

CHAPTER FOUR

*“the more I see them the less
I know them”¹*

Disciplinary Surveillance and the Department of Indian Affairs

THE VARIOUSLY NAMED DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS CAN CLAIM A pedigree that links it directly to the 1755 formation of the British Imperial Indian Department, as discussed in Chapter Two.² While the circumstances described in the previous chapter illustrate that many others were involved, the DIA was the primary instrument of surveillance in western Canada and so is central to this study. While it never had funding sufficient to provide services equal to those available in neighbouring non-Indigenous communities and while for the most part it was removed from parliamentary interest, from 1877 to 1927, the DIA was developing into a large and diffuse bureaucracy with a multilevel hierarchical structure in which each level in the chain of authority examined the level below and was responsible to the level above.² The smallest details of its operation were recorded; observations of Indigenous groups and individuals were registered and assessed; and the perceptions of others in, and about, the department were noted.³ By the late nineteenth century, the volume of this record began to increase dramatically as departmental correspondence alone doubled in the 1870s and 1880s and then re-doubled in the 1890s.⁴ Commenting on the body of textual records that it had created and collected, the department’s archivist proudly proclaimed in the 1930s,

“it is doubtful if there is another branch of the [Public] Service having an almost continuous record of correspondence since such a distant date.”⁵

The functionaries of the DIA also had a romantic impetus for data collection. As D.C. Scott, DSGIA 1913–1932, said of western Canada: “dealing with a free new country with a people as yet unaware of civilization lent attractiveness to even the driest details of administration.”⁶ From its observations of First Nations people, the department constructed a body of knowledge that its functionaries believed was accurate and universal, but is in fact more clearly a record of the department’s attempts to inculcate Anglo-Canadian liberal values into populations of people to whom this knowledge and these understandings were alien and often of dubious merit. It is also a record of Canada’s efforts to gain control over Indigenous territories and resources. The records of the DIA are additionally, if read across the grain, valuable in any attempt to construct an account of Indigenous response to the department’s project.

As mentioned above, the DIA annually published an enormous amount of detail regarding its administration and the “progress” of those it observed. But it was very selective about the “knowledge” that was collected and more discerning yet about the specific information it distributed. As Noel Dyck has observed in discussing the “arbitrary political system imposed upon Indians,” the department’s “power to manage outsiders’ access to and understandings of this sphere of relations comprised another essential element of this destructive system of control.”⁷

The department was particularly guarded about what information it released to those about whom the data were gathered. In 1925, for example, Mike Mountain Horse complained that the Kainai were “never given a statement of their earnings especially their wheat money and also a statement of their rations, that they are never told what price their wheat sold for and that the only time they know they have no more money is when the Agent tells them verbally.”⁸ While at least in this case, the First Nations in southern Alberta were denied access to financial accounts, those in British Columbia were denied access to significant land records.

In 1927, when a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons conducted hearings into the claims of the Allied Tribes regarding land and resources, Indigenous representatives were denied access to the collection of documents known as *Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question, 1850–1875*. When advocate A.E. O’Meara attempted to provide evidence from the early instructions of James Douglas and the comments of

colonial officials, he was chastised by committee member H.H. Stevens for not producing the original documents.⁹ Stevens complained “Oh, I have had twenty years of your nonsense, and I am tired of it.” Even though he had a copy of *Papers Connected* in front of him, he complained that since O’Meara was not able to produce the documents it contained that he would “not allow that to go out without my protest.”¹⁰ The Allied Tribes tried unsuccessfully to secure a copy of the book and while DIA officials Scott and Ditchburn had copies with them, they would not permit these to be “impounded” by the committee.¹¹

These incidents were clearly significant to the material well-being of those whose interests the DIA was meant to protect. But they were not isolated. As late as 1944, representatives of the department were instructed that “no copy of any official communication addressed to you from this Branch should be furnished to any person or Indian without permission.”¹² First Nations people may have had barely a passing interest in some of the data collected by the DIA, for example how many individuals within a particular nation wore “civilized clothes,” but the type of information withheld from them affected their capacity to make decisions related to their ability to provide for themselves independent of government “assistance.” Not only is it unlikely that information of these sorts would have been withheld from any other group in Canada, its suppression is a clear contradiction of the department’s stated objectives of assimilation and self-sufficiency. Even though First Nations people had been under DIA supervision for half a century by the time of the incidents above, had seen service in World War I, had “accumulated property to which they are justly proud,”¹³ were clearly capable of understanding the Canadian legal system and demonstrated that were willing to work within it, they were still excluded from the rights guaranteed to others in liberal Canada.

The record keepers of the DIA believed their work had a moral as well as a legal value uncommon in other departments. The department believed it was creating a permanent record of what it had “done for its wards” and so its records should be “kept intact for historical purposes as an example to future generations.”¹⁴ However, the DIA was quite guarded about what got into this official record in the first place. In the compilation of their annual reports, agents were told to “refrain from suggesting therein any policy which, in your opinion, the Department should adopt in the management of Indian affairs.”¹⁵ Hayter Reed was more to the point a few years later in 1894 when he wrote that reports meant for publication should include only that “which it was desired the public should believe.”¹⁶

Agents were told in 1890 that “complaints from Indians” should be “omitted altogether from their Annual Report,” which would be published and circulated well beyond the DIA, but that these could be submitted in official letters.¹⁷ Later, since it was determined that “no profitable result has been attained” from the investigation of these complaints, it was “determined to pay no attention to any demands made by individual Indians into the conduct of an officer of the Department.”¹⁸ The hierarchy was for the most part inviolable throughout the period under discussion here and beyond. As DSGIA Harold McGill stated in 1933 “[o]ur Indian Agency organization is the basis of our administrative system. The Indians should be instructed to bring matters that concern them to the attention of the Agents” and not to the department directly.¹⁹ Under these conditions, it was very difficult to pursue local grievances, especially since the agent was often involved in some way.

The Department of Indian Affairs' Hierarchy

The formidable DIA hierarchy was established in both the interior of British Columbia and the Treaty 7 region in the 1870s. In the latter, the number of DIA personnel, and the surveillance of Indigenous residents, increased steadily through to the mid-1890s.²⁰ By 1885, there were two agents operating in Treaty 7 and in 1886 the region was divided into three, with one agent responsible for the Siksika, one for the Tsuu T’ina and Nakoda, and one for the Piikani and Kainai.²¹ In 1888, the Kainai and Piikani were placed under separate supervision bringing the total number of agents to four. In 1898, a separate agency for the Nakoda was created, but there was no resident agent there until the farmer in charge was promoted in 1901.²² After this, there was no more increase in agencies or agents until after 1927.

In the Treaty 7 area there were some salary reductions and the total number of department employees fell from thirty-three in 1896 to twenty-eight in 1897,²³ but for this region at least, this reduction of employees was not a permanent state of affairs. While the number of employees reached a low of twenty-five in 1905, the following year it had climbed again to over thirty. By 1916, there were forty-two. At the same time, during this period, the total population of Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Tsuu T’ina, and Nakoda being supervised in Treaty 7 declined from 4,183 in 1896 to 3,164 in 1916. In addition to the overall increase in employees during this period, therefore, the ratio of observer to observed initially grew from 126.8 per employee in 1896 to 147.3 per employee in 1897, but then fell almost by half to 77.2 per employee by 1916.²⁴ Annual raw wages increased as well from \$15,460

to \$29,640. However, when inflation is taken into account, the actual wage expense in 1916 was virtually identical to 1896.²⁵ In other words, when total employees is the indicator, the department was getting rather more for its surveillance and reformatory dollar in 1916 than it was in 1896.

Unlike in British Columbia, DIA employees in the Treaty 7 area and throughout the prairie west tended to live on reserves thereby further increasing their potential for surveillance of Indigenous communities. These employees included Indian agents and a mix of others who, depending on the year and agency, might include farmers, farming instructors, farmers in charge, clerks, stockmen, scouts, interpreters, issuers, assistant issuers, labourers, mail carriers, instructresses, foremen, cooks, and medical officers.

The situation in British Columbia is an interesting counterpoint to that in the North-West Territories. The DIA officially entered British Columbia with the appointment, despite the objections of Lieutenant Governor Trutch, of Victoria physician Israel Wood Powell as superintendent in 1872.²⁶ Two years later the department appointed a second superintendent, James Lenihan, who would be based in New Westminster and responsible for the interior. Powell and Lenihan remained the only DIA employees in British Columbia for the next seven years.²⁷

In 1881, Lenihan's position was cut and a new one, superintendent's assistant, was created. At the same time the province was divided into six agencies including one each at Kamloops and the Okanagan.²⁸ Three years later in 1884 the number of agencies in British Columbia was increased to eight, but Kamloops and Okanagan were combined due to what Macdonald referred to as "the advanced state of the Indians in these districts" and as "a matter of economy."²⁹ This massive area, which included approximately 24,000 square miles and about 334,000 acres of reserved lands was supervised by a single employee of the department.³⁰ When, in 1910, it was finally recognized that the surveillance of this enormous area was a practical impossibility for even a dedicated and energetic agent, which by all accounts then agent Archibald Irwin was not, the region was restructured to "make three agents covering practically the same ground as was formerly supposed to be covered by Mr. Irwin."³¹ The new Kamloops Agency was restricted to "the watersheds of the Thompson River, Shuswap Lake and their immediate tributaries."³² The Okanagan Agency was limited to "the valleys of the Spallumcheen, Okanagan and Similkameen rivers and along the shores of Okanagan, Dog, Duck and Osoyoos lakes."³³ A large portion of the former Kamloops-Okanagan territory was also transferred to the new Lytton Agency, although six First Nation groups were shifted back to the Kamloops Agency by 1914.³⁴

