

The West and Beyond●nd

The West Unbound: Social and Cultural Studies

SERIES EDITORS: ALVIN FINKEL AND SARAH CARTER

Writing on the western halves of Canada and the United States once focused on the alienation of the peoples of these regions from residents of the eastern regions. The mythology of a homogenized West fighting for a place in the sun blunted interest in the lives of ordinary people and the social struggles that pitted some groups in the West against others, usually the elite groups that claimed to speak for the whole region on the national stage. *The West Unbound* series challenges simplistic definitions of the West and its institutions. It focuses upon the ways in which various groups of Westerners—women, workers, Aboriginal peoples, farmers, and people of various ethnic origins, among others—tried to shape the institutions and attitudes of the region. This series draws on a variety of disciplines and is intended for both university audiences and lay audiences with an interest in the American and Canadian Wests.

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The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region

EDITED BY ALVIN FINKEL, SARAH CARTER, AND PETER FORTNA

The West and Beyond

New Perspectives
on an Imagined Region



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Alvin Finkel | Sarah Carter | Peter Fortna

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Introduction

ALVIN FINKEL, SARAH CARTER, AND PETER FORTNA

■ **The very first history conference** attended by co-editor of this book Sarah Carter, then a Master of Arts student at the University of Saskatchewan, was the 1977 ninth annual Western Canadian Studies conference held at the University of Calgary: “One Century Later: The Native Peoples of Western Canada since the ‘Making’ of the Treaties.”¹ Presenters included people from the Treaty Six and Seven nations, such as Harold Cardinal, Chief John Snow, Marie Smallface Marule, and Stan Cuthand. Arthur J. Ray gave a paper that has been used in courses and readers ever since: “Fur Trade History as an Aspect of Native History.” George F. Stanley—whose monumental 1935 study, *The Birth of Western Canada*, remained in 1977 the most sustained academic treatment of the Métis and First Nations—was also a presenter, shedding light on the neglected history of the Dakota in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. As Ian A.L. Getty and Donald B. Smith, editors of the volume of papers from the conference, commented in their introduction, the conference not only highlighted the work then being done but also pointed to the “topics that [cried] out for further study” such as the history of the implementation of the treaties and “Indian policy” of the twentieth century, drawing on documentary sources but also oral histories.²

A tremendous sense of energy and vitality infused the 1977 gathering, including important exchange and dialogue across disciplines and vocations among the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal delegates. The conference was also more accessible for graduate students studying in Western Canada than those held in the active conference regions such as Ontario. Yet when Carter's advisor, Ted Regehr, introduced her to David Bercuson, one of the Western Canadian specialists at the University of Calgary, Bercuson immediately asked how an MA student could possibly afford to attend a conference. (She was too embarrassed to stammer in reply that she had piggybacked on her parents' visit to Calgary and Banff, which happened to coincide.) Conference attendance was, and remains, expensive for graduate students, and a conference outside of the Prairie provinces would have been well beyond the means of most at the West's universities. Yet conference attendance is critical for graduate students. It would be difficult to exaggerate the impact this gathering of more than five hundred students, teachers, and the general public had on Carter, who was casting about for a thesis topic and knew virtually nothing about the history of the Aboriginal people of the West. The conference helped lead her to and shape the topics and approaches she pursued in her graduate work and beyond. Ten years later, as a newly minted PhD, Carter gave her first conference paper at a Western Canadian Studies conference held at the University of Saskatchewan. It was close to home (at that time Winnipeg) and manageable, as her one-year-old daughter could be left with family in Saskatoon.

These conferences ended in 1990, after a stretch when they were no longer annual and were no longer always held at the University of Calgary. The last one, held in Banff, was on the theme of women's history.³ Why they ended is not clear, but the suspects include conference burnout on the part of the Calgary organizers and collection editors, funding drought, fewer Western Canadian specialists hired to academic positions, Western Canadian specialists deserting the field for other areas of study, new Western Canadianists' unwillingness or inability to grab the baton, a changing political climate with less focus on region in favour of other identities, and a burgeoning of other academic networks with conferences on diverse areas of focus such as the fur trade, labour/working-class history, women's history, and Native Studies. Conferences were still being held in and about the West, but the Western Canadian Studies banner disappeared, even though British Columbia Studies and Atlantic Canadian Studies continued to flourish.⁴ A focus on provincial history in the years leading to the centennials of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 2005 drew attention away from the broader region. But the three interdisciplinary Prairie conferences—held at St. John's College at the University of Manitoba in 1998, 2001, and 2004—helped to revive interest in a broader regional and

interdisciplinary approach. Three collections of essays have resulted from these conferences.⁵ Important collections of essays on Western Canadian history that were not the product of conferences have also been published.⁶

The main goal of “The West and Beyond: Historians Past, Present and Future,” held at the University of Alberta, 19–21 June 2008, was to determine whether there was interest in reviving the Western Canadian Studies conferences that began in 1969 and ended in 1990. The first then-annual Western Canadian Studies Conference was launched at the University of Calgary in 1969, but its spiritual forebear was the 1967 Centennial Conference on the history of the Canadian West, held in Banff.⁷ At the Banff gathering, presenters included many distinguished scholars and writers of the time, such as W.L. Morton, (“A Century of Plain and Parkland”), L.G. Thomas (“Historiography to 1867—The Fur Trade Era”), J.C. Ewers (“Cultural Conflicts on the Prairie: Indian and White”), W.J. Eccles (“New France and the Western Frontier”), and W.O. Mitchell (“The Canadian West in Fiction”). The lieutenant governor of Alberta, historian Grant MacEwan, gave the keynote address at the banquet.⁸ Although papers from this conference were never brought together in a publication, many were published elsewhere and had long-lasting significance.

Described as the founder of the Western Canadian Studies conferences, David P. Gagan, at that time with the University of Calgary history department, explained in his preface to the volume of papers from the 1969 inaugural gathering that the specific objectives were to have “an informal, broadly interdisciplinary exchange of views on regional problems” and “to contribute, in a meaningful way, to western Canadian historiography.”⁹ Organizers wanted to involve and inform the community and have “more general appeal than scholarly deliberations usually enjoy.” Regional politics of the late 1960s—Western “alienation” arising from the neglect and interference of national governments—provided the catalyst. Gagan explained that the first annual meeting was timed to “take advantage of the undercurrent of interest in the Prairie region” evoked by recent events, including the federal-provincial constitutional conferences and the national debate on bilingualism and biculturalism, which created a “crisis of confidence in Confederation.” Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau was particularly disliked for his policies and his perceived indifference and indignities toward the West. In the summer of 1969, several hundred protesting farmers greeted Trudeau on the Regina stop of his Western tour, heckling his speech and holding placards that read “Flour Power” and “Hustle Grain Not Women.” The annual conference born that year was intended to “cast new light on the origins and nature of the Prairie regional identity which now, as has happened so frequently in the past, seems to be aggressively reasserting its presence.”¹⁰ Discontent and indignation with federal governments fueled the Western Ca-

nadian Studies conferences long after Trudeau's 1969 confrontation with Regina farmers. As David Bercuson wrote in his introduction to the proceedings of the fifth conference in 1973: "Without any significant political muscle and overshadowed by the confrontation of French and English, Western Canada has been ignored, patronized, wooed, and scolded but never satisfied."¹¹

The first two conferences focused on the Prairies, and the first two collections of papers were entitled *Prairie Perspectives*. Thereafter efforts were made to include a broader region, including British Columbia, the North, and Western Ontario (and *Prairie Perspectives* became *Western Perspectives*). The conferences were always interdisciplinary, including presenters from political science, sociology, literature, geography, economics, fine art, education, and other fields although a heavy emphasis on history predominated. Both academic and popular historians, such as Hugh Dempsey and Grant MacEwan, presented papers. Speakers included participants in key events, such as Hon. Justice Emmett Hall, who helped forge Medicare, and Cree activist John Tootoosis (1983). There was generally a closing banquet with keynote speakers from the non-academic world, including Tommy Douglas (1979) and Roy Romanow (1983). Many of the conferences had broad and sweeping themes with the goal of deepening understanding of the West while challenging assumptions and stereotypes. David Bercuson explained in his introduction to the fifth conference that the goal was to demonstrate that the West was both ancient and modern. The region had a long history of "civilization" that began with its Native people and involved more than just the French and the British, as it was built by people of much more varied ethnicities. Nor was it a rural backwater that could be ignored. The region had been urbanized since the late nineteenth century, and its metropolitan centres were among the largest in Canada. Other conferences focused on more specialized themes: the fourth (1972) on "The Unknown Decade: The Twenties in Western Canada"; the "One Century Later" conference in 1977 mentioned above; the eleventh (1979) on the "Dirty Thirties in Prairie Canada"; the twelfth (1980) on "The New Provinces: Alberta and Saskatchewan," an event coinciding with the seventy-fifth anniversaries of those provinces; and the 1983 conference on "The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945."

Attendance waxed and waned due to many factors. While the 1977 "One Century Later" gathering had more than five hundred delegates, the conference the year before had only sixty-three formally registered though many more attended the free sessions.¹² The low attendance in 1976 was apparently due to declining financial support, as travel grants could no longer be offered. But it was reported at the business meeting that the University of Calgary would increase its support if other funding failed. This must have happened, as the conference was once again on solid ground the next year.

An important legacy of the conferences is the fourteen volumes of papers that were very quickly produced, edited, and given introductions, mainly by the University of Calgary historians.¹³ A historiographical analysis of these would be a worthwhile and interesting project. The topics were diverse but there was a heavy emphasis on political history and the agricultural settlement era. Women's history first emerged in the 1976 volume of the eighth conference, with Sheilagh S. Jameson's "Women in the Southern Alberta Ranch Community, 1881–1914." Women presenters were relatively few, but they gained momentum. Patricia Roy of the University of Victoria appears to have led the way with her paper at the 1972 gathering on "The Oriental 'Menace' in British Columbia." At the time of the 1984 conference, held at the University of Victoria, on "The Forgotten Majority: A Conference on Canadian Rural History," papers were given by Eliane Leslau Silverman, Nancy M. Sheehan, and Cecilia Danysk. Susan Trofimenkoff was the only woman to edit a volume of conference papers. These publications ended in 1993 with the volume edited by R.C. Macleod, *Swords and Ploughshares: War and Agriculture in Western Canada*. The volumes as a whole constitute a remarkable record of these gatherings. As Anthony Rasporich wrote in his introduction to *The Making of the Modern West* from the 1983 conference: "From their very inception a decade and a half ago, the Western Canadian Studies Conferences have made a considerable contribution to mapping the historical landscape of the *terra incognita* of the western interior of Canada.... When one thinks of the mindscape of the West before this enterprise began in 1968 [sic] and its strong self-consciousness today, it is to some degree a reflection on the willing efforts of western academics, writers and thinkers who have sown and reaped a bountiful crop."¹⁴

Organizers of the 2008 Western Canadian Studies meeting thought that it was time for a new crop of academics, writers, and thinkers to rise up, evaluate, and appraise the state of Western Canadian history, acknowledging and assessing the contributions of historians of the past and present while at the same time showcasing the research interests of the next generation. The meeting was meant to encourage a dialogue among generations of historians of the West and among practitioners of diverse approaches to the past. It was hoped that such a meeting would facilitate conversations across disciplinary and professional boundaries.

The field of Western Canadian history has expanded in multiple directions in the last twenty-five years. New histories of the West emphasize its diverse social landscape. Reflecting interdisciplinary approaches, these histories stress plural perspectives, inequality, relationships of power, human agency, and the environment. Recent histories have uncovered both the ancient and modern history of the region, moving beyond an emphasis on the settlement era. Themes

of memory and commemoration—how we have constructed our visions and myths of the West—have been explored by a new generation of scholars. Influenced by developments in the field nationally and internationally, recent histories of Western Canada draw on postmodern, cultural, feminist, environmental, and post-colonial approaches, methods, and theories. The conference organizers felt it was time to pause and take stock of this energetic and imaginative range of scholarly activity; as this collection attests, the field of Western Canadian history has stretched its reach in a number of different directions.

While developing the conference, the organizers felt it was important to include a wide variety of people and opinions with the goal of hosting a conference that reflected the interests and perspectives of those in the field. This engagement was initiated in the winter term of 2007, when more than one hundred scholars active in the field of Western Canadian history were asked about the possibility of reviving the Western Canadian Studies Conference series. They were also asked what the main purpose and objectives of such a meeting should be. This initial email was followed by a very lively gathering at the Saskatoon meeting of the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in June 2007. In both instances, tremendous support was expressed for the concept and the timely need for such a conference. The organizers learned about the areas of research the responders wished to see explored, and these were reflected in the meeting. Respondents also made known the distinct need to assess the historiographical development of the field. In addition, they urged the conference organizers to recognize a number of new fields in the scholarship, including the social and physical diversity of the West, memory and commemoration, environmental history, medical history, and the development of the modern, post-World War II West. As a result of our consultations, organizers decided not to define the West and not to limit the West to Prairie Canada, but rather to recognize multiple Wests and to include British Columbia, northern Ontario, Northern Canada, and the borderlands with the United States. These choices led to a wide range of presentations that attempted to define their “West” in a number of innovative and exciting ways; the editors are pleased that the collection reflects this variety.

The conference was designed to assess the work of historians past and present, and to showcase the work of a new generation of scholars. Our plenary session speakers—Adele Perry, Lyle Dick, and Gerald Friesen—addressed the overarching historiography of the West. Two of their papers have been collected for this publication, and all of their presentations are available as podcasts (<http://digiport.athabascau.ca/wcsc>). A number of specialized panels of established and emerging scholars were also initiated to address major historiographical themes and developments.¹⁵ These were an outstanding success, and

a number of their presentations have been collected as podcasts and as papers for this publication. Of particular note is the roundtable discussion “‘Settlement’—An Environmental History Perspective,” sponsored by the Network in Canadian History and Environment (NiCHE). The discussion, hosted by NiCHE and available as a podcast,¹⁶ provides a critical examination of the term *settlement* when considering the populating of the West. NiCHE also hosted a number of the other conference presentations related to environmental history that offer an important window into the development of the field within a Western Canadian context. Other panels provided a rich and wide sampling of the depth and diversity of the new and exciting research, and many of these are available as podcasts on the Western Canadian Studies Conference website or as articles in this collection.¹⁷

The conference also provided an opportunity to evaluate the importance of Western universities in fostering the development of the field. The year 2008 marked the centennial of the University of Alberta, which has been an important centre for the teaching, mentoring, and writing of Western Canadian history. In the session of 1949–50, Lewis G. Thomas introduced a course on the history of Western Canada, which was for many years the only such course at any university in Canada. Generations of Alberta undergraduates learned of their own history through this course. Thomas was also an important mentor to many of the most distinguished scholars in the field, including the late John Foster, Sylvia Van Kirk, Frits Pannekoek, T.D. Regehr, David Breen, and others. The importance of Thomas’ scholarship and mentorship was recounted in a keynote presentation given by one of his most accomplished and respected students, R.C. Macleod. The presentation provided Macleod with an opportunity to recognize and assess Thomas’ achievements and the important role of the University of Alberta’s history department in shaping our understanding of the history of Western Canada. The presentation has been brought into the public realm as a podcast accessible on the Western Canadian Studies Conference website.¹⁸

The conference organizers also felt that the meeting should recognize more than the contributions made by academic historians. A number of sessions were therefore organized to consider the important role that public history has played in the development of the field, with a particular focus on the role of public historians, institutions, discourses, and writers. These sessions culminated with the performance of Catherine Cole, Maria Dunn, and Don Bouzek at the Royal Alberta Museum. Taking the closure of the Great West Garment Company as their subject, the performers were able to effectively demonstrate the power of a story in the hands of artists with a historical conscience. Together, these presentations offer an important perspective that, as Lyle Dick’s

article suggests, is too often forgotten in the academic discipline of history. In this vein, the editors are pleased that they are able to make such a large volume of the material produced at the conference public through the Athabasca University's Open Access model. As the digital landscape expands opportunities to disseminate information, it is important that scholars—privileged in their seats of authority—do all they can to make the information they produce as accessible as possible. In this way, they will demonstrate their relevance and continue to make important contributions to the public discourse. The conference organizers, contributors, and editors are excited that Athabasca University Press has provided them with this opportunity.

Finally, the editors hope that the collected material and published collection of papers will make an important contribution to scholarship within the region. They hope the forum will help to revitalize and expand the field and bring together a new generation of scholars—both actually and virtually—who can share and build on each other's work.

Our collection begins with three introductory essays that develop themes discussed in keynote addresses at the conference. Gerald Friesen's "Critical History in Western Canada, 1900–2000" outlines five broad stages of scholarly writing on the Canadian West. Beginning with a concentration on the achievement of self-government before World War I, regional history shifted to an interwar focus on the West as a hinterland of Central Canada. After the war, Central Canadian influence in the region was treated more critically, and greater emphasis was placed on alleged regional particularities. A fourth stage, beginning in 1968, rejected much earlier writing as too concerned with regional elites and turned the spotlight to social history, placing women, Aboriginals, workers, and immigrants at the forefront. A fifth stage, beginning about 1989, treated the notion of regions as problematic and tended to locate both the social and political histories of Western Canada within global developments and to view them through the lens of postmodernist discourse.

Lyle Dick's essay, "Vernacular Currents in Western Canadian Historiography: The Passion and Prose of Katherine Hughes, F.G. Roe, and Roy Ito," argues that non-scholarly historians were providing some voice for non-elites in the period when scholarly historians narrowly focused on elites and their various nation-building and region-building agendas. Archivist Hughes' biography of Father Lacombe included the Aboriginal response to the nation-building plans of the Canadian elites. Farmer and worker Roe challenged "expert" claims that Aboriginal people had hunted the buffalo to near-extinction, while Ito's work on Japanese Canadians who served during two world wars gave direct voice to internees, furnishing a challenge to official scholarship that had justified the evacuation of the Japanese from their coastal homes in 1942.

Winona Wheeler's essay, "Cree Intellectual Traditions in History," explores the persistence of oral history traditions in defining Cree identity. Just as Dick demonstrates that non-academics assembled evidence that provided perspectives that challenged conservative, elitist social constructions espoused by early professional historians of Western Canada, Wheeler asserts the importance of history recognizing "other ways of knowing," including the Aboriginal oral methods. "Accuracy, precision and procedural protocols," she notes, rather than anecdote, characterize the work of the Elders responsible for transmission of the stories of the people.

Part 2 of *The West and Beyond* examines ways in which both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have attempted to portray the millennia-long history of Aboriginal people in the West and their interaction with non-Aboriginal people. Matt Dyce and James Opp study the gaze of the European newcomers on Aboriginal people. That gaze shifted over time, as their study of two early Edmonton professional photographers and their work in the Athabasca-Mackenzie River Basin suggests. Both Charles W. Mathers, the dean of Edmonton photographers, and his successor, Ernest Brown, were mainly interested in Natives only to the extent of their compatibility with the changing economic order represented by colonialism. Mathers initially photographed what he viewed as ethnographic portraits of traditional Aboriginal people, but later fastened on the development of the resource economy, portraying Aboriginal people as labourers along the river system whose work was helping to shape an emerging capitalist economy. Brown went further in subordinating the place of Aboriginal people within the territories that they had long inhabited, giving only circumscribed roles to Natives and the Hudson's Bay Company with which they had long traded. Northern river systems, so important to Mathers, largely vanished in favour of Euro-Canadian settlements, with the North reduced to a hinterland of Edmonton and with Aboriginal peoples pushed to the margins of the story of Euro-Canadian economic development that Brown extolled.

Though colonial-minded photographers constructed a new West in which Euro-Canadians dominated while Aboriginal peoples seemed to disappear, Aboriginal peoples in fact persisted. They attempted as best they could to maintain their cultures and underlying beliefs. This often led to conflicts with the colonialist authorities who claimed to govern them. Kathryn McKay traces such conflicts in the area of mental health in her article, "The Kaleidoscope of Madness: Perceptions of Insanity in British Columbia Aboriginal Populations, 1872–1950." McKay observes that both colonialism and psychiatry embody discourses that label groups and individuals as normal or abnormal. Examining patient files from the Department of Indian Affairs, she demonstrates the ways in which racial constructions were important in the "treatment" that

was offered to Aboriginal people. Cultural beliefs at the root of Aboriginal understandings, such as communication with spirits, were labelled signs of madness. The department's psychiatrists seemed as well to believe that the more Aboriginal blood an individual had, the less likely he or she was to respond to treatments other than long-term institutionalization. Individuals categorized as being mixed-race were more likely to be the subject of aggressive treatments than individuals categorized as fully Aboriginal.

The characterization of Aboriginal lives and Aboriginal spaces as marginal and dangerous continues to the present. Amber Dean reflects on such characterizations in "Space, Temporality, History: Encountering Hauntings in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside." Observing that the so-called Downtown Eastside was Coast Salish territory before the imposition of a colonial regime, she views it in its current form as the continuation of colonized territory. Within its boundaries, many prostitutes from various backgrounds, but with a significant over-representation of Aboriginal women, have gone "missing" and may be presumed to have been murdered. She challenges depictions of the area as a latter-day Western frontier and suggests that there is a clear historical line from colonization to the poverty of the area and the murder of women who have been marginalized, victims of both racial and gender stereotypes.

Finally, this section closes with a story of an Aboriginal woman who was named Calgary Stampede Queen in 1954. Susan Joudrey's "The Expectations of a Queen: Identity and Race Politics in the Calgary Stampede" traces the story of Evelyn Eagle Speaker, who won the Stampede beauty contest in 1954. Eagle Speaker had entered the contest in an effort to combat stereotypes of Native people as uneducated and unwilling to contribute to Canadian economic development. A high school graduate and experienced rancher, Eagle Speaker was embraced by the five Treaty 7 Southern Alberta Nations, who named her "Princess Wapiti" and sponsored her entry into the Stampede contest. While Eagle Speaker won, discussions in the media during and after the contest indicated how difficult it was for many non-Aboriginals to accept her self-depiction as both a proud Aboriginal and a cowgirl. Questions of whether this beauty queen should be attired in Native or cowgirl garb filled newspaper columns and letters to the editor for a considerable period.

If the place of First Nations in the discourse of region and nation has been controversial, so has the place of working people as opposed to the entrepreneurs and farmers that settlement literature has favoured. Part 3 examines "The Workers' West." Jeffery Taylor opens the section with "Capitalist Development, Forms of Labour, and Class Formation in Prairie Canada." Taylor portrays Prairie capitalist development as just one part of the larger development of capitalism in Europe and the colonies of European powers. While the capi-

talist mode of production co-existed with traditional kin-ordered First Nations economies during the fur trade period, the settlement period marginalized the latter and placed independent commodity production on the farms side by side with capitalist exploitation in the emerging industrial sectors.

Elizabeth Jameson furthers Taylor's analysis with a comparison of class and labour developments across the U.S.–Canada borders. She notes that workers' real lives, reflected in migrations, demonstrated the porousness of national and regional borders. Complex economic transformations and the imposition by governments of class, racial, and gender legislation all put restrictions on the possibilities for control over the lives of individual working people, including homemakers. Overarching theories such as Turner's frontier theory (in the U.S.) and Innis' staples theory (in Canada) fail to explain most things about the real lives of people in either country. We need to explore more of their individual stories and to expand our paradigms rather than our myths.

Esyllt Jones provides one such paradigm in her exploration of "Disease as Embedded Praxis: Epidemics, Public Health, and Working-Class Resistance in Winnipeg, 1906–19." While public health authorities, reinforcing elite ideology, claimed that disease was common in working-class quarters because of lack of cleanliness on the part of working-class families, the trade union movement, representing workers, argued that low wages leading to poor housing and nutrition lead to weakened working-class bodies. Workers' desire for some measure of freedom from interfering authorities sometimes led to anti-vaccination campaigns but also to demands for a fairer distribution of wealth. The higher death rate among working people during the 1918–19 influenza epidemic heightened class conflict.

In 1919 Winnipeg's workers launched a general strike that spread to many cities across the country. John Willis examines a previously unexamined group of strikers, Winnipeg's postal workers, and uncovers the extent to which these workers challenged management's right to set work rules. The strikers proposed their own rules for sorting and delivering the mail in order to create greater equity among workers. The federal government responded by dismissing the most militant workers and asserting its right to impose whatever work regime it wanted.

Part Four examines the efforts of other marginalized groups to challenge regional and national narratives that excluded them. Dan Cui and Jennifer Kelly analyze an African-Canadian newspaper column that appeared at various times in the 1920s in both Edmonton daily newspapers. Called "Our Negro Citizens," the column provides, according to these authors, "an example of everyday citizenship practices." The elite members of the African-Canadian community who wrote this column used it to counter dominant negative stereotypes of Af-

rican Canadians as violent and lazy. As Evelyn Eagle Speaker attempted for Aboriginal communities, they tried to focus on community members who were educated and making a contribution to society. The focus on “racial uplift,” while conservative and tending to downplay the impact of racism on creating social justice, co-existed with efforts in the column to fight systemic discrimination, appealing to readers’ notions of Canadian justice and fair play.

Another submerged group that gradually emerged from the shadows of illegality to demand justice and fair play were gays and lesbians, whose presence has until recently been barely mentioned in a Western Canadian historical tradition that tends to assume universal heterosexuality. Valerie Korinek’s “A Queer-Eye View of the Prairie” attempts to reorient Western Canada’s history, especially its urban history, to make it more inclusive. She traces the efforts by gays, lesbians, and transgendered people to carve out spaces for themselves, sometimes simply as quiet couples or as participants in gay social clubs, but also sometimes as gay activists. While homosexuals, like heterosexuals, were divided by class and race and did not create homogeneous cultural communities, the lives and communities that they created help to nuance the stereotype of Prairie families as uniformly heterosexual and nuclear.

Dominique Clément’s article places the gradual acceptance of difference in Western Canada in long-term perspective with his outline of the emergence of human rights law in British Columbia, emphasizing its impact on sexual discrimination in the province. In the period before human rights legislation was introduced in British Columbia, employers freely and habitually discriminated against women in employment in every imaginable way. But the introduction of legislation that would protect women from discrimination occurred quite unevenly, benefitting from New Democratic Party periods in government and then becoming gradually unravelled each time conservative parties took office. Throughout, suggests Clément, a focus on individual rights as opposed to systemic discrimination placed limits on the efficacy of the “human rights state” in creating greater social equality.

Part Five turns to critical pieces on “Cultural Portrayals of the West.” Robert Wardhaugh looks at writer Margaret Laurence and historian W.L. Morton as representatives, albeit with views at variance on many subjects, of small-town mid-twentieth century white Anglo-Canadian southwestern Manitoba. Both focused on the region of the mind that constituted the authentic expression of Prairie culture for them. For Morton, that culture, while resisting control by Central Canada, was British and agricultural, and immigrants troubled him when they did not sufficiently assimilate into WASP Prairie culture. Laurence both embraced and critiqued that culture but gave a special place in her thoughts and writing to Aboriginal culture, particularly that of the Métis. Both,

however, were united in their devotion to views of region that accord with the third phase of Prairie historical writing observed by Gerald Friesen.

At a more local level and in a limited era, Lauren Wheeler pinpoints one variant of a WASP-identified West in “The Banff Photographic Exchange: Albums, Youth, Skiing, and Memory Making in the 1920s.” Photographic collections document identity formation and the coming of age of WASP middle-class boys in Banff as they took up skiing, and their later introduction of the sport to their girlfriends and wives.

Robyn Read finds a somewhat broader notion of Prairie culture in “Eric Harvie: Without and Within Robert Kroetsch’s *Alibi*.” Harvie’s desire to collect artifacts of interest knew no bounds, and the regional museum that he founded, the Glenbow, became a repository for his multi-themed collections. In turn, Kroetsch, while focused on Prairie individuals and landscape, creates “carnavalesque fictions” that collect fragments of lives and events, and avoid boundaries, both territorial and mental.

The book ends with a consideration of what is deemed to have sufficient “cultural significance” to result in preservation of historic sites and events. Focusing on Saskatchewan, Bruce Dawson’s “‘It’s a Landmark in the Community’: The Conservation of Historic Places in Saskatchewan, 1911–2009” traces the determination of landmarks in that province from a decision to preserve Saskatoon’s initial school rather than tear it down in 1911 through to recent provincial programs that involve both provincial and municipal authorities, along with community groups, in deciding which sites will be constituted as heritage sites and preserved. As Dawson suggests, values and power relationships are reflected both in decisions about what to preserve and what not to preserve and in the rationalizations given for these decisions. *

Notes

- 1 Ian A.L. Getty and Donald B. Smith, eds., *One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserve Indians Since Treaty 7* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978).
- 2 Ibid., xi–xii.
- 3 A collection of papers from this conference was to have appeared in the *Journal of Canadian Studies*, but this did not materialize due to factors beyond the control of the journal, so there are few traces of this conference.
- 4 Examples of the conferences held on the West from the mid 1980s include the CCF–NDP history conference held in Saskatoon (1983); the Winnipeg General Strike conference (1984); “1885 and After” held at the University of Saskatchewan (1985), and a conference held later that year, also on the theme of 1885, at the University of Alberta; the 1991 symposium of the Women and History Association

of Saskatchewan and Alberta (WASH); “The Canadian Cowboy,” held at the Glenbow Museum, Calgary (1997); and “Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West through Women’s History,” held at the University of Calgary (2002). Organizing for the 2005 centennials of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan likely dissipated the energy of those who worked on the earlier conferences. A 1987 conference in Red Deer on the Alberta centennial was organized to put in place plans for research and publication for the centennial. The focus on provinces led to a decline of a broader regional perspective. In 2001 a “Centenary Symposium on the Labour Movement in Saskatchewan” was held at the University of Regina, and in 2002, there was another “Centenary Symposium on the Labour Movement in Saskatchewan” held at the University of Regina. From the mid 1980s, the Centre for Rupert’s Land Studies of the University of Winnipeg held bi-annual symposiums on fur trade-era history.

- 5 Robert Wardhaugh, ed., *Toward Defining the Prairies: Region, Culture and History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2001); Alison Calder and Robert Wardhaugh, eds., *History, Literature and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2005); Len Kuffert, ed., *The Prairies Lost and Found* (Winnipeg: St. John’s College Press, 2007).
- 6 See, for example, Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat, eds., *Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996); R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzen, eds., *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007).
- 7 A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen, eds., *Prairie Perspectives 2* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), 1.
- 8 “Notes and Correspondence,” *Saskatchewan History* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1967): 40.
- 9 David P. Gagan, “Preface,” in *Prairie Perspectives*, ed. David P. Gagan (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), iv. David P. Gagan is described as the “founder” by Rasporich and Klassen in their introduction to *Prairie Perspectives 2*, p. 1.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 11 David Jay Bercuson, ed., *Western Perspectives 1* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).
- 12 Keith Stotyn, “Western Canadian Studies Conference 1976,” *Archivaria* 1976, 79–80.
- 13 Gagan, *Prairie Perspectives*; Rasporich and Klassen, *Prairie Perspectives 2*; Susan Trofimenkoff, ed., *The Twenties in Western Canada* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1972); Bercuson, *Western Perspectives 1* (1974); A.W. Rasporich, ed. *Western Canada: Past and Present* (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975); Henry C. Klassen, ed., *The Canadian West: Social Change and Economic Development* (Calgary: Comprint Publishing Company, 1977); Getty and Smith, *One Century Later* (1977); Howard Palmer, ed. *The Settlement of the West* (Calgary: Comprint Publishing Company, 1977); David Jay Bercuson and Philip A. Buckner, eds., *Eastern and Western Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); R.D. Francis and H. Ganzevoort, eds., *The Dirty Thirties in Prairie Canada* (Vancouver: Tantalus Research, 1980); Howard Palmer and Donald B. Smith, eds., *The New Provinces: Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1905–1980* (Vancouver: Tantalus Research, 1980); A.W.

Rasporich, ed. *The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1984); R.C. Macleod, ed., *Swords and Ploughshares: War and Agriculture in Western Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993).

- 14 Rasporich, *Making of the Modern West*.
- 15 Panels were specifically solicited on the topics of politics, women and gender, Aboriginal history, ethnicity and immigration, social class, borderlands and comparative, environmental history, and African-Canadian history.
- 16 <http://niche.uwo.ca/audio-video/wcsc2008>.
- 17 <http://digiport.athabascau.ca/wcsc>.
- 18 Ibid.





Part One

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Frameworks for Western Canadian History

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Critical History in Western Canada 1900–2000

GERALD FRIESEN

■ **This essay** deals with the development of a professional historians' canon, one associated with publishing about, and university teaching in, Western Canada, and it relates this story to changing cultural perspectives. Its focus is the historical writing that, as Carl Berger defined it, broke the "traditional patterns of interpretation."¹ It suggests that, on the prairies, the traditional patterns have been challenged and supplemented five times in the course of one hundred years and that a comprehensive regional cultural history would have to take these five shifts in perspective into account.

A list of the founders of critical history as a discipline in Western Canadian universities must include Chester Martin (who joined the University of Manitoba in 1909), Arthur Silver Morton (Saskatchewan, 1914), A.L. Burt (Alberta, 1913), and Walter Sage (British Columbia, 1918). Though a case can be made for the historians of the nineteenth century as founders of the discipline in the region, including George Bryce of Manitoba and Judge F.W. Howay of British Columbia, they were closer to nineteenth-century amateur than twentieth-century professional in terms of research effort, scholarly documentation, and attention to broader schools of interpretation. Martin, Morton, Burt, and

Sage were pioneers. Each commenced his training before the First World War, each contributed important books that discussed the Western past, and each stood out in his respective province for his institutional contributions, including teaching in the schools, the development of archival collections, and the founding of provincial historical societies and university history clubs.²

A second step in Western historical writing connects the twenties, the thirties, and the Second World War. The important histories published by this interwar generation concerned forests, mines, grain, and immigration, and were written by such famous academics as Frank Underhill, Harold Innis, Arthur Lower, J.B. Brebner, and S.D. Clark. The era also encompassed the planning (not the execution, in which the many volumes varied enormously in approach and interpretation) of four important publishing projects: the *Frontiers of Settlement* series, the Carnegie series on Canadian–American relations, the studies commissioned by the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, and the *Social Credit in Alberta* series. In this period, Underhill was interested in protest movements, Innis addressed the export of staples, and Clark, a father of Canadian sociology, linked those two stories (political protest and staple economies) by suggesting that “new forms of economic enterprise” imposed stresses, social and political, upon frontier regions.³ These various scholarly enterprises undertaken between the end of the First World War and the end of the Second World War continued the political themes set out in the preceding generation, but, not surprisingly given the events of this quarter-century, they emphasized that the physical environment and economic forces shaped human action. For example, Carl Dawson’s important volume on immigrant groups implies that those groups could be placed on a gradient running from isolation to assimilation and suggested that ethnic bloc settlements, such as the Mennonite and Doukhobor, would move quickly from the former to the latter as the economy, the state, and communication technology consolidated a Prairie Canadian way of life.⁴

This era’s historiography has sometimes been associated with the frontier theory, but as Jeremy Mouat and Elizabeth Jameson have argued, F.J. Turner was not central to professional writing about the Canadian Prairie past. (Walter Sage in British Columbia and Burt in Alberta had a different view.)⁵ W.A. Mackintosh’s historical writings, Innis’s emphasis on staples, and the Canadian interest in the metropolitan side of the story were more important in Western academics’ thought. And George Stanley’s frontier in *The Birth of Western Canada* was “not so much a Turnerian frame of reference,” Carl Berger cautioned, “as an imperial one that compared the destruction of Métis society with the fate of other peoples who unsuccessfully resisted the march of white civilization in Africa and Australia.”⁶

The Second World War, like the first, constituted a profound challenge to Canadian scholars. That crisis drove the historiographical reorientation that occurred in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Innis, Underhill, Lower, and Clark addressed new topics, none directly related to the West. And in history, new institutional leaders in each of the Western provinces—W.L. Morton in Manitoba, L.H. Thomas in Saskatchewan, L.G. Thomas in Alberta, and Margaret Ormsby in British Columbia—directed their discipline along a new path. Morton has received the lion's share of attention, due in part to Berger's decision to devote a chapter to Morton's work in *The Writing of Canadian History*.⁷ The Manitoba historian would have been quick to reply that this was an achievement of many, not one. Among the scholars in related disciplines who contributed to local historical study in the post-war decades were Vernon C. Fowke, a distinguished member of the so-called Saskatchewan school of economics; geographers in each university (Tom Weir, J.H. Richards, William C. Wonders, J. Lewis Robinson); political scientists (Murray Donnelly, Evelyn Eager, J.R. Mallory, C.B. MacPherson); sociologists (S.M. Lipset, Forrest LaViolette, Stuart Jamieson); anthropologists (W.J. Mayer-Oakes, Wilson Duff); and even psychologists (John Irving) and students of literature (E.A. McCourt, George Woodcock, Chester Duncan).⁸ The regional history movement also included students of local societies located in other parts of Canada, ranging from J.M. Beck and Stewart MacNutt in the Maritimes to Maurice Careless in Ontario.

Eric Hobsbawm suggests that the events of the late 1960s, notably in 1968, marked a turning point in world history, not because of their immediate political impact but because of the cultural changes that the popular uprisings in Europe and North America helped to consolidate.⁹ His statement deserves attention in Canada because the “new” history—social history, mainly—which reached the peak of its influence in the next twenty years, began for Canadians in the late 1960s. It encompassed what Berger described as a “vast expansion” in the number of Canadian academic historians, an “explosion of research and publications,” and “new fashions” in historical writing.¹⁰ It was accompanied by an initial boom in university hiring and enrolment, another boom in book publishing, yet another in the founding and expansion of university presses, and still another in spending on libraries, museums, and archives.¹¹ New subfields emerged—led in the 1970s by urban history, labour history, ethnic history, and most of all, Aboriginal history—with their own journals, conferences, and, it seemed, infinite futures.

Historians' worlds changed again around the beginning of the 1990s. The collapse of the communist bloc, the birth of the Web, and the rise of North American academic interest in the postmodern were markers of a cultural shift between the late 1980s and the end of the millennium.¹² In Canada, the ab-

sence of new university and public history appointments constituted a crisis of a different kind. Graduate students continued to enrol, theses and articles were written, but the conferences and the social connections gradually declined in number and creativity. Historians had to regroup under the pressure of the new ways. They were fewer in number and they were being recruited for legal work by Aboriginal, environmental and city planning interests while simultaneously dealing with their colleagues' insistence that they decentre their interpretive language, abandon metanarratives and essentialist categories, acknowledge the instability of boundaries by moving beyond the national to the global, and re-think such basic terms as gender, race, space, the state, the body, and identity.¹³

What does a cultural history of these five generations look like? The founders such as Burt and Martin were outsiders who moved west to take jobs and develop a discipline. The vantage point from which they surveyed the Canadian West was London, Oxford, or Edinburgh, where their understanding of the discipline was established. Their conceptual tools were empirical, their questions political. The flaw they perceived in the writings of the previous generation, an error that the Great War group aimed to correct, was amateurism. They resolved to undertake more extensive research in primary sources and to look more rigorously at the documentary record. In terms of cultural outlook, Burt, Martin, Sage, and A.S. Morton belonged to Careless' Britannic School and, in the case of Burt and Martin, to Berger's category of historians preoccupied by Canada's achievement of self-government.¹⁴

The interwar histories were written by Canadians whose vantage point was Toronto and whose conceptual tools were rooted in economics. The flaw they perceived in the work of their predecessors was an excessive preoccupation with Britain and with the British system of government. These interwar historians sought to establish the material foundations of a national society. The key to understanding their cultural location was that they treated the West as a hinterland, a receiving vessel for outside influences, rather than as a pattern-maker that would create its own history.

Many of the post-1945 generation were born in the West and spent their careers there. Their vantage point was located within the territory, often in rural communities. They knew the local leadership and respected local people. The excess or flaw they saw in the work of their predecessors was its Central Canadian, centralizing bias. Their conceptual tools were increasingly drawn from a range of social science disciplines. Their achievement, as Berger asserted about Morton (but the judgment applies to many), was to see the West and the nation as equally prominent in their lives and to find a means of expressing this dual loyalty.¹⁵

The post-1968 social histories were also written by academics who had grown up in the West. These scholars sought to write history "from the bot-

tom up.” Like their predecessors, their vantage point was located within the region, but they chose to situate themselves outside privileged circles. The flaw they saw in the work of the post-1945 group was its elitism and its England-centred social outlook. Their goal was to develop the points of view of the less powerful in society, including ethnic groups, Aboriginal people, or the working class and, by the 1980s, women. Their models included a wide variety of social histories that drew upon Marxist, literary, and anthropological traditions.¹⁶ They believed that writing the history of the region and its less-privileged peoples would, in and of itself, contribute to a richer nation-state. Their intellectual mooring was the concept of “limited identities,”¹⁷ a term developed by Ramsay Cook and Maurice Careless to encapsulate the belief that Canada’s identity lay in the absence of a uniform national identity—what Joe Clark later described as a “community of communities.” These post-1968 social historians recognized that the Western Canadian economy remained small, open, resource-based, and export-oriented. And many among them believed that, because the West was still subject to sharp fluctuations in the production of and demand for its primary products, the periodic outbursts of regional protest—now renamed “Western alienation”—were justifiable responses to Sir John A. Macdonald’s National Policy and its offspring. These views spawned debates that continued through the 1980s on the role of the market in the allocation of resources and the fate of communities.¹⁸

The writers of the post-1989 publications belonged to yet another cultural age. Their ideal vantage point was perhaps a satellite looking down on the earth that enabled them to see all human activity and environmental change as one. Their predecessors’ flaw, they might say, was to observe the world from within the confines of the region and the nation-state, and thus to slight the international dimensions of their society.¹⁹ When post-1989ers looked at language, social relations, and individual identity, they saw instability, contingency, and deception. They sought to identify what was similar in imperial and state-driven and identity-forming experience among the peoples of the world.²⁰ Their goal, like their predecessors, was to talk on the same plane and in the same terms as colleagues around the world. But their emphasis on such approaches as the post-colonial and the feminist, and on such themes as race and gender and borderlands, seemed to threaten the very “regions” that had been developed in the four previous generations of critical history.

Though the post-1989 approaches reduce the importance of Western Canadian or Prairie regional history, they do not make it irrelevant. Rather, the new themes place greater emphasis upon the scale of our analysis, as Richard White has suggested, and multiply the range of scales—local, regional, national, global—that must be considered as we define our topics.²¹ One example of

region's continued relevance lies in the history of immigration to the Prairies. In the mid-twentieth century, newcomers from Europe settled in Prairie cities where they encountered two regionally distinctive groups of Canadians: migrants fleeing rural areas whose families had been in Canada for several generations and "established Canadians," British in ethnicity, who had been accustomed to setting the cultural tone of the community. The negotiations undertaken by these three population fractions in the burgeoning Prairie cities constituted an important chapter in the story of a Prairie regional culture and resulted in the creation of a "Nordic prairie" cultural synthesis. The following two or three decades encompassed another immigration wave, this time from the global South, and another rural-to-urban migration, this time of Aboriginal people. These two groups encountered a third social type in Prairie cities, a quite different host than the one that had met their mid-century counterparts: the "Nordic prairie" host society, having coalesced in the previous generation, now greeted newcomers with more inclusive institutions and more ambitious multicultural ideals. The three groups' adaptations after 1968 did not eliminate racism, did not end gender issues, did not transcend global communication developments, but they did suggest why such themes—race, gender, culture—drawn from "world history" found resonance in a Prairie Canadian "regional" historical writing.²²

The foregoing is structured in terms of generations of historians for purposes of clarity, but the image is misleading. Really these are five distinct conceptual languages, each of which, once introduced, survived in a wide range of historical works published in later decades. Most are still in use, sometimes to great effect, sometimes only to elaborate on conventional wisdom. Recognizing this continuity, Lyle Dick has suggested that professional history operates in sedimentary layers and that eventually its interpretations compress even outright error and prejudice into bedrock.²³ And he is right to say that a deeply rooted and implicitly racist narrative such as the so-called Seven Oaks massacre, as it was recounted between 1900 and the 1950s, is difficult to dislodge from its position as a historical "truth." But the emergence of five distinct analytical patterns during the course of the twentieth century suggests that new conceptual frameworks do challenge the old and may, given time, even replace or at the least recast some of the inherited stories.

The hostility that sometimes erupts between professional and popular historians has its roots in the contrast between old and new conceptual languages. Thus, when Peter C. Newman used crude terms to describe Aboriginal women in the fur trade, he was roundly criticized by scholars who viewed his descriptions as unacceptable. Yet it is well known that scholarly books languish in academic libraries while their apparent competitors—Newman, Bruce Hutchison,

James Gray, Pierre Berton, J.G. McGregor, Grant MacEwan, and George Bowering, among others—sweep the prizes and reap the rewards accompanying higher sales figures. The academics' seeming marginalization might prompt them to doubt the relevance of scholarly research, but the preceding history of the canon suggests one additional observation. Scholars have learned to write more effectively, to assess the present and to anticipate the future more convincingly, through contact with international historical and social science publications and increasingly global conceptual languages. And the finest works in their field, such as A.J. Ray's contributions to our understanding of Aboriginal history, have demonstrated the worth of truly innovative scholarship.²⁴

This conclusion would not be complete without a word of caution. We might recall Carl Berger's closing shot at the new social historians in the 1986 edition of his landmark history of English-Canadian historical writing: "Of only one thing we may be certain: in time the new history will experience the same fate as the old history, for Clio is still an inspiring muse but she has the alarming habit of devouring those who respond to her charms."²⁵ Berger's comment offers a dash of cold water while underlining that historians should approach their predecessors with humility. Understanding of the human condition changes continuously and so does the language in which it is expressed. The relatively long-lasting issues addressed by today's historians—modes and relations of production, sexual difference and sexuality, colonialism, the nation-state, the environment, the body—endure for a good reason: citizens have not finished debating their meaning and their proper place. Contemporary historians may make lasting contributions to public understanding through their original research and through their understanding of the changing language of scholarship. Nevertheless, they have to accept that their works, in turn, will at best become part of the historical canon. *

Notes

- 1 Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), ix. When addressing historians' "search for fresh perspectives" in the 1940s and 1950s, Berger wrote: "It was typical of the subtlety of the reorientation of the forties and early fifties that [J.M.S.] Careless could, in 1954, restate in language appropriate to his generation one of the central arguments of the historians of the twenties: that the pragmatic temper of the Canadian character and the national habit of compromise and maintaining opposites in balance implied certain qualifications for a fruitful participation in international affairs" (177–78). Berger's *The Writing of Canadian History* is a superb study: deeply researched, judicious, and perceptive. It serves as the guide and foundation for all that follows.

- 2 On Morton and archives, see Joan Champ, "Arthur Silver Morton and His Role in the Founding of the Saskatchewan Archives Board," *Archivaria* 32 (September 1991): 101–13; Arthur S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870–71* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1939). The nineteenth-century origins of Prairie historical writing are discussed in Doug Owsram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856–1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); L.G. Thomas, "Historiography of the Fur Trade Era" and T.D. Regehr, "Historiography of the Canadian Plains after 1870," in *A Region of the Mind: Interpreting the Western Canadian Plains*, ed. Richard Allen (Regina: Canadian Plains Studies Centre 1973), 73–85 and 87–101; "Introduction," in *Historical Essays on British Columbia*, eds. J. Friesen and H. K. Ralston (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), vii–xxvi; Allan Smith, "The Writing of British Columbia History," in *British Columbia: Historical Readings*, eds. W. Peter Ward and Robert A.J. McDonald (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981), 5–34. Chester Martin, in his work on the long-lasting federal-provincial debate over public land and natural resources, established a Prairie version of national history's early preoccupation with the growth of self-government. Burt wrote a Prairie history survey for the schools, *The Romance of the Prairie Provinces*, and civics textbooks for Alberta and Manitoba that combined the history of the British parliamentary system and provincial constitutional principles.
- 3 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 164. In Clark's view, the local version of Social Credit was a typical protest movement of the North American frontier—"intensely localist, separatist, ... [seeking] autonomy and withdrawal from the infringements of outside authority." *Ibid.*, 167.
- 4 Carl Dawson, *Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936), 109. A British Columbia volume in the Canadian-American series was F.W. Howay, W.N. Sage, and H.F. Angus, *British Columbia and the United States: The North Pacific Slope from Fur Trade to Aviation*, ed. H.F. Angus (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1942).
- 5 Elizabeth Jameson and Jeremy Mouat, "Telling Differences: The Forty-ninth Parallel and Historiographies of the West and Nation," *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (2006): 183–230; George Stanley, "Western Canada and the Frontier Hypothesis," Canadian Historical Association Report (1940): 105–14; Morris Zaslow, "The Frontier Hypothesis in Recent Historiography," *Canadian Historical Review* 29, no. 2 (1948): 153–67.
- 6 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 164, 167, 175. Some popular historians used a simple frontier approach, but the single most important book in that vein was written by Wallace Stegner. His much-acclaimed *Wolf Willow* relies on the frontier to construct a romantic past but is cruel in its assessment of the frontier's successor, the small Saskatchewan town. Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier* (New York: Viking, 1966). See also J.F.C. Wright, *Saskatchewan: The History of a Province* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1955), ix–xi. George Stanley's reflections on the theme, including his definition of A.L. Burt as a Turnerian, are recorded in George Stanley, "The Last Word on Louis Riel—The Man of Several Faces," in *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition*, eds. F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1986), 3–22.

- 7 Berger's memorable conclusion: Morton's "major intellectual achievement was ... the successful effort to construct a framework and find a vocabulary to convey his attachments to both Canada and the West." Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 256; W. L. Morton, "Clio in Canada: The Interpretation of Canadian History," in *Contexts of Canada's Past: Selected Essays of W.L. Morton*, ed. A.B. McKillop (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980), 105; originally published in *University of Toronto Quarterly* 15 (April 1946): 227–34.
- 8 Robin Neill, "Economic Historiography in the 1950s: The Saskatchewan School," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 243–59. Another disciplinary synthesis was Edward McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1949).
- 9 Eric Hobsbawm, "Reflections on '68," *New Statesman*, 12 May 2008, 33.
- 10 Carl Berger, "History and Historians," in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, ed. Gerald Hallowell (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004), 286–89. The most frequently cited statement of the new age was by J.M.S. Careless, "Limited Identities in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1969): 1–10 and "Limited Identities—Ten Years Later," *Manitoba History* 1 (1980), http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/01/limitedidentities.shtml.
- 11 "Archives and Social History," special issue, *Archivaria* 14 (Summer 1982); Tom Nesmith, ed., *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1993).
- 12 Ellen Meiksins Wood, "What is the 'Postmodern' Agenda? An Introduction" and Francis Mulhern, "The Politics of Cultural Studies" and Terry Eagleton, "Where Do Postmodernists Come From?" in *Monthly Review* 47, no. 3 (July–August 1995): 1–12, 31–40, 59–70; Keith Thomas, "Coming to Terms with the Death of Certainty," *Guardian Weekly*, 18 September 1994; Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994).
- 13 One illustration, in addition to the works cited above, is Peter Burke, "Overture: The New History, Its Past and Its Future," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 1–23.
- 14 J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 35 (1954): 1–21; Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 32–53; Chad Reimer, "The Making of British Columbia History: Historical Writing and Institutions, 1784–1958" (PhD diss., York University, 1995).
- 15 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 256.
- 16 The most complete outline of this literature is the chapter Berger added to the second edition of *The Writing of Canadian History*, 259–320. Sherry B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 1 (January 1984): 126–66. The generation enjoyed closer affiliations because the University of Calgary convened many conferences on Western studies between 1968 and 1984, followed by others (Saskatchewan, Alberta); see "Introduction: Tandem and Tangent," in *Toward Defining the Prairies: Region, Culture, and History*, ed. Robert Wardhaugh (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2001), 3–11.

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- 18 Ken Norrie's 1984 essay addressed Alberta's experience, but its conclusions fit the rest of the West; Ken Norrie, "A Regional Economic Overview of the West Since 1945," in *The Making of the Modern West: Western Canada Since 1945*, ed. A.W. Rasporich (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1984), 63–78; Norrie's earlier article on regional economics was the first entry in that debate: "The National Policy and Prairie Economic Discrimination, 1870–1930," in *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, ed. Donald H. Akenson (Gananoque, QC: Langdale Press, 1978), 1:13–32. A note of protest was struck in David Jay Bercuson, ed., *Canada and the Burden of Unity* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977). An alternative view, more imbued with social history's categories, is represented by R. Douglas Francis, "In Search of a Prairie Myth: A Survey of the Intellectual and Cultural Historiography of Prairie Canada" and Douglas Cole, "The Intellectual and Imaginative Development of British Columbia," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 44–69 and 70–79. The market debate became central to the national "free trade" election of 1988.
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Vernacular Currents in Western Canadian Historiography: The Passion and Prose of Katherine Hughes, F.G. Roe, and Roy Ito¹

LYLE DICK

*“Only connect the prose and the passion,
and both will be exalted.”*

— E.M. Forster, *Howard’s End* (1910)

■ In a 1985 review article on Gerald Friesen’s *The Canadian Prairies* and Pierre Berton’s *The Promised Land*, David C. Jones argued for a new approach to Canadian historiography. Specifically, he called for a fusion of best practices of the genres of academic and popular history, and asked: “What is the scholar’s responsibility to the masses?”² Jones thereby identified an issue of continuing relevance to our discipline—the relationship between practitioners of history and the people whose history is being represented. Jones was primarily concerned with promoting popular forms of writing, but I would like to focus attention on another important but neglected dimension of historical work over the last century: the vast and undervalued production of vernacular history.

Some clarification of terms is warranted. Over the last century, the term *vernacular* has held little currency in Canadian historical discourse, consigned

largely to such sub-fields as architectural history, classical or medieval disciplines, and folklore studies. However, the term *vernacular* has experienced a long genealogy, originating with the Latin *verna*, meaning “home-born slave,” “indigenous,” or “domestic.” As an adjective, it refers to 1) a person “using a native language or dialect of a country or district”; 2) the language or dialect “spoken as the mother tongue by the people of a particular country or district;” 3) a composition “written or spoken in the native language of a country or people”; or 4) an artistic form or feature “native or peculiar to a particular country or locality.”³ In earlier eras, vernacular writing played important and sometimes even dominant roles in the historiography of European countries, especially in France and England in the late medieval period.⁴ More recently, various cultural theorists have embraced the vernacular in their assorted critiques of modernism, its hierarchies, and its exclusions.⁵

My use of the phrase *vernacular history* refers generally to grassroots historical practice in North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as discussed in my 1991 article on the Seven Oaks incident of 1816 and John Bodnar’s application of *vernacular culture* in his 1992 book on commemoration in the United States.⁶ Bodnar and I drew similar distinctions between the unofficial or vernacular historical memory of local groups and the official histories sanctioned by the state or established elites. However, we might heed Bennet Schaber’s cautionary advice to avoid characterizing vernacular writing in terms of “traditions.” Schaber prefers the term *situation* to describe the contexts within which vernacular performance is constituted or sanctioned, and *situation* seems to better approximate the contingent circumstances within which vernacular historical texts have been produced in Western Canada over the last century.⁷ These circumstances echo the diverse contexts of vernacular architecture within which local builders in particular situations have confronted the challenge of fashioning usable forms from a limited repertoire of materials, through the application of accumulated experiential knowledge and the practitioners’ capacities for on-the-spot problem solving.⁸

Yet vernacular historiography does not simply respond to the local but often also borrows from and comments upon the larger scene of historical writing. As the historian Robert Blair St. George has usefully argued, vernacular expressions, while rooted in local knowledge, generate texts derivative of “collisions of imperial interests and autoethnographic resistance.” Drawing inspiration from both macro- and micro-levels of history, vernacular forms are always mixtures, referencing “uneven and uneasy attempts to create artifacts or texts that address simultaneous but divergent social realities.”⁹ The mixing of forms and genres also characterizes the concept of hybridity as elaborated by the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin.¹⁰ Some of the

most interesting aspects of vernacular historical production have included its tendency toward formal promiscuity—the sometimes indiscriminate mixing of forms, both the high and the low. Because its practitioners were not schooled in traditions favouring unitary and internally cohesive forms, they were therefore obliged to develop new forms within which to express the diverse strains bearing on their writing. This very tendency toward hybridity is one of the features endowing vernacular production with its continuing resonance and relevance to lived experience and memory.¹¹

Notwithstanding a diversity of practices, forms, and perspectives, practitioners of vernacular history share the common experience of operating outside dominant discourses of power and authority. It must also be acknowledged that vernacular writing does not always run against the grain of prevailing discourses and may incorporate concepts and ideological content derivative of hegemonic forms. In this regard, the sociologists Kent Ono and John Sloop usefully point out that vernacular discourse “is not, by definition, liberatory” and may indeed incorporate conservative or even reactionary elements. However, Ono and Sloop also acknowledge that vernacular discourses “emerge from discussions between members of smaller, self-identified communities within the larger civic community,” ..., and as Bakhtin observed, the dialogical character of such interactions ensures that the audience or addressee participates in the production of meaning alongside the nominal author or addressor.¹² It is its strong connection to the local that helps ground vernacular writing within the experiential contexts within which it emerges. We might go farther in suggesting that, whether pursuing accommodationist or oppositionist strategies, the marginalized status of vernacular discourse makes it incapable of fully reproducing dominant power relationships. Unschooled to operate comfortably within discursive conventions established according to guild protocols, vernacular practitioners must necessarily draw on their own experience in fashioning their historical works. In this regard, sociologist Richard Harvey Brown usefully distinguishes “official” from “unofficial” history as they relate to two terms: *cogency* and *coercion*. In Brown’s formulation, official history has exhibited a high level of inner cogency or coherence, albeit shaped with coercion, while unofficial or folk history “characteristically is highly malleable precisely because its expression has not been rationalized and justified in terms of official canons of reasoning, whatever these may be.”¹³ By definition a subordinate genre, the vernacular stands outside of or on the margins of the official canon, sometimes merely co-existing in relative obscurity within vernacular domains but on other occasions critiquing and challenging the canon and its claims to dominance.¹⁴

Brown’s categorization was earlier anticipated by Bakhtin and members of his circle in several important works on the history of Western discursive

forms. In his famous essay "The Epic and the Novel," Bakhtin identifies two opposing forces in cultural history—a centripetal tendency that he associated with official culture and the contrary centrifugal tendency of unofficial culture.¹⁵ As Bakhtin scholars have noted, official forces seek to impose order on an essentially heterogeneous and messy world, while unofficial forces continually disrupt that order.¹⁶ The Bakhtin circle also distinguishes between the "linear style" of authoritative discourse and the "pictorial style." In this schema, authoritative discourse flows from efforts by a group to entrench approved forms of writing by discouraging any tampering or alterations to an approved canon. It seeks to standardize discursive forms to minimize individuality of expression, which might reveal the origins of a work in the specific, and therefore partial or incomplete, experience of the author. Therefore, official forces seek "stylistic homogeneity," imbuing writing with the impression of authority or universality, and with minimal personalization. By contrast, the pictorial style seeks to maximize personalization by breaking down the boundaries between the reported speech and the speech of the author, calling attention to the relationship of style or form to social realities and attitudes, and enhancing dialogical interaction between speech and its contexts.¹⁷ These distinctions also closely correspond to Bakhtin's important differentiation between monological and dialogical imperatives in writing. Monological, or single-voiced, discourse comprises the forms in which the author's own voice takes precedence to the exclusion of other voices, while dialogical forms acknowledge a plurality of consciousnesses and perspectives in any given social situation. For Bakhtin, all writing can be placed on a continuum between the absolute monological closure of the traditional epic and the fully dialogized open-endedness of the modern novel, as exemplified in the work of Dostoevsky, in which each character is accorded her or his own authentic voice, unsubordinated by the voice or perspective of the author.¹⁸

In the last century, in Western Canada, as throughout Western Europe and North America, vernacular practitioners and associated dialogical forms of writing were marginalized by the rise of the academic discipline, which introduced the new categories of "professional" and "amateur" history, and the associated privileging of professional production in opposition to its amateur counterparts.¹⁹ Academic history was constructed through the entrenchment of a series of hierarchies, including, among others, 1) the privileging of written documents over oral testimony, 2) the favouring of scholarly distance over direct experience, and 3) the development of a master narrative of progress to advance the new critical methods of academic historians in opposition to the putative biases of "promoters, patriots, and partisans" in nineteenth-century historiography.²⁰ Other hierarchies flowed from the gender, ethnocultural, and

class identifications of members of the historical profession throughout much of the twentieth century. Prior to the advent of social history in the 1970s, most practitioners of scholarly history were male, Euro-Canadian, middle class, and heteronormative in background, and these associations clearly influenced their perspectives on and practice of history. This is not to pursue an essentialist argument that identities rooted in these social categories necessarily predisposed practitioners to particular outlooks. However, current historiography suggests that few professional practitioners departed from the mainstream credo that suffused so much of the academic historical canon during the century following Confederation.²¹ Not until Gerald Friesen's *The Canadian Prairies: A History* in 1984 and Jean Barman's *The West Beyond the West* in 1991 was the social history of Aboriginal people, women, and working-class residents of the West significantly acknowledged in synthesis histories.²² For much of the twentieth century, non-mainstream issues in Western Canadian history were either addressed by vernacular or grassroots historians, or not at all.

It might be useful to try to isolate some of the characteristic features of these two major currents in Western Canadian historiography. Academic or scholarly history, which has been dominant since about 1900, has been predominantly deductive in approach to evidence and interpretation. Argument- or thesis-driven, it has usually been based on primary and secondary written sources. Over the last century, academic historians have preferred to write in the third person, expressing a position of detachment from the topic, and in the plain prose style pioneered in scientific writing by Francis Bacon.²³ Academic discourse has thereby assumed the removed stance of Antonio Gramsci's "traditional intellectual," operating on the assumption that the realm of truth is separated from the world.²⁴ Emphasizing the crafting of syntheses and generalizations from specific examples, these practitioners have preferred to subsume the voices of witnesses or other historical observers under the author's synthesizing voice. Academic history has been presented in the synchronic (thematic) or diachronic (narrative) temporal modes, and less often in analytic modes. It has tended to be carried out by individual scholars although collaborative research is becoming more common.

By contrast, vernacular history, which was dominant up to about 1900, has historically been largely inductive in its authors' approaches to evidence gathering and processing. Vernacular histories have also typically lacked a central argument. Like academic history, vernacular history has often been grounded in research in primary oral or written sources, or a combination of the two, but unlike academic history, it has been written in a variety of voices, including first, second, and third person. Vernacular authors have often not displayed scholarly detachment; their writing has tended to be informed by direct experience

and animated by a passionate involvement with their subjects of study, more in keeping with Gramsci's concept of the "organic intellectual."²⁵ Vernacular writers have resisted synthesis and generalization; rather than integrate other sources into their own arguments, they have often quoted sources at length and displayed the voices and perspectives of witnesses to history for readers to consider and evaluate for themselves. Vernacular history has been presented in narrative, thematic, or analytic modes but has also been cast in idiosyncratic forms. It has sometimes been prepared by individuals but in other cases collaboratively when it has served as a vehicle for the social memory of an ethnocultural community or other social group. Like scholarly history, vernacular history has included a wide range of practitioners and practices over the last hundred years. Vernacular historians have ranged from community historians to individual scholars to so-called history buffs, and their practice has assumed many forms, from informal pioneer reminiscences to highly crafted works of scholarship, exemplifying varying levels of talent, experience, and imagination.

Rather than approach these two categories as binary opposites, my preference is to treat both vernacular and academic histories as encompassing a range of strategies on a continuum extending from a close identification and engagement with one's audience to a position of distanced removal. This continuum corresponds to the range of levels of interaction between performer and audience as mapped out by folklorist Roger D. Abrahams. In Abrahams' schema, the spectrum of narrative expression extends from conversational genres, expressing full interpersonal engagement, to static genres of vicarious experience and removal from the audience, with various gradations between these poles. These categories also correspond to different narrative concerns—conversational genres tend to be more concerned with conflict and dramatic movement, while the static genres express a preoccupation with resolution, repose, and stability.²⁶ Generally, academic writing has been weighted toward remoteness from the subject and vernacular history toward greater interpersonal connection, although it is important to reiterate that we are not talking about "traditions" so much as loosely defined genres, tendencies, and currents.²⁷ My assumption is that even today vernacular currents persist in academic contexts, just as scholarly currents may be found within the vernacular, in keeping with the notion that vernacularity is more than a condition of "outsidedness" obtaining from local, class, or gender identity and difference, but also a position that writers may choose to inhabit through a close identification with and connectedness to vernacular communities and concerns.

This paper is concerned with three vernacular historians writing in three different periods in the twentieth century: Katherine Hughes, a female journalist, archivist, and social activist, whose most significant historical work predates the

First World War; F.G. Roe, an agricultural settler and railroad engineer, who produced major works from the interwar era to the period after the Second World War; and Roy Ito, a Japanese Canadian war veteran and teacher, whose historical research and books date from the 1980s and early 1990s. While informed by Gramsci's concepts of organic and traditional intellectuals, this discussion shares a greater affinity with Grant Farred's reformulation that places vernacularity as "operating outside organized political structures." As Farred wrote, "the vernacular is a mobile and flexible experience, accommodating of different trajectories."²⁸ The practice of the three historians discussed in this essay does not readily correspond to particular class membership or consciousness in the manner of Gramsci's formulation. Of these three practitioners, only F.G. Roe clearly meets the definition of a member of the working class, while Hughes and Roy Ito might more accurately be placed in the professional white-collar, or "petit bourgeoisie" class, upwardly mobile but also occupying a recurrently insecure position owing to their gender or racial difference.²⁹ Regarding Roe, while clearly animated by populist sympathies, his work does not directly bear upon issues of class unless his deconstruction of academic authorities can be taken as an allegorical stand-in for resistance to class structures represented in mainstream historical discourse. Nevertheless, we might hazard an inference that Hughes' experience as a woman writing in a patriarchal era (and as a Roman Catholic functioning within a developing Protestant dominance in the Prairies), Ito's identity as a Japanese Canadian in an era of racial marginalization, and Roe's proletarian origins in Sheffield at the height of the British class system influenced their formal approaches to history and prompted much of the passionate engagement that imbues their work with its resonance. As the African-American poet and philosopher Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) wrote in the 1960s: "The view from the top of the hill is not the same as that from the bottom of the hill."³⁰ In important ways, each of these practitioners was an outsider for whom gender, class, or racial barriers might have impeded their acceptance within mainstream historical discourse but whose very otherness was also what afforded them perspectives on history unlike those of other contemporary practitioners.

Katherine Hughes (1876–1925)

THANKS TO THE RESEARCH of the Irish Studies specialist Pádraig O Siadhail, a good outline of Katherine Hughes' life is already available. She was born in Prince Edward Island in 1876, the second youngest of nine children in an Irish-Canadian Roman Catholic family and the niece of Cornelius O'Brien, archbishop of Halifax between 1883 and 1906. Hughes was educated in Charlottetown at Notre Dame Convent and Prince of Wales College, from which she graduated



Katherine Hughes, n.d.
Photo courtesy of Library and
Archives Canada, Photo no. C-008785.

with a first-class teacher's licence in 1892. Soon afterwards she apparently moved with her family to Ottawa and became engaged in missionary work with First Nations in eastern Ontario and Quebec. In 1899 she worked as a teacher at the Mohawk reserve at Saint-Régis (Akwasasne) and in 1901 founded the Catholic Indian Association, which sought to find employment outside reserves for graduates of Indian schools.³¹ Like most missionary teachers of her era, she espoused an assimilationist ethos, albeit one informed by a deeply felt concern for Aboriginal people.

In the early 1900s, Hughes found work as a reporter with the *Montreal Star*, where she impressed William Cornelius Van Horne, president of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. In June 1904 she became a

founding member of the Canadian Women's Press Club, established en route to the St. Louis World's Fair.³² Perhaps also through Van Horne's connections, she caught the eye of Frank Oliver, publisher of the *Edmonton Bulletin*, who offered her a job with his newspaper in 1906. Within two years, she had accepted the position of Alberta's first provincial archivist; in this role, she actively sought textual and photographic collections for the archives while carrying out oral history research with old-timers in the region to preserve their stories. "I should like to get from them, if possible, portraits of the early settlers, buildings, fairs, banquets, or any striking incident connected with the old times," she wrote in an advertisement.³³ In 1909 Hughes was appointed private secretary to Premier A.C. Rutherford; she also served as secretary to his successor A.L.W. Sifton. In 1912, at the request of Bishop Legal, she organized the Catholic Women's League of Edmonton (within the Diocese of St. Albert) to assist Roman Catholic immigrants to Alberta. In 1913 she transferred to London, England to become assistant and secretary in the office of the agent general for Alberta. By the time she returned to Canada in 1915, she had become a passionate advocate of Irish independence, which proved harmful to her standing with Anglo-Canadian elites.³⁴

Hughes was acquainted with Father Lacombe even before she moved west, and they evidently developed a warm friendship.³⁵ Lacombe had long intended to write his own memoirs but complained that distractions had prevented him from pulling it together. According to historian Raymond Huel, Lacombe first approached Hughes in 1904 with the request to write his memoirs, and in 1907 she agreed to take on this assignment, apparently with the church's blessing.³⁶ Hughes' published biography of Lacombe, entitled *Father Lacombe: The Black-Robe Voyageur*, was in some ways an extension of the archival project she had commenced as provincial archivist. Specifically, her book illustrates an archivist's approach to collecting and displaying oral history. As she showed during her trip to northern Alberta in 1909, Hughes saw her role as one of collecting and preserving the reminiscences of old-timers, written biographies, and original documents for posterity.³⁷ She prided herself on including extensive dialogue in the book and especially on the authenticity it represented. In the foreword to the 1920 edition of the biography, she writes: "Where I repeat conversations in Père Lacombe's Life, I am not making magnificent guesses at what these people likely would have said. I am repeating from the lips of participants what actually was said—or what I myself heard.... This record is History—picturesque western History caught for posterity before it had passed out of memory—and while many of its makers still walked with us."³⁸

Relying on both oral and written sources, including her extensive correspondence with Lacombe, Hughes brought out some nuanced dimensions to her subject that were not well known at the time and have not been extensively treated in the subsequent historiography. For example, she was not averse to pointing out differences between Lacombe's written records and his oral recollections. One such example was his condemnatory comments on railroad construction workers, whose language and conduct he often found blasphemous. Hughes concludes that Lacombe's oral reminiscences were sugar-coated in relation to the more frank—and truer—expression of his sentiments as recorded in his diary. She also does not always paint a flattering picture of her subject. Lacombe emerges from her account as a subject with a unique personality; certainly hers is not a generic official biography of a missionary. For example, she relates Lacombe's reported indignation on encountering intolerance directed toward his priestly robes while visiting Winnipeg in 1874. Recounting Lacombe's words, she conveys his defiance: "More than once insulting jeering remarks were thrown slyly at him as he passed through the streets; and usually then a very unpriestly desire came to thrash the man or boy who flung the jeer at the crucifix or robe. There never was anything of the turn-the-other-cheek Christianity about Father Lacombe."³⁹ Hughes' anecdotal approach, incorporating both extensive direct quotation of Lacombe's own words and indirect

reported speech in the pictorial style, grounds her biography in everyday experience and dialogical interaction with her subject. In her version, according to Padraig O Siadhail, "Lacombe emerges in all his contradictions as missionary and colonizer ... simple churchman and wily old politician."⁴⁰

Like Lacombe, Hughes was unsympathetic to the armed resistance led by Louis Riel in 1885 although she took pains to document Lacombe's sympathy for prairie Aboriginal peoples in the West during the Northwest Resistance/Rebellion. In that era, criticism of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's government was rare in the English-language historiography, but Hughes quoted Bishop Grandin's correspondence with Macdonald, in which Grandin reproached the prime minister for failing to respond with "anything but fine words."⁴¹ In her notes, Hughes also records a conversation with Lacombe in which he revealed he had considered the possibility of most Prairie First Nations taking up arms in 1885, which he thought might buy them three or four more years of freedom. Ultimately, however, he believed it would bring about the destruction of First Nations on the Prairies.⁴² It was this realization, she implies, that impelled Lacombe to exhort the Blackfoot not to join Riel's resistance, followed by his famous telegraph to Sir John A. Macdonald assuring him that the Blackfoot intended to remain loyal to Canada. Notwithstanding Lacombe's role in encouraging the Blackfoot not to take up arms, Hughes suggests that he was dismayed by the aggressive character of Canadian settlement and what he viewed as the newcomers' lack of regard for the well-being of the Aboriginal populations of the Prairies, a concern she shared. In her notes on Lacombe, she writes: "15,000 people in west at time of transfer—objected to themselves and possessions being signed away without one word of their consent or approval."⁴³ Her position contrasts sharply with contemporary assertions of George Bryce, the father of academic historiography in Western Canada, who celebrated Canada's victory in 1885 as an imagined triumph of civilization over barbarism.⁴⁴

Beyond highlighting aspects of Lacombe's character, Hughes allowed her biography to be a conduit for the missionary's major thoughts, including his dismay at developing racism and marginalization of difference within Euro-Canadian communities in the West. Hughes faithfully recorded Lacombe's words: "Out of these many years of communication with the Indians, I bring this thought, that with all the power left to me, I want to impress upon the white man that the Indians are truly in flesh, feelings, and aims, our brothers. Do not judge the race by one or a score of the worst as you do not judge some of the bad white people—Look upon these poor uneducated populations, scattered in our Northwest with sympathy, charity, and Christian philanthropy. I think that you occupy now the land and ground where they were born and which was once their property."⁴⁵

Hughes's approach to form was to present history not retrospectively as a process completed in the past but rather as a dynamic succession of present-day occurrences, as animated by direct quotation of the participants' own words. With a journalist's eye for both a compelling anecdote and first-person dialogue, she imbued her biography with immediacy and contingency. Hughes does not present us with a past that is sealed off and done with. Every episode in Lacombe's life is presented as he might have viewed it, part of an open-ended present, resonant with future possibilities. Her approach to history derived from her own life experience. As she writes in her unpublished notes, "Experience is knowledge, obtained by one's own person in senses, spirit, etc." She divided this experiential knowledge into three categories—physical, mental, and spiritual, all of which she saw as interconnected.⁴⁶ In this regard, Hughes could not separate her religious beliefs from her writing, and her biography of Lacombe might properly be viewed as an extension of her work as a Roman Catholic missionary and teacher. Rather than assume a position of objectivity and neutrality, she became passionately committed to documenting what she regarded as Lacombe's selfless devotion to the Prairie First Nations, mirroring her own concerns as a missionary.

Notwithstanding Lacombe's celebrity, Hughes' choice of subject departed from the mainstream focus of Anglo-Canadian historiography of the early twentieth century. In that era, the nation-building preoccupations of Anglo-Canadian historians led them to privilege historical figures associated with Confederation or its historical antecedents. These included mostly anglophone and a few francophone political and military leaders, as in the twenty original books of *The Makers of Canada* series. This series comprises biographies of three colonial governors; three prominent fur traders; three francophone political leaders; three Maritime politicians; war hero Isaac Brock; educator Egerton Ryerson, founder of the Ontario school system; and five Ontario politicians. All the historical figures represented in the series were drawn from Canada's privileged classes. As historian Daniel Francis observes, these individuals comprise a pantheon of heroes "whose efforts had contributed to the development of the self-governing nation."⁴⁷

In contrast, Hughes' biographical subject was a francophone priest who, while closely connected to pivotal events and prominent personalities involved in Canadian expansion, followed a career path diverging from the nation-building narratives of the canon in that era. Nation building was in any case a tenuous rubric for this particular author, whose nascent Irish nationalism inclined her to take a critical attitude toward Anglo-Saxon pan-Canadianism. Beyond her own authorial voice and Lacombe's, she quoted the words of the Cree leader Sweet Grass, the Blackfoot chief Crowfoot, Métis and other observers

alongside quotations from prominent businessmen and church leaders of the period. She wrote in a period in which the developing discipline of history was increasingly subsuming the diverse voices of history under the professionals' overriding syntheses, such as the Rev. Dr. George Bryce's refashioning Western Canadian historiography as a narrative of the ascendancy of his own Anglo-Canadian ethnocultural group.⁴⁸ While certainly no oppositionist, Hughes brought vernacular voices into Western Canadian historical discourse, a practice that waned as the professionalization project took hold. For Lacombe's biography, Hughes pioneered in oral history and careful scholarship, and in employing forms of representation enabling the people she was studying to speak for themselves. Hughes' biography of Father Lacombe was a popular success and is still regarded as a reliable source.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, Hughes' biography of Lacombe fell short of a fully dialogized treatment of his life and career. While including quotations from First Nations witnesses, she incorporated their voices within her own narrative framework rather than as fully autonomous individuals with the freedom to challenge or contradict her assertions. Lacombe's close connections to Canadian Pacific Railway executives Lord Strathcona and Sir William Cornelius Van Horne also raise questions in terms of his apparently divided loyalties, and the missionary experience itself has been considered highly problematic. I do not intend here to make light of these issues although Lacombe's role as elaborated by Hughes does appear to share affinities with other Euro-Canadian witnesses to colonization who sought to mitigate the negative consequences of Canadian expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵⁰

Hughes' biography is not an objective, detached account of Lacombe's life. Rather, it is a text animated by both her admiration for Lacombe and her compassion for Aboriginal people who had been displaced by advancing European settlement in the West. The book's merit resides in its status as a faithful representation of Lacombe's own perspectives on his long career as a missionary, as mediated through Hughes' sympathetic eyes. By quoting Lacombe and other witnesses at length, she contributed their authentic voices to the historiography of his career and to an important period of Western Canadian history.

Frank Gilbert Roe (1878–1973)

ROE WAS BORN INTO A WORKING-CLASS FAMILY in Sheffield, England in 1878 and moved with his family to the Blackfalds district north of Red Deer in 1894, where they made entry for a homestead, built and established residence in a sod house, and then moved into a log dwelling a year later.⁵¹ After the early death of their father, Roe and his brother, both teenagers, attempted to con-



Frank Gilbert Roe, n.d. Photo courtesy
University of Victoria Archives,
Frank Gilbert Roe fonds, AR 110.

tinue farming with their mother. The 1906 Census of the Prairie Provinces enumerated Roe, still single at twenty-seven, as the sole head of the household consisting of himself and his mother.⁵² Two and a half years later, following the third in a succession of crop failures, they were forced to abandon their farm. Obligated to start again from scratch at the age of thirty, Roe found a job with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and worked his way up to an engineer's position by 1919. He also assumed a leadership role in the railroad workers' union. After 1923 he continued his career with the Canadian National Railway (CNR) until his retirement in 1944. Obligated by his family's straitened circumstances

to work at an early age, Roe had no formal education beyond the age of twelve.

Roe's limited formal education would seem to be a poor preparation for intellectual labour, but Roe was no ordinary school dropout. Early in life he developed a passion for reading and reflection that belied his lack of schooling.⁵³ Roe's grassroots experiences also imbued him with a down-to-earth quality that apparently never left him. In his published autobiography, he recalls several direct encounters with First Nations people at his family's homestead in Alberta, including his purchase of two pairs of moccasins for fifty cents from the Aboriginal visitors. A theme running throughout his published and unpublished writings is his persistent sense of injustice regarding indignities that had been visited on Aboriginal people. He was particularly critical of the residential school system imposed on First Nations, which he regarded as paternalistic and authoritarian.⁵⁴

Roe came to his great subject virtually by happenstance. Aware that certain nineteenth-century British scholars had sought to determine whether or not English roads had begun as animal paths, he developed a similar curiosity with regard to North America. When, as an engineer, he travelled over trestle bridges or high above mountain valleys, his imagination was piqued by the ap-

pearance of trails visible from the engine cab; these sightings spurred him to investigate the hypothesis that prairie First Nations trails followed old buffalo routes.⁵⁵

He began by assembling a large corpus of references to the Prairies, which he had planned to publish before learning that the English Place Names Society was then undertaking to publish much of the same primary material he had already collected. Discouraged at first, it then occurred to him that his assembled materials offered the potential for developing a much larger study on the buffalo as a wild species in its former domain across the Canadian Prairies, Northern Great Plains, and other regions of the continent. Roe continued to collect materials and wrote the manuscript of his book *The North American Buffalo: A Critical Study of the Species in Its Wild State* between ca. 1925 and 1940, while still employed by the CNR as a train engineer.

What is striking even today is the immense scope of Roe's subject, encompassing the study of the entire natural range of the North American buffalo across the continent of North America. Inspired by the panoramic prospects afforded a train engineer travelling through the Rockies, Roe applied his expansive perspective to wide-ranging research on this species while other contemporary historians of Western Canada—including A.S. Morton, Marcel Giraud, and W.L. Morton—largely confined their archival research on the buffalo to the documents of missionaries and Hudson's Bay Company officers bearing primarily on the areas north of the forty-ninth parallel.⁵⁶

On one level, Roe's book constituted a monumental historical reconstruction of arguably the most significant event in Western Canada in the nineteenth century—the virtual extirpation of the buffalo from its natural habitat on the North American prairies and plains. His work was enabled by a unique research context in the first half of the century. In the early decades, the small number of serious students of Western Canadian history militated against rigid hierarchies and sometimes contributed to collegiality between the classes. Alexander Rutherford, a former premier of Alberta and chancellor of the University of Alberta, granted Roe wide access to his library near the University of Alberta in Strathcona (Edmonton).⁵⁷ University librarian Donald Ewing Cameron was another senior person at the University of Alberta who also gave Roe unimpeded access to its developing collections of materials.⁵⁸ Roe consulted Cameron when considering the preparation of a much larger work than originally intended on the history of the buffalo, and the university librarian's encouragement was apparently decisive in his decision to proceed.⁵⁹

On another level, Roe's book constitutes a detailed critical analysis and deconstruction of questionable or erroneous generalizations and specific assertions by both period witnesses and scholarly authorities on the buffalo in the

author's own day; the work is astonishing in both its rigour and the author's capacity for sustained argument. In particular, he singles out for interrogation long-standing assertions that Aboriginal peoples were responsible for the near extirpation of the buffalo. Roe's text and footnotes are filled with minute dissections of illogical arguments, faulty hypotheses, and factual errors that he found to be ubiquitous in buffalo scholarship. Regardless of rank or privilege, no careless authority escapes his acute cross-examination. Roe's book probably represents the most sustained critique of textual reification ever published in Western Canadian historiography.

Roe was aware that his research constituted a revisionist challenge to Western North American historiography, and he deliberately set out to challenge what he regarded as uncritical orthodoxies that had come to dominate the subfield.⁶⁰ Discovering in the course of his research on the buffalo that early eyewitness evidence "was almost damning in its complete refutation of most positive pronouncements by later scholars," Roe's practice evinced a particular aversion to reifications that he discovered were widely represented in the literature.⁶¹ In his monumental challenge to received wisdom, he followed "a series of principles I had laid down for my own guidance." These include "the vital distinction between observation and opinion, the insertion as far as possible of any witnesses' testimony in his own words, the inclusion of as many witnesses as possible on any topic of dubious or disputed authority, and the precise and accurate documentation of any citations whatever, whether of factual matter or opinion. Only thus, could a fair and authentic account of the buffalo be presented."⁶²

Among the nineteenth-century observers he examined critically are Alexander Ross, Reverend John McDougall, and Henry Youle Hind, each of whom asserted that the plains Aboriginal cultures overhunted the buffalo on which they had relied for numerous generations, as if impelled by a suicidal death wish. To Roe, these assertions were misguided if not ridiculous. Piece by piece, he picked apart both the texts of period observers and the scholarly authorities who accepted their assertions uncritically. In treating the narratives of Rev. John McDougall, Roe zealously critiqued what he regarded as McDougall's sanctimonious hypocrisy.⁶³ Regarding Hind's report on the putative migration patterns of buffalo, Roe comments, ironically: "The foregoing is an admirable specimen of a type of general description which might be considered highly informative or even convincing, if we had no other source of information."⁶⁴ Of Alexander Ross, Roe comments on this observer's tendency to have "recorded an incident and made it a law."⁶⁵

Roe reserved his most detailed criticism for three American specialists, including William T. Hornaday, an acknowledged leading authority whose work entrenched and perpetuated notions of Aboriginal profligacy, waste, and re-

sponsibility for the destruction of the buffalo. Hornaday, formerly a zoologist at the Smithsonian Institution, was then director of the New York Zoological Society and a close associate of leading eugenicists in the United States. For decades following the publication of his *The Extermination of the American Bison*, it served as the standard text on the topic, and it continues to be cited even today.⁶⁶ It was this book's questionable scientific status "as the unchallenged authority on a subject for over half-a-century," combined with its racist sentiments, that prompted Roe to devote particular attention to Hornaday in his own book, and his analysis of this work occupies a significant proportion of the text of *The North American Buffalo*. Roe writes: "Those portions of Hornaday's essay dealing with the Indian are the most unsatisfactory of the entire work. The exaggerations, the contradictions, the unsupported assertions, and the slovenly argumentation, which are only too frequently evident in his pages, are brought to bear in an exaggerated form against the Indian."⁶⁷

Meanwhile, Roe encountered Ernest Thompson Seton in Edmonton. In the 1930s, Roe's friend Donald Cameron introduced him to the University of Alberta zoologist William Rowan, who, after reading several chapters of his buffalo manuscript, also became one of his champions. Rowan in turn introduced him to Seton, who happened to be visiting with him in Edmonton. Roe proceeded to interrogate Seton as to why he had relied on Hornaday in his work on the buffalo; he later recalled Seton's reply that "he was then a young man and rather diffident in the face of Hornaday's authority." Roe states: "I told Seton that if my manuscript ever got itself printed Hornaday himself would be in the dock, and not for that alone." However, Roe was also willing to acknowledge that Seton, "in his old age if not before," had revised previously unsympathetic attitudes toward Aboriginal people and "had thrown his great weight behind the 'new look' at the Indian question."⁶⁸

The particular hybrid form of Roe's idiosyncratic work might paradoxically be characterized as a deconstructivist epic. Written long before the rise of postmodernism, deconstruction, and the associated critique of reification, Roe's work shares certain affinities with these currents from more recent critical theory, as his open-ended style runs against the grain of the reifying tendencies of the sanctioned historical discourse of his own era. His parodic style—with its extended quotation of the most egregious passages from Hornaday and other biased authorities, relentless dissections, innumerable digressions, and caustic asides—constitutes a dialogical form of writing that was utterly opposed to the hierarchical closure of conventional historical discourse. Unlike historical synthesis that seeks to override the vernacular, Roe insists on preserving local difference, and rather than the familiar declarative voice of scholarly writing, he favours the interrogative. He continually poses questions

to readers, and, as one might expect of an inquiring mind, is often dissatisfied with the answers—his own or those of others. For example, having discredited the buffalo authorities' notion of regular buffalo migrations, Roe also freely acknowledges his own inability to replace the conventional wisdom with a new hypothesis, as he refers to "those numerous instances in which the origin of some recognized and powerful impulse is the despair of the inquirer."⁶⁹

Yet Roe's *The North American Buffalo* is far more than a deconstruction or dismantling of faulty authorities. He devotes at least as much attention to historical reconstructions through the painstaking analysis of the entire corpus of primary published material on the buffalo, including documentation of its movements and whether hypothesized migrations could be verified. He also seeks to reconstruct the sequence of actions in both the United States and Canada leading to the near extirpation of the species in the wild. Roe's book provides encyclopedic data on environmental history, including the climate and topography of buffalo habitat in regions across the continent.

Notwithstanding the support of key scholars and university officials in Edmonton, Roe encountered resistance when seeking to publish his manuscript. In his unpublished autobiography, he relates a succession of rejections by university presses, whose editors asserted that they could entertain the work of only accredited scholars. He writes: "Meanwhile several years passed by and publication seemed no nearer than ever. I grew very much discouraged; and more than once, but for my wife's remonstrances, I think the MS. would have gone into the furnace." He submitted several chapters of the manuscript to the *Canadian Historical Review*, which accepted them for publication as articles.⁷⁰ As well, Roe's academic colleagues, apparently from the University of Alberta, read Roe's papers on his behalf at annual meetings of the Royal Society of Canada, and two of his essays on the buffalo were published in the Society's *Transactions*.⁷¹ Then, according to Roe, "a lucky accident happened." In 1949 Roe learned that George Brown, professor of history at the University of Toronto and long-term editor of the *Canadian Historical Review*, who had published some of Roe's work in that journal, was coming to Vancouver to lecture at the University of British Columbia. Learning of his impending sojourn, Roe invited Brown to visit him in Victoria, and when Brown arrived, he presented him with his 1,637-page manuscript. Roe writes: "I think the size of it almost took his breath away. After looking through it quite briefly he evidently caught the general 'motif.' 'This thing ought to be printed, Mr. Roe.'" At Brown's request, Roe mailed him the manuscript after his return to Toronto, and it was published within two years by the University of Toronto Press.

Almost coincidentally, the University of Alberta awarded Roe a Doctorate of Laws, *honoris causa*, on 20 October 1951 and invited him to deliver the con-

vocation address.⁷² Roe's achievements were further recognized by leading academic historians of his day. In the late 1950s, George Stanley and F.E.L. Priestley, themselves eminent scholars in History and English, nominated Roe to the Royal Society of Canada. After some debate focusing on his advanced age, Roe was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1960 at the age of eighty-two. In the early 1980s, historian Lewis G. Thomas wrote an appreciation of Roe in the foreword to a posthumous autobiographical compilation extracted from Roe's unpublished papers, entitled *Getting the Know-How: Homesteading and Railroading in Early Alberta*.⁷³ Numerous laudatory reviews greeted the publication of Roe's *The North American Buffalo* across North America and Britain, including a review in the journal *Ecology* by F. Fraser Darling, who characterized it as "one of those great books which will adorn the culture of a continent."⁷⁴ In an obituary and tribute published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada, historian George Stanley describes Roe's book as "truly a magnificent work, which received acclaim from scholars in Great Britain, France, Germany and Poland, as well as in Canada and the United States."⁷⁵ The book's enduring resonance resides in its author's critical spirit and unceasing quest for the truth.

Roy Ito (1922–2000)

BORN IN VANCOUVER IN 1922, Roy Ito was a member of the Nisei or second-generation Japanese Canadians in British Columbia. While growing up in Vancouver, he became acutely aware of the linguistic barriers that had cropped up between the generations, even within his own family, in which his parents spoke Japanese and he was far more fluent in English. Against these differences, he related the importance of the Asahi baseball team in providing a venue at which the entire community could come together. A shared sense of belonging to a community, one united not by linguistic bonds so much as its members' shared sense of marginalization from mainstream society, impressed on Ito and other members of his generation the need to support one another in the face of systemic racism in British Columbia.⁷⁶

Following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the implementation of compulsory registration and removal of all Japanese Canadians in Canada's west coastal zone, Ito moved with his family to southern Alberta, where they worked on a sugar beet farm. A year later, he moved back to Kaslo in B.C.'s interior, where he assumed the position of assistant English editor for *The New Canadian* newspaper under the editorship of Thomas Shoyama. The core group of young writers to which he belonged—including Marje Umezuki, Muriel Kitigawa, and Harry Kondo—saw their role as one of reinforcing the faith and confidence of members of the Japanese-Canadian community in their identity as Canadians



Roy Ito, ca. 1984.
Photo courtesy of Mrs. Mitsy Ito.

through this difficult period of displacement and marginalization. Shoyama writes: "We had a sense of mission in the sense that it was very important to do everything we could to sustain morale. We had to tell people: Look, in spite of all these terrible things that have happened to you, stand on your own feet. Look within yourself to your own strength and self-respect and your own sense of dignity."⁷⁷

After commencing studies at McMaster University in 1943, Ito enlisted with the S-20 Unit of Japanese Canadian recruits for service with Canadian forces in the Second World War and served as a sergeant with the Canadian Intelligence Corps in India and Southeast Asia. After the Second

World War, he completed his university studies, became a teacher, and for the last twenty-five years of his career, served as a school principal, retiring in 1984. Even before his retirement, Ito had already embarked on a major project to research the history of Japanese Canadians' role in the First and Second World Wars. As a veteran of the Second World War, he felt a responsibility to his comrades to tell their story of fighting for Canada and in particular of the First World War veterans' application of their wartime service to secure the franchise for Japanese Canadian veterans, a prelude to the general extension of the franchise to Asian Canadians after the Second World War. In 1984, the year of his retirement as a school principal, Ito published his first book, *We Went to War: The Story of the Japanese Canadians Who Served during the First and Second World Wars*. In focusing on the wartime service of both Issei and Nisei generations, Ito stresses the role of their military service in demonstrating for Japanese Canadians a sense of belonging to Canada, of participating in the country's struggles and sharing in its sacrifices. He writes: "For Japanese Canadian veterans, the struggle was not merely to wear the King's uniform, not to gain the franchise, but to be able to say without any fear of contradiction: 'I am a part of my country. I have suffered in her struggles and gloried in her victories, I was ready when I was needed. I am a Canadian.'"⁷⁸

Ito's research for this book included extensive reliance on Japanese language sources, including period newspapers and published diaries and letters from soldiers, from which the author selected and translated passages for inclusion in the book, supplemented by oral histories. These quoted passages afford a vividness and immediacy to his account, which goes far to illuminate the soldiers' experience in the theatre of war, including their aspirations, achievements, and suffering.⁷⁹ Ito also carried out considerable archival research, but that is not the principal strength of the book. Its merit largely resides in incorporating Japanese-Canadian voices into the story and in enabling the assorted participants to speak for themselves as witnesses to history. While he left an extensive set of papers elaborating research on many chapters in Japanese-Canadian history, Ito's reluctance to focus on himself is evident in the dearth of material in his papers dealing with his practice as a historian. Nevertheless, an entry from his wartime diary affords a partial glimpse into his philosophy of history. Referring to the agency of his Nisei comrades in enlisting in the Canadian armed forces in 1945 and the significance of their taking this step for the Japanese-Canadian community, he writes: "[We] felt a big significant step forward was made for our people. Motto 'Action From Knowledge.'"⁸⁰ A further, concise statement of his concrete, experiential approach to history can be drawn from a passage in his second book, *Stories of My People*, in which he writes: "[History] should be told from the inside, a history as seen and remembered by the people who have shared the experience."⁸¹

Ito's largest work, researched and written over an eight- to ten-year period following his retirement, is the book *Stories of My People: A Japanese Canadian Journal*, a wide-ranging series of vignettes of both well-known and obscure people and events in Japanese-Canadian history. Loosely organized chronologically into five eras of Japanese-Canadian experience in Canada (1877–1907, 1908–18, 1918–41, 1941–45, and 1945–88), it also includes a section on Canadian Nisei recruits in wartime Japan, in which the author relates his own experiences as a Canadian soldier during the Second World War through a series of stories. The balance of his narrative traces this history through the life stories of other individuals, from the arrival of the first Japanese Canadian immigrant in 1877 to the attainment of the redress settlement and the formal apology of the federal government to Japanese Canadians in 1988. Ito was one of the first scholars to address this history through extensive reliance on Japanese language newspapers and oral history, in contrast with the archivally based research of other historians. As Marilyn Iwama points out in a 1995 review of the book, Ito's approach to research influenced the interpretive orientation of his book. Rather than rely on government documents that presented to historians an image of Japanese Canadians as submissive victims, Ito's direct experience of the

Second World War, as well as his research in Japanese-Canadian newspapers, revealed to him that his own community had reacted to injustices with dignity and active resistance.⁸² His work contrasts significantly with academic work of the same era, which is based largely on government sources and tends toward interpretations aligned with official justifications of the internment of Japanese Canadians on the basis of wartime contexts of 1942.⁸³

In terms of form, *Stories of My People* does not represent Japanese-Canadian history as a seamless narrative. Rather, Ito broke up the continuous flow of text with photographs, cartoons, anecdotes, lists of people whose history was being represented, a plan of the Japanese neighbourhood of Powell Street, and even poetry, such as “Powell Street Knows” by Mark Toyama, a voice of the Nisei generation. Periodically punctuating the generally reserved narrative with occasional expressions of emotion—including anger, nostalgia, joy, grief, and devotion—Ito did not feign objectivity and distance from his subject. These periodic ruptures in Ito’s narrative echo the disjunctures in Japanese-Canadian history, a history that resists the smooth continuities of conventional narrative history. Even so, Ito found agency in the midst of injustice. For example, notwithstanding the racist character of many of the displayed cartoons, Ito managed to find one that showed spirited resistance within his community to the violent attacks during the 1907 anti-Asian riots in Vancouver.⁸⁴ Overlaying and connecting the individual stories is Ito’s literary device of treating the stories as his own personal journal, although he resisted the temptation to shape them into an integrated whole. Ito’s evident objective was to enable each story to speak for itself and retain its own integrity as a stand-alone episode without being subordinated to an overriding narrative synthesis.

Ito’s emotion shows through in the penultimate chapter of *Stories of My People*, a chapter dealing with the friendship and collaboration of George Tanaka of the National Japanese Canadian Citizens Association and Ken Adachi, a journalist chosen by the association to write the history of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. The publication of Adachi’s book in 1976 was a milestone in the revival of Japanese-Canadian post-internment identity, and it examines an important chapter in Canadian history neglected in mainstream historiography. Ito’s chapter consists largely of extended letters between Tanaka and Adachi, affording a revealing glimpse into the struggles of writers within marginalized communities. In their correspondence, Adachi writes of various setbacks and a lack of support for his writing, while Tanaka repeatedly urges him to continue.⁸⁵ Adachi was finally able to publish *The Enemy That Never Was* in 1976, thirteen years before his suicide in Toronto. Of this tragic event, Ito comments tersely: “Silence isn’t always golden.”⁸⁶

Ito concludes *Stories of My People* with a chapter on the redress settlement of 1988, followed by his concluding reflections entitled “The End of My Journal.” Here, he expresses ambivalence regarding the history of the Japanese Canadians in the twentieth century. While expressing no bitterness toward Canada, he could not forget his experiences of growing up in British Columbia: “We were called names ... dirty Japs! The word still makes us bristle. There were hakujin who seem to have an unreasonable loathing for all things Japanese.... We were sitting ducks. ‘Boycott their stores. Close their schools. The Japs are treacherous. Send them back to Japan.’” Ito also reflects on the prospect of community fragmentation: “The ties that once bound us from west to east as one community will be no more. We are moving as a small invisible minority living in fragmented communities.”⁸⁷ Alongside his expressed ambivalence toward British Columbia, Ito simultaneously expresses a deep attachment to Canada, a country that he served overseas in the Second World War.

The author’s concluding words were drawn from a poem by Motoori Norinaga, an eighteenth-century Japanese scholar and poet. Ito writes: “It is a poem no Japanese can read without being moved but it has to be read and understood in Japanese. It reveals the essence of the spirit of the Japanese people, a part of our heritage”:

Shikishima no
Yamato gokoro o hito towaba
Asahi ni ni-o-u
Yamazakura kana.

Notwithstanding his admonition that the poem needs to be understood in Japanese, as a teacher Ito could not refrain from offering a translation for readers he knew would not be able to read it in its original language: “The morning fragrance of the mountain cherry blossom is the Yamato spirit of Japan.”⁸⁸ With understated grace, Ito thereby expresses his pride in his own people.

Conclusions

FOR MUCH OF THE LAST CENTURY, vernacular history has been a vital, if often discounted, force in Western Canadian historiography. In both Western Canada and other regions of the country, it occupied a critical place in the practice of history even as advancing concepts of professional history after 1900 generated the new category of “amateur” as its binary opposite and as a prelude to its marginalization. Within successive generations of the twentieth century, the vernacular impulse persisted in the oral traditions of Aboriginal cultures, as well

as within successive waves of immigrant communities. It survived in both towns and rural districts, where often one or more dedicated individuals typically assumed the role of documenting the community's history. Unlike its professional counterparts, vernacular history was characteristically un-nationalistic.⁸⁹ While oral traditions continued within Aboriginal and other communities, over time vernacular writing was extensively displaced by written histories of Euro-Canadian groups that became dominant in the post-Confederation economic, social, political, and cultural life of the four Western provinces. Thereafter, orality was accorded little credibility in the emerging text-based cultures of the Prairies, although in the first half of the twentieth century, the distinction between professionals and amateurs could not be rigidly maintained. Even after the great expansion of academic and public history between the 1950s and 1970s, when the professional historical canon became well entrenched, vernacular currents could still be discerned. Today they hold the potential to connect us to people who either directly participated in important events or who left us grassroots knowledge bearing upon the interpretation of these events.

The history of vernacular historical production reminds us of what was lost alongside what was gained in the course of professionalization. Beyond issues of inclusion or exclusion of content, a casualty of professionalization was a loss of multivocality, as diverse grassroots voices bearing on historical experience were appropriated and subsumed under the monological syntheses of scholars as authorities. Here we might refer to the French philosopher Jacques Rancière, whose book *The Names of History* offers a rather trenchant critique of Annales-style social history. Rancière asserts that in the course of dissecting and analyzing human groups from the past, the Annales scholars inflicted a second death on the people they were studying, robbing them of their vitality as historical agents by smothering them with what he terms "the excess of words."⁹⁰ I would certainly not endorse Rancière's sweeping critique of the great Annales tradition, but he may have a point. What has often been missing in Western Canadian historiography is the voices of historical participants or individuals with grassroots experience of their communities' histories, as well as direct dialogical engagement with these voices by practitioners seeking to represent their experience.⁹¹

Excepting several unique characteristics owing to their different personalities and life trajectories, the work of the three vernacular historians highlighted here illuminates three different eras of Western Canadian historiography over the last century. The work of Katherine Hughes belongs to the earliest phase of post-Confederation historical writing in the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Operating outside the nascent male- and Anglo-Canadian-dominated historical profession of Western Canada in that era, her choice of Albert

Lacombe as biographical subject contrasts with the nation-building preoccupations of her contemporaries. In terms of form, she pioneered in oral history and wrote history as a succession of open-ended contingencies in the present, as opposed to a retrospective, sealed-off process. Hughes' idealization of Lacombe prevented her from fully representing the diversity of perspectives and voices bearing on his career although her extensive use of quoted material expressed a partially realized dialogism surpassing the monological narratives of other historians of that period. A generation later, F.G. Roe's *The North American Buffalo* represented a more fully dialogized engagement with history, manifested in the author's extended debates with his sources and in his candour regarding his own thought process, displaying a critical spirit and method throughout. Roe's widely acknowledged achievements owed much to a fairly open scholarly environment in Edmonton in the first half of the twentieth century, when academic historians reached beyond the university to encourage a prodigiously talented vernacular historian who they recognized was making a significant contribution to the field. By contrast, Roy Ito was writing in the late twentieth century in British Columbia, when Japanese Canadians still felt isolated from mainstream society and academic historians were either writing about their history from a position of distanced removal or ignoring it altogether. Acutely aware of his community's marginalization in historical discourse, Ito researched and highlighted important episodes omitted in the prevailing historiography. In the process, he experimented with form and produced multivocal works disrupting the organicist flow of conventional narrative, enabling vernacular voices to be heard and challenging readers to reconsider their assumptions regarding the boundaries of legitimate historical discourse. Each of these writers drew on their own direct experiences as witnesses to history to add to our understanding of the people and events about which they were writing. As outsiders freed from the constraints of conventional form, they followed history wherever the evidence and their imaginations took them, exemplifying a fusion of vernacular experimentation and grassroots commitment. Their works attest to the dynamism of the vernacular impulse and the importance of recovering and nurturing this strain to the revitalization of the practice of history in Western Canada. *

Notes

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- 2 David C. Jones, "Toward a New Form in the Writing of Canadian History," *Archivaria* 20 (Summer 1985): 168.
- 3 "Vernacular," *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 2:3523.
- 4 See Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1999); and Mark C. Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition: Oral Poetics and Literate Culture in Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2004).
- 5 See, for example, Bennet Schaber, "Modernity and the Vernacular," *Surfaces* 1 (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1991), <http://www.pum.umontreal.ca/revues/surfaces/vol1/vol1TdM.htmlpp>; and Russell Potter, *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995).
- 6 Lyle Dick, "The Seven Oaks Incident and the Construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816 to 1970," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, n.s., 2 (1991): 91-113; John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
- 7 Bennet Schaber, "Modernity and the Vernacular." *Surfaces* 1.
- 8 Elsewhere I have argued that the practice of vernacular architecture has affinities to the concept of bricolage, as elaborated by anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who distinguished between two types of science—the abstract Western science, analogous to the approach of an engineer, and the concrete or applied science of a bricoleur, or handyman. Where the engineer designs specific tools and conceptual frameworks for each new problem, the bricoleur pragmatically reworks materials within pre-existing mental frameworks to arrive at a suitable solution. A good example of the vernacular result of the "untamed thinking" characterizing bricolage is the complex of wintering shelters erected by the North Polar explorer Robert Peary and his expedition party in an emergency situation in the High Arctic in 1900. See Lyle Dick, "The Fort Conger Shelters and Vernacular Adaptation to the High Arctic," *SSAC Bulletin (Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada)* 16, no. 1 (March 1991): 13-23; and Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). See also Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

- 9 Robert Blair St. George, "Introduction," in *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 26.
- 10 Mikhail Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 41–83; and Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, eds., *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 325–44.
- 11 Roger D. Abrahams, "Creolizations," in *Everyday Life: A Poetics of Vernacular Practices* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 217–37. Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, as well as Todd Boyd, have similarly argued that the vernacular is characterized by "cultural syncretism," which affirms vernacular cultural expressions even as it "protests against the dominant cultural ideology." See Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995): 21–22; and Todd Boyd, "Deep in the Shed: The Discourse of African-American Cinema," *Iowa Journal of Literary Studies* 11 (1991): 99–104.
- 12 Ono and Sloop, "Critique of Vernacular Discourse," 19–46; and Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, *Shifting Borders: Rhetoric, Immigration and California's Proposition 187* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 13. See also Peter Hitchcock, *Dialogics of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xv–xvi.
- 13 Richard Harvey Brown, *Social Science as Civic Discourse: Essays on the Invention, Legitimation, and Uses of Social Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 109–10.
- 14 On "experiential history" and its critique of professional hierarchies, see Jean Barman, "'I Walk My Own Track in Life and No Mere Male Can Bump Me off It': Constance Lindsay Skinner and the Work of History," in *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*, eds. Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); and *Constance Lindsay Skinner: Writing on the Frontier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
- 15 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," in Holquist, *Dialogic Imagination*, 3–10.
- 16 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in Holquist, *Dialogic Imagination*, 271–72. See also Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 30.
- 17 Valentin N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Knowledge*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (New York: Seminar, 1973), 120–22; and Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 165. Bakhtin scholars Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist have argued that this work was actually authored by Bakhtin and published under the name of Voloshinov, a member of his scholarly circle. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1984), 146–70. For counter-arguments on the issue of this book's authorship, see Morson and Emerson, 102–19. In any case, the issue of whether or not Bakhtin authored this text is of little consequence for this discussion, as the arguments of Voloshinov are consistent with the tenor of Bakhtin's other writings and his philosophy of dialogism.

