. Beach seines were large nets set out parallel to the shore from a canoe. When enough fish had congregated between the net and the shore, men on the beach hauled in the net, pulling the fish onto the shore, where they could be gathered. In Coast Salish territory, off the shores of southern Vancouver Island, a reef net was suspended between two canoes with stone anchors holding it in place on the ocean bottom. At the right moment it was hauled up to the surface and the trapped fish were removed.

At river mouths and estuaries, where salmon wait before heading upstream, people used the tide to their advantage by building stone traps. At high tide, the

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Dave Elliot, Saanich

My people never killed a tree unnecessarily. Once in a while the need was so great they would cut a tree. When this had to happen they would speak to the tree. It had a sacred name. Every living thing had a sacred name—streams, lakes, trees, flowers, birds, everything. When your need was great you had no choice. You would stand before the tree and talk to it and tell the tree how sorry you were to take its life. When we took the life of a tree, we used every scrap, every shred right down to the last bit. We used it all. It was wrong to waste something that had been provided for us by this intelligence we didn't quite understand.¹

Adze

A tool for cutting away the surface of wood, like an axe with an arched blade at right angles to the handle.



■ Fish traps from the Hazelton area, showing a sophisticated technology, were lowered into rushing water to catch salmon.

salmon could swim over the circular stone walls, but as the tide went out, they were stranded and could be gathered by hand. The tidal flats or rocky shores at the mouths of most salmon rivers along the coast had such stone traps, and the remains of some of them are still visible today.

Different techniques were used once the salmon entered the rivers. Groups worked together to build and use weirs, fence-like structures which allowed water to flow through but blocked salmon on their

relentless journey upstream. Weirs could be built across a small river to stop the salmon, which could then be gathered by spears or dip nets.

More elaborate structures could guide the fish into traps. Basket traps were large, circular traps placed in the water that funnelled the salmon into the tapered end. More solitary methods using dip nets and spears were often used in faster water. Platforms and stages were built out over the river on rocky promontories. Still in use today,

these are usually built in precarious spots where it would be too dangerous simply to fish from the shore. Gill nets, which catch the gills of fish in the mesh of the net as they attempt to swim through, also remain in use today at age-old fishing sites on rivers. Another

■ This fishing weir on the Cowichan River on Vancouver Island was photographed about 1867. First Nations fishers tailored their weirs for specific locations.



method involved fishing at night from canoes using torch lights to attract the fish. One person held a burning torch over the water, while another speared the salmon or trout.

Many technologies were used for catching other varieties of fish. Oolichan arrived in rivers in such large quantities that they could be caught in long, funnel-shaped nets, in dip nets, or with rakes. These rakes were also used for herring. Halibut, which live on the ocean bottom, were caught with highly specialized hooks which were anchored in groups near the ocean floor. Two different styles of halibut hook were developed. On the south and central coasts, they were made of one piece of hard wood, usually yew bent with steam to form a U shape. On the north coast, two pieces of wood were lashed together to form a V shape. One of these pieces had an elaborate carving.

Freshwater fish were caught with similar methods to those used in the salmon fishery: hooks, spears, and gill nets. Ice fishing was common in the interior during winter, when fine fishing lines of sinew were dropped through a hole in the ice with a baited stone or bone hook attached. When a fish was caught it was hauled through the hole, or if it was large, speared first. The largest fish in B.C.'s rivers, the sturgeon, grows up to six metres in length and can weigh as much as 600 kg. Sturgeon were usually fished from canoes.



■ A collection of halibut hooks. Those from the north coast are more elaborate.

Sometimes they were speared with large, double-headed harpoons and sometimes trapped in a large trawl net.

Hunting

Moose, caribou and deer were the primary sources of meat for many interior people. Hunters required highly developed tracking skills, as well as an intimate knowledge of the vast territories where the animals travelled. They needed to understand animal behaviour so they could attract the animals using sounds that mimic those made by the deer or moose.

Sometimes individuals hunted these animals using bows and arrows, but more often, people worked together to hunt whole herds of caribou or deer. Some groups worked in hunting teams, where a line of men would close ranks and encircle the deer, allowing the best archers to shoot them. Some groups used fences or corrals. Fences were built along travel routes in the mountains, while corrals were built at small lakes, either in the water or on the shore where the deer would come out of the lake.

Deadfalls were used to trap other mammals, from large game like bears to mink and otter. These are traps which drop a heavy log when triggered by animals entering them. Some people dug pits along the animals' paths, covering the holes with light vegetation. The unsuspecting animal would break through the covering and be trapped in the pit.

Preserving and Using Resources

First Nations people developed highly efficient and sometimes quite sophisticated technologies to process the resources they harvested. Much of their labour was spent preparing stores of food for the winter. Many of the tasks requiring time to create a product, such as weaving a basket, making clothing or carving a mask, were done in the long winter months.



Hagwilget
Village was strategically located near Hagwilget Canyon on the Bulkley River. An abundance of salmon was harvested with nets and traps and preserved in these smokehouses. By the time this photograph was taken, the people had moved their dwelling to land above the canyon. The original longhouses had fallen or been adapted, but four totem poles remained.

Preserving Food

In the past, the most common way used to preserve the large stock of food needed to last through the winter was drying. Sometimes meat was dried by wind or sun, and sometimes by the heat and smoke from fires. The meat, whether it was from salmon, deer, or other animals, had to be expertly cleaned and prepared for drying.

Usually some kind of structure was built to dry or smoke the meat. In the Fraser Canyon, you can still see dozens of open air racks along the shores where salmon are hung to let the dry, hot summer winds remove the moisture. In most First Nations communities throughout the province you will find smokehouses, small structures used generation after generation to hang salmon or meat over a fire. From community to community methods of cutting and drying differ, with a variety of finished products. Sometimes salmon is dried completely, resulting in a light, nutritious food that is easy to store and to pack when travelling. At other times, it may be half-dried, letting the smoke do most of the curing.

People on the coast stored food in bentwood boxes beneath the raised floors around the sides of their longhouses. In the interior, where people were more mobile, raised caches were built. These were small storehouses built high above the ground so that animals could not invade them. In other interior villages, where people lived in pit houses for the winter, dried salmon, deer, and other foods were kept in underground pits.

Hides

The hides of animals such as deer, moose, and elk were valuable for clothing and footwear and were also used to make shelters such as tipis. Sometimes the raw hide was used, such as for making cord and drums, but frequently the skins needed to be tanned. Tanning was a complex technology, requiring a great deal of skill and knowledge. First, it was essential to skin the animal and scrape the hair and fat off without making any cuts or tears, and secondly, knowledge of the chemical process of tanning, as well as the critical timing of all the steps was necessary. A common



■ A dog team pulling a toboggan made from hide.

tanning solution was made from the brains of the deer or moose, which were boiled with bones and marrow. Part of the processing of hides could also include hanging them over smouldering fires to smoke them.

■ A collection of coiled baskets, photographed near the Fraser River, probably in St'at'imc territory, about 1902. Most of these baskets are in the Lillooet style. They are made from a root, usually cedar or spruce, which is coiled, first to form the bottom, then the sides. As each layer is built up, the root is wrapped with bark or grass, concealing the root. Designs are created with a technique called imbrication, in which dyed bark or grass is incorporated into the wrapping process. Typically, Lillooet style baskets have the major design on the top section of the basket.



Making Textiles and Baskets

Plant fibres were woven into clothing, mats, and baskets, and used in twine and rope. Women usually had the role of gathering and processing the necessary plants. They had specialized knowledge of where and how to gather the plant materials, and the skills to process them and create a finished product.

For example, making traps or nets for fishing took considerable time—sometimes as much as a whole winter—as well as resources. On the coast, the most common plant used to make nets was the stinging nettle; in the interior it was “Indian hemp” (*Apocynum cannabinum*). The strong fibres were removed from the stems of these plants and twisted into twine.

Other products made from plants required similarly sophisticated technology. Baskets woven from cedar bark, spruce roots, reeds or grasses came in many different styles depending on their purpose. Some were made watertight for carrying liquids, usually by weaving them very tightly, or sometimes by applying a sealant such as resin. Others were loosely woven to allow water to drain

■ A Haida woman making a spruce root hat, using techniques that are still practised today. In her lower lip she is wearing a decorative ornament known as a labret, a sign of prestige among many Northwest Coast First Nations.

out. Throughout much of the province, birch bark baskets were common. The waterproof and rot-resistant bark was sewn with spruce roots to form watertight containers.

Weaving and basket-making were developed into complex and highly sought-after arts, almost always carried out by women. As well as making utilitarian objects, women created fine textiles from both plants and animal hair spun into thread. These were most often made into robes that signified great power and social status, or had spiritual significance.

The expertise of Coast Salish women in creating valuable textiles was highly regarded. They raised a breed of dog especially for its soft hair, which was spun using a spindle whorl, a unique tool which helped the spinning process. The thread was woven using a special type of loom with free-floating roller bars.

Mountain goat wool was also widely used in weaving blankets. Because it was relatively rare and difficult to obtain, it was reserved for ceremonial robes of high-ranking people. On the northern coast, two types of ceremonial robes known as the Raven's tail blanket and the Chilkat blanket were created using complex weaving processes. The Coast Salish wove their own style of blanket from mountain goat hair.



Making Tools and Household Goods

Winter offered an opportunity to replenish the tools that would be needed for the coming year. Usually everybody knew how to make the tools they would require, and men and women were responsible for making the implements they used. In some cases experts might be called upon to make very sophisticated items.

Nothing was wasted: people made use of practically every part of the resources they harvested. For example, when a moose was killed, those parts that were not used for food could be used in other ways. The skin, of course, was tanned for many uses. The antlers were used as moose calls, imitating the sound of a moose rubbing its antlers against the trunk of a tree. They were also shaped to make knives and scrapers. Other bones were fashioned into tools such as awls and needles. Sinew from the muscles made a tough thread, while the stomach was cleaned and used as a bag.

A hunter's most important equipment was his bow and arrows, and the skill with which he could make

them determined, to a degree, the success of the hunt. Bows were made from a strong supple hardwood such as yew or maple, while the string might be made from sinew or the fibre from Indian hemp. The construction of arrows varied according to their purpose. One type might simply have the shaft sharpened to a fine point for small prey like birds, while others had large detachable stone points for killing large game.

Great expertise was required in using the materials. For instance, it isn't a simple matter to shape a stone into a projectile such as a spearhead or sculpted form like an anchor. To make a sharp projectile, you must understand the structure of the stone and know how shards will flake off when you strike it a certain way. To sculpt the stone, you must have the knowledge and the patience to grind, pierce, and smooth the material, creating a tool of great utility as well as beauty.

Woodworking, too, required great skill, and often men specialized in building large items such as canoes. One of the most useful household items made on the coast, but also traded into the interior, was the cedar bentwood box (sometimes known as a kerfed box). Highly sophisticated techniques enabled the woodworker to make the sides of a box out of one piece of wood, using steam to bend the wood after the corners had been carefully notched

■ A pit house located in the territory of the Nadleh Whut'en, about 130 km west of Prince George. These large houses, usually circular but sometimes rectangular, were excavated out of the deep soil, covered with a sloping roof of timbers and grass, bark, or pine boughs and topped off with a thick layer of earth.

or kerfed. The bent wood was joined with pegs or lashing and a tight-fitting lid and bottom were added to make a tightly sealed container. These boxes were made in many sizes and used to store any manner of goods, from foods such as dried salmon and oolichan grease, to fishing gear, to chiefs' ceremonial objects. They were also used for seating.

Creating Shelter

Most First Nations used different architecture for summer shelter than they did for winter. Many houses were light and portable, as people moved to different resource sites in the summer. In some areas, such as the northeast, tipis were the principal type of shelter, as they were on the Prairies. These tall conical tents covered with moose or caribou hides were light and easily transported.

The people of the southern interior developed a unique winter home that is usually called a pit house





A frame of poles covered with woven mats was a common form of summer housing in the interior, as it allowed for easy movement.

grooves. The Coast Salish houses used planks set horizontally. This construction made it possible to add extensions, and some Coast Salish houses truly were long, reaching lengths of 450 metres. The planks of the longhouse could be removed and transported by canoe to be used in the buildings at seasonal camps.

The longhouse was an important cultural entity. It was a part of the Northwest Coast social organization, and longhouses were named and decorated with crests. As well as providing daily living space, they were

used for all the important events such as potlatches.

Transportation

Throughout the interior, people usually walked as their main mode of transportation, until the arrival of the horse in the early 1700s. They developed extensive and well-maintained networks of trails. Where trails needed to cross rivers, people built bridges, usually simple log structures. However, the Gitksan developed a unique technology for constructing cantilevered bridges over deep river canyons. During the winter, people used snowshoes to travel between villages or to work their traplines.

Cantilevered

A cantilevered bridge is built with beams projecting out from the banks and supported by girders.

because a pit was excavated in the ground to create a living space. They were usually circular with a conical roof built of beams and posts. People entered through the central smokehole, which held a ladder made from a log. As many as thirty people lived in these structures over the winter. The earth acted as insulation, and the houses were comfortable and easy to heat.

Coastal people constructed a different type of house that suited their climate and social organization. They used the readily available cedar trees to construct large plank houses known as longhouses or big houses. Distinct architectural styles were used in different regions of the coast. Haida houses had six beams which projected out from the roof, while most other types used two roofbeams. In the north, the cedar planks forming the wall were placed vertically in



■ This suspension bridge built by the Hagwilget people across the Bulkley River near their canyon village is a marvel of engineering technology. This, the second bridge here, uses sawn timbers, but the first bridge was built entirely of poles lashed with cedar bark and rope.

On the coast, transportation was mainly by canoe. Cedar was used almost exclusively, except for some small river canoes which might be made of birch or spruce. The cedar canoes, which reached a size of eighteen metres, had a remarkable streamlined design, were able to travel great distances on stormy seas, and could carry a large cargo or as many as twenty passengers. Each one was made from a hollowed-out tree that was steamed to stretch the gunwales to a broader shape.

In the interior, where cedar was not so plentiful, birch bark canoes were the most common type. Dugout canoes made from cottonwood, cedar, or ponderosa pine were also used. Skin canoes were most common in the far northern reaches of the province, although they were sometimes used as hunting canoes in

the south. A frame of light wood was covered with the skins of caribou or moose, sewn with sinew, and sealed to make it watertight.

Gunwale

The upper edge of the side of a boat or ship. The name comes from when guns were supported there.



■ Constructing a canoe out of spruce bark. This photo was taken in northeastern B.C. in 1914; it is believed to be in the Nelson River region.

Managing the Resources

First Nations people's traditional way of life integrated social, economic, and spiritual elements, and the natural world and the human world were all one. It is important to understand what is meant by the spiritual to realize its significance in First Nations' relationship with the land and their views about resource management. The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples defined it clearly:

Spirituality, in Aboriginal discourse, is not a system of beliefs that can be defined like a religion; it is a way of life in which people acknowledge that every element of the material world is in some sense infused with spirit, and all human behaviour is affected by, and in turn has an effect in, a non-material, spiritual realm.²

One example of this view of nature is in First Nations' celebrations of the earth's annual rebirth. People showed their respect and appreciation for the new season by addressing plants and animals as living entities. They thanked them for sharing themselves, and also explained to them in what ways the people would make use of them. Further respect was shown for the resources, especially the major meat sources such as salmon or moose, by following certain rituals when disposing of the unused portions. Often bones and guts were burned or placed in water so scavenging animals could not eat them.

Almost every First Nation named the months after the major seasonal activity that was carried out during that time, or the actual resource gathered. For instance, the Tsimshian call June "Salmonberry Month" and July "Sockeye Month."

Special spiritual ceremonies often celebrated the arrival of key resources. These included First Salmon, First Fruit, and First Root ceremonies. Some were quite simple, showing reverence and thanks, while others were complex. For instance, the First Salmon ceremony of the St'at'imc people began when a special man, the seer, received the first sockeye from the fisherman who caught it. The seer and another Elder set the salmon on a bed of boughs, and they presented



Because of the importance of salmon as a food source, the beginning of the salmon season has traditionally been celebrated by many First Nations.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Rita George, Wet'suwet'en Nation

I am a strong believer in our Wet'suwet'en culture and customs, and the use of natural resources such as the harvesting and preservation of salmon, hunting, berry picking and gathering our natural herbs and medicines from the land.

This is what Aboriginal rights involve, and our lives are governed in the Feast Hall. The hereditary system of the Wet'suwet'en is based on maternal lineage, which means the children follow the mother's clan. I am part of the Bear Clan (Git dum den), so my children are also in the Bear Clan.

The other clans in the Wet'suwet'en system are Killer Whale (Lahk-san us-u), Caribou (lahk-seel-u), Beaver (Tsa-u) and Frog (Gihl-tse-u). The land and resources are divided according to the clan system through the potlatch system.

Because we live off the land we must also protect the land.³

CASE STUDY

The Dunne-za: Hunters and Dreamers

Before the modern world imposed itself on their lands, the Dunne-za (sometimes known as the Beaver) lived an extremely adaptable lifestyle that made the most efficient use of the land and the resources available in the harsh climate of northeastern B.C. They integrated the spiritual and economic worlds in ways that are difficult for us to understand today. By becoming aware of the world view of the Dunne-za, however, we can appreciate the diversity of ways that First Nations people related to the land.

The Dunne-za were, and still are, excellent hunters. Their principal food sources were large mammals, primarily moose, but also caribou and bison. Their lives were organized to be closely attuned to the behaviour of these animals, which could be unpredictable. Hunters had to be ready to follow the random movements of the game, and the whole community needed to be able to cope with an uncertain food supply. Thus it was essential to be able to track the animals, and to organize society in ways that could survive on limited food if necessary.

Families belonged to a loose association of relatives in a kinship group which could change its composition to adapt to the seasons and the available resources. A family group of thirty people was the optimum size for survival and would require, on average, one moose a week. People came together in larger groups in summer and fall when game was more plentiful, but at times when they knew they were more vulnerable to starvation, they separated into smaller groups.

As hunters in vast tracts of land, the Dunne-za had incredibly detailed mental

maps of the land and an internalized geographical sense that infused all aspects of their lives. The directions and the path of the sun were more than hunting guides, they were fixed points of stability in an otherwise flexible world.

For example, a hunter slept with his head pointed east, to where the sun rises. Beside him hung a medicine bundle, a source of spiritual power acquired from an animal he had contact with when he was young. As a boy, he went alone into the bush on a vision quest, where he encountered what is called his medicine animal, learned its unique song, and received instructions on how to make his medicine bundle. Now, as a man, the power of this animal helped him to dream about his hunt. He believed that dreams came from where the sun rises, and in his dream he travelled back to his encounter with his medicine animal, but at the same time he could see ahead to his future hunt. In his mind he travelled ahead of his tracks in the bush, and was able to see his future prey. In his dream he would kill the animal and then, the next day, he knew just where his path would cross that of his prey, and he would easily track it and kill it.

Such a dream kill did not necessarily happen at every hunt, nor could all hunters dream in this way. However, dreams were an important experience for all Dunne-za people. The songs that were discovered through dreaming were performed at gatherings, such as the summer meetings when several hundred people would come together.

The performances had a particular structure which reflected the people's relationship with the land, their society,

and their spirituality. At the centre was a fire, around which people danced in the direction of the sun's path. The dances around the fire were seen as a symbolic walk along the trail to heaven. People also paid attention to the directions when arranging the seating at a gathering. Men sat in the northern half of the circle, women in the southern half. Hunters sat in the eastern section of the men's side, so that their songs came from the east, just as did their dreams. At the west, where the sun sets, sat a specially revered man known as the Dreamer, whose dreaming ability was so powerful that he could see the trail to the heavens.

The social system of hunter societies such as the Dunne-za appears on the surface to be very simple, partially because they had little material culture for observers to see. However, even in this brief look at their society, we can appreciate the complexity of their spiritual culture, and how, still today, it is integrated with their relationship to the land.

to it a series of wooden rods which were individually marked and decorated. These rods represented the Elders of the village, and through the rods, each Elder was introduced to the salmon. Having been welcomed, the salmon was boiled and shared among the whole community. Everyone who took part in the ceremony later gave one salmon to the seer. These were all cooked and eaten by everyone during a feast that included dancing led by the seer.

The ways that resources were administered varied from place to place. Generally a band would hold certain territories in common, but other bands were permitted to share these areas. For instance, among the St'at'imc a family held rights to specific fishing spots, but once they had caught all the fish they needed, others were permitted to use the same places.

Hereditary chiefs were responsible for the prosperity and safety of their groups. They organized their group's economic activities, maintained its prestige and social position through feasts and potlatches, and acted as leaders of spiritual pursuits. However, they required the support of the resource-use unit's members. Decisions were made by consensus through a council of Elders and chiefs. All members of the group gave some of their labour and food and materials for the common good of the group, and the chief used this wealth in his potlatch. Thus it was required of everyone in the resource-use unit to manage the land and resources of their particular territories.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The First Nations of British Columbia have always had a close and special relationship with the land, which is marked by respect. It reflects a different world view from that of western European cultures, one that sees the natural world and human experience as integrated and unified.

The material cultures of the First Nations of the province reveal a multitude of technologies developed to efficiently and effectively harvest and process the plants and animals which made up the natural resources. A high degree of skill was required to make and utilize the varied technologies.

The way that people managed their resources influenced their social organization. Interior people, on

the whole, had relatively large and open areas within their territories, and travelled extensively to reach different sites. Their social organization was flexible and democratic, without a pronounced hierarchy or rank. Coastal people, however, divided their territories into smaller units which required less travel. Their seasonal rounds followed a strict pattern and a corresponding structured social organization was the result.

As you will see in a later chapter, as a result of land claims and a number of landmark court cases dealing with Aboriginal rights and resource base issues, today First Nations are reclaiming their roles as stewards of their territories.

Sharing the Land and Resources

The First Nations of British Columbia were self-sufficient and used the resources of their territories to produce the goods they needed. However, they did not live in isolation. They traded with neighbouring villages and with more distant nations, exchanging surplus food and materials for items they could not obtain locally. Through trade, people were also able to interact culturally with their trading partners, exchanging knowledge and ideas. Often, trade was strengthened through marriage.

This chapter looks at trade economies, the importance of the potlatch in sharing resources, and how First Nations education taught each generation the uses of the resources from the land.

Trade Economies

The First Nations of B.C. are believed to have been the most active and expert traders of their time in North America. A number of factors contributed to their highly developed trade economies, which have existed for thousands of years. The wealth created by the salmon harvest allowed many tribes to participate in trade. Because the resources available on the coast and in the interior were significantly different, demand for items unavailable locally led to trade.

The First Nations trade economy involved more than gathering the resources. Considerable labour went into many of the products that were traded. For example, cedar canoes, an important trade item for

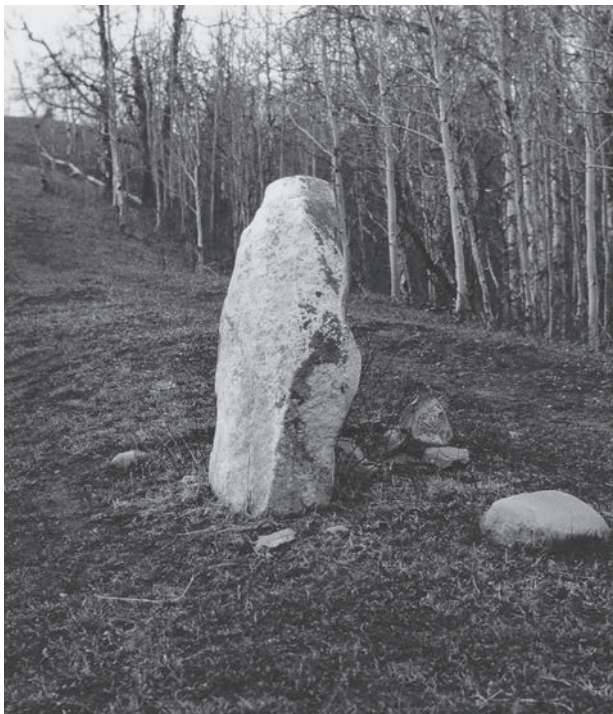


■ Oolichan fishery at Ts'im K'ol'hl Da oots'ip or Fishery Bay, on the Nass River, circa 1884. The Nisga'a and their neighbours have fished oolichans and processed oolichan grease here for untold centuries. Here the small fish have been caught in funnel-shaped nets and are being packed in large bentwood boxes and transported by sled to the cooking bins to be made into valuable grease.

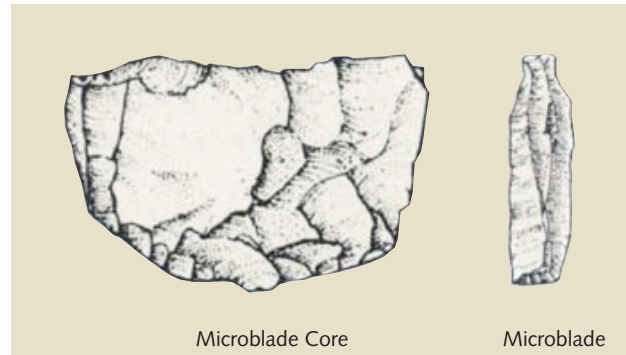
coastal people such as the Haida and the Heiltsuk, required a great deal of work from the felling of the tree and the steaming of the hollowed-out shape, to the finishing of the surface. Likewise, fibres were woven into baskets for trade, and furs had to be treated before they could be exchanged.

One of the most important trade items that was carried from the coast to the interior was oolichan grease, which was extracted from the fish in a lengthy process. Because of its importance, major trading routes were called Grease Trails. People travelled in large numbers over the trails to trade for the grease. In recognition of their importance, these trails were constantly maintained and were often two metres or more wide.

Goods were often traded from group to group through one or more intermediaries, so a product's final destination was often a long distance from its origin. For example, the Secwepemc who lived along the Fraser River south of Williams Lake were able to



Landmarks such as this “trading rock” near Hazelton marked places where First Nations people met for trade.



Microblades are thin, sharp blades created from obsidian, agate or other hard stone using a sophisticated technology. A chunk of the stone, called a core, was struck in just the right way to break off a thin wafer 2 to 3 cm long. This technique produced two extremely sharp edges, and was the most efficient way of making blades. The blades were set into grooves in wood, bone, or antler to make cutting tools or hunting spears. People stopped using microblade technology several thousand years ago.

produce a great quantity of dried salmon and salmon oil. They traded the salmon with neighbouring Secwepemc tribes who lived farther to the east. These people in turn traded the dried salmon with the Cree of the Plains.

One unique trade good, obsidian, helps us understand the age and extent of the trade economy. Obsidian is a glass-like volcanic rock which was highly prized in cutting tools. Tiny, razor-sharp pieces of obsidian, called microblades, were fixed in handles of wood, bone, or antler to make efficient knives and projectiles. What makes obsidian such a useful marker for understanding the past is that there were only three main sources of obsidian available to the First Nations of British Columbia. Two are in British Columbia: Mt. Edziza in Tahltan territory and Anahim

Obsidian

Obsidian is a volcanic glass, prized for its ability to be honed to an extremely sharp edge. It was used for knives, arrowheads, and other tools. Each obsidian source is unique, so scientists can identify the source of an artifact wherever it is found. Today it is sometimes used as the blade for a surgeon's scalpel.

Peak in the Ulkatcho. The third is in Oregon. Scientists can analyze obsidian samples and identify the source of obsidian found in archeological sites. With carbon dating, they can tell when the rock was traded and how far it travelled. The study of obsidian tells us that goods have been traded throughout British Columbia for 8,000 years.

Most trade was probably between neighbouring nations for items that were less accessible or unavailable in their home territories. For example, the Nuu-chah-nulth traded dried halibut, herring, and cedar baskets to the Coast Salish of Vancouver Island in exchange for camas bulbs and swamp rushes for mats. The soapberry or soopolallie, a common plant in the interior but non-existent on the coast, was frequently traded. The berries can be whipped into a froth that makes a treat sometimes referred to as “Indian ice cream.” The berry and other parts of the plant are also important herbal medicines. So soapberries were, and still are, traded by interior people for foods from the sea, such as dried cockles or herring spawn.

The plant called “Indian hemp” or hemp dogbane was the most important source of fibre for people of the interior. It was spun into a strong twine used for nets, traps, baskets, and many other purposes. It is not, however, a common plant. It grows in dry climates such as the Okanagan and the East Kootenay. Thus, it was a valuable trade item throughout the southern interior. The Okanagan people traded it with the Nlaka’pamux for salmon and animal skins and also made trading journeys to the coast where they traded the fibres for items such as seafood and dentalium.


Medium of exchange

A medium of exchange is something that people agree has a value and can be used to exchange goods and services. It allows people to trade without the limitations of bartering. Today money is the most common medium of exchange.

With such complex trading networks and diverse commodities, the process of trade among First Nations went beyond simple barter. In some situations, mediums of exchange were used as a standard for trade. For instance, on the North Coast and the Skeena region, groundhog skins and elk skins were a kind of currency. The shell dentalium was widely used as currency across what are now western Canada and the United States.

Trading for Status Goods

Trade goods can be divided into two types, items of provision and items of prestige or status. Prestige items required great wealth to purchase. While all

 Dentalium, shown here on a Haida blanket, is a small, cylindrical mollusc that only grows in deep water off the west coast of Vancouver Island. Because it is rare, it was highly sought after for decoration and as a form of currency.





Copper was the key symbol of wealth on the Northwest Coast. Shield-like objects called coppers, seen here in objects 1–4, were originally hammered out of copper nuggets. Later they were made from copper sheets manufactured in Europe.

goods that were unavailable locally had some prestige associated with them, there were certain objects whose value made them desirable as symbols of wealth. One such object was dentalium, a small tusk-like shell which is found only in sub-tidal waters on the west coast of Vancouver Island in Nuuchahnulth and Kwakwaka'wakw territory. For thousands of years it has been traded to people as far away as the sub-Arctic and the Plains. Dentalium was often strung on twine in two-metre lengths. Sometimes the whole shell was used as decoration, which would demonstrate great wealth. More often, the shells were sliced to make small beads.

Copper was a rare and extremely valuable resource because it is soft enough to be easily shaped. There was, however, only one source for B.C. First Nations and that was the Copper River in the interior of Alaska.

The Tlingit, who live on the Alaskan panhandle, were the intermediaries in the copper trade along the coast. The ore is called native copper because it can be taken out of the ground and used without being processed. It was used to decorate carvings such as masks. However, its most important use was for the large shield-like objects called coppers. These were the ultimate symbol of wealth for the Northwest Coast tribes. They were displayed and given away at potlatches.

Slaves were part of the highly structured societies on the coast. They added to the labour force and in many cases contributed to the wealth of a chief. They allowed the high-class members of a community more time for preparing for the many social activities such as potlatches, feasts, and winter ceremonies. Slaves were captured during warfare, and sometimes the slaves acquired this way were traded.

Controlling the Trade

Some groups became well known as traders rather than producers. They could spend less time gathering and processing food and materials than most groups. Those with access to large quantities of salmon had an advantage. This included most coastal people and some strategically located interior groups. For instance, the four Secwepemc bands who lived on the lower Chilcotin River had a very rich supply of salmon. Their key location at the border between Secwepemc and Tsilhqot'in territories gave them control of trade between the two nations. They developed a specialized role as intermediaries in the trading networks. They were also known as peacemakers between two groups when conflict threatened to disrupt the trade.

In some parts of the province, the trading systems became quite complex as certain chiefs gained control of trade routes. They were able to increase their wealth, power, and prestige by controlling the flow of goods. Sometimes this control meant that neighbouring people had to pay for passing through a chief's territory. In other cases, however, control was exerted by building an armed fort at a river canyon or mountain pass. Trade alliances were also formed, sometimes through marriage. In other circumstances, two tribes might agree on a trade monopoly. This was the case, for example, with the Tsimshian and the Gitksan. These two nations are neighbours who share the Skeena River watershed. The Tsimshian have territories on the ocean, near the mouth of the Skeena, and also along the lower reaches of the river. The Gitksan occupy the upper Skeena River in the interior. The most powerful Tsimshian chief, Ligeex, and his tribe the Gispaxlo'ots, held a monopoly on trade with the Gitksan. However, another Tsimshian group, the Kitselas, controlled a strategic narrow canyon

on the Skeena at the border of Tsimshian and Gitksan territories. Ligeex was forced to maintain a partnership with the Kitselas people to ensure his safe passage through the strategic canyon.

Education: Learning About Values and Resource Use

First Nations education was part of the fabric of the society through which values and skills for using and preserving the land and its resources were transmitted. Children were regarded as gifts to the community and keepers of the culture. In order for the whole community to prosper, it was a communal responsibility to pass on collective knowledge. The

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Matthew Johnson, Gispaxlo'ots tribe, Tsimshian

Well now, Ligeex he was the one who had the power all along the Skeena and there was no one who would go up the Skeena without first getting the permission of the chief Ligeex. Now it was the Gispaxlo'ots (gis-pac-lawts), Ligeex's tribe, who were the ones who could go up the Skeena. And if they did so they most certainly gave a gift to the chief for going up the Skeena. It was he who was the chief over all the Skeena River. And if any other tribe, any relatives of the Gispaxlo'ots tribe went in the canoes of the Gispaxlo'ots they first gave a passage fee to the chief. And when they returned then they gave a trading fee for anything they had been able to get while upriver. And if they didn't do so then Ligeex's spokesman went to demand payment. And all of the different tribes greatly respected the powers of the chief of the Gispaxlo'ots. Although there were many tribes living along the Skeena downriver from the Canyon, none of them had ever gone upriver beyond the Canyon, and there was not one of them who traded with the Gitksan. Only Ligeex. He was the one who made the law that he alone should trade with the Gitksan. And all the tribes knew this. ¹

community worked together to support each member, and thereby, the whole group.

As the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated, “In Aboriginal educational tradition, the individual is viewed as a whole person with intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical dimensions. Each of these aspects must be addressed in the learning process. Holistic education is the term used to describe the kind of education traditionally used by Aboriginal peoples.”²

For First Nations people learning is viewed as cyclical and a life-long endeavour. Training begins at birth and proceeds through the stages of life. As people mature, they take on more responsibilities in teaching.

The extended family took responsibility for caring for children and encouraging them to discover and learn about life. In most First Nations societies, children were raised in an atmosphere of tolerance, without criticism or direct control of the child's behaviour. In this way, young children learned to think independently and become self-sufficient.

As soon as they were physically able, children participated in the activities of daily life, learning by observation and practice. As they grew older, more formal training might be given in specific skills and knowledge. For example, a child learned about trapping by being involved in the entire process. Play around the camp gave way to assisting in setting up and cleaning tools, then helping to scrape the skins. As soon as the child was ready, he or she accompanied the parents on the trapline and was trained to recognize the tracks and other signs of the different animals.

Youth was a time of apprenticeship when young people prepared to take on the jobs and responsibilities of adulthood. They learned their specific roles and understood the value of the unique contributions men and women made to the community. Having been active participants in daily life from infancy, they had by this time internalized the morals and behaviours

that were expected of them.

The transition from adolescence into adulthood was marked by special ceremonies and rites. An important step in the education of young people from most First Nations societies was the vision quest. Young men moved away from the community for days or weeks, surviving on their own and seeking spiritual guidance through visions or dreams. In many societies, the person on the vision quest acquired a spiritual guardian. Usually this was restricted to young men, but in some societies women could also seek a spiritual guide. More often, teenage girls received important teachings about womanhood when they began menstruation. They were secluded from the rest of the community at that time for several days or even weeks, while they were nurtured and instructed by their close relatives or Elders.

Young men faced rigorous and disciplined training for roles that required strength, stamina, and spiritual power. To be successful hunters or warriors, they learned to fast and follow the rituals that connected them with the spiritual dimension of their endeavour.

Another crucial area of knowledge for all members of a group was full understanding about the land and its resources, including which territories belonged to their family and which belonged to others. Along with this came the knowledge of who your ancestors were, and how their connection with the land was passed down. Children learned much about the land and resources by experience as they travelled with their families between the seasonal camps. This information was repeated year after year and was also reinforced through oral traditions, where Elders passed on the history of the extended family through stories.

People at the Borders

Borders between territories were not hard and fast lines in the way that national boundaries are today. There were regions of overlap and shared territories. For example, the Nlaka'pamux people of the Fraser Canyon and the Tait group of Stó:lō shared a frontier at the lower reaches of the Fraser Canyon. Each group had its own salmon fishing sites which could only be used by those families who inherited them. However, the mountainous areas looking down on the river were used by people from both nations. Even though they spoke different languages and had different cultural customs, the Stó:lō and Nlaka'pamux sometimes married each other. Some people were bilingual.

The customs in villages in the heart of one nation's territories and those at the borders were sometimes quite distinct, because the people at the borders usually showed the influence of their neighbours. The

St'at'imc, for example, occupied the mountains and the lakes on the eastern side of the Coast Mountains, north of the top end of Harrison Lake. Their neighbours were the Halq'emeylem of the lower Fraser and the Secwepemc of the interior. The St'at'imc people living nearer the coast had winter houses different from those living closer to the interior. The more interior villages used the pit house that was common throughout the interior, while those closer to the coast used a style of longhouse that they adapted to their needs. Coastal houses were large open spaces, with no permanent dividers. The St'at'imc did not have the feasts and winter ceremonials of the coastal people, so they didn't need the open space. They divided the space with permanent partitions.

Archaeological evidence shows that cultural sharing goes back thousands of years. One case is Namu, on the central coast in Heiltsuk territory. People

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

George Manuel, Secwepemc

In his book *The Fourth World*, George Manuel wrote about the role of storytelling in education.

Story-telling was often used among native peoples, not only for moral teaching, but for practical instruction, to help you remember the details of a craft or skill, and for theoretical instruction, whether about political organization or the location of the stars.

*One advantage of telling a story to a person rather than preaching at him directly is that the listener is free to make his own interpretation. If it varies a little from yours, that is all right. Perhaps the distance between the two interpretations is the distance between two human lives bound by the same basic laws of nature illustrated by the outline of the story. However many generations have heard the story before the youth who hears it today, it is he who must now apply it to his own life.*³



FIRST NATIONS VOICES

John Thomas, Nitnat

I come from a whale hunter's family so I'll talk about that kind of training. I was learning to make tools, hunting implements, bows and arrows, different spears—especially the whale spear which is part of our ancestral heritage. There is a lot to whale hunting. You don't just go out and catch a whale. You had to be physically and spiritually fit. You had to know what you were doing. One mistake could be your last so you were told over and over again how to perform certain rituals to get the power to go out and hunt the whales. To this end, we were taught how to make the tools, even pieces of rope. We learned what to say to the tree before cutting it down, which way to fall it. You didn't just cut it down. It took four days just to cut down a tree for a whale spear. You had to fall it toward the sun, just when the sun was coming up over the mountain. You treated it like a person coming home. You talked to it and you continued to talk to it even when you were using it to spear a whale. So things like this were part of it all. Every little piece of equipment was spoken to. You were old enough to go hunting when you finished the training.⁴

have lived in this bay for nearly 8,000 years. All that is left of the most ancient people are the remains of their stone tools. Archaeologists discovered that these people used two different technologies to make their tools. They used the microblade, a series of small blades set into a handle, and they also used leaf-shaped spearheads. Microblades were used mainly by the people of the north coast. The spearheads were only used on the south coast. But both types were found at Namu, suggesting that people living on the borders of two cultures were influenced by both.

Gatherings

Throughout the province, people gathered together at central locations to trade goods and ideas. Some gatherings were meetings of family groups who were related to each other; others brought together people from different nations. Gatherings were important socially and economically, and were usually festive and greatly anticipated throughout the year. Competitions were often held at these gatherings, including challenges of physical strength and races. Gambling was a major component. Lahal was the almost universal gambling game played. But the opportunity to exchange resources and objects and to share ideas and knowledge was most important. These interactions also gave young people the opportunity to meet each other and seek out future mates.

Often such gatherings were associated with food harvesting. For instance, different Okanagan groups gathered each year at a few key fishing sites such as Kettle Falls, Okanagan Falls, and Shuswap Falls. These gatherings could last throughout the salmon season, sometimes from June to October. As well as catching and drying the fish, people traded

and competed in games such as lahla and horse or foot racing.

Lahal

Lahal (slahal, bone game, stick game) is a game of chance played by many First Nations of British Columbia. Two bones are hidden behind the back or beneath a cloth. One is marked, the other is plain. The player brings his closed hands forward, a bone in each one. A player from the opposite side tries to guess which hand has the unmarked piece. Special sticks are used to keep score. A player who guesses wrong gives one of the sticks to the hider's side.

Teams face each other with the captain or guesser in the middle. The sticks are divided into two equal groups, half given to each team. Different people take turns being the hiders. The hiding side drums, sings, and tries to distract the guesser. In the past some people had individual gambling songs. There could also be a spiritual aspect to the game. In some cultures people believed their guardian spirit helped them win the game.



Today, some people still hold gatherings to share and build a sense of community. This is a gathering of Ulkatcho people in 2001.

Other gatherings had trade as their primary focus. Every year many different tribes journeyed long distances to Green Lake in Secwepemc territory, near where 70 Mile House is today. Here many Secwepemc

groups gathered, as did St'at'imc, Tsilhqot'in, and Okanagan. A similar event took place in Nlaka'pamux territory at Botanie Mountain. Both Green Lake and Botanie Creek are provincial parks today.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Chief Jimmy Stillas, Ulkatcho

In Tanya Lakes we'd get together with the people of Nazko, Kluskus, Ootsa Lake and Bella Coola for a few days. It was a time to be together to communicate and renew our friendships with each other. We'd catch and dry fish and play a few games. Mostly we played lahal. Though sometimes we had foot races, horse races or spear throwing contests. Sometimes we had to walk back home from Tanya Lakes after losing our horses in a gambling game to some Nazko

people. We had five different trails leading into Bella Coola. The first couple went down the Atnarko River. The word Atnarko comes from two words: Atna meaning Bella Coola people, and Koh, meaning valley. Once you hit the big timber, you respected the Bella Coola people. When you were in the jackpine country up top, you respected the Ulkatcho, Kluskus and Nazko people.⁵

The Potlatch

The potlatch integrates the spiritual, political, economic, and social dimensions of a community's life. It is a complex institution based on the idea of giving. In fact, the word potlatch comes from the Nuuchah-nulth word meaning "to give," which in turn was borrowed by the Chinook language. Each First Nation has its own word or words to describe its ceremonies. While different nations conduct potlatches in ways unique to their cultures, they have some common features.

A potlatch is always initiated for a specific purpose, usually to mark an essential milestone in the life of the family or clan, such as a boy's first kill, a marriage,

the completion of a canoe, or the raising of a totem pole. Depending on the purpose and the importance of the host and the guests, some potlatches included just the extended family while at others, one clan or kin group would invite all the others who shared the same winter village. The most impressive and costly potlatches were those where chiefs from neighbouring villages or nations were invited.

A potlatch is never an individual endeavour. Once a person has decided to hold a feast, he or she calls the kin groups, extended family, or clan which will assist. The host explains to the gathered relatives the purpose of the potlatch and asks for their agreement in going ahead with the event. Once they approve, planning and preparation begin. This may take several



Household and other goods are assembled in preparation for a potlatch in Alert Bay in approximately 1910. When a chief distributes gifts, he is publicly repaying his debts, while at the same time he is investing for the future. A chief who gives away resources can fully expect to receive the same value back with interest at another feast held in the future.

CASE STUDY

The Ulkatcho

The Ulkatcho region of the West Chilcotin is a place of marvellous diversity. The name means “fat of the land,” reflecting the variety of resources available in the different habitats found in the region. There are more different plants growing here than in most other regions of British Columbia. It is an ancient land. Some areas have been free from ice for 14,000 years, much longer than most parts of the province. Cultural diversity is significant here, too. The Ulkatcho lies at the borders of people from three different language groups, the Dakehl (or, as they are often still known, the Carrier), the Nuxalk, and the Tsilhqot’in. Today Ulkatcho territory is one of the remotest areas of the province. For centuries, however, it was the meeting place for many different First Nations. Major transportation routes called Grease Trails passed through, and it is home to one of two major sources of obsidian in the province.

The Ulkatcho people belong to the Dakelh (Carrier) language family, but their presence at the borders of the Nuxalk of the Bella Coola Valley and the Tsilhqot’in of the Chilcotin plateau has influenced them. Elements of the three different cultures have been incorporated into the Ulkatcho traditional lifestyle. Even the name Newchote’en, given to them by their Kluskus and Nazko neighbours, reflects this. It means “Carrier people mixed with Chilcotin.” Today community members have relatives in all three

nations and many of their customs blend ceremonies and ways of life from these nations as well.

The numerous river systems that flow through Ulkatcho territory create a network of travel corridors. Travel was a way of life for the Ulkatcho people. With a cold winter climate and short summer season, they needed to access a large area to find all the resources they required. They had to move frequently, so it was important to build and maintain good travel routes. As they moved, they came into contact with people from neighbouring cultures.

Each family had its own area where it hunted and harvested plants. The use of these territories was flexible, and they were shared with neighbouring families. At certain times of the year, individual families congregated, working cooperatively to harvest and process resources. One such location was Ulkatcho Village, on the shores of Gatcho Lake where people met in the winter. The village is near the headwaters of three rivers, the Blackwater running east, the Entiako going north, and tributaries of the Dean River to the south. Large groups of people worked together to hunt and process caribou.

The Ulkatcho shared territories with neighbouring tribes as well. For example, they had traditional salmon fishing sites within Nuxalk territory on the Bella Coola River. They made several trips a year to Bella Coola, a three-day walk from Ulkatcho Village along the

major grease trail. The Nuxalk, in turn, shared some sites within Ulkatcho territory, including soapberry grounds and salmon fishing spots. One important fishing place is called Salmon House Falls on the Dean River. Here Ulkatcho, Nuxalk, and Tsilhqot’in families gathered to smoke salmon.

Their first trip of the year to the coast, after the snow had melted from the trails, was to trade oolichan grease from trading centres at the mouths of the Bella Coola, Dean, and Kimsquit rivers. They exchanged grease for items such as buckskin, furs, obsidian, and caribou meat. On their return journey, people were laden with bentwood cedar boxes or tightly woven spruce root baskets containing the valuable oolichan oil or grease. They stopped at Ulkatcho Village, which was an important trading hub. Grease trails brought Dakelh from the north and the east, and Tsilhqot’in from the south. The Ulkatcho were the middlemen in the trading economy based on oolichan grease.

South of Ulkatcho Village is another feature that adds to the uniqueness of this territory and the complexity of the trading economy that operated here for thousand of years. Out of the rolling plateau land rise the Rainbow Moun-tains, and principal among them is Besbut’a (Anahim Peak). At the base of Besbut’a, the Ulkatcho excavated valuable obsidian. Blades made from Besbut’a obsidian have been found in Alberta, Washington, and south-central



British Columbia. As in every other interaction with the natural world, the people have a spiritual connection with the mountain. They show respect by introducing themselves when they approach, and give thanks for the use of this unique resource.

Some of the customs of the people of Ulkatcho illustrate the sharing of different cultures that was common for people living near borders. Many

gathering sites had a longhouse for holding potlatches. These were special feasting buildings, not used for living in. They were only used on special occasions. While winter villages on the coast were made up of many longhouses, here the people lived in smaller pit houses. The presence of potlatch houses in the Ulkatcho territory shows how ideas and customs were shared between the interior and coastal people.

■ Besbut'a (Anahim Peak) in the Rainbow Mountains south of Ulkatcho Village. In the Carrier language, Besbut'a means "Obsidian Hill."

weeks or months, or in the case of a memorial feast to a high-ranking chief, several years. The feast will draw upon the economic resources of the kin group, especially if the guests will include chiefs from other villages or nations. They pool the food and material goods which they have collected from their territories, or which they have earned in trade. (Today many family members contribute money as well as food.) The success of the potlatch and the esteem of the host and kin group will depend on the wealth that they are able to give away.

When the time of the potlatch is nearing, guests are formally invited. People are delegated to travel to the guests' homes, be they in the village or at a great distance. This is an important step with strict attention to protocol.

The form of the potlatch itself varies from place to place, of course, but usually a potlatch begins with welcoming ceremonies followed by a meal where food from the hosts' territories is shared with the guests. Following this, what might be termed the business side of the potlatch takes place. The hosts validate their inherited rights through dances, songs, and oral histories. Often names will be passed on or certain ceremonies related to the reason for the potlatch will be conducted. Speeches related to the purpose of the potlatch will be given in grand oratorial style by trained speakers. They will often tell what territories the different foods in the meal came from, and who provided them. Then the collected wealth of the kin group is given away to the guests in the form of material goods such as furs in the past and blankets today. Higher-ranking people receive more valuable gifts. The giving and receiving of gifts is a key event in the potlatch. Not only is the host group giving away its possessions, the guests are accepting them. By doing

so, they acknowledge the validity and correctness of the proceedings which they have witnessed. This is reaffirmed by concluding speeches made by the guests, who respond to the speeches, gifts, and food shared by the hosts.

There are many reasons why the potlatch is so crucial to the cultures which practice it. It can be a bank, life insurance, and a pension fund combined. Business is conducted in a very formal and open way and will be remembered by all who witness it.

The potlatch also serves a function in managing the resources of the kin group's territory by reinforcing its hereditary rights to use the various lands under its control. Stories and songs are performed about the group's connection with the land, and robes, masks, and dancing paraphernalia illustrate the stories and songs.

Potlatches also have a broader social purpose. They bring people together, strengthening the bond of unity between kin groups and their neighbours. They are times where food, humour, and deeply held cultural values and beliefs are shared, and the importance of this sharing is reinforced.

Conflict between Nations

First Nations people value their relationships with each other, but conflict among nations is inevitable. Wars were fought for preservation of traditional territories, to expand upon existing territories, and to acquire goods or slaves.

Every First Nation was prepared to defend itself with trained warriors and special battle gear. However, some groups were much more aggressive than others, and were greatly feared. The Haida were known to travel great distances down the coast in their large canoes to raid villages for plunder, revenge, and the capture of slaves. Some people argue that these raids were not truly warfare, as their motivation was obtaining wealth rather than domination. The southern Kwakwaka'wakw group, the Lekwiltok,

Protocol

The rules, formalities, etc. of any procedure or group; formality and etiquette observed on state occasions.

however, were definitely war-like, as they battled for territory with the Comox people, who originally inhabited central Vancouver Island from Salmon River to Cape Mudge. The Lekwiltok drove the Comox out of these territories, expanding southwards as far as Cape Mudge.

Before they went to battle, warriors often fasted and purified themselves, and while they were away, the women, children, and Elders supported their mission by keeping themselves pure, and in some societies, acting out a mock battle.

Wooden helmets and protective armour made of pleated elk skin, which was extremely resistant, were

worn by some people. Many groups built defensive sites as places of refuge during attack. These were sometimes erected on high banks along a river or ocean coast, on an island, or on a hilltop. Some were fortified with log walls and had defensive weapons such as rocks, spears, or logs which could be dropped on the enemy.

When peace was finally negotiated, in many nations, the one that lost the fewest people had to make reparation to the other nation. Upon their return home, warriors underwent long periods of preparation for peace. To be fully integrated into society again they had to be clear of the psychic energy required for war.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

First Nations groups used surplus resources to trade with other nations. Vast trading networks were established for thousands of years, utilizing trails that linked the coast with the Prairies and the sub-Arctic. Because oolichan grease was one of the most valuable resources carried on these trails, they were often referred to as grease trails. Through trade, people

exchanged not only goods, but also ideas, knowledge, and skills. The potlatch traditionally played a key role in resource distribution, as well as having broader social purposes. First Nations education was fundamentally about passing on values and teaching the skills for using the resources of the land.

The Historical Journey

First Nations communities, though weakened severely by disease brought in by the Euro-Canadians, nevertheless resisted and protested the changes that were being imposed on them. In some cases their protests turned violent, but usually only when violence was directed towards them. Overwhelmingly, First Nations people have used petitions and meetings as peaceful forms of resistance. Since first contact with Europeans they have continued to try to meet the settlers on a nation-to-nation basis.

Two major factors hobbled the First Nations people on their journey: the Indian Act and Indian reserves. As you will see, their lives were controlled by legislation which governed nearly every aspect of their lives, something the rest of Canadian society was not subject to. As part of this control, Indian reserves were set aside for them to live on. In the eyes of the governments of the day, these measures were intended to be temporary until all Aboriginal people became assimilated into mainstream society.

Despite the oppressive measures taken against them, First Nations communities retained a strength which enabled them to keep moving forward on the road to just treatment and recognition of Aboriginal rights. Organizations were formed and powerful leaders emerged who confronted government officials,

until slowly changes began to happen. After World War II, First Nations began to use the courts to challenge the status quo. Each case was a small step towards achieving self-determination. The Delgamuukw case is the final step in the journey described in Part Two, but as you will see later, the struggle continues today.

For the First Nations people living in the Gitxsan Wet'suwet'en Territories, the four-year-long Delgamuukw court case was about the right to live as they and their ancestors have for millennia. From the point of view of the governments of British Columbia and Canada, a large tract of land full of crucial economic resources was at stake and had to be defended. The Gitxsan-Wet'suwet'en people, Elders, and chiefs placed their trust in a foreign court. In return, they felt that they were repaid with insult and disdain.

Chief Justice Allen McEachern ruled that Aboriginal title to the land did not exist. However, his decision did not agree with most recent court rulings and it was overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada, which said Aboriginal title existed and has never been extinguished in this province.

This case was a turning point on a long, difficult journey by First Nations people.



Hereditary chiefs Walter Harris (left) and Alvin Weget in 1997 when the Supreme Court of Canada decision on the Delgamuukw case was handed down.

The Fur Trade Era, 1770s–1849

The lives of First Nations people were irrevocably changed from the time the first European visitors came to their shores. The arrival of Captain Cook heralded the era of the fur trade and the first wave of newcomers into the future British Columbia who came from two directions in search of lucrative pelts. First came the sailors by ship across the Pacific Ocean in pursuit of sea otter, then soon after came the fort builders who crossed the continent from the east by canoe. These traders initiated an intense period of interaction between First Nations and European newcomers, lasting from the 1780s to the formation of the colony of Vancouver Island in 1849, when the business of trade was the main concern of both parties. During this era, the newcomers depended on First Nations communities not only for furs, but also for services such as guiding, carrying mail, and most importantly, supplying much of the food they required for daily survival. First Nations communities incorporated the newcomers into the fabric of their lives, utilizing the new trade goods in ways which enhanced their societies, such as using iron to replace stone axes and guns to augment the bow and arrow. These enhancements, however, came at a terrible cost, for while the fur traders brought iron and guns, they also brought unknown diseases which resulted in massive depopulation of First Nations communities.

European Expansion

The northwest region of North America was one of the last areas of the globe to feel the advance of European colonialism. For three hundred years before first contact was made on the west coast, countries like

Spain, Portugal, England, and France had colonized eastern North America and most of South and Central America. Early expansion began with the Spanish, who funded Christopher Columbus' voyage in 1492. The following year Spain had claimed all of the Pacific as its territory. England, Spain's rival for imperial superiority, argued that a colonial power should at least visit a territory before claiming it. Thus began a brief northern push by mariners in the 1500s, although it is not clear if the Spanish or English sailed as far north as what we know today as British Columbia's coast. Sir Francis Drake is known to have reached the Oregon coast in 1759, and some believe he may have travelled farther north, although there is no concrete evidence to support this theory. A fabled Spanish expedition led by Juan de Fuca is said to have reached southern Vancouver Island in 1592, and even though no proof has been given that such claims are true, later sailors named the passage between Vancouver Island and Washington Juan de Fuca Strait.

By the 1700s Europeans had explored and colonized much of the rest of the world, and England and Spain were still rivals for supremacy in the Pacific. The focus of exploration was on finding better access to the lucrative Asian markets, particularly the search for what was called the Northwest Passage. In 1745 the British Parliament offered a reward of £20,000 to the first ship which could find a shortcut around or through North America. Ever since Juan de Fuca, Europeans had been certain there must be a westward route that would be faster than the known sea or land routes to Asia.

In addition to the search for the Northwest Passage, international rivalries came to a peak in the 1770s. The Spanish and English learned that the Russians had crossed the Bering Strait to begin colonizing the Aleutian Islands in northwest Alaska, and they were moving their influence southwards down the coast. The first recorded encounter between B.C. First Nations and Europeans was part of a Spanish spy mission under the command of Juan Perez to see what the Russians were up to.

In 1774 Juan Perez anchored his ship the *Santiago* off the northwestern tip of Haida Gwaii. A number of Haida people came out to the ship in canoes, too wary to board the strange vessel, but willing to trade some furs. Weather and illness aboard ship made Perez turn back soon after, and on the trip south, the Spanish made a short stop on the west coast of Vancouver Island, in Nuu-chah-nulth territory, at Yuquot. Perez noted that the Nuu-chah-nulth had iron and copper, proof that even though Europeans had never met First Nations of the coast face to face, their material goods had already reached British Columbia through trade.

The Nuu-chah-nulth Meet Cook

Four years after the brief contact by Perez, another expedition would coincidentally land at Yuquot. Captain James Cook, a commander in the British Royal Navy, had taken up the challenge to find the Northwest Passage. More than that, he was instructed to claim any territories that looked uninhabited in the name of King George III. Secret instructions to Cook clearly stated that any claims he made were not to conflict with Aboriginal territories or with claims made by other European nations, “but if you find the countries so discovered are uninhabited you are to take possession of them for His Majesty by setting up proper marks and inscriptions as first discoverers and possessors.”

Cook’s ships *Resolution* and *Discovery* approached the west coast of Vancouver Island on March 29, 1778. The Englishmen spent a month among the Nuu-chah-nulth to repair their ships, give the crew some rest, and, even though they had not planned it, to trade. Descriptions by Cook and other observers are the

first written records of the material culture and social life of coastal First Nations. Cook mistakenly thought the name of the local people was Nootka, apparently misinterpreting the Nuu-chah-nulth word *nutka*. This word means “go around,” and the Nuu-chah-nulth used it to direct the mariners to “go around” a point of land to find safe anchorage. The Nuu-chah-nulth people were called Nootka after that, and have only recently reclaimed their true name.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Mrs. Winnifred David

The Indians didn't know what on earth it was when [Captain Cook's] ship came into the harbour. They didn't know what on earth it was. So the Chief, Chief Maquinna, he sent out his warriors. He had warriors, you know. He sent them out in a couple of canoes to see what it was. So they went out to the ship and they thought it was a fish come alive into people. They were taking a good look at those white people on the deck there. One white man had a real hooked nose, you know. And one of the men was saying to this other guy, "See, see . . . he must have been a dog salmon, that guy there, he's got a hooked nose." The other guy was looking at him and a man came out of the galley and he was a hunchback, and the other one said, "Yes! We're right, we're right. Those people, they must have been fish. They've come alive into people. Look at that one, he's a humpback." ¹

When they left, the Englishmen took 1,500 sea otter pelts with them. They also took a tree that had been used to make a new mast for the *Resolution*. Cook never returned to England. He died in Hawaii soon after leaving the Northwest Coast. However,

his officers reported on the wealth of sea otter furs available on the coast and the fantastic profit to be made by selling them in China. The race for furs was on.



Yuquot, a Mowachat village on Friendly Cove in 1970. The Mowachat, a group of Nuuchah-nulth, have traditional territories in what is now called Nootka Sound.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Captain Cook's Journal

In his journal, Captain Cook described the welcoming ceremony given by Chief Maquinna and his people as they initiated trade.

On their first coming, they generally went through a singular ceremony; they would paddle with all their strength quite round both Ships, a Chief or other principal person standing up with a Spear, or some other Weapon in his hand and speaking, or rather halloaing all the time, sometimes this person would have his face cover[ed] with a mask, either that of the human face or some animal, and some times in stead of a weapon would hold in his hand a rattle. After making the Circuit of the ships they would come along side and begin to trade without further ceremony. Very often indeed they would first give us a song in which all joined with a very agreeable [sic] harmony.²



Chief Maquinna at Yuquot (Friendly Cove), August 1896. Maquinna was a powerful chief who led Nuuchah-nulth interaction with the Spanish and British at the time of first contact. More than a century later, Maquinna was still an important name. The chief, pictured here at the right, is wearing a sea captain's uniform.

The Maritime Fur Trade

In the twenty-five years following Cook's stop on Vancouver Island, nearly two hundred ships came from Britain, Spain, and the United States to engage in the lucrative sea otter fur trade. When accounts of Cook's voyages were published in 1784, people took note of the wealth of timber available in addition to furs. Many of the traders who followed Cook left not only with furs but also with boards and timber from the forests.

As they traded for furs, the European mariners followed their policy of claiming sovereignty over the land. They did this in the name of their king or queen and their home nation. The Russians and Americans proclaimed sovereignty, as did the Spanish and the British, who focussed their energies on trying to claim settlement at Nootka Sound. However, after a short-lived international crisis in the 1790s, the imperial powers soon lost interest in the Northwest Coast and colonial power was left to the fur traders.

The European traders generally stayed on board their sailing ships, while the First Nations traders brought furs to the ships in their canoes. Sometimes the visitors were taken ashore and honoured with a feast, but they did not settle on the land. The First Nations integrated the European presence into their traditional social systems. They treated the visitors as they would chiefs from a visiting village, conducting welcoming ceremonies and blowing eagle down as a sign of peace. The chiefs expected an exchange of gifts to begin the negotiations on a positive note. The European traders soon learned that the First Nations people were expert traders and hard bargainers. Often the women in the trading party had an important say in what the final price should be.

Probably the trade item most sought after by First Nations people was iron. Iron often came in the form of chisels and axes, but anything made of iron could be shaped into sharp tools that were easier to use than

Artist Thomas Bamford's impression of ships at anchor in Friendly Cove, painted in 1897. This site was the focus of European attention during what is called the Nootka Sound Controversy. Between 1789 and 1794 Spain and Britain wrangled over which country had sovereignty. War nearly broke out, but the two countries signed a treaty with each other which recognized the British claim. In 1795 the representatives from both countries raised the British flag, then lowered it again. The flag was given to Chief Maquinna for safekeeping. The Nuu-chah-nulth people who lived here and had sovereignty for centuries were not consulted.



tools made of stone or shell. Firearms were also desired greatly since they could increase the number of furs a hunter could acquire, thus adding to his family's wealth. Copper and cloth were also in high demand. Copper was formed into shields that symbolized wealth, and cloth both replaced gifts of furs given at feasts and was made into clothing. Many other manufactured goods were traded, including clothing, buttons, mirrors, and dishes. Food items that could be stored for long periods, such as rice, molasses, and pilot biscuits, were also valued. As time passed, and

Sovereignty

Sovereignty refers to supreme power or authority over a land or state; the power of self-government, with independence from outside control; autonomy; freedom from outside interference and the right to self-government.

competition between English and American traders became fierce, alcohol became a commonly traded commodity.

From ten to twenty ships a year traded on the B.C. coast during the peak years of the maritime fur trade between 1790 and 1812. The trade devastated the sea otter population, and by the 1840s the animals were scarce. By 1900, they were nearly extinct. Dwindling supplies of the principal commodity combined with increasing competition from the Hudson's Bay Company resulted in the maritime trade declining after the 1820s, although a small number of ships continued to travel the coast into the 1860s.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Women's Participation in Trade

From the *Journal of Vancouver's Voyage*,
1793-1794:

Trading with the Kitkatla, 1793

In traficing for some furs & curiosities it was observed that neither of the men would close a bargain let it be ever so advantageous without first consulting the women, & if any of them gave a negative to it or made any objections, the things were instantly handed into the Ship. ³

From Charles Bishop's *Log of the Ruby*:
Trading with the Haida, 1795

Seeing so many Women about the Ship one would Suppose nothing hostile was Intended, but it is to be remembered that the Eannas [women] are Kings, and Govern the men throughout these Islands, with a degree of despotic Athority. What ever they Say the men must do. Nor dare the men Sell a Single fur without first shewing the Goods to Eanna.

4

The Land-Based Fur Trade

Soon after the maritime traders arrived by sea, other traders came overland from east of the Rocky Mountains. The North West Company (NWC) had for many years been making profits from trading furs in the vast interior of the continent and shipping them back to their headquarters in Montreal. Their rivals, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), operated out of forts on Hudson Bay.

Three NWC traders pushed the range of their company beyond the mountain barrier. Alexander Mackenzie travelled the interior trail networks, reaching the ocean at Bella Coola in 1793. Simon Fraser and David Thompson ventured down their namesake rivers in the early 1800s. Fraser established the first forts in the interior region west of the Rockies, which was known as New Caledonia. Fort McLeod was built in 1805 and Fort St. James and Fort Fraser in 1806. The NWC overextended itself, and facing financial ruin, merged with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. The HBC continued European expansion into British Columbia, building posts throughout the future province.

While the maritime fur trade was based on the sea otter market in China, the land-based trade was built chiefly on European markets for beaver fur. Other animals such as mink, marten, muskrat, river otter, fox, and bear provided a broader range of resources. The type of European trade goods that could be carried by canoe through the interior was more limited than what a sailing ship could pack into its hold. Guns were important, but blankets became the principal item traded for furs. The distinctive Hudson's Bay Company blankets, with their red, yellow, and green bands, became a medium of exchange. Other goods that were traded at the forts included foods such as sugar and flour, tobacco, and many household goods. The HBC men, like the maritime traders before them, recognized that the First Nations people were





■ Bella Bella, in Heiltsuk territory, with Fort McLoughlin, 1880s. You can see the fence marking the Hudson's Bay Company's land. The original Fort McLoughlin stood there from 1833 to 1841. Shown here is a later company trading post without the fortified walls and bastions. The Heiltsuk tribes took advantage of the presence of the fort, moving over time from their individual villages to amalgamate here. They traded furs with their neighbours to sell at the fort. The Nuxalk, at the mouth of the Bella Coola River, used their control of trading networks along the grease trails into the Chilcotin. They traded more furs at Fort McLoughlin than even the Heiltsuk. The fort was closed in 1841 and replaced by the steamer *Beaver*.

skilled and experienced traders who could drive hard bargains, refusing to trade if prices fell too low and demanding good quality items. They would sometimes spend hours or days negotiating a trade or would simply keep their furs, waiting for a better price.

First Nations traders integrated the newcomers into their traditional trading systems. The people in the forts depended on First Nations people not only to supply furs, but also for their food. Fish and meat purchased from First Nations people frequently made up the main food supply for the Hudson's Bay Company workers. Those tribes that controlled trade routes and resources before contact with Europeans

often continued to exercise control. However, the presence of a fort increased the local group's status and power, and the people were able to act as intermediaries in a complex trading relationship with their neighbours. If local people did not choose to participate in the fur trade, the HBC had no choice but to abandon its post. Such was the case in Tsilhqot'in territory. Although the HBC built Fort Chilcotin, it was not supported locally and was closed in 1844.

By the 1820s, the Hudson's Bay Company had a network of forts extending from the Columbia River northward. At first, the headquarters for shipping supplies and furs was Fort Vancouver, on the lower Columbia River. Using centuries-old trails, the fur brigades travelled up the Columbia River and through the Okanagan Valley. They crossed to Thompson's Fort at Kamloopa (today's Kamloops) and travelled up the Fraser River to Alexandria and beyond.

Forts were also built along the coast, principally at Fort Langley on the Fraser River and Fort Simpson near the Skeena River. After 1846, when the Oregon Treaty defined the border between British and American territories, the HBC moved its headquarters to Victoria, and after that, the brigade route followed the Fraser River instead of the Columbia.

The forts were built to be islands of protection in what the newcomers considered to be a potentially hostile environment. They were surrounded by high, thick log walls, and had bastions armed with cannons in two opposite corners. Heavy wooden gates guarded the entrance, and often wary employees would admit only one or two people to trade at a time. This was not always the case, however, and sometimes a more relaxed atmosphere prevailed.

Women in the Fur Trade

Women played an integral role in the fur trade, one that is often overlooked. While men usually took the lead in both the trapping and the trading, there were other dimensions to the functioning of the fur trade in which women were key. At home, often the women of

a village were left to provide for their families on their own while the men were away for extended periods in pursuit of the increasingly scarce furs. More time was required to prepare the furs, which was often the job of women, increasing their workload. Similarly, for many groups, trading salmon with the Euro-Canadians was as important as trading furs, and the extra work needed to clean and dry the salmon was largely the women's task.

However, it was their participation in the social structure of fort life which marked women's most significant contribution to the fur trade, and also to the future population of British Columbia. First Nations women frequently married company employees and they and their children lived inside the fort, becoming bound up in complex social, economic, and political

PROFILE

Jean-Baptiste Lolo

Jean-Baptiste Lolo (1798-1868) was an influential Métis employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. His parents were likely Iroquois and French. He worked at Fort St. James and other New Caledonia posts, but spent most of his life at Thompson's River Post, on the east bank of the north Thompson River near Kamloops. The fort depended on him not only for his trading ability but for his role as an interpreter and, most importantly, as a liaison between the First Nations who traded at the fort—the Secwepemc, Okanagan, and others—and the English traders. He had a family of seven sons and four daughters, one of whom married the fort's chief trader, John Tod. When the HBC moved the fort across the river in 1843, Tod built his father-in-law a house at the old site. Lolo raised horses and operated his own fur-trading business there. Through the Catholic missionaries, he received the name St. Paul, and was often referred to as Capt. St. Paul. In 1862, the property where he lived became part of the Kamloops Indian Band reserve. His house still survives today, part of the Kamloops museum.



■ The original caption on this photograph, taken at Thompson's River Post in 1865, reads "St. Paul and Family. Kamloops, most celebrated Indian Chief in British North America." Jean-Baptist St. Paul "Lolo" is shown with his wife and two of his daughters.

relationships. In some cases, especially in the more structured societies of the coast, marriages were considered to be alliances between high-ranking families and the officers of the trading post, forging a political and economic bond between the two sides. For example, Dr. John Kennedy, chief trader at Fort Simpson on the Nass River, married the daughter of Ligeex (Legaic), the highest-ranking chief of the Tsimshian. Partly because of this marriage, the Hudson's Bay Company moved Fort Simpson from Nisga'a territory south to Ligeex's traditional land.

Most marriages, however, operated at a more personal level. Aboriginal women offered companionship for the employees and a family environment, but they also relieved the men of domestic duties. As was the case in most societies throughout the world, women were not considered equal to men, and this belief certainly held true in these marriages. They suffered further from racial discrimination; there are accounts of a man's wife and children being hustled out of the parlour when visitors arrived.