British Columbia was not affected by the reorganization of 1896-97, perhaps because there simply were no employees that could be let go without reducing the number of agencies. British Columbia did, however, go through a major readjustment as Laurier left office in 1911. The province was then divided into three inspectorates, each with a resident inspector. At the same time the number of Indian agents was increased from eleven to fifteen, including one each for the Kamloops and Okanagan agencies.³⁵ Even with these increases, however, and even if one includes the inspector for the South Eastern Inspectorate, the Dominion constables appointed for Okanagan in 1912 and Kamloops in 1916, and the agent for the neighbouring Lytton Agency, there were never more than six employees in the region occupied by the Kamloops and Okanagan agencies. During the period under discussion, in British Columbia, agents did not live on reserves and, during this period at least, there were no farming instructors. With the occasional exception of a Dominion constable or other temporary employee, agents in British Columbia always worked alone.³⁶

At its largest, the Kamloops-Okanagan Agency was roughly the same geographic size as the Treaty 7 area. After 1898, the First Nation population of the combined Kamloops and Okanagan agencies was consistently larger than that of the Treaty 7 region until the 1911 restructuring and the shift of some groups to neighbouring agencies.³⁷ Between 1914 and 1917, the populations of the two regions were roughly equivalent. Yet, by even the most conservative of accountings, there were consistently ten times or more DIA employees in the Treaty 7 region than in the combined Kamloops and Okanagan agencies. Indeed, there were consistently more DIA employees in Treaty 7 than in all of British Columbia.

The obvious explanation for this disparity is economic. To the extent that the federal government chose to live up to the obligations it undertook when it entered into Treaty 7, it had to provide land, an annuity, livestock, agricultural implements (though interestingly there is no explicit provision for instruction on their use), salaries for school teachers, and a variety of other goods and services.³⁸ The resulting expenditures incurred had to be justified at each level in the hierarchy and to opposition politicians. It was more economically and politically prudent, then, that the disciplinary surveillance network at the disposal of the DIA be more sharply focused on southern Alberta than on the interior of British Columbia.

At the same time, while the population growth across western Canada was remarkable, the pace of non-Indigenous settlement in the North-West

Territories far exceeded that of British Columbia. Further, the attention of the department was concentrated more directly on the prairie west after 1870 as a result of, as Scott admitted, the threat caused by “the half-breed disturbance of 1870 and afterwards.” Always the righteous booster of DIA policy though, Scott claimed that there was “small cause for rebellion,” since the department operated with a “spirit of generosity” rather than “in a niggardly spirit as if the treaty stipulations were to be weighed with exactitude.”³⁹ There may have been no intention of weighing treaty provisions with exactitude, and no intention of honouring the spirit of the agreement entered into in 1877, but Indigenous peoples were to be judged with precision and any perceived defect or lingering “Indianness” was to be reformed.

In British Columbia there were no such contractual obligations to admit or ignore. The Okanagan and Secwepemc were denied the annuity and food stuffs provided to the Siksika and Tsuu T’ina and other Treaty 7 nations, but were also spared, to some degree and for a time, the intense supervision that was attached to such benefits. Not only was it more difficult to restrict movement in British Columbia as already discussed, but everything from domestic arrangements to use of land and economic activity, while still profound, was subject to less scrutiny than in the prairie west as will be discussed in more detail below. The web of incessant disciplinary surveillance had larger gaps west of the Rockies. Further, federal authorities had to deal with an intransigent provincial government in British Columbia that had little interest in resident Indigenous people beyond removing them from their lands and restricting them from their resources.

The Permit System

A further example of the profound but still less intense operation of disciplinary surveillance in British Columbia compared to the prairie west is evident in the application of the so-called “permit system.” This piece of the colonial edifice, and further illustration of exclusionary liberalism in practice, involved governmental control and restriction of the independent survival strategies and entrepreneurial efforts of Indigenous people. Beginning in the 1870s, debates in the House of Commons led to a succession of amendments to the *Indian Act* that restricted the right of reserve residents to exchange, barter, or sell their possessions or the goods that they produced without first obtaining permission from the DIA.⁴⁰ Since this permission was only granted to individuals, the permit system served liberal purposes well in helping to destroy collective production.⁴¹ Unlike the pass system,

the requirement that Indigenous people obtain a permit from their agent or farm instructor before selling anything they owned, grew, raised, cut, dug, caught, were given, found, or otherwise acquired, and the parallel restrictions imposed on their settler neighbours from receiving any of this contraband, was openly supported by legislation approved by the Canadian state. Further legislation required non-Indigenous merchants to obtain a special license to sell goods on a reserve in Manitoba or the North-West Territories by 1891.⁴²

As with most of its efforts involving Indigenous people, Canadian officials justified this imposition by claiming it to be in the best interests of people who they decided lacked both business acumen and ability to discriminate between useful goods and money-wasting trinkets. As SGIA Edgar Dewdney explained in 1891, there were always unscrupulous merchants waiting to take advantage of apparently witless Indians by selling them “useless articles at excessive prices.” To make matters worse, Dewdney went on, “the proneness of the Indian to run into debt” and his “disinclination to discharge his liabilities, has a very demoralizing effect upon him.” For the same reasons the department feared that Indigenous people were incapable of securing a fair price for reserve production.⁴³

Cree elder John Tootoosis was apparently willing to concede the positive impetus of the system to protect First Nations vendors and consumers, and accepted as well that the DIA recognized the collective ownership of reserve resources and took steps to ensure that no one individual would benefit to the detriment of others. He refers, though, to the permit system as a “loaded gun” that was, in the end, turned against those it was ostensibly designed to protect.⁴⁴ It was when production on reserves began to offer competition to neighbouring non-Indigenous farmers, ranchers, and business owners that Canadian officials began to take more serious notice. While some from settler society sympathized with Indigenous efforts to be excluded from the permit system, many argued that by receiving agricultural supplies and rations, reserve farmers were subsidized by the government and that this amounted to unfair competition. In their attempts to secure some remedial action, they were not shy about presenting their complaints to their political leaders and to local media.⁴⁵

When the Piikani began operating a sawmill on their reserve in 1899 for example, a local lumber dealer complained to *Edmonton Bulletin* founder and M.P. Frank Oliver that the selling of lumber in Macleod amounted to unfair competition for citizen taxpayers. DSGIA James Smart agreed that this amounted to “a very great injury to the merchants who are engaged in the

lumber business,” but department secretary J.D. McLean stated that since the mill was not paid for out of public funds he did not think that the DIA would be justified in restricting the Piikani from earning what they could on the timber they cut.⁴⁶

With the permit system in full operation after 1885, DIA employees controlled the funds earned from the sale of reserve production as well as deciding who that production could be sold to and at what price. For providing this service, the department withheld a portion of the proceeds, sometimes as a set “tax” on each beef or ton of wheat sold.⁴⁷ Indian agents were also responsible for overseeing the accounting systems that this entailed and in prosecuting those who sold goods without permission. While at times agents were assisted in their efforts by the mounted police, operating the permit system until the late 1940s at least, required innumerable hours of surveillance, record keeping, and other permit-related duties on the part of department employees in the Treaty 7 region and elsewhere.⁴⁸

Agents also had to deal with various settler requests in relation to permits. Settlers sometimes asked that specific reserve residents be given permits to put up hay for them,⁴⁹ while sometimes the request was a more general one for some product.⁵⁰ At other times they simply notified an Indian agent when someone they had hired did not have a permit,⁵¹ or asked him what to do after they had purchased something from a person who did not have a permit to sell it.⁵² After they agreed to issue a permit, agents were also required to manage accounts receivable and act like collection agents.⁵³

There was control and restriction of economic activity in British Columbia as well, and while permission was required in most situations, the permit system did not and could not operate in the same way as it did east of the Rockies. On the coast, federal fisheries officers tended to ignore licensing requirements for salmon in the early years of the period under discussion here as long as there were no sales to canneries. Douglas Harris argues that even though “Fisheries was increasingly vigilant, its lack of personnel and equipment and the size of the territory it had to patrol meant that its surveillance was sporadic” in the nineteenth century. The Fraser River, for example was patrolled by two officers in rowboats in the late 1880s. However, as with farming in the prairies, as the canning industry grew in British Columbia, so too did government regulation of the fishery and restriction of Indigenous control.⁵⁴ Restrictions on Indigenous fishing became increasingly strict especially as they began to offer growing competition to White fishers by the beginning of the twentieth century.

In Secwepemc territory, the removal and sale of wood came under particular scrutiny. Indigenous people in this area had engaged in logging activities at least since the 1880s when they rafted logs from the Shuswap Lakes to sell at Kamloops. They cut this and other wood under permit, and paid “dues” for the privilege. In addition to surveillance by the local Indian agent, this activity was also observed by a Crown Timber Inspector, T.S. Higginson. Higginson collected the dues and at times at least set the prices paid to the individual wood cutter.⁵⁵ When Agent McKay asked for his assistance, Higginson wrote back “I now enclose a bloody document, which I think will meet your views and send terror into the heart of the brave Red man. I feel grateful to you for being the means of impressing upon them my authority. I want to help the poor fellows all I can but they must as you say, be made to respect authority.”⁵⁶ In 1894, Higginson went with Kamloops-Okanagan Indian Agent Wentworth Wood “to Shuswap Lake [to] lay off some timber land for your lambs.” But when he suspected that these “lambs” were challenging his authority by also cutting wood on crown land outside of the temporary timber lands assigned to them, without permission, Higginson was less patronizing: “we will have to put an end to their trickery. I am determined, if I have to make a trip every two weeks along Shuswap Lake, that I will prevent them from cutting a stick.”⁵⁷

Almost a decade later, in April 1903, Agent Irwin wrote to Superintendent Vowell and recommended that Chief Francois Silpahan of the Qw7ewt (Little Shuswap Lake) Secwepemc community be deposed. Irwin included a petition, apparently signed by a majority of the voting members of the community supporting his request, and stated “Any usefulness he may have possessed is evidently at an end.”⁵⁸ In July the department approved Silpahan’s removal as chief and settled on “incompetence” as the reason.⁵⁹ Within a few months, though, the department received a second petition, this time signed by members of Silpahan’s community, other Secwepemc and Okanagan, and 109 White settlers. The petitioners claimed that “a serious injustice” was done to Silpahan and that he was deposed “for insufficient cause.” The underlying reason for the chief’s removal was that he cut logs on the reserve and sold them without Irwin’s permission, even though he apparently thought he had secured his agent’s authorization.⁶⁰ Irwin argued that the signatories to the second petition were incorrect, that the community was satisfied with their new chief, and that he had warned Silpahan a number of times that he needed the agent’s permission to sell logs. This seems to have

satisfied the department at Ottawa and the matter was dropped.⁶¹ “Incompetency” it seemed could be interpreted quite broadly to include anything that displeased an agent. It would be a few years before Irwin himself would be dismissed for being incompetent.