- 18 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- 19 To refer to some current definitions, the word *professional* has alternately been defined as 1) following an occupation as a means of livelihood or for gain, and 2) engaged in one of the learned professions. *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (Random House, 2006), <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/professional>. Alternatively, the word *amateur* has been defined as 1) a person who engages in a study, sport, or other activity for pleasure rather than for financial benefit or professional reasons, and 2) a person inexperienced or unskilled in a particular activity. *Ibid.*, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/amateur>. It was the latter definition of *amateur* that was to prevail in the consciousness of professional historians in the twentieth century.
- 20 The master narrative of the Canadian historical profession as the unproblematic advance of professional over amateur practice was asserted or implied in Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing: 1900 to 1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 1; M. Brook Taylor, *Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans: Historiography in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); and A.B. McKillop, "Historiography in English," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, rev. ed. (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1988), 993.
- 21 In the first edition of Carl Berger's *The Writing of Canadian History*, for example, only three women were listed in the index—Hilda Neatby, Judith Robinson, and Jean Burnet. Burnet, a sociologist from the University of Toronto, was included because she authored one of the volumes of the Social Credit series discussed in Berger's book while Robinson, a journalist, was apparently included for sharing some of historian Donald Creighton's political concerns. Neatby was the only female professional historian in the country considered to merit inclusion. See also Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada to the 1950s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 52–81.
- 22 Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); and Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).
- 23 See James Stephens, *Francis Bacon and the Style of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Robert Adolph, *The Rise of Modern Prose Style* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1968).
- 24 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 5–23.; James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002), 201.
- 25 Gramsci, *Selections*, 6.
- 26 Roger D. Abrahams, *Everyday Life: A Poetics of Vernacular Practices*, 45 (fig. 1), 62 (fig. 2).
- 27 Northrop Frye wrote that the purpose of genre criticism is "not so much to classify as to clarify ... traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were

no context established for them.” Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 247–48. It should be stressed that while this essay seeks to draw attention to vernacular history as a legitimate and important genre within Western Canadian historiography, it is not being claimed that it necessarily comes closer than academic counterparts to the truth of history, however that might be defined. As literary scholar James Fairhall has pointed out, neither academic nor vernacular historians of the 1882 Phoenix Park murders in Dublin were able to provide a definitive account of this incident. In contrast, he suggests that the dialogical forms of novelist James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* and *Ulysses* come closer to accurately representing the complexity and diversity of voices bearing on this event than is evident in works cast in either vernacular or academic genres of historical writing. See James Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially 11–39, 59–60, and *passim*. I would like to thank Walter Hildebrandt for drawing my attention to Fairhall’s insightful account. This is not to suggest that historical treatments (whether academic or vernacular) more oriented to dialogical interactions between writers, texts, and readers might not more successfully engage the complicated scene of history than the monologically oriented texts referenced by Fairhall.

- 28 Grant Farred, “Introduction: Thinking in the Vernacular,” in *What’s My Name: Black Vernacular Intellectuals* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 14.
- 29 See Nicos Poulantzas’s discussion of the “new petit bourgeoisie” in *Classes in Contemporary Society* (London: New Left Books, 1976); and Stanley Aronowicz, “The Professional-Managerial Class or Middle Strata,” in *Between Labor and Capital* ed. Pat Walker (New York: South End Press, 1979), 213–42.
- 30 Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), “Expressive Language,” in *Home: Social Essays* (New York: Morrow, 1966), 171. Interestingly, a developing discourse on “outsider” pedagogy in law schools seems to signal an awareness of problems of exclusionary academic discourses and practice, at least within university legal studies in Canada. See Natasha Bakht, Kim Brooks, Gillian Calder, Jennifer Koshan, Sonia Lawrence, Carissima Mathen, and Debra Parkes, “Counting Outsiders: A Critical Exploration of Outsider Course Enrollment in Canadian Legal Education,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 45, no. 4 (2007): 667–732.
- 31 Pádraig O Siadhail, “Katherine Hughes, Irish Political Activist,” in *Edmonton: The Life of a City*, eds. Bob Hesketh and Frances Swyripa (Edmonton: NewWest Press, 1995), 78–87.
- 32 Pádraig O Siadhail, “Hughes, Katherine (Catherine) Angelina,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, ed. Ramsay Cook (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2004), <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=42059&query=hughes>.
- 33 Provincial Archives of Alberta (Edmonton), Katherine Hughes Papers 74-340/81, Katherine Hughes, 21 September 1908, quoted in Siadhail, “Katherine Hughes, Irish Political Activist,” 87.
- 34 Siadhail, “Katherine Hughes, Irish Political Activist,” 80–83; and Sheila Ross, “‘For God and Canada’: The Early Years of the Catholic Women’s League in Alberta,” *CCHA Historical Studies* 62 (1996): 90–92.

- 35 In their correspondence, Lacombe addressed Hughes as “Omimi,” an Ojibwa term meaning “turtle dove,” and she addressed him, alternately, as “Father Lacombe,” “Big Chief of the Rockies,” “Father and Chief,” and “Aahsosskitsipahpiwa,” a name given to him by the Blackfoot, meaning “the good heart.” Provincial Archives of Alberta, OMI Grandin Province Archives, acc. 71.220, box 156, file 6548. I would like to thank Ms. Diane Lamoureux, Archivist with the OMI Grandin Province Archives, for kindly locating and sharing with me the correspondence between Katherine Hughes and Father Lacombe in this collection.
- 36 Raymond Huel, “Lacombe, Albert,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, ed. Ramsay Cook (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 14:576. In the early twentieth century, the engagement of a layperson to write a priest’s biography was unusual, especially if that layperson was female. According to Huel, the approval of Bishop Émile-Joseph Legal was undoubtedly required, but Hughes clearly impressed Lacombe with her career as a Roman Catholic missionary, and her religious credentials were impeccable. As well, in 1906 she published a biography of her uncle, Archbishop Cornelius O’Brien of the Diocese of Halifax, which may have impressed her Catholic clients in Alberta. See Katherine Hughes, *Archibishop O’Brien: Man and Churchman* (Ottawa: Rolla L. Crain, 1906).
- 37 Ken Kaiser and Merrily Aubrey, eds., *In the Promised Land of Alberta’s North: The Northern Journal of Katherine Hughes* (Summer 1909) (Edmonton: Historical Society of Alberta, 2006). In presenting her first report as provincial archivist to Premier Rutherford in 1909, Hughes elaborated on her collecting priorities. Stating that the archives had communicated with more than five hundred towns, cities, and settlements, she indicated that in each of these communities, several persons were “asked for information.” She added: “In passing, it may be remarked that the collecting of Archives does not now consist, as in the past, mainly in securing documents bearing upon outstanding events of interest, affairs of political interest and matters of great moment generally. This work has taken on a broader aspect, and now embraces all records bearing on the social conditions of a country as well, for these have come to be regarded as essential to the study of writing of history.” Beyond major collections such as the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, the Masson Collection, missionary reports, and “the copying of any important reports referring to Alberta in the Canadian Archives in Ottawa,” Hughes stressed the need to collect “reminiscences and narratives of pioneers, traders, prospectors, missionaries, ranchers, and other settlers together with maps, charts, documents, diaries or private letters relating to historic incidents in the family or public life.” Provincial Archives of Alberta (Edmonton), Legislative Library Records, GR 74.350, file 82, correspondence, 1908–10, Katherine Hughes to the Honourable Alexander C. Rutherford, 15 February 1909; and Hughes’ “Preliminary Report in Connection with the Recently Established Archives for the Province of Alberta,” 1, 2, and 5. It might be noted that Hughes’ archival collecting priorities anticipated a number of the concerns of Canadian social historians that emerged sixty to seventy years later.
- 38 Katherine Hughes, “Foreword to New Edition,” in *Father Lacombe: The Black-Robe Voyageur* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1920), x.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 250–51, 231–32.

- 40 Siadhail, "Katherine Hughes, Irish Political Activist," 82.
- 41 Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black-Robe Voyageur*, 295–96.
- 42 According to Hughes' notes, in Lacombe's speech to the Blackfoot at Hobbema, Alberta, he said: "Suppose we kill or drive away all who are here—the Govt. will send an army of 1000s of soldiers, for the world is full of white people. Then, they will exterminate us. Let us submit. Many countries in [the] world where people of land had to give it up after struggles to the whites. Submit." Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa), Katherine Hughes fonds, MG 30, D 71, vol. 1, file 6, Memoranda: Notes on Father Lacombe and Northwest Missions [handwritten notes entitled "A Passing Thought"].
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 George Bryce, *The Old Settlers of Red River: A Paper Read before the Society on the Evening of 26th November 1885* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Historical Society Transactions, 1885), 6.
- 45 Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa), Katherine Hughes fonds, MG 30, D 71, vol. 1, file 6, Memoranda: Notes on Father Lacombe and Northwest Missions, "To La Tourterelle [Katherine Hughes] Omimi, from The Old Chief [Father Lacombe]," n.d.
- 46 Ibid., vol. 4, file 21, Memoranda – Personal and Family, "My Belief" [handwritten notes].
- 47 Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 117.
- 48 George Bryce, *A History of Manitoba, Its Resources and People* (Toronto, 1906), 306. See also the discussion in Dick, "Seven Oaks Incident."
- 49 Historian Raymond Huel observes: "Although Hughes may have thrown humility to the winds in her depiction of Lacombe's character, *Father Lacombe, the Black-Robe Voyageur* is an accurate factual account of his activities and career." Raymond Huel, "Lacombe, Albert," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, ed. Ramsay Cook, 14:576. In his own biography of Lacombe, popular historian James G. MacGregor also pays tribute to Hughes' book. He writes: "Prior to his death some sixty years ago Katherine Hughes wrote her excellent *Father Lacombe: The Black-Robe Voyageur*. In the present work there is little about the man himself to add to her account." James G. MacGregor, *Father Lacombe* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1975), 11.
- 50 See the thoughtful discussion of these issues in the introduction and essays in Celia Haig-Brown and David A. Nock, eds., *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).
- 51 Frank Gilbert Roe, *Getting the Know-How: Homesteading and Railroading in Early Alberta* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), 9–15.
- 52 Library and Archives Canada, (Ottawa), RG 31, Statistics Canada Records, 1906 Census of the Prairie Provinces, Alberta, Strathcona District No. 21, Sub-district 28 (Townships 39, 40, 41 in ranges 23, 24, 25 west of the 4th M), family no. 326, microfilm reel no. T-18363.

- 53 Roe later recalled: "I suppose I read at first for the pure pleasure: history, biography, and their kind, mingled with such sane, down-to-earth criticism as one gets—and from such masters!—in the English Men of Letters." He particularly "gloried in the nineteenth-century historians" and owned his own copies of works by Gibbon, Hallam, Carlyle, Froude, Macaulay, Mommsen, Motley, Prescott, Schiller, and John Richard Green. He also studied "many of the great critics in English history especially: Stubbs, Maitland, Bishop Creighton and Thorold Rogers, and the massive intelligence of John Fiske." From these luminaries "I learned much of the stylistic and logical approach to the critical revisionist's problems; and incidentally I also mastered the 'mechanics' of the apparatus criticus." University of Victoria Archives (Victoria), Frank Gilbert Roe fonds, F.G. Roe, "That's How It Seemed to Be," unpublished autobiographical manuscript, chap. 32, "New Ambitions."
- 54 Roe, *Getting the Know-How*, 111, 113.
- 55 University of Victoria Archives (Victoria, B.C.), Frank Gilbert Roe fonds, series C, box 1, F.G. Roe, "Unpublished Memoirs," chap. 32, "New Ambitions," typescript. See also Frank Gilbert Roe, "Trails," in *Getting the Know-How*, 81–87.
- 56 A.S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870–71* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1939); Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis canadien: son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest* (Paris: Institute d'ethnologie, 1945); W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957).
- 57 In the preface to *The North American Buffalo*, Roe later writes: "Without the aid of the late Hon. A.C. Rutherford, Chancellor of the University (and first Premier of the Province of Alberta), it probably never could have been written." He writes that Rutherford granted him free access to "his magnificent library of early Canadiana and Americana, which included many very valuable original editions. From this rich collection I was allowed to take away anything I chose to select." F.G. Roe, *The North American Buffalo: A Critical Study of the Species in Its Wild State*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), v.
- 58 Roe writes that, having exhausted the available research materials at the province's legislative library and the Edmonton municipal library, he approached Cameron "not without some inner fear and trembling, and stated my needs. I may say that I was at once taken to his heart; and we became fast friends until his death twenty-five years later." Roe, "Unpublished Memoirs," chap. 32, "New Ambitions."
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 In his unpublished memoirs, Roe writes: "I had long felt that there was need for a drastic change of front in the approach to Western history. This had in my opinion been abandoned far too long to the treatment of men who in their simplicity reminded me of the mediaeval monkish chronicler; and like him needed their rhapsodies to be checked from the Public Records Office.... There was a complete absence of the critical attitude which, in such fields as ancient Rome or mediaeval England, was felt to be the very beginning of wisdom." Roe, "Unpublished Memoirs," chap. 33, "Widening Horizons."

- 61 Roe's aversion to stereotypes appears to have been a lifelong tendency. While still a teenager, he bristled at the notion that all British immigrants belonged to a type, drawing distinctions between British farmers or land workers, artisan townsmen, and what he termed the "'middle-class' quasi-aristocrat" of southern Alberta. He regarded any such lumping of social groups "preposterous." It is this long-standing aversion to stereotypes that animates so much of the argument in Roe's *The North American Buffalo*.
- 62 Roe, "Unpublished Memoirs," chap. 32, "New Ambitions."
- 63 For example, after reproaching First Nations people for excessive reliance on the buffalo, McDougall also wrote that "so long as we can get buffalo within three hundred miles we would prefer buffalo steaks to barley-meal." Roe observes: "After this, from a scion of a meal-eating ancestry, who had then spent only two years among the buffalo, who shall blame the Indian or his kin!" Roe, *North American Buffalo*, 400.
- 64 Roe, *North American Buffalo*, 378.
- 65 Ibid., 143.
- 66 William Temple Hornaday, "The Extirpation of the American Bison, with a Sketch of Its Discovery and Life History," *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution for the Year 1887*, pt. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 369–548.
- 67 Roe, *North American Buffalo*, 664ff.
- 68 Roe, "That's How It Seemed to Be," chap. 33, "Widening Horizons."
- 69 Roe, *North American Buffalo*, 542.
- 70 Frank G. Roe, "The Extirpation of the Buffalo in Western Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 15, no. 1 (March 1934): 1–23; "Buffalo and Snow," *Canadian Historical Review* 17, no. 2 (June 1936): 125–46; "Buffalo as Possible Influence in the Development of Prairie Lands," *Canadian Historical Review*, 20, no. 3 (September 1939): 275–87.
- 71 Frank Gilbert Roe, "The Red River Hunt," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, ser. 3, sec. II, XXIX (1935): 171–218; and "The Numbers of the Buffalo," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, ser. 3, sec. II, XXXI (1937): 171–82.
- 72 In his convocation address in 1951, Roe paid extended tribute to the late university librarian D.E. Cameron, who had encouraged him. Noting the contrast in their social stations, he writes: "I was in railroad service, and in the 'black squad,' the caste characterized with some contempt by Shakespeare as 'lean unwashed artificers,'" and even more contemptuously by Rudyard Kipling. "As against this, Mr. Cameron was member of four universities, and a most distinguished member of a faculty of a fifth. It was no small thing to be treated as an equal by such a man. I am proud to know that we remained fast friends as long as he lived." University of Victoria Archives (Victoria, B.C.), Frank Gilbert Roe fonds, box 49, ser. H, "Newspaper Cuttings," Frank Gilbert Roe, "Address to the Graduating Class," 20 October 1951, p. 167.

- 73 L.G. Thomas, "Foreword," in Roe, *Getting the Know-How*, xi. Thomas observes: "Roe's ironic view of the world about him emerges in his memoir even more frequently than in the scholarly publications of his long lifetime. His sharply critical mind made him suspicious of received popular wisdom. He was as impatient with the propagandist who represented the prairie soils as inexhaustible as he was with what he saw as A.S. Morton's unduly charitable judgment of the Hudson's Bay Company."
- 74 F. Fraser Darling, "Ecology and History of the Bison," *Ecology* 33, no. 2 (1952): 307–08.
- 75 George Stanley, "Frank Gilbert Roe (1878–1973)," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada*, ser. 4, vol. 7 (1974): 62–65.
- 76 See Roy Ito, "My Field of Dreams," *Stories of My People: A Japanese Canadian Journal* (Hamilton, ON: Promark Printing, 1994), 1–8.
- 77 John Endo Greenaway, *The New Canadian—A History*, Exhibition at the Japanese Canadian National Museum (2008), <http://jccabulletin-geppo.ca/o8o4-april-o8/the-new-canadian-a-history>.
- 78 Roy Ito, *We Went to War: The Story of the Japanese Canadians Who Served during the First and Second World Wars* (Stittsville, ON: Canada's Wings, 1984), 284.
- 79 Ibid. See especially "Heroic Volunteer Soldiers," 5–76.
- 80 Japanese Canadian National Museum (Burnaby, B.C.), Roy Ito Collection, ser. 1: Material related to Roy Ito's Second World War Experience: 2001/04.01.001, Roy Ito War Diary, 22 March–1 December 1945, entry for 7 April 1945.
- 81 Ito, *Stories of My People*, 432.
- 82 Marilyn Iwama, review of *Stories of My People*, by Roy Ito, *Pacific Affairs: An International Review of Asia and the Pacific* 68, no. 3 (1995): 470–71.
- 83 J.L. Granatstein and Gregory A. Johnson, "The Evacuation of the Japanese Canadians, 1942: A Realist Critique of the Received Version," in *On Guard for Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939–1945*, eds. Norman Hillmer, Bohdan Kordan, and Lubomyr Luciuk (Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1988), 101–29; and Patricia E. Roy, J.L. Granatstein, Masako Lino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
- 84 Roy Ito, *Stories of My People*, 61.
- 85 Ibid., 432–41.
- 86 Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).
- 87 Ito, *Stories of My People*, 453–59.
- 88 Ibid., 459–60.

- 89 In his survey of Anglo-Canadian historiography of the first three quarters of the twentieth century, Carl Berger observes that “Canada’s historians have all been nationalists of various hues.” Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 259.
- 90 Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*, trans. Hassan Melehy, intro. Hayden White (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
- 91 On the importance of vernacularity and the dialogical principle in the public sphere, see Gerald Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

Cree Intellectual Traditions in History

WINONA WHEELER

■ **A few years back**, I was nudged by my former MA supervisor to do some expert witness testimony in federal court. A daunting challenge, but I could hardly say no, as it offered a great opportunity to get first-hand insights on how oral history is presented, understood, and evaluated in that context. I learned much. Among other things, I was struck by how ill-prepared the courts are to deal with other ways of knowing. They are challenged in their task of assessing the oral history evidence offered by the Old People because they have few, if any, appropriate tools to help them understand what it is the Old People are sharing with them. So they look to the “expert witnesses” to provide some of the skills they need. In this context, studies of and in indigenous oral histories can have very real implications in the daily lives of indigenous people.

Doing oral history with Old People poses many challenges but is worthwhile because it yields precious experiences and insights into how they understand the world around them. More specifically, it yields insight into the cultural values and laws that they live by and practice in their roles as keepers of community knowledge. Elders are not just repositories of knowledge. They are not official documents; they are human beings and teachers. As the days go by, fewer and fewer of them remain among us, which makes learning

from them, preserving their teachings, and remembering them as best we can in their own contexts all that much more important.

Historians are trained to go beyond the data, to get to know their sources inside and out. This holds especially true when studying with Old People. One does not simply whip in and out of their lives; one develops reciprocal relationships with them.¹ What I want to speak to here is the importance of learning more about Indigenous knowledge keepers and how they understand the world around them. Who are these living sources? What are the tools of their trade and how do they practice it? The overarching goal of this paper is to contribute to the growing studies on the value of Indigenous oral history as source and method in scholarly research. It is intended to add a little bit about other ways of knowing in order to help us along as we carve a space for Indigenous oral history in history, as history, and it takes a momentary path outside the academic framework to consider the nature and quality of Indigenous oral histories from within their own contexts.

By no means am I an expert in Indigenous oral histories. By the standards of my people, I am a fledgling, and my learning will take a lifetime. What I understand so far comes from many intersecting places: from my predominantly *nēhiyawak* (Cree) and *nēhiyawpwātak* (Cree/Assiniboine) family members (immediate and extended) and teachers, from being a guest and student in other Indigenous communities, from academic teachers and critical and post-/anti-colonial scholars, and from First Nations and Métis literary scholars who have been writing in the oral tradition for a very long time.² In the spirit of the subject matter, I ask the reader to “listen” to the words—listen to the teachings shared with us for your own contemplation. What little analysis there is here is derived from my own contemplations and understandings.

The most learned of teachers among us is *kisēyiniw*, “an Elder.” *Kisēyiniwak* are differentiated from *kéhté-ayak*, “Old People,” by their standing in the community as people who have demonstrated throughout their lives their generosity, skills, and wisdom. The word *kisēyiniw* comes from the word *kisēwew*, which roughly translates as “protector.” This information come from the late Alex Bonais from Little Pine First Nation, who left them for us in recorded interviews with him done in the 1970s by the late Wilfred Tootoosis from Poundmaker First Nation.³ In defining *kisēyiniw*, Alex Bonais gave the analogy of a duck beating the ground with its wing to distract a potentially dangerous predator and give its little ones time to run and hide. When the Cree see this, they say, “That bird or animal *kisēwew*, that one is protecting its young. That’s what *kisēyiniw* means—to encircle oneself around or over one’s young. That’s what a true Elder does, they encircle themselves around, or hover around, their children or grandchildren.”⁴ The words *kisēyiniw* and *kisēwew* are closely related to *kisēwatisiwin*, which means “kindness, compassion, empathy.”

Stan Cuthand was born and raised on the Little Pine Cree Reserve in Saskatchewan and was among the first generation of Cree men to receive a high school and university education.⁵ He followed the path of his mentor Edward Ahenakew, a Cree from Sandy Lake First Nation,⁶ into the Anglican ministry and served as a minister and schoolteacher on a number of Indian reserves in Western Canada. For the last twenty-odd years before retiring, Stan was employed in various teaching and research vocations. We first met when I embarked on my undergraduate studies in 1982 at the University of Manitoba, where Stan Cuthand was head of the Native Studies Department. I later had the privilege of working with him until his retirement from teaching.

Stan has fond memories of growing up among great orators and storytellers. He recalls that storytelling was an integral part of everyday life and that a number of Old Men were well known for their expertise and oratorical skills:

One of the men who told stories was Sakamôtâ-inew, the son of Poundmaker. He lived at Poundmaker but he used to come to Little Pines because that's where his friends were.... And he brought his blankets and he'd place them against the wall and he sat there and sat there and he said, "Once upon a time Wisahkēcāhk⁷ was walking....," and my father said, "Well! You make the children happy!"

Sakamôtâ-inew was a teller of "miscellaneous" stories—Wisahkēcāhk stories, little stories about situations that happened in early times before Treaty, all kinds of stories "about how a person did something, gave a feast, or gave away horses or was a warrior and how he won a wife." Most stories had been passed on to him. His specialty was Wesakejac stories. One thing about Sakamôtâ-inew, "people would laugh at him. He would forget the details of some stories, or he would forget a word and wonder, 'Now what was that word I was gonna say?'" and the men would laugh at him and help him out."

Sakamôtâ-inew was one of those who came to tell stories during hard times. One winter when Stan's brother's child was sick, Sakamôtâ-inew came all the way from Poundmaker and told stories all night. "I often wondered, how did he know the child was sick that he came?" He also showed up at the wakes where his stories "helped the mourners"; his storytelling would "relieve the tension with the mourners." Stan Cuthand continued:

The other storyteller was Night Traveler. He was a real Plains Cree, he spent most of his time south in the early 1920's looking for pronghorn antelope. That's the only thing they could hunt, there was nothing left.... [Night Traveler] was witness to the signing of Treaty No. 6 and

he used to talk about it.... He specialized in the Treaties. And he said, "The Queen said you would be looked after, when you are hungry you would be fed," that's the way they understood it.

"The other storyteller was my father," Josie Cuthand, whose father, Sailing Horse, took part in the Riel Rebellion. Josie had many handed-down stories because Sailing Horse had lived with his Old People, and he had many experience stories from when he lived in Montana after the Rebellion.

Then there was Bonais (the late Alex Bonais's father), who was found as an infant crying among dead relatives in a camp ravaged by smallpox. "He was spoonfed with a little broth. He survived, and when he got older he refused to eat anything that contained milk because he was not raised on milk; then he had the belief that it would make him sick." Bonais told funny life experience stories, such as the time they surrendered at Fort Battleford in 1885 and their guns were confiscated.

We were told to raise our hands, so we raised both hands, we had no choice, and they confiscated all our rifles. And there was a pile of rifles. Some were all tied up with wire, mended over again. And these were the rifles that really defeated them [Canadian soldiers].

Bonais "told funny stories like that." He "was the one, when the soldiers withdrew from Cutknife Hill, he went down the hill and men used to laugh at him, going through the bush he lost his breech cloth, it was hanging on a tree."

Stan recalled George Atimoyoo, who was fond of horses; his "specialty in storytelling was horse racing." They used to race horses across the open country and around the mountains: "My goodness they were hard on horses. But those ponies must have been very, very strong; they had a lot of stamina. Just like the Indians."

He also recalled Cikinásis, who told war stories about the societies and the battles, mostly with the Blackfoot. He had exciting stories to tell and was very entertaining, "but then the women didn't like him because ... he told off-colored stories. The women used to say he swears too much. Dirty stories. But the men liked him.... If I was around and he started telling stories ... the dirty stories, [the men would tell me] 'You go on over there,' so I'd just go away." Fine Day also told great war stories.⁸

Later in life, Stan met Matciskinik and marvelled at his oratorical skills. In particular, Matciskinik told an átayóhkewin, a sacred story, about mistasini, the sacred rock buried under water when the Gardiner Dam was built.⁹ "The four winds play a part in that story" and "the young man rolled four directions and

became a buffalo.” Matciskinik also told the story about Saskoweetoon, the drooling-face man who was magically healed by the sage smudging of a beautiful woman.

Stan explained that not all the storytellers could “attract attention, [where] everybody listens, wondering what’s gonna happen next.” Some storytellers “stop and wonder, they would retrace their steps, and [say] ‘I’m going too far, I’ll go back’ and they would go back again.” But Matciskinik told stories beautifully, “perfect Cree and it was just a beautiful story the way one event leads to another.” Stan pondered, reminiscing: “The way he structured his stories you know, ya ... one word after the other, he doesn’t forget words.”

Stan Cuthand’s memories of the storytellers and history keepers from whom he learned as he grew up tells us much about the roles of these traditional knowledge keepers in Cree societies. One of the many differences of oral traditions and literate traditions is that the former are as much about social interaction as they are about knowledge and transmission. Peter Nabokov explains:

[The] paradox of memorized history that is spoken and heard is that while it can preserve intimacy and locality over astonishing time depths, it seems to be only one generation away from extinction. It is a fragile linkage of spider strands across time. For it to endure someone somewhere must continue to bear witness, must intuitively resist the demands of media and archive in favor of the interactive, oral narrative.¹⁰

The fear that oral traditions will be lost in this modern age of literacy, cyberspace, and cable television is very real. During the 1960s and 1970s, a number of Elders were interviewed in an attempt to preserve these teachings before they were lost.¹¹ At first many were hesitant and worried about recording oral histories, sacred songs, and ceremonial information but most agreed that recording their teachings might be the only way to retain them for future generations.¹²

The late Cree Elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw spoke at a Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College (SICC) workshop in the 1970s and expressed thanks that his teachings about the Treaty No. 6 Pipe Stem were being recorded “so that our relatives might learn by hearing about it in this way.” He explained to all assembled there that “it is better to leave good things for them to use ... that they might listen on this kind [pointing to the audio-recorder] and that the young might thereby remind each other.”¹³

The late Alex Bonais also allowed his stories, knowledge, and songs to be recorded in the early 1970s by the late Wilfred Tootoosis because he feared they would all be lost:

Nobody wants to carry on to replace me, to carry on with these responsibilities across this land. All will stop. Spiritual ceremonies, Sundance, the lodge for smoking the pipe ... they will be no more. And at that time where will the people take their children? ... Only the white man's world will remain.¹⁴

Tyrone Tootoosis translated this interview while I simultaneously transcribed it. As we listened to this old man's recorded voice, a sudden surge of hope broke through his lament. He moved closer, spoke more directly into the microphone. Then, raising his voice slightly, he called out: "In the future you youth try to educate each other with this information." Almost forty years later, he was still speaking directly to us.

The primary tool of Cree Elders' trade is memory. The late Nora Thomas (1885–1982) was my great-grandmother by way of my late stepfather, Colin Stonechild. She was from Peepeepeekisis Cree First Nation in the File Hills, just northeast of Fort Qu'Appelle. She was eighty-seven and I was fifteen when we first met at her home in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Kohkom Nora seemed ancient to me. Her tall, slim, slightly stooped and corporeal presence was sometimes discomfiting. But she told good stories in her broken Cree/English. My late mother, Bernelda Wheeler, spent a lot of time in the 1970s interviewing and recording her stories.¹⁵ I remember how excited my mom was when she learned that Kohkom had attended a recital given by E. Pauline Johnson, a Mohawk poet, at Fort Qu'Appelle:

BW: Kohkom, at that concert, what did she talk about?

KN: She talked about canoes, and the corn huskers, yes, and the moose and the hides and, oh my ... she had us all quiet as mice.

BW: Kohkom, what did she look like?

KN: She looked like, oh, she was fat. Ya. And she had a dark complexion and she had her hair all ribbons and she had a string of bear claws in her throat, oh my!

BW: Kohkom, did she read lots of poetry?

KN: Yes, no, she read, she didn't. She, well, most of her composition was mostly on air. Ya. And she read some too.

Then, in deep remembrance, Kohkom lifted her face toward the ceiling and, with eyes closed tight, recited her favourite poem:

"The Corn Husker"

*Hard by the Indian lodge
Where the bush breaks in the clearing
Through the ill fashionable fields
She comes to labor
When the first still husk of autumn
Follows large and recent yields
Ages in her fingers, hunger in her face
Her shoulders stooped with weights of work and years
But rich in tawny coloring ...*¹⁶

Kohkom Nora was in her late teens when E. Pauline Johnson gave her recital at Fort Qu'Appelle more than sixty years earlier, but she could recount her favourite poem word for word, as she had heard it.¹⁷

The veracity and strength of Cree memory is well known; even the early Hudson's Bay Company folks like Andrew Graham wrote in the mid-1700s: "Their memory is very retentive, and their conceptions ready; for they are apt in learning the manners and employments of the English, and remember instances that have happened many years back."¹⁸ In *The Plains Cree* (1923), Edward Ahenakew describes the responsibilities associated with the telling of stories by the Old Men he knew in their respective communities. According to Ahenakew, the role of Old Man was

an institution in Indian life through the centuries. The fact that the Indians used to have no written language compelled them to rely upon memory for the recollection of things from the far past, as well as for those of a more recent date. Because of this the accuracy of an Old Man's memory can be surprising. Two or three Old Men together will recall the minutest details of events that took place in their childhood, sometimes comparing notes, for instance, about the surface markings of a horse that lived forty or fifty years before.¹⁹

Scholarly studies of oral history have demonstrated repeatedly that because non-literate societies have no other mechanisms for recording their past, their oral traditions are especially rigorous. Among the Plains Cree and other indigenous non-literate societies, memory capabilities were nurtured and disciplined from early childhood. The late Chief Abel McLeod of the James Smith Cree First Nation explains that "our ancestors had no other way to keep the sacred

promises [Treaty had] given to them, only by memory. They said then their brains were like paper.”²⁰

The Elders tell us that all our traditions, laws, knowledge, and historical records are preserved in the collective memory through a rigorous and disciplined process that emphasizes “accuracy, precision and procedural protocols.”²¹ The Office of the Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan learned through the testimony of more than 160 Elders that “the process of preserving and transferring traditional laws and procedures is a solemn obligation and serious commitment” and a “life-long endeavour.”²²

In oral societies, the education of the youngest living generation is undertaken by the oldest living generation. Children are brought up by grandparents because parents spend most of their days working. Historical studies on the education of children by grandparents in non-literate, rural societies demonstrate a number of points. According to Marc Bloch,

with the molding of each new mind there is at the same time a backward step, joining the most malleable to the most inflexible mentality, while skipping the generation which might be the sponsor of change. And this way of transmitting memory ... must surely have contributed to a very substantial extent to the traditionalism inherent in so many societies.²³

For most of us on the Plains, the last living generation to grow up in this manner was our grandparents although in most cases, their education in the oral tradition was interrupted by the industrial and residential school systems. While a small number of grandparents and older parents were raised by their grandparents in the oral tradition, much traditional and historical knowledge was lost as a direct result of the residential school system and the aggregate social breakdown that hit our communities at the end of the Second World War. Despite these setbacks, their formative years had lasting impacts, and upon their return home, some picked up their learning and some returned to those teachings later in life. Today we are in the process of reconstructing that which has been lost or is in hiding.

There is more to Indigenous oral history than just stories. Neal McLeod explains that “oral consciousness has ways of encoding memory.” For example, body language in the telling is vested with meaning that presumes a shared cultural repertoire with the listeners. Without that cultural context, much could be lost. Numerous studies also document the role of mnemonic devices as aids to memory among Indigenous peoples, and this holds true for the Cree. In the case of the Treaties, the pipe ceremonies memorialized the events.²⁴ The Treaty No. 6 Pipe Stem and the ten marker sticks that Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw refers to above, which represent the Treaty promises made by the Treaty Commission in 1876, serve as

mnemonic devices. Other such devices among the Cree take the form of artistic illustrations and depictions on tipi coverings, clothing, drums, and rock outcrops. Natural phenomena as well as petroglyphs and other artifacts carved on the landscape—trenches dug during warfare, wagon tracks, property boundary markers, even old abandoned cars—contain embedded stories and serve to nudge memory. The land is mnemonic, it has its own set of memories, and when the Old People go out on the land, it nudges or reminds them, and their memories are rekindled.

According to *nēhiyawīhcikēwin*, Cree ways, the spoken word is sacrosanct. The Old People tell us that the Creator gave all People the spoken word and memory to keep their laws, lessons, and histories protected for future generations. While some Peoples have turned away from the spoken word in favour of writing, belief in *nēhiyawīhcikēwin* oral traditions remains strong.

Words have great power. They can heal, protect, and counsel, but they can also harm. One is advised early in life to speak with care because when words are spoken, they are *manitōkiwin*—the act of speech is tantamount to doing something in a holy manner, making something sacred, making ceremony. So when the Old People accept tobacco from one seeking knowledge and when they share the pipe, they are saying that they will tell the truth as they know it. They are bound in the presence of the Creator as witness to speak from the heart, to speak their truth.

The pipe opened and closed every set of Treaty negotiations in Western Canada. The late Elder Pauline Pelly, whose grandfather Gabriel Cote negotiated Treaty No. 4 on behalf of his Saulteaux band, tells us that the ones who negotiated our Treaties used the pipe because “we as Indian people when we want to tell the truth we put it in the hands of the Creator.”²⁵ The Creator gave us the pipe to talk to Him; that is “why when we talk about the sacredness of that ... pipe, if you are going to tell the truth, and if we are going to ask Him to help us, [it is] the ... pipe that is picked up by our people, the pipe holders, when they take that pipe already it is for Him.” The Cree and Saulteaux people told the Treaty Commission, “‘We want to tell the truth, we’re going to use the pipe.’ Because if you lie on the pipe you will pay ... because you’re attempting to lie to the Creator.”²⁶

In Cree, this is understood as *pâstâhowin*, a transgression or breach of natural order/law.²⁷ When promises, agreements, or vows are made to the Creator, “they are irrevocable and inviolable.” Breaking these vows can “bring about divine retribution with grave consequences.”²⁸ The use of the Bible by the Treaty commissioners was understood by the Cree as a solemn promise to God, so it was understood in Cree terms that *pâstâhowin* applied. Based on their own understandings, the Cree Treaty makers had faith that the Crown Treaty commissioners were similarly bound to their promises.

Prone as colonial agents are to myopia and cultural arrogance, the Treaty commissioners trivialized and misunderstood the sacrosanct bindings of the

pipe. The late James Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw from Onion Lake First Nation—grandson to Sâkaskôc, a signatory to Treaty No. 6 and one of the inheritors of the Treaty No. 6 oral history and Pipe Stems—tells us that after the Treaty was signed, the Old Man Pâkan picked up the Pipe and made a long speech to Governor Morris about the Treaty promises: “Some day you might go after us for taking this good fish and game, you will some day want to renege on the terms of the treaty. If you are truthful in your promises, hold on to the stem.” According to oral history, Morris replied, “If anyone tries to break these Treaties, see this red coat beside me, I give him to you and he will enforce your rights.” Whenever Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw was asked to speak about the Treaties at gatherings around the province, he would tell us that the Pipe guaranteed that no human being could break the Treaty: “[T]hat’s what was promised to us, [this Pipe] that’s where we get our truth.”²⁹

Among the Plains Cree, there were powerful sanctions against attempting to pass off something known to be untrue. Penalties ranged from supernatural punishment to ridicule and humiliation. The solemn promises the Cree made to the Creator through their Pipes and the promises made by the Treaty commissioner through his Bible during the Treaty negotiations are understood as truths because of the traditional/natural law of *pâstâhowin*—one does not lie to God. *Tâpwêwin*, truth, is also about trust, the foundation of all human relationships.³⁰

Edward Ahenakew reminds us that the Old Men were both historians and legal advisors, and were the ones “who were qualified to speak, for they had passed through most of the experiences of life, and their own youthful fires were burnt out.”³¹

An Old Man dare not lie, for ridicule that was keen and general would have been his lot, and his standing as a teller of authentic events would have suffered. He dared not lie, for there were always other Old Men on the reserve or in the encampment who would contradict him readily.... Of necessity then, this veracity had to be unimpeachable, and this, together with well-developed powers of observation, made him an authentic repository for the annals of his people.³²

The late Smith Atimoyoo envisioned a new order of Indian education—an education system that would balance Cree knowledge, values, and language with Western skills. He was a respected storyteller and purveyor of Cree knowledge and history. One afternoon over a cup of tea at Wanuskewin, Maria Campbell and I asked Uncle Smith about lies. More precisely, Maria asked him in Cree, “What kinds of laws did the Old People have to prevent them from telling lies?”³³ Uncle Smith responded:

The Old People had laws for everything, and the teacher of those laws was Wisahkécáhk.... He went around telling lies, in stories, and it didn't matter how many lies he told, they all came out as good teachings. Māmāskāc ci! [Incredible, amazing!] How he could do that, make a lie into something good? He was very wise, he knew everything and he shared that wisdom in stories.... We call him *nistāsinān*, our elder brother. He could make stories come alive, even the lies. After he left us, when someone would lie, people would say, "Hmmm, that's what our elder brother used to say." That would force the liar to either tell a really good story or face humiliation. That was the law.

If the storyteller made good, transformed the intent to deceive into a good story, the lie was erased.

According to Uncle Smith, the Old People were polite when they doubted something in a story someone was telling. They never outright accused the storyteller of lying. Sometimes listeners would say, "That can't be," or *āyanwētēman* (I don't believe it), or *ki-tapwewin* (that is your truth), but they do not outright call the storyteller a liar. What they are saying is that they cannot believe the story, or as Uncle Smith would say, "It is not what I know to be true."

But times change, Uncle Smith explained: "Lies are different today." "A long time ago, *ki-tāpwē-towino*, we believed differently. Things were different then and lies were different then from now."

Nimōsom Willie Bear's father was Misaskoot [saskatoon berry bush]. There is a story about him that he was a great runner. He could outrun horses. The people could go ahead of him and he would arrive ahead of them. He was also elusive. He could disappear into thin air. The Blackfoot people once were chasing him and they couldn't catch him 'cause he just disappeared on them, disappeared into thin air. They had power in those days, through their dreams. And they believed in the dreams and so they were true. And I believe these stories of Nimōsom because Indian people were given the gift of supernatural. Like the weasel story. Nimōsom's *pawakan* [spiritual power] was a weasel, and he carried that weasel skin in his bundle, it was his helper, I guess you would say in English. And I remember when I was a little boy, I used to spend lots of time with him and sometimes when he was going to pray he would take that weasel fur out of his bundle and stroke it gently and sing a little song—the weasel would come to life and run up his arm and around his head and it would play with me. And my *mōsōm* would tell me stories of the things *êkos* had helped him with

in his life. Nikitāpwētan, I believed. We don't live in a world where we believe in the supernatural anymore, but back then it was all possible.

Uncle Smith lamented that over time our conceptual understanding of truth and lies has changed:

There are so many things today that distort the way we see and believe, that distort human memory, so many old stories, but we start to believe what we are told now. Start to believe what they [non-Cree peoples] tell us to know and we don't believe the old ways anymore. We start to believe we are not alive, what we believe is obliterated.... They will make us believe that black is white, that's how powerful it is. That's how the stories of our Old People get so far away. We just try to grasp it. A person will have to be very strong, like my grandfather. He did turn into an animal, he did turn into a weasel, he did turn into a coyote, to get away from the people who were trying to kill him, to survive. I didn't get that stamina and thinking to make me into something. And so, really, I'm becoming nothing.

Áyanwétéman, I don't believe it, is very different from ékiyastat, to tell lies. Much of what we knew to be true has become lies because non-Cree notions of truth cannot accommodate known Cree realities. In this way, much is being lost.

Cree historians trained in the oral tradition do not assume omniscient authority. The keepers of *âcimowina* strategically build side stories into their oral texts, which serve to establish the original source(s), the teller's relationship to the incident and persons involved, how the teller came to acquire it, and the relevant time referents. It's sort of like a "traditional footnote."

In Jim Tootoosis' story of the Battle of Cutknife Hill, he spent almost as much time recounting the stories behind the story as he did on the story itself. Toward the end of his story, Jim Tootoosis tells us:

How I come to know, I'm gonna tell you. This story is my great grandfather's brother,³⁴ his name was Wind Walker, Pimohteyawiw. He was only about seventeen or eighteen years at that time and he was here watching the fight.... That old Wind Walker, he's a cousin to our great-grandfather [Sakakweyan] Skunk-Skin and he was very old. He was around ninety years old then maybe older. My [oldest] brother Adam was about twelve or thirteen years old then and that Old Man told that story three times, three times over, so he wouldn't forget. "This is your future, you'll be able to tell the story to other people so he won't get lost." That's how I come to know this story. My brother told me different times.³⁵

In some stories, significant missing pieces are found outside the community and are built into the narrative, along with an aside on its source. In the Battle of Cut-knife Hill story, one Blackfoot warrior survived the battle by hiding in a water-filled cave in the cut bank along the creek. After all the Crees had left, he snuck away under the cover of darkness and made it back to his people. Jim Tootoosis tells us:

Sometimes they'd have a fight and other times they'd make a treaty, smoke together ... make a treaty until they asked stories about different incidents, about different times. And this fella that had hid in the water here, he didn't know when to quit [going on trips into enemy territory].... [At one such meeting between a group of Blackfoot and Cree men] one [Blackfoot] guy asked about this incident when Cut-knife was killed. And, well the [Cree] Indians said they lost one to the Sarcee—"We lost one Sarcee, he got away." [Then this guy stood up and told them] ... "That was me." That's how we come to know that story. And he told the story about how he hid in the water and how he went home and how they come way up into the hills west of here.³⁶

Finding a place in history for Other Ways of Knowing is a challenge. It requires us to develop new ways of learning and understanding, and to step outside of our rigorously trained comfort zones. It requires a willingness to get to know the Elders or knowledge keepers in their own contexts and to be open-minded enough to learn how they understand the world around them, the tools of their trade, and how they practice it. As students or novices, our job is to interpret the teachings, to help us fill the gaps in our current state of knowledge and to apply the methods they teach us. The Elders share their teachings to help us grow as individuals, but they intend for us to put their teachings into practice, not just to fill in the gaps. Thus, our task is not only to create a space for other ways of knowing as an object or subject of study, but also to create a space to apply the teachings that guide the learning, keeping, and transmission of Indigenous knowledge. If we are not willing to step out of our comfort zone, we are culpable for the obliteration of our world. To carry Uncle Smith's words home, we would be responsible for our "becoming nothing." *

Notes

- 1 See Winona Wheeler, "Reflections on the Social Relations of Indigenous Oral History," in *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and Their Representations*, ed. David T. McNab (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 189–214.
- 2 The roman orthography used for Cree terms here varies, reflecting the different sources used and the phonetic spelling used in local transcription.

- 3 Wilfred Tootoosis interviewed and recorded oral narratives from his contemporary Elders starting in the 1960s. His collection is in the possession of his eldest son, Tyrone W. Tootoosis, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
- 4 Alex Bonais (Plains Cree, Little Pine First Nation), interview by Wilfred Tootoosis, Poundmaker First Nation, Saslatchewan, c. 1974, trans. Tyrone Tootoosis, Wilfred Tootoosis Collection, in possession of Tyrone Tootoosis, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
- 5 Stan Cuthand was born in 1918. In 1975 he started teaching Native Studies at the University of Manitoba. Throughout his life, he has been committed to preserving Cree oral histories and translation. Ruth Cuthand and Doug Cuthand, "Stan Cuthand," in *Saskatchewan First Nations: Lives Past and Present*, ed. Christian Thompson (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2004), 47.
- 6 Edward Ahenakew (1885–1961) graduated with a degree in theology in 1910 and spent the rest of his life in missionary service. He also collected oral narratives and wrote numerous articles on the sacred teachings, history, and conditions of his people. He is best known for his book *Voice of the Plains Cree*, which he wrote in 1923. Edward Ahenakew, *Voice of the Plains Cree*, ed. Ruth M. Buck (1979; repr., Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1995). See also Charlene Crevier, "Edward Ahenakew," in Thompson, *Saskatchewan First Nations*, 9.
- 7 Wisahkécáhk is generally known as a Trickster, but the term is inaccurate. In Cree, Wisahkécáhk is also referred to as Elder Brother or Kistésinaw. His primary function is teacher, and his stories constitute átayóhkéwina, or spiritual narratives. Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 97.
- 8 Fine Day or Kamiokisihkwew (c.1847–1941) was a renowned Plains Cree historian who served as principal informant for David Mandelbaum's study on the Plains Cree. David G. Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical and Comparative Study* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1979).
- 9 See John Cuthand, "Legend of Mistassini Has Modern Chapter," *The StarPhoenix*, 22 November 1996.
- 10 Peter Nabokov, "Present Memories, Past History," in *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 145.
- 11 Tyrone Tootoosis, "Our Legacy: Ka ke pesi nakatamakiawiyak," *Eagle Feather News* 1, no. 10 (1999): 21.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, cited in Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart, eds., *ana kâ-pimwêwêhahk okakêskikhêmwina: The Counselling Speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1998), 101, 65.
- 14 Alex Bonais, interview by Wilfred Tootoosis.
- 15 Bernelda Wheeler (nee Pratt) was a member of George Gordon's First Nation in southern Saskatchewan. She was a newspaper and radio journalist for most of her professional life and had the opportunity to interview many Elders. See Winona Wheeler, "Bernelda Winona Wheeler," in Thompson, *Saskatchewan First Nations*, 139–41.
- 16 Kohkom Nora Thomas, interview by Bernelda Wheeler, Winnipeg, Manitoba, February 1974. Original and transcripts in possession of the author.

- 17 Kohkom Nora's rendition of "The Corn Husker" is almost a precise rendition of the original found in E. Pauline Johnson, *Flint and Feather: The Complete Poems of E. Pauline Johnson* (Tekahionwake) (1912; repr., Don Mills, ON: Paperjacks, 1972), 93.
- 18 Glyndwr Williams, ed. *Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay 1767-1791* (London: Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1969), 144.
- 19 Ahenakew, *Voice of the Plains Cree*, 10.
- 20 "No. 21, James Smith Band Submission, 7 March 1947," in Canada, *Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Appointed to Continue and Complete the Examination and Consideration of the Indian Act, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence* (Ottawa: Kings Printer, 1947), 1123.
- 21 *Office of the Treaty Commissioner for Saskatchewan, Statement of Treaty Issues: Treaties as a Bridge to the Future* (Saskatoon: Office of the Treaty Commissioner, October 1998), 12.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Marc Bloch, cited in Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 39.
- 24 Neal McLeod, "Rethinking Treaty Six in the Spirit of Mistahi Maskwa (Big Bear)," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 19, no. 1 (1999): 69-89.
- 25 Pauline Pelly "Testimony," *OTC Mock Trial: Special Presentation to the Office of the Treaty Commission of Saskatchewan* (Regina: Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, 14-16 September 1992), video recording.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Christian missionaries understood pâstâhowin (pasta'hoowin) as "vengeance, retribution, an evil spell (Indian idea is the consequent vengeance of offending the Deity)." R. Fairies and E.A. Watkins, *A Dictionary of the Cree Language* (1938; repr., Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1986), 408.
- 28 Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream Is That Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 7.
- 29 Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, "Testimony," OTC Mock Trial.
- 30 Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978), 31.
- 31 Ahenakew, *Voice of the Plains Cree*, 10.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Smith Atimoyoo (Plains Cree, Little Pine First Nation), interview by Maria Campbell and Winona Wheeler, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 6 May 1996.
- 34 Among the Cree, parallel cousins are often referred to as siblings. There is no error in Jim Tootoosis's reference to Wind Walker as his great grandfather's brother, and later as Skunk-Skin's brother.
- 35 James Tootoosis (Plains Cree, Poundmaker First Nation), interview by Floyd Favel, Poundmaker First Nation, Saskatchewan, c. 1996, trans. Tyrone Tootoosis.
- 36 Ibid.





Part Two

.....

The Aboriginal West

.....

Visualizing Space, Race, and History in the North: Photographic Narratives of the Athabasca-Mackenzie River Basin

MATT DYCE AND JAMES OPP

■ In 1970 Queen Elizabeth II visited Beaver House, the headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in London, to view a special exhibit commemorating the tercentenary of the company's founding. In one portion of the display, a series of sepia-toned photographs were arranged, many of them depicting Edmonton and various points along the Athabasca-Slave-Mackenzie river system that linked fur-trading periphery to regional metropole. The opening panel explained the purpose of the gallery:

The advent of the camera brought a novel dimension to the historical records of the Hudson's Bay Company. For the first time the actual conditions in the Company's operations could be properly represented and permanently recorded. These pictures give their own vivid account of life as it was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹

Within the wider context of the exhibition, the photographs might appear to reinforce a straightforward and celebratory narrative of expansion, commerce,

and progress, despite the almost complete lack of explanatory captions. But how exactly did these historical images speak to the audience? How could they “give their own vivid account”?

The majority of the photographs employed in the 1970 exhibit were taken by professional photographer Charles W. Mathers in 1901, but over time, his images have been employed to support multiple, and sometimes competing, narratives of the North. From souvenir booklets to scientific reports to historical accounts and works of fiction, Mathers’ photographs of the Athabasca-Mackenzie river basin circulated far and wide, and new meanings accompanied these sites of reproduction. Mathers’ photographs were reframed by new exhibitionary spaces and given new archival meanings as the avenues for “displaying history” were transformed in the twentieth century. In particular, Mathers’ successor, Ernest Brown, resituated these Northern photographs within a new context that spoke to history, while simultaneously projecting a modern utopian vision of a Northern future.

As a collaborative excavation of the multiple meanings attached to Mathers’ photographs of the North, we move beyond a single, static reading of these images. We focus particularly on the intertwining threads of economic development and constructions of race that were reshaped over time and across space. In comparing Mathers’ and Brown’s visual orderings of place and race, we suggest that photographs constituted an important site of engagement in the early twentieth century where the often-competing meanings of modernity and history were arranged and negotiated. For both Mathers and Brown, photographs carried evidential meanings, but as John Tagg argued twenty years ago, the very nature of “evidence” and how such images should be read also needs to be historicized.² If the mobility of Mathers’ photographs served fluid purposes across time and space, Brown worked tirelessly to stabilize their meanings within a comprehensive historical framework. Even as the tercentenary exhibition claimed that through photographs, the operations of the company “could be properly represented and permanently recorded,” such assumptions were layered on top of seventy years of shifting discourses surrounding the role of the HBC in the North, and the evidential value of photographs in shaping these views.

In the course of retracing some of the historical pathways taken by Mathers’ photographs, our chapter reflects on the circulatory power of photographs to envision, remember, appropriate, and join history/memory with geography/place. Within these reimaginings, race was central to the visual rendering of the North, binding the temporal and spatial orderings produced through photographs of the Athabasca-Mackenzie river basin. The change in narratives attached to this series of photographs was not simply a product of

time but also a product of place: the location and vantage point from *where* the photographs were viewed proved to be just as important as *when*.

Charles W. Mathers

IN EARLY JUNE 1901, Edmonton's only professional photographer, Charles Wesley Mathers, joined the fur brigade of William Connor on a three-month journey to the Arctic Ocean, travelling down the Athabasca River, onto Lake Athabasca and, by way of the Slave River and Great Slave Lake, down the Mackenzie to Fort McPherson on the Arctic Circle.³ In training a camera on Canada's "Far North," Mathers aimed to recoup the cost of his three thousand-mile journey by selling copyrighted images to newspapers, magazines, and research institutions. Like previous voyages to Calgary and the Rocky Mountains, the photographer would also release souvenir albums depicting the amateur exploration. The *Edmonton Bulletin* helped to ensure Mathers' success by vaunting his expert status to readers: these would be "the only views taken in the north country by a professional photographer using the latest and most complete appliances."⁴

In the popular imagination, photography was understood as the mechanical ability to produce, in both composition and character, the image of an original scene. At the close of the nineteenth century, the camera's power to represent a truthful picture of reality was readily accepted in Western society.⁵ To properly view the photographs that a camera produced, however, required more than accepting the veracity of an image. Viewers also brought the social and cultural codes of the nineteenth century to bear on and explain the objects before their eyes, searching for cues about the appearance and the order of what they saw. The world of appearances suggested that things (people, objects, and places) conveyed innate qualities and moral bearings outwardly. When William Connor arrived in Edmonton from the north for the summer of 1900, city residents were shocked to see him arrive in the company of three Déh Gah Got'iné men. The *Edmonton Bulletin* assured readers that "they are the first Slaveys who ever visited Edmonton, and the wonders of civilization are a revelation to them."⁶ Euro-Canadian readers were encouraged to discern the civilizing process at work in the minds of the Native people now in their midst and, through the supposed moral appearance of Edmonton to the Déh Gah Got'iné men, were given an explanation of how the gaze would be returned.⁷ Equating the business of town life with morality, the newspaper imagined that "their ideas of the whiteman's mode of living as they see it here is highly edifying."⁸ Another powerful visual logic of modern Europeans was the feeling that order existed naturally and was decipherable in the world, and that its proper identification would lead to progressive goals.⁹ As James Murton discovered in

early photography of British Columbia's industrial potential, photographers carefully conceived of images that appealed to the "language of order and the rationalization of nature" to speak to investors.¹⁰ The introduction of photography to the North was no exception. Mathers' 1901 photographic narrative recorded economic potential by drawing upon a language that attempted to arrange and assemble the meanings of racial and gendered appearances in the river systems north of Edmonton. Photographs, however, are inherently unstable platforms in which to fix meaning, as later circulations of Mathers' images would demonstrate.

From all appearances, C.W. Mathers' chief patron in Edmonton was Frank Oliver, founding editor of the *Edmonton Bulletin* and member of parliament for the district of Alberta in Laurier's Liberal government. A self-proclaimed pioneer and relentless champion of Edmonton, Oliver also recognized the power of images to mobilize and transmit ideological messages. During the gold rush of the 1890s, he promoted travel through Athabasca as the only suitable "All-Canadian" route to the Klondike, using Mathers' images of industry and transportation in Edmonton to support his arguments.¹¹ Mathers specialized in photography celebrating Edmonton's ascendancy to a metropolis at the centre of regional progress in farming, fur trading, and mining. His first book, *Souvenir of the Edmonton District*, emphasized the quality and abundance of arable land adjacent to the former fur-trading depot, reflecting the views of Oliver's political backers, A.C. Rutherford and J.H. MacDonald, that "[i]t is of the utmost importance to all Canada that the vast tract of fertile agricultural land in the North should be opened for settlement and placed under cultivation. The government should carry out a vigorous immigration policy."¹² By the time of his 1901 voyage into the Far North, Mathers' stock images were mainstays for representing a productive and civilized hinterland surrounding Edmonton. Now, images captured heading down the Athabasca-MacKenzie would help envisage economic modernization in the river systems. Frank Oliver vouched in the *Bulletin* that Mathers' images would speak for the North, suggesting that readers feel "a sufficient assurance that they will do justice to the subject."¹³ Coming from Oliver, the praise of the *Bulletin* was hardly disinterested.

After his return from the Arctic Circle, Mathers meticulously indexed, labelled, and copyrighted his photographs.¹⁴ The Department of Agriculture published some of these pictures in a pamphlet titled *The Far North*, which the photographer reproduced himself the next year as *A Souvenir from the North*. Although close to four hundred images were made during three months of travel in the North, these souvenir books each contain no more than twenty prints and are limited to a small range of subjects: river travel, the men in the scow brigade, trading posts dotting the Mackenzie basin, and images of Sub-

arctic inhabitants. No written source explains why these images were chosen and not others. Apart from the labels and captions Mathers used on the photographs, the only textual record connected to his original voyage is a 1903 article in *The Farmers Advocate* recreating the voyage. The popular Western digest approached Mathers to contribute an expert piece on the North for a special issue on progress in agriculture in the regions of Canada. In Mathers' submission, an adventuring photographer emerges, enduring harsh environments and conquering great distances to provide his camera with the best views. Many Euro-Canadians associated Northern adventure narratives with ideas of unchecked freedom and rugged masculinity.¹⁵ American author and sportsman Caspar Whitney justified his hunting trip down the Mackenzie in 1896 as a retreat from progress: "I went that I might for a time escape the hum and routine sordidness of the city, and breathe air which was not surcharged with convention and civilization."¹⁶ Mathers' impression conveyed the spirit, if not the flare of Whitney's account: travelling in the North "was decidedly bad."¹⁷ Indeed, it grew worse, and as the harshness of nature increased the further the expedition moved from Edmonton, the physical difficulty of travel and the mechanical difficulty of acquiring images increased in turn. As the Northern days grew longer, he recorded that "[i]n order to get the photographs we found we had to follow the natives' example and stay up all night and sleep in the daytime."¹⁸

Photographic captions and the published narrative worked to establish this kind of referential connection among the images, the "conquest of distance," and movement northward.¹⁹ Mathers knew that the right visual narrative would increase the value of his photographs. The opening plate in *A Souvenir from the North* presented what was for many a quintessential scene of hard life in the north, tracking scows up the Athabasca (plate 1).

Such images of tracking indicated arrival in the North and conjured a powerful mystique. Agnes Deans Cameron remembered how the scow brigades, after lazily drifting downriver to the Arctic, made the return voyage against the current: "Towing the boats, weary mile after mile, 'by the power o' man,' the half-breed boatmen scrambling now on the bank, now in the water, tugging the heavily-laden craft after them. It is a mode of transportation that neither written word nor camera can do justice to."²⁰ Mathers was well aware of this. Although tracking upriver always took place at the end of a Northern voyage, he kept these images at the start of the books. Doing so established a clear visual narrative of adventure in difficult terrain. It also kept the visual imagery of the journey segregated between what transpired in the Subarctic region and what happened in the "Far North." As will be demonstrated, Mathers was careful not to let the tracking done by the Native brigades or the hauling of scows by modern steamers take place inside the geography of the Inuit.



PLATE 1. Tracking scows on the Athabasca River, showing original caption and printed context. Photograph by C.W. Mathers, published in C.W. Mathers, *The Far North: A Souvenir from the North* (Edmonton: C.W. Mathers, Minister of Agriculture, 1901), 6. Original negative held by the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

The relative ease involved in the ordering and reordering of images enabled the mapping of a racialized narrative across the real and imaginary spaces of the North. In the nineteenth century, the ability of photographs to “picture place”—to order dynamic social space into a static and apprehensible scene with a singular meaning—merged powerfully with colonial attitudes about ethnicity. Landscapes were embodied with racial characteristics, Lynda Nash argues, because modern society “insisted that races were associated with particular places and that ‘race’ itself was both an outcome of location and the principal determinant of one’s fitness for any particular land.”²¹ Heading north down the Athabasca on a scow, Mathers’ voyage also unfolded through a sequence of places and narratives that reinforced racialized understandings of place, projecting differences between European and Native, modern and authentic, or progressive and traditional along a spatial arc that began in Edmonton and ended at the Arctic Circle.²² As Northern peoples increasingly overlapped with the infrastructure of the modern Northwest, the bounds of what constituted an “authentic” Native person had to be continually negotiated. Native labourers were prominent in the early transportation photographs of the scows, but more



PLATE 2. "An Indian Packer." This caption was originally engraved upon the glass negative by C.W. Mathers, but most of the writing visible in this copy was added later by Ernest Brown. Photograph by C.W. Mathers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, B2203.

modern modes of transportation, such as the river steamer, were never associated with Native peoples. Instead, Mathers was fascinated with the strength of the packers he saw at the Grand Rapids north of Athabasca Landing and was insistent on the premise that these people were somehow natural labourers: "The packing of the goods across this portage was really the first work I saw the Indians do, and the loads they carried were truly astonishing.... I saw one of

them packing an ordinary No. 8 cook stove, and another—a small, skinny individual—walking off with a barrel of sugar.”²³ While Euro-Canadians imagined themselves to be strong in the North away from “civilization,” Mathers’ persistent depiction of Native and Métis people freighting goods, portaging scows, shooting rapids, and carrying furs emphasized the place of Native people as workers in the labour economy.²⁴

The shift to economic visions replaced an earlier trope in the Euro-Canadian colonial imagination that saw Native people mostly as timeless, anthropological objects incompatible with civilization and modernity. “An Indian Packer” (plate 2) and the many photographs Mathers took of Native people at work stand in marked contrast to the early photography Mathers undertook in southern Alberta during the 1890s, where a wide collection of ethnographic portraiture of the Tsuu T’ina (Sarcee) and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) make up the corpus of his work. Mathers started working for Calgary stock photographers Boorne and May in 1892 and purchased their Edmonton studio the following year.²⁵ The firm lauded itself as the first to photograph “authentic” Sundance images, while at the same time capturing for posterity the “vanishing races” of Western Canada that many thought would soon disappear in the wake of modernity.²⁶ Mimicking ethnographic imagery and exotic display, Boorne, May, and Mathers found a healthy market in Native “views” and “types” alive in the East, provided buyers accept their caveat that the “Indians with which our neighbourhood abounds—although not exactly up to the standard of the ‘noble red man’ of Fennimore Cooper—are very interesting.”²⁷ Throughout the 1890s, Mathers continued photographing Native men and women in the face-forward and inert ethnographic poses used by Boorne and May. When he focused his camera on the Dēnesūliné (Chipewyan), Dēh Gah Got’iné (Slavey), TłìchQ (Dog-Rib), and Métis people north of Edmonton in 1901, his compositions differed significantly. Native men were depicted hard at work in occupations related to Northern commerce. The visual moment of the photograph, however, often conceals the history of its making. Whether individual Native men and women that Mathers’ pictured hoped to control the effects of their own representation is difficult to recover.²⁸ Looking at Mathers’ souvenir albums suggests that the effect was not to erase Aboriginality, but, in the words of Adele Perry, to “reformulate First Nations men as economic subjects.”²⁹

So the landscape of the adventuring photographer became filled with the otherwise routine practices of Native labourers “opening” the North, making it into a Euro-Canadian place for the growing city to the south. Frank Oliver thought it natural that the region should be “annexed to the trade territory of Edmonton.”³⁰ But while the role of trade and the Native people working in it were highlighted, some elements of the exchange system remained notoriously

absent in this souvenir book image. Despite having taken extensive images of HBC posts, in Mathers' souvenir books, the Hudson's Bay Company received close to no representation. To be sure, the HBC was not without its critics, and Frank Oliver was among the most vociferous. Epitomized by journalist and historian Alexander Begg, anti-HBC sentiment generally assumed that before the Canadian purchase of Rupert's Land in 1871, the Northwest "had been regarded as a land fit only for the hunter and trapper; and the fur traders knowing that the advent of civilization meant the destruction of the fur trade, spared no pains to circulate the idea that it was a cold, inhospitable, and barren country."³¹ Oliver's distrust of the HBC's power in the North was nurtured working with Begg and the Canada Firsters, John Schultz, at the *Nor'Wester* in Winnipeg during the 1870s. However, while ardent nationalists such as Begg and Schultz portrayed the HBC as a foreign and imperial entity dominating the Northwest at the expense of a nascent Canadian dominion, for Oliver the crime was different. The view from Edmonton saw the honourable company falling increasingly out of step with an emerging liberal-order framework in the region.³² The monopsony strength the HBC had enjoyed since the incorporation of the rival North West Company in 1821 was stalling the progressive effects of a laissez-faire market economy in the region.³³ In other words, the Northwest would need modern capitalism in order to develop, and the HBC represented an antiquated mercantilism. In Edmonton, Oliver determined that the northern fur country must be opened to new trades, agriculture, and settlement, and he saw the 1897 Klondike rush as a step in this direction—he railed against the HBC's counter-efforts to deter travellers from using the Athabasca-Mackenzie route to the goldfields.³⁴ The company had good reason to be hostile, as Oliver had made significant inroads leading toward his vision of the North during the 1890s. By 1893 free-traders could operate on the rivers, introducing paper money as a challenge to the barter system.³⁵ Four years later, with Treaty 8 in view, Oliver brought the state to bear directly on the region when he convinced the North-West Mounted Police to reconnaissance the area. When viewed through the context of Oliver's ambitions in the North, Mathers' photographs appear to speak against the HBC unequivocally for the value of free trade and capital practices of exchange.

The new order of capitalist exchange and geographical expansion was apparent in Mathers' depictions of opening of the North for modern Edmonton. Recalling how a Tłı̨cẖ trapper traded at Fort Resolution with the HBC, the photographer laments the archaic inexpediency of the company's barter system. After a day of celebration, he writes, the trapper "returns and talks about his fur and the price, the scarcity of game, his dogs, and how many miles they can travel in a day.... Three or four days are taken up in this way, as if he were

reluctant to part with his much-prized peltries. To him this is the one event of the year.” Not only slow, the HBC also unfairly retained its suppliers, in his opinion: “After the sorting and counting is done, the trader hands the Indian two pieces of paper. On one is marked the value of the fur and on the other the amount of his ‘gratuity.’ It seems a very absurd mode of trading. I give you so much for your furs and so much for nothing.”³⁶ Mathers’ photographs of Native men at work appear within a larger framework. In a new North of free exchange and commerce, Native people liberated from the grip of the HBC could be the vanguard of industrial civilization in Edmonton’s hinterland.

Transforming Native men and women from ethnographic subjects into economic individuals required more than changing their appearance on film. The order in which European and Native were displayed was also contested through photography. If Native men and women were represented as part of capitalist modernity, this reimagining also left vacant a position of “uncivilized” other. As the expedition continued north, their entry into a new geographical space brought a resolution to the shifting order Mathers was recording. While in the lower Mackenzie, the river voyageurs were “not long anchored until we saw what we came to see. The Esquimaux in their kayaks ... a perfectly uncivilized tribe.”³⁷

Witnessing the Inuit was a prized opportunity for Europeans at the turn of the century. Using his camera, Mathers both emphasized the spectacle of the encounter and used it to mediate the place of the Inuit relative to the new North in the Subarctic. His images pronounced the difference between these new people and the Dene and Cree to the south. In the early part of his voyage on the Athabasca, he had employed panoramic views of Métis and Natives hard at work in the service of trade. Beginning down the Mackenzie River, Mathers began to picture his voyage through the symbolic reversal of the order of the Subarctic. Once he encountered the Inuit, Mathers returned to the essentialized photography of “racial types” presented for ethnographic scrutiny that he had used in southern Alberta. Captions such as “Group of Esquimaux taken at Midnight” underwrote such posturing, where people at the mouth of the Mackenzie “were up during what we called night.”³⁸ Unlike the Dene people of the Subarctic, whose place was as labourers, Mathers presented viewers of his souvenir books with the Inuit people of the Far North deeply situated in their decidedly non-Western environs. In “Esquimaux, Peel’s River – 269” (plate 3), he positioned a family in front of their summer dwelling. Each member, unnamed in the scene, carries a curio of daily life: a knife, a sealskin coat, a pipe in the child’s mouth. The *Edmonton Bulletin* described the meaning of these encounter images quite succinctly, explaining that “the Esquimaux were met only at McPherson on Peel river and are the most interesting, not only because



PLATE 3. "Esquimaux, Peel's River." Caption engraved on negative by C.W. Mathers. Photograph by C.W. Mathers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, B9955.

they are the most distant and the least known, but because they are most independent of civilized influences and show by far the greatest ingenuity and industry in the manufacture of their tools, utensils and weapons."³⁹ For audiences disenchanted by the "taming" of Native people in Western Canada, the Inuit became the new "noble savage" removed from the cities in the south where, in the words of northern sportsman Warburton Pike, "we carry this civilization too far, and are in danger of warping our natural instincts."⁴⁰

For Edmonton to really annex the Athabasca territory as Oliver hoped, the spatial boundary of otherness needed to move northward. As the labouring Dene and Cree people became labourers, the Inuit of the Far North became the



PLATE 4. “Eskimo in their Kayaks.” This caption was engraved on the negative by C.W. Mathers, although this print also shows markings from Ernest Brown that were added later. Photograph by C.W. Mathers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, B9967.

new limit of familiarity. The otherness of the Inuit, for many Euro-Canadians, was still open to cultural interpretation—were they “defective Europeans” or “perfect Indians”? Rather than a problem at the margins of the colonial world, debates over the nature of such bodies in question were often central to the production of difference and fundamental to the discursive reinscription of racialized essentialisms.⁴¹ When extended to the question of “what” the Inuit were, Frank Oliver’s *Bulletin* sketches a familiar hierarchy of races: “in appearance they resemble the Japanese much more than they do the Indians and their skill and industry would indicate such a relationship rather than with the Indians.” Despite the “skill and industry” demonstrated in commerce and transportation on the Athabasca, which Mathers’ many images testified to, once Native people were judged at the mouth of the Mackenzie, they paled before the Inuit. Retaining this spatial division was essential in bringing the Athabasca territory of the HBC into Edmonton’s orbit. The *Bulletin* continues: “The Esquimaux and Indians have no intercourse whatever. They look upon each other as of different and hostile race.”⁴²

Mathers’ images arranged and narrated both civilization and savagery through the different spaces of the North by writing them onto the bodies of



Eskimos and their Kayaks. The Kayak is made of seal skin and is about 26 feet long.

C. W. MATHERS
Photographer

PLATE 5. “Eskimos and their Kayaks,” showing original caption and printed context. Photograph by C.W. Mathers, published in C.W. Mathers, *The Far North: A Souvenir from the North* (Edmonton: C.W. Mathers, Minister of Agriculture, 1901), 20. Original negative held by the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

his subjects—Native bodies at work and Inuit bodies in ethnographic display. This helps explain why “Eskimo in their Kayaks” (plate 4), displaying two Inuit men facing the photographer directly and in semi-profile, remained unselected for inclusion in the booklet. The image Mathers did use, “Eskimos and their Kayaks” (plate 5), has close similarities with what might be a more suitable alternative but betrays the conventional logic that guided booklet production and circulation. Mathers did not see the men as Western subjects but felt content to depict them as ethnographic others, turning one backward so as to open him to the gaze of scrutiny and display. The photograph simultaneously reduces individuality as it creates a static anthropological model of “Eskimo”—another man turned backwards substitutes a perfect copy of the facing man. Placing these images at the end of his souvenir books allowed Mathers to differentiate the “perfectly uncivilized” nature of Inuit kayaks and set them apart from the labour performed by Native peoples.

Peter Geller suggests that while images of the Inuit bore the meaning of “primitive” to Euro-Canadians, photographers also tried to explain that “they are also hardy and cheerful and resilient and worth admiring; here are the heroic qualities of Inuit lifestyle, of humans against the elements.”⁴³ The Inuit provided

a benchmark for Euro-Canadians' own status as moderns, but a large part of this relationship also rested on geography and Mathers' camera being in the North. Coates and Morrison claim that "[t]he goal of newcomers was not to adapt to the North, but by the use of technological superiority or the expenditure of a great deal of money, to *conquer* the North and make it irrelevant to them."⁴⁴ Although Mathers' track south to Edmonton must have been longer and more arduous than his entrance to the North, images of the return are not pictured in his albums. The visual narrative portrayed in the books closes with the Inuit discovered at the northern reach of a voyage from Edmonton to the terminal point of civilization. In between lay the territory "annexed" to Edmonton from the possession of Native peoples and the economic control of the HBC.

Ernest Brown

IN 1904 Mathers sold his portrait studio and some of his equipment to his assistant, Ernest Brown, who had recently arrived in Edmonton to help run the portrait business while Mathers concentrated on views.⁴⁵ The sale agreement stipulated that Mathers would not undertake portraits for five years, while Brown would similarly refrain from entering into the business of views.⁴⁶ However, it was not long before Brown was in arrears, unable to maintain the mortgage, and was undertaking his own view photography. In 1907, after moving to Vancouver, Mathers arranged a new financial contract with Brown that included the sale of Mathers' entire view collection.⁴⁷ Since Mathers had previously purchased the photographs of the defunct Calgary firm Boorne and May, this transaction was significant, involving the transfer of tens of thousands of negatives. Brown aggressively pursued photographic negatives from other local photographers until his total collection numbered more than fifty thousand, allowing him to claim that his views covered more than "6,000 subjects," and could "illustrate Edmonton from 1867 to last week," forming "the largest collection west of Montreal."⁴⁸

After a decade of success in which he had managed to build his own modestly named edifice, the Ernest Brown Block on Jasper Avenue, business declined in the war years, and when the post-war recession hit, eviction from his building followed in 1920. Although he managed to hang on to his collection of negatives, they were cold comfort at the time. Brown's financial woes would transform both his present politics and his later historical consciousness. He ran unsuccessfully as a candidate for the Independent Labour Party in 1921 and operated a short-lived newspaper, *The Glowworm*. He repeatedly attacked creditors, banks, the financial system, and partisan politics as obstacles to achieving a co-operative society.⁴⁹

Despite the fact that he held “all the photographic records of anything that happened in the West for nearly 40 yrs back,” Brown remained bitter over his financial decline, complaining that “the people of today have no sentiment when it comes to paying money to back that sentiment, consequently my collections of records bring me no return whatever.”⁵⁰ And yet Brown’s words point to an important conceptual shift in his understanding of the photographic images he had accumulated. The original primary value of the massive collection had been to serve as stock for Brown’s store, reproduced as souvenirs. This transference of negatives between photographers was common practice at the time.⁵¹ From the 1920s on, however, Brown came to view his archive as a documentation of history, a marketable heritage commodity, even if few were willing to pay for such “sentiment” at the moment. It was not as glimpses of the exotic or scenic that the images held value; rather, it was the specific reference of a time now considered to be past.

This transformation in the meaning of the image archive was part of a broader development in how photography itself was understood. Miles Orvell describes the visual transition between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as moving from a “culture of replication” to a “culture of authenticity.”⁵² The expansion of amateur photography in the early twentieth century altered notions of what it meant to experience place through photographs. Simply buying postcard views of professional photographers was no longer deemed to be “authentic” when amateurs could “capture” the scene on their own. As Nancy Martha West notes, Kodak’s own advertising shifted from the camera as an item of leisure to an indispensable tool of nostalgia, reinforcing a discourse of personalized, “authentic” experience.⁵³ Thus, Brown was left to reconfigure the collection to meet the new demand for, in Orvell’s words, “the real thing.” In the end, producing a visual narrative of history proved to be a simpler task than extracting a remunerative value from photographs deemed to be historical artifacts.

Although devastated by his bankruptcy, Brown had trained his former assistant, Gladys Reeves, as a photographer and had helped her to establish the Art League Studio in Edmonton. As the market for old postcard views and dated souvenir books evaporated, Brown and Reeves turned to producing large albums of photographs that were marketed distinctly as history. One of the earliest customers for this memory project was the Hudson’s Bay Company, which was in the midst of reinventing its public image from that of a London-based relic of colonialism to a Canadian retail department store.⁵⁴ The HBC had used a number of Mathers’ photographs in its 1920 commemorative anniversary history brochure.⁵⁵ Although the company had paid copyright fees to Brown through its public relations agency, only a few Canadian officials were aware of the archive until 1926, when Governor Charles V. Sale encountered

samples of Brown's work during a tour of Canadian operations. A strong advocate for promoting the company's history, Sale quickly arranged for a large selection of them to be printed.⁵⁶

Rather than simply reproducing a series of prints, Brown and Reeves designed three separate photographic albums of pictures. According to Brown's calculations, the three albums collectively included 192 "subjects," which were expanded into 291 separate pictures. Bound in leather, the albums were substantial in size, measuring 16 in. x 11 in. and weighing 17 to 18 lbs.; when delivered in 1927, Brown and Reeves received a princely sum of \$750 for their efforts. The sale sparked a similar album project for the Canadian Pacific Railway (which sold for \$500) and launched Brown and Reeves into a new field, selling a variety of historical albums centred around themes, such as the history of Calgary and "The Birth of the West."⁵⁷ The weight and size of the albums signalled the monumental nature of photographs as documents of history, in contrast to the thin and cheaply produced touristic souvenir booklets of "views" produced by Mathers. And unlike the earlier booklets, which reproduced each photograph at roughly the same size, Brown's reprinting also resized the photographs so that some filled an entire page, while others were smaller in order to fit multiple images on the same page. In comparing the two, we need to be aware of the differences in materiality that mark their production.⁵⁸

The three HBC albums were initially destined for three different locations: one was intended specifically for the Edmonton Hudson's Bay store, one for the Canadian Committee head offices in Winnipeg, and the third for Beaver House, London. At Sale's request, all three albums were sent to London, but then they seemed to disappear. Only the Winnipeg album has survived intact, having reappeared under mysterious circumstances at Beaver House in the late 1950s.⁵⁹

The *Hudson's Bay Company Album* is heavily dependent upon Mathers' images, and in many ways, the narrative is similar to that presented in *A Souvenir from the North*. The album follows a strict order in leading from south to north, and like Mathers, Brown uses at least one photograph that shows the tracking of scows "up" the Athabasca at a narrative point when, spatially and temporally, the photograph should be signalling travel down the river. As with his predecessor, Brown ends the northern journey with two images of the Inuit. However, Brown noticeably begins the album not at Athabasca Landing, but rather with a number of photographs of Edmonton, especially focusing on Jasper Avenue (plate 6), with no small amount of civic pride: "Great has been our advance, from a Hudson's Bay fort to Capital of a province; our foremost thinkers believe we have but touched the fringe of our future greatness." Without criticizing the company directly, Brown purposefully marks the point of greatness as the year in which the HBC land reserves were opened up, allowing the city to expand and develop.⁶⁰



PLATE 6. Edmonton's Jasper Avenue. Most of the markings on this negative were added by Ernest Brown. Photograph by C.W. Mathers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, B5032. Reprinted in *Hudson's Bay Company Album*, 1987/24/13, box 18(OS), Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

From Edmonton, the visual narrative moves northward, but unlike Mathers' souvenir albums, Brown includes maps to mark the journey. While Mathers emphasized his own role as the adventurer/photographer, the camera interacting dynamically with the mobility and travails of the river that carries him, Brown employs a cartographical framework to situate and solidify the metropolitan centre of Edmonton itself as the heroic influence upon the North. In the *HBC Album*, four different maps, all highlighting the central geographical position of Edmonton, reinforce this posturing. It was not the details of the maps as much as their "representational force" that mattered.⁶¹ In Mathers' visual narrative, the viewer is carried downriver, the journey itself unfolding first-hand before the camera in a uniform series with little textual interruption. But for Brown, these images alone were too fluid and too flexible in meaning to be allowed to sit on the page spatially untethered. Instead, Mathers' successor situates the viewer in place, allowing geographical abstractions to define the scale and relationship between the city and its hinterland. Brown's album even includes a chart of northern transport rates published by the HBC in 1898. In the original document, all distances are listed from Athabasca Landing, but

Brown inserts a handwritten note indicating “100 miles Edmonton to” in front of the Athabasca Landing title, reinscribing metropolitan control over northern transportation routes.⁶²

A close reading of the *HBC Album* reveals other differences in the visual narrative it presents. Mathers, having experienced the journey first-hand, focuses about half of his published images on the question of transportation: by scow, by steamboat, by oxcart, and by dogsled. Not only does this imagery reinforce the trope of the adventuring photographer, but it also speaks to wider political demands for increased access to the North, freer trade outside of the Hudson’s Bay monopsony, and the mobility of goods. Brown, in recasting the photographs as evidence for rather than against the HBC presence, downplays the mobility suggested by the river and instead draws upon Mathers’ images of the settlements, largely HBC posts, along the Athabasca-Slave-Mackenzie river system. As noted earlier, in *A Souvenir from the North*, the “settled” presence is almost completely erased in visual terms. Photographs of Fort Simpson and Fort McPherson are two of the rare views of HBC posts that appear in the booklet, while other posts are alluded to in captions but never pictured (or only pictured in the far distance). In contrast, Brown delves into the Mathers’ archive to produce close to a dozen different images of a wide variety of buildings erected by the HBC. In these photographs, such as the image of Fort Resolution (plate 7), the buildings fill the width of the frame, dominating the barely distinguishable people at the gates and enclosing the land in the foreground. This visual strategy might have been initially conceived by Mathers to emphasize the “emptiness” of the Northern posts and the company’s unproductive use of the land. In the hands of Brown and Reeves, deployed as historical documents removed from the earlier battles over trade and governance, the photographs of the company’s buildings offer a narrative of material progress and civilization in the North rather than suggesting obstacles to modernity.

However, for Brown and Reeves, the photographs of buildings were also markers of localized histories of specific places. Their understanding of the material imprint of the HBC required a particular spatial and temporal positioning. As Brown explains in the forward to the album:

In making our selection it has been somewhat difficult to know which to include and which to omit. We have thought it advisable to include a few pictures of some of the towns, showing their early beginnings, for the purpose of making comparison with present day views which may easily be obtained.



PLATE 7. Fort Resolution, 1901. Photograph by C.W. Mathers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, B2902. Reprinted in *Hudson's Bay Company Album*, 1987/24/38, box 18(OS), Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba.

For Brown and Reeves, the photographs do not just depict company posts; rather, they present the past of “towns” that still exist, and these scenes need to be compared to “present day views.” This pedagogical technique, designed to enhance the value of photographs as conveyors of historical truth, also serves to constrain the history of the HBC in the North. Rather than viewing these settlements as products of a company history, Brown and Reeves imply that, like Edmonton, the places mapped out on the Athabasca-Mackenzie have their own historical trajectories that extend beyond the parameters of the company. Invoking “present day views” situates the viewer geographically and temporally within a contemporary space. From this vantage point, the HBC presence is but the beginning of a progressive history that extends beyond the stage of the company fort into the present and on to the future. Just as Edmonton’s “greatness” begins with the loosening of the HBC land holdings, so too does the North emerge as more than the history of the company, despite the very concentration of photographs that would appear to suggest the opposite.

Although enamoured with the patronage of the HBC (which was almost constantly mentioned in later promotional material), Brown clearly saw its role in the North as part of history and not the future. In a manuscript ad-

dendum to the historical album *The Birth of the West*, Brown makes it clear that while the company explorers had once performed heroic deeds, the whole enterprise of the fur trade was guided by selfish motives, “skimming the cream from the country explored and trying to keep out settlement.”⁶³ Brown, the critic of unrestrained capitalism, viewed the HBC with suspicion, especially when it interfered with his perception of “real” settlement, which was embodied by civilized agriculture. Indeed, for Brown in the late 1920s, the North remained in its “primitive state,” equivalent to what the “west” had been like “sixty years ago.” The historian turned prophet in announcing that “sixty years hence would prove the potential for the north,”⁶⁴ an assertion demonstrated visually within his historical album: situated between two pages with ethnographic photographs of Inuit in traditional dress, Brown superimposes a map of Tobolsk, Siberia on the Prairie provinces, showing how much agricultural production could be achieved at higher latitudes, a map that also makes an appearance in the *HBC Album*. Apparently inspired by Vilhjalmur Stefansson’s popularization of the “friendly north” in the 1920s, the “frontier” of the Prairie West had clearly shifted northward.⁶⁵ Brown’s alignment with the local interests of Edmonton as the regional centre for northern activity certainly shaped his understanding of what part of the West was destined for greatness, but in this narrative the Hudson’s Bay Company’s role was clearly confined to history.

The shift of Mathers’ photographs from souvenirs to artifacts of history also restages narratives of race. In a short textual note in the *HBC Album*, Brown comments on a series of photographs of a portage near Fort Smith (plate 8). While Mathers employed space to direct a hierarchical ordering of Indigenous peoples that improved the further one travelled down the river, Brown re-frames the photographs to speak to historical imaginings:

As may be seen from the pictures, the taking of one of these scows overland is no ‘child’s play’, but one requiring great strength of muscle and endurance. It is said that in the early days of the fur trade, the English men or French men of the Traders were unequal to the strenuous demands of tracking or postaging [*sic*]; and that the Indians would not do it. However with the marriage and intermixing of the white races with the Indians, a new race of Métis or halfbreeds were produced, who fulfilled the essentials required of one engaged in the arduous task of either portaging or packing.⁶⁶

By isolating the activity of portaging as his reference point, Brown extends a historical commentary on race, while simultaneously ignoring the question of race in the actual photograph. The clear photographic evidence of Tłı̨ch̨ (Dog-Rib)



PLATE 8. Portage on Slave River, 1901. Photograph by C.W. Mathers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, B2913. Reprinted in *Hudson's Bay Company Album*, 1987/24/31, box 18(OS), Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba.

labourers meeting the “strenuous demands” of the portage is obscured by the textual framework, which recasts the activity as the particular historical domain of the Métis, who are constructed as being more racially suited to the task. Despite the visual evidence that offers an alternative reading, one suggesting that Native peoples were active and essential contributors to the economic activity of the North, Brown insists on presenting these photographs within a historical fantasy of exotic otherness. Although Mathers’ captions on other photographs (permanently etched onto the large glass negatives) explicitly identified the labourers as “Indian” packers (plate 2), Brown is clearly determined to use the image to project his own narrative of race as historically situated.

This understanding is evident from the forward of the album, where Brown explains, “The original types of Indians and Eskimos, with whom the Company so long did business, have mostly passed away, we therefore include a few pictures showing these people, their habits and their customs.” If Mathers saw his images as capturing a “vanishing” race, in Brown’s mind, authentic Native peoples had already vanished, a position that also increased the value of his photographs as both historical artifacts and documentary witnesses.⁶⁷

For Mathers, the spatial and racial boundaries of the North were still fluid as the processes of modernity remade Native peoples into economic subjects and distinguished the Inuit as premodern ethnographic curiosities. Brown, however, attempts to fix these meanings in space by reframing them inside the spaces of history. Rather than simply reproducing Mathers' images, or even just rearranging them, Brown overpowers them with text and maps. History is deployed to empty the landscape of obstacles to modern progress, clearing the way for a renewed utopian vision of the North. Both the HBC and the Aboriginal inhabitants along the Athabasca and Mackenzie rivers found themselves represented in photographs, but with roles tightly circumscribed and restricted.

In the late 1950s, almost a decade after Brown's death, the Hudson's Bay Company rediscovered him and published a glowing tribute to the man in *The Beaver*.⁶⁸ The article tells a somewhat tragic tale of Brown's sacrifices to preserve the visual history of the West and his difficulty in finding a buyer for his collection. Eventually the Government of Alberta stepped in, purchasing the collection from Brown even though it had no proper facilities to house the massive stockpile of negatives until the establishment of its own provincial archives in 1967. By the time of the HBC's tercentennial celebrations in 1970, however, the Brown collection was publicly archived and accessible, promoted as an indispensable heritage resource for the province.

With the full Mathers/Brown archive available to the company through the newly established Provincial Archives of Alberta, the HBC rewrote the visual narrative on its own terms. The photographs that filled the wall of the gallery at the 1970 Beaver House exhibition were all sepia-toned, invoking a deep sense of the past, even though many of the images had likely never been printed that way before. There was no chronological or geographic order to follow. Instead, the viewer was confronted by a dominant grouping of HBC forts and various settlements, spread out from Fort Smith to Prince Albert to Moose Factory. These were followed by a cluster of ethnographic images of First Nations and Inuit peoples, punctuated by photographs of Edmonton "pioneers" and even of Ernest Brown himself. Absent from the display were any of the images of the Northern river systems. Gone were the tracking of scows and scenes of Native labour. The HBC, from the vantage of Beaver House almost seventy years after Mathers' journey, represented itself as the benevolent governor of far-flung lands, marked by the buildings that signified its civilizing influence. In the opening panel of text, which celebrated the arrival of the camera, the claim that "[f]or the first time the actual conditions in the Company's operations could be properly represented and permanently recorded" implied that the photographs were produced *for* the HBC rather than against it. In the course of rewriting its own history, the HBC rewrote the history of Brown's collection and Mathers's photographs, while simultaneously reordering the landscape of the North.



Plate 9. Hudson's Bay Company Tercentenary Exhibit, Beaver House, London, 1970. Photograph by A.C.K. Ware (Photographs) Ltd., London. Album 88, image 32, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba.

Conclusion

CHARLES W. MATHERS started down the Athabasca with an eye toward using his photographs to “open” the North to freer trade. And while selected images circulated widely, the point of his expedition was not simply to take a few representative images, but rather to produce a visual archive of the North. As Scott McQuire suggests, the camera offered a “means of producing an archive on a scale and rhythm in accord with the demands of capitalism. Capitalism needed the camera as a means of negotiating the social disjunction produced by its convulsive expansion.”⁶⁹ Photographs established and narrated a past anchored by the stability non-Aboriginals desired to see in the timeless and retrogressive world of the Inuit. The Athabasca-Mackenzie basin north of Edmonton, however, was anything but stable during the turn of the twentieth century. The

1890s had been a period of rapid technological, social, and industrial change, of which image making was itself part and parcel.

Just as the North was itself changing, so too was the archive, which cannot be seen as a neutral or stable entity but rather serves as, in Allan Sekula's words, "a kind of 'clearing house' of meaning."⁷⁰ In reordering the visual narrative, Ernest Brown produced an album that simultaneously appealed to the Hudson's Bay Company while employing history to confine its role. As photographs were transformed into historical artifacts, the meanings of economic development and race were reconfigured; authenticity was deployed to erase Aboriginal presence and clear the way for a new period of pioneer settlement in the North. Brown's Northern visions became the reach of Edmonton over its hinterland and with a scale and scope that even Oliver likely could not have imagined.

Despite their important differences, Mathers and Brown both saw these photographs of the North as speaking to past and present, and understood photography as a distinctly modern form of "making" place. Indeed, to return to McQuire:

The status given to photographs as a material form of memory, and the deference to photography, film and videotape over other forms of record and recall, signals an important threshold of modernity. If ... the key political struggle of the twentieth century is the struggle of memory over forgetting, the camera has been a crucial force in this contest.⁷¹

The Northern experience must be reconsidered, and a reconsideration of this kind requires identifying photography as a particularly modern discourse. Yet we cannot simply restore a single, "authentic" reading to Mathers' photographs, for the circulation and continuing afterlife of his images produced new imaginings that were not without consequence to how the North was perceived. Here too, place emerges as not simply imagined but as a contested vantage point. The massive rivers that carried Mathers and his heavy camera equipment downstream in 1901 also carried the weight of interpretation in supporting his political goals, but the river recedes as time and space carry the viewer further away from the North. From Mathers to Brown to Beaver House, London, distance from the Athabasca-Mackenzie river system played as great a role in transforming the narrative as the passage of time. If we are to follow Joan Schwartz's advice that we bring "context to the image, better to understand the context,"⁷² we must also be aware of the multiple contexts produced by time and place in the circulation of images of the North. *

Notes

Research for this chapter was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

- 1 Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), Winnipeg, Manitoba, introductory panel, 1 June 1970.
- 2 In his critique of Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, John Tagg notes that "[t]he very idea of what constitutes evidence has a history." See John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1988), 4.
- 3 A complete biography and analysis of Mathers' contribution to the photographic record of Western Canada is available in Brock V. Silversides, *C.W. Mathers' Vision* (Edmonton: Provincial Archives of Alberta, 1989) and Brock V. Silversides, "Charles Wesley Mathers," *History of Photography* 14, no. 4 (1990): 327–48.
- 4 *Edmonton Bulletin*, 16 September 1901, 2.
- 5 Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 198.
- 6 *Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 April 1900, 6.
- 7 On vision and empire, see James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997).
- 8 *Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 April 1900, 6. Kim Greenwell adds that the "colonial gaze was predominantly White, male, and bourgeois in its inclinations, thus it should come as no surprise that its vision tended to reinforce the hierarchies of power that privileged its perspective." Kim Greenwell, "Picturing 'Civilization': Missionary Narratives and the Margins of Mimicry," *BC Studies* 135 (2002): 6.
- 9 Lianne McTavish, "Learning to See in New Brunswick, 1862–1929," *Canadian Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (2006): 553–81; Richard White, *The Organic Machine* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).
- 10 James Murton, "What J.W. Clark Saw in British Columbia, or, Nature and the Machine: A Photo Essay," *BC Studies* 142–143 (2004): 147.
- 11 Frank Oliver, "To the Klondike – The All-Canadian Route," *The Nor'-West Farmer* 16, no. 22 (1897): 453–59.
- 12 City of Edmonton Archives (hereafter cited as CEA), Edmonton, Alberta, Northern Alberta Pioneer and Old Timers Association Collection, "Address Read to Mr. Oliver on Return from 1st Parliamentary Session He Attended," MS172/25.
- 13 *Edmonton Bulletin*, 16 September 1901, 2.
- 14 Evidence of the importance Mathers placed in this respect is given in that he left an uncannily detailed description to an assistant on the proper techniques to follow in photo-engraving. Most commercial and stock photographers used engraving to claim copyright, index their images, and promote themselves. Provincial Archives

- of Alberta (hereafter cited as PAA), Edmonton, Alberta, Ernest Brown Collection, C.W. Mathers, "Directions to Photo Engraving," 18 September 1894, PR1965/124.
- 15 Greg Gillespie, *Hunting for Empire: Narratives of Sport in Rupert's Land, 1840–1870* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure* (London: Routledge, 1997); Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge Chapman Hall, 1991).
 - 16 Caspar, Whitney, *On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds: Twenty-eight Hundred Miles after Musk-Oxen and Woodbison* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896), 2.
 - 17 C.W. Mathers, "A Trip to the Arctic Circle," *The Farmers Advocate* 38, no. 589 (1903): 1121.
 - 18 C.W. Mathers, *The Far North: A Souvenir from the North* (Edmonton: C.W. Mathers, Minister of Agriculture, 1901), 2.
 - 19 Mathers, *Far North*, 2.
 - 20 Agnes Deans Cameron, *The New North: Being Some Account of a Woman's Journey through Canada to the Arctic. With Many Illustrations from Photographs by the Author* (New York: D. Appleton, 1910), 88.
 - 21 Lynda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 14. Joan Schwarz and James Ryan, eds. *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).
 - 22 On binaries of authenticity and their resistance, see Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 7.
 - 23 Mathers, "Trip to the Arctic Circle," 1121.
 - 24 At the time of Mathers' voyage, the neo-Lamarckian theory that racial characteristics matched environments was long established in the tradition of geographical exploration and the standard narrative of contact experience. David Livingstone explains that "climate's moral economy" was a powerful force in rationalizing the European exploitation of "lesser" peoples: the idea that Europeans could not be acclimatized to work in the antipodes was an early justification of slavery. David Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 219–25. Also see Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, eds., *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
 - 25 Silversides, "C.W. Mathers' Vision," 4–5.
 - 26 "We Have Received from Boorne & May, Ltd. of Calgary, N.W.T.," *Canadian Photographic Journal* 7 (1892): 157. On the "vanishing race," see Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); and Brian W. Dippie, "Photographic Allegories and Indian Destiny," in *Readings in Aboriginal Studies*, vol. 4, *Images of the Indian*, ed. Joe Sawchuck (Brandon: Bearpaw Publishing, 1995).
 - 27 William H. Boorne, "With the Savages in the Far West," *Canadian Photographic Journal* 2 (1893): 372. Also see Brian Street, "British Popular Anthropology:

- Exhibiting and Photographing the Other," in *Anthropology and Photography, 1860–1920*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
- 28 Stephen D. Hoelscher, *Picturing Indians: Photographic Encounters and Tourist Fantasies in H.H. Bennett's Wisconsin Dells* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); and Carol Williams, *Framing the West: Race, Gender, and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
 - 29 Adele Perry, "From 'the Hot-Bed of Vice' to the 'Good and Well-Ordered Christian Home': First Nations Housing and Reform in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," *Ethnohistory* 50, no. 4 (2003): 596.
 - 30 CEA, Frank Oliver fonds MS172/2, Frank Oliver, "The Founding of Edmonton,".
 - 31 Alexander Begg, "The Great North-West of Canada: A Paper Read at Conference, Indian and Colonial Exhibition, London, June 8th, 1886" (London: H. Blacklock & Co., 1886), 8.
 - 32 Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856–1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 168–216; Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (2000): 617–45.
 - 33 Arthur Ray has pointed out that focused study on the period after 1821 is complemented by scant historical scholarship examining the HBC and its competitors after 1871. A monopsony is the market condition of control by a single buyer. Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), xvi.
 - 34 Somewhat corroborating Begg's opinion, and no doubt to Oliver's ire, HBC officer E.B. Nixon informed Klondikers that "semi-starvation, if not worse, and cold await the prospectors who make a late start via the Edmonton route." "Shuts Door to Gold," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 August 1897, 2.
 - 35 Responding to aligned pressures, in 1891 the HBC empowered businessman C.C. Chipman to modernize the company. Ushering in new capitalist models of work, he ended the officer status of traders and transferred wages from the deed poll to a salary system. Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North: 1870–1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 61. For an overview of state formation in northern Alberta during the 1890s, see Donald G. Wetherell and Irene Kmet, *Alberta's North: A History, 1890 to 1950* (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute Press, University of Alberta Press, Alberta Community Development, 2000).
 - 36 Mathers, "Trip to the Arctic Circle," 1122.
 - 37 Ibid.
 - 38 Ibid.
 - 39 *Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 September 1901, 1.
 - 40 Warburton Pike, *The Barren Ground of Northern Canada* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 299.
 - 41 Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); and Ann Laura Stoler, *Race*

- and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).
- 42 *Edmonton Bulletin*, 16 September 1901, 2.
 - 43 Peter Geller, *Northern Exposures: Photographing and Filming the Canadian North, 1920–45* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 35.
 - 44 Kenneth Coates and William R. Morrison, "Winter and the Shaping of Northern History: Reflections from the Canadian North," *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*, ed. Kerry M. Abel and Kenneth Coates (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2001), 30.
 - 45 PAA, item 24, box 1, PR1990-601, "The Autobiography of Ernest Brown," 17 February 1940, p. 1.
 - 46 Silversides, "Charles Wesley Mathers," 22.
 - 47 In many of Brown's later recollections, the date is uncertain or sometimes combined with the original purchase of the studio. The appended contract is vague about the exact transfer of the negatives. See PAA, file 467, box 10, 74.173, indenture, 1 June 1904, between Charles W. Mathers and Ernest Brown.
 - 48 PAA, file 511a, box 11, 74.173, typed draft copy of classified advertisement, c. 1904.
 - 49 Eric Holmgren, "Ernest Brown, Photographer," *Alberta History* 28, no. 4 (Autumn 1980): 16–19.
 - 50 PAA, file 2, 79.280, Ernest Brown, "To Whom It May Concern," p. 1.
 - 51 For example, Richard and Hannah Maynard, photographers based in Victoria, had purchased the collection of Frederick Dally, repackaging his images of Native life as scenic stereocards and *cartes-de-visites*. See Carol Jane Williams, "Framing the West: Race, Gender and the Photographic 'Frontier' on the Northwest Coast 1858–1912" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1999), 187–90.
 - 52 Orvell, *Real Thing*.
 - 53 Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2000). On the shifting social practices of collecting and scrapbooking "tourist mementoes," see Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National identity, 1880–1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), chap. 7.
 - 54 See David Monod, "Bay Days: The Managerial Revolution and the Hudson's Bay Company Department Stores, 1912–1939," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* (1986): 173–96; and Peter Geller, "Creating Corporate Images of the Fur Trade: The Hudson's Bay Company and Public Relations in the 1930s," in *The Fur Trade Revisited*, eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994).
 - 55 William Schooling, *The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay during Two Hundred and Fifty Years, 1670–1920* (London: Hudson's Bay Company, 1920).

- 56 PAA, file 112a, box 17, 65.124, Charles V. Sale to Ernest Brown, 29 December 1927.
- 57 PAA, file 69, box 3, 74.173, Gladys Reeves, "The Ernest Brown Collection."
- 58 On the materiality of photographs, see *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, eds. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (London: Routledge, 2004).
- 59 In 1958 or 1959, an anonymous workman walked into Beaver House with the Winnipeg album in hand, claiming that he had "acquired" it to use as a scrapbook but his employer had advised him to return it to the company. Efforts to find out more about the disappearance and return did not produce any results. See HBCA, Beaver File acc. no. 1987/174, A.M. Johnson to F.B. Walker, 7 October 1959.
- 60 HBCA, box 18(OS), Text accompanying image 1987/24/13, *Hudson's Bay Company Album*, 1987/24 (hereafter cited as *HBC Album*).
- 61 J.B. Harley notes that "the influence of the map is channelled as much through its representational force as a symbol as through its overt representations." See J.B. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power," in *The Iconography of Landscape*, eds. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 303.
- 62 See HBCA, *HBCA Album*, 1987/24/19.
- 63 Ernest Brown, "Birth of the West," textual addendum to the *Birth of the West Album*, 24.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 45.
- 65 Janice Cavell, "The Second Frontier: The North in English-Canadian Historical Writing," *Canadian Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (2002): 364–89.
- 66 Ernest Brown, "Birth of the West", 25.
- 67 Undoubtedly, the company itself would have been surprised at this assessment, since just seven years earlier, the HBC had celebrated its 250th anniversary with a large pageant at Fort Garry, attended by a wide range of Native participants. See Peter Geller, "'Hudson's Bay Company Indians': Images of Native People and the Red River Pageant, 1920," in *Constructing the Indian: Representation of Native Americans in Popular Culture*, ed. S. Elizabeth Bird (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 65–77.
- 68 John Patrick Gillese, "Handfuls of History," in *The Beaver: Magazine of the North* (Autumn 1959): 4–11.
- 69 Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera* (London: Sage, 1998), 125.
- 70 Allan Sekula, "Photography between Labour and Capital," in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures*, eds. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 194.
- 71 McQuire, *Visions*, 110.
- 72 Joan M. Schwartz, "More Than 'Competent Description of an Intractably Empty Landscape': A Strategy for Critical Engagement with Historical Photographs," *Historical Geography* 31 (2003): 107.

The Kaleidoscope of Madness: Perceptions of Insanity in British Columbia Aboriginal Populations, 1872–1950

KATHRYN MCKAY

MARCH 1886 – His appearance and conduct [are] indicative of idiocy, [he] refuses to speak, eat or drink. Sometimes he seems to understand what is said to him but only replies with a stupid stare. He moves about at random trying to pick up coloured stones and pieces of paper in an aimless manner.¹

JULY 1950 – This patient ... is an Indian male 23 years of age in good physical condition. He appears rather dull and retarded mentally. He is very slow in his speech and it is rather difficult to obtain any accurate information from him.

JULY 1950 – I disagree with the previous impression that he is of very low mentality. I have been observing this patient on the ward and he plays a good game of bridge and appears to shoot a good game of pool. I do not think he is mentally defective and it seems likely that he suffered an episode of complete bewilderment and depression.²

■ **More than sixty years separate these ward notes.** The first two quotations illustrate the rather uncomplimentary attitudes of some physicians regarding the First Nations patients committed to the provincial mental asylum in British Columbia. The record from 1886 is scant, a mere three paragraphs. The report states only that the patient has been sick for about two months and does not speak English. It offers neither a diagnosis nor a prognosis. The 1950 patient remained in hospital for approximately a year and a half and, at discharge, was considered to be “mentally deficient with epilepsy,” despite the opinion of the second doctor.

Colonialism and psychiatry are both normalizing discourses that seek to differentiate between populations along lines of belonging and behaviour. In British Columbia, Aboriginal patients institutionalized for mental illness contended with both of these discourses.³ This paper examines the committal and treatment of Aboriginal patients admitted to the provincial mental hospital system of British Columbia during the period 1872–1950.⁴ My focus is the construction of sanity and madness, and the framing of this dichotomy by colonial authorities, complicated by designations of “status,” “non-status,” and “mixed race.” Although these terms are fluid, I maintain that there was little significant change in the treatment patterns established by medical authorities in the late nineteenth century. Almost consistently, medical authorities disregarded Aboriginal patients in favour of their relatives with less “Native blood.”

This paper is based on my initial review of the Aboriginal patient case files contained in the larger collection of patient files held at the British Columbia Archives.⁵ In most instances, the admission documents clearly indicated the “race” of the patient. Further, all status Indian patients were admitted as wards of the state, and their records contain correspondence from the Department of Indian Affairs. The non-status patients were identified at admission as racially “Indian” but included indications that the patient had been enfranchised or, in a few instances, was thought to be an “American Indian.” Mixed-race patients were identified in the admission documents and patient registers by a variety of terms, including “half-breed” and “mixed.”