CASE STUDY

Chief Gweh, the Dakelh, and the Fur Trade at Fort St. James

At Fort St. James a monument stands to commemorate the life of Chief Gweh (also spelled Kwah), one of the great leaders of the northern interior. He and his people lived at the village of Nak'azdli on the shores of the lake called Na-kas-le (now called Stuart Lake). They belonged to the Dakelh Nation, also known as Carrier, who occupy most of central B.C., including the upper Fraser River, Nazko River, Bulkley River, Nechako River, and the Stuart, Takla, Pinchie, Fraser, François, and Anahim lakes. Their neighbours include the Sekani to the east and the Nat'oot'en of Babine Lake to the west.

Chief Gweh was a formidable leader, a hunter, trader, and warrior who lived from about 1755 to 1840. The strength of his leadership played an important role in the interaction between First Nations and the fur traders. He gave Simon Fraser food on Fraser's first visit to the lake, and as the traders moved into the region to set up trading posts, Kwah and the Nak'azdli people provided at least a third of the salmon they required for food.

Fort St. James was established as a fur trading post for the North West

Company by Simon Fraser in 1806. Situated on Stuart Lake, it was known at first as Stuart Lake Post. After the North West Company merged with the Hudson's Bay Company, the name was changed to Fort St. James. It became the headquarters of the fur trade in the central region the traders called New Caledonia.

The fur traders depended on the Dakelh people to supply them with salmon. They purchased dried salmon in the fall, and again in the winter when their supplies had run low. People from Stuart Lake and Fraser Lake traded the dried salmon in large quantities, more than 30,000 fish a year. This was enough to give each worker four fish a day. Supplying this quantity of fish to the trading company employees must have put a strain on the management of resources for the Dakelh people. Although they received European goods in exchange, they had either to catch and dry more fish than usual or to eat less themselves. The Dakelh controlled the salmon resource throughout the fur trade period, fitting the traders into their traditional resource management systems.

The interactions of Chief Gweh and the fur traders highlight the nature of power and control between First Nations and the Europeans during the fur trade era. The traders were there to make money, not to colonize or rule the First Nations. Without a government or a military force to back them, the traders tried to maintain power on their own. They often resorted to violence as a show of force. Flogging or execution without trial was fairly common, but more often threats of violence were used to instill fear.

Chief Gweh had at least two major confrontations with fur traders. The first incident occurred during the North West Company days. When the Stuart Lake Post trader Daniel Harmon wrote about this incident, he acknowledged how frequently most fur traders used violence against First Nations people. Harmon wrote, "I gave a tolerable decent beating to the Chief of this Village—but he is the first Indian that I ever lifted my hand to strike. But few, I believe can with truth say so much."

The cause of this beating was a kind of war of wills. Chief Gweh and eight

The quality of the relationships which the women had when they lived inside the forts varied a great deal. Some had happy and loving marriages, and their partners shared in traditional culture and interacted with their families. Aboriginal women brought many strengths to these partnerships, but also gave up a great deal in the process. In some cases they were able to bridge two cultures and share skills and knowledge between them, such as those involved in food preparation. Euro-Canadian objects, such as chairs and tables, were often viewed with suspicion by

the older members of their families, but women were often able to demonstrate their utility and demystify these items. In the same way, they were able to bring an understanding of their culture to the men of the fort and break down at least some racial barriers.

For some men, these marriages were simply a convenience, and when they retired to eastern Canada or England, they often abandoned their wives and families. The famous court case *Connolly v. Woolrich*, the first important trial in Canada to acknowledge Aboriginal rights, resulted from such an incident.

or ten other men came into the trading post. Gweh, according to Harmon, was trying to get trading credit for a friend, which Harmon refused to give. To the trader, it seemed as if the chief was trying to provoke a quarrel. In frustration he leaped over the counter, smacked the chief with a yardstick and “pelted him for five minutes.” To make peace following this clash, Gweh invited Harmon to a feast.

The second incident involved James Douglas, long before he became governor of the Vancouver Island colony. In 1828, he was placed in temporary charge of the fort. Two Dakelh men had previously been accused of killing two HBC employees at the fort. One man named Tzoelhnolle had been secretly killed by HBC men. In August, the second man was found near Fort St. James by Douglas, who had him killed, by most accounts quite brutally. This man’s relatives wanted revenge or restitution.

Chief Gweh organized a large group of men who entered the fort and confronted Douglas. Chief Gweh’s nephew held a dagger poised above Douglas’ heart. “Should I strike?” the nephew asked. Douglas’ wife Amelia and the fort interpreter’s wife ran upstairs where the trade goods were stored. They

tossed down blankets, handkerchiefs, clothing, and tobacco. To the Dakelh people, according to accounts, this was seen as a giving of gifts, a sign of respect. They were motivated, it is clear from every version of this episode, by their understanding of Aboriginal custom. The outcome is described by historian A.G. Morice, who lived at Fort St. James in later years: “Kwah, who never had any real intention to kill the clerk, signified his acceptance of the gifts as a compensation for Tzoelhnolle’s death, and bade his followers quietly return to their homes, as the incident was closed.”

But it wasn’t quite closed for the fur traders. It happened that George Simpson, governor of the HBC, toured through New Caledonia a few weeks later. He and his entourage approached the fort with a grand procession. The British flag led the parade, followed by buglers and bagpipers, with Simpson and others on horseback. At the fort, guns were fired and the bagpipers played a march. Many Dakelh had gathered to witness this strange spectacle. Governor Simpson, introduced to the Dakelh as the “Great Chief,” delivered a speech. He referred to the attack on Douglas and suggested that next time the traders would take much

harsher action. He said, “The next time the Whites should be compelled to imbrue their hands in the blood of Indians it would be a general sweep. The innocent would go with the guilty, and their fate would become deplorable.”

Despite these confrontations, however, Chief Gweh usually had a friendly relationship with the traders at Fort St. James. He continued hunting and trading furs until his death in his eighties. He often visited the chief factor and frequently gave him fresh beaver, bear, or caribou meat. When he died in 1840, he was buried at the mouth of the Necoslie (Stuart) River, so, it is said, the salmon would always return. Not long after his death, the era of the fur trade ended and colonial government took power. The Dakelh gradually lost control of their resources. The buildings of Fort St. James still stand today, and the fort is a national historic site. And the Nak’azdli people still live in their village on the shores of Stuart Lake.

William Connolly had lived with his wife Suzanne, daughter of a Cree chief, whom he had married according to Cree law, for thirty years. When he retired to Montreal, he left her and married his second cousin, Julia. In the 1860s, one of Suzanne's sons, John, sued for half of the inheritance Connolly left, which his second wife Julia Woolrich had claimed solely. The Quebec courts upheld John's argument that the first marriage was valid and that Suzanne's son was entitled to his share of the inheritance. This decision was based the court recognising that Aboriginal law was in effect when Europeans colonized the land, and that their incoming legal system in no way eliminated the

Aboriginal laws that predated it by centuries.

Another of William and Suzanne Connolly's children was to rise to the highest ranks of British Columbia's colonial society. Their daughter Amelia married James Douglas while they were posted at Fort St. James and later became Lady Douglas when James was made governor of the colony of Vancouver Island. Her understanding of Aboriginal customs and behaviour is credited with saving the life of Douglas during a confrontation at Fort St. James.

Amelia Douglas' experience was unusual for children of mixed marriages. So much depended on the particular experience of the partnership and the environment in which they lived. On the Prairies, the children of Aboriginal women and fur trade employees shared many customs, and a distinctive Métis culture with its own language and values emerged. In British Columbia, such a singular culture did not develop. Many children of mixed marriages returned to their Aboriginal families, especially prior to the growth of settlements in the province. Some adopted their Euro-Canadian heritage and assimilated into mainstream culture. Others, however, found themselves stuck between two worlds, never completely accepted in either, and often struggling for acceptance. They were frequently burdened with the label "half-breed," which in British Columbia, as elsewhere, took on a disparaging connotation. When the issue of Indian "status" was introduced under Canadian law, their situation was exacerbated as anyone deemed "non-status" had no rights under the Indian Act.

The significance of women during the fur trade era as wives, as helpers behind the fort walls, as intermediaries between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture, and perhaps most importantly, as mothers to future generations of British Columbians, cannot be over-estimated. They often sacrificed the traditional bonds with their culture, and risked much as they entered the world of the newcomers.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Chief Gweh

Chief Gweh, as recorded by North West Company agent Daniel Harmon at Stuart Lake Post (Fort St. James), 1811.

He then told me, that he saw no other difference between me and himself, but this only: "you," said he, "know how to read and write; but I do not. Do not I manage my affairs as well, as you do yours? You keep your fort in order, and make your slaves," meaning my men, "obey you. You send a great way off for goods, and you are rich and want for nothing. But do not I manage my affairs as well as you do yours? When did you ever hear that Quas was in danger of starving? When it is the proper season to hunt the beaver, I kill them; and of their flesh I make feasts for my relations. I, often, feast all the Indians of my village; and, sometimes, invite people from afar off, to come and partake of the fruits of my hunts. I know the season when fish spawn, and then send my women, with the nets which they have made, to take them. I never want for any thing, and my family is always well clothed." ⁵



Setting a lynx snare near Fort Nelson.

Impacts of the Fur Trade

The fur trade changed the daily lives of the First Nations people. Although they continued traditional hunting and gathering practices through the seasons, the amount of time they spent on seasonal activities changed. Men spent more of their time hunting and trapping to supply the fur trade. Women, who did most of the work preparing the skins, often found themselves much busier. These trade-oriented activities replaced traditional food harvesting and preparation, creating a dependency on European supplies that had not existed previously.

The fur trade also changed traditional settlement patterns. Even before the arrival of Europeans in the western mountains, several groups in the northeastern region of the province had been displaced by other Aboriginal groups. The Cree of the Prairies and eastern woodlands met the first fur traders, and worked with them as trappers and guides. As the fur trade pushed westward in the early 1700s in the constant hunt for new supplies of fur, so did the Cree. Armed with

guns acquired in trade, the Cree expanded their living and hunting territories into the lands of the Dunne-za (Beaver) and Dene-thah (Slavey) people who lived in northern Alberta. These people in turn moved west of the Peace River, displacing the Sekani people from the foothills into the depths of the Rocky Mountains. The decline in beaver after the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company led some groups to change or expand their territories to try to meet the demand. For example, Peter Kinbasket led a group of Secwepemc people beyond the eastern boundaries of their territory to settle in the Columbia Valley. Their descendants are known today as the Kinbasket people.

The First Nations used the trade goods they received in different ways. Some objects simply made life easier. Owning a factory-made woollen blanket meant a household didn't need to spend so much time weaving cedar bark capes. Using coins and thimbles to replace deer hooves or bird beaks on dancing aprons also saved time. Iron tools increased a carver's output. These objects also came to increase the status of users. Guns had an even greater effect on status and power. They could make hunting easier, although hunters often found the bow and arrow to be superior to the unreliable musket. Guns could always be counted on, however, to shift the balance of power in warfare with other groups.

By trading with the Europeans, coastal chiefs increased their wealth and power substantially. In many ways, traditional social patterns were enhanced by the new objects and ideas brought by the sailors. However, these sailors also brought silent agents that were to have devastating effects on First Nations societies—unknown diseases like measles, influenza, and smallpox.

Devastation by Disease

Probably the most devastating result of the European influx was the vast depopulation that occurred because of disease epidemics. The statistics tell the story. Although it is extremely difficult to determine an accurate figure, it is estimated that when Europeans arrived in the late eighteenth century, there were between 200,000 and 400,000 First Nations people living in British Columbia. By 1900, this figure had dropped to around 25,000. In little more than a century, the population had been slashed by 90 or 95 per cent.

The diseases that arrived with the Europeans—measles and smallpox, in particular—were unknown in British Columbia, so First Nations people had no immunity to them. These diseases usually broke out in epidemics, sweeping through a village or even throughout the province.

The first epidemic occurred in the 1770s, when smallpox broke out. It is likely that the smallpox virus was carried to Tlingit territory in Alaska by the Spanish. From there, the disease spread southward to

the Haida and Tsimshian people. In 1782, a terrible wave of smallpox swept up from Mexico through the trading routes into Stó:lō territory at the mouth of the Fraser River. More than 60 per cent of the people died within a few weeks. When Captain George Vancouver observed the shores of the Fraser River delta in 1791, he saw overgrown, empty villages, evidence of the toll which disease had taken on the Musqueam, Burrard, and Tsawwassen people.

Other epidemics and smaller outbreaks of diseases occurred during the nineteenth century. In the 1840s, a measles outbreak spread to most of the First Nations of B.C., taking two years to do so. The measles outbreaks could be traced along the trading routes of the fur traders. At first they appeared along the Fraser River. Then an infected person aboard the *Beaver* carried the disease to Fort Simpson, and from there, measles spread along the trade networks into the interior, attacking people as far inland as Fort St. James and Fort George.

The last major smallpox epidemic did not take nearly as long to affect most of the province. This

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

The Haida Encounter Europeans

The name of the person who gave this description of the first encounter between the Haida and the Europeans is not known. John Swanton, who recorded the narrative in 1905, says only that it was a person from the village of Kaisun.

All the people who moved from Skidegate Inlet to Tc!a'al [Chaatl] were dead, and their children growing old, when the first ship appeared. When it came in sight, they thought it was the spirit of the Pestilence, and, dancing on the shore, they waved their palms towards the new-comers to turn back. When the whites landed, they sent down to them their old men, who had few years to live, anyhow, expecting they would fall dead; but when the new arrivals began buying their furs, the younger ones went down too, trading for axes and iron the marten and land-otter skins they wore . . . When one of the white men shot with a gun, some of the natives said he did so by striking it on the side; another, that he blew through it; and a third, that a little bird sat on top and made it go off.⁶

Clearly the Haida associated the Europeans with terrible disease even before they had encountered them directly. They had already been infected with smallpox when the first European ship arrived at Haida Gwaii. Sending some elderly men to meet the sailors first in case they brought disease was a characteristic gesture among many First Nations because it protected the younger generation from any potential danger.



was the worst single epidemic, killing as many as 70 per cent of First Nations people. It began in 1862 in the bustling colonial capital of Victoria. Many First Nations from the north coast—Haida, Tsimshian, Tlingit, Stikine, Heiltsuk, and Kwakwaka'wakw—had travelled to Victoria to work and trade. They lived in an area on Victoria harbour called “the Northerners’ Encampment.” A population count in 1859 showed that out of more than 2,200 people living there, 25 per cent were Haida and 45 per cent were Tsimshian.

Soon after this population count, those numbers were to plunge terribly. On March 13, 1862, a passenger aboard the ship *Brother John*, arriving from San Francisco, had smallpox. Apparently, the destruction that followed originated from that one man. A month later the fearsome disease had taken hold in the Northerners’ camp. Conditions became terrible as people became ill and died. Neither the First Nations people nor the colonial officials were prepared for such an epidemic. They could not cope with the overwhelming number of bodies and people too ill to move. Newspaper reports suggest that there

■ Skidegate, 1880s. Smallpox left many Haida villages with too few people to survive. Many of the people from the southern villages had already moved to Skidegate by the time this picture was taken. Twenty years later, there were only two Haida communities, Skidegate and Masset.

were more than a thousand bodies of people from the northern tribes piled on open ground near the camps. The reaction of the colonial police was to order the northern people to leave Victoria. When they protested, the gunboats moved in and aimed their cannons at them, giving them no choice but to load up their canoes and head north.

One report in the *Daily British Colonist* gives only the briefest suggestion of the horror the Northerners faced: “Forty out of sixty Hydahs who left Victoria for the North about a month ago, had died. The sick and dead with their canoes, blankets, guns, etc. were left along the coast. In one encampment, about twelve miles from Nanaimo, Capt. Osgood counted twelve dead Indians—the bodies festering in the noonday sun.”⁷



■ Songhees reserve in the 1870s, looking across the harbour to Victoria. The Northerners' Encampment was near here.

The epidemic hit the northern people harder than any cannon fire could have. For example, the estimated population of the Haida nation before the epidemic was about 5,700 and after, about 1,600, a loss of 4,100 people, or over 70 per cent of the population. But the epidemic did not end on the coast. Through trading networks the disease was carried far into the interior, until within two years, hardly a corner

of British Columbia was left unscathed. Complete villages were wiped out in some cases, while in others sixty to ninety per cent of the people died. Imagine the impact on the families and the communities they lived in: they would be grieving, leadership would be destroyed, and people would have to use all their energies simply to cope and survive.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Europeans came to the West Coast in the 1770s, hundreds of years after first contact occurred in Canada. The search for the Northwest Passage to provide easier access to Asia brought the first ships to the Pacific coast, while others in search of new fur supplies came overland through the mountains. The maritime fur trade, which primarily sought sea otter for markets in Asia, was conducted from sailing ships which moved up and down the coast and stayed a short time. The land-based fur traders, first through the North West Company and later the Hudson's Bay Company, built permanent forts and established transportation routes through much of the interior.

The era of the fur trade was a transitional stage

in the colonization of British Columbia. First Nations people kept control over their lands and resources as the European newcomers relied on them to provide furs and food supplies. The fur trade era had both positive and negative effects on First Nations societies. The new European goods that resulted from trade, such as iron and copper, made some aspects of First Nations people's lives easier, and increased the wealth and prestige of those who could control the trade. However, devastating effects of smallpox and other diseases obliterated any positive effects: as many as 90 per cent of the Aboriginal population died in the period of a few decades.

The Colonial Era, 1849–1871

The fur traders who lived at the trading posts had a significant impact economically and socially on the lives of First Nations people, but they did not attempt to govern the land and impose their own laws and regulations. Their concern was business. In the 1840s, however, the British government began to exert more direct control over the former fur-trading territories.

This chapter looks at the transition from the fur trade monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company to a colonial government which directed the settlement of the territory and began to put controls on the lives and lands of First Nations people in B.C. You will see how two different men administered policies regarding Aboriginal people, first James Douglas, governor of the colonial government, and following his retirement, Joseph Trutch. Between them they laid the foundation for the relationship between British Columbia and First Nations people for the next century and a half. This chapter also discusses the importance the Fraser River gold rush had in opening up the country, advancing formal colonization, and increasing tension between First Nations and Euro-Canadians.

Colonial Precedents

The development of colonial government in British Columbia occurred rather late in the history of the British Empire, and there were precedents which could have been followed in developing a relationship

with First Nations people. British Columbia, however, pursued its own unique course.

In eastern North America the competing imperial powers of Great Britain and France had long since established colonies to defend their territorial expansion into what they called the “New World.” In 1759 the battle for control of North America came to an end at the Plains of Abraham and Britain claimed the continent. Their hegemony was to be shortlived, however, as the colonies on the eastern seaboard south of the St. Lawrence River rebelled against the laws imposed on them by the British government, culminating in the American War of Independence. A period of struggle over sovereignty between Britain and the United States ensued, until finally, in 1846, the border stretched across the continent, following the forty-ninth parallel of latitude for most of its length in western Canada.

Colony

A colony is a country or territory occupied and ruled by another country. A colony has an elected local government but is subject to the laws of the parent country.

Precedent

A precedent is a similar event or action that occurred earlier; a previous case or legal decision taken as a guide for subsequent cases or as a justification for subsequent situations.

Hegemony

The predominant influence of one group or power over others, especially when it involves coercion, as in colonialism. The beliefs and values of the dominant group appear to be universal.

Colonial Timeline

1843	1846	1849	1858	1866	1871
Fort Victoria established on Vancouver Island	Oregon Treaty defines border	Colony of Vancouver Island created	Colony of British Columbia created	Both colonies united as Colony of British Columbia	Confederation within Canada

Following its victory in 1759, the British government consolidated its policies relating to the administration of the colonies in a document known today as the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Among other things, this proclamation contained Britain's general policies for dealing with First Nations people in its North American colonies. Based on the premise that the Aboriginal people and the British colonizers had a nation-to-nation relationship, settlers and colonial governments were instructed not to settle on Aboriginal lands until agreements had been reached between the First Nations and Britain transferring ownership of the land. The Royal Proclamation set out the guiding principles for making treaties, based on the premise that the lands belonged to First Nations people. In eastern Canada the intent of the Royal Proclamation was adhered to, in that treaties were made with most First Nations. That was not the case in British Columbia.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Royal Proclamation of 1763

These excerpts from the Royal Proclamation regarding First Nations are an important record of colonial policy and underpin modern-day land claims.

And whereas it is just and reasonable, and essential to our Interest, and the Security of our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the Possession of such Parts of Our Dominions and Territories as, not having been ceded to or purchased by Us, are reserved to them, or any of them, as their Hunting Grounds...

And We do hereby strictly forbid, on Pain of our Displeasure, all our loving Subjects from making any Purchases or Settlements whatever, or taking Possession of any of the Lands above reserved, without our especial leave and Licence for that Purpose first obtained.

From Fur Trade to Gold Rush

For decades First Nations people had incorporated the fur-trade economy into their societies, but soon a new economic force—the gold rush—was to bring about a greater transformation in their lives.

In the 1840s, westward expansion of the United States forced the Hudson's Bay Company to move its Pacific headquarters at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River because this was now American territory. To replace Fort Vancouver, Fort Victoria was established in 1843 at the southern tip of Vancouver Island. The site was chosen because of its large harbour and the rich agricultural land nearby.

Meanwhile, hoping to forestall the advancing Americans, the British parliament decided to create an official colony to establish its sovereignty on the coast. In 1849, Fort Victoria became the capital of a new colony of Vancouver Island. The colonial office in London leased the colony to the Hudson's Bay Company for ten years, with the understanding that the HBC would administer the colony in addition

to its fur-trading activities. The first British governor was Blanshard, but he was soon replaced by long-time HBC employee James Douglas, who continued to work for the HBC as well as acting as governor. It was Douglas who established the first government policies that had such an enormous impact on First Nations people.

The colony of Vancouver Island was established without negotiation with, or even consideration of, First Nations governments. The presence of First Nations people was simply irrelevant to the Europeans intent on carving up North America.

Furs continued to be the prime economic resource of the colony, but some First Nations people recognized that the Europeans were also keen to trade in minerals, particularly coal and gold. The Kwakwaka'wakw and



■ A Nlaka'pamux family placer mining on the Thompson River. The couple at left are Antonie McHalsie (Meshk N'xetsi) and Catherine McHalsie. The woman in the background is Mary Smith, sister to Catherine. The others were not identified.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Elder Annie York, Nlaka'pamux

The first thing these people did, they took out the goldpan, and the old lady, my great-grandmother, and my great-grandfather from my mother's side, they look at this pan and they wonder, "What on earth? Are they going to play by the beach?" So they stood and watched them. They went there and moved all the rocks, and they find these great big nuggets—gold nuggets at Thompson Siding, and they were just yellow in the pan and the kids run home and tell their parents, "You know these Whites, they are playing with the rocks, down at the beach there and they are having a nice time. They're gathering these nice yellow rocks, like this." So the old lady went down to see and wondered, "What on earth are they doing with those rocks?" Because she says, "Ourselves, we don't value the rocks. We don't take them—they just play with it and throw it around."¹

the Snuney-muxw had both traded small amounts of coal to the HBC, and pointed out the sources of these minerals within their territories. Rather than trading with these First Nations, however, the HBC started a mining division and built mining camps at two new posts, Fort Rupert and Nanaimo. These were small-scale developments compared to events that occurred when gold was discovered on the Fraser River.

Through the 1850s, First Nations people along the Fraser River had traded small amounts of gold with the Hudson's Bay Company. The company encouraged First Nations to search for other sources by paying for their prospecting equipment. Douglas tried to keep the discovery of gold secret because he was familiar with the destructive lawlessness that occurred when gold fever infected California in 1849. The news leaked out in spite of his efforts and in 1858 thousands of miners, mostly American, flooded into Victoria, crossed the Strait of Georgia, and headed up the Fraser River.

The book *You Are Asked to Witness*, published by the Stó:lō Nation, describes how First Nations people perceived the gold miners: "In the Halq'eméylem language the word for people of European descent is Xwelítem. Stó:lō Elders explain that Xwelítem translates as 'hungry people' or 'starving people'. No one remembers exactly when the Stó:lō adopted this term to describe the immigrants who came to

their land, but Elder Dan Milo was of the opinion that it dates back at least as far as the 1858 gold rush when thousands of poorly provisioned miners arrived in Stó:lō territory.”²

In the decades that followed, the gold rush moved from places near the coast like Hope and Yale up into the Cariboo to Barkerville. As the gold was exhausted in one area, the miners moved on. Thousands of men and women journeyed along the gold rush trails, trying to make their fortunes. In their hunger for gold, they frequently ignored traditional First Nations use of the rivers and valleys they passed through. They disturbed the environment with their mining activities and with the communities they built to meet their

needs, in most cases showing no respect for the First Nations.

First Nations people became miners too, sometimes working alongside miners from other countries. At one spot on the Fraser called Hill’s Bar, for example, five hundred First Nations people and seventy foreigners mined the river banks for gold. However, most foreign miners opposed the participation of Aboriginal people, because they viewed them as competitors for the gold.

Douglas and the colonial office were determined that the lawlessness which characterized the American frontier would not be copied in British territories, so in 1858 the British government decreed the formation of an additional colony on the mainland. It was

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

The Laurier Memorial

In 1910, Secwepemc, Nlaka’pamux, and Okanagan chiefs made a presentation to the Prime Minister of Canada, Sir Wilfred Laurier. This document, today called the Laurier Memorial, traces the history of their interaction with the newcomers, and puts forth their requests for Aboriginal rights. In this excerpt, they describe their perceptions of the gold rush and the colonial era.

At first they looked only for gold. We knew the latter was our property, but as we did not use it much nor need it to live by we did not object to their searching for it. They told us, “your country is rich and you will be made wealthy by our coming. We wish just to pass over your land in quest of gold.” Soon they saw the country was good, and some of them made up their minds, to settle it. They commenced to take up pieces of land here and there. They told us they wanted only the use of these pieces of land for a few years, and then would hand them back to us in an improved condition; meanwhile they would give us some of the products they raised for the loan of our land. Thus they commenced to enter our “houses,” or live on our “ranches.” With us when a person enters our house he becomes our guest, and we must treat him hospitably as long as he shows no hostile intentions. At the same time we expect him to return to us equal treatment for what he receives.

Some of our chiefs said, “These people wish to be partners with us in our country. We must, therefore, be the same as brothers to them, and live as one family. We will share equally in everything—half and half—in land, water and timber, etc. What is ours will be theirs, and what is theirs will be ours. We will help each other to be great and good.”

. . . Presently chiefs (government officials, etc.) commenced to visit us, and had talks with some of our chiefs. They told us to have no fear, the queen’s laws would prevail in this country, and everything would be well for the Indians here. They said a very large reservation would be staked off for us (southern interior tribes) and the tribal lands outside of this reservation the government would buy from us for white settlement. They let us think this would be done soon, and meanwhile until this reserve was set apart, and our lands settled for, they assured us we would have perfect freedom of travelling and camping and the same liberties as from time immemorial to hunt, fish, graze and gather our food supplies where we desired; also that all trails, land, water, timber, etc., would be as free of access to us as formerly.”³

named British Columbia, and its headquarters were established at New Westminster.

During the gold rush era, both colonies were opened up to newcomers as never before. The influx of miners caused the creation of transportation routes that enabled them to participate in the gold rush. Prospectors spread out from the Fraser River and Cariboo gold fields, exploring nearly every part of the province. Smaller scale gold rushes occurred, including on the Stikine, the Omineca, and the Peace Rivers, as well as at Kamloops and on the Leech River near Victoria. Once a viable mining region had been established, roads had to be built for easy access. The age-old transportation routes of the First Nations and the fur traders were no longer sufficient, especially on the Fraser River route where the Cariboo Wagon Road crossed the interior plateaus to Barkerville. Other people dreamed up alternative schemes to reach the gold fields; for example, Alfred Waddington led forays from the coast at Bute Inlet into the Chilcotin region,

resulting in what is sometimes called the Chilcotin War.

The British felt that it was imperative for British justice to prevail in these colonies. The chief agent of the justice system in the colonial era and after, was Chief Justice Matthew Baillie Begbie who, through his judgements on a number of early cases, played an important role in administering colonial policies involving First Nations people.

James Douglas continued to administer both colonies until 1864. By that time, running two colonies was becoming too expensive, so they were joined, in 1866, under the name British Columbia, with the capital at Victoria.

Colonial Policies

As chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company in British Columbia, and as colonial governor from 1851 to 1864, James Douglas had immense power over the lives and lands of First Nations people. When



Interior chiefs meeting in New Westminster in 1864 or 1866. They are identified (l to r) as Na Mah (from Dog Creek), Quibquarlse (Alkali Lake), Tao'task (Canoe Creek), Se-as-kut (Shuswap), Timpt Khan (Babine Lake), Silko Salish (Lillooet), William (William's Lake), Kam-co-Saltze (Soda Creek), and Sosastumpt (Bridge Creek).

CASE STUDY

The Chilcotin “War”

On October 26, 1999, two hundred people gathered in a small park near the Fraser River in Quesnel. They were there to honour five Tsilhqot’in chiefs who had been publicly hanged 135 years earlier. The people stood near the unmarked graves of Head War Chief Lhatsas’in, Chief Biyil, Chief Tilaghed, Chief Taged, and Chief Chayses. Although no one knows the exact location, people think they lie underneath Quesnel’s hospital.

The events that led to the hangings so long ago are often forgotten in the history of British Columbia, yet they are important for us to remember. Some have called these events the Chilcotin War; others call it the Bute Inlet Massacre. Some say that it was the only actual war waged between First Nations people and European colonizers. Whatever you choose to call it, this resistance was the sad result of the coming together of the political, economic, and cultural realities of the colonial years. The resistance grew out of the rush to extract resources, in this case gold. It came from the conflict between colonial assumptions about land ownership and First Nations beliefs. Finally, it is an illustration of the devastating aftermath of the smallpox epidemic.

The events began with the discovery of gold in the Cariboo in 1858. Previously, few Europeans other than fur traders had made their way through the interior of the province. People began to flood in along the routes leading from the Fraser River, in search of gold. One of the incoming miners brought smallpox with him, setting off an epidemic in 1862.

The Tsilhqot’in people, whose territory is on what is called the Chilcotin Plateau, had had relatively little contact with Europeans before the gold rush. They pursued their traditional lifestyle of hunting and fishing, moving throughout their lands between the Coast Mountains and the Fraser River. They did not participate in the fur trade. The Hudson’s Bay Company tried to encourage them by building Fort Chilcotin within their territories, with little success. The last trader there, Donald McLean, became well-known for his often intolerant treatment of First Nations people. He wore a bullet-proof vest for good reason.

When more Europeans started entering their territory in the early 1860s, the Tsilhqot’in tolerated them. They traded with the newcomers and worked for them packing and guiding. Most of the men who came just passed through, but one, named William Manning, stayed. He built a cabin at Puntzi Lake on a traditional Tsilqoh’tin camping site and began a farm. He is said to have threatened the Tsilhqot’in by saying he would bring back smallpox.

Not long after, smallpox did come. In 1862, an epidemic struck the Tsilhqot’in with devastating consequences. Hundreds died within a few short weeks. Villages were empty except for the dead bodies. Making matters worse, two businessmen took the discarded blankets that had wrapped the sick and dying, and sold them, unwashed, to other Tsilhqot’in. Another smallpox outbreak was kindled. It is estimated that between half and two-thirds of the Tsilhqot’in population died in 1862 and 1863.

At the same time, a Victoria businessman named Alfred Waddington began his dream of building a road from



Lhatsas’in was one of six Chilcotin chiefs who were hanged in 1864. Before he was taken to the gallows, Lhatsas’in said: “We meant war, not murder.”

the coast at Bute Inlet, up the treacherous Homathko River, across the Chilcotin, and into the Cariboo. The colonial government gave him a licence to build the wagon road, but it did not consult the First Nations people of the region, nor did it pay them any kind of compensation. Waddington did hire some Tsilhqot’in people as packers, guides, and cooks.

The events which sparked the Chilcotin War began in the spring of 1864. Some Tsilhqot’in people, smallpox survivors, were still ill and starving when they came to Waddington’s camps to work in exchange for muskets and food. They were treated badly, thrown only scraps of food or given none at all. The foreman, William Brewster, is said to have thrown his scraps into the fire rather than give them to the starving people.

Brewster is believed to have ignited the violence of that spring through his actions. Returning to the Homathko River

after the winter break, the roadbuilders discovered that their store of flour had been taken. They searched far and wide for the culprits. Finally they questioned some Tsilhqot'in men. After a long delay, one man said, "You are in our country; you owe us bread."

The man in charge of the builders, probably Brewster, demanded to know the names of all the Tsilhqot'in people. He wrote them down. "I have taken down your names," he told them, "because you would not tell who stole the flour. All the Chilcotins are going to die. We shall send sickness into the country, which will kill them."

The act of writing down names was still mysterious and magical to many First Nations people at this time. Papers with written words seemed to hold power. This act, in addition to the threat of smallpox, frightened the people. Had not William Manning's threats come true? News of the encounter passed quickly to the leading Tsilhqot'in chief, Lhatsas'in (sometimes written Klatsassan). He was the most powerful war chief among the Tsilhqot'in, said to be so fearsome that children ran away when they saw him.

By April 1864, he decided that he had to defend his territories and stop the Europeans from crossing Tsilqoh'tin land. Newcomers were entering Tsilhqot'in land without paying any compensation. They brought diseases that threatened to wipe out his people completely. He and his followers declared war on the interlopers. They did not necessarily act for all Tsilhqot'in people in their actions, but they were acting for the future of them all.

What followed were seen as wanton and savage acts of violence by colonial society. Considered in another light,

however, they were a series of strategic attacks conducted according to the practices of warfare. The warriors used surprise attacks at dawn, and in one case destroyed the ferry crossing on the Homathko River, making it difficult to cross in pursuit.

Lhatsas'in and about twelve warriors carried out three attacks on the Homathko River construction camp at the end of April, 1864. Thirteen men were killed, including Brewster. Two more attacks, this time back in Chilcotin country, left five British dead. One was William Manning, the rancher.

The Tsilqoh'tin warriors were resisting the invasion of their lands; they were defending their land and culture. The European immigrant settlers saw these as unprovoked and unwarranted attacks. The newly appointed governor of British Columbia, Frederick Seymour, felt

compelled to take swift action. He sent out two hastily formed military groups. One moved eastward from the coast at Bella Coola, and Seymour accompanied this contingent himself. The other group came westward from the Cariboo under Gold Commissioner William Cox. His second-in-command was the old fur trader Donald McLean, called out of retirement.

From June through August nearly 200 colonial troops searched for the men they called murderers. One of the casualties was McLean, shot while he was scouting alone. Finally Cox sent out a message to Lhatsas'in that they could come to the camp safely and meet with Governor Seymour without fear. It is clear that the warriors believed they were coming to negotiate a peace settlement between two warring nations; it is just as clear that the colonial government saw them merely as criminals.

On the appointed day Lhatsas'in and six others arrived at the old HBC Fort Chilcotin, where the soldiers had camped. They were unarmed. Instead of being received as equals, they were immediately seized, handcuffed, and transported to the little settlement of Quesnel on the Fraser River. At the end of September 1864, Chief Justice Matthew Baillie Begbie sentenced the five chiefs to be hanged. Later a sixth chief would be hanged in New Westminster for his role in these events.

The death toll was terrible: hundreds of Tsilhqot'in dead from disease, fifteen Europeans killed, and six chiefs hanged. The memory of the events may have faded from the general public view, but it never left the hearts of the Tsilhqot'in people.



In 1993, the provincial government officially apologized for the "Chilcotin War." First Nations people and government officials gathered near the unmarked graves of the six chiefs to unveil a memorial plaque and give them an honourable burial.

he took control, he was given clear instructions to follow British colonial policy, which was to recognize Aboriginal title to the land and to negotiate a treaty or settlement to purchase land required for settlement. In the early years of his administration, Douglas followed these instructions. He negotiated what are known as the Douglas Treaties. Between 1850 and 1854 he signed fourteen treaties, covering approximately 927 km² (580 square miles) of land around Victoria, Saanich, Sooke, Nanaimo, and Port Hardy. In each treaty, First Nations land was surrendered “entirely and forever” in exchange for cash, clothing, or blankets. The chiefs and their descendants kept existing village sites and fields for their use, the “liberty to hunt over unoccupied lands,” and the right to “carry on their fisheries as formerly.”

James Douglas did not negotiate any treaties after 1854. His views on Aboriginal residents seem to have changed, due in part to changing policy in London. Earl Grey, colonial secretary until 1852, believed it was important to protect Aboriginal rights in the colonies, but his successor, Sir Edward Lytton, seemed more intent on creating model communities fashioned after English country villages, with a church at the centre and farms surrounding it. Douglas heartily agreed with Lytton’s vision, and instead of making treaties, he began creating “Indian reserves” and developed a “system” that he believed would help the survival of the First Nations people.

Under the Douglas system, First Nations groups would be given parcels of land reserved for them, but owned by the Crown. Most of the reserves

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

A Douglas Treaty

This extract is taken from the treaty negotiated between the Swengwhung people of Victoria Peninsula and the Douglas administration.

Know all men, we, the chiefs and people of the family of Swengwhung, who have signed our names and made our marks to this deed on the thirtieth day of April, one thousand eight hundred and fifty, do consent to surrender, entirely and for ever, to James Douglas, the agent of the Hudson's Bay Company in Vancouver Island, that is to say, for the Governor, Deputy Governor, and Committee of the same, the whole of the lands situate and lying between the Island of the Dead, in the Arm or Inlet of Camoson, where the Kosampsom lands terminate, extending east to the Fountain Ridge, and following it to its termination on the Straits of De Fuca, in the Bay immediately east of Hof Clover Point, including all the country between that line and the Inlet of Camoson.

The condition of or understanding of this sale

is this, that our village sites and enclosed fields are to be kept for our own use, for the use of our children, and for those who may follow after us; and the land shall be properly surveyed hereafter. It is understood, however, that the land itself, with these small exceptions, becomes the entire property of the white people for ever; it is also understood that we are at liberty to hunt over the unoccupied lands, and to carry on our fisheries as formerly.

We have received, as payment, Seventy-five pounds sterling.

In token whereof, we have signed our names and made our marks, at Fort Victoria, on the thirtieth day of April, one thousand eight hundred and fifty

*(signed) Snaw-nuck his X mark and 29 others
Done before us*

*(signed) Alfred Robson Benson, M.R.C.S.L.
Joseph William McKay*

created under the colonial government were in more populated regions, especially where settlers were moving in to take up farming, such as in the Fraser Valley, the Thompson and Okanagan, and Vancouver Island. First Nations people were encouraged to pre-empt land, just as the incoming foreigners did. In this way, they could build communities based on the English countryside ideal. However, this policy caused an outcry from European and American settlers, who were, at this time, outnumbered by First Nations people. They feared that all the best land would be taken up by the First Nations, who would then have an economic advantage over them.

Douglas fought hard to defend land rights for First Nations people, although it was from a colonial perspective based on the assumption that First Nations people would quickly become assimilated into mainstream society. He saw the Aboriginal people in the same light as he saw British immigrants. He believed they had rights similar to those held by British settlers, and enacted laws allowing them to pre-empt land and to vote in elections.

Some of his policies left a legacy that would define the relationship of the future province with First Nations people until the end of the twentieth century. He ignored the important idea of Aboriginal title in his plans, leaving his successors with the impression that Aboriginal title did not exist. He also left the impression that the government had a policy of allotting only ten acres for each family on

Pre-empt

To pre-empt land (known elsewhere as homesteading) was the main form of land settlement by immigrants in North America. In Canada, British subjects were given 160 acres of land free, as long as they cleared the land and started farming on it. During the Douglas administration, First Nations people were encouraged to pre-empt land, but after Douglas left, the laws were changed to forbid them from pre-empting.

reserves. Although much larger allotments were often made under his government, in a speech made just before he retired, he suggested that reserves should be ten acres a family. Later he tried to clarify this statement, but the damage had been done.

Joseph Trutch succeeded Douglas as the administrator of First Nations policies. He stated his belief in no uncertain terms that the First Nations of B.C. had never owned the land. “The title of the Indians in the fee of the public lands, or any portion thereof,” he said, “has never been acknowledged by Government, but, on the contrary, is distinctly denied.” This statement contradicted the earlier Royal Proclamation of 1763, the policy of the British government, and the intent of the Douglas Treaties that had already been signed. It was, however, consistent

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS


Instructions to Governor Douglas

The colonial office's letter of instructions to James Douglas clearly acknowledges that the First Nations were considered to be the rightful possessors of the land. However, the British only regarded land that was cultivated or that had permanent buildings standing on it to be owned by First Nations people. They had no understanding of the complex systems of land use and ownership that had existed for thousands of years.

With respect to the rights of the natives, you will have to confer with the chief of the tribes on that subject, and in your negotiations with them you are to consider the natives as the rightful possessors of such lands only as they are occupied by cultivation, or had houses built on, at the time when the Island came under the undivided sovereignty of Great Britain in 1846. All other land is to be regarded as waste, and applicable to the purposes of colonization . . . The right of fishing and hunting will be continued to [the natives], and when their lands are registered, and they conform to the same conditions with which other settlers are required to comply, they will enjoy the same rights and privileges.

with the general feeling held by the British settlers that the land was “empty” and free for the taking. By accepting the belief that the land had been empty before they arrived, the colonists could say Aboriginal title never existed and that treaties were irrelevant. In fact, even the act of making reserves was thought by government to be a generous gift.

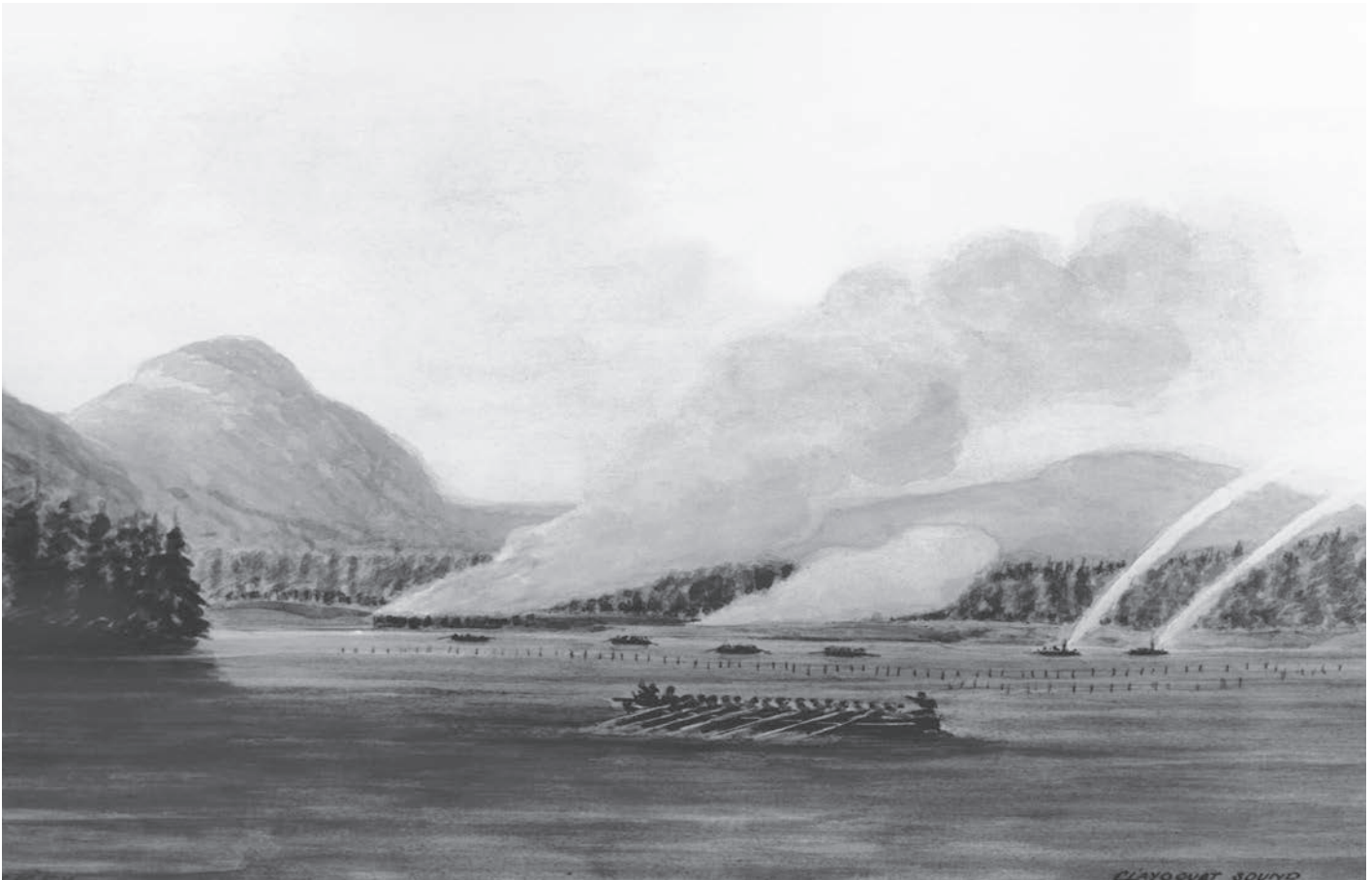
One of the first things the united colony did was to remove the right of First Nations people to preempt land. Reserves were strictly limited to ten acres a family. Inequality became a part of First Nations policy in the colony.

 An artist's rendition of the Royal Navy attacking a First Nations village in Clayoquot Sound.

Gunboat “Justice”

Violence and the threat of violence were commonly used to keep order on the coast during the 1800s. The might of the British Empire was imposed throughout the world by the Royal Navy, and the Northwest Coast was no different. At its base at Esquimalt, near Victoria, the Royal Navy stationed “gunboats”—sailing ships and steamships armed with cannons, with names like *Forward*, *Grappler*, and *Devastation*. Whenever a First Nations person committed a breach of British justice, there was a public cry of “Send out the gunboats!”

The crime that usually warranted sending out the gunboats was murder. Murders occurred for a number of reasons. Some followed patterns of inter-tribal warfare that were traditionally a feature of some First



Nations societies, but more often they were the result of conflict between First Nations and new settlers moving onto their traditional territories. Some were acts of protest.

The settlers and their governments feared that a murder meant much more than a specific act growing out of local circumstances. It was regarded as a threat, a form of lawlessness that would grow if it were not stopped with a great show of force. From 1849, when Vancouver Island became a colony, until 1910 when the Canadian navy took over, Britain's Royal Navy provided that force. It was believed by government leaders and military commanders that brute force was the only form of justice First Nations people understood.

When the navy was first sent out to the scene of the crime, the commander anchored his ship, often called a "man-of-war," directly in front of the village. He attempted to arrest the accused person or persons. If he faced resistance, he sent in the marines to take hostages, who were usually chiefs or their relatives. If the suspects still failed to turn themselves in, the commander threatened to destroy the whole village, and often fired the ship's cannons to demonstrate their power. Sometimes he seized canoes to prevent

escape. Finally, the threat was carried out, and the whole village was blasted and destroyed, along with the canoes and any people who remained behind.

During the time that gunboats were used to bring "justice," there were at least fourteen major incidents where the Royal Navy threatened a community or groups of communities. Eight of these resulted in the villages being destroyed. The most disastrous campaign involved a number of Nuu-chah-nulth groups on the west coast of Vancouver Island in 1864. Nine villages between Barkley Sound and Clayoquot Sound were destroyed, as well as sixty-four canoes. The last such incident was the destruction of Kimsquit in 1877, but the threat of gunboats was used as late as 1888 on the Skeena River.

When suspects were finally captured, they were hanged, sometimes on the spot in front of their community, sometimes in Victoria or New Westminster. This heavy-handed form of justice left the whole tribe with a sentence of its own. With their houses destroyed, they were forced to disperse, often to live with relatives in other villages. Without canoes, they could not harvest the food and other resources they needed for survival.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

During much of the fur trade era, First Nations people had to deal with just one corporate entity, the Hudson's Bay Company, but the discovery of gold brought tens of thousands of newcomers into British Columbia, each concerned only with his own wealth. The British government, to protect its sovereignty on the Pacific coast, created the colony of Vancouver Island in 1849. A second colony called British Columbia was established in response to the influx of miners, and the two were joined in 1866. James Douglas, at first chief factor of the HBC on the Pacific coast and later governor of both colonies, forged the

future relationships that would exist between First Nations and the newcomers. He abandoned the notion of treaties in favour of Indian reserves, which were designed to assimilate First Nations people into the immigrant society. His successor, Joseph Trutch, denied that First Nations people had Aboriginal title to the land. He determined that reserves would be limited to only ten acres per family. The British Empire imposed its control, often using the Royal Navy to dispense gunboat "justice."

Canada Takes Control, 1871–1911

Under the colonial government of British Columbia, First Nations first experienced the loss of control of their lands and resources, but when B.C. became part of Canada, they found nearly every aspect of their lives dominated by the laws of the new government.

This chapter first describes the politics behind the Terms of Union, which established the relationships among First Nations people, Canada, and British Columbia. Next the Department of Indian Affairs and the Indian Act are discussed, showing the extent of control exerted over Aboriginal people, in an explicit attempt to assimilate them into mainstream society. Specific features of this control are identified, including the setting up of Indian reserves, the banning of important cultural institutions such as the potlatch, and the implementation of residential schools.

These attacks on the Aboriginal world had devastating effects, but they were not imposed without resistance. From the outset, First Nations leaders, supported by their communities, protested the creation of reserves and the stripping away of Aboriginal rights. They used peaceful means to try to make their arguments, meeting with politicians at every level. The chapter concludes with an important meeting of protest in 1911 which united First Nations from many communities around the province for the first time.

Joining Canada

When Canada became a country in 1867, the British North America Act (BNA Act, now called the Constitution Act of 1867) continued the colonial policy of discriminating against First Nations people

by enforcing government control. The BNA Act divided this control between two levels of government. The federal government took overall responsibility for “Indian affairs”—meaning the governance of First Nations communities and lives. The provinces, however, controlled the land and natural resources, which gave them the power to regulate land uses such as hunting, trapping, and forestry, and to ignore Aboriginal resource management systems. Furthermore, the provinces determined which lands were used for reserves. This basic division of power split control of the lives of First Nations people and their lands between two often antagonistic parties in a way that was foreign to their holistic world view.

British Columbia was still a colony when Canada was formed, however, and followed its own policies for administering First Nations affairs. Under the direction of Joseph Trutch, Minister of Lands and Works, Aboriginal title to the land was denied. The provisions of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 were ignored or dismissed as irrelevant to British Columbia. The colonial government refused to negotiate treaties. Its policies formed the basis of B.C.’s relationship with First Nations for more than a century.

By 1870, most B.C. politicians were in favour of joining the new country of Canada, since the costs of running the colony as a separate territory were becoming too great. Although there were more First Nations people than Europeans in the colony, they had no part

Title

Title is a legal term that means the right to the possession of land or property. “Aboriginal title” is based on Aboriginal people’s long-standing use and occupancy of the land as descendants of the original inhabitants of North America.

in the negotiations regarding entry to Confederation. Trutch, in fact, decided on most of the Terms of Union. Joseph Trutch, R.W. Carrall, and Dr. John Helmcken travelled to Ottawa in June 1870 to discuss B.C.'s entry into Confederation. Trutch was content to omit First Nations people from the agreement, but the federal politicians insisted on including them, and Section 13 was added.

Federal politicians did not understand clearly the conditions experienced by First Nations people in British Columbia. They assumed their situation to be similar to that of the First Nations of Ontario, who had signed treaties by 1850 with land allocations of eighty acres of land per family. The federal officials mistakenly believed that treaties had been negotiated in B.C., freeing up the land for settlement.

It is not clear what the B.C. representatives told Ottawa about their policies regarding First Nations people. Dr. Helmcken wrote in his diary: "The clause about Indians was very fully discussed. The Ministers thought our system better than theirs in some respects, but what system would be adopted remained for the future to determine."

Obviously the delegates described some type of system, but the details of how the new system would operate under Confederation were left up in the air. Helmcken's diary continues with the note: "I asked about Indian Wars and Sir G. Cartier said that it depended upon the severity, as a rule the expense would have to be borne by the Dominion Govt."

This is a reference to the armed resistance by the Métis at Red River in Manitoba in 1869–1870. Often called the Riel Rebellion or Red River Rebellion, this was a pivotal episode in Canadian history. It was undoubtedly on the minds of the B.C. politicians, and they wanted to ensure that they would not be liable to pay the costs of quelling any "Indian Wars."

The Terms of Union make no mention of Aboriginal title to the land, or the need for treaties to be negotiated in the future. They do state that

B.C. will transfer lands to the federal government for Indian reserves, but the language used is vague. The administration of reserve lands was to be, in the words of the Terms of Union, "as liberal as that hitherto pursued," and the reserves were to be parcelled out "as it has hitherto been the practice of the British Columbia Government." Federal politicians apparently assumed this reserve allotment was comparable to the eighty acres given to First Nations families in Ontario. Trutch and the B.C. politicians, however, felt it confirmed the ten-acre allotments that the colonial administration had previously distributed.

British Columbia joined Canada in 1871 and Joseph Trutch became the new province's first lieutenant-governor. A Superintendent of Indian Affairs for B.C. was also appointed by Ottawa. Dr. Israel Powell was the first superintendent, beginning in November 1871. He divided the province into regions called "Agencies," each administered by an Indian Agent. He also had the task of determining what reserve lands had been allocated for the First Nations before Confederation. Further, he had the job of continuing to assign Indian reserve land. He found himself caught in the middle of the conflict between the policies of the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa and the provincial government in Victoria, which was reluctant to implement federal policies.

In 1873, for example, Ottawa passed an Order-in-Council stating that reserves in B.C. should be eighty acres per family, just as they were in Ontario. Powell dutifully told the provincial officials of Ottawa's resolution. He received a letter back from the province

Treaty

A treaty is a formal agreement between two groups, usually sovereign bodies or nations. Treaties with First Nations in Canada were agreements between the government and the First Nations to clear land of Aboriginal title so the land could be used for settlement, resource extraction, or transportation routes like railways. Certain payments and benefits were traded in exchange for clear title to the lands. In negotiating treaties, the government acknowledges the title of First Nations to their lands.

stating “This quantity is greatly in excess of what has been found to be sufficient by previous Governments, and the Government has decided that throughout the Province the land to be reserved for Indians should not exceed 20 acres of land for each head of family of five persons.” This increase from ten to twenty acres a family was never put into practice.

In the 1870s, Treaties 1 to 7 were signed with First Nations on the Prairies, allotting 160 acres or more to each family. First Nations leaders in B.C. hoped that treaties would also be signed with them, for although

the terms of the treaties were often less than favourable, they nevertheless established that Aboriginal title existed, and that the original inhabitants were compensated for the lands they surrendered. However, British Columbia continued to deny the existence of Aboriginal title and First Nations communities were restricted to tiny reserves, remnants of their traditional territories.

The Indian Act

When Canada became a country, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) was created to administer policies regarding First Nations. In 1876, the Indian Act was passed. This act gave legal power to government to control the lives of First Nations communities across the country. The Indian Act combined earlier colonial and federal laws into one act, and included clauses about land, Indian status, and local government.

The Indian Act defines who is considered a “Status Indian.” Individuals who qualify as “Status Indians” are wards of the government, meaning that the act treats them as if they were children in need of parental care. Before 1951, Status Indians were not deemed to be “people” under the laws of Canada, and therefore were denied certain rights that other Canadians enjoyed. Status Indians could only become “persons” by voluntary enfranchisement—by relinquishing their Indian status. Only then would they be allowed to vote, own property, or have the rights of other Canadian citizens.

The Indian Act provided for reserve land to be set aside for the use of Status Indians, and specified who could live on the reserves. Government officials exercised considerable power over people living on reserves. Among other things, they could dictate when and where children would go to school.

The Indian Act infringed on personal behaviour in its discriminatory laws regarding alcohol use. It was a crime for anyone falling under the act to own or consume alcohol, and an inebriated person could

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Article 13, Terms of Union, 1871

The following is an excerpt from the agreement by which the colony of British Columbia joined Canada in 1871. It defines the responsibilities of the province and the federal government with regard to First Nations people.

The charge of the Indians and the trusteeship and management of the lands reserved for their use and benefit, shall be assumed by the Dominion Government, and a policy as liberal as that hitherto pursued by the British Columbia Government shall be continued by the Dominion Government after the Union.

To carry out such policy, tracts of land of such extent as it has hitherto been the practice of the British Columbia Government to appropriate for that purpose, shall from time to time be conveyed by the local Government to the Dominion Government in trust for the use and benefit of the Indians on application of the Dominion Government; and in case of disagreement between the two Governments respecting the quantity of such tracts of land to be so granted, the matter shall be referred for the decision of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

be thrown in jail immediately and fined in court the next day. It was against the law for anyone to sell alcohol to Status Indians, and such suppliers were frequently given harsh fines. These paternalistic laws were intended for the people's own good, in the eyes of Canadian law-makers, but they only served to push the use of alcohol underground and became a major factor in one of the most serious issues that First Nations have had to face: alcohol abuse.

Although little control remained in the hands of local communities, the Indian Act dictated the structure of local government. Ignoring the traditional First Nations forms of governance, local government was modelled after the Euro-Canadian elected town council. In this model, the government was formed by a band council, led by a chief councillor rather than a mayor. This band council usually replaced, or sometimes co-existed with, traditional forms of government. In traditional governance, leadership was

usually hereditary. In many cases, the hereditary chiefs were elected to the band council positions. Imposing this electoral system on First Nations created a major disruption within First Nations societies.

The Department of Indian Affairs developed a complex bureaucracy, from the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Ottawa down to the Indian Agents located throughout the country. The DIA kept extensive files of all their correspondence, memos, and other documents. These are available on microfilm today and are valuable resources for researchers, especially for those researching land claims.

Originally there were a hundred clauses in the Indian Act; today, because of amendments that have been made in response to changing conditions, there are almost two hundred. In many cases, powers that were originally assigned to the DIA have been transferred back to local communities, but the Minister of Indian Affairs still holds the legal ability to

interfere in many aspects of the lives of First Nations people. Although the act gives some benefits to Aboriginal people, these have been outweighed by the discrimination and oppression embedded in it.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Chief Neeshot, Tsimshian

Chief Neeshot (Albert Nelson), Gitsaxlál tribe, Tsimshian Nation, addressing the first Indian Agent for the Northwest Agency, James McKay, at Port Simpson in 1883.

We are living in peace for this reason, that this Tsimshian tribe belongs to no government. God has put us here Himself. That is why our minds are at peace, for we know God is the only one who governs us. We have heard that the government has appointed you here. You have told us yourself that the land belongs to us the Tsimshians. That the council will have to make a law to divide the lands; so you have said. We do not see what the council has to do this for, as the land belonged to us years ago. What the people of this place want they will let you know; what they do not want they will let you know also. Well Sir, Mr. McKay, this is all I will say. I will not trouble you yourself. This thing we want is not a small thing, it is a great thing.

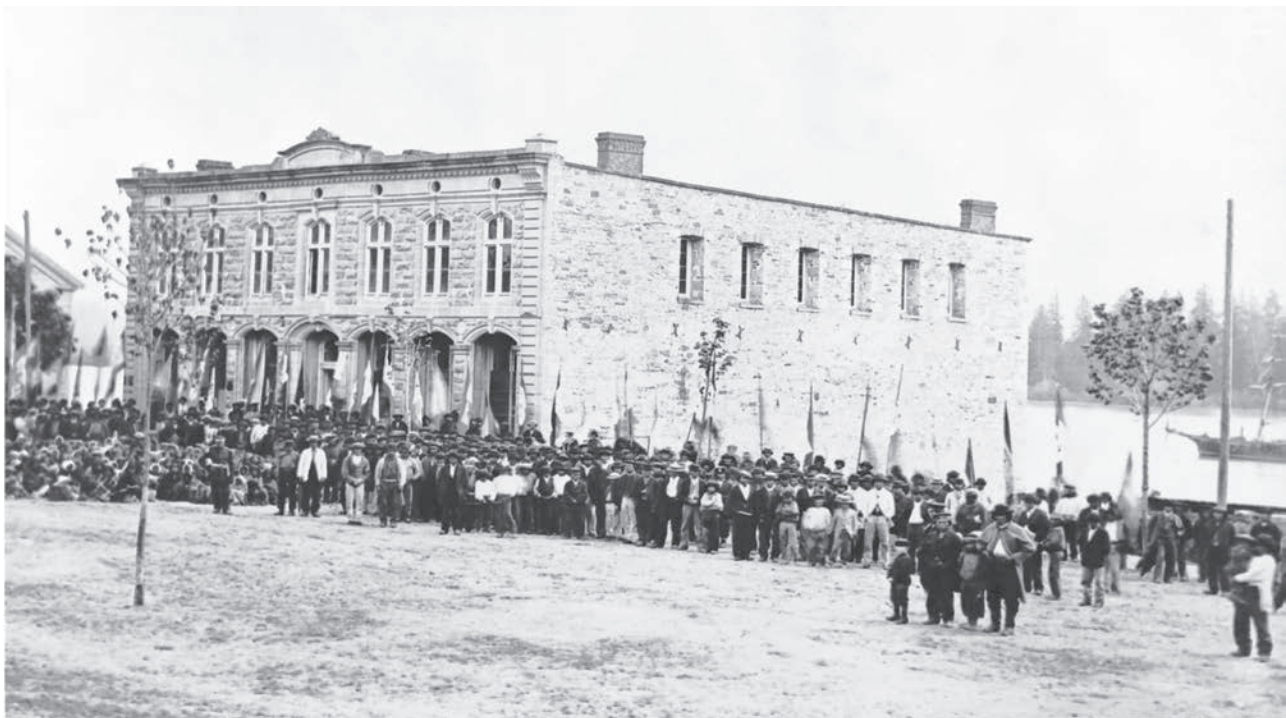
Enfranchisement

Enfranchisement gives people the right to vote in elections. For First Nations people, however, it has meant more than this. Until 1949 provincially, and 1960 federally, First Nations people could only vote if they relinquished their Indian status. This meant cutting themselves off in many ways from their reserve communities.

Indian Reserves

Once the Indian Act was passed, First Nations people were not permitted to own land because they had become wards of the state. This shocked the First Nations, who had always had stewardship over their territories. In many areas of B.C., moreover, the First Nations had demonstrated generosity and a willingness to share their territories with the newcomers. For instance, Chief Pelka-mu-lox of the Okanagan stated, “You are my white children and I do not want to lose you. I want you to live in my territory. I have a big country, big enough for all of us. I have plenty of everything, enough for all of us, for our children and for our children’s children.” Instead of living on their traditional territories, the First Nations were now to live on reserves. The idea of reserves was so foreign to First Nations people that many did not fully understand what their impact would be until surveyors arrived to physically mark them out.

Indian reserves were meant to be temporary, lasting only until First Nations people were assimilated into mainstream society and could buy property like other Canadians. The reservation of lands that had started in the colonial era continued once B.C. became a province. An Indian Reserve Commissioner was appointed to oversee this process. The first commissioner, G.M. Sproat, lived among the Nuu-chah-nulth people and was sympathetic to First Nations people. He was as generous as he could be in allotting reserves. In 1880, he was forced to resign and Peter O’Reilly, Trutch’s brother-in-law, assumed his position instead. It comes as no surprise that O’Reilly immediately reduced the size of many reserves that Sproat had set out. Through the 1880s and 1890s, O’Reilly travelled across B.C., consulting First Nations communities and decreeing where reserves should be made. Wherever he went, he was met with resistance and the call for treaties to recognize Aboriginal title.



Coast Salish people gathered at the Land Registry Office in New Westminster in the 1870s. They were protesting the severe restriction of their land base.

Early Resistance

From the beginning of their relationship with incoming Europeans, First Nations people resisted the alienation of their lands and protested the loss of their rights. Although protests have occasionally turned violent, First Nations protests have usually been peaceful and non-violent. Once the First Nations had unwittingly become part of Canada and come under the control of the Indian Act, First Nations communities organized to resist their new status and to advance the recognition of Aboriginal title and land claims.

First Nations protests generally followed a pattern that placed great importance on community consultation. Everyone in the village, and sometimes the whole nation, would meet to discuss the action they wanted to take. The strongest speakers were appointed to present their claims to politicians, and accompanied by chiefs, they travelled to meet Euro-

Canadian leaders face to face, in some cases all the way to England. Once the advocates returned, they reported the proceedings at another meeting of their community.

Sometimes First Nations people requested assistance from local missionaries, who, with their command of the English language, transcribed letters and petitions which reflected the spoken word of the leaders. Often these missionaries were accused by government officials and newspapers of interfering in First Nations-government relationships. Sometimes the missionaries were accused of supporting protests for their own gain.

One of the earliest protests was made by the Stó:lō people of the lower Fraser River at New Westminster in 1874 in hopes that the government of Canada could redress land issues that dated back to the colonial era. In 1864, shortly before he retired, Douglas directed that fourteen reserves in the Fraser Valley be surveyed,

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Petition to the Government, 1874

The following are excerpts from a petition to the Indian Commissioner for the province of British Columbia.

The petition of the undersigned, chiefs of Douglas Portage, of Lower Fraser, and of the other tribes on the seashore of the mainland to Bute Inlet, humbly sheweth:

That your petitioners view with a great anxiety the standing question of the quantity of land to be reserved for the use of each Indian family.

That we are fully aware that the government of Canada has always taken good care of the Indians, and treated them liberally, allowing more than 100 acres per family; and we have been at a loss to understand the views of the local government of British Columbia, in curtailing our land so much as to leave in many instances but few acres of land per family.

Our hearts have been wounded by the arbitrary way the local government of British Columbia have dealt with us in locating and dividing our Reserves.

..

For many years we have been complaining of the land left us being too small. We have laid our complaints before the government officials nearer to us. They sent us to some others; so we had no redress up to the present; and we have felt like men trampled on, and are commencing to believe that the aim of the white men is to exterminate us as soon as they can, although we have always been quiet, obedient, kind, and friendly to the whites . . .

We consider that eighty acres per family is absolutely necessary for our support, and for the future welfare of our children. We declare that 20 or 30 acres of land per family will not give satisfaction, but will create ill feelings, irritation among our people, and we cannot say what will be the consequence. ¹

averaging eighteen hectares (forty-five acres) per person. Before the reserves could be officially registered, however, Trutch had taken over the administration of Aboriginal affairs. In his opinion these reserves were much too large for the needs of the Stó:lō, so in 1865 he slashed the size of the reserves by eighty per cent. Individual reserves were cut by even more. For example, the Matsqui reserve, which was originally 3,887 hectares, was reduced by Trutch to only 60 hectares. The Stó:lō wrote letters and petitions to various officials hoping to have these cuts reversed. In 1874, more than fifty chiefs and hundreds of other First Nations people gathered in New Westminster to protest in front of the provincial land registry office. They presented a petition to Indian Superintendent Israel Powell requesting that their reserves be increased and that they be compensated for the land outside the reserves. According to government records, this petition caused officials in the Indian Affairs department in Ottawa to realize that treaties had never been signed in British Columbia. However, the relationship between Canada and British Columbia was fragile at that point because the possibility existed that the new province might separate from Canada to join the United States. As a result, the federal government ignored the Stó:lō petitions.

The Nisga'a and Tsimshian were among the earliest First Nations to take action against the reserve surveyors and the Indian Agents. They fought for recognition of Aboriginal title to the land and consistently opposed the idea of Indian reserves. Their protests were based on their traditional ideas regarding land ownership, which made house groups stewards over their territories. They found support for their position in statements made by the colonizers themselves, for example, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and a statement made by Lord Dufferin, Governor-General of Canada, when he visited Port Simpson and Metlakatla in 1876. Dufferin told the Tsimshian that the people of Canada recognized

them “as the ancient inhabitants of the country.” He also made a speech to politicians and businessmen in Victoria, saying:

We must all admit that the condition of the Indian question in British Columbia is not satisfactory. Most unfortunately, as I think, there has been an initial error ever since Sir James Douglas quitted office... of British Columbia neglecting to recognize what is known as Indian

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

1887 Meeting in Victoria

The meeting between the Nisga'a and Tsimshian leaders was held at the premier's house. Rev. Thomas Crosby was meant to be the interpreter, but since he was not permitted in the room, Nisga'a Chief Charles Barton, with some misgivings, was made interpreter. Following are some extracts from the transcript of this meeting.

Richard Wilson (Tsimshian): *You have power to very easily settle what we want, which is, to be free as well as the whites. You know, if they catch a little bird they put it in a cage. Probably that cage will be very fine; but still the bird will not be free. It will be in bondage; and that is the way with us, and is what we have come to tell you. Can we be free under the laws of Queen Victoria on the top of our land? We have seen that it is not only ourselves who will be in bondage, but it will be worse on our children. Now in this generation there are some who can read and write, who are educated. How much different the next generation will be from us we cannot say. I ask that you will always speak with the Indians just the same as we are speaking now together. Not by frightening us, or by a fuss, or making trouble to make it right, but to make it right with us by what in English you might call a treaty among the Indians. And that is all the world we ask you. This is all I have got to say, and hope that it will be settled. If it is not settled now, in what other way could we help ourselves?*

title. In Canada this has always been done: no government, whether provincial or central, has failed to acknowledge that the original title to the land existed in the Indian tribes and communities that hunted or wandered over them . . .

But in British Columbia, except [for the Douglas treaties] the Provincial Government has always assumed that the fee simple, as well as the sovereignty over the land, resided in the Queen.

Acting upon this principle, they have granted extensive grazing leases, and otherwise so dealt with various sections of the country as greatly to interfere with the prescriptive rights of the Queen's Indian subjects . . . I consider that our Indian fellow subjects are entitled to exactly the same civil rights under the laws as are possessed by the white population.²

The politicians in Victoria did not agree with Lord

Later, Nisga'a leader **John Wesley** spoke:

Our reserve is very little. We have not got any timber land. Neither have we got our hunting grounds. These are what we want and what we came for. We want you to cut out a bigger reserve for us and what we want after that is a treaty.

Hon. Mr. Smithe: What do you mean by a treaty?

John Wesley: I have mentioned after a certain amount of land is cut out for the Indians . . . outside of that we want such a law as the law of England and the Dominion government which made a treaty with the Indians.