The permit system could not have been anything but demoralizing to reserve residents. Indigenous people were treated like children, subjected to the whims, pleasure, and business acumen of individual agents, and ruled over by policy and legislation that restricted their ability to compete with their non-Indigenous neighbours. None had much of a chance of pursuing their own economic future, but ironically it was probably those who tried the hardest to integrate the economic strategies of the newcomers and to fit into the liberal individualist model who were affected most deeply. Many Indigenous farmers simply gave up under the weight of the obstacles provided by the DIA surveillance and assistance that mitigated against their economic success.⁶² The permit system did though, like other components of the surveillance apparatus, create employment for a host of non-Indigenous functionaries.

DIA Employees and the Expense of Surveillance

While the DIA had a substantial ensemble of employees engaged in its surveillance activities and record-keeping projects, it did not have unrestricted hiring privileges. Already by 1885 the amount expended on the salaries of DIA officials in western Canada was questioned. As the first resident priest to the Siksika, Father Constantine Scollen reported, “we have a whole army of employees attending to a handful of Indians, receiving large pay out of the Indian appropriation money + eating up Indian provisions.”⁶³ In 1895, salary expenditures were criticized in the House of Commons: “In British Columbia, out of the \$1,029,000 that have been appropriated under the pretense of helping the Indians, there has been expended on officials \$695,993.”⁶⁴ In the prairie west, as Sarah Carter has already noted, the number of DIA employees, and so its aggregate payroll, declined over-all with the reorganization and budget slashing that accompanied the Laurier administration and the appointment of Clifford Sifton as Minister of the Interior and SGIA after 1896.⁶⁵ Indian Commissioner Forget argued though that “the very large saving thus effected has not in any degree affected its [the DIA’s] efficiency.” Over the North-West Territories as a whole, the number of inspectors was increased, which “secured a much closer and more frequent and thorough inspection of the work of our agencies than was possible heretofore.”⁶⁶

Surveillance by and of Indian Agents

The employees with front line supervisory duties, and so the “men on the spot” of colonialism, were Indian agents. Agents were responsible to inspectors, who were in turn answerable to superintendents, and/or commissioners, the deputy superintendent general and finally to the cabinet minister who also served as superintendent general.⁶⁷ Agents, like policemen, were caught up in the panoptic mechanism as surely, though not as irrevocably, as Indigenous people themselves. They were also observed, measured, and judged in their performance by others in the DIA, and by missionaries, policemen, settlers, merchants, and capitalists. While much could be excused, if they were judged deficient in their ability to counter the potential of overt resistance or to record their endeavours, and so contribute to the body of knowledge on First Nations people, in the precise manner demanded by the DIA, they could be, and were, replaced.

A.J. Looy makes the point that Indian agents were “the single most important instrument through which the government tried to realize its objectives and to implement its specific Indian policies,”⁶⁸ and that it was “the Indian Agent, more than anyone else, who translated governmental policy and regulations which daily affected the lives of thousands of Indians.”⁶⁹ Certainly, where Indigenous people were concerned, Indian agents were the primary instruments of surveillance in western Canada. Since the weave in the web of surveillance was much tighter in the Treaty 7 area than in the Kamloops-Okanagan region, however, there was more room for a generous application of policy, but also for undiagnosed incompetence, preferential treatment, and mean-spiritedness in the latter. Individual agents could have a significant impact on the daily lives of their “wards” as Looy suggests, but this possibility had even greater potential in British Columbia, particularly away from the population centres of southern Vancouver Island and the lower mainland, and particularly before the restructuring of 1911, than in the prairie west which was the subject of Looy’s study.

Even in the Treaty 7 area, though, agents had significant opportunity to act the tyrant if they chose to. As former agent George Gooderham stated, in the late 1880s and early 1890s, “a great many of the Agents at that time were old military men who felt they must run the whole show. They said to the Indians ‘You only do what I say you must do, or must not do.’”⁷⁰ While this seems to be an overstatement, at least in the regions under discussion here, there were a few former NWM Policemen and soldiers and there was some opposition to their appointment as Indian agents. When resigning as

farm instructor in the Blood Agency, W.C. McCord commented in regard to Agent Pocklington: “these expolicemen are not the right men to have in the Indian Department, discharge them and try to get honest men.”⁷¹ More importantly, the structure of the DIA was not unlike the military or the mounted police, which fostered a view of Indigenous people, and especially their band council leadership, as simply occupying the lowest rungs of the administrative hierarchy.

It was not only former military men who used their authority in autocratic fashion to enforce government policy. For example, in Agent Lucas’ attempt to coerce Many Wounds and other Tsuu T’ina parents into sending their children to boarding school, he first withheld employment opportunities from those who refused, and then a few days later, withheld their rations until they capitulated.⁷² Since agents were also granted power as justices of the peace by amendment to the *Indian Act* in 1881, they could prosecute violations of the act. When Lucas wanted Bull Head and Crow Shield to cut logs in a particular area, he spoke to the latter and “assured him I would prosecute Crow Shield on [an] old liquor charge if he did not begin work.”⁷³ But while the personnel changed rather often in the Treaty 7 area, and while individual characters varied, agents still had considerable freedom well into the twentieth century. As Gooderham confirmed, “I was pretty well a free agent to carry on when the Minister had okayed the budget. This meant that I didn’t have to go through the usual ‘red tape’ to get authority to spend Government funds... It was a great help to me, and of course, made me very responsible, because I was a free agent.”⁷⁴ Reverend John McDougall confirmed that agents could always use the “almost despotic power of the ration house” or their discretion regarding the distribution of food stuffs, to coerce Indigenous people in their area to act in concert with their wishes.⁷⁵ A U.S. observer too wrote in 1915 that the only accounting of the financial resources of individual reserve residents was compiled by agents in Canada and while this observer saw this as expeditious, the system also meant that there was considerable opportunity for manipulation of the accounts should the agent be so inclined.⁷⁶

Yet while the discretionary power of agents was substantial in the way they treated Indigenous people on a daily basis, especially if there was no additional expense involved and as long as reserve residents were relatively quiet, it was severely restricted in other ways by the formidable hierarchical structure of the DIA. Even the smallest details of administration were scrutinized. Contrary to the experience related by Gooderham above, some agents

were required to request permission before purchasing ink for their offices⁷⁷ and others were instructed to paint all farm implements nothing other than “a light terra cotta colour.”⁷⁸

In order to augment the level of surveillance over agents, Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney requested a second inspector be employed for the North-West Territories to relieve the pressure on Inspector T.P. Wadsworth because “without a close supervision and constant and speedy intercourse with the Head office we cannot keep such a watch on our agents and their subordinates as we ought or rectify any mistakes made by them as quickly as we should.”⁷⁹ While Dewdney’s request was driven in large part by the exigencies of 1885, his brief comment succinctly points to the position of inspectors within the DIA’s hierarchy of surveillance. Inspectors supervised the progress of all of the department’s reserve employees, the health and relative “advancement” of reserve residents, and the conditions of schools and progress of students. They scrutinized the repair of reserve buildings and all equipment, reported on agricultural production and livestock, audited financial records, recorded the extent and quality of reserves, and kept an eye on the work of missionaries. They also worked to increase the pace of the civilizing project and to advance Anglo-Canadian versions of morality.⁸⁰

By the mid-1880s, most officials believed that the level of surveillance in Treaty 7 should be increased. Some, like Inspector Wadsworth, were inclined to blame the problem on the lack of Agents’ initiative. But even Wadsworth was forced to recognize the difficulties faced by agents attempting to meet the surveillance requirements of the DIA by the mid-1880s. He explained that agent Norman Macleod, elder brother of J.F. Macleod, was “diligent and hard working but from the large increase of Indians in his district it is quite impossible for him alone to exercise that close supervision that is necessary over the whole treaty.”⁸¹ Even where agents were living on the reserves it was reported that “on a reserve of such dimensions [the Siksika reserve] it is impossible for the Agent to tell where his Indians are.”⁸² Increasingly, agents relied on other employees to assist in the supervision of day-to-day activities on the reserves of Treaty 7.⁸³

