

“OUT OF MANY KINDREDS AND TONGUES”:  
RACIAL IDENTITY AND RIGHTS ACTIVISM IN VANCOUVER, 1919-1939

by

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines “race” politics in Vancouver during the interwar period as one origin of human rights activism. Race-based rights activism is a fundamental element of the modern human rights movement and human rights consciousness in Canada. The rhetoric of race-based rights was problematic from its inception because activists asserted equality rights based on an assumption of racial difference – a paradox that persists in human rights rhetoric today. While the late interwar period marks the origin of modern rights rhetoric, it also reveals a parallel turning point in the history of “race.” The racial categories of “Oriental” and “Indian” originated as discursive tools of colonial oppression. But during the interwar period, these categories were being redefined by activists to connote a political identity, to advocate for rights and privileges within the Canadian nation. While many scholars interpret the driving force behind the Canadian “rights revolution” as a response to the work of civil libertarians and the events of the Second World War, I argue that changing interpretations of rights were also a result of activism from within racialized communities.

Interwar Vancouver was a central site for Canadian “race” politics. This type of political activism manifested in response to a range of different events, including a persistent “White Canada” movement; the Indian Arts and Crafts revival; conflict over the sale of the Kitsilano Reservation; the 1936 Golden Jubilee celebrations; sustained anti-Oriental legislation; and a police campaign to “clean up” Chinatown. At the same time, economists and intellectuals in Vancouver were beginning to recognize the importance of international relations with Pacific Rim countries to both the provincial and national economies. When “whiteness” was articulated by businessmen and politicians in City Hall, it was most often used as a means of defending local privileges. In contrast, the “Indian” and “Oriental” identities that were constructed by activists in this period were influenced by transnational notions of human rights and equality. The racial identities that were formed in this local context had an enduring influence on the national debates and strategies concerning rights that followed.

## **List of Abbreviations Used**

B.C.H.A.	British Columbia Historical Association
C.B.A.	Chinese Benevolent Association
C.I.I.A.	Canadian Institute of International Affairs
I.P.R.	Institute of Pacific Relations
N.G.C.	National Gallery of Canada

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## Chapter 1 ~ Introduction

Citizenship regimes include historically specific conceptions of rights. In Canada in the 1940s, the idea of human rights emerged as a new and central element of citizenship. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and in the new human rights laws of the succeeding decades, racial identities played a key role in naming rights. The origins of those racial identities are a part of the history of human rights in Canada. Much of the current literature in that history takes racial identities as commonsense givens. In this thesis, however, I will argue that the racial identities that defined the conceptual framework of human rights in the 1940s and 1950s were first produced as political tools in the interwar years. In this formative period for human rights concepts, British Columbia's history and Vancouver's in particular were central. Here, activists, community leaders, reformers, and intellectuals established racial identities that later structured the human rights movement, in an uneven, sporadic, and contradictory fashion.

Vancouver between 1919 and 1939 was a breeding ground for "race," rights, citizenship, and immigration politics. Its geographic location, demographic make-up, economic vulnerability during the Depression, and political influence in Ottawa made its racial culture both distinctive and nationally significant. Three interconnected processes of racialization were important. First, this period saw the assertion of a new vocabulary of "whiteness" as a racial category. Second, a change occurred in the way "non-white"

racial categories were politicized in these years, most notably in terms of “Chinese” and “Indian.” And finally, in this period a conceptual distinction was being made between *ethnicity*, on the one hand, and *indigenism* on the other.<sup>1</sup> These three processes enabled and produced discourses of “race” that were premised on the assertion of rights, and notions of what it meant to be a Canadian citizen. The way “Chinese” and “Indian” were politicized during the interwar period involved the articulation of what might today be understood as “*race*”-based equality rights. These early interpretations of rights had two notable consequences in the second half of the twentieth century. The assertion of indigenous rights enabled Aboriginal activists to engage in a rights movement in the 1960s and 70s that, at least in theory, precluded the politics of the Canadian nation state.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the assertion of rights of ethnicity that was articulated by, for example, Vancouver’s Chinatown community through the leadership of the Chinese Benevolent Association (C.B.A.) gave rise to a rhetoric that advocated universal rights.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Kallen, in the 1970s the term “ethnicity” was understood by sociologists and policy makers in Canada as “an attribute of an organized and cohesive ethnic group whose members shared distinct bio-cultural attributes which they transmitted from generation to generation through the processes of inbreeding (intra-ethnic mating) and enculturation (distinctive ethnic socialization)” (60). “Indigenous” is a specific type of ethnicity, but, as Kallen argues, is distinct in Canada because it includes “territorial claims based on Aboriginal status” (68). Niezen further expands on this distinction by asserting that while both “ethnicity” and “indigenism” are analytical concepts, “indigenism” is also “an expression of identity” (3). See Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada* (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1982); and Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> For example, the American Indian Movement, which was part of the civil rights movement based primarily out of the United States and active during the 1960s and 70s, functioned as a lobbying group that sent representatives to international forums. These forums included indigenous non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as the various Councils, Committees, Commissions, and conferences focused on indigenous rights and issues organized through the United Nations. See Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism*, 40-45.