Hon. Mr. Smithe: Where did you hear that?

John Wesley: It is in the law books.

Hon. Mr. Smithe: Who told you so?

John Wesley: There are a good many Indians that can read and write, and they are the ones who say this themselves.

Hon. Mr. Smithe: And they told you this, did they?

John Wesley: Yes.

Hon. Mr. Smithe: Well, I should like them to produce this book that they read this in. I have never seen that book.

John Wesley: We could not tell you the book just now; but we can probably find it for you if you really want to see it.

Hon. Mr. Smithe: *There is no such law either English or Dominion that I know of; and the Indians, or their friends, have been misled on that point.*

Later in the meeting the Premier explained that the Nisga'a and Tsimshian should count themselves lucky.

Hon. Mr. Smithe: *The Indians, indeed are specially favoured. When a white man comes into the country no land is given to him, no reserve is made for him, and he does not own a single inch until he has paid for it. The land all belongs to the Queen. The laws provide that if a white man requires a piece of land he must go to the Land Office and pay for it, and it is his. The Indian is placed in a better position. A reserve is given to each tribe, and they are not required to pay for it. It is the Queen's land just the same, but the Queen gives it to her Indian children because they do not know so well how to make their own living, the same as a white man, and special indulgence is extended to them and special care shown. Thus, instead of being treated like a white man, the Indian is treated better. But it is the hope of everybody that in a little while the Indians will be so far advanced as to be the same as a white man in every respect. Do you understand what I say?*

Charles Barton (Nisga'a): *I understand. As I said before, we have come for nothing but to see about the land which we know is ours.*³

Dufferin, however, and continued to deny Aboriginal title and implement the reserve system. In the 1880s, the northern people began actively seeking answers to their land claims questions by travelling to the seats of government. In 1881, Chief Mountain led a Nisga'a delegation to Victoria, and in 1885 three Tsimshian chiefs became the first First Nations delegation from British Columbia to travel to Ottawa. In 1886,



■ Chief Israel Sgat'iin, also known as Chief Mountain, wearing a silver-tipped grizzly robe. He held hereditary rights to wear this rare fur. In the 1880s he was a leader in protesting reserves and once stopped government surveyors from entering Nisga'a lands.

Tsimshian and Nisga'a leaders decided to join political forces to present their case to the representatives of the provincial and federal governments. They travelled through winter storms to meet Premier Smithe and others in February 1887. Accompanying them were Methodist missionaries Rev. Thomas Crosby and Rev. A. Green. However, the premier would not allow the ministers into the meeting, presumably believing that the First Nations people on their own would be unable to speak for themselves. It is clear from the records of these meetings, however, that First Nations leaders were able to speak for themselves very eloquently.

At the meeting in Victoria, the Nisga'a and Tsimshian leaders made a case for a treaty. The officials, however, kept returning to the idea of Indian reserves. The premier even tried to make out that there was no such thing as a treaty in Canada. Finally, the northern leaders requested that the government officials visit their territories to talk with all members of their nations. The government agreed, and set into motion a Royal Commission that travelled to the north coast and met with people, but ultimately did nothing to settle land claims or the question of Aboriginal title.

Potlatch Banned

The sweeping law set out in the Indian Act of 1876 was not having the success that Indian Affairs officials thought it should. People were not choosing to enfranchise themselves, but were continuing their cultural practices, including their spiritual practices. Consequently, in 1884 the government attacked the central expression of Northwest Coast culture and banned the potlatch. An amendment was made to the Indian Act forbidding the potlatch and other customs involving dancing and singing. Banning the potlatch, which was central to the political, economic, social, and spiritual life of many First Nations in British Columbia, was akin to some foreign power today banning all parliaments, libraries, banks, and churches.

Not all Euro-Canadians believed the potlatch

should be banned, but the church and the state certainly did. All they could see were the external aspects of the potlatch, the giving away of great amounts of wealth, and the weeks of unproductive time involved. From the perspective of the capitalist work ethic, the whole affair was simply wasteful and, because they did not understand it, they could see no purpose to it.

Many communities simply ignored the law, while others, particularly those which had incorporated Christianity into their belief systems, continued to practise potlatches in other forms. Some called the get-togethers “dinners” but kept the overt potlatch practices to a minimum. In some communities organizations such as the Fireman’s Brigade or sports clubs brought people together for public sharing. Indian Agents and missionaries, finding it impossible to enforce the potlatch ban, lobbied Indian Affairs to strengthen the law. This was done in 1895, when other cultural practices from other regions of the country were added. It effectively became illegal for a First Nations person to wear ceremonial articles or to dance in public.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Section 3, The Indian Act

Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the “Potlatch” or in the Indian dance known as the “Tamanawas” is guilty of a misdemeanour, and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than six nor less than two months in any gaol or other place of confinement; and any Indian or other person who encourages, either directly or indirectly, an Indian or Indians to get up such a festival or dance, or to celebrate the same, or who shall assist in the celebration of same is guilty of a like offense, and shall be liable to the same punishment.

State and Church Education

One of the main tools of colonialism in British Columbia and throughout the world was the education system. The values and the language of the colonizing culture could be taught to the youngest generation through educational institutions. To make schools even more effective, the students were taken out of their home environment and isolated in a foreign environment.

In Canada, the education system for First Nations children was a partnership between the Department of Indian Affairs and the Christian churches. The missionaries shared the beliefs of government officials regarding First Nations people, and had operated their own schools since their arrival. In the words of Rev. Thomas Crosby, a Methodist missionary, “Our way to a heathen tribe was often through the school.”

Most reserve communities were aligned with one of the major Christian denominations, and children from the reserve went to schools operated by their local church, even though they might be a great distance away. Children from Methodist (later United Church) communities usually attended Coqualeetza at Sardis, near Chilliwack in the Fraser Valley. Some students from these communities also went to the United Church residential school in Port Alberni. Children from Anglican communities went to the residential school in Alert Bay or Lytton. Catholics attended school at places such as Kuper Island near Chemainus and St. Mary’s at Mission.

Even though many students were eager to learn, these schools gave them little opportunity beyond the most basic academic and practical skills. They were only in class for half the school day; the other half they spent applying their practical skills to such tasks as cleaning and laundry. The students were required to work not only to maintain the institution, but also to produce the food they would eat. They spent time in the bakery, the dairy, or the garden. It is not surprising that many people who attended residential schools

■ The Catholic, United, and Anglican churches ran 17 residential schools in B.C. This is St. Michael's, the Anglican school in Alert Bay from 1929 to 1973.

say they were like slaves, having to perform tasks that in any other situation would have been done by paid employees.

One of the greatest wedges driven between the old and new ways was the enforced use of the English language. Students were not permitted to use their own languages at any time, and if they did, were often physically punished. The state and the church knew very well that culture is transmitted by language, and by imposing the English language they could impose English culture.



Not all First Nations children went to residential schools. Communities continued to have local schools called Indian Day Schools, which, at least until the 1950s, were run by local missionary teachers. By law, people with Indian status were not allowed to go



■ Pictured here is the Junior Girls class at the Alberni Indian Residential School in approximately 1930.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Jeannette Armstrong

In 1988 Okanagan educator and writer Jeannette Armstrong was one of several invited guests at a conference hosted by Simon Fraser University on the theme "Women and Language Across Cultures." Here is an excerpt from her talk.

I was one of the lucky people on my reservation. I was born into a traditional family: my family is an old family in the Okanagan with a long history. They were given responsibilities that date back thousands of years. Because of those responsibilities, they kept certain parts of our culture and our traditions alive and handed them down to other people in the Okanagan, to other children of generations coming. As a result, my family took a really hard line on independence during the colonial process and withstood real hardship during the past one hundred years of brutality that all my people in Canada and the United States shared.

As a youth, I did not understand why my family were the way they were. I remember as a teenager that I began to understand the value of being who I am, an Okanagan woman, a person who has been educated and taught many things that other people did not have access to. Many of our people were coerced and brutalized for speaking their language and practicing their culture until their memory grew distant and dim. Over the years my family was able to separate us from that in many ways.

My grandmother refused to speak English all her life. I really admire her for that. She refused to acknowledge any English word from any of us, refused to allow my father and my uncles and my sisters to receive any sort of white education, in any way. At the time my father was a child, the government was taking Native children by force and putting them in residential schools. They were called agricultural schools at that time. The children raised pigs, they raised potatoes and they fed the nuns and priests—really well. My father



did not attend these schools. He married and had children when the provincial government was coercing people in our communities, forcibly removing the children and putting them into residential schools at Kamloops, and they resisted that.

There was a huge battle. There are newspaper accounts of this mini-war that happened in our community, right on our reserve. The traditional people who were not adherents of the Catholic Church just refused, said "No, we're not letting our children be taken." My father stood by that, but at the same time he knew and realized that the world was changing, that there was a need for his children to be able to speak our language and learn to survive in this world where English is a must. He spoke to the people, the traditional leadership in the community, and said there needed to be schools on the reservation and only then would his children attend.⁴

CASE STUDY

Death of a Residential School Runaway

On a cold February afternoon in 1902, nine boys ran away from the Williams Lake Industrial School, trying to return to their homes. Eight were captured and returned to the school, but one, eight-year-old Duncan Sticks, was able to escape capture. However, his parents were not informed that he was missing and no one from the school went after him until too late. Two days later he was discovered dead in the snow by a local farmer between the school and his home at Alexis Creek.

The background to this sad episode and its outcome both reveal the relationship which existed between Indian Affairs and churches in running residential schools, while practically ignoring their relationships with the First Nations community.

The Catholic church established St. Joseph's mission in northern Secwepemc territory near Williams Lake, and in the 1880s began the Williams Lake Industrial School, a residential school for boys and girls from surrounding communities such as Alexis Creek, Canim Lake, and Williams Lake. Girls and boys lived, studied, and worked apart, in separate buildings.

Priests were responsible for the boys, and nuns for the girls. As was the case in similar schools, pupils studied basic academic subjects in the morning and "industrial training" in the afternoon. This, in reality, meant working in the kitchen, bakery, workshops, or fields.

Labour disguised as instruction was central to the school's operation, although it had little to do with the children or their families. Money was the key factor: the church never had enough to run the school properly. The school was inadequately funded by the Department of Indian Affairs. Soon after the school was built, parents requested that their children be given a month's holiday in the summer to visit with their families. The principal would only agree if the school continued to be paid for the days when the students were away. The department was not willing to do that, so the students had no holiday due to the financial need of the school, which later rationalized this decision by saying it was better for students to attend all year.

In the 1890s, to increase its income, the school sold the products made and harvested by the students, including

leather goods, grain, and hay. Students were not compensated in any way. Like children in other residential schools, they had to work to support the institutions, but in Williams Lake they also unwittingly entered the market economy.

This did not sit well with local merchants in Williams Lake and Kamloops, who complained to authorities. They weren't concerned about the fact that children were being used as a labour force, but the fact that their goods were being sold at lower prices with which the merchants could not compete. Indian Affairs supported the sale of goods, as it lifted from government the responsibility of paying for the full costs of running the school.

The fact that they were made to work was not the main reason Duncan Sticks and the other boys ran away, nor were they the first to do so. It was a sign of the conditions inside the institutions that runaways were a constant concern for most residential school staffs. And the explanation for the frequent attempts at escape given by authorities in this case is one more example of the government and churches' attitude towards their "wards."

to public schools until the Indian Act was revised to allow this in 1951.

In the end, residential schools did not accomplish what they and the Department of Indian Affairs had set out to do, that is, to assimilate First Nations people. They did, however, create extraordinary social problems for several generations of people who lost

their language and their normal childhood. Some people had positive experiences at residential school, but for most, the loneliness, the regimentation, and the institutionalization left terrible memories. For many, the experience was much worse. Those who suffered physical, mental, or sexual abuse can only look back on residential schooling as a nightmare.

The principal and the Indian Agent agreed that an inquest would not be necessary, as it would be too expensive, and Duncan's body was buried without being examined by a coroner. The Indian Agent conducted a short investigation into the matter, and, when the boys told him they had run away because of the frequent whippings they received, put the episode down to "the wild nature of the Indian [who] hates confinement." The role of the school was to "civilize" the children, and running away was, to the Indian Agent, a perfect example of why this was necessary.

That would have been the end of the incident were it not for the antagonistic businessmen and others in the non-native community who learned of the death, and the fact that there had been no inquest. Seeing a possible public outcry blowing up, Indian Affairs called an inquest, and for five days the coroner and six jurors listened to witnesses describe the school. From the students who had previously run away, they learned that the worst of the conditions were the poor quality and small quantity of food, and the strict discipline, including frequent whippings. The jury concluded that indeed there were problems with the

operation of the Williams Lake Industrial School.

Given the jury's findings, Indian Affairs had to follow through, and the Indian Superintendent for British Columbia, A.W. Vowell, was directed to investigate. But Vowell appeared to be less concerned about the welfare of the children, than for the politics of the matter. As writer Elizabeth Furniss points out, Vowell had two purposes: first, to conduct a "public relations job" with the families, telling them the students' welfare was being looked after, and second, to intimidate the school staff into running a "tighter ship." His conclusions discredited the testimony at the inquest, saying the children had said what they thought the court expected to hear. He blamed the students for the problems. All they had to do, he said, was ask for more food and the staff would happily give it to them. Aside from the fact that often they wouldn't want to have more of the rotten meat served them, Vowell's response shows an utter lack of sympathy for these children. How could these little children, who were punished for simply speaking their own language, face the formidable authority of the priests and nuns to ask for more?

Vowell's report on the incident closed the case, but not the problems at the school. Runaways continued, and in the 1920s several students made a suicide pact. The nature of the relationship between the two agencies responsible for the care and education of First Nations children perpetuated the problems within the residential school. In the 1990s former students of the Williams Lake residential school were among the first to gather strength and take the very private experience of abuses suffered at the school into the public forum of the courts.

⁵

Treaty 8

The government of British Columbia consistently argued that Aboriginal rights, if they ever existed, had been extinguished at the time of Confederation. Why, then, did the government agree to a treaty in the Peace River region in 1899?

Between 1870 and 1877, the federal government negotiated Treaties 1 to 7 as part of a strategy to open up the west for settlement. Canada, which continued to follow the policy stated in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, needed to ensure there were no obstacles for new settlers on the Prairies. The regions north of the Prairies, from Saskatchewan across to the Rocky



Mountains, were occupied by Dunne-za (Beaver), Sekani, Dene-thah (Slavey), Chipewyan, and Cree people. This area had little farming potential, so no treaties were made there until gold seekers began travelling through the area.

Even before the influx of miners, the people living in this vast territory had called for a treaty because their way of life had changed. Before European contact, they were principally moose, caribou, and bison hunters. After the fur trade began, they devoted much more time to trapping and came to depend on the fur trade for income. By the 1880s, fur supplies in their territories were depleted, and there were so few fur-bearing animals that people could no longer

earn a living. Thus, many First Nations people saw the benefits of a treaty. Even the \$5.00 yearly cash payment (a fairly large sum at that time) to each person common to previously signed treaties would keep them from starvation.

The year 1897 brought many more prospectors travelling by pack trains along the trails from Edmonton, through Fort St. John, and on to Fort Graham. They were part of the Klondike gold rush, and they were determined to reach the Yukon and strike gold. Some of the men behaved with complete disregard for First Nations people. For example, they stole or shot First Nations' horses on numerous occasions. The First Nations people depended on

their horses not only for regular transportation, but also for packing, one of their sources of income. In one case, a miner shot two stallions belonging to Chief Montaigne of Fort St. John, because, he said, the stallions were chasing his horses.

The increase in the number of people moving along the trails also affected the traplines. Prospectors often destroyed traps that the Dunne-za had laboriously built or set. Some newcomers stole food or other items such as snowshoes which the people had cached in trees as they moved about their territories.

The First Nations could not tolerate this behaviour, and they retaliated. On one occasion, miners left seventy-five buggies and wagons at the top of a hill near Fort St. John. Some Dunne-za pushed the whole works down the steep hill. The Sekani near Fort Graham set up a toll gate for prospectors crossing their territories. Open hostility threatened when the travellers refused to pay.

By 1898, when the Klondike gold rush began in earnest, it was obvious that something had to be done before violence broke out, or, in the language of the day, there would be an "Indian War." The world learned of the tense situation in May, 1898, when five hundred First Nations people gathered at Fort St. John. They blocked the way of the miners and the Mounties. No one could pass, their leaders said, until the government signed a treaty with them. The story was carried in newspapers across North America, forcing the government to take action.

The process was set in motion to sign a treaty with the people of the vast territory in northern Alberta and Saskatchewan, in the southern Yukon, and in the Peace River region. The only problem was, the Peace River region was in British Columbia, and the B.C. government had stated clearly that it did not recognize Aboriginal title and would give no provincial land for treaties.

The federal government tried to involve B.C. in the treaty process, but politicians in Victoria ignored any

invitation to participate. Still, the federal government had a way around the issue. Previously, British Columbia had given a large tract of land in the Peace River region to Canada as part of a deal involved in the construction of railways in B.C. The original intention had not been to use this block of 8,850 square kilometres (5,500 square miles) for treaties or reserves, but now the province had no say in the matter. Not that it wanted any. By remaining silent about the issue, British Columbia could maintain its position that Aboriginal title did not exist. Still, the treaty stands today as proof that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 does apply to British Columbia, and that Aboriginal title was recognized, at least in one corner of the province.

1911 Victoria Conference

One of the first attempts to organize all the First Nations in B.C. came in 1909 with the formation of a group called the Indian Tribes of the Province of British Columbia. Around the same time, a number of ministers and other non-Aboriginal people formed the Committee of Friends of the Indians, with the goal of advancing the recognition of Aboriginal rights through public education and fundraising.

In March 1911, the Indian Tribes of B.C. held a conference in Victoria to discuss issues important to them and to meet with the premier of the day, Richard McBride. As they had been before, the clergy were accused not only of organizing the conference but also of inciting the First Nations people to militancy. "The entire course of the clerics," wrote one paper, "is warmly criticised."

At the opening of the conference, Rev. C.M. Tate, a minister and leader of the Committee of Friends, presented a draft of a petition for the group to sign. A young man jumped up. He spoke eloquently against signing Tate's petition. The First Nations people needed to make their own statements, said Peter Kelly, the Haida representative from Skidegate. And when he spoke, the people listened.



■ The ceremony marking the transfer of the Songhees reserve on Victoria harbour to the province of B.C. in 1911.

Peter Kelly, only twenty-five years old, was educated both in the Haida community of Skidegate and at Coqualeetza Residential School in the Fraser Valley. He continued reading and studying on his own, until he understood constitutional law and the matters relating to Aboriginal rights. When he was only eighteen, he became the teacher at the Skidegate school, and in 1910 was made the lay minister and teacher at the Tsimshian village of Hartley Bay.

At the Victoria Conference, he argued that instead of simply accepting Rev. Tate's petition, the gathered leaders should discuss fully their intentions and their demands. He pointed out the folly of Section 13 of the Terms of Union which required Canada to continue the colonial policies with regard to land issues. But the colony had never established title to the land; it had only assumed it. It was this point, Kelly argued, that needed to be made to the premier. After three days of discussion, the leaders agreed, and appointed Peter Kelly to be their speaker.

On March 3, 1911, nearly one hundred chiefs and leaders from all parts of the province met Premier McBride. Chief Chiekleets of Douglas Lake headed the delegation. Peter Kelly read the unified statement of the chiefs, and spoke powerfully in favour of it. The premier, however, would not consider the question of Aboriginal title. He told the chiefs that he didn't even know there was a problem until a few months earlier. "The question of title," newspapers such as the *Prince Rupert Empire* reported him saying, "would never have been raised were it not for the pernicious activity of some white men who should have known better. If they had any legitimate grievances these should be presented to the Indian department at Ottawa, as they were the wards of the Dominion government."⁶

The province had once again made its position clear. At the same time, other activities reflected the government's policies in practice. Two days after the report of the Victoria Conference appeared in the *Prince Rupert Empire*, another article appeared,

describing the anticipated arrival of five hundred men to mine and farm in the Nass valley. The headline unabashedly read, “To Exploit the Nass Valley.” One month after the Victoria Conference, Premier McBride purchased the reserve lands of the Songhees tribe on Victoria harbour. The headline read “Cold Cash for Songhees Indians.”

Similarly, in 1913, the Kitsilano people living on the shores of False Creek in Vancouver, after tremendous pressure, sold their reserve to the

province. The deal, signed on a barge on the beach by the Attorney General of British Columbia, was highly questionable. The Indian Act was ignored, no surrender from Indian Affairs was obtained, nor did the federal government intervene on behalf of the Kitsilano people. In July 2000, after years of legal action, the Squamish Nation and Canada agreed on a settlement to compensate for the loss of these lands, which today include Vanier Park, roads to the Burrard Street Bridge, and a number of industries.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The division of powers at the time of Confederation was to have long-lasting repercussions on First Nations societies. The federal government assumed responsibility for First Nations people as wards of the government, while the province had control over crown lands. This, along with B.C.’s repeated refusal to recognize Aboriginal rights, has left the land claims issue in a stalemate since Confederation in 1871.

The Indian Act was passed in 1876, effectively taking control of many aspects of their lives away from First Nations individuals and communities. They were restricted to small fragments of their former territories by the establishment of Indian reserves. They were banned from continuing important cultural practices such as the potlatch, and many of their children were taken away to residential schools where the continuity of family life and language learning were disrupted. The damage to families and communities has lasted

for several generations, and First Nations are still in the process of healing from that devastation.

However, from the first, First Nations people resisted these discriminatory laws. They consistently maintained their right to Aboriginal title and sovereignty to the land of their ancestors. They always attempted to meet with political leaders on a nation-to-nation basis.

Ironically, Treaty 8 was signed with the First Nations of northeastern B.C., but due to unusual circumstances, the province was not a party to it.

Until 1911, most resistance was undertaken by individual groups, but that year in Victoria, the beginnings of a unified protest movement began when many First Nations gathered to present a petition to Premier Richard McBride. He resolutely rejected the notion of Aboriginal title.

Adapting to New Economies

Traditional First Nations economies were based on extended families working together to provide for the whole group. Europeans brought a new economy based on the production of the individual. With the discovery of gold in the 1850s, thousands of newcomers entered the colony. By the early 1860s, mining, forestry, and fishing had replaced the fur trade to become the backbone of British Columbia's settler economy.

In this chapter we will see how First Nations people applied their traditional skills to jobs such as fishing, logging, ranching, and other resource-based industries. By joining the wage economy, First Nations people were no longer working for the good of their communities but for the capitalist interests that operated these industries. This fundamentally changed the relationship between First Nations people and the non-Aboriginal newcomers. First Nations people were no longer valued as trading partners. They were seen only as workers in a rapidly growing labour force.

As they became integrated into these industries, control of the land and resources was taken away from First Nations through the combined powers of the companies and discriminatory laws. Without First Nations ever ceding their Aboriginal title, their resources were appropriated and their traditional way of life was made perilously difficult. How the division of work between women and men was allocated changed, and families underwent major stresses. As well, subsistence activities on the land became more difficult as habitats deteriorated.

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system in which private wealth or capital is invested to produce and distribute goods at a profit. In order to accumulate wealth, owners hire labour to produce the goods. Market forces determine production and distribution.

Colonialism and Resource Appropriation

The relationship between non-Aboriginal newcomers and First Nations has revolved around the exploitation and appropriation of the natural resources of British Columbia. The fur trade economy allowed First Nations people a great deal of control; however as the fur traders gave way to settlers, First Nations people lost control over trade. In the Fraser Valley and the southern interior, many settlers arrived to introduce a new lifestyle, that of the farmer. They exercised their rights as British citizens to homestead large tracts of land, rights that were denied First Nations people. By the 1880s, First Nations' control of valuable land and resources was almost completely destroyed through laws and practices introduced by governments to provide for the Euro-Canadian settlers.

In the 1880s, under the provisions of the Canada Fisheries Act, specific laws were passed to create the legal category of "food fishing." This law said that under their Aboriginal fishing rights, First Nations people could use salmon resources for food and ceremonial uses only. The main effect of the law was to forbid the sale of fish caught by First Nations people within their traditional fisheries. As a result, First Nations lost their traditional and customary ownership of fishing resources. Ownership shifted into the hands of industrial capitalist fishing firms, in which First Nations people worked primarily as labourers.


Appropriate (v)

To appropriate something is to take possession of it, usually unlawfully or without authority.

The struggle of First Nations people to regain control of their traditional land and resources continues to bring them into conflict with non-Aboriginals employed in resource extraction industries such as fishing, forestry, mining, and agriculture. For over a century the needs of a market economy based on resource extraction industries have taken precedence over First Nations Aboriginal title to the land and resources. For many non-Aboriginals, the prospect of settling land claims with First Nations sparks fears of loss of jobs and homes. In contrast, First Nations people look forward to a better tomorrow in which they again control their traditional territories. As we will see in Chapter 8, this fundamental issue remains unresolved.

Fishing for a Living

From about 1880 until the mid-1970s, commercial fishing, logging, and mining were the major industries in British Columbia. Throughout this period First

 A First Nations commercial fisher on the Skeena River in the 1920s.

Nations women and men were workers on fishing boats and in fish plants, mills, and logging camps. On the north coast, First Nations fishers and cannery workers supplied the bulk of the early labour force. Cannery managers would contract with local village or house leaders to hire entire families much the same way as trading alliances had been organized during the fur trade period. This system quickly broke down in the south of the province under the onslaught of Euro-American settlement, but it remained the dominant mode of labour recruitment on the north and central coasts until the 1950s, when factors such as global markets, improved technology, and more government regulation shifted the employers' demand for First Nations workers.

In the early years First Nations people became allies with non-Aboriginal people in the trade union movement that fought for workers' rights in the fishing industry. In the 1890s they played a prominent role in central and north coast fish strikes. They were also decisive in turning the tide in favour of the Fishermen's Union in a critical strike on the Fraser River in 1900.

That Fraser River strike was important for two major reasons: (1) it demonstrated that a labour force from diverse cultural backgrounds could work together toward a common goal, and (2) it established that the employers, the cannery owners, had to

Trade union

A trade union, also known as a labour union, is an organized association of workers formed to protect and further their rights and interests and to bargain collectively with employers on issues such as working conditions and wages.





First Nations women became an essential part of the workforce in salmon canneries. These skilled workers were paid according to the number of trays of cans they filled.

share some of their profits with the workers. After nearly thirty years of expansion, the industrial canning industry was an almost invincible force. Until the 1900 strike the large fish processing firms had almost complete control. They dictated nearly all terms of employment, and they set the prices of fish and the conditions of work. Following the strike, however, the canning industry was faced with a union movement that went beyond racial, gender, and regional boundaries to act collectively in the interests of workers.

Union building in the fishing industry was most intense in the 1890s–1910s (led by the Second International Socialist Party of Canada) and in 1925–1945 (led by the Communist Party of Canada). Organizers worked hard at building labour unions that included both First Nations and non-Aboriginal people. Although they were accepting of First Nations organizing their own workers, most union organizers believed that First Nations people's interests were with the working class in general. In fact, from the 1890s until the Depression of the 1930s, First Nations fishers chose to join the unions rather than organize themselves. But First Nations fishers ultimately

found themselves in conflict with many of their non-Aboriginal co-workers because the trade unions never developed a united policy to recognize and lobby for First Nations' Aboriginal rights and title.

In 1931 leading commercial fishermen from Haida and Tsimshian villages formed the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, which pledged to work for the recognition of Aboriginal rights in hunting, fishing, trapping, and off-reserve logging activities. Eventually the women's section of the Native Brotherhood, the Sisterhood, led the struggle for better working conditions and wages for women working in the fish canneries. Over time the Native Brotherhood expanded from the north coast to the south coast, and began to act as a union for First Nations fishermen. In 1943 it signed its first contract with canning companies.

Meanwhile in their role as labour brokers for the canneries, some First Nations leaders were able to accumulate wealth and assume positions of higher social rank. On the north coast, for example, when the restriction on using motorized boats in the gillnet fishery was lifted in 1923, leading First Nations fishers purchased their own boats, often using their control of

CASE STUDY

Rivers Inlet Salmon Canning

Rivers Inlet reaches approximately 48 km (30 mi) into the Coast Mountains on B.C.'s central coast. The Owikeno people live at the head of what is called Rivers Inlet, where the Wannock River runs into the sea. For centuries they had enjoyed the riches of one of the largest salmon runs in the province. Everything changed in the 1880s when the salmon cannery boom hit their peaceful waters. Before long nearly a dozen canneries were built along the shoreline. Hundreds of workers descended during the summer, caught and canned as much salmon as they could, then left again.

Many of the workers were First Nations people from up and down the coast, from Tsimshian in the north to Coast Salish in the south. A large proportion came from Alert Bay and other Kwakwaka'wakw communities. Their age-old skills in fishing and processing salmon were valuable to the canners, and they formed the backbone of the workforce, especially in the early years of the industry. Usually the men fished for salmon using gillnets set out from small open boats powered by oar and sail. The women worked in the canneries. Sometimes when the fish were plentiful they worked around the clock.

Each cannery was a self-contained community, a miniature village with homes and workspaces built on pilings and connected with boardwalks. They were highly segregated both in their assignment of jobs and in their living spaces.

Fishing was done by men of First Nations, Japanese, and European descent. The job of canning the fish was

done by Chinese men and First Nations women. Each ethnic group had its own area of the cannery village to live in. The management, always of European descent, lived in individual homes, the finest in the village. The Japanese lived in bunkhouses of eight to ten fishers. The Chinese workers, always men, had the worst living conditions. They all lived in one large bunkhouse.

Cannery employees worked under a contract system. The complete canning operation was given to a Chinese contractor, who hired the Chinese men and First Nations women who made the cans, butchered the salmon, washed and cleaned the salmon, packed the fish into cans, sealed and cooked them, boxed them and loaded them onto the steamers that shipped them away to markets around the world. The women were paid piece rates, a few cents for each tray of tins filled.

For First Nations people, coming to the cannery in the summer was a family affair. They lived in small cabins, usually built in rows, often over the water. Each family, no matter how large, had a little cabin of about 7 by 3 metres, with a small room used as a living room, dining room, and kitchen, and two tiny bedrooms. Furniture was rustic, usually hand-built.

First Nations people often faced discrimination in the company store. Some stores set different prices for their goods, the lowest for the white workers and the highest for First Nations shoppers.

The living conditions were cramped and unhealthy. Working conditions were harsh, given the stench and the noise

of the canneries. Yet many First Nations people who experienced this lifestyle have a fondness for those days. The work was difficult, but the social side of the life made up for it. With so many people gathering together, there was a great sharing of friendship and culture.

Chief Harry Assu of Cape Mudge recalled the excitement of travelling to Rivers Inlet in the 1920s:

Our people all went off together as families around June twentieth on the Union Steamship that called in at Quathiaski Cove twice a week. It was like a summer holiday beginning. It must have been like that in the old days when we had this country to ourselves and our people all started off together in spring from the winter village to head out to the summer camping grounds . . . We worked hard, and we had a very good time too. The best thing was that our friends and families were all there together. I remember that there was a big net-loft where we danced on the weekends. It was a lot of fun.¹

By the 1930s, the industry had changed considerably since its early days. Mechanization had replaced much of the hand-operated canning equipment. Most fishers now used larger gillnetters with gasoline-powered engines. Many of the smaller independent canneries had closed or been swallowed up by a few large companies. The cannery owners tried to reduce the price paid for fish as low as possible, while increasing rent on boats and nets. They also encouraged

Continued



■ The price paid for salmon was at the heart of the 1936 strike that shut down Rivers Inlet canneries.

more boats to fish, meaning the average earnings dropped. Fishers were going deeper and deeper into debt.

In 1936 there were eight canneries operating on Rivers Inlet, with 1,300 fishers who had barely managed to survive the Depression of the early thirties. Now that the economy was back on its feet they wanted a better price for the fish.

Instead, the companies offered a cut of 5 cents a fish. In those days, fishers were paid a set price per fish, not by weight as today. All the companies were willing to pay was 45 cents for one rich Rivers Inlet sockeye. The reason, they said, was that they were smaller than the Skeena River sockeye, which were worth 50 cents each.

Fisheries and shoreworkers had gone on strike numerous times since the beginning of the industry, but by

the 1930s they were becoming more organized. The Fishermen's and Cannery Workers Industrial Union became the major player in 1934.

In June 1936, union organizers set out to shut down salmon fishing on Rivers Inlet. Fishers of all races joined together in solidarity. They felt if they stood unified, the strike would be over in a week and the canneries would have to raise the price to 50 cents a fish.

But the employers did not give in. They were determined to stop the union. They encouraged non-union men to fish for them. Rivers Inlet canneries locked their company stores to anyone belonging to the union. Families were starving. The strike dragged on until it was too late. The fish had gone, and there was nothing to fight over.

This strike was an important turning point in the development of an independent First Nations voice for workers in the fishing industry. Many union fishermen saw the Rivers Inlet strike

as a major advance for unions, but many First Nations still think of it as a betrayal. The conflict between non-Aboriginal and First Nations union members grew out of differences in where their home port was, and how involved their families were in the fishing industry.

A great many of the non-Aboriginal fishers lived in Vancouver. Each season they would ready their boats, leave their families behind, and set sail for fishing grounds spread along the coast. First Nations fishers, on the other hand, mostly fished in or close to their historic territories. More often than not their entire family laboured in the fishing industry either as fishers or shore workers.

In the Rivers Inlet strike, First Nations fishers were concerned about the well-being of their families locked away behind picket lines. Kwakwaka'wakw Chief James Sewid said, "We weren't allowed to go up to Knight Inlet to see our wives and children and we wanted to know how they were getting along. They finally settled it but we didn't make hardly anything at all because we had been tied up nearly all season." Following this incident the Pacific Coast Native Fishermen's Association was formed at Alert Bay on the south coast. It later amalgamated with the north coast Native Brotherhood of British Columbia to form one unified coast-wide organization.

the labour supply in the competitive market to extract loans for this purpose from the cannery owners. Though some Aboriginal chiefs raised sufficient capital to purchase their own boats and then break free from the companies, most First Nations fishers could not. The reason for this is embedded in the colonial relationship between the Canadian state and First Nations. Legal restrictions prevented First Nations fishers from borrowing money from banks, keeping them tied to the processing companies through debt. Changing fisheries management regulations and technological innovation combined, moreover, to push up the cost of operation, driving First Nations fishers out of the fishery.

Fishers of European descent faced an entirely different set of conditions. While there were no legal barriers designed to prevent them from securing a loan to buy a fishing boat, the fish companies were able to maintain effective control over the Euro-Canadian fishers through a monopoly-like control of fish prices. As opposed to their First Nations brethren, Euro-Canadian fishers could not rely upon a subsistence base or home village in times of need. Most resource workers of European descent circulated between jobs in forestry, fishing, construction, or other semi-skilled industrial jobs. Their only effective resistance against exploitation within the market economy was collective organization, as in trade unions, cooperatives, or credit unions.

A vital cooperative and credit union movement in the Euro-Canadian communities following World War II created an avenue of escape for fishers. Once out from under the economic control of the companies, an independent boat-owning class of predominantly Euro-Canadian fishers developed.

The fish canning industry in British Columbia has always relied upon a workforce segregated by race and gender. While this produced immediate and pronounced benefits for the companies and their distant shareholders, it has not been in the best

interests of either First Nations or Euro-Canadian communities. The different historical links of Euro-Canadian and First Nations to the fishing industry has led to the current segregation of the fleet. First Nations fishers are more highly concentrated in the north and among the gillnet fleets. Euro-Canadian fishers, though by no means absent in the gillnet fleet, predominate in the more capital-intensive seine and offshore fleets.

Working in Agriculture

A common assumption of colonialism is that agriculture is the hallmark of civilization, as if there is an evolutionary scale of development and those societies with agriculture are more advanced. This false assumption led the agents of colonialism to see First Nations people as uncivilized because they were not farmers. Government agents and missionaries were determined to make First Nations people farmers as part of their process of civilization.

Most coastal First Nations had very little arable land even if they were inclined to farm. Interior First Nations did join in the agricultural economy to some degree, but discriminatory laws which favoured the settlers put almost insurmountable obstacles in their way. Just as the industrial take-over of the salmon resource displaced First Nations of the coast from their fishing grounds, so did agricultural interests displace interior people from their territories. They had a small land base and little capitalization to operate commercial farms. Instead, they formed an important segment of the agricultural workforce.

A vast difference existed between the economic, social, and political structures of traditional First Nations resource-gathering, and Euro-Canadian farming. First Nations people utilized a wide diversity of plants and animals, moving throughout a large expanse of land. Farmers used a limited number of crops or livestock, sometimes restricting their total production to one crop such as grain or hops. They

Looking across the Thompson River near Kamloops, with a view of fertile farm land. As settlers pre-empted large tracts of land for farming, First Nations lost much of their most productive land.



lived and worked in one spot year-round. Hunting and gathering required less work, but larger spaces. Farming was much more labour-intensive, with the tilling, planting, weeding, and harvesting that needed to be done.

The principal resources required for agriculture are land and water. First Nations people were unable to fully participate in agriculture because they were denied access to these resources. Any British citizen could come into the province and squat on 160 to 320 acres of “unoccupied” land, and it was theirs, as long as they “improved” the land. Improving the land meant clearing it and converting it to agricultural land. As we have already seen, First Nations people could not pre-empt land in this way.

Settlers arrived in growing numbers in the 1860s and 1870s, taking up land and water rights. There were laws which prohibited settlers from claiming lands that were burial sites, First Nations villages, or cultivated fields, but these were often ignored. When First Nations people tried to seek justice, they found the legal system was against them.

Many people were in despair. The survivors of the smallpox epidemic were just getting back on their feet again, only to find their land base disappearing. Not only that, animals such as deer and beaver were being

driven from their habitats. When the Fraser River salmon run failed in 1879, things became desperate. The despair of one of the leaders of the time, Chief William of the Williams Lake band, is clear in his letter printed in the *Victoria Daily Colonist*:

*I am an Indian chief and my people are threatened by starvation. The white men have taken all the land and all the fish. The country was ours. It is all gone. The noise of the threshing machine and the wagon has frightened the deer and the beaver. We have nothing to eat. We cannot live on the air, and we must die. My people are sick. My young men are angry . . . The land on which my people lived for five hundred years was taken by a white man; he has piles of wheat and herds of cattle. We have nothing not an acre. Another white man can take three hundred and twenty acres of our land and the Indian dare not touch an acre . . . Now, what I want to say is this—there will be trouble, sure. The whites have taken all the salmon and all the land and my people will not starve in peace.*²

First Nations people became involved in agriculture in three ways: subsistence farming, commercial farming, and working as farm labourers. Subsistence farming, that is farming to provide food for the family, was the most common. It took many forms, from potato gardens which were widespread in coastal villages to larger farms elsewhere with poultry, vegetable gardens, hay, and cows for milk.

Commercial farming was undertaken in relatively few areas of the province, primarily in the Cowichan Valley, the Fraser Valley, and the Okanagan. The height of First Nations commercial farming was between 1890 and 1920. However, many factors made it difficult for these farms to succeed. Partly, it was due to the economics of the time, as small farmers generally were having difficulty by World War I. First Nations farmers faced other obstacles. They could not increase their land base, since they were restricted to using only their reserve land. They had no access to water for irrigation, because people living on reserves could not get a water licence. Gradually, the commercial farms died out as people realized they could make more money working as labourers for the owners of large farms. Seasonal work on farms in many ways suited the lifestyle of First Nations people better than running their own farms because they could continue with their seasonal activities.



Working in a potato field near Bella Coola in 1913. First Nations people grew potatoes in many parts of the province, particularly on the coast and in the Okanagan.

Labouring on Hop Farms

The hop industry was one of the first agricultural enterprises that hired large numbers of First Nations people as seasonal workers. The flowers of the hop plant, used in the making of beer, ripened in late August or early September. Large hop plantations required hundreds of workers. Hop farmers of



Cabins on a hop farm in the Fraser Valley, 1950, where First Nations families lived during the hop-picking season.

CASE STUDY

Farming in the Okanagan

One of British Columbia's prime agricultural areas is the Okanagan Valley, where fruits and vegetables flourish in a hot summer climate. But the story of the relationship of the Okanagan people with the farming industry is another example of how Euro-Canadian social, economic, and political structures replaced those of First Nations people.

The Okanagan tribes are members of the Interior Salish language family, whose traditional economy produced a wide range of food and materials throughout the mountains and valleys of their territories. These are dry lands, except around the series of long, narrow lakes that run in a north-south corridor. There were ten winter villages, most on the same sites as the present-day towns and cities.

When the first settlers arrived in the 1880s, the Okanagan people were already familiar with agricultural methods. They were skilled at stockraising, for they had been keeping horses for a century and a half. The horse fit in well with the flexible nature of their resource gathering, and also made long distance trading journeys easier. In more recent years, people had learned how to grow fruit and vegetables from the Hudson's Bay Company posts which all had gardens. Most Okanagan

people, like First Nations people throughout the province, grew potatoes beginning in the 1840s.

By the 1860s miners and farmers were moving into the Okanagan Valley and squatting on traditional sites. To avoid conflict between First Nations people and the newcomers, Governor James Douglas negotiated peace agreements with the Okanagan and other interior people. Okanagan chiefs agreed to permit Europeans to share their land and resources, as long as they were guaranteed the ability to continue with their traditional hunting and fishing practices. Reserve lands were set aside for the Okanagan people, lands that included space for raising cattle and farming as well as for hunting and fishing. Substantial reserves of land were marked out by the local Lands Commissioner, William Cox, guided by the Okanagan chiefs. Most of the flat land around the southern and northern ends of Okanagan Lake was included in the reserve lands, as well as traditional village sites, fishing camps, and gardens. While conditions were more restrictive than before the Europeans came, they at least seemed to offer opportunities not only for following their traditional economies, but participating in the new economies if they so desired.

Increasing numbers of settlers made it clear to the colonial powers, however, that these large reserves were a hindrance to settlement. The Okanagan people were viewed simply as obstacles in the way of progress, rather than owners of the land with whom the newcomers would negotiate. For example, in the winter of 1865 a rancher brought two hundred head of cattle down from the mountains into the valley for wintering. The best wintering grounds were at Penticton, where there was plenty of feed and protection from the weather. However, the rancher was unwilling to pay the Penticton people for wintering his cattle there, so he moved them to a less desirable location where most of the cattle died.

The very next year all the Okanagan reserve lands were slashed in size. Douglas had retired in 1864 and colonial policies involving First Nations lands were taken over by Joseph Trutch. The reserves marked out by Cox were ignored. New, much smaller and less valuable lands were set out by a local magistrate named Haynes. The man who surveyed the new reserves probably spoke for the ranchers when he wrote, "Mr. Haynes' reservation at Penticton is a great improvement to the last."

western Washington, the Saanich Peninsula, the Fraser Valley, and the Okanagan Valley depended on First Nations workers from the 1870s to the 1940s, when mechanization replaced them.

Hundreds of families travelled to the hop fields from the coast and the interior. Usually the beginning

of the hop season coincided with the end of the main salmon canning season. Women and children picked the hop flowers, while the men took care of the plants, transported the full sacks, and operated the kilns where the hops were processed. Pickers earned about one cent a pound. The faster workers could pick 300 pounds in a day, earning a total of \$3.00 a day.

Ranching became the way of life in the Okanagan during the final decades of the 1800s. Settlers could acquire huge tracts of grass-covered hills for grazing. One ranch near Vernon, Coldstream, had a great influence on the development of agriculture in the Okanagan Valley. Coldstream couldn't have had a more colonial landowner. The ranch was owned by the Earl of Aberdeen, who later became Governor-General of Canada. He initiated many of the changes in the valley, encouraging settlement, beginning the orchard industry, and building irrigation systems.

Hops were one of the crops grown at Coldstream, to be shipped to Britain. Aberdeen relied on First Nations labourers to pick the hops. Okanagan people were the major workforce, but families came from Lytton, Similkameen, and as far away as eastern Washington. Hundreds of families gathered at the farm for a month in early September, camping in tents. Aberdeen maintained a level of economic control which kept the wages circulating in the settler community. First Nations workers weren't paid in cash, but rather with coupons, coloured cards printed with different denominations, which could only be cashed at local stores.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the cattle industry was disappearing from the Okanagan. Rich grasslands

were overgrazed, making it harder and harder to feed the animals. More settlers were moving in, dividing the land into smaller sections, with fences dividing them. Instead, fruit farming became the main form of agriculture in the valley. One resource was key to running a profitable orchard, and that was water. In the dry, hot summers, expensive irrigation systems were indispensable. In the following years, access to water was to play a defining role in the ability of the Okanagan First Nations to participate in the industry.

There should have been every reason for Okanagan people to become active owners and operators in the fruit industry. By 1890 they were as skilled farmers as any. They successfully cultivated land and grew a variety of crops. Much of their produce was used for subsistence, but there was enough left over to sell at a profit.

Then, in the 1890s, the realities of the reserve system brought development to a halt. More people had turned to farming, and the fields were expanded until there was no room left on the reserves. But because of the special laws governing them, First Nations could not acquire additional land. In fact, they found their reserves shrinking as the government arbitrarily removed acreage. For instance, the chief of the N'kamapeleks applied

for more land, but instead reserve land was taken away from them in favour of settlers.

As well as a shortage of land, a shortage of capital to invest in fruit farming was a hindrance to agricultural development for the Okanagan people. Perhaps the most frustrating obstacle, however, was access to water supplies for irrigation. Water rights were controlled by the provincial government under the British Columbia Water Act, and water licences were denied to anyone who did not own their land in fee simple. Of course, under the Indian Act, the Okanagans could not own land individually. The province consistently refused to consider special dispensation for the First Nations farmers. In some cases farmers were forced to defy the laws and use water to save their crops, only to be thrown in jail.

Instead of participating in significant ways in the agricultural economy of their valley, the Okanagan people had to settle for working as labourers on the farms of the newcomers. The farmers depended on them for much of the work required to send the fruit off to market, from picking in the fields to canning and packing.

Hop picking was more than an opportunity to earn extra income. It was an enjoyable social gathering. With hundreds of families living on the fields, there was a great deal of interaction between people from many different nations, from the Tsimshian of the north coast to the Secwepemc of the interior. People

traded food and things they had made, caught up on the news, and held competitions, especially slahal (lahal).

Ranching

Cattle ranching came to the interior of B.C. from the United States in the 1860s following the Cariboo gold rush. The large expanses of land necessary to raise cattle were apparently there for the taking for the newcomers. The colonial government sold or leased land for very little. Soon ranching became established in the Okanagan Valley, the Nicola Valley, the Cariboo, and the Chilcotin country. Many First Nations people found that ranching fit their lifestyle; since they were already expert at riding and breeding horses it made sense to apply these skills to raising cattle.

Some First Nations people were able to run their own ranches successfully, but they were the exception. The Okanagan people of Spaxomin, at the west end of Douglas Lake, have worked with cattle since they were introduced. One of the leaders



First Nations men from the Soda Creek reserve in 1901. Many First Nations men worked on ranches as cowboys and labourers, while First Nations women were often employed as camp cooks.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Chief Johnny Chillihitzia

I want to speak to you about grazing. Long ago the Indians already started to have cattle, horses, and everything, and they had the use of the range and the Indians succeeded in getting large stock for themselves, and at that time they had big use of the range; it was not under control then, and they had a lot of stock, and it increased because there was range for the Indians at that time—open range. Now the white people sell it between themselves, and they are all taken up, and the Indians have no more land, and finally the Indians' cattle diminished, because they were short of land.

... At the time [Reserve Commissioner] Sproat came and had the reserves surveyed out for the Indians he said, "This stream that runs through the reserve is for your use; after a while you maybe will get to know how to cultivate your land, and that will be for your water—for irrigation. Now, I am going to record this water for you Indians with the Queen." Now, the water



Chief Johnny Chillihitzia (centre) standing with two members of the McKenna-McBride Commission in 1912 or 1913.

is taken away from the Indians by the white people ... Long ago, when they had the use of the waters, the Indians had a lot of grain and potatoes which they planted, and they sowed their wheat...

*Now the Indians are poor because their water is taken away from them, and the water is taken from the Indians in Kamloops by the harbour account, and their land is dried up, and they have not water to irrigate it. Now, the Indians want to have their water given back to them.*³

was Chief Johnny Chillihtizia, who owned hundreds of cattle and horses. In addition to being a successful rancher, he was a strong leader for the interior people in the political arena.

In the Peace River, the first ranchers were the Thomas family, who were of Iroquois and Métis descent. Napoleon Thomas, the head of the family who moved to the Peace River in the 1890s, paid a price to become a rancher. He had signed Treaty 8, but had to give up his Indian status and his treaty rights in order to pre-empt land. He and his family raised Black Angus cattle and a large number of horses. They adapted new economic opportunities into their traditional lifestyle. Mrs. Thomas was noted for the quality of her leatherwork, such as moccasins and jackets. The sons learned traditional skills of hunting and tracking, as well as cattle handling and rodeo performing. One son became a famous rodeo champion known as “Johnny Napoleon.”

Impact of the New Economies

The forces of the capitalist economy transformed First Nations economic and social structures. As businesses expanded in the province, they required First Nations people to become assimilated as wage labourers. Hand in hand, capitalism and colonialism transformed First Nations economies from collective, independent production to dependant, single family subsistence.

Becoming involved in the wage economy often meant that First Nations people had to move beyond their local region. Often, especially in the earlier colonial days, this was a seasonal move. Many left home for several months in the summer to work in salmon canneries or to harvest fruits and vegetables. One especially disastrous result of leaving home for work was the smallpox epidemic of 1862. Hundreds of men and women from northern tribes such as the Haida and Tsimshian made the long journey to Victoria to work following the influx of miners after 1858. Men often worked as carpenters, while women

CASE STUDY

Tsimshian Women and the Forest Industry

The Tsimshian are one of the Aboriginal groups whose traditional lands occupy the coastal territories of British Columbia. These Tsimshian lands are located in the northwestern corner of British Columbia and include the communities of Lax Kw'Alaams, Metlakatla, Kitkatla, Gitgia'ata, Kitasoo, Kitselas, and Kitsumkalum as well as the towns of Prince Rupert, Port Edward, and Terrace. Today the members of the Tsimshian Nation number around 10,000 and are the direct descendants of people who have lived and worked in this area since time immemorial.

Tsimshian women have been less obvious participants in the forest industry than their uncles, fathers, brothers, husbands, or sons. They have nonetheless been involved in forestry in various ways since contact with the Europeans. The nature and degree of their involvement has changed throughout the last 150 years, however, and these changes are important to understanding the significance of colonialism in transforming the status of Tsimshian women and their relations within Tsimshian society.

When the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) set up Fort Simpson on Tsimshian territory in 1834, the white residents were fearful of the Tsimshian community outside the fort walls. The HBC hired men to cut wood for them but would only allow Tsimshian women to bring the wood inside. As well, the women were hired to cut firewood when the fishing season caused a shortage of male labour at the fort. The proliferation of local sawmills during the late nineteenth century did not result in any direct employment opportunities for Tsimshian women. However, the increase in sawmills did lead to an increase of small-scale handlogging and this resulted in some work for women in the family-based harvesting of timber for the mills. While the men did the actual falling, the women were involved in the process of handlogging: trimming

Continued

the logs, making the boom, driving the boat, gathering and preparing food for the loggers.

The money brought in through handlogging helped with Tsimshian subsistence activities such as buying gas and supplies for fishing. This continued until the late 1950s when the large logging companies began to monopolize timber claims in the region. The Tsimshian soon found that this shift to industrial logging impacted their ability to gather other resources. In other words, large tracts of clearcut land meant fewer animals to hunt, fewer fish, smaller amounts of forest foodstuffs. For Tsimshian women, the end of the handlogging era also meant the end of any significant involvement in the forest industry for several decades. Logging companies did not hire women, either as loggers or as labourers in the local sawmills. (There was one brief exception to this exclusion, however, when women were hired to replace Japanese male labourers who were forced to go to internment camps during World War II.)

The recent shift in control of logging operations in reserve lands back to First Nations may result in increased employment opportunities for Aboriginal women. Administrative positions may appear for women in joint-venture logging projects, although jobs in the actual logging process may not materialize for them. One thing is certain, this most recent shift in forestry in the Tsimshian territories cannot provide fewer employment opportunities for Tsimshian women than were provided when logging was controlled by the large transnational companies up until the

1990s.

It may not be surprising that Tsimshian women experienced a steady decline of involvement in forestry as the industry became more industrialized. What complicates this picture is that Tsimshian women found steady employment in waged labour positions in another sector of the resource economy. From the 1880s until the 1950s, First Nations women provided the majority of workers for the salmon canneries on the north coast. The reasons are very complex as to why Tsimshian women were integrated into the waged labour of fishing and not forestry. This would require an analysis of the ideology driving the Euro-American industrialists that is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The massive growth of capitalism that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could not have occurred to the extent it did without the colonizing of indigenous people throughout the world. This process involved three key features: (1) the appropriation of indigenous lands and resources by foreign investors and settlers; (2) the transformation of independent indigenous workers into waged labourers; and (3) the denigration of indigenous beliefs and values. Furthermore, the Tsimshian practice of matrilineal descent, where people become part of the mother's group at birth and remain so for their entire lives, did not fit in with the patriarchal model favoured by the Euro-American industrialists, and therefore, had to be altered through their colonizing efforts. These goals were achieved largely through the efforts of the Christian missionaries and capitalists: the social and

economic benefits of the potlatch were undermined with the federal ban of 1881; male-headed single family households were established; male and female labour was completely segregated; and subsistence activities on the land such as hunting and fishing became more difficult to do with the deterioration of habitats.

The assimilationist policies of the federal government and the missionaries, most effectively delivered through residential schooling, eventually led the Tsimshian and other First Nations to shift their own ideology regarding gender relations.

Despite the fact that the Tsimshian had traditionally valued both male and female labour as crucial to the well-being of the family and the community, during the twentieth century many Tsimshian community members internalized the notion of the "male breadwinner" (even though many Tsimshian women continued to work outside the home for wages).

Whatever the future holds for the Tsimshian, it is obvious that they have been key players in the development of forestry in northwestern B.C. Despite the obstacles facing them, Tsimshian women have contributed significantly in a variety of ways to the family income through forestry. Recent changes in political and environmental conditions may provide an increase in employment opportunities for Tsimshian women in the future.

did domestic jobs in households. It was the large concentration of people living in close quarters that allowed the disease to take hold, and their eviction from the town back to their home territories that caused it to spread.

As First Nations people became more involved in the wage economy, they often faced a difficult choice: to stay at home on the reserve or local community, or to move to an urban centre where there might be more economic and educational opportunity. This meant the population in rural and reserve communities declined. Those who moved to the cities faced challenges adapting to urban life.

Families underwent many changes due to the demands of the new economies. Instead of the whole family working together on the production of food, roles of men and women often diverged. Sometimes husband and wife worked together on a fishing boat or in a handlogging operation. More often than not,

men were occupied in the resource-gathering side of industry, while women worked in processing or stayed at home without employment.

Women had additional changes to make. They had the primary role of processing food, such as the cutting and drying of salmon. As they moved into wage labour in salmon canneries or on farms, the demands on their time changed. They had to spend most of the summer working for others and then had to try to maintain the same level of family food production when the work for their employers was done.

Diet was also affected. For a variety of reasons, people moved away from their traditional diets to eat more Euro-Canadian foods. Since working for others cut into their time for food production, people found they had to spend the cash they earned at grocery stores to fill the gap. Those who moved to urban centres had little choice but to depend on the food they found on store shelves.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The outside forces of capitalism drastically changed the relationship First Nations people had with their lands and resources. They were displaced from their lands by waves of settlers who did not acknowledge the rights of First Nations people to hold land. At the same time, First Nations people were blocked from full participation in the new economies by discriminatory laws.

First Nations people were the backbone of the fishing industry. Their traditional skills were applied in the harvesting and processing of the salmon resource, but not in its management. Seasonal movement to cannery villages became an important part of the lifestyle of First Nations families until the 1960s. First Nations workers also played important roles in the labour movement within the fishing industry.

In the Fraser Valley and the southern interior of the province, agricultural interests took up most of the land base under the laws established to encourage settlers. First Nations people became involved in agriculture in three ways: subsistence farming, commercial farming, and as farm labourers. Most who tried commercial farming soon found that restricted access to land and water made success nearly impossible.

In forestry, the Tsimshian people played a key role in northwestern B.C., but as the industry became more mechanized, their involvement declined. Today, many First Nations are negotiating to regain control over the management of forestry and fishing resources in their traditional territories.

Organizing for Aboriginal Rights, 1912–1951

During the first half of the twentieth century, Canada entered three major wars, the two world wars and the Korean war. In all of them a significant number of First Nations people volunteered to fight on behalf of Canada, despite the fact that they did not have the same rights accorded to other Canadian citizens.

Meanwhile at home perhaps the greatest battle First Nations people engaged in was the struggle against renewed attacks by governments on land claims and potlaches. Many of the veterans who had served abroad returned home to become leaders in their communities in the fight for equal treatment for First Nations people. Through the efforts of organizations such as the Allied Indian Tribes, led by Andrew Paull and Peter Kelly, and the Native Brotherhood of B.C., First Nations people gradually gained rights to do such things as attend public schools and qualify for old-age pensions. The struggle for land claims, however, was far from resolved.

After many years of lobbying by First Nations, a memorial in honour of Aboriginal veterans was erected in Ottawa in 2001.



World War I

World War I (1914–1918) saw many First Nations men volunteer to fight for Canada, despite the fact that they held no rights as Canadian citizens. The Canadian government does not have accurate records of the total number of First Nations men who enlisted, partly because it counted only “Status Indians,” and even then the records were not complete. However, today Veteran Affairs Canada estimates that one

in three able-bodied First Nations men who were of age to serve enlisted during WWI (approximately 4,000 Status Indians and probably as many Non-Status and Métis people). In B.C., the Head of the Lake band in the Okanagan district saw every single man between the ages of twenty and thirty-five volunteer. First Nations women, like other Canadian women, also contributed to the war effort. They formed Red Cross societies and other charitable groups and collected clothes, money, and food for shipment overseas.

Over the course of the war, First Nations men participated and earned medals for valour in practically every major land

battle. At least 300 of them died, and many more became ill with tuberculosis. Following the war, returning soldiers spread a deadly strain of influenza, which hit First Nations communities particularly hard.

McKenna-McBride Commission

The 1911 Victoria Conference discussed in Chapter 6 illustrated two things: the First Nations of the province could come together to collectively organize a protest, and the governments realized that what they called the “Indian Problem” was not going away. To resolve the question in a way which they hoped would be final, Canada and British Columbia held another Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, commonly called the McKenna-McBride Commission (1912–1916), named after federal minister McKenna and provincial premier McBride. Its task was to visit each First Nations community in B.C., consult with the people about the amount of land they required, and assign additional reserves. Some bands refused to meet with the commission, while others, in making their presentations, reinforced their desire for treaties. In the end, the commission did make new reserves, but it also removed valuable land from certain reserves. These lands are referred to as cut-off lands, and most of them were in urban areas where the property had come to have great economic potential.

In 1913 one individual, Duncan Campbell Scott, came to control the Department of Indian Affairs. He had been rising through the ranks of the department since 1879, but had now attained a position where he created departmental policy and advised politicians on drafting new legislation. Outside his career as a civil servant, he was one of Canada’s best-known poets. Inside the halls of the government, Scott was an influential bureaucrat whose intention for his department was to complete the full assimilation of “Indians” into mainstream Canadian society. “The happiest future for the Indian race,” he wrote, “is

absorption into the general population, and this is the object of the policy of our government. The great forces of intermarriage and education will finally overcome the lingering traces of native custom and tradition.” In 1931, he wrote about the First Nations of B.C., “The outlook in British Columbia is certainly encouraging; there is fine material among the natives to make good British citizens, and in two or three decades we may expect that a large number of Indians will have been absorbed into the ordinary life of the Province.”

Scott saw in the McKenna-McBride Commission the perfect way to achieve his goals. In 1914, he drafted an Order-in-Council that stated that if the decisions of the McKenna-McBride Commission were accepted by the courts, the First Nations of the province would surrender and extinguish all title in return for whatever compensation the governments deemed adequate. No further claims could be held against the provincial government; for them, the “Indian Problem” would be over. The decisions of the commission could only be taken to court if the province chose to do so, and if it did, the First Nations leadership could not choose its own lawyers, but would have to accept those assigned by Canada.

As you might expect, there was vehement protest against this Order-in-Council. A delegation of Nisga’a and interior tribes met with the federal cabinet in 1916, but the politicians told them that no action could be taken because they did not represent all First Nations in British Columbia. Naturally, leaders took steps to remedy this situation.

The Allied Indian Tribes

By that time, the Indian Tribes of the Province of British Columbia, the First Nations organization which had met in Victoria in 1911, had dissolved. A new province-wide organization (called the Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia) was formed in response to the McKenna-McBride Commission. Two



Members of the Nisga'a Land Committee in 1913. (From left to right) 4th Row: Charlie Elliot, Mark Smith, Brian Peal, Charlie Brown, William Stevens; 3rd Row: Matthew Russ, Jeremiah Clayton, Charlie Davis, Leonard Douglas, Benjamin Benson, George Pollard; 2nd Row: Benjamin Monroe, Peter Calder, William Lincoln, George Woodfield, Lazarus Moody, Andrew Mercer, William Angus, Alfred McKay, George Eli, Johnny Moore; 1st Row: Paul Mercer, John Wesley, Steven Allan, Arthur Calder, Charlie Barton, William Foster, Sam Pollard, and William McNeil.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Order-in-Council, July 1914

This is an excerpt from the Order-in-Council that was introduced following the McKenna-McBride Commission's findings.

The Indians of British Columbia shall, by their Chiefs or representatives, in a bind way, agree, if the Court, or, on appeal, the Privy Council, decides that they have a title to the lands of the Province, to surrender such title, receiving from the Dominion, benefits to be granted for extinguishment of title in accordance with past usage of the Crown in satisfying the Indian claim to unsundered territory, and to accept the finding of the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs in British Columbia, as approved by the Governments of the Dominion and the province as a full allotment of reserve lands to be administered for their benefit as part of the compensation.

That the Province of British Columbia, by granting the said reserves, as approved, shall be held to have satisfied all claims of the Indians against the Province.

Response of the Allied Indian Tribes

This is an excerpt from the Allied Indian Tribes' reply, dated June 1916.

The reason of the opposition of the Allied Indian Tribes to a settlement under the provision of the McKenna-McBride Agreement is that the carrying into effect of the agreement shall be a 'final adjustment of all matters relegating to Indian affairs.' But the agreement ignores completely the general rights of the Indians as aborigines of the Province. We maintain that to accept the provisions of the McKenna-McBride agreement would be surrendering all that the aboriginal title involves.¹

men emerged as the force behind the Allied Indian Tribes, Andrew Paull from the Squamish Nation and Peter Kelly, the young leader who had made such an impression at the Victoria Conference.

The Allied Indian Tribes took on a battle on another front. The idea of enfranchisement was a failure; by 1918 only 102 people in all of Canada had chosen to renounce their Indian status for Canadian citizenship. That year the Indian Act was amended to make it easier to become enfranchised. Previously the band had to agree, but under the new legislation, a man who wanted enfranchisement could say to the Superintendent-General that he did not follow “the Indian mode of life.” Widows and unmarried women could also apply, although married women had to allow their husbands to make this choice on their behalf.

This measure wasn’t enough for Duncan Campbell Scott, however. He wanted the Department of Indian

Affairs (DIA) to be able to enfranchise individuals or whole bands without even consulting them or getting their consent, if, in the wisdom of the department, “the continuance of wardship was no longer in the interests of the public or the Indians.” In 1920, Bill 14 was put forward in Parliament to amend the Indian Act to make it legal to enfranchise any adult Indian whether he or she wished it or not. Also included in this bill was a law to force First Nations children between the ages of seven and fifteen to go to school. One of the key signs of suitability for becoming enfranchised was education, and part of the law stated that any Status Indian who completed a university degree was automatically enfranchised and lost his or her Indian status.

Naturally this legislation caused a great outcry in First Nations communities, and the Allied Indian Tribes protested it, asking why Status Indians could

PROFILE

Andrew Paull (1892–1959)

From the Squamish Nation, Andrew Paull attended St. Paul’s residential school on the reserve in North Vancouver. In 1913 he worked as an interpreter for the McKenna-McBride Commission, which led him to a role as Secretary of the Allied Indian Tribes. He was also a labour organizer, working to organize hop-pickers in the Fraser Valley and later First Nations people in the fishing industry when he helped organize and lead the Native Brotherhood of B.C. In 1945, he split with the Brotherhood and formed a new organization called the North American Brotherhood, with the aim of uniting Aboriginal people across the continent. Another side to his life involved helping a number of Aboriginal musical bands, training them and booking their concerts. He was probably most well known outside the political realm for his organization of sports, particularly baseball and lacrosse. He managed teams and took a local lacrosse team called Salmon Village to the national championships in Ottawa. He was made a member of the B.C. Sports Hall of Fame in 1999.



Andrew Paull, shown here in 1958, was a key cultural and political organizer of First Nations people throughout his adult life.

George Manuel, in his book *The Fourth World*, gives a tribute to Andrew Paull with these words:

We honour our great grandfather Andrew Paull, whose scholarship and diligence combined with humour and humility to strengthen him for the work for which he was raised.

not be given full citizenship and the vote while still holding their lands and status. Representatives of the Allied Indian Tribes travelled to Ottawa and petitioned Parliament against the compulsory enfranchisement laws. As a result, a parliamentary committee investigated the issue, and although the law was not repealed, it was never put into practice. This successful petition to Parliament encouraged the Allied Indian Tribes and other First Nations across the country in the belief that organized protest could achieve results.

The McKenna-McBride Commission completed its report in 1916, and in 1920 an act was passed to implement its recommendations. The Allied Indian Tribes continued to resist, and in 1923 petitioned the government. In August 1923, federal officials made an almost unprecedented visit to British Columbia expressly to meet with the Allied Indian Tribes. Interior Minister Charles Stewart (responsible

for Indian Affairs) and Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, met with the executive of the Allied Indian Tribes, including Andrew Paull, Peter Kelly, and twelve other leaders. As Kelly later wrote, this visit revealed “the power of unity that existed among all the B.C. Indian Tribes at that time.”

At the opening of the meeting, Kelly put an old issue to rest. Just as in earlier times, it was assumed that when First Nations people took political action, there must be a non-Native person behind it. With the Allied Tribes, it was assumed that the protests were instigated by their lawyer, A.E. O'Meara. Kelly clarified the matter in this way:

The idea has gone abroad that Mr. O'Meara leads the Indians by the nose, as it were, and he agitates our minds, even against our will.

PROFILE

Peter Kelly (1885–1966)

Peter Kelly, a member of the Haida Nation, was one of the most influential of British Columbia's First Nations leaders in the twentieth century. From his home in Skidegate, he travelled to school at Coqualeetza in the Fraser Valley. As a young man he taught school and became a lay minister of the Methodist (United) Church, first in his home town, and later in the Tsimshian village of Hartley Bay. He became an ordained minister, and served in a number of coastal communities as well as on the mission boat *Thomas Crosby*. Beyond working for his parishioners, he used his eloquent speaking abilities to advance the cause of Aboriginal rights for all First Nations people in the province. He was a co-founder and chairman of the Allied Indian Tribes, and later played an important role in the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia.

George Manuel expresses the esteem that all who knew Peter Kelly held for him:

We honour our great grandfather Peter Kelly, who returned in charity two-fold the learning he took from all cultures.



Peter Kelly, from the Haida community of Skidegate, was the spokesperson for chiefs from all parts of the province when they met with Premier McBride in Victoria in 1911.

We have engaged him to give us his opinion, his interpretations of important matters, but we reserve the right to act on his advice. As to his being the sole agitator, I think he agitates insofar as we allow him to agitate. ²

Peter Kelly presented their case, and Stewart promised to take it before cabinet. It required another petition before any action was taken. Finally, in 1926 a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons investigated the issue of land claims and Aboriginal title in British Columbia. The official record of this committee includes documents submitted in evidence that compile all the work by various First Nations groups and leaders since 1875, and also all the testimony given by the witnesses. Today the document provides an excellent summary of the land claims struggle for researchers.

The outcome, however, was far from satisfactory. The committee recommended a yearly payment of \$100,000 to provide for technical education, hospital care and medicine, promotion of agriculture, and for irrigation projects—and nothing else. These were all areas which the government already had an obligation to provide for. However, as Kelly noted, the idea of the grant did prove something.

The grant of \$100,000 indirectly recognizes the validity of the Indian land question of British Columbia. The British Columbia Indians claim that if their title to the lands of British Columbia were without foundation why would there be the necessity of a \$100,000 annual payment 'in lieu of an annuity.' This deviously admits the actuality of the Indian land claims of British Columbia.

As it happened, the work of the Allied Indian Tribes had an unforeseen outcome: Parliament apparently decided the First Nations organization had become too powerful. A new amendment to the Indian Act was passed in 1929 which stopped

the Allied Indian Tribes cold. The new law made it a criminal act for First Nations people to try to achieve recognition of Aboriginal title, or to pursue in any way their Aboriginal rights. It was now illegal to raise money to pursue land claims; it was illegal to hire a lawyer to pursue land claims; and it was even illegal for people to meet to talk about land claims.

Prosecuting the Potlatch

The criminalization of the potlatch was one of the most significant acts of Canada's assimilationist policy, but it took some time before it was successfully prosecuted. Section 149 of the Indian Act, which made it illegal to participate in a potlatch, had not been enforced before Duncan Campbell Scott became Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs. He quickly took steps to put teeth into the legislation, convincing Parliament to change the nature of the crime so it became a "summary offence." This meant that the trial did not have to be heard before judges, who in the past had usually dismissed potlatch cases. Instead, a justice of the peace could try the case. This was a local person empowered to hear minor crimes, someone who usually lacked legal training. This change did not result in potlatch prosecutions either, so the federal government took even greater steps to have the laws enforced by establishing new Royal Canadian Mounted Police posts in "trouble spots." The presence of an RCMP officer at Alert Bay seemed to be the turning point for prosecuting chiefs and elders who participated in the potlatch. In 1921, the potlatch of Dan Cranmer, the biggest feast in the history of the Kwakwaka'wakw, became a test case for the legislation. Many Kwakwaka'wakw were arrested, twenty of them were sent to prison, and Duncan Campbell Scott declared the potlatch "dead." It did not die, however, but went underground or was adapted into a more "acceptable" form such as Christmas gift giving or community dinners.