I start with the premise that Aboriginal psychiatric patients were subject to multiple systems of designation and surveillance. Federal Indian policy was based on the notion that Indian cultures and societies were inferior to settler society and required constant surveillance. Governmental regulation tasked a variety of bureaucrats with this surveillance, including Indian agents, who were responsible for the local control of bands; medical officials, who investigated Indigenous health; and residential school officials, police, and field matrons, who investigated the personal lives of status Indians. Although not active agents of the state, missionaries also instituted a system of surveillance designed to discourage indig-

enous cultural practices.⁶ The reports and writings of these officials contributed to the perception of Indians as distinctly other.⁷ Indeed, as Homi Bhabha argues, colonial discourse is precisely intended “to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.”⁸

During the period of examination, status Indians were not synonymous with those peoples identified today as First Nations. The term *status Indian* was a legislated designation based on perceptions of racial and cultural difference. The *Indian Act* of 1876 promoted assimilation through the “reorganization” of traditional land-use patterns and through the imposition of the chief-and-council system that replaced the traditional Aboriginal systems of governance. The Act determined the identity of the status Indian in relation to occupation of the land and established a system by which this occupation would be overseen through a multileveled bureaucracy. Further, this act did not consider the social and cultural distinctions between First Nations peoples but subsumed these differences with the vague wording identifying Indians as peoples with “Indian blood ... who lived an Indian life style.” This excluded, among others, Indian women who married white men and Indians with a university degree. This act was amended numerous times between 1876 and 1951, but definitions of who was and who was not Indian and hence who had status did not fundamentally change.

Just as the term *Indian* had both a legal and cultural designation, *insanity* was a legal as well as a medical term. The *British Columbia Act Respecting Asylums for the Insane*, passed in 1873, defined a “lunatic” as “any insane person whether found so by inquisition or not.”⁹ Those determined to be lunatics by this rather elastic definition were then removed from society and incarcerated in mental hospitals. Mental hospitals were thus integral components of state formation that linked notions of impropriety to psychiatric definitions of deviancy.¹⁰

In many ways, nineteenth-century colonialism and early psychiatry have much in common. Both were predicated on the idea that Western society, along with the version of reality that it supported, was the most developed and represented progress as the highest achievement possible. The emerging field of medicine bolstered and was supported by colonial directives that promoted a hierarchy of race and culture. Medical investigations, such as craniometry, were used to illustrate the very physical evidence of this supposed hierarchy. Colonial and scientific authority created and privileged a definition of reality that was used as a means to promote a specific version of social order within the colonial context. Both relied upon racialized notions of “others” as representations of the “primitive mind.” Further, it seems that some forms of madness were colonial tropes for the resistance of “non-civilized” peoples.¹¹

Historiography

THE LITERATURE SHOWS that the complex relationship between colonialism and psychiatry varied between colonial settings. For example, Richard Keller's *Colonial Madness*,¹² Lynette Jackson's *Surfacing Up*,¹³ and Jonathan Sadowsky's *Imperial Bedlam*¹⁴ examine the racialized treatment of Indigenous patients within colonial mental hospitals. In his study of French North Africa, Keller reports that due to overcrowding, Indigenous Algerian inmates were removed from familiar surroundings and shipped to France for treatment. Keller notes that one physician argued that the voyage had a calming effect on Algerian mental patients.¹⁵ Jackson, whose work focuses on the Ingutsheni Hospital in colonial Zimbabwe, notes that Indigenous patients were housed in inadequate shelters, while white patients admitted to the hospital enjoyed a modicum of privacy and dignity.¹⁶ Sadowsky maintains that a large number of Indigenous people in colonial southwest Nigeria were turned away from the asylum due to lack of space.¹⁷

Similarly, the response to gendered transgression of behavioural norms was not constant among colonial settings. Breaches of white masculinity concerned colonial authorities in India, while African women's contradiction of gendered norms of colonial society branded the women as dangerous and hence fit for committal to colonial Zimbabwe's asylum.¹⁸ Further, Jackson argues that it was only when the asylum succeeded in making itself a "civilized space" that white women were admitted.¹⁹ According to Adele Perry, colonial British Columbia followed other imperatives. Intending to build a white settler colony on the "edge of empire," colonial authorities quickly incarcerated white women who broke with gendered, classed, and racialized notions of sanity.²⁰ This literature points to the diversity of colonial responses to madness and cautions against viewing colonial discourses as overdetermining, or uniformly determining, perceptions of Indigenous people deemed insane.

There are few historical studies of the relationship between colonialism and psychiatry as related to First Nations people in Canada. In his *Revenge of the Windigo*, James Waldram outlines the development of the concept of the "Aboriginal mind" by psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, physicians, and anthropologists over the course of the twentieth century. According to Waldram, concepts of Aboriginal psychopathology influenced both social and medical authorities. His focus is on "the intellectual underpinnings of explicit and implicit models of culture that appear to be guiding research" as well as "sweeping generalizations of the Aboriginal personality."²¹ Scholars writing about Aboriginal mental states in the early twentieth century concluded, along with Diamond Jenness, that "[t]he Indians are mentally somewhat unbalanced," whether that was due

to their being rooted in primitivism, prone to magical thinking, subject to environmental stress, caught in between two worlds, or experiencing the pressures of assimilation.²² Waldram's study is significant because he situates the construction of the Aboriginal mind not in a self-reflective examination of Aboriginal culture by Western psychiatry but rather in the flawed Western notion of objective observation. Waldram also points to the problematic nature of a monolithic Aboriginal mind that was applied to all Aboriginal peoples and did not consider the cultural differences among Aboriginal peoples.

In their article "Turbulent Spirits," Robert Menzies and Ted Palys examine the confluence of colonialism and psychiatry in relation to First Nations patients in British Columbia. They identify distinctive patterns of legal and medical intervention and argue that the committal and treatment of First Nations patients raise "important questions about the recursive relations of race, ethnicity, Aboriginality, and psychiatry across the province and the nation."²³ In particular, they note that members of Indigenous communities rarely initiated the committal of status Indian patients; rather, agents of the state were frequently responsible.²⁴ Further, Menzies and Palys find that only a small number of the status Indian patients were actually treated. They indicate that 68 percent did not receive any type of treatment. Eleven percent were prescribed medicines to treat paresis, followed by six percent who were given sedatives for epilepsy.²⁵ Finally, Menzies and Palys argue that, despite the pleas of family, First Nations patients were often denied discharge, as their villages were seen as sites of disease.²⁶ Thus, Indian patients were isolated, often left untreated, and frequently denied discharge.

This article builds upon Menzies and Palys' important work by comparing the symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment given to status Indian patients with those of non-status and "mixed" Aboriginal patients. This will illustrate the relationship between perceptions of indigeneity and deviance through a discussion of the handling of these patients from committal through institutionalization and treatment, and on to either death or discharge.

Methodology

UNDERSTANDING THAT STATUS INDIAN PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS were subject to multiple definitional practices, this paper investigates how discourses of colonialism and psychiatry converged, coalesced, and conflicted in producing both knowledge about and practices directed at psychiatric patients identified as status Indian. Previous studies have identified approximately 276 Aboriginal people admitted to British Columbia's psychiatric facility between 1872 and 1950. Some but not all of these were status Indians.²⁷ The mix of status and non-

status Aboriginal patients provides an opportunity for comparison that may help highlight the influence of the legal definition of *Indian* on the treatment of status Indian patients.

Case histories present a specific set of challenges for the researcher.²⁸ My research indicates that the files cannot be used as a source for the lived experience of the patient; rather, the files function as illustrations of the attitudes held by the medical authorities toward the patients. Further, I maintain that it is impossible to reconstruct the chorus of patient voices from these records, as the authorities recorded only those words and deeds, either positive or negative, that they considered relevant. Similarly, instances of patient resistance are also difficult to ascertain, even through a close reading of the files. Although escapes and suicides, the most extreme manifestations of resistance, were noted, these notations reflect the perspectives of the medical authorities. For example, a generally well-mannered patient may be described as “wandering off,” while a more recalcitrant patient as attempting to escape from the institution.²⁹ Further, psychiatric authorities did not view suicide and escape as indications of institutional failure but rather as evidence of the accuracy of the diagnosis and of the patient’s lack of insight into his or her condition. Some of the files do contain letters written by the patients; however, these are letters that were confiscated by the authorities, generally due to their negative content, and thus are not representative of the patient experience in general.

Admission was a staged procedure. Although the legal process of admission was standardized, the route to admission varied. In some cases, family or community members complained to authorities. In other cases, the police or other government officials recommended committal on the basis that the patient represented a public menace. Still other patients were admitted from state institutions such as jail or residential and industrial schools. Once the person came to the attention of the authorities, two physicians—usually general practitioners, not psychiatric specialists—examined the patient and indicated their recommendation for committal. The physicians recorded the relationship of the person who instigated the initial complaint as well as what the patient said and did during the exam and how the patient appeared physically at the time of examination. Finally, a legal official, such as a judge or stipendiary magistrate, reviewed these recommendations and gave the order for committal. In some cases, this legal official was also one of the examining physicians. Once the patient was admitted to hospital, resident doctors diagnosed the individual and prescribed a regimen of treatment. If the patient responded favourably, he or she was discharged after improvement was sustained for a reasonable period of time.³⁰

Upon admission, the doctors examined the patient to ascertain if the signs and symptoms of madness had abated or increased. Physicians also performed

a physical exam in order to ascertain the general health of the patient; for women, this often included a gynecological exam. Sometime after admission, the medical authorities interviewed the patient in a process recorded as a “verbatim.” During these sessions, the patient was asked a number of increasingly difficult questions. Generally these interviews began with inquiries as to the patient’s age and social status, and included education and occupational experience. If the patient was able to answer this type of question, the interrogation progressed to knowledge of cultural aphorisms, such as “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” The medical authorities frequently portrayed Aboriginal patients as mentally deficient if they were unable to supply personal information or comment on these adages.

The centrepiece of the file is the ward notes written by the medical officials during the length of the patient’s committal. In the early years, the law required that the patient be assessed once a year. However, the files became more detailed as legislation demanded that the patients be examined more regularly.³¹ In the 1930s, social service reports were added as an important component of the case file.³² These reports focused on the information gathered through interviews with the patient’s family and, when possible, friends and employers. Not surprisingly, these interviews often produced contradictory evidence, which required the social worker to comment on her perception of the veracity of the witness. At every point, psychiatric patients were observed and assessed using definitions of normalcy that were culturally bound and socially produced. As wards of the state, racially and culturally defined by the *Indian Act*, this system placed Aboriginal patients at a disadvantage.

Discussion

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, organic theories of causation informed medical decisions. By the 1930s, psychoanalysis was in ascendance, and by mid-century, medical authorities treated patients with both medicine and psychosurgery.³³ These shifts in theory, in conjunction with the developments in technology and medication, profoundly affected the type of treatment provided to and outcome expected from the patient. In the years before radical medical intervention—such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), metrazol shock, and psychosurgery—was introduced, a patient was removed from the community and remained in hospital until signs and symptoms of illness ceased.³⁴ Once medical intervention became the standard method prescribed, a patient was returned to the community when indications of illness were ameliorated through medication and treatment. In the first instance, the patient was considered to have regained mental balance. In the second, stability was artificially maintained as

long as the patient adhered to a prescribed regimen. These models would have profoundly different effects on First Nations patients and their diverse communities. Those patients who lived close to centres in the lower mainland were able to maintain the medical regimen and were often compelled to do so as a requirement for discharge. Patients from outlying communities where surveillance was difficult or non-existent were often not discharged. Further, if discharged, these patients generally did not have access to the pharmacies and clinics integral to maintenance of a prescribed regimen of treatment, nor were the medical staff in smaller communities trained to deal with the continuing care of mental patients.

For example, in the early 1950s, a nurse from a small community on Vancouver Island inquired of the hospital authorities:

Dear Sir – Would you kindly give me some idea as to the condition of a recent patient of yours, an Indian from here. He wants a repeat of a large red capsule and a small white one with a cross on it. I have neither in stock here, so please send the medication, care of the hospital and instructions as to how long he is to continue same. NP There is no doctor nearer than [X], so I look after him. Many thanks for a speedy reply. I am, Yours Truly ...³⁵

Patients from outlying communities often remained in hospital, despite showing improvement, as medical officials deemed their home environments to be unhealthy and not conducive to recovery and mental stability. Consider the case of Agatha, a First Nations teenager from a remote coastal community who was admitted to hospital in 1934 with depression. After a few months in the hospital with no treatment given, she was considered cured of this ailment. Despite the pleas of her parents to return her to her family and her community, she was kept in the institution, as a return to her home “could cause a return of her condition.” Agatha remained in the hospital for three more years until she died of tuberculosis.³⁶ The case of Bernice, another First Nations woman admitted for depression in the mid-1940s, illustrates the tragedy that could ensue. The admission note states:

[S]he is quite dull and foolish Indian girl. She is uncommunicative when asked questions about herself and her behaviour in the Industrial school. She reached only the 4th grade in school and her arithmetic and general knowledge is limited. Her behaviour on the ward is quiet and co-operative to date and she follows instructions well. Thus far we have not been able to state that her illness has been more than a re-active depression in an immature and impulsive individual.

Bernice continued to hold her improvement for a number of years and was depicted as co-operative and assisting with ward duties. Her immediate family and friends wrote numerous letters to the authorities asking for her release. However, they were always answered in the negative, with the caution that if allowed to return to her home, she may become “difficult to control.” After eight years in hospital, the ward notes show an abrupt change:

She cannot be engaged in conversation with regard to her difficulties. Patient was extremely threatening and combative towards the staff and exhibited homicidal tendencies on several occasions. There has been no previous expression of suicidal tendencies and most of her behaviour was aggressive in nature. Because of her homicidal acts, the patient was put in restraint.

However, according to the notes, within the space of fifteen minutes, Bernice got out of both a straitjacket and a restraining sheet; she wrote a short message on the wall and hung herself. The subsequent inquest relieved the authorities of charges of culpability in her death.³⁷

The records clearly illustrate cultural ignorance of Indigenous practices on the part of the medical authorities. For example, when Aboriginal patients mentioned communication between themselves and the deceased, the authorities used this as an indication of madness.³⁸ Edgar, a fisherman from the north coast, maintained that he had been out in a boat recently, talking with a chief and a number of his deceased friends, although the police reported he had been in the “lock up” for two days.³⁹ Anna, described as “intemperate,” believed in ghosts and stated that a man who had been dead for four months had approached her and asked her to go with him.⁴⁰ Vernon, a labourer from the interior, stated that his problems began when he was asked to drive a dead person to town. It was later confirmed that Vernon had been asked to drive a body to the mortuary and had been involved in an accident while transporting the body. Despite the confirmation of his story, Vernon remained in hospital, “dull and confused,” until he died from tuberculosis twenty-three years later.⁴¹ In contrast to the opinions of the medical authorities, ethnographers argue that communication with the dead was and still is an important component of community and identity for many First Nations.⁴²

During the 1930s, when psychoanalysis was in ascendance, the entire life of the patient and his or her relationships became sites to examine. The disregard for First Nations culture was evident in the social service note attached to the file of Joe, a middle-aged male patient.

The Indian agent assured visitor that no information would be obtained by visiting the home, partly because of the suspicious nature of the Indian and partly the lack of English. However as the Agent is in close contact with the [X] family his records were up to date and visitor obtained information from them.⁴³

The social service notes also illustrate the disregard for Indigenous traditions. The social service worker recorded the following information from the husband of Mary, a woman diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia:

While patient was picking hops one of the other hop-pickers lost something and accused patient of having stolen it. Patient told them to look through her things, which they did, but did not find the missing article. One night when she was sleeping an old woman, over seventy years of age, went creeping around behind her and kicked her in the back. The next morning the patient was ill. Patient's husband and aunt both believe that the illness is due to a spell cast on the patient and which allowed the entrance of an evil spirit. The Indian doctor and an old woman had something to do with it. If the Indian doctor at the reserve, were to be called in it is thought he could cure her by the next morning by taking off the spell. Patient's husband is somewhat apologetic about this story of how the illness occurred. He said he knew white men thought this to be old-fashioned. However he believed it to be true.⁴⁴

It is heartening to note that the traditions continued despite discouragement from the medical officials.

Perceptions, or rather misperceptions, of indigeneity held by the medical authorities influenced not only the medical course but also the social component of treatment for many Indigenous patients. Medical authorities deemed Frank, a coastal-community resident admitted in the late 1800s, to be "worse than a beast" before his death caused by tuberculosis eighteen months after admission.⁴⁵ Admission notes report that Stanley, admitted from the interior in the 1890s, was "on the warpath" and noted him to be a "real Siwash in his habits." However, Stanley remained in hospital for more than twenty-five years and was considered "generally quiet and a good worker."⁴⁶ Admitted during the 1920s, Wilma, whose father and husband were dead, did not want to be alone and talked to herself. She was noted to cause no trouble but was difficult to engage in conversation, remained apart from others, and interestingly, was "tidy for an Indian." After ten months in hospital, she was interviewed by an interpreter, who reported that she was "not delusional, is well orientated and has a

good memory.” As soon as arrangements could be made, she was discharged as “recovered.”⁴⁷ In contrast, Ida, a woman of Chinese and Aboriginal heritage, was deemed “unkempt even for an Indian.” Until her death ten years later, reports labelled her as “uncommunicative,” noting ironically that she did not speak English.⁴⁸ Finally, May from the northern interior—whose case was informed by the local minister and schoolteacher, a married couple—had recently been involved with the accidental death of a friend. The minister reported that May had been “disturbing the village for a week” after the death of her close friend. The most damning evidence was that she “clings to the Indian idea of witchcraft” and had “a low intellectual capacity.” Medical authorities confirmed her mental incapacity with the observation that she “speaks only when spoken to and uses simple, concrete words.” Despite contracting tuberculosis, May was demeaned for “spitting on the floor.” May died after fifteen months in hospital.⁴⁹

As mentioned previously, the only major study of British Columbia’s Aboriginal mental patients is “Turbulent Spirits” by Robert Menzies and Ted Palys. Their data is based on a review of one hundred of the First Nations patients admitted between 1879 and 1950. According to Menzies and Palys, only a handful of Aboriginal patients were treated with interventions, including ECT, metrazol shock, and psychotropic drugs.⁵⁰ However, my review of a broader patient population reveals that quite a number of Aboriginal patients were given these treatments. The most important difference I have found is that most status or “full-blooded” patients lingered for years without therapy while their mixed-race cousins were treated in a timelier manner.

In my sample, fifteen Aboriginal patients were treated with ECT. Eleven of these patients were listed as “full blood.” Only three of these underwent the procedure within the first month after admission. The remaining eight waited from nearly four to seventeen years to be treated. Of the eleven patients, one was admitted in a manic state and died of exhaustion within a few days. Another was diagnosed as a “moron” and was treated after two weeks. Of the four patients listed as mixed race, all were treated within the first month after admission.

Consider the case of Elsie, who was born and raised in the Cariboo region of British Columbia. She was sentenced to Oakalla on a four-month sentence for vagrancy. While in jail, her behaviour drew the attention of the authorities and she was transferred to the hospital at Essondale. At admission, she was portrayed as mentally dull since “she cannot say the months or the days of the week and cannot read or write.” After six years, she was described as “cooperative to routine but resistive to anything outside routine.” At times she acted impulsively. After sixteen years in hospital she was treated with ECT, but with little effect. Elsie remained in hospital for another nine years, showing little change. After twenty-five years, she was given leave as “improved.”⁵¹

Joe, a trapper from the Yukon, was admitted in the late 1930s because he threatened his family and others with an axe. At admission, he was labeled as “dull, antagonistic ... and delusional.” Joe was not treated and languished in hospital with “progressive mental deterioration and paranoid delusions ... and is impossible to gain in conversation.” After sixteen years he was treated with ECT, to little effect. He was given extended leave after thirty-four years, with a diagnosis of chronic schizophrenia.⁵²

Compare the case of Milly, admitted during the same period, to those of Elsie and Joe. Milly, born and raised in the north coastal area, was given up by her Scandinavian father when her “breed” mother died. Milly feared that people were after her in order to kill her either by hanging or execution by the guillotine, and she worried that her two children had been strangled. At admission, Milly had an apathetic and despairing attitude, and her speech was slow and retarded. She was started on a course of ECT after four weeks in hospital and showed some improvement. She continued to improve and was given probation after fourteen months of hospitalization.⁵³

The situation was similar for those who were treated with both ECT and psychotropic drugs. Consider the case of Edna, admitted from the Cariboo in the late 1930s, who feared that men were trying to kill her and her two-year-old child. As a result of her fear, she had not slept for days when she came to the attention of the authorities. At admission, she was described as “apprehensive, dull and difficult to gain in conversation and gives the impression of limited mental capacity.” The nurses noted that “if she is treated sympathetically, she will respond,” yet if she was ignored, she broke windows and caused disturbances on the ward. According to the ward notes, she remained “dull and disinterested, obviously mentally deficient, [yet] cooperative and her habits are clean.” Over the next twenty years, her behaviour vacillated between periods of co-operation and combativeness. After seventeen years of hospitalization, she was treated with ECT but did not improve. At twenty years, she was treated with Largactil and showed improvement. The psychologist reported:

Intellectually she tests in the Borderline range on the Wechsler and Porteus,⁵⁴ thus she cannot be categorized as a defective. In spite of her lack of adequate social and educational background, she seems to have picked up a certain amount of knowledge and simple elementary skills. She shows relatively good planning ability and control and there were no indications of bizarre or illogical features in either her verbalization or approach.

After twenty-one years of institutionalization, she was discharged as “much improved” with a diagnosis of catatonic schizophrenia.⁵⁵

Joseph, admitted in the late 1930s, was detained after causing a disturbance in a restaurant. He complained that people were persecuting him and that spies frequently followed him into restaurants. After one week in hospital, authorities described the patient as suspicious and confused, yet correctly oriented with a good memory. Due to his continuing delusions of persecution, he remained in hospital for more than twenty years without treatment. In his thirty-third year, he was treated with Largactil and other psychotropic drugs. However, Joseph remained in hospital for another seven years before he escaped.⁵⁶

The case of Angela, whose parents were of mixed blood, contrasts with the experiences of Edna and Joseph. She was admitted due to episodes of anger and complaints that she heard two voices in her head that controlled her thoughts. After two weeks in hospital, she was treated with insulin shock. Two months after admission, she was free of “psychotic material” and was given discharge in full.⁵⁷

My findings suggest that this difference in treatment patterns was generally, but not always, the case. Sam, admitted in the 1890s, was a fisherman from Vancouver Island with a history of “a good deal of mania.” He was detained due to “wild and threatening behaviour” that had culminated in an assault upon a stranger. Sam improved after one month in hospital, and was discharged “with no indication of psychosis” after four months in hospital.⁵⁸ In contrast, Bob, admitted in the same era as Sam, was listed as “half Indian” and was a farmer from the interior of the province. He was admitted after killing a heifer with an axe and remained in hospital until his death after sixty-two years of institutionalization.⁵⁹ Both patients are depicted as “slow, dull, and quiet”; the main difference is that Sam was considered to be “a good worker.”

Conclusion

FINALLY, let's return to the two patients introduced through the ward notes at the opening of this paper and reconsider their situations. The first patient is defined by inaction. The notes present his silence as an integral component that frames the space between his personality and his supposed illness rather than as the reasonable action of someone who does not speak English or is culturally uncomfortable with personal discussion. His actions are portrayed as random and aimless. He is depicted as too remote and too primitive to interact with the medical authorities. Specifically, the 1886 ward note illustrates how colonial psychiatry found connections between “race and mind” as the rationale for the colonial project. Indigenous peoples, not only in British Columbia, but also

throughout the world, were diagnosed as essentially different and situated as inherently unable to cope with or understand the colonial agenda.

As well, there are a number of concerns with the diagnosis of the second patient as a mental defective with epilepsy. First, if the patient “plays a good game of Bridge,” as noted in the second 1950 quotation, it seems unlikely that he was a mental defective. The diagnosis of “mental defective” was determined through the use of a number of intelligence tests, including the Porteus Maze Test. The report on the results of this test note that “his approach to the problems was fairly steady, unemotional and he was capable of profiting from his mistakes. Qualitatively he was penalized for lack of adherence to instructions (i.e. he repeatedly lifted his pencil from the paper).” Thus, the patient’s inability to properly use a pencil effectively sealed his fate. Although he was able to interact with the medical authorities, unlike the patient from 1886, this patient was still diagnosed as primitive since he was unfamiliar with an exam designed for urbanites and was considered to have a defective or diseased mental process as indicated by epilepsy. His occupation as a trapper, in the “traditional mode of an Indian,” signalled his reliance upon outdated modes of subsistence, yet his ability to play bridge, a game of memory and skill was overlooked.

I do not mean to imply that ECT and psychotropic drugs were an effective means of treatment or that interventions should have been prescribed earlier for patients such as Elsie, Edna, Joseph, and Joe. As a historian, I am unqualified to comment on the efficacy of treatments. Rather, I argue that these treatment patterns indicate that the racial perceptions of the medical authorities directly influenced the treatment of the patient and of the subjectively defined prognosis of that patient. Treatment and discharge were then based in a complex discourse that marginalized the “full-blood” Aboriginal patient in relation to “less Aboriginal” patients, who were appraised to have been “improved” by the addition of “white blood.”

The study of colonialism and psychiatry analyzes aspects of medical, political, and social history in order to “unsettle” or decentre progressive histories of colonialism, particularly colonial medicine. Psychiatry holds a unique position as a biological, behavioural, and social science that, when in concert with colonialism, promoted race as a determinant of one’s role in civil society. Further, concepts of race, gender, and sexuality act as sites of consent and dissent in relation to biological, social, and legal issues. Thus, madness cannot be defined as a singular issue but rather as an entity viewed through and constructed by a kaleidoscope of shifting possibilities—twist one way and an image is produced, twist again and the image changes. *

Notes

- 1 British Columbia Archives, GR 2880, box 2. As per the requirements of the British Columbia Archives, all identifiers have been removed and, when given, all names are pseudonyms. All direct quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the patient case files. These files are held by the British Columbia Archives in the GR 2880 collection, "British Columbia Mental Health Services, Originals, 1872–1942," and in the 93-5683 and 93-7364 accession groups that cover patients discharged from the 1940s until the 1970s. Admission books are catalogued as GR 1754, listing patients admitted from 1872 until 1947, and GR 3019, which lists those patients admitted after 1947. Although there were four institutions in the B.C. mental hospital system, the identity number assigned to the patient remained the same throughout the course of committal. The endnote is given at the end of the discussion of the specific patient. File numbers will be disclosed to qualified researchers.
- 2 Accession 93-5683, box 1138.
- 3 Canada, Parliament, Indian Act, 1876, s.c. 1876, c. 18.
- 4 I have chosen 1872 as the entry point for my study, as this was the year when the asylum was established and detailed records began to be kept. Before 1972, "lunatics" were often housed in jails. The year 1950, for a number of reasons, is a logical conclusion point. An investigation spanning from the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century tracks changes in psychiatric methods of treatment. These ranged from purely physical measures in the early years to psychosurgery in the 1940s. Further, until 1950 most, if not all, patients considered to need treatment were admitted to one of the hospitals in the system. After this date, patients were treated in local clinics and hospitals. The first mental hospital in British Columbia opened in 1872 on land designated as a reserve for the Lekwammen (Songhees) people in the Victoria harbour. Four Aboriginal patients were admitted to this institution. In 1878 the institution moved to New Westminster. By 1910 it was clear that this institution was overcrowded, and construction of an additional hospital began. The Aboriginal patient population grew by thirty-one admissions from 1878 to 1910. In 1913 the new hospital, located at Essondale, opened for male patients. A female ward was opened at Essondale in 1930. After the First World War, the Aboriginal patient population grew steadily with approximately fifty patients in each ten-year period. This increase in admissions occurred during the time when the Aboriginal population in British Columbia was in decline. The last hospital was added in 1919 when Colquitz, on Vancouver Island, opened to house the criminally insane. This same period, 1872–1950, marks significant decades in the implementation of Indian policy in British Columbia as reserves were laid out, Indian agents put in place, systems of medical surveillance initiated, and residential schooling made compulsory, at the same time as improved transportation and communication networks opened up all of First Nations lands to settlement and development. In these ways, government and settler observers had increasing access to observe Aboriginal communities between 1879 and 1950.

- 5 One of the major limitations of this record group is that a number of the files were “purged” during the late 1970s, rendering them incomplete. In some cases, only a few documents, such as nursing clinical files or family correspondence, were destroyed. In other cases, much of the file is missing. However, most retain the ward notes, and additional information can be obtained from the “Patient Register” books.
- 6 In *Will to Power*, Mulhall discusses the Durieu system in British Columbia. David Mulhall, *Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 58–60. In *Colonizing Bodies*, Kelm examines medical surveillance of Aboriginal people. Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 127–52. In *On the Edge of Empire*, Perry discusses perceptions of Aboriginal housing and its relation to health. Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 107–08.
- 7 In *A Fatherly Eye*, Browlie details the influence of Indian agents in the daily life of status Indians. Robin Jarvis Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Mulhall examines the role of missionaries in northern British Columbia as the main topic of *Will to Power*.
- 8 Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London: Prentice Hall-Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997), 123.
- 9 *Insane Asylums Act, (1873), The Statutes of British Columbia up to and including the Year 1888*, chap. 61, par. 2, p. 451.
- 10 Stoler states, “Nationalist discourses ... marked out those whose claims to property rights, citizenship, and public relief were worthy of recognition and those that were not.” Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 8.
- 11 In *Difference and Pathology*, Gilman discusses drapetomania, a “mental illness” characterized by the desire of slaves to flee from their owners. Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 138. Lou Marano discusses the pitfalls of diagnosing “culture bound” syndromes in “Windigo Psychosis: The Anatomy of an Emic-Etic Confusion,” *Current Anthropology* 23, no. 4 (August 1982): 385–412.
- 12 Richard C. Keller discusses the connection between colonial psychiatry and the inculcation of modern concepts of citizenship in “primitive” Indigenous populations. Keller builds on the work of Fanon and Memmi in his contention that Indigenous peoples were driven mad as a result of being denied full access to the status enjoyed by the colonizer. Richard C. Keller, *Colonial Madness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2, 4.
- 13 Lynette Jackson examines the history of the Ingutsheni Hospital in colonial Zimbabwe. Lynette Jackson, *Surfacing Up* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
- 14 Jonathan Sadowsky, *Imperial Bedlam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
- 15 Keller, *Colonial Madness*, 42.
- 16 Jackson, *Surfacing Up*, 43–67.
- 17 Sadowsky, *Imperial Bedlam*, 47.

- 18 Waltraud Ernst, "European Madness and Gender in Nineteenth-Century British India," *Social History of Medicine* 9, no 3 (1996): 357–82; Jackson, *Surfacing Up*, 101–02.
- 19 Jackson, *Surfacing Up*, 46.
- 20 Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 188–90.
- 21 James Waldram, *Revenge of the Windigo: The Construction of the Mind and Mental Health of North American Aboriginal Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 8–9.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 23, 108–24.
- 23 Robert Menzies and Ted Palys, "Turbulent Spirits," in *Mental Health in Canadian Society*, eds. James Moran and David Wright (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 152.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 161.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 160.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 150.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 153, 155. The graph on p. 155 notes that of the one hundred patients studied, six were enfranchised. Since their study examined half of the patients, it is impossible to ascertain from their published data how many of the 193 were status Indians. Dr. Geoff Smith's comprehensive study of schizophrenia identified the remaining patients, who were described as "ethnically" Indian but were not necessarily status Indians. One hundred and thirty-seven patient files were compiled for this study. This list contains all patients identified as Aboriginal who presented with signs and symptoms of possible schizophrenia. This list does not include those patients considered to have "organic" explanations for madness. Diagnoses such as epilepsy, chorea, senile dementia, toxic psychosis, and developmental disorders are not incorporated into this list. Dr. Geoff Smith in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of British Columbia graciously supplied me with this data.
- 28 The difficulties associated with the use of case files are outlined in the edited volume *On the Case: Explorations of Social History*. In his chapter, Steven Maynard maintains that the "genealogy" of case histories indicates that they are a response to the social challenges faced during rapid urbanization and the perceived need for social regulation. He argues that since case histories incorporated statistics, social surveys, and methods of criminal identification, they were "central to the practice and professionalization of psychiatry." Steven Maynard, "On the Case of the Case: The Emergence of the Homosexual as a Case History in Early Twentieth-Century Ontario," in *On the Case: Explorations in Social History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Wendy Mitchison (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 65–87, esp. 69. In his work on colonial Africa, *Imperial Bedlam*, Jonathan Sadowsky cautions that case files are not an "authentic source ... but ... polyphonous ... produced as clinicians and patients, representatives of complex social worlds, work with and against each other." Sadowsky, *Imperial Bedlam*, 49. Stoler stresses the double-edged nature of archival sources, as they illustrate the "rough interior ridges of governance" and act as places of "uncertainty and doubt." Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 2, 4.

- 29 Menzies and Palys, "Turbulent Spirits," 164–65, 168. Sadowsky, *Bedlam*, 89. Erickson argues that reports of Aboriginal suicide by the authorities varied according to "commonsense ideas or 'shared social meanings' about the circumstances and motives that 'typically' culminate in suicide." Lesley Erickson, "Constructed and Contested Truths: Aboriginal Suicide, Law, and Colonialism in the Canadian West(s), 1823–1927," *Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 4 (December 2000): 616.
- 30 The amount of time varied. In the era before drugs, patients remained in hospital for extended periods of time. The introduction of antipsychotic drugs reduced the length of committal for many patients. Largactil, the trade name for chlorpromazine hydrochloride, also known as Thorazine, was one of the earliest antipsychotic drugs widely used in the 1950s. Essentially, Largactil acted as a tranquillizer and calmed patients presenting with indications of aggression, agitation, or excitement.
- 31 The original B.C. *Insane Asylums Act* was passed in 1873 and amended in 1893. The *Hospitals for the Insane Act* replaced the original act in 1897. It was renamed the *Mental Hospitals Act* in 1912. This act was revised in 1940 by allowing the addition of appeal boards. In 1964 the B.C. legislature passed the *Mental Health Act*.
- 32 Social service reports were added to the case files in 1931. Social workers were dispatched to interview family members, employers, and acquaintances in order to gain a broader picture of the patient's life.
- 33 Joel Braslow, *Mental Ills and Bodily Cures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3.
- 34 Edward Shorter outlines the changes in treatments over time. He reports that insulin coma was introduced in 1927, metrazol shock in 1934, electroshock in 1938, and chlorpromazine in 1952. Edward Shorter, *Historical Dictionary of Psychiatry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 142, 62, 94, 54.
- 35 Accession 93-5683, box 1126.
- 36 According to Menzies and Palys, 43 percent of the Aboriginal population died from tuberculosis. Menzies and Palys, "Turbulent Spirits," 167.
- 37 Accession 93-5683, box 1295.
- 38 I was reminded of the importance of this means of communication through Dr. Keith Carlson's lecture "Beyond Aboriginal History: Engaging Historical Consciousness," delivered 9 October 2008 at the University of British Columbia.
- 39 GR 2880, box 7.
- 40 Ibid., box 16.
- 41 Accession 93-5683, box 1346.
- 42 For a discussion of the role of the dead, see Joyce Wilke, "The Role of the Dead in Northwest Coast Culture," in *Indian Tribes of Aboriginal North America*, ed. Sol Tax (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 97–103. Pamela Amoss, *Coast Salish Spirit Dancing: The Survival of an Ancestral Religion* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978).

- 43 Accession 93-7364, box 28.
- 44 Accession 93-5683, box 1310.
- 45 GR 2880, box 2.
- 46 Ibid., box 5.
- 47 Ibid., box 147.
- 48 Ibid., box 196.
- 49 Accession 93-5683, box 1180.
- 50 According to their data, three patients were given ECT, three were given ECT and psychotropic drugs, one was given metrazol, and two were given psychotropic drugs. Menzies and Palys, "Turbulent Spirits," 160.
- 51 Accession 93-5683, box 566.
- 52 Ibid., box 581.
- 53 Ibid., box 1302.
- 54 The Wechsler-Bellevue was an IQ test developed in 1939 that included both verbal and non-verbal, or performance, testing. The verbal and performance scores were blended to produce the IQ ratio. The Porteus Maze Test was non-verbal and required the patient to trace a route out of a maze without lifting the pencil or crossing any lines.
- 55 Accession 93-5683, box 1377.
- 56 Ibid., box 1379.
- 57 Ibid., box 489.
- 58 GR 2880, box 10.
- 59 Accession 93-5683, box 1478.

Space, Temporality, History: Encountering Hauntings in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside¹

AMBER DEAN

*[T]he relationship between present and past is
the battleground on which interventions could be
distinguished from repetitions.²*

– Ernst Van Alphen

Haunted encounters

AN IMAGE OF A GHOST TOWN EVOKES ABANDONED URBAN SPACE, a town without life or people, a space of hauntings. In nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century British Columbia, ghost towns were left standing in the wake of gold rushes as discouraged miners literally rushed to the next purported hot spot. As a child, I loved visiting one such spot, pieced together from abandoned buildings and towns to form a tourist attraction near the B.C.-Alberta border. The Three Valley Gap ghost town was a necessary stopping point on family road trips from Edmonton to Vancouver Island and was indelibly tied to my sense of what it meant to have crossed into British Columbia. From Three Valley Gap, I have some of my earliest memories of learning about the spaces of the Western frontier. In a ghost town, it is virtually impossible to escape the feeling

that one is surrounded by ghostly presences. A child with an active imagination can read the historical plaques and positively feel the presence of the ghosts of the people they tell stories about. Yet the ghosts these plaques speak of are often relatively benign: they do not tell us much of the story of the frontier at all. For in a frontier ghost town, the ghosts themselves are haunted by the pasts that their stories (or at least, the versions presented on the plaques) disavow. What might happen if such hauntings and such feelings of being surrounded by ghosts were presented not in a location and language that imply a historical past as past, but instead a historical past animated in (and for) the present?

In this paper, I transpose the traditional site of the ghost town with the space of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. I have chosen this particular space because of the research I have been doing for some time now on representations of the women who have been disappeared from this neighbourhood over the past few decades.³ For those who might be unfamiliar with these events, sixty-five women who lived or worked in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside are currently listed by a joint Vancouver Police Department and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Missing Women's Task Force as "missing." The first woman to have been disappeared from this neighbourhood, according to that task force, went missing in the late 1970s (although there is good reason to believe that many women had already been disappeared from the neighbourhood by then).⁴ Since that time, more and more women have been disappeared from the community, with a sharp increase in the numbers of women listed by police as "last seen" in the late 1990s and the very early years of the twenty-first century. For many of the women on the official list of the missing, those of us who did not know them before they were disappeared can now, in some cases, learn little more than their names and the approximate dates when they were last seen. Most of the women on the police list have friends, families, and lovers or partners who love and miss them and who noticed their disappearances almost immediately (in contrast to some initial suggestions otherwise).⁵ Many, perhaps most, of the women on the list did street-level, survival sex work at the time of their disappearances and were grappling with an addiction to drugs, which is what most of us lacking an immediate personal connection to the women first learned about them. It is also important to note that a vastly disproportionate number of them are of Indigenous ancestry.⁶ Their disappearances must therefore also be situated in relation to what the Native Women's Association of Canada estimates to be at least 520 murdered or unaccounted for Indigenous women across the country, clustered mainly in the Western provinces.⁷ It is my argument that while the women who were disappeared from Vancouver are no longer physically there in the Downtown Eastside, they do indeed maintain a "seething presence," to use social analyst Avery Gordon's term, in Vancouver

(and beyond), one that can tell us something important about the relationship between the past and the present.⁸

I am curious about the possibilities that might arise when such “seething presences” mess around with conventional notions of space, temporality, and history: what might encounters with hauntings be able to tell us about the past’s claims on the present, the past’s ongoing *presence* in the present state of things in a space such as Downtown Eastside Vancouver? In other words, encountering hauntings is in part about sorting out a way to reconfigure the linear relationship between past and present. It involves bringing the two together to sort out how they are enmeshed, thereby staging what Van Alphen, in the epigraph to this paper, describes as an “intervention” instead of a “repetition.”⁹ When we look to the past for lessons we can learn, we often, perhaps unwittingly, secure that past’s place as past, over and done with, or settled. When we look to the past for how it is evident in the conditions and arrangements of the present, we provide openings for haunting encounters, which in turn unsettle conventional understandings of these two concepts, past and present, as linear and separable.

Thus, the value of a haunting lies in its disruption of notions of space as containable and static, of temporality as linear, and of history as something fixed, finished, and past. When we recognize the contingency of designations of space and separations of past from present, it seems to me that it becomes impossible to claim spatial boundaries or the past’s relationship to the present as “settled” in any way. Such a realization draws us into a new way of relating to one another, of knowing ourselves to be related to one another. If we see settlement of the land now known as Vancouver (or Western Canada, for that matter) not as something that happened between Europeans and First Nations in the distant past, for example, but as an ongoing process evident in the way our spaces and identities are constituted today, then a different understanding of our relation to each other becomes necessary. It is my argument that unravelling notions of space, temporality, and history as they are conventionally understood might work to implicate a broader public in the injustices and violence experienced by many who live in the Downtown Eastside today, unsettling us at the same time that these notions themselves are shown to be far from settled. Taking counsel from Avery Gordon’s thinking on the significance of haunting encounters, I turn first in this paper to a consideration of the past’s haunting presence in the present state of things in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and will conclude with a story about my own encounter with the haunting presence of a woman named Sereena Abotsway, a woman who was an activist in the Downtown Eastside before she was disappeared in 2001 and subsequently murdered. This encounter, I will argue, aptly exposes the power of hauntings

to unsettle conventional understandings of space, temporality, history, and the relations between them, and it might work to in turn unsettle conventional arguments about who or what is responsible for the disappearance and murder of Abotsway and other women who share her social circumstances.

Hauntings and ghost stories are somewhat unusual terrain for scholars, associated as they are with the deliberate scare tactics of commercial haunted houses and Hollywood horror films. But the conceptual framework for encountering hauntings that I develop in this paper has little to do with the term's more conventional resonances. Instead, it is a framework for a different approach to doing academic research. As social analyst Avery Gordon explains in her book *Ghostly Matters*, such a practice could "be conceived as entering through a different door, the door of the uncanny, the door of the fragment, the door of the shocking parallel." For Gordon, haunting describes "how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities." Encountering hauntings is in part about a different way of approaching knowledge, a different way of understanding what knowledge is and how we might recognize it, since we are tasked with looking not for what is there but for the "seething presence" of what "appears to be *not* there."¹⁰

Hauntings thus offer a way of producing scholarship that requires "a fundamental change in the way we know and make knowledge, in our mode of production." This change is brought about in part, according to Gordon, by postmodernism, or more specifically by "the claims and summons poststructuralism, in particular, has made on our traditional notions of the human subject, meaning, truth, language, writing, desire, difference, power, and experience." But Gordon does not halt her description of the shifting understanding of knowledge required for encountering hauntings at poststructuralist interventions. She is also interested in how "some feminists and critical theorists have sensibly insisted on retaining ... a double structure of thought that links the epistemological and the social."¹¹ I too am committed to maintaining this "double structure" of thought, an approach to theorizing that takes seriously the epistemological challenges brought about by poststructuralism but that insists on contemplating the relations to and relevance of those challenges for contemporary social and political life.

Hauntings demand not only a different way of recognizing knowledge but also a different approach to knowledge production, and in that sense, encountering hauntings is a kind of methodological approach, although not only that. It is a way of knowing and a way of producing knowledge, one that attempts to account for significant theoretical shifts in the humanities and social sciences but one that also wants to do so in a way that situates such knowledge in rela-

tion to social life. "Could it be," Gordon wonders, "that analyzing hauntings might lead to a more complex understanding of the generative structures and moving parts of historically embedded social formations in a way that avoids the twin pitfalls of subjectivism and positivism?" "Perhaps," she replies. "If so, the result will not be a more tidy world, but one that might be less damaging."¹² I am attracted to Gordon's conceptualization of hauntings, to her thoughts about where following ghosts might lead, because a more complex but ultimately less damaging world seems a laudable goal to me as well.

The West's (present) pasts

THAT VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE is a neighbourhood of some notoriety across Canada practically goes without saying. It is frequently described as "Canada's poorest postal code" and is certainly a community where the unjust and uneven effects of urban poverty and neglect are deeply felt. There has long been considerable interest in "cleaning up" the area among some civic officials, law enforcement officers, real-estate developers, and residents both within and beyond the neighbourhood. What exactly that process might look like and what forms it might take often remains vague and is sometimes cloaked in the more innocuous language of urban "revitalization." Long recognized as one of the few neighbourhoods in Vancouver offering anything close to affordable housing for those on a fixed income, the Downtown Eastside is nonetheless losing low-income housing today at an alarmingly ever-greater pace in the lead-up to the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. This displacement of local residents has not escaped the notice of neighbourhood activists and is being documented in the interests of challenging civic officials' repeated insistence that displacements due to "revitalization" of the area will not occur. According to a new report by the Carnegie Community Action Project (C-CAP), 174 rooms in single-room occupancy hotels (SROs) closed in the first few months of 2008, with another 225 rooms in imminent danger of closing.¹³

Meanwhile, new condominium projects with few or no commitments to social housing are being given a green light by the City despite resistance from local activists and residents.¹⁴ Clearly, the City's zero-displacement commitment is not being met, as the thrust of development forces low-income residents either out of the neighbourhood or onto the streets. Likely at the insistence of local residents and activists, civic officials were careful not to imagine away the existing Downtown Eastside community through the design of a recent revitalization project, repeatedly emphasizing that the revitalization was intended for the benefit of the existing community, not a community of new urban middle-class "pioneers" yet to come. Nonetheless, residents of the Downtown Eastside

are today facing displacement at an alarming rate, seemingly to make room for “settlers” who will stake claims on this space that are deemed by many to be more legitimate.

It is hardly coincidental that the language and metaphors frequently invoked to describe or represent the space of the Downtown Eastside today very closely resemble those used to describe the land now known as British Columbia (and Western Canada more broadly) during efforts to resettle this space with European colonizers. As Sommers and Blomley explain, the Downtown Eastside is frequently cast today as a “mythical frontier” that is “wild, dangerous, and, ultimately, [an] empty space, ripe for (re)settlement.”¹⁵ The repetition or recycling of language and metaphor evident here indicates that colonization is not a finished, settled, or past project, but instead is ongoing and continually remade in the present. This insight provokes an important recontextualization of the present-day injustices and violence experienced by residents of the Downtown Eastside *not* as the inevitable outcome of contemporary social problems like drug use, prostitution, and crime, but instead as the outcome of encounters that repeatedly remake colonization in the present, attempting to re-enact its permanence while at the same time exposing its contingency.

The use of frontier mythology to describe the contemporary Downtown Eastside alerts us to a haunting. The resurfacing of this mythology in contemporary efforts to revitalize the Downtown Eastside is an indication that these efforts are haunted by the city’s colonial past, a past with claims on the present that are yet to be reckoned with. Frontier mythology slips into these efforts and makes this colonial past “there and not there at the same time”: “there” because the mythology evokes this past, but “not there” because the past’s significance and relevance to the present is so frequently disregarded.¹⁶ Instead, efforts to effect a present-day displacement of Downtown Eastside residents rely on a taken-for-granted assumption that the past is past—is settled, so to speak—in order to legitimize desires to clean up and resettle this community. But the invocation of frontier mythology provides an opening for haunting to seep out and expose how the relationship between past and present is far less linear than conventionally conveyed.

The space now designated the Downtown Eastside was of course not always demarcated in this way. In fact, it did not become known as the Downtown Eastside until around 1973, when the Downtown Eastside Residents’ Association was founded to try to change negative public and civic perceptions of the area then most commonly referred to as “skid road.”¹⁷ But before the city of Vancouver was incorporated as such in 1886, before the province now known as British Columbia entered into the Canadian confederation in 1871, before Vancouver Island was established as a British colony in 1849, and before

the establishment of Fort Langley in 1827 brought about regular contact between European settlers and Indigenous people, the space now known as the Downtown Eastside was travelled across, lived on, and occupied primarily by numerous Coast Salish First Nations (who of course were not known and did not come to know themselves as Coast Salish or as First Nations until the violent imposition of a colonial settler society on what is now known as the west coast of British Columbia).¹⁸ The people of these nations lived on these lands for centuries prior to the arrival of European colonizers. Mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century representations of this space, this land, as vast, empty, rugged wilderness have contributed to a social imaginary that frequently eclipses those with prior claims and ties to this space, claims and ties that were not dealt with justly but instead outright denied or suppressed through a decimation of the peoples who stood to make them.¹⁹

Such is the weight of discourses that posit the colonization of British Columbia as the discovery of a vast, empty wilderness that they continue to influence the way histories of colonization are written and understood today.²⁰ In his book *The Resettlement of British Columbia*, for example, Cole Harris reflects on the impact such discourses had on the history he was writing and publishing in a reputable academic history journal as recently as 1985. As he explains:

When I wrote that there was no evidence of Native settlement near Idaho Peak [in the British Columbia interior], I did not know about the smallpox epidemics of 1782 and 1862, or about the measles epidemic of 1848, or about influenza in 1849.... Mine is another example, from one who should have known better, of the substitution of wilderness for an erased Native world.²¹

The organization of space and social life in contemporary British Columbia was shaped by colonial acts that aimed to effect the erasure and/or displacement of First Nations peoples and communities: Harris documents how by 1877 much of the Indigenous population of the lower mainland was sequestered on reserves. These acts continue to have a significant impact on how the space of the Downtown Eastside in particular is imagined today.

In her book *On the Edge of Empire*, historian Adele Perry carefully documents the turbulence and anxieties provoked by efforts to resettle the land now known as British Columbia with settlers of European descent. Prior to its entry into the Canadian confederation in 1871, British Columbia, Perry writes, “hung precariously at the edge of Britain’s literal and symbolic empire.” Colonialists were routinely frustrated and/or outraged that this outpost of empire “bore little resemblance to the orderly, respectable, white settler colony that imperial observers

hoped it would become.”²² At a time when Indigenous people still outnumbered their colonizers, when white women were scarce and mixed-race relationships (between European men and Indigenous women) commonplace, considerable effort was required to try to bring this colony in line with imperial ideals and imaginings. Such efforts would not only bring about a profound displacement and destruction of Indigenous communities but would also constitute and sanction a particular understanding of Indigenous womanhood, one that I will argue is indelibly bound to the contemporary violence directed at Indigenous women who live or work in the Downtown Eastside (and in Western Canada more broadly).

Anxieties over sexual and/or domestic relationships between European men and Indigenous women were part of the reasoning behind official policies aimed at evacuating Indigenous people from the burgeoning urban spaces of the new colony. There were many debates among governors and clergymen about the merits of officially wedding such couples. Some argued that “white men’s morality would inevitably be imperilled by connections with Aboriginal women,” while others argued that Aboriginal women should be protected from the debasement of extramarital relationships with European men. Regardless of their reasoning, Perry writes, “[a]ll shared the motivating conviction that relationships forged between white men and Aboriginal women were indicative of the failure of respectable gender and racial organization to develop on this edge of empire.”²³ Significant efforts were thus taken by colonial governors and by the church to prevent or disrupt such relationships.

Calls from across the colony to restrict the presence of Indigenous people in the growing cities of Victoria and New Westminster led to official and unofficial policies intended to produce this effect. In April 1861, for example,

[p]olice issued orders “to drive all Indians found in town after 6 o’clock p.m. across the bridge” that separated settler-Victoria from the Lekwammen (Songhees) reserve. Aboriginal people found on the wrong side of the racial divide after 10 p.m. were to be searched and prevented from returning until morning unless they could produce documentation of a clear and subservient relationship to the colonial community, namely “passes from white persons by whom they are employed.”²⁴

While anxieties over mixed-race relationships were not the only cause of such policies (Perry suggests that smallpox was another convenient and perhaps coincidental excuse for them), they were certainly one cause. Such determined efforts to rid urban spaces of the presence of Indigenous peoples, and of Indigenous women in particular, hauntingly—and alarmingly—foreshadow contemporary examples of similar practices.

Another technique for discouraging mixed-race relationships in the colony was to employ language and imagery that would eventually secure a near-synonymous equation of the categories of “Indigenous woman” and “prostitute.” As Perry explains, “[a] convenient shorthand for signifying the immorality of First Nations womanhood was the suggestion that Aboriginal women were, by definition, prostitutes.” This mapping became so pervasive that at the time it took “little to ‘prove’ [Aboriginal women’s] participation in the sex trade,” a belief that was in turn used as both a tool and a justification for ejecting indigenous women from urban centres. In December 1862, for example, a Victoria city councillor “proposed a by-law ‘declaring it to be unlawful for any person to Harbor Indian women within the City limits.’” To legitimize this proposal, he insisted that “‘the squaws might all be considered as prostitutes, and that was sufficient grounds for their rejection.’”²⁵ While his proposal was not successful, it suggests a generalized tendency toward this conflation of Indigenous womanhood and prostitution in colonial British Columbia.

A common reaction to Perry’s findings might be to dismiss the racist ideologies they document as belonging to a bygone era, the injustices of which we have securely put behind us in the interests of a more tolerant, pluralist, multicultural present. But Sunera Thobani’s important new research offers much evidence to the contrary. Thobani argues that Canadian nationality is built upon a notion of “exaltation.” “In the case of Canada,” she writes, “the historical exaltation of the national subject has ennobled this subject’s humanity and sanctioned the elevation of its rights over and above that of the Aboriginal and the immigrant.” The exalted subject is the national subject, and its outsiders (for Thobani, these are primarily Indigenous persons and immigrants) are cast—in law as well as in national mythology—as outside of the bounds of the human, belonging to spaces outside of the rule of law. She explains:

Racial difference, as a system of hierarchy within the Canadian socio-legal system constitutes the national, the Indian, and the immigrant as different kinds of *legal* beings. In the process, it also constitutes them as different kinds of *human* beings at a symbolic level.²⁶

What it means to be constituted as a Canadian national is indelibly bound to what it means to be constituted as Indigenous in Canada; this, Thobani argues, is the founding distinction on which our national mythology is based, a mythology that shapes our present as much as our past.

Violent colonial encounters that constituted subjects as exalted Canadian nationals or as Indigenous outsiders to the nation are inseparably tied to divisions of space within the boundaries of what is now known as Canada. Build-

ing on the work of Franz Fanon, Thobani argues that “[t]he colonial world emerged as a world divided.”²⁷ For the settler, cities, lawfulness, and wealth prevailed; for the “native,” reservations, lawlessness, and poverty. While such divisions are obviously oversimplified, the connections Thobani makes between understandings of space and subject formation are important. Not only do they suggest that whether or not someone is recognizable as human has much to do with which spaces they occupy, but, if we take her insight a step further, one could also argue that such spaces do not remain static across time; that different spaces are constituted on similar terms during different historical epochs. Thus, during early contact, the lands now known as British Columbia were described on very similar terms (as empty space awaiting “improvement”) as the Downtown Eastside repeatedly is today. The mythologies used to define particular spaces are thus trans-temporal, while such spaces, despite their refusal to remain static, are nonetheless used to *contain* those subjects whose humanity is, in relation to the “exalted” subject, rendered less intelligible.

I contend, then, that the kinds of mythologies and rhetorics tracked by Perry and Thobani, although frequently historical, are nonetheless certainly not past (when the past is construed as settled, finished, over and done with); instead, they shape the contours of the present of British Columbia. In fact, as already noted, some very similar symbolic and material practices are evident in the Downtown Eastside today, and it is to these symbolic and material practices of (neo)colonialism as they haunt contemporary representations of and encounters with this neighbourhood that I now turn.

An urban frontier²⁸

THE CONTEMPORARY DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE has become notorious for drug use, prostitution, and extreme poverty, not just through news reportage but also in part through the immense popularity of a National Film Board of Canada (NFB) documentary titled *Through a Blue Lens* (1999). This film documents the lives of several people who at the time of filming were addicted to substances and living for the most part on the streets in the Downtown Eastside, as filmed (and framed) through the gaze of a group of Vancouver police officers. It constructs the Downtown Eastside along the lines of the mythical frontier that Sommers and Blomley describe: the film’s opening shots of drug deals and people smoking and injecting drugs emphasize the supposed degeneracy and lawlessness of the neighbourhood and are accompanied by steel guitar music intended, according to geographer Jennifer England (based on an interview with the film’s director, Victoria Mannix), to “give the inner city a purposeful wild-west groove.” In an interview with England, Mannix explained that her

aim was to represent the Downtown Eastside as “an untamed frontier: a place of good guys and bad guys, cowboy cops and outlaw addicts.”²⁹

Through a Blue Lens is rife with scenes evocative of the Wild West. In one scene, for example, with the steel guitar again twanging in the background, a police officer encounters a man in an alleyway, makes him dump his heroin on the ground, and then says, “Turn your pocket inside out there, partner.” When he is satisfied that the man has no additional drugs, the officer instructs him to “move along, partner.” The music and language here are right out of a typical Western. The scene concludes with the officer’s statement that Downtown Eastside residents addicted to drugs have “really tragic, pathetic, wasted lives.” This construction of Downtown Eastside residents as “pathetic” and as “waste” legitimates claims that the neighbourhood ought to be “cleaned up” in the interests of (good) citizens who desire to resettle the area.³⁰ The reference to “waste” echoes nineteenth-century rationales for colonizing the space that has become Vancouver; as Blomley explains, “Native lands ... were deemed unimproved, and could thus be justly expropriated by those who were capable of reclaiming the ‘waste.’”³¹ Blomley also documents how contemporary developers imagine the Downtown Eastside today as *terra nullius*, a legal notion used to refer to empty or undeveloped land, and one that was also deployed to support European usurpation and theft of lands occupied and used by Indigenous people in the nineteenth century.

As Blomley points out, “[t]o characterize a dense, inner-city neighbourhood—containing several thousand people—as ‘empty’ seems a striking claim.”³² Initially, I was myself confused by the tendency to conflate degeneracy with emptiness in descriptions of the contemporary Downtown Eastside; after all, a space requires contents, people and places and events, in order to be rendered “degenerate.” Yet I have come to see that there is a definite connection between images and productions of the Downtown Eastside that emphasize “degeneracy” and “waste” and those that render it empty. The logic goes something like this: degeneracy = waste = nothing of value = nothing there. This kind of logic is thoroughly bound up in the modernist principles of development and progress, those taken-for-granted markers of triumph and success that are in turn thoroughly immersed in the logics of imperialism and colonialism. So the characterization of life in the Downtown Eastside as “degenerate” and as “waste” is an old frontier trick remade for a contemporary moment.

The echo of early descriptions of Indigenous people in contemporary descriptions of the residents of inner-city Western Canadian neighbourhoods such as the Downtown Eastside should make us curious about what kinds of encounters such descriptions might authorize. Blomley explains:

Characterization of the residents of the inner city as mobile and unfixed bear a striking resemblance to many representations of native people. In both cases, the effect is to force a separation between a population and the space it occupies, rendering a collective claim to this space void, even invisible.³³

Blomley argues compellingly about the relationship between property and citizenship, underscoring that the characterization of groups of people as mobile and unfixed places them outside of the category of property owner (often equated with citizen) and, by extension, outside of the realm of the social. Such descriptions are used not only to rationalize a resettlement of urban spaces but also to explain away the displacement or even disappearance of people belonging to spaces such as the Downtown Eastside, and then to legitimate an official strategy of non-response. For example, those who followed early media coverage of the belated realization that dozens of women were “missing” from the Downtown Eastside in the late 1990s will recall that the women were frequently described as “transient” and “mobile,” and thus, officials insisted, there was no reason to look for them (or else it was deemed impossible to look for them). These two claims, that a space slated for resettlement is “empty” and that the people who occupy it are “transient” and “mobile” work together, through the logic of private property, to rationalize not only displacement but also a sense that those supposedly transient and mobile lives are somehow less valuable, less recognizable as human.³⁴

The pervasiveness of frontier mythology in descriptions of the Downtown Eastside is also intimately tied to the violent encounters all too frequently experienced by many women who occupy that space today. Sherene Razack has analyzed how spaces of prostitution are produced as racialized spaces, asking, “[H]ow is prostitution always about race, class, and gender, even when the prostitutes are white?”³⁵ Her analysis of the racialization of the spaces where prostitution happens is essential, I suggest, to understanding the connections between British Columbia’s colonial past and the disappearances and murders of women from the Downtown Eastside today. For it is not as though all of the women who have been murdered or gone missing from the Downtown Eastside are Indigenous; in fact, it is possible that fewer than half of them might be (although this would still mean that they are enormously overrepresented). But I would argue, building on Razack’s analysis, that a kind of metonymic slippage is also at work here. In the racialized spaces of the contemporary Western Canadian inner city—spaces that are described much as the frontier was described during early contact between Europeans and First Nations—histories of colonization, and in particular that aspect of those histories that produced an in-

delible connection between Indigenous womanhood and prostitution, work to effect a synecdochal rendering of “the prostitute” in such spaces as Indigenous, such that she is in effect produced as a racialized other even when her skin may be read as white. What a spatial analysis reveals here is how racialization is produced concomitantly through the histories that also (re)produce particular understandings of space, such that “race” signifies quite differently in different spaces and epochs. This insight can help us to understand how such histories are implicated in the encounters being analyzed in the present.

I have found it useful to consider Razack’s analysis alongside Sara Ahmed’s theorizing about the significance of encounters. Ahmed is interested in the figure of “the stranger,” in how encounters between those deemed familiar and unfamiliar (or strange) *produce* those subjects *in* the encounter. As she explains, “the encounter itself is ontologically prior to the question of ontology (the question of the being who encounters).” For Ahmed, then, our analysis should be concerned with the question of “how contemporary modes of proximity *re-open prior histories of encounter*.” She is interested in investigating “how colonial encounters are both determining, and yet not fully determining, of social and material existence.”³⁶ Read alongside the histories of encounter I noted earlier between Indigenous women and European men in colonial British Columbia, it seems quite productive, not to mention alarming, to consider the violence experienced by women in the Downtown Eastside today (and in inner-city neighbourhoods cast as new urban frontiers in Western Canada more broadly)³⁷ as encounters which reopen that history, belying its past-ness.

The return of significant numbers of Indigenous people to urban centres in the 1960s and 1970s in Western Canada created considerable anxieties, resulting in efforts to contain Indigenous urbanites within particular spaces in the city and/or to (re)expel them from urban centres. In her analysis of the murder of Pamela George, a Saulteaux woman from the Sakimay First Nation in Saskatchewan, Razack notes, for example, that George’s murderers drove her to the outskirts of Regina (another Western Canadian city), where they murdered her and abandoned her body.³⁸ Razack locates this violent act on a continuum of similar contemporary efforts to violently expel Indigenous bodies from cities in Western Canada, such as the horrific police practice of driving Indigenous people out of the city and abandoning them there, which has been linked to the freezing deaths of several Indigenous men in recent years.³⁹ Note the haunting parallel between these contemporary events and the historical efforts to remove Indigenous people from urban centres discussed above. Many of the women who went missing from Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside were, of course, also driven out of the inner city, their remains discovered on a rural property in the suburban outskirts. The pattern has been similar in Edmonton,

where the bodies of women involved in survival sex work in the inner city have, over a period of several years, been found in fields outside of the city limits. It is the same pattern documented by journalist Warren Goulding, who writes about the murders of at least three Indigenous women whose bodies were discovered on the outskirts of Saskatoon, and the pattern is also evident in Winnipeg, where three bodies of women involved in sex work have been found near the city's northern outskirts.⁴⁰ This is precisely the kind of encounter that is authorized by the contemporary use of frontier mythology to describe the inner-city spaces where such women lived and worked; it is an unsettling example of the social and psychic legacies of a colonialism that is anything but past.

Encountering an absent presence

A WALK THROUGH THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE TODAY is likely to result in an abundance of ghost sightings if one is looking for them. There is a ghost on nearly every corner—in fact, on some corners they jostle for room. Sometimes ghosts are a “seething presence,” as Gordon describes, but at other times they are most noticeable through absence: the absence of their human forms.⁴¹ Absent presences mark the ghostly spirits that are visited and paid homage to each year during an annual Valentine's Day march through the Downtown Eastside, when marchers pause and perform smudge ceremonies at corners where women were last seen before they were disappeared, vanished, made absent from the spaces where their ghostly presences now hold court. And ghosts have also been captured by another recent documentary film about this neighbourhood.

Nettie Wild's documentary, *Fix: The Story of an Addicted City* (2002), is haunted by absent presences and by a presence now made absent—a presence now missing from the Downtown Eastside.⁴² The first haunting is intentional, the other accidental; both draw attention to contemporary injustices and together they show how hauntings are multi-layered, how “even those who haunt our dominant institutions and their systems of value are haunted too.”⁴³ Released in 2002, *Fix* documents the struggles of the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) to secure funding for a safe injection site in the Downtown Eastside. By drawing attention to the social and historical causes of poverty and addiction, the work of VANDU undermines the desire of the filmmakers of *Through a Blue Lens* to paint a picture of addiction as simply a matter of individualized bad choices. By contrast, through its focus on the social activism of VANDU, *Fix* explores the social dimensions of addiction, providing an opening for contemplating the relationship between past and present injustices.

The members of VANDU seem aware of the power of hauntings to provoke recognition of injustice. They attempt to deliberately animate hauntings

in their protests against funding cuts to Downtown Eastside services or refusals to fund social housing and harm reduction programs, programs that might reduce some of the vulnerability to unjust, untimely death that many people from the Downtown Eastside contend with daily. Repeatedly, they establish rows of wooden crosses in parks, in front of city hall, and on the grounds of the provincial legislature. Cloaked in spectre-masks, they take coffins to city council meetings. In doing so, they insist that public officials reckon with the dead of the Downtown Eastside, drawing important interconnections among public policy, the uneven distribution of social resources, and the untimely deaths of many of the people who share their neighbourhood. A laudable effort to animate hauntings for the purposes of creating change, there is nonetheless something about the intentionality of VANDU's work here, about their strategic deployment of the dead, that cannot quite hail us into the sort of unsettling realizations that I have in mind, despite its importance as a form of political activism.

But *Fix* contains at least one other less obvious haunting, one captured on film entirely by accident. The second time I watched the film, I was suddenly struck by a face I thought I recognized among those in a Downtown Eastside park installing rows and rows of crosses for a demonstration. I puzzled over where I knew this face from, backed up the DVD, and suddenly felt stunned and disoriented as I realized why I recognized the woman: she is Sereena Abotsway, and I recognized her from her photograph on the Missing Women's Task Force poster and others I have seen of her on websites and in the press. Sereena Abotsway is one of the women missing from the Downtown Eastside, and her remains were found on that rural property on the city's outskirts. In life, Abotsway was an activist in the community. She participated in VANDU protests as well as in the Valentine's Day march, where she once remembered murdered and missing women and is now one of the women whom marchers remember and mourn. The Valentine's Day march, which has taken place annually in the Downtown Eastside since 1991, is organized by Indigenous women and functions as both a protest of the lingering effects of colonization and a memorial for the women whose lives have been taken or lost in large part due to this legacy.⁴⁴ Now, marchers pause to remember Abotsway and perform a smudge to honour and release her spirit in front of the Portland Hotel on Hastings Street, where she was last seen.⁴⁵

It is, of course, not surprising that a documentary made in this neighbourhood at this time would capture the images of some of the women who have since been disappeared. Wild began filming *Fix* in 2000, and Abotsway was reported missing in 2001. Yet Abotsway's presence in the film, because it is unexpected, is unsettling, all the more so because it is a moving image of a

woman whom I had only ever seen in still photographs. In the film, Abotsway is alive, and in the few seconds in which she appears, she pounds a wooden cross into the ground, her hammer hitting the top of the cross four times before the camera pans away to other activists doing the same thing. Here, Abotsway is protesting the social conditions that make her and others from the Downtown Eastside more vulnerable to unjust, untimely death. Her presence here among those whose deaths she protests and mourns indicates a double haunting: Abotsway—haunted by the deaths of friends and neighbours, possibly also enemies, or lovers, or acquaintances or strangers—has herself come to haunt, her presence, now made absent from the Downtown Eastside, a warning to pay attention to hauntings, to heed what they can tell us about the complicated enmeshment of past and present.

Abotsway's haunting presence is unmarked in *Fix*: the film does not signal in any way that she has become one of the women on the list of Vancouver's missing women. Yet after I recognized her presence in the film I could not watch the film again in the same way. Recognizing Abotsway in the film and knowing of her (coming) death is disorienting because it collapses time: here in the film, we see the living presence of a woman now murdered, whose death is now considered to be in the past, yet in the present captured by the film it is still in the future, still to come. Knowing of her (coming) death and seeing her alive in this film seems to implicate me, the viewer, in her murder, particularly when considered alongside the other hauntings that the film intentionally animates. I start to watch for other faces I might recognize, start to wonder whether others who appear in the film are still alive or have been disappeared or killed, or have experienced another form of unjust, untimely death. Abotsway's haunting presence provokes a sense of urgency about the ways that injustice and vulnerability continue to be so unevenly distributed and lived.

When I visited Vancouver recently, I sat for a long time across the street from the Portland Hotel, where Abotsway was last seen. Although I have walked, biked, taken the bus, or driven past this spot literally thousands of times in my life and have at times participated in neighbourhood rallies, forums, festivals, and marches, I have seldom stopped and just sat here, on Hastings Street in the heart of the Downtown Eastside. It is not a particularly comfortable spot for me to sit; everything, from my MEC rain jacket to my designer glasses to the hue of my skin, marks me as a likely outsider in this neighbourhood, even though this demarcation of inside and outside is shifting, fluid, more porous than usually represented. But on this day, I sat for a while and contemplated Abotsway's absent presence from where she was disappeared. For me, what lives on from her death is a building awareness that everything about who I believe myself to be and how I live my life is indelibly bound up in the injustices

that are everywhere evident in this neighbourhood. This does not mean that I can, or want to, collapse the vast differences between myself and Abotsway, or myself and many of the people who today call this neighbourhood home. To do so would be to erase the evidence of colonialism in the present, of the many ways that the past's presence in the present left Abotsway so much more vulnerable to the violence she experienced and found her living with so much more exposure to precarity in her daily life. Still, unravelling the complicated binding of our existence is what I inherit from Abotsway and others from the Downtown Eastside whose unjust deaths continue to haunt. Attention to the haunting presences of Abotsway and others like her provokes me to begin to imagine a present (and future) that might be otherwise, or, to return once again to the epigraph from Van Alphen, to create openings for staging "interventions" instead of "repetitions," in the interests of a (future) present in which the presence of the past is a provocation for reckonings instead of disavowals. *

Notes

- 1 For ongoing conversations that inform and support my writing and research, I am especially grateful to Kara Granzow, Daphne Read, and Sharon Rosenberg. Any shortcomings in this essay, however, are all my own.
- 2 Ernst Van Alphen, "Colonialism as Historical Trauma," in *Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South African Art*, eds. Brenda Atkinson and Candice Breitz (Johannesburg: Chalkham Hill Press, 1999), 279.
- 3 I have been conducting this research for my doctoral dissertation, *Hauntings: Representations of Vancouver's Disappeared Women*, Department of English and Film Studies, University of Alberta, 2009.
- 4 For example, the deaths of at least ten women going back as far as 1965 have been connected to a man named Gilbert Paul Jordan, although he was convicted of manslaughter in only one of the women's deaths. These women's deaths suggest that the heightened vulnerability of women, and particularly of Indigenous women (all of Gilbert's presumed victims were Indigenous), extends beyond the timeframe designated by the police task force, and I will also go on to argue that it likely extends back much, much further still.
- 5 See, for example, Maggie de Vries' memoir, *Missing Sarah: A Vancouver Woman Remembers Her Vanished Sister* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2003).
- 6 There is much debate about how many of the women are Indigenous, but even conservative estimates suggest that at least a third are of Indigenous ancestry. When considered alongside the fact that Indigenous women make up only 1.9 percent of the total population of females in Vancouver (see Statistics Canada's 2006 *Aboriginal Peoples Highlight Tables*), it becomes obvious that their numbers here among the women disappeared from the Downtown Eastside are vastly disproportionate to their representation in the overall population.

- 7 See the Native Women's Association of Canada's "Sisters in Spirit National Statistics Backgrounder—October 2008," available online at <http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/documents/SISStats1Oct2008FINALv1.pdf>. According to this document, 78 percent of the women whose province of residence was known at the time of their disappearance or murder resided in one of the four Western provinces.
- 8 Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.
- 9 Ernst Van Alphen, "Colonialism as Historical Trauma," 279.
- 10 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 8 (emphasis added), 66.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 7, 9–10, 11.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 13 The C-CAP report, *Disappearing Homes: The Loss of Affordable Housing in the DTES*, is available online at <http://ccapvancouver.files.wordpress.com/2008/04/ccapreport08d4.pdf>.
- 14 See the coverage of the proposed Concord Pacific site at 58 West Hastings on the Save Low Income Housing Coalition's website: <http://slihc.resist.ca/>.
- 15 Jeff Sommers and Nicholas K. Blomley, "The Worst Block in Vancouver," in *Stan Douglas: Every Building on 100 West Hastings*, ed. Reid Schier (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2002), 45.
- 16 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 6.
- 17 Shlomo Hasson and David Ley, "The Downtown Eastside: 'One Hundred Years of Struggle,'" in *Neighbourhood Organizations and the Welfare State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 190–91.
- 18 See Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 76, for more about the impact of Fort Langley.
- 19 See Nicholas Blomley, *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* (London: Routledge, 2004), 117, 123; and Harris, *Resettlement*, xvi, 194, for discussion of representations of the West as empty space.
- 20 For a compelling critique of further examples of such histories, see Blomley, *Unsettling the City*, 117.
- 21 Harris, *Resettlement*, xvi.
- 22 Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 3.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 107, 97.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 113.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 54, 110, 119.
- 26 Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 9, 28.

- 27 Ibid., 38.
- 28 The title of this section references Neil Smith's important study, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996). Smith's research on the connections between frontier mythology and inner-city gentrification in North American cities has contributed many important insights to my own reflections on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and I was fortunate to benefit from conversations with Smith while writing an early draft of this chapter.
- 29 Jennifer England, "Disciplining Subjectivity and Space: Representation, Film and Its Material Effects," *Antipode* 36, no. 2 (2004): 301.
- 30 The claim also legitimizes a form of "anything goes" Wild West policing intended to "bring order" to a presumably disorderly space. The overwhelming documentation of extensive police brutality in the Downtown Eastside lends support to the idea that this sort of mentality is at play in policing of the area. See the report by Pivot Legal Society, *To Serve and Protect: A Report on Policing in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*, available online at <http://www.pivotlegal.org/Publications/reportstsap.htm>.
- 31 Blomley, *Unsettling the City*, 116; see also Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 126.
- 32 Blomley, *Unsettling the City*, 91.
- 33 Ibid., xx.
- 34 See Blomley, *Unsettling the City*, for more on the effects of the logic of private property.
- 35 Sherene Razack, "Race, Space, and Prostitution: The Making of the Bourgeois Subject," in *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 10 (1998): 345.
- 36 Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 7, 11 (emphasis original), 13.
- 37 For an examination of how similar casting was deployed to support the gentrification of an inner-city neighbourhood in Edmonton, another Western Canadian city, see Kara Granzow and Amber Dean, "Revanchism in the Canadian West: Gentrification and Resettlement in a Prairie City," *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 18 (Fall 2007): 89–106.
- 38 Sherene Razack, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George," in *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 15, no. 2 (2000): 91–130.
- 39 It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on these heinous acts of police violence, but interested readers should consult Susanne Reber and Robert Renaud, *Starlight Tour: The Last, Lonely Night of Neil Stonechild* (Random House, 2003).
- 40 Warren Goulding, *Just Another Indian: A Serial Killer and Canada's Indifference* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2001); see "Third Prostitute Found Dead in Man[itoba]," *The StarPhoenix*, 5 September 2007.
- 41 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 8.

- 42 *Fix: The Story of an Addicted City*, DVD, directed by Nettie Wild (Vancouver: Canada Wild Productions, 2002).
- 43 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 5.
- 44 I discuss the Valentine's Day march in much more detail in chapter 5 of my unpublished dissertation. Interested readers will also want to consult Dana Culhane, "Their Spirits Live Within Us: Aboriginal Women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver Emerging into Visibility," *American Indian Quarterly* 27, no.3 (2003) 593–606; and Caffryn Kelley, "Creating Memory, Contesting History: Inside the Monstrous Fact of Whiteness," *Matriat* 5.3 (1995): 6–11.
- 45 In his coverage of the 2007 Valentine's Day march, published on 15 February 2007, Doug Ward from the *Vancouver Sun* documents Abotsway's participation in the Valentine's Day march in 2000, a year and a half before she was disappeared. It is quite likely that Abotsway participated in the march in many other years as well.

The Expectations of a Queen: Identity and Race Politics in the Calgary Stampede

SUSAN L. JOUDREY

■ During the 1954 Queen of the Stampede contest, Evelyn Eagle Speaker, a young Kainai woman, stepped outside the spaces designated for Aboriginal participation at the Calgary Stampede and into a space dominated by young, white women.¹ From the Stampede's beginnings, visitors consumed specific depictions of North American Aboriginal groups that reinforced constructed identities that were often in conflict with one another. Early Stampede promoters worked hard to attract rodeo enthusiasts and tourists to "The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth," and one of the major draws was the presence of First Nations participants. Members of the southern Alberta Treaty 7 Nations have always contributed to the success of the Calgary Stampede.² Aboriginal men and women often played the part of the Canadian "authentic Indian" by donning traditional First Nations dress in street parades, at the evening grandstand show, and on-site at the Stampede's Indian Village. At these venues, the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Tsuu T'ina, and Nakoda Nations displayed their cultural past for tourists and Calgarians of varying ages, genders, and social classes. Although Aboriginal men competed with white cowboys in the

rodeo events, Eagle Speaker's participation in the Queen of the Stampede contest sparked a controversy unparalleled by male rodeo competitors. When Evelyn Eagle Speaker was crowned Queen of the Stampede, a debate emerged around how she should perform her role. As the first non-white Stampede Queen—or even contestant—Eagle Speaker presented an unexpected challenge to North American race and gender expectations. In her study of Canadian beauty pageants and nationalism, Patrizia Gentile notes that beauty contests provide cultural historians with “a unique way to explain gender and bodies as signifiers of morality, sexuality, class, race, and ‘womanhood.’”³ A case study of the 1954 Queen of the Stampede contest demonstrates the constructed nature of racial identity presented through a negotiation of bodily performance. Evelyn Eagle Speaker confronted the expectations of race by articulating a racialized femininity that simultaneously contested and embodied a number of white, middle-class standards.⁴

While a number of books and articles about the Stampede have been published, many of them concentrate on cowboys and Western Canadian culture, giving little consideration to First Nations participants. An exception is the recent article by Hugh Dempsey, “The Indians and the Stampede,” published in Max Foran's edited collection, *Icon, Brand, Myth: The Calgary Exhibition and Stampede*, and Mary-Ellen Kelm's article, “Riding into Place: Contact Zones, Rodeo, and Hybridity in the Canadian West 1900–1970,” which focuses on First Nations rodeo competitors.⁵ Unlike these previous studies that either provide an overview or mention a broader aspect of First Nations participation in the Stampede, this chapter specifically interrogates non-Aboriginal expectations of Evelyn Eagle Speaker's vie for, and eventual win of, the Queen of the Stampede competition. Since the debate over Eagle Speaker's role as Stampede Queen took place in public, this chapter focuses on public sources in order to understand the non-Aboriginal reactions and anxieties that accompanied her participation. Newspaper articles, letters to the editor, photographs, and cartoons all articulate understandings of race and gender. In addition to these sources, Evelyn Locker (née Eagle Speaker) graciously answered my questions and commented on drafts of this chapter, sometimes offering views that differ from my own interpretation of events. Where possible, I have attempted to integrate Evelyn's own understanding into this narrative without claiming to speak for her or the Kainai community.

Dorinne Kondo observes that “the world of representation and of aesthetics is a site of struggle, where identities are created, where subjects are interpellated, where hegemonies can be challenged.”⁶ The subject formation that Kondo addresses is achieved through a process that Judith Butler describes as “performativity.” In her now classic book, *Gender Trouble*, Butler tackles Simone

de Beauvoir's claim that "one is not born a woman, but rather *becomes* one."⁷ She asks, "How does one become a gender? ... What is the moment or mechanism of gender construction? And perhaps most pertinently, when does this mechanism arrive on the cultural scene to transform the human subject into a gendered subject?"⁸ It is possible to ask the same questions about racial identity: How does one become a race? What is the moment or mechanism of racial construction? And when does this mechanism arrive on the cultural scene to transform the human subject into a racialized subject? Drawing on Foucault's model of inscription, which he applied to prisoners' bodies, Butler works out how gender is inscribed on the surface of bodies through discourse and discipline.⁹ She argues that what we assume to be an "internal essence" of one's identity—such as gender or, arguably, race—is constructed through discourse, maintained through a repeated set of acts, and presented through a "stylization of the body."¹⁰ Thus, Evelyn Eagle Speaker's participation in the Queen of the Stampede competition set the stage for a public debate over clothing precisely because her racial identity seemed incongruent with her position as the winner of a traditionally white beauty contest.

In a colonial context, the performance of race was often framed through an articulation of opposites. Historians such as Paige Raibmon and Myra Rutherdale have noted that colonial discourses rely on racialized concepts of the other and form a number of binaries—such as uncivilized/civilized, dark/white, authentic/inauthentic—that attempt to describe First Nations peoples.¹¹ Post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha refers to this feature of colonial expression as "fixity": "the ideological construction of otherness."¹² He explains that the stereotype is its primary discursive strategy. It oscillates between "what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated." In Canada, colonial binaries affected how people thought about race, but the expectations of race often did not fit within these boundaries.¹³ This was the case at the 1954 Queen of the Stampede contest. When the markers of racial identity were put on display in an arena that expected white cultural attributes, Evelyn Eagle Speaker came to embody culturally constructed racial identities and illuminated tensions between constructed colonial binaries.

Beauty contests and pageants began as early as 1921 with what would become known as the Miss America contest and gained popularity following the Second World War. More specifically, a new type of "socialite" rodeo queen materialized as American rodeos began excluding women from traditional rodeo events following the death of a prominent female competitor, Bonnie McCarroll, at the 1929 Pendleton Round-Up. As cowgirl athletes' presence in rodeos decreased, the importance of rodeo queens as promoters began to swell.¹⁴ Although, at the core, most pageants, including rodeo queen competitions, were

advertising gimmicks for businessmen, these events actively promoted specific ideas of race and femininity through the display of bodies. Gentile argues that “[b]eauty pageants became ubiquitous because their structure and messages promoted western values of competitiveness, individuality, respectability, and conformity widely and effectively. They strived to sell not only goods, but also spread ideals of community, respectability, character, and symbols of nation.”¹⁵ These ideals were based on concepts of appropriate femininity, and, as a number of historians have noted, many post-war cultural activities, sometimes intentionally, reinforced the normalcy of white, middle-class standards of heterosexuality.¹⁶ Following the Second World War, beauty competitions served to strengthen popular gender, sexual, and racial norms, but as they attempted to create a universal beauty ideal by collapsing racial, ethnic, and sexual diversity, beauty contests actually made the notion of beauty problematic and exclusionary.¹⁷ Specifically, they created a space where gender and racial identities were performed, and they supported post-war, white gender and racial ideals by presenting a norm that young women could strive toward. However, as Sarah Banet-Weiser asserts, the beauty pageant is also a site in which “the meanings ascribed to individual and cultural identities are continually negotiated and often vehemently contested.”¹⁸ As the example of Evelyn Eagle Speaker will demonstrate, beauty contests provided an arena where these ideals could be simultaneously performed and challenged.

The Stampede Queen and Princess contest began in 1946 when Ms. Patsy Rodgers was asked by members of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Board to become the first Stampede Queen. In 1947 the Associated Canadian Travellers (ACT), a society founded in 1888 by travelling salesmen who raised funds for local community associations and charities, asked community clubs to sponsor one contestant. The queen was chosen through the sale of tickets and competitions related to personality and riding ability. Revenue secured by ticket sales was donated to a local charity, and in 1954 net proceeds went to the Council for Retarded Children.¹⁹ From 1947 to 1963, the winners were chosen by this method.²⁰ Unlike most beauty contests, the Queen of the Stampede competition did not have a specific category for judging physical appearance although the newspapers occasionally referred to the winners as “beauties” and recorded contestants’ physical appearance, including height and weight.²¹ The winner, whose friends and family sold the most tickets, was called a “sponsor girl,” and the two runners-up were labelled her “ladies in waiting.” This was a method of selection commonly practiced in rodeo queen competitions in the United States.²²

The personality aspect of the competition was completed in the form of interviews conducted by sponsoring clubs before they decided to nominate a

candidate. As Gentile emphasizes, personality was an important component of beauty competitions that drew on the belief that outer beauty, or the “social self,” corresponded with inner beauty and was an important prerequisite for consideration as a viable beauty contestant. This focus evoked the idea that beauty is good and, more importantly, that beauty is indicative of moral integrity and wholesome character. Ultimately, a beauty contest participant was required to demonstrate how her inner goodness informed her public self.²³ Through a series of questions and character references—in Eagle Speaker’s case, this included reference letters from the Business College and the Department of Indian Affairs—the onus was on the contestant to prove that she could conduct herself appropriately in public.²⁴ Personality and charm, or the ability to portray a public self, was a necessary characteristic.²⁵

The Stampede Queen and Princess contest was not a beauty pageant like the more famous Miss America pageant, yet participants were still required to conform to specific standards. Contestants were young, unmarried women between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four, and community clubs typically sponsored white girls from middle-class homes. For example, Peggy Fisher, who was chosen as the 1954 Orange Hall Association candidate, was described as follows: “A slim brunette, five feet seven inches in height. One of a family of three boys and two girls, Peggy is popular with her classmates and is a good basketball player.”²⁶ Her personal and public life exemplified the attributes of an acceptable middle-class girl: attractive, popular, proficient at various extracurricular activities, and a member of a traditional family unit. The Queen of the Stampede contest reinforced ideas about post-war white femininity but combined them with expectations of a local Western femininity that included horsemanship. Evelyn (Eagle Speaker) Locker explained that the Stampede Queen’s horse-riding abilities were demonstrated throughout the Stampede.²⁷ Eagle Speaker’s participation seemed natural to her because she came from a ranching family, but as a First Nations woman who was raised on the reserve, she presented a challenge to what non-Aboriginals believed to be the beauty-pageant norm.²⁸

On 17 April 1954, Evelyn Eagle Speaker’s entry into the Queen of the Stampede contest was announced in *The Albertan*. While she was attending business college in Calgary, the nineteen-year-old was sponsored by the Calgary Elks Lodge, an exclusive club for white males. The members of the Elks Lodge decided to sponsor a First Nations woman for the contest, and Evelyn was the one chosen from others who were interviewed.²⁹ The newspaper announcement explained that Ms. Eagle Speaker was a “full-blooded Indian princess” who was born on a reserve near Lethbridge to Chief Eagle Speaker of the “Blood Tribe.” The announcement also highlighted her education at St. Paul’s Indian School

and her graduation from the high school in Cardston.³⁰ It has been observed by other historians that First Nations performers in North America were either presented as the remnant of a “vanishing race” or as an example of “the stunning transformation of former primitives.”³¹ According to press reports, Evelyn’s successes as an educated First Nations woman demonstrated to the concerned public the ability for Canada’s Aboriginal population to “improve themselves.”

In the initial announcement of her entry into the contest, Evelyn was quoted as claiming that her only thought on accepting the honour was for the good it could do First Nations peoples. “Sadly enough,” she explained, “the large majority of persons still think of the Indians as illiterate people. Perhaps, now, I may get the opportunity to inform the thousands of tourists visiting Calgary during the Stampede that the Indian of today is well educated and a good Canadian.”³² This would be an opportunity for Evelyn to represent the Aboriginal community as productive members of Canadian society and to dispel some of the negative ideas held by non-Aboriginals. Here was an occasion to challenge the colonial discourse. As Lucy Maddox points out, Aboriginal performers often managed their own performances, sometimes using them to advance their own political agendas. Instead of making an attempt to escape their performative roles, they would control and exploit them, “turning performance into an effective means of self-expression.”³³ Even recently, when I asked Evelyn (Eagle Speaker) Locker to reflect on why she decided to participate, she explained that the reason she let her name stand in the competition was “[n]ot for personal glory but to bring attention to my people to show that we were capable of being anything we chose to be. I wanted to be an example to the youth of my nation and a symbol for everyone worldwide that the Indian of then and today could be well educated and a good Canadian. And to show that Native people could compete equally in such a contest.”³⁴ Eagle Speaker wanted to demonstrate that Aboriginal people were not inferior to the white population, but in order to achieve this — to set a good example for other First Nations youth and dispel stereotypes — spectators had to recognize Evelyn Eagle Speaker as an Aboriginal woman, and an obvious signifier of her race would be her clothing and her name.

Shortly after Eagle Speaker’s entry into the competition, the Elks Lodge organized a naming ceremony, with the consensus of the head chiefs of the Treaty 7 Nations, at Calgary’s Cinema Park Drive-in. Each of the five Treaty 7 southern Alberta Nations demonstrated their support by making her an honorary princess (see figure 1). A number of well-known Aboriginal leaders took part in the event, including Jacob Two Young Men, chief of the Nakoda; James Starlight, chief of the Tsuu T’ina; Joe Crowfoot, chief of the Siksika; Percy Creighton, minor subchief of the Kainai; and Eagle Speaker’s father, Michael



FIGURE 1. Naming Ceremony at the Cinema Park Drive-in, April 1954. Back row, left to right: Jacob Two Young Men, James Starlight, Joe Crowfoot, Michael Eagle Speaker, Percy Creighton. Evelyn Eagle Speaker seated front centre. Names of men in front row unknown. Glenbow Archives NA-5600-7771a.

Eagle Speaker, subchief of the Kainai.³⁵ Instead of choosing an appropriate Blackfoot name, the Elks Lodge selected the name “Princess Wapiti,” *wapiti* being the Cree word for “elk.” Her sponsor helped showcase an Indian Princess who could embody universal Aboriginality. This reinforced Eagle Speaker’s racialized and gendered identity as a “full-blooded” Indian Princess. Even though she had been chosen to compete in a primarily white event and although she was well educated, the naming ceremony emphasized that she was not the typical Stampede Queen contestant; it emphasized her racial identity. As a ceremony that took place in Calgary, not on the reserves, at a drive-in—a space specifically intended for entertainment—this was a public event designed to draw attention to Eagle Speaker and the Elks Lodge. It was this construction of Aboriginality, however, that also allowed her to subvert racial expectations.

Including Eagle Speaker, fourteen contestants were vying for the 1954 Stampede Queen title. They were all sponsored by local community organizations such as the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, the Orange Hall, and various Legions.³⁶ Most of the contestants represented the “typical” pageant competitors: they were young, middle-class, Euro-Canadian women. It was obvious that Eagle Speaker was an exceptional contestant, as demonstrated by the newspa-

per advertisement published in *The Albertan* (see figure 2). Amidst a number of cowboy hats, only Eagle Speaker is pictured wearing feathers, and she is identified by her “Indian name,” Princess Wapiti. Furthermore, in order to sell more tickets, the interested public was invited to meet and vote for Princess Wapiti at the Western Canadian Sportsmen’s Show held in Calgary during the first week of June. Eagle Speaker was in attendance at the Sportsmen’s Show Indian Village.³⁷ However, the public could meet another Stampede Queen candidate, Kay Dench, at the Russell Sporting Goods booth at the same event. Dench was billed as an “expert Calgary horsewoman” and demonstrated her riding skills each evening at the Sportsmen’s Show.³⁸ Eagle Speaker was positioned as an “Indian Princess,” while Kay Dench’s expert riding skills and cowboy costume were emphasized. This was a common dichotomy—the cowgirl and the Indian Princess, a feminized version of the dominant cowboy/Indian binary made popular by American Wild West shows, dime novels, and Hollywood movies. The cowboy versus Indian opposition was replicated at the Stampede even though it was constantly complicated by Aboriginal participation in the rodeo.³⁹ Evelyn Eagle Speaker was sometimes cast this way, most likely in an attempt to accommodate her presence even though, like Dench, Eagle Speaker was also an expert horsewoman.⁴⁰ Her presence at the Western Canadian Sportsmen’s Show reinforced the constructed difference between Eagle Speaker and the other competitors through the performance of race, yet this articulation of racial identity was “performed” in order to transgress the actual racial boundary of participating in the Queen of the Stampede contest.

Media discourse surrounding Eagle Speaker’s participation in this competition emphasized otherness but also reinforced her femininity in an attempt to validate her acceptance as a competitor. The Calgary press almost always referred to Eagle Speaker as the “Indian Princess,” “Princess Wapiti,” or “Indian Maiden.” In their eyes, she was first and foremost an Indian Princess. These terms evoked images of Aboriginal femininity popularized by colonial ideas about the “noble savage.” Romantic poets and playwrights of the nineteenth century, such as James Nelson Barber, often defined the “Indian Maiden” in terms of her relationship with male characters.⁴¹ As Rayna Green argues, the story of Pocahontas was probably the most popular of these myths and took a strong hold in the American imagination.⁴² The most famous Canadian example of the depiction of an Indian Princess is E. Pauline Johnson, a poetess and performer, and a woman of Canadian Aboriginal heritage. Johnson is credited with creating “a synthetic pan-Indian stage presence that necessarily relied as much upon popular European fantasies of the Native as it did upon direct Aboriginal inspiration.”⁴³ She was billed as “the Mohawk Princess” and during her performances of “Indian poems,” she would wear her Native costume

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★ Announcing Miss Calgary Stampede Queen Contest 1954
 ★ 14 Contestants!
 ★ Each 25c Ticket 25 Votes
 ★ Vote for Your Favorite!
 ★ Net Proceeds to the Council for Retarded Children

Sponsored by
Associated Canadian Travellers
 CALGARY CLUB

Contestants:

ANNETTE FORDYTH Canadian Legion Park City, AB & COPE	RAY DENCH South Calgary Community Club	ARLENE WEINBERG Canadian Legion Park City, AB & COPE	BETTY LUTHER Canadian Legion Park City, AB & COPE	IRMA JEAN OLIVER The Rotary Club of South
GERTA ARCTANDER Danish Canadian Club	IRMA EVELYN PEY The Rotary Club of South	PRINCESS MARIE B.P.C. No. 4, Calgary	PEGGY FISHER The Calgary Stampede Club	
JENNITA STUBBS Lions Club of West	LORNE MARIE HILL Western Agricultural Society	BONNIE CLARICE HILL High School, West Side, AB	EVELYN BAUGH Canadian Legion, West Side, AB	MARIE BRANTON C.L. No. 1, Calgary & Surrounding Clubs of Alberta

FIGURE 2. *The Albertan*, 24 April 1954. Photograph courtesy of the Glenbow Archives.

of buckskin dress, leggings, moccasins, hunting knife, and a Huron scalp that had belonged to her grandfather.⁴⁴ Johnson was one of Canada's most popular performers, and because of her reputation, she captured the imaginations of Canadians, who supported her performance of Aboriginal culture and Native

femininity. By successfully embodying both the role of a white genteel woman and, when practical, a female version of the “noble savage,” Pauline Johnson encouraged the mythology of the Indian Princess and challenged it at the same time.⁴⁵ Like Johnson, Eagle Speaker’s public expression of racial identity was framed in terms of the Indian Princess.

The Indian Princess, of course, was not the only depiction of First Nations women. “Squaw” was widely used to describe Aboriginal women by non-Natives and provided a derogatory term based on the opposite image of the noble Indian Princess. Often when it was used by the white settlers, it took on demeaning connotations and was applied generally to all Native American females even though the word meant “wife,” “female friend,” “woman of the woods,” or “female chief” in some languages.⁴⁶ Activist Muriel Stanley Venne notes that “when a person is called a ‘Squaw’ she is no longer a human being who has the same feelings as other women. She is something less than other women.”⁴⁷ Aboriginal women’s lives exemplified what Rayna Green describes as the “Pocahontas Perplex,” the Indian Princess–squaw dichotomy, which was a racialized version of the Madonna–whore duality. While the princess was considered beautiful and proud, the squaw was often seen as debased and immoral.⁴⁸ In many ways, these ideas were not in conflict with the expectations of other beauty queens. Pageant participants were often depicted as morally upstanding, possessing characteristics such as purity, respectability, and domestic expertise. However, Native women were doubly burdened because they were women *and* the racialized other.⁴⁹ They were haunted by suspicions concerning their morality and civility. As late as 1955, the “Indian Prize” for the most accurately attired “Sarcee,” “Stoney,” and “Blackfoot” woman was still advertised as the prize for the “best-dressed squaw.” Since language is fluid, however, not all First Nations women defined this word in negative terms. Unlike Venne, Evelyn (Eagle Speaker) Locker points out that it became a common term for any Native woman, not just prostitutes, and there was no derogatory meaning in its general use.⁵⁰ The media, however, never referred to Eagle Speaker as “squaw,” and it seems that as a representative of the ACT and the city of Calgary, it was important to distance her from a potentially negative image.⁵¹

On 22 June 1954, the local newspapers announced Evelyn Eagle Speaker’s Stampede Queen contest win (see figure 3).⁵² The *Calgary Herald* declared that “[t]he Indian princess turned queen [would] exchange her Indian finery for Western garb for her reign at the Stampede.”⁵³ But once the “Indian Princess” had become the “Rodeo Queen,” Stampede and city officials, the ACT, and the non-Aboriginal community could not agree on what she should wear. The ACT thought that as Stampede Queen—a representative of their organization and of the city—Eagle Speaker should wear the cowboy hat and boots



FIGURE 3. Evelyn Eagle Speaker and the runners-up: Kay Dench, Greta Arctander, Peggy Fisher. Glenbow Archives NA 5600-7629.

befitting such an honour. Lyle Lebbert, chairman of the Associated Canadian Travellers Stampede Queen contest, explained that just because Evelyn Eagle Speaker was an “Indian girl,” it was not going to make a difference to the ACT regulations.⁵⁴ A number of vocal Calgarians, however, preferred that she wear her traditional Aboriginal dress. Evelyn (Eagle Speaker) Locker reflects that she had very little to say about the decision and tried to carry on with her classes at business college while others debated her role as Stampede Queen.⁵⁵

In a letter to Eagle Speaker’s father, Mike Eagle Speaker, Indian Events judge and former Hudson’s Bay Company officer Philip Godsell expressed his disgust with the Stampede’s insistence that Eagle Speaker should not wear her traditional dress. Godsell often supported the public display of First Nations artifacts and handiwork because he, like many other non-Aboriginals, believed that Aboriginal culture was “rapidly succumbing to the march of civilization.”⁵⁶ Godsell contacted Alan Bill, the editor of the *Calgary Herald*, as well as a number of other friends, encouraging them to write to the newspaper and insist that Eagle Speaker be “allowed to wear her Indian costume in the Parade.”⁵⁷ The first letters appeared in the *Herald* on June 25, only three days after the initial announcement of Eagle Speaker’s reign. They expressed their desire for her to wear her traditional dress.⁵⁸ Judging from the opinions articulated in the

newspaper, there were three main reasons why the non-Aboriginal community thought Eagle Speaker should wear the doeskin dress made by her mother: first, because she was an authentic representative of her race; second because cowgirl attire was inauthentic; and finally, a genuine Indian Princess would secure commercial success. As detailed below, each reason sought to reinforce Eagle Speaker's racial identity as a "full-blooded" First Nations woman and highlighted the way the Calgary public expected female Aboriginality to be performed. The remainder of this chapter will expand on each of these reasons.

A number of letters to the editor published in the *Calgary Herald* supported the suggestion that Eagle Speaker should wear the traditional dress because it would be an insult to Native Canadians to ask her to dress like a cowgirl. "Two Native teenagers" expressed their disappointment that Eagle Speaker would not be wearing her traditional dress during the Stampede. They explained that First Nations participants were "just as much an attraction at the Stampede as cowboys," that their own dress was "very spectacular," and "it would be a great honour for the Princess to appear as she actually is, an Indian Princess."⁵⁹ For Eagle Speaker to appear as she actually was, she would need to conform to expectations of race. As Peter Geller acknowledges, even though Aboriginal peoples participated in historical pageants and other community events as performers for their own reasons, organizers "attempted to define and limit their appearance and actions as 'Indians.' Elaborate dress, in particular, tended to affirm, and conform to, these perceived roles (for both Natives and whites)."⁶⁰ Dress helped alleviate any questions about racial authenticity. Eagle Speaker's racial identity was tied to the performance of that identity through the signifiers of adornment. She was not a white cowgirl but an Indian Princess, and she was required to act out her race to the satisfaction of others—whether they were members of her own community or non-Natives. Pamela Waller, daughter of L.G.P. Waller, inspector of Indian schools for the province of Alberta, expressed that Princess Wapiti "had every right to wear Indian robes if she chose," and Mrs. E. Smitheran noted that "Princess Wapiti is undoubtedly proud of her tribal costume and all the glorious history it stands for—so I say let her wear it and wear it proudly. It would be an insult to her race to ask her to change."⁶¹ Other letters expressed a similar sentiment: that her position as Stampede Queen was an "honour to her race," "a credit to her race," and "excellent publicity for the Indians" as she was "a representative of her race."⁶² The concept of "racial uplift"—the belief in the "good character of the race"—was another discourse used to accommodate white ideals of femininity and beauty. According to Gentile, "Embracing beauty practices and products that mimicked white ideals enforced racial uplift with the added caveat that while white women maintained high moral standards, non-white women had to be

even more vigilant.”⁶³ Eagle Speaker was given the added burden of tackling a number of expectations that had been applied to non-white women.

Furthermore, according to the non-Aboriginal public, it would be incongruous if she were dressed as a cowgirl and not an Indian because it would be inauthentic. Butler’s theory of performativity seems particularly useful in understanding how race is constructed to appear natural. The racialized subject is the product of racialized discourse, and what appears to be a natural identity trait is constructed and sustained through bodily signs and other discursive meanings.⁶⁴ Therefore, markers of race, such as clothing, were important to affirm the authenticity of one’s racial identity. The letters to the editor demonstrate that non-Aboriginal Calgarians assumed race was a natural identity trait that should be reflected in signifiers such as apparel. For example, William Dowell wondered if anything could be “more ridiculous or out of harmony” than an Indian dressed in a cowgirl outfit!⁶⁵ Some letter writers—such as Harry Hutchcroft, a long-time Stampede volunteer and former parade marshal—even went so far as to proclaim that dressing Eagle Speaker in a cowgirl costume would be deceptive, and it would not do to “[doll] up an Indian miss in a brand new factory-made cowgirl outfit.”⁶⁶ Most blatantly, Gordon Robson claims in his letter to the editor that “Indian clothes” are the appropriate attire for Eagle Speaker and emphasizes his point by quoting Shakespeare: “For apparel doth proclaim the man.”⁶⁷ Several First Nations peoples at the Stampede did not wear traditional dress, and many Native men dressed as and competed with cowboys, yet in this context, Eagle Speaker was expected to perform her Aboriginality by wearing “Indian clothes.” Historian Susan Roy observes that non-Native audiences often demanded that Indigenous “cultural traditions be limited to flamboyant costumes, drumming, singing and dancing.”⁶⁸ It was obvious that Eagle Speaker’s reign as Stampede Queen was considered another Stampede spectacle and that she was on display. According to Philip Godsell, a cowgirl outfit did not suit her and “would cause her to be eclipsed by those attendants who could carry it to better advantage.”⁶⁹ Perhaps Godsell was thinking of “real” cowgirl Kay Dench, who had performed with Eagle Speaker at the Western Canadian Sportsmen’s Show and, as runner-up to the Queen, would often be pictured with her. Therefore, what Eagle Speaker wore was integral to articulating her racial identity. Although, as Evelyn (Eagle Speaker) Locker points out, it was normal for her to wear Western clothes because she was from a ranching family and was an expert horsewoman, it seems Aboriginality was so clearly defined through specific discourse and performance that for her to wear cowgirl attire would be inappropriate, deceptive, and even less attractive.⁷⁰ In other words, it was inauthentic, and authentic Aboriginality relied on the sustained performance of expected signifiers that were created through colonial discourses.

Finally, it was public opinion, as mediated through the press, that tourists should get the chance to see an authentic Indian who represented Calgary's past. Amid the post-war tourist boom, Calgary, like many other places in North America and Western Europe, sought to sell its cultural past. Other historians have commented on this phenomenon as it applies to First Nations performance and have concluded that "a major reason for securing Aboriginal participation [in public celebrations] was to ensure tourist dollars."⁷¹ Concerned Calgarians thought that, in her traditional dress, Eagle Speaker would be a great attraction for the Stampede visitors.⁷² "What a drawing card!" exclaims William Dowell. "Thousands will come to Calgary to see the lovely Indian girl we picked to be our Queen all rigged out in her native dress."⁷³ Of course, Eagle Speaker was a "drawing card" because authentic Indians represented the past. The rhetoric of the vanishing Indian, prevalent in Romantic literature, reinforced the belief that Aboriginal peoples represented the past, while Euro-North Americans were progressive and modern. Indigenous peoples were often called upon to perform the past at world fairs, exhibitions, and the Stampede. During other Stampede events, Aboriginal performance helped represent the Western past, but the Stampede Queen symbolized the modernity of the city. Since the queen was to represent Calgary's progress, it became tricky for Euro-Canadian Calgarians to fully make sense of Eagle Speaker's role. Her racial identity was bound by a temporal association with the past, but Eagle Speaker consciously sought to present herself as modern and commented that she wanted to demonstrate that First Nations peoples did not embody the stereotypes held by the non-Native majority.⁷⁴

It is not surprising that many members of the non-Aboriginal community conceived of Eagle Speaker's role in this way. Even as a cowgirl, the Stampede Queen was seen as a representation of Western culture, but as an Aboriginal woman, Eagle Speaker was considered a piece of living history.⁷⁵ In fact, Philip Godsell thought that it would be "anachronistic" to insist Eagle Speaker wear a cowgirl uniform.⁷⁶ Probably the most obvious example of this sentiment came from Harry Hutchcroft, who observed: "The day may come when genuine full-blooded Indian maids are as scarce in Calgary as genuine cowgirls are now and by that time we may have to resort to make-believe substitutes, but while we have them to show our visitors in their own beautiful outfits, let us do so."⁷⁷ The belief that authentic Aboriginal culture was vanishing influenced how the public expected Eagle Speaker to perform her race.