This same sentiment of universality was incorporated into Canadian legislation by government officials and policy makers in the latter part of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

Racial tensions characterized the social, economic, and political development of the province. Each of the three most commonly used racial categories in British Columbia – “white,” “Indian,” and “Oriental” – was an amalgam of multiple ethnicities and nationalities. These internal multiplicities were increasingly obscured as each category developed new political meanings in the early twentieth century. In the process of *politicization* which ensued, people organized to manipulate racial designations in order to claim political status and rights. While racial identity is always political, what is striking about the interwar context is the particular way that race was being politicized by local activists, community leaders, reformers, and intellectuals. In this period, racial identities were politicized so as to claim rights and privileges within the Canadian state. In other words, organized advocacy groups argued for the right to work as “Chinese-Canadians”; the right to land and resources as “indigenous Canadians”; and the right to vote, to live, and to make a living as “hyphenated” Canadians. In these politics, racialization was deployed as a means of resisting oppression. At the same time, racialization in this period simultaneously served as a way of guarding privilege. Various civic organizations asserted the right to restrict others from land and resources, and defended the right to political, social, and economic

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<sup>3</sup>For example, in the repeal of s.14(2)(i) of the *Dominions Elections Act* in 1948; followed by the 1960 *Canadian Bill of Rights*; the various provincial Human Rights Acts of the 1960s; Quebec’s 1975 *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*; the 1977 *Canadian Human Rights Act*; and the 1982 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. See pages 24-27 below, for an analysis of the literature that discusses these Acts and Charters.

privilege as “white” Canadians. In all of these discourses – of “whiteness,” indigenism, and ethnicity – “race” was taken as a genetic absolute and racial identity was assumed to be a basis for political solidarity.

At the same time, the differences apparent in the making of specific racial identities provide some explanation for the distinct trajectories that each racial category would take in political rhetoric after the Second World War. First, “whiteness” was often imbued with notions of racial superiority, in contrast with the assertions of equality articulated by “Chinese,” “Japanese,” and “Aboriginal” Canadians. In the aftermath of the Holocaust explicit articulations of racial superiority became taboo, and “whiteness” became an invisible backdrop to the Canadian mosaic. Visible racial and religious minorities emerged as clear-cut political manifestations. Secondly, by the postwar period, a clear distinction was held in the minds of many Canadians between *ethnicity* and *indigenism*. The most striking outcome of this conceptual differentiation is apparent in hindsight, in the removal of “race” as grounds for political exclusion in the Dominion Elections Act that enfranchised “Chinese” and “Japanese” Canadians in 1948, in contrast with the continued disenfranchisement of many “Aboriginal” Canadians until 1960.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Under the *Dominion Elections Act*, 1900, c.12, the federal franchise was extended only to those individuals who had the legal right to vote in a provincial election. In British Columbia, ‘Chinese’ and ‘Hindu’ Canadians were given provincial franchise (and, therefore, also the right to vote federally) in 1947 via the *Statutes of British Columbia*, 1947, c.28, s.14. The following year, “race” was removed as a grounds for exclusion from the federal franchise when s.14(2)(i) of the *Dominion Elections Act* was repealed. However, Japanese British Columbians were not granted the provincial franchise until 1949. Most “Aboriginal” Canadians were also denied the vote via the *Dominion Elections Act*, 1900, c.14 s.2, by virtue of their status under the 1876 Indian Act, and not by virtue of their “race.” Thus, when s.14(2)(i) of the *Dominion Elections Act* was repealed in 1948, this did not apply to “Aboriginal” Canadians, who were granted the federal franchise in 1960.