CASE STUDY

Prosecuting the Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch

Indian Agent and justice of the peace William Halliday was at the forefront of the prosecution. Duncan Campbell Scott had instructed him to charge any-one involved in a potlatch. Halliday had previously had a good relationship with the Kwakwaka'wakw. Now he felt caught between them and his bosses in Ottawa. He followed instructions, however, and between 1913 and 1918 tried unsuccessfully to bring people to trial. Then, in 1918, two men were charged and sentenced to two months at Oakalla Prison. Although they did not serve due to appeals, they were the first people to be sentenced to jail for participating in the potlatch.

In 1920, a special RCMP detachment was established in Alert Bay under Sgt. Donald Angermann, whose main task was to stop the potlatch. When he learned of Dan Cranmer's potlatch at Mamalilikulla, he knew this would be the trial to end all trials.

Dan Cranmer's potlatch was part of Kwakwaka'wakw life that had continued for centuries. His wife, Emma, her family and relatives of Mamalilikulla wanted to complete the wedding contract that had been made when they were married.

This tradition was often the reason for a Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch. When a marriage is arranged, the bride's family promises to pay a dowry at some point in the future. They save up for this potlatch over a number of years until they are ready. Chief Billy Assu of Cape Mudge was related to the Mamalilikulla people, so he also took part. Members of the three families, Emma Cranmer, Dan Cranmer, and Billy Assu, distributed

gifts and presented their hereditary dances and songs.

Three to four hundred people participated in the potlatch at Village Island over the Christmas holiday season in 1921. There were guests from all the southern Kwakwaka'wakw villages to witness the proceedings. Emma Cranmer's family gave her husband much wealth. Some was material goods, but they also gave rights to dances and songs, which were performed.

Dan Cranmer in turn distributed the wealth he had just received, plus much more, to all those who had gathered. People had never seen anything like it. He passed out boats, pool tables, sewing machines, violins and guitars, sacks of flour, and much more.

Sergeant Angermann gathered evidence to put together a case. Forty-five people were arrested on a variety of charges such as giving speeches, dancing, arranging articles to give away, and receiving gifts. They were summoned to court in Alert Bay in February, presided over by Indian Agent Halliday. Sgt. Angermann, the arresting officer, also acted as the prosecuting attorney.

The accused, guided by their lawyers, pleaded guilty. They were told they would receive a suspended sentence if they signed an agreement to stop potlatching. They also had to turn over their ceremonial objects as part of the deal. The masks, headdresses, instruments, coppers, and other items would be sold to museums and the profits from the sales would be returned to the original owners, Halliday and Angermann said. This agreement was a breach of the law, but no one at the

time seemed to have questioned it. The people were, in fact, paying for their freedom.

The people were given a month to turn over their potlatch regalia. Halliday, in his report to Scott, said he believed that the "potlatch question is at its crisis." For the Kwakwaka'wakw people, the crisis was how to choose between turning in their cultural treasures and sending their chiefs and young people to prison. Some of the village chiefs agreed very reluctantly to turn their objects over, while others refused. Those who relinquished their regalia received suspended sentences. Twenty people refused to turn them over, including four women. They were all sentenced to two months' hard labour in the Oakalla Prison Farm in Burnaby.

The regalia and coppers were gathered up by the scowload. Chief Harry Assu recalls the day they were taken from Cape Mudge:

The scow came around from the cannery and put in at the village to pick up the big pile of masks and headdresses and belts and coppers—everything we had for potlatching. I saw it pull out across Discovery Passage to the Campbell River side where more stuff was loaded on the Princess Beatrice for the trip to Alert Bay... Our old people who watched the barge pull out from shore with all their masks on it said: "There is nothing left now. We might as well go home." When we say "go home," it means to die.²



Halliday rented the Anglican church hall to display the masks and coppers as they came in from the surrounding tribes, charging 25 cents admission to cover the rent. There were over 450 items displayed and the church hall was filled. Halliday's instructions were to pack the treasures up and send them to Ottawa. He delayed, and sold some of them to a collector from an American museum, for which he was reprimanded by officials in Ottawa. Finally he packed the materials into seventeen crates. They were split between the National Museum of Man in Ottawa (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization) and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Some pieces ended up in private

collections, including those of Duncan Campbell Scott and Sgt. Angermann.

The impact of the prosecution of the Kwakwaka'wakw people was great. There was a personal toll on those who went to jail. The humiliation they suffered was terrible. One of those sent to prison, Herbert Martin, gave a grease potlatch the next year, where he gave out 1,000 cans of oolichan grease to cleanse those who were imprisoned.

The families of those in prison felt an immediate economic impact, since the prisoners were unable to work. Greater than that, however, was the economic loss to those who held the feast. They had invested a great amount of wealth

The U'Mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay was established in 1980 to house a collection of potlatch ceremonial objects that have been returned to First Nations from museums.

which they would never be able to recover in the traditional way.

Potlatching was never the same. It did not stop, but it was done in secret. "A strict law bids us dance," a Kwakwaka'wakw chief once said to anthropologist Franz Boas. But Kwakwaka'wakw laws were ignored in the bid to assimilate First Nations people. Section 149 was dropped from the Indian Act in 1951, although it was not formally repealed. It was simply forgotten. The Kwakwaka'wakw did not forget the treasures that had been taken from them, and in the 1960s they began to work towards bringing the masks, headdresses, coppers, and other objects back to their territories.

Museum officials agreed to repatriate objects, as long as they were stored in fireproof buildings. Kwakwaka'wakw leaders decided to split the repatriated pieces into two groups. Half would be kept in the Kwakiutl Museum in Cape Mudge, opened in 1979, and half in the U'Mista Cultural Centre at Alert Bay, opened in 1980. Today the potlatch is practised with renewed vigour, not only by the Kwakwaka'wakw, but by all the First Nations who value it.

Native Brotherhood of British Columbia

The Allied Indian Tribes folded after it was made illegal to pursue land claims. There was, however, still a great deal of work to be done to advance Aboriginal rights and the fair treatment of First Nations people. A new organization emerged during the Depression of the 1930s known as the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia. As we saw in chapter seven, it began on the fishing grounds of the North Coast in 1931, when Haida and Tsimshian leaders agreed there was a need to organize the northern communities into a unified group which could fight for better social, physical, and economic conditions. Alfred Adams from Masset suggested creating an organization similar to the successful Alaska Native Brotherhood.

In December 1931, the first meeting of the Native Brotherhood of B.C. was held in Lax Kw'alaams (Port Simpson) with delegates from five northern villages. The members signed their first petition to the federal government, requesting revisions to hunting and trapping laws that would allow people to follow their traditional practices without restrictions, and to fish for food without permits.

Over the following years more coastal communities joined, until the organization became recognized as a powerful lobby for Aboriginal rights. Two elder statesmen of First Nations politics, Andrew Paull and Peter Kelly, contributed their wisdom. By the 1940s the Native Brotherhood represented most of the coastal communities and some interior ones as well. Its role changed in those years; while it continued to work for changes in the laws governing First Nations people, the Brotherhood also became a union which supported First Nations people in the fishing industry.

The Native Brotherhood of British Columbia successfully met its goals of improving the lives of First Nations people, and today many of its achievements are taken for granted. For example, the Brotherhood helped First Nations people become eligible for the

Old Age Pension and Family Allowance programs, it worked to improve medical and education services on reserves, and it lobbied to change the B.C. School Act to permit First Nations children to attend public schools.

World War II

During World War II, more than 3,000 Status Indians volunteered across Canada, and probably a similar number of Métis and Non-Status people as well. George Manuel points out, “because we lacked European education, most of our men served in the infantry. We were among the first to see action and the last to come home.”⁹ Although Aboriginal soldiers who fought for Canada overseas experienced equal treatment alongside other soldiers during the war, once they returned home that equality faded away.

Many enlisted men and women lost their Indian status by volunteering to fight for Canada. Some were told by superior officers that they must become enfranchised before they could enlist. Others were encouraged to drop their status when they returned so that they could take advantage of the benefits given to veterans.

The primary benefit to war veterans was provided through the Veterans' Land Act (VLA), which gave most veterans of World War II a low-interest loan of \$6,000 to purchase agricultural property or, for those on the coast, to invest in the fishing industry. A portion of this, \$2,320, was in the form of a forgivable loan. However, the Act was specially revised in 1942 to deal with Status Indian veterans who were returning to their home reserves. Since reserve land could not be sold, they were not eligible for the loan. The most they could receive was a grant of \$2,320, and control over who could receive the benefit was in the hands of the Indian Agent. Those who did get approved did not actually receive the money. Instead, it was held in trust for them, and required extra paperwork, resulting in delays while payments were processed. Individual veterans did not own any fishing



■ A ceremony honouring Stó:lō veterans of World War II.

equipment purchased under the VLA; Indian Affairs retained ownership for ten years.

Most Aboriginal veterans faced long waits for the applications to be accepted, and not all of them were. Some people gave up waiting and tried to find other employment, a difficult task in itself. Some, seeing no alternative, left Canada to take jobs in the United States. Others, seeing the obstacles and delays encountered, chose out of frustration to become enfranchised. They were convinced by people like Indian Agents that it would be the easiest way out. What rights they were giving up by signing the forms was often unclear to them.

When the VLA was denounced as being discriminatory to Aboriginal veterans, Indian Affairs replied that the vets were free to apply for the full loan for lands not on reserves. Few took advantage of this because they were afraid that they would lose their status and become enfranchised.

Many Métis and Non-Status veterans also had difficulty receiving veterans' benefits. Often, they were not aware of what benefits were open to them, or the regulations were improperly applied to them. For example, some were only given the \$2,320 grant that veterans with status received, when they should have been eligible for the full amount of the loan.

For many Aboriginal people in the armed forces, the wars, particularly World War II, gave them a new outlook on the world and the possibilities of their role in it. Like most men and women who fought in the war, they experienced the intense camaraderie that grows between people thrown into extraordinary situations. More than that, they felt, perhaps for the first time since the fur trade era, what it was like to be considered equal by non-Aboriginals. They also saw other countries and cultures, broadening their understanding of life in different societies. When they returned to their homes, many of these people became leaders in their communities and in larger political arenas.

Only recently have Aboriginal veterans been given the respect they are due. Until 1994, Aboriginal veterans were unable to participate in Remembrance Day ceremonies as a group. They were expected to participate as individuals only. Remembrance Day 1994 was the first time that they were permitted to lay a wreath symbolizing the Aboriginal veterans at the War Memorial in Ottawa. In Vancouver, before 1995 Aboriginal veterans could not march as an Aboriginal group, nor could they lay their own wreath on the cenotaph. The reason given was that the monument was too crowded.

Post-War Developments

In the years following World War II and the creation of the United Nations, federal and provincial governments slowly changed their relationship with Aboriginal people, thanks in large part to the work of the Native Brotherhood. British Columbia extended the vote to First Nations people in 1949 (to Chinese people in 1947 and to Japanese people in 1949). In federal elections, First Nations people were first allowed to vote in 1960.

In 1949 Frank Calder was elected to the B.C. provincial legislature. He held his seat in Atlin from

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

"Sound the War Cry"

The Native Voice was the monthly newspaper of the Native Brotherhood of B.C. Here is an editorial from August 1947, written shortly after the leaders of the Native Brotherhood had made their submission to the federal government regarding changes to the Indian Act.

In May the Native Brotherhood Brief was successfully presented at Ottawa. There has been much publicity re Reserves and living conditions. Indian sports days are becoming popular, every day we see printed pamphlets of Indian lore and radio talks on the color and contribution of Indian Art. These are all indications, not so much of what we have done, but of public sympathy. Now our down-to-earth work begins.

Goal—To retain the love of our ancestry and our identity as Indians but at the same time to absorb our white brothers' culture in order to put ourselves on a competitive basis.

Weapons—Equal education, better health facilities, better housing, and equal status.

Our goal and weapons are before us. The presentation of the Brief at Ottawa is a wedge and that only—we must shoulder the Brief and keep it there

before Ottawa. There is one weapon that will make the work easier, and that is an official say in our own affairs. Practically every question brought up is to have consideration during the revision of the Indian Act except THE question. The vote question has been shelved for another year. Everyone should sit down and read the present Indian Act; you bite your nails all during the reading and feel like going out to bite someone else after. Without an official voice, we will always be futile.

Today the Municipality of West Vancouver is dickering for the purchase of a portion of the Capilano Reserve. No matter how the people on the Reserve feel about the sale of the land the Department has the veto power, the last word . . . Consider the dangerous question of the right to drink beer in a beer parlor. If the right to drink in a beer parlor signifies equality, then let us through an official vote decide for ourselves. Let's grow up. From where the members sit in Ottawa, they can study cause and effect, statistics, etc., but can they know what is in our hearts like one of our own people would know? ³

1949 to 1956 and again from 1960 to 1979, and during that time became the first Aboriginal cabinet minister in Canada. He was also the founding president of the Nisga'a Tribal Council.

In 1951, major changes were made to the Indian Act and some of the most discriminatory clauses, such as the anti-potlatch law and the ban on any land claims activities, were dropped. At the same time, women finally obtained the right to vote in band council elections.

Frank Calder, seen here by a volcanic cone near New Aiyansh, was the first Aboriginal person to be elected to a provincial legislature in Canada.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs, also known as the McKenna-McBride Commission (1912–1916), was expected to provide the final solution to the “Indian Problem” by creating additional reserves and extinguishing Aboriginal title in the process. First Nations communities resisted vigorously, and the Allied Indian Tribes emerged as a strong voice on their behalf, led by two men, Andrew Paull and Peter Kelly. Protests over the application of the commission’s report resulted in a federal committee investigation. However, the outcome was a new discriminatory law making the pursuit of land claims illegal.

At the same time, the potlatch laws were prosecuted with renewed force when participants in a great potlatch in Kwakwaka’wakw territory were sent to prison and much of their ceremonial regalia was confiscated.

A new organization, the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, emerged in the 1930s, and by the 1940s had become an important voice in bringing about changes to basic human rights. For example, First Nations people got the right to vote in British Columbia and the anti-potlatch law was repealed.

The leaders of the early part of the twentieth century lived to witness many fruits of their labour, although they knew there was still much work to do. In the words of George Manuel, “The surest sign that the lives of our fathers had meaning did not lie in convincing the Parliament of Canada of our humanity. It lay in the fact that the tradition of the potlatch never died. The organizing and coming together of people to work for our common goals never stopped.”⁴

Pursuing Justice, 1951–1997

A new era in First Nations politics emerged in the 1950s and 1960s following the gains made after World War II. Local organizations began to appear on some reserves, but real changes in recognition of land claims and Aboriginal rights came not through government negotiations, but through the courts. Some important cases, such as the *Calder* case, prepared the way. The Constitution Act of 1982 entrenched Aboriginal rights in Canada's constitution. Other court cases, using the Constitution Act as evidence, further defined and recognized more fully what Aboriginal rights are. This chapter ends with the *Delgamuukw* court case, which was groundbreaking in several ways, including the fact that the Supreme Court of Canada accepted oral histories as evidence.

Studies, Hearings, and Papers

From 1959 to 1961, the federal government's Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons held hearings aimed at overhauling the administration of "Indian Affairs." Among the many recommendations issued in its report in 1961 was the creation of a land-claims commission. When Lester B. Pearson's Liberal government came to power in 1963 it brought forward a bill to create a commission that would settle all outstanding "Indian claims." However, the proposed legislation did not acknowledge Aboriginal title as being the basis of land claims and it did not allow First Nations to file suits against the provinces for land. First Nations political organizations and leaders denounced the bill, and eventually, it was defeated.

Then in 1963 the federal government commissioned a study of First Nations people, officially titled the "Survey of the Contemporary

Indians of Canada," but usually called the Hawthorn Report after its editor. It pointed out the many social and economic disparities between First Nations people and other Canadians. The first of the report's ninety-one recommendations was this:

Integration or assimilation are not objectives which anyone else can properly hold for the Indian. The effort of the Indian Affairs Branch should be concentrated on a series of specific middle range objectives, such as increasing the educational attainments of the Indian people, increasing their real income, and adding to their life expectancy.¹

The federal government reacted to the Hawthorn Report by preparing a White Paper describing plans for change. The "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy," as it was officially called, was issued in 1969 by then-Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chrétien. The report proposed repealing the Indian Act and ending the acknowledged status First Nations people had in Confederation. It also denied any governmental responsibility for Inuit and Métis people. As the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples found, reaction from the Native community to the White Paper was strong:

The release of the White Paper on federal Indian policy in 1969 generated a storm of protest from

White Paper

A White Paper is named after the colour of the cover. The term refers to a government report that summarizes an investigation that has been made by a government committee into an issue, policy, or proposed legislation and outlines the government's intentions regarding it.

Aboriginal people, who strongly denounced its main terms and assumptions. It left in its wake a legacy of bitterness at the betrayal of the consultation process and suspicion that its proposals would gradually be implemented. However, it also served to strengthen the resolve of Aboriginal organizations to work together for a changed relationship. This marked the beginning of a new phase in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations.²


Another important event of 1969 was the founding of a new First Nations organization, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. It grew partly as a response to the White Paper, and out of the need for a province-wide organization. People like Chief Dennis Alphonse of the Cowichan band called for a unifying organization and others agreed. At the inaugural Kamloops Conference in November 1969, 140 bands were represented.

Also that year another association was formed to organize Métis and Non-Status First Nations. This was the British Columbia Association of Non-Status Indians (BCANSI). The driving force was H.A. Smitheram.

The Calder Case

From its inception in 1907, the Nisga'a Land Committee laboured persistently to resolve Nisga'a land claims. The Nisga'a people finally took the Province of British Columbia to court in 1969, arguing that Aboriginal title to their traditional territory in the Nass Valley had never been extinguished. The case was filed under the name of Frank Calder, one of the young Nisga'a leaders at that time, and is now usually referred to as the *Calder* case. The Supreme Court of British Columbia did not agree with the Nisga'a, saying that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 did not apply to B.C. It agreed with the provincial government's position that the actions followed by the colonial governments proved that Aboriginal rights had been extinguished.

The next step for the Nisga'a was to appeal the decision to the British Columbia Court of Appeal, which upheld the first decision. So the Nisga'a appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1973. This appeal did not succeed either, yet it is still considered a

 An aerial view of the Nass valley in Nisga'a territory. The Nisga'a Nation defended its Aboriginal title to the land for over a century before the claim was settled.



major victory. The highest court in Canada said, in no uncertain terms, that the Nisga'a had held title to their land when the colonial government was formed. However, the judges were split on whether the Nisga'a still held title in the 1970s.

As a result of the *Calder* case, the federal government took a renewed look at its policies toward land claims, and in 1973 instituted a new process for dealing with land claims with two types of submissions. One, the comprehensive claim, covered the Aboriginal rights to unsurrendered land, while the second, specific claims, dealt with redress of particular cases in which the Department of Indian Affairs had failed to live up to its responsibilities to local bands. This included such issues as cut-off reserves and departmental mismanagement of band funds. However, part of the deal for settling claims was to have Aboriginal land and resource rights extinguished. As well, the government would only consider land claims, not the broader issues of self-government. The provincial government of British Columbia, still refusing to recognize Aboriginal title, did not participate. Two claims were negotiated under this policy, resulting in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and the Northeastern Quebec Agreement.

In order to submit land claims to the Office of Native Claims (later called the Comprehensive Claims Branch), a group had to prove that its members held rights to their territories and that their ancestors had done so before the arrival of Europeans. This meant documenting the traditions and histories of a community or nation using oral histories from Elders and archival records. Partially because of this need, First Nations people began to align into tribal councils, which are usually based on a common language and culture. The Nisga'a and the Nuu-chah-nulth had begun such councils in the 1950s, but in most other regions of B.C. it was not until the 1970s and 1980s

that tribal councils became the voice for federations of local band councils and communities. Besides the principal goal of preparing for land claims, many tribal councils moved towards self-government and took over some of the responsibilities that had previously been managed by the Department of Indian Affairs. Individual bands also began to run programs that concerned their local communities. During the 1970s and 1980s, both tribal councils and band councils gained more autonomy and workers at both levels gradually replaced much of the Department of Indian Affairs bureaucracy.

The Constitution Act

In 1980, the federal government announced that it would repatriate the Canadian constitution. This means that ultimate control over the constitution would be in Canada, whereas until then any changes to the constitution had to be made in Great Britain. Under the terms of the proposed constitution, First Nations people would lose all of their Aboriginal rights. When First Nations leaders across the country realized this, they took action to make sure that Aboriginal and treaty rights were entrenched in the Canadian constitution.

One form of action was a cross-country train trip called the Constitution Express, rallying Aboriginal people to protest in Ottawa. Under the leadership of people such as George Manuel, president of the

Tribal council

A tribal council is an organization of Aboriginal communities that have joined together to achieve greater social, political, and economic strength than they wield individually.

Constitution Act, 1982

This legislation describes the basic principles on which the government of Canada bases its laws. Before 1982, the Canadian constitution was contained in the British North America Act (now called the Constitution Act, 1867), and any changes to the constitution had to be made in the Parliament of Great Britain. Now Canada has complete control of its constitution.

PROFILE

George Manuel (1921–1989)

George Manuel was a dynamic leader who helped organize important First Nations political bodies provincially, nationally, and internationally. He is regarded as being one of the most visionary and influential Aboriginal leaders in our country. Born at the Secwepemc village of Neskonlith, east of Kamloops, he spent much of his childhood with his grandfather on the land. His schooling began at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, but when he became ill with tuberculosis he was moved to Coqualeetza, which had a special hospital for Aboriginal children with the disease. In the late 1940s, George Manuel became chief of his band. The problems and issues he dealt with at the local level, he came to realize, needed to be addressed by the larger community. One of his objectives was to build communications between the band and the community of Chase. He was one of the few chiefs of the day who openly criticized Department of Indian Affairs officials. He grew to believe that the First Nations of British Columbia needed a provincial organization to present a united front. Through a number of organizations, including the Aboriginal Rights Committee and the North American Indian Brotherhood, he became the accepted spokesperson for the First Nations of the Interior, and also a nationally recognized figure.

In the 1960s, Manuel worked for the Department of Indian Affairs, hoping to bring about change from within the system. However, the 1969 White Paper ignited him to renewed activism. In 1970, he was elected president of the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB), the forerunner of today's Assembly of First Nations. In this role as a national leader, Manuel sometimes travelled to other countries. He realized as he met with indigenous people around the world that they had a common history of colonization and shared common goals. He took his experiences and his ideas and, working with writer Michael Posluns, recorded them in a landmark book called *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. In 1975,



he brought leaders of indigenous people from around the world together at Port Alberni, B.C., and there the World Council of Indigenous Peoples was born, with Manuel as its first president.

In 1977, Manuel moved back to the provincial level as president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. Through the UBCIC he initiated public protests which called attention to important issues of the day such as the "fish-ins" protesting Department of Fisheries policies, the Indian Child Caravan, which challenged the social welfare system, and the Constitution Express, which fought for recognition of Aboriginal rights in the constitution. Many people credit George Manuel with convincing the federal government to include amendments to the draft constitution. Even when he became ill and confined to a wheelchair in the 1980s, Manuel continued his role as a chief of the Secwepemc. He received many acknowledgements for his achievements, including three nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize and being made an officer of the Order of Canada in 1986. George Manuel died on November 15, 1989, leaving a rich legacy of accomplishments. His son Arthur continues in his footsteps as a leader of the Secwepemc people.

Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, the protest continued at the United Nations in New York and in Europe. The Constitution Express visited the Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium, and England. The First Nations people of Canada, the world learned, were not going to allow their Aboriginal rights to be taken away.

The attention that the Constitution Express and other protests focussed on the proposed constitutional changes forced the Trudeau government to take a second look. Not everyone was enthusiastic about having Aboriginal rights entrenched in the constitution. Eight provincial governments opposed it, and so did many First Nations people. Some organizations, such

as the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations), lobbied against the amendments. Some First Nations chiefs travelled to Great Britain to oppose repatriation. Treaty nations were concerned that the new constitution would not recognize treaty obligations. Provinces took the federal government to court.

A new draft constitution was written at a First Ministers conference. Most provinces agreed this time, but all references to Aboriginal rights were removed. First Nations people joined together from coast to coast to fight to have Aboriginal rights reinserted into the document. They joined forces with another concerned group, Canadian women, who

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Aboriginal Rights in the Constitution Act, 1982

PART I

Section 25 of the Charter of Rights:

25. The guarantee in this Charter of certain rights and freedoms shall not be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any aboriginal, treaty or other rights or freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada including

- (a) any rights or freedoms that have been recognized by the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763; and
- b) any rights or freedoms that may be acquired by the aboriginal peoples of Canada by way of land claims settlement.

PART II

RIGHTS OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF CANADA

35. (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.

(2) In this Act, “aboriginal peoples of Canada” includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada.

(3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) “treaty rights” includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.

(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.

35.1 The government of Canada and the provincial governments are committed to the principle that, before any amendment is made to Class 24 of section 91 of the “Constitution Act, 1867”, to section 25 of this Act or to this Part,

- (a) a constitutional conference that includes in its agenda an item relating to the proposed amendment, composed of the Prime Minister of Canada and the first ministers of the provinces, will be convened by the Prime Minister of Canada; and
- (b) the Prime Minister of Canada will invite representatives of the aboriginal peoples of Canada to participate in the discussions on that item.

CASE STUDY

The Constitution Express

On Monday, November 24, 1980, about 200 First Nations people, from children to Elders, gathered at the Via Rail station in Vancouver, preparing for an unprecedented train trip across Canada. They were boarding the Constitution Express, which would take them, as well as hundreds of others who would be picked up at train stops along the way, to Ottawa. This was a journey of unity, to demand Aboriginal participation in the creation of Canada's new constitution and to have the collective rights of Aboriginal people enshrined in the constitution.

By the fall of 1980 it looked like the Trudeau government was going to unilaterally repatriate the constitution from the British Parliament and entrench a charter of rights and freedoms which did not include specific recognition of Aboriginal rights. It seemed quite possible that future interpretations of the charter could result in the loss of such things as treaty rights, reserves, and indeed all special recognition of Aboriginal rights.

The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), under president George Manuel, organized the show of unity. The momentum had begun the previous month at the UBCIC annual meeting, where a resolution was made to take whatever steps were necessary to stop the repatriation of the constitution until First Nations were part of the process. A mass protest similar to the Constitution Express had begun at the UBCIC annual assembly in October, although people didn't arrive by train. This was the Child Caravan, in which hundreds of people



In 1980 a mass protest against the proposed changes to the constitution convinced the government of Canada that Aboriginal rights could not be abolished.

joined in a trek through the province in a long caravan of cars and trucks, beginning in Terrace and growing in size until it reached Vancouver. They were protesting the way First Nations children were apprehended under the B.C. Child Protection Act and sent to non-Aboriginal foster homes. Specifically, they were supporting attempts by the Spallumcheen Band to regain custody of its children after a large number had been taken away from the community.

Chief Wayne Christian of Spallumcheen organized the Child Caravan, and he was also instrumental in organizing

the Constitution Express. As he waited to board the train, he explained to reporters, "If patriation is successful, over a period of time our people will lose all the rights we now have—fishing, hunting, the things we can do in our community as a collective group of people."

There were actually two trains that left Vancouver that Monday, as special coaches were added to the two trans-continental trains, four on the northern route through Edmonton, and six on the southern route through Calgary. They joined at Winnipeg. Then, in northern

Continued



Ontario, the Constitution Express broke away from the rest of the train, arriving in Ottawa on Friday for the opening of the second annual conference of the National Indian Brotherhood, comprised of chiefs from across Canada. This group is known today as the Assembly of First Nations.

By the time the train arrived to a noisy reception in Ottawa there were more than 700 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people aboard, while many more had arrived by car and airplane.

Delegates to the National Indian Brotherhood hammered out a Declaration of First Nations that was presented to Governor General Ed Schreyer. In part, it read: "The Creator has given us the right to govern ourselves and the rights to self-determination. The rights and

responsibilities given to us by the Creator cannot be altered or taken away by any other nation."

In addition to the declaration, the delegates, after much emotional debate, voted to boycott, at least for the time being, the special parliamentary committee studying the constitution. Their point was that Aboriginal people should meet directly with Prime Minister Trudeau, not with a committee that had little authority. In the House of Commons, the opposition under Progressive Conservative leader Joe Clark seized the opportunity and made a non-confidence motion, condemning the Trudeau government's policies regarding Aboriginal people.

The Constitution Express successfully

■ The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs used mass protests to get the government to include Aboriginal rights in the Constitution Act, 1982 .

demonstrated the collective will of Aboriginal people in their pursuit of justice. Largely due to the attention drawn to the matter by the train journey and the subsequent declaration, the Canadian Constitution now includes Section 35, which specifically entrenches Aboriginal rights.

feared sexual equality rights of the charter could be overridden by the “notwithstanding” clause. The two groups supported each other, and after a hard-fought political battle, both had their concerns reflected in the new draft constitution. The notwithstanding clause does not apply to the sexual equality section of the charter, and Aboriginal and treaty rights were put back in. The word “existing” was inserted, however.

The Constitution Act, 1982 was proclaimed on 17 April 1982. At the same time, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms also became law. The whole process of constitutional reform helped unite First Nations people across the country.

Royal Commission: Response to the Oka Crisis

In the summer of 1990, the nation’s attention was focussed on a small piece of land outside Montreal near the Kanesatake reserve. What began as a small protest over the fate of a parcel of land exploded into a summer-long siege, often referred to as the Oka crisis.

On July 11, 1990, Quebec provincial police tried to dismantle a roadblock that had been set up in mid-March by a group of Mohawks from the community of Kanesatake. The roadblock was to prevent the nearby town of Oka from expanding a golf course onto traditional burial grounds the Mohawks considered sacred and their own. An armed force of 100 police attacked the blockade, but the protesters refused to move. After the gunfire had stopped and the tear gas cleared, one of the police officers was dead.

For seventy-eight days, armed Mohawk warriors faced Quebec provincial police, and later the Canadian Armed Forces. In a show of support, Mohawks at nearby Kahnawake also set up a blockade at the Mercier bridge, which crosses the St. Lawrence River into Montreal. Finally, at the end of September, the Mohawks peacefully withdrew from the barricade without having their land issues settled.

Oka was a turning point in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. It triggered protests across the country in support of the blockaders at Oka. The stand-off was reported in newspapers and broadcast around the world on television. Hundreds of reporters arrived on the scene, moving behind the barricades. Carla Robinson, from the Haisla village of Kitamaat and a *Newsworld* news anchor, said of the unprecedented news coverage, “I think that was the first time that journalists became sympathetic towards native people. And I think after that native issues became a topic in the news, there were native reporters all of a sudden.”³

While the Oka crisis did not solve the immediate issue, it focussed public attention on Aboriginal issues and showed the need for an improved relationship between governments and First Nations. Consequently, the Report on the Royal Commission was released in November 1996. In 3,500 pages it outlined the experiences of colonization for Aboriginal people across the country and made many recommendations aimed at changing the way the government and Canadian society dealt with First Nations people. One of the report’s recommendations was that the federal government create an Aboriginal parliament and abolish the Department of Indian Affairs.

In a response to the Royal Commission, the federal government issued a plan for redressing the wrongs of the past, titled *Gathering Strength—Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan*. On January 1, 1998, Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs, issued a formal apology to all Aboriginal people of Canada in a “Statement of Reconciliation.” As well, the government committed \$350,000,000 to healing programs aimed at overcoming the legacy of residential schools, including counselling programs and language training.

The action plan had four general themes: renewing the partnership, strengthening Aboriginal governance,

developing a new fiscal relationship, and supporting strong communities. It suggested ways of working towards self-government and promoting economic development, and building on new and historic treaties. It also proposed a public-education campaign to “build more balanced, realistic and informed perspectives with respect to Aboriginal people.”

Finally, in 1990, the year of Oka, the province of British Columbia agreed to negotiate land claims. The First Nations, Canada, and British Columbia established a task force to develop a process for land claims negotiations. The B.C. Treaty Commission began negotiations in 1993.

Testing the Constitution

What did Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution actually mean in practical terms? A number of landmark court cases have tested it and, through the judicial process, defined Aboriginal rights.

The *Guerin* case of 1984 confirmed that the federal government has a “fiduciary responsibility” to protect First Nations interests and rights. This case started long before the Constitution Act was even thought of. In the 1950s, the local Indian Agent convinced the Musqueam band to lease 65.6 hectares (162 acres) to a neighbouring golf course. Department of Indian Affairs officials negotiated on behalf of the band. In 1970, Chief Delbert Guerin learned that the government officials had made a lease agreement with the golf club that leaned heavily in the golf club’s favour. The Musqueam band sued the federal government for breach of trust. Although the court ruled in the band’s favour, the government appealed this ruling

Fiduciary responsibility

Fiduciary comes from the Latin word for trust. Fiduciary responsibility is the position of trust given to the government to act in the best interests of First Nations people. It cannot act against First Nations’ interests but must preserve and protect Aboriginal rights. It must justify government regulations and laws that interfere with Aboriginal rights.

and the case was eventually heard by the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court ruled that the federal government had a fiduciary responsibility for First Nations people, meaning that it was obligated to protect the interests of the First Nations, and in this case it had not done so. This was an important ruling because it recognized that pre-existing Aboriginal rights applied to land that was on reserves and also outside reserves.

The Sparrow Case

Ron Sparrow, a senior member of the Musqueam band, was arrested in 1984 for illegally fishing salmon in the Fraser River. He was fishing under the band’s food fishing license, but he used a net longer than was allowed under the Fisheries Act. His action changed the way the country looks at Aboriginal fishing rights and brought about the first Supreme Court of Canada decision concerning Section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Sparrow’s defence was that he was exercising his Aboriginal right to fish. The laws restricting the net size, he argued, violated Section 35(1), which recognized and affirmed existing Aboriginal and treaty rights. A provincial court judge found him guilty, saying Sparrow could not claim Aboriginal rights without a treaty. Sparrow and the Musqueam band took the case through the judicial system until it came to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1990.

The Supreme Court ruled that Section 35’s phrase “existing Aboriginal rights” has to be interpreted flexibly. It recognized that Aboriginal rights are changing; they aren’t necessarily the same as they were in the past. The court also recognized the federal government’s fiduciary relationship with Aboriginal people.

The court ruled that for Aboriginal rights to be truly extinguished, the government must clearly state its intentions. It cannot just assume or imply that the

rights no longer exist. The Supreme Court also ruled that Aboriginal fishing was subject to conservation needs but is to be given priority over the demands of other groups.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

The Supreme Court Decision in the Sparrow Case

The following is a brief excerpt from the Supreme Court's decision on the Sparrow case.

The Crown failed to discharge its burden of proving extinguishment. An aboriginal right is not extinguished merely by its being controlled in great detail by the regulations under the Fisheries Act. Nothing in the Fisheries Act or its detailed regulations demonstrated a clear and plain intention to extinguish the Indian aboriginal right to fish. These fishing permits were simply a manner of controlling the fisheries, not of defining underlying rights. Historical policy on the part of the Crown can neither extinguish the existing aboriginal right without clear intention nor, in itself, delineate that right. The nature of government regulations cannot be determinative of the content and scope of an existing aboriginal right. Government policy can, however, regulate the exercise of that right but such regulation must be in keeping with section 35(1).⁴

Van der Peet v. The Queen

A series of B.C. court cases in 1996 also clarified Aboriginal rights. These cases included the *Van der Peet*, *Nikal*, *Lewis*, and *NTC Smokehouse* cases.

Van der Peet is a key case in the clarification of the Constitution Act. Dorothy Van der Peet, a member of the Tzeachten Band of the Stó:lō Nation, sold ten sockeye salmon to non-Aboriginal people in September 1987. She was charged with illegally selling fish. Under the Fisheries Act, selling fish caught with a food-fishing license was illegal.

At her trial, Van der Peet argued that it was her Aboriginal right to sell the fish if she so desired. She argued that this right had not been extinguished and that the fisheries laws violated it. At her first trial, Van der Peet was found guilty and fined \$50.

Van der Peet successfully appealed to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Justice Selbie ruled that the trial judge, who had ruled that in traditional society the Stó:lō people did not sell their fish commercially, had made an error. Judge Selbie said we cannot compare modern definitions of commercial fishing with the economy of the past. Trade and economies have changed. He ruled that Van der Peet had proved that her Aboriginal right to fish included the right to sell the fish she caught.

The *Van der Peet* case went to the Supreme Court of Canada in November 1995. This court decided that Van der Peet had no Aboriginal right to sell fish and her conviction was upheld. However, as part of their decision, the justices defined the requirements that an activity had to meet to be protected as an Aboriginal right. First, the activity must have existed before the arrival of Europeans in North America. Secondly, the modern activity must have been practised continually in a similar fashion according to pre-contact practices, customs, and traditions, although, the court admitted, it may be practised in a modern form. Finally, the activity must meet an “integral to a distinctive culture”

test. To be integral, a practice, custom, or tradition must have been of central significance to the particular First Nation. It cannot, according to the Supreme Court decision, be something done by every human society, but must have been distinctive and a central

and defining attribute of the Aboriginal society in question. These three requirements have been referred to in other court cases as the “*Van der Peet* test.” They give a narrow or limited definition of “Aboriginal right.”

The *Van der Peet* test, applied in the *Nikal*, *Lewis*, and *NTC Smokehouse* cases being heard in the Supreme Court at the same time, resulted in those appeals being lost. However, the Heiltsuk people were able to meet the requirements to prove they had an Aboriginal right to sell herring roe on kelp. This case, known as the *Gladstone* case, showed that commercially trading herring spawn was integral to the Heiltsuk, had been a distinctive part of their culture before contact, and had been practised continually.

Delgamuukw v. The Queen

In 1987, the hereditary chiefs of two neighbouring nations, the Gitksan and the Wet’suwet’en of the Skeena and Bulkley rivers, sued the provincial government for ownership of over 57,000 km² of their traditional territories in northwestern British Columbia. Their rights to use the resources on these territories have never been extinguished, they argued. Their system of resource management, the house system, continues from generations ago down to the present. The first Gitksan chief on the list of those named in the court document was Delgamuukw, and the case is now referred to by his name.

The trial in the B.C. Supreme Court was lengthy. The chiefs filed their statement of claim in 1984. The trial began in Smithers in 1987 and ended in Vancouver in 1990. Chief Justice Allan McEachern announced his decision in March 1991. He completely dismissed the claims of the chiefs, saying



In the court case known as *Van der Peet v. The Queen*, the Stó:lō Nation argued that its Aboriginal right to fish included the right to sell fish. The Supreme Court of B.C. ruled in favour but the decision was overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada in November 1995.

that the lives of First Nations people before contact were “nasty, brutish and short.” He would not accept as evidence the many oral histories that recorded the stewardship that each house group had over its territory.

The *Delgamuukw* case moved on to the British Columbia Court of Appeal, which, in June 1993, reversed part of the first decision. It found that Aboriginal rights in the territory had not been extinguished by colonial actions. However, it said these rights did not entitle the Gitksan and the Wet’suwet’en to jurisdiction or ownership.

In June 1997, the chiefs appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada and a ruling was made December 11, 1997. The court agreed with the Gitksan and the Wet’suwet’en that Aboriginal title to their lands had

never been extinguished, stating that the trial judge, McEachern, had made an error in not accepting oral history as evidence. The court ruled that a new trial be held. However, the ruling also suggested that it would be better for the Gitksan and the Wet’suwet’en to return to treaty negotiations rather than litigation to resolve their claims.

Many important points were made by the Supreme Court in its decision on *Delgamuukw v. The Queen*, and the decision is still discussed and analyzed to try to determine the full meaning of its conclusions. In one of its principal findings, the court said that Aboriginal title is more than hunting and fishing rights. It is the right for the people to choose how their land may be used. The court said First Nations should expect to be part of the government decisions involving the use of their traditional lands and resources.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Testimony of Gisdaywa (Alfred Joseph)

Gisdaywa was a witness for the Wet’suwet’en Nation who presented evidence at the *Delgamuukw* trial. He began by describing how First Nations take responsibility for preserving resources of the land.

When House Chiefs take a name, they take on the responsibilities that go with a name. One of them is to make sure that, on the territory you have taken to protect, the people using it make sure there is no pollution, and that the area the animals are using and game trails and beaver dams and fishing sites are free from any obstructions, and you have to make sure that the people using it don't clear out the animals that are there for reproduction.

He went on to give an example of First Nations stewardship of the land.

... We were camped at Owen Creek back in 1983 and as we were camped there an Elder was with us and it was a cold morning and he related to me how we used the territory, how we used the

resource of the land. And while we were talking there was a logging truck going by every two or three minutes and that interrupted him, so he had to stop. So he finally said to me, “Those logging trucks going by there and the trees you see on the back of that truck,” he asked me, “Who—who protected that when they were small trees?” He asked me, “Who protected that?” And I didn't know. So he said, “Gyologyet protected those young trees when they first started to grow up because he was using the territory. He didn't want to see any burns.” He said that Gyologyet protected those trees. That's why those trees are going by here now. There was no B.C. Forest Service. There was no Department of Indian Affairs at the time. So that is why I say we owned the territory. We owned the resources that are on it, because our ancestors protected those resources before the coming of the government or any Federal or Provincial Government.⁵



Along with defending Aboriginal rights in the courts, the Gitksan people are also taking action to protect their resources from depletion. Here a Gitksan Elder is blocking a road through their territory to keep logging trucks from passing.

Another major statement in the decision was that Aboriginal title may allow First Nations to sell fish caught under old food-fishing licences. However, the court said, First Nations must show that they controlled this fishery before contact with Europeans.

A third area of importance is the Supreme Court acceptance of oral histories as evidence. Since *Delgamuukw*, trial courts must accept oral history and

other forms of traditional knowledge as evidence when First Nations are proving use of traditional territories.

According to the *Delgamuukw* decision, the province has no right to extinguish Aboriginal title. Only the federal government can do that. Further, both governments have a moral, if not a legal, duty to negotiate issues dealing with Aboriginal title in good faith.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The last half of the twentieth century saw a renewal of political action by First Nations communities. The Hawthorne Report demonstrated the gap in social and economic conditions between Aboriginal people and other Canadians. In response, the federal government issued the White Paper of 1969, which sought to abolish the Indian Act and not replace it with anything that recognized and protected Aboriginal rights. This galvanized Aboriginal people in British Columbia and across the country to protest. A new generation of leaders, including George Manuel and Frank Calder, took up the reins from the great leaders of the first half of the century. They worked tirelessly for the betterment of the lives of Aboriginal people and the resolution of land claims. Two approaches were available to them: negotiation with governments or pursuing rights through the courts. The Nisga'a land claims court case, known as the *Calder* case, changed the face of treaty negotiations when the federal government responded by opening the Comprehensive Claims Branch. However, the British

Columbia government still refused to negotiate land claims.

When the Canadian parliament repatriated the Canadian Constitution in 1982, Aboriginal leaders fought hard to have Aboriginal rights entrenched in it. Section 35 of the Constitution Act now recognizes and affirms “existing aboriginal and treaty rights” and defines Aboriginal people as including “Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada.” However, it does not spell out just what those rights are. In order to test the constitution, Aboriginal individuals and groups have taken specific issues to the courts, and a number of cases from British Columbia have become landmark cases in defining Aboriginal rights. These include *Guerin*, *Sparrow*, and *Van der Peet*. However, it wasn't until the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en nations sued the British Columbia government in the case known as *Delgamuukw* that the highest court in the land acknowledged that Aboriginal title has never been extinguished.

The Legacy of Colonialism

As you saw in Part Two, the First Nations of British Columbia have made a difficult journey over the last two hundred years in the face of the actions of colonial governments and private enterprise. The results of colonialism are not difficult to see. Five hundred years of European settlement in the Americas is painfully and tragically represented in any number of statistics, such as high rates of suicide, un- and under-employment, and substance abuse. This is not to deny impressive and important examples of successful First Nations people. Rather, it underlines the fact that the social inequality experienced by First Nations people is directly linked to the processes of colonization and to the government policies directed at undermining Aboriginal institutions and social organization.

In this section you will study the ways that this colonialism has affected different aspects of First Nations society. One of the greatest impacts was on First Nations economies. The resource-rich province was a prime investment opportunity for businesses and developers, and they paid little or no heed to First Nations land use or resource management. Aboriginal people became workers in a foreign industrial system.

The colonial legacy also had major effects on First Nations communities, especially on the way they were governed under the Indian Act. While all First Nations suffered discrimination under the Act, women were doubly discriminated against. The impact of the residential school system has left deep scars on communities, scars which have been compounded over the generations to affect nearly all

members of some communities. Ironically, despite the government's intentions, the one thing that colonialism did not do was assimilate Aboriginal people into the mainstream. Instead, opposition to such measures helped keep First Nations communities together.

The Métis people are a unique community of people with mixed First Nations and European, usually French, ancestry. These "Children of Contact" formed an important segment of B.C.'s population in the province's early years. Many Métis also moved from their historic homeland in the Prairies to British Columbia after the 1885 Riel Rebellion, and many more came after World War II. Today they are actively seeking to have their identity and Aboriginal rights recognized.

The journey of First Nations people is not over by any means. There are many significant challenges facing them today and communities are working to heal from the legacies of colonialism through social programs, education, and revitalization of language and culture. On the political front, self-determination and self-government are the same goals held by those who resisted and protested at the beginning of the journey. Treaty negotiations are leading towards this end, but their progress has been exceedingly slow, except for the notable case of the Nisga'a, who have settled their land claims and are no longer subject to the Indian Act. Until the other First Nations of the province achieve similar control of government and resources, their journey will continue.



■ St. Ann's Catholic Church at Chuchuwayha, near Hedley. Behind the peaceful beauty of this scene lie aggressive forces of colonialism: restricting people to reserves, breaking up land with fences, and educating children through church-run schools. All have left their legacies.

Communities in Transition

Before European contact, First Nations communities were self-sustaining and healthy, comprised of members who were confident in their place at the centre of their world. Social structures were in place to deal with the inevitable tensions and conflicts that develop in any culture. However, the growing dominance of Euro-Canadian culture and laws over the last three hundred years has marginalized First Nations people. The local community, usually a village located on a reserve, is still the foundation of First Nations culture, but the imposition of beliefs and legislation from foreign cultures, along with the devastation caused by disease, has diminished the strength of that foundation.

Colonialism had an enormous impact in First Nations communities. Governance, local economies, the health of families, and spiritual practices were thrown into turmoil. This chapter examines some of the significant issues affecting First Nations people as they live in their communities today. Some of these topics are difficult to talk about, but it is important to understand them in order to bring about healing.

The Social Legacy

The impact of B.C.'s colonial past is starkly revealed in government statistics such as those on income, health, and interactions with the criminal justice system. There are dramatic gaps in these statistics between First Nations people and other Canadians, and these inequalities are symptoms of a far bigger problem: the disruption and near destruction of Aboriginal societies by an encroaching settler state. Let's consider a few of the key symptoms of colonialism.

The average income of First Nations people is only 70 per cent of the average income of other

Canadians. The household income of First Nations families is 40 per cent lower than the national average (\$21,800 for First Nation families versus \$38,000 for other Canadian families). The source of income is also important to look at: First Nations people living on reserves in B.C. receive a higher portion of their income in government payments such as employment insurance, pensions, or social assistance than from employment.

The statistics on health also show marked inequalities between Aboriginal people and members of mainstream British Columbian society. Poverty, overcrowding, and poor housing have led to chronic and acute respiratory diseases affecting First Nations people disproportionately. The average age of death is more than twenty years below that of the average non-Aboriginal Canadian. The rate of infant mortality, though improved, is still nearly three times the Canadian average (17.5 versus 7.9 per 1000). More than 33 per cent of all Aboriginal deaths are related to violence, compared with 8 per cent in mainstream society. These statistics highlight a significant discrepancy between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Canadians.

First Nations interactions with the justice and criminal law systems of Canada also reveal the lingering effects of colonialism. First Nations people were not entitled to vote in federal elections until 1960. Activities related to land claims were criminalized between 1927 and 1951. Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their home communities and placed in residential schools, the last of which did not close until the late 1970s.

In 1996, Aboriginal people accounted for slightly less than 3 per cent of the total Canadian population.

However, they accounted for 12 per cent of federal and 20 per cent of provincial admissions to prison.

Why should this be? Careful studies of the judicial process have clearly demonstrated that if an individual is Aboriginal, his or her chance of being incarcerated is higher than with any other group of Canadians.

The statistics on health and other social inequalities are brutal, but there are indications that the situation is changing. For instance, the gap between projected life expectancy of First Nations people and all Canadians is narrowing significantly. Between 1975 and 2000 the life expectancy of male Status Indians increased from 59.2 years to 69.5, compared to 70.3 to 76 for all Canadian males. For women, it increased from 65.9 to 77.2 (compared to 77.6 to 82 for the general population). Data were only gathered for those people registered under the Indian Act, but they reflect a general change in Aboriginal communities. What these numbers mean is that positive changes are being made in the lives of Aboriginal people and they are living longer.

Rules of Exclusion

Who is a “Status Indian”? How is he or she different from a Non-Status person? Aboriginal communities have been split based largely on artificial definitions set out in the Indian Act. Under traditional custom, birth was the only determiner of who you were, but under government control, a person’s affiliation could change according to the laws of the day. Only people with status according to the Indian Act can be members of a band, and only band members are supposed to live in reserve communities. Where does this leave relatives who, for one reason or another, have lost their status?

The rules of the Indian Act have historically discriminated against women in many areas, such as land ownership, wills, band elections, and band membership. Before 1951, the Indian Act stated that women could not vote on local band issues. Such rules were derived from the European model based on the

nuclear family and patrilineal descent, whereas First Nations traditionally recognized extended families and in some cases, matrilineal descent. The Indian Act made males the head of the household; women and children were subject to them by law. Status under the Act, and any rights given by it, were determined solely by the man’s status. Should a woman with Indian status marry a non-Indian, she and her children would lose their status, and if she married a man from a different band, her status would automatically transfer to her husband’s band. Sometimes a woman lost her status involuntarily if her husband decided to enfranchise himself (that is, give up his status under the Indian Act). For men, however, things were different. If a man married a Non-Status woman, he retained his status. His wife also gained status, even if she was not an Aboriginal person. These rules existed until 1985, when they were revoked with the passing of Bill C-31.

Until recently, membership in a band was controlled by the Department of Indian Affairs. Even after the changes to the Indian Act in 1951, determination of status and membership was not put into the hands of band councils. In fact, the rules were tightened by the introduction of an “Indian register.” This is an official list of band membership that allows the Department of Indian Affairs to track reserve populations. It was compiled from various less formal lists and records, and did not include all people entitled to membership. Some people were left off simply through clerical errors.

The rules governing who can hold “Indian status” are complex and have changed over the years. For example, until recently, a person could lose status automatically at the age of 21 if both his or her mother and grandmother had gained their status only through marriage. This was called the “double mother” rule. Someone who had grown up on a reserve, sharing in all the cultural practices of the community, could suddenly find him- or herself without status and

forced to find a new home off the reserve.

The 1985 amendments to the Indian Act, under Bill C-31, made important changes to band membership to bring it into alignment with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The ability of the Department of Indian Affairs to enfranchise a person or a band arbitrarily was removed, and bands gained more control over membership. Most significantly, women and their children who had lost their status through marriage were able to have their status and membership reinstated.

Governing Communities

Colonial governments and the Canadian state had little regard for traditional First Nations governance systems. Instead, they imposed a European model of governance based on the municipal system. Historically, First Nations in B.C. had hereditary chiefs who held their positions for life. Under the Indian Act, Band Council members are elected for a limited term, as is the head of the Band Council, the Chief Councillor. While First Nations were obliged to accept the European model of governance, in practice many bands choose their hereditary chief to also serve as Chief Councillor for several terms in a row.

In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples identified a number of important characteristics of traditional First Nations governance systems on which Euro-Canadian governments have had a profound effect. These characteristics are important to consider for future development of self-government.

First is the centrality of the land. In the past, a community's relationship with its land—the earth, the water, and air—was the basis for its government. Political action was based on the need for respect for the land and stewardship of its resources. This differs radically from the Euro-Canadian approach of domination and control of the land. As a result of colonial views of land ownership, Aboriginal people either find themselves with no land base, or with



Siyémches (Chief Frank Malloway) is the hereditary chief of the Yakwekwioose Band in Chilliwack. He is a vigorous promoter of the revival of Stó:lō traditional culture.

lands which are much reduced from their original territories. Governance of their lands has been taken away, although in some cases, it has been reclaimed.

Traditionally, the rule of law which directs First Nations governments was grounded in the relationship people had with the land. For some, laws were given by the Creator; for others, they grew out of the natural world. In both cases, these laws were underlying principles that guided the behaviour of people in their society. They were unwritten, but carried out in

daily practice and passed on through oral traditions. However, they were unseen and unheard by the newcomers, who had a different form of laws. Euro-Canadian laws were written down in great detail and based on social control.

The roles that different groups played in their community are further characteristics of traditional governance. The roles of the family and clan were at the core of village organization and formed the basis of membership in the society. A person belonged to their family unit or clan for life. It was an important part of who they were. Under the Indian Act, as we have seen, membership could change.

Elders in First Nations are the keepers of the language, the culture, and the laws. They are looked to for guidance in all manner of community affairs. Colonial governance tended to marginalize Elders. Although they have always remained important to the community, Elders' roles and responsibilities have diminished. Women's roles have also become marginalized, as for many years the Indian Act denied them any political say.

Individuality and responsibility to the larger group go hand-in-hand in many First Nations societies. Self-reliance and initiative add to the success of the community. Often in Western cultures, individual achievement is seen in opposition to group success. The relationship between the individual and the collective becomes very apparent when you compare government leadership in the past with that under a band council system. Traditionally, leaders were accountable to the whole community. Their individual powers were exercised for the goals of the whole group. They were trained for leadership from childhood and took their responsibility to the group as integral to their role. Band councils, being elected, don't require this accountability, as leaders only need to be voted in by a simple majority. Another characteristic of traditional government that has been impacted through colonialism is consensus decision-making. The process of electing leaders and voting on important issues is very different under a system based on majority vote. Consensus



■ Okanagan Elder Harry Robinson in the Similkameen Valley. Harry was one of the great storytellers of the Okanagan people. He died in 1990 but his knowledge of the sweeping changes that took place over his lifetime is preserved in two collections of stories, *Write It On Your Heart* and *Nature Power*.

Elders are making major contributions in teaching young people their First Nations languages. Here the Halq'emeylem language of the Stó:lō Nation is being taught.

brings about a sense of unity, as everyone works together to reach total agreement. Majority vote can split people, and has reduced the role of Elders.

A recent change affecting band councils has the potential to completely alter the make-up of band government. In the *Corbière* case of 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that band members who live off reserve should be entitled to vote in band elections. Until then, only band members who actually lived on the reserve had a say in who made up the chief and council. The impact of this change in band government is still to be determined, as the first elections under the new rules did not take place until 2000.

Health-Related Struggles

A series of epidemics during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in British Columbia had devastating effects in First Nations communities. The last great epidemic to impact the First Nations of B.C. was the outbreak of Spanish influenza following World War I. This pandemic spread around the world as soldiers returned from the battlefields of Europe and Asia. Many Aboriginal communities in British Columbia were hit hard, resulting in countless deaths.

During the twentieth century the nature of diseases affecting First Nations people changed from short, swift epidemics to lingering chronic illnesses. Most prevalent of these was tuberculosis (TB), an infectious bacterial disease that often affects the lungs or bones.



It is spread easily through coughing and sneezing. Tuberculosis was one of the first European diseases to infect First Nations people after contact, but as people gathered on reserves, where living conditions were often substandard, it took a stranglehold. Many healthy children who were sent to residential schools soon contracted tuberculosis due to the unhealthy conditions found in the schools, where large groups of children lived in close quarters, dormitory style, for most of the year. When they returned home, they carried the bacteria with them.

It could take months or years to cure, and often people were left weakened or crippled after surviving it. Children were the hardest hit by TB. Treatment

usually involved sending the patient to an isolation hospital, called a sanatorium, where fresh air and good nutrition played a key role in rehabilitation. Although the disease affected all Canadians, it took a disproportionately high toll on the Aboriginal population. First Nations patients were not normally admitted into provincially run TB sanatoriums, but were sent instead to separate hospitals operated by the federal government. This discrimination, based largely on which government was funding the hospital, reinforced the inequality of health care for First Nations. Not only did patients suffer poor health, the sanatoriums were usually far away from their homes, so they were further isolated from family and friends as they recovered.

That being said, the doctors and nurses who worked in the TB hospitals for Aboriginal people were known to be committed and caring people. George Manuel, who spent eight years of his youth in hospital, recognized this in his book *The Fourth World*.

Far better than I remember the baths and towels, meals, and beds, which were all warm and plentiful, I recall the nurses who brought me those books, and who sat with me those many hours. . . I honour those women who kept me alive as though they were grandmothers of our own nation.¹

In the 1970s and 1980s, the incidence of TB among Aboriginal people dropped considerably, thanks to an improved immunity to the disease, as well as to medical intervention and healthier living conditions. Alarming, however, tuberculosis is once again becoming a serious health concern in some Aboriginal communities.

Diabetes is another disease which affects a large number of First Nations people, due largely to the shift in diet from traditional wholesome foods to more processed foods, especially those containing high sugar and starch content. Diabetes is a disease of the endocrine system in which sugars and starches

are not properly absorbed due to a lack of insulin. It often leads to serious complications, such as blindness and poor circulation in the lower limbs, which can result in amputation. For Aboriginal people generally, diabetes begins earlier, and the complications are more severe.

The rate of diabetes among Aboriginal people in Canada is three times the national average, yet this disease was virtually unknown among them before World War II. There appears to be a higher incidence of diabetes among people living on reserve than off reserve. There is also a gender difference: two-thirds of First Nations people diagnosed with diabetes are women, whereas in the general Canadian population it occurs more frequently among men. To be able to understand and deal with this serious illness in Aboriginal communities, a variety of research and education programs are currently in place, but it is still a fact of life in many Aboriginal homes that at least one family member must constantly watch their blood sugar levels and cope with taking insulin injections daily.

Alcohol abuse is a social disease which, like infectious diseases, was introduced through contact with Europeans. Alcohol was used as a trade item in the fur trade, and Aboriginal people had no physical immunity or social conventions in place for its use. In the twentieth century myriad factors have trapped Aboriginal communities in cycles of alcohol abuse that are very difficult to break. For many Aboriginal communities alcohol and drug abuse are the first hurdles to be overcome before other reforms can be accomplished. Many individuals, families, and communities are facing that challenge, and a wide variety of programs exist, ranging from community-based self-help groups to intensive treatment centres. The most successful programs seem to be those run by Aboriginal people which use a holistic approach that incorporates cultural as well as emotional and social components.

Alcohol abuse brings with it both personal health issues, such as increased risk of heart disease, liver disease, hepatitis, and certain kinds of cancer, and social consequences. When women drink alcohol during pregnancy, it can result in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in their children, a birth defect which has life-long impacts on their health and social development. The social and emotional effects of alcohol abuse are far reaching, contributing directly to family breakdown, violence, sexual abuse, jail terms, unemployment, and suicide.

HIV/AIDS is the newest disease to threaten the Aboriginal population, and there are warning signs that it could develop into a serious health issue. While the actual number of cases is relatively small, the alarming fact is that the number of HIV/AIDS cases is increasing in the Aboriginal population while it has stabilized among the general Canadian population. Initiatives are being taken to prevent the disease, assist those affected, and provide community support for families of those living with HIV or AIDS.

Rebuilding Families

The key to any community is the strength of its families. The agents of colonialism shattered the bonds of families in the pursuit of their goals of assimilation. Too often, government officials, churches, and social workers failed the families who were supposed to be in their care.

Residential schools did not do their intended job of assimilating First Nations children into mainstream society, but they divided families, nearly destroyed First Nations languages, and created untold numbers of ongoing social problems. Forced attendance at residential schools shattered the traditional notion of families in First Nations communities. In a society built on the extended family, where the whole village is involved in the raising of children, the separation

was terrible. Imagine the fear of a young child being taken away from his or her family, not knowing why, not knowing when they will see them again. Boys and girls were usually kept apart, so even when brothers and sisters were in the same institution they were not allowed to talk to one another. When they returned home for the summer, the children often felt alienated from their friends and family.

Locked away for months or years, children missed the opportunity to grow up in their own families and culture. They did not experience the daily love of their parents and had no opportunity to learn parenting skills. Many people found themselves stuck between two worlds. They lacked the skills to fully participate in their own communities, yet were not prepared for life in Euro-Canadian society.

Many students suffered even more at the hands of individuals who worked in the institutions. Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse created deep emotional pain for their victims. For years, sometimes generations, victims of abuse were silent, hiding their shame and guilt. The fact that there are currently 6,000 lawsuits filed by survivors of residential schools across Canada shows how widespread this abuse was.

When several generations of First Nations people were wounded by the residential school experience, the problems were compounded. Faced with poverty and discrimination in addition to the fall-out of residential schools, parents were often unable to cope. Substance abuse and violence broke up families. Some children were raised by grandparents or other family members; others suffered severe neglect.

With the amendments to the Indian Act in 1951, the federal government handed over responsibility for Aboriginal social welfare to the provinces. In the 1950s, '60s and '70s, social workers, like missionaries and Indian agents before them, believed they knew the best way to take care of First Nations children.

Thus began what is sometimes called the “scoop-up.” Children were literally scooped up from their homes and families and sent to foster homes or adoptive parents, resulting in another generation of children being separated from their culture.

Today many First Nations have fought to regain control over child custody and welfare. Some are succeeding in having First Nations children cared for within their own communities, but they cannot do so without adequate financial resources.

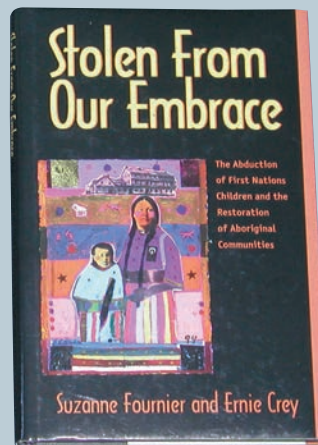
FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Crey

In the book *Stolen From Our Embrace*, Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Crey describe how in the past two decades residential school survivors have sought justice and restitution through political and legal channels.

Residential school survivors who returned home from a miserable childhood of abuse and military-style discipline have found themselves still experiencing, decades later, symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder not unlike those suffered by war veterans or police officers. Panic attacks, insomnia, uncontrollable anger, alcohol and drug use, sexual inadequacy or addiction, the inability to form intimate relationships, eating disorders: the list of symptoms is lengthy, but today it is more likely to form part of the legal documents filed in civil lawsuits than to describe an individual's silent torment. Survivors who sought solace in self-destructive acts discovered that eventually their memories had to be confronted, grieved and healed. There was no more powerful incentive to do so than the fact that many of them had become parents and grandparents who lived every day with the impact of their pain on the most precious ones, their children.

Once survivors were well embarked on their own healing journey, they soon realized that seeking an apology and restitution from the government of Canada and the churches was a healthy, empowering goal to pursue. Even more importantly, the survivors hoped financial compensation could help provide healing resources to ensure the cycle of pain and abuse would not be passed on to each successive aboriginal generation.²



Adjusting to Urban Living

The trend for Aboriginal people to move to urban areas has increased steadily since the 1970s. In British Columbia between 1979 and 1999 the percentage of First Nations people living on reserve decreased from 61 per cent to 52 per cent. This is not quite as great a change as seen in Canada overall, where on-reserve populations went from 70 per cent to 58 per cent. Based on these figures, nearly half of B.C. First Nations people registered under the Indian Act live off reserve, primarily in urban areas. National statistics

for Métis people suggest that two-thirds of Canada's Métis people live in large cities.

People move to cities for many reasons. Some move for greater opportunities in employment and education. Others leave their rural communities to get away from negative situations they have experienced there, such as poor housing, family breakdown, and abusive relationships. Many Aboriginal people successfully find employment and make permanent homes for their families in cities. They become part of the fabric of the multicultural mix which characterizes most large communities in the province today. Others face

Restitution

Restitution is an act of restoring something lost or stolen to its proper owner. It also means compensation for an injury.

economic hardship when they reach a city, particularly Vancouver, and often find themselves with as many problems as they had on the reserve. Many are forced to live in the poor districts of a city; some become involved in substance abuse and criminal behaviour. These people are often more visible to the general public than the majority of urban Aboriginal people, which reinforces negative stereotypes and prejudices.

Maintaining their cultural identity is a challenge for many First Nations people living away from their home communities. Some whose families have lived in urban regions for several generations may have lost touch with their relatives, while others who left to escape abuse and violence may not want to have any contact. However many First Nations people keep strong bonds with their families at home, returning to visit when possible, opening their homes when relatives come to the city, and sharing traditional foods

as a way of maintaining the bond.

In most urban areas there are people from diverse First Nations, and it is sometimes a challenge for them to maintain a strong sense of their unique cultural identity. Some First Nations have created urban locals that bring their people together. They organize activities such as Christmas parties for their children and graduation dinners to honour their youth who complete high school, and they support grieving families when a death occurs.

First Nations people living in a city do not receive most federal services to which they were entitled when they lived on the reserve, such as health care, housing assistance, and counselling. Off-reserve government services are usually delivered by municipal and provincial agencies, and many Aboriginal people are not aware of the services available to them. Some argue that they should be able to receive the same

CASE STUDY

Scoop-Up in Spallumcheen

The name Spallumcheen comes from the Secwepemc word meaning “beautiful valley,” but for the Spallumcheen band in the North Okanagan their community was less than beautiful in the 1960s and ‘70s, for most of their children were gone. Social problems had hit this reserve community as they had many others, and provincial social workers felt it was important for some children to be removed from their homes. However, the numbers of children apprehended and the fact they were removed completely from the reserve did nothing to improve the well-being of the community.

In 1994, then Spallumcheen Chief Cinderina Williams made a submission to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples regarding the root of family

breakdown in her community. It began with the residential school systems, which desensitized children to their families and culture.

Many, after years of rigid discipline, when released, ran amok, created havoc with their new-found freedom and would not listen to their parents, Elders or anyone else in a position of authority. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of this background was the unemotional upbringing they had. Not being brought up in a loving, caring, sharing, nurturing environment, they did not have these skills as they are not inbred but learned through observation, participation and

*interaction. Consequently, when these children became parents, and most did at an early age, they had no parenting skills. They did not have the capability to show affection. They sired and bred children but were unable to relate to them on any level.*³

This resulted in the second wave of assault on Spallumcheen families. In the 1960s children were literally taken away in busloads, with as many as fifty children apprehended in one year. Many were sent to families in the United States. The book *Stolen From Our Embrace* describes how on one weekend a social worker chartered a bus to scoop up thirty-eight children from the Spallumcheen reserve. Each



■ A totem welcomes people to the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. Among many other services, the centre operates a culinary training and catering business.

services as they did on the reserve. To fill the void, a variety of organizations have been established to assist Aboriginal people living in towns and cities. For example, Friendship Centres offer support in many areas, including education programs, child care, youth drop-ins, and assistance to the homeless.

The reality of life in urban regions varies greatly for different Aboriginal people. Some are successfully established but many experience racism, lack of recognition of Aboriginal rights, and poverty. Most Aboriginal people believe that long-term solutions depend on properly funded programs operated by Aboriginal organizations.

of them was placed in a separate foster home. "Spallumcheen became a quiet, dispirited town of adults and elders," write the authors, "with at times fewer than fourteen children left on reserve. Drinking and despair intensified rather than dissipated." ⁴

Many families who fostered or adopted First Nations children were well-intentioned and loving. Others were not. Because so many homes were needed at once, they were often not screened properly, and children were frequently placed in abusive situations.

Whatever the situation in their new family, the children under the child welfare system were nevertheless strangers in their homes. Once more children were separated from their families and cultural roots. The system was based on the model of the Euro-Canadian family, where two parents raise

the children. It ignored the age-old tradition in First Nations communities where the extended family provided a support network and took care of its own.

One of those who was scooped up was Wayne Christian, who, with his nine brothers and sisters, was sent off to a foster home. He returned to Spallumcheen at the age of seventeen to find his family and community in despair. In 1980, as Chief Councillor of the Spallumcheen band, he took positive action to change the disruptive child welfare system and worked for First Nations communities to regain control of their own children. Under his leadership the Spallumcheen Band Council passed a resolution calling for the power to retain custody of their children within the community. They wanted to be able to find their own solutions to family

breakdown, not leave it to outsiders to take care of.

Wayne Christian was also active in the UBCIC, and with their support, organized the Child Caravan in October, 1980. Hundreds of Aboriginal people from around the province formed a long caravan of vehicles as they drove together to the UBCIC annual assembly in Vancouver. This event raised awareness of the issue not only for First Nations, but for non-Aboriginal people as well.

Their action also stirred a response from the provincial government. The Minister of Social Services, Grace McCarthy, met with the band, resulting in an agreement which gave the Spallumcheen control over their own child welfare program.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

There is little doubt that the attacks from so many fronts—political, social, economic, and cultural—have left First Nations communities in turmoil. Pages of grim statistics reflect the legacy of colonialism. The fundamental issue of who is entitled to live in reserve communities was taken out of the control of First Nations, and imposed forms of governance moved communities a great distance away from traditional government.

Epidemics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which destroyed as much as 90 per cent of the First Nations population in B.C., have given way to equally disturbing but more chronic health issues. Tuberculosis was the most significant disease during the twentieth century, but in more recent years diabetes has affected many families, and HIV/AIDS looms on the horizon as a new epidemic if steps towards protection and awareness are not taken now.

Alcohol abuse extends its influence far beyond the physical well-being of the individual, affecting the social and emotional health of families and entire communities. It results in cycles of dependency and family breakdown which take incredible courage to overcome.

Families have suffered on another front, that of government intervention. In response to family breakdowns, child welfare agencies pursued policies which removed children not only from their homes but also from their communities, with devastating effects for children and entire villages.

Half of First Nations people live off their home reserves, facing new challenges as they adapt to living in urban centres. Many are able to make the transition while maintaining ties with their relatives at home, but for others the urban experience is fraught with problems of poverty and prejudice.