According to J.A. Macdonald, the employment of “practical farmers [was] necessary to keep a very close supervision over [Indigenous] farmers.”⁸⁴ These men came to be known as farm instructors, but for a variety of reasons this is a bit of a misnomer. In 1892, Agent Colonel A.G. Irvine complained that the farm instructor on the Kainai reserve was required to “look after” farms that were situated in an area of 5,475 sq mi. Department clerk F.H. Paget wrote

in response that Commissioner Reed thought there were already “employees enough in the agency and that if too many are allowed they encourage each other to do nothing.”⁸⁵ Surveillance, tempered by economy, was rather more important than agricultural instruction. Further, as with Indian agents, the continued employment of a farm instructor was dependent not on their agricultural expertise, but on their success at carrying out DIA policy as it existed. This policy of hiring instructors for their willingness to comply with the minutiae of DIA policy rather than any expertise in farming did not bode well for the future of Indigenous farming. Inspector of Agency Accounts, S. Swinford, who had previously served as a clerk in the Blackfoot Agency and later an Indian agent at several posts reported after traveling over the Kainai reserve for two months in 1913 “many things came to my notice that have led me to look upon farming operations as a complete farce.” Swinford stated that former agent R.N. Wilson had “introduced farming operations on the reserve in order that he might get experience in power plant farming before commencing operations on his own private farm.” While Swinford agreed that those employed as farmers on the reserve were “good intelligent men as character goes,” one was a tinsmith, one was a “cow puncher,” and the other had no agricultural experience prior to his arrival on the reserve, “[s]o how they could be expected to teach Indians what they do not know themselves I do not understand.”⁸⁶

In the Kamloops-Okanagan region agents had few such responsibilities related to the supervision of non-Indigenous employees. But, as described above, they were responsible for large, and during some periods massive, territories. In 1889, for example, there were forty-eight separate bands designated in the region, some of whom had as many as seven reserves.⁸⁷ Here, agents were forced to develop different strategies in their surveillance of First Nations people. Agent Archibald Irwin put an inordinate amount of power in the hands of Isaac Harris, who had earned the favour of the DIA and BCPP, but for whom support among the Okanagan was questionable at best. Inspector J.G. Ramsden reported that “Isaac Harris had a pretty free hand but not more so than the mill owners.”⁸⁸

Other agents in the British Columbia interior, where transportation was a major obstacle to surveillance, only visited some reserves once or twice a year.⁸⁹ In the 1870s, when rumours of an “Indian rising” in the interior reached Indian Superintendent Powell in Victoria, he was forced to write that “Impassable roads above Yale will delay me indefinitely. Will Spring visit satisfy Indians.”⁹⁰ Even much later, travel continued to be a problem

for DIA employees. In 1914, when agent J.F. Smith wrote “Loon Lake No 3 of the Bonapart Reserves, being situated beyond two days travel on horse back from the Upper Hat Creek reserve was not visited but was given all the necessary information by Chief Dick Basil.”⁹¹ In practice, then, Indigenous communities in the Kamloops and Okanagan areas were under far less direct scrutiny than those in Treaty 7. Whereas employees of the department supervised all activity in the latter, in the former their role was often limited to merely dispensing advice.⁹²

While Indian agents were expected to fulfill a variety of functions, their primary role was to help facilitate the expansion of Anglo-Canadian interests and values, particularly the introduction and maintenance of a liberal capitalist framework. To this end, an agent was expected to “familiarize himself with the special character and habits” of each Indigenous person in his agency, but as Indian Commissioner for British Columbia W.E. Ditchburn warned, he “should not become too familiar with them or he would lose the dignity of his office.”⁹³ Clearly, agents were to keep a social distance between themselves and those under their supervision. When the department proposed abolishing the position of agency clerk in the North-West Territories, the then commissioner of the NWMP warned that “[i]f the Agent is to become a storeman and labourer in handling stores good bye to his commanding the respect of the redman.”⁹⁴ The department was constantly on the alert to protect the status of its agents, especially in the eyes of Indigenous people.⁹⁵

The specific tasks assigned to agents to facilitate the overall objectives of the DIA were so varied that it is difficult to imagine how all could be fully engaged in, let alone competently managed, by even an experienced, energetic, and conscientious agent. As George Gooderham, recalled, the normal duties

were to look after the general welfare of the members of the Band of which he was the Agent, and this included the education of the children, their health, their morals – and in this respect as an Agent I became a Magistrate and dealt with minor offences, which I found took considerable time: in fact, the position required the Agent to deal with pretty nearly everything in the life of the people. This in itself occupied a great deal of one’s time, but as well as that I had all these land sales, land leases and the farming of the Indians to deal with.⁹⁶

Indeed, agents were expected to directly supervise all affairs involving Indigenous people in their agency.

The instructions given to agents in British Columbia in 1910 included all of the activities mentioned by Gooderham, but were prefaced with: “[t]he duties of Agents mainly consist in advising the Indians, and in protecting them in the possession of their farming, grazing and woodlands, fisheries or other rights and preventing trespass upon or interference with the same.”⁹⁷ This protection, if conscientiously provided, would arguably have had more long-term benefit to Indigenous people than all other activities undertaken by Indian agents. With the exception of trespass on reserves, though, protection was not mentioned in the ninety-two point instructions issued to all agents by newly appointed DSGIA D.C. Scott in 1913.⁹⁸ This omission is illustrative of the primary objectives of DIA administration.

In the reformation of Indigenous people, agents supervised all church-administered schools, the provision of health care, the elections or appointments of chiefs and councilors, and differences with neighbouring settlers, ranchers, or businessmen. They oversaw reserve maintenance, including the construction of irrigation works, fences, and buildings of various sorts. They also acted as forest rangers without additional salary.⁹⁹ In their effort to reconstruct Indigenous people to conform to the mandates of Canada’s capitalist economy, agents were responsible for the instruction and supervision of all agriculture and livestock production, marketing, mining operations where these existed, logging, milling, firewood cutting, and wage work in the homes of neighbouring settlers, in the fields of farmers, and the premises of local businessmen. Agents were also expected to assist in ensuring that Indigenous people in their areas adhered to all federal, territorial, and provincial regulations related to hunting, trapping, and fishing. They were responsible for the initiation, collection, and distribution of funds earned from the non-Indigenous lease of reserve land or use of foreshores and, of significant long-term importance, they were to assist in the reduction of reserve lands. Agents had magisterial jurisdiction to try offences under the Indian Act or offences committed by “Indians” as defined by the act related to the vagrancy, morality, and other provisions of the criminal code.¹⁰⁰ They settled domestic disputes, separations, and alimony arrangements.¹⁰¹ This judicial responsibility could easily put agents in the position of simultaneously acting as complainant, prosecutor, and presiding judge.

In the Treaty 7 area, like all of the west under treaty, agents were responsible for overseeing the slaughter and inspection of animals, the distribution

of rations, and the payment of annuities as part of treaty obligations. Any overpayment or payment to people who the department deemed not entitled, could result in an equivalent deduction from the agent's salary.¹⁰² They supervised numerous other employees including at various times, clerks, stockmen, issuers, scouts, interpreters, labourers, teamsters, builders, cooks, blacksmiths, mail carriers, assistants of various sorts, and temporary contractors and their crews working on the reserve, and were responsible for the quality and quantity of their work.

In British Columbia, agents did not have similar duties related to annuities or other treaty terms. In 1879, DSGIA Vankoughnet stated, therefore, that "there will be little other responsibility attaching to the position of Indian Agent than the ordinary care of the interests of the Indian and their protection from wrongs at the hands of other nationalities."¹⁰³ Certainly this beneficent attitude, even if it was only a theoretical one, was soon altered. Though they did not live on reserves as they did in Treaty 7, agents were still expected, as purveyors of "civilization," to regularly visit all reserves in their agency, to promote the subdivision of reserve lands, and to give attention "to the sanitary condition of the Indians villages and camps." Since the DIA determined that in British Columbia "nuptial unions [were] still in the most unsatisfactory conditions," agents were instructed to "as far as possible prevent the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes."¹⁰⁴

In attempting to shift the shape of Indigenous families as the primary units of production and to align the economic activities of each member with Anglo-Canadian liberal capitalist conceptions, agents in both regions were expected to observe and reform the personal life of those under their supervision.¹⁰⁵ Anything other than heterosexual monogamy as structured into a marriage sanctioned by the church was considered aberrant and abhorrent and in need of reform. As D.C. Scott stated in 1910,

the true remedy of this lax state of things must come from the gradual civilization of the Indians, and more especially by the inculcation into their minds of the views which prevail in civilized communities as regards woman's true position in the family, and of the Christian doctrines respecting the sanctity and indissolubility of the marriage tie. When they come to grasp this higher morality, it will no doubt be easy to bring about the desired change in their social relations.¹⁰⁶

Scott requested that registers of Indigenous marriages be kept at each agency,¹⁰⁷ though he was later informed that “the Indian Act makes no provision respecting the marriage or divorce of Indians, these being regulated by the laws of the Province.”¹⁰⁸ At least on occasion Scott got directly involved in the relations of individual families.¹⁰⁹ Long before this, however, agents were required to make a list of all those who lived with more than one wife.¹¹⁰ During annuity payments, agents were told that they should attempt to discourage polygamy “in every legitimate manner.”¹¹¹ Annuity payments, interest money, and “any participation in the real property of the band” could be withheld from men who separated from their families, women who separated from their family and then lived “immorally with another man,” and men or women who had children out of wedlock.¹¹² Those who did not adhere to the Anglo-Canadian conception of family could also have the provision of foodstuffs restricted¹¹³ or be discharged from a government job.¹¹⁴ In the British Columbia interior, DIA Inspector Cummiskey reported “I attacked the evil of a number of [I]ndians who had put away their married wives and were living with other women and some living together without being married. I impressed on the Chief and his Council that I did not want immorality tolerated on the Reserve.”¹¹⁵ In the Treaty 7 area, when a man left his reserve with a woman who was not his wife, the agent could request that he be returned.¹¹⁶

Reluctance to adhere to Anglo-Canadian conceptions of morality was blamed not on resistance to this aspect of the colonial edifice, but on the difficulty of impressing on “the Indian mind” the significance of distinctions between marriages recognized by the church and state and those that were not.¹¹⁷ Yet marriages in the “custom of the tribe” were also recognized as valid; DSGIA Scott wrote that “there seems to be more or less confusion or uncertainty in the minds of officials and Agents of the Department with regard to the law as to the recognition of Indian marriages and Indian divorces.”¹¹⁸ Clearly then, there was considerable confusion regarding the legal position and policy directives concerning cohabitation on the part of those whose responsibility it was to ensure that these were followed.¹¹⁹

What was less muddled in the minds of those enjoined to enforce the newcomers’ notions of morality was the inherent inferiority of Indigenous values in this regard. As Kamloops Agent J.W. McKay reasoned: “I beg to submit that Indians are in their nature, in consequence of their training, habits and surroundings far less virtues [sic] than the average whites. Their morality should not therefore be judged of by the standards of the white people.”