On July 3, *The Albertan* made a front-page announcement that the "costume controversy" surrounding Evelyn Eagle Speaker, or Princess Wapiti, was settled "to everyone's satisfaction" when Calgary Stampede officials announced that the Stampede Queen would wear her "royal Indian robes" in the opening

day parade and at the crowning ceremonies, and cowgirl regalia for all other occasions.⁷⁸ While opinion was split on how Eagle Speaker should dress, perhaps (and not surprisingly) the most pragmatic response came from Daisy Crowchild, a long-time Stampede participant and the wife of Tsuu T'ina Chief David Crowchild. She explained that "[t]he costume is too heavy to wear all the time."⁷⁹ She agreed that it would be good for Eagle Speaker to wear her Aboriginal dress (or as the newspaper described it, her "Indian costume and frills") for the parade and cowboy garb for the rest of the Stampede. On the same day the controversy was declared resolved, *The Albertan* ran an editorial cartoon by John Freeborn illustrating the attitudes toward an Indian Princess as Stampede Queen (see figure 4). The cartoon pictures Eagle Speaker riding a horse pulling a travois. She is wearing cowboy boots, kerchief, and cowboy hat, but a hole has been cut in the brim to make room for her "Indian" feathers. The horse also has a feather in its mane and is branded with a question mark. Her companion is a very confused dog, wide-eyed and shocked by the sight before him. Finally, the whole scene is accompanied by the old cowboy standard, "Home on the Range," playing on a hand-crank phonograph. Although not reprinted in the cartoon, one of the verses of "Home on the Range" asserts the common non-Aboriginal understanding of First Nations peoples as members of a vanishing race: "The red man was pressed from this part of the West, / He's likely no more to return / To the banks of Red River where seldom if ever / Their flickering campfires burn."⁸⁰ To alleviate any confusion concerning the depiction of Eagle Speaker, the caption read "1954's Miss (Poor-little-mixed-up) Calgary Stampede."⁸¹ Evelyn (Eagle Speaker) Locker reminisces that she was comfortable with the cartoon because she "saw it only as the media's perception."⁸² The "mixed-up" questions it raised did not reflect her as much as it did those who debated her role. Regardless of audience opinion, this cartoon is an important cultural indicator. Could the Stampede Queen be both a cowgirl and an Indian Princess? Could she represent the West of the past *and* the West of the present? According to the cartoon, the whole idea confused the dog, the horse, and even Eagle Speaker. This, however, was a reflection of the anxiety felt by the observing public. Evelyn Eagle Speaker challenged the expectations of race by participating in an event that reinforced ideas about white femininity and revealed racial anxieties felt by the non-Aboriginal community. Her participation opened up a public debate about First Nations identity.

Evelyn Eagle Speaker fulfilled her duties as Stampede Queen by making a number of social appearances, including a trip to Hollywood and Las Vegas, and meetings with other beauty queens and notable individuals. Her presence subverted expectations of Aboriginality while encouraging discussion about racial identity. This is evident in a photograph entitled "From One Indian to



FIGURE 4. Editorial cartoon by John Freeborn. *The Albertan*, 3 July 1954.

Another" published in *The Albertan* (see figure 5). M.I.U. Munshey of "West Pakistan" is depicted passing a silk embroidered tablecloth made in the district of Thar, where purebred Brahma cattle were raised, to Evelyn Eagle Speaker, who is wearing her Stampede Queen cowgirl outfit. They are surrounded by other members of the Treaty 7 Nations dressed in traditional Aboriginal costume, including elaborate feather headdresses.⁸³ Even though Eagle Speaker is wearing her cowgirl garb, she is positioned as a racialized other. According to the caption, she was still the "Blood Indian Queen" Princess Wapiti and not the Stampede Queen. But the photograph actually subverts white discourses, because Eagle Speaker's actions and dress clearly denote her as the Stampede Queen. She looks more like the other contestants that are pictured in *The Albertan* advertisement than like Princess Wapiti (see figure 2). Furthermore, Mr. Munshey is presenting Eagle Speaker with a gift appropriate for a white, middle-class Stam-



FIGURE 5. "From One Indian to Another." *The Albertan*, 7 July 1954.
 Photograph courtesy of the Glenbow Archives.

pede Queen, which undermined the suggestion that she was an Indian Princess who resided in a tipi, as she was cast at the Western Canadian Sportsmen's Show. The text that accompanies the photo demonstrates the white community's desire to rationalize Eagle Speaker's participation and win in the Queen of the Stampede contest, but the photo validates her position as Stampede royalty.

In reviewing this chapter, Evelyn (Eagle Speaker) Locker expressed her concerns that I was turning the event into something more radical than it really was. She did not see her participation in the Queen of the Stampede contest as a chance to challenge the constructed norms of middle-class, white femininity. Instead, she believes that, as a Kainai woman who was crowned Stampede Queen, she "overcame any stereotypes and gave the Stampede what it wanted: a horsewoman from a Western tradition that was proud of her Native heritage."⁸⁴ The media coverage, however, suggests there were multiple layers to non-Aboriginal expectations of race.

In general, beauty pageants and queen competitions place women's bodies on display, and Evelyn Eagle Speaker's body produced anxieties about race and gender. The widespread concern expressed over what Evelyn Eagle Speaker should wear reflected deep-set unease surrounding the body as "the object of desire" and the body as a contested site for negotiating the boundaries of race and gender. Even though Eagle Speaker was allowed to wear her traditional

dress on occasion, the wider community attempted to make sense of her participation in accordance with standards of whiteness and expectations of Aboriginality. Yet, according to media accounts, Eagle Speaker's involvement in the Queen of the Stampede contest challenged how non-Aboriginal Calgarians thought about Aboriginality and how it should be performed because she engaged with White assumptions about race and gender to turn those assumptions back on those who thought they knew the other. This episode provides an example of how racial identities are created via discourse and sustained through social performances. Contrary to what John Freeborn's cartoon suggests, Evelyn Eagle Speaker knew who she was, even if Calgary did not quite know what to make of the Indian Princess who was crowned Stampede Queen. *

Notes

- 1 My sincere thanks are offered to Mrs. Evelyn Locker (née Eagle Speaker), who has been kind enough to share her memories of this event. Evelyn Locker retired in 2000 following a forty-six-year career with the Department of Indian Affairs, the City of Calgary, and the Shell Oil Company of Canada. She continues to actively participate in her community in an Elder advisory capacity and as a celebrated dancer. She and her husband travel extensively, attending a number of powwows. Evelyn holds status as a dancer and an Elder, and as one of the few people adopted by the Five Tribes. I would also like to thank the editors of this collection for all of their hard work, as well as James Opp and the anonymous reviewers, whose careful comments much improved this chapter.
- 2 For the purposes of this paper, I have not changed any of the quotations to reflect the current reclaimed names of the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Tsuu T'ina, or Nakoda Nations. All quotations from newspaper and archival sources reflect the titles commonly used in 1954; therefore, the historic names of the Blackfoot, Blood, Peigan, Sarcee, and Stoney Nations will appear in this context. In the remainder of the paper, however, I have decided to use the reclaimed names of the southern Alberta Treaty 7 Nations.
- 3 Patrizia Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf: A History of Beauty Contests in Twentieth-Century Canada" (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2006), 3.
- 4 Evelyn did not feel that non-Aboriginals held stereotyped expectations of her. Evelyn Locker, personal communication, 2 April 2009.
- 5 Hugh Dempsey, "The Indians and the Stampede," in *Icon, Brand, Myth: The Calgary Exhibition and Stampede*, ed. Max Foran (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2008); and Mary-Ellen Kelm, "Riding into Place: Contact Zones, Rodeo, and Hybridity in the Canadian West 1900–1970," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, n.s., 18, no 1 (2007): 107–32.
- 6 Dorrine Kondo, *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 4.

- 7 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 141.
- 8 Ibid., 141–42.
- 9 Ibid., 171–73.
- 10 Ibid., xv.
- 11 Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); and Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).
- 12 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994; repr., New York: Routledge, 2005): 66.
- 13 According to Bhabha, when colonial subjects identified with the colonizing authority and adopted cultural attributes of the colonizer, they were simultaneously alienated from it. The colonial subject would never be the same as the colonizer: in Bhabha's terms, "not quite/not white." Therefore, the colonizer was divided between the need to represent the colonized and the desire to reject them, to recreate the native population as alien and inferior. This produced a tension and challenged essentialist colonial categories because while the former strategy tried to "identify coloniser and colonised as mutually knowable and therefore similar, the latter insisted on their fundamental difference." Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 89–92; and Simon Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 166.
- 14 Renee M. Laegreid, "'Performers Prove Beauty and Rodeo Can Be Mixed': The Return of the Cowgirl Queen," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 54, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 45–46.
- 15 Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," 3.
- 16 See Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Valerie Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).
- 17 Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," 3.
- 18 Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 2.
- 19 "Your Stampede Queen?" *The Albertan*, 24 April 1954, 7.
- 20 "From 1959–1963, to ensure that the winners were able to ride and were interested in, and able to represent the Stampede effectively, the top ticket sellers (5–10, depending on the total number of entrants), underwent a rigorous judging competition on appearance, poise, intelligence, and riding ability. Activities included a meet and greet dinner, public speaking, individual interviews with questions pertaining to the contest, the city, the Stampede, etc., riding a horsemanship pattern in the arena, and constant appraisals by 'secret' judges." "The Origins of the Stampede Queen and Princess Contest," Calgary Stampede Queen's Alumni webpage, <http://www.stampedequeensalumni.com>; and Evelyn Locker, interview by the author, 2008.

- 21 See "Indian Maiden Chosen Miss Calgary Stampede," *The Albertan*, 22 June 1954, in which it is noted that Eagle Speaker is five feet four inches tall and 114 pounds; or "Stampede Notebook," *The Albertan*, 9 July 1954, where Eagle Speaker and others are described as "a bevy of beauties."
- 22 For example, the first three Miss Frontier Days queens (1931–33) at Cheyenne, Wyoming's Frontier Days celebration won their crowns through competitions where townspeople "voted" for their favourite candidate by purchasing tickets from her. Likewise, in 1935 the first rodeo queen of the Omak Stampede in Omak, Washington "was selected by the number of purchases made in her name at the local stores. A contestant gained 100 votes for every 50 cents spent." Renée M. Laegreid, *Riding Pretty: Rodeo Royalty in the American West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); and Joan Burbick, *Rodeo Queens: On the Circuit with America's Cowgirls* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2002).
- 23 Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," 49.
- 24 Evelyn Locker, personal communication, 6 October 2008.
- 25 Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," 61.
- 26 "Queen Candidate," *The Albertan*, 26 April 1954.
- 27 Evelyn Locker, e-mail message to author, 23 April 2009.
- 28 Ibid., 2 April 2009.
- 29 Ibid., 27 May 2008.
- 30 "Enters Queen Contest," *The Albertan*, 17 April 1954.
- 31 Lucy Maddox, "Politics, Performance and Indian Identity," *American Studies International* 40, no. 2 (June 2002): 18.
- 32 "Enters Queen Contest," *The Albertan*, 17 April 1954.
- 33 Maddox, "Politics," 9.
- 34 Evelyn Locker, e-mail message to author, 27 May 2008.
- 35 "Tribes Adopt Indian Princess," *The Albertan*, 23 April 1954.
- 36 "Your Stampede Queen?" advertisement, *The Albertan*, 24 April 1954, 7.
- 37 Advertisement, *The Albertan*, 2 June 1954.
- 38 Advertisement, *Calgary Herald*, 2 June 1954, 16.
- 39 See Kelm, "Riding into Place."
- 40 Evelyn Locker, e-mail message to author, 2 April 2009.
- 41 James Nelson Barker, *The Indian Princess* (1808); and Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," *The Massachusetts Review* (Autumn 1975): 703.
- 42 Green, "Pocahontas Perplex," 704–07.

- 43 Veronica Strong-Boag, "A Red Girl's Reasoning": E. Pauline Johnson Constructs the New Nation," in *Painting the Maple: Essays on Race, Gender, and the Construction of Canada*, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag, Sherrill Grace, Avigail Eisenberg, and Joan Anderson (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998): 132–33.
- 44 Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 115.
- 45 Strong-Boag, "Red Girl's Reasoning," 130; and Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson, Tekahionwake* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).
- 46 Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003): 174, n.6. Also see Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada," in *Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History*, eds. Ken S. Coates and Robin Fisher (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996); and Ralph E. Friar and Natasha A. Friar, *The Only Good Indian: The Hollywood Gospel* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1972).
- 47 Muriel Stanley Venne, "The 'S' Word: Reclaiming 'Esquao' for Aboriginal Women," in *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West through Women's History*, eds. Sarah Carter, Lesley Erickson, Patricia Roome, and Char Smith (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005): 125. Venne tackles the derogatory use of the word *squaw* and advocates that women reclaim *esquao*, a beautiful word that means "woman" in Cree.
- 48 Green, "Pocahontas Perplex."
- 49 Becky Ross and Kim Greenwell draw similar connections among performance, body, and the racialized other in "Spectacular Striptease: Performing the Sexual and Racial Other in Vancouver, B. C., 1945–1975," *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 1 (Spring): 137–64.
- 50 Evelyn Locker, e-mail message to author, 2 April 2009.
- 51 Various Stampede parade prize lists for the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, 1924–55, including 1954.
- 52 "Stampede Queen Contest Winners," *The Albertan*, 22 June 1954.
- 53 "Queen of the Calgary Stampede for 1954," *Calgary Herald*, 22 June 1954, 1.
- 54 "Indian Queen to Wear Native Costume Twice," *Calgary Herald*, 29 June 1954, 13.
- 55 Evelyn Locker, interview by the author, 2008.
- 56 Glenbow Archives, M433, box 15, file 117, Philip Godsell, "Report on Special Handicrafts; Parade and Teepee Judging," 21 July 1958.
- 57 Glenbow Archives, M433, box 7, file 71, Godsell, Indians Misc., 1948–59, letter from Philip H. Godsell to Mike Eagle Speaker, 5 January 1955.
- 58 Of course, it is important to remember that people who agreed with the decision were probably less likely to write to the newspaper.

- 59 "Princess Wapiti's Dress," *Calgary Herald*, 25 June 1954, editorial page.
- 60 Peter Geller, "'Hudson's Bay Company Indians': Images of Native People and the Red River Pageant, 1920," in *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of Indian in American Popular Culture*, ed. S. Elizabeth Bird (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 70.
- 61 "Stampede Queen's Costume Settled," *The Albertan*, 3 July 1954, 1.
- 62 "She Should Wear Her Native Dress," *Calgary Herald*, 25 June 1954, editorial page; "Not Part Way: Indian Dress All Week," *Calgary Herald*, 29 June 1954, editorial page.
- 63 Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," 87.
- 64 Ibid., 173; and Sara Salih, ed., *The Judith Butler Reader*, with Judith Butler (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003): 91. See also Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
- 65 William D. Dowell, letter to the editor, *Calgary Herald*, 29 June 1954.
- 66 Harry Hutchcroft, letter to the editor, *Calgary Herald*, 29 June 1954.
- 67 Gordon Robson, letter to the editor, *Calgary Herald*, 29 June 1954, quotation from *Hamlet*.
- 68 Susan Roy, "Performing Musqueam Culture and History at British Columbia's 1966 Centennial Celebrations," *BC Studies* 135, *Perspectives on Aboriginal Culture* (Autumn 2002): 60.
- 69 Philip Godsell, "The Queen's Dress," letter to the editor, *Calgary Herald*, 30 June 1954.
- 70 Evelyn Locker, e-mail message to author, 2 April 2009.
- 71 Roy, "Performing Musqueam Culture," 65.
- 72 DAR, letter to the editor, *Calgary Herald*, 29 June 1954; and Old Timer, letter to the editor, *Calgary Herald*, 29 June 1954.
- 73 William D. Dowell, letter to the editor, *Calgary Herald*, 29 June 1954.
- 74 "Enters Queen Contest," *The Albertan*, 17 April 1954; and Evelyn Locker, e-mail message to the author, 2 April 2009.
- 75 An editorial explained: "Evelyn Eagle Speaker is a native Indian. Her tribal dress is as symbolic of the history of this province, and the spirit of the West which the Stampede seeks to recapture as could be hoped for." "Not Part Way: Indian Dress All Week," *Calgary Herald*, 29 June 1954.
- 76 Godsell, "Queen's Dress."
- 77 Hutchcroft, letter to the editor.
- 78 "Stampede Queen's Costume Settled," *The Albertan*, 3 July 1954, 1.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 <http://www.friendsacrossamerica.com/homeonrange.html> and http://bussongs.com/songs/home_on_the_range.php, both based on John A. Lomax' 1910 version.

- 81 “1954’s Miss (Poor-little-mixed-up) Calgary Stampede,” editorial cartoon, *The Albertan*, 3 July, 1954.
- 82 Evelyn Locker, e-mail message to author, 2 April 2009.
- 83 “From One Indian to Another,” *The Albertan*, 7 July 1954, 16.
- 84 Evelyn Locker, e-mail message to author, 2 April 2009.



Part Three

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The Worker's West

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Capitalist Development, Forms of Labour, and Class Formation in Prairie Canada

JEFFERY TAYLOR

■ **The geographic and political area** that is now known as Prairie Canada had a complex experience of capitalist development and class formation between the initial contact of First Nations with European fur traders in the seventeenth century and the decline of agriculture's leading role in the regional economy in the second third of the twentieth century. Various forms of labour have been produced as part of merchant and industrial capitalist organization of production and exchange in the fur trade, agriculture, resource extraction, manufacturing, and other sectors of the economy. This capitalist development took place in an environment in which pre-existing non-capitalist societies occupied the land and resources that Europeans sought to exploit.

This chapter makes the case for a long transition to capitalism from the mid-seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. It explores the forms of labour and producing classes that were generated during this period. The first section establishes the theoretical context, briefly defining some key concepts in historical materialism. The second section sketches the broader historical context, explaining the main features of the transition from feudalism

to capitalism in Europe. Attention then turns to Prairie Canada. The three sections that follow summarize relevant developments in the region between 1670 and 1811, 1812 and 1885, and 1886 and 1940.

Theoretical context

THE ANALYSIS THAT FOLLOWS is historical materialist, which is a critical realist epistemological position. For critical realists, the material world exists independent of human thought and activity, but human thought and activity arises from the material world.¹ Historical materialists, in turn, argue that the relationship among labour, knowledge, and nature creates the material conditions for human existence. This relationship is a feature of all societies. For most of recorded human history, according to historical materialists, this relationship has been organized in societies in which a minority of people is supported by the labour of the majority in exploitative relationships. A variety of such societies have existed over time and a number of categories have been developed by historical materialists to analyze their creation, growth, and transformation. These include modes and relations of production, productive forces, class, and base and superstructure.²

Hence, in order to understand the nature of class formation and social development in Prairie Canada during this period, it is first necessary to identify the modes and relations of production that have existed here or have influenced development over time. “Mode of production” means the combination of productive forces (labour transforming nature) and social relations characteristic of an epoch. “Relations of production,” meanwhile, refers to the specific social relations characteristic of a mode of production. An exploitative mode of production is one in which some members of society are forced, through various coercive and ideological methods, to generate a surplus through their labour, beyond what is necessary for their subsistence, to sustain other members of society. This process results in class formation and class-based relations of production, whereby a class of producers sustains a class of non-producers. Class, therefore, is a relational concept: there are at least two classes—producers and non-producers—in exploitative modes of production, and they are inextricably linked. The domination of producers by non-producers in this relational process creates conflict and struggle between these classes as producers resist the efforts of non-producers to extract labour from them.³

In order for human beings to engage in labour in both non-exploitative (classless) and exploitative (class-based) modes of production, their labour power must be reproduced on a daily and generational basis so that it is available to engage in the production of subsistence (in classless societies) or subsistence

and surplus for extraction (in class-based societies). Domestic labour (food preparation, child care, etc.) is expended to produce labour power, and domestic relations (the relations of labour power's production) are characteristically constituted in some variation of a family or kin-based household unit.

Historically, women in class-based societies and most classless societies have performed domestic labour. A limited sexual division of labour arises from the biological fact that pregnancy and lactation result in a period of reduced work capacity for a childbearing woman during which she is unable to supply her own means of subsistence. But there is no biological rationale for this limited sexual division of labour to extend beyond the period of pregnancy and lactation. In class-based societies, however, whether women are directly engaged in surplus production or solely involved in producing subsistence, childbearing interferes with the extraction of surplus product by the dominant class. But over the long term, childbearing is a systematic requirement if the labour force is to be replaced through generational reproduction. Hence, a contradiction exists that needs to be resolved if the optimum amount of surplus product is to be extracted from the producing class.

This resolution, which entails minimizing the amount of subsistence product granted to producers while ensuring that ongoing reproduction occurs, takes place in the family. Through a variable process of class struggle and negotiation, the dominant class grants more subsistence product to men than is necessary for their own reproduction, thereby creating the material basis for extended female dependency. In turn, with a certain degree of sexual struggle, women are increasingly given the major or sole responsibility for all facets of domestic labour, while men take the major or sole responsibility for providing the means of subsistence through participation in surplus production.⁴

Modes and relations of production create structures and ideologies that both legitimate and challenge their reproduction. Historical materialists use the metaphor of base and superstructure to describe this phenomenon. The "base" contains the modes and relations of production and reproduction, with their attendant features, and the "superstructure" contains the various structures that sustain the modes of production (state and other institutions). The superstructure generates coercive structures and legitimating ideologies to sustain exploitative relations of production. In turn, ideologies and structures of resistance develop to give form to critiques of the class and sexual exploitation that are features of exploitative modes of production. These ideologies and structures then intersect with each other, with other ideologies, and within and between the base and the superstructure to create the subjective identities of actors in modes of production. In the capitalist mode of production, for example, dominant ideologies cast the existence and form of its social relations as

natural and normal. Ideologies of resistance, meanwhile, question and criticize these relations with various degrees of intensity at different stages of capitalist development and generate vehicles (trade unions, for example) to channel these critiques and mobilize resistance. Dominant structures and ideologies, in turn, respond to these critiques and mobilizations with their legitimating ideologies and coercive forces.⁵

Modes of production, relations of production, class, productive forces, reproduction, gender, base, superstructure, and ideology are abstract concepts that allow us to dissect the logic of productive activity in particular epochs. They never exist in a pure or undiluted form in history, however. A particular social formation (the mix of political, economic, social, and other structures and ideologies in a particular time and place) may contain elements of various social classes, relations of production, and modes of production. Furthermore, other social forces and ideologies at play in specific formations are not directly related to material production and reproduction, but nevertheless determine historical development to some degree. Racial ideologies, for example, have been used to create hierarchies of race across exploitative modes of production. They are central to slavery, for example. They have also been a feature of global capitalist development and expansion—in part because of the legacy of slavery in certain parts of the world—affecting such things as class formation and stratification, human spatial organization, and gender relations. Any social formation, then, may be a complex mix of modes and relations of production and reproduction articulated to each other in various ways, ideologies of domination and resistance generated by these material forces, and other ideologies that develop their own social power and material force, including the creation of institutions and structures to influence historical events. For the historical materialist, though, material production and reproduction are the chief determinants of historical development.⁶

Historical context

PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF EUROPEANS, the inhabitants of the Americas were organized in both class-based and classless societies. The Inca, Aztec, and Maya empires that existed in South and Central America prior to European contact were variants of the class-based tributary mode of production, which they shared with ancient civilizations in the Old World, such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China. In this mode of production, a state bureaucracy extracted a surplus from its subjects through tax. The inhabitants of Prairie Canada, in contrast, were part of a kin-ordered mode of production in which access to the means of production was controlled through kinship, and power and politics

were organized in terms of kinship. While surplus labour was created in the kin-ordered mode, it was not expropriated systematically by force from one group for use by another. Rather, it was used for the general well-being of the clan or group, according to kinship traditions. Therefore, classes did not form in the way they did in other modes of production.⁷

Europeans introduced the forms and relations of production of class-based and exploitative modes of production to Prairie Canada. At the time of initial contact, European societies were undergoing a transition from feudalism to capitalism. Both of these modes of production were class-based and exploitative. In each case, one primary dominant class materially exploited another primary subordinate class, and these class relations of exploitation and domination determined, to varying degrees, other aspects of human activity in the societies in which they operated. The principal feature of feudalism was that land-owning aristocrats dominated the rest of society. This land-owning class exploited peasants by extracting the surplus, through labour or rent-in-kind or money, beyond what was necessary for the latter to maintain their subsistence. Capitalism, meanwhile, is a system of production and exchange for the market in which the principal classes are capital-owning entrepreneurs and property-less wage earners. Capitalists extract surplus value from wage earners directly through the process of capitalist production (industrial capital) and indirectly through unequal exchange (merchant and finance capital).

Capitalism was born in European feudalism, eventually generating the social forces that would make capitalism dominant in Europe and the rest of the world. Two developments within feudalism laid the basis for capitalist development. First, the handicraft households that were a feature of feudalism, producing goods for lords and monasteries, began in the Middle Ages to sell their goods to other social groups clustered around sites of power and, more importantly, to peasants. Peasants had the financial or in-kind resources to purchase goods as a result of their ability, through resistance, to retain more of their surplus labour. As a result, there slowly emerged a nascent class of simple commodity producers (households producing for a market), separate from lord and peasant but with material relations to them both. Second, merchants were a feature of medieval European societies, generating significant wealth for themselves through the purchase, transportation, and sale of goods within Europe and between Europe and other parts of the world. For most of the feudal period, however, this wealth remained in the sphere of circulation and was not applied either to agricultural or handicraft production.

By the early seventeenth century, however, merchants were beginning to invest their capital in industrial production, and simple commodity producers were generating sufficient surpluses to transform their production processes by em-

ploying wage labour. Similarly, agriculture was transformed as the two classes of feudal production—lord and peasant—gave way to three classes: landowner, capitalist farmer, agricultural labourer. By the late eighteenth century, it was possible to describe England, the first capitalist society, as being fully capitalist in the sense that the dominant mode and relations of production were capitalist.⁸

The history of Prairie Canada developed on the periphery of this transition. The region's social organization, its relations of production and exchange, and its class structure have been determined by the developing capitalist economies—nourished in feudalism—to which it has been linked. The region underwent its own transition to capitalism, beginning in the seventeenth century and extending into the twentieth century. It was different than the transition in Europe, however. First, there was at least one other mode of production in the mix: the kin-ordered mode of First Nations societies. While there was no feudalism in this part of the world, the organization of production and exchange and the forms of labour that were part of the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe—and intersecting with a pre-existing kin-ordered mode of production—shaped capitalist development and class formation in complex ways. Second, from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, this region has been an economic and mostly political colony of other states and regions. This has determined the nature of economic development and class formation.

There are three stages in this transition. The first is the period from 1670 to 1810. The year 1670 marks the arrival of Europeans and the introduction of a class-based mode of production, and 1810 roughly marks the establishment of the Selkirk Settlement and the permanent settlement at Red River. Between these dates, merchant capitalism established its presence in the region through the fur trade, and First Nations established relations with it. While there was some working-class formation and simple-commodity production in this period, it was clearly subordinate to merchant capitalist activity and was less important than kin-ordered production. The second stage lasted from 1811 to 1885. In this period, industrial capitalism became dominant in the United Kingdom and was firmly established in Central Canada and the eastern United States. In Prairie Canada, kin-ordered production was subordinated to merchant and industrial capital, while simple-commodity production and wage labour expanded. In the final stage, from 1885 to 1940, industrial capitalism and simple-commodity production expanded in tandem with the expansion of the wheat economy, until the crisis of the 1930s resulted in the decline of simple-commodity production. Kin-ordered production survived in this period but existed on the periphery of the dominant capitalist economy with some limited connections to it.

1670 to 1810

AT THE TIME OF EUROPEAN CONTACT, Prairie Canada was inhabited by First Nations peoples who, depending on their location and cultural tradition, followed a relatively sedentary life based on hunting/fishing and agriculture, or a nomadic existence focused primarily on hunting (fowl, bison, caribou, moose, other game) and fishing. These peoples were, from roughly east and south to west and north, Ojibwa, Cree, Assiniboine, Blackfoot, and Chipewyan. These societies were organized around kin networks with a sexual division of labour in which women performed primarily domestic tasks, which could extend to agricultural work, and men engaged in the hunt, warfare, and political leadership. Different groups might inhabit the same territory at different times of the year, depending on their resource needs. Trade was an important part of these societies, with exchanges within and between bands. These exchanges were roughly equal and did not involve the organized subordination of one group of people to the other and the consequent development of social classes. Any surplus that was generated beyond what was required for kin or group subsistence was collectively owned. Furthermore, councils consisting of the male heads of households normally made political and diplomatic decisions, and leaders were chosen from among these men, based on heredity and ability.⁹

The Europeans who arrived in Prairie Canada in the seventeenth century were merchant capitalists seeking furs to transport and sell in Europe. They made their profits in the act of exchange, purchasing the furs as cheaply as possible and selling them in markets as dearly as possible. Although they employed some labour directly for tasks in support of the trade, they mainly exploited labour indirectly through unequal trade relations.¹⁰

There were two main groups of fur traders during this period. Merchants in New France and Lower Canada expanded westward through the St. Lawrence, Great Lakes, and connecting river systems from the mid-seventeenth century to eventually establish a transcontinental trade by the late eighteenth century. The St. Lawrence trade was based on small-scale merchant activity in which individual entrepreneurs pooled capital, assembled goods and labour, and hired traders to lead expeditions into Prairie Canada. When the traders returned with their cargo, the merchants sold the furs into European markets. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), meanwhile, was the creation of London investors and had a monopoly, established by royal charter in 1670, to conduct trading activities in the area draining into Hudson's Bay. The period from 1670 to 1821 was marked by competition between these two groups. The St. Lawrence traders were generally more aggressive, extracting and selling more furs during this period. The HBC traders, meanwhile, were relatively more conser-

vative, being content to enjoy a steady profit. At first they stayed close to the bay, expecting First Nations traders to come to them, but eventually they ventured inland in the face of competition.¹¹

In order to exploit the furs of Prairie Canada, fur trade companies had to forge trade alliances with First Nations peoples. As a result, the class-based merchant capitalist system, based on exploitation, accumulation, and commodity exchange, came into contact with a non-class system based on kinship and subsistence production for use. The European fur traders were reliant on First Nations peoples for the provision of furs and were not in a position to subordinate them and their labour to their will. They recognized that they had to make connections with kinship systems and that they had to make available for trade commodities that would be attractive and novel to First Nations peoples. Kin connections were with men or women, depending on what alliances were necessary to promote trade. Manufactured domestic goods; guns, knives and traps; and alcohol were offered for trade. In the absence of a monetary system, the “Indian tariff” was established as a rate of unequal exchange to allow a healthy surplus for the traders. Some First Nations peoples—primarily Ojibwas, Crees, and Assiniboines—were the primary traders with Europeans, while others provided the furs to these intermediaries.

During this period, then, the economies and cultures of those First Nations peoples who had direct and indirect contact with Europeans through the fur trade were transformed to varying degrees. These First Nations peoples developed a degree of dependence on the commodities offered in trade by the Europeans. Alcohol, in particular, altered the traditional societies. While First Nations labour was not subordinated in a fully capitalist sense, it did grow increasingly dependent on merchant capital for at least part of its reproduction. As well, gender relations in these societies were altered by the fur trader practice of favouring trade alliances with men, regardless of the cultural traditions of their trading partners. But fur traders also found it advantageous to take Indian wives to aid their transactions and to facilitate their survival in this new environment. In this way, the kin-ordered mode of production co-existed with the developing capitalist mode of production throughout this period. The developing capitalist mode was dominant in the sense that it established the terms of trade and commodity circulation while serving to dissolve aspects of the kin-ordered mode with which it came in contact. But it never succeeded in completely subordinating it. Indeed, significant numbers of First Nations peoples in the region had little or no contact with the European trading system and continued to follow the traditional ways unaltered.¹²

Both the HBC and St. Lawrence traders purchased skilled and unskilled labour to conduct their commercial activities. HBC traders relied on men from

the Orkney Islands of Scotland to provide this wage labour for the first century of its activity in Prairie Canada. Skilled English workers supplemented this supply in the late eighteenth century. The St. Lawrence traders, meanwhile, drew upon French Canadian men from parishes along the St. Lawrence. The standard labour contract in this period was a form of indentured servitude in which workers agreed to provide labour to their masters for a fixed period of time, often five years. The relations of production were also characterized by a culture of paternalism, in which the workers generally accepted their subordinate position and agreed to obey their masters in return for board and wages. Within this social context, however, workers did express their frustrations from time to time. These were mostly individual and isolated cases of resistance, but increasingly in the late eighteenth century, there were collective, although still isolated, forms of protest. This development of a limited collective resistance corresponded with the erosion of the paternalist system. The HBC, in particular, encountered new challenges as it was faced with sourcing workers from the United Kingdom where working-class ideologies of resistance and collective organization were developing.¹³

The late eighteenth century also witnessed the beginnings of some working-class and simple-commodity-producer formation as a result of the articulation of the kin-ordered and capitalist modes of production. Although traders resisted using First Nations peoples for wage labour, some proletarianization did occur, especially among the Homeguard Cree who congregated near fur trade posts. More importantly, though, the Métis (used here to refer to both English and French mixed-bloods) formed the beginnings of an Indigenous working class and a class of simple-commodity producers in this period.

The Métis emerged as a result of the alliances formed between First Nations women and young men employed in the fur trade. In the case of the St. Lawrence trade, young French men who had formed such alliances moved inland from the late seventeenth century to replace First Nations brokers. They established settlements around the Great Lakes that were distinct from First Nations settlements. Following the English conquest of 1763, they began moving further west as far as the settlement of Red River in Prairie Canada. In the case of the HBC, distinct Métis communities developed after the company moved inland after 1790. In both cases, the Métis played a brokering role in the fur trade between First Nations traders/suppliers and company merchants. This economic activity laid the basis for the development of simple-commodity production in the nineteenth century. The Métis also sold their labour directly, working as voyageurs and related occupations in the transportation of furs and supplies.¹⁴

Labour power was reproduced in this period within a gendered division of labour. In the kin-ordered mode, women performed most of the domestic tasks,

including child care and food preparation, in heterosexual households containing women, men, and children. For women in those kin-ordered communities that traded directly or indirectly with Europeans, the nature of domestic work was changed with the introduction of metal kettles, utensils, and the like. Those men who sold their labour power to the fur trade companies, meanwhile, were normally part of households in the region from which they were recruited for their bonded service. While working for the companies, however, they were responsible for the reproduction of their own labour power beyond what was provided by the companies as part of their employment contract. This led some of them to take First Nations domestic partners who provided them with the kind of domestic labour required to survive (production of clothing and preparation of food appropriate to the region, for example) as well as with companionship.¹⁵

1811 to 1885

THE ARRIVAL OF SELKIRK SETTLERS IN 1811 marked the beginnings of the Red River colony and the first permanent European agricultural settlement in Prairie Canada. The colony, and the economic activity it fostered and sustained, also provided a crucible for the development of Métis society and identity. The 1885 insurrection—in which Métis, First Nations, and some white settlers briefly joined forces to resist the form that capitalist development was taking in Prairie Canada in the late nineteenth century—signalled the end of a period in which Métis and First Nations had a direct role to play in the political economy of the region. Between these two dates, the St. Lawrence and HBC trades became one, class relations became more complex with the expansion of simple-commodity production and wage labour at Red River, the Métis emerged as a social force, and the region became a Canadian hinterland with a formal transfer of ownership of the territory, related policy initiatives, and the expansion of white settlement.

The fur trade continued to define the economy of Prairie Canada and its class formation until mid-century. Competition between the St. Lawrence traders (North-West Company, or NWC) and the HBC intensified in the first two decades of the nineteenth century and was exacerbated by the establishment of the Red River colony. Merger occurred in 1821, ending the competition that had escalated to war, and ensured that the HBC monopoly would continue in the region for the foreseeable future. The growth of a Métis economy, centred on Red River and becoming less reliant on the HBC, challenged and eventually broke the monopoly in the 1840s. This economy—based on the buffalo hunt, the fur trade, and independent commercial activity—intersected with hardening attitudes toward racial, gender, and class position in the nineteenth century to create a Métis nation of workers, simple-commodity producers, traders,

and those who still followed the kin-ordered subsistence strategies of survival. While the fur trade continued to play an important role in Prairie Canada's north after 1850, the plains and parkland were becoming drawn more closely into Canada's plan for agricultural settlement in the region as part of a new confederated country. The Red River resistance of 1869–1870 was fuelled by the sense of Métis identity that had developed over the previous fifty years and marked both a reasoned attempt to negotiate the terms of the region's entry into Confederation and an effort to defend a way of life based on the fur trade and the buffalo hunt. The insurrection of 1885 was, in part, a continuation of this Métis resistance, but with the participation of some plains Cree protesting the terms of their marginalization to the new order and white settlers rejecting the nature of their incorporation in that order.¹⁶

During the nineteenth century, the articulation of the kin-ordered mode to the capitalist mode of production changed as a result of transformations in the fur trade and eventually was mostly ruptured with the marginalization of First Nations communities as agricultural settlement advanced. The westward expansion of the St. Lawrence trade after 1760 and the consequent HBC move inland had the effect of diminishing the role of Cree and Assiniboine traders as fur brokers. At the same time, the demand for provisions at inland posts expanded. As a result, these former middlemen shifted to supplying the inland trading system with food, which was increasingly buffalo-based pemmican. Their economic activity shifted to the buffalo hunt and ensured a degree of autonomy in the trade into the nineteenth century.

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, however, a number of factors combined to undermine the Native role in the trade. First, the Métis community at Red River began to displace the First Nations role as pemmican supplier to the trade, and the American buffalo robe trade joined the fur trade in contributing to the eventual exhaustion of the plains buffalo as a natural resource. Furthermore, disease—notably the smallpox epidemic of 1837–38—and alcohol took their toll on the First Nations population. This set the stage for the marginalization of the kin-ordered mode after 1850. The increasing scarcity of buffalo created tensions among Native groups and between First Nations and the Métis. More importantly, though, the sale of Rupert's Land to Canada as part of Canadian settlement plans meant that there was no longer an important economic role for the kin-ordered mode in partnership or articulation with capitalism. This change was compounded by ideologies of race, which cast First Nations and Métis as inferior to whites. The kin-ordered mode, and the people who followed it, had to be marginalized.¹⁷

With the establishment of the Red River colony in the early nineteenth century, the conditions were created for the development and growth of sim-

ple-commodity production in the region. In the early years of the colony, the Métis inhabitants provided food and related products to the HBC, thereby participating in limited market transactions. They remained primarily subsistence producers, however, in a peasant-like economy. With the emergence of other trading opportunities from the 1830s, however—notably the buffalo robe trade—and the breaking of the HBC monopoly in the 1840s, many Métis households in Red River made the transition from subsistence to simple-commodity production in which production, while still household based, was primarily for the market. This trade prospered until the 1860s. The decline of the trade in the face of the exhaustion of the buffalo supply meant a Métis retreat from simple-commodity production, as they did not, for the most part, make the transition to commercial agricultural production. With the growth of agricultural settlement after 1870, however, simple-commodity production began to develop in that sector, but it would not become a significant force until after the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁸

In the broader world economy to which Prairie Canada was connected in the nineteenth century, mature capitalist relations of production were developing in Europe and eastern North America with the emergence of an industrial working class. While similar class formation in the Prairie region would be delayed until later, this period did experience the further development of wage labour, including among First Nations and Métis. The fur trade continued to create a direct demand for labour in the form of skilled and unskilled workers at the posts and for transportation. This labour continued to be bonded labour, employed on fixed contracts of normally five years. While this was mostly a passive workforce that did not, like most pre-industrial workers, develop ideologies of resistance and critique, there were numerous incidents in the period of various forms of individual and collective resistance. Red River became an important source of labour during this period, supplying about 50 percent of the employees for the HBC's Northern Department by 1850. Inhabitants of the colony also sold their labour to employers other than the HBC, especially those involved in the buffalo robe trade and related activities. With the expansion of settlement after 1870 and the growth of towns, notably Winnipeg, the working-class characteristic of early industrial capitalism began to take shape in the form of craftworkers employed in skilled trades and unskilled workers selling their labour in a free market.¹⁹

Gender relations and the sexual division of labour became more entrenched in the nineteenth century, while the nature of domestic labour changed for some women with the further expansion of capitalist and simple-commodity production. Women in kin-ordered communities continued to follow traditional patterns, supplemented by European trade goods. By the end

of the period, some were retreating to a more subsistence existence with the exhaustion of the trade and the buffalo hunt in most of the region. The establishment of a permanent settlement at Red River resulted in working-class and simple-commodity-production household formation. In the latter, women engaged in some aspects of goods production in the household, especially in the buffalo robe trade. All women were affected by the hardening of domestic roles in the period. More European women arrived in the region, accompanied by bourgeois notions of domesticity that, among other things, intersected with hardening racial ideologies to construct a hierarchy among women in families that served to subordinate traditional First Nations and Métis family forms to a dominant European/Canadian one.²⁰

1885 to 1940

THE DEFEAT OF THE NORTHWEST REBELLION symbolized the marginalization of kin-ordered production as a significant partner in the capitalist economy. While connections between kin-ordered societies continued on the periphery of capitalism, the land and resources that provided the material foundation for these societies were made available for agricultural and resource exploitation as Prairie Canada was brought within the sphere of Central Canadian capitalist development. This period was characterized by the expansion of the wheat economy, the infrastructure to support this economy, and related and separate resource extraction. The main producing classes in this period were simple-commodity producers and workers. Simple-commodity producers dominated in agriculture, while wage workers provided the labour power for infrastructure projects, the light manufacturing that existed in the region, services, and resource extraction.

Two main forces intersected in the late nineteenth century to provide the basis for the incorporation of Prairie Canada into the Canadian political economy and to determine the nature of class formation there. First, Central Canada experienced its first industrial revolution in the four decades after 1850. A home market emerged for producer and consumer goods, and both master artisans and former merchant capitalists expanded into factory-based industrial production. This gave rise to a nascent industrial working class. Production was increasingly centralized in this period in lead sectors of the economy, but control of the pace and rhythm of work remained with the workers through their retention of artisanal methods. Second, a world market in wheat emerged, and the geographic frontiers of global wheat production expanded. As part of this expansion, simple-commodity producers displaced capitalist and peasant enterprises as the primary form of wheat production in all regions of the world market. The

Canadian state, under pressure from various capitalist and non-capitalist groups, undertook its westward expansionist policy, including the purchase of Rupert's Land, railway building, treaty making, settlement, and protective tariffs.²¹

In the forty years after 1890, Canada underwent its second industrial revolution, based on wheat production, new chemical and electrical processes, and mining for minerals associated with the new processes. New industries employing these new processes, largely controlled by American branch plants, grew rapidly in this period. These firms, joined by new Canadian corporations formed by indigenous mergers in areas such as agricultural implements and steel, controlled the Canadian economy in the early twentieth century. Those corporations that succeeded in the merger movement in both countries did so by cutting costs through internal economies. This involved, among other things, the development of managerial structures to control and coordinate factor markets, output markets, and the production process. Labour was the most significant production factor to control. The new technologies that formed part of the second industrial revolution embodied human skills in machines, and professional engineers became the new controllers of the production process. New managerial strategies were devised to appropriate shop-floor knowledge from workers, to intensify work effort, and to speed up production.²²

The Prairie economy developed in the context of this broader capitalist development and was anchored by wheat production. The wheat economy was not firmly established until the early twentieth century and hence developed in tandem with the second industrial revolution. Although potential farmers were available for migration to the region in the late nineteenth century by the displacement caused by global transformations in agriculture, Canada had to await the exhaustion of cheap American land in that period before agricultural immigrants began flowing northward. With this provision of labour, a grain trade evolved to set the price farmers received for their commodities. The trade centred on the Winnipeg Grain Exchange and involved an elaborate marketing structure presided over by capitalist, co-operative, and state intermediaries that extended from local elevators to terminals at the Lakehead and beyond. Farmers purchased their production inputs and items of personal consumption in an increasingly corporate-organized industrial structure protected by tariff barriers. After the initial homestead and pre-emption period, they faced a fully capitalist market in land.²³

A railway network was established across Prairie Canada to service the agricultural economy and to exploit other resources not directly connected to the production of wheat and related commodities. Branch lines were built to connect to the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway after its completion in the 1880s. This was joined by further main and branch line construction by

other companies after the turn of the twentieth century. Urban centres and rural towns accompanied the development of this transportation infrastructure. Winnipeg was the largest in this period, serving as a centre for the grain trade, a regional railway hub, the main wholesale centre for the distribution of goods on the Prairies, and the site of light manufacturing related to agriculture, construction, and garments in particular. Calgary, meanwhile, boasting the second-largest urban economy in the region during this time, served the regional cattle industry and the emerging petroleum industry. Non-agricultural resources industries were a feature of the Prairie economy as well in the early twentieth century. Coal was the most important, providing the fuel for the railways, most prairie homes, and other uses. The Drumheller valley and the Crowsnest Pass in Alberta, and the Estevan region in Saskatchewan were the most important. Non-coal deposits were discovered and mined in other regions, notably in northern Manitoba, and this region was part of a developing hydroelectric industry in the period.²⁴

The Prairie working class that formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ranged from skilled workers in areas such as the railways, mines, and the construction trades through unskilled workers in resource industries, including agriculture. This class was male and female, was composed of a variety of ethnic groups, experienced variable degrees of subordination to capital, and accepted or resisted this subordination in different ways. Skilled workers were the most stable and well paid of the working class. This was a male, Anglo-Saxon bastion that was proud of its craft traditions. The control over the labour process that these workers had enjoyed in the metal trades and mining was being seriously eroded in this period due to employer offensives designed to cut costs and increase profits. Unskilled workers were found in all parts of the Prairie economy. They were most prominent in the urban and rural construction projects, especially the navvies, who provided most of the labour for railway construction. These workers were primarily male and were a mix of a variety of ethnic groups. Unskilled and semi-skilled workers could also be found toiling in the mines and in the various manufacturing and service industries in urban and rural centres. Women workers were a minority of the working class working directly for wages in this period, but could be found in garment, service, and some other industries. Wage workers were also a minority feature of the agricultural economy, either working as isolated "hired men," in itinerant harvest crews, or as domestic servants. Some First Nations and Métis people participated in wage labour in the period, notably in agriculture and northern resources, but, for the most part, those who did sell their labour power retained a direct connection to the subsistence economy for part of the year.²⁵

The Prairie working class developed an acute sense of its social position in the early twentieth century and expressed that sense in confrontations with em-

ployers. The most noteworthy were the metal trades and construction strikes in Winnipeg immediately after World War I and the general sympathetic strike that shut down the city in 1919. Workers in other centres in the region and across the country staged walkouts in solidarity with their sisters and brothers in Winnipeg. Workers in resource industries, notably mining, and on the railway construction projects were also known for their militancy throughout the period. Prairie workers developed a number of ideologies to express and formulate their resistance. These ranged from the labourism of some skilled workers, promoting moderate reform, to the syndicalism of some miners and navvies demanding the destruction of capitalism. While the former was an exclusivist doctrine, pitched primarily to male and Anglo-Saxon craftsmen, the latter, at least in theory and rhetoric, treated all workers equally, regardless of gender, race, and ethnicity.²⁶

While capitalist relations of production developed in the non-agricultural sectors of the economy, simple-commodity production persisted and expanded in agriculture. There were attempts to establish capitalist agriculture on the two-class (employer-worker) model on the “bonanza farms” of the late nineteenth century, but these failed because of the difficulty of maintaining sufficient control of the labour process to ensure the steady extraction of surplus value. As a result, the wheat economy was dominated by household production in which waged workers were occasionally employed, but the bulk of the labour was supplied by members of the household. Farm households were formed as a result of immigration from a variety of sources. Rural Ontario, the Midwest and other agricultural regions of the United States, and a variety of northern European countries were the sources for most farm settlement. The simple-commodity production that evolved ranged from larger and more capitalized operations among some of the settlers from Ontario and the United States, where nearly as much wage labour as household labour was used, to smaller and more marginal farms among some immigrant groups, where subsistence strategies more akin to peasant production supplemented market-oriented production and consumption. In addition, some First Nations and Métis peoples engaged in commercial agriculture, but often this was supplemented by subsistence hunting and trapping.²⁷

Farmers, like workers, developed ideologies and movements to make sense of and challenge their place in Prairie and Canadian society. Unlike workers, who were dispossessed of their means of subsistence and had no choice but to sell their labour power in order to subsist, farmers had access to land and could theoretically provide some or all of their subsistence. However, virtually all Prairie farmers were integrated into the capitalist market through the purchase of inputs and the sale of commodities to such a degree that they were

effectively subordinated to an agro-industrial capital composed of grain companies, financial institutions, railways, retail suppliers, and the like. The ideologies generated as part of the Prairie farm movement ranged from the left Liberalism of a W.R. Motherwell through the radical democracy associated with the Alberta movement, to the socialism and communism favoured by mostly immigrant farmers tilling the more marginal farmland in the central and northern parts of Prairie Canada. In some cases, farmers co-operated with workers who shared similar ideologies of resistance to forge common understandings, but these were uneasy alliances for the most part.²⁸

Canadian expansion westward and the establishment of a wheat economy were based on the dispossession of First Nations lands. Whereas earlier capitalist development had involved an articulation of capitalism with kin-ordered societies, industrial capitalism and the extension of simple-commodity production required the disarticulation and marginalization of the kin-ordered mode of production. The Canadian state was a central part of this process through treaty making between 1870 and 1908 to move First Nations people on to reserves, the passage and enforcement of the *Indian Act* (1876, 1880) to supervise all aspects of First Nations life, the establishment of residential schools to be run primarily by religious organizations to assimilate First Nations peoples to the dominant culture of Canadian capitalist society, and related initiatives, including the attempted inculcation of subsistence agricultural skills. In the northern regions of Prairie Canada, where the fur trade persisted, the articulation of the kin-ordered and capitalist modes of production continued to some degree. The ideologies of domination that were deployed as part of this assault against the kin-ordered mode and the First Nations people who lived it combined traditional appeals to capitalist values with a racism that defined First Nations peoples and their way of life as inferior. In turn, First Nations and Métis peoples began developing their own post-1885 ideologies and practices of resistance. Most of this was passive in this period, such as the continued practice of the Sun Dance and other traditional ceremonies in defiance of Indian agents. But First Nations and Métis peoples were also starting to organize politically toward the end of this period, combining traditional negotiating skills with practices learned from organizations of resistance in the broader society.²⁹

The reproduction of labour power and the sexual division of labour were affected to limited and varying degrees in working-class, farm, and kin-ordered/subsistence households in this period. For the working class in the late nineteenth century, the removal of much goods production from the household during early industrialization intensified the sexual division of labour by confining women more strictly to the home. Some domestic processes were removed to factories, but women continued to produce many goods and services for

the home. During the second industrial revolution, the domestic labour process was transformed. Mass production and mass distribution brought many new products and services to many working-class homes. For farm households, meanwhile, the shifts in mass production and consumption that were part of the second industrial revolution had uneven effects as a result of geography and variable rates of incorporation into the market. Prairie farm women did not experience many of these changes until after World War I, and even then the changes were limited mostly to those areas affecting geographic space, such as transportation and communications, rather than in the areas of housework and child care. In kin-ordered households, by comparison, patterns of domestic labour continued much as they had in the past, with those households that had contact with capitalist markets making limited use of domestic commodities.³⁰

Conclusion

BY WORLD WAR II, Prairie Canada was fully capitalist in the sense that the dominant form and relations of production were capitalist. While simple-commodity production persisted—and continues to persist—in agriculture, its proportion of the population and the economy decreased dramatically as a result of the dislocations of the Great Depression and the increased mechanization that began in the 1920s and accelerated during the years of World War II and beyond. As has been argued here, however, this was a long and complex process.

A form of capitalism arrived in the region in the seventeenth century with the first European traders, though European society was in the early stages of its own transition to capitalism in this period. The earliest social formation that emerged from the contact between Europeans and First Nations peoples was an articulation of merchant capitalism with kin-ordered groups in which kin-ordered labour entered the circuits of capital through exchange but was not subordinated to it. There was some direct subordination of labour in this period, taking the form of indentured labour primarily from New France and Scotland. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, simple-commodity production emerged, notably among the Métis of Red River, who occupied a strategic role in the fur trade economy until the mid-1800s. The latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century witnessed the development of fully capitalist relations of production and the creation of a modern working class in the region. It also saw the simultaneous expansion of simple-commodity production in agriculture. While kin-ordered production was marginalized with the growth and expansion of the wheat economy, it nonetheless continued to exist on the geographic and economic margins of the region.

While the economy and society of Prairie Canada today is capitalist by any measure, the legacy of this long and complex transition is still with us. The populist politics and culture of the region, for example, is a direct result of the important role that simple-commodity production played in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the articulation, disarticulation, and marginalization of the kin-ordered mode over the course of this long transition continues to affect the lives of First Nations and Métis peoples, and their relations with other groups in the region. One of major challenges facing Prairie Canada in the twenty-first century is how these relations, including the expansion of capitalist forms of production to First Nations communities, will evolve. *

Notes

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Two Wests, One-and-a-Half Paradigms, and, Perhaps, Beyond¹

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■ **"Two Wests, one-and-a-half paradigms"** is a variation on *One West, Two Myths*, one of the growing number of histories that explore what has linked and separated the Canadian and U.S. Wests.² The intent here is to explore class and labour across the 49th parallel, which requires entering a longer historical conversation about class and region that until now has been largely contained within two separate national histories. American and Canadian historians crafted two Wests with different meanings for each nation. At times, the U.S. emphasis on frontiers denied Western class differences and working-class radicalism. Partly because the Central Canadian metropole exercised greater influence than the Western frontier in Canadian histories, the representation of Western labour was somewhat different. From mostly nationalist perspectives, but sometimes using continental frameworks that followed workers across the 49th parallel, Canadian and U.S. labo(u)r historians wrote separate but sometimes connected accounts of Western labour, sometimes crossing the borders that national histories erected. Hence, two Wests, one-and-a-half paradigms.

In both countries, the past generation of social, ethnic, women's, and working-class histories challenged these paradigms, and labour historians have been more open to transnational approaches than many Western historians, especially historians of the U.S. West. Here I summarize what connected and divided older histories of class and region, and some strategies suggested by recent working-class histories that might cross the boundaries of national histories.

Like most historians, I was trained in a national history; this essay will surely demonstrate the limits of that approach. I strive, as an American historian, to compare U.S. and Canadian histories. Still, my focus is inevitably skewed south of the 49th parallel. My questions about how to bridge the border flowed from American origins, particularly from the tensions between Western and working-class histories in the United States.

National, state, and provincial policies helped construct class formations in the North American West. But for all the importance of state power and national identities, their frameworks distort Western workers' histories. If we focus on a nation or the West as the subjects of history, we cannot follow the workforces, industries, economies, and ecologies that cross national and regional boundaries. Transnational and comparative approaches are more unsettling for histories of the West than for histories of class. It is less disruptive to national and regional narratives to imagine workers crossing borders than to imagine transnational regions or histories.

Mainstream Western labour histories begin with national development and organized labour. The national "creation stories" authored most famously by Frederick Jackson Turner in the United States and Harold Adams Innis in Canada emphasize Western resource industries.³ The formative labour histories in both countries were written by economists allied with reformist labour unions and progressive politics: John R. Commons and the Wisconsin school of labour history in the United States and Canadian historians such as Frank Underhill, Eugene Forsey, Stuart Jamieson, and Kenneth McNaught.⁴ National histories and labour histories combined in both countries to narrow the focus of labour history to organized labour and to cast organized Western workers as exceptional deviants from the national mainstream. The workers and unions in the same industries became exceptional on both sides of the border but differently exceptional in separate national historiographies.

Neither Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" nor Innis's *The Fur Trade in Canada* was intended as Western history, but rather as narratives of distinctive national development.⁵ Both sought to establish what made his country unique; despite similarities, their narratives differed in important respects. Both began with the fur trade. Starting with his MA thesis on the Wisconsin trade, Turner went on to elaborate how the frontier uniquely

shaped the nation.⁶ Free land on a series of westward-moving frontiers forged America's distinctive democratic institutions and national character. Innis located Canada's distinctive development staples economies managed from distant metropolises in Europe and Central Canada. Both based national development on key resources—furs, fish, timber, land, and minerals—with similar male workforces. For Turner, each successive frontier progressed from Indian traders, to soldiers, ranchers or miners, to farmers (and on the Atlantic frontier alone, fishers).⁷ The men who laboured on Innis's resource frontiers were simply workers directed from distant metropolises. For Turner, the same men became mythic national archetypes, rugged individuals who shaped national character. Turner's narrative virtually erased Native peoples, but some of Innis's workers were Aboriginal or Métis.⁸

The divergent paths of U.S. labour and Western histories intersected at Johns Hopkins University, where both Commons and Turner attended graduate school, and at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where they both taught.⁹ Despite many differences, both Commons and Turner emphasized American exceptionalism—how the United States was different from everywhere else—especially the opportunity it offered for upward mobility, which undermined the significance of class. For Turner, opportunity comes from acquiring free land; for Commons, from negotiations between labour and management that prevent conflict. While Turner focused on a frontier that had ended, Commons turned to the dislocations of industrialization that drew a new workforce of former slaves; immigrants from Europe, Asia, Canada, and Latin America; and “immigrants” of another kind who left farms for urban labour. These changes stimulated a growing labour movement, organized through the National Labour Union (1866), Knights of Labour (1878), and American Federation of Labor (1886).

Commons taught at Indiana University from 1892 to 1895, and then at Syracuse University. But in 1899 Syracuse, apparently irritated by his outspoken politics, eliminated Commons' position, and he could not find academic employment until the University of Wisconsin hired him in 1904.¹⁰ The rest would be labour history, as Commons led the influential Wisconsin school of labour history that produced a ten-volume *Documentary History of American Industrial Society* and a four-volume *History of Labor in the United States*.¹¹ Believing that scarcity increased the value of labour and property, Commons saw as normal the segment of organized labour represented by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), skilled workers who tried to control the market for their crafts by limiting access to apprenticeship and who withheld their labour as a strategy to win “bread and butter” reforms. Commons considered the U.S. labour movement exceptional: pragmatic, self-interested, and self-protective, seeking

incremental gains, not fundamental change. In contrast, the Knights of Labour, the Western Labor Union/American Labor Union (WLU/ALU), and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) organized all the workers in a community or all the workers in an industry, regardless of skill, in order to match the growing power of economically integrated corporations. These unions, prominent in the U.S. and Canadian Wests, were considered outside the moderate mainstream.¹² The Commons school marginalized most workers—all who weren't skilled, white, male, waged, or organized—and also historians outside the academy, notably women progressives such as Edith Abbot and Sophonisba Breckenridge, whose histories of women workers remained outside the academic mainstream.¹³ And it marginalized most Western workers, including the workers of Turner's and Innis' staple resource industries. Vilified for their "un-American" strike violence, the WFM, WLU/ALU, and IWW all, at various times, endorsed the Socialist Party, syndicalism, and the General Strike, and became the exceptions to Commons' exceptional moderate "mainstream."

Canadian historiography likewise considered Western labour exceptional for the radical politics and tactics of the WFM, United Mine Workers of America (UMW), and One Big Union (OBU), culminating with the 1919 Calgary Labour Congress and the Winnipeg General Strike. The debate about Western Canadian labour, like the history of Western Canada, was caught between histories of national development and continental approaches that linked the workforces and unions active in both countries. From a nationalist perspective, the question became what separated the Canadian West from both Central Canada and the United States. In 1940 George F.G. Stanley distinguished an orderly and peaceful Canadian West from its more violent and unruly neighbour.¹⁴ Histories of Canadian resource industries emphasized either the institutional links between the Canadian and U.S. labour movements or the more peaceful character of Canadian labour relations compared with violent strikes in the U.S. West.

Much of the debate concerned mining, and the "heritage of conflict" of the Western Federation of Miners (1893–1916)/International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (1916–67).¹⁵ Historians in both countries found the roots of miners' radicalism in their failure to find frontier opportunity. But the legacies of Turner, Innis, and Stanley separated the two exceptionalisms. In the United States, the weird Western labour radicals got explained as the products of the frontier or of the peculiar demography of Western struggles. In Canada, Innis' metropolitan staples framework explained similar "exceptional" labour movements. Daniel Drache, for instance, explained differences in regional labour, and Western radicalism in particular, as the products of particular staples economies.¹⁶ Others, including Paul Phillips and Stuart Jamieson, focused on Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's National Policy, which relegated the

Western provinces to staples production, thus reinforcing the power of Central Canada to doubly exploit workers as Westerners and as labourers. Eastern Canadian workers, in Phillips's view, benefitted from tariffs that protected their employers from international competition, inclining them to accommodate labour. Western resource-extracting employers sold in international markets and extracted their profits from the hides of their workers, who were further burdened by the high costs of protected Eastern manufactured products.¹⁷

Canadian scholars' reliance on Innis' framework rather than Turner's made sense: trade union militancy persisted in Western Canada well beyond the "frontier period," which made it hard to locate radicalism in a brief period of post-frontier disillusionment. U.S. historians came to similar conclusions by the 1960s, questioning frontier and exceptionalist explanations of Western labour radicalism. The WFM, long considered a radical exception, was not founded until 1893, three years after the superintendent of the U.S. Census declared that the frontier had closed.

In the 1960s and 1970s, new working-class histories in Canada and the United States challenged nationalist and union-centered labour histories, drawing particularly from British historian E.P. Thompson, who emphasized the cultural roots of working-class consciousness and organizing. Thompson influenced American historians Herbert Gutman, David Montgomery, Melvyn Dubofsky, and others who influenced new interpretations of Western labour histories. The new working-class history was not monolithic. It included historians who focused on working-class culture and community, on rank-and-file organizing at the point of production, on working-class radicalism, and on unorganized workers, including women and people of colour. And it generated new debates about Western workers.

Melvyn Dubofsky began the conversation in 1966 with his article "The Origins of Working Class Radicalism." Insisting that "reform and revolution need not be mutually exclusive," he disrupted the Commons school's binary that separated moderate American unions from un-American working-class radicalism.¹⁸ Tracing the IWW to its roots in Western hardrock mining, Dubofsky linked the histories of radicalism and Eastern and Western workers to industrial class relations, not the frontier.¹⁹ Richard Lingenselter, chronicling the WFM's antecedents, concluded that wages, health, and welfare were dominant concerns. He, too, found that radicalism and violence came not from frontier lawlessness but increased with industrialization.²⁰

Miners and their unions crossed the 49th parallel. So did the debate about Western working-class radicalism. Canadian labour historians were more mindful than Americans of scholarship and unions from the other side of the border and, not surprisingly, wrestled with the power that American-based unions

wielded in Canada. U.S. historians have paid less attention to the Canadian members that made the same unions “international.” This difference mattered in the 1970s, as U.S. labour histories entered the Canadian academic mainstream more than the reverse. Though no Canadian scholars unquestioningly applied new American analyses, U.S. scholarship influenced new histories of Western Canadian labour, such as A. Ross McCormack’s *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, and David J. Bercuson’s “Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier: 1897–1919,” which was influenced by Dubofsky and likewise concluded that rapid industrialization fostered Western Canadian working-class radicalism.²¹

Historians on both sides of the border challenged interpretations of Western labour as exceptionally radical and Western industrialization as exceptionally rapid and brutal. Gregory Kealey, Jeremy Mouat, Craig Heron, Norman Penner, and others argued that militancy and violence occurred elsewhere and that the radical/reform binary distorted Western workers’ experiences and strategies. Some suggested that the larger contexts of post-war demobilization, the Russian Revolution, and government repression linked the Winnipeg and Seattle General Strikes and similar upheavals in Calgary, Regina, Vancouver, and throughout Ontario. Kealey challenged Bercuson’s conclusion that the Winnipeg General Strike grew from local and regional grievances, arguing that larger national and international contexts sparked workers’ revolts in many Canadian cities. Heron’s anthology, *The Workers’ Revolt in Canada, 1917–1925*, documents this larger movement. Norman Penner, dealing with Winnipeg alone, challenged clear divisions between reformists and radicals during the strike.²² Jeremy Mouat’s “The Genesis of Western Exceptionalism” dislodged the false dichotomies of radicalism and reform in Western hardrock mining.²³ And a few historians began to explore how capital, workers, and unions crossed the 49th parallel in specific resource industries.²⁴

Much earlier, in 1937, Walter Sage had suggested that the contiguous cross-border regions had more in common than they did with the eastern U.S. or Central Canada. And in 1955 U.S. historian Paul Sharp argued that the U.S. frontier did not close in 1890 but moved north to Canada. Despite such pioneering scholarship, until recently few histories followed cross-border economies and workforces. According to Sharp, cowboys sought employment with outfits in Alberta as freely as with those in Wyoming and Montana, yet the focus on national differences narrowed the gaze to the very different ownership, society, and scale of Canadian ranching compared with the United States.²⁵ More recent works suggest that while the structure and management of the Canadian ranching industry differed from the United States, the mobile ranching workforce transported the technologies and practices of working cowboys across the border.²⁶ Similarly, Richard Rajala has studied the timber workers

whose movements and organizing crossed the 49th parallel in the Pacific Northwest, Chris Friday has documented the cross-border migrations and organizing of fish cannery workforces, and Gunther Peck has explored international and continental labour migrations.²⁷ Their work joined the “new” Western, social, working-class, women’s, and racial-ethnic histories that challenged previous approaches to labour, the West, and the nation. New Western histories introduced multicultural perspectives, imperialism and conquest, environmental impacts, and economic dependency. The new working-class history broadened the focus of labour history from strikes and labour unions to daily acts and to working-class cultures and communities. Histories of women and people of colour vastly expanded the historical casts and shifted the focus from male labour in resource economies to service work, agriculture, and domestic and unwaged labour, and to resistance and organizing beyond organized labour.

Nonetheless, labour history and Western history have remained largely disconnected. Western workers remain marginal in new labour histories, and work and class are not central to most new Western histories.²⁸ Despite a wealth of new histories of workers of colour, it is hard to dethrone white male industrial workers or to shift the narrative from a linear tale that moves from industrial development to post-industrial decline. Despite the work of Chris Friday, Dianne Newell, Vicki Ruiz, and Zaragosa Vargas, for instance, on multi-ethnic food processors, I cannot think of a labour history that features Western food-processing workforces.²⁹

Still, an expanding cross-border conversation addresses intersections of race and gender in Western workforces, and how migrations, within and across borders, have constantly reconfigured workforces.³⁰ Immediately before the “West and Beyond” conference, the program of the fourteenth “Berkshire Conference on the History of Women” in June 2008 included a session featuring new work on Native women’s wage work in Montana and Manitoba,³¹ and the joint meeting of the Pacific Northwest Labour History Association and the Labour and Working-Class History Association featured papers on migratory workers in Western Canada and the Washington apple industry, on the anti-Asian riots in Vancouver and Bellingham in 1907, on Indigenous workers in both countries, and on organizing Asian Pacific islander workers in the United States and Canada (among others).³²

Such new scholarship provides fruitful contexts in which to push beyond two separate Wests to think comparatively and transnationally about topics such as accumulation, workforce formation and reproduction, and the intersection of histories of class and place. A first step involves connecting the state with these processes and critiquing how national histories have obscured them. Turner and Innis distorted key processes of class formation. Assuming that the

subject was the nation, they erased eons of prior history and occupation to normalize and legitimize appropriating the land that provided the territory and resources for state formation. Both nations gave land “free” to homesteaders, thus underwriting small-scale capital accumulation.³³ Both governments used the appropriated land to capitalize east-to-west railroads. The United States gave 129 million acres for Western railroad development. Canada gave the Canadian Pacific Railroad alone 25 million acres, government-built lines worth \$38 million, tax exemptions, and a twenty-year ban on competing rails south of the CPR main line. From 1903 to 1915, the Prairie provinces offered cash subsidies and guarantees on railway bonds totalling \$215 million.³⁴

Western ecologies generated similar resource industries; state policies charted their development. National treasuries supported the North West Mounted Police and the U.S. cavalry that policed both Wests and secured the land grabs, regardless of their different images since George Stanley distinguished the peaceful and orderly Canadian West from its violent neighbour to the south. Both governments became prime customers for Western staples such as metals to back the currency and beef to feed the troops and Native peoples on reserves. During the “Open Range” era in the United States, the federal government bought about fifty thousand head of cattle a year to distribute on Indian reservations.³⁵ Both nations kept vast territories and offered their resources for private profit through timber leases in national forests and Crown lands or through the 1881 amendment to the *Dominion Lands Act* that allowed British subjects to lease up to a hundred thousand acres for a penny an acre, a policy that underwrote huge spreads for wealthy British and Eastern Canadian ranchers.³⁶ During World War II, new defence industries changed the economies and workforces in both countries; afterwards, the U.S. government funded military and scientific industries that fundamentally reshaped Western workforces and economies, and differentiated them from post-war Canadian West.³⁷

This example underscores the importance of historicizing Western economies and workforces. National policies affected workforces and class relations. At various times, both countries alternately sought and banned Asians, Mexicans, and other workers.³⁸ State policies that governed who could claim land and jobs impacted relationships of race and gender as well as class. As the example of Chinese and Japanese immigrants suggests, labour forces and class relations changed as workers and capital migrated. Canadian and U.S. histories emphasize that railroads linked the nations and forged east-to-west economies. Canadian histories may record concerns about U.S. economic control and the fact that Cornelius Van Horne was American, but few American histories mention that James J. Hill was Canadian or consider that fact significant.³⁹ Neither focuses on how Chinese and Irish men came to lay the tracks. A second chal-

lenge for histories of Western economies and workers is linking the local and national within global economic contexts.

Global and local migrations highlight how different workers have been pushed and pulled into Western workforces, as, for instance, Mexican workers were pushed out of the United States during the 1930s Depression, pulled back into the Bracero guest worker program in the 1940s, and are now demonized as illegal aliens. Another example links the processes of internal colonization and globalization. During the 1950s and 1960s, Indian Affairs encouraged Aboriginals in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan to work seasonally harvesting sugar beets. First Nations workers laboured in sugar beet fields near Lethbridge, where European immigrants had worked between two world wars and interned Japanese Canadians had toiled during World War II. As many as one thousand to twenty-five hundred Aboriginals migrated to work in Alberta beet fields each year, the “largest managed group migration of First Nations orchestrated by the state.” Coerced into the program by threats of losing welfare payments, Aboriginal workers have more recently been replaced by Mexican Mennonites.⁴⁰ Similarly, in the United States, sugar beet growers at various times recruited Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, and Germans from Russia.⁴¹ Though national policies and personnel ran these programs, national boundaries and histories did not contain them.

The new social histories highlighted linked constructions of race, class, and gender. Applying these analytic lenses to Western workforces, it becomes clear that traditional labour histories erased workers who were either, like Mexican and Chinese workers, banned from Western labour unions or who performed unwaged labour.⁴² The focus on the white male workers of staples frontiers oversimplified a much messier grid of human labour. The women of the fur trade tanned hides, made snowshoes and pemmican, and gardened.⁴³ On miners’ frontiers, women also gardened, raised dairy cows and chickens, sold sex, cooked, and did laundry for wages.⁴⁴ Focusing on the staples themselves erased the labour that underwrote their workforces. That “service work frontier” remains an unrecognized but hugely significant sector of Western infrastructure.

Another challenge is analyzing what connects productive and reproductive labour. I use “productive labour” in the technical sense: work that produces a commodity, including labour power sold for wages. By “reproductive labour,” I mean all the work necessary to create human labour power, whether paid or not—preserving and preparing food, making clothes and washing them, hauling water for baths—all the work required for people to get up and go to work every day with the energy to do their jobs. I mean, too, the labour of reproducing the next generation of workers and of creating social relationships by raising and teaching children, building institutions such as schools and hospitals,

and enacting or changing the daily behaviours that knit communities together. Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer Brown offered a useful model, as they linked Aboriginal women's productive and reproductive labour in the fur trade, from making pemmican to creating families and social networks.⁴⁵

For women, the defining characteristic of resource frontiers was a demographic imbalance: there were too many men, which narrowed women's options to providing sex and domestic labour.⁴⁶ Canada recruited domestic servants (and potential wives) from Europe. In both countries, ads for housekeepers on ranches and farms drew women workers, sometimes eventually to perform the same work without pay as wives.⁴⁷ The male excess supported sex workers who crossed national boundaries to the next resource boom.⁴⁸ Besides circumscribing women's wage work, the skewed sex ratios also fostered interracial intimacy and marriages that forged the changing racialized class hierarchies of both Wests. Albert Hurtado, Peggy Pascoe, and Sarah Carter have examined how regulating intimate relationships was inseparably linked to class formation.⁴⁹ For example, the Asian exclusion laws of both Canada and the United States so restricted the immigration of Chinese and Japanese women that few working men could marry and only the middle class could reproduce itself.⁵⁰ Always taking into account gender and reproductive labour makes it much easier to trace how classes formed and changed. It also introduces human bodies as sites where labour power is generated, and likewise the next generation of workers.

I was first led to Canadian history by a mining hoist engineer named James McConaghy, who migrated from Ireland to Leadville, Colorado, to the Cripple Creek District, to Rossland, back to Colorado, and then to Nevada. And I was led to him by his daughter, May McConaghy Wing, the keeper of family memory, who shared his journeys and his story.⁵¹ The McConaghys represented millions of workers who forged transnational workforces with different racial-ethnic hierarchies in each locality and brought organizing experience with them. Farmers' migrations back and forth across the 49th parallel wrote similar language into (the U.S.) Omaha Platform and (the Canadian) Farmers Platform. Men who marched to Washington in 1894 with Coxey's Army later joined the On-to-Ottawa Band.⁵² Work and labour movements propelled Arthur "Slim" Evans from Toronto to the 1913 coal miners' strike in Ludlow, Colorado, to the OBU in Alberta, to the Communist Party in British Columbia, to the On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot.⁵³ The migrants who carried ideologies and tactics across international borders recast labour histories that have been anchored to the places where workers only sojourned.

National and regional boundaries have not provided the most useful frameworks to understand the historical processes of accumulation, workforce formation and reproduction, or, for that matter, work itself. Communities and

regions are constantly reconstructed by economic and social relationships, and national borders have been open and closed at different times to the people and the movements that forge class and community. From these perspectives, the subject becomes not the West or the nation, but how people build and transform social relationships. The older stories of frontiers, staples, and organized labour are not nearly large enough to hold this complexity. By broadening concepts of labour, organizing, and resistance, and looking beyond national and regional borders to the sites of labour and the factors that pushed and pulled workers on their journeys, we may gain more than a more accurate history of workers and of Western social and economic development. We may imagine new and more complex ways to map regions that have thus far been defined largely by their geopolitical boundaries. We may imagine many constantly changing Wests, the geographies of which have been as intensely local as the distance from home to work, from the kitchen to the garden, and at the same time as large as the global geographies that brought people to work and build social relationships. To map these regions, we need many more stories, multiple paradigms, and far fewer myths. *

Notes

- 1 Thanks to the organizers of the “West and Beyond” conference, especially Alvin Finkel, for the invitation and for ideas, references, and terrific comments. Thanks, too, to the helpful anonymous reviewers and to Amy McKinney, copy editor extraordinaire.
- 2 Carol Higham and Robert Thacker, eds., *One West, Two Myths: Essays on Comparisons* (Calgary and Lincoln: University of Calgary Press and University of Nebraska Press, 2005) and *One West, Two Myths II: Essays on Comparison* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006).
- 3 Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *History, Frontier, and Section: Three Essays by Frederick Jackson Turner*, ed. Martin Ridge (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 62–71. Turner delivered his thesis at the American Historical Association in Chicago, 12 July 1893. *Extra Census Bulletin* 2, no. 20 (April 1892). Harold Adams Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, rev. ed (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1930; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956). Citations are to the 1956 edition.
- 4 Forsey, Underhill, Jamieson, and McNaught were all associated with the CCF, but Underhill and Forsey were also Liberals at times, and Forsey a Tory. Like Commons, they might be characterized as “liberal progressives.” Forsey and Underhill were founding members, in 1931, of the League for Social Reconstruction, which carefully distinguished itself from communists and socialists. Underhill helped draft the CCF’s Regina Manifesto in July 1933. See Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian*

- Labour, 1800–1980* (Toronto: Butterworth, 1983), 214–15; Frank H. Underhill, *James Shaver Woodsworth: Untypical Canadian* (Toronto: Ontario Woodsworth Memorial Foundation, 1944); Frank H. Underhill, *In Search of Canadian Liberalism* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1960); Eugene Forsey, *Trade Unionism in Canada, 1812–1902* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Stuart Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900–1966* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968); Stuart Jamieson, *Industrial Relations in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: MacMillan, 1973); Stuart M. Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900–66* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1968); Kenneth W. McNaught, *A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959); Kenneth W. McNaught, *The Winnipeg Strike, 1919* (Don Mills, ON: Longman, 1974). There were radical exceptions to the dominant reformist tradition. See, for instance, Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, vols. 1–4 (New York: International Publishers, 1947–1965).
- 5 R. Douglas Francis, “Turner versus Innis: Two Mythic Wests,” in Higham and Thacker, *One West, Two Myths II*, 15–29; and Elizabeth Jameson and Jeremy Mouat, “Telling Differences: The Forty-ninth Parallel and Historiographies of the West and Nation,” *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (May 2006): 183–230, 189–94.
 - 6 Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Influence of the Fur Trade in the Development of Wisconsin,” (master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1888).
 - 7 Turner, “Significance of the Frontier,” 66–70, 82–84.
 - 8 Innis, *Fur Trade in Canada*, esp. 393.
 - 9 Turner was born in Wisconsin in 1861, Commons in Ohio in 1862. Turner earned his BA and MA at the University of Wisconsin; Commons graduated from Oberlin College, which was founded by abolitionists.
 - 10 Leon Fink, “‘Intellectuals versus ‘Workers’: Academic Requirements and the Creation of Labor History,” *American Historical Review* 96, no. 2 (April 1991): 395–431, 408. See also John R. Commons, *Myself: The Autobiography of John R. Commons* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 58–59.
 - 11 Fink, “‘Intellectuals versus Workers,’” 403, 408–11; John R. Commons, Ulrich B. Phillips, Eugene A. Gilmore, Helen L. Sumner, and John B. Andrews, eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, 10 vols. (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Company, 1909–11); John R. Commons et al., *History of Labor in the United States*, 4 vols. (New York: MacMillan, 1918–35).
 - 12 See Edith Abbott, assisted by Sophinisba Breckenridge, *The Tenements of Chicago, 1908–1935* (1936; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1970); Edith Abbott and Sophinisba Breckenridge, *The Wage-Earning Woman and the State: A Reply to Miss Minnie Bronson* (Boston: Boston Equal Suffrage Association for Good Government, 1911); Sophinisba Breckenridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Their Political, Social, and Economic Activities* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933); Edith Abbott, *Women and Industry: A Study in American Economic History* (New York: D. Appleton, 1928); Edith Abbott, *Public Assistance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940).

- 13 The Western Federation of Miners (WFM) was the largest affiliate of the Western Labor Union (WLU, 1898–1902), which it helped found as a western alternative to the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The WLU changed its name to the American Labor Union (1892–1905), signalling a national challenge to the AFL. In 1905 the ALU and WFM helped found the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The WFM withdrew from the IWW in 1908 and joined the AFL in 1912 in an unsuccessful attempt to merge with the United Mine Workers of America.
- 14 George F.G. Stanley, “Western Canada and the Frontier Thesis,” *Canadian Historical Association, Report of the Annual Meeting* (1940): 105–14.
- 15 Vernon H. Jenson, *Heritage of Conflict: Labor Relations in the Nonferrous Metals Industry up to 1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950); Selig Perlman and Philip Taft, *History of Labor in the United States, 1896–1932*, vol. 4 (New York: MacMillan, 1935); Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel, “The Interindustry Propensity to Strike,” in *Industrial Conflict*, ed. Arthur Kornhauser, Robert Dubin, and Arthur M. Ross (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 189–212; Carlos A. Schwantes, “The Concept of the Wageworkers’ Frontier: A Framework for Future Research,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (January 1987): 39–55; and David M. Emmons, “Constructed Province: History and the Making of the Last American West,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 437–59.
- 16 Daniel Drache, “Harold Innis and Canadian Capital Development,” in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic Development*, ed. Gordon Laxer (1982; repr., Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991); Daniel Drache, ed., *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change: Selected Essays, Harold A. Innis* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995), esp. xiii–lix.
- 17 Thanks to Alvin Finkel for these insights. Paul A. Phillips, “The National Policy and the Development of the Western Canadian Labour Movement,” in *Prairie Perspectives* 2, ed. A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen (Toronto: Holt Rinehart, 1973), 41–62; Paul Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in B.C.* (Vancouver: B.C. Federation of Labour and Boag Foundation, 1967); H. Clare Pentland, “The Western Canadian Labour Movement, 1897–1919,” *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 3 (1979): 53–78; Stuart Jamieson, “Regional Factors in Industrial Conflict: The Case of British Columbia,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 28, no. 3 (1962): 405–16.
- 18 Melvyn Dubofsky, “The Origins of Western Working-Class Radicalism, 1890–1905,” *Labor History* 7 (Spring 1966): 131–54; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1969), 35. For the Commons school’s interpretation, see Perlman and Taft, *History of Labor*, 173.
- 19 Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 21; Dubofsky, “Origins.” See also John H.M. Laslett, *Labor and the Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 241–86; George G. Suggs, Jr., *Colorado’s War on Militant Unionism: James H. Peabody and the Western Federation of Miners* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972); Elizabeth Jameson, *All That Glitters: Class, Conflict and Community in Cripple Creek* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); David Brundage, *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism: Denver’s Organized Workers, 1878–1905* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). For Canada, see Jeremy Mouat, “The Genesis of Western Exceptionalism: British Columbia’s Hard Rock Miners, 1895–1903,” *Canadian Historical Review* 71, no. 3 (September 1990): 317–45.

- 20 Richard E. Lingensfelter, *The Hardrock Miners: A History of the Mining Labor Movement in the American West, 1863–1893* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).
- 21 A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899–1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); David J. Bercuson, “Labour Radicalism and the Western Frontier, 1897–1919,” *Canadian Historical Review* 58, no. 2 (June 1977): 154–75.
- 22 Bercuson, “Labour Radicalism”; David J. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978); David J. Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1974); Gregory S. Kealey, “1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt,” *Labour/Le Travail* 13 (Spring 1984): 11–44; Gregory S. Kealey, “State Repression of Labour and the Left in Canada, 1914–20: The Impact of the First World War,” *Canadian Historical Review* 73, no. 3 (September 1992): 281–314; Norman Penner, *Winnipeg, 1919: The Strikers’ Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto: James, Lewis & Samuel, 1973); Craig Heron, ed., *The Workers’ Revolt in Canada, 1917–1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). For the Seattle General Strike, see Harvey O’Connor, *The Revolution in Seattle* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964); Robert L. Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964); Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919–1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 34–39, 45–46.
- 23 Mouat, “Genesis of Western Exceptionalism.” See also Jameson, *All That Glitters*; and Jeremy Mouat, *Roaring Days: Rossland’s Mines and the History of British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995); Robert J. McDonald, “Working Class Vancouver, 1886–1914: Urbanism and Class in British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 69–70 (Spring/Summer, 1986): 33–69.
- 24 For mining, see for instance Carlos A. Schwantes, *Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism, and Reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885–1917* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979); and Mouat, *Roaring Days*. On the California Gold Rush as an international phenomenon, see Kenneth N. Owens, *Riches for All: The California Gold Rush and the World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).
- 25 Walter N. Sage, “Geographical and Cultural Aspects of the Five Canadas,” *Canadian Historical Association, Annual Report* (1937); Paul F. Sharp, “When Our West Moved North,” *American Historical Review* 55, no. 2 (January 1950): 286–300, 299.
- 26 David Breen emphasized the different structure and ownership of Canadian ranching; Warren Elofson and Terry Jordan-Bychow have emphasized similarities in the technologies and practices of working ranchhands. David H. Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874–1924* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Warren M. Elofson, *Cowboys, Gentlemen, and Cattle Thieves: Ranching on the Western Frontier* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000); Warren M. Elofson, *Frontier Cattle Ranching in the Land and Times of Charlie Russell* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006); Terry G. Jordan, *North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993); Terry G. Jordan-Bychow, “Does the Border Matter? Cattle Ranching and the Forty-ninth Parallel” in *Cowboys, Ranchers, and the Cattle Business: Cross-Border Perspectives in Ranching History*, ed. Simon

- Evans, Sarah Carter, and Bill Yoo (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 1–10; Simon M. Evans, “The Origins of Ranching in Western Canada: American Diffusion of Victorian Transplant?,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (1983): 79–91.
- 27 Richard A. Rajala, “Bill and the Boss: Labour Protest, Technological Change, and the Transformation of the West Coast Logging Camp, 1890–1930,” *Journal of Forest History* 33, no. 4 (October 1989): 168–79; Richard A. Rajala, “A Dandy Bunch of Wobblies: Pacific Northwest Loggers and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1900–1930,” *Labor History* 37, no. 2 (March 1996): 205–34; Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870–1932* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880–1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Evelyn Stitt Pickett, “Hoboes across the Border: Itinerant Cross-Border Laborers between Montana and Western Canada,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 49 (Spring 1999): 19–31; Lissa Wadewitz, “Fishing the Line: Political Boundaries and Border Fluidity in the Pacific Northwest Borderlands, 1880–1930s,” in *The Borderlands of the Canadian and American West: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 299–308.
 - 28 Notable exceptions include Richard White, *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); and William G. Robbins, *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994). Gerald Friesen discusses the militance and radicalism of Western labour in *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 355–64, yet labour is not central to the narrative of most Western histories.
 - 29 Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor*; Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Workers, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930–1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Dianne Newell, *The Development of the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry: A Grown Man’s Game* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989); Dianne Newell, *Fishing Places, Fishing People: Traditions and Issues in Canadian Small-Scale Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Zaragosa Vargas, “Tejana Radical: Emma Tenayuca and the San Antonio Labor Movement during the Great Depression,” *Pacific Historical Review* 66, no. 4 (November 1997): 553–81. This is one example. The same could be said of histories of fruit pickers or other migrant agricultural workers, for instance.
 - 30 See for instance *Repositioning North American Migration History: New Directions in Modern Continental Migration, Citizenship, and Community*, ed. Marc S. Rodriguez (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004); James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migration of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Randy William Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880–1920* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998); and John J. Bukowczyk, Nora Faires, and David R. Smith, eds., *Permeable Borders: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650–1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005).

- 31 "Native American Women Workers in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Conversation," session at 14th "Berkshire Conference on the History of Women," 12–15 June 2008, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. The following presentations were given at the same conference: Carol Jane Williams, "Seeking Recognition as Workers: Native American Women's Labor within National, Reservation, and Family Economies"; Colleen O'Neill, "Gendering of Work Relief in Indian Country: American Indian Women in the New Deal Era"; Mary Jane McCallum, "Gender, Bridging, and Discourses of Self-Help: Community Help Representatives in Western Canada."
- 32 "Filipino and Mexican Migratory Workers: Historical Perspectives," session at Pacific Northwest Labour History Association's 40th annual conference presented with Labour and Working Class History Association, 6–8 June 2008, Simon Fraser University, Harbour Campus, Vancouver, BC. The following took place at the same conference: Dan Baldulescu, "The Mobile Worker Project: Temporary Workers in Western Canada—A New Tsunami?"; Tony Zaragoza, "One Big Labour Problem Solved: Immigrant Workers, Technology and Scientific Management in the Washington Apple Industry, 1890–1930"; "The 1907 Anti-Asian Riots in Bellingham and Vancouver: Moving beyond White Supremacy" (session); Kornel Chang, "Crossing the White Pacific: The Transpacific Sources of Anti-Asian Labour Politics in the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands"; Henry Yu, and others from the Vancouver 2007 Race Riot Reconciliation Events: Stan Fukawa (National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre), Masako Fukawa (Project Coordinator, BC Teachers' Federation/ The Critical Thinking Consortium 07 Curriculum Project), Harbhajan Gill (Komagata Maru Heritage Foundation), Hayne Wai (Chinese Canadian Historical Society), Harley Wylie (Aboriginal Liaison, Provincial Capital Commission; "Indigenous Workers in the Pacific Northwest" (session); Charles Menzies, "Capturing the Fishery: Tsimshian Peoples and the Development of the Capitalist Fishery" and Josh Reid, "Nineteenth-Century Makah Peking Sealers: Adapting Indigenous Practices to New Opportunities and Technologies"; "Globalizing and Organizing Asian Pacific Islander Workers: Race, Gender and Migration" (session); March Lawrence Santiago, "Who Cares? Global Nursing Shortage and the Politico-Cultural Economy of Philippine Nurse Migrations"; Robyn Rodriguez, "Transnationalism and Filipino Immigrant Worker Organizing in the UW"; Cynthia Oka, "Challenging the Racialization of Temporary Labour in Vancouver."
- 33 The 1862 U.S. *Homestead Act* and the 1872 Canadian *Dominion Lands Act* were similar. Both offered male heads of families or single men (age twenty-one in the United States and eighteen in Canada) a 160-acre homestead in return for a small filing fee and living on the land (five months a year in the United States, three months in Canada) and improving it for a period of time (five years in the United States, three in Canada). In Canada, until 1889 a homesteader could "pre-empt" a second adjacent quarter section. In the United States, single women and women heads of families could claim land in their own names. In Canada, the restrictions on women homesteaders were stringent; very few qualified.
- 34 Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *Frontiers: A Short History of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 111–20; John Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 53, 84.
- 35 White, *It's Your Misfortune*.

- 36 Breen, *Canadian Prairie West*; Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, 64.
- 37 These included the laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico, that developed the atomic bomb; scientific labs in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Hanford, Washington; the Nevada nuclear test site; the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant; Pacific Coast ship- and airplane-building facilities; and Western military bases. This military/defense economy continues to characterize local economies throughout the U.S. West.
- 38 The United States and Canada, for instance, both discouraged Chinese immigration after the railroads were built, the United States through the *Chinese Exclusion Act* of 1882 and Canada through the head tax imposed in 1885. The United States expelled many Mexicans and Mexican Americans—including U.S. citizens—during the 1930s and then invited them back in 1942, when an executive agreement between the United States and Mexico created the Bracero Program, under which some three hundred thousand Mexican labourers came to do mostly agricultural labour. Nearly five million migrated under the program by the mid-1960s.
- 39 See Beth LaDow, *The Medicine Line: Life and Death on a North American Borderland* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 73–88.
- 40 Ron Laliberte, “The ‘grac-ahoe’ Indians: The Canadian State and the Procurement of Aboriginal Labour for the Southern Alberta Sugar Beet Industry,” *Prairie Forum* 31, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 305–24; Ron Laliberte and Vic Satzewich, “Native Migrant Labour in the Southern Alberta Sugar-Beet Industry: Coercion and Paternalism in the Recruitment of Labour,” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 36, no. 1 (February 1999): 65–86; James Burke, *Paper Tomahawks: From Red Tape to Red Power* (Winnipeg: Queenston House, 1976).
- 41 Sheryll Patterson-Black, *Ethnic Life, Agriculture, and the North Platte Valley* (Crawford, NE: Cottonwood Press, 1984); Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- 42 Sucheng Chan, ed., *Entry Denied* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Roger Daniels, ed., *Anti-Chinese Violence in North America* (New York: Arno Press, 1978); Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858–1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989). Similarly, Latino/as, American Indians/First Nations, African Americans, and others were excluded from skilled employment and organized labour in many Western industries and communities.
- 43 Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983). Alan M. Klein, “The Political Economy of Gender: A Nineteenth-Century Plains Indian Case Study,” in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, eds. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Latham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 143–73; Gilbert L. Wilson, *Buffalo Bird Woman’s Garden* (1917; repr., St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987).

- 44 Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitution in the American West, 1865–90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Marion S. Goldman, *Gold Diggers and Silver Miners: Prostitutes and Social Life on the Comstock Lode* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981); Lucie Cheng Hirata, “Free, Endentured, and Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Signs* 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1979): 3–29; Elizabeth Jameson, “Imperfect Unions: Class and Gender in Cripple Creek, 1894–1904,” *Frontiers* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1976): 85–117; also in Milton Cantor and Bruce Laurie, eds., *Class, Sex, and the Woman Worker* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 166–202; Jameson, *All That Glitters*, chap. 5; Elizabeth Jameson, “Where Have All the Young Men Gone? The Social Legacy of the California Gold Rush,” in Owens, *Riches for All*, 202–29; Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 30–31, 99–139, 269–70, 295–96; Laurie Mercier, *Anaconda* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Mouat, *Roaring Days*, 68, 116–20; Mary Murphy, “The Private Lives of Public Women: Prostitution in Butte, Montana, 1878–1917,” in Armitage and Jameson, *Women’s West*, 193–206; Colleen O’Neill, “Domesticity Deployed: Gender, Race, and the Construction of Class Struggle in the Bisbee Deportations,” *Labor History* 34 (Spring/Summer 1993): 256–73; Paula Petrik, *No Step Backward: Women and Family on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier, Helena, Montana, 1865–1900* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1987); Mary Lee Spence, “Waitresses in the Trans-Mississippi West: ‘Pretty Waiter Girls,’ Harvey Girls, and Union Maids,” in Armitage and Jameson, *Women’s West*, 219–34.
- 45 Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980). See also William R. Swagerty, “Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (April 1980): 150–80.
- 46 Women were outnumbered from the onset of European colonization well into the twentieth century. In California, a year after the gold rush, the census counted 123 men for each woman. In Colorado, a year after the Pike’s Peak boom, there were 165. By 1930, Kansas had 101 men per 100 women; Texas had 104; Utah, 105. These figures, however, omitted most Indians. Calculated from *Bicentennial Edition, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Time to 1970*, ser. A (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1970), 195–209. See also Albert Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); Jameson, “Where Have All the Young Men Gone?”, 203–04; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 163, 280, 313; Mouat, *Roaring Days*, 110–11.
- 47 Norma J. Milton, “Essential Servants: Immigrant Domesticity on the Canadian Prairies, 1885–1930,” in Armitage and Jameson, *Women’s West*, 207–18; Eleanor Pruitt Stewart, *Letters of a Woman Homesteader* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961).
- 48 Lucie Cheng Hirata, “Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Signs* 5, no. 11 (Autumn 1979): 3–29; Yuji Ichioka, “Ameyuki-Sun: Japanese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Amerasia Journal* 4 (1977): 1–21; Char Smith, “American Prostitutes in Western Canada, 1895–1925,” in *One Step over the Line: Toward a History of Women in the North American Wests*, eds. Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Athabasca University Press, 2008), 241–60.

- 49 Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers*; Peggy Pascoe, "Introduction: The Challenge of Writing Multicultural Women's History" and "Race, Gender, and Intercultural Relations: The Case of Interracial Marriage," *Frontiers* 12, no. 1 (1991): 1–18; Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Athabasca University Press, 2008). See also Peggy Pascoe, "Western Women at the Cultural Crossroads," in *Trails: Toward a New Western History*, eds. Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1991), 40–58; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; Brown, *Strangers in Blood*; Swagerty, "Marriage and Settlement Patterns"; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*.
- 50 See Chan, *Entry Denied*; Timothy J. Stanley, "Schooling, White Supremacy, and the Formation of a Chinese Merchant Public in British Columbia," in *Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement*, eds. Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996), 215–43.
- 51 James McConaghy's journey took him (at least) from Ireland to Leadville, Colorado, to Victor, Colorado, to Rossland, back to Victor and Leadville, to Goldfield, Nevada. May McConaghy Wing, interview by author, Boulder, Colorado, 6 March 1976 and Victor, Colorado, 21 October 1978.
- 52 Paul F. Sharp, *The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada: A Survey Showing American Parallels* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948); Sharp, "When Our West Moved North"; Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2003); Carlos A. Schwantes, *Coxey's Army: An American Odyssey* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); Inez Hunt, "The Poverty Marchers of 1894," *Empire Magazine*, 16 February 1969, 14–18; David J. Bercuson, "The One Big Union in Washington," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (July 1978): 127–34. As these sources suggest, the tactics were similar in part because Populists and labour activists crossed the forty-ninth parallel to work.
- 53 Born in Toronto, Evans apprenticed as a carpenter and worked in the midwestern United States as a young man, where he became involved with radical labour. He was wounded during the tragic climax of the 1913–14 Ludlow strike. Returning to Canada in 1919, he became the B.C./Alberta representative for the One Big Union (OBU). He moved to British Columbia in 1926, joined the Communist Party, served as district organizer for the Workers' Unity League in the Great Depression, and was a leader in the On-to-Ottawa Trek. See Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us*, 44–46 and passim. Evans was jailed in 1923 for alleged theft of OBU union dues, which he apparently used for relief in Drumheller. The miners he allegedly robbed petitioned to secure his early release. That story is chronicled in a song by Maria Dunn, "Do you know Slim Evans?" on Maria Dunn, *We Were Good People* (2004).

Disease as Embodied Praxis: Epidemics, Public Health, and Working-Class Resistance in Winnipeg, 1906–19¹

ESYLLT W. JONES

■ In the *Winnipeg Strike Bulletin* of 27 May 1919, the poetics of embodiment characterized as “alien” the heart and blood of the ruling class:

*But alien is one—of class, not race—he has drawn the line for himself;
His roots drink life from inhuman soil, from garbage of pomp and pelf;
His heart beats not with the common beat, he has changed his life-stream’s hue;
He deems his flesh to be finer flesh, he boasts that his blood is blue;
Politician, aristocrat, tory—whatever his age or name,
To the people’s rights and liberties, a traitor ever the same.*²

In this, the rhetoric of the Winnipeg General Strike, the working-class body is the body of humanity, true to nature and natural justice. Assuming that such metaphors spoke to the way injustice lived in and through the body, this essay explores linkages between bodily experience and working-class resistance in Winnipeg in the early twentieth century. It seeks to generate a conversation among theories of embodiment, working-class history, and the history of health and dis-

ease. Working against a lack of serious consideration given to embodiment and disease processes in Canadian working-class history, I argue that crises such as epidemics are not simply reflections of poverty or markers of social inequality, but potential sites of an embodied praxis of resistance and of social transformation. Infectious diseases do not expose underlying social relations so much as they are historical processes central to the political dynamics of working-class consent and resistance in the early twentieth-century West. Bodily experiences of disease such as the 1918–19 influenza pandemic generate the pain of physical misery, yet also enhance communal bonds of solidarity and humanity and serve to challenge the legitimacy of the social order in ways currently unexamined in the literature.³

Methodologically, I draw upon theories of “the body” and upon scholarship that explores the dynamic relationships among state formation, infectious disease, and social transformation. Although much of what constitutes these relationships is not restricted or unique to the West, place matters as a point of intersection between nature and politics, like disease itself. Disease processes such as the ones I examine here (smallpox and influenza) are embedded in the spatial history of settler colonialism and capitalist expansion in Western Canada, and the spatial management of disease by the state has been a key tenet of both. How did working-class movements in Winnipeg respond to a ruling order in which bodily discipline and control featured so prominently, particularly during moments of epidemic crisis?

What is the history of the body?

THE CONCEPT OF “THE BODY” is by no means new in theory or application. Ten years ago, Mary-Ellen Kelm showed that the bodies of Aboriginal peoples in twentieth-century British Columbia were “literally marked ... with the signs of colonization.” Her work argues that Aboriginal bodies “were made, in part, by the colonizing governance of the Canadian state and its allies, the medical profession, the churches, and the provincial government,” and that this was a contested process in which Aboriginals made demands and insisted upon their own views of disease causation.⁴ The body has been employed widely in women’s and gender studies, queer studies, and sociology; by the late 1990s, historians of gender, including those whose work examined the lives of working-class women in relation to the state, were often invoking “the body” in their work.⁵

In their recent essay “The Body as a Useful Category of Analysis for Working-Class History,” Ava Baron and Ellen Boris argue that the turn toward bodily studies can and should be usefully employed in working-class history, “through exploring how bodies are both constituted by and constitutive of the workplace and the racialized and gendered class relations that work both expresses and

creates.”⁶ The body “as a category for historical analysis, ... allows for incorporating difference more fully, for it is one of the most powerful and pervasive cultural symbols that define who and what we are.”⁷ “The abstract idea of workers” is represented in specific notions about working-class bodies: for example, in state policy and laws that attempt to discipline working bodies, in popular images of the muscle-bound male labourer, or in sexualized constructions of female labouring bodies. Workers’ bodies have also been viewed as troublesome and disruptive to the social body as a whole, even as they may be viewed as abject and inferior by dominant society.

For my purposes here, the reciprocal relationship between the corporeal and the social, or the idea of “embodiment,” is of interest. Embodiment, suggests Leslie Adelson, is a process “of making and doing the work of bodies—of becoming a body in social space.”⁸ This making involves an ongoing dialectic between the experience of the body and the social construction of the body; as Kathleen Canning argues, “embodiment encompasses moments of encounter and interpretation, agency and resistance.”⁹ Within the Marxist tradition, the materiality of the body is essential to human emancipation. As Bryan Turner notes, Marx “approaches the body via a theory of human sensuous practice on nature in which embodiment is social and historical.... A genuine Marxism is thus not simply about social freedom, but must include some account of the liberation of embodied persons from physical misery.”¹⁰ However important the post-structuralist critique of bodily regulation, which posits that “the reality of the body is only established by the observing eye that reads it,”¹¹ working-class history must recognize the role of human agency and what Turner calls the “phenomenology of embodiment.”¹² Although human beings may not have control over the fate of their bodies, they can exercise “corporeal government,” and can act “in, on and through” their bodies. One example of this agency, he argues, is the assertion of individual or social definitions of the meaning of disease. Another example, I argue here, is resistance to public health regimes.

Bodies in labour and working-class history

ASSUMED AT THE HEART OF WORKING-CLASS HISTORY are the exploited bodies of working men, women, and children. Boris and Baron have referred to “embodiment [as] a foundational assumption rather than a process subjected to historical analysis” within labour and working-class history.¹³ Indeed, especially following after the influence of Thompsonian history and the subsequent interventions of feminist gender historians sympathetic to—if in debate with—class, bodies are everywhere. One obvious place to find a notion of the *unhealthy* body in labour history is in the struggles surrounding occupational health and safety,

workers' compensation, and the labour of women and children. Scholars including David Rosner, Alan Derickson, and Amy Fairchild have given us a sophisticated understanding of capitalism's impact upon the health of the labouring body and of worker responses to the state's interventions and *failures* to intervene in support of working bodies, particularly the most marginalized of those bodies: immigrant labour.¹⁴

However, the processes of embodiment cannot be confined to what is traditionally referred to as work or the workplace. To limit our interest to the "working" body is to fail to consider the body at home: in the family, in leisure, in intimacy, in illness, in pleasure. Working-class claims of bodily entitlement have extended considerably beyond the mine, factory, or office. Consider, for example, the early twentieth-century claims of British workers to leisure and enjoyment: men and women argued the right to have a life and do what one wished with one's body outside of the workplace, like their class superiors.¹⁵ Historians of gender and class have been influential in moving the history of working-class bodily experience into the realm of the family and community.¹⁶ Much of the scholarship of the lived experience of working-class families—in its consideration of issues such as infant mortality, motherhood, and the welfare state—bridges the boundaries between the disciplines of medical and working-class history. Social historians of medicine, while not always committed to class analysis, have long argued the relevance of the material conditions of life in determining disease and mortality rates in society.¹⁷ To be poor, to live in inferior housing conditions, to labour in unsafe and exhausting work is to be unhealthy. Exploitation and social inequality write themselves on the body.

This interdisciplinary engagement between the history of medicine and working-class history is particularly relevant given that medicine and public health have been fundamental venues for the regulation of the modern body, serving to define the contours of citizenship and social rights, gender inequality, immigrant inclusion and exclusion, and colonialism. As sociologist and body theorist Chris Shilling notes, "[T]he social reproduction of society ... involves the social reproduction of appropriate bodies."¹⁸ Indeed, the healing professions (along with others, including educators, for example) "pass judgements on whether certain bodies or bodily practices should even exist."¹⁹ Working-class bodies have historically been particularly vulnerable to the implications of this "judgement." As Mona Gleason and Jennifer Stephen illustrate, in the first half of the twentieth century in Canada, health "experts" defined notions of intelligence and "mental hygiene," introducing regimes of school medical inspection and intelligence testing, for example, that stamped social hierarchy onto working-class and immigrant bodies and minds in profound ways.²⁰ But this has always been a contested process.

Public health measures such as smallpox vaccination generated controversy, debate, and at times overt resistance. Compulsory vaccination and isolation, as Alison Bashford notes, raised “the crucial question of the sovereignty of individual embodied subjects, both in terms of the suspension of habeas corpus which public health detention powers were increasingly insisting upon, and in terms of incursions into familial and bodily space which vaccination entailed.”²¹ Anti-vaccinationism, which sought to defend the autonomy of the citizen body, enjoyed considerable support in many working-class communities in Europe and its colonies, although the level and tenor of opposition varied by locale.

Bodies in place

THE HISTORY OF DISEASE often reflects this intersection between the local and the global. There has also been a recent turn toward region in the Canadian history of medicine.²² Megan Davies suggests that “the concept of ‘region’ [in medical history] can help us understand the whole in a more nuanced way, demarcating boundaries and marking out potential sites of identity.”²³ She argues for a functional rather than a formal definition of region, stating, “[W]e can consider a multitude of factors that may be shaped by region: state and educational structures, sites of professional identity, routes of agency, and ethnic and cultural groupings.” Although less directly addressing “the West” as a category, new scholars—such as Kristin Burnett, Ryan Eyford, and Mary Jane McCallum—explore space and territoriality, settler-Aboriginal relationships, and a racialized pattern of state formation in which health and disease feature prominently,²⁴ building upon earlier work by Mary-Ellen Kelm, Maureen Lux, and Carolyn Strange,²⁵ and international scholarship such as the work of Alison Bashford, Ann Laura Stoler, Claire Hooker, and Warwick Anderson.²⁶

In the history of settler colonialism in Western Canada, the spatial management of disease through processes of public health (such as quarantine) play a central role, not only in Aboriginal communities but also among those marginalized groups within settler society that were similarly subjected to discourses of race, civilization, and progress. In his examination of the disease impact upon Aboriginal peoples and Icelandic immigrants to Manitoba, for instance, Eyford argues that the 1876–77 smallpox epidemic on the shores of Lake Winnipeg “demonstrates how Aboriginal dispossession and settler-colonialism were linked through the overlapping governmental apparatuses of territoriality and public health.”²⁷ Measures such as quarantine asserted the state’s power over individual bodies, but also over the spatial process of colonial transformation in the West.

What is yet missing from this consideration of space, place, and health in the West is the experience of urbanity. Epidemic disease in an urban context

generates heightened anxieties, not just of widespread and rapid contagion, but also of overt social disruption as hierarchies of class, ethnicity, race, and gender shape the disease experience and the epidemic reveals points of fragility in the legitimacy of the social order. The dominant theme of recent histories of immigrant bodies in North America has been the key role played by management of disease in constructing notions of race, ethnicity, and deserving citizenship, largely based in the urban experience. Nayan Shah argues that “the collection and interpretation of knowledge about the incidence of epidemic disease, mortality, and morbidity produced an ethnography of different groups and locations in the city, of their habits, and of their conditions.”²⁸ Public health regimes helped to determine the social boundaries of race and class in cities around the world in this era; the particularities of time and place make evident the specific processes of social “inclusion and exclusion” whereby public health shaped the body politic.²⁹

Epidemics and bodily resistance

THROUGH SHIFTING PROCESSES OF COERCION AND CONSENT, the state asserted its dominance over Indigenous inhabitants, unruly workers, and immigrants, and structured bodily experiences of disease in urban working-class life. Therefore, as a social relation so central to modern state formation, health was a key site of agency and contestation. The history of epidemic disease suggests a fruitful tension between the now-classic interpretation best represented by Charles Rosenberg—that epidemics “constitute a transverse section through society,” laying bare both the good and bad in social organization—and an alternative formulation that makes space for epidemic disease as a historical contingency that may reshape and transform social relations.³⁰ Without giving in entirely to a dramaturgical narrative that privileges the disease as biological agent, it is important to consider infectious disease as a site of interaction between human and nature, where people engage their embodiment and employ their agency.