Métis and Non-Status People in British Columbia

One of the legacies of colonialism in Canada is the division of Aboriginal people into categories. The fact that the Indian Act labelled Aboriginal people as “status” or “non-status” did not change the depths of their identities, but it changed the way Canadian society viewed them. Moreover, through its policies, the government perpetuated the notion that there were only two major groups of Aboriginal people in Canada, First Nations and Inuit. Only in 1982 with the repatriation of the constitution were Métis included as the third Aboriginal peoples.

The nature of early settlement in British Columbia, dependent on resource-based industries, such as the fur trade and gold rush, resulted in many mixed families, usually with an Aboriginal mother and non-Aboriginal father. The contributions of these families and their children to the building of the province have often gone unrecognized. While the experiences of their descendants have been varied, it is safe to say that many of them have been marginalized by Canadian society.

The words Métis and Non-Status are both used to describe people of mixed lineage, although there have been differing interpretations of their definitions. While the government created the legal definition of “status” and “non-status,” Aboriginal people themselves have always held the notion of self-identification as key to their identity.

The struggle for recognition of Aboriginal identity and rights, an enduring commitment for Métis and Non-Status leaders, was given renewed vigour when the Constitution Act of 1982 recognized Métis as one of three distinct Aboriginal groups in Canada. Since this affirmation of their identity as an Aboriginal

people, Métis and Non-Status people have organized councils to promote their culture, to have their role in Canadian history recognized, and to try to attain rights that have been denied them.

Children of Contact

Non-Status and Métis people are the direct result of contact between First Nations and Europeans, tracing their roots to marriages between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men. The earliest settlements in western Canada were male-dominated societies comprised of employees of the North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company who lived in forts at key locations within traditional First Nations territories. Marriages sometimes came about to form an alliance between a local First Nations group and the traders, and sometimes simply out of a man’s desire for companionship and the domestic skills of a woman. The nature of these marriages varied, as described in Chapter 4. Unique marriage ceremonies were conducted in “the custom of the country”—that is, based on the customs of the local First Nations group. These partnerships are often referred to as “country marriages.” In British Columbia, the fur trade gave way to the gold rush, and while more non-Aboriginal women arrived as settlers at this time, many of the miners married Aboriginal women.

The marriages between Aboriginal women and their fur-trading and gold-mining husbands created a new and significant segment of the early population of the province. Some would argue a new race of people emerged from these unions. Children of mixed marriages had their feet in both worlds, and the knowledge and skills that they gained from the

separate cultures of their parents was advantageous in the economies of B.C.'s early days. But as immigration began to swell the province's population, the children and grandchildren of mixed families became marginalized and often invisible as a unique culture. "Half-Breed" became a term of shame and derision. Some children were accepted by their First Nations relatives, and became part of that community. Many others, however, felt rejected by both worlds.

The separation of children with mixed lineage from their parents' cultures became further entrenched when the Indian Act imposed its own definition of who was and was not "Indian." First Nations women who married non-Aboriginal men suddenly lost their cultural identity, at least officially. They and their children were denied the rights and benefits they would have retained if they had married a man with status. Instead, they were classed as "Non-Status Indians." Officially, they were Indian people who were not registered under the Indian Act. Generally, they were considered to be First Nations people under the common usage of that term. Although they did not have rights and benefits under the Indian Act, it is widely held that they nonetheless retained Aboriginal rights.

People were considered non-status for reasons other than marriage. They, their parents or grandparents may have lost their status through enfranchisement, either voluntary or involuntary. For example, people who earned a university degree were automatically enfranchised and so lost their status. In some cases, people who were out on the land when the registrar came by their community were missed from the band list. Some of the issues of loss of status were addressed under Bill C-31, which amended the Indian Act in 1985 to restore Indian status to women who lost their status through marriage. Their children could also apply for status, as could those who were previously enfranchised.

In some regions of the country, families of mixed



Today many Métis people are teaching their children to be proud of their heritage. Here Rielle Angelique Grover is wearing a traditional Métis sash at a Métis gathering in 2002.

marriages developed unique cultures, blending aspects of both sides into a distinct culture or race. This culture was recognized as early as the days of French colonization, when the term Métis, meaning "mixed," arose. In eastern Canada, Métis people trace their ancestry to the earliest colonizers. On the Canadian Prairies, originating from the Red River settlements in Manitoba, a strong and vibrant people with their

Métis sash

The Métis sash was traditionally made with a finger-weaving technique used by First Nations of Ontario. This method had long been used to make clothing and useful objects such as tumplines out of plant fibres, and was adapted to use wool after European contact. The governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan have created the Order of the Sash, which recognizes the achievements of Métis individuals.

own language identified themselves as Métis, and were recognized by governments as having land rights. However, as you will see, these rights have yet to be realized.

Métis people stand strong in their identity as a distinct Aboriginal group and do not consider themselves included in the term “First Nations.” However, the meaning of Métis is contentious and is interpreted in various ways today. To some, it refers to anyone of mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parentage, while others maintain that it specifically refers to those who can trace their ancestry to the Red River days on the Prairies. The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples discusses Métis identity in terms of two key features, ancestry and culture.

It is primarily culture that sets the Métis apart from other Aboriginal people. Many Canadians have mixed Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal ancestry, but that does not make them Métis or even Aboriginal. Some of them identify themselves as First Nations persons or Inuit, some as Métis and some as non-Aboriginal. What distinguishes Métis people from everyone else is that they associate themselves with a culture that is distinctly Métis.¹

The Commission’s recommendation about Métis identity reflects two criteria that are important to the Métis community: self-identification and community acceptance. People must identify themselves as Métis and be accepted by the nation of Métis people “on the basis of criteria and procedures determined by that nation.”

It is the last statement that points to the area of controversy. What criteria will be used to define Métis? The answer to the question will have major political and economic implications for the Métis people.

Roots of the Métis Nation

The roots of Métis culture lie in the fur trade. French and Scottish traders married First Nations women,

usually Cree, Ojibwa, or Salteaux. Many Métis people are descendants of the children of these marriages. Their cultural heritage is a mix of customs, but is especially influenced by the French and First Nations traditions. Métis families and communities were recognized as early as the 1600s.

During the fur trade era, Métis people made an important contribution. Being from two worlds, they could act as intermediaries between both. They worked as interpreters and guides for the fur trading companies. They assisted the traders as they pushed westward. Métis helped provide food for the forts, becoming expert buffalo hunters.

Distinct Métis communities grew up on the Prairies near the trading posts. A unique language evolved, called Michif. It is a blend of languages. A unique lifestyle evolved as well, combining the fiddle music of the French and Scottish with the First Nations skills and knowledge of managing the resources of the land. The roots of a distinctive social culture appeared.

Michif

Michif is the language of the Métis, developed during the beginning of Métis culture. It blends ancestral languages to create a new language. There are several dialects. The most well known combines Cree, French, and English. Other dialects incorporate other First Nations languages such as Ojibwa, Salteaux, and Assiniboine. Today it is considered an endangered language because there are fewer than 1,000 speakers, most of them in the Prairie provinces and neighbouring American states.

Here is an example:

Les Canadiens come across, les Sauvagesse mâci-wîcamâweyak and then puis êkwa les enfants ê-ayâwâ-cik. La Sauvagesse namôya kaskihtaw en français takitôtât ses enfants. Le Français namoya kaskihtâw ses enfants ta-kitotât en cri. En français êkwa kitotêw. êkwa quelques les deux kiskinohamahk kîkwây. ohci pîkiskwêw rien que en cri ekwa en français.

Translated into English, this means:

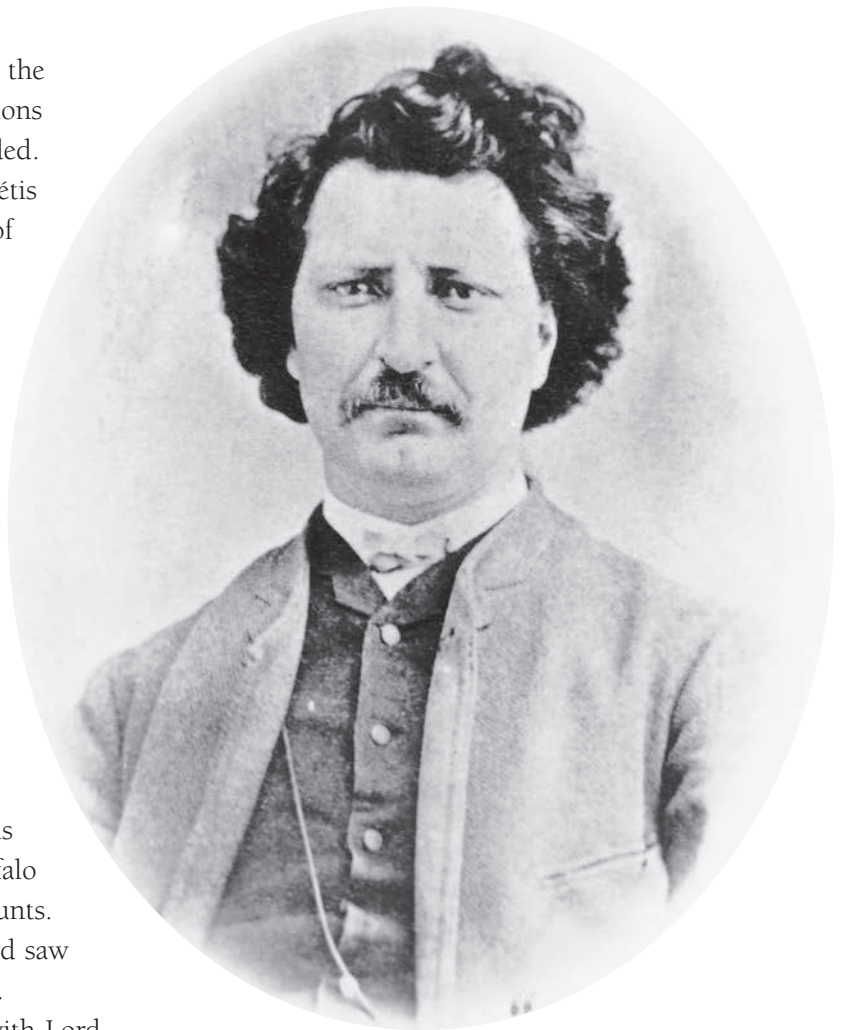
When the French Canadians came from across the ocean, they started to marry Indian women and then they had kids. The Indian woman couldn't speak French. The Frenchman couldn't speak Cree to their kids, so he spoke to them in French. Some of them learned to speak French and Cree. Therefore he speaks only French and Cree (mixed).

The woven sashes became an emblem, and the beadwork which was inspired by First Nations and European design became highly regarded. Other Aboriginal groups referred to the Métis as “the flower-beadwork people” because of their elaborately decorated clothing and belongings, such as embroidered gun sheaths and beaded pipe bags.

In the nineteenth century buffalo hunting and the production of dried buffalo meat called pemmican were central to the Métis economy. Many Métis people also took up farming. They adopted long, narrow strip farms similar to those used in Quebec.

A well-defined political system was fostered in the Métis communities of the Prairies. It was particularly focussed on being democratic, ensuring everyone had a say and a vote. In the early 1800s the Métis elected buffalo councils to manage the buffalo hunt. Captains were elected to lead the hunts. The Métis had become a unique people, and saw themselves as belonging to a distinct nation.

In 1811 the Hudson’s Bay Company, with Lord Selkirk, began the Red River Settlement in what is now Manitoba. This was a British settlement scheme for the Red River Valley. Many Métis families moved there, and a large percentage of the settlement was Métis. But economic action that went against their crucial export of pemmican caused the Métis to organize and demand rights to the land. Protest came to a head, and the Métis and some settlers confronted each other in 1816 at what has become known as the Battle of Seven Oaks. This protest was a unifying event for the Métis Nation, and proved that its members could speak up for their rights.



Most Métis people look to Louis Riel as an inspiration for ongoing pursuit of their rights. In 1998, when the government of Canada apologized to Aboriginal people in the Statement of Reconciliation, Riel was finally vindicated. The man who had been hanged for treason more than one hundred years earlier was declared one of the Fathers of Confederation.

Riel and the Northwest Rebellion

In 1869, the Hudson’s Bay Company sold Rupert’s Land to Canada. This was the vast territory in western Canada that the company claimed as its own. Neither the Métis nor the First Nations inhabitants were consulted. Under their inspiring leader, Louis Riel,

the Métis protested what they saw as a move to take away their rights to the land. Their action played a major role in Manitoba becoming a province.

Under Riel, the Métis created their own provisional government in Red River. They drew up a list of demands which included making Manitoba a province and protecting Métis lands. In 1870, after some violent confrontations between Métis and non-Aboriginal settlers, Canada did make Manitoba a province. The Métis way of life was to be protected, as was title to the land. The law decreed 1.4 million acres of land for the children of the Manitoba Métis.

During the conflict, the provisional government had executed one of the non-Aboriginal settlers. Once Manitoba became a province, the Canadian military moved in. Riel, expecting retribution for the execution of the settler, moved across the border to the United States.

The people soon realized that, despite the law, Métis rights were not going to be honoured by the federal government. Many people left Manitoba, forced to move west where they could carry on their traditional lifestyle, but without a land base. Saskatchewan became the focus of Métis society

MÉTIS VOICES

Leona Point

Even though Métis and Non-Status live in both worlds, we still feel tied to Mother Earth and her different faces throughout the year. In spring, breakup comes and the sap runs. For Métis and Non-Status people, these bring certain activities, meanings and memories.

I was raised most of my life in Quesnel. Growing up in Quesnel was not always easy. Many of our Métis families and friends were very poor. Our dads would try to find work. Sometimes they would have to travel long distances. My dad and many other Métis men would work in the sawmills. In those days B.C. had a lot more sawmills than now. When there was no work, our families would get together and help each other. A lot of people we called relatives were not related by blood. We were all related in another way because we could speak the same language. We could also share the same experiences. The best part of all was the help we gave each other by sharing our home and our food. We laughed and cried like a close-knit family. We shared what we had with each other.

Most of the Métis women were like my mother. They very seldom worked outside the home. If they did, they usually worked as housekeepers or waitresses. A lot of families, like my family, were large. Mothers were kept busy feeding and clothing the children. They also had to keep the house in order. My mother used to

sew just about all of our clothing. We hardly ever bought store-made clothes. We used to go to sleep at night with the purring of the sewing machine. My mother would sew until the early hours of the next morning. She also used to sew for a lot of other people.

Other mothers would help their families by selling their beadwork or making moccasins for the children. All the mothers spent a lot of time raising their families. As time went on, a lot of the things our parents did to survive became hobbies, like my mother's sewing and beading.

We didn't have the abundance of material possessions that you have now. We did not have a television or new clothing. Life was difficult for many. A lot of us did not have running water or inside bathrooms. One family I heard about did not even have doors in one place that they lived.

When a lot of us look back to remember all this we are sad thinking of the conditions that we lived through. All of us would like to forget the sad times. But we had a lot of good times too. We laughed at the funny things that happened to our people. It's sad that chores meant that some people didn't have a chance to learn how to read or write but family chores were important. They brought us together.²

during the 1870s. Also during this time the buffalo on which they depended for food was hunted to near extinction. By 1885, many Métis and First Nations people were starving. The government was doing nothing to help them, so they vowed to help themselves.

They called Louis Riel back from exile. Under the combined leadership of Riel and Gabriel Dumont, the Métis and First Nations people mustered a force to take military action against the government. This has become known as the Riel Rebellion or the Northwest Rebellion of 1885. It took place in northwestern Saskatchewan, near the settlements of Duck Lake and Batoche. After initial wins by the Aboriginal forces, the Canadian government crushed the rebellion. Riel was arrested for treason and on November 16, 1885, he was hanged. But in the Canadian parliament, future prime minister Wilfrid Laurier defended Riel and the Métis.

*To tell us that Riel, simply by his influence, could bring these men from peace to war, to tell us that they had no grievances, to tell us that they were brought into a state of rebellion either through pure malice or through imbecile adherence to an adventurer is an insult to the people at large and an unjust aspersion on the people of Saskatchewan. I say they have been treated by this government with an indifference amounting to undisguised contempt, and if this rebellion be a crime, I say the responsibility for that crime weighs as much upon the men who by their conduct have caused the rebellion as upon those who engaged in it—I say, give these men justice, give them their freedom, give them their rights.*³

The aftershocks of Riel's execution are still reverberating today.

PROFILE

H.A. "Butch" Smitheram

Born in 1919, the son of an Okanagan mother and an English father, Butch Smitheram was denied Indian status because of his mother's marriage. After working at a number of jobs, including as deputy Indian agent in the Kamloops agency, he decided to direct his energies towards organizing the Métis and Non-Status Indians of British Columbia. He made his intentions clear in an early speech:

*If we are to rise above the mediocrity of the common herd, we must widen our view, develop our inherent curiosity, bolster up our courage, exercise our self-discipline, and wrap the whole lot with enthusiasm. There is no doubt that there are future lawyers, doctors and teachers sitting at your table every day . . . Your children are the wealth of the nation—give them the opportunity and the inspiration and they will build on the foundations that you have laid for them.*⁴

Tirelessly, Smitheram recruited new members. Local associations were formed throughout the province. Membership was open to "any unregistered person of native Indian descent, who is one-quarter or more Indian blood but does not have treaty rights."

As the provincial groups were starting, Smitheram also saw a need for a national voice. He put forward the idea to Métis leaders from the Prairies, and out of this came the Native Council of Canada. Smitheram wrote the constitution and bylaws of this council.

Butch Smitheram was named to the Order of Canada in 1982. He died a short time later.



Many Métis people who migrated westward from Manitoba used what became known as “Red River carts” (shown above) to move their households. In B.C., the Métis community of Kelly Lake was founded 80 kilometres southeast of Dawson Creek in a region rich with resources. The people who settled in Kelly Lake continued the social customs and culture they brought from the Prairies.

The Long Struggle for Recognition

After the 1885 conflict Métis families migrated west, many of them to northeastern British Columbia. Some Métis gathered on the shores of a small lake in the Peace River region, south of Dawson Creek where, in 1893, they founded Kelly Lake, the only Métis community in British Columbia. After World War II, thousands of Métis people from the Prairies moved to British Columbia. They often faced similar social and economic conditions as the indigenous population of Non-Status people living in the province.

Both Métis and Non-Status people coped with a lack of acknowledgement of their identity and Aboriginal rights. So overt was the racism in British Columbia that for much of the past century some people felt they needed to keep their Aboriginal heritage secret. People speak of the “lost generation” who felt compelled to hide their identity, some women going so far as to wear light-coloured make-up when they went to town. Poverty was common for many people, both for those living in rural communities and those in urban centres.

A renewed drive to organize for political action came in 1968, with the creation of the British Columbia

Association of Non-Status Indians, or BCANSI. Its main goal was to improve the opportunities for Non-Status Aboriginal and Métis people in British Columbia by increasing access to education. It began largely through the efforts of one man, H.A. “Butch” Smitheram.

At the same time as the BCANSI was growing, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs was also getting established. The two bodies became the dominant voices of Aboriginal politics in B.C. Often they held their annual conventions at the same time in the same city. Both groups received funding from B.C.’s First Citizens’ Fund, a fund set up by B.C. Premier William Bennett to assist Aboriginal groups.

In the mid-1970s, BCANSI evolved into a different type of organization than Smitheram had envisioned. It sought to unite status and non-status people, and its name was changed to the United Native Nations in 1976. The Native Council of Canada changed too, and is now called the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. It continues to act as an advocate for Métis and Non-Status people.

United Native Nations Society

The United Native Nations Society has as its motto, “Working Together for Our Children.” It is organized through local chapters throughout the province. Each local is managed independently. The locals work with members on and off reserve; with local bands and tribal councils; friendship centres; local Aboriginal organizations and Métis locals in their areas.

The society has undertaken important initiatives to improve conditions for all Aboriginal people, including Status, Non-Status, and Métis people. Since 1977, it has provided housing

through its B.C. Native Housing Corporation. Since 1985, the corporation has helped to house more than 2,000 families and assisted more than 6,000 families with home improvements and renovations. Another program is the Family Reunification Program, which helps Aboriginal people regain contact with their

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Philosophy of the United Native Nations Society

The UNN is nondiscriminatory in our service to all Aboriginal People regardless of false definitions created by the Indian Act.

The UNN exercises an open-door policy with strict accountability in relation to all our political, economic and social activities.

The UNN believes in full participation, and the exercise of our traditional systems with respect to all Aboriginal nations in their territories.

The UNN fully practices and encourages, with its membership, ethical standards of honesty and openness in all business dealings and in management of finances and administration.

The UNN believes in providing opportunities for employment of Aboriginal people to give them work experience and do so through our administration and program activities.

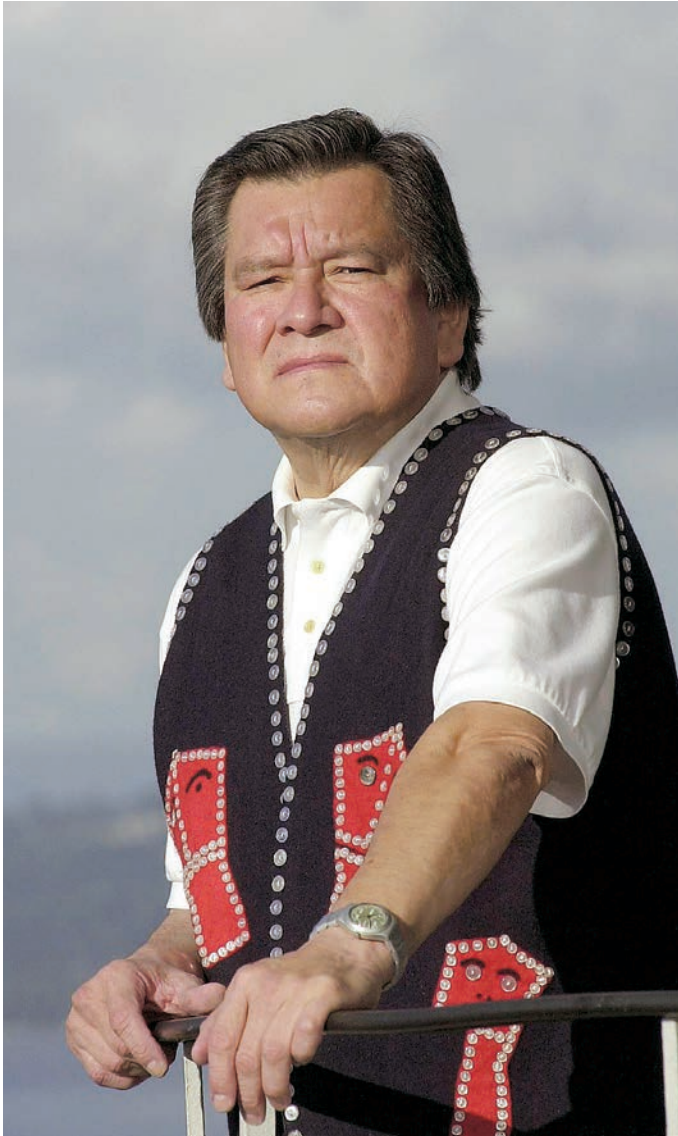
The UNN believes in working with community people to become independent of our offices and self-reliant in their own right.

The UNN actively supports the principle of equity of access for all Aboriginal People to programs, funds, policies, and resources of the governments.

The UNN believes in commitment, hard work, and achievement through our own efforts as a means to our long-term goals.

The UNN believes fully in taking direction on policy, political activity, and economic efforts from its membership and designs our programs and administration to meet the priorities and needs expressed by them.⁵

families following adoption or foster care. The *Nu-Sayla* (My Vision) training program helps Aboriginal people with career planning and job search strategies.



■ Bill Wilson was a leading activist in Aboriginal politics in B.C. for over three decades. He was the founding president of the United Native Nations Society, where he served from 1976-1981. He also co-founded the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of B.C. and served as vice-president of the Native Council of Canada in 1982-83.

Organizing the Métis

When the Constitution Act of 1982 recognized Indians, Inuit, and Métis as Canada's three distinct Aboriginal peoples, the struggle for recognition took a giant leap forward. Still, it did not define Métis or determine where Non-Status people fit in. Ongoing discussions about a correct definition for Métis have been very controversial.

Following the recognition of Métis in the constitution, the Métis National Council was created in 1983. It is recognized by federal and provincial governments as the national body representing the Métis Nation in constitutional negotiations at the national level, and in important matters concerning the Métis on the international stage. The Métis National Council represents five provincial groups, stretching from British Columbia to Ontario.

The Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia (MPCBC) is the elected governing organization for the Métis in the province. Among its many roles, the council acts as the political representative for its members to governments and funding agencies, and advocates for its members.

After 1982, a great deal of organizational work was done to establish locals in communities throughout the province and build awareness of Métis issues. Through this development work, many people rediscovered their Métis identity. Often they knew a little about their Aboriginal heritage, but had never been able to express it. By joining together with people in their own communities who shared similar backgrounds, they felt a renewed sense of identity and self-pride.

Through the locals, people were able to register as Métis. Three main criteria were considered. The first two, self-identification and community acceptance, were key to the democratic philosophy of the Métis movement. No acknowledgement by outside agencies was important. The third came to the heart of the question posed earlier: what criteria are used to define Métis? The answer in British Columbia is that you are

accepted as Métis if you can show genealogical proof of your Aboriginal ancestors.

The Métis seek rights in two areas, land and resource rights, and self-governing rights. They seek greater control of their own lives within the broader Canadian society. They seek a land base in the Prairie provinces or compensation for the lands they once owned but lost through development. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Métis leaders knew that to achieve full recognition of their identity and their rights, a specific and widely accepted definition of Métis would be necessary. Pursuing Métis land



■ The flag of the Métis Provincial Council of B.C.

■ Three generations of a Métis family (*clockwise from top left*): Roxanne, Sara, and Mickaella Laslo at a Métis Week gathering in Maple Ridge, B.C., in March 2002.





■ Métis gatherings, such as Batoche Day, provide opportunities for people to celebrate their culture.

MÉTIS VOICES

Doreen Yvonne Magee

Doreen Yvonne Magee is a Métis Elder in the Kootenay region. In September 1999 she was called as a witness in the case known as *R. v. Howse*, in which Métis hunters were charged with various infractions including hunting out of season. In her testimony, she described her personal rediscovery of her Métis identity.

Myself, I was not really aware of my Métis heritage until about seven years ago. I knew there was always something at home when I was young but actually, in our family, we were more ashamed of it because of the sad things, and I say this with absolutely no prejudice intended in any way, but we were never accepted by Indian people or by normal society. We weren't. My mother and her sisters and brothers often said that they were ridiculed in school and called Nitchee which meant half-breed and so on. And I think this problem exists today, still today, that this is a sad and sore point. That we actually are a nation from Canada. We should be accepted as such. A Métis could come from nowhere else in the world, only from Canada. I'm proud of that. I'm very proud of that. I wish the Canadian government was as proud of

that as we are. But anyway, to get back to this, my mother's family, it's through my mother's lineage that I am Métis. We could trace our line back to the paper that my great-grandfather signed for land in Manitoba . . . I have never cured a hide or anything, I would like to know how but I never—after I grew a little older, that part of our life was kind of hid until 1995 when we became aware that there was a Métis organization in B.C. We joined it, became a part of it and worked hard to be part of it . . . I felt the singing, the dancing, the music playing. My people did it when they were young. It's always been a part of our life to this very day. We do it with our own family and that was something I felt an instant rapport with when we joined with other Métis people somewhere that—that the feeling was just there. It was almost like a homesickness in me when it started, when at the first AGM I went to and they had the gathering and it started. It was just like I had been there before . . . I don't know for sure how to—how to end this except to say, I don't believe Métis people are asking for anything that shouldn't be theirs . . . I am very proud to be a Métis. And I'm always sorry, it's a sad fact that my mother and her people, especially in that particular generation, couldn't feel the pride of being a Métis. ⁶

CASE STUDY

Métis Commission for Children and Family Services

Imagine that government social workers come into your home to check on your living conditions, look in the refrigerator and see only a few items sitting on the shelves. Based on this observation, they believe your children do not have adequate food, and they add this evidence to other information that legally allows them to take your children away from you. What they have missed are the pantry shelves in another room well stocked with jarred moose meat, dried fish, and other traditional foods.

This scenario is just an example of what Aboriginal families face when outside government agencies have the power to remove their children, with no consultation with the local community, and no understanding of cultural practices, be they Métis or First Nations. Since the 1950s, the provincial government has had legislated authority for Aboriginal social welfare. As you saw in Chapter 10, this often resulted in Aboriginal communities being unable to make decisions about their own children.

Aboriginal children have been significantly over-represented in the case files of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. In the past few years, only 8 per cent of the under-eighteen population in BC were Aboriginal children, but 30 to 40 per cent of the children in the care of the ministry were Aboriginal.

Who should provide assistance and support for Aboriginal children and their families? The strong belief that Aboriginal groups should be able to control their own social welfare services

went unrealized for years, until the mid 1990s. Finally policies were put in place that make it possible for Aboriginal communities to administer their own assistance to Aboriginal children and families.

It was in this climate of change that the Métis Commission for Children and Family Services was born in September 1999 with the aim of protecting Métis family values, eliminating poverty, and promoting the self-sustaining capacity of Métis people and communities.

The commission is affiliated with the Métis Provincial Council, although it is registered separately under the Societies Act. A director is appointed in each of seven regions in the province, and each is approved by the Métis Provincial Council.

With offices in Victoria, its staff includes an Executive Director and Special Policy Advisor.

The commission does not deliver services; it develops policies and advises the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia as well as government organizations. Working within the framework of provincial legislation, it defines operational standards for the delivery of culturally appropriate services for Métis children and families. Among its many other roles, the council provides advice on social issues pertaining to Métis people, including social issues in the Tripartite Self-government Negotiations process of the Métis Provincial Council of B.C.



Two young girls enjoying each other's company at a Métis gathering in Maple Ridge in 2002.

The creation of the Métis Commission for Children and Family Services is significant for Métis people at several levels. The work it does in supporting Métis cultural identity for children and families throughout the province serves as a unifying force for the Métis community. In addition, the commission plays a solid leadership role in the development and implementation of Aboriginal social welfare matters for the whole province. It stands as a positive sign, to Métis and non-Métis alike, of the growing recognition that the Métis community is achieving in British Columbia.

For instance, one of the commission's current priorities is to see provincial legislation changed to restructure social welfare funding. At present, service agencies are funded based on the number of children they have in care. But the commission joins others in arguing that apprehension should not be the ultimate goal. Funding must support keeping families together and having fewer children in care.

Another example of the commission's leadership role is its ongoing work in the formation of Regional Aboriginal Authorities. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the province moved to decentralize delivery of all social services. This has turned into an opportunity for Aboriginal groups in the province to finally be able to make their own decisions about their children who are vulnerable.

In its discussions and negotiations to implement changes to social services,

the province has officially recognized the government-to-government relationship it has with four leading Aboriginal groups, including the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia.

In June 2002, recognizing the need for a unified stand, Aboriginal leaders met in Tsawwassen to agree on a way to work together to assert their inherent right of governance over the lives of their children and families. All the leaders sought one ultimate goal: the care of their children. They signed what is called the Tsawwassen Accord, whereby they unanimously voted to work together to develop Regional Aboriginal Authorities to lead the way in reducing the numbers of Aboriginal children in care. The accord sets out the terms under which the Aboriginal Authorities will be organized, calling for a stand-alone authority rather than one that blended Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service delivery.

And so, at an historic ceremony held at the UBC Museum of Anthropology on September 9, 2002, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the province and four Aboriginal groups: the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, the First Nations Summit, the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia, and the United Native Nations. Nine other organizations signed as supporting members, including the Métis Commission for Children and Family Services.

The purpose of the MOU was to put into action a decision-making process for the well-being of Aboriginal children and families that:

1. is on a government-to-government basis;
2. recognizes that First Nations, the Métis Nation, Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples assert jurisdiction over their children and families, regardless of residency;
3. recognizes the importance of transferring the delivery of services to Aboriginal communities;
4. draws on the expertise of Aboriginal service delivery agencies and research institutions;
5. reflects the historic and new relationship established at Tsawwassen on June 11, 2002.

Scott Clark of the United Native Nations said, "We are committed 100 per cent to working together for our children—First Nations, Métis, Non-Status, Status, and the many First Nations and Inuit children who come from abroad and call British Columbia home." ⁷

As the Regional Aboriginal Authorities are created, Métis representatives sit at the table with other Aboriginal people, working together to improve the quality of life for all their children. For the Métis Commission for Children and Family Services, its involvement is seen as a major achievement, one in which Métis people are accepted as equal partners.

claims in the Prairie provinces was one of the driving forces to shape a definition linking the Métis to the homelands. So it was that on September 27, 2002, delegates to the Métis National Council Annual Assembly in Edmonton, Alberta, unanimously voted to accept a definition of Métis that ties it to the historic Métis Nation. As part of the definition, the assembly also approved definitions of terms which clarify the national definition of Métis. (See sidebar.)

The importance of the democratic rights of every Métis person was at the heart of another historic decision made at the assembly, which voted to hold nation-wide ballot box elections for the President of the Council. “For the first time in our history it gives our people the right to vote for the national leadership. Power to the people,” said President Gerald Morin after the vote was passed. “This is history in the making. We have taken some major steps in realizing Riel’s dream.”

The implications of the new definition are extremely powerful. For “Red River” people—those who trace their ancestors to the original families who were given scrip—it means a stronger and more unified voice in political, economic, social, and cultural realms. For others of mixed lineage who do not fit the new definition, it will undoubtedly create a number of feelings, including confusion and anger. Some feel that the definition is exclusionary.

Genealogical

Tracing family descent from an ancestor.

Scrip

Scrip, or Land Scrip, is a certificate issued to Manitoba Métis families entitling them to 240 acres or money for the purchase of land, issued in compensation for lands lost by the Métis after the Northwest Rebellion.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

National Definition of Métis

As Adopted at the Métis National Council's 18th AGA in Edmonton, AB, September 27th – 28th, 2002

National Definition of Métis

Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation. Moved: David Chartrand, MB Second: Al Rivard, SK

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Defined Terms in National Definition of Métis

WHEREAS on September 27, 2002 the Métis Nation adopted a national definition of Métis; and

WHEREAS within the definition there are defined terms;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Métis Nation adopts the following defined terms for its national definition of Métis:

“Historic Métis Nation” means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-Breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland;

“Historic Métis Nation Homeland” means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-Breeds as they were then known;

“Métis Nation” means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation, which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the “aboriginal peoples of Canada” within s.35 of the Constitution Act of 1982;

“Distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples” means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes. ⁸

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Métis and Non-Status people are in many ways the “Children of Contact,” since they are mostly descended from Aboriginal women married to fur traders. Children of mixed families formed an important segment of British Columbia’s population in its early years but became more and more marginalized as the province grew. Both governmental policies and societal attitudes left many people with no Aboriginal benefits and a feeling of shame towards their Aboriginal identity.

On the Prairies a distinct Métis culture developed, with its own language, culture, and customs. The battles of the people for recognition of their culture under the leadership of Louis Riel were significant events in Canada’s history.

In British Columbia the struggle by Métis and Non-Status people has taken different paths. At first attempts were made to unify both groups under the umbrella of the British Columbia Association of Non-

Status Indians and later the United Native Nations Society.

Official recognition of the Métis as one of Canada’s three Aboriginal peoples in the Constitution Act, 1982, led to concerted political action to organize and register Métis people, and as a result many people rediscovered their roots. Still, the definition of Métis was very controversial. Two elements, self-identification and community acceptance, were agreed upon, but the third key element regarding ancestry was not. Some believed anyone with mixed lineage could be Métis, while others believed Métis heritage was linked to the original Red River settlements in Manitoba. At the Métis National Council Annual Assembly in September 2002, the delegates voted unanimously to link the definition of Métis to the Red River ancestry. The implications of this decision will bring both challenges and opportunities to Métis and Non-Status people in the coming years.

First Nations Society Today

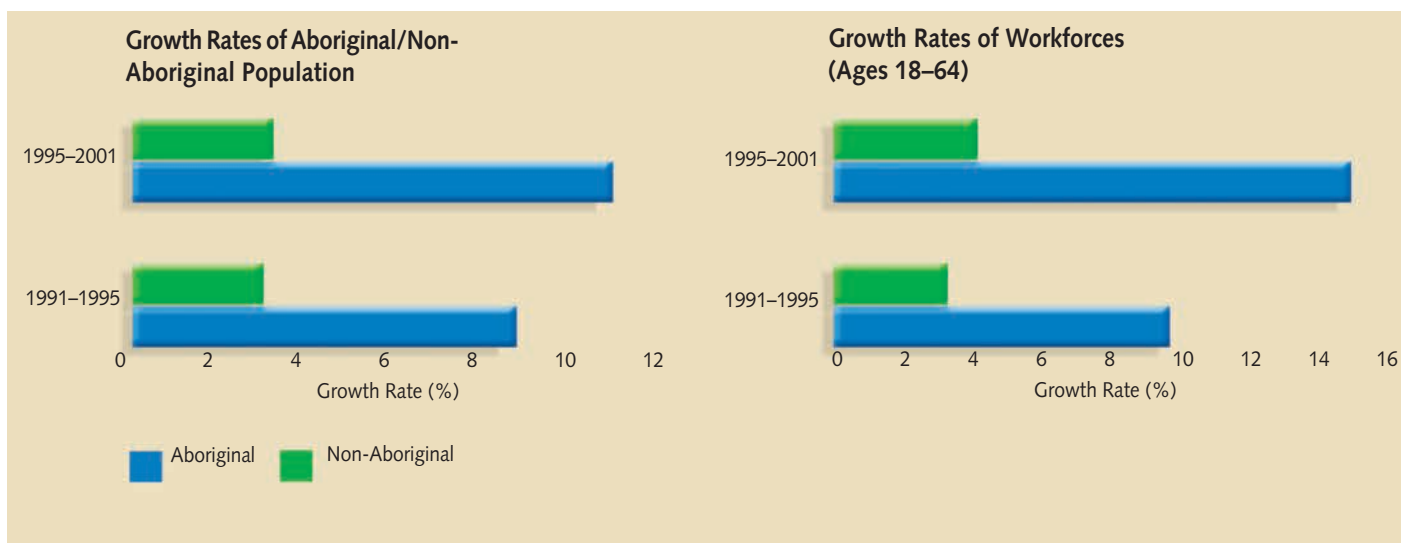
First Nations society today is perhaps more diverse than it ever was in the past, as people bridge two worlds, the traditional and the contemporary. No longer is it necessary to live completely in either world, for First Nations people have the capacity to live in both. It is possible to live on the land, but still have satellite communication with relatives in cities. Computers can be used to assist people to get in touch with their language and culture. The choices are many for First Nations people as they, their beliefs, and their Aboriginal rights are slowly given more respect by mainstream Canadian society.

The First Nations population has the fastest growth of any group in Canada, which means a surge in the number of children and youth rising up to take

their place in the unfolding society of the twenty-first century. What the future holds for them depends on the work of present leaders in overcoming the legacies of the past and achieving self-determination for all Aboriginal people.

Building Healthy Communities

There are approximately two hundred First Nations bands in British Columbia, most with a central community and a number of different parcels of reserve land. Some are located in or near urban centres, but many are remote and isolated. Conditions vary greatly as to services that are available. On some reserves the basic necessities that most Canadians take



The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) estimates that between 1995 and 2001 the Aboriginal population in Canada increased at a rate more than three times that of the non-Aboriginal population.

DIAND estimates that between 1995 and 2001 the number of Aboriginal people in the workforce increased at a rate 4.5 times that of non-Aboriginal people.¹

for granted, such as adequate housing, water, and sewage systems, are substandard. Social conditions on some reserves are still troubled, with substance abuse and suicide being ongoing problems. While suicide is often considered an issue for teenagers, they are not the only age group feeling so desperate that they take their lives.

Aboriginal people living in urban centres face similar problems as those on reserves, although their isolation takes the form of separation from family and culture. For many who migrate to a city, finding housing and employment can be difficult.

What can be done to enhance the lives of First Nations people in their communities, be they on reserve or off? A two-pronged attack is required: healing past abuses, and building new opportunities to face the future equipped with a sense of pride in identity and ability.

Certainly political and economic solutions are important, such as self-government and economic development; social programs and educational opportunities are other tools for change.

Much work is being done in breaking the cycles of physical abuse and substance abuse. Many programs are available which tap into the spiritual roots of First Nations culture, and Elders play a leading role in the healing. Traditional ceremonies such as sweat lodges are being incorporated into the healing process.

One specific group of people that is actively working towards wellness is the survivors of residential school abuse. Following the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the federal government established the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in 1998 to provide support for people in building sustainable healing processes to overcome the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools.

Aboriginal Healing Foundation

In 1998 the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was given a ten-year mandate and \$350 million to help Métis, Inuit, and First Nations communities heal themselves, and to help bridge the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It supports grassroots projects that are attempting to respond to the healing needs of many thousands of survivors, their families, and descendants. It sees its role as a facilitator in the healing process, providing resources, promoting awareness, and building on the strengths and resiliency of Aboriginal people.

The foundation is funding projects such as healing circles, sex offender programs, leadership training for healers, parenting skills, curriculum development, and sexual abuse programs. As of the year 2000, 1,686 communities were being served by activities funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Among the participants, 57 per cent were First Nations people on reserves, 29 per cent were First Nations people off reserve, 11 per cent were Métis, and 3 per cent were Inuit.

A photo exhibit entitled *Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential School* is one example of healing and reconciliation work that aims to promote awareness of the residential school system and tolerance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The exhibit relates the history of residential schooling through historical photographs and selected

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Ovide Mercredi, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations

*If you heal a person, you will heal a family,
A family will help heal a community,
A whole healthy community
Can be a proud nation.*

documents from the collections of the National Archives of Canada and various religious groups.

Another project that received funding is the Indian Residential School Survivor Project, the first gathering of its kind, which offered self-help, clinical, and cultural workshops to over 1,000 participants at the University of British Columbia in 2002.

In January 2001, 344 projects were underway, including projects targeted at youth, women, men, survivors, and intergenerationally-impacted people.

The Indian Act in the Twenty-First Century

As anachronistic as it may seem, the Indian Act still regulates the lives of First Nations people and Indian reserves are still a reality in British Columbia today. People registered under the Indian Act today are issued a “Certificate of Indian Status” card which bears the person’s photograph, description, registry number, the name of the band to which the individual belongs, and the family or band number.

There are a number of misconceptions about what entitlements First Nations people receive under the Indian Act. For example, many members of the general public believe that Aboriginal people do not have to pay taxes. In fact, Aboriginal people are required to pay taxes the same as every other Canadian citizen, except in circumstances on reserve where tax exemptions are covered by the Indian Act. Section 87 of the Act recognizes the unique constitutional and historic position of Aboriginal people in Canada, and the exemption is intended to preserve the rights of First Nations people to their reserve lands, and to ensure that the use of their reserve lands is not eroded by taxation. The Act states that the “personal property of an Indian or a band situated on a reserve” is tax exempt, and this applies to goods, income, and some on-reserve services. For example, on-reserve

stores do not have to charge sales taxes, and many bands operate gas stations which offer fuel at a lower cost to people with status cards. Only people who are registered Status Indians living and working on reserves are exempt from paying income tax. Status Indians living or working off reserves are still required to pay income tax.

While the Indian Act prevents non-Aboriginal governments from taxing the property of Status Indians on reserve, it does allow First Nations to collect property taxes on reserve. Bylaws allowing such tax collection must be approved by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Some members of the Canadian public feel that it is unfair for any Aboriginal people to be exempt from taxes. However, many First Nations would argue that the amount of money is insignificant compared to the vast profits and taxes that have been generated by the resources of the non-reserve land, none of which has benefited First Nations.

In the summer of 2002, the Minister of Indian Affairs introduced a new revision of the Indian Act, partly to bring it in line with the Canadian Charter of Rights, but also to change the ways that reserves are governed, from how leaders are elected to ways of making them more financially accountable. Many First Nations leaders see this as yet another unilateral move by the federal government to make decisions on behalf of First Nations people. Chiefs at the Assembly of First Nations rejected the plan to change the Indian Act and offered their own process for making the important changes that would affect them and their people. As this book is being published the federal government’s First Nations Governance Initiative (Bill C-61) is still under discussion and the outcome is unclear.

Anachronistic

Old-fashioned or out of date; out of harmony with its period.

Economic Development

Self-government alone, in the words of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), “would be an exercise in illusion and futility.” It needs to have a solid economic foundation. For this and other reasons, economic development is of prime concern to First Nations.

Unemployment is a major problem for First Nations communities because many have only a limited economic base. Several factors contribute to the problem. For example, few jobs are typically available on reserve, First Nations people have historically not had access to loans for starting businesses, and Aboriginal people have the fastest growing population rate of any group in Canada, meaning there will be more young people looking for jobs than ever. The RCAP Final Report estimated more than 300,000 jobs will be needed for Aboriginal people across the country between 1991 and 2016 to

meet Canadian standards of employment levels and to provide for the growth in population.

In the past, many programs trying to improve economic conditions have not been successful. Often this was because an emphasis was placed on the individual rather than the collective or group. Programs targeted at assisting individuals ignore the holistic or integrated nature of First Nations communities. Approaches that emphasize the collective strengths are found to be more successful. This comes back again to the importance of self-government.

Economic independence for First Nations groups throughout the province will require different solutions depending on their situations. No formula can be applied everywhere, for it is a complex process that will require support of governments, community members, and neighbouring non-Aboriginal residents.

What kind of economic opportunities do First



Richard Jacobs making a tipi for the Ktunaxa Tipi Company near Creston. Traditionally most Ktunaxa (Kootenay) people used animal hides for tipi covers, but in the Lower Kootenay area, reeds or rushes were sewn together. Today canvas is used and the tipis are double-stitched and have interlocking seams. A finished tipi is shown on the right.

Nations communities seek? In its consultation with communities across the country in the 1990s, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples heard about six major goals:

1. All Aboriginal people, including Métis, need to have a secure land and resource base.
2. Canadians need to respect agreements, such as treaties that have been made.
3. Economies need to provide choices for people and provide a decent income. Jobs should help develop self-esteem and identity by enabling people to choose to work in traditional occupations, such as hunting and fishing, or join the market economy.
4. New economies need to be self-reliant and sustaining for the individual and the community as a whole. They must go beyond simply allowing

for survival, and should bring growth and prosperity.

5. First Nations governments must be allowed to function fully in carrying out the administration of their lands and resources. Their people need to be the ones deciding on how economic development will take place, how it will be organized and carried out.
6. Finally, new economic development should incorporate First Nations customs and values.

There are many positive examples of self-reliant economic development around the province. These ventures adapt traditional knowledge and skills to modern enterprises, or embrace new fields or technologies. Many are related to the use of resources or to tourism.

PROFILE

Osoyoos Band

In the southern B.C. interior, the Osoyoos Band runs ten businesses, including one of Canada's top vineyards, a recreational vehicle park, and a golf course.

The Osoyoos Band occupies 32,000 acres of land between Gallagher and Osoyoos lakes, including the largest tract of unspoiled desert in Canada. In the past ten years it has shifted its focus from ranching and small farming to diversified businesses: the 18-hole Inkameep Canyon Desert Golf Course, vineyards, a Redit-Mix business, an RV park, as well as construction and retail businesses.

In 2001 the band signed an agreement with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for an investment of \$2.8 million for a major new economic development plan. The Nk'Mip Project will include Nk'Mip Cellars, the first Aboriginal-owned winery in Canada, expanded vineyards, a Desert Interpretive Heritage Cultural Centre, spas, and accommodation facilities. Plans are also underway for a 125-unit housing development, Inkameep Manufactured Home Park.



“We’re business people,” Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Band told the media in 2001. “Our goals are to build a strong future, to pursue the good life, prosper from our investments, and earn our place in the local economy, thereby earning our freedom.”²

The Osoyoos Band currently has more than 1,000 acres of prime *Vinifera* grapes grown on its land, and many B.C. wineries have made award-winning wines from grapes grown there.

Resource Management

An important factor in strengthening the economies of First Nations communities is a return to local control and management of resources. For most of its modern history, British Columbia has been a resource-rich province whose products are exported

around the world. But First Nations people are not full participants in managing these resources, even though the fish, trees, and minerals are being taken from their traditional territories. Changing economies around the globe mean that resources are becoming less important, and in recent years forestry and fisheries have been in severe decline. At the same time, First

CASE STUDY

Gitx̱san Resource Management in the Past and Present

Although the Gitx̱san live 300 kilometres inland from the ocean, their society shares features of Northwest Coast culture. Their language, *Gitx̱sanlivimuxw*, is related to the Tsimshian and Nisga'a languages. Gitx̱san territory covers about 30,000 km² in the upper Skeena River watershed. This large territory is managed by *Wilp* or House Groups. These are closely aligned extended family groups which have stewardship over particular territories. Rights to territories and resources therein are hereditary, passed on from generation to generation through the matrilineal line. The head chief of the *Wilp* holds a great deal of power in managing the resources and economy of the people, but he or she requires the support of the people of their *Wilp* to successfully manage the lands and increase the group's wealth. These hereditary rights are reaffirmed at public ceremonies called *yawk* or potlatches. At the *yawk*, narratives called *adaawk* are recounted and dramatized. The *adaawk* tell of the origins of the House Group's relationship with its territories through encounters of ancestors with supernatural creatures or natural phenomena on their lands. The *adaawk* may only be told by members

of the *Wilp*, and the accompanying privileges of dances and songs are also restricted to members. Connected with the territories and the *adaawk*, as well, are the crests which are displayed on regalia, robes, house fronts, and totem poles.

Colonization and settlement radically changed the way the Gitx̱san were able to manage their resources. Forestry became the leading industry in the region, and while it offered some paid employment to Gitx̱san people, it removed control of the forests and other resources from the *Wilp*. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Gitx̱san and the Wet'suwet'en took the governments of Canada and British Columbia to court, seeking a solution to long-outstanding issues of Aboriginal title and land claims. Their case, commonly referred to as *Delgamuukw*, was to a great extent based on their traditional laws which governed the House system. Much of the evidence recounted the *adaawk* of each *Wilp*, and stated for the record the individual hunting, fishing, and berry sites managed by each chief. The initial judgement of the B.C. Supreme Court, which denied the validity of *adaawk* and other oral histories as evidence,

was overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1997. The federal court acknowledged that the Gitx̱san and the Wet'suwet'en hold Aboriginal title and that the *adaawk* are admissible in Canadian courts.

Following the *Delgamuukw* decision, the Hereditary Chiefs of the Gitx̱san signed a Reconciliation Agreement with the Province of British Columbia. In part, the province agreed that the Gitx̱san would play a major role in managing the resources of their traditional territories. This includes *Wilp*-based forestry planning and a concerted effort to improve the depleted salmon stocks in the Skeena River.

Part of the challenge for the Gitx̱san in reasserting control in the management of the resources in their traditional territory is to re-introduce holistic management. Under government control, for example, salmon are managed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, a federal body. The land which forms the habitat of the salmon, however, is governed by the provincial government, as is the forestry industry, which has an enormous impact on salmon habitat.

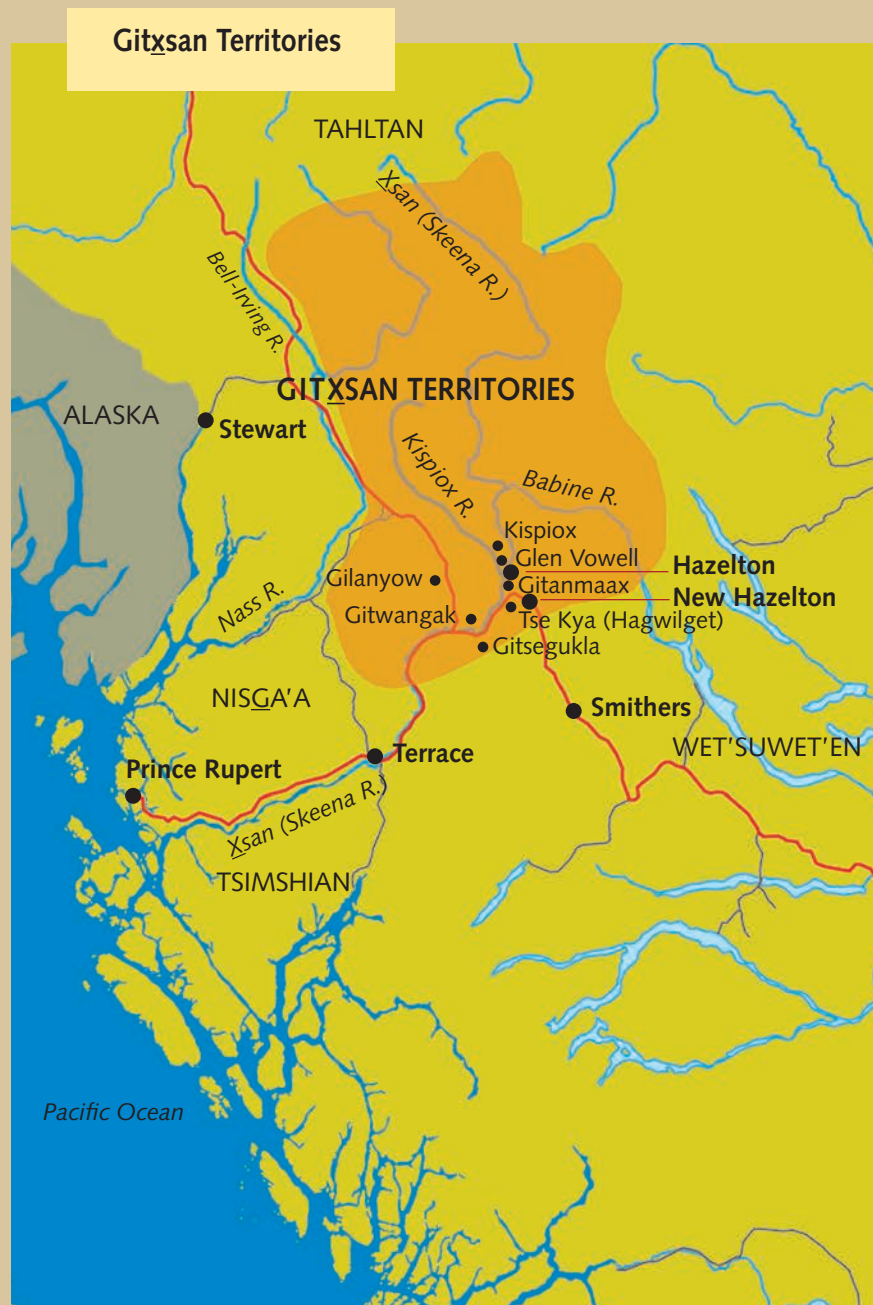
Continued

Nations have been able to become more involved in managing their resources through advances made through the treaty process and other initiatives.

The resource-based industries in B.C. are giving way to technology, information industries, and service industries. However, resource management and information are closely linked. The 1996 Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples noted: “From an Aboriginal perspective, the successful use and sustainable management of natural resources have always been knowledge-intensive, drawing on a base built up over many centuries and that still has much to contribute, even as mainstream scientific and technical

The Gitx̱san model for forestry management combines First Nations knowledge with the latest technology. It puts environmental and cultural considerations first when it comes to deciding where and how logging will take place in their territories. Inventory maps which show significant biological, ecological, and cultural elements are crucial to the model. This has involved mapping in great detail each resource using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. These maps show everything from trade and access trails to sites for medicine gathering and berry-picking, spiritual camps and ancient villages, as well as fishing sites and hunting territories. The Gitx̱san are acknowledged as leaders in using “high-tech” GIS technology to assist with continued stewardship of their ancient territories.



knowledge makes another kind of contribution.” The service industries, likewise, are linked with resource use, in areas such as resource planning, accounting, tourism, and recreation. Consequently, the knowledge and skills that many First Nations people have are important, even in our changing economy.

The key is having control. Many First Nations people live in the rural areas of the province where the resource industries are located. They are well positioned to apply their knowledge to utilizing the resources in a manner consistent with the First Nations traditional values.

A good example is Yun Ka Whu'ten Holdings, the non-profit company run by the Ulkatcho band near Anahim Lake. The company, whose name means, appropriately, “People of the Land” in the Ulkatcho language, integrates resource management with forestry activities. For instance, they needed to find a way to balance traditional mushroom harvesting with environmentally sound logging practices, so undertook a five-year study to research the question.

Community involvement is central to the operation of the company. Laurie Vaughan, president and CEO, explains that the company's projects must benefit both the land and the community. The company talks with the community about its priorities in managing the land. Its diverse activities include harvesting timber for a local sawmill and conducting a moose inventory. When the inventory reported a significant drop in the moose population, changes were made to the hunting limits the following year. For more long-term improvements in moose numbers, the band applied to have a conservation officer enforce wildlife regulations in the area. By working through government agencies but also involving the local community, the Yun Ka Whu'ten Holdings have worked out a successful method of controlling resource management in their territories.

Land claims will be another avenue for resource management. Most negotiations include clauses which

return control of resources to the First Nations. In some regions of the province, however, communities continue to watch their land and resources being used without any benefits to them or any input into their management.

Tourism Services

In recent years many First Nations in B.C. have developed businesses and services to attract tourists to their communities. Such ventures have the advantage of promoting pride in their culture while also providing employment and business revenues. One example is the Quw'utsun' Cultural and Conference Centre in Duncan, on southern Vancouver Island. The centre opened in 1990 and now employs 55 people. It attracts 45,000 visitors a year, over 60 per cent from outside Canada. Along with exhibits of Quw'utsun' cultural history, the centre features the work of Quw'utsun' knitters, carvers, and jewellery makers. Nearly 3,500 Quw'utsun' people live in the Cowichan Valley today.

Another successful First Nations tourism operation is the Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council's Tin Wis Resort Lodge. The Tin Wis is located just south of Tofino, on the open waters of the Pacific Ocean. In a joint venture with Best Western, a former residential school has been converted into a posh resort. Tin Wis is owned and operated by the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation. It opened in 1994 and currently has revenues of approximately \$3 million per year. Best Western provides the resort with global marketing and operational expertise. Nuuchah-nulth cultural components include storytelling programs, art exhibits, and Aboriginal foods on the menu. About 70 per cent of the summer season staff are First Nation members. The work experience enables them to pursue tourism-related training or to use their earnings for further education or other pursuits.

On Haida Gwaii, the Qay'llnagaay Lodge and Heritage Centre is a major economic development project of the Skidegate Band. The centre, which is



currently in the conceptual design phase, will include a Bill Reid Teaching Centre with studios for working with wood, argillite, prints, drafting, silver, gold, and textiles. The Haida Gwaii Museum will expand to include exhibits on Haida culture and history, natural history, and information on Gwaii Haanas National Park. The Canoe House will be renovated to accommodate four 50-foot canoes, including Bill Reid's famous cedar canoe Loo Taas.

The focus of Qay'llnagaay Lodge will be adventure tourism, including guided kayaking, boat tours to Haida heritage sites, nature tours, and guided sports and freshwater fishing. The lodge will incorporate

■ Sunrise on Haida Gwaii. The Skidegate Band has plans to develop a major adventure tourism centre, the Qay'llnagaay Lodge, to bring more visitors who can enjoy the natural beauty of Haida Gwaii—and provide employment for Haida people.

traditional Haida designs and will serve traditionally prepared seafood.

The Doig River First Nation, located 80 kilometres northeast of Fort St. John, is a small community that is attracting several thousand people to its annual three-day rodeo. Combining traditional rodeo events with a cultural celebration including musicians, dancers, and drummers, the event gives First Nations people

from the surrounding area a chance to showcase their talents and unique cultures. The rodeo also provides temporary employment for youth and adults, and generates revenue for the community.

These are just examples of the types of tourist destinations and events that First Nations are offering. The Aboriginal Tourism Association of B.C., with a comprehensive web site at www.atbc.bc.ca, offers information on such ventures in all regions of the province.

The Urban Experience

Women make up the largest segment of First Nations people who live in the cities. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples found that in 1991, 56 per cent of people with Indian status in cities were women, while 53 per cent of Non-Status and Métis people were women. In addition, urban Aboriginal women more often are heads of families, while men are frequently single. Many factors contribute to these statistics, usually having to do with housing and family. Some women lost their status through marriage, so were unable to stay on the reserve. Those who gained back their status under Bill C-31 have sometimes found that there are not services available for them to move back. Others have felt compelled to move to a city to escape abusive relationships.

For Aboriginal people living in urban centres, it is important to build a sense of community with which they can identify. Friendship Centres are important in bringing Aboriginal people together in cities and towns. These centres, run by First Nations staff, offer many services, from providing food or shelter, to educational and recreational programs. They cater to all ages. Many have day care programs, special programs for youth, and Elders' groups that guide and advise them.



Artwork on the building that houses the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. The Centre includes a gallery and gift shop where First Nations artists sell their work.

British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

The Friendship Centre movement in British Columbia began in 1963 with the formation of the Vancouver Indian Centre Society from what was originally the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club. The centre's aim was to provide services to Aboriginal people living in Vancouver. By the mid-1960s, the number of First Nations people moving to urban areas had increased to the point where support organizations were formed in many centres across the province. Friendship Centres were established in Port Alberni in 1965, in Nanaimo in 1968, in Williams Lake and Prince George

in 1969, and in Fort St. John in 1970. Today there are 24 Friendship Centres throughout the province.

In the early years, Friendship Centres were primarily places where Aboriginal people could socialize and receive emotional support, as well as get referrals to social service agencies. In the mid-1970s Friendship Centres began to provide services in the areas of employment, substance abuse, family support, legal services, and cultural retention, as well as promoting understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Education

Education has always been of extreme importance for First Nations people. Despite all the inequities, discrimination, and violence that educational systems have sometimes dealt them, they have understood the need to participate in the Canadian education system in order to be able to successfully participate in Canadian society. This is why in the past some parents reluctantly agreed to send to their children off to residential school.

The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recognized the economic impact of education and training:

*Few topics received more mention during our public hearings than education and training as part of a strategy for change. Knowledge, expertise and experience are essential for Aboriginal people to regain control over economic development institutions, to manage their lands and resources, to expand their business base and to participate, if they choose, in the mainstream economy.*³

For generations, control of education was removed from the hands of First Nations people. At first it was shared by the federal government and the churches. The 1946 Special Joint Committee on the Indian Act recommended that Aboriginal students should be integrated into mainstream schools, and subsequently

in the 1950s many Aboriginal students were sent to public schools in the provincial system, often against the wishes of parents. As the authors of the policy paper “Indian Control of Indian Education” point out, there is a difference between true integration and simply transferring students into a public school:

*Integrated education must respect the reality of racial and cultural differences by providing a curriculum which blends the best from the Indian and the non-Indian traditions. Integration viewed as a one-way process is not integration, and will fail. In the past, it has been the Indian student who was asked to integrate: to give up his identity, to adopt new values and a new way of life. This restricted interpretation of integration must be radically altered if future education programs are to benefit Indian children.*⁴

While the province provided educational services for many First Nations students, the Department of Indian Affairs was still responsible for the funding. Consequently, tuition fees were paid through what were called Master Tuition Agreements, a transfer of money from the federal government to the province. First Nations people had no say in the distribution of the money.

An important turning point in Aboriginal control of education came with the release in 1972 of the policy paper mentioned above, “Indian Control of Indian Education.” Produced by the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations), it outlined the philosophy, goals, principles, and directions which were believed would form the foundation of an educational program for First Nations students. It emphasized pride, understanding of other Canadians, and living in harmony with nature. Among its recommendations were two key principles: local control of education, and parental responsibility in setting educational goals for their children. In 1973 the federal government adopted the policies of the

report and began to support the move towards greater control by First Nations.

There is still a long way to go before the goals of “Indian Control of Indian Education” are achieved. However, there have been positive steps in recent years. Since the 1970s, some bands have taken the control of education into their own communities, and through federal funding, operate their own schools on their reserves. Bands who choose to participate in the public school system now have more control over the funding of their students and negotiate Local Education Agreements between themselves and the local school board.

In 1987, the provincial government tabled a sweeping survey of the entire education system, known as the Sullivan Report. It was critical of the failure of the public school system to achieve its goal of parity for Aboriginal students. In response, the government initiated changes, including the Local Education Agreements, special funding for Aboriginal language and culture programs, and the creation of a new branch of the Ministry of Education, the Aboriginal Education Branch. Another important outcome of the Sullivan Report was the development of the B.C. First Nations Studies course, for which this book is the text.

A leader in Aboriginal education is the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), a provincial First Nations collective organization that facilitates communication and support for First Nations educators by conducting research, collecting data, and offering professional development. It also plays an important role in communicating with federal and provincial governments to ensure that First Nations concerns are addressed. Publications written by First Nations educators are commissioned and distributed through FNESC, with the goal of putting control of Aboriginal education into the hands of Aboriginal communities.

Early in 2001 the B.C. Human Rights Commission began an inquiry into the failure of the public school system to meet the needs of Aboriginal students, in an initiative called Aboriginal Education: Pathways to Equality. It planned to investigate the delivery of education services to Aboriginal students in the province, and was to hold public hearings in the fall of 2001. However, the hearings were suspended, and it is unclear whether they will resume in the future.

The provincial teachers’ body, the B.C. Teachers’ Federation (BCTF), has also taken steps to better serve First Nations students by establishing its Task Force on First Nations Education. A number of initiatives have grown out of this province-wide discussion by teachers, including increased awareness of the racism facing students and a review at the school level of the inclusiveness of the school environment. The Employment Equity Program is a significant policy which encourages districts to recruit, retain, and support Aboriginal teachers.

Teachers in public schools are predominantly non-Aboriginal, but for several decades the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University have offered undergraduate and post-graduate programs to train First Nations teachers. Since 1984 UBC has offered a graduate program in education to students of First Nations ancestry. Called Ts’kel, (the Halq’emeylem word for golden eagle), it provides students an opportunity to conduct advanced research into important issues facing First Nations education, such as the effects of residential schools and local control and administration of schools. It is important for First Nations people to be represented at all school levels, and teaching in all subject areas, not just in First Nations programs.

Today, Aboriginal students around the province usually begin their formal education with a pre-school experience. Many provide unique, culturally relevant programs for children. Parents and communities recognize the importance of instilling cultural values

and language at an early age. Aboriginal Headstart is a federally funded program for early childhood education. It literally gives students a head start for when they reach primary school. It has five main components: language and culture, foundations for reading and writing, health and nutrition, social support programs for the family, and parental involvement.

Once students begin their formal education, they

may attend a public school or a band-run school. An example of a successful band-run school is the Chief Atahm School in Chase, an immersion school in which most of the subjects are taught in the Secwepemc language.

A number of post-secondary programs exist around the province that offer special courses aimed at First Nations students. At the Institute of Indigenous Government in Vancouver, students take a one-year or

CASE STUDY

Aatse Davie School

Aatse Davie School has been operated by the Kwadacha Band since 1993. Prior to that time the school was operated by the Department of Indian Affairs, which first established a one-room school in 1963. The Kwadacha Band is located at Fort Ware, approximately 570 km north of Prince George. The band has 350 members, with approximately 270 living on reserve. The village lies at the confluence of the Fox, the Kwadacha, and the Finaly rivers in the Rocky Mountain Trench.

Aatse Davie School is named after a prominent and respected member of the Fort Ware community. Aatse means “grandfather,” and many people in Fort Ware consider Aatse Davie to be their grandfather in spirit (if not their actual grandfather). His generosity, kindness, and humanity guide the mission statement of Aatse Davie School, which is dedicated to ensuring that each student’s learning is maximized according to his or her ability.

The current school building was erected in 1983; a full-size gym, two

new classrooms, and a reception area were added in 1999. The school is now organized into two wings. The South wing consists of a Kindergarten Class, a Grade 1 Class, and a Primary (Grade 2 and Grade 3) Class. The North wing has students from Grades 4 to 10, who rotate from class to class, working with different teachers for each subject. All students receive instruction in the Sekani language for several hours each week.

Fort Ware is one of the most isolated communities in British Columbia. Access is predominantly through small-plane air travel, which entails a one- to two-hour flight from Prince George, depending on the weather. In 1992 a logging road from Mackenzie was extended as far as Fort Ware. The travel time from Fort Ware to Prince George by road is from ten to twelve hours, depending on the road conditions.



two-year interdisciplinary program studying many aspects of indigenous governance, with concentration in one of four areas: Indigenous Government Administration, Indigenous Economic and Social Development, Indigenous Political Development and Leadership, and International Indigenous Relations. The institute is run in partnership with the University of British Columbia, and on completion of a two-year program students are awarded an Associate of Arts degree and

can transfer into the First Nations Studies program at the University of British Columbia to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree.

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, based in Merritt, offers post-secondary courses in four theme areas: The Land, Wellness, Economic Development, and Governance. In conjunction with the University College of the Cariboo, it offers a Bachelor of Social Work degree, and many students transfer their



Grades 5 to 9

Aatse Davie School is developing a reputation for innovative educational changes. In 1995 a sophisticated computerized learning system was installed, which enables students in K-10 curriculum to work independently in a number of programs, including math and reading. During 1995-96, 57 per cent of students achieved a year's growth in these core programs. Several students achieved two years' growth in both subjects, and one student completed three years in both subjects. Prior to 1995-96, the average academic gain in these core subject areas was between .2 and .4 years of growth per year.

The long-range plan for the school is to offer a graduation program within five years. With its state-of-the-art computerization and committed support from parents, teachers, and the community, the Aatse Davie School aims to be a model for other First Nations communities.



The Aatse Davie School lobby is a welcoming place.

PROFILE

Native Education Centre, Vancouver

The Native Education Centre has been offering training programs to the Aboriginal community in Vancouver since 1967. Its present facility is a beautiful West Coast longhouse which holds up to 250 students. With current enrolment of 300, it has become British Columbia's largest Aboriginal private college.