McKay went on to argue that the “Indian woman, although...inclined to be worse in her morals, is naturally modest” and argued that the “the provisions of the Vagrant Act [should be] stringently applied” to keep women out of towns and cities.¹²⁰

In both regions and in all spheres, the actions of women were placed under particularly close scrutiny in regard to restrictions on their movement. In 1901, Inspector Wadsworth reported that new agent to the Siksika J.A. Markle’s “influence will reach to their domestic hearths: he interests himself in what they shall eat and how to cook their food and a liberal use of soap and water, apparently trivial matters but a great lever in leading to civilized habits, for the bad habits of the women are more difficult to overcome than those of the men, because they are lazy and prefer to lie about and gossip to keeping their children and houses clean and properly cooking the meals for their family.”¹²¹ The mission to impose patriarchal relations and the private/public dichotomy operative in non-Indigenous Canadian society was unmistakable. As Pamela White has argued, “[t]he objective of the policy was to train Indian women to behave in a domestic economy in a manner similar to the white European women who were settling nearby the reserves.”¹²² Women were to be reformed to accept the position that they should perform solely reproductive labour.

The advance Anglo-Canadian conception of morality was, in part, facilitated by Indigenous political structures that were themselves being co-opted and perverted. As J.A.J. McKenna, who served in a number of capacities with the DIA noted, “where he deems the Indians sufficiently advanced to carry it out” the Governor General could ratify the capacity of DIA structured band councils to make and enforce regulations in areas intended to facilitate “civilization.”¹²³ In British Columbia, regulations designed specifically for interior peoples were conceived either to restrict women’s productive activity or to control their sexuality. On at least three occasions such band regulations were approved, at least tacitly, by interior Indigenous groups.

In 1879, Reserve Commissioner G.M. Sproat had regulations passed that included a clause that “women are not to work so much in the fields as has been the case hitherto, when the men were doing nothing. The women are to look more after the houses.”¹²⁴ Several years later Kamloops-Okanagan Agent J.W. McKay had rules passed that he claimed were “the result of the Indians’ desire to maintain and improve morals of their women.”¹²⁵ Later still, Kamloops Agent J.F. Smith, also concerned with morality, had rules ratified designed to alleviate “intemperance and profligacy” and which also made it

an offence to live on a reserve in the agency “as man and wife without being legally married.”¹²⁶

Some, at least, saw the hypocrisy evident in the level of surveillance trained on First Nations people in this regard. Edward Blake, in reference to the 1884 *Indian Advancement Act*, asked “why should not this be extended to whites... why should we be more moral with our Indian friends than with ourselves?”¹²⁷ Similarly Oblate missionary Jean-Louis Levern wrote that the “corruption of the whites, together with the thoughts of the pitiful and devilish activities in many of our cities of America, Canada, and France, when compared to the customs of our natives” will ensure that the latter is treated more tolerably in the afterlife than the former.¹²⁸ Nonetheless Indigenous women had to demonstrate their adherence to Anglo-Canadian notions of morality to receive an inheritance¹²⁹ or obtain the pensions of their soldier husbands.¹³⁰

Since it was determined that “there is perhaps no single feature from which more can be gathered relative to the progress made by Indians in their advance toward civilization than the character of their dwellings” this part of domestic life, and women’s responsibility therein, was especially singled out for observation, measurement, and judgment.¹³¹ While it was believed that “fixity of abode is the first essential step towards civilization” it was recognized at the same time that advantages of “superior cleanliness secured by more or less frequent change of site...[were] obvious.”¹³² Since allowing the maintenance of an economy based on seasonal rounds of varied activities would have been absolutely counterproductive to virtually all objectives and strategies of the DIA, sanitation was added to residential morality issues and problematized.

As discussed above, the bounded spaces created by treaties, Indian agencies, and reserves were culturally constituted. Similarly, the interior space inhabited by Indigenous people was constructed within Anglo-Canadian precepts. As DSGIA James Smart confirmed in 1899, “[t]here is perhaps no single feature from which more can be gathered relative to the progress made by Indians in their advance towards civilization than from the character of their dwellings.”¹³³ Of special interest was the “partitioning of inside of houses [which] is essential for morality.”¹³⁴ Some DIA employees were quite concerned with sleeping arrangements, as Sarcee Agent Lucas complained of Inspector McGibbon, “he makes a great fuss about the Indians sleeping on the floor [and] says they must have bedsteads and sleep on them.”¹³⁵ The conformity of reserve dwellings with those in neighbouring White communities was to be accomplished, where possible, with the earnings of reserve residents or from the proceeds from the sale of reserve lands.¹³⁶

Unsanitary conditions in their homes were attributed to the intransigence or indolence of Indigenous women.¹³⁷ Commissioner Reed was clearly interested in the smallest details when he proclaimed that “greater pains in some quarters must be bestowed upon inculcating thoroughness in the performance of domestic duties, such as the sweeping out of corners and under the beds, as well as the centre of rooms, the keeping clean of dishes and the practicing of habits of cleanliness and tidiness.”¹³⁸ By 1896, at least one Treaty 7 agent was able to report on the success of the department’s objectives.

It is quite noticeable that the Indian women are, from year to year advancing in cleanliness, their houses now presenting a far more comfortable appearance than in former years. Nearly all houses consist of two rooms, bed-room and kitchen, and are furnished with stoves, bedsteads, tables, chairs and cupboards.¹³⁹

To facilitate harmony with Anglo-Canadian precepts of appropriate gender divisions of labour within the family, male employees of the DIA were expected to inspect the level of cleanliness but, when at times instruction on this “women’s work” was provided, it more often fell to their wives.¹⁴⁰ When employees’ wives received payment for their instruction they were expected, like all regular employees, to identify their own efforts and to carefully observe those under their tutelage. Reed told agents to “instruct all the Farmer’s wives who are drawing salaries as Instructresses” to submit a monthly report identifying the names of the Indigenous women they are instructing, the work performed, their progress, and how and where the instruction is given.¹⁴¹

The panoptic machinery employed by the DIA was maintained through observation at every level of its hierarchy. Like the surveillance of Indigenous people, the disciplinary observations of those senior in the hierarchy were recorded in considerable detail. The primary method maintained by the administrative centre to judge the work of its agents was, unremarkably, through its various written reports. Agents were expected to keep and submit monthly a travel diary, daily journal, general report, expense report, and schools reports. Each year they were to prepare a tabular statement of “agricultural and industrial statistics.” They were to keep a record of all correspondence, cheques, and vouchers and to submit all letters to Ottawa, one subject per letter, in the proper form and only on stationery sanctioned previously by the DIA.¹⁴² Tardiness in the submission of the requisite reports

was viewed as “an act of insubordination” and a “grave dereliction of duty”¹⁴³ and could in some instances result in the withholding of salary.¹⁴⁴ Through written reports, errors in accounting could be spotted¹⁴⁵ and unjustifiable generosity curbed.¹⁴⁶

While the department took all reports, vouchers, and statements seriously, the agent’s annual reports were the most significant of all textual material that he submitted. It was within these reports that the agent provided the statistical data that was compiled in Ottawa into its, in some years, several hundred page tabular statements that were included in its published *Annual Reports*. The quantity and detail of data displayed in the tables peaked during the twentieth century before World War I, but in all years they graphically, and publicly, display the results of surveillance. The “tabular statements” measured and compared by agency, and in some years for some locations, by individual, everything considered significant by the DIA: fourteen types of grains, roots, and fodder planted and harvested; the quantity of seventeen distinct types of livestock and poultry kept; eighteen varieties of agricultural instruments and vehicles; nineteen classes of buildings and the sources and values of income along with all other data related to agricultural operations.

Not only did the tables allow the DIA to display the apparent progress of its “wards” but it permitted it and other interested observers to easily compare one group to another. Additionally, the presentation of the data in tabular form projected an air of scientific objectivity that furthered the image of the DIA’s reformatory project as itself rational, well-informed, and incontestable. However, the DIA’s tabular statements were far from neutral representations of reality.¹⁴⁷ The construction and combination of categories did not necessarily have any meaning to the peoples they were supposed to describe, but the particular measurements and the judgments related to progress and success that emerged as the result of these tables informed the degree of remedial action believed necessary. These could only be based on the values of the colonizers.

The possibilities for errors in agents’ calculations of reserve production or their valuations of other sources of income were abundant. Especially in British Columbia where the agent might only rarely visit some reserves, the total reported quantities of fish removed from lakes and streams or potatoes and carrots pulled from the ground have to be suspect. Yet these kinds of errors were among those least likely to be noticed by the DIA. Rather than inaccuracies, it was inconsistencies and data that held the potential for uncomfortable questions, which were more likely to be detected.