Although not directly applying a theory of embodiment, suggestive here is the work of Marxist health sociologist Evan Stark, who theorizes disease as an “‘event’ with ideological, political, and socioeconomic dimensions”:

To the extent that epidemics can be traced to clearly definable social causes such as “poverty,” overcrowding, or the unequal distribution of services, they can be thought of as in some sense purposive, as done *by* and *with* as well as *to* people. In this context their definition is a dynamic phenomenon constituted politically—as well as “scientifically”—in the struggles that circulate along with physical illness.³¹

His 1977 article “The Epidemic as Social Event” argues that “the coincidence of periodic crises in [capitalist] production and in health ensured that ‘epidemics’ would be occasions for labour to struggle against injustice, not simply sickness.” Stark’s work is unusual in its emphasis upon an embodied resistance to capital expressed during epidemics, upon “epidemics as ‘praxis’ around the labour process.”³² Stark argues that the same conditions that led to labour struggles and riots—poor living conditions and a relative worsening of material well-being—led to epidemics. The coincidence of epidemics and revolt in the nineteenth century was a reflection of a failure in social and political authority and arose out of workers’ awareness of the social nature of disease. Stark contends that epidemics heighten class-consciousness, sharpening workers’ perception of social power and the state’s illegitimacy; epidemics are also occasions for “mass social invention,” “collective self-help,” and “basic social reorganization.”³³ He draws a line connecting disasters, epidemics, and labour revolts; all are events that leave the existing order shaken and open up space for social transformation: “Like riots, famines, wars, fires, mass strikes, and rebellions, epidemics are stages for collective self-recognition and for the reconstruction of collective identities normally subordinated in everyday life to publicly acceptable ‘roles.’”³⁴ Collectivity not only implies that people reach out to one another out of necessity in order to survive. Acts of mutual reliance build bonds, release a “suppressed world” of workers’ culture, and suggest new forms of social relations.

An epidemic holds potential as *carnival*: the world is turned upside down, and upside down, the possibility of living differently emerges. Here Stark’s work resembles that of Rebecca Solnit, whose essay “The Uses of Disaster: Notes on Bad Weather and Good Government” also draws links between carnival and disaster. She concludes: “[D]isaster makes it clear that our interdependence is not only an inescapable fact but a fact worth celebrating—that the production of civil society is a work of love.... [A]t stake in stories of disaster is what version of human nature we will accept, and at stake in that choice is how will we govern.”³⁵

Within Canadian working-class history, bodily health, when mentioned at all, tends to be seen as a functional issue: disease might be another among the litany of indignities to which working people were subjected, but bodily experience of disease is not viewed as integral to working-class movements or ideologies, or as a catalyst in moments of overt challenge to the governing order. Historians have duly noted the impact of the Great War upon labour radicalism, yet have largely ignored the global 1918–19 influenza pandemic.³⁶ Yet each of these events produced approximately the same number of deaths (fifty-five to sixty thousand) in Canada, both presented new challenges to families because of their impact upon adults (60 percent of those who died from influenza in Winnipeg were between

ages twenty and thirty-nine),³⁷ and both were arguably experiences that held distinct meanings and consequences for the working-class and racialized minorities.

The history of pandemic influenza in Winnipeg illustrates the severity of epidemic disease for workers and families, and provides evidence of both mutual reliance and overt oppositional struggle against the public health response to disease, suggesting the delegitimization of state authority and social order, and an enhanced space for new forms of social organization. If a carnivalesque world of interdependence and inversion emerged in Winnipeg in 1918–19, however, it did not grow entirely from a vacuum: the diseased body was already a politicized and politicizing issue for working-class movements in the city.

Ethnicity, class and embodiment in Winnipeg

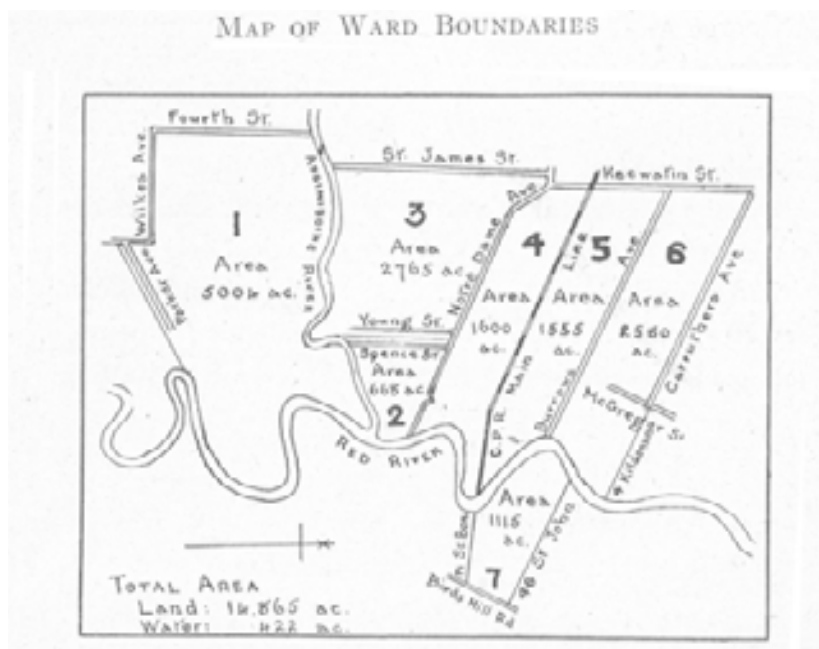
IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY WINNIPEG, which was simultaneously a frontier town and a particular kind of cosmopolitan metropolis, spatial geographies were critically shaped by the intersection of class and ethnicity, as geographer Daniel Hiebert has shown. Although not unique in its emergence from the profits of industrialization, settler colonization, and the displacement of Aboriginal peoples from the territory, Winnipeg had a relatively distinct trajectory as a Western Canadian city in the period. With a population of approximately 180,000 at the end of World War I, it was significantly larger than other communities in the region.³⁸ Although the city was past the peak of its rapid expansionary boom, it was still the most important financial, distribution and transportation, and manufacturing hub in the West. Almost half of Winnipeggers were immigrants; in the early 1930s, more than half could speak a language other than English. Even for the West, which had settled the vast majority of European immigrants to Canada in this era, this was a high level of diversity.³⁹ It was a city where European immigrants had made a visible impact on the development of large sections of the city centre. The most (in)famous immigrant district was the North End, but immigrants from Germany and Iceland, for example, lived and created social institutions in the west end.⁴⁰ Both districts were home to many working-class people of British or Anglo-Canadian backgrounds, not only European immigrants.

The city's social geography reflected significant economic inequality, intersecting with ethnic segregation. Winnipeg's labour force had an unusually high number of unskilled workers employed in menial labour creating urban infrastructure; the city also attracted seasonal labourers from the agricultural and railway sectors, mostly single men, seeking work in the city to tide them over through the winter months. Daniel Hiebert estimates that in 1921, 53 percent of the workforce was blue collar, an additional 17 percent worked in clerical/

sales, and 7.6 percent earned their living running small family-based businesses. A growing professional/managerial sector constituted 16 percent of the local labour market, but only 2.4 percent of Winnipeggers owned large businesses. The wealthiest of the city's population were almost entirely concentrated in two residential enclaves: Fort Rouge, immediately south of the Assiniboine River, and the area, today known as Armstrong's Point.

Health statistics gathered by the city health department in this era demonstrate not only the very real implications of inequality but also the preoccupation of health officials with ethnicity and economic status as determinants of poor health. The Bureau of Child Hygiene, for example, spatially tracked infant mortality rates and argued that the infants of "British" and "foreign born" populations were susceptible to different disease processes. Wards with high "foreign born" populations had "low death rates during the first month of life, but high mortality from the first to the sixth month, mainly due to improper feeding and pneumonia." Infant mortality in wards that included working-class "British" families living in rooming houses and cramped conditions "mainly occurred in infants less than one week old and were due to diseases of early infancy." The highest infant mortality rates in Winnipeg in 1919 were in the northern part of the city, on either side of the Red River, in ethnically mixed, working-class wards (wards 5 and 7).⁴¹

Despite a general awareness of the importance of poor housing, for example, in facilitating the transmission of disease, workers and immigrants were blamed for the spread of diseases such as smallpox, tuberculosis, and typhoid, and became the target of public health reform.⁴² Nayan Shah argues that over the first two decades of the twentieth century, public health tactics shifted from compulsion and coercion toward education and processes of self-governance and consent.⁴³ As many public health practitioners themselves clearly understood, health measures that relied upon compulsion provoked resistance in the population. Nadja Durbach has shown that in nineteenth-century England, opposition to the state's use of coercive health practices, such as compulsory smallpox vaccination, was deeply held in many working-class communities, and was politicized within a broader opposition to the New Poor Law and the 1832 *Anatomy Act*, which allowed medical practitioners to dissect the bodies of the poor without consent.⁴⁴ The small body of literature dealing with anti-vaccinationism in Canada has discussed the existence of an organized social movement to oppose compulsory vaccination in several Canadian cities. Not exclusively working class, anti-vaccinationists nevertheless argued that "compulsory vaccination was a class based legislation whose function was to exert control over the working classes."⁴⁵ In Ontario, for example, private and separate schools were exempt from legislation mandating compulsory vaccination for school attendance.⁴⁶



Source: City of Winnipeg, Annual Health Report, 1919.

Any shift in public health from coercion to consent was fragmentary and subject to retrenchment. Anti-vaccinationism in Winnipeg persisted into the twentieth century and was supported by many within labour and socialist circles. Working-class objection to vaccination was part of a larger discourse that resisted the loss of personal freedom at the hands of health officials and physicians. This opposition was expressed in letters to the editor of the Winnipeg worker paper, *The Voice*; in *The Voice* editorials; and in the “Woman’s Column.” Although it was officially published by the Trades and Labour Council (TLC), *The Voice* represented an eclectic mix of working-class opinion (albeit generally of Anglo-Canadian opinion), including the views of working-class feminists, socialists, trade unionists, social democrats, and single taxers. From the late nineteenth-century through to the Great War, letters from readers concerned with the public health measures taken to control the spread of infectious disease reveal a sense of disenfranchisement from the state. During a smallpox outbreak in Winnipeg in July 1897, a letter to *The Voice* referred positively to a British Royal Commission’s recommendation against compulsory smallpox vaccination, but noted that Winnipeg’s “wise [city] councilors thought it advisable not to put the means in the way of the people instructing themselves in the laws of health. They would rather the people think by proxy.”⁴⁷ It is clear from the

labour press that compulsory vaccination was a hotly debated subject in labour circles; *The Voice* referred to it as “this well worn and contentious subject.”⁴⁸

Discussion intensified as the city moved toward the closer enforcement of compulsory vaccination for school children, made possible under Manitoba’s *Public Health Act* (1893). The act gave Winnipeg school boards the authority to prevent unvaccinated children from attending school, an indirect but nonetheless assertive means of ensuring widespread smallpox vaccination, as parents were unlikely to forego their children’s education, however strongly they felt about smallpox vaccination. This authority appears not to have been widely exercised until 1901, when the school board decided to begin stricter monitoring of children’s vaccination. This decision was debated by the TLC, which had appointed a committee to examine the issue. Although there were dissenting voices in the discussion, the TLC passed a condemnation of compulsory vaccination in schools in December 1901.⁴⁹ In spring 1902, *The Voice* announced that an anti-vaccination league had been formed in Winnipeg. In May the league called on the province to repeal the compulsory clause of the *Public Health Act*. A letter to *The Voice* written by G.W. Winckler states that compulsory vaccination “is most oppressive and iniquitous, insisted upon an unfounded and exploded idea.”⁵⁰

Between 1902 and 1906, the labour press did not report again on the issue. From 1906 to 1912, however, anti-vaccinationism and opposition to mainstream medicine and public health found a voice in Ada Muir, who would regularly discuss health issues in her “Woman’s Column” in *The Voice* and who played a critical role in the founding and success of several health advocacy groups supported by labour, including the Winnipeg Health League. Ada Muir was born in Britain and trained as a nurse there before emigrating to Canada. The mother of six, she was an active feminist who worked alongside Nellie McClung to change the dower law and gain women’s suffrage. She was also a founding member of the working-class Women’s Labour League, led by Helen Armstrong.⁵¹ She and her family left Winnipeg for Vancouver in 1912, where Ada and her husband, Alan, continued to be active on health issues. In the 1920s, they were vocal opponents of the sterilization of the feeble-minded and the mentally ill.⁵²

Ada Muir’s overlapping political commitments and oppositional views on a number of issues were not uncommon in health movements of the era.⁵³ She was a proponent of natural health and an anti-vaccinationist, and she explicitly rejected the germ theory of disease. “The germ scare is only a medical scare craze,”⁵⁴ she bluntly argued in 1911. Health was more than the absence of the disease organism: “Health may be said to exist in a proportionately well balanced organism enjoying full vitality.... Whatever causes loss of life force or vitality would produce a condition of depression or anxiety rendering the body unbalanced, and therefore liable to disease at its weakest point.”⁵⁵ Illnesses such as tu-

berculosis were caused not by *bacilli*, in her view, but by “nervous depletion of the chest from worry, poverty, strain, or restraint. It is caused by dirty and unwholesome conditions, and is purely an economic and social disease.”⁵⁶ Tuberculosis, in Muir’s view, would best be addressed by an improvement in the material conditions of working-class life: “Give to everyone the right to live. Improve working conditions and remove the cause of the workman’s fear that when old and unfit for employment he will starve, and many a consumptive case will be prevented.”⁵⁷

Muir was consistently hostile to the medical profession and to other professionals such as teachers and social workers who exerted control over working-class parents. In 1906 Muir warned against medical usurpation of citizen control over health. “Instead of the doctor’s calling being legitimate and beneficial,” she cautioned, “it is becoming more and more meddling and despotic, and the government seems unequal to the task of contending with the profession.”⁵⁸ She opposed government legislation that gave allopathic medicine a legal monopoly over the provision of medical care by excluding other types of practitioners such as chiropractors and naturopaths, arguing that families should have the right to seek and receive medical help from providers of their own choosing, as well as friends and neighbours.⁵⁹

Muir considered the medical inspection and compulsory vaccination of school children to be violations of working-class freedom without demonstrable cause, as neither would improve the health of working families. Muir disputed the effectiveness of the smallpox vaccine, and like opponents elsewhere in Canada and in Britain, characterized vaccination as defilement of the pure bodies of working-class children. “If a man were to put a rotten apple in the middle of a barrel of good ones and say he did it as a preventive of more rotteness, we should consider him crazy. So in the next generation will the man be judged who introduces a disease into the pure life blood of a little child.”⁶⁰ In 1908 and 1909, Muir urged parents to protest vaccination and medical inspection by withdrawing their children from school when they were to take place. Not only were public health measures autocratic, but they also failed to address the fundamental cause of illness: “How will medical inspection provide a remedy for the thousands of poor who must live on less than a living wage during eight months of the year and on nothing at all the remaining four?” she queried.⁶¹ Muir became the central working-class voice for anti-vaccination after the inauguration of her column in 1906.

Muir’s ideas, which were explicitly oppositional to the state, were not universally held in the labour and socialist community, particularly by labour parties, which tended to give greater support to the development of state medicine and public health.⁶² Her position and her writings exposed the tension within working-class politics between the desire to compel the state to articulate a greater de-

gree of regard and support for the bodies of its citizens and a profound mistrust of state power over those bodies. In February 1908, the Canadian Labour Party organized a lecture by Dr. C.T. Sharpe, a practicing physician in Winnipeg's North End, entitled "Tuberculosis as It Affects Wage-Earners." Sharpe began by explaining the germ theory to his audience and appeared to express sympathy for the health implications of poverty and poor housing. He told the story of an immigrant family moving into a rented house whose former resident suffered from tuberculosis. Due to economic hardship—perhaps requiring the sharing of the same bed—two of the family's children contracted bronchitis, which eventually worsened into tuberculosis. This would have been a familiar scenario for his audience. Yet Sharpe's discussion of remedies for the situation illustrated the yawning gap between the world views of working families and public health and medical approaches to disease causation and control: his solution was not to increase incomes, improve housing conditions, or even provide better medical care for working-class tuberculosis sufferers but rather to implement a system of compulsory notification of disease, house inspections by health officials, and a public record of the health history of every home. He also called for the appointment of a full-time minister of health in Manitoba, a qualified physician.⁶³

Ada Muir and other anti-vaccinationists openly voiced their concern at Sharpe's suggestions, and, according to *The Voice*, the audience at the lecture "became demonstrative and plainly sympathetic" to their criticism. Muir was typically scathingly critical of medicine in her defence of the bodily autonomy of "the people":

The suggestion that the Health Board keep a record of every house, would if carried out create an ideal condition for the doctors, bringing about a medical inquisition similar to the theological inquisition of the middle ages, whereby the profession backed by the laws and the political force would have absolute control of the bodies of the people and incidentally their purses.⁶⁴

In her writings, Muir drew on the discourse of British justice and the right to liberty of the British working man (and woman), drawing upon a rich tradition in working-class rhetoric in Winnipeg. As Chad Reimer has demonstrated, this was the language of the workers' revolt in 1919.⁶⁵ Decrying state power over the health practices of working mothers and fathers, Muir urged her audience to resist:

What are we that we will tamely allow irresponsible practitioners to take our children from our care? Has British pluck died out of the resi-

dent Britishers that they will tolerate such an infringement of their liberty? Remember the mothers of Bristol, who stormed the school doors crying "We won't have our children undressed," and the doctor and nurse were afraid.... Remember the mothers of Huddersfield who emptied the schools on medical inspection day.... Do we so bow to the great Winnipeg god, Respectability, that every nobler trait shall be subservient to it?"⁶⁶

Ada Muir's discussion of health in her "Woman's Column" drew attention to the fraught and at times conflictual relationship between workers' bodies and the state. It is difficult to assess to what degree she reflected broader thinking or influenced her readership, but Muir considered health issues central, not peripheral, to labour politics and activism. Her intense and often personal hostility to mainstream medicine may ultimately have resulted in the cancellation of her column, which ended in September 1912 after a series of heated exchanges between Muir and a reader named George Keays, who challenged Muir's comprehension of medical science, charges against which Muir robustly defended herself.⁶⁷ Yet she was not alone in arguing for a class analysis of disease causation and in opposing state and medical control of the working-class body. Her advocacy in *The Voice* was a factor in the establishment of the Winnipeg Health League in 1907, and she contributed to the league until its demise in 1909. The league began after a series of letters to the "Woman's Column" suggested that anti-vaccinationists and other critics of mainstream medicine organize themselves into a group whose purpose would be to advocate "medical freedom."

The president of the Winnipeg Health League was Ada's husband, Alan Muir, and the vice-president was Fred Dixon, an advocate of the single tax and a Labour member of the provincial legislature.⁶⁸ Dixon would (with J.S. Woodsworth) assume the editorship of the *Western Labour News* after the arrest of William Ivens during the Winnipeg General Strike. Ivens, the leader of the Labour Church and a future member of the provincial legislature, also resisted medical orthodoxies and became a chiropractor after the strike.⁶⁹ The Health League published articles critical of the city's health policy, opposing compulsory vaccination and holding public lectures and meetings on a variety of health questions. Although the level of interest in the league's activities appears to have been fairly high, the group discontinued its lectures in spring 1908. It was followed a few years later by the Manitoba Medical Freedom League, formed in 1914.⁷⁰ This organization was also short lived. Dixon himself continued to advocate for improved health conditions for workers through higher wages. In 1911 he criticized the health department for missing the true cause of overcrowding and disease in the city's North End: poverty.⁷¹

Despite this economic analysis, health activists whose views were expressed in *The Voice* often shared dominant understandings of “foreign” bodies as potentially diseased and requiring instruction in “a higher standard of domestic and personal life,” as the Winnipeg Health League stated in 1907.⁷² In 1908 Muir argued that “the living conditions of non-British immigrants might be improved through a program of modern domestic education and the regular sanitary inspection of immigrant public housing.” At the same time, Muir referred to “the Canadian alien” as “a desirable class,” which would have distinguished her views from those of many in the city’s Anglo-Canadian elite.⁷³ That year, *The Voice* reported with outrage the use of force against a “foreign” mother who was handcuffed to her bedpost by police in order to remove her child with diphtheria to the hospital.⁷⁴ As much as non-British immigrants were viewed as other, they too were entitled to freedom from medical coercion.

Influenza 1918–19

THIS CRITIQUE OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH formed the backdrop to the coming confrontation between labour and health officials during the 1918–19 influenza pandemic. Twelve hundred women, men, and their children died of influenza in Winnipeg that season, sometimes in desperately tragic circumstances. A thirty-four-year-old carpenter lost his wife, mother to five children, the youngest of whom was nine months old.⁷⁵ A six-year-old boy sat for a day and a half alone with the body of his mother, who had worked at a department store lunch counter while her husband fought overseas.⁷⁶ The wife of a Jewish peddler miscarried seven months into her pregnancy and died, leaving her husband and two children in the care of the local nursing mission.⁷⁷ Brother Woodcock, a member of the carpenters’ local union of which future General Strike leader George Armstrong was business agent, died in February 1919. His widow was left with two small children and was pregnant.⁷⁸ In December 1918, R.B. Russell organized the funeral of his comrade Ray Calhoun, president of the Metal Trades Council, who was married with one child.⁷⁹ “The sympathy of all the workers of Winnipeg goes out to all his relatives in their loss,” said his obituary in the *Western Labour News*. Dead, too, was Isabella Duncan, head of the Winnipeg Housemaids’ Union.⁸⁰ The labour movement lost, grieved, and raged.

Influenza had arrived in Winnipeg on 30 September 1918 and was soon made a “notifiable disease” by the provincial government.⁸¹ Provincial authority over disease containment was delegated to the municipal governments. Most public health responses to influenza were determined by local government and Winnipeg’s Medical Officer of Health Alexander Douglas. Douglas and his staff preferred to operate according to principles of consent rather than overt coer-

cion. Instead of forcing the infected to be confined in hospital isolation wards, for example, the health department emphasized the importance of educating the public (including “foreign” immigrants) and the reporting of cases. As I have argued elsewhere, although the city did ultimately institute the quarantine and placarding of infected households, Douglas agreed with other health professionals who argued that placarding merely encouraged the public to hide the infected from authorities.⁸² The main strategies employed by the health department to fight influenza were mandatory closures of public gathering places, an immunization campaign, and public education about how to prevent the disease and what to do if infected.

Although historians of the influenza pandemic in North America have often argued that the 1918–19 influenza pandemic crossed classes and ethnicities, recent scholarship has challenged this, suggesting that illness and death from influenza was shaped by social inequality.⁸³ The Winnipeg experience supports this view. While the disease affected all social groups, Winnipeg’s working class and immigrant poor were hardest hit. Between October 1918 and January 1919, the North End of Winnipeg suffered nearly four and a half times as many dead as did the more prosperous region south of the Assiniboine River: 6.73 deaths per 1,000 population compared with 4.02 per 1,000.⁸⁴

Many of the claims about economic hardship made by labour interests in Winnipeg before and during the 1919 General Strike were highly relevant in the pandemic situation. In the later years of the war, households lost considerable purchasing power relative to wages as inflation undermined income levels. Winnipeg housing in working-class and immigrant districts was of poor quality and overcrowded. Keeping the sick clean, dry, and comfortable could be impossible for working families. The majority of homes in the North End had no baths.⁸⁵ In an epidemic disease context, even more than in ordinary life, hygiene was a luxury that the well-off could afford but for which the poor struggled.⁸⁶

In this economic context, household earners could not afford to lose wages, and many would have continued to work even after they developed symptoms of influenza and would have returned to work before they were truly well. While the available evidence is fragmentary, work itself could increase susceptibility to contracting the disease. Those in public service and professional occupations—doctors, nurses, social workers, child welfare workers—who were exposed to high numbers of influenza cases were certainly at high risk. But so too were railway workers, city transportation workers, police, ambulance drivers, and telephone operators, as well as factory workers, probably because of the poor ventilation and close quarters of their workplaces.

During the peak period of the epidemic in mid-November, public health authorities estimated that there were approximately three hundred new cases

of influenza in the city each day; on November 15, forty-three deaths were reported.⁸⁷ Although the city had opened emergency hospital beds for flu victims, many were left empty as people remained in their homes.⁸⁸ It seems clear that, for a time, the demands of coping with influenza disrupted workers' everyday lives, and they called upon informal and formal networks of communal solidarity in an extraordinary way. These sources of support included ethnically based mutual aid organizations, unions, the Labour Church, and groups such as the Women's Labour League, which collected funds to help those widowed during the epidemic. While many working families were assisted by volunteer nurses and missions,⁸⁹ others organized themselves into informal support networks to help their neighbours.⁹⁰ Family, extended kin, friends, neighbours, comrades—these relationships were crucial to survival, even if they did at times fail. The preservation of life and health moved beyond the private domain, becoming dependent upon bonds between people rather than upon individual behaviour (avoiding crowds, seeking medical attention, observing health quarantines), as the dominant public health paradigm asserted. These bonds formed one crucial element of an embodied praxis that subverted the legitimacy of the social order.

Other elements of this praxis were more overtly defiant.⁹¹ During the epidemic, public health policy and disease containment became directly interwoven with a key demand of Winnipeg's labour movement: the right to a living wage. Taken as a measure to limit the spread of influenza, the city health department in Winnipeg, like those in many other North American cities, announced on 11 October 1918 a ban on public meetings and the closure of public gathering places. The list of those affected by the meeting ban included "theatres, schools, boarding schools, the university, the medical school, churches, lodges, exhibitions, and all public meetings."⁹² The closure was also extended to places of entertainment, including theatres, billiard parlours, and bowling alleys. The ban lasted forty-six days—the longest in North America, according to the *Tribune*—and caused "considerable unrest among businessmen" as their incomes and profits were more deeply affected than they had initially expected, particularly those who owned places of entertainment.⁹³

The closure of entertainment venues in the city put between three and four hundred theatre, billiard parlour, and bowling alley workers out of work, without financial compensation, for over six weeks. This infuriated the Trades and Labour Council (TLC), which on 1 November 1918 bellowed on the front page of the *Western Labour News*: "Men cannot be allowed to starve in a time of epidemic."⁹⁴ Labour employed a gendered discourse to emphasize the threat influenza posed to the male wage, and by extension to working families, employing what Elizabeth Faue refers to as "the masculine solidarity of workplace

conflict.”⁹⁵ Female workers were not directly visible in this rhetoric; however, women played a role in working-class resistance to public health regulation, claiming their authority as wives and mothers in writing to city council to protest the impact of the public closures upon their families’ well-being.⁹⁶

When the closures were first announced, the business community quietly supported them, although with mixed motives. Owners of places of entertainment feared that the epidemic, regardless of any public health measures, would reduce business and that they would be forced to pay their employees’ wages with reduced revenue coming in. The health department’s decree allowed them, essentially, to lay off their workers without having to bear the responsibility or the wrath of their employees, such as members of the Winnipeg Musicians’ Union. And, indeed, labour did direct its opposition toward the state, not employers. It was not the public closures *per se* that labour resisted, but rather the failure by health authorities to consider the economic devastation that this would mean for hundreds of working families during a time of economic vulnerability and instability.

The TLC responded immediately to the announcement of public closures and took the workers’ case to two levels of government, provincial and municipal. The public meeting ban had been declared under the authority of the provincial government’s *Public Health Act*. The Provincial Board of Health was responsible to the provincial Municipal Commissioner, and in 1918 that cabinet post was held by a prominent Manitoba physician, James William Armstrong. Armstrong was socially progressive, an advocate of women’s suffrage and equality rights in the government that gave Manitoba women the right to vote in 1916,⁹⁷ but his government did not give a sympathetic hearing to labour’s arguments regarding wage compensation. After hearing the complaints of labour representatives, Armstrong evaded any responsibility and denied any undue suffering on the part of the employees:

Some hardships must be encountered in carrying out any such provision. The board of health had no authority regarding the matter of wages, this being entirely within the province of the employers and employees. At such a time the whole community had to suffer a certain measure of inconvenience.⁹⁸

A few days later, the TLC appealed to the city’s Board of Control for the reimbursement of theatre employees’ lost wages. The workers’ case was presented by T.J. Murray, the solicitor for the Dominion Labour Party. He argued that employees could not find work by leaving the city because theatres were also closed in other nearby cities, such as Minneapolis. On October 21, a deputation

of business owners appeared before the Board in support of their employees.⁹⁹ As a result, the Board agreed to appoint a committee to take up the issue with the provincial government. The mayor and Board of Control were careful to “repudiate any legal liability.” Frank Kerr, the relief commissioner, was asked to help the men find temporary work, and it was suggested that families could be provided with cheap firewood.¹⁰⁰

But working men, and their wives, resented the refusal of the city to offer any solution apart from relief. The issue from their point of view was one of basic fairness and community responsibility in a time of crisis. The suggestion that workers laid off as a direct result of public health policy be dealt with by relief authorities was unfair and an affront to values of self-reliance, independence, and British justice.¹⁰¹ Labour argued that the loss of wage “was incurred in behalf of the public generally, and that injustice would be done if working men were compelled to suffer for the public good, without at least a portion of the cost being met by the people generally.”¹⁰²

Letters to the Board of Control document the desperation of those families who lost their main source of income through the implementation of the *Public Health Act*.¹⁰³ The Provincial Exhibitors Association wrote in support of the Winnipeg Musicians’ Association, pointing out that more than eighty Winnipeg musicians, the majority of whom were married, had lost more than \$15,000 in wages; the TLC approximated \$23,000 in lost wages overall.¹⁰⁴ The Board of Control, which met only twice during the epidemic (and full city council not at all), declined to appeal to the provincial government on the workers’ behalf. Since employees had already made their case directly to the province, the Board argued that it “could not add anything further to the representation of the case” and that such a meeting was therefore unnecessary.¹⁰⁵ The Board referred the issue of compensation to the city solicitor for a legal opinion, and he reassured them that “the City has no authority to grant any such compensation.”¹⁰⁶ Labour’s vision of governance and social justice confronted a state that did not acknowledge workers’ sense of fairness or entitlement.

Embodied praxis and labour resistance

IF, AS IAN MCKAY ARGUES, the period 1915–20 witnessed an “organic crisis of liberal order,” resistance to health inequality played an important, if neglected, role in the hegemonic challenge.¹⁰⁷ The global influenza pandemic of 1918–19 served to emphasize in a compelling and tragic way the health implications of social hierarchy, the longstanding failure of the state to respond to the health needs of the people, and the state’s tendency to discipline the working-class body through health measures that were class-biased and perceived as unjust. Demands for bodily

autonomy and “medical freedom” in Winnipeg in the period before the pandemic reveal an embodied praxis constructed not only around work itself, but also in relation to the perceived social nature of illness. In labour’s discourse, health was less an individual matter than a political one, shaped by class and ethnic relations and state power. Given this already existing critique, labour’s response to the 1918–19 influenza pandemic can be seen not as an isolated reaction but as intricately woven into the context of labour struggle in this period. The epidemic, within a context of broader demands for health equality and freedom from coercion, greatly intensified both mutual reliance and opposition to the state, and created an opening through which an alternate social order could be imagined and lived. In many suggestive ways, then, the influenza pandemic resembles Stark’s epidemic as praxis and Solnit’s “crash course in consciousness,” and sheds new light upon McKay’s argument that Winnipeg in 1919 was a place where “new relations of freedom” were tested.¹⁰⁸

This was not a permanent space; it was fleeting. But it is no less important for that. Theories of embodiment urge us to view the working-class body as both historical subject and unfinished project. As Chris Shilling argues,

the shapes, sizes and meanings of the body are not given at birth and neither is the body’s future experience of well-being: the body is an entity which can be “completed” only through human labour.... [S]ocial relations, inequalities and oppressions are manifest not simply in the form of differential access to economic, educational or cultural resources but are *embodied*.¹⁰⁹

This embodiment is made real and is starkly revealed in the experience of epidemic disease. Diseased working-class bodies are not merely victims of a social order but bodies of resistance and rage. They are, if we like, “real” material bodies that exist in a place, a social landscape constituted by specific, historically constituted power relations: “a landscape for politics.”¹¹⁰ *

Notes

- 1 This paper could not have been written without research in the labour press carried out by Desmond Fitzgibbon. I also wish to thank two anonymous readers for their helpful comments and the editors of this volume for their encouragement of this project.
- 2 Quoted in Norman Penner, ed., *Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers’ Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1975), 78. This poem is also quoted in Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People’s Enlightenment in Canada, 1890–1920* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008), 478. He refers to it as “drawing on the organic language of parasitism.” I would add that the power of

the metaphor for the paper's working-class audience lies with their experience of bodily marginalization and resistance. References to flesh and blood operate in and through language but express a bodily experience of inequality.

- 3 This paper is a fine-tuning of my earlier work on the connection between epidemics and revolt. See Eysyllt W. Jones, *Influenza 1918: Disease, Death, and Struggle in Winnipeg* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), chaps. 5 and 6.
- 4 Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900–50* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), 174. The gendered body and colonialism is also the theme of Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale, eds., *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005).
- 5 Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 169.
- 6 Ava Baron and Eileen Boris, "'The Body' as a Useful Category of Analysis for Working-Class History," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 4, no. 2 (2007): 23.
- 7 Baron and Boris, "'Body' as a Useful Category," 24.
- 8 Leslie Adelson, *Making Bodies, Making History: Feminism and German Identity* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), xiii.
- 9 Canning, *Gender History in Practice*, 179.
- 10 Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 208.
- 11 David Armstrong, *The Political Anatomy of the Body: Medical Knowledge in Britain in the Twentieth Century*, quoted in Turner, *Body and Society*, 206.
- 12 Turner, *Body and Society*, 206.
- 13 Baron and Boris, "'Body' as a Useful Category," 23.
- 14 Alan Derickson, *Workers' Health, Workers' Democracy: The Western Miners' Struggle, 1891–1925* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Alan Derickson, *Health Security for All: Dreams of Universal Health Care in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, eds., *Dying for Work: Workers' Safety and Health in Twentieth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Amy Fairchild, *Science at the Borders: Immigrant Medical Inspection and the Shaping of the Modern Industrial Labor Force* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).
- 15 Peter Bailey, "Languages of Pleasure in Britain's Belle Epoque," *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 82–94.
- 16 Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1874–1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996); Lara Marks, *Model Mothers: Jewish Mothers and Maternity Provision in East London, 1870–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

- 17 There is a long tradition of “social medicine” and historical perspectives that privilege the role of social inequality and poverty in illness and disease. See, for example, Richard J. Evans, *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years* (London: Penguin Books, 2005); Georgina Feldberg, *Disease and Class: Tuberculosis and the Shaping of Modern North American Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Christopher Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick: Britain, 1800–1854* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Randall Packard, *White Plague, Black Labor: Tuberculosis and the Political Economy of Health and Disease in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
- 18 Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Editions, 2003), 109.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 126.
- 20 Mona Gleason, “Race, Class and Health: School Medical Inspection and ‘Healthy’ Children in British Columbia, 1890 to 1930,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 19, no. 1 (2002): 95–112; Jennifer Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity, and the Gendering of Canada’s Welfare State, 1939–1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).
- 21 Alison Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 51.
- 22 Chris Dooley, “Reflections on ‘Region’ in Recent Writings on the History of Health and Medicine in Canada,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 166–84.
- 23 Megan Davies, “Mapping ‘Region’ in Canadian Medical History: The Case of British Columbia,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 17 (2001): 73. See also Peter Twohig, ed., “Written on the Landscape: Health and Regionalism in Canada,” special issue, *Journal of Canadian Studies* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 7.
- 24 Kristen Burnett, “Building the System: Churches, Missionary Organizations, the Federal State, and Health Care in Southern Alberta Treaty 7 Communities, 1890–1930,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 18–41; Ryan Eyford, “Quarantined within a New Colonial Order: The 1876–1877 Lake Winnipeg Smallpox Epidemic,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17, no. 1 (2006): 55–78; Mary-Jane McCallum, “This Last Frontier: Isolation and Aboriginal Health,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 22, no. 1 (2005): 103–20.
- 25 Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*; Maureen Lux, *Medicine That Walks: Disease, Medicine and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Alison Bashford and Carolyn Strange, *Isolation: Places and Practices of Exclusion* (London: Routledge, 2003).
- 26 Alison Bashford and Claire Hooker, *Contagion: Historical and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 2001); Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).
- 27 Eyford, “Quarantined,” 57.
- 28 Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 4.

- 29 Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 6. See also Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). Both works make race the central category of analysis and sometimes refer to “race and class” as intertwined. A work that deals more clearly with capital and labour is Fairchild, *Science at the Borders*.
- 30 Charles Rosenberg, “What is an Epidemic? AIDS in Historical Perspective,” in *Explaining Epidemics and Other Studies in the History of Medicine*, ed. Charles Rosenberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 279.
- 31 Evan Stark, “The Epidemic as Social Event,” *International Journal of Health Services* 7, no. 4 (1977): 682.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid., 687, 686.
- 34 Ibid., 687.
- 35 Rebecca Solnit, “The Uses of Disaster: Notes on Bad Weather and Good Government,” *Harper’s Magazine* (October 2005): 31–37; web-exclusive postscript at <http://harpers.org/archive/2005/10/0080774>.
- 36 Historians from a variety of interpretive perspectives have pointed to the role of the war in generating worker resistance. See David Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1974); Chad Reimer, “War, Nationhood and Working-Class Entitlement: The Counterhegemonic Challenge of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike,” *Prairie Forum* 18, no. 2 (1993): 219–37.
- 37 City of Winnipeg, *Annual Health Report*, 1918.
- 38 At the beginning of the First World War, Regina’s population was just over 34,000. <http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/regina.html>. In 1918 the population of Edmonton was 57,000. City of Edmonton, Planning and Development, “City of Edmonton Population, Historical,” August 2008, [www.edmonton.ca/business/documents/InfraPlan/Edmonton_Population_Historical\(1\).pdf](http://www.edmonton.ca/business/documents/InfraPlan/Edmonton_Population_Historical(1).pdf).
- 39 Gerald Friesen and Royden Loewen, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), chap. 2. See also Marvin Macinnis, “Canada’s Population in the Twentieth Century,” in Michael R. Haines and Richard Hall Steckel, eds., *A Population History of North America* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 541, 545.
- 40 Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes: Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008).
- 41 City of Winnipeg Health Department, *Report of the Bureau of Child Hygiene* (1919), 121, 126.
- 42 For Winnipeg, see Marion McKay, “Region, Faith, and Health: The Development of Winnipeg’s Visiting Nursing Agencies, 1897–1926,” in Jane Elliot, Meryn Stuart, and Cynthia Toman, eds., *Place and Practice in Canadian Nursing History* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 70–90.

- 43 The transition away from compulsion is traced in Esyllt W. Jones, "'Cooperation in All Human Endeavour': Quarantine and Immigrant Disease Vectors in the 1918–1919 Influenza Pandemic in Canada," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 22, no. 1 (2005): 119–40. See also Shah, *Contagious Divides*.
- 44 Nadja Durbach, *Bodily Matters: The Anti-Vaccination Movement in England, 1853–1907* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). Anti-vaccinationism and opposition to compulsory isolation of the diseased also flourished in the colonial settings, where public health practices tended to be overtly coercive. Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene*, chaps. 1 and 2.
- 45 Jennifer Keelan, "The Canadian Anti-Vaccination Leagues 1872–1892" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2004), 1–2.
- 46 Katherine Arnup, "'Victims of Vaccination? Opposition to Compulsory Immunization in Ontario, 1900–1990,'" *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 9, no. 2 (1992): 162–63. See also Paul Bator, "The Health Reformers versus the Common Canadian: The Controversy over Compulsory Vaccination against Smallpox in Toronto and Ontario, 1900–1920," *Ontario History* 75, no. 4 (1983): 348–73.
- 47 *The Voice*, 17 July 1897. The British Royal Commission on Vaccination presented its findings in 1896. While the commission did in fact recommend the continuation of compulsory vaccination, it suggested that parliament include a conscientious objector clause. Durbach, "Conscientious Objector," 68.
- 48 *The Voice*, 27 December 1901.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 *The Voice*, 9 and 16 May 1902.
- 51 Anne Molgat, "'The Voice' and the Women of Winnipeg" (master's thesis, University of Ottawa, 1988), 89.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 92.
- 53 Nadja Durbach, "Class, Gender, and the Conscientious Objector to Vaccination," *Journal of British Studies* 41 (January, 2002): 61. Durbach notes the links between female anti-vaccinationism, the movement for the female franchise, opposition to the *Contagious Diseases Acts*, vegetarianism, and anti-vivisection in late-nineteenth-century England.
- 54 *The Voice*, 24 February 1911.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 16 February 1906.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 2 April 1909.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 24 May 1907.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 2 March 1906.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 *Ibid.*, 7 April 1911.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 27 August 1909.

- 62 Muir disagreed with the Independent Labour Party's support for compulsory education, since this would require the vaccination of all school-age children.
- 63 A summary of Dr. C.T. Sharpe's lecture appeared in *The Voice*, 6 March 1908.
- 64 *The Voice*, 29 February 1908.
- 65 Reimer, "War, Nationhood and Working-Class Entitlement."
- 66 *The Voice*, 3 September 1909.
- 67 This exchange took place June through August 1912. See *The Voice*, 28 June, 5 July, 19 July, 23 August 1912. Muir's column ended 20 September 1912.
- 68 Fred Dixon first ran for the provincial legislature as a Labour Party candidate in 1910 but was narrowly defeated as a result of a split in the left vote when a Socialist Party candidate entered the race. In 1914 Dixon ran again, with the endorsement of the Labour Representation Committee, a joint venture of the Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party. This time his bid was successful. Doug Smith, *Let Us Rise! An Illustrated History of the Manitoba Labour Movement* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1985), 29–30.
- 69 After the General Strike and during the last year of the Labour Church's existence, Ivens became a chiropractor, an occupation outside of the allopathic medical mainstream. As a member of the provincial legislature, Ivens often addressed health inequality. Michael Butt, "'To Each According to His Need, and from Each According to His Ability. Why Cannot the World See This?': The Politics of William Ivens, 1916–1936" (master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 1993), 187–200.
- 70 *The Voice*, 19 July 1907, 8 May 1914.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 2 June 1911.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 18 October 1907.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 21 August 1908.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 20 November 1908, 7.
- 75 Manitoba Archives (hereafter cited as MA), P5436, Children's Home of Winnipeg, case file 2225.
- 76 *Winnipeg Tribune*, 21 November 1918, 2.
- 77 MA, MG10 B9, Margaret Scott Nursing Mission Applications for Nursing, Attendance and Relief, 1908–1921, 8277.
- 78 MA, P3351, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America Local 343, minutes, 14 February 1919.
- 79 *Western Labour News*, 13 December 1918.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 15 November 1918.
- 81 For a discussion of public health measures during the epidemic, see Jones, *Influenza 1918*, chap. 3.
- 82 Jones, "'Cooperation in All Human Endeavour.'"

- 83 See, for example, D. Ann Herring and Ellen Korol, "The North/South Divide: Social Inequality and Mortality from the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Hamilton, Ontario," in *Epidemic Encounters: New Interpretations of Pandemic Influenza in Canada, 1918–1920*, eds. Magda Farhni and Eshyllt W. Jones (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, forthcoming); Sverren-Erik Mamelund, "A Socially Neutral Disease? Individual Social Class, Household Wealth and Mortality from Spanish Influenza in Two Socially Contrasting Parishes in Kristiana 1918–19," *Social Science and Medicine* 62 (2006): 923–40. For an argument that ethnicity was more significant than socio-economic factors in shaping influenza mortality, see Peter Tuckel, Sharon Sassler, Richard Maisel, and Andrew Leykam, "The Diffusion of the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 in Hartford, Connecticut," *Social Science History* 30, no. 2 (2006): 167–96.
- 84 City of Winnipeg, *Annual Health Report*, 1918.
- 85 In 1921 fewer than 33 percent of North End homes had baths. City of Winnipeg, "Report on a Housing Survey," (1921), 51–83, as cited in Orest Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada, The Formative Period, 1891–1924* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1991), 142.
- 86 For a discussion of the relevance of social inequality to hygiene and the prevention of cholera, see Evans, *Death in Hamburg*, 409–12. The well-off had domestic servants to boil all water and maintain strict hygiene in their households. The poor lacked running water, had to carry water long distances, and lacked the fuel and person-power to boil all of their water. They were therefore more likely to contract cholera.
- 87 *Manitoba Free Press*, 15 November 1918, 11.
- 88 *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 November 1918, 6; 16 November 1918, 3.
- 89 For a discussion of nursing relief, see Jones, *Influenza 1918*, chap. 4.
- 90 *Winnipeg Tribune*, 12 November 1918, 6.
- 91 I have discussed elsewhere the struggle over the respectable burial of working-class bodies. "Politicizing the Labouring Body: Working Families, Death and Burial in Winnipeg's Influenza Epidemic, 1918–1919," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History in the Americas* 3, no. 3 (2006): 57–76.
- 92 *Manitoba Free Press*, 11 October 1918, 1.
- 93 *Winnipeg Tribune*, 22 November 1918, 1.
- 94 *Western Labour News*, 1 November 1918, 1.
- 95 Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 71.
- 96 See the letters written to the Board of Control by Mrs. Lamoreaux, the wife of a theatre employee put out of work by the public closure. Jones, *Influenza 1918*, 4, 111–12.
- 97 MA, P 2192, file 4, 15, 16. James Armstrong was born into a farming family in Nova Scotia, attended Acadia College, and became a school teacher. He came to Manitoba in 1889 to teach in Brandon, decided the following year to enrol in the

- Manitoba Medical College, and graduated in 1893. After postgraduate study at Guys Hospital in London, England, he established a practice in Gladstone, a rural community about a hundred miles west of Winnipeg. Active in politics as a Liberal, he sat as a member of the legislative assembly from 1907 to 1921. He moved to Winnipeg in 1915 and was appointed to Tobias Norris' first cabinet, serving as provincial secretary and municipal commissioner (responsible for health).
- 98 *Manitoba Free Press*, 12 October 1918, 4.
- 99 City of Winnipeg Archives (hereafter cited as CWA), Board of Control minutes, 16 and 21 October 1918.
- 100 *Winnipeg Tribune*, 16 October 1918, 1.
- 101 Craig Heron argues that the balance between self-reliance and community responsibility was central to labour politics in this era. See "Labourism and the Working Class," *Labour/Le Travail* 13 (Spring 1984): 62. For a discussion of demands for British law and justice in Winnipeg's labour movement in this period, see Reimer, "War, Nationhood and Working-Class Entitlement," 228–33.
- 102 *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 December 1918, 2.
- 103 CWA, Board of Control Correspondence, 014403, 26 October 1918; 0144036 November 1918.
- 104 CWA, Board of Control Correspondence 014426, 7 December 1918; City Council minutes, 9 December 1918.
- 105 CWA, Board of Control Correspondence 014426, 13 November 1918.
- 106 *Ibid.*, 13 December 1918.
- 107 McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise*, 426.
- 108 Solnit, "Uses of Disaster"; McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise*, 493. I don't share McKay's critique of the "liberal activists and intellectuals" who have shaped the memory of the strike as "a sort of natural disaster" (492). The disastrous, the uncanny, might be, as Leonard Cohen would say, the cracks where the light comes in, albeit not without those who proclaim it so.
- 109 Shilling, *Body and Social Theory*, 109.
- 110 See Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007).

Winnipeg's Moment: The Winnipeg Postal Strike of 1919¹

JOHN WILLIS

■ **The Winnipeg General Strike** is often depicted as the unified response of the city's workers to wartime deprivation and repression. That characterization of the Strike has some merit. But each group of striking workers had workplace histories of their own that shaped their demands during the Strike and then their response to employers' efforts to force an end to their militancy. This essay attempts to demonstrate the complexity of workers' aspirations at the end of World War I by focusing on a single group: the postal workers. As we shall see, these workers, and no doubt many others, had long-simmering complaints against their employers. The general militancy of the Strike period caused them to articulate their complaints as part of a more general workers' reaction to state and employer power. On the surface, the postal workers' demands may not appear especially radical. But as we shall see, to the Post Office, the effort of postal employees to have a say, however small, in how their work was organized was a threat to established power that would have to be met by force and firings. In modern day parlance, it could be said that this kind of change was not something the government of Canada was prepared to believe in. The lesson of the Winnipeg General Strike, for postal workers, for

all workers, would be that employers were unwilling to forgo their mastery of the labour process. Workers in Canada, including Western Canada, could indulge themselves in the trappings of parliamentary democracy. But they were to have no or little say in the conduct of their daily work lives. This contradiction is still very much a part of labour relations in Canada.

At the close of World War I, various tensions created domestic instability within Canada.² Three main strands—political strong-arming, labour ferment, and bourgeois paranoia—prevailed across the country. Events in Winnipeg helped bring about their intersection.

The Borden Conservatives, in power from 1911, provided the first strand of tension. Masquerading as Unionists in the federal election of December 1917, their imposition of conscription drove a wedge between Québec and the rest of the country, as well as eventually enraging the labouring population because working people were conscripted while war profits were not prohibited. The government's limited controls on the marketplace resulted in rampant inflation, which enriched a few profiteers and undermined the working-class family budget.³ The government managed the state with the interests of its friends in mind and used political strongmen to push its policies down the public's throat.

Labour, the second strand of contention, was becoming increasingly confident by 1916 of its ability to win gains for working people. Wartime production needs temporarily erased the pervasive unemployment of the pre-war period and reduced the threat to those in employment of repression if they demanded their rights. A broad band of labour radicalism and demands for reforms swept the country, beginning in 1917 and reaching their apex in 1919. Particularly strong in Western Canada, signs of the labour revolt could be found in every region of the nation, as well as in the other combatant nations.⁴ The third strand was the fear among the elite classes of foreigners in general and foreign-born revolutionaries in particular. During World War I, elites conveniently conflated the foreign enemy with the foreign-born "agitator," blaming the latter for legitimate complaints about who was profiting from the war and who was suffering. André Cellard and G. Pelletier have shown that bourgeois fear of these political *classes dangereuses* antedated the war. Then, as now, class fear resulted in the criminal code being used as bludgeon against social and ethnic targets.⁵

Tom Mitchell argues that the hysterical sense of fear, espoused by the bourgeoisie grouped under the auspices of the Committee of 1000, helped push the Canadian government to repress the General Strike in Winnipeg.⁶ Winnipeg labour, with a pre-war radical culture of opposition that the war had reinforced and strengthened, fought back.⁷ A face-off between the two sides seemed inevitable. The federal government had to take note of the strike not only because it threatened elite power across the country but also because its own postal work-

ers walked off the job. This was reason enough to send cabinet ministers from Ottawa to help get the situation under control. All three strands of contention played off one other like a party of kid-cars colliding at the midway.

The postal strike in Winnipeg that was part of the Winnipeg General Strike was no small matter. The Winnipeg postal workers, belonging to a vital service sector and consisting of roughly five hundred men, represented, along with the iron workers and the building tradesmen, a hotbed of labour revolt. Their actions were watched by fellow workers and by the government, for whom the postal walkout helped turn the General Strike into a national priority. At the time, the Post Office was the central medium of mass communication. Telephones and telegraphs did exist but were not available to all. In 1919 there was no radio broadcasting in Canada. The press was still enjoying its golden age, but without postal distribution, its reach was much hampered.⁸ In 1919 the post was the great information highway of the world.

To understand why postal workers joined the confrontation of 1919, we need to examine the decades-long history of labour organization within the Post Office. The management of labour within the postal system had its origins in the late nineteenth century. A system gradually evolved to ensure city home delivery by uniformed letter carriers, central Post Office buildings for coordinating mail, the blanketing of city streets with red mail boxes, and protocols for sorting mail by hand, generally in the rear of a post office outside the public view. The management of postal work was never entirely set in stone. At the turn of the century, the employer was still experimenting with various classification schemes so as to fit all workers into a common postal pecking order, with the letter carriers invariably relegated to the bottom. The "City Post Office Procedure," put out in 1934, ultimately codified work methods and responsibilities. Labour did not stand idly by as management sought unilaterally to control the work process. The 1919 strike was a manifestation of the demand that postal workers be heard.

Canadian postal employees were hardly pampered. Letter carriers received no salary increases from 1872 to 1902 to compensate for either inflation or a more productive economy. The Federated Association of Letter Carriers was created in 1891 to press for wage hikes.⁹ The Dominion Postal Clerks Association (later renamed the Postal Clerks Association of Canada) was founded in 1911 to represent the interests of clerks working inside the Post Office, a group at the mercy of managerial and political caprice, though higher in the pecking order than letter carriers. Neither union had a formal collective bargaining agreement with the employer. Each lobbied for statutes and regulations to improve working conditions. Mitchell and Naylor argue that more was at stake in the Winnipeg General Strike than the right to collective bargaining.¹⁰ Yet for

the posties, for whom collective bargaining proved elusive until the 1960s, that right was fundamental, though it was linked to their other demands.¹¹ These demands form the backdrop of the strike in 1918, and the ensuing period of 1918–19, which saw a rise in militancy among postal workers. Examining these two periods in succession, the article explores the strike of 1919 in terms of the issues involved, the government's response, taking into account the ongoing interface with the union, and the ensuing short- and long-term actions taken to reassemble the postal labour force.¹²

The 1918 Strike

IN WINNIPEG, the war occasioned vacancies in the ranks of civilian industry, including the Post Office. The government hired temporary employees to replace letter carriers who had gone to war, some never to return. Four were hired in 1915, eleven in 1916, twenty the following year, and fifteen during the first seven months of 1918.¹³ Many workers who escaped death in war were felled by the influenza pandemic of 1918–19. The minute book of the Winnipeg chapter of the Federation of Western Postal Employees of Canada notes that the lifting of the flu ban permitted holding a union meeting on 3 December 1918 at the Labour Temple. A vote of condolences was expressed following the death from influenza of four union members. Another brother lost a daughter.¹⁴

The latter stages of the war created opportunities for organized labour across Canada. In Winnipeg, a series of rotating strikes commencing with civic employees lasted the entire month of May 1918. The Dominion minister of labour was brought in successfully to make peace. The spring and summer of 1918 saw the offensive of railway shop craft union workers spill over into the entire Winnipeg metal trades sector.¹⁵ Postal workers in Winnipeg were not indifferent to these events. In 1918 they too went out on strike, the letter carriers on July 22, the clerks the following day. The strike would eventually affect post offices in Toronto, Regina, and Moose Jaw, while letter carriers walked off the job in at least eleven cities.¹⁶ The main issue was the cost-of-living bonus, no small matter when inflation ran rampant.¹⁷ The bonus had been promised to postal workers on several occasions but had not yet been paid.

Messages were sent to postal authorities on June 17 and 27 by the Winnipeg-based officers of the Postal Clerks Association of Canada (PCAC) and the Federated Association of Letter Carriers (FALC). Ottawa responded that no definitive arrangement for paying out the bonus had been determined. A mass meeting of postal employees supported by the Winnipeg Trades Council on July 8 demanded a pay increase for permanent employees and fair treatment for temporary employees. The government, opined the workers, was inclined to employ returned



The Main Post Office in Winnipeg, circa 1914. An elaborate four-story building the post office is situated on Portage Avenue, a busy downtown street with a constant flow of cars, trams and pedestrian traffic. The Fort Garry hotel at the foot of Garry Street, right side of photo, dominates the southern skyline. Provincial Archives of Manitoba N 7392.

soldiers and keep them at the lowest grade of wages.¹⁸ The letter carriers petitioned on July 18 for a board of conciliation in order to redress conditions within the postal service, noting that “failing the appointment of the said board at once the carriers of Winnipeg will not report for duty after July 21st 1918.”¹⁹ Two days later, the Winnipeg chapter of the PCAC informed the postmaster general that it too demanded a board of conciliation; if that demand was not met, they planned to strike on July 23. The timing suggests effective coordination and solidarity between clerks and letter carriers. This may explain the greater duration of the strike in Winnipeg compared with Central Canadian strikes.

One day before the scheduled strike, the deputy postmaster general informed Winnipeg letter carriers and clerks that the provisional allowance would be paid immediately. Two days later, he informed the postmaster of Winnipeg that the first quarterly cheques were being issued. The next day, as the clerks began their strike, the deputy minister wrote that if the men returned to work, a cabinet sub-committee would meet with the representatives of the postmen and deal with proposals, “within the limits of the Government’s legal powers.”²⁰

The strike lasted a little over one week and was successful. The men were even paid for their time off work. The two unions eventually accepted the government’s proposal to institute the Civil Service Commission as a board of conciliation.²¹ On July 31 the commission secretary arrived in Winnipeg to enquire into working conditions of postal employees. The men returned to work the following day.

The strike appears to have been both effective and popular. By July 27, two million undelivered letters had accumulated in the Winnipeg post office togeth-

er with tons of parcels and newspapers. Yet only ten applications for volunteer work at the post office had been received. Two letter carriers had reported for duty. The postmaster managed to convince twelve members of the registration staff to show up for four hours of work per day in shifts of two. But they threatened that if he brought in temporary help, they would cease work.²² The situation was “desperate,” reported the postmaster to Ottawa.²³ Local members of parliament and businesspeople lobbied the government. The Board of Trade sent a telegram to the government demanding assurances that it would meet the demands of the letter carriers and clerks.²⁴ The government was hard put to bring the situation under control. The war was still on. Its reaction a year later would be more energetic.

1918–19

UPON RETURNING TO WORK ON AUGUST 1, Winnipeg postal workers faced a backlog of mail. The *Free Press* headline was upbeat: “Men Tear into Stack of Mail with Vim.”²⁵ Fresh from their successful dispute with the government, workers in Winnipeg and throughout Western Canada established their own union, the Federation of Western Postal Employees (FWPE), renamed the Amalgamated Postal Workers (APW) in the spring of 1919. Unlike Eastern postal worker organizations, the APW represented both clerks and letter carriers.²⁶

The first meeting of the Winnipeg chapter of the FWPE was held 17 September 1918. An executive was chosen and basic procedures were worked out regarding stationery, dues collection, and the integration of new members, specifically transfer drivers and mail collectors. Executive officers of the local were to be notified of meetings by postcard. The postal service would facilitate the union business of its employees.

Discussions on workplace issues were ongoing. The meeting of 19 January 1919, lasting four hours, focused on the report of the Civil Service Commission, which addressed the grievances of letter carriers, porters, and clerks. Letter carriers were concerned with overtime, the cost of boots and uniforms, mail-loads, the age limit for men returning from the war to postal jobs (the government offered thirty-five; the union asked for forty), and the poor condition of postal facilities, especially Station A. Clerks argued for promotion based on merit, the abolition of certain classes of employees, and a reduction in the number of years of employment necessary to qualify for work in the more prestigious money and registration section. In short, postal workers were increasingly questioning management’s exclusive right to manage.

In spring 1919, the postmaster general invited five union delegates to Ottawa for further discussions. On April 18, they reported on their deliberations.

The APW president mentioned his encounters with other postal employee associations in Ottawa, though his group preferred to meet separately with the government. The Ottawa sessions did not achieve conclusive results: "they had been asked to bring the bacon home and had failed."²⁷ The Post Office, it appeared, was unwilling to yield any ground to unions of its employees.

As the APW pursued its demands, a second thematic thread emerged in the minutes: labour radicalism. The Winnipeg local subscribed to the left-wing paper, the *Western Labour News*. The agenda of the proposed Calgary Conference in March (1919), which approved the establishment of One Big Union (OBU), was discussed by the membership. After the conference, the four main resolutions were read out to the Winnipeg local. These included class action, industrial organization, a strike to protest the allied occupation of Russia, and a two-cent levy per member to be used for propaganda purposes. At a special meeting on April 20, a motion was passed to support the OBU.

At the meeting, Brother Durward, a letter carrier and the postal union's representative on the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council, declared: "What I do not know of Industrial organization would fill a book, yet I realize we must have a change of organization, the present form having become antiquated through the change of various conditions."²⁸ He cited the case of Australia, where unionization by industry had proved effective. Another speaker, representing the OBU, pointed to the divisive tactics of the American Federation of Labor. He emphasized strength in numbers: "[N]umbers win strikes.... We are no longer facing the one small faction but capital in a body."

Anti-capitalist rhetoric was consistent with OBU discourse and would lead many members to support the General Strike. But there were dissidents. Only 37 of 300 members attended the meeting, and its resolutions lacked effect due to the lack of quorum.²⁹ Some union leaders adhered to old ways of doing things. In March 1919, the president and secretary of the union local were chastised for sending flowers to the postmaster, who had fallen ill, without consulting the rest of the executive. After a vote of censure passed, the president (F.R. Sutton) resigned and retired from the meeting.³⁰ A few weeks later, on May 9, votes for and against a city-wide sympathetic strike were tallied. The yes side scored a resounding victory among the postal workers, 259 for the strike and 19 against, with workers voting not just to sympathize with the strike's overall demands but in favour also of a set of demands of their own.

The strike opponents, though a minority, continued to challenge the strike effort. Secretary F.J. Perry stated that, while he favoured better working conditions, everyone needed reminding that postal work, unlike other types of work, had a long-distance impact upon the Dominion and the United States. Another officer warned that by taking a strike vote in favour of their demands of their

employer, as distinct from the vote already taken in favour of the sympathetic strike, they were acting too hastily. He suggested they negotiate for another week before striking for their demands.³¹ The question was resolved by allowing the executive to take a strike vote when they saw fit. The following meeting opened with the charge that Perry was undermining union morale. A motion called for his expulsion from the organization. In his defence, he claimed there was insufficient justification for a strike, "considering our position as an organization." Furthermore, he charged, some were using the organization to forward trade-union ideas not germane to APW interests.³²

Further dissatisfaction with strike action surfaced on the first day of the postal strike and Winnipeg General Strike, 15 May, when F.R. Sutton, former president of the Winnipeg local and still vice-president of the Manitoba branch of the APW, declared his opposition to the strike. He defied the strike and showed up for work along with thirty-four other men.³³ This was the same man who, along with F.J. Perry, had sent flowers to the postmaster. In an effort to remain on good terms with the employer, Perry sent a letter to the assistant postmaster explaining his own and Sutton's resignation from the union. Despite their efforts, they were unable to prevent members of the Winnipeg local from jumping into the sympathetic strike.³⁴

1919 Strike

THE 1919 POSTAL STRIKE raised similar issues to the 1918 strike but occurred in a different context that conditioned the responses of both postal workers and management. The intervention of the Civil Service Commission in 1918 had left many grievances unaddressed. What was different was the buoyancy that the General Strike gave to the postal strike: "the strike came like a cyclone over Winnipeg," and postal workers felt obliged to support it.³⁵ This time the men went out not for one week but for over a month. They were branded as Bolsheviks and revolutionaries. The government defended itself by implementing an aggressive short- and long-term response. In the end, only those who accepted the employer's terms would be allowed to return to their jobs.

In the standoff between the post office and its employees, more was at stake than the resolution of grievances. Each side came to the table with a different set of priorities. Well aware of union grievances, the Post Office department was unwilling to relinquish its power over the work of its postal employees. Service came first, grievances afterwards. Moreover, in the midst of a General Strike, the Crown could not accept a challenge to its authority. The very legitimacy of the state was at stake.³⁶ The employees viewed matters differently: there had to be more humane ways to get the work done.

Post Office employees demanded reforms, some small, some substantive. The dispatch men called for printed labels on pigeon holes, as well as for suitable stools.³⁷ They wanted the mail from the T. Eaton Co. to arrive earlier so that the workers were not so inconvenienced by the huge volumes of mail generated by the company's Winnipeg mail-order operation. Clerks, conscious of their position in the hierarchy among workers, were reluctant to hang bags on a parcel post rack, for this was porters' work. They wanted all work in the basement to cease until proper ventilation and windows were installed. A later memo stated that when the fan in the basement was not working, the stench from the lavatory would waft into the area where the men worked.³⁸

The single most important issue was time. The practice was to divide work into four shifts: 9h to 18h, 13h to 20h30, 17h to 23h, and 23h to 6h30. The one-hour overlap (17h to 18h) of the first three shifts and the 3.5-hour overlap (17h to 20h30) of shifts two and three was no accident, for this was the postal rush hour when the contents of mail boxes and mail bags were brought in for sorting. The system was demanding, especially for the junior sorters, who were required to work five or six evenings per week or in split shifts: from 9h to 13h and then from 17h to 20h30. The union proposed a three-shift platoon system: 9h to 18h; 17h to 24h; 23h to 6h30. The men would be allowed to alternate between shifts so they could enjoy their evenings elsewhere than at work.

E.J. Underwood, an Ottawa postal official temporarily stationed in Winnipeg, criticized the proposal. It would leave just one shift to handle the evening rush. During slack times, there would be more clerks on duty than necessary. Twenty more employees would have to be added to the payroll at Winnipeg. In his view, the evening work schedule, though challenging, was explained to the men when they first came on. The system encouraged junior sorters to get ahead "by intelligent application to their work." Men could aspire to become primary sorters, thus relieving them of evening work duties.³⁹ It was more important, Underwood believed, to encourage good work habits within the ranks over time than to provide an equitable schedule of work, day in and day out.

The strike challenged the organization of labour and interfered with the circulation of mail. By May 1919, almost all postal workers were on strike. The Railway Mail Service transfer men were out, as were most of the employees working for the mail contractor. The Railway Mail clerks were set to hold a strike vote. Underwood and the assistant postmaster had to sleep overnight at the post office to guard the currency packages until they were able to move them to a bank. Underwood, a man loyal to the department, despaired. The city was in disarray. Fourteen hundred citizens had been sworn in to bear arms, and there were many loyal veterans in Winnipeg, if it came to a matter of force.⁴⁰

Lines of communication and persuasion

IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO COMMUNICATE BY POST. Postal authorities in Winnipeg exchanged coded telegrams with Ottawa.⁴¹ Letter correspondence would feature a decoded transcription of the message sent or received by cable in order to make sure that it was properly understood. In some cases, letters were carried by reliable railway mail clerks journeying to and from the city. But the telegraph was key.

Access to the telegraph allowed the department to implement a calibrated response to the dispute in Winnipeg and elsewhere. At Ottawa's behest, the Winnipeg postmaster telegraphed the postmasters of Calgary, Saskatoon, and Edmonton—where employees had struck in solidarity with the Winnipeg postal workers—the good news: “situation improving here rapidly”; two hundred new employees of “fine calibre” had been taken on at the post office; the railway mail clerks were back at work; many civic employees and firemen were back on the job. The object was to persuade strikers in these cities to return to work. In Saskatoon, the good news was to be accompanied by a warning instructing employees to return to work within twenty-four hours or face dismissal.⁴² The government employed a carrot-and-stick approach in an effort to disable the strike west of Winnipeg. The union responded by exchanging wires with locals in Calgary, Saskatoon, Vancouver, and elsewhere. Delegates were sent to points east and west of Winnipeg to obtain information and counter the disinformation campaign of the government.

Inside Winnipeg, the strikers' mood was far from conciliatory. Underwood encountered a strong undercurrent of confidence and solidarity. An official from Ottawa, he was able to spend several hours among the men without being recognized. He wrote his superior: “You have no idea of the situation here. The Strike Committee thinks that they can bring the Government to their knees.”⁴³ Not surprisingly, the union minutes of the same day report that the Winnipeg postal workers' local, its confidence in full bloom, considered the possibility of approaching fellow workers at the Lakehead (Port Arthur) and Sault Ste. Marie to stop entirely the flow of mail to and from the West.⁴⁴

The lack of proper information among the men and the public was “glaringly apparent,” in Underwood's view. The general understanding in Winnipeg was that letter carriers were underpaid. This was the result of information spread by the letter carriers who, Underwood believed, “have time for propaganda work and are experts in that line.”⁴⁵

How could the government persuade strikers and influence public opinion? A mixture of political prestige, intimidation, and reliable reportage was necessary. The strategy was briefly complicated by the silencing of the media. A strike by

pressmen shut down the *Manitoba Free Press* from May 19 to 22. Pro- and anti-strike publications battled each other for the allegiance of Winnipeg readers. The battle extended into June, when the Strike Committee persuaded newsboys to distribute only the *Western Labour News* in the streets.⁴⁶ Once it resumed publishing on May 22, the *Free Press* served as a reliable mouthpiece for anti-strike views, welcoming back its readers with a robust front-page headline: "Anarchists and aliens: The combination which has tried to take this country by the throat." Two days later, the headline targeted postal employees: "[Posties] Must return to work noon Monday or be dismissed, says government."⁴⁷ The government was determined to adopt a hard-line approach vis-à-vis the postal strikers. The strategy foreshadowed the eventual use of force to defeat the Winnipeg General Strike altogether. With postal service at a standstill, the government felt that it had to act immediately.

Ultimatum and short-term response

AROUND MAY 22, Minister of the Interior Arthur Meighen, Minister of Labour Gideon Robertson, and Winnipeg South Member of Parliament George William Allan began contemplating an ultimatum to the postal strikers.⁴⁸ The strategy may have been concocted in Winnipeg or while Meighen et al. were en route from Ottawa. The idea appealed to other public employers including the Province of Manitoba and the City.⁴⁹ The government intended to seek out and punish the guilty. The next day they called at the Post Office asking for a list of agitators among the employees and demanded an explanation regarding incidents of Railway Mail Service clerks refusing to handle mail. Underwood complied and sent his deputy minister a copy of everything he had given Meighen, Allen and Robertson, including a list of ten troublemakers and an explanation for each incident.⁵⁰

On Saturday, May 24, the *Free Press* published a statement from Robertson and Meighen enjoining postal workers to return by noon Monday or face dismissal; in the meantime, voluntary workers would take their place. One hundred fifty volunteers showed up for work that morning.⁵¹ Pointed statements by the postmaster were published in the news: "It should be made illegal for employees in the Post Office or any other branch of the government service to go on strike"; "Post Office must go on, even if none of the strikers return." A meeting was scheduled for the following day. The labour minister would address the men on the importance of returning to work.⁵²

Dispatched to Winnipeg to bolster the government's position during the General Strike, Gideon Robertson was a known personality in labour and Manitoba circles. Born in Portage la Prairie, the former vice-president of the Order

of Railroad Telegraphers occupied a seat in the Canadian Senate and was appointed minister of labour in Robert Borden's Union government in November 1918.⁵³ In his first public test during the strike, Robertson was less than successful. Only fifty men showed up to listen to him. Strike picketers deflected the balance of employees to a union meeting at the Labour Temple. The minister warned his audience that while they would not be paid for time on strike, it might be possible to deduct strike time from their leave time if they returned.⁵⁴ Robertson did not address the strikers' demands. He talked only of getting them back to work. Management would not tolerate a strike nor discuss strikers' demands.

The government broadcast the ultimatum in the paper and via a large poster in the front window of the Post Office in plain view of the picket line. On the morning of May 26, Postmaster McIntyre visited the picket line. He invited W.J. Cuthbert, a letter carrier, to come around the corner for a talk. The postmaster emphasized that by staying out on strike, Cuthbert was jeopardizing career, pay, and pension; he was being carried away by Bolsheviks and demagogues. Cuthbert responded that he was man enough to think for himself, "and that he was upholding a principle and would do [so] till the fight was finished."⁵⁵ He repeated the conversation from the platform of the union meeting later that day.

Cuthbert was a proud union man, as was Lawrence Pickup, a clerk with the Post Office inspector active in the events of both 1918 and 1919. Pickup left work on May 15 and never returned. The inspector phoned him on the morning of May 26, explaining that the whole section was needed for work. Pickup promised to be in by noon but didn't arrive until three. There followed a brief exchange—Inspector: "You are out on strike with the rest of the boys"; Pickup: "Yes I suppose so." No hard feelings were recorded. Pickup said he would return the next day to clean out his desk, and left.⁵⁶ With one twist of fate, Pickup marched out of his postal career. He was not alone.

A total of 393 employees did not return before the deadline.⁵⁷ Forty-seven did, and added to the 35 who had refused to strike. Eighty-two of the initial 500 workers were on the job. The loyalists consisted in the main of clerks, with only 10 letter carriers deciding to return; perhaps the latter were made to feel like second-class employees? Significantly the table below shows that temporary employees accounted for 34 percent of the postal workforce.

With most of the Post Office staff absent, the union stepped up the pressure by persuading the Railway Mail Service (RMS) clerks to go out. Their strike was set for midnight May 27. Robertson's response was quick and effective: on May 28 he demanded they return within twenty-four hours. The ultimatum was posted on the RMS Order Book and in the room used by the clerks. The entire staff (upwards of fifty) returned within a few minutes of the deadline on May 29.⁵⁸ The department gained a small but significant victory. Without the RMS, mail could not

Date	Clerks	Letter Carriers	Temporary Employees	Total
On strike May 15	79	144	147	370
On strike May 16	11	9	3	23
Total on strike	90	153	150	393

TABLE 1. Summary of employees not reporting for work, May 1919

enter or leave Winnipeg. Here was a good news story for management to build on. Force would prevail; postal service would resume. The principle that workers should have some say over their working conditions would be pushed aside.

Newspaper reports offered a rose-tinted view of the remaking of the postal labour force. On May 27, the *Free Press* reported under the headline “Rush for Positions as Postal Clerks”; on May 29, “[a] constant stream of applicants for the vacant positions on the post office staff again thronged the entrance to the postmaster’s office”; and on June 4, “[w]ork at the local post office is rapidly returning to normal.” The reports were misleading. The firing of 400 employees sent shock waves through the organization. Authorities had to integrate inexperienced recruits in a short period of time, a tall order.

Considerable effort was required to remake the labour force. Staff numbers had to be increased above pre-strike levels since the new, unskilled staff could not be expected to work as efficiently as the seasoned staff that they were replacing. As new employees learned their trade, less efficient ones could be let go. There was a continued influx of substitute workers from May 26 to the end of August. The majority of clerk and porter positions were staffed with replacements by June 21: 202 clerks (out of a total of 270) and 44 of the 69 porters. Finally, 148 of 278 letter carriers were substitutes.

The department aimed to replace clerks first because they were responsible for sorting mail. Particularly in demand were hands experienced in city sortation. The backlog of incoming and outgoing mail was substantial.⁵⁹ Special sorting cases were devised to make the work of new employees easier.⁶⁰ Clerks familiar with Western distribution were brought in: 5 from Montreal, 1 from Toronto, 4 from Ottawa and 2 from Hamilton. The work was arduous: the Montréal postmaster stated that each of his men worked from twenty-four to eighty hours of overtime.⁶¹

Letter carrier delivery early in June was irregular. A new system was introduced on June 5. Mail would be distributed from the postal station closest to customers’ homes.⁶² The schedule of service at each of the four stations was as follows: residents of street names beginning with A to D were to call for their

mail Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9h to 12h; streets E to L, the same days from 13h to 17h; M to Q, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings; and R to Z, the afternoon of the same days. Four more stations were soon added to the distribution network. This freed up letter carriers so they could work in the more peaceable neighbourhoods. The postmaster hoped that the residents inhabiting quieter areas would receive mail once a day, "and by the time the savages are tamed," he said presumably in reference to the people of the city's North End, there would be letter carrier service for them too.⁶³

Clerks worked in an enclosed space protected by Mounties. Demonstrators might parade by, as they did on June 2, hurling verbal abuse at those working inside the Post Office, but they couldn't see inside.⁶⁴ Letter carriers worked outdoors in full view of strikers and the public. It was difficult to recruit substitute letter carriers, for would-be postmen feared they would be molested while out on their walks.⁶⁵ On June 2, Underwood reported that two carriers had quit due to intimidation, and a rumour circulated that a letter carrier had been mauled. The same source reported that members of the public were refusing to receive mail from the hands of new letter carriers. Two days later, six letter carriers resigned due to intimidation, but, Underwood happily reported, only one was mauled. In the meantime, letter carriers were accompanied by North West Mounted Police officers on their downtown routes.

A basic solidarity between strikers and the public underlay the union response to attempts to reactivate letter carrier delivery. The preferred tactic of picketers was to have five or six men accompany a hireling ("scab") during his walk. They were not to speak to him or interfere with him in any way; "other people would do the rest."⁶⁶ The other people likely consisted of workers and their families engaged in the General Strike. From the vantage point of the Post Office, delivery in the city's North End was inadvisable in the absence of police protection, "as the attitude of the public there is becoming more hostile, the community being made up chiefly of the working classes."⁶⁷ The General Strike was eventually called off on June 26. As the weeks turned into months, the government could pursue its policy of rebuilding the Winnipeg postal service unfettered by hostile public opinion.

Long-term perspective

THE POST OFFICE was determined to reconstruct the postal labour force in such a manner as to check militancy among workers and preserve management's authority. The process took time. Initial policies eventually adjusted. The department had to train and then hold onto new people. Solutions were adopted that would have been unthinkable during the summer of 1919. For a time, the de-

partment stuck to its decision not to reinstate striking employees. Delegations sent on behalf of the strikers to the postmaster in Winnipeg and the prime minister in Ottawa were put off or rebuffed.⁶⁸ In the end, however, the lost workforce would come back to haunt postal authorities.

By September 1919, the Winnipeg staff was up to about 540, considerably more than the pre-strike level of 439. The payroll was not greater because so many junior employees had replaced senior ones. Postmaster McIntyre was content with this group, which consisted of men opposed to strikes in public utilities. He recommended that no striker be allowed back into the fold so as to prevent any campaign by others to return.⁶⁹ Department officials and politicians concurred, but labour shortages forced a compromise.

During the climax of the strike, Winnipeg postal officials scrambled for labour. Substitutes hired during the early days of the strike were promised that if they performed satisfactorily, they could obtain permanent status without having to take the civil service examination.⁷⁰ In late August 1919, the Civil Service Commission decided that henceforth no such promises were to be made.⁷¹ Ottawa resumed control of staffing. Employees hired on a temporary basis prior to August continued to petition for access to permanent jobs during the coming year. The government did not disregard them entirely, but it was in no hurry. There were so many others, including returning soldiers, desperate for work.

Over the following months, the Commission drew up lists of prospective employees eligible for work in Winnipeg. But in spring 1920, the postmaster complained that 46 of 88 eligible candidates for permanent positions were either unavailable or impossible to locate.⁷² Another complaint refers to the faulty nature of five other lists: they contained names of men who were already employed, difficult to locate, or unavailable. The postmaster wanted more names or the authority to hire temporary employees.⁷³

By July 1920, Assistant Postmaster Bower revealed that they were as badly off in the Post Office as a year ago. He expected that they would lose men during the summer months: those not granted holidays during July and August would likely resign or take unpaid leave and go elsewhere. He was sure that the postal service would never make it through the busy fall and Christmas season.⁷⁴ Bower was so anxious about the personnel shortage that he had taken to sleeping at the Post Office.⁷⁵ A memo prepared by a senior Toronto postal official got to the heart of the matter: the staffing problem in Winnipeg was the result of an exceptionally high turnover rate in personnel, in excess of 50 percent. In the year ending 30 June 1920, 299 of 536 staff members had resigned their positions. The category hardest hit was the clerks, 173 of whom resigned.⁷⁶

Was postal work especially arduous or unpopular with workers? Was management's unwillingness to alter work procedures and conditions the root cause

of the problem? Whatever, the Post Office had to reconsider its position and start recruiting from among the dismissed strikers. Throughout summer and fall 1919, the Post Office received several proposals for reinstatement from former strikers. A union delegation reporting to dismissed strikers in July gloomily concluded that “nothing could be done to get us back.”⁷⁷ Yet in December the deputy minister advised the postmaster general that the older strikers could be allowed back in. They were family men, less militant and too specialized to apply elsewhere for employment.⁷⁸ In January 1920, a cabinet memo officially offered clemency to dismissed workers. In exchange, those reinstated were to abstain from engaging in future sympathy strikes. There were other conditions for reinstatement: there had to be a suitable vacancy at the Post Office, and the re-employment of ex-postal employees required cabinet approval.⁷⁹

The news of clemency was announced in the papers, but the new policy was not immediately enacted. The postmaster told the *Free Press* that he was not authorized to deal with the dismissed strikers asking to be reinstated. Local postal officials continued to recruit elsewhere. According to the *Free Press* publisher, “[T]he post office here is in the habit of posting notices in the Great War Veterans’ Association whenever there is a shortage of help.”⁸⁰ The dismissed employees were convinced that they were the victims of the government’s preference for veterans; that the government offered clemency but in reality was discriminating against them.

The department was highly selective about whom it would allow back in. The Civil Service Commission, in the summer of 1919, began keeping a card index file with the names of all strikers dismissed from the postal staff of various Western cities, including Winnipeg, in order to keep them out of the civil service.⁸¹ The commission approached the department, which then selected the men it wanted.

A list was prepared in August 1920 containing the names of fifty-three former employees whose reinstatement was not recommended. Some were put aside owing to union activism, but other criteria influenced the decision as well. One man was too old for postal duty; had he remained in the service, he would have qualified for superannuation. Another was allegedly of below average aptitude for postal work. Another was tubercular and inclined to be incorrigible; still another was ever dissatisfied. There was the “veritable chatterbox” always disturbing others. Finally, there was “[a] somewhat stupid postman.... Stupid mentally and unfit physically.”⁸² Here was a staff-cleansing blacklist long on vengeance, short on compassion.

Well aware that it could draw from three pools of labour in reassembling the staff of the Winnipeg Post Office—temporary postal employees, returned soldiers, and dismissed employees—the government now had the upper hand. It went out of its way to accommodate veterans, who were in the process of becoming sacred fixtures of Dominion hiring policy.⁸³ Yet the Post Office could

not adequately function without some strikers. From June to August 1920, a flurry of staff lists was exchanged between Winnipeg and Ottawa with a view to bringing more strikers back. The assistant postmaster believed it was best to take back the strikers before the men got wind of how much they were missed, for they would then surely take advantage of the government. Of the hundreds of trained clerks available in Winnipeg, only one had appeared on a formal list of appointments. It was, stated Bower, as if a hospital in dire need of trained surgeons and nurses were to take in butchers and dishwashers.⁸⁴

What the Winnipeg officials emphatically desired was experienced clerks. Fifteen or twenty trained men for inside duty “would be a bonanza for us,” wrote the postmaster in July 1920. The assistant postmaster was jubilant upon receiving a list of fourteen trained sorters in September. He hired nine at once; “we were at our wit’s ends in our efforts to keep the work going.” Each sorter represented a saving in training time for postal officials. It took two or three months to teach a letter carrier but much longer to make a successful primary sorter.⁸⁵ The key ingredient in the era of manual sorting, in Winnipeg as elsewhere, was human memory, which enabled the clerks to memorize entire schemes of distribution and, through fast hand-to-eye coordination, to sort the mail.

By November 1920, Bower was persuaded that all the desirable clerks recommended by the department had been taken on. There were too few vacancies to take many of the former letter carriers back. Perhaps he did not care. Bower had what he needed: the necessary brains, and, soon enough, authority to operate the Winnipeg postal service. He succeeded McIntyre early in 1921 and would continue to run things until 1934.⁸⁶

Conclusion

BY 1921 the government had reassembled the Winnipeg postal labour force. It was a blend of substitutes taken on in the aftermath of the strike, veterans of the Great War, and reinstated strikers brought back on the employer’s terms. The result was a staff that in the very least would know how to snap to attention. How compliant were these workers in the ensuing period?

It is clear that postal militancy did not end during the early 1920s. A national strike involving postal workers in Toronto, southern Ontario, Moncton, and Montréal erupted on 18 June 1924. Fifteen hundred employees took part, roughly a third of the national postal work force.⁸⁷ Ultimatums were issued and disobeyed. The lion’s share of the strikers did not return until after July 1. That they could afford to stay out and literally taunt postal authorities confirmed their conviction that, as in Winnipeg, they had something their employer needed, namely the sorting skills and the memory of distribution schemes to direct

mail wherever it had to go. Skilled leverage would co-exist with a system of labour organization characterized by strong employer authority mixed with political patronage and caprice. But the 1924 strike marked the last major incident of organized unrest in the Post Office for four decades.

The era following the 1920s was not marked by significant unrest in the postal service. It was as if labour chose to sleep for four decades, only to stage a dramatic return. Gilles Parrot, who joined in 1929, would enjoy a 28-year career in the Montreal post office. He and an entire generation would adhere to the pattern of obedience in the work place and subdued trade unionism. Gilles passed away in 1957. His son, Jean-Claude, entered the postal service in 1954. A decade later Parrot and his workmates would begin to challenge the postal status quo. In so doing they followed a trajectory of contest whose momentum reaches back to the events of the Winnipeg postal strike during the long spring of 1919. This was Winnipeg's moment: a rebellion energized by a context of general labour revolt and characterized by unprecedented solidarity between clerks and letter carriers. The strike planted the seeds for a subsequent élan that would gather steam over two generations. The underlying cause of unrest in the post office from the late 1960s to the 1980s was, in our view, a decades-old heritage of job frustration integral to the postal system that first erupted in the wildcat strikes of 1965. Winnipeg's moment was one high water mark in the history of Canadian labour. There have been and there will be others. *

Notes

- 1 I wish to acknowledge the research collaboration of Lorna Chisholm, Marguerite Sauriol, and Jesse Alexander. Rhonda Hinther, Robert Tremblay, Jennifer Anderson, and two anonymous readers read through a previous draft of the article: *un gros merci!*
- 2 Craig Heron and Myer Siemiatycki, "The Great War, the State and Working-Class Canada," in *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917–1925*, ed. C. Heron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 11–42.
- 3 Desmond Morton, *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Labour Movement*, 5th ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 114.
- 4 Gregory Kealey, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt," in *Workers and Canadian History* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 289–319.
- 5 G. Pelletier, "Le code criminel canadien, 1892–1939: Le contrôle des armes à feu," in *Crime, Histoire et Sociétés/Crime, History and Societies* 6, no. 2 (2002): 59; see also André Cellard and G. Pelletier, "Le code criminel canadien 1892–1927: Étude des acteurs sociaux," in *Canadian Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (June 1998): 274ff. An amendment enacted in July 1919 made it illegal for foreigners to have arms in their possession in the home and on the street without a permit. British subjects only needed a permit to bear arms on the street.

- 6 Tom Mitchell, "Repressive Measures: A.J. Andrews, the Committee of 1000 and the Campaign against Radicalism after the Winnipeg General Strike," in *Left History* 3, no. 2; 4, no. 1 (1995–96): 133–67.
- 7 Mitchell and Naylor refer to the broad basis of this oppositional culture. See T. Mitchell and J. Naylor, "The Prairies: In the Eye of the Storm," in Heron, *Workers' Revolt in Canada*, 176, 185, 193. For a general narrative of the strike, see J.M. Bumsted, *The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919: An Illustrated History* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1994).
- 8 Paul Rutherford, *The Making of the Canadian Media* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978), 75–76.
- 9 Ian R. Lee, "The Canadian Postal System: Origins, Growth and Decay of the State Postal Function, 1765–1981" (PhD diss., Carleton University, 1989), 239.
- 10 Mitchell and Naylor, "In the Eye of the Storm," 176.
- 11 H.A. Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1948), 295. The formal right to collective bargaining in the Post Office and throughout the civil service dates from the passing of the *Public Service Staff Relations Act* in 1967.
- 12 Our interpretation is based on a rich file in the archives of the Post Office: Underwood and Bower Special Correspondence, Library and Archives Canada, Archives of the Post Office and Canada Post, RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2 (hereafter cited as RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2). The file contains Underwood's reports to the deputy postmaster general back in Ottawa, as well as his exchanges with Thomas T. Bower, the assistant postmaster of Winnipeg. Other material includes the *Manitoba Free Press* and the minutes of the Winnipeg chapter of the postal employees union.
- 13 Library and Archives Canada, Archives of the Post Office and Canada Post, RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, 120 (hereafter cited as RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1), Winnipeg Postmaster to Superintendent of Staff Branch, 25 October 1918. The actual number of temporary employees was much higher; see below.
- 14 Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Minute Book of the Winnipeg Branch of the Federation of Western Postal Employees of Canada, P5790 file 12 (hereafter cited as PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch), 3 December 1918; Bumsted, *Winnipeg General Strike*, 14.
- 15 David Jay Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations and the General Strike* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), 70–74. For a more complete picture of labour agitation in the West, see Mitchell and Naylor "In the Eye of the Storm."
- 16 *Manitoba Free Press*, 24 July 1918, 1. The movement involved cities other than Winnipeg, but Winnipeg will be our focus. See also Myer Siemiatycki, "Labour Contained: The Defeat of a Rank and File Workers' Movement in Canada 1914–1921" (PhD diss., York University, 1986), 203ff.
- 17 Heron and Siemiatycki, *Great War*, 20–21. Their data demonstrate that inflation was a reality and not a mere figment of labour's imagination. For a counter view, see "The Trials of War," in Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg*, chap. 3, 32ff.
- 18 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, G.W. Andrews, M. to the Postmaster General, 8 July 1918.

- 19 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, telegram, J.A. Elrick, Secretary, letter carriers to C.J. Doherty, Acting Premier, Ottawa, 18 July 1918.
- 20 Ibid., draft prepared by deputy postmaster general, 23 July 1918.
- 21 *Manitoba Free Press*, 30 July 1918, 1 August 1918.
- 22 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, postmaster to postmaster general, 25 July 1918.
- 23 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, Winnipeg postmaster to deputy postmaster general, 27 July 1918.
- 24 Ibid., telegram, secretary of Winnipeg Board of Trade to deputy postmaster general, 19 July 1918. In Winnipeg and cities elsewhere in Canada, the press chastised the government for being unfair with its postal staff. See Siemiatycki, "Labour Contained," 205.
- 25 *Manitoba Free Press*, 1 August 1918, 1.
- 26 Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada*, 295. See also Lee "Canadian Postal System," 319. Western letter carriers broke with the FALC over the One Big Union issue; the founding of the western Federation was likely their initiative.
- 27 PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 18 April 1919.
- 28 Ibid., 20 April 1919. R. Durward, a grade E letter carrier, would eventually serve on the central committee, which ran the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919. See Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg*, 120.
- 29 PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 17 May 1919.
- 30 Ibid., 11 March 1919. F.R. Sutton was a clerk, grade 2-A.
- 31 Ibid., 9 May 1919.
- 32 Ibid., 14 May 1919.
- 33 Brother Sutton's decision to cross the picket line was noted by his fellow union members (see meeting of 15 May) and is confirmed in RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, letter from the Winnipeg postmaster to the postmaster general, 13 June 1919.
- 34 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, F.J. Perry to T.T. Bower, 15 May 1919.
- 35 PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 22 June 1919.
- 36 From an editorial in the *Free Press*, 2 August 1918: "apart from the courts and the machinery of justice, there is no function of government that more completely expresses the sovereignty of the state than the operation of His Majesty's mail."
- 37 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, attachment from Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 19 May 1919. See also PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 15 May 1919. E.J. Underwood was sent by Post Office headquarters to keep an eye on matters in Winnipeg when the strike broke out. During the war, he served with the censorship division of the Post Office. By 1924 he had risen to the level of chief superintendent.
- 38 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, memo for deputy postmaster general, 10 June 1919.

- 39 Ibid., correspondence by Underwood, 20 May 1919.
- 40 Ibid., Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 19 May 1919.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, Winnipeg postmaster to postmasters of Calgary, Saskatoon, Edmonton, 29 May 1919. Telegram, deputy postmaster general to E.J. Underwood, 29 May 1919.
- 43 Ibid., Underwood to P.T. Coolican, Ottawa postal inspector, 26 May 1919.
- 44 PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 26 May 1919.
- 45 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 24 May 1919. One worker floated the idea of printing their side of the story for home distribution at a union meeting, but the proposal was not enacted. See PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 2 June 1919.
- 46 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 4 June 1919. See also Bumsted, *Winnipeg General Strike*, 31, 34. One union member opined that the newsboys' strike was defeated by the policy of publishers giving out copies of papers for free and then paying a bonus to those who distributed them. The measure created a parallel network of newsboys. PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 9 June 1919.
- 47 *Manitoba Free Press*, 24 May 1919, 1.
- 48 Authorities with the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg would enforce their own ultimatum, hiring replacement workers after the deadline at Manitoba Telephone and the city police. See Bumsted, *Winnipeg General Strike*, 39, 40.
- 49 The view expounded in Mike Dupuis's forthcoming book (dealing with press coverage of the Winnipeg General Strike) is that members of the Winnipeg Committee of 1000 who boarded, at Thunder Bay, the westbound train carrying Meighen, Robertson, and Allen to Winnipeg dictated the hard-line strategy to the Ottawa ministers.
- 50 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, letter and attachments from Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 23 May 1919. There were five incidents. Four of the ten trouble-makers—Durward, Hoop, Pickup, and Hammond—were active during the 1918 troubles as well. Not surprisingly, their names appear prominently in the APW local minutes, as union officers, delegates, and speakers.
- 51 Ibid., 24 May 1919. There is no indication of who the volunteers were. It is known that two days later, volunteers in the post office consisted of businessmen, bank clerks, real estate men, lawyers, and staff members from various wholesale houses. The presence of so many white-collar notables testifies to the importance of the postal situation. See Provincial Archives of Manitoba, M 268 Preliminary Hearing, *The King v. William Ivens, R.J. Johns et al.*, "Testimony of Peter McIntyre August 10, 1919." Thanks to Mike Dupuis for this reference.
- 52 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 24 May 1919.

- 53 Heron and Siemiatycki, *Great War*, 32.
- 54 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 25 May 1919. Robertson's name comes up again and again in the minutes of the postal workers' union local as a government spokesman or a compromise man. Borden made considerable use of him in other labour conflicts. Mitchell and Naylor, "In the Eye of the Storm," 181–82.
- 55 PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 26 May 1919. Same day, same picket line, postmaster McIntyre asked a picketer his name. "J.C. Cohen" was the reply. McIntyre answered with "I thought you was an alien." British-born and presumably Jewish, Cohen was a Great War veteran.
- 56 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, Winnipeg Post Office Inspector to Superintendent Staff Branch, 8 July 1919. Pickup returned to the post office, allegedly to fetch a cheque for someone else. He was accused of trying to return to work, an accusation he vehemently denied at a meeting of the union local and in the papers. See PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 27 May 1919; see also clipping from *Western Labour News*, 29 May 1919, attached to same correspondence of 8 July 1919.
- 57 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1. See figures accompanying Winnipeg postmaster to postmaster general, 13 June 1919.
- 58 Ibid., Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 28 May 1919, 29 May 1919.
- 59 Ibid., 2 June 1919.
- 60 Ibid., 31 May 1919. How these cases compared to the previous ones is a question to which I would very much like an answer.
- 61 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, postmaster of Montréal to postmaster general of Canada, 13 September 1919; assistant postmaster of Hamilton to chief post office superintendent of Toronto, 21. Correspondence sent to O. Staff Branch, date-stamped 6 June 1919. Not all of the men were warmly welcomed upon their return home. The two Hamilton clerks were suspended from their union, the Post Office Clerks Association, for having accepted the invitation to go to Winnipeg and break the strike.
- 62 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, memo from the (Winnipeg) postmaster, 5 June 1919.
- 63 Ibid., assistant postmaster to E.J. Underwood, 10 June 1919.
- 64 Ibid., Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 2 June 1919.
- 65 Ibid., Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 28 May, 1919.
- 66 PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, meeting of 3 June 1919.
- 67 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 4 June 1919, 2 June 1919.
- 68 PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch. The exchanges over reinstatement are recorded consistently in the minutes of the Winnipeg local, beginning on 27 June 1919.

- 69 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, Winnipeg postmaster to deputy postmaster general, 10 September 1919. No doubt the government had to maintain a balance between substitute workers and reinstated strikers so as not to poison the workplace with antagonistic elements.
- 70 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, Underwood to deputy postmaster general, 27 May 1919. In this letter, Underwood wrote a decoded transcription of a telegram received from the deputy minister, for this was an important matter that required a decision from Ottawa.
- 71 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, superintendent of Post Office Staff Branch to Winnipeg postmaster, 29 August 1919.
- 72 Ibid., Winnipeg postmaster to postmaster general, 8 April 1920.
- 73 Ibid., 25 June 1920.
- 74 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, Bower to Underwood, 12 July 1920.
- 75 Ibid., vol. 1, chief Post Office superintendent, Toronto to superintendent of Post Office Staff Branch, 14 July 1920.
- 76 Ibid., 19 August 1920. Ross and assistant postmaster Bower corresponded regularly.
- 77 PAM, Minute Book Winnipeg Branch, 4 July 1919.
- 78 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 1, deputy postmaster general to postmaster general, 24 December 1919.
- 79 Ibid., correspondence sent to Acting Prime Minister of Canada (Sir George E. Foster), 7 May 1920.
- 80 Ibid., Dafoe to Chisholm of Ottawa Press Gallery, 28 April 1920.
- 81 Ibid., secretary of Civil Service Commission to superintendent of Post Office Staff Branch, 22 July 1919.
- 82 RG-3 vol. 677, Winnipeg 39, vol. 2, Assistant Secretary of Civil Service Commission to superintendent of Post Office Staff Branch, 20 August 1920.
- 83 This was as true of the rural as the urban postal service.
- 84 RG-3 vol. 676, vol. 2, Thomas Bower to Underwood, 13 August 1920.
- 85 Ibid., vol. 1, Thomas Bower to Underwood, 17 September 1920. See also Winnipeg postmaster to postmaster general, 12 July 1920.
- 86 Ibid., vol. 2, 12 November 1920. McIntyre had passed away by 4 November 1920.
- 87 Lee, "Canadian Postal System," 330.



BY THE CHURCH.

EAST PETER AVE. LOOKING W.
EDMONSTON. 1904

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FROM THE REINFORCE BLOCK LOOKING TO THE GREAT F...



Part Four

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**Viewing
the West from
the Margins**

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“Our Negro Citizens”: An Example of Everyday Citizenship Practices¹

DAN CUI AND JENNIFER R. KELLY

Introduction

THIS ESSAY EXAMINES THE SOCIAL-HISTORICAL FORMATION of primarily urban African-Canadian communities in and around Edmonton, Alberta, during the early 1920s.² A review of literature indicates that there is a lack of consistent recognition of the lived experiences of peoples of African descent in Canada, especially in Alberta.³ Groundbreaking work by teachers and community members has documented to some degree an early historical presence.⁴ But to date a theoretical interdisciplinary approach, akin to critical cultural studies, that draws on sociological concepts as well as historical excavation has been lacking. To complement Howard and Tamara Palmer’s general description of the social and economic experiences of African Canadians in Alberta, our analysis of the data generated from a newspaper column entitled “Our Negro Citizens” (ONC) will provide new insights into issues of everyday citizenship practices.⁵ Our paper takes up more recent theorizations in sociology, history, cultural studies, and social theory to examine how the ONC newspaper column might

allow us to understand early attempts at community formation and consequent identity formation as Christians and Canadians. **In particular, the essay highlights** the efforts of the writer of the column, Reverend Geo. W. Slater Jr., an African American pastor working within the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (EAME) church in Edmonton. More specifically, we aim to demonstrate how the urban African-Canadian community of early 1920s Edmonton is represented in this column. What identities are enabled for those involved in the activities described in the **ONC column? And what relationships are discursively** constituted or reconstituted between different people mentioned in the column? The paper starts with an examination of how the research fits within existing literature on African-Canadian presence in Alberta and then goes on to examine the various ways in which Reverend Geo. W. Slater Jr. is able to use the column to highlight issues of racism (in the United States and Canada) while praising Canada as a haven; the ways in which he acts as a mediator of temperance discourses between the mainstream society racialized as white and his own community racialized as “coloured.” As a Methodist church, the EAME had links to a broader community of Methodist churches within Alberta, as well as to influential religious and community leaders such as Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy. Constructions of specific forms of Christian citizenship were constituted through the everyday practices identified in the **ONC columns.**

African-Canadian presence in Alberta

BETWEEN 1907 AND 1911, approximately one thousand Black Americans immigrated to Alberta. Both push (increasing racial discrimination in Oklahoma) and pull (the extensive advertisements by the Canadian government to attract farmers to the Canadian Prairies) factors motivated these early pioneers.⁶ It has been well documented through government papers and popular newspapers of the day, such as the *Edmonton Bulletin* and *The Albertan*, that the reaction of governments, the media, and economic groups such as the Board of Trade was one of hostile racism. Nearly every Prairie town objected to the movement of Blacks from Oklahoma to Western Canada.⁷ Further, R. Bruce Shepard’s exemplary text, *Deemed Unsuitable*, does a good job of laying out the journey from the United States that many of these pioneers undertook in order to arrive in Alberta. Of note, Shepard clearly articulates how Prairie newspapers have been an important source of stereotyping and negative representation of these immigrants from the United States. By way of support, Kelly argues, “common understandings of race as a biological concept were promoted in newspapers and magazines reinforcing an underlying question as to Black suitability for ‘the development of the highest sort of citizenship in Canada,’ given that their

'sense of humour and predisposition to a life of ease render [their] presence undesirable.'"⁸ Finally, over the period of 1905 to 1912, various official and unofficial strategies were employed by immigration authorities to discourage Blacks from moving to the Canadian West.⁹

Black immigrants who did make it into Alberta by 1911 settled primarily in four isolated rural communities: Junkins (now Wildwood), Keystone (now Breton), Campsie (near Barrhead), and Pine Creek (now Amber Valley, twenty miles from Athabasca).¹⁰ According to the 1911 census, only 30 percent of these pioneers were located in urban areas, with 208 in Edmonton and 72 in Calgary.¹¹ By 1921 the census information for Calgary recorded 66 under the "Negro" column, while the Edmonton population had grown to 277. Although Edmonton was the hub for the ONC column, the comings and goings among these four communities were also highlighted. Much of the literature that discusses this period of time assumes that urban experiences, in contrast to self-contained rural experience, was rife with ongoing daily racism and discrimination. We argue that an examination of the everyday lived experience of urban folks as constituted through the ONC column can complement the existing literature and illustrate how peoples of African descent were able to live bearable lives with similar as well as different aspirations to those who were racialized as white. Palmer and Palmer's and Boyko's studies indicate that stereotyping within print media was evident and consequently did affect levels of expectations as well as the employment prospects of many of these early immigrants.¹² The issue of restricted employment opportunities and economic racism is pointed out by Shepard and substantiated by Palmer and Palmer, who state, "[I]n Calgary during the 1920s and 1930s the job of porter was virtually the only one open to blacks."¹³ This segmentation of labour in relation to racialized understandings was not unique to Alberta but has been recorded by Sarah Jane Mathieu and Agnes Calliste in a historical analysis of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in Canada, as well as via the autobiography of former porter, union leader, and social activist Stanley Grizzle.¹⁴ In Edmonton, on the other hand, there was also "a group of entrepreneurs who were not entirely dependent upon a black clientele."¹⁵ However, little is known about this group's citizenship practices and how they constituted themselves as new Canadians. Some historians argue that this urban group could only "excel and find recognition in the less rigidly guarded, more fluid, informal world of entertainment and sports."¹⁶ As well, urban Blacks in Alberta during the 1920s are often depicted as victims of racial discrimination with regard to housing and public facilities; little is written about their undertakings as active citizens. Velma and Leah Carter's *Windows of Our Memories* does acknowledge both the ONC columns and the EAME church, but little analysis is given to the role that such a newspaper column played within

the community. One of the interesting aspects of the column that is not evident elsewhere in the literature on Black newspapers is the fact that *ONC* appeared in a newspaper aimed at readers racialized as white rather than in a specific newspaper for African Canadians.¹⁷ In this context, our analysis of a newspaper column entitled “Our Negro Citizens” will complement this partial view of the urban Black community of 1920s Edmonton.

Theoretical orientation: Lefebvre’s theory of “everyday life”

“OUR NEGRO CITIZENS” appeared weekly in two major Edmonton daily newspapers—in the *Edmonton Journal* from 10 September 1921 to 12 August 1924 and in the *Edmonton Bulletin* from 27 August 1921 to 21 August 1922. We have traced the columns beyond these dates, but, for the sake of in-depth analysis, we have chosen to limit our data to primarily 1921–22. The columns were often placed alongside the religion section and other news items. Each issue consists of short descriptions of and comments on the everyday comings and goings of a nascent African-Canadian community in Edmonton and environs.¹⁸ The topics highlighted ranged from social activities such as weddings, church meetings, dining, and entertainment, to fundraising, elections, and lectures given by the people within and outside the community. In some ways, these pieces could easily be viewed as mere society columns, as the trivial comings and goings of a specific social group striving for racial uplift and middle-class status.¹⁹ However, a deeper, theoretically infused analysis of the column urges us to see a value in exploring further the everyday lived experiences of these settlers. In particular, we draw on the work of Henri Lefebvre, a **French social theorist and philosopher** who argues that what is regarded as trivial in everyday life (micro aspects) is just as complex as what is traditionally conceived as the macro-sociological—**“both levels ‘reflect’ the society which encompasses them and which they constitute.”**²⁰ They cannot be analyzed as separate domains. Drawing on Lefebvre’s dialectical approach to the study of everyday life, we are able to link the specific instances of comings and goings of the African-Canadian communities to the wider issues of race and racialization as well as to other social issues taking place on a national and international level. Further, in analyzing the specifics of everyday life described by the newspaper columns, we find that Lefebvre’s concepts of strategies and tactics can provide us with some insights into the everyday citizenship practices of the African-Canadian community in Edmonton during the 1920s. A good starting point, according to Lefebvre, is that “individuals can be differentiated by their degree of participation in the consciousness and action of the group; leaders are people who think up the tactic, most importantly, the strategy, and who devote themselves to putting it into action.”²¹

Although Lefebvre acknowledges that tactics and strategies do not exhaust the reality of social groups, he emphasizes the importance of such theorization in that “it eliminates the illusion of inertia and rest of social groups.”²² These concepts allow us to rethink the stereotype of African Canadians in 1920s Alberta as consistently passive victims of racial discrimination fully segregated from mainstream Alberta. Instead, we can explore what strategies and tactics were discursively produced by individuals and group leaders within and through the columns.