These developments in Vancouver's racial culture had their roots in the expeditions of the late eighteenth century and the trans-Pacific patterns of migration that followed. Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, individuals from various parts of Europe, China, the Philippines, India, Korea and Japan frequented and inhabited this place that was home to hundreds of distinct "Aboriginal" communities, and that was to become the province of British Columbia. By Confederation, however, only three major racial categories were used by government officials in the interests of governance – the categories of "white," "Indian," and "Oriental."<sup>5</sup> In the decades immediately following Confederation, the creation of the Indian Act, the disenfranchisement of "Chinese" and "Aboriginal" Canadians, and the considerable increase of "whites" in the province as a result of National Policy initiatives by the federal government led to a heightened tension in "race-relations" in the province. During this period, "Indians" and "Orientals" were substantially excluded from the exercise of political rights in the province. Discrimination in a whole host of social and economic spheres led to spatial segregation and economic marginalization. All of these limits to full citizenship, political, social, and economic, were justified by government officials and many "white" Canadians on the basis of the moral qualities that they attached to "Indian" and "Oriental" as racial designations. Most notably, "Chinese" was defined by vice and transience, while "Indian" was characterized by primitivism. On the other hand, the designations of "white" and "European" were linked to the positive moral concepts of settlement and civilization.

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<sup>5</sup> In the archival documents used in this thesis, the term "Asiatic" was also sometimes used interchangeably with "Oriental" during this period.

Racial discrimination in British Columbia persisted well into the twentieth century, but changes in both the national and international realms shed a different light on these conflicts. During the interwar period, these national and international influences explicitly challenged not only the notion but also the viability of “white” supremacy in British Columbia. The interwar period was one of internal political struggle in Canada. Regional dissatisfaction with the federal government appeared in an organized fashion across the country, for example through the rise of the Progressive Party and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in Western Canada. Furthermore, by the 1920s the demographic distribution of the country had shifted from being predominantly rural to increasingly urban, and most people living in the cities depended on waged labour for survival. The stock market crash of 1929 revealed the precariousness of the industrial economy. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, more than half of all Canadians shared the common experience of poverty.<sup>6</sup> The Depression meant different things in the different regions of Canada, as might be expected from a country with distinctive regional histories, demographic patterns, and physical landscapes. Vancouver had the highest per capita income in the country during the 1920s, and British Columbia was one of the provinces most impacted by and slowest to recover from the Depression.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Michiel Horn, “Preface,” In *The Dirty Thirties: Canadians in the Great Depression* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1972), 14.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 236-269.

Vancouver was characterized by patterns of modern Canadian urban life. Its boundaries were permeable and shifting, with transient and non-resident (especially merchant and labour) populations constantly moving in and out of the city core. The city is best understood as the node of a region, a core with inextricable connections to the outlying periphery. Because of the centrality of its port and oceanic orientation, Vancouver was one of the most international and “multiracial” cities in Canada. By 1930, Vancouver had a well established Chinatown, and in the province of British Columbia there was a total “Oriental” population (including the designations of “Chinese,” “Japanese,” “Hindu,” and “Other”) estimated at over fifty thousand.<sup>8</sup> Many of these individuals lived in Vancouver, and were a significant minority in the city’s total population of one hundred and fifty thousand.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the land base of the Aboriginal reserves in the Vancouver agency totaled 17 553 acres.<sup>10</sup> The records for populations counted according to racial designation for the interwar period is patchy, at best. Certain groups of Canadians were identified, counted, tallied, and categorized according to racial designations, but only at specific moments and in response to particular circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978), 170-171.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; Derek Hayes, *Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005), 120.

<sup>10</sup> Canada, *Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report*, 1931.

<sup>11</sup> My understanding of population making as a practice derives from Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). Curtis argues that census making “is inherently a *disciplinary* practice, as Michel Foucault employs that term. It seeks to tie individuals to places within an administrative grid and then to hold them steady so that they may become objects of knowledge and government” (6).

During the interwar years, racialization occurred most explicitly in representations of popular history, in electoral politics, and in the workplace. Spaces like Chinatown and the reserves involved the creation of racially defined populations by tying groups of individuals to a particular place, with real physical boundaries. In the first half of the twentieth century, competition over land and resources gave rise to debates in which these racial and spatial designations were continuously being created and recreated by activists, community leaders, reformers, and intellectuals, as well as by residents of those communities, local politicians, the police, and journalists. In these processes, racial designations were not only imposed on certain communities, but were also asserted as a means of claiming power. Military participation in the First World War by “non-white” Canadians – and indeed, the effects of war itself on local, national, and international circumstances – instigated a shift in processes of racialization during the interwar period. While new and existing legislation reaffirmed earlier social and statutory notions of “race,” these were being contested. In the years following the First World War, a first generation of English speaking, university educated Chinese and Aboriginal Canadians were politically active in Vancouver. New racial identities were being asserted by these British Columbians, which better reflected the diversity, ambiguity, and complexity of society and politics in the interwar period.