In 1901, the department complained that “in certain agencies sums are set down as income which would be absolutely incommensurate to the support of the Indians of those agencies.” While it is possible that tabular reports were more accurate after this admonition, as has been argued elsewhere, it is just as likely that agents began, without necessarily having any supporting evidence, to estimate income data upwards in order to meet the demands of their superiors that incomes be “at least, enough to support the number of people in the band.”¹⁴⁸

In 1902, British Columbia’s Indian Superintendent A.W. Vowell reported that “as usual, in nearly every instance” the statistical statements “were more or less inaccurate.” The next year, however, Vowell was pleased to report that these statements “in accordance with the desire of the department, were received in good time and were as nearly as possible in the required form.”¹⁴⁹ While this miraculous turn-around is possible, the issue seems not to have been one of accuracy so much as one of balancing the books and maintaining the appearance of precision.

In southern Alberta, a higher level of surveillance meant that the data should have been more accurate, but problems with regard to inconsistencies were nonetheless common there as well. In order to help the DIA tie up loose ends, the agent to the Nakoda was asked to account for the origin of the potatoes planted on the reserve in the spring.¹⁵⁰ Siksika Agent J.H. Gooderham seems not to have understood the importance that the DIA placed on consistency and was chastised for altering the categories created by the department and for not explaining what happened to four saw mills that appeared on the annual report he submitted the previous year.¹⁵¹ The same year the DIA found it necessary to inform agents that the column “total value of real and personal property” should indeed be the aggregate of those items.¹⁵²

Where inconsistencies in the reports, or factors pointing to a failure of DIA supervision, could not be removed, they had to be explained, even if only by deflecting blame to someone else. For example, it was argued that a decrease in population in British Columbia in 1897 was “in some cases... entirely owing to inaccuracies in previous census returns. This must certainly be the case, as the year shows an advance in improved sanitary measures, and in the Indians’ mode of living.”¹⁵³ Certainly, the department wanted to avoid illustrating that these “advances” were unsuccessful, even if it meant purposely manipulating the data.¹⁵⁴

Agents were instructed in the form that their reports and statements should take, that the various columns should balance, and not to change the

headings.¹⁵⁵ There was, however, little advice regarding how they were supposed to accomplish a detailed compilation of all production, construction, goods owned, each dollar earned from all sources in addition to personal attributes, levels of education, and religious sentiment of all reserve residents under their jurisdiction. Certainly this micro-measurement would have been somewhat easier in Treaty 7 where the agent normally lived on the reserve and had assistance from other employees. Additionally, annuity payment time and ration distribution days provided opportunities for census taking and list-making of various sorts that were unknown in British Columbia. But even there the task could be hopeless. In 1907, for example, Agent Fleetham reported the total income of the Nakoda “from all sources amounted to \$26,016.96 besides amounts earned in southern Alberta during the year which it is impossible to ascertain.”¹⁵⁶

Needless to say, preparation of their annual reports caused considerable consternation to employees. As an agent from the Williams Lake Agency in British Columbia complained “I am at this present moment nearly on the verge of lunacy. Annual reports - wh[ich] should be in today (but wh[ich] wont) and a table of statistics (wh[ich] I can not give) to accompany the same.”¹⁵⁷ Never the sensitive diplomat, Inspector Wadsworth stated of the Tsuu T’ina, “I know of no better way to count these Indians than to drive them into a carral [sic], and allow them to come out by families, then taking their names and classifying them, even this small band will not be counted without force being used.”¹⁵⁸

Clearly not all agents had the same levels of dedication, enthusiasm, or energy. Two long-serving agents at Kamloops, Archibald Irwin and John Freemont Smith, are illustrative of this point. Irwin was the last agent to administer the sprawling combined Kamloops-Okanagan Agency from 1897-1911. He was supporter of Laurier’s Liberals and a patronage appointee who seems to have had little interest in the detail of administration or record keeping. An “ex-Liberal” charged that a “more unpopular and disreputable appointment could not be made. It is well-known that Mr. Irwin has no qualifications for the position.”¹⁵⁹ In a study devoted primarily to the administration of Irwin’s successor, J.F. Smith, Trefor Smith referred to Irwin as “incompetent,” and claimed that the agency suffered from his neglect.¹⁶⁰ Secwepemc chiefs accused Irwin of never coming to their reserves, despite his promises, and of being “good for whiteman, very bad for Indian.”¹⁶¹ At one locale at least, Irwin was accused of visiting the reserve only once in the fifteen years he was agent.¹⁶² Settlers complained that Irwin was “more interested in

driving around with the Liberal candidate than in attending to his business as Indian agent.”¹⁶³ DIA Inspector K.C. McDonald “found Kamloops Office in a very unsatisfactory condition. There being no system of keeping accounts of transactions on behalf of the various Bands, and as a result it has been very difficult to get definite information with respect to the Agency.”¹⁶⁴

At first glance it seems remarkable that Irwin was not dismissed long before February 1911.¹⁶⁵ It is clear that the surveillance network was functioning well, but that Irwin could remain in office for more than a decade before any “incompetence” would be seriously challenged by his superiors is perhaps an indication that his technical job performance was not the fundamental concern of the DIA. While Irwin’s lack of administrative skill, or inclination, was offered as the reason for his dismissal, it was the widespread vocalization of grievances by Secwepemc and Okanagan leaders that shook the liberal humanitarian facade of the DIA. Irwin’s dismissal may well have had more to do with his inability to calm the concerns of the First Nations in his area than his other failings. As Inspector Ramsden reported there is “[I]ittle wonder there were complaints and unrest among the Indians here. I find the Indians have implicit confidence in the Government and it is only when after repeated complaints have been ignored, or their interests neglected that they become dissatisfied and troublesome.”¹⁶⁶ It seems indeed that everything was “all right if they are quiet” and that “the only good Indian is a sleeping Indian” since this would most inexpensively facilitate Anglo-Canadian control of Indigenous lands and resources. Archibald Irwin was not able to keep interior groups subdued in the face of the growing assault on their territories and on their political, cultural, social, and economic structures.

Even after Irwin’s dismissal, however, rather than responding to Indigenous concerns, the DIA sought what has been referred to as an “administrative solution” to the growing dissent of Indigenous peoples.¹⁶⁷ Secwepemc and Okanagan affronts to what were seen as inherent truths and the inevitable progressiveness of liberal capitalism went beyond the realm of what was considered possible to dispute and were therefore treated as irrational. Irrespective of Irwin’s level of competence, he was, at least in part, a scapegoat sacrificed to maintain the appearance of the success of DIA surveillance and the quietude it was designed to deliver.

Irwin’s successor, in the then much smaller detached Kamloops Agency, was a very different man. J.F. Smith too, at least in part, owed his appointment to his political affiliation, but by most accounts was a conscientious and energetic agent. Smith was a Black shoemaker-farmer-pro prospector who

was born in Fredricksted, St. Croix and educated in Denmark, Sweden, and at a Jesuit college in Liverpool.¹⁶⁸ He was highly involved in the Kamloops Central Conservative Association, active in the Moral Reform Association and the Children's Aid Society, and taught shoe-making at the Kamloops Indian Residential School.¹⁶⁹ Motivated by his convictions as a practicing Catholic and active moral reformer, Smith was more likely to energetically support the larger reform projects of the church and state.

Where Irwin's ineffectiveness in keeping Indigenous complaints from the public eye eventually caused his dismissal, it was Smith's skin colour that caused some anxiety in settler society. He had an apparently unwavering faith in dominant political and economic ideologies of his day and chose to immerse himself in those structures, not often to challenge them.

There is little doubt that Smith saw himself more closely aligned to White settlers than Indigenous people in the Kamloops area. Writer and archivist Mary Balf claimed that he referred to himself as "the first white man to explore the North Thompson—if by white you mean non-Indian."¹⁷⁰ Not everyone could, however, close their eyes to Smith's skin colour. When the commander of the local militia at Salmon Arm wanted to alienate a portion of the Sexqeltqi'n (Adams Lake) reserve on the shores of Shuswap Lake for a rifle range, he wrote:

I do not think that if it could be avoided, that nigger Smith be employed [to arrange a lease] as the officers of my regiment consider that white men should fill these official billets and decline to meet anything in the way of colour. We have none of any personal objection to Smith only he is in a position which makes intercourse with whites often necessary and when national defence is under consideration we would confer with men of our own race if possible.¹⁷¹

In 1917, J.G. Turriff complained in the House of Commons that "there has never been any very great good feeling between our Indians and our coloured people in Canada." The appointment of Smith, "a darkey," had resulted in "a great deal of dissatisfaction." Turriff then tried to defame Smith by claiming he was illiterate and had to employ his daughter to write his correspondence.¹⁷² Ten years later, W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, reported to a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons that Smith had been "[a] very good agent; a very

respectable man,” but there was “not the slightest doubt” that the Indigenous people in the Kamloops Agency preferred a “whiteman” as their agent.¹⁷³ Ditchburn provided no evidence for this assertion.

When Smith suggested the Kamloops band lease land to a Chinese expatriate, as opposed to alienating it for the settlement of White soldiers, H.T. Dennison, an adversary of Smith’s on the Kamloops Board of Trade wrote to his M.P.: “It would be a shame if this negro Agent is allowed to have Chinamen mixing with these Indians.”¹⁷⁴ There were those who resented Smith’s modest attainment of success in a world reserved for Whites even though he seems to have behaved with the decorum considered appropriate to one in his relatively comfortable economic position. Together he and Irwin occupied the post of agent in this region for a quarter century.



John Freemont Smith, shown here with his family, was by all accounts a responsible and sympathetic Indian Agent but was disparaged by some in settler society. (*Kamloops Museum and Archives/10008*).