As we mentioned above, this newspaper column is characteristic of the trivial. For each issue, at least twenty people are mentioned, with some issues exceeding forty names of community members. In order to have a general idea of who these people were and what they did, we generated a database in which the names of individuals and organizations, and their roles and activities in each issue were recorded. Based on this database, we conducted a quantitative content analysis to count the appearance and frequency of those individuals and organizations in order to identify which names were most frequently mentioned across several columns.

However, we wanted to push our analysis further than just content analysis to incorporate an understanding of textual meaning. As Richardson argues, the study of manifest meaning through quantitative content analysis is not adequate in revealing the latent meaning of the texts: that is, the ideological and political dimension of the texts.²³ In the process of textual **production, consumption, and distribution**, “it is also important to recognize that textual or journalistic meaning is communicated as much by *absence* as by presence; as much by what is ‘missing’ or excluded as by what is remembered and present.”²⁴ Examining what is written allows us to analyze how relationships are constituted through the columns’ textual representation. As Richardson argues, we should “ask what does this text say about the society in which it was produced and the society that it was produced for? What influence or impact do we think that the text may have had on social relations?”²⁵

Presence and activeness of a community leader: Rev. Geo. W. Slater Jr.

BASED ON THE RESULTS OF OUR QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS, a number of individuals and families are identified as active within the community. One of the most significant figures is Reverend Geo. W. Slater Jr., pastor of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (EAME) church of Edmonton. Starting in 1921 and continuing to at least 1924, Rev. Slater was identified as the compiler of the community’s narratives; thus, he has some control over which activities were

included and which were excluded.²⁶ His narrative constitutes him as having had what Lefebvre identifies as the sense of presence and activeness of a community leader. It is therefore to Rev. Slater that we look in order to tease out the tactics and strategy identified by Lefebvre. As a member of EAME, he associated himself with a denomination that was founded on both theological and sociological beliefs. The underlying ideology of his church rejected the then-popular negative theological interpretations that tended to dehumanize and render people of African descent second-class citizens.²⁷ While not discussed directly in the everyday comings and goings of the *ONC* columns, we are able to piece together some background information on Slater. We find that he was an American who regarded his position in Edmonton as on par with missionary work, especially necessary during the early 1920s when one considers the lack of social services and state responsibility for looking after those perceived as in need. In 1911 Rev. Slater assumed pastorate of what was then the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Clinton church in Iowa.²⁸ Through tracking the discourses in the column, it is evident that the United States was still an important aspect of the reverend's life as he and his wife travelled back and forth to the United States to visit family or to attend various African Methodist Episcopal (AME) conferences.²⁹ The fact that the U.S.-based parent church of Rev. Slater developed from within a protest movement against racism marks his subject position within the community as not just religious but also racialized. We can also verify that he was educated at a well-known AME university, Wilberforce, which he regarded highly.³⁰ His wife, Missouri, adopted the gendered role of helpmate for her husband's various missionary duties both internal and external to the church and is often praised in *ONC* for her singing and administering to the sick. Few personal details about Rev. Slater are presented in the columns, but we do know that he had at least two daughters, both of whom were living in Los Angeles with his parents and sister, and a son, Duke, who was a successful football player in the United States.

Like other parts of Canada and the United States, Edmonton had both Methodist (AME) and Baptist (Shiloh) churches.³¹ While Rev. Slater does to some extent prioritize and highlight the EAME church activities, the actual *ONC* content moves beyond denominational inclination by including Shiloh Baptist church events. Thus, racialized identities can be privileged in relation to religious denomination:

Last Tuesday night at the Shiloh Baptist church was organized the Douglas Athletic club which proposes to encourage the colored men and women in all sports such as baseball, football, basketball, lawn tennis, croquette and all track work. The club is composed very largely of persons belonging to and attending the two churches, Baptist and Methodist.³²

The ONC column reveals a flurry of different social and political activities organized around the EAME, some of which gave social and economic solace that would certainly challenge the status quo and Robin Winks' claim that "for all that these churches—Baptist, Methodist, and other—did give the Negro in succor and inspiration, on the whole they were ineffective in meeting the major problems."³³ In fact, based on the analysis of the newspaper columns, we would argue that Winks' generalizations about the role of churches and church leaders offers a partial rather than complex reading of the situation. This newspaper column was used, primarily by Rev. Geo. W. Slater Jr., as a tactic to challenge the unequal power relations and build community between Edmonton and scattered rural areas, a tactic not unique to Alberta but also noted in other Eastern provinces in Canada.³⁴

Constructing/reconstructing the community

THE IDENTITIES CONSTITUTED through Rev. Slater's narratives are **not of stereotypical** Negroes (as they were often portrayed in newspapers and magazines at that time) who are illiterate or capable only of directed heavy manual work; rather, they are individuals who have taken advantage of educational opportunities and are moral and gainfully employed. There are no stories where members of the community are presented in a straightforward negative way. In line with the thinking at that time, those within the "coloured" community who fall on hard times are seen as the responsibility of the community rather than the state. When Rev. Slater hears of a destitute old homestead couple, his response is that "this is a most unfortunate case, for the old people and also for the taxpayer."³⁵ Here, the response to old stereotypes is related to a public fear that immigrants of African descent will inevitably become charges of the state. In contrast, the column reflects citizens who are complex and active, and for whom hard work and education is paramount for social advancement and racial uplift:

At the beginning of the new year's term the following persons entered school: Richard Slater, Nellie Waggoner and Sam Colemon [*sic*] the day period, and Mrs. H. Brooks night period, at the Technical High School; Mrs. E. O. Anderson and Mrs. Hines of Calgary, the McTavish Business school; Mrs. Slater, Anderson and Brooks, musical course at the Victoria High. A number of others plan to enter soon.³⁶

These citizens were also experienced teachers such as Mrs. Payne, a graduate of Wilberforce University, who was teaching at Junkins; entrepreneurs such as Mesdames Bell and Proctor, who opened a dressmaking and fancywork store

in downtown Edmonton; or Dan Hayes, who opened a machinery building and reassessing shop. They also included successful settlers such as Mr. C.A. Watts of Sturgeon, who “owns a quarter section well improved; eight head of good horses; fourteen milkcows; one hundred head of hogs of the best breed; and many hundred head of fowls of all kinds; and a nice farm cottage well furnished.”³⁷ As well, in support of active citizens, this column purposefully selected and reproduced the stories of a U.S. magazine entitled *The Presbyterian Record*, which introduced “the most remarkable advancements made by the colored people of the United States since freedom.”³⁸

Of the three million men, nearly two millions are farmers or farm laborers; 80 percent, of the women are in necessary home and industrial life; accumulated wealth over a billion dollars; directors of seventy banks, forty periodicals and an Associated Negro Press; 400,000 called to the colors during the recent war, and 200,000 saw actual service overseas; that in Alabama, where 1,133,000 was appropriated for 720 Rosen Wald schools, \$430,000 of it was contributed by colored people.³⁹

Discourses are constructed within a context, and within these columns, we can see a link between existing ideas and practices around race and a normalizing of capitalism as an economic system. Rev. Slater’s positive construction of African Canadian citizens is clearly manifested in his response to W.E.B. Du Bois, a foremost pan-African intellectual and the editor of the journal *Crisis*, who, upon inquiring as to whether “colored people were permitted to settle in Canada,” received the answer that “from all the information that he can get that good, industrious and thrifty colored people are welcomed to Canada, and will find justice and protection.”⁴⁰ This linking of thrift to capitalism can also be seen throughout the columns, with constant reference to issues of unemployment and labour. Various meetings with the purpose of discussing employment and getting more opportunities for employment are recorded in the *ONC*, as links are reinforced between citizenship and home ownership:

Mr. and Mrs. Oliver are among our progressive citizens who understand the value of owning a home. Every colored family in Edmonton should this spring buy a home if only on the installment plan. It beats paying rent.”⁴¹

In addition to the construction of positive representation of the coloured community, Rev. Slater also used this column as a tool to challenge, disrupt, and present counter hegemonic media representations that stymie the denigration

of African Canadians. As we mentioned above, Prairie newspapers at this period of time were identified as an important source of stereotypes and negative representation of African Canadians.⁴² Examination of stories embedded with stereotypes reveals the use of rhetorical tropes such as hyperbole, metaphor, or metonym. Through rhetorical strategies, an **isolated incident can be immediately linked to the Black settlers as a whole and, consequently, can have a negative impact on the whole community.** One such case happened in Edmonton on 4 April 1911 and was well documented by historians—an incident in which, as it turned out, a white girl fabricated a story of an attack by a Black man. This “news of the supposed attack spread as quickly as the proverbial prairie fire, but managed to pick up a few embellishments on the way... [P]rominent newspapers immediately linked the Black settlers with the incident.”⁴³ Racist hyperbole such as “The Black Peril” became a catalyst for agitation against Black immigration to Alberta and for a later vigorous petition campaign by the Edmonton Board of Trade.⁴⁴ While this incident indicates the foregrounding of “the age-old sexual mythology that surrounds the Black man” as a menace to white women,⁴⁵ it also illustrates the role that newspapers played in naturalizing, for some political purpose, **ideological constructions of African Canadians as violent and dangerous.** Our rationale for familiarizing readers with this case is to demonstrate how **words operate in an intertextual way as they play off existing narratives.** Thus, **when the theme of sexual proclivities of Black men reappeared again a decade later in the *Edmonton Journal*, the community, through the ONC column, was able to identify and respond to its charges.** This time the African-Canadian community would not let history simply repeat itself; it now had access to a white audience. On 11 March 1922, the newspaper reported that George Borden, who self-identified, falsely, as a coloured sleeping car porter, had been arrested a few days earlier for “attempting to force his attention on a young white girl.” In responding to this incident, the ONC column immediately published a letter from H.E. Williams on behalf of coloured sleeping car employees in Edmonton that aimed to curb the negative impact of this incident on the whole community:

Now I wish to state that he is not a railroad porter and that the railroad company does not employ colored men of his type. They employ men of a clean moral reputation.... Why I call your attention to this is because there are ten or twelve [Black] porters with families living in this city at present, men of that clean moral type that the companies demand, and the action of this man Borden casts a reflection on those men in the eyes of some of the people.⁴⁶

In the next issue, 18 March 1922, the column followed up this case and published Rev. Slater's, support of H.E. Williams' statement.

The reporter [Slater] wished to testify to the truthfulness of the statements of H. E. Williams last week in his article, where he defends the porter's union as composed of good citizens. The reporter, having had good opportunity to visit them in their homes and quarters has found them very largely intelligent, progressive, home owning and morally dependable. These men, having had exceptional opportunity of travel and observation, furnish that class of our colored citizenry that is the real backbone of all our progress. Having had relatives and friends who were porters and knowing the conditions of their labor, the wonder to us is not that a few may now and then go astray but the remarkable thing is that many of them are most excellent citizens.⁴⁷

The sleeping car porters' case indicates how this column, with the aid of Rev. Slater, worked as a tactic to constitute counter-narratives that challenged the media's negative representation of African Canadian men as violent and dangerous. It also allowed for a challenge to the easy transposing of individual traits onto a social group and thus worked to curb the potential impact of an isolated incident on the entire community. Examining Rev. Slater's supportive testimony, it is interesting to note the inherently racialized language at work. Reference is made, for example, to "coloured" people as "largely intelligent, ... home owning and morally dependable." The type of citizen produced through the column is one who fits the expectations of an ideal Canadian citizen and illustrates Rev. Slater's privileging of certain national/racialized narratives that can be regarded as "discourses in the name of power."⁴⁸ The form of citizenship constituted is a Christian one based upon class-based ideals that reinforce the tenets of property ownership and capitalism. Contradictions are writ large here; although Rev. Slater comes from within the community, he is not immune to the taking up of racialized ideologies that dominate within the wider society.

Race consciousness:

Presence and activeness of political organizations

IT IS NOTICEABLE how many political and secular organizations are identified in the column. Many are organizations based on race consciousness in the sense that their aim and purpose is for the betterment of coloured people. Palmer and Palmer speak of the early African-Canadian secular organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which had close ties

with both the EAME and Shiloh churches in Edmonton.⁴⁹ As a branch of the New York-based organization of Marcus Garvey, it was dedicated to black self-improvement and consciousness. According to Palmer and Palmer,

[o]rganizational activity reached a peak in 1921 when, under the auspices of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, two other organizations were established. The Negro Welfare Association of Alberta was established to deal with the growing problem of unemployment among Edmonton's blacks, while the Negro Political Association of Edmonton fought for black rights.⁵⁰

Other than this concise commentary about the existence of Black secular organizations in Edmonton, little detailed public information is available about them. On this point, the column provides us with some historical data about the presence and activeness of these political organizations. First, the column demonstrates the significant role of UNIA within African-Canadian communities, and meetings (Pine Creek and Junkins) were noted and highlighted in nearly every issue. While the details of these meetings were not reported, Rev. Slater offers consistent support and praise for Marcus Garvey. In the issue of 4 March 1922, he states,

Making all allowances for human frailties, we believe Marcus Garvey to be a great, good, and honest man. His scheme is a gigantic international one for the Negro, and, if only one half of it succeeds, he will have contributed mightily to the solution of one of the world's greatest problems—the race problem. No Negro although he may not agree with Mr. Garvey in total, yet must admire the consummate ability of the man who in less than four years can organize into one organic body four million Negroes from all parts of the world.

Even when financial difficulties were emerging in 1923 about Garvey's scheme, the ONC position didn't really shift, and whereas the column announced an upcoming meeting to discuss Garvey, it is noticeable that after an initial cancellation, the meeting was not publicly rescheduled or reported upon.

As well as identifying with U.S. race-based politics, ONC issued a strong call for the community to pay attention to the vote in Edmonton and for individuals to become active citizens. During the 1922 election, Slater strongly questioned readers as to whether they had voted. Voting and "welfare of the race" were at the forefront of local political concerns. In the very first issue of the column, we garner the objectives of the Negro Political Association (NPA):

The object of the association is as follows: to study political principles and tenets of political parties, legislative measures proposed by legislative bodies, and all political propositions as they affect the welfare of the race. It is not the purpose of this organization to endorse any measure or men, but rather to study and give correct information as to reports, studying treatises, or assembling the colored citizens to listen to representative exponents of various theories and propositions. Also to get the people to become voting citizens.⁵¹

At voting time, the column was used by the NPA to deliver political claims, on the one hand, and, on the other, to urge African Canadians to use their votes to promote social change:

The Negro Political Association of Alberta wish to inform the different political parties that we will not endorse any until we have heard all the candidates of the different parties. Then that party that sets forth in their platform the true principles of democracy and the protection of their citizens and country, regardless of race, creed, or color, without discrimination and we are sure these candidates are not camouflaging, then that party we will endorse and give our hearty support to at the polls and live up to our obligation in every respect.⁵²

Finally, the column publicized how the work by the Negro Welfare Association was linked to other political groups in Edmonton, a fact attested to by the support it obtained from the mayor of Edmonton, D.M. Duggan:

The committee composed of Rev. Geo. W. Slater, Jr., Pastor of the Immanuel A.M.E. Church, Ira J. Day, and D.W. Anderson, who a few days ago called upon the mayor and the principal authorities in the interests of the unemployed colored people report that their efforts are meeting with very gratifying success. Rev. Geo. Slater Jr. reports that he finds that the mines, the packing plants, and the harvest fields are securing extra help now from the ranks of their people who were idle a few days ago and that also in complaints with the request made in the following letter from Mayor Duggan, Rev. Geo. Slater Jr. called upon Mr. Jamieson of the C.N.R. and finds out the demands for labour on the railroad is such that all of the unemployed men of the Negroes can find permanent work with that company.⁵³

Through the efforts of these political organizations, African Canadians were able to participate in both the political and economic domains, and had connections with the mainstream authorities rather than remaining, as is frequently indicated in earlier literature, an isolated and often powerless community stymied by racism.

Racial discrimination: Using the narrative of the Canadian nation

IT IS APPARENT IN READING THE COLUMN that the Black community was in its early stages of formation and that many of its members were in a phase of transition from regarding themselves as solely Americans (family visits to the United States are consistently interspersed in the column) to positioning of themselves as Canadian citizens with certain rights and expectations in Canada. The ONC column was a site where issues of race and racism in the international U.S. context were linked to the local issues of racialization. Certain discursive practices are apparent in the highlighting of active participation of members of the community in various organizations such as the Negro Political Association.

Further, Rev. Slater takes up existing perspectives that constitute Canadian identity as aligned with fairness. He uses what can be regarded as a narrative of the nation, the stories, images, landscapes, scenarios—national symbols and rituals which stand for, or represent—which give meaning to a nation.⁵⁴ For example, in the issue of 21 January 1922, the column reports that Rev. Slater received news from Campsie that “the parents of the colored children who have not been permitted to attend school for five to seven years are petitioning the new government for redress of their wrongs.” In support of their petition, Rev. Slater argues that “we feel sure that that Canadian spirit of justice and fair play would not tolerate that situation for a moment when once it is appraised of the same.” In the follow-up report on 4 February 1922, it is noted that “the colored children have been shut out of school for about seven years in that district. The white people ... have arbitrarily contrary to the legal vote of the people, mapped out a checker board school district that makes it impossible for the colored people to go to school unless they leave the district.” Rev. Slater once again asks, “Is this Canadian justice and fair play?” Finally, he laid the issue before the ministerial association:

A committee consisting of several of the more prominent preachers of the city was selected to wait upon the minister of education concerning the matter. On Wednesday they were very cordially received by the minister and were given assurance that the situation was under

immediate advisement and that in a short time it is hoped to have the whole matter amicably settled. Wednesday night Rev. Mr. Slater reported the recent situation to a meeting of the U.N.I.A.⁵⁵

This example reveals that Rev. Slater not only took advantage of the capacity of newspapers to publicize this injustice in Campsie, **but he also used the opportunity to question Canada's self-proclaimed stance and moral high ground on issues of justice.** Further, he strategically broadened the issue to the mainstream community and worked collectively with other religious associations to solve the issue of discrimination and exclusion. Here, Rev. Slater's, ability to act as a mediator between communities and his effectiveness as a leader able to galvanize support on a community rather than individual basis are highlighted. The struggle against racial discrimination directed toward the coloured children in Campsie undermines the stereotypical images of passive Black church leaders and African Canadians totally isolated from mainstream Edmonton society. Similarly, when one of his church members was refused entry to the Metropolitan Theatre in Edmonton, Rev. Slater regards it as an issue for all coloured residents and unequivocally calls for justice under the British flag. For him, such resistance meant a more diplomatic and tactical approach that continually co-opted nationalist discourses that envisioned Canada's past, present, and future as a country of justice and fair play. Here he positions himself as a Canadian, fully accessing his rights and seeing no difficulties in being both "coloured" and Canadian. In the 4 February 1922 issue in **which the above Campsie case is discussed,** the story is immediately followed in the next paragraph by laudatory praise of the Canadian sense of justice:

The colored people of Edmonton rejoiced to know that their honored fellow citizen, the Hon. Charles Stewart, displayed the true Canadian spirit of justice and fair play when he refused to send Matthew Bull-ock back to North Carolina, U.S.A., where colored people are lynched for almost trifling cause. This action of the honorable minister of the interior was in strict keeping with the attitude of the Canadian government from the old American slavery days when Canada became a safe asylum for the fleeing slave by way of the Underground Railroad.⁵⁶

The idea of Canada as fair and just is not only drawn upon as justification of rights but is also linked with responsibilities, as these new African Canadians are urged to demonstrate their appreciation and loyalty to Canada. So, for example, the following was highlighted one week:

The Chicago Defender last week had a full page given to a review of the history of Canada's attitude in protecting the coloured people who have in the last century fled to her soil for escape from the injustice of oppression of the States. Every Negro should read it and tell it to his children for there is no history like it in the world. The land of the Maple leaf shall ever be dear to men of Negro blood.⁵⁷

In combining the seemingly contradictory elements that recognize the existence of racial discrimination in Canada while praising Canada as a country of justice and fair play, ONC delivered a message of critique, in an acceptable way, to a mainstream Canadian audience. Also evident in the column are various linguistic strategies such as “foregrounding” in relation to the United States and what Richardson, after Teun van Dijk, identifies as the “ideological square.” Richardson argues that for van Dijk, “the ideological square is characterized by a Positive Self-Presentation and a simultaneous Negative Other-Presentation; it is a way of perceiving and representing the world—and specifically ‘our’ and ‘their’ actions, position and role within the world.”⁵⁸ This strategy enabled the survival of this column and its line of critique in the very mainstream *Edmonton Journal* and *Edmonton Bulletin* newspapers. As Lefebvre argues, “survival in itself is a form of action.”⁵⁹ In this sense, it is apparent that Rev. Slater played the role of mediator between the mainstream, dominant Anglo-Saxon community and the African-Canadian community by discursively drawing on and reproducing ideas across both communities.

Rev. Slater as a mediator of discourses: Slippage between communities

THE COLUMN'S TITLE indicates that the writing was couched in rhetoric of the “Negro citizen,” and thus framed African Canadians as possessing a distinct form of citizenship, one set apart from the norm of “white” citizenship. This distinction from the mainstream recalls Gillian Rose's comment that “racist discourses construct racialized identities in part by erecting supposedly impermeable barriers which depend on an essentialist understanding of difference.”⁶⁰ Through examination of the columns, it is apparent that ideologies are not bound to distinct and fully segregated communities. At times, it is evident that the column was produced to speak to more than the existing coloured community, as when Rev. Slater highlights how a domestic position has been found for a woman in the community and how he would be able to provide this service again if necessary. More explicitly, he states, “[W]e know that the column is read by white and colored settlers.”⁶¹ So the column was not just for the so-called Ne-

gro community; rather, the newspaper crossed discursive boundaries, allowing for flows from the mainstream into the newly emerging African-Canadian communities. Finally, by introducing and filtering the existing dominant ideologies, Rev. Slater helped construct a community identity characterized by a willingness to open up—and be uplifted. Identified most explicitly in terms of the discourse and social practices of women’s organizations, gendered/racialized uplift is a practice not unique to Alberta; it has been recorded by James St. G. Walker and Dionne Brand in other provinces in Canada.⁶² Indeed, a language of racial uplift joins with other narratives around temperance to act as part of a **larger discursive** formation that produces social practices such as administering to the poor. In the issue of February 1922, the column made its regular report of the meeting of the Phylis Wheatley Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).⁶³

Mrs. H. Brooks and Mrs. Shirley Oliver read well written papers on the life of Miss Willard, and Madame Pinkey Hunt read one of Dunbar’s poems on Frederick Douglas. Mrs. Edna Anderson recited a beautiful poem. After several very interesting remarks the ladies took up the discussion of heredity and environment. Rev. Geo W. Slater. Jr., pastor of the Emmanuel A.M.E. church, being present, was called upon for an address. Rev. Mr. Slater, in his remarks, called the attention of the ladies to the great spread of the drug habit, as he had been informed by an address to the Social Service Council by Mrs. Magistrate Murphy.⁶⁴

Evident here are the ways in which race-consciousness was achieved through the holding of regular meetings to read literature, some of which was related to racial uplift. Rev. Slater discursively reproduced, introduced, and linked women within his church community to mainstream WCTU ideas on moral regulation. Two prominent women and members of the mainstream WCTU are referenced in many of the *ONC* columns: Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy. In highlighting the speeches and homilies of “Mrs. Magistrate Murphy,” better known as Emily Murphy, the column links existing dominant ideologies concerning social change and prohibition in 1920s Edmonton with these new coloured citizens. Embedded in these dominant ideas were perceptions of women as responsible for saving the sanctity of home and patriarchal rule within it. As we know, Emily Murphy was a well-known Canadian women’s rights activist and the first woman magistrate in Canada.⁶⁵ Her ideas represented mainstream Canadian feminism at that time. By consistently making positive references to Emily Murphy, the column once again emphasizes the key role Rev. Slater played in mediating ideas of the mainstream community racialized as white and communities racialized as coloured. More importantly,

it demonstrates the role of an African-Canadian women's organization in trying to upgrade their knowledge to be on a par with that of mainstream white women. In other words, the subtext of the message presented here is that African Canadian women held similar ideas in terms of temperance to their white counterparts and that through reading and consciousness raising, they also had the potential to be the equals of white middle-class women. That the Wheatley WCTU had links to the mainstream temperance movement in Alberta and that members attended provincial meetings alongside other women representing rural and urban unions has been verified through an examination of the Reports of the Annual Convention of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Alberta. While the third annual convention booklet of 1915 made no mention of the Phylis Wheatley group, examination of a 1916 Annual Report identifies the existence of the group through a hand-written note indicating a "coloured" group.⁶⁶ In verifying the date of their establishment, the 1921 Annual Report states that "Wheatley observed their 4th anniversary on 25 July; they have purchased over 100 blotters and cards and succeeded in having over 50 children sign the pledge."⁶⁷ Further, the columns indicate that the Phylis Wheatley WCTU members were active women who associated with the mainstream WCTU. The stated aim of the WCTU is Christian citizenship, and this aim is certainly exemplified within the work of the Phylis Wheatley group.

In 1921 they reported holding fourteen regular meetings, three special and one parlor meeting. Members of the union canvassed the district during the referendum campaign, held a prohibition concert put on a drive for new members and have 18 paid up members. Observed Mothers' day. Held a Frances Willard memorial meeting gave a drama and bazaar from which we realized \$129.59, most of which has been spent. We found a home for a small girl who could not otherwise get to school, gave a free Xmas social to orphan children. We mother a L.T.L. of 12 members. Two of our members were part of a committee to wait upon city council to protest against high rental taxes.⁶⁸

According to Mariana Valverde, whose important book *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water* overlaps the period of time under discussion in this essay, the WCTU, as a primarily small-town venture with an exclusively female membership, enabled opportunities for autonomous organization.⁶⁹ So, the Phylis Wheatley WCTU—named after the founder and representative of African-American literature in the United States—provided women of the African-Canadian community with a spiritual and intellectual place for consciousness raising and autonomous organization.

The racialized nature of the Phylis Wheatley group is further highlighted by the fact that, unlike other district unions, the Wheatley group appears to be the only one, at this time, that is not identified by a geographic area (e.g., Highlands, Westmount) within Edmonton.⁷⁰ Similarly, a prominent member of the Famous Five, Nellie McClung, is often praised in the column for her various activities related to her role as a member of the legislative assembly as well as for her ecumenical and Methodist work in Canada and in England. She is credited by Rev. Slater with giving a presentation at the Wesley Methodist that was a “rich feast filled with fact, reason and soul.” She is further credited with speaking “highly of the dignity, learning and soul-strength of the Negro delegates to the Methodist Ecumenical conference in London.”⁷¹

While McClung’s interaction with the EAME and Rev. Slater seemed to revolve amicably around Methodism and temperance, nonetheless Valverde cautions that “feminism, Christian, chauvinism, and ethnocentrism were for McClung and her fellow feminists a unified whole: the superiority of the Anglo culture is not an incidental belief that could be exercised, leaving a pure feminism behind.”⁷² Such ideas, espoused by Murphy and other women involved with the WCTU, on the importance of mothers and families are linked to a wider social concern for racial purity at that time. In trying to understand these early forms of feminism, we have to recognize Murphy’s paradoxical role in the Canadian race-making project, as well as her articulation of settler woman as an emblem of sexual vulnerability and an agent of government. There are evident contradictions within Murphy’s position as a liberal in relation to gender yet a conservative racist and nationalist in her work as a writer and judge in the women’s court. Questions are raised here as to how the women of the Phylis Wheatley WCTU related to the dominant discourse of moral regulation that was infused with issues of racial degeneration, whiteness, nation, and woman’s mission as mother of the race.⁷³ Were these African Canadian women aware of this disjuncture in beliefs? Although the columns do not give an indication as to how the Phylis Wheatley WCTU reacted to the racist narratives of their fellow temperance allies, Rev. Slater states, “We have heard Mrs. Murphy give her lecture on the ‘Black Candle’ and shall secure the book for reference for my library.”⁷⁴

Conclusion

IN CONCLUDING, we return to Richardson’s questions posed at the beginning of this essay: What does this text say about the society in which it was produced and the society that it was produced for? What influence or impact do we think that the text may have had on social relations?

First, 1920s Edmonton, Alberta, was a vibrant place in terms of community, social, and political organizations. Dominant ideas of **the period were racialized, gendered, and classed**, all of which intersected religious sensibilities and were crystallized through social practices related to the temperance movement. Coming from a Methodist church, the column illustrates the intersections of these various complex discursive practices and the identities that are enabled as well as constrained. These intersections are exemplified in relation to mainstream elite middle- and upper-class Methodist women such as Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy, both of whom were associated with the campaign for temperance in wider Canadian society.

The naming of the column is interesting and says a lot about the society for which it was produced. Peoples of African descent were regarded as separate beings within a society normalized as white. This underlying assumption of separate spheres based on racialized identities is what makes plausible the very idea of a column entitled “Our Negro Citizens.” There is also a degree of irony in the title, as the column is less about “our” African Canadian citizens—African Canadians as wards of the dominant white state—than it is about the construction of “us” as Canadian citizens. Put differently, the column is as much about the African-Canadian community’s understandings of itself as it is about the stereotypes within mainstream society. Further, we can also argue that the “us” is not a stable category or a one-dimensional position, as this “us” can shift from a racialized collective to an elite, classed, and socio-economic grouping. In terms of what effects on social relations *ONC* had, we can start with the insight that people project themselves as certain types of persons and that the identity that a person projects relates, in part, to the activity that he or she is attempting to accomplish. So the activities that are engaged with will illustrate what types of identities these church members are trying to perform and in particular how Rev. Slater was able to produce himself as an important member of the coloured community who had access to elite individuals from the mainstream community.

From what we can discern, “Our Negro Citizens” was produced for a society that would enable peoples of African descent to achieve their due recognition. It was also produced in order to give the self-defined coloured individuals highlighted in the column a **way to position themselves within Canadian society** as respectable, moral, Christian, middle-class citizens who value hard work, thrift, and property ownership. As Lefebvre argues, not only do subjects vanish at the threshold of the everyday; they are constituted and reconstituted there as well.⁷⁵ In positioning the *ONC* column in relation to literature on Black newspapers, we argue that the column offers a different reading of traditional literature that tends to highlight problems of small readership base and lack of

ongoing financial support.⁷⁶ Instead, *ONC* is illustrative of a space of border crossing where communities racialized as white and communities racialized as coloured are able to engage with common ideas. Similarly, community formation took place between and within the four rural and urban African-Canadian communities. Taking up the idea that language use is a form of enacting identity, we can observe **processes of collective identity formation taking place**. However, this formation is neither static nor one-dimensional; instead, we extend our analysis of identity and draw on the work of Stuart Hall, who theorizes identification as complex and more about becoming than being. As he views it, “cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning.”⁷⁷ If we take up this argument that “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past,” then it is evident that these citizens are both Canadian and American. The ideas constituted in the column enable identification with their past experiences in the United States as well as their present everyday lives in Canada. Thus identifications constituted in the columns can, at least tentatively, be regarded as “diasporic” rather than solely Canadian or American, a point supported by Jane Rhodes, who argues, “[E]xamining black migrations in North America—the formation of a continental diaspora—is crucial for understanding the dynamics of black America and black Canadian identities.”⁷⁸

It has to be recognized that the discourses within the newspaper illustrate a classed positioning by those within the community as they attempt to provide “uplift” for others perceived as less fortunate than themselves. The Wheatley WCTU saw a lot of their work as rescuing the destitute and the poor and as such produced themselves as good, respectable, Christian citizens who would assist their less fortunate neighbours. Using de Certeau’s understanding of the everyday, we argue that the “Our Negro Citizens” column was very much in the nature of tactics. Rev. Slater used the language of nation, moral regulation, religion, gender, and class as a tactic that “insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety.” In the process, the emergent African-Canadian community was able to challenge negative constructions of their community identity, fight against denigration in the media, and interrupt the unequal power relationship with the mainstream community racialized as white. *

Notes

- 1 Funding for this research was provided by a three-year Standard Research Grant, Social Sciences Humanities Research Council. We would like to thank Laura Sirtonski for research and archival work, Lorin Yochim for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this essay, and Susan Smith for her ongoing support and historiographic insights.
- 2 Throughout, the term *African Canadian* is used interchangeably with *Black*. *Coloured* is used when referring directly to the column.
- 3 Jennifer Kelly, *Under the Gaze: Learning to be Black in White Society* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1998); Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); R. Bruce Shepard, *Deemed Unsuitable: Blacks from Oklahoma Move to the Canadian Prairies in Search of Equality in the Early Twentieth Century Only to Find Racism in Their New Home* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1997).
- 4 Velma Carter, *The Window of Our Memories* (St. Albert: B.C.R. Society of Alberta, 1988); Gwen Hooks, *The Keystone Legacy: Reflections of a Black Pioneer* (Edmonton: Brightest Pebble, 1997); and Cheryl Foggo, *Pourin' Down Rain* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1990).
- 5 Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, "Urban Blacks in Alberta," *Alberta History* 29 (Summer 1981): 8; Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, "The Black Experience in Alberta," in *Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity*, ed. Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), 366–93. About ten years ago, one of the authors encountered this column while undertaking archival research for a book project. A return to the "Our Negro Citizens" columns through the generous funding of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) has meant that we are now able to give due recognition to the importance and significance of the columns.
- 6 However, the Canadian government deterred Black American farmers under the racialized excuse that Canada's cold climate is not suitable for non-whites. For further details on this part of history, see R. Bruce Shepard, "Plain Racism: The Reaction against Oklahoma Black Immigration to the Canadian Plains," in *Racism in Canada*, ed. McKague Ormond (Saskatchewan: Fifth House, 1991), 14–31; Shepard, *Deemed Unsuitable*; Palmer and Palmer, "Black Experience in Alberta."
- 7 John Boyko, "Black Canadians 1791–1970: Slavery, Segregation and Evacuation," in *Last Steps to Freedom: The Revolution of Canadian Racism*, ed. John Boyko (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1995), 149–74.
- 8 Kelly, *Under the Gaze*, 42.
- 9 For details of these strategies, see Boyko, *Black Canadians 1791–1970*; Shepard, "Plain Racism."
- 10 Sarah Carter, Lesley Erickson, Patricia Roome, and Char Smith, eds., *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West through Women's History* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005); Hooks, *Keystone Legacy*.

- 11 Palmer and Palmer, "Black Experience in Alberta."
- 12 Ibid., and Boyko, *Black Canadians 1791–1970*. An examination of the *Edmonton Journal* and *Bulletin* at this time indicates that jokes portraying Blacks as stupid were prevalent. As well, because the newspapers took many of their stories from larger newspapers in the United States, there was a crossover and travelling of racist stories.
- 13 Palmer and Palmer, "Urban Blacks in Alberta," 9–10.
- 14 Sarah Jane Mathieu, "North of the Colour Line: Sleeping Car Porters and the Battle against Jim Crow on Canadian Rails, 1880–1920," *Labour* 47 (Spring 2001): 9; Agnes Calliste, "Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900–1932," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28 (Winter 1993): 131; Stanley Grizzle, *My Name's Not George: The Story of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Personal Reminiscences of Stanley G. Grizzle* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1998).
- 15 Palmer and Palmer, "Urban Blacks in Alberta," 9–10.
- 16 Palmer and Palmer, "Black Experience in Alberta," 383.
- 17 See Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998).
- 18 Junkins was also highlighted, as there was a growing church community in the area.
- 19 This idea of "uplift" is an ongoing part of Black identification and also has roots in W.E.B. Du Bois's notion of the Talented Ten.
- 20 Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 1991), 140.
- 21 Ibid., 106–07.
- 22 Ibid., 106.
- 23 John E. Richardson, *Analyzing Newspaper: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
- 24 Ibid., 93.
- 25 Ibid., 51.
- 26 In the first issue of the *Edmonton Journal*, 19 September 1921, it states, "News for this column should be reported to Rev Geo. W. Slater, Jr., of Coppin Centre News Agency, 9633 107 A Avenue, Edmonton, Alta: phone 6084."
- 27 <http://www.ame-church.com/>.
- 28 "In 1855 the Cincinnati Conference on the Methodist Episcopal church decided to raise money to establish a college for black youth that incorporated the following year as Wilberforce University ... after a brief suspension at the beginning of the Civil war, it was re-opened under the sponsorship of the African Methodist/Episcopal church." See John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 181.

- 29 While not discussed explicitly in the column, Internet searches suggest that he had at least one son who achieved fame as a football player at the University of Iowa. As well, I speculate that this is the same Rev. Geo.W. Slater Jr. who was a socialist minister and writer in early-1900s Chicago. http://www.bookrags.com/wiki/Duke_Slater.
- 30 "In 1855 the Cincinnati Conference on the Methodist Episcopal church decided to raise money to establish a college for black youth that incorporated the following year as Wilberforce University ... after a brief suspension at the beginning of the Civil war, it was re-opened under the sponsorship of the African Methodist/Episcopal church." See Franklin and Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 181.
- 31 Palmer and Palmer, "Urban Blacks in Alberta."
- 32 *Edmonton Journal*, 15 April 1922.
- 33 Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 360.
- 34 James W. St. G. Walker, "African Canadians," *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*, ed. Paul R. Magocsi, <http://multicultural.Canada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z/a16/5>.
- 35 *Edmonton Journal*, 17 June 1922.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 7 January 1922.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 11 March 1921.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 18 March 1922.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 *Edmonton Journal*, 7 January 1922.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 15 April 1922.
- 42 Shepard, "Plain Racism."
- 43 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 44 It is an editorial entitled "The Black Peril" in the *Lethbridge Daily News* on 8 April 1911. It was quoted by Shepard in "Plain Racism," 23.
- 45 Here the work of Sarah Carter is instructive in analyzing constructions of Aboriginal males as a similar threat.
- 46 *Edmonton Journal*, 11 March 1922.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 18 March 1922.
- 48 John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).
- 49 Palmer and Palmer, "Urban Blacks in Alberta"; "Black Experience in Alberta."
- 50 Palmer and Palmer, "Black Experience in Alberta," 387.
- 51 *Edmonton Journal*, 10 September 1921.

- 52 Ibid., 22 October 1921.
- 53 Ibid., 19 September 1921. Ira J. Day was the president of the Negro Welfare Association at that time.
- 54 Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 342–401.
- 55 *Edmonton Journal*, 18 February 1922.
- 56 Ibid., 4 February 1922.
- 57 Ibid., 1 April 1922.
- 58 John E. Richardson, *Analyzing Newspaper: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 51.
- 59 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 106.
- 60 Gillian Rose, "Spatialities of 'Community,' Power and Change: The Imagined Geographies of Community Arts Projects," *Cultural Theories* 11, no. 1 (January 1997): 1–16, esp. 2.
- 61 *Edmonton Journal*, 12 August 1922.
- 62 Walker, "African Canadians"; Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s–1950s*, with Lois De Shield and the Immigrant Women's Job Placement Centre (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991).
- 63 "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was organized in 1874 by women primarily racialized as white and who were concerned about the problems alcohol was causing their families and society. The members chose total abstinence from all alcohol as their lifestyle and protection of the home as their watchword." <http://www.wctu.org/>.
- 64 *Edmonton Journal*, 25 February 1922.
- 65 Emily Murphy, in her book *The Black Candle and Other Writings*, expressed racist ideas about the various racial and ethnic groups. This book was published in 1922, the same publication year of this newspaper column.
- 66 Glenbow Museum, WCTU file.
- 67 Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Alberta: Report of 9th Annual Convention, 1921, 45. This dating of the formation of the Phylis Wheatley WCTU as founded in 1915 contradicts the ideas put forward in *Windows of Our Memories* that the Booker T. Washington WCTU was the first to be founded.
- 68 Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Alberta: Report of 9th Annual Convention, 1921, 61.
- 69 Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada 1885–1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 58.
- 70 This intersection among race, gender, and religious ideology was also evident in later WCTU groups from the Black community that were named after individuals rather than geographic areas.

- 71 *Edmonton Journal*, 25 February 1922.
- 72 Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 120. The point is illustrated by Patricia Roome, "'From One Whose Home Is among the Indians': Henrietta Muir Edwards and Aboriginal Peoples," in Carter et al., *Unsettled Pasts*, 47–78.
- 73 Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 60.
- 74 *Edmonton Journal*, 18 Nov 1922.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 76 Both Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, and Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, have interesting and in-depth discussions of Black newspapers.
- 77 Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 392 and 75; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendeall (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984), xix.
- 78 Jane Rhodes, "The Contestation over National Identity: Nineteenth-Century Black Americans in Canada," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 30 (2000), 175.

A Queer-Eye View of the Prairies: Reorienting Western Canadian Histories¹

VALERIE J. KORINEK

■ **Among the iconic, evocative images of the prairies** are those marvelous bird's-eye-view maps and photographs that cities and towns commissioned to graphically depict their settlement and expansion. As a cultural historian and a newcomer to Prairie studies, I have taken tremendous delight in looking at these pictorial and geographic mappings of progress. It is only belatedly, when invited to assess the role of histories of sexuality within the Prairies and more importantly, the inherent potential such a thematic approach offers to Prairie scholars, that I have realized that my work is as intimately involved in mapping the modern, urban history of Western Canada as it has previously been concerned with historicizing the emergence of gay and lesbian community formations. Employing a "queer-eye view," as this paper argues, has much to offer Prairie historians as it both reorients and complicates our social histories of the West.² By enumerating the regional and international historiography on this topic, I hope to both contextualize and encourage further work in this area. Ultimately, introducing queer histories to their rightful place in our regional history offers a more inclusive and accurate social history of contemporary Western Canada.

Uncovering the histories of gay and lesbian communities in Western Canada has occupied my attention since 2000, when I began a project to collect and analyze Prairie gay and lesbian oral histories. That larger project, a monograph in progress entitled *Prairie Fairies*, investigates the gay and lesbian social, cultural, and activist development in the five largest Prairie cities—Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Edmonton, and Calgary.³ What began innocently enough as a proposed “small book” has now morphed into an increasingly larger, more complicated study of the development of Prairie queer experiences, identities, and communities. Conceived as a topic firmly situated in the North American histories of sexuality and gender history literature, it became apparent that the setting, the Prairies, would become a third focal point of the study. Thus, in my essay, I want to offer three individual case studies that illuminate how employing a queer-eye view of the Prairies forces a confrontation with a number of key issues for contemporary Prairie scholars and in so doing, raise some substantial questions about how we imagine, historicize, and mythologize the Prairie West.

This research is part of a growing international historiography that implicitly seeks to compare and contrast the diverse experiences of gays and lesbians in international gay metropolises—London, New York, San Francisco, Toronto, and Vancouver—with their counterparts in cities not initially associated with gay and lesbian enclaves and cultural, commercial, or activist activity.⁴ To date, excellent work has been completed on cities as diverse as Buffalo, Philadelphia, Chicago, Memphis, Portland, Jackson, Mississippi, and Deadwood, South Dakota.⁵ While primarily a sexual and cultural history of the Canadian Prairies, this research has benefitted from an international literature concerned with “mapping desire,” to borrow David Bell and Gill Valentine’s term.⁶ Increasingly, larger coteries of cultural, social, and feminist geographers have theorized extensively about the complexities of writing what Kath Weston calls “the great gay migration of the seventies and eighties.”⁷ Like studies of lesbians in Grand Rapids, Michigan, or gay people in Minot, North Dakota, my research about Prairie gay and lesbian communities uncovers both urban spaces and communities that few outside of those communities knew existed. Because of the dearth of Canadian sources, and owing to our misconceptions that most Prairie lesbians and gays migrated to larger centres, this study began with relatively simple questions: Where were the gay and lesbian people in the Prairies? How did these groups form cultural and political organizations? What did it mean to be gay or lesbian in the Prairies? Now, this research also includes the acknowledgement that the concept of a unitary gay community, while a long-desired goal of some residents, was unattainable.⁸ Class, race, and sex divisions were nearly always in evidence in the region at the same time that the “gay imaginary” dreamt of and worked toward building community.⁹ As Weston astutely notes, “the gay imagi-

nary is not just a dream of freedom to 'be gay' that requires an urban location, but a symbolic space that configures gayness itself by elaborating an opposition between rural and urban life. It is also the odyssey of escape from the isolation of the countryside and the surveillance of small-town life into the freedom and anonymity of the urban landscape."¹⁰ Many of the narratives of coming out in the Prairies, and of the urban gay life available there, reference either the physical migration from farms, rural areas, and small towns, or the psychological migration from the straight world to the gay world.

However, "if the Great Gay Migration participated in the construction of the imagined gay community, it simultaneously undermined this sexual imaginary" because "individuals often found themselves asking, 'Am I them? And who are we?'"¹¹ Questions of whom to include in such studies and how to analyze people's understanding of their sexual behaviours, orientation, and identity posed a continual challenge. As evidence provided below illustrates, while some individuals were prepared to identify and label themselves relatively early as gay or lesbian, others were latecomers to gay and lesbian identities, coming out only in middle age, after heterosexual marriages. Still others were prepared to participate in sexual or social events, while eschewing any labels based upon their sexuality. For example, one female informant took great care to explain how she believed that it was not necessary or appropriate for her to indicate her orientation to co-workers, family, or straight friends. Instead, she just lived her life and if people chose to speculate about her and her long-time companion, then that was their business.¹²

As research progresses, another issue is emerging: a contemporary re-evaluation of the historical perceptions of Western Canadian cities and society in a far broader sense. Much important gendered history-of-sexuality research has been done on the contact period and the early settlement years—work by Sylvia Van Kirk, Sarah Carter, Adele Perry, Terry Chapman, Lyle Dick, Angus McLaren, and others, all of which clearly illustrates the centrality of sex, heterosexual marriage, and imperial racial policies in creating a particular form of settler society in Western Canada.¹³ Equally, Western Canadian histories were at the forefront of Canadian urban history in the seventies and early eighties (Winnipeg in particular is well historicized), and this work needs to be extended into the post-World War II era.¹⁴ The absence of such work is problematic because it hinders social history of this time period and, again, fails to account for how the West has transformed itself into an increasingly urban region in the second half of the twentieth century. Despite those innovative and important contributions, the field has failed to capitalize on its early lead in this area, and thus the scholarship that might logically have been anticipated, and that might have charted similar trends into the twentieth century, remains underdeveloped. Most Prairie

historiography continues to prioritize histories of settlement, native-newcomer relations, and economic and agricultural developments. The other temporal focal point of Prairie scholarship, the Depression, offers much scope for those interested in gender, political, economic, and urban studies, but it also represents virtually the terminal date for most Prairie historical scholarship.

There are a number of ways to proceed. First, as a specialist in Canadian cultural and gender history in the post-World War II era, I encourage Prairie scholars to focus more intensively on the later twentieth century, for both scholarly and pedagogical reasons. This was a time of considerable transformation for the Prairie West (some might argue Western ascendancy, albeit uneven) as it reconfigured from a primarily rural to an urban place, as it became an economic powerhouse, and as demographic shifts made it an increasing social and political force within the country. This transformation needs to be explored and assessed historically. Regretfully, Western historians have failed to participate in enumerating and evaluating these substantive historical changes in the second half of the twentieth century, hence ceding our important scholarly role to academics in political science, economics, sociology, and law. Our undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom are interested in more contemporary histories (or are tired of the pioneer narrative that still predominates in the literature) have not been well served by this disinclination to study the post-war era. Finally, Western histories need to be more engaged with the national and international literatures, both to keep our work engaged with the current scholarly debates and so that our scholarship is more accessible and recognized by scholars in our thematic sub-fields outside the region.

Having indicated some of the temporal and thematic limitations in this field, let me now chart some reasons for renewed optimism. In the past decade, there has been a seismic change in the legal status and social inclusion of gay, lesbian, transgendered, and bisexual Canadians. The hard-fought legal victories achieved over the past fifteen years in provincial human rights codes, Charter challenges, pensions, adoption benefits, marriage, and most recently, divorce have reframed such issues in terms of human rights and away from morality discourses and notions of “special rights.” Extensive and often contradictory media coverage has produced renewed academic interest in human rights scholarship, politics, and historical assessments of how these changes materialized. Within the Prairies, Gallup polls indicate increasing awareness and acceptance of queer people, particularly in urban areas, although this still lags behind the rest of the country. For example, an Ipsos Reid poll (for CanWest News Service) in 2006 polled Canadians on a variety of topics, including the statement “To me, homosexuality is morally acceptable.” According to the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* 54 per cent of Canadians affirmed that homosexuality was acceptable to them. This

average masked some striking provincial differences. For example, 69 percent of Quebecers agreed that homosexuality was personally acceptable, whereas only 40 percent of Saskatchewan residents agreed with the statement.¹⁵ Later polls indicated that one key determining factor in this poll and others, both regional and nation-wide, was locale—urbanites had a tendency to be more tolerant than rural dwellers. It is significant and appropriate to note such gains, but they must not be overdrawn. Much work remains to be done in translating the so-called equity agenda into tangible gains at the societal level. Interviewed in a recent edition of Winnipeg's gay periodical *Outwords*, sociologist Gary Kinsman noted, "Many people have the position that if we have formal equal rights with heterosexuals then everything is resolved. But, of course, formal rights don't actually mean very much in terms of substantive social equality if you still live in a society in which there's heterosexual hegemony."¹⁶

One thing emerging from the substantive political and legal debates about gay and lesbian rights is that undergraduate and graduate students have begun gravitating toward these topics. Specifically, the current generation of graduate and undergraduate students at the Universities of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Queen's University, and Simon Fraser University are engaging with these topics and situating history-of-sexuality topics in the modern Prairie West.¹⁷ This heartening development is matched by innovative research and teaching within the fields of education, political science, social work, and law at the Universities of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Regina.¹⁸

Equally encouraging are the increasing archival and library holdings that have been amassed. Here a few short examples must suffice. Gay and lesbian community history projects are underway in Edmonton and Winnipeg, and a growing body of secondary literature within the University of Alberta collection bodes very well for the ongoing health of this subject. The leader has been the Saskatchewan Archives Board and the University of Saskatchewan, thanks to the energy and passion of special collections librarian Neil Richards, who has quietly worked for over thirty-five years collecting books and periodicals by and for North American homosexuals, preserving the key foundational documents of the Prairie gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered organizations.¹⁹ These collections are variously located at the Saskatchewan Archives Board office in Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan Archives and Special Collections, in online collections such as the Saskatchewan Resources for Sexual Diversity, and in the general library holdings of the University of Saskatchewan.²⁰ These collections rank second among Canadian research libraries (Toronto's collection ranks first, given the combined strengths at University of Toronto, Ryerson University, and the Canadian Gay and Lesbians Archives) and offer the strongest Western collection.

Having assessed the historiographical developments within the field and reflected upon the expansion of academic work in this area, it is time to back up my assertions and offer three case studies drawn from my research. These histories are representative of many of the larger themes within my work—how people came out as gays and lesbians, how they entered and forged communities, and finally, how they came to become activists, both in their daily lives and in their political engagements. Above all, these histories illustrate how despite the persistent efforts of churches, government, communities, and families to continually inculcate and reinforce heterosexual hegemony, a number of rebels refused to follow the normative prescriptions. Those iconoclasts profoundly suggest that the region was far more diverse than many long-cherished stereotypes and histories might wish, and they break down the existing silence about Prairie gays and lesbians.

Norman Dahl

NORMAN DAHL was born in 1928 in Birch Hills, Saskatchewan, a predominantly Norwegian community in north-central Saskatchewan. Dahl was raised in a Lutheran household by his Norwegian Canadian parents. He was the second of three children and the only son. His father was a grain buyer, his mother worked at home, and in his family education, music and art were highly valued; thus his parents strongly supported Dahl's aspirations to be a pianist, artist, and singer. According to Dahl, life in Saskatchewan small towns and the countryside in the thirties and early forties was rife with sexual possibilities for boys—from skinny dipping at the local pond to the indulgence for boyish curiosity and hijinks that time and space permitted. Routine exposure to farm animals meant that all rural children had a basic familiarity with sexual activity. Dahl recalls that lack of sexual terms and concepts, far from impeding his adolescent sexual activity and experimentations, and the absence of pejorative or medicalized language to describe same-sex acts freed him from fears of censure. Only when his eldest sister, who attended the University of Saskatchewan, brought home stories about a “perverted, homosexual” professor whom she reportedly found “revolting” (all her words) did Dahl first hear those terms.²¹

Very talented musically, Dahl took piano lessons for years, and as a teenager he travelled throughout the province to music camps, recitals, and other events. It was during these travels that he began to notice the other men and teenagers like himself. He attended the University of Saskatchewan for one year in the late forties but had to drop out when he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. In the sanatorium, he had his first male love affair—a chaste but intense one—and recalls mourning this man's death for years afterward. After his recovery, he

returned to intensive music training, with summer programs at Emma Lake and classes in Prince Albert and, later, Saskatoon. He reminisced that the evening of his final piano recital in Saskatoon in 1949 was very memorable. In the audience that evening was "Brad S," a motorcycle-riding St. Andrews College seminary student.²² After the recital, Brad and Dahl returned to Dahl's room at the Senator Hotel, where they had a night of "wild sex."²³

Contrary to what some might suspect, neither man agonized over this night, although they did branch off in two very different directions. Afterwards, Brad told Dahl that he was "completely heterosexual" and Dahl, clearly enjoying relaying this tale, reportedly told Brad that he had "improvised brilliantly." Witty repartee aside, Brad was clear about his intentions, as he chose the conventional path—heterosexual marriage and children. Still, he continued to have same-sex liaisons on the side. This bisexual dalliance angered Dahl for two reasons. First, he had two sisters and he claimed that he did not like to see women deceived. Secondly, because he chose the more difficult road, he had little sympathy for those who would not make similar choices. Asked to recollect his coming out, Norman simply laughed and replied, "I've never been in."²⁴

Later, Dahl studied at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. His grandmother, who lived in Oakville, Ontario, introduced him to her neighbours, the Wilkes, and their son George, who was doing graduate work at the University of Toronto after serving with the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II. Smitten, Dahl remembers getting invited to Wilke's Toronto apartment for dinner and then pursuing Wilke throughout the following year. After Dahl completed studies at Toronto, Wilkes and Dahl became life partners, splitting their time between Ottawa and their cottage in Gatineau, Quebec (a noted gay Ottawa hideout), which they designed and built themselves. Wilkes was employed by the federal civil service while Dahl worked for a variety of governmental and cultural institutions, including the Canada Council, the Canadian Welfare Council, the National Gallery, and others.²⁵ Together now for more than fifty-five years, they acknowledge the challenges and stresses of living in more homophobic times, and in a city where governmental purges of gays in the civil service are well documented.²⁶ But they take immense pride in being survivors and in their determination to live their lives as they choose. Their life has revolved around work, volunteer activities, social and gay activism, their homes, and travel.

While Norman Dahl's youthful, relatively carefree sexual escapades in Saskatchewan seem very daring—and atypical, in that he stresses his family's liberal values and their whole-hearted support for their artistic son's aspirations—his decision to migrate outside the region for advanced education and later for employment is a supremely conventional narrative, and it is what ulti-

mately enabled his life choices. There would be many others like Norman Dahl, men and women who shrewdly left the Prairies in search of better jobs, more cultural opportunities, and a gay life. Even a partial list of well-known Prairie gay and lesbian émigré's—playwright Brad Fraser; journalist, editor, and museum impresario William Thorsell; accountant and activist Tom Warner; musician k. d. lang; and the late journalist and activist Chris Bearchell—attests to the region's rich heritage of talented expats. According to Chris Vogel, a well-known Winnipeg activist, the large number of former Prairie and in particular Winnipeg gays now resident in Toronto has immeasurably strengthened and enriched that community, while weakening the one in Winnipeg.

Lilja Stefansson and Evelyn Rogers

THE ORAL HISTORY OF STEFANSSON AND ROGERS offers a distinctively “queer view” of small town life, but it is richly suggestive of how mapping queer histories of the Prairies both enriches and complicates our histories of the West. In 1959 Evelyn Rogers and Lilja Stefansson were conventional heterosexual prairie wives and mothers, living in the small town of Rouleau, Saskatchewan.²⁷ Rogers had been raised in a middle-class family in Regina, and from the age of twelve, she recognized that she was different from other girls. She repressed her feelings, not knowing how to name or positively interpret them, and a year after graduating from high school, she married into a prominent Rouleau farm family. There she became a typical farm wife—working in the house and fields, and raising two children. Stefansson was raised in rural Manitoba, in a very large Icelandic Canadian farm family. Her formal schooling ended at the eighth grade, after which she worked for family members and subsequently moved to Winnipeg for work. There she met a local serviceman, and after a very brief courtship, they married. Her first marriage produced two children and ended in divorce. Looking for a fresh start, she moved to southern Saskatchewan to be near one of her sisters and because the province provided assistance to mothers with dependent children. Eventually, the excellent student had the opportunity to complete her high school certification and worked as an elementary school teacher to support herself and her children. While she was single parenting, juggling paid and unpaid labour, a bachelor farmer many years older than Stefansson proposed marriage. She consented, primarily recognizing that this would bring some financial relief from the strains of single parenting. Remarriage also brought another child and ultimately a move to Rouleau, Saskatchewan, in 1959.

In Rouleau, both women were active in their community and they soon met at their local United Church. Through this church work they became fast friends, sharing a bond of marital dissatisfaction and ennui. After more than

a decade of friendship, Evelyn mustered the courage to talk to Lilja about a recent *Chatelaine* article on lesbians.²⁸ Lilja remembers being shocked by the article because she had never imagined such a possibility. Using the article to stimulate discussion, as the editors routinely encouraged their readers to do, Evelyn made two further revelations—that she now self-identified as a lesbian and that she loved Lilja. They hatched a plan to go away for the weekend together, reportedly to talk Evelyn out of leaving her marriage, and they had a fun-filled trip to Williston, North Dakota. In the end, it was Lilja who did not want to return to conventional, heterosexual married life, and after a long, intense affair, both women divorced their husbands, moved to Regina, and re-established themselves there as a lesbian couple.

In 1997 Regina's *Sensible Shoes News* published Evelyn Rogers's essay entitled "Reflections on the 'Good Old Days.'" Here she describes the trepidation she and Lilja felt about their actions and her excitement about an ad in the *Regina Leader Post* in 1972 that read "Gay or lesbian? Want to meet socially with others?" and listed a phone number. "The year was 1972," she continued. "I was married and living on a farm, BUT, recently my whole life had changed! My 25-year secret desire of wanting a woman lover had come true. She was content to keep this to ourselves but, now, I wanted to meet others like us!" After a few months of working up the courage, she finally called the number and spoke to Heather Bishop, a local feminist and well-known Canadian folk singer, who invited them to her house in Regina for coffee. After months of meetings, Heather Bishop and Bev Stiller took Stefansson and Rogers to Regina's gay club, then called the Odyssey Club. Rogers recalls that the club was a "larger, old, three story house almost hidden behind the overgrown bushes," yet "the subdued lighting, the smoke filled air, the smell of booze, the music and the mingling of people certainly gave this old house a rather cozy, club like atmosphere." Rogers goes on: "When we left that first night we knew we would be back. We had officially come 'OUT'!"²⁹ Rogers was thirty-eight and Stefansson fifty-one. Some thirty-six years later, they are still together; although Lilja has recently moved to a nursing home, Evelyn lives close by and visits her daily.

Rogers and Stefansson's experience with the Regina club was repeated across the Prairies, whether it was at the Zodiac Friendship Society Club in Saskatoon, Club 70 in Edmonton, Club Carousel in Calgary, or Happenings Social Club in Winnipeg.³⁰ These members-only social clubs are a hallmark of post-1970s Western Canadian gay and lesbian community formation. They largely replaced the older queer spaces located in working-class bars, railway hotel bars, public toilets (tearooms), and outdoor parks and cruising areas that marked primarily male queer spaces prior to the early seventies. The new clubs were usually located behind unmarked doors, often with alley entrances, or

else were initially situated in marginal areas of the city and were purposely hard to find—you had to know someone to find them. The majority of lesbian and gay people who entered those spaces spoke and wrote evocatively of the joy of being surrounded by hundreds of other gay and lesbian people. For women in particular, this represented a significant expansion of their social and political opportunities. William Thorsell recalls the experience of attending Edmonton's Club 70 in the mid-seventies:

You'd drive out in 20 below weather at night where there's no cars anywhere in sight, and suddenly you'd see this clench of cars in an abandoned area of town around a one storey cinder-block building with a little light over the door, and that's the gay club and it's suddenly quite thrilling. It was as close as you got to being an outlaw. I'm glad in a way that it doesn't happen [that way] much anymore. But it did create a sense of community.³¹

Not surprisingly, the vibe of each gay and lesbian community was slightly different, befitting their different cities, provincial culture, economy, and scale. Given its size and wealth, Edmonton was a popular regional gay and lesbian mecca. Many informants from Regina, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw fondly reminisced about weekend trips to the Alberta capital. Thorsell recalls reading Toronto's activist nationally available newspaper *The Body Politic*, as well as the work of American gay writers and activists, but "in Edmonton," Thorsell says, "it wasn't a politically active community. It was just 'Let's go dancing,' and we didn't cause ripples otherwise. You'd get *The Body Politic* and it was another world, a politically charged world that just did not happen in Edmonton."³² Naturally, however, that was not the whole story. As the final case study illustrates, some people were dissatisfied with the club scene and sought more than just socializing in what many activists derisively called "a bigger closet."

Maureen Irwin

MAUREEN IRWIN was born in Windsor, Ontario, in 1934 and during her teen years recognized that she was attracted to her female classmates. Trying to decipher what this meant, she went to the public library and found a definition of the word *homosexual*, one that stressed the pathology of such individuals and stated simply that this was an illness.³³ In 1953 she joined the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). Stationed in Montreal, she experienced the city's gay bars first hand. "It was a secretive, rough life in late night bars," Irwin reports. "More women wore campy leather or distinct mannish outfits. Often there was

violence.” Yet, conversely, “[t]he only place you could be yourself was in the gay bars for men, which wasn’t for me,” says Irwin. “There was a lot of heavy drinking and a lot of women were into the heavy butch (male) image.”³⁴ Instead, Irwin found lesbians in another time-tested way, through amateur sports. Years later, she would joke with younger lesbians, reminiscing that “they didn’t call us lesbians in those days. They called us baseball players” because “sports was one of the ways women of this self-identity could come together.”³⁵ After a series of strikes with bar culture and with lesbian teammates who already had partners, she did eventually have a two-year love affair with another woman in the RCAF. While she realized that lesbianism was her true identification, she also knew that she could pass as a heterosexual woman. After her partner was reposted elsewhere in 1955, Irwin met a “nice man,” Ron Warren, who was also in the Air Force, and they married a year later. They had four children, and the family followed Warren through his various postings in Canada, France, and Germany. In 1965 Warren was transferred to Cold Lake, Alberta, and nine years later, they moved to Edmonton when he retired.

In Edmonton, Irwin worked as a librarian at the *Edmonton Journal* newspaper, and through friendships with some of the feminist journalists there, she discovered the local independent bookstore Common Woman Books. There she discovered positive books about lesbianism and in volunteering at the store, met a larger circle of feminist friends. In 1978 her husband asked for a separation and subsequently a divorce. After discussions with a counselor, she determined to kick-start her life again and in 1981 came out as lesbian. Immediately, Irwin began to get involved with many activist activities in Edmonton—she was one of the founders of Womonspace, which provided an alternative space for lesbian women to socialize (outside of the bars); worked the phone lines at GATE (Gay Association Toward Equality in Edmonton), later GALA (Gay and Lesbian Awareness Society); and eventually got involved with the drive for gay and lesbian human rights. Since Irwin had been the recipient of a number of civic, gay, and national honours for her extensive volunteer work, in 1993 the Pride Committee of Edmonton created the Maureen Irwin Award for Committee Service. When Irwin died in 2002, she was treated to a glowing “Life and Times” feature in the *Edmonton Journal* that eulogized her as one of “Edmonton’s leading lesbian activists.”³⁶

One of Irwin’s finest moments came in 1990 at an Edmonton conference entitled “Flaunting It!” which brought activists, lawyers, and Prairie and federal human rights commissioners together for two days of discussion about how to advance the agenda for gay and lesbian rights in Alberta. Irwin was one of the co-organizers as a spokesperson for GALA. In a poignant and very effective speech, she reflected on her life:

During the 23 years I was married I had all the rights of a Canadian citizen. But since my separation and divorce I have lived for the last 13 years as a lesbian in Alberta without most of the rights that were afforded to me before. Am I any less a person now than I was when I had a Mrs. in front of my name? Of course not, but let me tell you how the laws of Alberta have treated me and you may understand why I feel the need to work to change them. It is not just so my children and my grandchildren can live in a better, fairer, province but because I am a person and it is the right thing to do. We should not have to pay our dues to get admitted to the Club of Equal Rights.³⁷

Irwin went on to describe how her lesbian status made her unable to get a mortgage or insurance with her same-sex partner or medical and dental coverage; she spoke about her challenges negotiating the hospital system, which made it difficult for her to be with her hospitalized partner and barred her from acting as next of kin to make treatment decisions. As a final indignity, she was told that her children could contest her will. The speech was powerful, and at the end, the audience erupted in applause. The following day, the *Edmonton Journal* carried a quote from Irwin criticizing Fil Fraser, then Alberta's chief human rights commissioner, for his admonition to gays and lesbians to "try and show people that you're okay" in a non-confrontational way. To emphasize his point, and presumably to make his message more palatable, Fraser revealed that he well understood the challenges of being a minority, and shared his experiences of growing up Black, Protestant, and middle class in a working-class, Catholic area of Montreal. Visibly angered by this patronizing advice, Irwin told reporters, "I need these rights now ... not in ten years or when Mr. Fraser thinks I've earned it!"³⁸

Such simple but effective calls for equity were made by other Prairie gay activists, including Winnipeg's Chris Vogel and Richard North; Saskatoon's Gens Hellquist, Peter Millard, and Doug Wilson; Calgary's Stephen Locke; and Edmonton's Liz Massiah, Michael Phair, and Delwyn Vriend, to name just a few.³⁹ These and other unnamed activists, in work that spans from the early seventies through to the present, bravely stepped into the harsh media spotlight. Every call for gay and lesbian rights triggered an onslaught of homophobic, often religiously inspired, critique. While this has lessened over time, it remains a fact of life in the Prairies. It would have been far easier to take their activism to other, more congenial cities, but these people were determined to make the Prairie West a more equitable place for all queer Westerners.

Conclusion

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE ENCOURAGING academic, regional, and political developments for history-of-sexuality studies within Western Canadian studies, there is much room for growth. There are a wealth of documents, burgeoning academic and popular archives, and an interest in preserving the histories of gay, lesbian, transgendered, and bisexual people in the West. Within the field of the history of sexuality in North America, many significant studies in the United States, and belatedly in Canada, offer workable models and research questions from which we can build to address histories of political engagement and political activism, social organization, legal histories, community development, and medical histories of at-risk communities. Now, with the burgeoning fascination with the West and modern Western identities, one hopes that we will witness more academic interest in historicizing the modern West.

This research will contribute to our knowledge of sexual histories in Canada and challenge the notions that Prairie society remains rural, religious, and agrarian, both within and outside of the region. Taking a queer-eye view of Prairie history from 1945 to 1990 and restoring queer histories to Western Canadian history offers much valuable information about these minority communities and the urban centres in which most openly gay and lesbian people lived and worked. It speaks to the increasing urbanization and diversity of the West. Not surprisingly, it offers valuable material from which to historicize and analyze gender differences, both masculinity and femininity, and the ongoing gendered conceptions of Western spaces and people. Though I have highlighted two women's stories here, the male narrative predominates in my work. In part, this is because the men were more willing to be interviewed or to leave documents behind. Most of the men I have spoken with have provided me with wonderful interviews, many of them sketched in Technicolor, proudly noting their sexual experiences as well as their extensive knowledge of cruising areas, clubs, and travel, in addition to their political endeavours. Most of the male informants have relished telling their pioneering tales and see their lives contributing to a different Western Canadian experience. Like Norman Dahl, many knew conclusively from a young age that they were attracted to other boys and men, and few whom I have interviewed sought out heterosexual marriages, preferring to follow their impulses and desires. Few, though, have been in a life-long partnership like Dahl and Wilkes.

Women's stories have been harder to capture, as Prairie lesbians have tended to lead more circumspect lives, known to their friendship circles and a few other confidants. They seldom broadcasted their status the way Maureen Irwin did when she turned to open activism. Many married, in part because it was

expected of them, in part because economically it was the surest route women had for keeping one's head above water, but also because many desired children. Thus, it is not uncommon to find Prairie lesbians, particularly those who came of age in the fifties and earlier, who lived their lives in two shifts—the first conventionally, as a married wife and mother, and the second often coinciding with their children moving out or becoming teenagers, when they moved, rather unconventionally, into lesbianism. Many were so conditioned into pleasing families, suitors, and then children that they were well into adulthood before they realized that it was permissible to act on their own desires. Times assisted them, as the marked shift in homosexual experiences and acceptability from the fifties through to the present has been seismic. Thus, they now find themselves apologizing for their inability to live a lesbian life from their earliest adult years. They should not. Life stories such as those of Lilja Stefansson and Evelyn Rogers indicate the courage it took to leave unfulfilled marriages and small-town life to move to a large city and re-establish themselves as a lesbian couple. Stefansson and Rogers continued to face challenges as an older lesbian couple negotiating a seniors' apartment complex in Regina. While there was a general acceptance in the building, there were those whose gossip or incredulity added a layer of strain to their lives that perhaps few others in the building experienced. Now, with Lilja in a nursing home, they will face other challenges in making the system respond to their familial situation. These daily acts of activism are important, historically and socially, because they reflect upon both the couple in question and the social cohesion, inclusions, and exclusions in Prairie society in general. It is one thing to write and speak abstractly about "progress"; it is another matter indeed to carefully explore the lived reality of this elderly couple. Their experiences offer a cautionary tale about creating too stark a dichotomy between urban and rural life. For most Prairie gays and lesbians, urban life held far more possibilities and opportunities for creating gay and lesbian communities. However, they noted that this was a far from perfect world, as intolerance, homophobia, and violence (directed at gay men in particular) was not unknown in the cities. Some were nostalgic for smaller towns and rural life, most notably gay activist Doug Wilson, who openly wrote of a future time when rural gays would not face ostracism and intolerance.⁴⁰ Though my study concentrates on the largest cities, evidence exists to document the formation of a handful of gay and lesbian social groups in the mid-sized cities (Brandon, Manitoba; Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; and Red Deer, Alberta).⁴¹

After gender, migrations feature prominently—from region to metropolis, whether big Prairie cities or cities in Ontario. Later, in the seventies and eighties, for Albertans the tide turned the other way, and that province was inundated with economic migrants headed there in search of employment. Ironically, a

number of the administrators, social workers, and government employees who were recruited to Alberta were gay and lesbian, and thus, Edmonton has been the beneficiary of many gay and lesbian professionals who brought to the province not only their professional skills but also their activist instincts. This migration points to our misplaced notions of prairie solitude and isolation from the rest of Canadians. Most people interviewed were constantly moving, either for jobs or for travel. They subscribed to periodicals, joined clubs, read novels, and purchased recorded music from the region and beyond. In more recent times, they would watch television programs or movies, and later cruise the Internet, searching for others. These activities significantly changed gay and lesbian culture and communities, and brought recent political changes and challenges.⁴² My research is not just uncovering and celebrating the lives of the marginalized but is centrally important to rewriting an inclusive history of modern, diverse, Prairie cities and their hinterlands that historicizes the growth of gay and lesbians spaces, politics, and communities. *

Notes

- 1 I gratefully acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for supporting this research.
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- 3 V.J. Korinek, *Prairie Fairies: The History of Gay and Lesbian Communities in Western Canada, 1945–1990* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).
- 4 See George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); David Higgs, ed. *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories since 1600* (London: Routledge, 1999); Brett Beemyn, ed. *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997); Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Maurice Leznoff, "The Homosexual in Urban Society" (master's thesis, McGill University, 1954); Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Homo and Hetero Sexualities* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1996); Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880–1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Becki L. Ross, *The House That Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Elise Chenier, "Rethinking Class in Lesbian Bar Culture: Living 'the Gay Life' in Toronto, 1955–1965," *Left History* 9, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2004): 85–117; David Churchill, "Mother Goose's Map: Tabloid Geographies and Gay Male Experience

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 - 7 Kath Weston, *Long, Slow Burn* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 32.
 - 8 "Introduction: Orientations," in Bell and Valentine, *Mapping Desire*, 7. See also Kramer, "Bachelor Farmers and Spinsters."
 - 9 This situation is not specific to Winnipeg. See Catherine Jean Nash, "Contesting Identity: Politics of Gays and Lesbians in Toronto in the 1970s," *Gender, Place and Culture* 12, no. 1 (2005): 113–35.
 - 10 Weston, *Long, Slow Burn*, 55–56.
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 - 13 See Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980); Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta and Athabasca University Press, 2008); Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Angus McLaren, "Sex Radicalism in the Canadian Pacific Northwest, 1890–1920" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 4

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 - 15 Pamela Cowan, “Poll Finds Most Sask. Residents Intolerant of Homosexuality,” *The StarPhoenix*, 22 March 2006, A8.
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 - 18 See James McNinch and Mary Cronin, eds. *I Could Not Speak My Heart: Education and Social Justice for Gay and Lesbian Youth* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2004); Gloria Filax, *Queer Youth in the Province of the “Severely Normal”* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); Kristopher Wells and L. Michelle Tsusumi, “Creating Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools for LGBTQ Students: A Guide for Counsellors” (Edmonton, Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, 2005); Dominique Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937–1982* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Carolyn Ann Anderson, “The Voices of Older Lesbian Women: An Oral History” (PhD diss., University of Calgary, 2001).
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- 20 See Saskatchewan Resources for Sexual Diversity, <http://library2.usask.ca/srsd/>.
 - 21 Norman Dahl, interview by author, 23 August 2006, Gatineau, Quebec.
 - 22 "Brad S" is a pseudonym.
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 - 24 Ibid.
 - 25 Randall Denley, "Leading the Way for Gay Couples: Gatineau Men Together 53 Years," *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 August, 2003.
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 - 27 Lilja B. Stefansson and Evelyn Rogers, interview by author, Regina, Saskatchewan, 29 July 2003.
 - 28 See Korinek, "'Don't Let your Girlfriends Ruin Your Marriage.'"
 - 29 Evelyn Rogers, "Recollections on the 'Good Old Days,'" *Sensible Shoes News*, reproduced on the University of Saskatchewan Library Special Collections Website, Saskatchewan Resources for Sexual Diversity, http://library2.usask.ca/srsd/chronology/SRSD_Chronology.pdf.
 - 30 These members-only clubs, the first exclusively gay and lesbian spaces in the Prairies, were critically important to the growth of an explicit gay and lesbian urban subculture. While the members-only clubs died out relatively quickly in Calgary and Edmonton, they were a hallmark of life in Winnipeg (where Happenings continued in one form or another for over thirty years), in Regina (where their club, run by the Gay and Lesbian Community of Regina, has been in existence since 1972 and remains the key social and cultural centre for the community), and in Saskatoon (where "the club" under various names was a city fixture for over a decade).
 - 31 Mitchel Raphael, "The Beauty of William Thorsell," *fab Magazine* 275 (<http://www.fabmagazine.com/features/Thorsell/>).
 - 32 Ibid.
 - 33 City of Edmonton Archives, GATE Papers, taped interview with Maureen Irwin, 1994.
 - 34 Marilyn Moysa, "Back When It Was against the Law of the Land," *Edmonton Journal*, 2 March 1983, C7.
 - 35 Ibid.
 - 36 Eliza Barlow, "Maureen Irwin Fought for Society's Underdogs: Opinionated and Outspoken," *Edmonton Journal*, 6 August 2002, B3.

- 37 City of Edmonton Archives, GALA fonds, MS #595 box 12, conferences, Maureen Irwin, "Panel Address – Flaunting It," 1 December 1990.
- 38 Marina Jimenez, "Gays 'Deserve Equality' Now, Conference Told," *Edmonton Journal*, 3 December 1990, B4.
- 39 For more details on the Saskatchewan political scene, see V.J. Korinek, "Activism=Public Education: The History of Public Discourses of Homosexuality in Saskatchewan, 1971–1993," in Cronin and McNinch, *I Could Not Speak My Heart*, 109–37; and V.J. Korinek, "'The Most Openly Gay Person for at Least a Thousand Miles': Doug Wilson and the Politicization of a Province, 1975–83," *Canadian Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (December 2003): 517–50. Additionally, for a regional and national overview, see Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
- 40 See Korinek, "'The most openly gay person.'"
- 41 Both the Brandon and Prince Albert communities left behind a small cache of printed materials (newsletters and ads) that enabled a partial reconstruction of their social activities. The most complete set of materials about gay and lesbian experiences in a mid-sized Prairie centre exist at the Red Deer Museum. The museum was awarded a provincial government grant to create a museum exhibit and an oral history collection of gays and lesbians who lived in that city. Regrettably, much homophobic criticism and controversy ensued. As a result, the wonderful oral history collection has been carefully guarded so as to protect the confidentiality of informants from further embarrassment or harassment. While I was warmly welcomed to peruse the collection, I was denied permission to copy materials and prevented from utilizing them in any scholarly publications. Hopefully, scholars may one day be permitted to utilize this resource as intended, to provide a portrait of the lives of gay and lesbian inhabitants of a smaller Prairie city.
- 42 While revisions for this paper were underway, the Alberta government announced that they would amend their legislation to formally include human rights coverage for the province's gay and lesbians. This corrective finally addressed the findings of the Supreme Court of Canada (*Vriend v. Alberta*, 1998) in which the Court ruled that the Province was contravening the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by denying human rights coverage to gays and lesbians. Despite that ruling, during the ensuing eleven years, the province chose to have that coverage "read in" to their legislation rather than formally amend the human rights statutes. Now, in finally extending explicit coverage to lesbians and gays, the provincial government has offered a balm to its religious conservative voting base by including a new educational opt-out clause in the same legislation. This clause provides parents of public school children with notices prior to any material pertaining to sexual orientation or religion being taught. Parents will be allowed to request that their children be excused from class during the teaching of this material if it does not accord with their personal or religious views. Within the ruling Alberta Conservative Party, this is widely regarded as a legislative "compromise." Such "compromises" graphically illustrate the ongoing homophobia within the province and the way that fundamentalist Christian family values serve as expedient political tools.

Human Rights Law and Sexual Discrimination in British Columbia, 1953–84

DOMINIQUE CLÉMENT

■ **“Human rights commissions,”** proclaimed the editors of the *Globe and Mail* in February 2008, “were never intended to serve as thought police.... It’s time to rein them in before further damage is done to Canadians’ right to free expression.”¹ The media’s portrayal of the role of human rights commissions in recent years has presented an image of overzealous, bureaucratic do-gooders who have lost touch with Canadian values. While George Jonas of the *National Post* characterized human rights commissions as a “complainants forum” for providing free counsel to complainants, Rex Murphy and Margaret Wenté have dedicated numerous columns in the *Globe and Mail* to what the latter has called “self-perpetuating grievance machines.”² In response to a case involving a man with bipolar disorder who successfully launched a human rights complaint against an employer for dismissing him because he failed to show up at work (for three months), Wenté suggested that human rights commissioners were “more and more disconnected from common sense. They’re taking on cases that would strike most of us as absurd.... These bodies are fast losing their legitimacy.”³

In 2002 British Columbia eliminated its human rights commission, severely restricted the mandate of the new tribunal, cut staff, and streamlined the process for dismissing complaints.⁴ Ontario followed suit with comparable reforms in 2006, and many other provinces are considering similar initiatives.⁵ If the twentieth century was a period of human rights innovation, the twenty-first century may be a period of retrenchment, if not the complete dismantling, of the human rights state.

Human rights laws and their enforcement mechanisms constitute what is referred to herein as the “human rights state.” The most visible manifestations of the human rights state are provincial and federal human rights statutes. Each statute is enforced by a state agency, which, as we will see below, is more accessible to a broad range of citizens than the courts.⁶ The human rights state is today constituted of a system of comparably similar provincial and federal human rights statutes and commissions. Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms represents another pillar of the human rights state. To a lesser degree, equal pay legislation, multiculturalism, and official language statutes also form the human rights state. They all share one key principle: these laws oblige the state to promote and enforce human rights.

Human rights ideals are not new to Canadians, but the creation of a state apparatus that binds governments to enforcement and education did not emerge until the 1960s. The human rights state, as well as the welfare state, is premised on the idea that the state should intervene in civil society to alleviate social inequality. This represents an important transformation of the role of the state. A rich literature has emerged in recent years to document the struggles minorities faced in attempting to confront discrimination using litigation and the courts, and how human rights statutes and the Charter have provided more effective avenues for redress.⁷ But the concept of a human rights state goes beyond public policy. The first anti-discrimination statutes referred only to racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination; by the 1980s, human rights laws also prohibited discrimination on the basis of, for example, sex, sexual orientation, disability, and age. The human rights state thus epitomizes a revolutionary change in Canadians’ values and beliefs about human dignity and equality.⁸

Several studies of human rights law and activism have attempted to capture a sense of Canada’s changing rights culture by documenting important legal victories or successful campaigns to amend human rights legislation.⁹ Gay rights activists, for instance, point to the symbolism of including sexual orientation in human rights statutes (beginning with Quebec in 1977). Still, most studies fail to take into account the impact of human rights legislation. In other words, does the human rights state represent an effective vehicle for redressing human rights violations? Moreover, few of these studies account for political

and ideological divisions that have shaped human rights policies, and most historians have concentrated on Ontario where the first laws were introduced.¹⁰

No jurisdiction better epitomizes the historical conflict surrounding the human rights state more than British Columbia. The limitations of the Social Credit government's weak 1969 *Human Rights Act* led the New Democratic Party (NDP) to introduce a far more expansive Human Rights Code in 1973 soon after it was elected. However, a decade later, another Social Credit (Socred) government introduced a variation of its original *Human Rights Act*. Not to be outdone, when the NDP returned to power in the 1990s, they replaced the Socreds' human rights legislation with a variation of the NDP's original statute. The law lasted only a handful of years. The Liberal Party replaced the statute in 2002 with a *Human Rights Act* that had a great deal in common with the Socreds' 1969 and 1984 statutes.

The following article explores the origins of the human rights state in British Columbia in a local and national context, from the 1953 *Equal Pay Act* to the controversy surrounding the 1984 *Human Rights Act*. British Columbia became the focal point of a national debate on human rights law reform in the 1980s. The province has historically possessed a diverse workforce in manufacturing and primary resources, and it was the most unionized province in the country. Between 1961 and 1968, the provincial labour force grew faster than any other province in the country (to 796,000 workers).¹¹ It was a major immigration port and the site of decades of conflict surrounding Asian immigration; 90 percent of Chinese immigrants to Canada lived in British Columbia. Moreover, the province's political culture was dominated by the right-wing Social Credit Party and the left-wing New Democratic Party, and this led to acute divisions over human rights policy. It was also a hotbed of social activism by the 1960s. The province was one of the major centres of feminist mobilization, the birthplace of Greenpeace and the first gay rights organizations in the country, and the site of dramatic student protests.¹² British Columbia's demographics, labour force, political culture, and social movement sector informed many of the debates surrounding human rights and undoubtedly contributed to the creation of remarkably progressive, and remarkably regressive, human rights laws.

The following piece also focuses on sexual discrimination: how women experienced discrimination and the efficacy of the human rights regime in combatting sexual discrimination. Since their creation in the 1960s, human rights agencies in Canada have investigated more sexual discrimination complaints than any other category. And, again, British Columbia provides a useful context for this study. The province was one of the first jurisdictions to enact human rights legislation and the first to prohibit sexual discrimination, and it established precedents in areas such as gay rights and sexual harassment. Two-thirds

of all jobs in the province were in service industries in 1981 (from one-quarter in 1911); many of these jobs, particularly the low-paid ones, were dominated by women. By the early 1980s, a majority of adult women were working outside the home, and almost half the provincial labour force was female. In fact, according to Jean Barman, “demographic data suggest that British Columbian women were in the forefront in moving back out of the home, if not into the work-force at least to pursue further education.”¹³ The polarized nature of the province’s political culture in the post-war period is also an important consideration. The Socreds’ male-dominated governments rarely included women. In contrast, thanks to the work of the NDP’s Women’s Rights Committee, female election candidates received support during provincial elections and the party platform included a promise to create a Ministry of Women’s Rights.¹⁴ British Columbia had also long been a major site of organizing for the women’s movement, and the NDP had strong ties to the movement.¹⁵

The human rights state was a significant advancement in public policy. Both policy makers and social activists played a key role in creating the human rights state. However, the human rights state in Canada, as represented in the British Columbia experience, was ultimately flawed. It was poorly positioned to confront systemic discrimination, and there were many ways in which politicians and bureaucrats could (and did) hamper the activities of human rights commissions.

Sexual discrimination

BY THE 1960s, there were few venues where women could seek restitution from discrimination. The courts were inaccessible unless an individual had the time, energy, and money to pursue a criminal or civil complaint. Human rights legislation was therefore an important public policy innovation for victims of discrimination seeking redress. As the files of the British Columbia human rights branch reveal, women faced an astonishing array of discriminatory practices in the workplace and in securing services or accommodation.

Women in Canada acutely experienced the contradiction between the promises of education and the realities of the workplace. Fifty women for every one hundred men had a university degree in 1971, and in 1981 that number had risen to sixty-five women per one hundred men. Yet in 1980 a woman with a university degree was more likely to earn less than a man with no high school degree. The female workforce in British Columbia increased 83.9 percent between 1959 and 1968 (the male workforce increased 30 percent); by 1981 more than half of all women in British Columbia (52.7 percent) participated in the workforce, and women represented 42.1 percent of the total workforce. Still, women continued to struggle against the glass ceiling. Women earned 57 per-

cent of a male wage in 1971 and only 62 percent ten years later. Men earned most of the total wages in the province (77.6 percent) and women were ghettoized in low-paying clerical and service jobs (in 1980 more than 56 percent of women workers were in clerical and service jobs, and an additional 20 percent were in sales and nursing).¹⁶ The discrimination women faced in the workplace was a result, in part, of longstanding presumptions regarding gender roles and the difficulties employers faced in adapting to the influx of female labour. After generations of gender-based labour divisions, often sanctioned (if not required) by law, employers and women struggled to cope with the new realities of the changing labour force.

Some jobs, for example, were simply not open to women. Kathleen Strenja, a young mother living in Vancouver whose husband was on welfare following a workplace injury, responded to an advertisement for replacement taxi drivers in May 1980. She was hired the day she arrived, and, after driving for a few hours, returned to the company office where she was confronted by the owner's son who asserted that he and his father, Bob Bennett, did not like woman driving cabs. He insisted that she park the car; a few minutes later, Bob Bennett, out walking his dog, became agitated when he saw Mrs. Strenja. He insisted that he would never hire a woman. Bennett removed the municipal license plate from the taxi and threw it into the garbage. Undeterred, Mrs. Strenja jumped into the car and headed for the nearest RCMP station, with Bennett (and his dog) chasing her in another taxi. At the station, Bennett and Strenja engaged in a heated argument. According to the officer on the scene, "He [Bennett] said that his policy was not to hire women, that this was Company policy, that he had been with the taxi business since 1954 and that women attracted too much trouble. He also told Corporal Geisser that women drivers just don't work out in this town. He said that he hired women as dispatchers, but not as drivers because they're 'just trouble'; he mentioned the risk of rapes."¹⁷

When women did secure employment, it was rarely at the same pay level as men. The introduction of provincial equal pay legislation (discussed below) in 1953 forced Nabob Foods Limited to discontinue its differential wage scale for men and women in its meat processing plant. By replacing the gendered wage scale with separate job classifications, the company avoided any change to its payroll. When Billie Linton began working for Nabob Foods in 1973, all the packers were women and order-selectors were men (packers made less money than order-selectors). Due to seniority, Linton was temporarily promoted to order-selector but was soon demoted back to her old job. An investigation into the case uncovered that the warehouse supervisor believed that "the warehouse was no place for a woman as it was too cold and too dusty" and that "a boxcar was no place for a woman."¹⁸ Loraine Warren discovered in 1976 that

her employer, Creditel (a credit-reporting agency), offered her male colleagues an extra two thousand dollars annual salary in starting pay for the same work. Creditel insisted that the company negotiated separate salaries for each employee, and Warren simply failed to secure a better contract.¹⁹ Several years later, in 1981, workers in a Burnaby trucking company temporarily went on strike to secure higher wages for data processors. All the data processors were women earning \$7.07 an hour despite the \$8.17 paid to unskilled summer help. But the employer refused to budge because “it was a matter of principle” (although which principle was unclear) and it was not their responsibility to correct “the ills of society.”²⁰

Working conditions for many women were intolerable, and in the case of twenty-four-year-old Jean Tharpe, her employer sought to avoid accommodating the needs of its female employees. Lornex Mining Corporation agreed in 1974 to submit to an order from the provincial Human Rights Commission to make its worksite accommodations in northern British Columbia accessible to its female employees. Tharpe, a laboratory technologist, moved into the company’s accommodations later that year only to discover that Lornex had complied with the order with the simple expedient of allowing women to shower and sleep in the same facilities as men. Tharpe submitted a complaint against Lornex. The company agreed to deal with the problem although once again its remedy was evasive. The company added a partition within the bunkhouse to separate Tharpe from the rest of the workers, which her male co-workers promptly ignored because her section was a faster route to the dining area. Tharpe spent most of her days sleeping and showering in a nearby town and commuting to work.²¹

Discrimination was not always an explicit act. Perhaps the most difficult issue to resolve was job requirements that applied equally to all employees but indirectly discriminated against some. One of the reasons Nabob Foods refused to allow Billie Linton to work as an order-selector was because, according to the company, the work was too physically strenuous to be performed safely by a woman.²² B.C. Forest Products Limited refused to allow Janice Foster to work at its mill in Youbou on Vancouver Island in 1977 because of her height and weight. The company informed Foster, who was five feet tall and weighed 115 pounds, that she would be unable to complete the task of manually removing lumber from a conveyor belt and placing the lumber in a nearby pile. The height and weight requirements were purely arbitrary for work that required more dexterity than physical strength.²³

Sexual harassment, as the former editor of *Chatelaine* magazine insists in her memoirs, was for many men “a perk of being boss—whether it involved gross and demeaning comments, nude pictures on the wall, or sleeping privileg-

es.... Every single woman I knew had been propositioned at some time, mostly by married men.”²⁴ Perhaps because sexual harassment was commonplace at work, because victims feared reprisals for speaking out, because they were humiliated, or because they did not want their families to know, a code of silence surrounded sexual harassment in the workplace.²⁵ Julie Webb challenged that silence in 1975. She accused her employer, the owner of Cypress Pizza in Vancouver, of sexual harassment. Webb testified before an inquiry that her boss, Rajinder Singh Roopra, repeatedly touched her hair; put his arm around her and held her against her will; made suggestive sexual remarks; leered, ogled, and made suggestive gestures; asked her several times for dinner dates; asked her to visit a motel and watch pornographic videos; and asked her numerous questions about her sex life.²⁶

Pregnancy was another obstacle to employment.²⁷ H.W. (her full name is unknown) launched the first successful human rights complaint in Canada for discrimination on the basis of pregnancy. She was working for a travel agency in Vancouver when, on 25 July 1975, her boss asked her if she was pregnant. She honestly did not know, and her boss insisted that she consult a doctor. When she informed her boss that she was indeed pregnant, she was immediately fired, although he later claimed that the cause was incompetence.²⁸

Inadequate child care facilities, occupational ghettos, limited mobility, declining service-sector jobs as a result of new technologies, family obligations, limited training opportunities—these and many other factors created obstacles for women seeking employment. These difficulties were acute for women in rural British Columbia. Opportunities for training were limited outside of Terrace or Prince George, and many women simply did not have the resources to temporarily relocate. Alcan (a major employer in the region) commissioned a report in 1982 on the labour force in northern British Columbia for its Kemano hydroelectric plant. One section of the report dealt with sexual discrimination in the north. According to the report, business proprietors and first-line supervisors’ attitudes were perceived as a major barrier to employing women, and “systemic discrimination was seen as more pervasive in the northwest.”²⁹

Women also experienced discrimination in services and accommodation. Insurance companies, for instance, sometimes refused to continue coverage for women after a divorce; because women lived longer, they were charged higher premiums for life insurance. Norene Warren could not rent an apartment in Vancouver for herself and her two children in 1975 because she was a single mother. The landlord refused to rent the unit to her out of concern that she could not afford the rent and could not, as a single mother with a job, properly maintain the house.³⁰

The human rights state

WHEN THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT passed the first anti-discrimination statute in Canada, the man responsible for introducing the legislation, Premier George Drew, stood in the legislature and cautioned his colleagues that laws could not prevent discrimination: "The best way to avoid racial and religious strife is not by imposing a method of thinking, but by teaching our children that we are all members of a great human family."³¹ Yet the 1944 *Racial Discrimination Act*, which prohibited any display of discriminatory signs (the law was partly in response to a now-famous newspaper article titled "No Jews, No Dogs" after a sign the reporter saw in a tavern window in Toronto), set an important legal precedent. A 1932 amendment to Ontario's insurance laws banned discrimination in the assessment of insurance on the basis of race and religion, and in the same year, British Columbia prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and political affiliation in the disbursement of unemployment relief. Otherwise, human rights laws did not exist in Canada.³² However, this situation changed dramatically soon after 1944.

Pressured by victims of discrimination, guided by international human rights norms and a belief in social justice, and reacting to controversies involving gross abuses of human rights, Canadian governments quickly embraced the idea of anti-discrimination legislation.³³ Tommy Douglas and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation passed the Saskatchewan Bill of Rights in 1947. With no effective enforcement mechanism, however, the statute was primarily symbolic.³⁴ Ontario later set the pace for more substantive legislation with Fair Employment Practices and Fair Accommodation Practices legislation in the 1950s to prohibit discrimination in employment and services (modelled on similar laws passed in New York in 1945 and 1952).³⁵ The Ontario legislation was the product of intensive lobbying efforts from a coalition of labour, ethnic, religious, and political organizations. The Jewish community, in particular, was a key player; Premier Leslie Frost asked labour law professor Jacob Finkelman (a member of the lobbying coalition) to draft the *Fair Employment Practices Act*.³⁶

Within a decade, most provinces in Canada introduced similar legislation to ban discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and ethnicity.³⁷ In each case, the minister (usually the minister of labour) could appoint an independent ad hoc board to investigate accusations of discrimination and enforce a remedy (e.g., a fine). Such laws, however, were vaguely worded, cumbersome, poorly enforced, and ultimately ineffective.³⁸ Prime Minister John Diefenbaker introduced a federal Bill of Rights in 1960. Unfortunately, as one leading constitutional expert quipped, "that pretentious piece of legislation has proven as ineffective as many of us predicted."³⁹

Ontario set a new standard again, this time in 1962, with the Ontario Human Rights Code. It was a unique creation inspired in large part by community activists campaigning for more expansive legislation and an effective enforcement agency.⁴⁰ Canada's modern human rights regime has since evolved from the Ontario model. Why Ontario? The province boasted a racially and ethnically diverse population; Ontario's rapid economic growth absorbed most of the post-war immigrants to Canada. Toronto's vibrant social movement sector included organized labour, civil libertarians, churches, organizations representing minorities and women, and an influential Jewish community determined to improve earlier legislation.⁴¹ The Ontario CCF's election platforms included a strong human rights policy, and the Conservative government was not averse to stealing its opponents' ideas.

The Ontario Human Rights Code incorporated existing anti-discrimination laws in the province into a single statute that was enforced through a Human Rights Commission. The commission was staffed by full-time human rights officers working for the government. Offenders might pay a fine, offer an apology, reinstate an employee, or agree to a negotiated settlement. Human rights commissions in Canada were further mandated to educate the public about human rights. By 1977 every jurisdiction in Canada had introduced similar human rights legislation.⁴² Unlike the courts, the human rights state comprised a series of specialized government agencies that were more efficient, faster, and more accessible, and bore the cost of investigating and resolving conflicts (human rights commissions, in effect, functioned similarly to regulatory agencies). Human rights adjudication was also less elitist than the courts. Specially trained human rights officers investigated complaints, and the staffs of human rights commissions were drawn from the ranks of academia, media, social activists, churches, and the legal community.⁴³

British Columbia followed a similar pattern. The Social Credit government introduced an *Equal Pay Act* (1953), a *Fair Employment Practices Act* (1956), and a *Fair Accommodation Practices Act* (1961).⁴⁴ But it was in 1969 that the province broke new ground with the *Human Rights Act*, which, for the first time in Canada, prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex.⁴⁵ Despite the achievements of the previous decade, none of the early anti-discrimination laws, including the 1962 Ontario Human Rights Code, incorporated sex as a prohibited ground of discrimination. This oversight was not simply a political failure. Many of the leading social advocates for anti-discrimination laws in Canada embraced "prevailing ideas about the necessity of differential treatment for women and men in many areas of life."⁴⁶ The editors of the *Vancouver Sun* hailed the 1969 *Human Rights Act* as a "Charter of Women's Rights."⁴⁷ Skeptics, however, including the editors of the other major newspaper in British Columbia, were convinced that

there was “no way to eliminate such discrimination, outside of blind-folding employers or requiring that female applicants wear veils and walk around in barrels while being interviewed.... [Matrimony] is the most important career of all for a woman—the most vital and, hopefully, long-lasting.”⁴⁸

The events surrounding the International Year for Human Rights in 1968 had highlighted the failings of the existing human rights regime in British Columbia.⁴⁹ With federal and provincial government funding, a provincial commission had been formed to celebrate the anniversary through workshops, surveys, and a major conference in December 1968. One of the key recommendations arising from the conference was to consolidate all existing anti-discrimination legislation in the province into a single statute and expand the scope of the legislation.⁵⁰ The Social Credit government acted quickly and introduced the *Human Rights Act* in 1969. Still, crass political opportunism was likely another contributing factor. The government was struggling to maintain support after two decades in office, and it would soon be defeated in the 1972 election. Although the women’s movement had not yet organized a sustained campaign to amend provincial human rights legislation in the 1960s, the Socreds’ opponent, the NDP, campaigned on a platform to ban sexual discrimination and expand the scope of the legislation.

The *Human Rights Act*, which was hastily introduced before the provincial election, did little more than integrate existing legislation into a single statute and prohibit sexual discrimination. Nothing in the legislation suggested a substantial departure from the government’s already tepid interest in anti-discrimination legislation. Attempts by the NDP to strengthen the legislation with an independent enforcement agency and a more expansive definition of sexual discrimination were defeated.⁵¹ And yet the Social Credit government promoted the legislation as a major advancement in the cause of human rights. Pictures of the minister of labour sitting on his desk holding a phone to his ear appeared in all the major newspapers, with captions indicating that the minister waited to hear complaints about discrimination. The government also spent more than \$42,000 in public monies to promote the legislation during the election.⁵²

Ideology and disgust with the 1969 act appear to have been the NDP’s primary motivation for introducing the 1974 Human Rights Code (the Social Credit party formed the government between 1952 and 1991, except for a brief NDP interregnum between 1972 and 1975).⁵³ After introducing the new legislation to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Minister of Labour William S. King noted several deficiencies with the 1969 act: too few grounds for discrimination were recognized; a poor enforcement mechanism; weak penalties; no mandate to educate the public; and the human rights commission’s lack of independence from the Depart-

ment of Labour.⁵⁴ Women's organizations and many other groups had lobbied extensively over the past few years for new legislation, and Rosemary Brown, a former ombudswoman for the Vancouver Status of Women and an NDP member of the legislature, was an influential proponent of the new code.⁵⁵ King also invited University of British Columbia law professor Bill Black to organize a class to debate and prepare an initial draft human rights code.⁵⁶

The code was a significant departure from the 1969 act. The *Human Rights Act* provided few options for redress, whereas the code emphasized conciliation and negotiation. The code also created a commission to promote human rights education and a branch with full-time human rights investigators to process and investigate complaints. Another important innovation was that the branch was required to investigate *all* complaints. Once a complaint was received, the Human Rights Branch would dispatch a human rights investigator to speak to the complainant and the alleged perpetrator. If the investigator found merit in the complaint, they would initially attempt an informal conciliation. Thousands of complaints were handled in this fashion under the authority of the Human Rights Code.⁵⁷ Most complaints were resolved with a private or public apology, an agreement to reinstitute the victim in a job or provide a service, or an informal monetary award.⁵⁸ If conciliation failed, the branch could ask the minister of labour to appoint a board of inquiry. A board of inquiry was a quasi-judicial proceeding in which one or a few individuals appointed by the minister would meet with the complainant and the accused, hear their arguments, and render a decision in favour of one of the parties. One of the commission's primary responsibilities, in addition to education, was to represent the complainant during the proceedings, therefore guaranteeing that people who had limited resources would be adequately represented.⁵⁹ If the board of inquiry ruled in favour of the complainant, the board was empowered to force the respondent to remedy the situation (e.g., offer a job or service) and to assess monetary damages. The board's decision had the full force of law although it could be appealed in the courts.

The Human Rights Code also included a blanket prohibition on all forms of discrimination unless the accused could demonstrate "reasonable cause." This was a significant innovation. All other anti-discrimination laws in Canada were limited to specific grounds for discrimination, such as race or gender. H.W. and Julie Webb were able to use the reasonable cause section to set new precedents in areas such as pregnancy, marital status, and sexual harassment.⁶⁰ The first gay rights case to reach the Supreme Court of Canada, *GATE v. Vancouver Sun*, emerged from a 1976 board of inquiry appointed under the British Columbia Human Rights Code.⁶¹ The code made no reference to sexual orientation in 1976, but the board attempted to employ the reasonable cause section to prohib-

it this form of discrimination. Although the decision was ultimately overturned in the Supreme Court of Canada (for, among other things, restricting freedom of the press), it was an important symbolic victory for gay rights.⁶²

Once again, social activists played an important role in the development of the human rights state. Organized labour, Jews, African Canadians, churches, and various other pressure groups lobbied extensively for the first anti-discrimination statutes in Ontario.⁶³ In British Columbia, women's organizations were especially important in the development and the enforcement of the Human Rights Code. The Vancouver Status of Women (VSW), for instance, prepared briefs and lobbied the government, assigned people to attend all-candidates meetings during elections to raise the issue of human rights law reform, and flooded the media with material on human rights reform.⁶⁴ One of the functions of the VSW's full-time ombudswoman was to prepare human rights complaints. Rosemary Brown, a former ombudswoman, was a vigorous supporter of the code. Many other organizations including the Status of Women Action Group, B.C. Federation of Women, Young Women's Christian Association, and NDP Women's Rights Committee also lobbied for human rights legislation.⁶⁵ Even the radical Vancouver Women's Caucus, which generally eschewed legal reform, presented a brief before the Human Rights Commission in 1969 demanding revisions to the *Human Rights Act*.⁶⁶ Kathleen Ruff, the first chair of the Human Rights Branch, was formerly the president of the Status of Women Action Group.

Sexual discrimination complaints dominated the work of the Human Rights Branch. Almost 50 percent of the complaints investigated by the branch between 1974 and 1982 involved sexual discrimination. The trend was consistent across the country except in Ontario and Nova Scotia; sexual discrimination constituted the second-largest number of complaints in both jurisdictions after racial discrimination.⁶⁷

The Socreds returned to power in 1975 and in less than a decade, they replaced the code with a regressive *Human Rights Act* as part of a broad program of fiscal restraint.⁶⁸ The Social Credit party had fully embraced neo-liberal economic and social policies, and their reforms in the 1980s severely restricted government spending and social services. The infamous "restraint package" of 1983–84 included twenty-six pieces of legislation that, among other things, allowed the government to dismiss thousands of civil servants and cut wages, eliminate services such as the Residential Tenancy Board and the Alcohol and Drug Commission, and increase taxes.⁶⁹ The 1984 *Human Rights Act* was one of the major bills in the package. True, the act incorporated, for the first time, physical and mental disability. But the reasonable cause section was removed, the maximum possible fine was reduced from \$5,000 to \$2,000, the Human Rights Commission was eliminated, and the process for submitting complaints

was streamlined to allow bureaucrats to dismiss complaints without an investigation. The human rights investigators, who worked full-time and had developed an expertise in human rights adjudication, were all dismissed. Overworked industrial relations officers with no human rights training were appointed to investigate complaints.⁷⁰ The new regime de-emphasized informal conciliation and concentrated on formal adjudication of complaints. The only member of the government who chose to defend the legislation in the legislature was the minister of labour, only because one person had to at least table the legislation.⁷¹ As R. Brian Howe and David Johnson suggest, “this was the furthest any Canadian government has ever gone in restructuring its human rights policy.”⁷²

Many of the stakeholders who supported the code, albeit insisting that it had many limitations, sharply criticized the reforms. The NDP Women’s Rights Committee stated that the amendments to the code were “the most serious aspect of the new legislative package [of fiscal restraint].”⁷³ The Status of Women Action Group accused the government of pandering to a small but vocal segment of the business community and called for the full reinstatement of the code.⁷⁴ The Nanaimo Women’s Resource Centre feared that the “elimination of the human rights office means that there are little or no protections within provincial jurisdiction.”⁷⁵ The major women’s organizations in the province—including the Vancouver Status of Women, the B.C. Federation of Women, Rape Relief, and many more—vigorously opposed the *Human Rights Act*.⁷⁶ Criticism of the reforms was widespread and included organized labour, civil libertarians, anti-racism associations, churches, and seniors’ groups.⁷⁷ The *Vancouver Sun* lamented the government’s efforts to “trivialize protection of human rights.”⁷⁸

Opposition mobilized outside the province. The 1984 reforms created a national debate on the direction of human rights policy. Gordon Fairweather, the chairman of the federal Human Rights Commission, campaigned against reforms he characterized as “emblematic of a police state.”⁷⁹ Another chief commissioner of a human rights commission, Ken Norman in Saskatchewan, claimed that “tearing apart the institutional fabric of the human rights commission and human rights branch is a very regressive step.”⁸⁰ Many prominent political figures outside British Columbia were outspoken critics of the reforms, including Manitoba Attorney General Roland Penner, the national leader of the NDP (Ed Broadbent), and federal Minister of Justice Mark MacGuigan.⁸¹ Several members of the federal cabinet—including Secretary of State Serge Joyal, Minister of Labour Charles Caccia, and the minister responsible for women, Judy Erola—in a rare example of direct interference in provincial politics, called on the government to withdraw the legislation.⁸² In a letter to the provincial minister of labour, Joyal described their vision for a human rights regime: a reasonable cause section to engage with unforeseen forms of discrimination, as

well as systemic discrimination; a commission to represent victims of discrimination before boards of inquiry and to promote human rights education; and full-time human rights officers who could develop an expertise in conciliation.⁸³

Some of the leading human rights and law reform agencies in Canada and abroad also joined the opposition. The Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies described the act as a “tragic mistake” and insisted that it be reversed.⁸⁴ Meeting in Philadelphia, the International Association of Human Rights Agencies passed a resolution expressing opposition to the proposed amendments.⁸⁵ The Canadian Bar Association, which has a long history of lobbying for legal reform; the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women; and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association were among the many diverse organizations defending the Human Rights Code.⁸⁶

The Socreds’ legislation represented a sharp break from the system designed by the NDP, which was based on accessibility, conciliation, education, and an expansive interpretation of human rights. The NDP government hired full-time human rights investigators, introduced the reasonable cause provision, provided funding for human rights education, and ensured that complainants had representation before boards of inquiry. In contrast, the Socreds balked at aggressive enforcement of a human rights law that favoured complainants: they eliminated the commission, reduced funding, fired the investigators, and placed the onus on victims to pursue complaints. The Socreds argued that the code was too cumbersome, created extensive delays that hurt employers, and facilitated frivolous complaints by providing individuals with free representation. The 1984 *Human Rights Act* had no mandate for education and no provisions to provide complainants with representation or counsel before inquiries.