The Centre began with the Adult Basic Upgrading program encouraging urban Aboriginal people to achieve Grade 12. Skills training and university transfer programs have evolved over the past twenty years and the present programs include:

Aboriginal Adult Basic Education
Office Administrative Training
Family and Community Counselling
Early Childhood Education
Aboriginal Criminal Justice
Aboriginal Tourism Management
Aboriginal Land Stewardship
Sun Circle Elders Care Program
First Host
Entry Level Tourism

The Centre describes its philosophy as follows:

Native education is what we believe in and is also what makes us different from other colleges. Our English, Sciences, and Socials have the true cultural history built into them. Being taught by Aboriginal instructors, the Aboriginal perspective sheds a different light on these subjects and the books that are regularly used in these courses. All programs are based on the principles of Aboriginal education:

1. *Respecting traditional knowledge.*
2. *Teaching the cultural and spiritual values of First Nations.*



3. *Addressing the community needs of First Nations that can best be met by professionally trained Aboriginal people.* ⁵

The college has had many Aboriginal people from across North America pass through its doors in the last 33 years. Many have gone on to be leaders in their communities, as well as actors, teachers, police officers, and counsellors. Over 3,000 students have graduated, and they have left with more than a certificate or diploma in hand; they have realized that their goals are achievable and that there are educators who care. Most importantly they have awakened pride in their culture and the spirit of learning with other Aboriginal people. They have attended cultural ceremonies and met Aboriginal role models who encourage them and prove that dreams do come true.

credits to degree programs at the major universities. The En'owkin Center in Penticton is operated by the Okanagan Tribal Council and aims to record, preserve, enhance, and continue First Nations cultures through education.

These are just a few of the programs that offer First Nations students opportunities to extend their education in settings that are controlled by Aboriginal people.

Language Renewal

Language is central to the survival of First Nations cultures, as it conveys meanings and ways of thinking that cannot be translated. According to information from the 1991 census, 12 per cent of Aboriginal people in British Columbia speak an Aboriginal language, while nearly 35 per cent would like to learn their native language. As you can see from the chart below, many languages in British Columbia are considered to be endangered, as fluent speakers age and diminish in number.

Many factors have contributed to the decline of Aboriginal languages, the most significant being the effects of the residential school system. However, many other aspects of mainstream culture have had their influence as well, from English in the workplace

to ubiquitous television and radio broadcasting, especially since satellite television enables remote communities to share the same plethora of channels as urban centres. For young people today, there is often no practical need to learn their language.

However, there is a powerful cultural need for people to retain their ancestral language, since it is intimately linked to their identity. Knowing one's languages goes beyond simple communication; it acts as a tangible symbol of who you are and connects you with your roots.

Most First Nations have taken action to save their languages from extinguishment and to revitalize their use in homes, schools, and public ceremonies. Programs are being developed to teach First Nations languages in elementary and secondary schools, and also for community members in night school classes in reserve and urban communities. Through the advent of multimedia technology, educational bodies are able to find new ways of teaching languages through web sites and CD-ROMs. Several languages have been approved for credit as a second language for graduation from high school and entrance into college.

It is crucial to have fluent speakers teaching language classes, but it is not always possible for these people to undertake the usual teacher training programs. Their knowledge is so uniquely valuable that the B.C. College of Teachers, which certifies teachers before they are permitted to teach in schools, certifies First Nations language teachers who are sanctioned by their local community rather than completing a university program. Since a structure was needed to carry out this local review of prospective language teachers, bodies called Language Authorities have been set up throughout the province. These are comprised of fluent Elders who are called upon to establish criteria to certify proficient speakers.

The role of the Language Authority goes beyond certifying teachers, however; it acts as advisor to

First Nations Languages in BC ⁶

Number of languages identified as:

- Flourishing (over 80% of all age groups fluent): 0
- Enduring (over 60% of almost all age groups fluent): 2
- Declining (at least 50% of adults are speakers): 10
- Endangered (80% of older population are speakers, but no speakers under age of 45): 20
- Critical (fewer than 10 speakers): 5

develop language programs and supports their use wherever possible. It is also seen in some locales as the authority for creating new vocabulary. With modern technology there are so many objects with names only in English, and many First Nations feel it is important to create words for things such as computers, dishwashers and televisions to be able to fully communicate in their language.

It will take a great deal of work to regain the losses in First Nations languages. While the desire to have

them renewed is almost universal, the practicalities are not so easy to achieve. Schools can make a beginning, but it is really in families and communities where the most significant change will happen.

MÉTIS VOICES

Gregory Scofield

In his autobiography, *Thunder Through My Veins*, Métis poet Gregory Scofield recalls the time he spent at the Native Education Centre in Vancouver after he had dropped out of high school:

The Native Education Centre was like heaven compared to public school. It was an adult basic-education program in Vancouver that provided upgrading and cultural/spiritual courses for urban Native people. The entire program, except for math, was taught from a Native perspective, using the works of Native writers and spiritual people. As well, there were classes in beadwork and leatherwork, hide-tanning and drum-making, classes on powwow singing and dancing, and even traditional Native cooking.

. . . Everyone treated me as an equal, more so than I'd ever felt in public school. I was excited to be with my own people and to meet students from tribes from across Canada: Nishg'a,



Haida, Salish, Blackfoot, Mohawk, Cree, and Ojibway. To some degree we were all displaced people, survivors who had either been through foster care, in jail, or on the streets. Some of the students had lost their children to social services or had come out of abusive, drinking relationships. All of us were struggling to heal the past, to find some sort of meaning in who we were. ⁷

PROFILE

Dave Elliott and the SENÇŌÏEN Alphabet

The SENÇŌÏEN alphabet was devised by the late Dave Elliott. Dave was born on the Tsartlip reserve in June 1910. Like many Saanich families of the day, he fished and travelled over the historical homeland of the Saanich. His family knew all of the places by their original SENÇŌÏEN names. Dave once said, "I saw how our old people lived before our own speaking system was broken down. Our people were the wealthiest on earth. We needed nothing. We lived in a virtual paradise."

Then came regulations forbidding the Saanich People from fishing, hunting, and food gathering over their traditional lands. Government policies of the day dictated that the families who were struggling to survive had their children taken away to residential schools. There, the Saanich children began to experience denial of the SENÇŌÏEN language and culture. Over the years, this created a communication gap between those who were still at home speaking SENÇŌÏEN and those who had begun to be educated and assimilated into the white education system.

In the early 1960s, Dave Elliott became a custodian at the Tsartlip Indian Day School, attended by most of the Saanich children. Dave recognized the rapid decline in the use of SENÇŌÏEN and the knowledge of the language and culture. The late Phillip Paul led an initiative to establish the Saanich Indian School Board. The SENÇŌÏEN language was immediately offered as part of the curriculum of the band-operated school.

Realizing that without a method of recording the language it would eventually be lost, Dave began to write down SENÇŌÏEN words phonetically. He soon discovered that upon returning to read previously recorded words, he could not understand what he had written. Dave studied with a linguist in Victoria, learning the International Phonetic

Alphabet and other orthographies. The main difficulty with these systems was that some of the complex sounds of the SENÇŌÏEN language required numerous symbols to be represented, resulting in long and complicated words. Dave decided to devise his own alphabet, using only one letter to denote each sound. He purchased a used typewriter for \$30 and set out to make the SENÇŌÏEN writing system accessible to his people. During the winter of 1978 the Dave Elliott SENÇŌÏEN Alphabet was created. In 1984 the Saanich Indian School Board adopted the Dave Elliott Alphabet to help preserve the SENÇŌÏEN language and history.

Dave Elliott's legacy is the revitalization of the SENÇŌÏEN language. Today, Apple iMac computers with a TrueType SENÇŌÏEN font are used extensively in the teaching of the language, both at LÁU,WELNEW Tribal School, and throughout the surrounding public schools of Saanich School District 63.

The B.C. Ministry of Education is advocating similar uses of technology elsewhere in the province as valuable tools in the task of revitalizing indigenous languages before it is too late.

Muskeg Video Productions has produced a thirty-minute video that tells the story of the development of the SENÇŌÏEN writing system from the first experiments on paper towels to the use of custom-made computer software. This documentary has been shown on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network as part of the series *Finding Our Talk*.⁸

CHAPTER SUMMARY

First Nations people have survived the legacy of colonialism to face the challenges and opportunities of twenty-first century Canada. While there are still huge gaps in the socio-economic conditions of First Nations people compared to the total Canadian population, there are signs of significant improvement, such as the growth of the First Nations population and increased life expectancy. The social ills of communities, both on reserve and off, still require much work but many programs are available to assist with the healing.

In recent years, several B.C. First Nations have taken responsibility for economic developments in their communities. A variety of successful businesses are operating, from vineyards to rodeos. Many ventures

are tourism-related and serve the dual functions of providing employment and fostering pride in First Nations cultures.

First Nations communities are also increasingly taking control of education for their own people. Band schools fulfill this need for some First Nations; as well, there are adult training programs such as the Native Education Centre in Vancouver and the Enow'kin Center in Penticton, and a number of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions. The revitalization of First Nations languages is key to the survival of traditional cultures. With the active participation of Elders, many communities are offering First Nations language classes for young people and adults.

Self-Government and Treaties

One of the principal goals of First Nations people in the twenty-first century is self-determination, to regain the control of their lives and lands that was taken away by colonization. Self-government is a key component in this struggle, and different forms of governing are being pursued by various First Nations in B.C. The Sechelt Indian Band was the first band in Canada to achieve self-government. With the settlement of the Nisga'a land claim in 2000, the Nisga'a Lisims Government became another model for self-government.

Over fifty groups, including many Tribal Councils, are currently in the process of trying to negotiate land claims under the B.C. Treaty Process, a lengthy, expensive procedure that involves six distinct stages. In 2001-02 the treaty process was put on hold while the B.C. government conducted a province-wide referendum on treaty negotiation. The long-term impacts remain to be seen. Meanwhile, federally, the government is again making changes to the Indian Act—changes that do not offer First Nations more control over their own affairs.

Models of Self-Government

The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) noted that public opinion in Canada and throughout the world acknowledges that self-determination is a basic right for First Nations people:

The right of self-determination is vested in all the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. The right finds its foundation in emerging norms of international law and basic principles of public

*morality. By virtue of this right, Aboriginal peoples are entitled to negotiate freely the terms of their relationship with Canada and to establish governmental structures that they consider appropriate for their needs.*¹

Self-determination includes a number of factors. One of the most important is self-government, the right of a people to govern themselves in a way that they determine. Having a say in how the resources of their traditional territories are used and being able to derive economic benefit from the resources are crucial. If these can be achieved, First Nations people will be able to make improvements in economic, social, and cultural conditions in their communities.

The Canadian Constitution recognizes the inherent right of self-government, but how will it be put into action and what form will it take?

There is more than one way that self-government can be put in place, since First Nations communities have varying needs and circumstances. The situation of the Musqueam who are surrounded by the largest urban area in the province is quite different from that of the Tahltan in the vast northwestern corner of the province.

The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples described three different models of self-government that First Nations groups might choose: the Nation Government model, the Public Government model, and the Community of Interest government model.

The Nation Government model is based on an identified group of people, usually a band or a group of bands, that identify as a First Nation, with a traditional land base, controlling the local governance of their territories. A Nation Government would have a

constitution that states, among other things, its beliefs and values, its areas of responsibility, and who can be a citizen. The governing body would have jurisdiction over certain lands that are part of its traditional territories. It also would have responsibility for its members, who may or may not live in the territories. Land is an important issue in this style of government, since it will usually be the basis for the identity of the group. Most treaty negotiations are working towards a Nations Government model.

The Public Government model includes all the people who live in a certain region, not just the First Nations people. It has authority over everyone who lives within its boundaries, like other Canadian governments such as a province or a municipality. However, it incorporates traditional First Nations cultural values and practices throughout its jurisdiction. An example of such a government is Nunavut, in the eastern Arctic. This type of government could be put into practice in a region of a province if

a band and local municipal government merged, or if existing local governments in predominately Métis communities were changed.

The Community of Interest model is a more limited type of government that might be used in places where people come from different First Nations but share common needs and interests. Members would join together voluntarily to take on specific responsibilities rather than an all-encompassing government structure. For instance, people might join together to form a body that will provide First Nations educational or health services. Certain factors would need to be in place for this model to work. There would need to be a large enough population willing to put it into practice and other levels of government would need to be willing to empower the Community of Interest government. Land is less of an issue with this type of government: because its members would be from diverse backgrounds, they could not associate with one traditional territory. The Community of



Wilpsi'ayuukhl Nisga'a, the magnificent new legislative building in New Aiyansh, seat of the Nisga'a Lisims Government.

Interest model would suit people living in cities, away from their home communities or reserves, who otherwise would not have access to self-government.

At this writing, true self-government is still in the future for most First Nations. Two groups have been in the vanguard of making self-government happen. The Sechelt Indian Band has had a unique form of local

government since 1986, while the Nisga'a Nation signed a modern treaty in 2000, resulting in the Nisga'a Lisims Government. For the rest of the province, the struggle continues. How will self-government be achieved? Most First Nations of the province hope it will be through the negotiation of treaties through the British Columbia Treaty Commission.

CASE STUDY

Sechelt Self-Government

The Shishalh or Sechelt people live in the region that is often called the Sunshine Coast, just north of Vancouver. Their traditional territories include the islands and fjords north of Howe Sound. Reserve lands total more than 1,000 hectares.

The Sechelt Nation has a unique form of self-government, very much like municipal governments elsewhere in the province. Even before their self-government solution was negotiated, the Sechelt people were well known for their enterprise, seeking to manage their own affairs in any way possible under the Indian Act. They managed the reserve lands, looked after the band revenues, and carried out local taxation. In the 1970s and '80s they decided that the only way to make social and economic improvements in their community was to forge new relationships with government. This meant making changes to the laws that governed them.

The leaders of the Sechelt Band made recommendations to the federal government about how the new laws should look and entered into negotiations with the Department of Indian Affairs to create a new blueprint for self-government. Instead of the band council system, which comes under the ultimate

authority of the Minister of Indian Affairs, the community was set up as a legal body with the same powers as other local governments, such as the ability to buy and sell property, borrow money, and enter into contracts. The legislation gave the community the power to write its own constitution. The Sechelt Indian Band would own its land in fee simple rather than having the limited powers of the reserve system.

In September, 1986, the members of the Sechelt Band voted in favour of the self-government agreement. The next month Parliament passed the Sechelt Indian Band Government Act. The following April the British Columbia Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a bill to give the Sechelt community municipal status. As a result, the Sechelt people moved from the federal government under the Indian Act, to the provincial government under the Municipal Act.

At the same time as they were negotiating self-government, the Sechelt people began the land claims process, submitting their comprehensive land claim proposal in 1984. Progress was inevitably very slow, but the Sechelt Indian Band was the first band in B.C. to have their framework agreement (Stage

2) signed and also the first to have their agreement in principle (Stage 4) signed.

Sechelt Chief Garry Feschuk said at the time of the AIP signing, "It is fitting that the Sechelt Indian Band, first to have assumed every available authority under the Indian Act, first Band in Canada to have achieved self-government, first to have settled all of its specific claims, should be the first to enter BCTC Stage 5. I attribute this continuing level of achievement to the determination and perseverance of my people, and I thank them all, particularly the Elders, for their unfailing support. This success is also a manifestation of our good relations with all our neighbours, both native and non-native."

Under its treaty, the Sechelt Band's successful self-government model will continue. The present land base will become treaty lands, as will additional lands from their traditional territories, bringing the total to nearly 2,000 hectares. Terms of the AIP provide for a cash settlement of \$42 million, of which \$40 million will be for the Sechelt Prosperity Fund and \$2 million for a Sechelt Transition Fund.

The Treaty Process

For over 125 years, First Nations people have been seeking treaties to recognize their Aboriginal title and lands. Today, the treaty process is finally underway. Many people are frustrated, however, with the time it is taking to reach agreements.

The first step was the Constitution Act, 1982, which recognized and affirmed “existing Aboriginal and treaty rights.” In 1986, the federal government conditionally agreed to negotiate treaties, but only under existing policies. The province of British Columbia still would not recognize Aboriginal rights or entertain the idea of treaties. This changed finally in 1989 when the province agreed to deal with Aboriginal issues and formed the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (now the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women’s Services).

The B.C. Treaty Commission (BCTC) was formed

in 1992 through an agreement among the government of Canada, the government of British Columbia, and the First Nations Summit, whose members represent the majority of First Nations in British Columbia. In 1993, both the First Nations Summit and the provincial legislature formally approved treaty negotiations, and in 1995, the federal government passed an act to officially recognize the B.C. Treaty Commission. Both government acts became effective in March 1996.

Tripartite (three-party) meetings are held with representatives and lawyers for each First Nation, the government of Canada, and the government of British Columbia. The three parties discuss what will be included in the final treaty.

According to Section 1.1 of the B.C. Treaty Commission Agreement, a First Nation is “an aboriginal governing body, however organized

Six Steps in the B.C. Treaty Process

Stage 1.

Filing a Statement of Intent to Negotiate a Treaty.

To be accepted into the treaty process, a First Nations governing body must submit a Statement of Intent that meets the commission’s criteria for Stage 1. The governing body must describe its organizational structure and how it was established.

Stage 2.

Preparing for negotiations and assessing readiness.

Stage 3.

Negotiating a Framework Agreement.

This is a negotiated agenda which sets out the issues to be negotiated in the next stage. It identifies the subjects for and objectives of the negotiations, and establishes a timetable and the procedural arrangements for the negotiations.

Stage 4.

Substantive negotiation.

At this stage, issues are discussed to produce the Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) that contains all the features of the eventual settlement.

Stage 5.

Finalization.

At this stage, all parties formalize the agreement needed in the AIP to produce a Final Agreement and the agreement is enacted by settlement legislation.

Stage 6

Implementation.

At this stage, settlement legislation is implemented: the terms of the agreement are carried out by all parties.

and established by aboriginal people within their traditional territory in British Columbia, which has been mandated by its constituents to enter into treaty negotiations on their behalf with Canada and British Columbia.”

The First Nations Summit is an umbrella group that brings together all those nations participating in treaty negotiations. However, treaty negotiations are conducted on a government-to-government basis.

There are three different types of First Nations governing bodies that participate in the treaty process.

Some groups are defined as a traditional government whose political organization is based on hereditary leadership or other traditional systems. In other cases an individual band established under the Indian Act is negotiating on its own. Most negotiating groups, however, are tribal councils, which bring together the bands within the traditional territories of one First Nation. In total, fifty separate negotiating groups have filed claims.

The negotiations involve hundreds of meetings among the representatives for the three parties.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

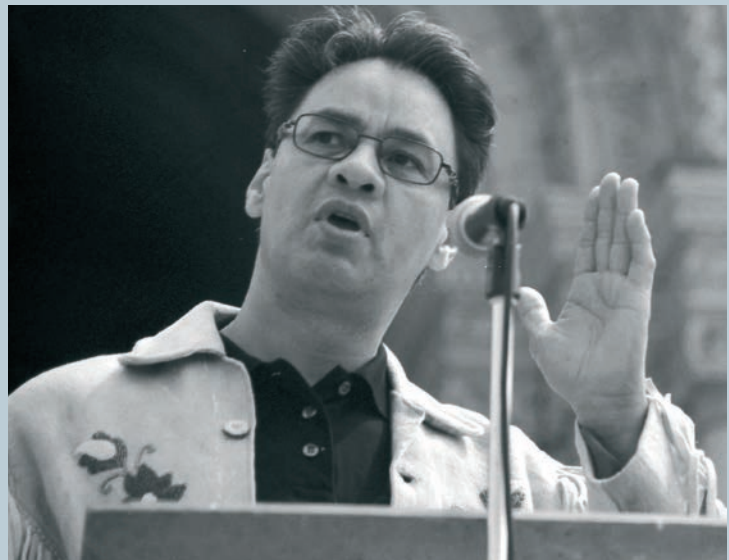
Grand Chief Edward John Speaking on Social Justice in Land Claims

The following is an excerpt from a speech by Grand Chief Edward John to Premier Ujjal Dosanjh at the First Nations Summit Meeting in Prince Rupert, September 2000.

We're all here to stay, and that's what the Supreme Court of Canada said in that famous decision in Delgamuukw/Gisday'wa. We have to find solutions to reconcile our people's interests, our people's Aboriginal rights and title, and the Crown's interests and the Crown's title. We, as First Nations people, should not have to be put to the proof that we are Aboriginal peoples. We sit around here [at the table] and we know we're Aboriginal peoples, that we are the descendants of our ancestors here, and that we have responsibility to the future generations.

Why is it that the governments tell us that in order for us to be Aboriginal peoples, we have to go to the courts to prove who we are? Why is it that the governments say that in order for them to recognize any rights of our people, that we have to go to the courts and put our people to the proof that we have rights in our territories? We know we have those rights.

Social justice. I think the governments need to quit hiding behind the lawyers, find that



Grand Chief Ed John speaking in front of the Legislative Buildings in Victoria.

political will. Find it in your heart to say, "Look, these First Nations have rights. These First Nations have Aboriginal rights and we recognize those. That these First Nations in the province of British Columbia, without exception, have Aboriginal title and they don't have to go to court to prove it." That's social justice.²

The Creation of the Nisga'a Lisims Government

Since they first resisted the imposition of reserves in the 1880s, the members of the Nisga'a Nation never gave up their struggle to have sovereignty over their traditional territories. It took over 115 years to achieve, but in the year 2000 Nisga'a citizens finally saw the dream of self-government in their own territories become a reality. As Joseph Gosnell, president of the

Nisga'a Tribal council, said when the treaty received royal assent, "Our canoe has landed."

What a long journey the Nisga'a canoe of self-government took before arriving. At every attempt to make their case, the chiefs were ignored or had obstacles put in their way. Then, in 1949 a young man named Frank Calder took advantage of the new laws permitting First Nations people not only to vote in provincial elections, but to run as candidates. Calder ran for the CCF party (forerunner to the NDP) and



■ The Nisga'a Lisims Government, which replaced the Nisga'a Tribal Council, is the governing body of the Nisga'a Nation, but each of the four communities along the Nass River still retains its local government. The Nisga'a Lisims Government passes laws which affect its citizens and lands, but federal and provincial laws still apply. As in most other places in Canada, laws of different levels of government overlap. Specific Nisga'a laws relate to language and culture.

won the large northern riding of Atlin, becoming the first Aboriginal person elected to the British Columbia legislature. As well, he was president of the Nisga'a Land Committee (changed to Nisga'a Tribal Council) and it was in his name that the Nisga'a took the question of Aboriginal title to land to court.

Finally, in 1976, the Nisga'a seized the first opportunity to present their land claims case under the federal government's comprehensive claims policy. The lengthy negotiations would take nearly twenty-five years, but the Nisga'a weren't going to give up after close to 100 years of struggle. When the B.C. Treaty Commission began in the 1990s, the Nisga'a decided to stay outside that process, as they were already progressing on their own. As their negotiations drew closer to completion, the treaty became a very public topic. There were those who opposed the treaty, believing it would give too much money, land, and power to the Nisga'a and create a "foreign territory" where Canadian laws do not apply. Some members of the Nisga'a Nation itself did not support it. They felt it did not give enough and that certain benefits under the Indian Act, such as an exemption from paying taxes, would be lost. However, the treaty was widely supported by most Nisga'a citizens and passed through both provincial and federal parliaments, including the final body, the Canadian Senate. It received royal assent in 2000. The Nisga'a Treaty is the first modern-day treaty entered into in B.C.—the first since Treaty 8 was signed in 1899.

What did the Nisga'a gain through their long journey? Primarily they gained self-government, full control of a portion of their traditional territories, and financial compensation for the rest of their lands. The cash settlement was \$196.1 million, to be paid over

Royal assent

In Canada, the U.K., and other Commonwealth countries, royal assent is the formal consent of the sovereign, or his or her representative, to a bill passed by Parliament.

Timeline to Nisga'a Lisims Government

Three Nisga'a chiefs meet Prime Minister Macdonald in Ottawa.

1886

Chief Sgat'iin refuses entry to reserve surveyors.

1887

Nisga'a and Tsimshian chiefs meet with Premier Smithe in Victoria, demanding a treaty.

1890

First Nisga'a Land Committee is formed.

1913

Nisga'a petition the British government for treaties as set out in Royal Proclamation.

1949

Nisga'a chief Frank Calder is elected to the B.C. legislature.

1955

Nisga'a Land Committee is re-established as the Nisga'a Tribal Council.

1968

The Calder case first goes to court.

1973

Supreme Court decision in Calder case split on continued existence of Aboriginal title.

1976

Nisga'a begin Comprehensive Land Claims process.

1990

B.C. joins land claims negotiations.

1996

Agreement in Principle ratified.

2000

Nisga'a treaty signed and Nisga'a Lisims Government comes into effect.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

President Joseph Gosnell of the Nisga'a Nation

The following is an excerpt of a speech given by Nisga'a President Joseph Gosnell at the Canadian Club in Toronto on May 15, 2000.

After more than a century of struggle, we are once again a self-governing people. Free citizens of Canada. Full and equal participants in the social, economic, and political life of this province, of this country. With all the rights, and all the responsibilities.

No longer wards of the state, no longer beggars in our own lands, we are now self-determining and self-actualizing. Today, no longer disenfranchised, we are free to make our own mistakes, savour our own victories, and stand on our own feet.

This is all made possible because of the Nisga'a Treaty, which was passed into Canadian law on April 13, 2000.

The Treaty is a triumph for the Nisga'a people—and all Canadians—and a beacon of hope for Aboriginal people around the world. A triumph, I believe, which proves to the world that reasonable people can sit down and settle historical wrongs. Which provides that a modern society can correct the mistakes of the past. As Canadians, we should all be very proud. ³



fifteen years, and the land amounted to 2,019 square kilometres. Other features included a sum of \$37.5 million paid for lost revenues from the forest resources on Nisga'a land. Also, there was support for initiatives in managing and seeing economic benefit from Nisga'a fisheries and forestry resources, such as \$10.3 million towards the Lisims Fisheries Conservation Trust to support fisheries science.

Alternatives to the Treaty Process

Some nations have not joined the treaty process and others have recently opted out. They look for different

approaches to reaching just settlement. The leading group in seeking alternatives is the Interior Nations Alliance.

The Interior Nations Alliance is composed of six nations: Southern Carrier, Tsilhqot'in, St'at'imc, Secwepemc (Shuswap), Nlaka'pamux, and Okanagan. Their spokesperson is Chief Arthur Manuel, son of George Manuel. They collectively support each other in developing an alternate process to the B.C. treaty process; one that would not involve the extinguishing of Aboriginal title in exchange for reduced treaty rights. In the following interview, Arthur Manuel explains how the Interior Nations Alliance approaches the settlement of land claims.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Chief Arthur Manuel

This is an excerpt from an interview with Arthur Manuel published in the newsletter *Talking Circle*.

Talking Circle: How do you see that rebuilding process starting? What is the foundation?

Arthur: We need to go back to the root cause—the unjust human relationship between settlers and indigenous people—and change it. That process of decolonization will be painful and difficult for both sides, but it is a very important step for Canada to take. Both sides will have to make a deep moral commitment. Rather than trying to bring about this change through treaties, I think we need a different approach, one based on developing relationships for co-managing and sharing resources. And these relationships must be developed in the context of human rights, aboriginal title and autonomy in areas such as language, culture, and traditional activities.

I look forward to a more dynamic relationship in which First Nations can share proportionately, according to their population size, their skills, and their ability to work and invest. But it will take a long time to get there—for Native people to learn new skills, break out of their dependency, and close the gap economically. One of the keys is public education. Both sides have the obligation to become educated about history and the issues involved. This is just starting. We're seeing changes to the education

system, and more of the story is getting told. But much more education is required.

TC: You represent the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council on the Interior Nations Alliance. Could you explain what its aims are?

Arthur: Our alliance is not looking to sign treaties with the federal and provincial governments. We believe that the treaty process, which uses a "settler approach" that divides up the land and resources in an "us-versus-them" model, doesn't offer a real solution. It doesn't satisfy human rights or fundamentally change the settler-indigenous people relationship. It reduces the relationship to a real estate deal. It leads to the extinguishment of aboriginal rights and title, even though *Delgamuukw* affirmed that aboriginal title exists and cannot be extinguished.

Instead, we want to pursue a different approach based on a "relationship model." We want to work jointly with government, business, and the public, using the wealth of our traditional territories, to improve the quality of life for First Nations people.⁴

Direct Action

Throughout most of the history of contact with outside settlers, First Nations people have protested their grievances peacefully and with dignity, usually attempting to meet with politicians on a nation-to-nation basis. The violence that characterizes the struggle for rights in other countries has not been a part of the B.C. experience.

However, anger and frustration with the persistent struggle for recognition of rights and title have resulted in some groups and nations taking direct action, which has usually been in the form of blockading a road or access route.

Typically a band or community with a particular and significant grievance, having tried every other

avenue of change, enacts a public demonstration by blockading a logging road, public highway, or railway track. The resolve of all members of the community, from youth to Elders, to stand their ground, demonstrates the undying commitment to achieve recognition of what they believe is owed them.

In recent years one group, the Native Youth Movement, has emerged as a strong, militant voice for land claims and other issues. The movement developed in Vancouver in the 1990s as young urban Aboriginals who felt excluded from the treaty process formed an informal association. One of their first actions was the 1997 occupation of the B.C. Treaty Commission Offices. Thirty Aboriginal youth spent two days and a night in the downtown Vancouver



Participants in the Native Youth Movement at a gathering near Lillooet in 1998.

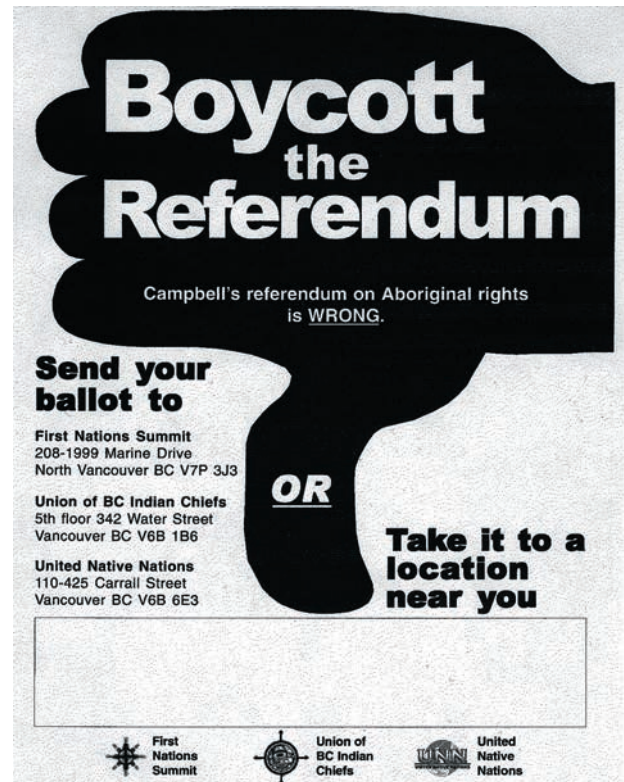
office, protesting the lack of representation by youth in the treaty process. They refused to leave until the commission agreed to meet with them. More recently, the Native Youth Movement has supported members of the Secwepemc Nation in their protests at the Sun Peaks ski resort development near Kamloops, and proved their determination and defiance in a long occupation of lands near the development. Referring to the Native Youth Movement's participation in protests at Skwelk-wek'welt, where Sun Peaks is located, Chief Arthur Manuel of the Neskonlith reserve told the media in 2001, "The spirits of the Native Youth are high. They know that they are undertaking a serious problem but they are determined to face up to the challenge . . . I must say that I am very proud of the young people who are helping us protect our Aboriginal title in the Skwelkwek'welt area." ⁵

The 2002 Provincial Referendum

When the Liberal government was elected in B.C. in 2001, it promised to hold a province-wide referendum on the treaty negotiation process. From the time it was announced until the results were in, the referendum was controversial. First Nations opposed it, and they received support from a wide range of non-Aboriginal organizations, including churches, labour unions, environmental groups, as well as many individual British Columbians.

The referendum was conducted by mail, at a cost of \$9 million. Meanwhile the treaty process that had been underway since 1990 was essentially put on hold.

First Nations organizations in B.C. and across Canada rejected the idea of the referendum and also objected to the wording of the questions put to the public. Lawyers for the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) stated: "In our opinion, many of the questions are unconstitutional, in the sense that the area and scope of the questions falls outside



■ The First Nations Summit considered the referendum a stalling tactic by the provincial government to try to impose its views on such issues as self-government and taxation. Many non-Aboriginal organizations supported First Nations in their opposition to the referendum.

the jurisdictional powers of the Province . . . The referendum questions seek a mandate to perpetuate an outdated colonial relationship, many features of which have been expressly repudiated by the courts." ⁶

Among other ways of protesting the referendum, the Hupacasath Nation in Alert Bay filed a motion before the Supreme Court of B.C. to have the language of the referendum declared unconstitutional. The court dismissed the case shortly before the referendum results were announced.

In April 2002 Elections B.C. mailed out over 2.12 million referendum packages to registered provincial voters. A total of 736,480 ballots were returned and

considered valid, meaning that less than 36 per cent of the voting population chose to respond. The UBCIC and other First Nations organizations encouraged voters to actively boycott the referendum by mailing unsigned ballots to specified collection points. They collected over 28,800 ballots, many of which were disposed of at public ceremonies. Hupacasath Chief Judith Sayers held a ceremonial burning of ballots: a cardboard canoe dubbed the S.S. Referendum was stuffed with ballots, lit with a flaming arrow, and sent out to sea to burn.

In a press release following the results of the referendum, Herb George, a member of the First Nations Summit political executive said: “A substantive majority of more than 1.5 million British Columbians chose to boycott or spoil their referendum ballot. This clearly shows most British Columbians saw this for the ill-conceived and flawed process it was. No matter what the results are, they do not represent the views of the majority.”

Despite the low voter response, Premier Gordon Campbell called the referendum an incredible milestone in the history of treaty-making in British Columbia and an unprecedented act of direct democracy. Of the voters who sent in valid ballots, the majority were in favour of the province’s questions. The government said this amounted to overwhelming support for its statements of principles for conducting treaty negotiations.

Speaking on behalf of B.C. First Nations involved in the treaty negotiation process, Lydia Hwitsum of the First Nations Summit said in a press release: “Let’s now place the referendum where it belongs—in the mirror behind us, never to be forgotten as a blight on our history and a reason for a year being wasted at the negotiation table. Together, we must now get back to effective good faith treaty negotiations immediately for the good of First Nations and British Columbians alike.” ⁷

Questions and results of the 2002 referendum on the treaty negotiation process.

1. Private property should not be expropriated for treaty settlements: 84.52% voted Yes.
2. The terms and conditions of leases and licences should be respected; fair compensation for unavoidable disruption of commercial interests should be ensured: 92.12% voted Yes.
3. Hunting, fishing and recreational opportunities on Crown land should be ensured for all British Columbians: 93.14% voted Yes.
4. Parks and protected areas should be maintained for the use and benefit of all British Columbians: 94.5% voted Yes.
5. Province-wide standards of resource management and environmental protection should continue to apply: 93.63% voted Yes.
6. Aboriginal self-government should have the characteristics of local government, with powers delegated from Canada and British Columbia: 87.25% voted Yes.
7. Treaties should include mechanisms for harmonizing land use planning between Aboriginal governments and neighbouring local governments: 91.79% voted Yes.
8. The existing tax exemptions for Aboriginal people should be phased out: 90.51% voted Yes. ⁸

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Self-determination in governing communities, lands, and resources is of paramount importance to First Nations. One way to achieve self-government is through the negotiation of treaties. Most First Nations in the province are pursuing this route through the B.C. Treaty Commission, although it is a slow and frustrating process. Others, such as the Interior Nations Alliance, seek alternate ways to self-government. The Nisga'a Nation achieved self-government in 2000 after more than a century of struggle. Its negotiations took place outside the B.C. Treaty Commission, but the Nisga'a Treaty, the first modern-day treaty entered into in B.C., was passed by both the provincial and federal parliaments and the Senate of Canada.

For self-government to work, communities must have a solid economic base, so it is crucial that communities devise plans for economic development. Putting control of resource management back into

the hands of First Nations communities can be done by working with governmental agencies and local industries, as well as through treaty negotiations.

The treaty negotiation process suffered a setback in 2002 when the B.C. government conducted a province-wide referendum on treaty negotiations. The First Nations Summit and many other Aboriginal organizations denounced the referendum on the grounds that the rights of the minority should never be subject to the whim of the majority. As well, they objected that the referendum questions failed to make any reference to the Crown's obligations to do justice after more than a century of denying Aboriginal rights and title. Many non-Aboriginal organizations supported First Nations in their opposition to the referendum, and only 36% of voters cast valid ballots. At this time it remains to be seen what impact the referendum will have on treaty negotiations.

Cultural Expression

*Culture . . . is dynamic, grounded in ethics and values that provide a practical guide and a moral compass enabling people to adapt to changing circumstances. The traditional wisdom at the core of this culture may transcend time and circumstance, but the way it is applied differs from one situation to another. It is the role of the family—that is, the extended network of kin and community—to demonstrate how traditional teachings are applied in everyday life.—1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.*¹

Culture is a guide and a moral compass, as the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples states. Aboriginal cultures are rooted in an enduring relationship with the land; beliefs and values held by Aboriginal peoples reflect their unique world views, in which all of life is seen holistically. This is the way people expressed their cultures in the past. The elements of what we classify today as “the Arts” were part of the whole cultural fabric, integrating social, political, spiritual, and economic realms. The forces of colonialism, as discussed in the previous chapters, severely disrupted many aspects of cultural expression, particularly the oppressive policies which attempted to force all First Nations people to abandon their languages and their ceremonial practices.

Today cultural expression is often a means of reasserting Aboriginal identity. By examining the wisdom of the past, Aboriginal artists in contemporary society are able to bring into focus their own cultural beliefs and values and express them both for their own people and for the wider Canadian society.

Part Four focusses on cultural expression through word and image. Chapter 14 looks at the importance of oral tradition in its many aspects, from storytelling to political oratory. The modern extension of the spoken word is the written word, and this is discussed in Chapter 15 through an examination of First Nations literature. The issue of cultural appropriation in literature is also considered.

Images are often the most distinctive way in which an individual or a group expresses culture to the outside world. The visual arts are explored in Chapter 16, including a look at the traditional art forms of the interior and the coastal First Nations, and the impact that governmental policies had on their execution. Additionally this chapter discusses the contemporary resurgence of the visual arts, which plays a role in rebuilding the identity of First Nations communities and also offers significant career opportunities for Aboriginal artists.

Canadian society has in the past frequently stereotyped and misrepresented Aboriginal people in the media through ignorance and racism. These issues are studied in Chapter 17, which presents a variety of ways that Aboriginal people have been (and still continue to be) represented in print, advertising, and museums. The chapter concludes with some highlights of positive cultural initiatives, featuring the achievements of a number of prominent Aboriginal people.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples calls for a renewed relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples built upon the principles of mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing, and mutual responsibility. Dynamic, rich, and diverse expressions of the vitality and legitimacy of First Nations and Métis cultures are important for building mutual understanding in Canadian society.



David Neel, a Kwakwaka'wakw artist, dancing his Keeper of the Animals mask on the Grand Canal in Venice, Italy, in 1998. The mask is a representation of the endangered species of the world.

Oral Traditions

For countless centuries First Nations knowledge, traditions, and cultures have been passed from one generation to another in stories and narratives, as well as through songs, dances, and ceremonial artifacts. Before Europeans arrived in B.C., First Nations had oral cultures; their languages had no written form. The oral tradition was integrated into every facet of life and was the basis of the education system. The education system in an oral tradition society is very precise and procedural: the information is taught to the next generation exactly as it was taught to the one before. Stories are used because they are easier to remember: you learn by listening closely and remembering. The oral tradition passed on the spiritual beliefs of the people and the lineage of families. It recorded ownership of property and territory, political issues, legal proceedings, and survival skills. The oral tradition also mapped the geography of an area, and it recorded history.

This chapter introduces some aspects of the oral tradition, a tradition that varies from nation to nation. Drawing on examples from many First Nations, it looks at songs, stories of origins, Trickster stories, family narratives, and formal oratory. All of these aspects of oral traditions continue to be an essential part of First Nations cultures in B.C. today. Although today First Nations knowledge is often recorded in printed form, the oral tradition has a profound significance for First Nations people, expressing who they are in the world.

Stories and Narratives

Stories and narratives have many elements in common but can be distinguished from each other. Stories — often creation stories—are set long ago in a mythical age; these stories communicate the moral traditions and knowledge of a people while telling of the origins of the landscape and the human and animal inhabitants of the land. Such stories are often told in a performance setting and may be accompanied by songs and dances that extend their meaning. Narratives meet a more concrete need and pass along specific skills and knowledge or record oral history. Formal oratory is another form of the oral tradition.

It is important to remember that the phrase “oral tradition” does not have a single meaning but is expressed in rich traditions that vary from nation to nation. Each First Nation gives its own oral tradition a name in its own language. For example:

- the Okanagan Nations use *cepcaptikwl* to pass historical narratives from generation to generation; these narratives are owned by the Okanagan Nations as a whole.
- the Wet’suwet’en call their historical narratives *kungax*; *kungax* are owned by the hereditary chiefs and clans of the Wet’suwet’en.
- the Gitksan’s narratives are called *adaawk*; they are owned by individuals, clans, and family groups.
- the Stó:lō have *sxwoxwiyám* (stories) and *Sqwélqwel* (narratives); the first are stories from the ancient past and the second are more contemporary stories.



- the Nlaka'pamux have two prominent types of oral traditions, speta'kl and spilaxem. The speta'kl (also spelled sptakwelh) are stories that refer to events from the mythological age. They include creation stories, stories of the Transformers such as Coyote, and stories of characters such as Muskrat, Beaver, and Black Bear who also walked and talked in human form. The spilaxem (also spelled spilaxam) are non-creation stories such as hunting stories, news stories, and personal narratives.

Each nation has its own traditions and procedures for its stories, and how they are to be told. In some cases, individuals, families, or clans own the stories

First Nations people still use storytelling to teach skills. Here Gwen Point and Helen Joe of the Stó:lō Nation are working with cedar bark, a traditional skill that has been passed down through many generations.

and narratives, while in other cases, certain stories can be told by anyone. To repeat a First Nations story, one needs to determine who is the owner of the story and whether it is available to be retold. Permission must be obtained before a story is passed along.

Once a spoken story has been committed to print, it becomes static. The printed form of a story from the oral tradition is sometimes referred to as “oral literature.” It is no longer strictly oral.

Songs of the Nisga'a

Historically among the Nisga'a, family histories and lineages, prime hunting and fishing locations, songs of love and loss, lullabies, and ancient tales of victories and defeats with rival tribes were passed down orally through songs from generation to generation. When successive waves of smallpox and measles killed

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Jessie Gurney

Jessie Gurney is an Elder and a granddaughter of Txalahaet, who sang some of the traditional Nisga'a songs that were recorded in 1927. When she heard a CD of her grandfather singing, she said she was deeply moved. She waited for almost eight decades to hear this music—music that her own grandfather would not let her hear.

I remember he took us children up to his fishing and hunting rounds, up the Nass. I heard him singing to himself, in Nisga'a, in the woods. I can still remember his voice. I wanted to know that song, the words, how to sing it. But he told me now he was a Christian; the priests had told him not to pass our songs on to the children and grandchildren.

Then another time I heard him at his smokehouse, where he was making salmon. He was singing another song, early, early in the morning. He was happy. I sneaked up behind. I was listening. But he found me and scolded me never to do that again. He said the priests made him promise not to teach those songs to us.

That was a terrible thing. It really, really hurt me. I hate that the preachers here then did that to him—told him not to teach us the olden ways. They just wanted to strip that away, like even the [ceremonial] clothes that he wore. What kind of Christian is that—to say his songs were a sin? ¹

half the population between 1860 and 1890, many of the oldest and best “songcatchers” died before they could pass on their musical heritage.

In 1927 two outsiders, Marius Barbeau, an ethnologist, and Ernest MacMillan, an esteemed musician, visited the area northeast of Prince Rupert to record the songs of the Nisga'a Nation using an Edison wax cylinder recording machine. Two elderly Nass River chiefs, Txalahaet (also known as Frank Bolton) and Pahl (Charles Barton) sang dozens of songs, some learned from their great-grandfathers. The songs contained elaborate lyrics, complex polyrhythms, and often enchanting melodies.

For seven decades the wax recordings were buried in the basement of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Only a small fraction were ever transcribed into music because of the technical and financial challenges involved. Recently the National Library purchased a custom-made “Archeophone” that can instantly convert wax cylinder records into digital data. Perfect copies can then be stored on computers, duplicated as CDs, and made publicly available.

In 2002 the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the National Library restored and transferred to CD two songs from Barbeau's Nass River wax cylinder recordings. They were then played for some of the descendants of the Aboriginal singers, seventy-five years after they were recorded. The ancestral songs are as sacred to the Nisga'a as old hymns are to Christians. Many First Nations people want their songs restored to them, so that young people can relearn their history and culture.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Sonny McHalsie

Yewal Sí:yá:m (respected community leader) Albert “Sonny” McHalsie of Shxw’ōwhámél.

Archaeologists tell us that we have been here for at least 9,000 years. Our Elders tell us we have been here since time immemorial. They also tell us through sxwox̱wiyámx (stories and legends) that many of our resources were at one time our ancestors. Many of our people have stories about a particular resource which at one time may have been their own people. For instance, people at a village near Hope claim the sturgeon as their ancestor; others from a village near Chilliwack and Agassiz claim the mountain goat as their ancestor. One legend common to all Stó:lō tells the story of the origin of the cedar tree. It goes like this: At one time there was a very good man who was always helping others. He was always sharing whatever he had. When X̱eX̱’a:ls (the transformers) saw this they transformed him into a cedar tree so he would always continue helping the people. And so to this day he continues to give and share many things with the people—cedar roots for baskets, bark for clothing, and wood for shelter.

So our resources are more than just resources, they are our extended family. They are our ancestors, our shxweli (spirit or life force). Our shxweli includes our



parents, grandparents, great grandparents, cedar tree, salmon, sturgeon and transformer rocks . . . Our Elders tell us that everything has a spirit. So when we use a resource, like a sturgeon or cedar tree, we have to thank our ancestors who were transformed into these things. We don't like to think that our ancestors came over the Bering Land Bridge. We have always been here. ²

In the Time of the Transformers

Many of the traditional stories from the First Nations oral traditions are set in an ancient time long ago, in the time of the Transformers. These stories transmit moral truths, cultural knowledge, and standards of

human behaviour from one generation to the next. They may bring the landscape to life for listeners by explaining how certain natural features such as large rocks, river whirlpools, or islands came to be. They may explain the origins of people and communities. Or they may tell how certain plants or animals came to be and explain how the people of an area came to have

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Bill Reid's Sculpture: The Raven and the First Men

First Nations artists have always been storytellers in their own right, giving solid form to the spoken word through weaving, painting, and carving. Contemporary artists blend the past and the present to create powerful works which preserve the ancient stories. Here, Haida artist Bill Reid has created a masterpiece of sculpture to capture the wonder and vigour of a Haida story telling about the origin of people.

According to Haida legend, the Raven found himself alone one day on the Rose Spit beach on Haida Gwaii. Suddenly he saw an extraordinary clamshell at his feet and protruding from it were a number of small human beings. The Raven coaxed them to leave the shell to join him in his wonderful world. Some were hesitant at first, but eventually, overcome by curiosity, they emerged from the partly open giant clamshell to become the first Haida.

■ The Raven and the First Men, by Haida artist Bill Reid, was commissioned by the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia in 1983.



a special relationship with the resources of their land, such as the salmon, the mountain goat, or the moose.

Until the Transformers came, the world was different—chaotic, disorganized, and filled with monsters. Animals and human beings shared many of the same characteristics, such as the ability to speak. As they travelled through the land, the Transformers changed things until they became as they are today. The Transformers changed the monsters and other beings from this age into the physical features or plants and animals that we find in today's world. On the west coast, the Transformer character in traditional stories is Raven. In the interior of B.C., Coyote plays that role.

While many First Nations stories describe the origins of things, they are not the same as European “creation stories.” In European creation stories, first there is nothing and the story tells how the world came to be made out of nothingness. In First Nations stories, there is no sense of nothingness preceding what there is now. There is always something that came before. Even when “first people” are referred to, it is with the knowledge that they are only the first because some catastrophe wiped out the people who were there before. This is consistent with the First Nations world view, which sees creation as a continuous flow of time. First Nations origin stories emphasize the continuity of existence, and do not break it into separate pieces.

The Trickster

Transformer characters in First Nations stories can also be tricksters. The trickster is a special, often very witty and humorous character that demonstrates the opposite characteristics to those that are valued in human beings. Through his actions, he shows people the consequences of acting in an unacceptable manner. In a reverse way, the trickster is a moral, ethical, and philosophical teacher. Stories featuring the trickster often teach a moral lesson. The trickster often also plays a creator role in stories, but he is also a liar, a cheat, lazy, and lustful.

The trickster is ageless, genderless (although in English the trickster is usually called “he”), and free of any stereotypes. He can take on the form of a human, an animal, or even the shape of an inanimate object such as a rock, stick, or tree. Having supernatural powers, the trickster is not constricted by human limitations, and those same supernatural powers allow him to explain the creation of places, traditional spiritual rituals and meanings, hunting and fishing rituals, symbolic objects, coming-of-age ceremonies, and the recordings of important dates and events to his people.

The trickster links human beings to the animal world. In First Nations stories, people usually appear in the world after the mythical period where animals were like people. First Nations are able to maintain a respectful and holistic relationship with the natural environment because the animals came first and humans learned from them. In this way, First Nations people see animals as relatives or forefathers who once talked and walked the earth like we do. The trickster

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Don Fiddler

Our stories are not just about birds or animals. The stories point to human capacity and frailty. The stories encode the psychology of a people. The Raven or Coyote as Trickster speaks to the human element, that part of ourselves which has the capacity for good and evil. Stories are about the circumstances that link us to the world and make us what we are. In storytelling each of the characters and their interaction is a metaphor and symbol of how we relate to ourselves, loved ones and community ... Storytelling then relates to many levels layered in meaning pertaining to human behaviour. ³

CASE STUDY

Two Trickster Stories

Among British Columbia First Nations, there are two main trickster characters, Coyote and Raven. Coyote is the trickster in stories from the interior. The first story below is from the Okanagan people. Raven is the trickster of the coast, but he is also a Transformer. The second story here is from the Nuxalk people of the Bella Coola Valley. It was told here by Joshua Moody.

These stories have been recorded in printed form in English. They were meant to be recited orally in the mother tongue of their people, the Okanagan and the Nuxalk. Consider what may have been lost by translating these stories and recording them in a static printed form.

Why the Flint-Rock Cannot Fight Back

Sto-Way'-Na—Flint—was rich and powerful. His lodge was toward the sunrise. It was guarded by Scur-hein—Crane. He was the watcher. He watched from the top of a lone tree. When anybody approached, Crane would call out and warn Flint, and Flint would come out of his lodge and meet the visitor.

There was an open flat in front of the lodge. Flint met all his visitors there. Warriors and hunters came and bought flint for arrow-points and spear-heads. They paid Flint big prices for the privilege of chipping off the hard stone. Some who needed flint for their weapons were poor and could not buy. These poor persons Flint turned away.

Coyote heard about Flint and, as he wanted some arrow-points, he asked his squas-tenk' to help him. Squas-tenk' refused.

"Hurry, do what I ask, or I will throw you away and let the rain wash you—wash you cold," said Coyote, and then the power gave him three rocks that were harder than the flint-rock. It also gave him a little dog that had only one ear. But this ear was sharp, like a knife; it was a knife-ear.

Then to his wife, Mole, Coyote said: "Go and make your underground trails in the flat where Sto-way'-na lives. When you have finished and see me talking with him, show yourself so we can see you."

Then Coyote set out for Flint's lodge. As he got near it, he had his power make a fog to cover the land, and thick fog spread over everything. Crane, the watcher, up in the lone tree, could not see Coyote. He did not know that Coyote was around.

Coyote climbed the tree and took Crane from his high perch and broke his neck. Crane had no time to cry out. Then Coyote went on to Flint's lodge. He was almost there when Flint's dog, Grizzly Bear, jumped out of the lodge and ran toward him.

Coyote was not scared, and he yelled at Flint: "Stop your grizzly bear dog! Stop him, or my dog will kill him."

That amused Flint, who was looking through the doorway. He saw that Coyote's one-eared dog was very small, hardly a mouthful for Grizzly Bear. Flint came out of his lodge. He was laughing.

"Sin-ka-lip', you better take your dog away. My Grizzly Bear will eat him up."

"No, stop your dog," repeated Coyote. "One-Ear is bad!"

"Hah!" laughed Flint. "No dog can hurt my Grizzly Bear!"

So, without more talk, Coyote sent One-Ear at Grizzly Bear, who opened his mouth wide. The little dog went right ahead and jumped straight into Grizzly Bear's mouth, and kept on going. He went clear through Grizzly Bear. His sharp knife-ear cut Flint's dog wide open.

"See!" Coyote said. "I told you that One-Ear was bad. He can kill anything."

About that time Mole appeared at the far edge of the flat. She was dressed in skins that were painted red, and she looked very handsome.

"My friend," Coyote spoke to Flint, "see that woman over there. Let us run a race. The one who gets to her first shall take her for his wife." Flint was willing. So they raced. They ran toward Mole. She pretended to be digging spit-lum (bitter-root). She had made tunnels all through the flat, and they were a bother to Flint. He kept stepping into them and falling, and every time he fell Coyote would jump over him, and shout: "Eh! Ha-yea! My friend, what is wrong?"

Flint was heavy, and slow in picking himself up. Sometimes Coyote jumped over him twice before he could get up. When they got to where Mole was standing, she changed herself into a real mole and skipped into one of her tunnels. Then Coyote began to hit Flint with the squas-tenk' rocks. At each blow they scaled off big flakes of flint.

Flint also tried to catch Coyote, but every few steps he stumbled into one of Mole's tunnels, and he grew weaker and weaker. Coyote kept striking him with the medicine-rocks. At last all of the monster's body was chipped away. Only the heart was left. Then Flint died.

Coyote picked up the heart and threw it across the flat. There it is today. It is a hill standing there. Much flint is found there.

The pieces of Flint's body which were scattered around on the flat were gathered up by Coyote and thrown all over the earth for warriors and hunters to use.

That done, Coyote said: "Sto-way'-na, you are a person no more. From this sun you are only dead stone!"

And this is why the flint-rock is senseless and cannot fight back when chipped for arrow-heads. Coyote made it so before the New People came. ⁴

Origin Myth of Snutali

In the beginning of time Alquntam created the forefathers of all mankind in his house above and then asked each in what form he wished to go to earth. A number of bird and animal cloaks were hanging on the walls of the house, and each was invited to take his choice. One whose name was Kaliakis chose the raven. When he had donned the garment he became a raven. Slowly he circled down from above in long spirals, carrying with him his two younger brothers and a sister, all in raven form, as a bird carries its young. He set down the two small brothers on the top of a flat mountain near Snutali where he told them to remain, adding:

"I am going to the east but will return."

He brought back some abalone-shells, which he set down near the diminutive ravens, saying:

"Stay here, I am going to the west but will return."

This time he brought back with him some copper, that flashed in the sun.

Kaliakis and his two brothers now assumed human form and sent their raven cloaks floating back to the land above. This was what happened to all the bird and animal forms used by the first people. The three descended the mountain and built their house by the Bella Coola River at the spot now known as Snutali. Kaliakis had brought with him a mountain goat, which, when set at liberty, bred with great rapidity, so that these first Snutali people subsisted largely on goat flesh, the provision made for them by Alquntam. In some inexplicable manner it appears that the supernatural hunter Twalatlit, whose other name is Lelemkila, "The One Who Throws Down [Goats]," had come with this group. Kaliakis had such success in hunting that he was able to give a potlatch and bestow valuable presents of goat meat, goat grease, and woollen blankets. At this ceremony he took for himself the sisaok name, Laltali-am-dimut, "The Copper One," because when returning from the west the raven had covered himself with copper, so that it seemed as if he were made of it.

During his lifetime, though whether before or after his potlatch, it is impossible to state, Kaliakis determined to obtain light for mankind, as at that time it was all semi-darkness, faintly illuminated by what resembled pale moonlight. He remembered that he had seen the sun in Alquntam's house, enclosed in a kind of sack, and he determined to steal it. So he again assumed the form of a raven and flew back aloft. Without allowing himself to be seen, he changed himself into a grain of dust and placed himself in a

cup from which Alquntam's daughter, Sixman-a, was about to drink. Noticing the speck of dirt, she blew it away. Then he changed to a hemlock needle, floating on the surface of the liquid, but she lifted it off. Undiscouraged, Raven became mud which she drank down, enabling him to enter her body. Sixman-a was greatly surprised to find herself pregnant, and so was her father. In course of time a boy was born, really Raven, though she knew it not. He grew with phenomenal rapidity, and within a few weeks was crawling around on the floor and, like a spoilt child, crying for playthings. Whatever his mother or grandmother gave him, he threw aside after a few minutes and cried the more; he was a fractious child. Looking up, Raven pretended to notice for the first time the sun, dimly gleaming from within its container as it hung from the roof of his grandfather's house. He cried and cried, almost choking himself; nothing would satisfy him, so at last his indulgent grandfather gave him the shining object though he was careful to pad the floor with soft bark. The happy child rolled the dimly glowing ball around on the soft covering for some time, but when the door was opened, he crawled outside with it, burst the container against the door-post, assumed raven form once more, and flew away, croaking derisively. Thus human beings received the boon of sunlight. Raven flew back to earth and again became Kaliakis. ⁵

serves as one of these lost relatives educating his relations about the mythical period of long ago.

The trickster stories are often very funny. No one wants to be laughed at like the trickster so the stories act in a proactive, powerful way to prevent wrongdoing and uphold the law. A person in error can save face by listening to the story, learning a lesson, yet not being singled out for wrongdoing.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Harry Robinson



Harry Robinson was a highly respected storyteller from the Interior Salish people. Harry was born in 1900 and learned storytelling in the Okanagan language from his grandmother and other oldtimers. In later years, when more and more of his listeners understood only English, Harry became a skilled storyteller in English. Beginning in 1977, over a twelve-year period, an ethnographer named Wendy Wickwire tape-recorded over 100 stories told by Harry. Selected stories were later published in two books: *Write it on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*, from which the following is a short excerpt, and *Nature Power*. Harry's stories were transcribed as he told them; they are set in short lines that mirror as closely as possible his rhythms of speech. Harry died in 1990.

Oral Narratives

Oral narratives focus more on transmitting skills, news, and history than on cultural values. Stories that help young people learn skills and knowledge, stories that record family histories, and stories that record the history of communities are all examples of oral narratives. Of course, in addition to transmitting

Fur Traders

*They tell the Indian to get fur.
Put in trap and get fur.
Then they buy that and trade 'em.
They trade, you know.
They cheating the Indian at that time.*

*See the gun?
See this gun here?
See?
They put this gun,
They stand 'em on the ground like that.
Well, the gun is higher.
In those days the gun is long.*

*And he stand that gun.
Then they pile the hides from the ground.
Build 'em right up even with the gun.*

"All right, you take the gun. I take the hides."

*And the gun, it was only about \$30.
And then the hide, it was about \$900.*

*See?
They traded that way.
That was wrong.⁶*

information, narratives, like creation and trickster stories, aim to entertain.

The narratives that record the history of B.C.'s First Nations have become very important in establishing Aboriginal title to a nation's territories. Until recently, such narratives had not been accorded importance in the Euro-Canadian legal system. However, in the Supreme Court of Canada decision in the *Delgamuukw* case, the judge ruled that First Nations oral history must be accepted as evidence and given due weight in legal decisions. This ruling set an

important precedent for future court cases involving First Nations and caused Euro-Canadians to reassess the nature and significance of historical narratives.

Oral narratives have not been used as evidence in the writing of B.C. history either until recently. Today, however, historians of the Canadian West are beginning to use First Nations' traditional accounts of events to give a more balanced history of this province. When

Appellant

In law, an appellant is a person who appeals a decision to a higher court.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Delgamuukw v. The Queen

This extract is from the ruling by Supreme Court Judge Lamer in the *Delgamuukw v. The Queen* case. In this case, the chiefs of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en sued British Columbia for the right to their traditional territories. Although the lower court judge, Justice McEachern, refused to accept the oral histories of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en, Judge Lamer overruled him in the superior court.

[T]he Gitksan Houses have an "adaawk" which is a collection of sacred oral tradition about their ancestors, histories and territories. The Wet'suwet'en each have a "kungax" which is a spiritual song or dance or performance which ties them to their land. Both of these were entered as evidence on behalf of the appellants.

This appeal requires us to . . . adapt the laws of evidence so that the aboriginal perspective on their practices, customs and traditions and on their relationship with the land, are given due weight by the courts. In practical terms, this requires the courts to come to terms with the oral histories of aboriginal societies, which, for many aboriginal nations, are the only record of their past. . . . [I]n the case of title [and] pre-sovereignty occupation, those histories play a crucial role in the litigation of aboriginal rights.

Many features of oral histories would count against both their admissibility and their weight as evidence of prior events in a court

that took a traditional approach to the rules of evidence. The most fundamental of these is their broad social role not only "as a repository of historical knowledge for a culture" but also as an expression of "the values and mores of [that] culture" . . . The difficulty with these features of oral histories is that they are tangential to the ultimate purpose of the fact-finding process at trial—the determination of the historical truth. Another feature of oral histories which creates difficulty is that they largely consist of out-of-court statements, passed on through an unbroken chain across the generations of a particular aboriginal nation to the present day. These out-of-court statements are admitted for their truth and therefore conflict with the general rule against the admissibility of hearsay.

Notwithstanding the challenges created by the use of oral histories as proof of historical facts, the laws of evidence must be adapted in order that this type of evidence can be accommodated and placed on an equal footing with the types of historical evidence that courts are familiar with, which largely consists of historical documents. . . . [G]iven that most aboriginal societies "did not keep written records," the failure to do so would "impose an impossible burden of proof" on aboriginal peoples.⁷

CASE STUDY

Simon Fraser Meets the Nlaka'pamux

The following extracts show the oral recording by the Nlaka'pamux of explorer Simon Fraser's arrival at present-day Lytton, compared to Simon Fraser's own journal entries. Notice that some of the same events are referred to but they are interpreted very differently in the two accounts. Fraser's written version has usually been used as the primary source for reporting on this historical event.

The Encounter with Simon Fraser, as told by Elder Annie York

When Simon Fraser came down, of course the Lytton Indians were the first ones that viewed him. They seen this man—the Lytton Indians seen this man coming down in a canoe with his party.

Chief Sexpinhemx, he soon spotted it, and he says, "That's what my wife foretold, that that man is coming to this area." So he said to the Indians, "You Indians must never touch him, you musn't hurt him. See that white handkerchief what he has on his head?" He had a white handkerchief tied around as a band, and he's the headman in the canoe.

And when Sexpinhemx's servants spotted Simon Fraser, he camped down there somewhere around the other side of Cisco [Siska], somewhere around there somewhere—and that's where he forgot his axe, his little hatchet. Simon Fraser forgot his little hatchet. But Sexpinhemx said to his servants, "You boys must make it. You must run after that canoe and you must catch up to him and give him his axe." So they did—they caught up to him and gave him his axe.

Sexpinhemx told his men, "You must keep on going to Spuzzum and send the word down there that you must never hurt that man. That's the man of the Sun—he's the son of the Sun." So these Indians came

along and came to Spuzzum and they spread the news all around.

But my grandmother, my own grandmother, she was ten years old, and they lived down there, on the other side of Spuzzum Creek, right at the mouth, and there were several others. Paul Yugla [Yoala] was there too, and several other Indians were there. And this special man came in a canoe, and when they seen him they knew who he was. That was the man that was foretold to come along.

And they welcomed him, and they had a little dog. The Indians had fish broiled by their summer campfire in the spring. It was in springtime, and they had this camp fire. They were broiling their fish and they offered Simon Fraser the fish. He didn't like the fish. He kept pointing at the dog, this little dog. The Indians couldn't understand why he kept pointing at this little dog. He wanted the dog. Anyways, they gave him the dog—and what do you think he did with the dog? He killed the dog and ate it. That's what he had for supper, but the Indians didn't like that very much.

The next morning they cooked the fish for him. Then he took part of the fish and the chief came. Then they had their pipe—the pipe was always used. The chief flew his flag and ordered all his tribe, "You must never beat this new man." Because that was their traditional way of living. So Palak, he ordered all his people, "You must never hurt this man. You must welcome him."

And so they did and he stayed for a few days, down there by the cottonwood tree. There's a big cottonwood down there by Spuzzum Creek at the mouth, and that's where the camp was. And our great-grandmother was there, and our grandmother was ten years old, and she told us this story.

There was a special woman, she was related to our grandmother. This special woman, she was an entertainer—she was a singer and she was asked to sing this special song when Simon Fraser was leaving. So they had a sort of prayer, a special prayer for him, that he must be saved in his voyage drifting down the Fraser River. They warned him about Battleship Island. They told him that one of the rapids was very fierce. They told him in a way that he could understand. They pointed, and they did this to the water [she gestures, indicating the roughness of the water]. They made it rough and told him, "That's where he's going to go through." These people that was with Simon Fraser, they understood that it was rough.

So when he was leaving they had this party, and this lady singing a special song—a traditional song for him. So anyway, she sang this song, and Simon Fraser, when he was leaving, he seemed so sad over it. He had tears in his eyes when he was drifting away in his canoe, and this lady who sings the song, she says:

We'll meet again when the leaves are turning red and yellow. When our chief asks us to pray, we'll pray for you when the sun rises—and when the sun rises, we'll bow our heads towards it and we'll pray for you; and when our Chief takes his pipe and smokes his pipe, the smoke will drift down the river to follow you, and our prayers will descend with you and will accompany you; and when all the trees sway along the beach, the green leaves and the green boughs and all the emerald greens will sway around you and the silvery circle—the eddy, the pool—and you'll be safe when you go through this channel. And when we're in the woods, in the forest, we'll always pray for you, and our prayers will always remain with you, and all our

tribes from Spuzzum will always pray for you to return, and one day your flag will fly over us.

That's Chief Palak's farewell to Simon Fraser; and this lady, she's singing that song on behalf of Chief Palak.

Simon Fraser, when he first came here, of course this was the last of the Thompson Indians right here. And when he went over there—the Indians have a traditional way of guiding a person—so when he was leaving, they gave him blessings, and when he went through Yale and all the way down nobody done no harm to him. He was safe all the way through. I don't know how the chief found out that he was safe. He went and he told all of his people, and they prayed for him again and they sent their prayers to him.

The Indians took him as the son of the Sun. Well, you see, the Indians always thought the White people came from the Sun, and they revered the White people that way. I don't know why, but that's the way they used to look at it—in the beginning, anyway.⁸

The Account from Simon Fraser's Journal

June 19, 1808

At 8 A.M. set out, divided as yesterday. A mile below, the natives ferried us over a large rapid river [the Stein River]. I obtained, for an awl, a passage to the next village, a distance of three miles through strong rapids. The others who went by land met some of the Indians on the way who were happy to see them. This was the village of the Chief who had left us in the morning. We were told here that the road a head was very bad, and consequently we should meet with much difficulty for most part of the way.

The Indians of this village may be about four hundred souls and some of them appear very old; they live

among mountains, and enjoy pure air, seem cleanly inclined, and make use of wholesome food. We observed several European articles among them, viz. a copper Tea Kettle, a brass camp kettle, a strip of common blanket, and cloathing [sic] such as the Cree women wear. These things, we supposed, were brought from our settlements beyond the Mountains. Indeed the Indians made us understand as much.

After having remained some time in this village, the principal chief invited us over the river. We crossed, and He received us at the water side, where, assisted by several others, he took me by the arms and conducted me in a moment up the hill to the camp where his people were sitting in rows, to the number of twelve hundred; and I had to shake hands with all of them. Then the Great Chief made a long harangue, in course of which he pointed to the sun, to the four quarters of the world and then to us, and then he introduced his father, who was old and blind, and was carried by another man, who also made a harangue of some length. The old [blind] man was placed near us, and with some emotion often stretched out both his hands in order to feel ours.

The Hacamaugh [Thompson Indian] nation are different both in language and manners from their neighbours the Askettels [Askettihs; Lillooets]. They have many chiefs and great men, appear to be good orators, for their manner of delivery is extremely handsome. We had every reason to be thankful for our reception at this place; the Indians shewed us every possible attention and supplied our wants as much as they could. We had salmon, berries, oil and roots in abundance, and our men had six dogs. Our tent was pitched near the camp, and we enjoyed peace and security during our stay.

June 20

The Indians sung and danced all night. Some of our men, who went to see them, were much amused. With some difficulty we obtained two wooden canoes; the Indians, however, made no price, but accepted our offers. Shortly after a tumult arose in the camp. I was writing in the tent; hearing the noise, I went to the door and observed an elderly man running towards me, but [he] was stopped by some of the others who were making a loud noise. I enquired into the cause; they crowded around me. They [the] chief spoke and all was quiet. I, then, learned that Mr. Quesnel having walked in the direction of a canoe that was some distance on the beach, the Old man in question, who was the owner, thought he was going to lose it.

This affray over, we prepared for our departure. The Chief pointed out three elderly men who were to accompany us to the next station. In the mean time, I was presented with berries, roots and oil in abundance. Notwithstanding these tokens of friendship, the impression, which the late disturbance made on my mind, still remained. However kind savages may appear, I know that it is not in their nature to be sincere in their professions to strangers. The respect and attention, which we generally experience, proceed, perhaps, from an idea that we are superior beings, who are not to be overcome; at any rate, it is certain the less familiar we are with one another the better for us.⁹

oral traditions are written down as part of historical documents, they become oral history.

Family Narratives

Family narratives are one special type of story that records the history and traditions of a family. These are stories told within the family, and they concern family members and their skills and experiences. They may describe the participation of family members in community events like hunting, fishing, basket weaving, cooking, sewing, or feasts, or they may describe special skills a family member has in order to pass them along from generation to generation. Each story helps listeners place themselves and their family within a particular context of time and place.

Teaching Stories

The oral tradition is one of the most lasting and effective ways of educating First Nations children. The children learn how to act and behave through trickster stories. Through creation stories, they learn where they came from, and through family narratives they learn about their family's history. Older First Nations members teach the younger generation through stories that reflect people's experience. Some stories have specific purposes, and some transmit cultural knowledge in a more general way.

Learning in an oral setting is quite different from learning with a printed text to refer to. When knowledge is transmitted orally, you have to listen to the procedure and remember it. Imagine how difficult

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Shirley Sterling

This narrative by Shirley Sterling tells how she learned to make a fish weir from her mother.