The convergence of local circumstances and transnational influences were central to this process of constructing racial identity in the interwar period, and Vancouver’s regional specificity was characterized by the city’s transnational ties. Local



circumstances in Vancouver, most importantly the promotion of a respectable “Chinese” community and an indigenous “Indian” identity, provided activists, politicians, and intellectuals with a concrete foundation from which to develop a rhetoric that advocated political equality regardless of racial difference. Both the “Chinese” and “Aboriginal” communities maintained transnational links well before the outbreak of the Second World War. In the case of the “Chinese,” this was because of their histories as immigrants in conjunction with the longstanding prejudice and segregation these groups experienced in North America. For “Aboriginal” organizations, indigenous rights, by definition, superseded national boundaries. The basis of indigenous rights claims is the assertion of sovereignty, and from this perspective individual “Aboriginal” nations are considered legitimate political entities. Thus, alliances between individual “Aboriginal” nations as well as treaties made between “Aboriginal” and “non-Aboriginal” (i.e., Canadian) nations constitute international agreements.<sup>12</sup> Indigenous rights organizations in the interwar period found solidarity in a sense of “pan-Indianism” that had an international scope and asserted sovereignty by making a unilateral demand to the Canadian federal government for the recognition of “Aboriginal” title.<sup>13</sup>

Many notable leaders of national “race”-based equality rights movements began their careers in Vancouver’s “race” politics in the interwar years. The work of these

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights*, 68-69; Dale Turner, *This is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>13</sup> I make a distinction here between “international” and “transnational” where the former refers to formal agreements made between nation-states, while the latter refers to the more general movement of or relationship between things, bodies, and ideas across national boundaries. Thus, “international” and “transnational” influences are distinct; “international” relations are one type of “transnational” relation; but, “transnational” connections do not always or only manifest in the form of “international” relations.

activists, community leaders, reformers, and intellectuals redefined federal citizenship and immigration policy in the 1940s and afterwards. The language of political equality that emerged in this period was one that often assumed inherent racial difference but asserted political, economic, and social rights despite these differences. This rhetoric of rights was shaped by a confluence of regional and international influences. The expansion of international trade and economic cooperation between the Pacific nations, in particular, highlighted the persistence and distinctiveness of discriminatory legislation against Orientals in British Columbia. While truly international social movements did not occur until the 1970s, the transnational ties that existed within local movements and campaigns for social justice gave rise to a common assertion of universal rights – a fundamental premise of modern human rights rhetoric.

This thesis highlights the significance of Vancouver as a place where “race” politics proliferated at a crucial point in the history of rights in Canada, and became formative to the development of a Canadian rights discourse. This case study is also significant because Vancouver offers multiple perspectives on “race,” where the categories of “white,” “Oriental,” and “Indian” can be examined together.<sup>14</sup> This perspective is useful, because it reveals what continues to be a key point of conflict in contemporary debates over human rights and ideas like multiculturalism. Historical understandings of rights discourses based on racial identities continue to influence

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<sup>14</sup> The various derivations of the terms “white,” “Oriental,” and “Indian” (including “Chinese,” “Japanese,” and “Aboriginal”) as well as the term “race,” are set in quotations in this first section of the introduction, to reinforce the constructed (and therefore subjective and historically specific) nature of these categories of identity. For the sake of clarity, however, hereafter quotations are only used around these terms to provide additional emphasis.

contemporary politics, albeit in the language of human rights. One of the greatest difficulties, as well as the most salient aspects of this project is that the very subject of study – racialization – also constitutes a primary obstacle in that this type of politicization reinforces racial difference.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the human rights discourse assumed by the Canadian government in the postwar period promoted an ideal of equality based on an assumption of racial, ethnic, and cultural difference – a point of conflict that persists to this day.

### ***Historiography***

This dissertation is positioned at the intersection of two literatures: the historiography of race and that of the human rights movement. The first part of the following historiographical analysis identifies several important conceptual foundations that have been established in the extant literature on “race” in Canadian history. The works discussed here show that imperialist notions of racial order were central to the Canadian project of nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but that by the mid-twentieth century, transnational ideas of human rights and equality engendered a shift in Canadian discourses of race. Both of these discourses – of an imperialist racial order and of human rights and equality – simultaneously influenced processes of racialization in this period. The second part of this historiographical analysis examines several works on the history of human rights in Canada. While scholars agree

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<sup>15</sup> For a thorough and insightful analysis of this paradox of “naming,” see Denise Riley, *“Am I That Name?”: Feminism and the Category of “Women” in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

that a key component in the intellectual trajectory of human rights history was a notion of egalitarianism and social rights which precluded the politics of the nation-state, the historiography tends to focus almost exclusively on international politics and organizations. This focus has obscured the role of grassroots race-based equality rights activism, including pro-white activism, in the broader history of human rights in Canada.