The 1984 *Human Rights Act* did not become a precedent. The human rights state remained relatively unchanged outside British Columbia, and the NDP replaced the act in 1996. New grounds for discrimination, such as sexual orientation, were later added to provincial human rights codes, and innovations such as permanent boards of inquiry were established in many provinces. Nonetheless, the fundamental underpinning of human rights adjudication—quasi-judicial bodies investigating citizen complaints with a priority on conciliation and a mandate to educate the public—remains the predominant model today.

The human rights state and gender equality

WITHOUT A DOUBT, the original anti-discrimination statutes in British Columbia, modeled on similar initiatives across Canada, were a complete failure. The *Equal Pay Act* (1953–69) barred employers from paying lower wages to women who did the same work in the same establishment. Only thirty-three women

(involving eleven employers) successfully applied for restitution under the *Equal Pay Act*. The *Fair Employment Practices Act* (1953–69) and the *Public Accommodation Practices Act* (1961–69) were even feeble.⁸⁷ A mere six complaints were received under the former and only three under the latter. Four of the six employment complaints under the *Fair Employment Practices Act* and two of the three under the *Public Accommodation Practices Act* were dismissed for falling outside the scope of the legislation.⁸⁸ The B.C. experience was not unique. Only two complaints had been sustained in Ontario under its *Fair Employment Practices Act* (1951–62).⁸⁹ Still, these statutes were a symbolic first step, and the failure of these early initiatives provided a basis for justifying future reforms.⁹⁰

The *Human Rights Act* of 1969 was only moderately more effective. Already over-burdened industrial relations officers with no expertise in human rights were responsible for investigating complaints. An average of seven hundred complaints were received each year between 1969 and 1973, and only thirty to eighty of these cases were assigned to investigators. Furthermore, the minister of labour rarely appointed boards of inquiry to adjudicate complaints after conciliation had failed. Of the 2,345 complaints received between 1970 and 1973, ninety-two were settled informally by the investigating officers, six were withdrawn, fifty-three were found to be without merit, and only twenty-three were decided by a board of inquiry.⁹¹ “The legislation,” insisted the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, “did little to foster or safeguard civil rights in British Columbia.”⁹²

The 1973 Human Rights Code transformed the provincial human rights regime. The number of complaints increased from seven hundred in 1973 to thirty-five hundred in 1976, and in 1982 the branch received 10,391 complaints.⁹³ Dozens of human rights officers were hired to enforce the code, and they developed an expertise in human rights conciliation. These officers conducted on average six hundred investigations per year. The NDP appointed more boards of inquiry, and boards generally favoured the complainant.⁹⁴ Of a sample of twenty boards of inquiry appointed between 1975 and 1979 dealing with sexual discrimination, sixteen complaints were upheld. In some cases, the victim was offered a job or a service, and in ten cases, the board assessed monetary damages. But the statistics only reveal one small part of the larger narrative. Human rights officers informally adjudicated thousands of complaints between 1974 and 1984.⁹⁵

After defeating the NDP in the 1975 election, the Socreds were able to restrict the activities of the Human Rights Branch and Commission. The Human Rights Code became the victim of a male-dominated government with close ties to business and whose electoral base was primarily in rural British Columbia.⁹⁶ Several ministers of labour, for instance, delayed appointments, were recalcitrant in approving boards of inquiry, reduced the number of investiga-

tors (and in some cases continued to use industrial relations officers), and hired people who had little or no experience in human rights adjudication.⁹⁷ The Status of Women Action Group expressed a common grievance with the Socreds' management when the association insisted that the "B.C. Human Rights Commission is an embarrassment and a bad joke. They have done nothing except show their appalling ignorance and insensitivity to human rights."⁹⁸

The Human Rights Commission lost all credibility in the late 1970s as a result of the Socreds' appointments. At one point, in 1979, the *Vancouver Sun* reported that the commissioners (composed of only white men and one white woman) exchanged sexist and homophobic comments during a public hearing.⁹⁹ The chair of the commission in 1979, Joseph Katz, suggested at one point that women were not needed on the commission—the men could solicit feedback from their wives.¹⁰⁰ And Jack Henrich, the former minister of labour, insisted during a television interview in 1984 that a complaint involving a ban on women at a local golf course on weekends was "frivolous." Men work and women do not, he insisted, and the policy was a legitimate restriction (at the time, 52.7 percent of women in the province worked).¹⁰¹ Unsurprisingly, the president of the United Fisherman and Allied Workers' Union complained that workers "lack confidence that justice will be done or will even be seen to be done while you, as Minister and/or the Commission, continue to display flagrant unconcern for even the appearances of impartiality in the highly sensitive area of human rights."¹⁰²

The NDP's expansive Human Rights Code also contained significant flaws. Boards of inquiry, for instance, rarely provided sufficient restitution. Among the twenty cases noted earlier, only a few resulted in damages over a thousand dollars. Jean Tharpe was awarded \$250 after years of fighting Lornex Mining Corporation. And boards could not always be counted on to see beyond the most direct forms of discrimination. Billie Linton, who was denied the opportunity to work as an order-selector, lost her case because there was no evidence that the company's managers explicitly stated that they refused to hire women. The lone dissenter on the board of inquiry observed that it was "trite to state that discrimination is seldom susceptible of direct proof. Seldom is there an open admission of discrimination by the respondent. Once a prima facie case of discrimination is established, the onus of proving a non-discriminatory cause as well as the reasonableness of the cause shifts to the respondent."¹⁰³ Constant delays also hampered the branch's work. Janice Foster, who was denied a job because of her height and weight, had to wait two years before her complaint was resolved. Loraine Warren's equal pay case would be considered a speedy resolution at the time—it was eighteen months before a hearing was scheduled.

The 1984 *Human Rights Act* represented a significant departure from the previous regime and did nothing to address the weaknesses of the Human

Rights Code. Julie Webb won her sexual harassment case against her boss at the pizzeria under the reasonable cause section of the code. In the same year, Andrea Fields' sexual harassment complaint was brought before the new Human Rights Council as constituted under the 1984 *Human Rights Act*. Fields, a waitress at a Victoria restaurant, testified that her boss, Wilhelm Ueffing, attempted to pinch or grab her, wrote her notes suggesting that she had a sexy body, and frequently asked her to have sex with him. The council dismissed her complaint, in part because Ueffing "frequently greeted staff and customers with a hug and a kiss" and because there was insufficient evidence to support her testimony.¹⁰⁴ It was a complicated case (other waitresses contradicted her testimony), but it was also a powerful symbolic defeat for the council's first case and the "new" human rights regime in British Columbia.

Conclusion

ULTIMATELY, the fundamental flaw of the B.C. human rights regime was the same failure inherent in similar legal regimes across the country. The Canadian human rights state was never designed to deal with any form of *systemic* inequality. Quebec was the only province to recognize economic, social, and cultural rights in its human rights legislation (in practice, few people in Quebec submitted claims under these provisions). Moreover, human rights codes in Canada conceived of human rights in terms of individual rights. Commissions were not pro-active; individuals such as H.W., who was fired for being pregnant, had to initiate complaints themselves. Human rights codes also did not allow for class-action suits on behalf of aggrieved minorities. As a result, the human rights state was unable to respond to job ghettos (for example, all-Caucasian fire departments) and rarely provided for collective remedies. The Ontario Human Rights Commission published a scathing critique of the Ontario Human Rights Code in 1977. Its concerns could easily apply to the other regimes in Canada at the time:

The most pervasive discrimination today often results from unconscious and seemingly neutral practices which may, none the less, be as detrimental to human rights as the more overt and intentional kind of discrimination. These practices perpetuate the discriminatory effects of past discrimination, even when overt acts of discrimination have ceased. Unfortunately, the Commission does not have the power, under the present Code to deal effectively with such practices despite their clearly discriminatory consequences.¹⁰⁵

Several provinces, including Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia, eventually amended their respective human rights codes and incorporated a mandate to investigate systemic discrimination.¹⁰⁶ But economic recession in the 1980s led to extensive government cutbacks. Investigations into systemic discrimination were long and costly, and during a period of fiscal restraint, individual complaints dominated the human rights agenda. As Howe and Johnson note, “financial constraints are compelling some provincial commissions to re-evaluate their support of systemic initiatives.... The critical factor is held to be the amount of time, effort, and funding required to assess and demonstrate systemic discrimination.”¹⁰⁷

The modern human rights state represents an impressive advancement in public policy. Employers such as Bob Bennett could no longer refuse women the right to work, and the human rights state provided an accessible forum for women to seek redress. Statistics can never fully capture the significance of the daily activities of human rights officers who informally conciliated thousands of human rights violations. Still, the human rights state struggled in its primary activity: employment discrimination against women. Between 1971 and 1981, the number of women in the labour force increased 22 percent and the number of working mothers increased from 36.2 percent to 50.7 percent. Yet in 1981 the average woman made barely 62 percent of a man's wage, a small rise of 5 percent from the 1971 figure. Women in 1981 continued to be represented disproportionately in low-paying jobs or “pink ghettos.” Six percent of physicians, dentists, lawyers, and managers in 1971 were women, and 60.2 percent of clerical and service workers were women. The gap had barely shifted by 1981: women represented 9.6 percent of the former and 57.7 percent of the latter.¹⁰⁸

Of course, human rights legislation has important symbolic value. “Organizations and individuals,” according to Didi Herman, “have proceeded on the law front with the belief that law reflects societal fears and prejudices.... [P]rogressive law reform signals to bigots, and to those who would discriminate, that such attitudes and behaviours are no longer acceptable.”¹⁰⁹ But there is a difference between human rights declarations, which are an expression of consensus within a community, and human rights law. These legal innovations were designed to be enforced and to mobilize the resources of the state to actively discourage (and, if necessary, punish) discriminatory acts. Human rights legislation should not be judged solely on its potential for legitimation, but the law's capacity to fulfill a concrete mandate. The question is significant in light of the limits of the human rights state. *

Notes

- 1 "Human Rights Commissions: Shake that Role of Policing Ideas," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 4 February 2008.
- 2 George Jonas, "George Jonas on the Trouble with Human Rights Commissions," *National Post*, 8 April 2008; George Jonas, "Speech Commissars are the Problem," *National Post*, 5 May 2006; Margaret Wente, "A Day at the Theatre of the Absurd.," *Globe and Mail*, 15 February 2008; Margaret Wente, "The Rights Revolution Run Amok," *Globe and Mail*, 26 February 2008. See also Rex Murphy, "Coming to a Human Rights Commission Near You," *Globe and Mail*, 25 January 2006.
- 3 Wente, "Rights Revolution Run Amok."
- 4 *Human Rights Code Amendment Act, Statutes of British Columbia* 2002, chap. 62.
- 5 *An Act to Amend the Human Rights Code, Statutes of Ontario* 2006, chap. 30.
- 6 "Within Canada, the human rights commissions came to be the preferred means for implementing human rights policy; in effect, the ordinary courts were rejected as the best mechanism for addressing legally proscribed social behaviour." Brian Howe and David Johnson, *Restraining Equality: Human Rights Commissions in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 38.
- 7 Christopher MacLennan, *Toward the Charter: Canadians and the Demand for a National Bill of Rights, 1929–1960* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); Joel Bakken, *Just Words: Constitutional Rights and Social Wrongs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); George Egerton, "Writing the Canadian Bill of Rights: Religion, Politics and the Challenge of Pluralism 1957–1960," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 19, no. 2 (2002); James B. Kelly, *Governing with the Charter: Legislative and Judicial Activism and Framers' Intent* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); James Walker, "Race," *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* (Toronto: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997); Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Carmela Patrias, "Race, Employment Discrimination, and State Complicity in Wartime Canada, 1939–1945," *Labour/Le Travail* 59 (Spring 2007).
- 8 On Canada's rights culture, refer to Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada: A Human Rights Perspective on Ethnicity, Racism and Systemic Inequality*, 3rd ed. (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2003); Michael Ignatieff, *The Rights Revolution* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2000); Dominique Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937–1982* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).
- 9 Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias, "'This Is Our Country, These Are Our Rights': Minorities and the Origins of Ontario's Human Rights Campaigns," *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (2001); Miriam Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada: Social Movements and Equality-Seeking, 1971–1995* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); James Walker, "The 'Jewish Phase' in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 34, no. 1 (2002); Rainer Knopff and F.L. Morton, *The Charter Revolution and the Court Party* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2000); Christopher Manfredi, *Feminist Activism in the Supreme Court: Legal*

- Mobilization and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Miriam Smith, "Social Movements and Judicial Empowerment: Courts, Public Policy, and Lesbian and Gay Organizing in Canada," *Politics and Society* 33, no. 2 (2005); Carmela Patrias, "Socialists, Jews, and the 1947 Saskatchewan Bill of Rights," *Canadian Historical Review* 87, no. 2 (2006); Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending North American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, 1942–49* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Didi Herman, *Rights of Passage: Struggles for Lesbian and Gay Legal Equality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Valerie Korinek, "'The Most Openly Gay Person for at Least a Thousand Miles': Doug Wilson and the Politicization of a Province," *Canadian Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (2003); Ross Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance: Canadian Human Rights Activists, 1930–1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Matt James, *Misrecognized Materialists: Social Movements in Canadian Constitutional Politics* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).
- 10 An exception is the work of Carmela Patrias and Ruth Frager on early innovations in human rights laws and policy in Saskatchewan.
 - 11 British Columbia, Department of Labour Annual Report (Report of the Women's Bureau), 1968, 35.
 - 12 Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution*; Dominique Clément, "'I Believe in Human Rights, Not Women's Rights': Women and the Human Rights State, 1969–1984," *Radical History Review* 101 (2008): chap. 1.
 - 13 Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 303.
 - 14 Five women were elected under the NDP banner in 1972 (one Social Credit elected), http://www.elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/1871-1986_ElectoralHistoryofBC.pdf.
 - 15 By the 1970s, the province boasted the country's first rape crisis centre, the first feminist newspaper (*Kinesis*), the first national conference of human rights ministers, the first Black woman elected to a provincial legislature, the only woman in the federal parliament in 1970, and one of the first women's liberation groups in the country, and it was the first province to legislate against sex discrimination. Women from British Columbia led the most visible protest against the abortion laws in Canadian history in 1969: a caravan from Vancouver to Ottawa carrying a coffin to symbolize the deaths of women from backstreet abortions. Clément, "'I Believe in Human Rights.'"
 - 16 Ministry of Labour Women's Programs, "Women in British Columbia, 1971–1981" (Victoria: Ministry of Labour, 1984).
 - 17 British Columbia Archives (hereafter cited as BCA), Department of Labour fonds, G85-158, box 5, acc. 8800573715, Human Rights Case—Kathleen Strenja v United Cabs-Comox Taxi, 1981.
 - 18 University of Victoria Archives (hereafter cited as UVA), British Columbia Human Rights Board of Inquiry Collection, AR017, box 97-159, Billie Linton v Nabob Foods Ltd., 1977; British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1977): 32–33.

- 19 UVA, British Columbia Human Rights Board of Inquiry Collection, AR017, box 97-159, *Lorraine Warren v D. Becket and Credit of Canada Ltd.*, 1977; British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1977): 62–63.
- 20 British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly* (1980), 3493.
- 21 UVA, British Columbia Human Rights Board of Inquiry Collection, AR017, box 97-159, *Jean Tharpe v Lornex Mining Corporation*, 1976; British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1976): 85–86.
- 22 British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1977): 32–33.
- 23 It was the opinion of the board of inquiry—after speaking with the employer, visiting the site and contacting people familiar with the industry—that the height and weight requirements were arbitrary. In its final report, the board insisted that “general rules based on meaningless attributes and not rationally related to the qualifications necessary to do the job are inimical to the equality of opportunity which Section 8 of the Code mandates.” British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1979): 52–53.
- 24 Doris Anderson, *Rebel Daughter: An Autobiography* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1996), 173.
- 25 For these and other reasons, including the possibility that many women did not “understand, at least in the first instance, that their experience falls within the parameters of sexual harassment,” the first Canadian study on sexual harassment appeared only in 1978. In their study, Backhouse and Cohen discuss briefly why sexual harassment was a “recent” phenomenon by the 1970s: “One is that since more women are working there are more instances of sexual harassment, and this has brought the problem to a head. Another is that middle-class women have begun to recognize they will continue to work outside their homes for the majority of their lives. This, it is argued, causes them to take threats to their working status—such as sexual harassment—more seriously.” They also suggest that the efforts of women activists to raise awareness of rape has also led to greater awareness of sexual harassment. Constance Backhouse and Leah Cohen, *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978), 1–2, 71–72.
- 26 “Julie Webb v Cyprus Pizza,” *Canadian Human Rights Reporter*, vol. 6, decision 444 (Toronto: Canadian Human Rights Reporter, 1985): D2794–97.
- 27 In her memoirs, Doris Anderson provides a vivid discussion of the obstacles facing women, including senior executives, who wanted both to have children and to work. Anderson, *Rebel Daughter*.
- 28 British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1976): 69–71.
- 29 BCA, Department of Labour fonds, G85-168, box 8, acc. 8800573718, Women and Youth in Northwest B.C. Labour Markets, Summary Report, Associated Economic Consultants Ltd., December 1982.
- 30 UVA, British Columbia Human Rights Board of Inquiry Collection, AR017, box 97-159, *Norene Warren v F.A. Cleland & Son, and David Fowler*, 1975.

- 31 Walker, “‘Jewish Phase.’”
- 32 The idea of entrenching rights in the constitution, as the Americans had done nearly two centuries earlier, was antithetical to Canada’s tradition of parliamentary supremacy. According to A.V. Dicey, the famed legal philosopher whose ideas were highly influential in England and, by extension, Canada, parliament was the supreme legal authority. Constitutional rights such as free speech would empower the judiciary to overturn laws passed in parliament. According to Dicey, the “principle of Parliamentary sovereignty means neither more nor less than this, namely, that Parliament thus defined has, under the English constitution, the right to make or unmake any law whatever; and, further, that no person or body is recognised by the law of England as having a right to override or set aside the legislation of Parliament.” A.V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1962), 39–40. In their recent study of human rights commissions in Canada, R. Brian Howe and David Johnson suggest that resistance to human rights legislation was rooted in a widespread belief in social *laissez-faire* and voluntarism in social relations: “This belief can be summarized as follows: While prejudice and discrimination might be morally wrong or socially undesirable, human rights legislation or legal action against discrimination would do more harm than good. It would involve unwarranted state interference with individual freedom, property rights, and the right to contract.” Howe and Johnson, *Restraining Equality*, 4.
- 33 For a history of human rights legislation in Canada, refer to Howe and Johnson, *Restraining Equality*; Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution*; Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance*.
- 34 The 1944 Ontario *Racial Discrimination Act* and the 1947 Saskatchewan Bill of Rights were designed as quasi-criminal statutes; they were enforced similar to criminal law, through the police and the courts.
- 35 Walker, “‘Jewish Phase.’”; Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance*, 219–20.
- 36 Walker, “‘Jewish Phase,’” 13.
- 37 *Fair Employment Practices Acts* appeared later in Manitoba (1953), Nova Scotia (1955), New Brunswick (1956), British Columbia (1956), Saskatchewan (1956), and Quebec (1964). The Ontario *Fair Accommodation Practices Act* was passed in 1954 and replicated in Saskatchewan (1956), New Brunswick (1959), Nova Scotia (1959), Manitoba (1960), and British Columbia (1961). British Columbia enacted a more restricted statute in 1961, while Quebec avoided passing Fair Accommodation Practices legislation. Walter Surma Tarnopolsky, *Discrimination and the Law in Canada* (Toronto: De Boo, 1982), 27–28.
- 38 Judges, who found it difficult to conceive of discrimination as a criminal act, were reluctant to convict. Fines did not help victims find new jobs, and most minorities were unaware of the existence of the legislation. For an overview of the weaknesses of these early initiatives, refer to Dominique Clément, “‘Rights without the Sword Are but Mere Words’: The Limits of Canada’s Rights Revolution,” in *A History of Human Rights in Canada*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2009).

- 39 Critics lamented that Diefenbaker did not seek to entrench the Bill of Rights in the constitution. Instead, it was passed as a federal statute. As a result, any future government could overturn the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the law was only binding on the federal government. The courts largely ignored the federal Bill of Rights. LAC (Library and Archives Canada), Frank Scott Papers, MG30, D211, vol. 47, Frank Scott to Gordon Dowding, 20 September 1964. Walter Tarnopolsky, *The Canadian Bill of Rights* (Toronto: Carswell, 1966).
- 40 Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance*, 220.
- 41 “[T]heir [Jews] greater integration into Canadian society, as well as sheer numbers, allowed them to be the most influential and effective campaigners against discrimination. By the 1940s many of them were English-speaking, and their ranks included academics and lawyers who undertook to do the necessary human rights research and become spokespersons for the campaigns for human rights. While most Jews lived in larger urban areas, some Jews (mostly small-business owners) could be found throughout Ontario. Frequently active members of the Canadian Jewish Congress, the small-town Jews provided the Jewish community with a provincewide communication network unparalleled by any other minority group.” Frager and Patrias, “‘This Is Our Country,’” 17.
- 42 The Ontario Human Rights Code (1962) was followed by similar initiatives in Nova Scotia (1963), Alberta (1966), New Brunswick (1967), Prince Edward Island (1968), British Columbia (1969), Newfoundland (1969), Manitoba (1970), Quebec (1975), Saskatchewan (1979), and Yukon (1987).
- 43 The files of the B.C. Human Rights Branch indicate the professions of the board members in many cases. However, no one has completed a systematic survey of people who have participation in the human rights adjudication process across the country.
- 44 *An Act to Ensure Fair Remuneration to Female Employees*, *British Columbia Statutes* 1953, chap. 6; *An Act to Prevent Discrimination in Regard to Employment and in Regard to Membership in Trade-Unions by Reason of Race, Religion, Colour, Nationality, Ancestry, or Place of Origin*, *British Columbia Statutes* 1956, chap. 16; *An Act Respecting Public Accommodation Practices*, *British Columbia Statutes* 1961, chap. 50.
- 45 *An Act for the Promotion and Protection of the Fundamental Rights of the People of British Columbia*, *British Columbia Statutes* 1969, chap. 10.
- 46 Philip Girard, *Bora Laskin: Bringing Law to Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 260.
- 47 *Vancouver Sun*, 28 February 1969.
- 48 *The Province*, 25 March 1969.
- 49 For further information on nation-wide celebrations in 1968, refer to Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution*. See also Donald Anderson, “The Development of Human Rights Protections in British Columbia” (master’s thesis, University of Victoria, 1986), 60–62.

- 50 British Columbia Commission for International Year for Human Rights, "Report" (1968).
- 51 Anderson, "Development of Human Rights Protections," 62–64.
- 52 *Vancouver Sun*, 31 October 1969; Anderson, "Development of Human Rights Protections," 66.
- 53 As Howe and Johnson note, "political party indeed does appear to make a difference." Howe and Johnson, *Restraining Equality*, 92. NDP governments consistently provided greater funding to human rights commissions. And, in British Columbia, the NDP revised the human rights legislation in 1973 and 1996 to expand the scope and mandate of the human rights regime.
- 54 The elected members of the NDP criticized, in detail, the 1969 *Human Rights Act* during the 1973 debates in the legislature surrounding the proposed Human Rights Code. In particular, Minister of Labour W.S. King offered a useful overview of the NDP's position on the 1969 act. See British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly* (1973), 1256–57.
- 55 Clément, "I Believe in Human Rights."
- 56 Unfortunately, a copy of the proposed draft produced by the UBC law students no longer exists. The provincial (NDP) government commissioned Black in 1994 to provide an extensive review of the human rights system, which resulted in a significant overhaul of the system. ; Bill Black, *B.C. Human Rights Review: Report on Human Rights in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Government of British Columbia, 1994).
- 57 Shelagh Day, the first human rights officer hired in British Columbia, later described the investigatory process as follows: "The investigating officer gathers available information relating to the complaint from all parties and, on the basis of this information, determines whether a contravention of the Code has occurred. If the Officer has evidence that discrimination has occurred, he or she makes a recommendation that the complaint be settled by the respondent. On the other hand, if there is no evidence of discrimination, the officer recommends to the Director that no further action be taken." Shelagh Day, "Recent Developments in Human Rights," *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1977): 16.
- 58 "A recommendation to settle a complaint can take many forms. Depending on the circumstances of the complaint, and the circumstances of the complainant and respondent, settlement may involve lost wages, instatement or re-instatement in a job, instatement in tenancy in an apartment, a payment of damages or expenses, a formal agreement with the Human Rights Branch to discontinue discriminatory practices that have been uncovered, an agreement to inform and educate the pertinent officials of a respondent company of the provisions of the Code, or a simple apology to the complainant." Ibid.
- 59 Unlike the courts, this significant innovation would ensure that employers, with more resources than an employee who was recently dismissed, would not have an unfair advantage. Moreover, victims of discrimination, such as racial minorities and women, often struggled on the margins of the labour market. The code was designed to make the process accessible to everyone.

- 60 "This is the first case in Canada to deal with employment discrimination against a pregnant woman and the B.C. human rights legislation is singularly able to provide protection to pregnant women because Section 8 prohibits discrimination without reasonable cause." Day, "Recent Developments in Human Rights." See also British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1976): 69–71; British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1977): 62–63; British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1976): 51–52; British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1980): 24–25; "Julie Webb v Cyprus Pizza"; Peter Comparelli and Glen Schaefer, "Two Women Sexually Harassed, Inquiries Rule," *Vancouver Sun*, 28 July 1984.
- 61 The board concluded that the newspaper had discriminated on the basis of sexual orientation when it refused to publicize an advertisement for the Gay Alliance Towards Equality's newsletter. *Gay Alliance Towards Equality v Vancouver Sun* (1979) 2 S.C.R. 435.
- 62 Quebec, in 1977, was the first jurisdiction to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination in its human rights legislation.
- 63 Walker, "Jewish Phase"; Dominique Clément, "Searching for Rights in the Age of Activism: The Newfoundland-Labrador Human Rights Association, 1968–1982," *Newfoundland Studies* 19, no. 2 (2003); Ross Lambertson, "The Dresden Story: Racism, Human Rights, and the Jewish Labour Committee of Canada," *Labour/Le Travail* 47 (Spring 2001).
- 64 Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia (hereafter cited as RBSC UBC), Vancouver Status of Women (VSW) Papers, Grant Application to the Provincial Secretary of BC, 1 April 1977 to 31 March 1978.
- 65 RBSC UBC, Rosemary Brown Papers, v. 8, f. 9, briefs and correspondence by the Vancouver Young Women's Christian Association, British Columbia Federation of Labour Women's Rights Committee, and the University of British Columbia Women's Action Group; Canadian Women's Movement Archives, British Columbia Federation of Women, vols. 5–6, materials on the British Columbia human rights code and commission, 1979; Donald Anderson, "The Development of Human Rights Protections in British Columbia" (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 1986), 69–70.
- 66 Simon Fraser University Archives, Frances Wasserlein Papers, f. 162-3-3-0-4, Vancouver Women's Caucus Brief to the Human Rights Commission, 3 December 1969.
- 67 British Columbia, Department of Labour Annual Reports, 1970–82; British Columbia, Human Rights Commission, Annual Reports, 1979–82; Nova Scotia, Annual Reports of the Human Rights Commission, 1977–82; Ontario, Annual Reports of the Human Rights Commission, 1977–80.
- 68 *Human Rights Act, British Columbia Statutes* 1984, chap. 22.
- 69 See Bryan Palmer, *Solidarity: The Rise and Fall of an Opposition in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987). "Few were more willing in the early 1980's to take up the cause of dismantling the welfare state and curbing the 'excessive' power of the trade unions than the populist neo-conservatives of the Canadian hinterland, the petty commodity hucksters, interest magnates and speculators

of British Columbia's Social Credit Party, recently re-elected to rule in a 1983 parliamentary contest" (p. 19). Bryan Palmer provides a detailed discussion of the restraint package and the movement against the reforms.

- 70 For a detailed review and critique of the 1984 *Human Rights Act*, refer to Black, *B.C. Human Rights Review*.
- 71 Minister of Labour Robert McClelland offered the following explanation for the amendments: "Since becoming the minister responsible for the Human Rights Commission about a year ago I've done an exhaustive review of the operation of both the commission and the human rights branch, as I have with every other operation under the control of the Ministry of Labour, and I came to the conclusion, as I've said publicly on a number of occasions, that the system was not working, that justice wasn't being served, that justice delayed was justice denied, and that a totally new system was necessary in order that we could move in a very meaningful way towards the day when we wouldn't have to worry about discrimination in this province." British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly* (1983), 769.
- 72 Howe and Johnson, *Restraining Equality*, 158.
- 73 *Sisterhood* 7, no. 2 (August 1983).
- 74 RBSC UBC, Solidarity Coalition Papers, v. 2, f. 12, Status of Women Action Group, Brief to the People's Commission on Social and Economic Policy Alternatives, 7 December 1984.
- 75 RBSC UBC, Solidarity Coalition Papers, v. 5, f. 6, Nanaimo Women's Resources Society, Brief Submitted to the People's Commission for Policy Alternatives, September 1984. The VSW was a key member of the coalition and a staunch opponent of the Social Credit government's so-called austerity package. British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly* (1984), 4471-72.
- 76 On opposition from women's organizations to the 1984 *Human Rights Act*, see *Sisterhood* 7 (August 1983); RBSC UBC, Solidarity Coalition Papers, v. 2, briefs to the People's Commission on Social and Economic Policy Alternatives; British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly* (1984), 4471-72. In addition, refer to media coverage on the following dates in the *Vancouver Sun*: 24 November 1984; 27 November 1984; 29 November 1984; 12 December 1984.
- 77 "Angry Crowd Wants Anti-Gov't Protest," *The Province*, 13 July 1983; Marc Edge. "Thousands Join Call to Battle Socreds' Budget," *The Province*, 24 July 1983.
- 78 "The new act would replace a process of conciliation and negotiation with an adversarial and confrontational system of handling complaints, a change that can only heighten hostility to human rights rather than further public acceptance of the concept." "Preserving Human Rights," *Vancouver Sun*, editorial, 16 July 1983.
- 79 Fairweather believed that the reforms set the stage for American-style social polarization and lamented attempts to "import this kind of thinking in Canada." "Critics Rap Socreds over Rights Record," *Vancouver Sun*, 22 September 1984; "B.C. Rights Move Rapped in Ottawa," *The Province*, 9 September 1983.

- 80 University of British Columbia, Rare Books and Special Collections, Solidarity Coalition Papers, f. 19-1, Ken Norman to William Bennett, 2 July 1983.
- 81 "B.C. Rights Move Rapped in Ottawa," *The Province*, 9 September 1983; "Five Provinces Reject Call," *Vancouver Sun*, 10 September 1983.
- 82 Ann Silversides, "Four Federal Ministers Ask B.C. to Reconsider Human Rights Bill," *Globe and Mail*, 9 May 1984.
- 83 RBSC UBC, Solidarity Coalition Papers, f. 19-1, Serge Joyal to R.H. McClelland, 7 October 1983.
- 84 "CASHRA deplores this ill-advised proposal and urges the Government of British Columbia to reconsider it. If it were implemented the powerless would be deprived of an advocate in the struggle against racism and bigotry.... To disband an organization that has proven expertise in providing such protection would be tragic." "Ottawa Steps Up Rights Pressure on B.C.," *The Province*, 17 July 1983; Vaughn Palmer, "A Strong Defence of a New Rights Act," *Vancouver Sun*, 5 June 1984; *Vancouver Sun*, 23 September 1983; RBSC UBC, f. 19-1, Press Release, CASHRA, 14 July 1983.
- 85 RBSC UBC, Solidarity Coalition Papers, f. 19-1, Press Release, CASHRA, 14 July 1983.
- 86 *Vancouver Sun*, 26 September 1983; RBSC UBC, Solidarity Coalition Papers, f. 19-1, Press Release, Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 25 July 1983. The Canadian Bar Association often participated in debates surrounding human rights violations, from government restrictions on civil liberties during the Second World War to the negotiations surrounding the creation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Dominique Clément, "Rights in the Age of Protest: A History of the Human Rights and Civil Liberties Movement in Canada, 1962-1982" (PhD diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2005), 141-43.
- 87 The provincial government added age as a prohibited ground for discrimination in an amendment to the *Fair Employment Practices Act* in 1964. *An Act to Prevent Discrimination in Regard to Employment and in Regard to Membership in Trade-Unions by Reason of Race, Religion, Colour, Nationality, Ancestry, or Place of Origin; An Act Respecting Public Accommodation Practices; An Act to Amend the Fair Employment Practices Act; An Act to Ensure Fair Remuneration for Female Employees.*
- 88 British Columbia, Department of Labour, Annual Reports, 1953-69.
- 89 *Toronto Star*, 3 August 1961.
- 90 Many workers and employers did not know the law existed. Members of the British Columbia Commission for International Year for Human Rights, who were drawn from a wide spectrum of community organizations, criticized the lack of human rights education in the province and the lack of publicity for the anti-discrimination legislation. The British Columbia Federation of Labour also claimed that "very many [employers] had not known the Act existed." B.C. Federation of Labour, *Summary of Proceedings of the 1969 Annual Convention (Human Rights Committee Report)*; Rights, "Report."

- 91 British Columbia, Department of Labour, Annual Reports, 1970–84.
- 92 *Democratic Commitments (BCCLA Newsletter)*, 10 (June 1969).
- 93 British Columbia, Department of Labour Annual Reports, 1970–82; British Columbia, Human Rights Commission, Annual Reports, 1979–82.
- 94 British Columbia, Department of Labour, *Annual Reports*, 1970–84; British Columbia Human Rights Commission, Annual Reports, 1980–82.
- 95 UVA, British Columbia Human Rights Board of Inquiry Collection, AR017, box 97-159, 1976.
- 96 According to Jean Barman, “Social Credit was also [a] male government.” The party elected the fewest number of female candidates in the province, and less than 20 percent of the women who ran for public office during this period ran under the Social Credit banner. Soon after their 1975 election victory, the Socreds eliminated the office of the Coordinator for the Status of Women, fired the consultant on sex discrimination in the Ministry of Education, and disbanded the Committee on Sex Discrimination in Ministry of Education. UVA, Status of Women Action Group fonds, AR 119, 2004-005, f. 1.2, “Human Rights Commission Unfit to Serve” letter to membership, 7 April 1979; Barman, *West Beyond the West*, 279.
- 97 G. Scott Wallace, a Progressive Conservative member of the legislative assembly, explained to the legislature in 1977 the frustrations victims felt when dealing with industrial relations officers: “I just want to bring to the minister’s attention that I was made aware as recently as this morning of a case where an industrial relations officer was allocated to investigate a complaint by an individual. This woman discovered that she ended up answering all kinds of questions as to whether she suffered from a neurosis, or if she had ever been considered by her friends to be paranoid, and questions of this nature, which seem to me to be ranging far away and beyond the preliminary kind of discussion that should take place when a man or a woman wants a complaint investigated by the human rights branch.” British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly* (1977), 4198.
- 98 UVA, Status of Women Action Group fonds, AR 119, 2004-005, f. 1.2, “Human Rights Commission Unfit to Serve” letter to membership, 7 April 1979.
- 99 Ibid.; *Victoria Times-Colonist*, 4 April 1979, 2 May 1979.
- 100 British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly* (1979), 1787.
- 101 Ibid., 4463.
- 102 UVA, British Columbia Human Rights Board of Inquiry Collection, AR017, box 97-159, Susan Jorgensen v BC Ice and Cold Storage Ltd and the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, J.H. Nicol to Allan Williams, 4 June 1979.
- 103 UVA, British Columbia Human Rights Board of Inquiry Collection, AR017, box 97-159, Billie Linton v Nabob Foods Ltd., 1977; British Columbia, *Labour Relations Bulletin* (1977): 32–33.
- 104 Nancy Knickerbocker and Peter Comparelli, “Harassment Complainant to Fight Ruling,” *Vancouver Sun*, 27 November 1984.

- 105 Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Life Together: A Report on Human Rights in Ontario* (July 1977), 33.
- 106 See, for instance, the Ontario Human Rights Review Task Force report on the need to investigate systemic discrimination: Ontario Human Rights Code Review Task Force, *Achieving Equality: A Report on Human Rights Reform* (Toronto: Ministry of Citizenship, 1992).
- 107 Howe and Johnson also found that the most common complaint among advocacy groups was the failure of human rights commissions to adequately deal with systemic discrimination. Howe and Johnson, *Restraining Equality*, 142–44.
- 108 Statistics on women in the labour force are available in the *Human Rights Act*, formally Statutes of British Columbia. *An Act for the Promotion and Protection of the Fundamental Rights of the People of British Columbia*, 1969, c. 10.
- 109 Herman, *Rights of Passage*, 4.



Part Five

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Cultural Portrayals of the West

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W.L. Morton, Margaret Laurence, and the Writing of Manitoba

ROBERT WARDHAUGH

■ **W.L. Morton and Margaret Laurence** are giants in Canadian writing. Both are considered to be at the top of their respective disciplines of history and literature. While they espoused a sense of Canadian nationalism and identity, both were regional and provincial writers who wrote from their own place and told the story of that place. Together they fit into what Doug Francis calls “mythic regionalism”; they offered a vision of the Prairie West, and of Manitoba in particular.¹ According to Clara Thomas, “they are writers who, more than any others, have given Manitoba a powerful historic and mythic identity.”² They forged what Peter Easingwood calls “a special interest in the relationship between fiction and history.”³

The lives of Morton and Laurence offer revealing parallels. Morton was born in 1908 and raised in Gladstone, while Laurence was born in 1926 and raised in Neepawa. These neighbouring small towns in Manitoba along the Yellowhead Trail are both distinctly “Ontario” in character. Gladstone and Neepawa were founded in 1882 and 1883, respectively. They were founded largely by Anglo-Celtic immigrants from Ontario prior to the Prairie immigration boom of 1896 to 1911 that ushered in large numbers of Eastern European newcomers,

as well as many other “foreign” groups. Their Ontario-style brick architecture is distinctly different than the false wooden storefronts and large main streets that dominate the small towns of western Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

After being a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, Morton taught at the University of Manitoba and later became the master of Champlain College at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario. Laurence went to Winnipeg to attend university, then on to Africa, Vancouver, and England to work as a writer; when she returned to Canada, she settled in the small town of Lakefield, just outside Peterborough, succeeding Morton as chancellor at Trent. Growing up in small-town “Ontarian Manitoba,” Morton and Laurence found a sense of familiarity in Peterborough that they could not find in larger cities such as Toronto.⁴ For Laurence, Lakefield was “an equally small town with many of the same characteristics” as Neepawa.⁵ The large brick house that Laurence purchased held an uncanny resemblance to her famous childhood house in Neepawa.⁶ “Whether or not I ever lived in the prairies again was really unimportant in a sense,” she once told Robert Kroetsch. “There is a kind of spiritual return. I don’t know whether it is a kind of totally Canadian experience. I know it is very western.”⁷ Their small-town identity and “Ontarian-Manitoba-ness” shaped their vision and meaning of the Prairie West.

W.L. Morton remains one of the greats in Canadian historiography, alongside Harold Innis, Arthur Lower, Frank Underhill, and Donald Creighton. But Morton, as Carl Berger indicates, stood out because he was a historian of region, “one of the first major historians of Canada who brought to his field of study a perspective molded by the cultural milieu of the prairie west.”⁸ In fact, Morton led the *second* generation of Prairie historians. The first generation included Donald Gunn, Alexander Begg, George Bryce, and A.S. Morton, and was characterized by the struggle of man against nature—the triumph of the human spirit and condition. The second generation included Chester Martin, George Stanley, and W.L. Morton.⁹ Works dealing with the Riel Rebellion, the wheat economy, or the emergence of the farm protest movements were depicted within the patriarchal framework of nation building but ultimately as part of a national success story. The narrative focused on agricultural settlement and the political structure of an emerging region within the nation.

Morton, however, challenged the dominant centralist metanarratives by focusing attention on the Prairie West as a time and place in and of itself: “The history of western Canada possessed an individuality that transcended its tributary relationship to the national economic policies; it therefore constituted a decisive field for historical investigation on its own terms.”¹⁰ He accepted the validity of Creighton’s Laurentian thesis that Central Canada formed a commercial, political, and cultural empire that exploited its subordinate hinterlands such

as the West, but he resisted the peripheral view of the region it implied. There was a metropolitan-hinterland relationship, but its influence worked both ways. Morton attempted to create a distinct image in the minds of Prairie dwellers through an appreciation of “their” history, an understanding of “their” myths.¹¹ The history of Canada could be written from the perspective of the West.

With his 1950 publication, *The Progressives*, Morton offered “a retrospective engagement with his own heritage and the people among whom he had grown up.” This search for place, identity, and home continued in 1957 with *Manitoba: A History*, which Berger refers to as “by far his most finely crafted work” and “a work of great emotional involvement.” Morton sought to resolve “the discrepancies that had existed in his mind between the locality he knew and the ‘unreal’ world he had assimilated from a distant literary culture, between his commitments to a society that he believed possessed a character and authenticity of its own and a historiographical tradition that consigned it to the margin of national development.”¹² The book was his answer to a problem of recognition that he first posed in 1946.

Morton described *Manitoba: A History* as emphasizing “the growth of a modern urban and agricultural community on the basis furnished by a primitive fur trade economy and society.”¹³ His central theme was “the development of a distinctive variant of Canadian society within the province.” But in creating a framework for the region’s history, Morton rejected the “frontierism” of the earlier generation of historians, according to whom the Prairies were “a virgin *tabula rasa*” until the community of Red River was formed. There was little room for the history of the First Nations, particularly prior to contact. Instead, Manitoba’s early history was dominated by the Métis and the fur trade of the St Lawrence and Hudson’s Bay. After the trials of Selkirk’s transplanted settlement, “the primary characteristic of the colony was the balance that existed ethnically between the buffalo hunt, river farm lots, and the canoe brigades.” Red River had become a dual society based on a balance between French Catholic Métis and British Protestant settlers.

This principle of duality was threatened by the migration of Ontario settlers that followed the resistance of 1869–70: “Modern civilization came to the plains and parkland in the 1870s,” he wrote, “but in a specific form, that of Ontario settlement. The next generation was to be dominated by the introduction of the institutions and mores of Ontario into the prairies.” Ottawa’s National Policy failed, however, to fill the new region with settlers. Ontario had “occupied” the Prairies but “had not peopled them.” The western immigration boom that brought Central and Eastern Europeans, Americans, and British finished the process of settling the West and again reformed Prairie society. This reformatting was characterized by utopianism and the search for radical political

alternatives, such as the Progressives. In Morton's mind, there was no doubt that Manitoba was a British-Canadian province, but immigration patterns ensured ethnic diversity. By the early decades of the twentieth century, Manitoba was a culturally pluralistic society.¹⁴ In the province's history—in the struggle of the Métis, the Scots, the Ontarians, and the immigrants—Morton perceived “the Canadian experiment in political bi-nationalism and cultural plurality” at “its most intense.”¹⁵ As Berger notes, “his sense of plurality of Canadian life informed and shaped everything he wrote.”¹⁶ But the West, Morton claimed, “was more than people.” The environment had its own role to play in creating this new society. In the first decades of the twentieth century, from the ferment of the agrarian revolt, a distinct Western identity was born:

In that tremendous generation, a generation of fierce action and hard decisions, the West with heavy strokes forged its own institutions, declared its own identity, and created its own sense of semi-political independence. It affirmed its own newly discovered and deeply felt sense of novelty. Its people had realized that the West was indeed a clean sheet on which a new story might be written. The West was no longer attempting to be Ontario on the prairies, it had declared its spiritual independence; it was persuaded of its own difference.¹⁷

Morton's conception of Manitoba's history was changing by the time the second edition of *Manitoba: A History* appeared in 1967. There was cautious optimism, a sense that the traditional enemies that had long besieged the Prairie West—economic uncertainty, crop failure, and debt—were receding. The main objectives in building Manitoba had been achieved: “Everything, in short, that had been dreamed of and aspired to had been realized at least to a reasonable degree. The society the pioneer generation and its sons and daughters had sought to build had been established.” But optimism, prosperity, and harmony were not part of Morton's history. Achievements could be obtained but only through grim determination and hard work. The fact that “no major depression, and no serious drought, or crop failure, occurred in the twenty years after 1945” left Morton off-balance. “The hard-taught caution of two generations,” characterized by the Depression and two world wars, “was confounded.”¹⁸

The future for Manitoba may have looked relatively bright in 1967, but much of what Morton witnessed he lamented. The rural population, “which had been the cornerstone of Manitoba rural society,” was declining faster than ever before. The decline of the small town and family farm weakened local institutions, leading ultimately to the collapse of “the foundations of Manitoba democracy.” The move from rural to urban also led to changes in “the values

people held." Urban values replaced rural values, leading to "a more material and easier way of life." It was not only that people were leaving the rural for the urban; "the countryside itself was being urbanized." The growing size and power of Winnipeg was exerting its pull and influence throughout the rural province: "The country was now urban in outlook; the city was rural in scope."¹⁹

Another result of Manitoba's transformation was "the re-appearance of the Indian." After being pushed away, out of sight, onto the reserves of the shield and interlake regions for three generations to make the transition from a nomadic life to the sedentary life of a farmer, the natural resources were now failing to support the Native population, "and the public conscience and the federal government, critical of other peoples in other lands, suddenly realized that it too had a 'native' problem at least as reproachful and as difficult of solution as any in the world." Morton wrote that the Natives and Métis "were simply added to the ranks of the dispossessed, the failures, the incarcerated, of Manitoban society."²⁰

Morton "wished for a history of the West written with such fidelity to the inner texture of local experience and so evocative of the sense of place that it would immediately trigger a recognition in those who had been molded by that history."²¹ In his 1970 article, "Seeing an Unliterary Landscape," Morton presents his view of a cultural landscape "formed by what the mind, not the seeing eye alone takes in."²² He describes his career as a historian as a quest to reconcile these two modes of vision. Writing about a landscape such as Manitoba, whether in a historical or literary context, meant staking an imaginative claim to a territory that had not yet achieved proper recognition. Morton's education in small-town Manitoba had left him disconnected from his local past. He learned little of his people or his place, and instead learned about Canada through the broad sweep and triumph of British imperial history: "The need to reconcile the actual and the mind's landscape, I think from my own experience, underlies the need, felt at least by the sensitive, of a new country to create its own literature and write its own history."²³ With his provincial history, Morton had written what he called "a general history of Manitoba for Manitobans."²⁴ As Francis points out, the "children of the West" were seeking a home.²⁵

To Morton, Margaret Laurence was accomplishing just that. In the second edition of *Manitoba: A History*, he calls her "one of Manitoba's best writers—and an expatriate."²⁶ Together the two shared a common challenge: the people of Manitoba needed to know and understand their history and their myths, their place and their identity. They needed to see both their internal and external landscapes. The historian and the novelist were instrumental in this process.

Morton held Laurence's first Prairie novel, *The Stone Angel* (1964), in high regard. Even though women were not visible characters in Morton's narrative, he recognized that Laurence's main character, Hagar, characterized the pio-

neering generation and the “stubborn northern flowering” of Manitoba.²⁷ For Laurence, Hagar represented her grandparents’ pioneering generation, represented by “a Scots-Irish background of stern values and hard work and Puritanism.”²⁸ But both writers viewed their province’s history with a strong and even painful sense of irony. Hagar’s character “flowers” despite her grudging nature through the embracing of her past. Like Hagar, Manitoba “was a province so long braced to endure that it did not find it easy to rejoice in victory or to expect much of the future.”²⁹

The historical development of the fictional town of Manawaka and Laurence’s use of history gradually expanded through her next four books. Laurence was part of the third generation of Prairie writers that sought to demolish the myth of the “Golden West” as depicted by such novelists as Frederick Philip Grove.³⁰ Like other Prairie novelists such as W.O. Mitchell, Wallace Stegner, Rudy Wiebe, and Robert Kroetsch, she sought to re-examine and rediscover the Prairie past because it had been misrepresented to her.³¹ But it was not so much a demolishing of myths as it was a reforging of myths. Like Morton, she recognized a distinction between history derived from reading and that derived from lived experience. The latter has “power over us.” It works “in unsuspected ways” through memories “that can recall a thousand images,” and it “can be related only to one’s first home.”³² Her emphasis on individual characterization, and in particular female characterization, merged with a longer time-perspective based on memory and the pursuit of historical context. In *A Jest of God* (1966), *The Fire-Dwellers* (1969), and *A Bird in the House* (1970), Laurence explores the need to reinterpret the past from memory and the interrelatedness of different sides of the Manawaka community with particular references to the Scots, Métis, and Ukrainians. Laurence may have been “newly seized by the thematic implications of the Manawaka novels as a series and by the idea of relating their development to a version of Canadian history,”³³ but she was not yet prepared to write a historical novel. “I don’t know what the hell I’ll write next as a novel, if it ever comes,” she told Al Purdy, “but something seems to be going on and I hope someday it’ll crystallize. I sure as hell don’t want to write an historical novel, God forbid. Something in the area of legend, or half-legend, or legend even seen distortedly through contemporary eyes.”³⁴

But, according to Easingwood, “the full strength of Laurence’s achievement ... emerges against the background that Morton’s treatment of Manitoba provides.”³⁵ Laurence used the writing of her last novel, *The Diviners*, to work out “the question of where one belongs and why, and the meaning to oneself of the ancestors, both the long-ago ones and those in remembered history.” It represented her deep-felt need to understand her time and place. In this sense, both Morton and Laurence were grappling with the central issue of identity. But as

Northrop Frye points out, “Canadian sensibility has been profoundly disturbed not so much by our famous problem of identity, important as that is, as by a series of paradoxes in what confronts that identity. It is less perplexed by the question ‘Who am I?’ as by some such riddle as ‘Where is here?’”³⁶ Laurence’s biographer, Lyall Powers, argues that her life may be understood as a sustained attempt to find viable answers to these two questions. But Laurence was also focused on a third question: When is now? “My writing, then,” she observed, “has been my own attempt to come to terms with the past.”³⁷ Eli Mandel claims there is more to regional writers “coming home” than simply mourning a sense of place: “It isn’t place that we have to talk about but something more complicated and more compelling: remembered place—or beyond that—remembered self, something lost and recovered, a kind of memory, a kind of myth.”³⁸

The concept of “myth” was fundamental for both Morton and Laurence. As Doug Francis indicates, the image of the West in the post-World War II era shifted from that of an external, physical, or formal landscape to a mental, internal, or mythic landscape, a “region of the mind” shaped by its own mythology.³⁹ But, according to Morton, “in this decadent analytical age” the historian was losing sight of its importance. Myths are essential to a people’s collective identity but they cannot be separated from its history. As early as 1943, he maintained that the historian and the writer resemble each other insofar as “each is a maker of myths, only the historian has neglected his job of making myths.”⁴⁰ If a society loses sight of its myths, it loses sight of its stories as well as its identity. The historian and novelist, therefore, face the same dilemma: the need to reconcile a landscape actually seen and realistically experienced with an internal landscape formed by reading. “How,” Morton asks, “could these be brought into a single, authentic vision in which neither would deny, but rather clarify the other? ... I desired it to be seen not only as it could be seen, but as it might be seen.”⁴¹

Laurence shared the belief in the relationship between history and myth. “We have only just begun to recognize our legends,” she writes, “and to give shape to our myths.”⁴² Myth took the form of the ancestors. “These people are our myths,” Laurence claims. “This is our history. And perhaps not consciously, but after a while consciously, this is what we are trying to set down.”⁴³ By the time she was writing *The Diviners*, Laurence viewed herself as “a kind of historian of her people or maker of myths.” As she noted in an interview, “our writers can affect this whole struggle simply, by forging our myths and giving our voice to our history, to our legends, to our cultural being.”⁴⁴ In this process, myth and history became interchangeable. “In one way, fiction may be viewed as history,” she writes, “just as recorded history may be viewed as fiction. They are twin disciplines ... for the perceptions, interpretation, and choices of material of particular writers give form to our past and relate it to our present and our future.”⁴⁵

The influence of Morton on Laurence can be seen most particularly in *The Diviners*. “The action of the novel,” Easingwood notes, “turns entirely on the concept of myth as an answer to the need that is felt, individually and collectively, to go on reinterpreting the past.”⁴⁶ Laurence read *Manitoba: A History* for the first time during the summer in which she began writing *The Diviners*.⁴⁷ “When I first read Morton’s *Manitoba: A History*,” she notes, “it was with a tremendous sense of excitement, combined with an angry sense of having been deprived, when young, of my own heritage. I have since done a great deal of reading of prairie history, but it was Morton who first gave me the sense of my place’s long and dramatic past.”⁴⁸ Laurence was moved by Morton’s vision of their shared past because she was already seeking this vision; she needed it for her own search. He provided, Laurence admitted,

a sense of the sweep of history, the overview which I think I share.... I subsequently had many conversations with him about the nature of writing history and fiction. I believe ... as I think he does, too ... that the two disciplines are very much related. The historian, like the novelist, must be selective and must necessarily write his own interpretation of the historical era with which he is dealing.⁴⁹

In the novel, Laurence seeks to connect the Manawaka world with Manitoba’s history and “goes considerably beyond her earlier fiction in the attempt to connect particular local experience with a wider view of Canadian history.”⁵⁰ According to Clara Thomas,

until *The Diviners* it was possible to miss the uniquely Manitoban element in her work, for the town of Manawaka was not as relentlessly regionalized as was, for instance, Sinclair Ross’s Saskatchewan town of Horizon. With the background of the Sutherlanders and the Métis, however, Morag’s youth is unmistakably set in a Manitoba that has been given historical—and in Laurence’s hand mythological—depth. She is very close to the historian, W.L. Morton, in what she has tried to do for her native province.⁵¹

The novel’s title represents divination and the discovery of “inner truths” that relate the past, present, and future: the river that flows both ways. When Christie Logan tells Morag the tales of Piper Gunn, one of Selkirk’s settlers, Laurence is experimenting with the transference of folklore into literature, history into myth. But through Morag, she questions that history and the relationship between the Scots and the Métis. According to Laurence, she shared with Mor-

ton especially those parts of Manitoba's history "which deal with the Métis people."⁵² The two ethnic groups came together in the founding of Manitoba. In order to achieve her inclusive sense of place, Laurence sought through the discovery of these myths to return them to a state of symbiosis, within Morton's vision of duality. "*The ancestors*," she writes, "are everyone's ancestors—mine, in some ways, are not only the Scots but also the Métis; I was born in a land which they had inhabited, shaped and invested with their ghosts."⁵³ This relationship becomes manifest in the image of the hunting knife and the plaid pin, and ultimately in the persona of Pique, Morag's mixed-blood child with Jules. "Those of us who are not Indian or Métis have not earned the right to call Gabriel Dumont ancestor," she writes. "But I do all the same."⁵⁴ "There are more and deeper things between myself and Riel, myself and Dumont," Laurence claims. "We are prairie."⁵⁵

Even though she never admitted it, Laurence went much further in incorporating the Métis into her history of Manitoba than Morton ever could. This was due in part to the decades in which they were writing and in part to their respective ideologies. Morton's depiction of the Métis that so influenced Laurence was based on the works of George Stanley and Marcel Giraud.⁵⁶ The Métis were a primitive people caught up amidst the inexorable march of progress and civilization. Morton did not, however, view Red River as a frontier settlement, nor did he view the Métis as Indians. Red River was "an island of civilization in the wilderness" and the Métis were civilized enough to fight to defend their rights and position in an emerging nation.⁵⁷ But, sad as it was, their way of life was doomed:

Only concentrated settlement would allow the work of civilization to proceed. The practice of agriculture, the ministrations of the church, and the education of the young required that the roving life of the hunt, native to the *Métis* and forced on the immigrant by the harsh circumstances of the first years of the colony, should give way to close settlement by church and school along the rivers and to the steady routine of the ploughman and the herdsman.... For fifty years the Red River Settlement was to live in uneasy balance between civilization and barbarism, the river lot and the buffalo hunt.⁵⁸

The Métis were victims deserving of sympathy. Their "savage" ways, while unfortunate obstacles to advancement, were romanticized. They were

the sons of French and Scottish fathers and Saulteaux, Cree, and Assiniboin mothers, they had adopted the hunting life, the wild freedom, and the ancient feud with the Sioux of the tribes of the park belt and

its bordering plains.... Their devotion to the buffalo hunt and their role as shield of the settlement served to perpetuate in the Métis their strong sense of identity, their belief that they were a "new nation."⁵⁹

For Morton, they were regional actors. They became "the archetypal westerners—misunderstood by an uncaring and ill-informed government in distant Ottawa and provoked into protest by policies that adversely affected their vital interests and about which they had not been consulted."⁶⁰ They also represented the dual nature of Canadian society, the balancing act between French-speaking Catholics and English-speaking Protestants. The *Manitoba Act* was the successful embodiment of this dual character; the struggle for Manitoba was a microcosm of the struggle for Canada.

Laurence's sympathetic depiction of the Métis goes further. They are a dispossessed and forgotten people. Their story is more than that of a small failed rebellion or resistance to Ontario and Canada; it is "the myth of a dying nation defending itself against impossible odds."⁶¹ She told George Woodcock that "it's a period of history which has haunted me for a long time, and some of that haunting I tried to put into *The Diviners*." When she was writing the novel, posters of Riel and Dumont looked down upon her from her office walls.⁶² Despite the fact that there were very few Métis in Laurence's Neepawa, their "mythic" insertion into Manawaka demonstrates her desire to deal with a more inclusive history of her province, as well as with issues of social injustice and post-colonialism.

The result is a romantic presentation of the Métis. Hagar's views of the "French half-breeds" reflect those of the pioneering generation. They "lived in a swarm in a shack somewhere," and Hagar "wouldn't have trusted" them as far as she could "spit." The Tonnerre family is physically as well as culturally segregated from the town. They live "below" Manawaka, "where the Wachakawa River ran brown and noisy over the pebbles, the scrub oak and grey-green willow and chokecherry bushes grew in a dense thicket." Their name means "thunder," a portent of their mixed-blood existence.⁶³ The family represents the place (or lack thereof) of the Métis in Canada. "They did not belong among the Cree of the Galloping Mountain reservation, further north, and they did not belong among the Scots-Irish and Ukrainians of Manawaka, either. They were, as my Grandmother MacLeod would have put it, neither flesh, fowl, nor good salt herring."⁶⁴ This identity crisis becomes manifest in the daughter of Jules and Morag. "I don't want to be split," Pique laments. "I want to be together. But I'm not. I don't know where I belong."⁶⁵ The Métis also represent what Angelika Maeser-Lemieux has termed the "shadow archetype," a metaphor for the "alienated and repressed parts of the individual and collective psyche in patriarchal culture." Jules, for example, becomes a consort figure for the feminine archetype, the black

Morag. The shadow side of the archetype is dark, mysterious, savage, and lustful. The Métis are that “lost factor” of the psyche that must be regained. As the “journey” continues throughout the Manawaka cycle, the place of the Métis therefore becomes increasingly important.⁶⁶

The loon is Laurence’s central metaphor for the Métis, and it appears in all the Manawaka works: “No one can ever describe that ululating sound, the crying of the loons, and no one who has heard it can ever forget it. Plaintive, and yet with a quality of chilling mockery, those voices belonged to a world separated by eons from our neat world of summer cottages and the lighted lamps of home.” In *A Bird in the House*, Vanessa attempts to befriend Piquette, a Métis girl at Galloping Mountain. ““You know something, Piquette?”” Vanessa says, ““There’s loons here, on this lake.... At night, you can hear them.... My dad says we should listen and try to remember how they sound, because in a few years when more cottages are built at Diamond Lake and more people come in, the loons will go away.”” When Vanessa returns to the lake as an adult, the loons have disappeared: “I did not know what happened to the birds. Perhaps they had gone away to some far place of belonging. Perhaps they had been unable to find such a place, and had simply died out, having ceased to care any longer whether they lived or not.”⁶⁷ In *The Fire-Dwellers*, Stacey comments on the disappearance of the loons: “She never discovered where they went, but she thought then, that eighteenth summer, of where they might be, somewhere so far north that people would never penetrate to drive them off again.”⁶⁸

The Métis are depicted in a state of stoic suffering that has been ongoing since Jules Tonnerre “came back from Batoche with a bullet in his thigh, the year that Riel was hung and the voices of the Métis entered their long silence.”⁶⁹ According to Easingwood, Laurence’s portrayal of the Métis is romantic; “however, to speak of an element of ‘romance’ in her fiction is not to deny her true concern with the actual history of the Métis.”⁷⁰

While emphasizing the history of the Métis and Scots, other ethnic groups such as the Ukrainians and Chinese receive some attention from Laurence, thereby weaving Morton’s fabric of cultural diversity. They do not receive the same romantic treatment as the Scots and Métis, but they are described as suffering under hegemony. In *A Jest of God*, Nick cannot come to terms with his past and serves to represent the plight of his generation of Ukrainian Canadians on the Prairies. He represents

the divided nature of the Ukrainian community. The split between the Ukrainian nationalist father and the politically leftist uncle.... In essence the inability of Nick as type to come to terms with his past is the inability of the Ukrainian community to come to terms with its

own history. And by virtue of this inability, the only path open for the ethnic community is a steady assimilation and the loss of its cultural heritage.⁷¹

Lee Toy, the “Chinaman,” is portrayed as the sojourner, fitting a stereotypical role in the Canadian West. The Chinese café, like the laundromat, became the abode of what was usually the lone Chinese family in the Prairie small town:

Behind the counter Lee Toy stands, his centuries-old face not showing at all what he may think of these kids. He has been here ever since I was a child, and he seemed old then. Now he is dried and brittle and brown like the shell of a lichee nut, and he has two younger men in partnership, nephews, perhaps. They could even be sons, and I wouldn't know. He has spent most of his life here, but in a kind of secrecy, living alone in the rooms above the café. My father told me once that Lee Toy's wife was still in China, still alive and living on the money he sent, but unable to come here, first because of our laws and then because of theirs. Maybe she is there yet, the woman he has not seen for more than forty years.⁷²

While Laurence expressed the emerging spirit of multiculturalism in the 1970s, like Morton she was not a complete convert. Even though she criticized the forces of assimilation, there is still a sense that Laurence believed they would ultimately prevail and even prove beneficial. History and geography, time and place, were ultimately more potent for Laurence than ethnicity: “Whatever ethnic and cultural background our prairie writers come from, they are very much prairie writers.”⁷³

Morton and Laurence shared a similar small-town background and view of the relationship between their disciplines, and their vision of the Prairie West was characterized by a shared “Ontario-Manitoba-ness,” but there were important differences. Morton was a conservative anglophile and staunch Anglican. He mourned the spiritual decline of his province: “The decline of the Church of England in rural Manitoba and the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches, consummated in 1925, were among other things, indications of the weakening of the religious spirit as the pioneering years gave way to the years of material accomplishment.” The Protestant laity were “blinded by the false doctrine of the ‘social gospel.’”⁷⁴ Morton's lament for all things British placed him in the same ideological tradition as George Grant and Donald Creighton. “Though Morton was a third-generation Manitoban,” Berger writes, “he has recalled that in his home all points of reference and all

standards were English, tempered only by a local variant of an intense imperial patriotism.”⁷⁵ Morton lamented Canada’s path to becoming a North American nation. With the revival of conservatism in 1957, this sentiment became evident in his later works, *The Canadian Identity* (1961), *The Kingdom of Canada* (1963), and *The Critical Years: The Union of British North America, 1857–1873* (1964). In *Manitoba: A History*, even though he is critical of Ontario’s role in dominating the West, Morton emphasizes what he calls “the solid rural conservatism” of the province, fused by the “great Ontario immigration of the 1870’s and 1880’s” and creating “a land of steady ways” where the “simple, sturdy virtues of hard work, thrift, and neighbourliness have been cherished and transmitted.”⁷⁶

Laurence was influenced by the social gospel tradition on the Prairies. “I want to proclaim and affirm my personal belief in the social gospel,” she indicates on several occasions.⁷⁷ She was a social democrat of Presbyterian upbringing who claimed affiliation to the “Winnipeg Old Left.” She claimed “the kind of social conscience closely associated, in the prairies, with the Methodist and Presbyterian churches and, ultimately, with the United Church of Canada, in which I myself was brought up. From such a tradition had come many of the early reformers in the prairies, founders of the Social Democratic Party, the CCF, people such as J.S. Woodsworth, Stanley Knowles, Tommy Douglas, and many others.”⁷⁸ Most of her characters share a struggle between the stultifying and punishing, and the liberating and redeeming, a “pilgrimage from bondage to grace, often expressed in a transition from Old Testament to New Testament imagery.”⁷⁹ Laurence’s lament for all things Scottish pervades her writing and shaped her sense of history, from the role of the Selkirk Settlers of Manitoba to her own search for home that took her back to Scotland and her ancestors. But even these ideological differences between the two writers served to create a certain balance, a certain whole. Together they reflected the spectrum of Manitoba and Prairie politics, left and right, social democratic and conservative.

Another major difference between the two writers is their approach to gender. Even though Morton’s Manitoba was overwhelmingly male—a province of Settlers, Métis, Politicians, and Capitalists, intent on building a nation and home—Laurence saw it as her place as well. Women were present, lurking in the background, but they did not take centre stage. They were *assumed*. Laurence knew these assumptions well. While she resisted them, they were part of her world:

My sense of social awareness, my feelings of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, anti-authoritarianism, had begun, probably, in embryo form in my own childhood; they had been nurtured during my college years and immediately afterwards, in the North Winnipeg of the

Old Left; they had developed considerably through my African experience.... But these developing feelings also related very importantly to my growing awareness of the dilemma and powerlessness of women, the tendency of women to accept male definition of ourselves, to be self-depreciating and uncertain, and to rage inwardly.⁸⁰

Laurence did not criticize Morton for ignoring and excluding women. There was no reason to expect any different from the aging historian. Whereas the conservative Morton never focused on gender, Laurence was influenced by the new trends in social history, including the emergence of women's history. In many ways, Laurence saw herself as a natural balance to Morton. She sought through her own writing to bring a distinctly female perspective and voice to her history and her place.

In writing their place, Morton and Laurence inevitably had to deal with the relationship between region and nation. This relationship in Canada is usually assumed to be hierarchical: the local, the provincial, and the regional, while remaining significant expressions of identity, ultimately give way to the national. As Clara Thomas notes, nation "transcends" region and province.⁸¹ While historians have fallen prey to the wiles of nationalism to a larger extent than those in literature, both disciplines feel a responsibility to express a sense of "Canadianism."

But Morton and Laurence shared a sense of regional alienation. For Morton, the agrarian revolt was a legitimate protest against the injustices of Confederation, the National Policy, and the two-party system. The economic and political grievances of the West were real. These injustices were repeated throughout Prairie history and then incorporated into the dominant schools of Canadian historiography. "Laurence's whole approach to narrative fiction," Easingwood notes, "may appear the inevitable extension of her strong sense of regional identity." She had experienced "the insidious dominance of a Central Canadian mentality which, from the nineteenth century well into the present one, saw the West as a means of advancing the interests of the older metropolitan centres."⁸²

The 1960s and 1970s, however, were an age of nationalism. Canadian writers felt a common bond as they struggled for recognition, both internationally and nationally. They sought "to convey in literature, art, and history the distinctive features of Canadian life so that a people who had previously perceived their country only through borrowed concepts could finally recognize it through the rich allusiveness of their own art."⁸³ While seeking to identify and express a distinctly Prairie identity, Morton and Laurence sought to incorporate it into a larger Canadian cultural nationalism. "It is important to know," Laurence notes, "that we all come from different sources, originally, but that in

this diversity lies our true strength as a people.”⁸⁴ Morton ultimately sought to “reconcile the regional identity with the national community.” While he wished to portray Manitoba as a *unique* historical combination of cultural pluralism and bi-nationality, “in a mysterious, even enigmatic way, the fundamental determinants of Manitoba’s history, while operating in a specific locale, were also those that had worked upon all of Canada.”⁸⁵ The history and the image of the West that he created “was one which saw the region as attempting to be like, not different from the rest of Canada. He argued in fact that the West had been germane to the Canadian experience and that its history could be seen as a miniature replica of the nation itself.”⁸⁶

In the end, however, the struggle between region and nation did not leave Morton and Laurence in the same “place.” Novelists and poets express the private, the imagined, and the internal; historians are expected to focus on the public, the real, and the external. Morton commenced his career as a “Prairie” historian but he ended up a “Canadian” historian, as his later works testify. Even while trying to be sensitive to region, Berger demonstrates the national biases of Canadian historiography when he writes that Morton’s “imperial orientation” and the strength of his nationalism prevented his sense of regional alienation and separateness “from degenerating into a mere parochialism.” Morton managed to avoid becoming “a regional scholar with narrow segregated preoccupations.” He began as a “mere” historian of region but he elevated his “narrow” approach and graduated to nation.⁸⁷

Morton’s odyssey was linear while Laurence’s was circular. She began writing about Africa but ended up writing about small-town Manitoba. She found it inevitable that she wrote about her locale “because that settlement and that land were my first and for many years my only real knowledge of this planet, in some profound way they remain my world, my way of viewing. My eyes were formed there.”⁸⁸ Laurence did not perceive the same need to express national Canadian themes. “Canadian writing now is still very local,” she asserts, “and local writing does not require that you depict or construct some homogenous national identity. I am not aiming at a specifically Canadian identity in the Manawaka novels.” She viewed *The Diviners* as dealing with broad Canadian historical themes, but ultimately, it was based on the history of Manitoba.⁸⁹ “I have no desire,” she once told Adele Wiseman, “to write a ‘Canadian’ novel in that horrible nationalistic, stilted sense.”⁹⁰

In 1981, following the death of Morton, Laurence published a personal tribute to the historian. Since moving to Peterborough, the two writers had become friends and had enjoyed many discussions regarding their Manitoba small-town background. “Morton’s history gave me,” Laurence claimed, “... a great many facts that I needed,” but she focused on their shared “overview.”

“What I share, most of all, with Morton is the sense of my *place*, the prairies, and of my *people* (meaning all prairie peoples), within the context of their many and varied histories.” The two writers also discussed the relationship between history and fiction:

We agreed that the two disciplines were closely related. The fiction writer seeks to create a world that has been experienced both as an external “real” world and as an internal one. The historian selects the facts and landscapes of the real world and brings to them his own perceptions and interpretations. Both try to arrive at some kind of truth which can never be complete but which will possess its own integrity.⁹¹

According to Easingwood, “Laurence considered herself more deeply engaged with the history of her own province than with any theory of fiction.”⁹²

W.L. Morton and Margaret Laurence, the best-known Prairie historian and novelist, presented a common vision of Manitoba and to an extent the Prairie West. Morton’s brand of “mythic regionalism” inspired and spoke to Laurence and she responded to his call for an articulation of the developing relationship between the sensitive observer and the landscape of Manitoba, of time and place, of history and myth. Both held an almost urgent sense of the need of their society to take possession of its past by creating its own literature and writing its own history, of the “great need to possess our own land, to know our own heritage”;⁹³ both “recognized and valued what the other was trying to do,” and both felt a heavy sense of obligation to the past, like a debt still to be paid.⁹⁴ *

Notes

- 1 Francis argues that there are four dominant approaches to Prairie history: formal, functional, mythic, and postmodern. He argues that while Morton represented all four, it was his vision of a mythic Prairie and Manitoba that influenced Laurence. R. Douglas Francis, “Regionalism, W.L. Morton and the Writing of Western Canadian History, 1870–1885,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 569–88.
- 2 Clara Thomas, “The Chariot of Ossian: Myth and Manitoba in *The Diviners*,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 13, no. 3 (Autumn 1978): 63.
- 3 Peter Easingwood, “Margaret Laurence: Prairie Fiction and Prairie History,” in *Re-visions of Canadian Literature*, ed. Shirley Chew (Leeds: Institute of Bibliography and Textual Criticism, 1984), 15.
- 4 Laurence disliked big cities and she particularly feared Toronto, which she called the “Vile Metropolis.” “I hate Toronto,” she told Al Purdy. John Lennox, ed., *Margaret Laurence–Al Purdy Correspondence: A Friendship in Letters* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 4, 39, 49, 91, 360. Laurence told Graeme Gibson

- that she found it difficult in her fiction “to create the feeling of living in a city, because I hate cities.” As quoted in Fiona Sparrow, *Into Africa with Margaret Laurence* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1992), 23.
- 5 Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), 290.
 - 6 “That House in Manawaka is the one which, more than any other, I carry with me,” Vanessa observes in the opening line to *A Bird in the House*. As James King points out, “8 Regent Street and John Simpson’s house bear an incredibly strong resemblance to each other.... In many ways, the move to Lakefield was a return home.” James King, *The Life of Margaret Laurence* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 320–21.
 - 7 Robert Kroetsch, “A Conversation with Margaret Laurence,” in *A Place to Stand On*, ed. George Woodcock (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983), 46–55.
 - 8 Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 238.
 - 9 The third generation consists of such Prairie historians as Gerald Friesen, John Thompson, Doug Francis, Howard Palmer, Paul Voisey, Bill Waiser, Sarah Carter, Alvin Finkel, Roy Loewen, Bill Brennan, Greg Marchildon, and Doug Owram.
 - 10 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 242; W.L. Morton, “Clio in Canada: The Interpretation of Canadian History,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 15 (April 1946): 242.
 - 11 R. Douglas Francis, “Changing Images of the West,” in *The Prairie West: Historical Readings*, eds. R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 641.
 - 12 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 244–46.
 - 13 W.L. Morton, “Preface to the Second Edition,” *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967).
 - 14 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 245–50.
 - 15 Morton, *Manitoba*, ix.
 - 16 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 238.
 - 17 W.L. Morton, “A Century of Plain and Parkland,” *Alberta Historical Review* 17 (Spring 1969): 1–10. Reprinted in Francis and Palmer, *Prairie West*, 28–37.
 - 18 Morton, *Manitoba*, 474–76.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, 476–78.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, 492–94.
 - 21 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 56.
 - 22 W.L. Morton “Seeing an Unliterary Landscape,” *Mosaic* 3 (Spring 1970): 1–10
 - 23 *Ibid.*, 9.
 - 24 Morton, *Manitoba*, vii.

- 25 R. Douglas Francis, *Images of the West: Changing Perceptions of the Prairies, 1690–1960* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989), 194.
- 26 Morton, *Manitoba*; Easingwood, “Margaret Laurence,” 15.
- 27 Morton, *Manitoba*, 473.
- 28 Margaret Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 3–6.
- 29 Morton, *Manitoba*, 448.
- 30 Clara Thomas, “Pilgrim’s Progress: Margaret Laurence and Hagar Shipley,” in Woodcock, *Place to Stand On*, 168.
- 31 Francis, *Images of the West*, 194.
- 32 As quoted in Lyall Powers, *Alien Heart: The Life and Work of Margaret Laurence* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2003), 272.
- 33 Easingwood, “Margaret Laurence,” 20.
- 34 Margaret Laurence to Al Purdy, 10 January 1969, in Lennox, *Margaret Laurence–Al Purdy Correspondence*, 119–20.
- 35 Easingwood, “Margaret Laurence,” 24.
- 36 Northrop Frye, “Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada,” in *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1971), 219.
- 37 Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger*, 17.
- 38 Eli Mandel, *Another Time* (Erin, ON: Press Porcupine, 1970), 70.
- 39 Francis, *Images of the West*, 194.
- 40 As quoted in Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 252.
- 41 Morton, “Seeing an Unliterary Landscape,” 7–8; Thomas, “Chariot of Ossian,” 63.
- 42 Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger*, 242.
- 43 “A Conversation about Literature: An Interview with Margaret Laurence and Irving Layton,” *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 65–68.
- 44 Bernice Lever. “Literature and Canadian Culture: An Interview with Margaret Laurence,” *Alive* 41 (1975), 27.
- 45 Margaret Laurence, “Ivory Tower or Grassroots? The Novelist as Socio-Political Being,” in *A Political Art: Essays in Honour of George Woodcock*, ed. W.H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978), 15.
- 46 Easingwood, “Margaret Laurence,” 23.
- 47 Thomas, “Chariot of Ossian,” 55–63.
- 48 York University Archives, Margaret Laurence Papers, “Books that Mattered to Me—Talk for Friends of the Bata Library,” delivered at Trent University, February 1981.

- 49 Margaret Laurence, "W.L. Morton: A Personal Tribute," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15, no. 4 (1981): 134.
- 50 Easingwood, "Margaret Laurence," 23.
- 51 Thomas, "Chariot of Ossian," 62.
- 52 Laurence, "W.L. Morton," 134.
- 53 Margaret Laurence to Al Purdy, 12 June 1974, in Lennox, *Margaret Laurence–Al Purdy Correspondence*, xxxiii.
- 54 Laurence's review of George Woodcock's *Gabriel Dumont: The Métis Chief and His Lost World* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1975) first appeared as "Man of Honour" in *Canadian Forum* (December 1975–January 1976); revision published in Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger*, 204–12.
- 55 Margaret Laurence, "Listen, Just Listen," in *Divided We Stand*, ed. Gary Geddes (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1977), 25.
- 56 G.F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (London: Longmans, Green, 1936); Marcel Giraud, *Le métis canadien: son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest* (Paris: Institut d'ethnologie, 1945).
- 57 W.L. Morton, "The Battle at the Grand Coteau, July 13–14, 1851," Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, *Transactions*, ser. 3, no. 16 (1961): 49.
- 58 Morton, *Manitoba*, 61–62.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 62–63.
- 60 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 246–47.
- 61 In her eyes, the history of imperialism included her own people. Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots," 23. Her response while in Africa to the plight of the Somalis was echoed in her portrayal of "the Highland clans and the prairie Métis." Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger*, 37.
- 62 Queen's University Archives, George Woodcock Papers, Margaret Laurence to George Woodcock, 12 August 1975.
- 63 Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1964), 127.
- 64 Margaret Laurence, *A Bird in the House* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), 114.
- 65 Laurence, *Diviners*, 287.
- 66 Angelika Maeser-Lemieux, "The Métis in the Fiction of Margaret Laurence: From Outcast to Consort," in *The Native in Literature*, eds. Thomas King, Cheryl Calver, and Helen Hoy (Toronto: ECW Press, 1987), 116. See also Helen M. Buss, "Margaret Laurence's Dark Lovers: Sexual Metaphor, and the Movement toward Individualization, Hierogamy and Mythic Narrative in Four Manawaka Books," *Atlantis* 11, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 97–107.
- 67 Laurence, *Bird in the House*, 126–27.
- 68 Laurence, *The Fire-Dwellers* (McClelland & Stewart, 1969), 172–73.

- 69 Laurence, *Bird in the House*, 114.
- 70 Peter Easingwood, "The Realism of Laurence's Semi-Autobiographical Fiction," in *Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Margaret Laurence*, ed. Colin Nicholson (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1990), 129.
- 71 Kenneth James Hughes, "Politics and *A Jest of God*," *Revue d'études canadiennes* 13, no. 3, (Fall 1978): 49–50.
- 72 Margaret Laurence, *A Jest of God* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), 54–55.
- 73 Michel Fabre, "From *The Stone Angel* to *The Diviners*: An Interview with Margaret Laurence," in Woodcock, *A Place to Stand On*, 196.
- 74 Morton, *Manitoba*, 466.
- 75 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 238.
- 76 Morton, *Manitoba*, viii.
- 77 Laurence, "A Statement of Faith" (aka "Road from the Isles"), 1966, 56.
- 78 Laurence, *Dance on the Earth* (McClelland & Stewart, 1989), 91.
- 79 Barbara Pell, "Laurence's African and Canadian Heroines: From Bondage to Grace," *Margaret Laurence Review* 4-5 (1994–95): 1.
- 80 Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots," 15–25.
- 81 Thomas, "Chariot of Ossian," 63.
- 82 Patricia Morley, "Canada, Africa, Canada: Laurence's Unbroken Journey," *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 27 (1980): 82.
- 83 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 246.
- 84 As quoted in Thomas, "Chariot of Ossian," 55.
- 85 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 245, 249.
- 86 Alison and Robert Wardhaugh, eds., *History, Literature, and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2005), 11; Francis, "Changing Images of the West," 718.
- 87 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 239, 250.
- 88 Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger*, 213.
- 89 Fabre, "From *The Stone Angel* to *The Diviners*," 196.
- 90 Margaret Laurence to Adele Wiseman, 29 March 1961, as quoted in Powers, *Alien Heart*, 212.
- 91 Laurence, "W.L. Morton," 134.
- 92 Easingwood, "Realism of Laurence's Semi-Autobiographical Fiction," 119, 129.
- 93 As quoted in Thomas, "Chariot of Ossian," 55.
- 94 Easingwood, "Margaret Laurence," 25–26.

The Banff Photographic Exchange: Albums, Youth, Skiing, and Memory Making in the 1920s¹

LAUREN WHEELER

■ **Computers and the Internet** have made exchanging photographs with peers as easy as clicking a mouse. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Flickr allow people to post photographs and comment on their friends' images in a semi-private sphere. This creates a layering of personal narratives onto photographs and a sharing of images that is not confined by the materiality of photographic prints and bound albums, and highlights the ways photographs act as sites of both individual and collective memory making.

The exchange of photographs and creation of multiple narratives through them is not specific to the digital albums posted on sites such as Facebook. For as long as youth, in particular, have had access to cameras, they have been taking photographs, sharing the prints with friends, and creating albums to document memorable experiences. Occasionally the albums from an identifiable peer group share photographs as well as an emphasis on one activity. The archived albums made by Fulton Dunsmore (c.1905–43), Cyril Paris (1904–81), Peter Whyte (1905–66), and Fern Brewster (1902–67) illustrate the layering of individual and collective memory facilitated by album making and the democ-

ratization of the technology of photography in the early twentieth century. Their albums show a mixture of summer and winter activities, but the greatest crossover of images and themes is found in the photographs of skiing.

The youth of Banff, Alberta², were first exposed to skiing at the first Banff Winter Carnival in 1917.³ Adolescent boys watched ski jumpers from Revelstoke, British Columbia, fly through the air and wanted to imitate them.⁴ When the carnival ended, friends Peter Whyte and Cyril Paris ransacked the storage room of Peter's father's store. Using long planks from a shipment of toboggans, circular cheese boxes, and scrap bits of leather, the boys created crude versions of the skis they had seen. Poles were made from brooms pilfered from their mothers.⁵ In 1918 Dave White and Co.,⁶ the same store Peter and Cyril had raided the previous year, began selling skis imported from Europe. Equipped with proper skis, the boys of Banff built temporary ski jumps on the natural slopes of Grizzly Street and Caribou Street. Under the watch of their fathers and with the guidance of Camrose, Alberta, ski jumper August "Gus" Johnson, the boys learned to fly through the air like the ski jumpers who had inspired them. By the winter of 1921–22, the Banff Ski Club, founded in 1918, boasted twenty-nine members, all but five of who were young men, and skiing was established as the choice form of winter recreation for the younger residents of Banff.

Gradually, skiing moved from the ski jump to mountain slopes outside Banff. Participants brought pocket cameras, such as the accessible and inexpensive Kodak Brownie,⁷ to capture the thrills of skiing, and the resulting photographs were regularly shared among friends, with many of these images finding their way into albums. These albums are both individual expressions of personal identity and part of a collective remembrance of life among youth in 1920s Banff. The images in albums by Peter Whyte are also found in those of his friends Cyril Paris, Fulton Dunsmore, and Fern Brewster. These are just the albums that are deposited in the local archive. The largest collections of 1920s albums are from Dunsmore and Whyte; Paris' albums date from the 1930s, after he married. All the men were active members of the Banff Ski Club beginning in 1918, were involved in developing skiing infrastructure at Mount Norquay and Lake Louise/Skoki Valley in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and were avid amateur photographers. The shared photographs of skiing excursions in their albums illustrate how comparing individual albums can allow for an understanding of collective memory within a known peer group.

The earliest photographs of skiing in the albums examined here are picture postcards of professional ski-jumpers and posed snapshots of boys with long skis and awards near the family home. Later photographs depict extended backcountry trips with friends, teaching others to ski, and building runs and

huts on the slopes around the Banff townsite. This shift reflects the movement of skiing from the public ski jump to the more secluded backcountry, and back to the public through the creation of ski infrastructure. Consequently, the albums act as sites of memory that speak to each other and present a subject positioning and an imagining of self that was informed by youth, masculinity, and the experience of winter recreation in the mountains. Through these albums, it is possible to look past the album as a site of individual memory expression and use it to examine how the construction and documentation of individual memories are part of a broader collective remembrance of growing up and being active in the mountain environment.

For the youth of Banff, a camera was part of the necessary equipment for summer and winter recreation. Trains and, later, automobiles allowed Banff youth to take day trips to hike along the Great Divide and ski or snowshoe on frozen Lake Louise. The photographic archive of the early twentieth century shows youth taking cameras with them on these trips to create rough snapshots of their friends enjoying leisure activities. This is especially true of the skiing excursions undertaken by the peer group that included Fulton Dunsmore, Cyril Paris, and Peter Whyte. The camera was carried to capture images of ski-jumping competitions, breaking trails, taking spills, and relaxing on the trail between runs. These young men also grew up with strong male photographer role models in the professional and serious amateur photographers living and working in Banff. Mountain photographers, such as Byron Harmon, began engaging in the commercial production and technology of photography in the early 1890s. Boys such as Peter Whyte grew up watching professionals produce images of remote regions of Banff National Park for sale to tourists. Occasionally, Banff youth would accompany professional photographers on photographic excursions as Whyte, Paris, and others did in 1919 when Harmon led a snowshoe tramp of Sulphur Mountain to make a motion picture of winter in the Rockies.⁸ Photographs by professionals accented the public space in Banff, as they were displayed in the windows of photography studios on Banff Avenue, appeared in the pages of the local newspaper, and were available as postcards in stores such as Dave White and Co. Additionally, two of the active amateur photographers were Ted Dunsmore and George Paris, the fathers of Fulton and Cyril, respectively. Thus the men were acculturated to view photography, especially of areas away from the town, as a masculine activity. They had the opportunity to learn from the serious amateur and professional photographers around them as seen in the increased attention to composition of photographs in later albums by Dunsmore, Paris, and Whyte.⁹

The albums that will be examined here were compiled between 1915 and 1930, which makes the creators between the ages of ten and twenty-five, and

unmarried, when the photographs were taken and the albums compiled. This focus captures the men in a state of transition from adolescent to adult, and the albums became expressions of life stories connected to adolescents' assertion of independence from the domestic family unit.¹⁰ Yet, like family albums, the albums express a narrative similar to that noted by Deborah Chambers:

By creating photographic images of events, people and places, the visually selective nature of domestic photography traditionally serves the purpose of constructing the family as myth by capturing a preferred vision of family life. The structures set the parameters within which agents create their visual family 'life stories.'¹¹

The young men's albums allowed them to construct a myth about outdoor exploits throughout the national park based on recreation activities pursued away from the Banff townsite with friends. They constructed life stories through the albums to visually narrate a specific period in their lives—the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The preservation of albums from members of the same social group allows individual "life stories" to be compared and a collective story of identity formation and coming of age in Banff during the 1920s to emerge. These stories are also marked by the shared white, middle-class, Protestant, English-speaking background of the adolescents making the albums.

Photographs are objects. Though often presented as two-dimensional visual representations of three-dimensional encounters, photographs can be picked up and held, turned over and written on, or pasted into an album. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart assert that "photographs are both images *and* physical objects that exist in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience."¹² The noting of names, dates, and places on the reverse of prints intensifies the importance of the photograph as an object, not simply a visual representation. The significance of what a photograph represents is enhanced by how it is treated as an object. The selection of one print over another for inclusion in a photographic album is a great signifier of the hierarchy of value placed on the photographs. The album allows a subjective visual narrative to be created from photographs from various events and experiences. It also provides space for a textual description of individual images and sets of images. Like the writing on the back of a photographic print, an album caption draws attention to specific features of the photograph and hints at its deeper meaning to an individual.

The photographic album takes the meaning of the photograph to a new level. Alison Nordstrom asserts that albums "are deeply individual, yet they survive as a material example of the broader context in which certain images were once used and understood, and they continue to shape our understand-

ing of these images today.”¹³ They function as a means of imposing order and hierarchical structure upon images, which makes them part of a linear narrative. Though Nordstrom refers to travel scrapbooks, the same is true of the photographic albums made by young men from Banff. The placement of the photographs in an album, instead of as loose prints, frames how they are read. The album forces the viewer to read images in relation to those around them. Approaching the album as a unit instead of as a collection of independent photographs facilitates identifying the unifying theme of the album. The albums of the Banff youth present variations on interpreting outdoor leisure and recreation pursuits. This allows for a reading of the albums as part of a collective memory of life in Banff in the 1920s. The similar composition and subject matter of the men’s albums allow for an understanding of the albums as a group that centres on a collective memory of recreation in the mountains broadly and winter recreation specifically.

Looking at album photographs as a series connects the single images to a larger photographic narrative. The appearance of the same people through a series of prints functions as a cue to the social connection between the people photographed and the person holding the camera. Even if the exact nature of the relationship between the photographer and subject is unknown, the constant appearance of the same people is enough to signify their importance. The same is true of places and activities that reoccur in an individual’s photographic collection. As Susan Sontag observed, “to photograph is to confer importance.... [T]here is no way to suppress the tendency inherent in all photographs to accord value to their subjects.”¹⁴ The same people, places, and activities in a photographic album elevate their importance because the album compilers consciously selected the photographs in the album to enact a specific photographic narrative.

The albums studied here function as collections, portable mementoes of experiences specific to a single time and place. There is an impermanence to skiing that makes photography perfectly suited to commemorating it. Snow comes and goes, trails change from year to year, but the single experience can be captured on film despite the constantly changing conditions of the environment. Commemoration is achieved with the camera, and the visual memories are transformed into mementoes through the creation of an album. This conforms to Sontag’s claim that “after the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance).”¹⁵ Approaching the albums and photographs taken by the young men from Banff in the 1920s in this way recognizes the materiality and immortality of the album and the photograph. It also forces us to view the album as a whole before taking it apart to examine specific photographs.



FIGURE 1. Ski Trip to Eau Claire Camp, Peter Whyte Album (3), V683/I.B.5.c-3 (PD), Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, WMCR, 16.

Sharing photographs is part of sharing experiences and the memories attached to those experiences. When the same photographs appear in albums by different people, it suggests a memory that is collectively important and warrants commemoration by multiple authors. When the layout of the photographs is similar from compiler to compiler, it indicates a common contextualization of the subject and further pushes the narrative structure of the album beyond the personal and into the collective.¹⁶ Shared photographs within albums from different compilers allow the albums to function both as personal mementoes and sites of collective memory making.

In their albums, Fulton Dunsmore, Cyril Paris, and Peter Whyte commemorated a 1920 ski trip to the Eau Claire Camp using four photographs taken by,



FIGURE 2. Ski Trip to Eau Claire Camp, Peter Whyte Album (3), V683/I.B.5.c-3 (PD), Peter and Catharine Whyte Fonds, WMCR, 17.

or at least obtained from, August Johnson (figures 1 and 2).¹⁷ The Eau Claire Camp visited by the group was located southwest of the Banff townsite in the Spray Lakes area. It was one of many logging operations in the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains operated by Calgary-based Eau Claire and Bow River Lumber Company in the early twentieth century. The location and photographer are identified by Fulton Dunsmore in captions and initials under each of the images (figures 3 and 4). Neither Whyte nor Paris noted the location or photographer, placing the accuracy of identification on Fulton alone. The four photographs are posed group shots: two in front of a log building at the camp, one in a forest opening that Dunsmore captioned “On the way to Camp Eau

Clair [*sic*],” and one on a suspension bridge near the camp. It is necessary to look at the photographs as individual images before comparing their treatment in the albums assembled by Fulton Dunsmore, Cyril Paris, and Peter Whyte to understand the visual narrative that each album presents.

The photographs from the Eau Claire Camp trip can be generalized as group shots with the skiers centred in the frame. This framing draws the eye directly to the participating group and clearly situates people in the natural environment outside the Banff townsite. The people in the photographs are identified courtesy of a piece of paper slid behind Cyril Paris’s copy of the “On the way to Camp Eau Clair” photograph naming the individuals in the group as Jack White, Ronald Quigley, Tom Dunsmore, Cyril Paris, Edwin Young, Fulton Dunsmore, Peter Whyte, and Owen Bryant.¹⁸ All the participants were residents of Banff, and—except for Quigley, Tom Dunsmore, and Bryant—were members of the Banff Ski Club in 1921–22. The participants are dressed for cold weather recreation in warm sweaters, toques or caps, mittens, and short pants with knee-high boots and long thick socks. Skis are visible in all the photographs, either on the people’s feet or leaning against buildings and sticking out of snowdrifts. The people are all smiling as they wait for the photograph to be taken. The two images from the Eau Claire Camp feature a sizable log building, which some participants have climbed on to be seen. These photographs are about the people and the event in the landscape, though it is impossible to completely separate skiing from the space where it was done.

In one image, taken from a distance, the landscape dwarfs the group of skiers. The focal point is the group of skiers standing on a suspension bridge spanning a snow-filled river valley (figure 2). The seven people are dwarfed by the valley below them, with the forest around them and the base of the mountain barely visible in the distance. Unlike the other three photographs, which leave little of the landscape visible around the skiers, this photograph suggests the grandeur of the environment in which they were skiing. It is also the only photograph where the uninhabited space between Banff and the Eau Claire Camp is exhibited in full. This one image poignantly illustrates that skiing happened in the backcountry, yet the photograph is not about the wilderness associated with the unpopulated areas of the mountains. Like the other three photographs, it is about the group of people on the suspension bridge, one of whom is waving at the photographer. When viewed outside an album, these four images suggest that what was important about skiing was that it was done in a group, not that it brought the skiers in closer contact with the wilderness around the Banff townsite. The photographs present early skiing in Banff National Park as a homosocial activity of the young men living in Banff; the gender-specific nature of skiing changed at the end of the 1920s as the boys in these photographs began to get married and introduced their girlfriends and spouses



FIGURE 3. Ski Trip to Eau Claire Camp, Fulton Dunsmore Album (1), VT84 PD-1, Fulton Dunsmore Fonds, WMCR, 87.

to skiing. The albums in which the Eau Claire Camp photographs appear show the place of the trip in a collective memory, and the albums also show the various ways that memory was integrated into a visual narrative.

The earliest incorporation of the Eau Claire Camp photographs is found in a Fulton Dunsmore album that is 153 pages long and stretches chronologically from 1917 to 1925.¹⁹ The first half is heavily captioned, with names, dates, and photographer noted for each image. The captioning becomes spotty in the middle, and only the occasional year is mentioned near the end. There is also a noticeable shift in where recreation occurs; gradually it moves from within the Banff townsite and around the family home to the wider national park. As Dunsmore's photographs show him further from the town, he captions less and less, until only the odd date or location is noted.²⁰ The Eau Claire Camp photographs come in the middle of both these transitions: they are near where Fulton stops captioning and where fewer photographs show recreation within the townsite. The only aspect of the photographs that remains consistent throughout the album is the people and the nature of their activities.

The Eau Claire Camp photograph collection is one example of Fulton including photographs of his friends skiing as a group (figures 3 and 4). The photographs are about people and the activity, and the captions suggest a distinct chronology to the trip. The first image is captioned "On the way to Eau Clair"; the two by the log building, "At Eau Claire Camp"; and the last, "On a Sus-



FIGURE 4. Ski Trip to Eau Claire Camp, Fulton Dunsmore Album (1), V184 PD-1, Fulton Dunsmore Fonds, WMCR, 88. In the album, the top image is captioned "At Eau Clair Camp" and the bottom image is captioned "At Eau Clair".

pension Bridge near Eau Clair." The captions create a flow of time from static images while still confirming Sontag's observation that "photographs may be more memorable than moving images, because they are a neat slice of time."²¹ In this case, the "neat slices of time" allow Fulton to enforce his individual memory of the time and place of the trip through the photographs.

The second instance of the inclusion of the four Eau Claire Camp photographs in an album comes from Peter Whyte. A first-generation Banff resident, Whyte was the third child of general merchant Dave White. He showed an early interest in visually documenting the Rocky Mountains through sketching,

painting, and photography, eventually becoming a landscape artist. The album in which Whyte included the Eau Claire Camp photographs does not follow a chronological organization; instead it is separated into three thematic parts. The album is devoted entirely to photographs of winter, beginning with the Banff Winter Carnival, then moving on to skiing in various locations with various people before ending with photographs taken while hosting people filming movies in Banff in 1923–24.²² While Dunsmore's visual narrative gives a sense of the evolution of skiing in Banff in the linear fashion, Whyte's non-linear approach provides insight into his perception of the activity. The series of photographs depicting Eau Claire Camp are placed in the section of the album of general skiing images and are preceded and followed by photographs taken in the mid-1920s (figures 1 and 2). This suggests that the album was compiled a few years after the Eau Claire Camp trip occurred and that it was still an important enough event to be commemorated. The layout of the photographs in Whyte's album is similar to Dunsmore's; both place the photograph Dunsmore captioned "On the Way to Eau Clair" first and follow it with the group photographs at the camp and the group on the suspension bridge. The narration of the trip is similar, while the distinct organizational styles of Whyte and Dunsmore show how the collective experience was internalized and how presentation is dependent on the individual's interpretation of the experience.

Dunsmore and Whyte approached commemorating the Eau Claire Camp trip in different ways. The life stories that the trip photographs are part of are specific to the person compiling the album and express distinct means of personal memory making. As asserted previously, the theme of Dunsmore's album is the people around him, not the landscape. This is seen in the captioning of photographs in the first half of his earliest album. The captioning identifies specific people rather than places and activities, suggesting that Dunsmore identified with the larger community through his recreation activities. This can be read juxtaposed to Peter Whyte's album, which shows Whyte as independent from his family and, to a lesser extent, his community. While photographs depict his friends and the things they did together, there is a sense that he used this album to express an identity separate from the people who surrounded him in Banff. These two men used albums to express different personal identities despite the inclusion of the same activities and many of the same people in the photographs. This illustrates a different way of understanding the visual narratives of albums, of looking at them as sites of *collective* memory.

The treatment of the Eau Claire Camp photographs in an album by Cyril Paris adds a layer of personal meaning that fleshes out the significance of the trip to the collective memory of the participants beyond what is gleaned from the albums created by Fulton Dunsmore and Peter Whyte. Paris, like Whyte,



FIGURE 5. Four images from the Winter Carnival and Eau Claire Camp Trip, Cyril Paris Album, V483 PD-1, Cyril and Ivy Paris Fonds, WMCR, 41.

was a first-generation Banff resident; his father operated a number of businesses, including the Paris Tea House on Banff Avenue. Cyril Paris was at the forefront of growing the ski industry in Banff National Park, and of the three men discussed here, he is the only one who turned his adolescent love of skiing into a career. Paris' archived albums begin after he married and focus on men and women skiing together in the backcountry. At the end of an album about skiing at Skoki Lodge in 1935, Paris included two of the four photographs taken on the Eau Claire Camp trip (figure 5).²³ The two images are included on the same page as photographs of a ski jumper and three skiers standing in front of a teepee on Banff Avenue during the winter carnival. The Eau Claire Camp photographs are placed in reverse of the arrangement used by Whyte and Dunsmore, the group at the camp being above the "On the Way to Eau Clair" photograph.



For Paris, the photographs were part of looking back on adolescent skiing experiences and indicate an acknowledgement of the importance of early skiing experiences with friends to his identity as an adult. Situating the Eau Claire Camp trip photographs at the end of an album of skiing in the Skoki Valley is telling because of the lead role Paris played in the development of skiing at Skoki and throughout Banff National Park. Like Peter Whyte and Fulton Dunsmore, Cyril Paris was a founding member of the Banff Ski Club in 1918 and participated in clearing the first runs on Mount Norquay. Unlike the other two, Paris turned his love of skiing into a career and was involved in the development of four major ski areas in Banff National Park: Mount Norquay, Lake



FIGURE 6. Skiing at Lake Louise, Peter Whyte Album (3), V683/I.B.5.c-3 (PD), Peter and Catharine Whyte Fonds, WMCR, 29.

Louise, Sunshine Village, and Skoki Lodge. Given the path his later life took, it is significant that Paris commemorated the trip as an adult instead of as an adolescent because it shows a connection between how he imagined himself and his place in these two stages of life, whereas the trip's treatment by Dunsmore



FIGURE 7. Skiing at Lake Louise, Fulton Dunsmore Album (1), V184 PD-1, Fulton Dunsmore Fonds, WMCR, 91.

and Whyte only applies to their adolescent identities. The intertextual reading of these albums illustrates a new level of understanding of the visual narratives of albums, an understanding that comes from examining them as sites of collective memory instead of as personal memory.²⁴

The variation in layout found in the three treatments of the photographs from the Eau Claire Camp trip is typical of other shared photographs in the albums. Each compiler interpreted and remembered the experience differently, and these decisions are reflected in the layout choices. The nature of group photographs, as posed images, allows the photographic ordering to be adjusted to fit the personal narrative of an album. One instance where shared photographs are treated identically is from a day of skiing at Lake Louise, a series that both Whyte and Dunsmore included in albums (figure 6).²⁵ The first photograph is of a man who has fallen into deep snow. All that is visible are his skis, poles, and head; the rest of his body is submerged. He is dwarfed by the snow around him and the forest backdrop, and the absence of other people in the photograph gives the impression that he has little chance of extracting himself from the snow alone. The second photograph shows two other men coming to the rescue of their stuck friend, pulling him up with the help of his poles. The captions provided by Dunsmore identify him as the photographer, the unfortunate skier stuck in the snow as Peter Whyte, and the rescuers as Cyril Paris and Alex Douglas (figure 7).

The photographs have an inherent ordering because of the nature of the event represented, yet Dunsmore and Whyte do not use them to express the



FIGURE 8. Four images from Spray Lakes Warden Cabin, Fulton Dunsmore Album (3), V184 PD-3, Fulton Dunsmore fonds, WMCR, 45.

same chronology of events. Both situate the photographic image of the immersed Whyte on the left side of the page and the image of his rescue on the right. The albums are both bound on the left side of the page in question along the short side of the page, and the pages are the same size though Dunsmore's album has many more pages. Despite the similarities of these two albums, the layouts of the images create two distinct narratives of the event depicted in the photographs. Dunsmore's narrative is clear, even without captions, because he places the bottom of the images parallel to the bottom of the album page to show that first Whyte got stuck and then he was helped back up: the narrative moves from left to right. Whyte's placement creates a confused narrative



because he rotated the images ninety degrees to align the bottom of the images with the inside edge of the page. This requires the viewer to rotate the album to view the photographs and in so doing places the image of Whyte being helped out of the snow before the image where he is stuck. The reversing of events in Whyte's album catches the viewer's attention but because it is an obvious mistake in ordering, it does not undermine the narrative of getting stuck and helped up. Despite the confusion caused in Whyte's album, the photographs' inclusion by both Whyte and Dunsmore indicate that the event was amusing to both and constituted one of many collective memories made while skiing and sharing photographs.

Dunsmore's last album is dominated by a series of photographs from an extended ski trip to Mount Assiniboine undertaken in 1929 by eleven men from

Banff (figure 8). The photographs are arranged chronologically, a trademark of Dunsmore's albums, and show activities typical of a backcountry ski trip: breaking through fresh powder, sawing wood, posing by the warden cabin, and getting stuck in deep snow. With the exception of a simple black-ink notation of "1929" in the top corner of the first photograph from the trip, there are no captions to identify when or where the ski trip took place. The absence of captions is consistent with the movement away from noting names, dates, and places in the later section of the album, which contains the previously mentioned Eau Claire Camp photographs. Yet there is a distinct chronology to the photographs that comes from Dunsmore's consistent layout of four photographs per page. The album concludes with a set of head shots of Dunsmore, Whyte, and Bernie Hansen, all exhibiting significantly more facial hair than in the earlier photographs. This produces a logical documentation of the trip, creating a distinct visual travel journal within an album documenting various events from the late 1920s.

The photographs from this 1929 trip are found as loose prints in Peter Whyte's photographic collection. This trip was undertaken shortly before Whyte departed on a year-long trip around the world, so it is likely he did not have time to put the prints into an album. It is interesting that Whyte's loose prints, not Dunsmore's album, are where specific details about the trip are found. The handwriting on the back of the photographs is not Whyte's; it belongs to his wife, Catharine Robb Whyte, whom he married in 1930.²⁶ This suggests that even though the photographs were not preserved in an album, the memories associated with them were later shared with Catharine in enough detail that she was able to make notes about Whyte, Paris, and Hansen returning ahead of the rest of the group.²⁷ It is possible that the memories associated with these photographs were written down as part of early archiving efforts undertaken by the Whytes beginning in the late 1950s. The circumstances under which the stories behind the photographs were recounted do not take away from how the images function as mnemonic devices. The writing on the back of these prints functions much like Cyril Paris' inclusion of 1920 photographs in a 1935 album because it signifies a continued commemoration of skiing adventures by Peter Whyte. It also points to a sense of nostalgia around early skiing for these men and the continued importance of youthful skiing exploits to this peer group.

The albums of Whyte, Paris, and Dunsmore present skiing as a homosocial activity, initially, that expanded to include women as the built infrastructure of cleared runs and lodges developed. Photographs in the albums dating from the late 1920s depict women joining men on the slopes of Mount Norquay and on the frozen, snow-covered surface of Lake Louise. One of the women who became interested in skiing in the late 1920s was Fern Brewster. The only child

of James (Jim) Brewster, a leading businessman in Banff, her albums share a number of photographs with the albums of Peter Whyte and Oliver Kaldahl, a ski jumper from Minnesota who frequently competed at the Banff Winter Carnival.²⁸ In an album from 1925, Brewster recorded her reign as queen of the Banff Winter Carnival. The photographs depict meeting a variety of Hollywood people filming movies in Banff in the 1920s, trips to Hawaii with her father for the Hawaiian branch of the Brewster Tours and Transportation Company, daily happenings with friends and family in Western Canada, and learning to ski with Whyte and Kaldahl. The album focuses on human subjects through actively naming the people in almost all the photographs and cutting just the faces out of duplicate prints to draw attention to specific personalities in larger group shots.