The turnover of DIA employees in the Treaty 7 region was considerably higher than in the Kamloops and Okanagan agencies, but there was no single cause. Between May 1897 and January 1898, for example, eight employees including two agents left the DIA: five resigned, one was dismissed for “irregularities and maladministration,” one was dismissed for “incompetency” and one was let go for “political partisanship.”¹⁷⁵ Even those who left

the department of their own accord had a variety of reasons. Peigan Agent Springett, was at least honest when he recognized that “I cannot do my duty to the Department and at the same time maintain friendly relations with neighbouring Settlers.”¹⁷⁶ He chose to resign, in part at least, because he recognized the contradiction between doing what was in the best interest of the government’s wards and in its primary objective of opening their territories to non-Indigenous settlement.

In the Treaty 7 region an employee’s incompetence, indiscretion, or inability to subdue resistance was far more readily apparent within the far tighter weave of DIA surveillance. In southern Alberta, agents, because of treaty and other obligations, had far more responsibilities, but could also be removed for far less indiscretion than that demonstrated for nearly fourteen years by Archibald Irwin.¹⁷⁷ Even in Treaty 7 though, agents could still cause considerable damage in some circumstances.

In 1896, Tsuu T’ina agent S.B. Lucas was investigated for financial irregularities. As Commissioner A.E. Forget reported, “the fact, as confessed by the Agent that no notes of any kind had been kept of the various transactions made by him on behalf of the Indians, although they amounted in the aggregate to over a thousand dollars during the last two years, was so unbusiness-like as to be open to grave suspicion.”¹⁷⁸ Lucas had, more than six years earlier, come into conflict with Methodist missionaries at Hobbema and was repeatedly warned about public drunkenness, not because this might interfere with his ability to perform his duties, but because the “odor upon the breath, of liquor, would at once attract the attention of an Indian, make him think it is less of an offence than it has been represented.”¹⁷⁹ Even though Dewdney had “great sympathy” for him and was “anxious to assist him out of his difficulties...but there is a limit, when matter is laid before parliament, [he] may have to dispense with services of Mr. Lucas.”¹⁸⁰ Lucas retained his position, though, and was transferred to the Tsuu T’ina reserve in 1891. He held this post until financial irregularities surfaced there as well, which prompted his retirement in 1897.

Ultimately, then, in both regions, agents were responsible for all details related to the reserves and their residents, both Indigenous and not, in their region. This formidable surveillance project was to be accomplished with parsimony while at the same time without inciting overt resistance. Failure to achieve either objective might embarrass the DIA or federal politicians, cause increased public scrutiny, and eventually bring DIA objectives and policy into question. This was fatal to the career of the employee held responsible.

With all of the potential pitfalls, one might wonder why anyone would choose such an occupation. Even before the wage reductions that accompanied the cut-backs of 1896, the wages paid to Indian agents were not exorbitant. In Treaty 7, Agent Pocklington complained that he could not afford to get married on his salary,¹⁸¹ while at Kamloops, it was reported that “it is very hard to get an Indian Agent appointed here on account of not being able to get any person to accept it at the salary offered by the Department.”¹⁸² Still, local political associations thought it advantageous to put forward particular individuals,¹⁸³ even if once hired, employees were warned that “endeavouring to bring political influence to bear upon the Minister” in seeking promotion would “probably result in serious consequences to the offender.”¹⁸⁴

Like political parties who wanted individuals in public service who would in turn support their electoral aspirations, the churches recommended individuals who would promote their sectarian interests.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, the people most affected by the disposition of a particular agent also wanted some say in his selection. The perspective of Indigenous people, however, seems not to have had any effect in the employment of any agent. When Secwepemc chief Bazile from St’uxwtews or the Bonaparte band stated in 1910 that “[w]e do not want a British Columbia white man as our Agent. All our Indians say the same thing,” it seems unlikely he anticipated the appointment of a British Columbia Black man.¹⁸⁶ In the 1930s, Secwepemc chiefs reported that J.F. Smith “was in most ways a good agent,” but complained that they had not had a similarly competent agent since and that they still had no input in their selection.

[W]e selected a man who is well known to us, speaks our tongue and writes our writing, he is an honourable and trustworthy man of education, his name was forwarded to Ottawa, we were not granted the privilege of selection and so our troubles continue under an Agent who knows not our ways, speaks not our tongue and cares less.¹⁸⁷

On the Piikani reserve, the 1893 reductions of foodstuffs led to an incident in which reserve residents broke into the ration house to secure additional food. When farm instructor Henry Nash tried to interrupt their mission he was wounded in several places.¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless when Agent Pocklington was transferred out of the agency later in the year, Nash was recommended to fill the position even though it was recognized that there “might possibly, in the

opinion of the Superintendent General, be an objection [from the Piikani] to his being placed in the position of Agent.”¹⁸⁹ It seems to have been, in fact, Nash’s willingness to enforce DIA policy in regard to the reduction of rations, despite Piikani objections, that delighted the DIA in the first place. Reed confirmed that he had “every confidence that before long Mr. Nash will make himself popular among his Indians, and do much to advance that policy which so successful elsewhere, we have been endeavoring to apply to the Indians of Treaty 7.”¹⁹⁰ It appears that Indigenous people in both regions had good reason to ask as St’uxwtews (Bonaparte) chief Bazile did in 1909: “What is the Agent for, does he stand for the white people or the Indians?”¹⁹¹

DIA Surveillance, Indigenous Employment, and Cooperation

Among the department’s permanent employees, agents, farm instructors, issuers, stockmen, and others deployed to reserves were on the bottom rungs of the DIA’s hierarchy. Over time, however, Indigenous people themselves filled a variety of surveillance positions below these in the power structure. As with their engagement by the police discussed above, the DIA employed Indigenous people to extend its web of surveillance, to reduce the costs associated with non-Indigenous employment, and to encourage the further acceptance of Anglo-Canadian structures and values by the employees themselves. Indigenous workers served in a number of capacities from servants, mail carriers, interpreters, scouts and detectives to assistants to stockmen, farmers and issuers.

More significant than all of these to the success of the DIA’s project and to the future survival of First Nation communities was the imposition of alien political structures and leaders chosen by methods unknown and untested by those directly affected. With the degradation and perversion of Indigenous political systems that accompanied DIA surveillance, leaders more supportive of DIA policies, or at least less likely to resist, were imposed on First Nation communities.¹⁹² It is here where DIA surveillance most clearly matches the similar procedures in other disciplinary situations, discussed in Chapter One, where “a synaptic regime of power” is exercised “*within* the social body, rather than *from above* it.”¹⁹³

As early as 1858, the Aborigines Protection Society (APS) recommended that “[t]o accomplish the difficult but necessary task of civilizing the Indians...it would seem indispensable to employ in various departments of Government a large proportion of well-selected men, more or less of Indian blood...who might...exert a greater moral influence over their race than

we could possibly do.”¹⁹⁴ While the DIA did not take up this advice to the extent suggested by the APS, department involvement in selecting leaders for Indigenous communities was far more effective, insidious, and served as a constant fracture in the ability of these communities to organize.

In constructing his 1879 regulations, discussed above, G.M. Sproat noted that “the Head Chief will be practically a sub-agent.” The work of councilors, he said, “whose presumed acquaintance with the ‘Queen’s mind’ and knowledge of the white men’s ways and laws would connect their efforts agreeably with those of the Government.”¹⁹⁵ Hayter Reed’s recommendations of 1885 that ushered in the pass system included a proposal that the “tribal system...so far as is compatible with the Treaty” be abolished. In the case of “rebel tribes,” who Reed argued broke their treaties, the positions of chiefs and councilors should be eliminated altogether so that “our instructors & employees will not then be hampered by Indian consultations & interferences but will administer direct orders & instructions to individuals.” Dewdney, Vankoughnet, and Macdonald all agreed with Reed’s suggestions though Macdonald was clearly concerned with quietude when he cautioned “this must be done carefully so that the chiefs may not be able to rouse a hostile feeling among their Indians.”¹⁹⁶ In the end, the department seems to have recognized that a continuation of a form of the “tribal system” where chiefs and councilors had to be approved by the DIA served both to advance the government’s agenda as Sproat suggested and by giving the appearance of self-government would tend to reduce the possibility of resistance.

While rule of Indigenous peoples was rather more direct in Canada than elsewhere in the former British empire, the need to recruit local leaders sympathetic to imperial goals was recognized much more generally. As Frederick Cooper states, “[t]he only way to administer the large spaces and dispersed populations of Africa was to co-opt local elites into doing the dirty work. ‘[I]ndirect rule’ was a fact in Africa—as it had been in many other empires—long before it was a doctrine.”¹⁹⁷ Kaniienkehaka (Mohawk) scholar Taiaiake Alfred argues that even today it is rare for “generous men and women who hold fast to the traditional way...to obtain positions of authority or influence within the current colonial structure.” For Alfred, “Native governments must be made legitimate within their communities. The only way to accomplish this is by rejecting electoral politics and restructuring Native governments to accommodate traditional decision-making, consultation, and dispute resolution processes.”¹⁹⁸ Other scholars and Indigenous leaders too have illustrated the disruptive experience of introduced political structures and

the unsuccessfulness of imposed electoral systems.¹⁹⁹ In western Canada, and especially in British Columbia, the elective structure was imposed gradually and existed in parallel with other structures and systems, some of which pre-existed the arrival of the DIA. While the department's official reason for this somewhat restrained approach was that western peoples were not advanced enough for electoral politics, it was also concerned about what it perceived as the attendant politicization that the imposition of such a system might create.²⁰⁰ The department was careful too about how it allowed its form of democracy to develop and who it permitted to fill the elected positions.