In January of 1987 I asked my mother, Sophie, to help me build a Salish fish trap as a project for a night course on the Native peoples of British Columbia. As we walked around the chicken-house to gather red willow for the project, my mother started to tell me about how her grand-aunt Yetko had shown her how to build the trap when my mother was about six or eight years old. They were down at the Coldwater River one day gathering plants and making "spetsin" or twine. Sophie showed me how you take some strings from the plant and roll it on your knee to twirl it into twine. Then Sophie said Yetko thought it would be nice to have fresh trout for supper. She gathered red willow and started to make the fish trap right there. My mother watched for a while, then she began to hold sticks in place so Yetko could tie them. As they worked together, Yetko explained what she was doing, how she was doing it, and why she was doing it a certain way. She explained where it was best to place the trap so that fish would go into it, and how to hide the trap from the fisheries people who were patrolling the rivers and breaking up the

traps. They went up to Yetko's house and told her she was not allowed to make fish traps anymore.

At one point in the building of the fish trap, I stopped to watch my mother. As she was chopping the willow sticks and tying them together with black baling twine she was remembering Yetko and the day at the river gathering twine. My mother was chuckling at something Yetko said or did.

"Oh, she was a nice old lady," said Mum.

"How many fish traps have you made, Mum?" I asked.

"Two," she said.

"I mean in your entire lifetime?"

"Well," she said. "This one and the one I made with Yetko."

"You mean you remembered how to make a fish trap from that one time when you were a little girl and Yetko showed you? That's like sixty-five years ago!" I was thinking, wow, sixty-five years later, she remembered! ¹⁰

this is compared to modern life where things can be written down and referred to again and again.

The following are several examples of teaching stories.

- A master carver teaches his son or an apprentice how to carve a canoe out of a cedar tree. Each carver has his own unique way of carving because he was taught by a certain teacher. The son starts to learn to be a carver when he is very young. At first, all he does is watch and listen. The carver leads his son through the whole process slowly and methodically. The son is only taught a small part at a time. He is disciplined if he makes a mistake. He must practice until he has learned the skills. The master carver may have some songs that he sings while he carves. These songs are his and will be passed down to the next carver. The new carver is allowed to make his own canoe only after he has satisfied the master carver he can do it correctly.
- A grandmother sings her granddaughter a song. The song tells about the creation of their family. The grandmother has begun the process of teaching her granddaughter the family history. She will be the family historian (other First Nations call it the Oral Recorder). Throughout her life, the granddaughter will listen to stories, songs, and narratives repeatedly. She will listen until she can tell the stories word for word from memory. If she cannot remember the stories perfectly, she

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Jerry Eneas

This family narrative records one family's line of descent. It is told by Jerry Eneas, and was passed on to him by his mother, Sarah Bone McCraige.

Our great grandfather is Jim and his Indian name is Shwee-yaut-kin. He was mauled by a grizzly bear at Methow Valley during the year of 1867 or close to that year. The date of birth of Shwee-yaut-kin is unknown. The Methow Valley is in the north central area of Washington State of U.S.A.

Our great grandmother is Quin-ho-pet-sa. The date of birth and the date of death of Quin-ho-pet-sa is unknown.

After her first husband, Shwee-yaut-kin, Jim, died at the Methow Valley, Quin-ho-pet-sa was alone without a husband for about seven years. This is a respect to the death of Shwee-yaut-kin, Jim. After the time of seven years come to pass, the younger brother of Shwee-yaut-kin, Jim, and his name is Hila-ka-hun, go to Quin-ho-pet-sa, proposed for marriage.

When one young Indian man dies, it is an obligation of the brother to care for the wife and sons and daughters of the deceased young Indian man. This is a custom of some tribes of North America.

Hila-ka-hun and Quin-ho-pet-sa were united as husband and wife during the year of 1874. Hila-ka-hun and Quin-ho-pet-sa bore a son and his name is Ed, Hila-ka-hun. The date of birth and the date of death Hila-ka-hun is unknown.

that he sings while he carves. These songs are his and will be passed down to the next carver. The new carver is allowed to make his own canoe only after he has satisfied the master carver he can do it correctly.

A grandmother sings her granddaughter a song. The song tells about the creation of their family. The grandmother has begun the process of teaching her granddaughter the family history. She will be the family historian (other First Nations call it the Oral Recorder). Throughout her life, the granddaughter will listen to stories, songs, and narratives repeatedly. She will listen until she can tell the stories word for word from memory. If she cannot remember the stories perfectly, she

Our great uncle, Ed, Hila-ka-hun died on April 15, 1961. Ed was about 86 years old at the time of his death. He was buried in the Indian cemetery near Nespelem, Washington.

Our grandfather is Narcisse Bone, Jim. During the early years of his life, from the childhood years to the young manhood years, Narcisse had a visitation from the Ten Wolves in the wilderness during the time of his vision quest. The Ten Wolves is the Indian mystic power of Narcisse Bone Jim. The Ten Wolves will chase prey, like the moose, the elk, the deer and kill the prey. The Ten Wolves will eat the meat from the carcass until all the meat is eaten and there is only "Bone" left of the carcass. And so, Narcisse Bone Jim got the Indian name "Bone" from what his Indian power, the Ten Wolves, can do in the wilderness.

Narcisse is the son of Shwee-yaut-kin, Jim and Quin-ho-pet-sa. He was seven years old when his father, Shwee-yaut-kin, Jim, was mauled and killed by a grizzly bear at Methow Valley.

Narcisse Bone Jim, was born during the year of 1860 or close to that year. He died on the day of June 1, 1924. Narcisse was about 65 years old at the time of his death and was buried on the Penticton Indian reserve British Columbia.¹¹

may be thought of as a liar. She must be accurate in her telling because she is the family book, so to speak. She is responsible for all the knowledge of the family. She is taught the family lineage, she knows the stories that tell about important events in the family's history, and she knows how family members got their names. If a family member, clan member, tribal member, or anyone else wants to know anything about her family, they will ask her.

- Hunters are hunting in the woods. There are no maps so they navigate by stars, landmarks, and waterways. Each of these landmarks has stories that describe the place, meaning, and the name of it. The hunters were taught by an older generation of hunters how to navigate in their territory. The stories also paint an outline of the borders of their

territories. The hunters know exactly where their territory begins and ends. They are taught to find game in their territory in different seasons. Once they have found game, the strategies of killing the game are also taught to them. The ritual that they go through has been taught to them orally. How they harvest the meat has been taught to them orally.

Oratory

Oratory plays a special role within First Nations culture. Oratory is the art of delivering a formal speech in a public place. It requires training and gives the speaker great dignity and respect. Many First Nations use a special form of language for such speeches. An orator's speaking reflects not only on him or herself,

but also on the people for whom he or she is speaking. The ability to state your position in a respectful way is important, particularly if you are speaking in opposition to someone else. First Nations people believe respect is a two-way street; this is reflected throughout their oral traditions.

First Nations people who use formal oratory are trained to do so. It is a great honour to speak for a family, clan, house, or tribe. The speaker, not wanting to misstate the position of the people, spends time listening to them. The art of listening in an oral society is very important. Listening to the people you are going to speak for, carefully preparing your speech, and being respectful to your audience are all part of the First Nations oral tradition.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

A Nlaka'pamux Teaching Story

In this Nlaka'pamux teaching story, a boy is raised without knowing who he is, not knowing his family or where he came from. Shamed at being called a slave, he finds his family, assisted by the short-tailed mouse.

The Owl and the Boy

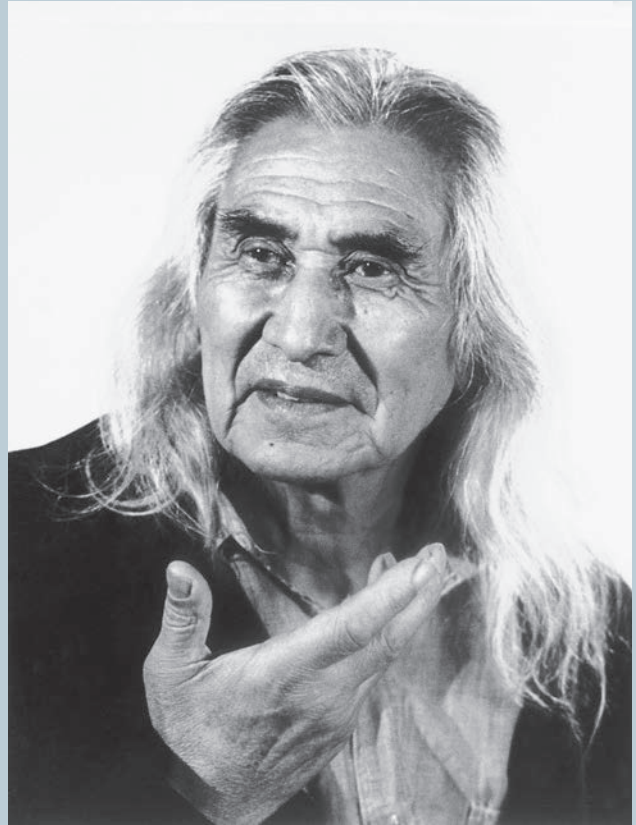
Formerly the Owl was a great hunter. At one time some people who were hunting happened to camp near his haunts in the mountains. They were accompanied by a boy continually making a noise and crying, causing them much annoyance. One evening his parents, intending to make him quiet said, "Owl, come and take him." That night Owl came and took him away. He reared him, and the boy eventually became like the Owl himself, a celebrated hunter. One day while hunting the boy heard the Owl shouting tci tem uL En ca'ut ("Go, towards my slave"), which he was calling to the deer. He felt very much ashamed and offended, and therefore repaired to the Short-tailed Mouse for advice. She told him, "The Owl is not your father: he stole you from your parents. Go back to your own country and people." She told him how and where to find his people, so he left the Owl and went back, taking up his abode with his own friends. ¹²

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Chief Dan George's Confederation Lament

Chief Dan George of the Burrard Indian Band in North Vancouver was a very gifted speaker. His speaking ability earned him several roles in Hollywood films and, more importantly, the respect of his peers. In this famous speech made in 1967, when Canada celebrated its first one hundred years, Chief Dan George critiqued that century from a First Nations perspective. This speech was made at the Empire Stadium in Vancouver, July 1st, 1967.

How long have I known you—Oh Canada? A hundred years? Yes—a hundred years—and many many years more. Today, when you celebrate your hundred years Oh Canada—I am sad for all the Indian people throughout the land. For I have known you when your forests were mine. When they gave me food and my clothing. I have known you—in your brooks and rivers—where your fish splashed and danced in the sun, and whose waters said “Come and eat of my abundance.” I have known you in the freedom of your winds and my spirit like your winds—once roamed this good land. But in the long hundred years since—the white man came—I have seen my spirit disappear just like the salmon as they mysteriously go out to sea. The white man's strange ways and customs—I could not understand—thrust down upon me until I could no longer breathe. When I fought to protect my home and my land—I was called a savage. When I neither understood nor welcomed this new way of life—I was called lazy. When I tried to rule my people—I was stripped of my authority. My nation was ignored in your history text books. We were less important in the history of Canada than the buffalo that roamed the plains. I was ridiculed in your plays and motion pictures—and when I drank your firewater—I got drunk—very, very drunk—and I forgot. Oh Canada—how can I celebrate with you this Centennial Year—this hundred years? Shall I thank you for the reserves that are left me of my beautiful forests? Shall I thank you for the canned fish of my river? Shall I thank you for the loss of my pride and authority—even amongst my own people? For the lack of my will to fight back? Shall I thank you for my defeat? NO—I must forget



what is past and gone. Oh God in Heaven—give me the courage of the olden chief. Let me wrestle with my surroundings. Let me once again as in the days of old—dominate my environment. Let me humbly accept this new culture and through it rise up and go on. Oh God—like the Thunderbird of old—we shall rise again out of the sea—we shall grasp the instruments of the white man's success—his education, his skill—and with these new tools I shall spirit my race into the proudest segment of your society; and before I follow the great chiefs that have gone before us—I shall see these things come to pass. I shall see our young braves and our chiefs sitting [in] the house of Law and Government—ruling and being ruled by the knowledge and freedom of our great land. So shall we shatter the barriers of our isolation. So shall the next hundred years be the greatest in the proud history of our tribes and nations.

PROFILE

Shirley Sterling

Shirley Sterling, whose Nlaka'pamux name is Seepeetza, was the first Nlaka'pamux person to earn a PhD. For her degree, she wrote a thesis titled "The Grandmother Stories: Oral Tradition and the Transmission of Culture." Shirley is also the author of the prize-winning children's book, *My Name is Seepeetza*, which is about her residential school experience. Shirley is currently working on a collection of stories with her sisters, and is compiling a collection of Elders' stories for publication. She has taught at the University of British Columbia in both the creative writing department and the Faculty of Education, and has served as the student co-ordinator for the Ts'kel (Golden Eagle) program.

Q: Do you consider yourself a storyteller?

A: Yes, I consider myself a storyteller in training and more importantly an oral traditionalist or "tradition bearer." I carry the traditions in my memory and pass them on by word of mouth.

Q: How much traditional content is in these stories?

A: It depends on the listener and the context.

Q: Are the stories in your thesis your own?

A: The stories in my thesis "came to me naturally." In other words I did not go interview people to obtain them. I did interview family Elders but not for the dissertation, for our family history on videocassette. Some of them were told to me only and were never repeated again. Since my mother, my cultural professor, had her stroke on Easter Monday it is unlikely that some of the stories in my thesis will come up again through her. Since I am the only one who knows some maybe I own them on behalf of my family. It would be my responsibility then to pass those stories on to the next generation of my family line. (Thank you for reminding me through these questions!)

Q: You wrote a children's novel, *My Name Is Seepeetza*, about the residential schools. Did it end up being what you started?

A: Do you mean did the process of writing about the residential school give closure to the experience? I think

it was one in a series of experiences. Remembering and articulating the experience was only the beginning. People reading the story is step two and does not necessarily include me. Answering questions about it and helping survivors in their healing process is another step.

Q: Your dissertation was based on the oral tradition and education curriculum?

A: My thesis topic was oral tradition; my area of specialization was curriculum and instruction.

Q: What part of the oral tradition did you look at?

A: I explored two types of oral tradition; *spetaki*, or creation stories, and *spilaxem*, narratives.

Q: What was the purpose of this study?

A: The purpose was to examine how they survived and through transmission provide pedagogies, philosophies, histories, and healing.

Q: Are you an oral recorder?

A: I am not an oral recorder. My sister Deanna is the family historian.

Q: What does the oral tradition mean to you?

A: Oral tradition gives me a connection to my ancestors and to my descendants and locates me within my culture group. It provides a philosophy of living and a world view, training me to live successfully and happily in my Nlaka'pamux society.

Q: As an educator, do you think that the oral tradition should be taught to the next generation?

A: As an educator I think Nlaka'pamux children need access to every Nlaka'pamux oral tradition that exists, and non-Nlaka'pamux children need access to some of the stories. The Nlaka'pamux Elders should be consulted before any of the *spetaki* are told. The *spetaki* should be told only by the tradition bearers, orally. Written stories and *spilaxem* may be told at any time for the benefit of all learners.

Q: Should our languages be taught to us along with the oral tradition?

A: Yes, we have the right to learn our first languages.

Q: What effect does telling the stories in English have on the oral tradition?

A: The stories are not the same in English. Children need to be taught to listen to the traditions properly. In Finland they teach their oral traditions and through them children learn to be proud of their culture and history. I think we can do that here also.

Q: Do you see the oral tradition as something from the past or as an ever-growing thing of the present?

A: Living traditions grow and change, yes.

Q: Do you think all the oral tradition should be written down?

A: It depends on the tradition bearers. Some Elders have asked educated non-First Nations people to write their stories down because they were afraid they would be lost when they died. They wanted their descendants to have access to the stories. Now there are many First Nations people who can do the same but with a better approach. They will, for instance, include the names of the storytellers and explain the context in which the story was written.

Q: To someone that does not understand the oral tradition, how would you explain it?

A: Oral tradition is a strength to us. Oral traditions make us laugh and heal us. They inform us of our heroes and our traditional activities. They connect us to our ancestors, our lands, our friends. They teach us to live successfully within our cultural groups, in harmony with nature. They inform us of the moral parameters we must not cross. The Elder tradition-bearers are Canada's national treasures.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The oral tradition is a rich, complex, and varied tradition that continues to be vitally important to many First Nations people. Each First Nation gives its own oral tradition a name in its own language, some of which were introduced in this chapter. As we have seen, stories, narratives, songs, and oratory are all integral parts of the oral tradition.

Elders have a respected place in their communities because they can pass on the oral tradition from previous generations. In recent years, many First Nations have taken steps to record stories from Elders, usually by tape recording and then transcribing the stories into writing. Once in print, these stories are no longer purely oral, but they may be referred to as oral literature. Shirley Sterling is a Nlaka'pamux woman who has collected stories from Elders. She summarizes the importance of the oral traditions by saying: "They connect us to our ancestors, our lands, our friends. They teach us to live successfully within our cultural groups, in harmony with nature. They inform us of the moral parameters we must not cross."

First Nations Literature

First Nations people became “part of” literature when the European explorers who first came to the shores of Vancouver Island wrote about them in captains’ logs and sailors’ journals. Subsequently, fur traders from the Hudson Bay Company and missionaries wrote about First Nations people in their journals and letters, as did miners of the gold rush era. After Confederation, government-appointed Indian Agents communicated to Ottawa about First Nations, and over many decades anthropologists collected and disseminated information on First Nations cultures.

All of these materials were written from a Eurocentric point of view, with little understanding of First Nations’ cultures. In the early years after contact, First Nations people had no knowledge of the material written about them and, consequently, no control over what was written or how it was used. Historically, and still today, non-First Nations writers have written about First Nations people, creating stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings. In recent years, well-intentioned academics who are knowledgeable and supportive of Aboriginal people’s political and cultural aspirations have established themselves as “Native Studies experts.” While much of their work has analytical value, it cannot express Aboriginal cultures and world views, nor can it express Aboriginal people’s perspective on their lived experience.

Since the latter part of the twentieth century, First Nations authors have developed a distinct body of literature written in their own Aboriginal voice. After years of marginalization and lack of access to publishers, First Nations writers in B.C. and throughout Canada are being published and

recognized for the significant contribution they make to world literature. This has been accomplished in part by having First Nations editors and publishers take control over the work of First Nations writers. More recently, both literary and mainstream publishers have begun allowing First Nations people to “tell their own story.”

Historical Overview

Beginning in the 1800s, anthropologists such as Franz Boas and James Teit collected stories from the oral traditions of First Nations people in British Columbia. Although they sometimes used First Nations people to collect material for their compilations, they published these oral narratives without permission from the First Nations who owned the stories. The *Mythology of the Bella Coola Indians*, published by Boas in 1898, and *Mythology of the Thompson Indians*, published by Teit in 1912, are examples of traditional First Nations literature published by anthropologists.

Métis poet Pauline Johnson, who was born on the Six Nations reserve in Ontario but lived in Vancouver during the later part of her life, published a collection of Aboriginal origin myths, *Legends of Vancouver*, in 1911. These stories were told to her by Chief Joe Capilano of the Squamish Nation, and this book was one of several “as-told-to” accounts of traditional literature that became popular.

Christine Quintasket (1888–1936), an Interior Salish woman who lived in what is now Washington state, is known as the first Native American woman to publish a novel. In 1927 she published *Co-Ge-We-A, The Half-Blood*, using the pen name Mourning Dove. She went on to write two other books: *Coyote Stories*,

published in 1933, and *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography* (edited by Jay Miller and re-issued in 1990).

Quintasket experienced things like the roundup of the last buffalo, which was the subject of her first book. She also attended a residential school that attempted to take her mother tongue of Okanagan from her. Her writing reflects the upheaval that First Nations communities were in at the time. Towards the end of her life she became a strong advocate for First Nations rights and justice.

One criticism of Quintasket's writing is that it was strongly influenced by non-First Nations editors, who insisted she write for a popular audience. Nonetheless, she made an important contribution to First Nations literature.

The first collection of stories published by an Aboriginal person in B.C. appeared in 1967: *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*, by George Clutesi. Clutesi was a Nuu-chah-nulth, born in 1905 in Port Alberni and educated in a reserve school. He worked for 20 years as a pile driver and took up drawing and writing while recovering from an injury. He went on to write *Potlatch* in 1969 and *Stand Tall, My Son* in 1990, and became a lecturer who taught Native culture and wrote textbooks for Canadian schools. Clutesi won the British Columbia Centennial Award in 1959, the Canada Centennial Medal in 1967, and the Order of Canada in 1973.

Chief James Sewid, a Kwakwaka'wakw leader who played a key role in encouraging the revival of the potlatch and traditional arts, wrote an autobiography titled *Guests Never Leave Hungry*, which was published in 1969. His account was edited by James Spradley, and was one of numerous life histories by First Nations people written in collaboration with non-First Nations writers. Other examples of this genre are *The Days of Augusta* (1973) by Secwepemc elder Mary Augusta Tappage, written with Jean Speare, and Chief Dan George's *My Heart Soars* (1974). This

genre of co-authored books is still getting published; a contemporary example is the 1988 book *Stoney Creek Woman: Sai'k'uu Ts'eke*, the story of Mary John as told to Bridget Moran.

Issues in First Nations Publishing

Publishing is the process of taking written material and making it available to the public in the form of a book, magazine, newspaper, newsletter, journal, or on the world wide web. By signing a contract, a publishing company acquires the right to edit and publish material by an author in return for paying the author a fee or royalty. Because publishing companies in Canada have been predominantly controlled by Euro-Canadians, Aboriginal writers have often encountered difficulty in getting published. For many years publishers gave preference to non-Aboriginal people writing about First Nations, which led to inaccurate and sometimes racist portrayals of First Nations cultures and communities. When First Nations writers did get published by mainstream publishers, they often had to give up control over the content and the grammatical structure of their writing.

In the past few decades First Nations writers have struggled for editorial control over what is published about First Nations. In some cases they have found that publishing with small presses, rather than mainstream publishers, has allowed them more editorial control. However, it has also meant that their books often did not get reviewed in major newspapers and did not reach a wide readership. Some First Nations writers have chosen to publish only with an Aboriginal publisher; in B.C. there is only one, Theytus Books. Recently, First Nations writers such as Thomas King, Tomson Highway, and Eden Robinson have been published by mainstream publishers, and their work has been widely and positively reviewed. This marks a new era in First Nations literature.

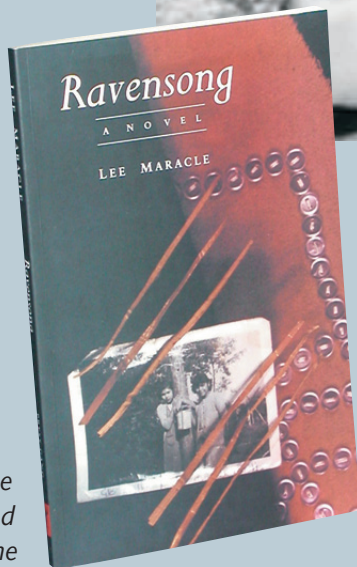
FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Lee Maracle

Lee Maracle is a gifted orator and an acclaimed First Nations writer and poet who has taught writing at the En'owkin International School of Writing and at Canadian and U.S. universities. The following is the opening passage from her novel *Ravensong*.

From the depths of the sound Raven sang a deep wind song, melancholy green. Above, the water layered itself in stacks of still green, dark to light. The sound of Raven spiralled out from its small beginning in larger and larger concentric circles, gaining volume as it passed each successive layer of green. The song echoed the rolling motion of earth's centre, filtering itself through the last layer to reach outward to earth's shoreline above the deep. Wind changed direction, blowing the song toward cedar. Cedar picked up the tune, repeated the refrain, each lacy branch bending to echo ravensong. Cloud, seduced by the rustling of cedar, moved sensually to shore. The depth of the song intensified with the high-pitched refrain of cedar. Cloud rushed faster to the sound's centre. Cloud crashed on the hillside while Raven began to weep.

Below cedar a small girl sat. She watched for some time the wind playing with cloud. Above, she felt the presence of song in the movement of cedar's branches. She surrendered to movement, allowing the sound to spiral her into reverie. Her



The cover art on Lee Maracle's *Ravensong* is by First Nations artist Marianne Nicholson.

body began to float. Everything non-physical inside her sped up. The song played about with the images inside. She stared blankly at some indefinable spot while the river became the sea, the shoreline shifted to beach she couldn't remember seeing, the little houses of today faded. In their place stood the bighouses of the past. Carved double-headed sea serpents guarded the entrance to the village of wolf clan.¹

Contemporary Aboriginal Literature in B.C.

In the 1970s, Aboriginal people started to write their own accounts of their history and place in Canadian society. Among this new era of authors were Lee Maracle (Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel, 1975); Howard Adams (Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View, 1975); and Maria Campbell (Halfbreed, 1973).

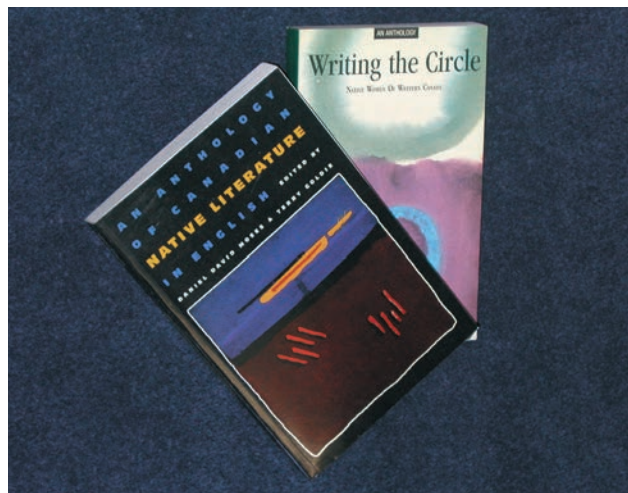
In the 1980s First Nations women writing about their lives began to get published. Among them were Jeannette Armstrong (Slash, 1985); Beatrice Culleton (In Search of April Raintree, 1983); Lee Maracle (I Am Woman, 1988); Joan Crate (Breathing Water, 1989); and Ruby Slipperjack (Honour the Sun, 1989). These and many other First Nations writers developed unique narrative voices influenced by such things as oral tradition, metaphors with traditional cultural meanings, and characters with transformational powers that shift through time periods. Writers such as Jeannette Armstrong and Lee Maracle sometimes use “rez” language, a non-standard form of English that follows the rhythms and patterns of speech in their



■ Métis poets Gregory Scofield and Marilyn Dumont, along with Okanagan poet and fiction writer Jeannette Armstrong, published acclaimed books of poetry in the 1990s.

First Nations communities. Because they are writing for First Nations people, they use language and grammar that is familiar to their primary audience.

In 1990 the En'owkin Center published the first issue of the journal *Gatherings*, which offered a sampling of current Aboriginal literature. *Gatherings* continues to be published each year, offering many First Nations writers their first opportunity to get published. During the 1990s a number of non-First Nations presses began to publish First Nations writers, achieving wider distribution and critical acclaim for First Nations books. Among the First Nations authors published during the 1990s were Shirley Sterling, Lee Maracle, Richard Van Camp, Jeannette Armstrong, and Gerry William. Two compilations of an Okanagan Elder's oral storytelling were also published around this time: Harry Robinson's *Write it on Your Heart* (1989) and *Nature Power* (1992). Annie York wrote *They Write Their Dream on the Rock Forever* (1993), and Darwin Hanna and Mamie Henry edited *Our Tellings: Interior Salish Stories of the Nla7kapmx People* (1995). This collection of oral narratives is particularly important because it was compiled and analyzed by Nlaka'pamux people and gives voice



■ Two anthologies of First Nations literature, both published by university presses in 1992, illustrate that the academic world had become interested in First Nations literature.

PROFILE

Eden Robinson

Eden Robinson is Heiltsuk on her mother's side and Haisla on her father's side. She grew up in Haisla territory near Kitamaat, B.C. She now lives in Toronto and is a full-time writer. Her sister, Carla Robinson, is a CBC news anchor.

Eden has a BFA in creative writing from the University of Victoria and a MFA in creative writing from the University of British Columbia. Her first book, *Traplines*, won the Winifred Holtby Prize for best first book published in the Commonwealth. The New York Times selected *Traplines* as an "Editor's Choice" and a notable book of the year.

Her latest book, *Monkey Beach*, represents a real success story for First Nations creative writers. Eden was nominated for both the Giller Book Prize and the Governor General's Award, the highest awards in Canadian literature. *Monkey Beach* won the Ethel Wilson fiction prize in 2001.

Q: Tell me about your experience in high school. Were you part of a First Nations community at your high school? Were you a good student? When did you know that you wanted to go to university?

A: The village (short for "Kitamaat Village," the Haisla reserve 11 km from the townsite) had an elementary school, but once you reached high school, you had very few options. High school in Kitimat meant going to Mount Elizabeth Secondary School.

There was a mix of different cultures—Portuguese, Italian, Swedish, etc.—because Alcan Aluminum hired people from outside of Canada. The Natives mostly hung out together, and I had a tight circle of cousins.

Throughout high school, I was completely focused on becoming an astronaut, and only switched to writing when NASA started using shuttles, which I found less romantic.

I was sulky, surly, and moody. Dressed in black a lot. Stayed in my room and wrote sad poetry. Come to think of it, I think I was doomed to be a writer.

Q: Tell me about your experience at the University of Victoria and with the creative writing department. Was there a First Nations community?

A: The university was a shock. Victoria was a shock. It



Eden Robinson's widely acclaimed books illustrate what a significant contribution First Nations writers are making to world literature.

was hard getting used to the noise and smell and people. There was a Native student group on campus, but their interests were primarily political and I was more interested in being social.

At the time, there were no other Native students in the department and sometimes it felt awkward. Most of the time, I was just trying to keep my grades decent so I could move on to the next level of fiction workshops.

Q: What was your experience like at UBC, getting a Master's degree in Fine Arts?

A: At UBC, I felt like I was coming into my own style, and I was lucky enough to find a mentor. The creative writing department had a few Natives, but they were in poetry and film studies. My mother's family is from Bella Bella, and most of them have moved down to Vancouver, so it was easier than UVic in that I had a stronger support network.

Q: What did you learn about your culture at these institutions? Did these universities have faculty to teach

you a First Nations writing style?

A: None of them taught anything about Haisla or Heiltsuk cultures. The courses I took were general and academic—treaty history, art history, etc. Mostly they taught me that we need more Native non-fiction writers.

My mentor was great. He was open to different styles of writing. Some of the profs weren't open to any style but their own, and you had to write like them or get bad grades. Having taught creative writing now, I can see how hard it is not to impose your own style on your students, but I also appreciate the profs I had who could reach beyond themselves.

Q: What makes your work First Nations writing? What makes your writing different from non-First Nations writing?

A: I don't know what makes my writing First Nations. I know I write with my own bent, and I hope that someone reading my writing can tell that it's mine just by my style. I'm interested in writing about families, the dynamics of families, and some of these dynamics are unique to First Nations cultures, and more specifically, to Haisla and Heiltsuk cultures.

Q: Does your writing connect at all with the oral tradition of the Haisla and Heiltsuk people?

A: Oral stories have fluid, impermanent construction techniques as opposed to written traditions, which are fixed, static. Melding the two is tricky, and the risk you run when translating from one medium to another is that it is very easy to kill the magic and wonder of a story. A moving oral story can sound hokey when it's written. A lovely written piece can be dull and confusing when told out loud.

Q: Can you give an example of hearing stories told when you were younger that might illustrate this?

A: Take any creation myth. Listen to a storyteller, or several storytellers, and notice how the story's movement changes from telling to telling, from audience to audience. When the same creation myth is written down, inevitably there will be some aspects that are left out to fit the written medium. The written version will be taken as the true version, and all the other versions tend to die out, or be compared unfavourably against the written version.

Q: Would you recommend going to the En'owkin International School of Writing for a First Nations writer as opposed to going to university?

A: University compresses the writing apprenticeship from about a ten-year period to a four-year period. You can learn writing on your own, but it takes longer. On the other hand, you really are your own boss and you follow your interests.

Those interested in going to university for writing should do their research. Some universities have a strong practical bent—UVic and Simon Fraser teach you how to survive on your writing skills, but UBC is completely focused on writing. Richard Van Camp said he thoroughly enjoyed En'owkin, and I'd say if he's an example of their teaching, the school must be very good.

I think if I had a chance to do it over, I'd do what Richard did, and spend the first two years at En'owkin and then spend two years at Simon Fraser. The more writing schools you go to, the better. You are exposed to more styles and have a broader range of choices.

Q: What advice would you have for a Grade 12 First Nations student who aspired to be a writer?

A: Write. All the advice and support in the world is useless if you don't put your butt in the chair and write. Don't worry about spelling and grammar—those come in time—just write about what you are interested in.

Your passion is your best guide. If you're enthusiastic about something, it shows through in your writing.

Q: Do you think there is anything unique about your family that led both you and your sister Carla to become "famous" in your own ways?

A: All of us—my brother, my sister, and myself—had an enormous pool of support to draw on. Even more important than material goods, we had encouragement to follow our ambitions without regard for the limitations of racism, poverty, etc. We were always told if you want something, then work for it, live it, breathe it. You hope success comes, but in the end it doesn't matter. Dream big dreams and let them fill your life with passion.

to Elders' cultural knowledge that is valuable to younger First Nations people. The editors described the purpose of the collection as "to take charge of our own cultural revitalization."

Also during the 1990s, a number of Métis writers and poets living in B.C. published books with literary presses, including Marilyn Dumont, Joanne Arnott, Marie Annharte Baker, and Gregory Scofield. After having won widespread recognition for several books of poetry, Scofield went on to publish an autobiography, *Thunder Through My Veins*.

First Nations scholars also re-wrote B.C. history. Douglas Cardinal and Jeannette Armstrong co-authored *The Native Creative Process* (1991), and a number of editors working with the Okanagan Indian Education Resource Society wrote *We Get Our Living Like Milk from the Land* (1994), which tells a different

history of the Okanagan people. Bill Cohen edited *Stories and Images About What the Horse Has Done for Us* (1998), which challenges the Euro-Canadian view that the horse came over with the Spanish. Joanne Drake-Terry wrote *Same as Yesterday* (1989), which describes the Stl'atl'imx's history since first contact.

Several First Nations accounts of residential school experiences in B.C. have been published, including a recent collection edited by Agness Jack, titled *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School*. In 2001 the first anthology of Métis drama was published, *DraMétis: Three Métis Plays*.

Cultural Appropriation

To appropriate something is to take possession of it, especially unlawfully, for oneself. In Canada, since the mid-1980s, the term cultural appropriation has

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Speaking on Cultural Appropriation

Jeannette Armstrong

Jeannette Armstrong is the author of the novels *Slash* and *Whispering in Shadows*. She has also published a book of poetry, *Breath Tracks*, and several books for children, as well as co-editing numerous anthologies. She has publicly spoken about cultural appropriation.

We as Native writers suffer because of the kind of cultural imperialism that's taking place when non-Native people speak about Native ceremony and Native thinking, Native thought, Native lifestyle, Native world view and speak as though they know what they are speaking about. That's appropriation of culture because no one can experience and know what I know and experience or what my grandmother knows or what Lee [Maracle] knows and feels, and she can speak with her own voice and so can I and so could my grandmother. ²

Lee Maracle

The truth is that yesterday, my grandmother and I thought little of such things as copyright, royalties and exploitation. We were a desperate people facing extinction whose first consideration was the land, along with the laws and sacred ways of our people that would protect the land from the fate this country had destined for us. Under duress, we parted with our stories in the hope that in the wake of our annihilation, our land would survive intact. We have survived. Not only did we survive but we speak our own language, understand our ways and write in English. To continue appropriating our stories and misusing them in the name of 'freedom of imagination' is just so much racism. My old typewriter and I sit in my bedroom where the magic of Trickster lives. We object to the theft of our stories and the distortion of our lives. Those who would hide behind the lie of censorship to justify thievery and dishonesty don't hold the same terror for us. Raven and I will have the last laugh. ³

referred primarily to non-Aboriginal writers using First Nations' beliefs, customs, ceremonies, and sacred stories without permission, incorporating them into their work in ways they were not intended to be used. For example, W.P. Kinsella, a Euro-Canadian author of short stories and novels, writes about characters who live on a fictional Indian reserve. His writing stereo-types contemporary First Nations people. He

writes as if he understands First Nations culture and has the authority to write about it, when in fact he does not. Readers who don't have personal experience of First Nations cultures may believe that books by self-defined "white experts" give accurate portrayals of First Nations culture. The misinformation and distortion in such books perpetuates stereotypes. Another problem is that if there are more books about

CASE STUDY

En'owkin International School of Writing

The En'owkin Center is located on the Penticton Indian reserve in the Okanagan region of B.C. It houses Theytus Books, the En'owkin International School of Writing, and the facilities for the En'owkin Fine Arts certificate program. The En'owkin Center has graduated 150 students with certificates. It is housed in a beautifully crafted building and provides a wonderful space for young First Nations writers to hone their writing skills.

The En'owkin International School of Writing (EISW) started up after the acquisition of Theytus Books by the En'owkin Center. The school's mandate is to teach First Nations people to use their "Native voice" in storytelling and creative writing. "We wanted to promote Aboriginal rights and articulate people in promoting these ideas," says Don Fiddler, executive director of the En'owkin Center. "The school also allows the students to write freely to develop these tools. Once their voices are developed, we (Theytus) hope we can publish them."

The En'owkin International School of Writing awards the Indigenous Fine Arts Certificate jointly with the University of Victoria. What was the Native Indian Creative Writing Certificate was expanded to include more fine arts. "The next logical step was to promote Indigenous arts, language, and culture. We took this step

by expanding the certificate program to include these elements. Students can now take classes to expand their abilities in these arts and not just be limited to creative writing," says Don Fiddler. "In the promotion of Indigenous rights, the arts have to evolve along with everything else." First Nations communities have a great need for this type of education.

Jeannette Armstrong is the director of the En'owkin International School of Writing. She is an educator and an accomplished writer who has had several books published. She is also an artist and sculptor and has taught in the Indigenous Fine Arts certificate program.

Jeannette is traditionally trained in the ways of the Okanagan Nation. She brings this perspective to the classroom every day. She explains that westernized schools teach First Nations people how to survive in Canadian society, but First Nations people also have a responsibility to learn their traditional ways. The En'owkin Center is a venue where First Nations people can develop their narrative voices while learning the ways of their people.

Q: What would you say to an aspiring First Peoples writer?

A: I would say that it isn't about English, it isn't about grammar, it isn't about

getting these right. It is about the story and the need for the story to be told. If you are thinking about correcting technicalities then you are not writing.

Q: How do you think this can be best taught to the First Peoples students? Does it have to be taught by First Peoples instructors?

A: I think only First Nations or First Peoples, I prefer to use that word, can deliver indigenous perspectives or First Peoples perspectives. I don't think a non-First Nations person can deliver that, though they can deliver education, and I think I have to really take a hard line on that.

At the En'owkin International School of Writing First Nations instructors teach First Nations students, allowing them to develop their creative minds for themselves and for others.

First Nations written by non-Aboriginal writers than there are books by First Nations writers, the real voices get drowned.

Today many First Nations writers believe that any non-First Nations person who uses First Nations' materials and knowledge from an authoritarian position, without their permission and for personal gain, is guilty of appropriation. With the number of First Nations writers, storytellers, poets, and

playwrights producing work in Canada today, First Nations people believe there is no justification for writers outside the culture appropriating First Nations themes and issues. This does not mean that white writers should not have First Nations characters in their fiction but that they should not interpret or evaluate the spiritual beliefs of First Nations cultures without specific approval from the people to whom those beliefs belong.

MÉTIS VOICES

Marilyn Dumont

Marilyn Dumont, a descendant of Gabriel Dumont, is originally from northeastern Alberta but currently lives and writes in Vancouver. She has a MFA from the University of B.C. and has published two books of poetry, as well as contributing to many anthologies. The following poem is from her first book, *A Really Good Brown Girl*.

Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald

*Dear John: I'm still here and halfbreed,
after all these years
you're dead, funny thing,
that railway you wanted so badly,
there was talk a year ago
of shutting it down
and part of it was shut down,
the dayliner at least,
'from sea to shining sea,'
and you know, John,
after all the shuffling us around to suit the settlers,
we're still here and Metis.*

*We're still here
after Meech Lake and
one no-good-for-nothin-Indian
holdin-up-the-train,
stalling the 'Cabin syllables /Nouns of settlement,
/...steel syntax [and] /The long sentence of its
exploitation' (')*

*and John, that goddamned railroad never made
this a great nation,
cause the railway shut down
and this country is still quarreling over unity,
and Riel is dead
but he just keeps coming back
in all the Bill Wilsons yet to speak out of turn or
favour
because you know as well as I
that we were railroaded
by some steel tracks that didn't last
and some settlers who wouldn't settle
and it's funny we're still here and calling ourselves
halfbreed. ⁴*

(') F. R. Scott, "Laurentian Shield."

CASE STUDY

Theytus Books

Theytus Books started in Nanaimo under the direction of Randy Fred, of the Alberni Native band. After publishing just four books, the publishing house ran into funding problems. Randy Fred had a choice to either declare bankruptcy or find another First Nations organization to take over the business.

At that time Randy had been in the process of negotiating to publish material from the Okanagan Indian Curriculum Project (OICP). The OICP mandate was to write curriculum material to bring more “Aboriginal voice” into the education system. By having First Nations authors write curriculum, First Nations could gain more control over what was taught to their children. Don Fiddler explained: “The OICP had been looking into venues to publish their own materials. They saw taking over Theytus Books as a wonderful opportunity.”

The Okanagan Tribal Council, representing six bands, wanted to buy the press, but not on its own. The Nicola Valley Indian Administration, representing five bands, was approached and, after several months of negotiating, the two organizations decided to buy 50% each of Theytus Books. The deal that brought Theytus Books to Penticton also brought Randy Fred, who retained a position as manager.

Over the next few years Theytus concentrated on publishing the curriculum materials of the OICP. These materials were primarily for Grades K–12; some adult education materials were also published. The OICP completed its project and now the Okanagan Learning Institute continues to do work in developing educational curriculum.

Greg Young-Ing has been the Managing Editor of Theytus Books for over ten years. Greg is from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in Manitoba. He is an accomplished writer, photographer, and editor who has been published on numerous occasions. Greg’s thesis for his Master of Publishing degree at Simon Fraser University created a template for a style guide for publishing and editing First Nations material. The style guide includes guidelines to present First Nations in a respectful manner. Greg describes the impetus for this project: “In the course of doing editorial work at Theytus, I was constantly encountering editorial problems that had to do specifically with Aboriginal subject matter and text written by Aboriginal people, and a lot of that comes from the fact that there is a 500-year plus history of writing in English about Aboriginal people that was undertaken without any consultation or input from Aboriginal people. A lot of assumptions, terminology, ways of talking about Aboriginal people, terms with heavy baggage, terms that are inappropriate have been practised over the last 500 years, and now that Aboriginal writers are starting to write in English in the past 25–30 years, we were just encountering editorial problems. I have come across hundreds and hundreds of editorial problems and inconsistencies in the text about Aboriginal people and in editing manuscripts at Theytus, so we really needed to have a style guide.”

At Theytus Books, Greg works under the directors of the En’owkin Center. “Theytus Books is all Aboriginal owned and staffed, and publishes only Aboriginal authors. We are trying to

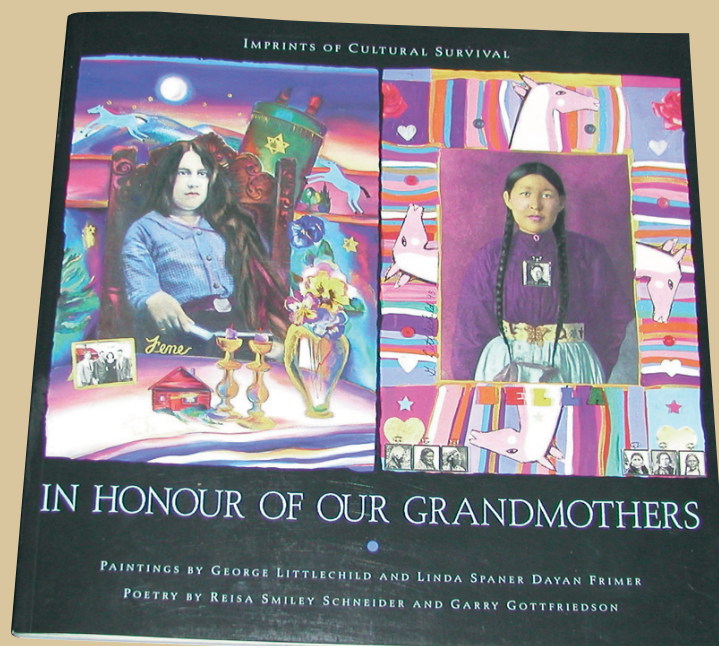
promote the Aboriginal voice, develop and nurture Aboriginal authors and Aboriginal literatures, and promote Aboriginal perspectives on issues. We are up to doing ten books a year and that’s the most we can handle. There are 500–600 books published every year by Canadian publishers, so in terms of demographic ratio, Aboriginal people are underrepresented.”

Theytus is a Salishan word that means “preserving for the sake of handing down.” The name was chosen to symbolize the goal of documenting Aboriginal cultures and world views through books. Theytus has published between 90 and 95 books over the last 20 years. The best-selling book is *Slash*, Jeannette Armstrong’s first novel, which came out in 1985. It has sold over 13,000 copies, qualifying it as a Canadian bestseller. In the first ten years Theytus was primarily a regional publishing company, selling books in B.C. and a little bit in Alberta; in the second decade it expanded and became more of a national Aboriginal publisher.

Theytus Books is in the same building as the En’owkin Center but they are distinct, separate entities. Greg explains: “The idea behind that was that the writing school would nurture the emerging Aboriginal authors and give them the skill and inspiration and the instruction that they need to write. The authors could be published through Theytus if they obtained a certain level of skill in their writing. We also publish an annual journal of literature called *Gatherings*. We would give them the

Continued

In Honour of our Grandmothers is a magnificent full-colour book of artwork and poetry published by Theytus Books. The art on the cover is by Linda Spaner Dayan Frimer (left) and George Littlechild. Littlechild is a member of the Plains Cree Nation and is internationally acclaimed as an artist.



opportunity to get published through Gatherings and build up their confidence. Theytus has published probably about 100 students in the Gatherings journal, many of them published for the first time. In terms of individual books by authors, Theytus has published books by two of the students so far. Seven other students from the writing school have gone on to publish individual books with other presses."

Greg outlines the fundamental reasons for having a First Nations publisher: "I think the ideal situation for promoting Aboriginal voices is to have Aboriginal editors and publishers working with the literature and with the authors. A lot of Aboriginal authors have had experiences with non-Aboriginal editors and publishers that have tried to

water down their work or tried to change it and over-edited it because they don't understand the gist behind the literature. I think the most culturally authentic way to express the Aboriginal voice is to have Aboriginal editing and publishing."

He outlines what kinds of manuscripts Theytus is interested in: "In terms of our literature, we are looking for something that is breaking new ground in the emerging discipline of Aboriginal literatures. We're looking for new ideas, new subject matter, new content, something that breaks the rules a bit, that's a little bit on the edge. In terms of our non-fiction, we have a philosophical mandate that we sort of lean toward the hard line on Aboriginal rights and title and any other Aboriginal issues. Basically our political philosophy is that we don't

believe in selling out any part of our rights, our land. We believe in getting compensated for any of the damages that have been done to First Nations people, so that's sort of the philosophy that we are promoting, and we are not really on any philosophical level with certain sectors of the Aboriginal community who believe in compromising and trying to work with government, taking a little less just to get some sort of agreement."

CHAPTER SUMMARY

For the first hundred and fifty years after contact, First Nations people were “written about” by Europeans and Euro-Canadians. They had no control over what was written about them or how it was used, and often the written records were not accurate. Because of the attempts by the federal government to “take the Indian out of Indians” by forcing First Nations children into residential schools, almost no books by First Nations people were published until the middle of the twentieth century. George Clutesi’s *Son of Raven, Son of Deer* was a groundbreaking book of short stories published in 1967. From the

1970s to the present, there has been a flourishing of literature by First Nations and Métis writers in B.C. The En’owkin International School of Writing and Theytus Books have had an important role in fostering a distinctive Aboriginal voice in literature. Today, B.C. Aboriginal writers such as Lee Maracle, Gregory Scofield, Jeannette Armstrong, and Eden Robinson are respected and valued for their contribution to world literature. First Nations writers are claiming their right to tell their own stories. They are the experts on First Nations voice.

First Nations Visual and Decorative Arts

First Nations art is rooted in a spiritual relationship with the natural world. In traditional First Nations cultures, artistic expression was not a distinct discipline as it has become in many cultures today. It was integrated into the daily and spiritual life of the people. Among First Nations, art is part of the fabric of life, finding expression in utilitarian objects of daily life and in sacred objects of ritual and religion.

Historically, much of the art throughout B.C. was based on shamanism. The visual form was a way to communicate with supernatural or spiritual worlds, or to try to bring balance and harmony between the natural world and the human world. Visual art is also

an important way for people to identify their ancestors and acknowledge their history, as well as displaying wealth or status with treasured objects such as totem poles or button blankets.

Today First Nations artists embrace both their traditional cultures and their particular artistic vision in contemporary society. They create art for their people to use in feasts and ceremonial ways, but they also create works of beauty for collectors to purchase. Some artists follow the rules and forms of artists before them, creating finely crafted baskets, robes, or masks. Others take the ancient forms and transform them into something unique to our time. But whatever they



■ If you look at a carved box as a utilitarian object that tells something about the life of the user, you might call it an artifact. If you also appreciate its beauty, its form, and design, you will call it art.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Hahl Yee, Doreen Jensen, Gitxsan artist

Hahl Yee, Doreen Jensen, is a Gitxsan carver who belongs to the House of Geel of the Fireweed Clan from Kispiox on the Skeena River. She was trained in the traditions of her family and clan through the oral tradition. She learned the history of the Gitxsan people, and understood the songs, dances and art forms that expressed it. She describes herself as a traditional Gitxsan artist, which comprises many roles: “teacher, historian, community organizer, mother, grandmother and political activist as well as visual artist.”

As a young adult Jensen committed herself to working for a better understanding of First Nations people through their art. She was a founding member of the 'Ksan Association that operates the 'Ksan Historical Village and Museum and the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art. Her influence has spread far beyond the shores of the Skeena River, however. In 1983, she curated “Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth,” a major exhibition at the UBC Museum of Anthropology that displayed the beauty and significance of the ceremonial robes sometimes known as button blankets. She also co-wrote the accompanying book.

In 1992, the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas, Doreen Jensen was invited to speak at the opening of an exhibit at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, called “Indigena: Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples on Five Hundred Years.” Here is an excerpt of her talk, which describes art history from a First Nations point of view.

In my language, there is no word for “Art.” This is not because we are devoid of Art, but because Art is so powerfully integrated with all aspects of life, we are replete with it. For the sake of brevity and clarity, I will use the word “Art” tonight.

This exhibition and forum, “Indigena,” asks us to reflect on the impact of European colonization on indigenous cultures. In my talk, I'd like to offer a different perspective. I would like to remind you of the Art that the Europeans found when they arrived in our country.

The Europeans found Art everywhere. In hundreds of flourishing, vital cultures, Art was fully integrated with daily life. They saw dwellings painted with abstract Art that was to inspire generations of European painters. Ceremonial robes were intricately woven Art that heralded the wearers' identity and privilege in the community. Utilitarian objects, including food vessels, storage containers, and clothing, were powerfully formed and decorated with the finest, most significant Art.

Each nation had its theatre, music, and choreography. The first Europeans found hundreds of languages in use—not dialects but languages. And in every language, our Artists created philosophical argument and sacred ceremony, political discourse, fiction, and poetry.

The Europeans saw Earth Art and large-scale environmental Art projects. From the East to the West Coast, what were later called petroglyphs and pictographs recorded our histories. My own earliest memories of Art are of the tall sculptures that told the long histories of my people. These tall sculptures are called “totem poles,” like the ones you see here in the Great Hall of the Museum of Civilization.

When the Europeans arrived, they found Aboriginal Artists creating beauty, culture, and historical memory. Art built bridges between human life and the natural world. Art mediated between material and spiritual concerns. Art stimulated our individuality, making us alert and alive. It affirmed our cultural identities.

I say all this to honour our cultural accomplishments. As Aboriginal Artists, we need to reclaim our own identities, through our work, our heritage and our future. We don't need any longer to live within others' definitions of who and what we are. We need to put aside titles that have been imposed on our creativity—titles that serve the needs of other people. For too long our Art has been situated in the realm of anthropology by a discourse that validates only white Artists.

Continued



■ A traditional Haida blanket. First Nations women have kept this artform alive.

Today there are many Art forms of the First Nations which are still not being recognized. Think of the exquisite sea grass baskets from the West Coast of Vancouver Island, the quill work and moose hair tufting Arts of the people east of the Rockies, and ceremonial robes, woven and appliqued, throughout North America. Not surprisingly, these exquisite works of Art are mainly done by women.

Art can be a universal language which helps us bridge the gaps between our different cultures. But attitudes towards Art reveal racism. The first Europeans called our Art "primitive" and "vulgar." Today, people of European origin call our Art "craft" and "artifact."

Our elders have nurtured the important cultural traditions against tremendous odds. It is time for us to sit still, and let these powerful, precious teachings come to us. Our elders bequeathed us a great legacy of communication through the Arts.¹

produce, First Nations artists continue to explore the creative energy and the meaning that inspired the great artists of old.

What Is Art?

There are two ways that people have classified the treasured objects of First Nations societies. Some, especially in the early years of European contact, identified them as artifacts, examples of the material culture that were more likely to be considered crafts. In more recent years, they have been considered works of art.

But what do we mean when we say something is a work of art? First comes skill. An artist trains and practises to learn the rules of the art form and control over the material he or she is using. An artist is a master of the material. Second is the aesthetic quality of the work, the visual impact it makes and what draws our eye to it. A third feature of art is the way the viewer looks at it and interprets it.

A common theme runs through the visual arts of the First Nations of British Columbia, the human relationship with the natural world. However, this relationship has been interpreted in very different ways. For example, the visual arts of the interior were shaped by the flexible and highly mobile nature of their societies. Interior First Nations did not produce large quantities of objects because their lifestyle demanded that their art be light and portable. Therefore art was usually applied to utilitarian objects or to personal adornment. These objects were often discarded when they were no longer useful. Important articles belonging to people of rank were frequently burned at their burial.

Different styles of textile arts were developed throughout the province, including basketry with cedar bark and spruce roots, Cowichan weaving using dog hair, and blankets made of goat hair in Coast Salish regions.

The Northwest Coast culture, which involved less migration, evolved a highly developed and

sophisticated art form, resulting in many hundreds of individual works which were passed from generation to generation. Many of these were an integral part of the central gathering of the society, the potlatch, where they were worn or used by dancers. After contact these artworks were collected by European or North American collectors and removed to museums or private homes. It is estimated that there are as many as 300,000 individual Northwest Coast items in museums worldwide.

Stone Art and Sculpture

The earliest art we know in British Columbia, stone art, is full of mystery. Why did people paint figures on stone bluffs? Why did they carve animal shapes on rocks at the water's edge? Despite our ignorance, we sense that the ancient artists were communicating with the cosmos.

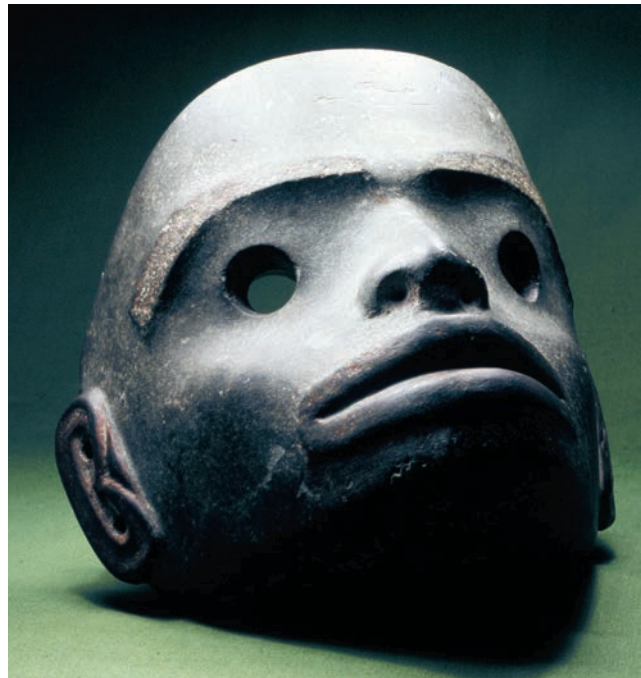
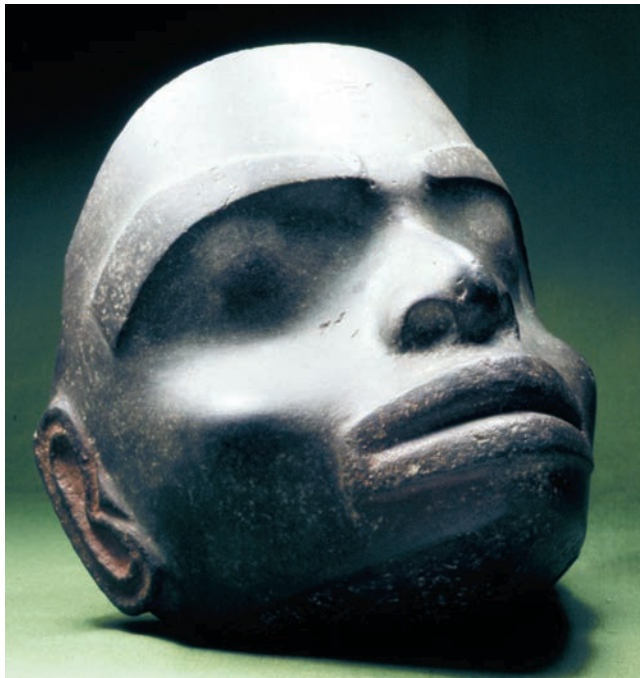
Stone is an ancient medium for art. Because it does not decay, pieces of stone art are the oldest form of artistic expression found in British Columbia. Stone tools have been recovered dating back 10,000 years, and stone objects from the last 5,000 years show remarkable sophistication in function and design. Stone was used to create a wide range of decorated objects, both practical and ceremonial. Stones were sculpted into mortars, bowls, and different types of hammers and clubs, as well as into ceremonial articles. The creation of a refined article from stone required great skill, strength, patience, and an artistic purpose. Various techniques were used to shape and smooth the stone. Using another piece of stone, artists controlled

Aesthetics

Aesthetics refers to the beauty of a piece of art, apart from its practical use. It is determined in part by its style, design, and skill of production.

Artifact

Simply defined, artifact (also spelled artefact) means an object made by humans. However, its connotation gives the sense of an object from the past, often dug up by archaeologists.



Tsimshian Twin Stone Masks. These remarkable masks, made of basalt, were both collected in Tsimshian territory in the nineteenth century. The seeing mask fits perfectly inside the unseeing one. Both measure 23 cm across. The mask with closed eyes was collected at Kitkatla in 1879 by Indian Commissioner I. W. Powell. It is now in the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The second mask was probably collected at Metlakatla, and is now in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. The lips, ears, and eyebrows of the second mask have traces of red paint. There are holes at the back to attach straps so it can be worn. Inside was a wooden harness that could support the mask on the wearer's head.

the direction, force, and manner in which they hit the stone to flake off pieces, peck or drill a hole, or grind the surface. Techniques were also developed to saw through some types of stone.

Rock Paintings

Rock was used as a canvas throughout most of the province, although no rock paintings have been found in the Peace River region. The southern interior has the highest concentration of painted images on rock walls, known as pictographs. Some areas have particularly large collections, such as the Stein Valley, Seton Creek on the Fraser River, and the South Okanagan and Similkameen areas near Oliver and between Hedley and Princeton. Most rock paintings are found along the shores of lakes or along river banks, often as high as eight metres above the water. Generally, the rock

artists chose granite rock as their canvas, although other types are also found. Usually the images are painted on rock faces, but some are on single boulders.

The rock artists knew how to make paints that have lasted hundreds of years while exposed to the weather. Today, we do not understand how they made such long-lasting paint. The pigments, we know, were made of minerals. The most common colour, red, is from a material called ochre, which contains a high quantity of iron mixed with clay. Ochres can come in different hues, including reds, browns, and yellows. Black was made from charcoal or soot. Other colours found less commonly in pictographs are green, white, and yellow.

Red pigment could be made through a process of baking yellow ochre. Disks of a paste made from ochre were baked in a fire. The resulting red pigment



■ This pictograph, located between Terrace and Prince Rupert, informed Skeena River travellers they were entering the trading territory of a Tsimshian chief.

was crushed into powder, which could be mixed with other ingredients. Sometimes pieces of rock containing large amounts of iron could be used to draw with, like chalk.

Rock Carvings

Etchings carved into rocks, called petroglyphs, are generally found along the coast on beaches or on river banks. They can be simple images, with pecked holes representing a face. Many, however, are complex and show what look like animals or supernatural creatures. Often these designs use the characteristic shapes of Northwest Coast art, such as the ovoid. Some places have a large collection of images. Near Bella Coola there is a cluster of over 100 carvings, while at Gitga'at on Douglas Channel there are more than 200 images. One of the most unique sites is at Clo-ose, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Amongst the dozens of

images on a rocky promontory are a number of sailing ships, and a person riding a horse. These post-contact engravings show a connection between relatively recent artists and the rock artists of long ago.



■ One of many petroglyphs near Bella Coola.

Visual Arts of the Interior

The traditional lifestyle of most of B.C.'s interior First Nations people demanded flexibility and ease of travel. People could only carry the articles they needed for survival: their clothing, tools, daily utensils, and weapons. These items were made with great skill and decorated in ways that reflected the people and the land. The messages carried by this artistic expression are for the most part lost to time. However, there is no doubt that the art of the interior people carried messages to the human world and the spiritual world.

Clothing

Clothing was the most vital form of personal adornment. A person's clothing communicated his or her place in society and displayed the skill of the woman who created it and the wearer's status and wealth. The quality of the skins and the decorations of quills, beads, and shells showed a man's skill as a hunter, his wealth, and his trading abilities. Many people, especially high-ranking men, had special "dress" clothes that were only used for meeting delegates from other nations.

Clothing was the supreme expression of skill and artistry for women, as they played the principal role in its creation. They tanned the hides, sewed the garments, and decorated them. Most clothing in the interior was made from the skins of deer, moose, and caribou, with some even made from salmon skin. In the southern interior, women also wove

garments of sophisticated design from natural fibres made from Indian hemp, cedar, sagebrush, and willow. Wool and hair were spun into thread that was woven into blankets and robes.

Skins were usually painted with natural paints made from plants and clay in a palette of reds, browns, greens, and blues. They were decorated with bone, porcupine quills, feathers, beads, and shells. Interior people traded for shells like dentalium and abalone from the coast to add value and status to their clothing. After European contact, manufactured beads made a colourful addition to decoration on clothing such as jackets, gloves, and moccasins.

Clothing was more than just protection from the elements or a display of social status. It had a spiritual dimension and was thought of as part of the person who wore it. To Athapascan people, clothing was said



■ A Nlaka'pamux young woman's dress. Traditionally such decorated clothing had a spiritual dimension that is not understood today.

to be like a “second skin.” It could take on qualities of the owner, and could even be manipulated in ways that could cause good or evil. Wearing the clothing of another person was sometimes believed to transfer the qualities of the owner to the new wearer.

The full meaning of the art displayed on clothing is not understood today. However, there are suggestions that at least sometimes it was intended to please the natural or spiritual worlds as well as fellow humans. For instance, one characteristic design element involves outlining in red ochre areas such as sleeves, hemlines, and seams. Among the Nlaka’pamux these were sometimes called “earth lines.” They were painted over joins or openings to bring protection and good luck.

Personal Adornment

Decorating the face by painting or tattooing was a sign of beauty or of status. Face painting was more common among men than women. Black and red were the main colours used. Tattooing was also common, though women were more often tattooed than men. The tattoos were made using a needle made from a porcupine quill or a thin, sharp bone. The needle pulled a fine sinew thread coated with charcoal under the skin to leave a mark. Men frequently had parts of their body such as their arms tattooed as a protection to keep them strong and healthy.

■ Three drums photographed by James Teit in 1915. The symbolism on the drum on the right is mentioned in Nlaka’pamux oral narratives.

A great deal of attention was paid to the hair, especially by men. It was arranged and decorated with feathers and dentalium shells. High-ranking Dakelh men were known to have worn ceremonial wigs made of materials such as human hair, sea lion whiskers, and dentalium. Other personal adornments worn by both men and women included pendants and ornaments worn in piercings in the nose or the ears.

Engraving and Painting

A common and very ancient style of design involved engraving patterns into horn and bone. The designs were highlighted by rubbing red ochre or charcoal into them. The execution of the engraving was very controlled and precise. Parallel lines were evenly spaced, and often areas were filled with detailed cross-hatching. Generally the patterns were geometric and non-representational. Some, however, appear to have been symbolic representations of the natural or spiritual worlds. The meaning of the engraved designs is not known today. Many items of daily use were decorated with engravings, such as arm



bands, bowls, clubs, scrapers, spoons, and tump-line spreaders. Others, including shamans' pendants and special drinking tubes used by girls when they reached puberty, suggest that the designs had important meanings.

Painting is also a very old technique. As we have seen above, clothing and the body were frequently painted. So were many other items. Often the design was composed of lines and dots, although stylized designs were also used. Frequently wood and skin articles were painted in this way. Some of these suggest a religious or spiritual significance. For instance, tents were often painted with a band of red ochre, which may have been a form of protection. In other cases, red designs were put on the bow of a canoe or the front points of snowshoes to aid the traveller to find the right way and travel safely.

The arrival of the fur traders brought new materials. Among many other adaptations, the people of the interior cultures who had horses developed special decorative arts centred on the gear and clothing used with horses.

Northwest Coast Art

The concepts and materials used in Northwest Coast art are similar in all the cultures of the coast, yet each has distinctive styles. The artistic traditions of the Northwest Coast can be categorized by region. The northern region includes the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Gitksan, Nisga'a and Haisla

■ Ancestral crest figures such as killer whales, bears, wolves, eagles, and thunderbirds show a person's lineage and were traditionally represented on totem poles, housefront paintings, talking sticks, and other objects. This totem is from Kispiox.

nations. The central region includes the Nuxalk, Heiltsuk, Nuuchahnulth and Kwakwaka'wakw nations. The southern region consists of the Salishan-speaking groups (Coast Salish people).

Making the supernatural world visible was one of the two main purposes of traditional Northwest Coast art. The carvings, paintings, ceremonial objects, and costumes were fully integrated with the arts of theatre, dance, and song. The second main purpose was to validate the social system.



At feasts and potlatches, masks, bowls, chests, and numerous other objects reflected the ancestry and status of the hosts. Certain essential design elements of Northwest Coast art have been identified by historian Bill Holm, including the formline, the ovoid, and the U-shape. These shapes can be used to create a naturalistic representation of a creature, or an abstract form. The same design concepts are used in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional art, but they vary from region to region.

The Impact of Colonization

Colonization took a heavy toll on Northwest Coast art. Disease killed many artists, so there were fewer people to pass on traditional knowledge, and fewer people to learn it. As well, the influence of Christianity caused some people to stop using ceremonial objects. In the western European world view of the day, objects such as totem poles and masks were viewed as heathen, pagan, or even sinful. Hand-in-hand with these beliefs was the anti-potlatch law of 1884, which outlawed the central institution of the Northwest Coast society and thereby the most important use of its art. Shamanism, called “witchcraft” by the government and church, was also made illegal. People went to jail for participating in events their ancestors had practised for centuries. Some people, trying to cope with the effects of disease and European settlement, with its new economy and values, pulled down their totem poles and sold their ceremonial objects. Often the people who purchased them were the same missionaries and governments that had outlawed them.

Without a reason for its creation, Northwest Coast art went into decline. But it did not disappear. It transformed itself, went underground, or simply

lay dormant. There were always artists, however, who continued the form. The purposes for the art changed. While some people, such as the Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish, continue to use ceremonial art, the majority of the new works in the twentieth century were created for sale to outsiders, for the curio and collector's market.

Haida artists maintained the art through their unique access to argillite, the soft stone available in only one location on Haida Gwaii. One of the most well-known and prolific artists was Charles Edenshaw, who lived from about 1839 to 1920. His carvings in silver, argillite, wood, horn, and bone and his paintings on spruce-root basketry are acknowledged as being among the best Haida art ever produced. A number of other master artists worked at the same time as Edenshaw, including John Cross, Gwaytiah, Tom Price, and John Robson.

Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs who defied the anti-potlatch law continued to keep ceremonial art alive, and maintained the role of the artist in their communities. Three artists remembered as influential cultural leaders were Charlie James (about 1868–1938), his stepson Mungo Martin (about 1881–1962), and Willie Seaweed (1873–1967).

These were the carvers, but much of the art that was traditionally in the realm of women's work, such as weaving and basketry, was kept alive by scores of women, most of whom are anonymous now. To earn money for their families, they wove cedar baskets and other crafts to sell on the streets of Vancouver and other cities.

As Rena Point Bolton states in the National Film Board film *Hands of History*:

It's safe to say that the women were the ones who kept our crafts alive during those years when we were not supposed to be doing them at all, when the potlatch was banned. It included anything that was made by Native people.

Formline

Identified as an essential element in Northwest Coast art, the formline is a continuous flowing line that outlines the creature being represented.

Museums and galleries played a role in the resurgence of Northwest Coast art in the 1950s and '60s by commissioning the restoration or recreation of a number of the old totem poles and the creation of new ones. Probably the most notable artist in this regard is Mungo Martin (right), a Kwakwaka'wakw carver who, in 1947, was put in charge of restoring totem poles at the University of British Columbia. Later he worked at the Royal British Columbia Museum, the provincial museum in Victoria, where he recreated a traditional longhouse and carved over two dozen totem poles. They still stand in Totem Park today.