### ***The Race Literature***

As Jo-Anne Lee and John Lutz have pointed out, history shows that “we stand on the bedrock of earlier forms of racial consciousness.”<sup>16</sup> This means that historians of race themselves write from within particular experiences that are shaped by *racialization* – the social process of constructing/producing race consciousness.<sup>17</sup> As a result, the race historiography is marked by two limitations. First, there is a tendency to conflate histories of racism with the history of race. Although, as Lee and Lutz rightly assert, racism is inherent to racialization, even in processes that are deployed and presented in a positive light (i.e., as not racist but instead as contributing to such conventional ideals in political discourse as *liberty, equality, and justice*)<sup>18</sup> – the histories of racism and racialization in Canada, while closely connected, are not the same. Secondly, the multiplicity inherent to race history is characterized by isolation rather

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<sup>16</sup> Jo-Anne Lee and John Lutz, eds., *Situating “Race” and Racisms in Time, Space, and Theory: Critical Essays for Activists and Scholars* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Miles, *Racism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 99-103. Although Miles uses the spelling *racialisation*, I follow Lee and Lutz’s usage of *racialization*.

<sup>18</sup> Lee and Lutz, *Situating Race*, 13-14.

than cohesion. In the Canadian context, this second limitation manifests in the separation of Aboriginal from race histories, as well as the separation of histories of whiteness from other race histories.

Two influential works that examine the history of racism in Canada are Angus McLaren's *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* and Mariana Valverde's *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1880-1925*. Both *Our Own Master Race* and *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, published in 1990 and 1991, provide evidence that discourses of Canadian nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were intensely racialized. In *Our Own Master Race*, McLaren examines the broad appeal of eugenics in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada. In this period, various politicians, social reformers, church officials, intellectuals, and scientists advocated eugenics theory as a means towards the "betterment" of the Canadian "race." McLaren argues that although the popularity of eugenics theory in Canada peaked in the 1930s, this movement was immediately checked by "the horrors that resulted" from the Second World War.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, McLaren's assertion that Canadian eugenicists were driven by progressivism, altruism, and a certain degree of utopianism rather than *racism* highlights a widespread assumption of racial order that permeated Canadian society.

In Valverde's argument, this notion of racial order provided one intellectual basis of the social purity movement, and was incorporated as part of a "certain cultural

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<sup>19</sup> McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, 9.

consensus” that was established by the 1920s in English Canada.<sup>20</sup> *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water* traces the roots and development of social purity ideology among bourgeois intellectuals. This work can be read as a study of a nationalist-imperialist defence of racial order. The social purity movement, an urban “philanthropic project to reform or ‘regenerate’ Canadian society,” influenced the development of state institutions and Canadian nationalism in the decades following Confederation.<sup>21</sup> In her chapter on immigration policy, Valverde demonstrates how the assertion of Canadian nationalism in the twentieth century – in some cases, of a “Canadian race” – was premised on imperialist notions of race, sexuality, and morality.<sup>22</sup> In essence, these two authors establish that in much of English Canada, by the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, “white” had become the norm for “Canadian.”

European expansion and conquest was justified by a racial typology which accorded both biological and cultural supremacy to the white race.<sup>23</sup> This typology was generally accepted as “common sense” by many Canadians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>24</sup> In the 1930s, however, scientific opinion shifted away from the view that physical differences dictated intellectual and behavioral differences,

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<sup>20</sup> Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 15.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-128.

<sup>23</sup> George Frederickson, *Racism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 49-95.

<sup>24</sup> James W. St. George Walker, “Race,” *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada* (The Osgood Society for Canadian legal History and Sir Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997), 13-14.

towards what James St. George Walker describes as “biological-cultural ambiguity.”<sup>25</sup> This emerging scientific opinion, which questioned an exclusively physiological basis for defining “race,” corresponded with the birth of a neologism as a criticism of the colonial perception of race. The term “racism” first came into usage during the 1930s, as a reaction of the Western World to the anti-Semitic activities of the Nazis.<sup>26</sup> In Canada, the emergence of this term in common parlance and the events of the Second World War marked a decisive shift towards the crystallization of anti-racist movements, both in political rhetoric and in the popular mind. Thus, in the interwar period, a persistent colonial mindset which assumed racial order provided the conceptual backdrop for an emerging discourse of human rights in Canadian politics.