Most of the photographs in Brewster's album were taken in summer, except for two pages devoted to the 1924 Banff Winter Carnival, when Brewster was carnival queen, and a number of pages showing her being taught to ski by Peter Whyte and Oliver Kaldahl. Though Brewster was five years older than Whyte, they would have known each other since childhood through a long friendship between the Whyte and Brewster families in Banff. Kaldahl, on the other hand, was from Minnesota and spent part of the winter teaching skiing in Quebec City and part of it competing in ski-jumping competitions in western North America. It was through ski jumping that he came to Banff and became friends with Whyte and Brewster.

Brewster, Whyte, and Kaldahl shared skiing experiences and the photographs taken of them. Brewster took ski lessons from Whyte and Kaldahl at Lake Louise in the mid-1920s, and one of her instructors brought along a camera.²⁹ The resulting photographs appear in albums by Brewster and Kaldahl, as well as in Whyte's loose photographic prints. Photographs from a day of skiing, with the cast and crew from the film *The Love Master*,³⁰ are in albums by Whyte and Kaldahl, while albums made by Whyte and Brewster also share images of relaxing at the Cave and Basin with the film crew. These sets of common photographs illustrate a different side of skiing at Banff: the side that includes women. This is reflected in later albums by Dunsmore that show more women skiing beginning around 1924 when the first lodge on Mount Norquay was constructed. It also places the men in a different position—instead of exploring the backcountry, they are teaching others to ski.³¹ Women taking ski lessons suggests the changing demographic of the skiers at the end of the 1920s and the more inclusive nature of the sport once it left the ski jumps.³²

The shared images of Fern Brewster learning to ski identify a difference between what she and her male friends commemorated. Like the male skiers from Banff, Brewster participated in exchanging photographs of skiing experi-

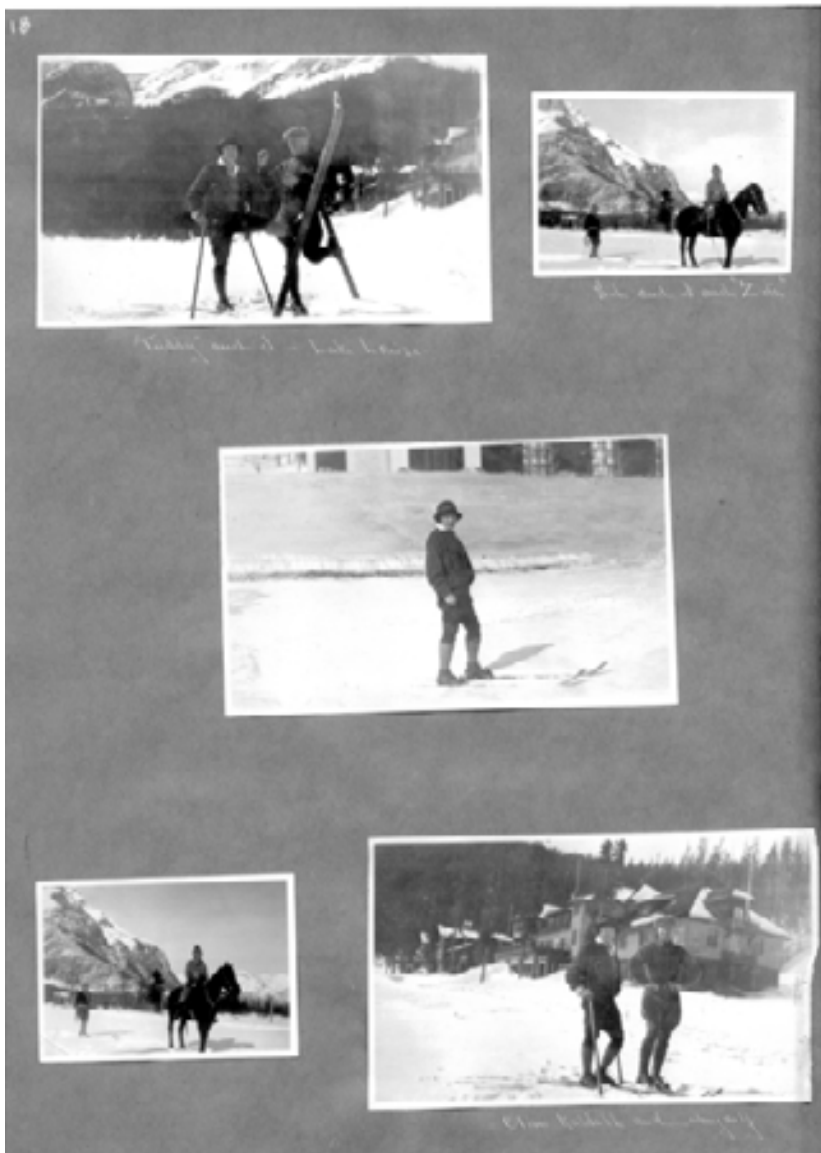


FIGURE 9. Skiing at Lake Louise, Fern Brewster Album, V90/10, Jim Brewster Family fonds, WMCR, 18.

ences. Unlike the male skiers, the photographs in her albums are of skiing near peopled areas and often include the buildings of the Chateau Lake Louise in the background. In other images, it is clear the skiing is happening on frozen Lake Louise. All the photographs are posed to show Brewster on skis but not actively skiing. The page of images from Lake Louise is followed by a page with four

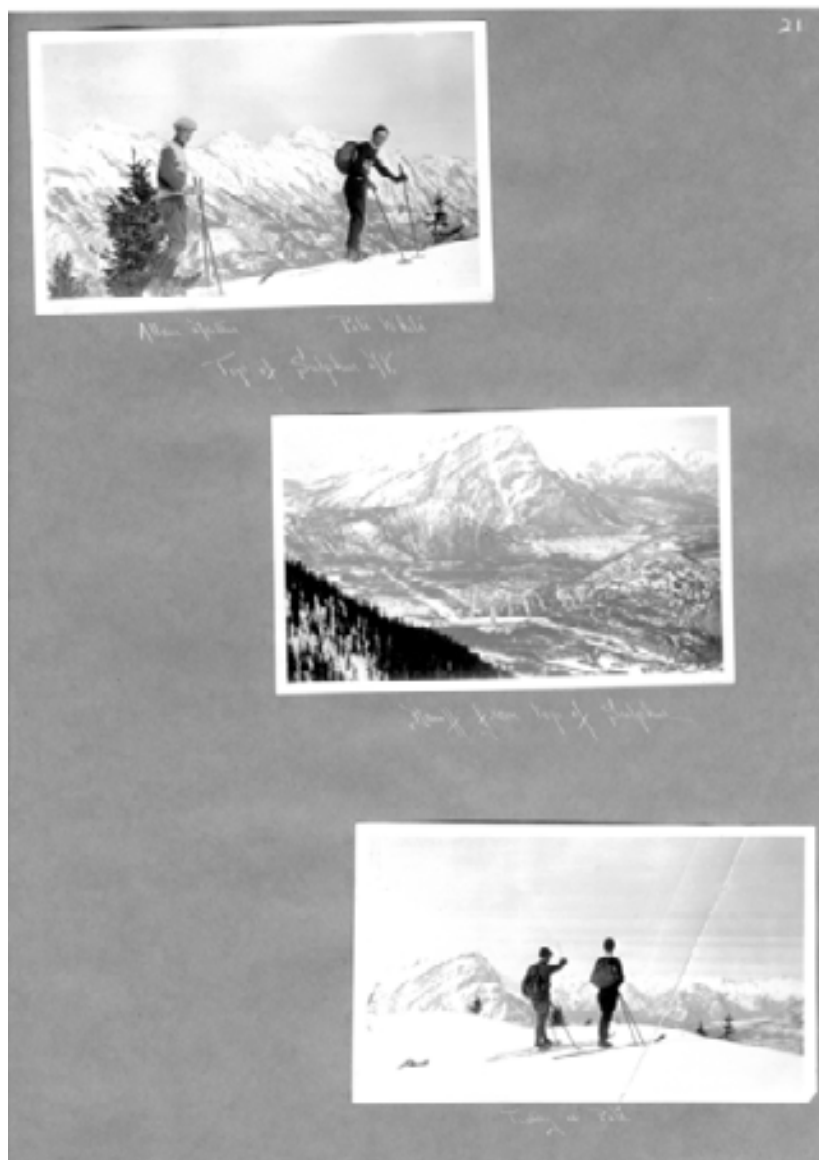


FIGURE 10. Skiing Sulphur Mountain, Fern Brewster Album, V90/10, Jim Brewster Family fonds, WMCR, 21.

photographs of a ski jumper arranged around a posed photograph of “Tuddy” (Kaldahl’s nickname; figure 9). This suggests that Brewster, through her visual narrative, was more interested in commemorating individuals than activities though she did continue to ski and frequently skied out to Skoki Lodge when it was under construction in the early 1930s.

The trend in Brewster's album of focusing on friends is seen in a series of photographs from a ski trip up Sulphur Mountain. Whyte and Kaldahl are present in the photographs, but Brewster is absent and likely did not participate in the excursion (figure 10). It is possible that Brewster used these photographs to experience something in which she was not involved. Sontag has described photographs as "devices for experiencing something, for giving an appearance of participation,"³³ and Brewster's inclusion of images from this event speaks to the photographs standing in for something she was not able to experience personally. A letter written by Whyte suggests the photographs were taken on Kaldahl's camera, as Whyte asks to borrow "the negatives of the five that were taken at the top, to have a couple of enlargements made of the best ones."³⁴ The complete set of images from this trip shows only men, casting doubt on Brewster's participation in the trip. This suggests that while the men's albums are about activities *and* the people with whom they were done, Brewster's are more about the people than the activities.

Where Brewster's album complements those of her male peers is in its depiction of the emerging participation of women in skiing. Skiing photographs in Brewster's album were taken around the same time that women begin to appear on skis in the men's albums. Like the photographs in the men's albums, Brewster's show women skiing in spaces designated specifically for skiing near the peopled areas of the national park. The photographs of Brewster on skis were taken in areas close to built infrastructure: the Chateau Lake Louise or the Banff townsite. These are spaces that are more controlled than the backcountry where the men often went skiing without women. Cutting a run into the forest tamed a small part of the landscape and, along with the lodge, created a controlled space where women could spend the day skiing alongside experienced men. Women are still not in the backcountry in Brewster's album, yet their appearance on the ski hill signifies that the sport had started to become heterosocial instead of homosocial.

The biggest difference between Brewster's album and those of her male peers is the focus on people, which reflects a gendered approach to album making in Banff. The men's albums are about activities that were gendered male specific within their peer group. These men also grew up with strong male photographer role models among the many professional photographers and serious amateurs living in Banff. Mountain photographers, such as Byron Harmon, were engaging in the technology of photography, and men such as Peter Whyte would have grown up watching the professionals produce images of remote regions of Banff National Park for sale to tourists.³⁵ Photographs by professionals dominated the public space in Banff, as they were displayed in the studios of Harmon and others, such as George Noble and Elliott Barnes. Thus, the men were acculturated to view taking photographs, especially of ar-

as away from the town, as a masculine activity and the creation of albums would have been a natural extension of this. There is also a noticeable increase of attention to the composition of photographs in later albums by both Peter Whyte and Fulton Dunsmore, which suggests that they were integrating the technical side of photography into the act of capturing recreation on film.

The albums of Peter Whyte, Cyril Paris, and Fulton Dunsmore are visual markers of what was important to these men when they were adolescents. Each album is a site of individual memory expression of growing up in Banff and indicates a construction of identity through specific forms of winter recreation. The presence of shared images in these albums allows a comparison of album making styles that suggests albums can be sites of collective memory making as well as individual self-reflection and commemoration. The albums of Whyte, Paris, and Dunsmore highlight the group aspect of skiing and indicate its importance in their memories of winter leisure as young men. They visually told this portion of their life stories through skiing photographs and identified as a group and as individuals through this and other recreation activities that took them away from the Banff townsite. Fern Brewster's album illustrates the turn toward skiing as a heterosocial activity in the late 1920s. These albums also raise questions regarding how skiing and other winter recreation activities were visually commemorated by this group of peers after they married and settled into careers and family life. This sampling of albums illustrates the role winter recreation played in the process of individual and collective perceptions of self among the younger generation in Banff. Comparing the individual treatment of the same photographs in albums and the broader narratives constructed allows albums to become sites through which the collective memory of a known peer group can be examined. *

Notes

- 1 The author would like to thank James Opp, John Walsh, Bruce Elliott, Jodi MacAuley, and two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.
- 2 This paper is concerned with the residents of the permanent settlement of Banff, Alberta, located within Banff National Park. When referring to activities that took place away from the townsite, I will use the term *backcountry*. When referring to the national park, I will use the post-1930 name, Banff National Park, instead of the original name, Rocky Mountains National Park.
- 3 The Banff Winter Carnival was created by Banff booster Norman Luxton and magistrate B.W. Collison. It was intended to entice middle-class visitors from Alberta and British Columbia to come to Banff in the winter. The carnival incorporated ongoing hockey games, the annual curling bonspiel, and weekly snowshoeing tramps, along with flashier events like ski-jumping, skijoring, masquerade dances, ice-carving competitions, and a carnival queen pageant.

- 4 Chic Scott, *Powder Pioneers: Ski Stories from the Canadian Rockies and Columbia Mountains* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2005), 36.
- 5 Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies Archives and Library (hereafter cited as WMCR), M36/25, Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Oral History Notes, Peter Whyte to Catharine Robb Whyte, 16 June 1965; and WMCR, M36/1913, Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Sketch of Improved Skis by Peter Whyte.
- 6 Peter Whyte changed the spelling of his last name from “White” to “Whyte” c. 1925. He was not the only member of the family to use this spelling, but it is not clear why there is inconsistency in spelling the name. One version of why the last name is spelled in various ways within the same family is given by Jon Whyte in *Mountain Glory: Art of Peter and Catharine Whyte* (Banff: Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, 1988), 10.
- 7 The Kodak Brownie was introduced in 1900, sold for one dollar, and intended for use by the general public.
- 8 The 1919 snowshoe tramp up Sulphur Mountain is documented in photographs taken by George Paris, which appear in multiple archived family collections, promotional literature for the Banff Winter Carnival, and the *Banff Crag and Canyon* newspaper.
- 9 Dunsmore’s last album contains many photographs of men making turns while coming down hills on skis. While these photographs are blurred, they signify experimentation with action shots of skiing. Similarly, the photographs taken by Whyte after he attended art school are indistinguishable from those of established professionals in Banff in terms of clarity, composition, and overall polish.
- 10 This set of albums functions as a marker of coming of age in a similar way to what Marilyn F. Motz observed regarding the albums of midwestern women from the nineteenth century in the article “Visual Autobiography: Photograph Albums of Turn-of-the-Century Midwestern Women,” *American Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1989), 63–92: 76, 87.
- 11 Deborah Chambers, “Family as Place: Family Photograph Albums and the Domestication of Public and Private Space,” in *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, eds. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (New York: Routledge, 2004), 115.
- 12 Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, “Introduction,” in Edwards and Hart, *Photographs, Objects, Histories*, 1.
- 13 Alison Nordstrom, “Making a Journey: The Tupper Scrapbooks and the Travel They Describe,” in Edwards and Hart, *Photographs, Objects, Histories*, 81.
- 14 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 28.
- 15 Sontag, *On Photography*, 11.
- 16 Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2001), 28–29.
- 17 August “Gus” Johnson taught Banff youth such as Fulton Dunsmore and Peter Whyte how to ski in the later 1910s. See Scott, *Powder Pioneers*.

- 18 Three of the participants were adults—Tom Dunsmore, Owen Bryant, and August Johnson—which is to be expected, as the youth participants were between twelve and sixteen years old. Tom Dunsmore was Fulton’s father and Jack White was Peter Whyte’s younger brother.
- 19 WMCR, Fulton Dunsmore Fonds, V184 PD-1. This collection consists of three albums created by Fulton before 1935. This is the oldest and largest of the albums and includes photographs spanning nearly a decade.
- 20 This trend continues into the two later albums from Fulton Dunsmore, which are also arranged chronologically.
- 21 Sontag, *On Photography*, 17.
- 22 Whyte worked as a driver for the Brewster Transportation Co., and through this work, met many of the producers, actors, and other Hollywood people who came to film in the Canadian Rockies. He maintained correspondence with some of them for many years after filming. See WMCR, Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, M36.
- 23 Paris was thirty-one years old and married when the album was created and sixteen when the trip to Eau Claire Camp occurred.
- 24 Two of the Eau Claire Camp photographs discussed are included in an album compiled by Cyril Paris in 1935. This treatment is not discussed here because the album was created when Paris was an adult, not when he was a youth, as is the case with Dunsmore and Whyte. Paris was a contemporary and lifelong friend of Dunsmore and Whyte.
- 25 These two photographs appear in the same albums as the Eau Claire Camp photographs.
- 26 The Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds include many letters that Peter and Catharine Whyte exchanged. Their handwriting styles are distinct, making it easy to differentiate Peter’s writing from Catharine’s.
- 27 Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 38. In *Suspended Conversations*, Langford illustrates her argument for the centrality of the oral transmission of albums through discussing them as subjects of reminiscence. However, she feels the orality is completely lost once an album is archived.
- 28 Jim and his older brother William (Bill) Brewster were the founders of the Brewster Tour and Transportation Company.
- 29 A postcard from Brewster sent to Whyte in 1923 opens with “sending a card to my skiing teacher to show that I have not forgotten him.” This card provides additional context to the photographs they shared. WMCR, M36/1893, Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Fern Brewster to Peter Whyte, 20 April 1923.
- 30 Silent film actor Lillian Rich is identified in a number of the photographs, and as she was the female lead in *The Love Master*, it is possible to identify the specific film crew in the photographs, including Hollywood producer Lew Borzage.
- 31 Ann Gilbert Coleman traces the introduction and growth of alpine-style skiing in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. She points to the idealized masculinity of ski instructors as symbolic of the gender roles fostered in this style of skiing. Ann

Gilbert Coleman, *Ski Style: Sport and Culture in the Rockies* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), chap. 3.

- 32 The increased presence of women on skis is supported by Fulton Dunsmore's last album, which clearly shows that women were beginning to ski in the controlled space of the cleared Mount Norquay runs in the late 1920s.
- 33 Sontag, *On Photography*, 10.
- 34 WMCR, M36/1894, Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Peter Whyte to Oliver Kaldahl, 1925. This letter is illustrated by Peter with a full-page cartoon ski jumper and the caption "The honourable Mr. Kaldahl (Tuddy) enjoying a little exercise amid the mountains of Banff, Canada."
- 35 See Carol Harmon, *Byron Harmon: Mountain Photographer* (Canmore: Altitude Publishing, 1991); and *Silent Narratives: The Byron Harmon Fonds* (WMCR, 2004), <http://www.whyte.org/harmon/intro.html>.

Eric Harvie: Without and Within Robert Kroetsch's *Alibi*

ROBYN READ

"O bliss of the collector, bliss of the man of leisure! Of no one has less been expected, and no one has had a greater sense of well-being.... For inside him there are spirits, or at least little genii, which have seen to it that for a collector—and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be—ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them."

— Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library"

"What else is there but the dream?"

— Robert Kroetsch, *Alibi*

■ On 13 February 1947, Eric Harvie became a collector. He had received a telephone call bearing the news that the drilling team at his Leduc No. 1 site had struck oil. Over the years, while working as a lawyer, Harvie had purchased the mineral rights to almost half a million acres of Alberta land, from Vermillion on the Saskatchewan border into the interior of the province, and

stretching beyond Edmonton. The Leduc site happened to be situated on land that he had optioned out to Imperial Oil, and his royalties were substantial. This was the first spurt of what would become the veritable geyser of his oil wealth: when the belly of the same Devonian formation that fed Leduc No.1 bloated with subsequent proximal wells, he found himself in a financial position where he could satiate his desire for almost anything in the world. Instead of one particular thing, however, Eric Harvie developed a desire for *everything* in the world.

It is not exactly accurate to propose that Harvie *became* a collector the moment he hung up the phone after that call from the president of Imperial Oil, for in fact, at the age of fifty-five, Harvie had already been a collector for most of his life. The vast array of Aboriginal artifacts that he had accrued made his basement resemble what biographer Fred M. Diehl refers to as “a 19th century pawn shop.”¹ His sister-in-law Marjorie believed the hobby to be genetic, as other Harvies from his hometown of Orillia, Ontario, had been “pack-rats”; his son Donald claimed that his father was not so much a collector as simply a man who “wouldn’t throw anything away.”² Harvie himself confirmed his propensity to hoard in a rare interview shortly before his death with Peter C. Newman, in which he urged the writer to “[n]ever throw away old socks, old underwear or old cars.”³ While such a statement certainly demonstrates Harvie’s steadfast inclination to salvage, it does not begin to articulate the enormity, in both size and historical significance, of the collections he amassed and eventually left in trust to his beloved Alberta; with donations totalling more than one hundred and fifty thousand objects,⁴ Harvie established the foundation for what is today the largest museum in Western Canada, the Glenbow.⁵ In *Audacious and Adamant: The Story of Maverick Alberta*, Aritha van Herk suggests that the spectre of Harvie, “the inspired and inspiring ghost of the ‘eclectic collector,’ haunts the province.”⁶ In this essay, I will explore what remains in the wake and legacy of such a collector; on one level the collection’s spectator is intrigued simply by the display—its contents, its assembly, and any affiliated information or commentary. On another level, though, a curiosity is aroused, or an interest piqued, by the spectator’s awareness that the display did not arrange or collect itself autonomously: who/what looms behind the collection? What remains unknown or private about the public collection? I will suggest how this “haunting” is crucial to our understanding that Harvie’s collection—like all collections—has a double meaning as a history of objects that has been shaped and informed by the history of the collector. This layered meaning manifests itself through the resplendent reconsideration of Harvie’s collection (and Harvie as collector) in Alberta-born Robert Kroetsch’s 1983 novel *Alibi*. But before I discuss how Harvie’s collection is unpacked by this postmodern fiction, I feel it pertinent to provide background on what is known about Harvie as collector.



Official Opening Ceremonies, Glenbow Foundation-Alberta Government Museum, Old Court House building, 16 December 1964, Glenbow Archives Image # 151-1.

Faced with his sudden wealth, yet middle aged and determined to die penniless, Harvie decided he would direct his passion for collecting toward “the research, assembly, preservation and display of Western Canadian history and more.”⁷ He established the privately funded Glenbow Foundation in 1954,⁸ hired a team of local consultants, caretakers, and curators, and contracted scouts all over the world to join him in the considerable task of collecting for this cause. During the inaugural years of the Glenbow, its primary mandate was “to collect, not to exhibit,”⁹ until Harvie opened the Glenbow Foundation–Alberta Government Museum to the public in 1964. Two years later, he officially turned the whole Glenbow Foundation—all of its findings, plus an additional five million-dollar investment in the collection—over to the province of Alberta, while his Riveredge and Devonian charitable foundations continued to support the museum.

In addition to consciously preserving the momentous history of Western Canada, Harvie also endeavoured, in no small way, to bring the history of the rest of the world to the West. Diehl quotes Harvie as stating, “I can afford to travel the world and see these things but where is the average youngster growing up in the prairies ever going to see a suit of armour?”¹⁰ Frances W. Kaye lauds the “depth and ... greater context” that this global scope produced for the Glenbow Museum’s audiences. She suggests, “Even Harvie’s most eclectic

objects, collected out of any coherent context, served the purpose of bringing the globe to Alberta.”¹¹ For example, in addition to First Nations headdresses, Harvie acquired military paraphernalia, Crown jewel replicas, and even undergarments once owned by Queen Victoria.¹² While he stored away taxidermic specimens and minerals indigenous to his own region, mounted butterflies were shipped to him from overseas, and his vast collection of international artwork and antiquarian books grew steadily. In wanting to bring home to Alberta what average citizens did not have the financial resources to go and see themselves, he created a Western Canadian narrative comprising what lay both within and without Western Canadian history itself.

According to Hugh A. Dempsey, the Glenbow’s chief curator emeritus who started working in the archives department in 1956, Harvie’s staff (secretly) had their own categories for classifying their boss’s seemingly incongruous collections: while certain acquisitions could be considered “Canadiana,” others, less easily labeled by national or historical adjectives, were regarded instead as “Harvieana.” In *Treasures of the Glenbow Museum*, Dempsey states:

Harvie’s travels, often on winter vacations, took him to such places as the Mediterranean, Europe, and the West Indies. Speaking of his Caribbean tours, former law partner George Crawford commented that “For a while it seemed every time he went on vacation he’d rape an island.”¹³

In more recent years, “Harvieana” has proven a complication for curators who have been forced to decide what the museum can afford to keep. Patricia Ainslie, curator of art emeritus and former vice-president of collections for the Glenbow, was part of a management and strategy team that, from 1993 to 2006, developed several initiatives to ensure that the museum could remain afloat despite being weighed down financially by its abundance of artifacts. At the time of this committee’s creation, the museum was beginning to wither under tremendous debt, and the threat of bankruptcy was looming; when Ainslie published her article “Deaccessioning as a Collections Management Tool,” the Glenbow held approximately 1.3 million objects in need of care and attention.¹⁴ As the article’s title proclaims, one of the strategies that Ainslie and fellow team members employed in order to regain stability was the deaccessioning of select international collections. Ainslie recognized that “Harvie collected with the passion and enthusiasm of a collector in the true Victorian sense of the word, and not with the professional eye of a curator”; as a result, “[c]ertain collections have outstanding range and depth, while others lack cohesion, focus, and relevance to Glenbow’s mandate.”¹⁵ Some regarded the plan as controversial, as it involved selling off the collections that had been Harvie’s gift to Alberta rather than disseminating

the relics throughout other museums and galleries in the province. However, deaccessioning was deemed necessary to prevent the possibility of the absolute diffusion of what was by then renowned as *the* museum in the West. This approach to saving the Glenbow involved reassessing the coherence of a collection and defining a clear aesthetic that would proclaim, by the rationale of these assessments, which objects belonged under the Glenbow's roof and which did not.

Ainslie states that museums are not "static, fixed institutions. They must be dynamic and respond to our changing environment."¹⁶ In a twist of irony, this very flux speaks to Harvie's ultimate philosophy of acquisition: the constant and effervescent inquisition into what can be collected is a continual process that, in many ways, resists a conclusion. Harvie's emphasis on process as in some ways beyond product was becoming, by the mid-twentieth century, characteristic of the more general creative processes of collection and narration in the cultural and sociopolitical spheres of Canada writ large. Jonathan Kertzer, in *Worrying the Nation: Imagining a National Literature in English Canada*, reflects how—in this same era of Harvie's collecting renaissance—rather than ascertaining a definitive Canadian voice or consciousness, "several critics were claiming that only a tentative/unending/fruitless quest for authenticity defines [Canadian] literature" and also that it is "[t]he questing itself [that] grants authenticity, even when it is unsuccessful."¹⁷ If we consider that Harvie's life as a questing collector, his methods as a collector, and his collections in and of themselves all intertwine to constitute their own historical narrative, his story begins to lack the perceivable fixed borders that govern traditional conceptions of the fixity of things collected. Rather than a completed record or a closed system, the collection is an exhibit in and about process; the collection's very ability to continue to exhibit the past in the ever-changing context of the present makes it continually relevant.

Emphasizing the interdependence between the search and the sought-after is at the core of Linda Hutcheon's study of historiographic metafiction in *The Canadian Postmodern*. She suggests that this literary genre "no longer operates entirely at the level of *product* alone, that is, at the level of the representation of a seemingly unmediated world, but instead functions on the level of *process* too."¹⁸ After all, Harvie was always just as interested—biographer Diehl in fact argues that he was "more interested"—"in the race than in the prize."¹⁹ As a result, the posthumous attempt to know, fully, Harvie's life as a collector is futile. While the Glenbow's artifacts testify to this life, their trajectories from their place of origin to their placement in the collection are not all recorded. Even those items that are mentioned in correspondence or listed in inventories inevitably have certain threads and traces that have escaped documentation, a subtext concerning their arrivals and departures that hovers like the ghost van



Robert Kroetsch near Empress, Alberta, University of Calgary Special Collections accession 775/04.25, file 27.5. Photograph by Isabel Hamilton.

Herk senses in Alberta's cultural history. And it is indeed both subtext of the collection and spectre of the collector that haunts Robert Kroetsch's curiously "fictional" novel *Alibi*.

Alibi is about a somewhat maladroit scout working for an affluent Calgary oilman-turned-collector. *Alibi* troubles the concept of collecting because everything and everyone in the story can be considered collectible, or themselves a collection: desire, disguise, and doubling crowd a narrative that refuses coherency and extols chaos. But what Kroetsch's *Alibi* demonstrates is how the life and work of Harvie as a collector is its own historiographic metafiction and can itself be considered and read as a collection. Accordingly, this essay takes a look at two historiographic metafictions of Harvie's life as a collector: his correspondence with his scouts contained in the Glenbow Archives and the glorious aggrandizement of that relationship between collector and agent in Kroetsch's *Alibi*. Both archive and fiction contribute to and reshape testament to Harvie's larger-than-life persona as a collector. What these historiographic metafictions demonstrate is that Harvie lives on through his collections, specifically because as collections they present an infinite number of narratives. Every subsequent interpretation reorders, and certainly rejuvenates, the past in the context of the present by participating in the continual reconsideration of the objects Harvie collected, how these objects were obtained, and why and with whose assistance.

Without: An oilman's orchestrated accrual

HUGH DEMPSEY RECALLS that one of the first directives of the Glenbow Foundation—and, it seems, the most quotable—was Harvie's order to his staff in the early years of the organization: "I want you to go out and collect like a bunch of drunken sailors!"²⁰ The utterance of this command has achieved infamy in its repetition; it is cited often within publications about Eric Harvie.²¹ The frequency of its reference renders what might have been something said simply in passing, or out of frustration, or possibly in a rare moment of facetious humour into an iconic statement illustrative of the workings of the mind of the collector, wherein, according to Walter Benjamin, there always resides a kind of madness. Benjamin, who theorized at length about collecting and collectors, notes in his self-reflective article "Unpacking my Library" that

there is in the life of a collector a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order. Naturally, his existence is tied to many other things as well: to a very mysterious relationship to ownership ... to a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is, their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate.²²

Therefore, while Harvie's proposed "intoxicated" acquiring methodology would likely incite initial disorder, Benjamin's conception of the collector suggests that Harvie invested in things once they were at the stage of being collected, when it would be up to his discretion how they could be reordered. Jean Baudrillard also refers to the collected object becoming abstracted from its original, utilitarian function—a weapon that will no longer be used in battle serves a strong example. Additionally, according to Baudrillard, not only do objects become "property" and are collected according to the "passion" of the collector, but furthermore they are "things of which [the collector is] the meaning."²³ The meaning of Harvie's collections is doubled: Harvie collected in order to preserve, and ultimately present, Western Canadian history, but these collections also reflect certain preferences, choices, and desires: that is, Harvie's agency in the gathering act. The collector, in this way, lives on in his or her collection.

I do not want to blur inaccurately the concept of collection (which has an inherent predisposition to disorder and promotes the possibility for relentless reordering) with that of the archive (which considers the previous disposition of objects and abides to order and regulations). At the same time, the Glenbow's archive of Harvie's personal notes, memoranda, correspondence, agendas for meetings, photographs, newspaper clippings, and so on provides a crucial ap-

pendix to his collections on display, one that speaks to not only the objects' individual histories but also the contexts behind their respective accruals. Consider Walter Benjamin's invaluable personal archive: while many lament the irretrievability of what was speculated to be his final manuscript, lost along with the briefcase upon his person when he made his fateful trek across the Pyrenees in 1940, throughout his life he strategized the survival of the large spectrum of his writing and collecting life, leaving "manuscripts, notebooks, and printed papers in the custody of friends and acquaintances in various countries."²⁴ As for Harvie—born, like Benjamin, in 1892—the continued engagement with his collecting oeuvre has been made possible by the materials preserved within the Glenbow Archives that narrate some important details concerning his collecting practice.

When John Gilroy, a British artist who painted portraits of both the Queen and the Harvie family, sent an unsolicited portrait of Harvie to him, Harvie requested that Gilroy remove this portrait from the collection of paintings that he had commissioned. He insisted, in a letter he wrote to Gilroy on 16 December 1962, "I am really not interested in having the second portrait of myself. One I think is enough, particularly when it is such a good one."²⁵ (A digital version of this "good one" can be found on the Glenbow website, alongside the "History of Glenbow Museum.")²⁶ One portrait of himself may have been enough, but Harvie did require people to double for him, all over the world, as collecting agents, bidding and acquiring for the Glenbow Foundation on his behalf. As Kaye states, "Eric Harvie was certainly an autocrat, a one-man band, but he did not operate in a vacuum. He had his family, his comrades, and his employees to support and guide him."²⁷ This was fortunate, as illness and old age eventually prevented Harvie from putting his own boots to the ground in search of treasure. Peter Cotton, an architect from Victoria, British Columbia, responded with great enthusiasm to Harvie's invitation to be an agent for him, writing on 15 January 1963: "Were I to take your injunction seriously I could spend all my time, cheerfully, in such a pursuit; to our mutual advantage."²⁸ Harvie, the collector with his face on the cover of every provincial paper, thanked by government officials and corporate moguls alike, could never have accomplished his mission were it not for the assistance of his many agents fervently collecting on his behalf.

Despite intense protection of his own privacy and his frequent absence from his home in Calgary on either collecting missions or vacations (and the two often collided), Harvie kept up with professional correspondence to his scouts. His courteous and detailed letters often carried the generous tone of the one he sent to H. Russell Robinson, keeper of The Armouries of the Tower of London, on 22 January 1963: "We don't care to put any limit on the amount you spend or the time you spend on the individual items. I suggest that as you begin to run shy

of funds, you give us a little warning and we will either renew credit or otherwise.”²⁹ The largesse of this gesture may seem in keeping with the bold gathering methods of “a bunch of drunken sailors,” but in the follow-up correspondence with his scouts, Harvie or others in the foundation (such as Vice-President E. J. Slatter) were meticulous with their appraisal of artifacts, should they reach the stage of being considered for his collection. Harvie was acutely concerned with the quality and authenticity of the items that he was receiving, often needing photographs or sketches to preview objects before their acquisition. He regularly negotiated over the price of collections and compulsively checked up on the shipping of these packages. It would seem that, given such fastidious protocols, Harvie was a collector in control. But the collection has a way of becoming more outstanding; Harvie’s dream to create a narrative of Western Canadian history resulted in some collections that were themselves extremely dreamlike.

The Harvie fonds contain over a decade of correspondence with Robert Wotherspoon, mayor of Inverness, vice-chairman of the Scottish Tourist Board, proprietor of several hotels and theatres, and self-affirmed eyewitness of the Loch Ness monster. In a *Calgary Herald* article from 28 October 1957 that published Wotherspoon’s “Nessie” claim, Wotherspoon is quoted as comparing the sighting to “a hole in one in golf. Once it happens to you, everything else seems comparatively unimportant”—an ironic statement, considering that Wotherspoon used his encounter as a platform to promote what *was* most important to him, Scottish tourism, informing readers that the current season was “phenomenal—the best we have ever had.”³⁰ Once acquainted with Wotherspoon, Harvie tested the possibility that he could collect a place itself. While Wotherspoon obtained antique furniture on Harvie’s behalf, Harvie in turn became Wotherspoon’s compatriot in matters of all things Scottish; he fleshed out his warehouses and his city with items of Scottish heritage and implemented regular lectures and film screenings sponsored by the local St. Andrews Society. Perhaps most famously, in 1967, Harvie arranged to have an exact copy of the twenty-seven-foot equestrian statue of Robert the Bruce he had commissioned for the historic site of Battle of Bannockburn near Stirling, Scotland, three years earlier to be erected just below the entrance to Calgary’s Jubilee Auditorium.³¹ In addition to all things Scottish, the transplantation of place plays a large part in who Harvie was and what he was capable of as a prosperous possessor. In 1961 Harvie purchased the entire Frontier Ghost Town, “a carnival and museum of western Canadian History which was based in Vancouver.”³² The town, once collected, was valued for its contents but also for its tremendous size. Dempsey recalls a Glenbow employee describing the collection as “most interesting” because its “historical value is beyond imagination. I think I have looked at more than six thousand items and there seems no end to it.”³³

Additionally, on the border of his own city of Calgary, Harvie created Heritage Park. As Kroetsch describes in his non-fiction work *Alberta*, “the Foundation has helped recreate the West itself in a sixty-acre prairie settlement.”³⁴ By having the funds and means to acquire buildings such as a blacksmith shop that once existed in Airdrie and a general store from Claresholm,³⁵ Harvie enabled objects from the past to become part of a fully functioning historical village and literally to take on new life in the present. The resulting narrative of Heritage Park is completely surreal; like the Frontier Town, it is a carnival in which people from the present participate in a ritual of the historical West that has been resurrected, rebelling against the notion that certain boundaries between the past and the present cannot be transgressed.

For Harvie and Wotherspoon, men of wealth and power, nothing was too large to be owned, moved, claimed, and re-established as part of their collection’s narratives. When their authority was threatened by any kind of check, they simply would not acquiesce. Later in life, both men took frequent trips for their health and were often ordered by physicians to lessen their workloads. With reference to this, shortly before his death, Wotherspoon wrote to Harvie on 26 September 1962: “I find all these rules and regulations rather irksome, but I am informed that if I do not strictly adhere to them, a worse fate awaits me.”³⁶ There is something compelling about the phrasing of this sentence, for of course the fate implied—death—awaited Robert Wotherspoon regardless. But the subjunctive tissue within this statement, the “if,” epitomizes a fascinating quandary for collectors, particularly those endowed with wealth who are used to testing their capabilities: by resurrecting the past in the present, does the collector outwit an end to things and perhaps, in a sense, death? But while the collector may live on in his or her collection, the collected object, according to Benjamin, enters “the scene, the stage, of their fate.”³⁷ Even if seemingly static objects are given new meaning, and thus figuratively spun back into life by the collector, they are physically put under arrest: if touched only by cotton-gloved curatorial hands, if viewed, usually through the barrier of glass casing. A curator’s label exalts the significance of the object on display, but when appropriated by a collector, objects unavoidably undergo a certain kind of amputation; the removal and repossession of artifacts creates a severance with the past lives of things, with previous owners and former habitats, whether known or unknown.

Where Harvie’s attributes of “avid enthusiasm, boundless curiosity, and the financial backing to indulge his passion” as “a collector in the grand Victorian style” are documented,³⁸ the capitalist complicities to his collecting have been critiqued less directly—most likely because Harvie’s intentions were benevolent ones, ardently allegiant to the preservation of history. Harvie was gathering artifacts in order to tell a story to, and about, Western Canada. If his priorities

altered the nature of the artifacts at all, it was read as Harvie-as-collector “becoming a part” of the objects’ story; in 1964 Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta J. Percy Page chose the following Francis Parkman quotation to describe the actions of Harvie at the opening of the Glenbow Foundation–Alberta Government Museum: “[F]aithfulness to the truth of history involves far more than research.... The narrator must seek to imbue himself with the life and spirit of the time.... He must himself be, as it were, a sharer or spectator of the action he describes.”³⁹ Harvie valued objects “as the scene, the stage, of their fate” because he saw the value in this threshold between past and present: he could access things from the past, and have them stand for history by exhibiting them in the present.⁴⁰

For Benjamin, this is the essence of the collected: not an inert product but one that is representative of a scene or a stage within a quest, thus signifying a “fate” only in the sense of a conduit for a new beginning. As Benjamin states, “I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth.”⁴¹ For Harvie, as it would have been for fellow collector and scout Wotherspoon, the alternative kind of fate, the “worse fate” to suffer, is the erasure of a life’s work, of all historical testimony. This presents the quint-essential predicament of the collector: to fear death, yet to become enticed by, seduced by, if not to eventually commit full-on to, the “if,” the questioning of whether the “worse fate” can be thwarted, outlived, or perhaps just traded for the “fate” of the collection. Extraordinarily, the collector lives two lives: one is a life made manifest through the story of collection that may be continuously reappraised, given a new beginning, even after the other life, the one led in public, has ceased to exist. The former is the life of Eric Harvie that surfaces in Kroetsch’s novel *Alibi*.

Within: Acquiring an *Alibi*

HARVIE’S INITIAL CONNECTION TO CANADIAN LITERATURE was forged when as a boy he mowed the lawn of Stephen Leacock in Orillia, Ontario. In fact, the Harvie family believed that one of the characters in Leacock’s *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) was rather blatantly based on Eric’s father, and they resented his depiction as grim and humourless; since the anecdote is recollected by Harvie’s very impassioned biographer, Diehl, it is difficult to distinguish to whom the resentment truly belongs.⁴² What definitely seems to be missing is an acknowledgment of Leacock’s work as not just a dig at a community but a parody of one, and that any resemblances to real people are complicit with the apparatus of fiction. Several decades after the Harvies’ first possible appearance in fiction, Eric Harvie himself materialized in the work of Robert Kroetsch.

Once again, the real life persona was satirized and exaggerated, this time in a carnivalesque fashion typical of much of Kroetsch's writing. It is appropriate that for *Alibi*, which according to Kroetsch's early hand-scrawled notes for the novel is "the story of a man who is looking for a spa,"⁴³ Kroetsch employs a tradition that goes back to the "baths ... of ancient Greece and Rome."⁴⁴ The implications of the carnival on literature have been widely theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin, whose philosophies have in turn inspired Kroetsch's approach to prose fiction. Kroetsch's novels blend binaries, blur borders, and experiment with the fracturing of a character into two or more often conflicting selves. According to Bakhtin, "everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated, it is, strictly speaking, not even played out; its participants *live* in it."⁴⁵ The carnival—an entity collected by Harvie himself in the Frontier Ghost Town, "a carnival and museum of western Canadian history,"⁴⁶ and created by Harvie with Heritage Park, a masquerade of "how the West was once"⁴⁷—is itself a collection.

As creator of carnivalesque fictions, Kroetsch is a collector himself; he is a writer who writes prose in fragments, contemplating how they might reappear and reinvent themselves throughout a text. Additionally, Kroetsch frequently incorporates the figure of the collector into his writing: Demeter Proudfoot as biographer collects the pieces of Hazard LePage's disorderly life in *The Studhorse Man* (1970), while scientist William Dawe collects dinosaur bones in *Badlands* (1975). Before featuring the collector in his work, Kroetsch had portrayed a collection both literally and literarily in the first 1977 edition of his long poem *Seed Catalogue*, in which the poems are printed on faint facsimiles of the pages of one of the artifacts housed in the Glenbow Museum, an actual 1917 seed catalogue. With almost a decade between *Alibi* (1983) and Kroetsch's novel *The Puppeteer* (1992), the latter picks up (if only to subvert) the identities of the characters and the crux of the storyline of the former; but in *Alibi*, the trace of Eric Harvie is still perceivable if not recognizable.

The narrator of Kroetsch's *Alibi* is the libidinous William William Dorfen (who most often just goes by "Dorf"), a former museum curator-turned-agent for a god-like collector. Jack Deemer is this collector, a "millionaire Calgary oilman whose pastime it was to collect anything that was loose."⁴⁸ Like Harvie, Deemer is described as a private man, sometimes speculated to be living on a ranch somewhere although no one is certain where. He remains a recluse, hidden away in his Calgary mansion: "He's simply a name. And a legend, of course; the richest of the many rich men spawned in the Alberta oil patch."⁴⁹ Although he remains unseen, Dorf states, "Everyone knew about [Deemer], the man who had so much money, the man who made such a fortune in Alberta oil he was collecting collections. Collecting the world, people said. That's the

way they liked to put it; the statement made them part of the conspiracy.”⁵⁰ Just as Harvie was known to purchase entire collections sight unseen, Deemer “simply collects. It is not a matter of what to collect. He has that kind of money.”⁵¹ Deemer never communicates with Dorf in person but rather through written correspondence and the occasional phone call. *Alibi* opens with a telegram from Deemer: “Find me a spa, Dorf.”⁵² And so Dorf’s mission throughout the novel is to find his boss the perfect naturally flowing spa.

Not only does Dorf’s employer seem to provide a blatant allusion to Harvie, but the narrative also opens at the Glenbow Museum itself. Dorf is attending an art show, where he meets up with Karen Strike, an aptly named photographer and documentary-filmmaker who is a prominent figure in both *Alibi* and *The Puppeteer*. Dorf likens Strike to Deemer: “Like my boss, she’s a lunatic on the subject of history.”⁵³ Additionally, Kroetsch invites comparisons to a member of the crew responsible for the Glenbow through the character Fish; the actual Jim Fish, according to Kaye, was one of the Glenbow employees whose “formidable managerial skills” were “challenged” by Harvie’s less than conventional “tastes and methods.”⁵⁴ Jim Fish was the Glenbow’s personal accountant during Harvie’s tenure with the foundation, while Kroetsch’s Fish is no accountant but rather a tour-bus driver in the mountains; he used to work for Deemer in some geological capacity, but the specificities of his job and his reasons for leaving are obscured by a conflicting backstory that ebbs away from him as he quaffs beer and swaps stories with tourists at a local pub. But what has perhaps dissuaded any published literary critic of *Alibi* from discussing its allusions to the Glenbow or Eric Harvie is that Jack Deemer embodies Harvie in an obscure and slightly splintered way. Deemer, of course, gestures toward the legacy of Harvie, as an oilman and reclusive benefactor to a collection of considerably ostentatious proportions. However, in his research notes for the novel, Kroetsch considers whether there should be a moment in the novel when Dorf visits “the Glenbow to study the collections of Deemer’s great rival, Harvie,” or when Deemer plans “to make an even greater collection” than that of “Harvie [no][?]”⁵⁵ As parody, Jack Deemer embodies and embellishes a representation of Eric Harvie without having to adhere to it rigidly—because Jack Deemer is *not* Eric Harvie. In fact, a reader might question whether Deemer is also a little bit like one of Harvie’s collecting contemporaries.

Eric Harvie and Norman Luxton were good friends, and their mutual passions for collecting inspired each other. Harvie helped Luxton establish the Luxton Museum in Banff in the early 1950s, while, as Dempsey speculates, “Harvie’s involvement in collecting may very well have been ignited by his association with Norman Luxton.”⁵⁶ The first curator of the Luxton Museum, John George “Red” Cathcart, who came to Calgary to work for the Glenbow

Foundation in 1959, wrote a report (14 July 1956) entitled “A Museum Is Born.” Cathcart affirms that “[a]long with Norman Luxton’s many dreams was one he had for many years, ‘To build a Museum.’”⁵⁷ Here, Cathcart succumbs to a kind of sentimentalism, as, according to him, tears welled up in Luxton’s eyes at the moment he was confronted with Harvie’s question, “Norman, what is going to happen to all this collection of yours?” Luckily, Harvie had the answer: “Let’s build a museum.”⁵⁸ While Harvie’s ambition for collection was certainly similar to Jack Deemer’s, Luxton had some Deemer-esque traits of his own. According to Mark Simpson, Luxton, a renowned taxidermist in Banff at the turn of the twentieth century, abandoned a sailing voyage across the Pacific in favour of raiding Aboriginal graves on the Queen Charlottes. He asked permission of neither the Native community nor the government before taking these human relics into his possession.⁵⁹ There is indeed something about collecting bones, but skulls in particular, that seems partial to the despotic spirit of a collector such as Deemer. But furthermore, on this mission, Luxton contracted a fever that necessitated his moving to a place where his body could heal and also where he could get back to his taxidermic and collecting practices. When Simpson contends, “Where else but to Banff, health spa and wildlife paradise, could he go to make himself new...?” his emphasis is on the “revivifying” capital that Luxton could make running a taxidermist’s shop;⁶⁰ Deemer was often at the other end of such a trade, as Karen Strike reminds Dorf that Deemer’s request for an exotic taxidermic specimen caused him to desert her at a previous gallery opening—“A white rhinoceros,” Dorf clarifies.⁶¹ Nevertheless, what Luxton and Deemer have in common—with Harvie and Wotherspoon as well—is that they covet a place in which to heal; the spa is the most prominent object of Deemer’s desire throughout *Alibi*. As well, the very first spa that Dorf visits is in Banff. At this spa, the dense fog hovering over the steaming mineral waters momentarily skews Dorf’s perception, and he believes he is encountering a space “full of floating heads.”⁶² In his notes for the novel, Kroetsch debates whether Deemer should turn out, after all, to be just a “floating head; not a man at all, but a woman; the rich man’s wife ... or mistress ... or even daughter...”⁶³ The ellipses seem to suggest that Kroetsch himself did not rule out any option but rather kept an entire collection of characters in mind for his collector; in turn, the collector, Deemer, the one who deems what should be gathered, is a mutable character, parodied as one whose intense desire is fueling the operation but whose identity is ultimately unknowable.

Meanwhile, Kroetsch embellishes the possibilities of the collection itself by demonstrating that everything, in a sense, can be considered collectible. Robert Wilson identifies this “concept of a collection,” employed “for absurdist ends,” as the novel’s “vehicle for making serious (or seriously playful) comments upon

the nature, scope and limitations of human conceptuality.”⁶⁴ The trunk of Jack Deemer’s vehicle is packed full: with ceremonial masks and walking sticks; with locks and keys and miniature buddhas; with broken stones and skeletons; with shrunken heads and Japanese armour. There are parallels here to Harvie’s collection. In addition, Deemer, like Harvie, faces the predictable dilemma that follows elaborate accrual: finding a place to put and preserve all the loot. However, although Deemer does order Dorf to find him a reservoir, he sets his sights on a container already replete with contents: not just a complete but also an everlasting collection.

Asking Dorf to find him a place does initially invite comparisons once again to the acquisitions of Harvie’s past—to the aforementioned transplantation of all things Scottish, the claim of the carnival Frontier Town, and the establishment of Harvie’s own West with Heritage Park. But the spa is a different kind of collected being; in *Alibi* it retains agency. It can be collected but not entirely claimed, as it brings the collector to its location rather than the other way around. In a way, it collects and contains the collector, as its property involves the envelopment of the collector’s body, its immersion in the spa’s waters. When Dorf shares Deemer’s request with Karen Strike, she explains, “Water cures were big in the nineteenth century.... The mineral hot springs were developed so the well-to-do might suffer their ills in comfort,” elucidating why a spa would be an object of desire for a mature collector.⁶⁵ Ironically, as a younger collector, Eric Harvie spent a great deal of time searching for reservoirs of fossil fuels, and so, as Kaye notes, “the very essence that made Harvie wealthy and enabled the collection, also fuelled farm consolidation, the demise of the small towns, and drilling on reserve, sacred, and environmentally fragile lands.”⁶⁶ *Alibi* changes the constitution of the sought-after earthly deposit from non-renewable oil to life-sustaining mineral water, offering more of a parallel to Harvie’s geological mineral specimens, an exhibit that continues to be part of the Glenbow today. In addition to its probability and playfulness, however, the spa in *Alibi* figures for much more than mineral constituents or waters that heal the body; the spa exists as a metaphor for the ideal collection.

After travelling throughout the novel from Banff to England, Wales, Portugal, and Greece in search of the perfect spa, Dorf finds Deemer’s prize startlingly close to home: Deadman Spring—Ainsworth Hot Springs, renamed and reinvented in the novel—is about thirty miles north of Nelson, British Columbia. Having the ultimate prize in *Alibi* exist in a dilapidated state appealed to Kroestch, and so in the novel Deadman Spring is

a little ramshackle run-down spa with a mineral hot spring that runs from deep inside a cave into a small swimming pool. The whole damned

thing was up for sale, lock, stock and barrel: the owner was going belly up, waiting for customers to drive west through the Rocky Mountains into the next mountain trench, into the next range of mountains.⁶⁷

It is a spa that has character, yet it has been neglected and, as a result, presents the potential for the kind of rebirth that comes with “discovery.” As a spot yet-unfrequented by the tourists who visit three of the finest hot springs in the country on the other side of the lake, this spa proves to be the quintessential collector’s treasure: it provides opportunity for rejuvenation but has yet to be truly *found* by the world.

This is not the first time Deemer has sent Dorf on the hunt for an object that represents the literal extension or preservation of life itself; for example, once in Budapest, Dorf found value in a rare collection of “teeth” because teeth “will survive when all else is gone. Teeth ... may well be our only immortality.”⁶⁸ But in addition to collections that might figure for eternal life, at one point quite early in the novel, Dorf directly addresses this very longing in the imagined psyche of his boss:

Jack Deemer, there in his mansion behind its guardian row of spruce, its tall and northward facing windows staring down onto the clustered skyscrapers in the bowel of the city; Deemer, his house and his trees and his privacy looking down from the rich seclusion of Mount Royal, had seen one day, maybe late one evening, instead of his own Midas wealth, his own death.⁶⁹

While Eric Harvie’s collecting was dedicated to restoration, to enabling the preservation of a historical narrative of the land that would exist even after all the oil had run dry, *Alibi* extends the concept of restorative and curatorial practice, proposing an embalming not only of the past but also of the motive behind the acquisition of artifacts, the *jouissance* of Harvie-as-collector. While Kroetsch’s *Fish* speculates that Deemer’s ultimate (re)quest is for a way “to go on living forever,”⁷⁰ the collector does find a way to achieve this through the protected existence of the collection.

But *what* and *who* lives on in the collection remains considerably more abstract. Baudrillard theorizes, “[t]hrough collecting, the passionate pursuit of possession finds fulfillment and the everyday prose of objects is transformed into poetry, into a triumphant unconscious discourse.”⁷¹ And here we have the paradox of the collection once again: an organism of seemingly unconscious or lifeless language, yet under the disguise of dormancy, the desire of the collector continues to pulse. The composition of that desire is, of course, not so

stable and in fact becomes more mutable the more the collection grows; it is further fractured by the fact that a collector such as Jack Deemer—or Eric Harvie—does not operate alone. At one point in *Alibi*, Dorf attempts to distinguish himself from the collecting zealot whose requests he has been following. He states, “I am only the collector’s agent. I only act out the collector’s desire. The desire is his.”⁷² Yet his very livelihood denies this, as his every move is driven by Deemer’s desire, another example of how, throughout *Alibi*, Kroetsch plays with plurality, with the notion of doubling.

William William Dorfен ponders his own doubleness early in the novel when he explains that he had two grandfathers named William; his “parents, farming people northeast of Calgary in the Battle River country, in a futile hope that I might receive at least one inheritance, named me after both of them. Billy Billy Dorfен. And all I got from my ancestors, it turned out, was the conviction that I needed two of everything.... Two lives, possibly.”⁷³ Then, at the end of the novel, an ailing visitor who lacks a name arrives at the Deadman Spring that Dorf has found, purchased for Deemer, and temporarily opened for business. Dorf, who leads his life in order to ensure the preservation of someone else’s legacy, decides to give this man one of his names, one of his Williams, and realizes, “Somehow I had two lives. I had one that I could give away. I saw that. Maybe that is the human condition. We have each two lives. We each have one that must be given away.”⁷⁴ Here, while Dorf speculates on what could be considered the “human condition,” he speaks to the collecting condition, a division or a doubling of self. This doubling is echoed by a statement made by the object of Dorf’s desire, the seductive and mysterious Julie Magnuson, who tells Dorf that we live “by our alibis.... We were somewhere else when it happened. Or should have been. Or shouldn’t have been.”⁷⁵ The etymology of the novel’s title, Latin for “elsewhere,” might indeed refer to the removal, retrieval, and reassignment of a thing’s natural habitat, a sequence implicit within the act of collecting. But it also gestures to Deemer’s absence throughout the novel and to how, in addition to the existence of the collection, it is through the employment of scouts, agents of Dorf—a name that is, as Robert Lecker points out, a play on the anagram for “fraud,” a replica, but not the real thing⁷⁶—that the collector’s life is made multiplicitous. With this cloning of selves, *Alibi* provides yet another incarnation of a motif figured by the objects and lives contained within collections, all of which ultimately gesture back to the plurality, the polyvocality that is the novel *Alibi* itself. In an attempt to epitomize desire over object—process instead of product, quest before treasure, race rather than prize—Dorf wonders, “What else is there but the dream?”⁷⁷ After all, it is a “dream” that Dempsey holds responsible for the possibility of the existence of the Glenbow’s “vast collections”; in the acknowledgements of *Treasures of the*

Glenbow Museum, Dempsey declares, “[T]he major credit must go to the late Eric Harvie, whose dream and passion made all of this possible.”⁷⁸

During the opening ceremonies of the Glenbow Foundation–Alberta Government Museum in 1964, Eric Harvie apologized for Glenbow Vice-President E.J. Slatter’s absence from the podium, explaining that, unfortunately, he happened to be without his voice that day. The alibi is polite, one that does not denote too much personal detail, and the apology makes it sound not so much that Slatter is suffering from an ailment but rather that his voice is an object he just happens to have forgotten at home. After reading the transcript, I wonder how closely I would have been able to pay attention to his careful, predictable speech when—from what I can deduce from the photographs—it appears that on that day speakers were positioned behind the enormous hide of a polar bear, which faces that of a ferocious-looking feline creature, draped across a banquet table with a crystal decanter perched upon the bear hide’s back. Once again, Harvie’s artifact speaks to a far different life (one dedicated to collecting from more countries than “[Harvie] could count” an average of one hundred objects a day)⁷⁹ than that of the man in the nice suit behind the podium politely thanking his government.

At the same time, Eric Harvie was both men. If his life as a collector lives on in his collections, demonstrating the flexibility, multiplicity, and mutability of these structures and their contents, can a portrait of that life ever be drawn? For the life that lives within the collections is undoubtedly a shapeshifter, just as history continues to inform the present in new ways. The original incarnation of the collector’s desire becomes marred by the movement and passing of time. But perhaps this is an instance of the form protecting its content; just as the collection preserves the past, the clandestine form of the collector’s desire ensures the obedience of the collector’s wishes for that life to remain private. Empathizing with his reclusive boss in *Alibi*, Dorf states, “I was sick of having my life described and analyzed and remembered and predicted. I wanted to be left alone.”⁸⁰ The collector lives on through his or her collection but also blends into or within it. When Jack Deemer finally arrives at the spa that Dorf has located, an electrical surge suddenly plunges the cave into darkness, disappearing it and them from each other. Walter Benjamin concludes the unpacking of his library by stating, “So I have erected one of [his own, the collector’s] dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting.”⁸¹ This vanishing act tempts one to quest for the person or object lost within the past. What I find myself wondering is this: in compiling a history, can one ever do any more than simply collect? It seems that with my critical consideration and comparison of Eric Harvie’s life as a collector with the fractured, frenetic fictionalization of that life by Robert Kroetsch, ulti-

mately I display another sort of collection myself. If the scholar, critic, historian, or writer is lucky, there will turn out to be not just one but several artifacts available to be retrieved, repossessed, and resurrected; the more the collection grows and the more diverse it becomes, the greater its potential to exhibit the past in the present and to gesture toward how it might be read in the future. *

Notes

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- 5 Ibid., 173.
- 6 Aritha van Herk, *Audacious and Adamant: The Story of Maverick Alberta* (Toronto: Key Porter, 2007), 94.
- 7 Diehl, *Gentleman*, 157.
- 8 Hugh A. Dempsey, *Treasures of the Glenbow Museum* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1991), 17.
- 9 Ibid., 14.
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- 11 Frances W. Kaye, *Hiding the Audience: Viewing Arts and Arts Institutions on the Prairies* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003), 137.
- 12 Aritha van Herk, *Mavericks: An Incurable History of Alberta* (Toronto: Penguin, 2001), 392.
- 13 Dempsey, *Treasures*, 19.
- 14 Ainslie, "Deaccessioning," 173.
- 15 Ibid., 174.
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- 18 Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 61.
- 19 Diehl, *Gentleman*, xiii.
- 20 Eric Harvie, quoted in Dempsey, *Treasures*, 14.

- 21 Eric Harvie, quoted in Ainslie, "Deaccessioning," 174; Patricia Ainslie, "Glenbow: The Legacy of Eric Harvie," *Alberta Museums Review* 26, no. 1 (2000): 20; Brennan, "Man Who Gave," 9; Kaye, *Hiding the Audience*, 93.
- 22 Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968; repr., New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 60. Citations are to the Schocken edition.
- 23 Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1996), 85.
- 24 Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz, and Erdmut Wizisla, eds., *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*, trans. Esther Leslie (London: Verso, 2007), 1.
- 25 Glenbow Archives, G-1-156, Eric Harvie fonds, letter, Eric Harvie to John Gilroy, 16 December 1962.
- 26 "History of Glenbow Museum," *Glenbow Museum*, <http://www.glenbow.org/about/history.cfm/>.
- 27 Kaye, *Hiding the Audience*, 94.
- 28 Glenbow Archives, G-1-155, Eric Harvie fonds, letter, Peter Cotton to Eric Harvie, 15 January 1963.
- 29 Glenbow Archives, G-1-158, Eric Harvie fonds, letter, Eric Harvie to H. Russell Robinson, 22 January 1963.
- 30 Glenbow Archives, G-1-159, Eric Harvie fonds, "Loch Ness Monster Sight Is Described By Scotsman," *Calgary Herald*, 28 October 1957.
- 31 Diehl, *Gentleman*, 162.
- 32 Ainslie, "Glenbow," 21.
- 33 Dempsey, *Treasures*, 30.
- 34 Robert Kroetsch, *Alberta* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1993), 180.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Glenbow Archives, G-1-160, Eric Harvie fonds, letter, Robert Wotherspoon to Eric Harvie, 26 September 1962.
- 37 Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library," 60.
- 38 Ainslie, "Glenbow," 19.
- 39 Glenbow Archives, G-1-141, Eric Harvie fonds, transcript for the official opening ceremonies of the Glenbow Foundation-Alberta Government Museum, 16 December 1964.
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- 42 Diehl, *Gentleman*, 11.
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- 44 Robert Kroetsch, *The Lovely Treachery of Words: Essays Selected and New* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), 95.
- 45 Mikhail Bakhtin, quoted in Kroetsch, *Lovely Treachery*, 97.
- 46 Dempsey, *Treasures*, 30.
- 47 *Heritage Park Historical Village*, <http://www.heritagepark.ca/>.
- 48 Robert Kroetsch, *Alibi* (Don Mills, ON: Stoddart, 1983), 7.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 13–14.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 13.
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- 53 *Ibid.*, 8.
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- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 Mark Simpson, “Immaculate Trophies,” *Essays on Canadian Writing* 68 (Summer 1999): 91.
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- 66 Kaye, *Hiding the Audience*, 102.
- 67 Kroetsch, *Alibi*, 200.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 106.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 57.
- 71 Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, 87.
- 72 Kroetsch, *Alibi*, 133.
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- 74 Ibid., 204.
- 75 Ibid., 125.
- 76 Robert Lecker, "Con/Texts of Desire: Robert Kroetsch's *Alibi*," *Open Letter* 5, no. 8-9 (1984): 89.
- 77 Kroetsch, *Alibi*, 35.
- 78 Dempsey, *Treasures*, 9.
- 79 Glenbow Archives, G-1-141, Eric Harvie fonds, transcript for the official opening ceremonies of the Glenbow Foundation-Alberta Government Museum, 16 December 1964.
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“It’s a Landmark in the Community”: The Conservation of Historic Places in Saskatchewan, 1911–2009

BRUCE DAWSON

■ **At the meeting** of the City of Saskatoon School Board on 6 April 1911, it was decided that the city’s original schoolhouse, a mere twenty-four years old, was redundant and should be torn down.¹ School District Superintendent W.P. Bates, in the face of ridicule, suggested that the school be moved to some public grounds and be preserved.² Answering his call was the local chapter of the Independent Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), who made arrangements with the recently established University of Saskatchewan to locate the schoolhouse on the grounds of the campus for use as museum. An impassioned plea to City Council yielded \$250 toward the cost of the move.³ In total, \$842 was spent taking the building apart, numbering the stones, and then reassembling them at the new location. A plaque to commemorate the occasion was drafted and hung upon the door. Thus was born the heritage conservation movement in Saskatchewan.

In the succeeding ninety-eight years, hundreds of monuments have been erected, buildings preserved, and other heritage conservation actions undertaken across Saskatchewan to recognize places associated with people and events that



A field crew from the University of Saskatchewan erecting the first historic marker in Saskatchewan at South Branch House in May, 1944. L-R: J.G. (Grant) MacEwan, Williard "Bud" Estey, A.S. Morton, Mr. Harrison and Lewis H. Thomas, SAB R-A 535.

are deemed significant at the local, provincial, and national levels.⁴ However, just as important to the historical record is the story of the commemoration associated with these places. Understanding what places were chosen and why, as well as how these choices and reasons have changed over time, provides important insight into the values held by the population at those moments in time. As well, understanding who was making these choices and how they were undertaken informs our understanding of the power relationships and decision-making processes within the society. This paper will consider the changing ways and means by which places have been commemorated and conserved during the past century and how the Saskatchewan experience fits within the national and international context.

The creation of heritage related to historic places involves two interdependent elements: individuals or groups who believe they have some authority, legislated or otherwise, to choose what is or is not heritage, and reasons or criteria for why a place is to be conserved. These authors of heritage related to historic places have typically been those of the political, academic, or economic elite or governing agencies. The nature of the heritage being conserved dictates this. Unlike language, customs, and personal artifacts, places are directly associated with land. Use or ownership of land in most nations requires financial investment, familiarity with legal processes, and some relationship with government officials. Not all potential authors of heritage have had knowledge or access to

these resources and, thus, their claims of heritage have traditionally not been recognized without intervention by an individual or organization with access to these resources, usually from one of the four aforementioned groups.

The reasons or criteria for why a place is to be considered an element of heritage are underpinned by the authors' belief that the historic place and its conservation have value to those involved in the process and, perhaps, to society as a whole. While often articulated with reference to the economic worth of an object, values are an inherent human framework for critique and decision making, and are applied much more broadly, including to the choice of historic places to conserve. Until recently, the values that guided heritage conservation have largely gone unarticulated, perhaps because, as Howard Green concluded, "[e]veryone knew what was important: the homes and other buildings associated with political, military, and business leaders—those who today are sometimes derided as the 'dead white men.'"⁵ The past thirty years have seen the emergence of a cultural-significance approach to heritage conservation.⁶ Underpinned by discussion and consensus building related to the values expressed for historic places, the cultural-significance approach has compelled the authors of heritage not only to articulate the values they hold for a property, but also to respond to challenges regarding the politically and knowledge-dependent processes of valuation that have evolved.⁷

Consistent within the creation of heritage has been its use by its authors to display and reinforce power relationships in society. Historic places, like museum artifacts and monuments erected for public display, serve as demarcations of victory and failure, reinforce hierarchal relationships that exist within our communities, and stand as touchstones for national identity.⁸ Places of heritage, in the words of James Scott, "produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant groups would wish to have things appear" and "provide convincing evidence for the hegemony of dominant values."⁹ In this process, historic places become an extremely visual and potentially permanent element of the public transcript, thereby helping the dominants project their values across society.

Study of where Canada fits within the discussion of historic-place conservation has been limited and recent. Until the early 1990s, scholarship in this field tended to be sympathetic and celebratory, often written by individuals affiliated with government heritage programs.¹⁰ Paralleling the critique of historic-place valuation, which accompanied the development of the cultural-significance approach to conservation in Canada in the 1990s, has been an increase in historical scholarship related to the creation and management of historic places. Authored by historians in both academic and government service, as well as by scholars in other disciplines, a primary focus of this recent literature has been

to consider the efficacy and legitimacy of heritage authorship by past and present government agencies in the face of shifting political direction and competing claims of authorship.¹¹ Much of this contemporary scholarship has been national in scope or focused on specific sites or local assemblages, leaving the discussion of provincial-level activity undeveloped.

The evolution of the conservation of historic places in Saskatchewan can be broken into four chronological periods. The pre-1938 period represents the establishment of conservation activities in the province and is largely defined by the actions of Arthur Silver (A.S.) Morton, head of the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan. In 1938 the provincial government introduced the first heritage legislation, and the years that followed were characterized by the growing involvement of local organizations and government in the conservation of places. The year 1960 ushered in a period of large government-sponsored restoration projects and a growing interest in stronger legislation to legally protect buildings and other places. In 1980 Saskatchewan introduced the *Heritage Property Act*, the province's primary heritage legislation, and with that act, the fourth and current era of historic-place conservation commenced. Each of these periods will be explored here with reference to how the Saskatchewan experience fits within the national and international world context of heritage conservation.

While activities to protect and promote historic places can be traced back to the Roman period, the modern conservation movement began in the late 1800s. In England, the United States, and Canada, societies composed of a "small knot of cultivated people"¹² formed in reaction to the changes to the physical landscape wrought by the industrial revolution and to assert a national pride and identity based on architecture.¹³ The aforementioned episode in Saskatoon fits within this national and international context. The project was spearheaded by the local chapter of the IODE, one of the groups identified by C.J. Taylor as leading early conservation efforts across Canada. The chosen property represented the establishment of Western education, the social norms of the frontier community, and the values and legacy of the previous generation's elite. The schoolhouse was, according to the IODE, "really the one historic building in the city."¹⁴

In the 1920s, other elites in Saskatchewan, notably A.S. Morton, took up the conservation challenge. Interested in the fur trade, Morton spent significant time after his 1914 arrival in Saskatchewan locating fur trade posts and visiting with people who had been present in the region during the fur trade period. During these visits, he also assisted with the organization of local historical groups across the province. The composition of these groups represented a Western form of elite membership. While Anglo-Saxon roots seemed to be an

unwritten requirement for membership, the recent emergence of the area from its frontier period resulted in a more open interpretation of “elite” compared to that of eastern North America or Europe. Most notably, these organizations tended to welcome “old-timers”—those who had arrived and persevered during the frontier period. The groups were focused on collecting documents, marking historic sites, and making public the information about the “pioneers,” and Morton’s attention validated their elite status.¹⁵

Also contributing to this validation process was the attention of the new National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (NHSMBC) paid to these groups. Established in 1919, the NHSMBC’s initial focus was on providing physical demarcation to the growing nationalist sentiment in Canada by formal recognition of places associated with the imperialistic milestones in the nation’s history.¹⁶ When Dominion Parks Commissioner J.B. Harkin wrote to Professor Morton in 1922 to ask for assistance in identifying local resources that might be of national, provincial, and local interest and “their relative need for immediate action to preserve them from deterioration,” Morton was happy to acquiesce and link the activities of these local organizations into this national cause.¹⁷ While many of the Saskatchewan suggestions represented the fur trade, the NHSMBC was more interested in places associated with national displays of power in the West, notably sites associated with the 1885 conflict and the North West Mounted Police.¹⁸ Like most other areas of the country at this time, the actions of the federal government were commemorative only; no actions were taken to manage or undertake any preservation or restoration activities at these sites.

Beyond the work done in Saskatoon in 1911, only limited conservation activity involving buildings was taken during this period. In 1924 the Town of Battleford acquired the buildings and grounds of Fort Battleford, an 1876 North West Mounted Police barracks, with the intention of establishing a museum. Similarly, in 1931 the historical society in the City of Prince Albert relocated the 1867 Nisbet Mission Church and School, the oldest building in the community, to the city’s main public park. Used by the first missionary to take up residence in the area, the church, like the Saskatoon schoolhouse, represented the arrival of European values in Prince Albert. The church was to form the centrepiece of an early Canadian example of a historic village, which was then an emerging method to present a desired view of history in a contrived context.¹⁹

In 1936 the provincial government took its first formal action in the area of heritage conservation, authorizing an annual grant to the newly formed Saskatchewan Historical Society (SHS). A provincial version of the previously discussed local historical societies, this move ushered in the second period of historic-place conservation in Saskatchewan, one that would be typified by changing authorship and audiences for historic places in the province.²⁰

At the forefront of activity during this period was the work of A.S. Morton to establish a trust to protect historic places of provincial interest. In 1938, at Morton's suggestion, the province passed an amendment to the *University Act* to establish a trust at the University of Saskatchewan for the purpose of identifying, marking, and acquiring property based on three criteria: historical importance, danger of being "ploughed up" or otherwise lost, and the interest of the people of the locality near the site.²¹ The appointment of two provincial government officials to the five-member committee overseeing the trust represented the first formal steps for the province into the role of heritage authorship heretofore dominated by the academic and social elites. While the activities of the trust were limited to the research and acquisition of a handful of fur trade sites during its seven years of operation, it initiated a trend toward greater government involvement in heritage conservation in Saskatchewan that predated the involvement of neighbouring provinces by almost a decade.²²

Provincial government involvement in the authorship of heritage grew quickly after the 1944 election of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). The CCF's centralized approach to governance was accompanied by a view that the province's historic places were important elements of a Saskatchewan form of nationalism and the post-war tourist economy. An early step in this process was the 1945 transfer of the work of the SHS and the trust to a new Crown agency, the Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB). In fulfilling the historic-marking element of its mandate, the SAB proposed to complete the work initiated by Morton to identify and mark fur trade posts but also valued "sites which are easily accessible and which can be integrated with the Government's other measures for developing the tourist attractions of the province."²³ The view of SAB officials that their work should merely "supplement" the work of the NHSMBC to mark sites reaffirmed the provincial commitment to the imperialistic nature of the national program.²⁴ That said, the 1948 statement that the building of Saskatchewan-based "memories and loyalties" among residents through a historic-marker program was "particularly desirable" hints at future directions for the commemoration of historic places.²⁵

Another step toward the province's burgeoning historic-places program was the government's 1945 acquisition of the former North West Mounted Police buildings in the town of Battleford for the purposes of establishing a police museum. Following the advice of A.S. Morton that "a historic site which should be preserved in memory of the past and for the interest of future generations should never go out of control of the Government," local MLA Joe Phelps, the powerful and impulsive minister of natural resources, at that time had his ministry acquire the property and, in partnership with a local heritage group, undertake modest restoration and research to operate the site as a tourist attraction.²⁶

Developed to present the imperialistic themes of conquest and governance promoted in the National Historic Sites, the government's foray into building ownership and restoration was a significant departure from the marking programs that typified historic-place conservation outside of Eastern Canada.²⁷

However, by 1950 Phelps was out of cabinet and the costs associated with managing and restoring the Battleford museum were not sitting well with provincial officials. Fortunately for the province, officials with the National Historic Sites program contacted the Government of Saskatchewan to inquire about the possibility of transferring the site, which was already designated by the NHSMBC, to their program for operation as the province's first National Historic Park.²⁸ The transfer was completed in 1951, and the government of Saskatchewan was out of the restoration business. The move proved to be fortuitous for the federal authorities as a response to the 1951 *Massey Report*, which was particularly critical of the work of the NHSMBC in Saskatchewan in regards to the preservation of buildings and sites.²⁹

Provincial interest in historic-place conservation did not end with the transfer of the Battleford park. In fact, the years preceding and into the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the province, the Golden Jubilee in 1955, was one of the most significant periods in the history of the sector. The Golden Jubilee was a chance, according to historian Michael Fedyk, to cast off the hardships and insecurities wrought by depression and war and to build anew the perception of Saskatchewan as a promised land.³⁰ In defining and celebrating this new Saskatchewan, the strong association of identity-building and nationalism with historic places previously identified was not lost on provincial officials. Prior to the commencement of Jubilee activities in 1952, a number of defining activities related to heritage conservation were already underway. The historic site work of the Saskatchewan Archives Board was transferred to the province's Department of Natural Resources in 1950 to increase the potential scope and reach of the program, and the *Provincial Parks and Protected Areas Act* was amended to include historic site protection. The department soon established an advisory committee on provincial historic sites comprising government and public members to foster local interest in sponsoring historic sites and developing "a distinctive provincial historic sites marker."³¹ The important role that archaeology plays in building nationalist pride was also recognized when one of the first provincially sponsored archaeology programs in Canada was established in 1951.³²

In 1953 J.D. Herbert, formerly in charge of the Fort Battleford operation, was named director of historic sites and loaned to the Jubilee's Subcommittee on Historic Sites and Publications.³³ The Subcommittee built on past initiatives and quickly set out an aggressive program of site marking that, as James Opp

suggests for the entire Jubilee program, “both relied on and challenged federal institutions and national symbols.”³⁴ Publicly promoted as a program to stimulate feelings of national unity, a majority of the more than fifty places marked followed the traditional themes of the national program.³⁵ However, that these promotional materials also requested public nomination of sites easily accessible to tourists reflected a new inclusion of the public in the authorship process and the heightened importance of tourism in the valuation process. The expressed interest in places associated with immigrant settlement and the 1953 designation of a three thousand-year-old First Nations campsite as one of the first historic sites defied the traditional approach to incorporate places that reflected the relationship between people and the local environment, a key theme in the new Saskatchewan identity.³⁶ It is also worth noting that the dominant role of government officials on the subcommittee marked a shift from academic elites as the primary authors of heritage related to historic places.³⁷

In the years immediately following the Golden Jubilee, resources for historic-place work was limited and primarily directed to completing the ambitious research and marking programs brought forward in 1953. It was not until the early 1960s, when a new province-wide celebration was in the offing, that new energy and focus ushered in the next phase of historic-place conservation.

In his book *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Canada's National Historic Parks and Sites*, C.J. Taylor characterizes the 1960s as “The Era of Big Projects.” During these years, large projects driven by government were common across North America as methods to address social issues and stimulate economic growth. Historic places, viewed primarily as an economic generator through job creation and tourism, benefitted from this trend. Canada's centennial in 1967 and the province's Diamond Jubilee in 1965 presented an opportunity to revisit historic sites as entities that could authenticate the celebrations and the government's projections of identity.

The Saskatchewan Diamond Jubilee and Canada Centennial Corporation, the agency created to coordinate the celebratory activities, called for more informative markers, a series of interpretive displays at places where more information should be provided, and “more extensive development” at a handful of fur trade posts, sites associated with the 1885 conflict, and other places associated with traditional national themes.³⁸ At four of the historic parks established through this work, development featured the reconstruction of several historic buildings, a popular approach to historic-place conservation during the era of “big projects.” In addition to creating jobs and increasing tourism potential, these reconstructions represented images of power and political messages in ways that plaques could not.³⁹ The extensive archaeological research done in advance of these developments, combined with inclusion of a handful of First

Nation sites related to commemorations, reflects a continued interest in the Saskatchewan-rooted identity promoted during the Golden Jubilee.⁴⁰

Another provincial agency that was driven to perpetuate the Saskatchewan identity promoted in 1955 through historic places was the Western Development Museum (WDM). The WDM was established in 1949 to collect artifacts associated with the economic and cultural development of Western Canada. With branches in North Battleford, Saskatoon, and Yorkton, the WDM was influenced by the historic village trend in the United States. The same J.L. Phelps who had been associated with the Fort Battleford project in 1946 became chair of the WDM and announced his intention for the WDM to create a "typical" village at the Saskatoon branch with actual buildings from the 1884 to 1912 period.⁴¹ Progress on this vision was slow, with only the Colony House, the oldest residence in Saskatoon, being relocated to the museum's Saskatoon location. However, a village was established at the North Battleford branch in 1965, and by the late 1970s, almost two dozen buildings had been relocated or reconstructed at this location.⁴²

Federal government activity to conserve Saskatchewan's historic places continued through this period. The NHSMBC designated ten properties between 1960 and 1980, many of which represented previously unrepresented themes in Saskatchewan, such as architectural significance and pre-contact history.⁴³ As well, the National Historic Sites branch began acquiring some of the lands associated with the NHSMBC designations, notably at Batoche, Fort Walsh, and Motherwell Homestead. The branch also undertook research and restoration work to restore many historic buildings at these sites and improve the facilities for public interpretation. In 1970 the growing national interest in architectural significance was given a boost through the launch of the Canadian Inventory of Historic Building, which initiated a systematic process of evaluating pre-1914 buildings. Administered in Saskatchewan as a partnership between the federal and provincial historic sites programs, the most notable impact of this inventory was its work to record urban historic places, which, aside from a handful of government structures, had not fit into the agendas of either the national or provincial historic sites programs to this point in time. The inventory program highlighted the heightened importance assigned to authenticity of place that took hold during this period. Until this time, the historic-marker programs of both the provincial and federal governments centered on the power of the message communicated by the marker, which was merely placed in the general vicinity of the actual place where the events occurred. Increasingly in this period, the focus shifted to a model in which physical place formed the basis of power.

Other developments in the 1970s included a broadened approach to historic-place conservation at the provincial level. In 1975 a new thematic framework

for site recognition was introduced that formally articulated the Saskatchewan identity theme related to the association of people with the land. The theme was divided into four concepts: the land, response to the land, Saskatchewan institutions, and wealth of the land.⁴⁴ Also in that year, the province introduced the Regional Historic Site Implementation Policy to support and encourage the care and recognition of locally significant historic buildings. While the program was designed to share heritage authorship with the community, the public role in this process was minimized by the requirement for assessment by provincial officials regarding the relative significance of the property.⁴⁵ Also notable was the establishment of formal linkages between tourism and the historic parks through the placement of the program within the new Ministry of Tourism and Renewable Resources in 1974.

The other significant action of 1975 was the introduction of the province's first heritage legislation that specifically protected historic places, the *Saskatchewan Heritage Act (SHA)*. Legislation was also *en vogue* elsewhere during this period as the United States passed its *National Historic Preservation Act* in 1966 and UNESCO created the World Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972, which Canada ratified in 1976. In Saskatchewan, the new legislation was, in part, the result of the calls by local heritage groups. In the urban locales, the push for urban redevelopment in the 1960s and the subsequent demolition of several potential heritage buildings resulted in calls from environmental and heritage organizations for legislation and government action to protect buildings. Most vocal was the Saskatoon Environmental Society, whose concerns about buildings in the central business district resulted in an invitation by city council to this organization to get formally involved with the identification of significant buildings.⁴⁶ These local advocacy activities were supported at the national level by the new Heritage Canada Foundation, which was established in 1973 to "work to engage as many Canadians as possible, demonstrate good conservation practices, and catalyze local action and investment."⁴⁷ An early focus for Heritage Canada was to work directly with all provincial governments to implement heritage legislation, a task they accomplished by 1980.⁴⁸

Under the *SHA*, the responsible minister could designate heritage properties owned by the provincial government and create an appointed advisory board to assist with the decision-making process. The province did designate five buildings as "protected property" between 1975 and 1980, four of the five being properties predominately associated with provincial governance.⁴⁹ While a step in the right direction, the *SHA* did not satisfy those urban heritage groups that wanted to ensure the protection of non-government-owned buildings in their communities. In fact, it seems to have furthered their resolve to push for legislation that would allow for local recognition of historic places.

The passage of the *Heritage Property Act* in 1980 ushered in a new period of historic-place conservation in Saskatchewan. The act detailed a tremendous scope of values by which a property could be recognized, and it provided both the province and municipal governments with significant powers to fund, promote, regulate, and designate heritage historic places as heritage property.⁵⁰ While these changes addressed the concerns of community groups and heritage organizations, a by-product of the new legislation was the further governmentalization of heritage authorship in Saskatchewan. Frits Pannekoek has described this process as “the rise of the heritage priesthood.”⁵¹ During the past phase, the provincial government had emerged as the key author of heritage, with support, advocacy, and engagement from a diverse range of community groups. Under the act, a formal relationship was established between the province and municipal governments on issues involving historic places. As well, the authorship of local heritage involving local historic places through the designation process became a municipal council decision. At the provincial level, the Heritage Resources Branch hired many historians and architects to go around and explain the act and to work with municipal officials to help them determine reasons for designation, what interventions to undertake, and generally how to proceed with heritage conservation in their communities.⁵²

However, the records of the Provincial Heritage Resources Branch suggest that for the most part, the needs of individual property owners and community officials were met by the legislation and were honoured to have their local historic places listed on the provincial register.⁵³ As of June 2009, almost 300 of Saskatchewan’s 789 municipalities have designated a heritage property at some point since the act was introduced, and a total of 742 have been designated as municipal heritage property.⁵⁴ The values that the municipalities hold for these properties, articulated in the reasons for designation on the formal bylaw, vary but tend to focus on interpretations of the Saskatchewan identity related to the relationship with the surrounding environment, including relative age of the building within the community and the association with local activities, organizations, and individuals. The most significant association is with religious practices, as over one-third of the municipal heritage properties are religious in nature. By far the most common reason for designation is the simple yet value-laden statement “It’s a landmark in the community.”

The provincial designation program to recognize a place’s significance to the province was initially a closed program; only projects researched by government staff would be forwarded to the minister responsible for consideration. Despite the broad range of themes that were incorporated in two frameworks that were developed by provincial officials to guide the designation process, a high percentage of the early designations were power-laden symbols of pro-

vincial authority: court houses, land titles offices, and government office buildings.⁵⁵ The evaluation form, criteria, and guidelines, except for a few minor corrections and term clarifications, remained unchanged until 2002. In that year, the process of nominations for provincial heritage property was changed to facilitate and encourage the submission of complete nominations from the general public, in place of the former system of department staff researching and preparing all submissions. With this change, it became apparent that the existing quantitative evaluation system presented challenges, as it relied too heavily on “expert” analysis of architectural and economic viability, and offered limited opportunities to draw out the community values that were driving the nominations. As well, the previous system was not easily adapted to archaeological sites, landscapes, and movable property, all eligible for designation under the act. An overhaul of the evaluation process resulted in the quantitative scoring system being replaced by three broad categories of evaluation for proposed provincial heritage properties: conveyance of heritage-related value; representation of important social, cultural, economic, or political history; and demonstration of historical association with persons or events of significance to Saskatchewan.⁵⁶ This shift to a cultural-significance approach and a willingness to share the heritage authorship with the general public appears to be meeting with success. Since 2002, the number of provincial heritage property designations has increased by 40 percent, with the majority initiated by public nominations.

In 2003 Saskatchewan joined the pan-Canadian Historic Places Initiative (HPI). Initiated by the federal government in 2001, the program is focused around the cultural-significance approach and is intended to engage and encourage Canadians to take a more active role in the conservation of historic places. Participation in the HPI provides federal funding to the province’s Heritage Resources Branch to undertake a variety of research and community-engagement activities to build local capacity to protect and promote historic places. As this is a step away from increasing governmentalization of heritage authorship in Saskatchewan during the past fifty years, the full impact of the program remains to be accessed. More time is necessary to determine if this government-public partnership will significantly advance community involvement.

In addition to the federal government’s contribution to historic-place conservation through the HPI program, the NHSMBC recognized twelve additional sites during this period. Most of these places are located in large urban centres.⁵⁷ Some, such as Wanuskewin and Last Mountain Lake Bird Sanctuary, and Seager Wheeler’s Maple Grove Farm, reflect the broader interpretations of heritage value suggested by the cultural-significance model developed by Parks Canada during this period. At the National Historic Parks, Parks Canada com-

pleted the restoration work at Motherwell Homestead and opened the site in 1983. Significant redevelopment was undertaken at Batoche in the early 1980s to refocus the interpretation of the site on post-1885 Métis culture rather than on the conflict itself. This shift of interpretation demonstrates how the authors of historic-place heritage can change their values and use the same place and resources to tell a new story.

Other activities in Saskatchewan have focused on attempts to increase the values represented in the authorship process. The provincial historic parks program followed a similar course to its federal counterparts to change and expand the interpretive messages—most notably through a partnership at Fort Carlton with the Beardy's Okamasis First Nation to interpret the First Nations role in the fur trade at the fort. In 1986 a non-profit organization, the Saskatchewan Architectural Heritage Society, was established to promote the conservation of buildings in the province. Although the society has struggled to maintain membership, it has undertaken a number of initiatives to support the rehabilitation of historic places.⁵⁸ These efforts were complemented in 1991 by the establishment of Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation (SHF) as a provincial crown agency to promote and support local heritage conservation through grant funding and the acquisition of properties to hold in trust. Since its inception, the SHF has acquired and partially rehabilitated one property, the Claybank Brick Plant, and contributed to the successful rehabilitation of hundreds of local historic places through its various grant programs. Also contributing to this work to promote local historic places has been a handful of community-based heritage societies, notably in Regina and Saskatoon.



AS WE APPROACH THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY of historic-place conservation in Saskatchewan, the body of work of the authors of heritage related to historic places can be seen in hundreds of communities across the province. In the establishment of these places, Saskatchewanians have been part of, and occasionally led, national and international approaches to the protection and promotion of historic places. In creating these places, the authors of heritage both reflect and convey a set of values that they hope will find resonance in the future. In this resonance exists a power: the power to define what represents a society and to validate the societal norms and relationships that have enabled the individual or group the opportunity to create this heritage. The conservation of historic places creates a public transcript of these values and power relationships. The history of heritage conservation related to places in Saskatchewan fits well within this story. What began as individual actions

led by academics and the “Western elite” morphed in the 1940s into a government-driven process steeped in community support and then into legislation-based activity dependent on professionals. Historic places represent traditional themes of imperialistic power that dominated the choice of places by both federal and provincial officials until the 1970s. Also included are a growing number of places that embody the relationship between Saskatchewan’s people and its environment, and the role of historic places as tourism destinations, both elements of public policy during and following the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the 1950s. The result today is group of historic places that represent a small but growing group of themes and the personal values of a handful of academics and professionals. However, because of the significant but understudied role that historic places play in informing and influencing the values of the public and their perceptions of history, it remains to be seen whether the places that have been recognized to date are truly representative of the values held by the community or merely reflect what the public has been told are appropriate locations to represent our values and our history. Further work in this area will provide additional insight into the values and power relationships embodied within our heritage and the contributions these landmarks in our communities make to the historical record. *

Notes

- 1 *Daily Phoenix*, 7 April 1911, 8.
- 2 Saskatoon Public Library Local History Room (hereafter cited as LHR), Schools—Little Stone School, William P. Bate, “The Little Stone School,” n.d.
- 3 City of Saskatoon Archives (hereafter cited as CSA), D500 II.17, letter, L.A.R. Straton and W.W.W. Morgan to City Council, 18 April 1911; CSA D500 IV.13, “Finance Committee Reports 1910–1912,” report dated 17 July 1911.
- 4 In this essay, the word *heritage* is defined as those visions, processes, and objects of the past that we choose to engage with and perpetuate for the future. *Conservation* is considered here to be all actions taken to protect and promote places and objects, or elements of those places or objects, that are important for their association with past people, events, ideas, or lifeways. It includes not only efforts to physically repair, restore, or maintain the place or objects, but also activities to identify, recognize, regulate, and raise awareness of and appreciation for the place or object.
- 5 Howard Green, “The Social Construction of Heritage Significance,” *Preservation of What for Whom? A Critical Look at Historical Significance*, ed. Michael A. Tomlan (Ithaca, NY: Council for Preservation of Education, 1998), 87.
- 6 The cultural-significance approach was first articulated in the *Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance*, authored by the Australia chapter of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1979, and has subsequently been implemented in most Western nations.

- 7 The Canadian and international scholarship on this topic has grown significantly during the last decade, including Alastair Kerr, "Considerations for a Values-Based Approach to Heritage Conservation in Canada" (unpublished manuscript); Christina Cameron, "Value and Integrity in Cultural and Natural Heritage: From Parks Canada to World Heritage," in *Capturing the Public Value of Heritage: Proceedings of the London Conference*, ed. Kate Clark (London: English Heritage, 2006): 71–78; Randall Mason, "Fixing Historical Preservation: A Constructive Critique of 'Significance,'" *Places* 15, no. 1 (2003): 85–94; Richard Striner, "Determining Significance: Mind over Matter," in Tomlan, *Preservation of What for Whom*, 137–42; Uffe Juul Jensen, "Cultural Heritage, Liberal Education and Human Flourishing," in *Values and Heritage Conservation: Research Report*, Erica Avrami, Randall Mason, and Marta de la Torre (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2000), 38–43; Ned Kaufman, "Historic Places and the Diversity Deficit in Heritage Conservation," *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 68–85; Kate Clark, "Preserving What Matters: Value-Led Planning for Cultural Heritage Sites," *GCI Newsletter* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2001).
- 8 The relationship between museums, monuments, and historic places and projections of power have been discussed by several authors, notably Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1991), 163–87; "Introduction," in *Museums and the Making of "Ourselves": The Role of Objects in National Identity*, ed. Flora Kaplan (New York: Leicester University Press, 1994), 1–16; Tony Bennett, "The Expeditionary Complex," in *The Birth of the Museum* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 59–88; Stephen Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 3–24; David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 35–73.
- 9 James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2–4. Scott defines the public transcript as the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate.
- 10 Examples include W.F. Lothian, *A Brief History of Canada's National Parks* (Ottawa: Environment Canada–Parks, 1987); C.J. Taylor, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Canada's National Historic Parks and Sites* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1990). The articles featured in the special issue of *Prairie Forum* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1990) focus on heritage conservation in Western Canada.
- 11 This literature has included several publications focused on the challenges of federal heritage agencies to promote a national identity, including Shannon Ricketts, "Cultural Selection and National Identity: Establishing Historic Sites in a National Framework, 1920–1939," *The Public Historian* 18, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 23–41; Yves Yvon J. Pelletier, "The Politics of Selection: The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and the Imperial Commemoration of Canadian History, 1919–1950," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17, no. 1 (2006): 126–50; Walter Hildebrandt, *Views from Fort Battleford: Constructed Visions of an Anglo-Canadian West* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1994); Alan McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance," *Prairie Forum* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 161–98; and Claire Campbell, "On Fertile Ground: Locating Historic Sites in the Landscapes of Fundy and the Foothills," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 17, no. 1 (2006): 235–64. In "Heritage and Authenticity: The Case of Ontario's Sainte-Marie-among-the-Hurons," *Canadian*

- Historical Review* 85, no. 3 (September 2004): 507–31, Alan Gordon considers the sometimes tenuous relationship between history and heritage as it relates to the management of a provincial historic site. James Opp and Michael Fedyk both consider the key role of historic sites in the new provincial identities being promoted in Saskatchewan and Alberta during the 1955 Golden Jubilee celebrations in recent articles: James Opp, “Prairie Commemorations and the Nation: The Golden Jubilees of Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1955,” in *Canadas of the Mind*, eds. Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 214–33; Michael Fedyk, “The Dream Still Lives: Promised Land Narratives during the Saskatchewan Jubilee,” in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, eds. R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 379–404. Geographers Randy Widdis, Brian Osborne, and Patricia Wood published multiple articles on the power relationships among identity, place, and heritage, and landscape architect Susan Buggey reminds us that the discussion of historic places has not been limited to buildings in “Historic Landscape Conservation in North America: Roaming the Field over the Past Thirty Years,” *APT Bulletin* 29, no. 3–4 (1998): 37–42.
- 12 William Morris, *Collected Works of William Morris* (London: Longmans Green, 1914), 22, 316, as in Christopher Miele, “‘A Small Knot of Cultivated People’: William Morris and Ideologies of Protection,” *Art Journal* 54, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 73–79, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_mo425/is_n2_v54/ai_17326658/pg_9.
 - 13 In England, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1877) and the National Trust (1895) are the dominant groups. In the United States, local societies dominated the heritage movement, with Daughters of the American Revolution (1890) and Colonial Dames of America (1889) as key national coordinating agencies. In Canada, like the United States, the action of local societies and chapters were complemented by national agencies, such as the Royal Society of Canada (1882) and the National Landmarks Association (1907). See Michael Wallace, “Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation,” in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and The Public*, eds. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 172–73; Charles Dellheim, *The Face of the Past: The Preservation of the Medieval Inheritance in Victorian England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 88–92; Charles Hosmer, *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the U.S. before Williamsburg* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s and Sons, 1965), 21–272; Taylor, *Negotiating the Past*, 3–31.
 - 14 CSA, D500 II. 17, letter, L.A.R. Straton and W.W.W. Morgan to City Council, 18 April 1911.
 - 15 Don Kerr, “In Defence of the Past: A History of Saskatchewan Heritage Preservation, 1922–1983,” *Prairie Forum* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 279. At least four historical groups formed during this period were involved in identifying sites suitable for “marking” (Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Battleford, and Kamsack). University of Saskatchewan Archives (hereafter cited as USA), Morton Papers MG 2, I.3, letter, A.S. Morton to Thomas Davis, 3 February 1923; letter, W. McWhinney to Dr. Morton, 30 May 1924; University of Saskatchewan Library, Special Collections: MSS C555.2.10.35, letter, A.S. Morton to the Committee of the Prince

Albert Historical Association appointed to locate fur-traders posts in the region under the care of the Association, 11 Nov. n.y.; Colonel F.C. Jamieson, *The Alberta Field Force of '85* (Battleford, SK: Canadian North-West Historical Society, 1931), front inside end sheet.

- 16 See Ricketts, "Cultural Selection"; Pelletier, "Politics of Selection"; and Taylor, *Negotiating the Past* for expanded discussion on this topic. Although a government-sponsored heritage agency related to built heritage was a rarity prior to World War II, the academic and social elite credentials of the NHSMBC's members resulted in an organization more similar to its national and international contemporaries.
- 17 USA, Morton Papers MG2 I.3, letter, J.B. Harkin to A.S. Morton, 11 January 1922.
- 18 While the NHSMBC did recognize three fur-trade sites—Fort a la Corne (1926), Cumberland House (1924), and Fort Carlton (1925)—the majority of sites commemorated were associated more directly with imperialistic themes, including Batoche (1923), Fort Battleford (1923), Battle of Cut Knife Hill (1923), Battle of Duck Lake (1924), Frenchman Butte (1929), Fort Walsh (1924), and Fort Livingston (1923). *List of Designations of National Historic Sites* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, March 2005).
- 19 USA MSS C555/2/10.3 r, Circular from the Prince Albert Historical Society, 3 March 1931. The "traditional village" approach was epitomized by those constructed in the United States at Colonial Williamsburg (1927) and Greenfield Village (1933).
- 20 USA MG 2, I.28, letter, Zachary Hamilton to A.S. Morton containing list of Standing Committee members of the SHS, 20 January 1942.
- 21 USA MG 2, I.28, Minutes of the Provincial Trust Committee, 19 July 1938.
- 22 Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB) R190.2, file 3.1.3.2, "Memorandum on the Administration of Historic Sites in Saskatchewan, Held in Trust by the University of Saskatchewan," n.d. Manitoba government involvement can be traced to the establishment of a historic sites advisory board in 1946, while the Alberta government's formal role did not begin until 1952 with its historic site identification program. See Jean Friesen, "Heritage: The Manitoba Experience," *Prairie Forum* 15, no. 2 (Fall, 1990): 214, and Mark Rasmussen, "The Heritage Boom: Evolution of Historical Resource Conservation in Alberta," *Prairie Forum* 15, no. 2 (Fall, 1990): 240.
- 23 SAB R 190.2, file 2.1.3.2, memo from L.H. Thomas to W.R. Pearn, 3 December 1946.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 SAB R-1902 311, "Archives Board Minute," 13 May 1948.
- 26 SAB R 190.2 3.3, letter, A.S. Morton to J.L. Phelps, 9 September 1944. Phelps was one of the strongest proponents of social ownership of business in the CCF and acquired many companies for his ministry related to resource development. His interest in acquiring and operating the Battleford site would seem to fit this pattern. See Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 346–48.
- 27 SAB R-190.2 3.1, "NorthWest Mounted Police Memorial and Indian Museum," promotional brochure, July 1949.

- 28 Ibid. In 1955 National Historic Sites also acquired the Rectory and Middleton Trench properties at Batoche National Historic Site. See *Batoche National Historic Site Management Plan* (Parks Canada, 1982), 8.
- 29 Taylor, *Negotiating the Past*, 133–34. At the time, Saskatchewan had just 2 percent of the 388 National Historic Sites across the country. During the remainder of the period, the board designated a further six sites in the province, all related to the fur trade, treaty signing, or the 1885 conflict. Even today, Saskatchewan still has the lowest number of sites per capita, with 42 of 943 National Historic Sites, only 4.4 percent of the total. Parks Canada, *Directory of Designation of National Historic Significance*, http://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/lhn-nhs/page3_E.asp?locateinp=&nhsprov=allprov&nhschoice=nhsdesig&list4=Generate+List; The Royal Commission on the National Development in Arts, Letters and Sciences, chap. 20, “Historic Sites and Monuments,” <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/massey/h5-447-e.html>.
- 30 Fedyk, “Dream Still Lives.”
- 31 SAB R190.2 File 3.1.3.2, memo, G.A.L. Hogg to J.B. Brockelbank, 17 February 1950.
- 32 Olga Klimko discusses the tangible, unique, and authentic base for nationalistic thought that archaeology has provided for Western Canada in “Nationalism and Growth of Fur Trade Archaeology in Western Canada,” in *Bringing Back the Past: Historical Perspectives on Canadian Archaeology*, eds. Pamela Jane Smith and Donald Mitchell (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1998), 203–14. Other articles in this book suggest that archaeology was primarily the domain of amateurs, universities, and the federal government until the 1960s, when the majority of the provincial programs were established.
- 33 Kerr, “In Defense of the Past,” 284.
- 34 Opp, “Prairie Commemorations,” 215.
- 35 Saskatchewan Golden Jubilee Committee, “Information on Marking and Preservation of Historic Sites” (1953) and “A Letter to the People of Saskatchewan: A Report on Historic Sites” (1954).
- 36 Ibid.; SAB R-190.2 file 2.94, memo, J.D. Herbert to Subcommittee on Historic Sites, Maps and Publications, 24 July 1953; Jim Wright, *Saskatchewan: The History of a Province* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1955), ix–xi.
- 37 This shift of authorship caused concern for at least one member of the committee, as J.D. Herbert noted in an April 6th memo to Everett Baker. In his reflections on the challenges of timelines and expectations of the Jubilee program, he stated, “[T]he selection of markers, the choice of sites, and above all the wording of inscriptions, imposes a discretionary authority which must sooner or later be challenged. In many cases we have to admit that the choice was simply six of one and half dozen of the other.” SAB R 563 III.16.
- 38 SAB R 229, box 9 51, Saskatchewan Diamond Jubilee and Centennial Corp., “1965–66 Capital Budget Presentation: Historic Sites Division”; SAB R-561 29(a), “Centennial Program: Suggestions for Historical Aspects”; *Guide to Historic Sites and Points of Interest* (Saskatchewan Diamond Jubilee and Canada Centennial Corporation, 1965), 3.

- 39 Shannon Ricketts, "Reconstructions as a Heritage Conservation Tool: Reconstructing Canadian Identity 1950–2000," in *Proceedings: Round Table on Conserving Historic Places: Canadian Approaches from 1950-2000* (University of Montreal, 11–13 March 2009), 1183–87, http://www.patrimoinebati.umontreal.ca/pdf/PV_Table_ronde_2009.pdf
- 40 Volume 8 of *Saskatchewan Archaeology* (1987) features several articles on the history of archaeological research in Saskatchewan, most of which touch on government-sponsored work during the 1960s related to historic sites. SAB R 229 box 9.51, "1965–66 Capital Budget Presentation: Historic Sites Division."
- 41 *The StarPhoenix*, "Long Range Development Plan for Museum Outlined by Phelps," 23 April 1956. The records of the WDM contain several letters to museum organizations in the United States, a 1946 brochure from the Greenfield Village in Dearborn, and a 1954 newspaper feature on the Harold Warp Pioneer Village at Minden, Nebraska. SAB WDM Collection, box 33, file 334, "Pioneer Village Drawings and Ideas."
- 42 SAB WDM Collection, box 21, file 182, "Pioneer Village Correspondence, 1956–1962"; box 56, file 609 "Pioneer Village N.B."
- 43 *Directory of Designation of National Historic Significance*.
- 44 SAB R 1069 VII 3, "Thematic Study of Saskatchewan Heritage," attachment to memo from Joe Jozsa, Director, Tourism and Recreation Planning Branch, to Ian Dyck, Museum of Natural History, 12 May 1975.
- 45 SAB R 1069 VII 3, "Regional Historic Sites Implementation Policy, Appendix E: Historical Considerations in Assessing a Regional Historic Site," attachment to memo from Joe Jozsa to staff, 7 February 1975.
- 46 William Delainey, "The Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee: The Main Issues and Events that Led to Its Development, 1970–1981," *Saskatoon History Review* 14 (1999): 3.
- 47 Natalie Bull, "The Heritage Canada Foundation: Helping Canadians Keep Historic Places Alive," in *Proceedings: Round Table on Conserving Historic Places*, 173.
- 48 Marc Denhez, personal communication, 21 February 2008.
- 49 The list includes the Regina Land Titles Building, the Legislative Building, Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office, and the Saskatchewan Revenue Building. The only non-government property was the Bank of Commerce building in Regina, which was situated in the midst of a government-sponsored retail development.
- 50 The *Heritage Property Act* defines heritage property as "(i) archaeological objects, (ii) palaeontological objects, (iii) any property that is of interest for its architectural, historical, cultural, environmental, archaeological, palaeontological, aesthetic or scientific value; and any site where any object or property mentioned in sub clauses (i), (ii) or (iii) is or may reasonably be expected to be found." It affords both the minister for the act and all municipal councils in Saskatchewan the power to designate heritage property, to regulate changes to properties so designated, and to establish committees, programs, funds, tax concessions, and tools to support

and promote heritage conservation activities. Saskatchewan, *Heritage Property Act*, <http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/documents/English/Statutes/Statutes/H2-2.pdf>.

- 51 Frits Pannekoek, "The Rise of the Heritage Priesthood or the Decline of Community Based Heritage," *Historic Preservation Forum* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 4–10. In this article, Pannekoek warns of the disconnect between the public and historic places that is occurring as a result of growing authority being placed in the hands of professionals.
- 52 Frank Korvemaker, interview by author, 11 April 2008.
- 53 Heritage Resources Branch, Municipal Heritage Property Files.
- 54 *Saskatchewan Directory of Heritage Property*, <http://www.tpcs.gov.sk.ca/heritage-property-search>.
- 55 Mark Rasmussen. "The Initiation of a Heritage Resource Systems Plan for Saskatchewan: Evaluative Framework" (unpublished draft, 1983); Frank Korvemaker, *A Thematic Framework for Managing Saskatchewan's Historic Sites and Structures* (Saskatchewan Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing, 1999). Of the thirty-five places designated a Provincial Heritage Property through 2002, seventeen were associated with national, provincial, or local government.
- 56 "Guide to Preparing a Provincial Heritage Property Nomination," <http://www.tpcs.gov.sk.ca/guide-to-PHP-nomination>.
- 57 *Directory of Designations of National Historic Significance of Canada*, http://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/lhn-nhs/index_e.asp
- 58 Al Gill, personal communication, February–April 2008.

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