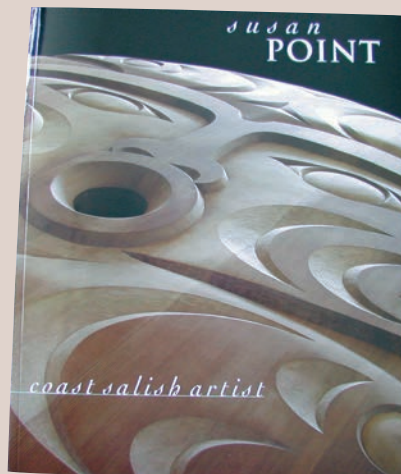


PROFILE

Susan Point

Susan Point is an artist from Musqueam ("People of the Grass"), one of the Coast Salish nations at the mouth of the Fraser River. She began her career in the 1980s, first taking a jewellery-making course and then working as a printmaker. Early on she adapted Coast Salish designs to non-traditional mediums such as glass and bronze. She also extended her designs to an architectural scale, and her exceptional artistry led to commissions of large-scale sculptures for public buildings. Among many others, there are major murals by Point at the Vancouver International Airport, house posts at the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia, and a wall installation at Langara College in Vancouver. She is noted for her exploration of the spindle whorl, a wheel-like tool for spinning wool. These ancient tools have unique designs on them, and Point uses them for inspiration in her art.

Susan Point is internationally recognized for her visionary and innovative style of Coast Salish art. Using old designs and forms as inspiration, she creates stunning new images in a range of materials from bronze to cedar to glass and cast iron. The acclaim her work has received



The range of Susan Point's artistic accomplishments is portrayed in a beautifully illustrated book. One of the foundations of her art is the spindle whorl design shown on the book cover.

has contributed to a resurgence of Coast Salish art and has made her a role model for other First Nations women artists in British Columbia. A recent book, *Susan Point: Coast Salish Artist*, provides a context for her work and showcases over sixty full-colour reproductions of jewellery, prints, paintings, and monumental pieces.

Resurgence

In the 1940s the world began to take a different look at Northwest Coast art. Non-native artists and critics began to see the art—which was for the most part stored away in museums—as “fine art.” Exhibitions were held and colourfully illustrated books were published.

After World War II, many aspects of life for First Nations people slowly began to improve. They were finally granted the right to vote provincially in 1949, though not until 1960 federally. The anti-potlatch law was dropped from the Indian Act in 1951. Gradually, First Nations people began to regain a positive sense of identity. Along with this came a new study of, and appreciation for, the art of their ancestors.

Another important milestone in the growth of Northwest Coast art was the publication in 1965 of *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form*.

Bill Holm, a Seattle academic, undertook the first close analysis of the styles used by the artists of the masterpieces housed in museums. He identified the elements that the art is based on, and developed the terms that are still used by Northwest Coast artists today.

In the 1960s, a new expression of Northwest Coast art exploded on the scene, using a Western medium. The medium was the serigraph, or print, whereby multiple copies of a design can be created. One of the first artists to make silkscreen prints was Tony Hunt, grandson and student of Mungo Martin. Today, printmaking is an important and often lucrative part of a Northwest Coast artist's career.

In the last thirty years the demand for Northwest Coast art has continued to grow. It is internationally acclaimed as one of the finest art forms in the world. Individuals and corporations throughout the world

PROFILE

Dorothy Grant

Dorothy Grant is a Kaigani Haida of the Raven clan from the Brown Bear house of Howkan. She is a fashion designer and traditional Haida artist who apprenticed with Haida Elder Florence Edenshaw-Davidson. Her garments, ceremonial button blankets, and spruce root hats are treasured as expressions of Haida living culture and may be found in art collections throughout the world.

Dorothy Grant has been at the forefront of the Aboriginal design industry since the early 1980s. Her strong connection to her people's past and her First Nations identity are the driving forces behind her fashion labels *Feastwear* and the *Dorothy Grant* label. Describing the *Feastwear* design and logo, Dorothy Grant says: “*Feastwear* embodies the philosophy of being proud of who you are and where you come from. The *Feastwear Hands* logo represents the ancestral knowledge and memory that guide me in



■ Dorothy Grant, wearing one of her own designs.

bringing the art of my people to a world stage.”²

Fashion art by Dorothy Grant is now on exhibit at the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Smithsonian Institute in the U.S., and in public and private collections in many other countries.

In 1994 the artist opened the *Dorothy Grant Boutique* in Vancouver, which now also sells via the internet at www.dorothygrant.com. In 1999 she was awarded a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in the Business and Commerce category.

CASE STUDY

'Ksan Historical Village and the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art

The 'Ksan Historical Village and Museum sits on an ancient Gitx̱san village site at the junction of the Skeena and Bulkley rivers near Hazelton in north central B.C. Since the 1960s it has been a focal point for the renewal and preservation of Northwest Coast art and culture. As the home of the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art, it has become one of the most influential forces in revitalizing the Northwest Coast art form in the north. Many of today's most successful artists were trained at the school, and as they have moved on to train others, the influence is ever-expanding.

The historical village began as a B.C. Centennial project in 1958, although plans had been emerging since the 1940s. Its goal was to protect and preserve the priceless but aging carvings and other pieces of Gitx̱san art and material culture. A new museum in a longhouse-style building was opened on the shores of the Skeena River in downtown Hazelton to preserve the art and culture of the Gitx̱san.

The Skeena Treasure House was opened in 1959. This name was chosen by one of the founding members, Smoigyet

Hanmuuxw, Chief Jeffrey Johnson. He felt that to call the building a museum would suggest that the objects displayed there were lifeless, unused artifacts from the past. This was not the case, however, as they were vital elements in Gitx̱san society, being the regalia, masks, rattles, and other items used at feasts. The

Skeena Treasure House quickly became a success. At that time there were few outlets for First Nations artists to sell their arts and crafts. Visitors came from far away to study the rich art of the Gitx̱san and their neighbours. By the late 1960s, the organizers realized larger facilities were needed.



■ The 'Ksan Historical Village near Hazelton is an excellent model of how a community can provide economic opportunities for its people and foster a better understanding of First Nations cultures as living and vital.

A new vision was born. Instead of one building, a whole village would be created. Many groups worked together to raise the large sum of money needed to complete the project. The Gitanmaax Band donated over fifty acres of land along the river nearby to build a campground, which is still operated by the band. The original Skeena Treasure House was moved to the new site to form the core of a recreation of a Gitxsan winter village. 'Ksan was officially opened in 1970. Today it houses a museum, gift shop, performance space, and most importantly a school for training First Nations artists.

Visitors leave the parking lot, pass between two entrance totem poles, and walk down a forested pathway to the recreated village. There they see seven longhouses built in a line facing the river. Totem poles stand in front of the buildings, and other structures including a smoke house, a grave house, and a food cache complete the village setting.

The first two buildings house the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art. First is the House of Carving, and next door the Silkscreen Studio. *Wilp tokx*, The House of Eating, is next, where visitors can sample traditional Gitxsan food. *Wilp Gisk'aast* (Fireweed House), the Treasure House, is the original museum building which today displays the regalia or ceremonial clothing worn by high-ranking people at a feast. *Wilp Lax Gibuu* (Wolf House), the Feast House, explains the Gitxsan *yukw* or feast. In the summer, it serves as the theatre for the 'Ksan Performing Arts Group for

their performances of "Breath of Our Grandfathers." The last house is *Wilp Lax See'l* (Frog House), The House of the Distant Past, which shows how Gitxsan people lived before contact.

'Ksan is an example of community cooperation. It is managed by the 'Ksan Association, a non-profit society made up of Gitxsan and non-Gitxsan members. The Board of Directors has eight volunteer members and three permanent staff who manage the facility. During the summer, seasonal employment is available.

The mandate of the 'Ksan Association is twofold: to demonstrate the richness of Gitxsan culture and heritage and to create and promote economic opportunities for First Nations people of the Upper Skeena area. To meet this mandate the Association provides a storage and display facility through the museum and a store where newly created art pieces can be sold. In recent years the storefront has been extended to include an on-line store.

The other side of 'Ksan's operation is working with artists. Not only can local artists use the workshop space on site, but they can receive training at the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art. This is a unique training program that offers a four-year course to promising First Nations artists. It teaches the foundations of Northwest Coast design, tool-making, carving, and silkscreen printmaking.

The final element of 'Ksan ties all of its work together. This is the 'Ksan Performing Arts Group, which acts as an

ambassador for 'Ksan and the Gitxsan nation by presenting the ancient songs and dances. The group originated in the late 1960s, organized by Doreen Jensen and Polly Sargent, a member of the Hazelton community (and the town's mayor for many years). They worked long hours with Elders from Kispiox and Kitseygyukla to study and learn the traditional songs and dances, and to create the performance called "Breath of Our Grandfathers." The songs and dances, which of course are the hereditary rights of the House Groups, have been loaned to the performers in order to increase understanding and appreciation of Gitxsan culture. The regalia worn by the dancers and the props used in their performances are all created by artists studying in the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art.

commission artists to carve totem poles, while the masks and other carvings of the most famous artists command high prices and are also found in collections worldwide.

Where carving ceremonial objects was once the domain of men, today many women also find expression in carving. One of the first was Ellen Neel (1916–1966), a Kwakwaka'wakw artist who carved model poles and created unique scarves. Two contemporary leaders in breaking traditional roles are Frieda Diesing and Doreen Jensen, both of whom were among the first students at the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art at 'Ksan.

Traditional women's arts such as weaving are also recognized as art forms today. One of the few men in the field is Tsimshian artist William White, who creates and teaches the techniques of cedar bark weaving and the complex forms of the Chilkat blanket and the Raven's tail blanket. Going beyond traditional forms, First Nations fashion designers are using Northwest Coast art to inspire the style and decoration of modern clothing. One of the leading designers is Dorothy Grant.

Art in the Community and the World

The revival of Northwest Coast art began with a focus on markets outside the local community. Today, however, artists have greater opportunities for creating art for their local communities, for the ceremonial purposes for which the art was originally intended. Not only has there been a resurgence in the art, but also in the cultural practices such as potlatches and feasts which incorporate the art. Totem poles are being erected in villages, the number of dance groups is increasing, and large canoe gatherings are being held in coastal communities. These and other gatherings require artists to create new works, be they drums, headdresses, masks, paddles, or clothing. There has

been a notable growth in demand for the ceremonial robes, also known as button blankets. Each dancer, performer, or speaker requires an elaborate blanket which displays his or her clan or crest. When worn en masse, they create an impressive scene which portrays the power of the revitalization of Northwest Coast art through the twentieth century.

There are venues throughout the province where First Nations artists sell their work. One popular outlet is at powwows that are held across the province during summer months. Many artists travel the powwow circuit, selling jewellery, prints, masks, and other art works to First Nations people from near and far. Large cities such as Vancouver and Victoria have commercial galleries as well as museums and public galleries with gift shops. Well-established artists such as Susan Point and Roy Henry Vickers have their own galleries, while others sell out of their studios and via the internet.

Cultural centres operated by First Nations groups offer unique experiences for visitors by recreating traditional villages with cultural demonstrations, restaurants to sample the food, and gift shops. Among them are the Secwepemc Museum and Heritage Park on the Kamloops reserve and the Cowichan Native Village near Duncan, on Vancouver Island. The oldest such centre is 'Ksan Historical Village near Hazelton, in northern B.C.

Revival of the Great Canoes

One of the single most exciting artistic revivals in recent years has been the return of the great canoes to the Northwest Coast. For the Kwakwaka'wakw, the Haida, the Coast Salish, the Tsimshian, the Nuuchahnulth, the Tlingit, and other coastal groups, the canoe was traditionally their primary mode of transportation, essential for fishing, gathering food, and trading. But the canoe was also a spiritual vessel that was the object of great respect.

Since 1986 a number of milestone “paddles” and canoe gatherings have taken place, including a group



■ The revival of the canoe is partly attributed to Haida master carver Bill Reid and several other prominent carvers who built the fifty-foot Loo Taas ("Wave Eater") canoe in 1985–1986.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

David Neel, Kwakwaka'wakw

David Neel, whose family is from Fort Rupert, comes from a long line of traditional artists. He is a photographer, writer, and visual artist who built his own 25-foot cedar canoe in 1994. He is also the author of the book *The Great Canoes: Reviving a Northwest Coast Tradition*, a beautiful visual and literary account of the revival of the great canoes, from which the following is an excerpt.

The canoe is today, as it has always been, much more than just a boat. The legends of the Pacific Coast Nations tell of the time of the great flood, when the people tied their canoes together side by side. As the waters rose, the people took a stout cedar rope and attached their canoes to a mountaintop. Here they waited until the waters receded, and they were saved. Today, in its renaissance, the canoe carries the knowledge of a millennia-old culture as well as the dreams and aspirations of a younger generation. It is a vessel of knowledge, symbolizing the cultural regeneration of many nations as they struggle to retain and rebuild following a period of systematic oppression and of rapid social and technological change. The great canoe has come back from the abyss a vital symbol for First

Nations. Once a mode of transport, allowing our people to fish, gather food, trade and travel, it has evolved into a healing vessel, deeply affecting all those who come into contact with it. Young people particularly benefit from learning the way of the canoe.

The canoe is a metaphor for community; in the canoe, as in any community, everyone must work together. Paddling or "pulling" as a crew over miles of water requires respect for one another and a commitment to working together, as the old people did. All facets of the contemporary canoe experience—planning, building, fund-raising, practising, travelling—combine to make our communities strong and vital in the old ways . . .

Like Haida artist Bill Reid, I believe the traditional canoe to be the basis for Northwest Coast design and sculptural principles. The canoe's form, the way each line flows and interacts, follows the same principles as those employed when carving a mask or painting a housefront . . . Contained within the canoe is the essence of our artform, as well as the combined knowledge of our old people, transported into this period of our history for us to breathe life into once again.³

of Heiltsuk people paddling from Bella Bella to the world's fair (Expo 86) in Vancouver. In preparation for a "Paddle to Seattle" in 1989, many First Nations communities in B.C. and Washington built canoes and started paddling for the first time in a century. The Seattle gathering spawned the Qatuwas Festival in Bella Bella in 1993, where an estimated 2,000 people attended a week-long gathering. In the Kwakwaka

language of the Heiltsuk Nation, Qatuwas means "people gathered together in one place." The canoe gatherings bring First Nations people from many locations together to visit, sing, dance, and share their cultures. They are evidence of First Nations people regaining their strength and cultures in a very visible and celebratory way.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

For First Nations people visual art has traditionally been integrated into all aspects of life. The earliest examples of artistic expression in British Columbia are found in stone art, in the form of rock carvings, rock paintings, and sculptural figures created from stone. First Nations cultures from the interior expressed their spiritual beliefs and their connection with the land through adorning their bodies and their clothing. The more structured societies of the coast gave rise to highly evolved artistic traditions that include masks and monumental arts such as totem poles and house fronts.

One of the impacts of colonization was a decline in artistic expression, partly through diseases that killed many Elders and also by the banning of the potlatch. Nonetheless, ceremonial art and other forms of artistic expression were kept alive by both men and women in First Nations communities.

In the past fifty years there has been a resurgence of First Nations art, and a new appreciation of it by artists

and collectors from around the world. Included in this revival is a return to building ocean-going canoes and hosting ceremonial "paddles" and gatherings that bring coastal First Nations communities together.

Today, many established artists find careers in their work, and many are transforming the traditional styles into modern contexts. Cultural centres, such as the 'Ksan Historical Village, provide important venues for First Nations artists to sell their work to wide audiences, while community events such as powwows give other artists opportunities to share their art with their own people.

Today, the art of First Nations in British Columbia is renowned around the world. It is recognized as one of the most sophisticated of art forms. Canada's foremost cultural museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, celebrates the significance of Northwest Coast art in the large display that greets visitors, called the Grand Hall.

Beyond Stereotypes: The Portrayal of First Nations People

From the earliest days of European contact, First Nations cultures have been described in simplistic and stereotyped ways. When early explorers and traders, with predominantly British roots, encountered ways of life that were unfamiliar to them, they viewed First Nations people as “less than” and “other.” The newcomers assumed a sense of superiority and described First Nations people in negative terms such as lazy, ignorant, or savage. From these beginnings, stereotypes of First Nations people became ingrained in Canadian society and were perpetuated for generations, passed on through popular culture.

Some myths about First Nations people still exist in the popular culture of mainstream North American society. One is that they make up one homogenous group; that is, they all have the same history, customs, and beliefs. Another is that their ancestors all wore feather headdresses, carried tomahawks, and lived in tipis. A third is that they are people of the past, that

anything identifiable as Aboriginal culture belongs to the past, or if it is practised today it is out of a romantic attachment to the past.

None of these statements is true, and none refers to real people. The statements refer to some notion of “Indian” created by a society that consciously or subconsciously marginalized First Nations people.

Today, First Nations people in many fields are challenging the stereotypes and offering honest, thoughtful reflections of their cultures. As discussed in previous chapters, First Nations writers and artists have begun to achieve recognition for their unique contributions to literature and art. This chapter will examine other ways in which First Nations people are celebrating distinguished achievers and role models.

Stereotypes in the Media

In the past, First Nations people were often anonymous when represented in the media. Newspaper reports

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Prince Rupert *Empire*

This newspaper article illustrates how First Nations people were so often represented anonymously. It also shows the underlying beliefs about segregation of the races. Why didn't the reporter simply write about the drowning of five men, or a party of ten men?

Prince Rupert *Empire*, September 21, 1907

FIVE MEN DROWNED IN THE SKEENA

Word reached here on Thursday of the drowning of three white men and two Indians in Skeena River at Red Rock Rapids. A party of seven white men and three Indians left Hazelton on Wednesday in a canoe. At Red Rock rapids the canoe struck a rock and capsized. All clung to the canoe, and when it drifted near the bank, three men and two Indians attempted to reach the land, but failed and were drowned. The others clung to the canoe and after drifting for an hour were picked up by a canoe that happened along. The white men drowned were E. Williams, James Dibble, and James Munro. James Dibble was one of the owners of mining property in the Babine range that was bonded in July to James Cronin for \$40,000. No further particulars could be obtained at Prince Rupert, owing to the telegraph wires being down between Aberdeen and Hazelton. Had there been a steamboat on the Skeena these men would not have lost their lives. Canoe navigation is too dangerous with unexperienced travelers as passengers.

almost always identified non-Aboriginal people in a news story, but left Aboriginal people nameless. In a similar way, First Nations people are often anonymous when shown in pictures in books or magazines. So often the picture caption only refers to “A group of Indians.” The writers did not attempt to research the names of First Nations people they reported on.

There were some exceptions to the anonymity of First Nations people in the newspapers. If they were involved in a crime, their names were usually mentioned. This fits into the stereotypical image of First Nations people as savages. This notion was popularized in the nineteenth century with the proliferation of what are called “captivity narratives.” These have similar plots in which a young damsel is captured by a horde of savage, ferocious “Indians.” She is usually rescued by a dashing young soldier. These

novels, with lurid titles and images on their covers, fuelled and perpetuated a stereotype of First Nations people.

We can see how this genre of writing influenced the telling of the history of First Nations in British Columbia. The “Wild West” style of adventure which occurred in the history of the United States was not part of B.C.’s history. Some writers in the past, however, tried to appeal to consumers’ appetites for this type of writing when they recounted tales of violent encounters between First Nations and the newcomers. As in the example shown here, “The Defiance of Ot-chee-wun,” the language used to describe the First Nations “renegades” is sensational and exaggerated, without any attempt to analyze the realities of the events. When it came to official colonial violence, however, such as the destruction of the village in this example, the language is understated.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

The Defiance of Ot-chee-wun

Chief Ot-chee-wun had only contempt for the whites. His Lamalchi warriors in their great canoes stalked unsuspecting settlers among the peaceful Gulf Islands—and boasted of the number they killed.

Lamalchi Bay, Kuper Island, is a pleasant place. There is nothing to indicate that it was once the home of a dreaded band of piratical Indians that required the entire resources of the North Pacific fleet to disperse them.

In 1863 Ot-chee-wun was a proud and haughty chief. His rule over the Lamalchi warriors was unquestioned. They were a fierce and resourceful tribe who were frequently at war with the Penelakuts, another Cowichan tribe that shared the island with them. From their lair they kept watch upon canoes and other craft in Stuart and Trincomali Channels and exacted such tribute as circumstances permitted. This form of piracy was not confined to the canoes of natives. Many white men and their boats

vanished in the labyrinth of waters about the Gulf Islands and only Lamalchi braves could tell what had happened to them.

James Douglas sent the Royal Navy to bring the chief Acheewun [Ot-chee-wun] to justice. The gunboat *Forward* was sent to Kuper Island. Acheewun had built a strong defensive bastion. Here, the captain of the *Forward* describes how he carried out orders:

“The chief answered that he would not come and he was not afraid of us,” Lascelles wrote. “At the end of the appointed time I hauled down the flag and fired into the village, which they deserted immediately and opened a very sharp fire of musketry from the two points at the entrance of the bay. I regret to say that one boy, Charles F. Glidden, was killed, being shot through the head whilst acting as powder-man at the pivot gun. Though the boat was hit in several places we sustained no other injury. The firing lasted about half an hour, when having thrown a few shells into the woods and knocked the village down, as much as possible, I went to Chemainus Bay for the night.”¹

Images of the Culture

Many people in the 1800s and early 1900s believed that First Nations cultures would soon be extinct, or at least assimilated into mainstream society. They were motivated to record for posterity their understanding of the people and their customs. Some people collected the objects of the material culture (“Indian artifacts”) and put them in museums or sold them to private collectors. Anthropologists collected stories and descriptions of customs and techniques. While these collectors did preserve the treasures of the past, they also helped to freeze the mainstream perception of First Nations cultures in antiquity.

Edward Curtis was such a man. A Seattle photographer, he set out to photograph First Nations people in traditional clothing from as many tribes as he could. Between 1907 and 1930 he produced twenty books of pictures, depicting people from Alaska to the southern United States. He took many pictures in British Columbia.

He also made what was probably the first film about First Nations people in Canada at Fort Rupert on northern Vancouver Island in 1914. In the *Land of the Headhunters* supposedly represented Kwakwaka'wakw people in a romantic love story, complete with an evil witch doctor, a love affair, and of course, a battle. It was a plot that movie-goers would relate to. It hardly mattered that Kwakwaka'wakw people were not headhunters, nor that the movie made little reference to them. The title was designed to attract an audience who believed the myths about Indians.

The movie depicts Kwakwaka'wakw life before contact, and shows Kwakwaka'wakw people dressed in cedar bark clothing and travelling in canoes. As a record of Kwakwaka'wakw

material culture, the film is valuable. But the plot and the action imposed by Curtis only reinforce how audiences expected to see “Indians” portrayed—as superstitious and barbaric.

Curtis and others were trying to capture the culture frozen in time. Museums displayed “Indian artifacts” in display cases, often with little interpretation. They reinforced the idea that First Nations cultures were of the past and static.

Marketing

If you learned everything you know about First Nations people from the movies (and many people do), you would learn that all Aboriginal people live on the Prairies, usually not far from a settler's ranch. You would learn they all ride horses. Even so, you might learn that these horse-riding Prairie people also made totem poles and probably danced around them, whooping away.

You would also learn that First Nations people only live in the past. Very few appear in modern times.



■ This billboard welcomed travellers to Fort St. John, suggesting that oil and gas rigs are as culturally significant as totem poles are to First Nations people.

Of course you would learn that most of them were savages and attacked white men whenever they had the opportunity. Those who weren't savages were noble, stoic sidekicks like Tonto. You would learn that most Natives have long braided hair, high cheekbones, and pronounced noses—or as close as the non-First Nations actors could come to looking that way.

It is estimated that Hollywood made more than 3,000 “Cowboy and Indian” movies. It's no wonder that they have had such an effect on popular culture. Seeing the same images and symbols over and over, even if they are false, reinforces the way people see First Nations and embeds it in the culture. More than that, these movies repeatedly show flat, one-

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

“That's My Dinner on Display”

Gloria Jean Frank, a historian and teacher, reflects on her experiences as a guide in the Royal British Columbia Museum.

“Mmm. That's my dinner on display,” I say, as we approach the display case labelled “Technology, Food Quest/Coast, Processing” at the beginning of the “pre-contact” section of the exhibit. The case contains fishing items as well as what appear to be dried, split salmon, dried clams, and other traditional foods. “But First Nations people still fish,” I explain to my group, “and they continue even now to process fish in ways similar to those displayed here.” Kitty-corner to this display case is another, featuring more traditional fishing items. A whaling tool has been removed from this case for a special whaling exhibit downstairs, according to the notes on a label that stands in its place: “Artifact Temporarily Removed.” “Ooo! That sounds ominous,” I exclaim to my listeners, as I ponder its transfer to a new location.

*Acting as a guide through the First Peoples exhibit made me realize my ability to convey a different view of First Nations history and cultures. I felt impassioned in the museum setting. I wanted to argue that First Nations peoples are not dead but still live in the here and now. I reflected on a statement by Deborah Doxtator, a Mohawk historian/museologist who curated the 1989 exhibit *Fluffs and Feathers: An Exhibit on the Symbols of Indianness* at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario. “Real ‘Indianness,’” she explains, “was represented in museums as all those traditions and technologies that anthropologists deemed to be existent before the coming of the*

European. To see change or European influence in the construction of an object was to see loss of culture, acculturation. As a result, exhibits about Native cultures were invariably labeled in the past tense.” I felt a need to offer some explanations during my tour so that our cultural heritage would not be seen as dead, reducible to “objects temporarily removed,” or, worse still, displayed permanently in glass cases.

The museum's role in representing First Nations cultures has a history that is now more than a century old. It is a history embedded within colonialism. As the recent Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples notes, “we simply cannot understand the depth of these issues or make sense of the current debate without a solid grasp of the shared history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on this continent.” This report views the past as more than an academic problem.

[. . .]

My group suddenly finds itself surrounded by a series of larger-than-life Edward Curtis photomurals. Our RBCM [Royal B.C. Museum] guidebook describes these as “glimpses of early Native life.” My eyes fixate on those words, and I nervously ask myself, “Where do I fit into this picture? What constitutes being Koo us (Nuu-chah-nulth for First Nations ‘people’)? Am I truly rooted in First Nations culture?” Maybe not. I realize that certain parts of the First Peoples exhibit make me feel uneasy about my own identity.

*As my group arrives at the next part of the exhibit, I draw their attention to the notice: “You Are Now Entering the Second Part of This Gallery . . . The Coming of the White People.” A short clip from Edward Curtis's 1914 film, *In the Land of the**

dimensional characters. There are few portrayals of realistic humans, characters with emotions, humour, and depth. The diversity of First Nations societies is ignored.

Along with such misrepresentation in films, symbols and images from First Nations cultures have often been appropriated by the dominant society.

Head Hunters (retitled, in 1924, *In the Land of the War Canoes*), immediately catches our attention. Anthropologist James Clifford has commented on the effects of Curtis's film in this exhibit. He found the images of traditional canoes with masked dancers in the bows "mesmerizing" in their display of familiar masks and canoes in motion. While the masks and canoes are mesmerizing, the real story behind the moving images is hidden from view. I convey this to my group.

Apparently, while staging this contrived dramatic production, Edward Curtis actually had a house built for the film, used the same stretch of beach repeatedly, had over twenty-one masks made, and had all of the male actors shave off their mustaches for fear that White audiences would not see them as authentic "Indians." Word has it that he became so frustrated with his Kwakwaka'wakw "actors" for not performing one scene "properly" that he actually "dressed-up" in costume and performed the scene himself. Because I knew these details about the film, I could not take it seriously.

As I watch other viewers transfixed by the film, I am tempted to blurt out the underlying story; instead, I convey this detail only to my group. It annoys me to think that Curtis may have shrieked impatiently, "You don't know how to behave like an Indian. Get out of that blessed costume and let me show you how to be you." Hmph . . . Indeed, I do well enough on my own, Edward Curtis, but thank you anyway.²

For example, First Nations names have been used for everything from sports teams to transnational corporations. When corporations such as Mohawk Oil Company or Sundance B&B use First Nations names and cultural symbols without having any connection to a First Nation, the effect is to denigrate First Nations cultures.



■ An early example of Euro-Canadian entrepreneurs using "Indian" symbols to promote products, in this case salmon. That the "Indian" pictured here does not resemble any First Nations culture on the West Coast didn't deter the company from capitalizing on the notion that no fish could be fresher than that caught by "Indians" using spears.

Symbols and images from First Nations culture, especially totem poles and images in pseudo-Northwest Coast style design, have been used throughout B.C.'s history to promote the province, especially to tourists. Since the 1920s, a large number of public buildings, hotels, parks, and shopping malls in B.C. have featured totem poles. A Haida pole welcomes people entering Canada at the Peace Arch border crossing south of Vancouver, and, in the 1960s, the province erected a series of poles along highways and at ferry terminals from Victoria to Prince Rupert—all in the interests of encouraging tourism. In the mid-1980s, Duncan, a small town on southern Vancouver Island, declared itself the "City of Totem Poles" and commissioned a group of totem poles; it has since become a major tourist destination.

CASE STUDY

Marketing the Imaginary Indian

The following excerpt from *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, by Daniel Francis, illustrates how non-Aboriginal society has historically used images of First Nations cultures to market products. There are many contemporary examples, especially with reference to marketing spiritual and healing practices.

In 1929, when Buffalo Child Long Lance was living in New York, the B.F. Goodrich Company introduced a new type of canvas running shoe. The "Chief Long Lance Shoe" was modelled on an Indian moccasin and endorsed by Long Lance in an extensive advertising campaign. "In our primitive life, nothing was more important than our feet," Long Lance is quoted as saying in one magazine advertisement. "I wonder if the white race would not be sturdier if they took better care of their feet in

childhood—by wearing shoes that allow free exercise of the foot and leg muscles." As part of the publicity for the new sneakers, Goodrich published a booklet, How to Talk in Indian Sign Language, featuring photographs of a bare-chested Long Lance, in breechcloth and headband, manipulating his hands.

B.F. Goodrich wished to associate its shoes with speed, strength and durability. There was no better way to do this than to associate them with the Indian, known for his ability to run like the wind for hours at a time. Of course, shoes were not the first products to be marketed with the help of the Indian image. The association of Indians and products was a venerable one, going back at least to the travelling medicine shows of the late eighteenth

century, in which potions and elixirs were peddled on the strength of their connection with Indian healing practices. The first decades of the twentieth century saw the appearance of dozens and dozens of products which tried to find favour with consumers by identifying with the Indian: Pocahontas perfume, Red Indian motor oil, Iroquois beer, Squaw Brand canned vegetables—the list goes on and on. For some products, the Indian was used as an all-purpose symbol of Canada. For others the Indian image was used to associate a product with the out-of-doors, or with strength and courage, or with the simple innocence of nature.³

First Nations Cultural Initiatives

Whether in films, books, visual art, or other aspects of culture, for many years the prevailing perspective was non-First Nations people speaking on behalf of First Nations. For example, white novelists have written about First Nations people as if they could accurately portray their voice, and non-First Nations artists have appropriated artistic traditions that belong to First Nations. Today, most people acknowledge the importance of First Nations determining the use of their own artistic traditions. The movements to return cultural possessions, the launch of the Aboriginal

Peoples Television Network, and the celebration of career achievements with National Aboriginal Achievement Awards are examples of cultural initiatives First Nations people are undertaking.

Returning cultural possessions

When the federal government sanctioned the arrest of forty-five people following a large potlatch at Village Island in December 1921, ceremonial regalia including coppers, masks, rattles, and whistles were gathered up by the Indian Agent in Alert Bay. The artifacts were sent to Ottawa, where the collection was divided between the Victoria Memorial Museum (now the

National Museum of Man in Ottawa) and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Some objects were set aside for the personal collection of Duncan Campbell Scott, then Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, and some were sent to a private collector in New York

City. The first efforts to repatriate these objects were started in the late 1960s. A few years later the board of Trustees of the National Museums Corporation agreed to return that part of the potlatch collection held by the National Museum of Man, on the condition that

museums would be constructed to house the collection. In 1979, the Kwakiutl Museum was completed in Cape Mudge, and in 1980, the U'mista Cultural Centre at Alert Bay was opened. Each received approximately half of the repatriated Kwakwaka'wakw objects.

The Nisga'a Nation, in its landmark treaty, also successfully negotiated with the



Members of the Haida Repatriation Committee working at the Royal BC Museum in Victoria in 2000.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Jeannette Armstrong

I am a real advocate of intellectual sovereignty, the reason being that I am a traditional keeper of knowledge. I really understand and really underpin the importance of our knowledge being subverted or being hijacked into the western framework, losing its potency or losing the power of it being able to contribute to the world, which really creatively needs to have as much intelligence and intellectual liaising to get out of the situation that it is in. I think indigenous people have a significant amount of power to give to that, and without educational institutions supporting that inquiry and that research and that academic level amongst ourselves, we could very easily neutralize and lose the knowledge that's there. Then it doesn't have a chance of becoming what it could be, it doesn't have a chance of being something new to contribute to the world.

I think the artists and the writers are at the forefront of creating—they are a vanguard of intellectual sovereignty. I really believe that in any culture, writers and artists are the vanguard, almost you could say the protectors of academic thought and philosophical underpinnings. They are also the vanguard of change as well; the change agent always come from the intelligentsia and so without an academic support and underpinning of that we don't have that opportunity, we are always marginalized, we are always colonized and we are always speaking from a colonized position rather than from a liberated position, rather than from a sovereign position. So we are always reacting to rather than speaking solely from a sovereign position, in any area of knowledge . . . I really believe in deconstruction of our political reality through literature.

PROFILE

An interview with Evan Adams

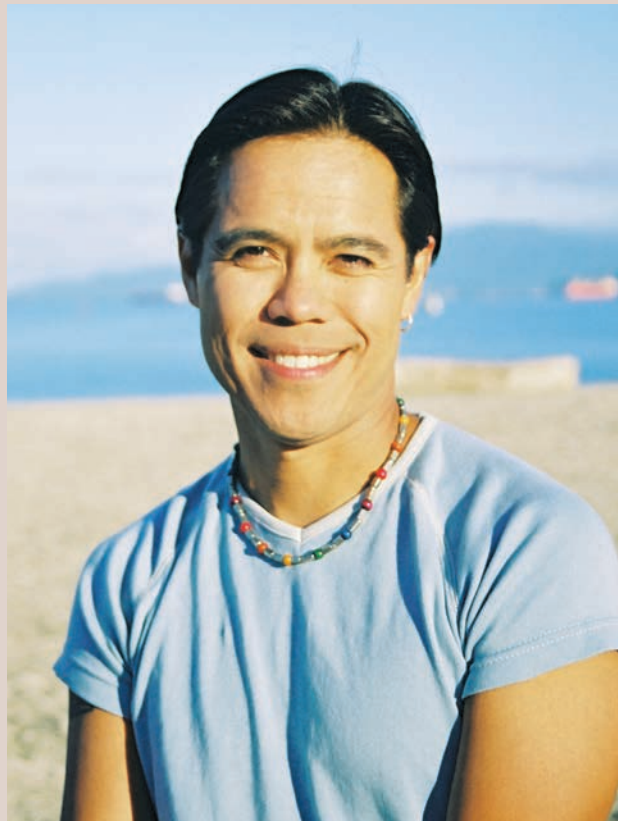
Evan Adams is Coast Salish. He has pursued dual careers, as a doctor (currently at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver) and an actor. In 1998 he starred in *Smoke Signals*, the first movie written by, directed by, and starring First Nations people. Recently he has collaborated with First Nations writer and director Sherman Alexie on a second film, *The Business of Fancydancing*. A third film is planned. This interview was done in 2000.

Q: Looking at First Nations images in Canadian history, what do you see? I'm thinking here of photographs, newspapers, scholarly journals, films, and books.

A: My first thought is, "What images?" We are underrepresented in official history. By omission, we are relegated to the status of "poor cousin" to the two "official" founding nations of Canada, the English and the French. It is ridiculous not to portray Aboriginal people in their rightful place historically. Our millennia of presence here, and our very land itself bought us a unique position as a founding nation in Canada. We directly helped make this country so great today.

Q: Have the images of First Nations people improved in the recent past from these historical images?

A: The images of First Nations people have improved, but they are still troublesome. Historic images—when they show us at all—portray us in the romantic past tense: wearing furs, going about a hunter-gatherer existence, naive—as if we had only just made First Contact. We are seldom portrayed in dynamic flux—evolving and changing from the moment we first laid eyes on white people. Today, we are no longer portrayed as the "Noble Savage." Now popular media like to present us as "social problems," as peoples who are not adjusting to modern demands or who are in social disintegration. Realistically, images say more about who has made the images than who



is in the image. To me, the contemporary and historical images of us tell me that the dominant culture still believes we are maladjusted artifacts—footnotes from Canada's glorious (and constructed) pioneer past—who have become, through time and their own inadequacies, social burdens on the rest of Canada. My sense from popular media is that they think they know better than we do how we should live our lives, and they basically wish we would just go away.

Q: You have heard the saying "Out of sight, out of mind." Do you think that First Nations are left out of popular media just for this reason, or do you think that First Nations are not being left out of popular media?

A: I think we need more First Nations journalists. I don't expect anyone other than us to make our lives better or to represent our voice; we have to do it ourselves. I do not expect someone else to right the wrongs of yesteryear. For instance, certain people have resented or ignored my peoples' well-being for the past 200 years. Why would I

suddenly expect those same people to take as good care of my mother as I would? Are today's history writers going to represent our contemporary First Nations reality to our children, or are we? We have to do it, of course.

Q: How do you see First Nations images in "popular culture" media today?

A: Popular media? I think of Hollywood when I think of "pop culture." I'm not naive. Pop culture is not about education, representation, visibility, or intelligence. Therefore I do not expect pop culture to reflect my complexity back to me. And what a surprise, it doesn't. Indians in pop culture are portrayed as strong, spiritual, keepers of the earth, and downright stoic—comic book—but everybody is "comic book" in popular culture. I don't give it much mind.

Q: Do you think First Nations images developed in the movie *Smoke Signals* improve on these images?

A: I think so. At least Sherman Alexie (the writer) and Chris Eyre (the director) attempted to subvert some of the weird, popular notions of who we are as First Nations people. Victor and Thomas, the film's two leads, argue incessantly about what it means to be an Indian. For First Nations audiences, it is a chance to finally hear someone talk about what it all means. It is an important discussion. "Identity" is one of the great existentialist journeys that all First Nations cultures have identified as being formative, and the audience gets to make this epic journey with the characters. Popular images are a bare shadow in comparison to these new depictions.

Q: Have you read Sherman Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, which the movie *Smoke Signals* is based on? What images of First Nations do you see created by these short stories? Why are they positive or negative for First Nations people?

A: I read those stories long before I was ever cast as Thomas in *Smoke Signals*. I absolutely fell in love with those characters. Have you ever fallen in love? I was in love with Thomas like that. I absolutely needed to play that role. I needed to use everything I had ever learned as an actor to bring that lovely role to life. Thomas embodied, metaphorically, all the pain and hardship my ancestors had suffered so that I could be here today. The images in Sherman Alexie's work, both in his book and in the

film, are both positive and negative. That is one of the responsibilities of the historian and/or the artist—to paint an accurate picture, warts and all. Indians are not perfect and should never be portrayed as such.

Q: Do you think these images are portrayed better in the movie *Smoke Signals* or in the book?

A: I would not compare them—it is like comparing apples and oranges. Both stand on their own as good pieces of work in their genres. I don't think one deserves "life" over the other.

Q: You are reported as saying: "It was so frustrating watching a movie like *Dances with Wolves* because Kevin Costner was always in the foreground and the Indians, whose story it was and who were more interesting, were blurs in the background." Could you explain what movies like *Dances with Wolves* do for images of First Nations and how movies like *Smoke Signals* do something else?

A: Hollywood movies almost always have a white protagonist/hero. I am not interested in that anymore. I am more interested in seeing something like my grandmother's life on the screen. When I was watching *Dances with Wolves*, I kept wanting to see past Kevin Costner and see what Tantoo Cardinal was doing. I wanted to see what the Indians were doing, not what the two white leads were thinking and feeling. I already knew that they were going to live happily ever after and their children would inherit the earth. Instead, I wanted to know what Tantoo was going to do as she found out that her people's time on this green Earth was in jeopardy. Now that's interesting! Kevin Costner is great, but he is not nearly as interesting as my grandmother.

Q: You said about your role in *Smoke Signals*: "I tried hard to make Thomas the kind of Indian my grandmother would have been proud of, but whom I never get to be." Could you explain the image your grandmother would be proud of?

A: Indians have different ideas about what it is to be a good person. The dominant culture pays attention to people who are thin, cool, sexy, well-dressed, smart-mouthed. My grandmother thought a person should be brave, loyal, funny, and, above all else, kind. I worry that

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younger First Nations people will never know old-time Indians like I did—regal and wise. I'm worried that young First Nations women want to be Madonna, and not like their Aunt Sarah. The dominant culture values knowledge; we value wisdom. They value power; we value respect. We value a strong individual and they adore long legs and "attitude." I didn't want Thomas (my character in *Smoke Signals*) to be cool; I wanted him to do the right thing.

Q: You have said: "I think it is essential that movies about Indians have an authentic voice." Can you explain this statement?

A: I remember a woman friend of mine saying, "Thank goodness women can speak for themselves." She was referring to the fact that, for a long time, women seldom constructed popular images of themselves. Portraits of women used to be largely by men. Even though some men created wonderful images of women, many did not. Thus, "thank goodness" there are now women to speak their own realities. I would much rather hear from a woman about her experiences as a woman than from a man who has no idea what it is to be a woman. Ditto for First Nations people.

Q: In previous interviews, you have said that both acting and being a medical doctor are "healing." Can you explain how these two activities are healing to the images of First Nations people?

A: When I played Thomas in *Smoke Signals*, I really wanted to capture an old-time Indian for future generations to see. In 100 years, there won't be people around like I knew. The Indians when I was growing up were so warm and kind, and had these gorgeous accents, and such a strange and lovely demeanour, that I wanted to capture that magic forever. Images of ourselves are extremely important in developing our self-concept and self-esteem as we grow up. I wanted people to feel the love and pride I have for old-time Indians, and to feel pride in themselves after watching *Smoke Signals*. An honest, thoughtful reflection of yourself can also be healing. Art can be healing—just as healing as medicine a doctor gives you.

Q: What do you think about the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network? Do you think this network produces a more positive image of First Nations people? You have done work with this network in the past. How do you see the network's portrayal of First Nations people so far? Has the network reached its potential? Or do you think we will see strides of improvement in the future?

A: APTN is only just beginning to find its voice. It has created some wonderful programming already, but it has only just got into the producing end of things (instead of just being a broadcaster). They/we will only get better. I am so happy that we can turn on the TV though and see ourselves as we are. I did not think I would ever get to see it, you know, First Nations people on TV. When I was a little boy, that was unthinkable. Look at us now, Baby!

Q: For me, the most healing word is "hope." "Hope" allows people to dream. It is from these dreams that we come alive. If images and truths in society are constructed, as many contemporary scholars argue, then what can you say about "deconstructing" First Nations images of the past and constructing new images of First Nations people to give people hope?

A: I have seldom seen the vibrancy, complexity, or tenacity of my ancestors in the static poses of yesteryear, only the unimaginative limitations of the (non-Aboriginal) photographers' eyes. I am not really interested in deconstructing those outdated ideas of who we are, they're so laden with judgement and almost wholly without perceptual or historic value. I/we have a responsibility to leave behind images that speak our reality, tell our truth. I want my children to see magic when they look at us in images.

Q: How do you think that the things you are doing in your life are changing First Nations images?

A: I understand that we all put forward images. Mine are literal images—film, TV, literature. We are also putting forward personal images of ourselves when we meet people in real life. I know that my presence in a hospital or university or someone's living room speaks volumes about us. We are here, we are getting somewhere, and we are defining ourselves.

Canadian and British Columbia governments for the return of specific artifacts. The Royal British Columbia Museum and the Canadian Museum of Civilization were ordered to return about 300 artifacts to the Nisga'a. The Nisga'a Nation is now using "moral suasion" to press for the return of other artifacts still held by institutions and private collectors. The Haida Repatriation Committee has also successfully lobbied for the return of cultural treasures. Furthermore, some First Nations have brought back and reburied skeletal remains that were removed by archeologists. This is a lengthy and ongoing process.

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network

The launch of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) in September 1999 represents a significant milestone: for the first time in broadcast history, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people have the opportunity to share their stories with the rest of the world on a national television network dedicated to Aboriginal programming. Through documentaries, news magazines, dramas, entertainment specials, children's series, cooking shows, and education programs, APTN offers a window into the remarkably diverse worlds of indigenous people in Canada and throughout the world. It also offers an unprecedented opportunity for Aboriginal producers, directors, actors, writers, and media professionals to create innovative and relevant programming. More than 70 per cent of APTN's programming originates in Canada, with 60 per cent broadcast in English, 15 per cent in French, and 25 per cent in a variety of Aboriginal languages. When it was launched, APTN became available to over 8 million homes throughout Canada via cable television, direct-to-home, and wireless service viewers.

Moral suasion

Persuasion as opposed to force. Appealing to a person's moral sense.

CASE STUDY

National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation

The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation is a nationally registered charitable organization created in 1985 by Mohawk conductor and composer John Kim Bell. Its mandate has evolved over the years and it now focusses its energies in three areas: educational programs, production of the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards, and Blueprint for the Future, a series of Aboriginal youth career fairs. With the establishment of the newly created Aboriginal Veterans Scholarship Trust, the foundation will provide Aboriginal youth with the opportunity to pursue a university education in the arts, business, and sciences.

National Aboriginal Achievement Awards (NAAA)

The NAAA was established in 1993 to pay tribute to the United Nations International Year of the World's Indigenous People. The NAAA is an awards system recognizing career achievements by Aboriginal people in diverse occupations. In total 14 awards are presented annually: 12 to occupational achievers, one to a lifetime achiever, and one to a young achiever who receives a \$10,000 prize to further his or her education.

The awards were created as a way to build self-esteem and pride for the Aboriginal community and to provide role models for Aboriginal youth. For the general public, the awards reveal the capabilities and aspirations of Aboriginal people in a new and powerful light. They serve to inform this audience of the strides that can be made when an individual has the discipline, drive, and determination to accomplish his or her goals. The awards are bestowed to individuals of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis heritage who have reached a significant level of achievement in their occupations. The awards ceremony is broadcast on CBC television, and has

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enjoyed audiences in excess of 2 million viewers. Since the awards began in 1994, 126 remarkable individuals have been recognized.

Among B.C. First Nations recipients of National Aboriginal Achievement awards are the following:

Freda Diesing,

award for Arts and Culture in 2002.



Master artist, carver, and educator Freda Diesing was one of a handful of artists responsible for the revival of Northwest Coast art and culture that began in the 1960s. In 1980 Diesing's work was included in the groundbreaking exhibition, "Legacy—Tradition and Innovation in Northwest Coast Indian Art," which was assembled by the Royal British Columbian Museum and later toured to other countries, showcasing her culture's art and history to the world. Haida Elder Freda Diesing died in 2002.

Mary Thomas,

award for the Environment in 2001.



Over a lifetime, Mary Thomas has been an environmentalist and educator advocating conservation, preservation, and awareness of the relevance of the traditional ways in preserving the health of the land and its people. She helped to found the Salmon River Watershed restoration project and has worked to create the Ecocultural Centre at Salmon Arm, B.C. In the 1970s she founded the Central Okanagan Interior Friendship Centre. Over the past ten years she has been using her traditional knowledge to document Secwepemc plant knowledge. In 1977 she became the first Aboriginal person in North America to receive the Indigenous Conservationist of the Year award from the Seacology Foundation.

Dolly Watts,

award for Business and Commerce in 2001.

A member of the Gitksan First Nation, Dolly Watts is the owner-operator of Liliget Feast House and Catering in Vancouver. This first-class restaurant offers traditional wild game and seafood, served in long wooden bowls carved from cedar and alder. While at university, Watts established a small bannock stand called Grandma's Bannock. From this she developed a catering business, Just Like Grandma's Bannock. Liliget Feast House opened in 1995, and its revenues have increased each year. Watts has developed an international reputation and is often a speaker on Aboriginal cuisine. She also co-founded the Aboriginal Business Club, which provides a forum for sharing successful business strategies.





Fred House,
award for Community Development in
2001.

A tireless advocate for Non-Status Indians and Métis, Fred House helped ensure that the rights of his people were enshrined in the constitution when it was repatriated in 1982. In the 1970s he served as President of the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians, and he formed Coyote Credit Union, which provides small business loans and investments for Aboriginal business people. He fought long and hard for access to social housing for Métis and Non-Status Indians in B.C., and he established a province-wide network of court workers to assist Aboriginal people before the courts.

Chief Simon Baker (Khot-La-cha), award for Heritage and Spirituality in 2000.

Chief Simon Baker, whose Squamish name is Khot-La-cha or “Man with a big heart,” served as an ambassador for his people, lecturing nationally and internationally. He was a longshoreman on the Vancouver waterfront for forty years, working his way up to Superintendent at Canadian Stevedoring. As a youth during the 1930s he was a star lacrosse player for the North Shore Indians Lacrosse Club, where he became known as “Cannonball Baker.” His contributions to lacrosse earned him a place in the B.C. Sports Hall of Fame.

For over thirty years Chief Baker was a band councillor of the Squamish Nation, serving ten of those years as



Chairman. He started the first Indian Club of Vancouver as well as the Capilano Indian Community Club. Throughout his life he generously volunteered his time to many organizations and lectured

to countless classes. His community designated him “Chief for Lifetime,” and he was also made an Honorary Chief of the Sechelt Nation and an Honorary Lifetime Member of the Native Brotherhood of B.C.

Chief Baker's autobiography, *Khot-La-cha*, was co-written with Verna Kirkness and published in 1994.

The Honourable Judge Steven Point,
award for Law and Justice in 2001.

A leader of profound vision, Steven Point was first elected chief of the Skowkale First Nation when he was just 23 years old. After serving for 7 years he was accepted into the Faculty of Law at UBC and completed his degree, specializing in criminal and constitutional law. He established his own law firm and practised criminal and Native law for Stó:lō bands in Chilliwack. In 1991 he became the director of the Native Law Program at UBC. Subsequently he returned to work for the Stó:lō Nation and was appointed the Chief's Representative at the Stó:lō Government House and the chief spokesman for 21 Stó:lō Nation bands. In 1999 he was appointed to the bench (as a judge) and asked to serve in Prince Rupert and northwestern British Columbia.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

From the earliest days of European contact, the newcomers viewed First Nations people as less “civilized” than themselves. Explorers and traders did not recognize the diversity and complexity of the First Nations cultures they encountered, and they lacked respect for the people whose territories they invaded. By the time immigrant settlers came to British Columbia, images of “savage Indians” were already commonplace. Journalists often wrote inflammatory accounts of interactions between First Nations people and law enforcement officers, focussing on the peaceful settlers and the “warlike Indians.”

During the 1800s and early 1900s, many works of art were removed from First Nations communities

and sold to museums and private collectors. As well, anthropologists collected stories from the oral tradition and photographers documented traditional First Nations clothing. Images from those times became engrained in popular culture, including in films that distorted and misrepresented cultural realities. The fact that First Nations cultural expressions have continued to change and remain dynamic has not been widely understood. In recent years, however, First Nations artists, writers, actors, and filmmakers have been producing their own images and telling their own truth. With initiatives such as the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards, First Nations communities are charting a new course in the twenty-first century.

Throwing the Baby Eagle Out of the Nest

by John Borrows

As First Nations peoples we still have some distance to go to be free from the oppression we live under. While it is true that our sovereignty has not been extinguished¹ and that partial victories have occurred to facilitate our existing powers of self-determination,² much remains to be done.³ The politics and laws of Canada continue to contribute to our devastation.⁴ We can and must persist in our critique of Colonialism, but we cannot rely on Canada alone to give us more power. Power comes from within and, though we continue to struggle for an explicit recognition of our rights, we cannot expect that the most important victories we achieve will be from any other source but ourselves.⁵

When I first started as a professor at University of British Columbia Law School I had an interesting dream which brought this to my attention. I had just recently moved to B.C. from Ontario to be the director of the First Nations Law Program. I am Anishinabe and though I really liked my work, I did not feel at home. I missed my feelings and knowledge of the land and the connections that I have with friends and family. In this context my dream occurred early one morning just before I woke up, so I remembered it very clearly as I went about my day's activities. It is not my Vision Quest dream so I have the liberty of sharing it with you. I believe that the dream has something remarkably important to say about justice and healing within our communities. The dream unfolded in the following way.

I returned home to my reserve⁶ to visit with my mother and to relax and enjoy the peace I have when I am there. One of the first things I did was to visit with my Auntie Norma and have supper with her.

When we were finished our meal we decided to drive down to the lake and take in its beauty. As we were getting close to the water I noticed that there was a small island just off the shore with a large pine tree growing on it. One of the limbs of the giant extended over the water towards the shore, and on the limb was a man. I was perplexed as to what he would be doing there and I eventually noticed that he had his hands in a bundle of sticks on the branch.

When we stopped the car and got out I realized that the man's hands were in an eagle's nest. I called out to him to stop. As I did this he lifted a baby eaglet from inside its home and perched it on the side of the nest. My shouting had attracted attention and people started gathering on the shore to see what was happening. At this point I ran through the knee deep water to get to the tree to attempt to prevent him from harming the bird. As I reached the trunk he cast the small life over the side of the nest and into the water where it drowned in the depth below. This made me quite upset so I climbed the tree to restrain him. Just before I could reach him he set another baby on the side of the nest, rested it there for a second, and then cast it over the side too. At this point I was able to stop the man from further harming the nest and we came down out of the tree.

When I got to the bottom there were by then a considerable number of people circling the shore watching the proceedings. No one had moved or said anything. From the midst of the crowd a Band Constable stepped forward and stated that he was arresting me for disturbing the peace. I started to protest and said: "I'm trying to help. Don't you remember me; I just came home to visit my Auntie Nor—." He interrupted me and said: "Oh yeah, now

I know you, you're John. I heard you were having supper at Norma's place tonight—now I remember. You are free to go." My dream ended and I woke up. I boarded a plane an hour and a half later and travelled to an isolated community on the central coast of B.C., accessible only by float plane and boat. There I had an experience which reinforced what I learned as I was sleeping, which I will return to in a moment.

Before I do this though I want to pause and ask, what does this dream-story teach about justice and healing? It probably teaches more than I understand right now as there seem to be levels of symbolism which I continually discover. The first thought that occurred to me was that I could not do anything of significance to help my people if I did not remain known to my community. I must constantly keep my association and attention focussed on the every day experience of my people if I am going to be able to do anything helpful. My people are not only the Anishinabe and my home reserve, but the First Nation communities I participated with in British Columbia. I believe that my dream contains this general lesson that others could consider. We must be careful not to become detached from our community in our attempts to assert our interests before the wider Canadian public.⁷ If we do, we run the risk I saw in my dream that people will not accept our actions even when our deeds are well intentioned and right. This is an incredibly heavy burden to bear as it requires much greater effort, but it seems to be most in keeping with our structure as First Nations.

The second lesson I garnered from the dream was that there are some people in our own communities who are casting the power of our future away, "over the side of our nest." This is done in different ways. Children are being abused and taken away from us.⁸ Women are being violated, assaulted and excluded from community participation.⁹ Community factions are encouraged and "rivals" are destructively isolated

from political, economic and social influence.¹⁰ Language is employed which does not respect the convictions and feelings of others and offends the vision that our grandmothers and grandfathers preserved for us.¹¹ Some people mis-characterize the words and intentions of others in order to make their own arguments appear stronger and more persuasive. Realizing these pathologies were in my communities, after my dream I had to honestly ask myself: am I also the man in the nest? Do I, by what I write and teach, cast our future away? I believe these questions could be beneficially pondered by others as well.

Finally, the dream taught me about what is happening in our communities when we as leaders and academics speak about justice. Figuratively speaking, our people generally stand at the edge of the issues and watch.¹² While Oka encouragingly illustrated that people will take action if pushed beyond measure, for the most part we witness silent watchfulness as rhetoric, politics and philosophy become increasingly disconnected from the actions and understanding of people "at home."¹³ Participation in healing then occurs at a distance, through the media, with little active involvement from those whom it will most personally affect. This observation is not meant to diminish the accomplishments of those who have tirelessly worked to advance our powers; we would not even have the encumbered sovereignty we possess if it were not for them. I merely want to stress that I must add to my future actions a greater degree of our people's understanding and participation. People need to be more directly involved and feel justice move from within, and they need to be more intimately caught up in the events taking place around them. I recognize that this is difficult when there are so many pressing contemporary issues which make it hard to look up from today's needs and participate in the vision of tomorrow. Again, this is a hard task to accomplish but once again seems to be the one most in line with our requirements as Nations today.

The lure of political power, personal influence, money, tenure, self-satisfaction and other forms of acquisitiveness make these lessons all the more difficult to learn and follow. I admit that the dream was directed to me and therefore I am the one that must most directly heed its lessons. If others can benefit from the dream in working for the restoration of balance within our communities, in the spirit of sharing I leave it with you to think about.

Meditations on my dream were reinforced by a subsequent experience which I alluded to earlier. Six hours after waking I was in the Kwagiulth village of Kingcome Inlet, home of approximately eighty Tsawataineuk people. I spent three days visiting with members of the community and at the end of my time there I was taken to their Ceremonial Big House. It was an eighty- or ninety-year-old structure with beautiful house posts and carvings. It was a place to be respected. My host explained the representations that the engravings depict and he told me the stories of their origins with visible pride. However, as he was going around the room he stopped at one pole and showed me where someone had taken an axe to the figure and partially defaced it. With a note of shame he said to me, as I remember it: "This is what our people have done in the day of their sadness. Some of us forgot who we were and turned against that which would most help us remember. Our people are beginning to recall their power, but this pole stands as a reminder that we must never again forget."

When he finished his tour I thought of the lesson of casting baby eaglets over the side of a nest.

There is still much to be written and said in legal and political discourse to persuade others that First Nations have a presently existing, inherent power of self-government. At the same time there is much more we can be doing within our communities to reconstruct and recapture the full dignity and liberty that flows from being the Sovereign First Nations

of this land. These efforts would be enhanced and more likely to succeed if more responsibility and participation is exercised by a widening circle of First Nations people. It is the best way to ensure that our children will become grandmothers and grandfathers so that when they get old, they too can become eagles.

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Adze A tool for cutting away the surface of wood, like an axe with an arched blade at right angles to the handle.

Aesthetics Aesthetics refers to the beauty of a piece of art, apart from its practical use. It is determined in part by its style, design, and skill of production.

Anachronistic Old-fashioned or out of date; out of harmony with its period.

Appellant In law, an appellant is a person who appeals a decision to a higher court.

Appropriate (v) To appropriate something is to take possession of it, usually unlawfully or without authority.

Artifact Simply defined, artifact (also spelled artefact) means an object made by humans. However, its connotation gives the sense of an object from the past, often dug up by archaeologists.

Band There are two ways you may see the term band used. People who study traditional First Nations of B.C. often refer to an extended family group as a band. A band was identified with a certain geographical area. Today, however, a band refers to a group of people living in a community on an Indian reserve. The band council administers the affairs of the band, in a similar way that a city council operates the business of a city or town.

Boreal forest Boreal means northern. The boreal forest is an evergreen forest growing in sub-Arctic regions and the cold temperate regions of the northern hemisphere. It forms a ring around the globe, crossing North America, Europe, and Asia. The boreal forest is a harsh environment, for plants and animals as well as people.

Cantilevered A cantilevered bridge is built with beams projecting out from the banks and supported by girders.

Capitalism Capitalism is an economic system in which private wealth or capital is invested to produce and distribute goods at a profit. In order to accumulate wealth, owners hire labour to produce the goods. Market forces determine production and distribution.

Colony A colony is a country or territory occupied and ruled by another country. A colony has an elected local government but is subject to the laws of the parent country.

Constitution Act, 1982 This legislation describes the basic principles on which the government of Canada bases its laws. Before 1982, the Canadian constitution was contained in the British North America Act (now called the Constitution Act, 1867), and any changes to the constitution had to be made in the Parliament of Great Britain. Now Canada has complete control of its constitution.

Elder A person whose wisdom about spirituality, culture, and life is recognized. First Nations people and communities seek the advice and assistance of Elders in various areas of traditional as well as contemporary issues. As a sign of respect for First Nations Elders, the term is often capitalized.

Enfranchisement Enfranchisement gives people the right to vote in elections. For First Nations people, however, it

has meant more than this. Until 1949 provincially, and 1960 federally, First Nations people could only vote if they relinquished their Indian status. This meant cutting themselves off in many ways from their reserve community.

Extended family The term extended family usually refers to a large family group of several generations who live and work together. Often it will include several siblings and their families living with parents and perhaps grandparents.

Fiduciary responsibility Fiduciary comes from the Latin word for trust. Fiduciary responsibility is the position of trust given to the government to act in the best interests of First Nations people. It cannot act against First Nations' interests but must preserve and protect Aboriginal rights. It must justify government regulations and laws that interfere with Aboriginal rights.

First Nation A community of Aboriginal people who identify themselves as a distinct cultural group and who are the descendants of the original inhabitants of the land that is now known as British Columbia. Each First Nation has a name for itself, such as the Stó:lō Nation.

Formline Identified as an essential element in Northwest Coast art, the formline is a continuous flowing line that outlines the creature being represented.

Genealogical Tracing family descent from an ancestor.

Gunwale The upper edge of the side of a boat or ship. The name comes from when guns were supported there.

Hegemony The predominant influence of one group or power over others, especially when it involves coercion, as in colonialism. The beliefs and values of the dominant group appear to be universal.

Intertidal zone An area which is under water at high tide and exposed at low tide.

Lahal Also known as slahal, bone game, or stick game, it is a game of chance played by many First Nations of British Columbia. Two bones are hidden behind the back or beneath a cloth. One is marked, the other is plain. The player brings his closed hands forward, a bone in each one. A player from the opposite side tries to guess which hand has the unmarked piece. Special sticks are used to keep score. If a player guesses wrong, he or she gives one of the sticks to the hider's side.

Material culture Material culture refers to objects that are made and used by a group of people. As a field of study, it includes the techniques for making objects, how they were used, and how they connected with the daily lives and beliefs of the people.

Medium of exchange A medium of exchange is something that people agree has a value and can be used to exchange goods and services. It allows people to trade without the limitations of bartering. Today money is the most common medium of exchange.

Métis sash The Métis sash was traditionally made with a finger-weaving technique used by First Nations of Ontario. This method had long been used to make clothing and useful objects such as tumplines out of plant fibres, and

was adapted to use wool after European contact. The governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan have created the Order of the Sash, which recognizes the achievements of Métis individuals.

Michif Michif is the language of the Métis, developed during the beginning of Métis culture. It blends ancestral languages to create a new language. There are several dialects. The most well known combines Cree, French, and English. Other dialects incorporate other First Nations languages such as Ojibwa, Salteaux, and Assiniboine. Today Michif is considered an endangered language because there are fewer than 1,000 speakers, most of them in the Prairie provinces and neighbouring American states.

Moral suasion Persuasion as opposed to force. Appealing to a person's moral sense.

Muskeg A swamp or bog, consisting of a mixture of water and partially decomposed vegetation, often covered by a layer of sphagnum or other mosses.

Obsidian Obsidian is a volcanic glass, prized for its ability to be honed to an extremely sharp edge. It was used for knives, arrowheads, and other tools. Each obsidian source is unique so scientists can identify the source of an artifact wherever it is found. Today it is sometimes used as the blade for a surgeon's scalpel.

Oolichan The oolichan (also spelled eulachon) is a small fish important for its oil. It spends adulthood in the ocean and returns to fresh water to spawn in the early spring. It was the first harvest of the year for the First Nations after the winter supplies had been exhausted.

Patrilineal Based on kinship with the father or descent through the male line.

Precedent A precedent is a similar event or action that occurred earlier; a previous case or legal decision taken as a guide for subsequent cases or as a justification for subsequent situations.

Pre-empt Pre-empting (known elsewhere as homesteading) was the main form of land settlement by immigrants in North America. In Canada, British subjects were given 160 acres of land free, as long as they cleared the land and started farming on it. During the Douglas administration, First Nations people were encouraged to pre-empt land, but after Douglas left, the laws were changed to forbid First Nations people from pre-empting.

Protocol The rules, formalities, etc. of any procedure or group; formality and etiquette observed on state occasions.

Resource-use unit The resource-use unit is the basic group which has stewardship over the resources in a particular territory. First Nations express this in different ways. For some it may be a family grouping; for others it may be a broader social organization such as a house group.

Restitution Restitution is an act of restoring something lost or stolen to its proper owner. It also means compensation for an injury.

Royal assent In Canada, the U.K., and other Commonwealth countries, royal assent is the formal consent of the sovereign or his or her representative to a bill passed by Parliament.

Scrip Scrip, or Land Scrip, is a certificate issued to Manitoba Métis families entitling them to 240 acres or money for the purchase of land, issued in compensation for lands lost by the Métis after the Northwest Rebellion.

Seasonal round Also known as the annual round, this term refers to the pattern of movement from one resource gathering area to another. Resources became available at different times of the year in different locations, so people moved from place to place on a cycle that was followed each year. The seasonal availability of resources determined the living patterns of the people. Spring, summer, and fall saw them moving to a variety of resource areas while during the harsher winters they gathered in winter villages. The abundance of resources also determined how often people moved. In areas that had a greater abundance and variety, people could stay in one location for longer than in areas where resources were scarcer.

Sovereignty Sovereignty refers to supreme power or authority over a land or state; the power of self-government, with independence from outside control; autonomy; freedom from outside interference and the right to self-government.

Stewardship Stewardship is the care and management of the local resources. It implies a responsibility to respect and protect the resources in return for using them.

Title Title is a legal term that means the right to the possession of land or property. "Aboriginal title" is based on Aboriginal people's long-standing use and occupancy of the land as descendants of the original inhabitants of North America.

Trade union A trade union, also known as a labour union, is an organized association of workers formed to protect and further their rights and interests and to bargain collectively with employers on issues such as working conditions and wages.

Treaty A treaty is a formal agreement between two groups, usually sovereign bodies or nations. Historically treaties with First Nations in Canada were agreements between the government and the First Nations to clear land of Aboriginal title so the land could be used for settlement, resource extraction, or transportation routes like railways. Certain payments and benefits were traded in exchange for clear title to the lands. In negotiating treaties, the government acknowledges the title of First Nations to their lands.

Tribal council A tribal council is an organization of Aboriginal communities that have joined together to achieve greater social, political, and economic strength than they wield individually.

Watershed All the land drained by a particular river or lake; a drainage basin.

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4. The section on Talhtan justice is based on material provided by David Ratray.

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Epilogue

This article was first published in *Justice as Healing*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1996), Native Law Centre, University of Saskatchewan. It is reprinted here with permission of the author.

1. See Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Partners in Confederation: Aboriginal Peoples, Self-Government and the Constitution* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1993).
2. See Kathy Brock, “The Politics of Aboriginal Self-Government: A Canadian Paradox” (1991) 34 *Canadian Public Administration*, 272.
3. For the most recent review of statistical measures of the impoverished conditions within First Nations see Statistics Canada, *1991 Aboriginal People’s Survey* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1993).
4. For an accessible and well-written description of the problematic application of Canadian law and policy to First Nations see, generally, A.C. Hamilton and C.M. Sinclair, *The Justice System and Aboriginal People: Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Queen’s Printer, 1991).
5. “As we begin to start to understand ourselves again as a people, as we start to deal with our own ceremonies, our own traditions, our own songs, I believe we will again identify for ourselves what is the true source of authority for all peoples.” Gordon Peters, Ontario Region Chief, Chiefs of Ontario in Frank Cassidy (ed.), *Aboriginal Self-Determination* (Lantzville: Oolichan Books, 1991).
6. Neyaashiinigiiming, or Cape Croker Indian reserve, on the southwestern shores of Georgian Bay in what is now Southern Ontario.
7. One of my Nation’s teachers wrote about the importance of attachment: “There are four orders in creation. First is the physical world, second, the plant world; third, the animal; last the human world. All four parts so intertwined that they make up one life and one whole existence. With less than the four orders of life and being incomplete, and unintelligible. No one portion is self-sufficient or complete, rather each derives its meaning from and fulfills its functions and purpose within the context of the whole of creation.” Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage* (Toronto: McClelland and Steward, 1976) at 21.
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9. See *Voices of Aboriginal Women: Aboriginal Women Speak Out About Violence* (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development and the Native Women’s Association of Canada, 1991).
10. To examine this occurrence under the new registration procedure of the Indian Act, see *The Impacts of the 1985 Amendments to the Indian Act* (Bill C-31): I) *Aboriginal Inquiry* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1990).
11. I have purposely chosen not to give any citations to the abuse and disrespectful language employed in some circles. I have done this because I might be a poor judge of the motivation and effect of people’s words. While I have definitely read and felt the bite of such language I want to give others the benefit of the doubt in why they said certain things and how they were said. I have also restrained from the citation here out of consideration for those who have unknowingly used such tactics and in the hopes that many people might examine their own talk and writings. Such introspections might be hindered if specific individuals were identified.
12. Many people I spoke to did not feel they had sufficient information to make an informed decision. For a statistical compilation of low voter participation rates in the referendum in Status Indian Communities see *Referendum 92: Official Voting Results* (Ottawa: Chief Electoral Officer, 1992).
13. See Menno Bolt, *Surviving as Indians: The Challenge of Self-Government* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), especially his chapter on leadership at 117–166.

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The following abbreviations are used in identifying the source of photos:

BCA	British Columbia Archives, Victoria
NAAA	National Aboriginal Achievement Awards, Ottawa
PEP	Pacific Educational Press, Vancouver
RBCM	Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria
UBCIC	Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, Vancouver/Kamloops
UBC/MOA	UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver

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(C-09639); 115: BCA (H-07279); RBCM (PN 7587); 118: BCA (I-33176); RBCM (PN 12454).

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B.C. First Nations Studies documents the history and cultures of First Nations and Métis people in British Columbia from before the arrival of Europeans to the present. It examines the historical foundations of contemporary issues and illustrates how First Nations cultures have adapted to changing world events and environments. Aboriginal people's contributions to British Columbia and Canada are highlighted, and important leaders and role models are profiled.



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