As Constance Backhouse and James St. George Walker have demonstrated, akin to the late nineteenth to early twentieth century project of nationalism, Canadian legal history is also marked by the persistence of a racist colonial mindset. Backhouse’s *Colour Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* and Walker’s “Race,” *Rights and the Supreme Court of Canada* provide three common conceptual bases for analyzing race. First, this approach argues against a “myth of racelessness,” or the general denial by many Canadians of racism in both the past and present, and a widespread belief in Canadian society as one that has been characterized by tolerance, peace, and order.<sup>27</sup> Second, both scholars assert the mutability of race, as a social construct and as a “legal

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>26</sup> Frederickson, *Racism*, 5; see also, Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: The Osgoode Society by U of T Press, 1999), 285, fnnt 14.

<sup>27</sup> Backhouse, *Colour-Coded*, 13-14; Walker, “Race,” *Rights and the Law*, 3,4, 307-308.

artifact.”<sup>28</sup> Finally, Walker and Backhouse conclude that systemic racism was prevalent in early twentieth-century Canadian society, evidence of which manifested in the legal proceedings that are the subject of these two monographs.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, as Backhouse argues, “as deeply rooted, multilayered, and systemic as racism was in Canadian society, it was not monolithic in the sense that historians sometimes purport it to be.”<sup>30</sup> Through an analysis of six court cases that were heard between 1903 and 1946, Backhouse provides evidence of resistance to racism from within “racialized communities” as well as white participation in anti-racist action to argue that racism did not occur in “a moral vacuum.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, the myth of racelessness was always contested. Further, Backhouse identifies a widespread shift in the “rhetorical analysis of race” by the 1930s, from the language of imperialism to the language of human rights.<sup>32</sup> Backhouse offers little explanation for this shift, except to gesture briefly in the general direction of “scientists,” “legislators,” Hitler, and the Second World War.<sup>33</sup> Walker also identifies the 1930s as a turning point in race history, which he attributes to “emerging scientific opinion” that led to a change in “scientific orthodoxy.”<sup>34</sup> Although the reasons for this shift are peripheral to the analytical focus of

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<sup>28</sup> Walker, “Race,” *Rights and the Law*, 302; see, also, 6; and, Backhouse, *Colour-Coded*, 8-12.

<sup>29</sup> Walker, “Race,” *Rights and the Law*, 303; Backhouse, *Colour-Coded*, 275.

<sup>30</sup> Backhouse, *Colour-Coded*, 275; see, also, 10.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 276; 278.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Walker, “Race,” *Rights and the Law*, 16.



*Colour-Coded* and *“Race,” Rights and the Law*, which is, in both cases, the history of racism rather than racialization – the notion that *something* changed in the interwar period that led to a reconceptualization of race relations in Canada is fundamental. This idea of a mid-century shift provides the chronological logic for both studies, as well as an analytical framework. Understanding the interwar period as one where concepts of race were characterized by ‘biological-cultural ambiguity’ enables historians to describe and explain resistance to systemic racism.

Both scholars also agree that the changes which occurred in the interwar period were a result of transnational influences, a subject that Walker does expand on, although not in reference to the rhetorical shift that Backhouse describes. One of Walker’s key contentions is that “Canadian law... provided a mechanism for the local manifestation of principles that were broadly current throughout Western civilization and beyond.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, transnational (or, external) influences shaped Canadians’ lived experiences. Walker uses the example of Canadian immigration laws, which, he argues, were based on “transnational stereotypes and racial doctrines.”<sup>36</sup> These global sensibilities translated into immigration laws and the accompanying legal devices that were put in place to regulate employment, education, and civil rights in accordance with transnational racial stereotypes and doctrines. According to Walker, this produced a “common sense” notion in Canada that colour equated to social status, which in turn

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

reinforced transnational stereotypes at a local level.<sup>37</sup> In this interpretation, local expressions of racism in Canada were defined by global trends – specifically, imperial and colonial racial stereotypes and doctrines.

This thesis builds on Walker’s assertion that the history of race in Canada is not only the story of local experience, but includes external/global/transnational influences as well. Where Walker focuses on how stereotypes and racial doctrines informed a specifically Canadian form of racial discrimination, the following thesis incorporates a second global paradigm that was influential in Canada during the interwar period. Transnational discourses of human rights, including race-based equality rights, also played a role in Canadian race history. As Kenneth Cmiel has argued, human rights discourse is a “universalistic idiom [which] acquires local meanings that are fought over and evolve over time... It is the careful and constant interplay between local and global, between specific political settings and grand political claims that promises to contribute to knowledge.”<sup>38</sup> This study of Vancouver interprets local manifestations of the convergence of these two transnational paradigms – of racial doctrines and human rights principles – as central to the history of race in Canada. From this perspective, writing the history of race involves recognizing processes of racialization that are not primarily characterized by racism.