When Black Plume was elected Piikani Chief in 1901 he, like all those whom the DIA permitted to ascend to that position, signed a declaration that he would "report all infractions of the laws and regulations at the earliest opportunity to the Indian Agent over me; and that I will strive to advance the interests of all the Indians of my band morally and financially, both by precept and example..."²⁰¹ There can be no doubt, then, that this conception of "chief" in its evocation by the DIA was part of its surveillance network. Chiefs were responsible to the "Indian Agent over" them in the same way that the agent was responsible to an inspector. All could be removed from their positions if they did not live up to the department's expectations.

Even before they ever got to the point of signing declarations, though, "elected" chiefs had to be endorsed by their agent or some higher-level official, and approved by the Governor General in Council. In preparation for his visit to the Kainai in 1900, for example, David Laird asked for and received permission to appoint a successor to the recently deceased Red Crow "providing the Indians' nominee be acceptable."²⁰² Crop Eared Wolf was selected unanimously and signed the usual declaration, but by 1907 had fallen out of the DIA's favour when he led the opposition to a surrender of reserve land promoted by Inspector Markle.²⁰³ Markle wanted the department at Ottawa to write to Crop Eared Wolf and Thunder Chief, another opponent of the surrender, and inform them that if they "continue in this line of action" they will be removed from office and replaced with leaders "who would more quickly take up advanced ideas and be a help to the Department instead of a hindrance."²⁰⁴ While the department found the course advocated by Markle, the removal of Crop Ear Wolf, "simply because he was unfavorable to a surrender an objectionable practice," it nevertheless recommended that the agent ascertain whether the chief was leading "an intemperate life" apparently in the hope of finding a less disagreeable grounds for his removal.²⁰⁵ The RNWMP was later approached to help prove a charge of intemperance

against Crop Eared Wolf, but Superintendent Primrose objected that “if the Indian Dept., wish to do any work of this nature, I think they had better do it themselves...Speaking of Crop Eared Wolf as I know him I should be very sorry to see him deposed from his office.”²⁰⁶

With the deaths of minor chiefs Old Moon and Many Dust on the same reserve in 1906, Laird recommended that Agent Wilson be given permission “to appoint a progressive man for the position for an indefinite term.”²⁰⁷ Similarly when recommending Left Hand to lead Kainai “Band H” Laird stated that Agent Wilson reported that Left Hand “had been a leader of the progressive party on the Reserve and one of the staunchest supporters of the Department for 12 or 15 years.”²⁰⁸ A similar state of affairs existed in the interior of British Columbia. As in Treaty 7, in order to be appointed by the DIA, “elected” chiefs had to be declared “progressive.”²⁰⁹ On the other hand, when an agent found that a chief’s “usefulness” was gone, he could be removed from office.²¹⁰ Similarly, if an elected chief opposed DIA proposals to alienate reserve land for non-Indigenous settlement, he could easily be deposed. In November 1908, a document “surrendering” the Long Lake reserve to the DIA was signed by seventeen adult male members of the Okanagan Band. Recently deposed Chief Pierre Michel wrote to agent Irwin complaining about the sale. When Irwin did not respond, Michel wrote to the DSGIA in Ottawa complaining that

[w]hen Mr. Irvin, [sic] the Agent demanded of me if I was going to sell that land or not I informed him that I could not sell it myself as most of the preple [sic] was against the selling of that land. Mr. Irvin, [sic] the Agent then told me that I could no longer be Chief, that Isaac Harris would be Chief in my place.²¹¹

Harris was replaced, but a partner in the questionable land deal, T.J. Cumiskey, was appointed inspector by the DIA, who wasted little time in bypassing new Okanagan Agent J.R. Brown, deposing Chief Logan, dissolving the band council, and threatening to jail any who objected.²¹² Even though the department informed Cumiskey that his actions were “of no legal effect,” Chief Logan was, within two weeks, deposed for intemperance.²¹³ While there was resistance to this act from the Okanagan and their advocate, and former NWM Policeman, J.H. Christie, Cumiskey reported that “I cannot allow squaw men immoral halfbreeds or other evil inclined whitemen to dictate a policy to me.”²¹⁴

While chiefs and councilors were elected, then, this apparent extension of liberal democracy to First Nations people was little more than a chimera. The positions of elected chiefs and councilors, if not always the individuals who served in these capacities themselves, were without question part of the structure of colonialism and its network of disciplinary surveillance. This network, focused on Indigenous peoples, and more formidable and long lasting than any similar network in Canadian history, was successful in removing the original inhabitants from their lands and resources but, perhaps unremarkably, was unsuccessful in achieving the stated objectives of the DIA. Certainly the inherent contradictions in policy and the chasms between objectives stated and tactics employed mitigated against success. While the DIA regularly spoke of promoting self-sufficiency, it took nations of independent peoples and enmeshed them in a web of regulation, restriction, and incompetent, inadequate, and inappropriate “assistance.” As John McDougall, missionary to the Nakoda, who was employed by the DIA to help reduce reserve lands in British Columbia reported, Indigenous people

are without any part in the ordinary franchise of the other people who are now dwelling on the lands of their fathers; that the Indians are despotically made to conform to laws and regulations which they have no voice in creating and that thus they are under the beck and nod of an Indian agent or provincial magistrate or constable in matters concerning which the white man beside them is given a free hand. Right here the best and strongest and most industrious and progressive of these Indians are in despair [sic]. They find themselves robbed of their manhood. They are put on the level with the basest and lowest of their own people and they are placed far below the plane conceded to the basest and vilest and most degenerate of the white people. Such a condition these Indians cry out for deliverance from.²¹⁵

Through its surveillance network, the DIA created a body of knowledge about Indigenous people that served to justify its policies and the legislation its officers were charged to implement as illustrated in this chapter. The information that it presented to the public in its *Annual Reports* was intended to display a benevolent, just, and well-informed federal department that was unquestionably operating for the benefit of all. If read against the grain, though, the prodigious record left by departmental officials more clearly

demonstrates the department's efforts at indoctrinating Indigenous people with a foreign set of principles that frequently held little value for them.

As a residual effect of the treaty and the different circumstances east of the Rockies, the DIA's hierarchical structure was much more extensive in Treaty 7 than in the Kamloops and Okanagan regions. While the DIA's supervision in the British Columbia interior had dramatic impact, the significantly greater number of observers in southern Alberta ensured that day-to-day activity was subject to less scrutiny in the former than in the latter, at least between 1877 and 1927. While not to understate the situation in British Columbia, the demoralizing permit system, for example, did not and could not operate in the same way that it did east of the Rockies. At the same time, in the British Columbia interior, there was more opportunity for the department's field operatives to apply policy generously if they chose, but also for their incompetence or malicious behaviour to continue unaltered.

In both regions, the bulk of the department's energies was directed at reforming and reconfiguring all aspects of the personal and public lives of Indigenous people, families, and communities to better facilitate Anglo-Canadian settlement. But again, because of the tighter weave in the disciplinary surveillance network in southern Alberta this was more quickly and dramatically felt there. In both regions as well, there was limited or no consultation with Indigenous people that might have permitted the incorporation of their wishes or allowed their input into decisions that would affect the lives of their descendents for generations to come. In addition, there was an evident and purposeful manipulation of those few democratic structures established for Indigenous people and a co-option or attempted destruction of those egalitarian structures that pre-existed the arrival of DIA supervisors. All of this further illustrates of how exclusionary liberalism operated in western Canada.

The DIA followed a practice of hiring employees for their willingness to comply with the minutiae of its policy rather than any practical expertise and then of saddling them with a mass of duties that even energetic and capable men could not possibly execute completely. As a result, assistance to Indigenous people that might prove useful in adapting to changes wrought by non-Indigenous settlement in their territories was unlikely.

In the interior of British Columbia, Indigenous peoples incorporated farming into their economies without the burden of DIA assistance. While these economies were undoubtedly jeopardized by the growth of government interference, had unadulterated support been the impetus for the DIA

payroll in western Canada rather than disciplinary surveillance in the interest of the non-Indigenous settlers, there seems little reason why members of the First Nations of Treaty 7 could not have been equally successful as ranchers. Unfortunately the settlers' liberal capitalist framework significantly restricted any possibility of success for the duration of this period and beyond. At the same time, it ensured that the original residents of the Treaty 7 region provided employment and generated considerable wealth for others.

While there is no attempt here to present an explicitly counterfactual argument, there is little doubt that the surveillance network of the DIA operated counter to the economic, political, social, and other cultural interests of Indigenous people. It is difficult to know how the Treaty 7 nations would have responded to changing circumstances after 1877 had they not been interfered with by the DIA. Certainly if the massive amounts of money spent to maintain supervision and to reform Indianness had been turned instead to any less paternal and self-serving modes, it is doubtful that the results could have been much worse. As it was, by 1920, after over forty years of DIA "assistance" and the isolation of Indigenous people onto reserves that were progressively cut out from under them, W.M. Graham was forced to admit "I might as well be frank with you now and tell you that the Department work is going back, particularly in Alberta."²¹⁶

More than half a century later, a well-respected educational trust based in the United Kingdom referred to the DIA as "a huge and costly vested interest" that might "wittingly or unwittingly, obstruct the movement of power and resources to the Indians."²¹⁷ Even with the continuing and massive disciplinary apparatus at the disposal of the DIA, coupled with that of the churches and the coercive efforts of the police, Indigenous peoples in both southern Alberta and the interior of British Columbia, despite the array of forces concentrated to mitigate such an outcome, resisted and continued as distinct cultures and nations. Today they are, though, in a much worse economic, physical, and psychological position than they should be as they move to give form to their assertions of sovereignty. Further, the incessant drive to reduce the lands available to First Nations, and the restriction of people to and on this dwindling land base, continues to make the realization of independent governance that much more difficult. It did, though, facilitate both disciplinary surveillance and the advance of exclusionary liberalism. This restriction of the land base is a primary focus of the remainder of this study.