These four works, by McLaren, Valverde, Backhouse, and Walker are national in scope, and speak to the importance of “race” in Canadian history as a whole. Two

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 304-305.

<sup>38</sup> Kenneth Cmiel, “The Recent History of Human Rights,” *American History Review* 109:1 (February 2004): 126.

notable patterns arise out of this common effort to discover a Canadian race history. First, each study focuses primarily on racism; and secondly, as a consequence of this first point, whiteness is the only racial category that is consistently represented as a self-consciously politicized identity. This fixation on racism is also apparent in many of the histories of particular categories of race, and in the histories that have been told from a regional perspective. In these accounts, what often occurs is that scholars tend to isolate categories of race in their analyses, and the result is a dichotomous interpretation of race-relations. This approach has given rise to rich subfields in Canadian and, in particular, British Columbian history that are defined by racial categorizations. There is a comprehensive literature on Chinese, Japanese, South Asian communities' histories, on the one hand, and Aboriginal history, on the other.<sup>39</sup> Scholars

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<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978); Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858–1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989) and *The Oriental Question*, 55-130; Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Peter S. Li, *The Chinese in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998); Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999). See also, Norman Buchignani, Doreen M. Indra, and Ram Srivastava, *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985); and Kamala Elizabeth Nayar, *The Sikh Diaspora In Vancouver: Three Generations Amid Tradition, Modernity, and Multiculturalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). For examples of Japanese Canadian history, see Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was: A History of Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982); Masumi Izumi, "The Japanese Canadian Movement: Migration and Activism Before and After World War One" *Amerasia Journal* 33:2 (2007): 49-66; Shannon Jette, "Little/Big Ball: The Vancouver Asahi Baseball Story" *Sport History Review* 38:1 (2007): 1-16; and Michiko Midge Ayukawa, *Hiroshima Immigrants in Canada, 1891-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008). The literature on Aboriginal history includes Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977; 1992); Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992); Harris, Cole. *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance and Reserves in British Columbia*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002; Hugh Shewell, *Enough to Keep them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); and Jean Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing 2005).

in these fields have contributed significantly to broader understandings of the history of race in Canada.

The subfield of Aboriginal history has been unquestionably influential in the literature on British Columbia. One such study that effectively examines processes of racialization is Paige Raibmon's *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast*. Raibmon describes the production of a dichotomy that simultaneously drew from and informed relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The dichotomy she examines is between notions of what constituted 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' Aboriginals, with particular rights as well as restrictions attached to each category. Raibmon's argument is premised on the idea that authenticity was not a given; rather, it was "a shifting set of ideas that worked in a variety of ways toward a variety of ends."<sup>40</sup> In late nineteenth-century North America authenticity was continuously being reproduced, altered, adjusted, and used for a broad range of purposes by government officials, settlers, missionaries, reformers, Aboriginal people, and most significantly by anthropologists.

Authenticity, in Raibmon's interpretation, involved the commodification of Aboriginal culture and its presentation in the form of timeless, unchanging exhibits. Exhibition has been interpreted as fundamental to a specifically European way of ordering and understanding the world. Timothy Mitchell argues that in nineteenth-century Europe, exhibition did not occur exclusively at organized events like the World

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<sup>40</sup> Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the late-nineteenth-century Northwest Coast*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 3.

Exhibition. This way of “organizing the view,” of “rendering up the world as a thing to be viewed,” of ordering the world “so as to represent” – could be found in places like museums, theatre, public gardens, zoos, the farms of the countryside, and the streets and facades of the cities. The world was arranged as objects that signified meaning, as representations. Representation separated meaning from materiality. According to Mitchell, ‘world as exhibition’ is a distinctly European colonial perspective, a persistent, pervasive and all-encompassing way of understanding and ordering the world premised on separation, dualism, and binary.<sup>41</sup> Material objects, things and bodies, were the objects of study, understood as detachable and isolated from their contexts of meaning. Inauthenticity was change and adaptability, a function of the mind and the marketplace. In Raibmon’s account, racial identity is both produced and sidelined by concerns for authenticity, in the interests of science, colonization, and governance.

In this thesis, I further suggest that the dichotomy of authentic/inauthentic was the product of several forces. Two exerted and especially formative influences are as follows. First, the need to distinguish authentic from inauthentic in the study of Aboriginal people had partial roots in the professionalization of the sciences which occurred in the late-nineteenth century, and which relegated Aboriginal scholarship to the realms of anthropology *as distinct* from history. In particular, this dichotomy was reproduced by the methodological and ideological premises of early ethnographers whose research required field work which positioned the scholar as impartial observer

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<sup>41</sup> Timothy Mitchell, “The World as Exhibition,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31:2 (April 1989): 221-222.

and Aboriginal people as objects. Secondly, this particular dichotomy was not an isolated perspective but part of a larger world view – an imperialist mindset that was premised on an assumption of multiple dichotomies, or a binary perspective.<sup>42</sup> This perspective translated into absolute distinctions between people, in accordance with racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic, and geographic differences. This thesis borrows from Raibmon’s approach in asserting that during the interwar period in Canada, “race,” like “authenticity,” was a “shifting set of ideas” embedded in a colonial discourse.

### ***Intersection***

Three key conclusions may be reached from the collective works of these scholars of race history. First, in the writing of history, the concept of racialization can be successfully integrated with the principle of maintaining real people and their interactions with other people as a focus of historical analysis. Secondly, there exists an important and mutually determining relationship between the discursive categories (such as race, class, and gender) that inform these human interactions. Finally, these discursive categories are inherent to the political discourses of imperialism, colonization, and nation. In accordance with this perspective, I argue in this dissertation that racialization was intrinsic to questions of citizenship and rights in early twentieth-century Canada. More specifically, processes of racialization were essential to the

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<sup>42</sup> For more in this vein, see Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

genesis of distinctly Canadian interpretations of citizenship and human rights, and of the nature of the relationship between citizenship and human rights. In Vancouver, the large presence of Asian and Aboriginal populations as compared to Southern Ontario and Quebec, and the absence of a francophone “natural” working class, gave these racialized groups more political significance. Race relations in Vancouver were also less binary than in places like Nova Scotia, where the black/white dichotomy dominated. Instead, notions of race rights were more attuned to the concept of collective rights, and the case of Vancouver made a notable contribution to the development of Canadian race relations more broadly. In the Canadian context, scholars have yet to fully integrate the theory and substance of the current race literature into discussions of citizenship and rights, despite the fact that one of the ideological pillars of the “rights revolution” in post-war Canada was the demand for racial equality.

### ***The Rights Literature***

This thesis opens with the claim that citizenship regimes include historically specific conceptions of rights. The notion of “citizenship regimes” is defined by Jane Jenson as the “discourses, as well as the practices which result from... visions of the proper form of the triangular relationship among the state, the market and communities.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, establishing the rights and obligations of both citizen and state are part of the state’s project of regulating relations between markets and

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<sup>43</sup> Jane Jenson, “Fated to Live in Interesting Times: Canada’s Changing Citizenship Regimes,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 30:4 (December 1997): 629.

communities. Jensen identifies the Second World War as the starting point of a distinct citizenship regime which culminated in the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and which she describes as a “profoundly liberal citizenship regime.”<sup>44</sup> Jensen defines this liberal regime as one in which the state took an active role in promoting social justice and in guiding economic development. This was done through a “pan-Canadian” strategy, which “recognized a single Canadian community albeit one composed of francophones and Anglophones, as well as individuals of diverse ethnic origins.”<sup>45</sup> There is an important paradox in this conception of the postwar citizenship regime, which, as Jensen demonstrates, has been a point of contention in the past 30 years for both Quebec nationalists as well as neo-liberal critics who speak from the current “era of globalization.”<sup>46</sup> This paradox lies in the attempt to accommodate the conflicting notions of pan-Canadianism and individual rights into a common conception of citizenship. In Jensen’s interpretation, two outcomes of this paradox were the Canadian government’s adoption of multiculturalism as official policy in 1971 and the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms.<sup>47</sup>

Chronology is vital to understanding one important aspect of this paradox of human rights, which lies at the intersection of race history and the history of rights in Canada. However, neither the race nor the rights literature has yet clearly identified the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 637.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 634.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 643.

<sup>47</sup> For a historiographical discussion on the literature on human rights which interprets human rights as paradoxical, see Cmiel, “The Recent History of Human Rights,” 132-133.



origins or timing of race-based equality rights activism. In his work on race relations in British Columbia, Peter Ward argues that the sinophobia which developed in the years following Confederation, illustrated by various restrictive laws surrounding immigration and enfranchisement as well as the 1907 Vancouver race riots, persisted into the interwar period “largely independent of social and economic circumstances.”<sup>48</sup> Patricia Roy follows a similar narrative, with her focus in *The Oriental Question* on the reasons for hostility against Orientals, the racial prejudice that led to the 1923 Exclusion Act, and the internment of the Japanese during the Second World War. In *The Triumph of Citizenship*, Roy argues for a paradigm shift following the Second World War, where the decline of racism and beginning of a movement towards the gradual inclusion of the Chinese and Japanese into full citizenship comes about after 1941. In their assessments of specific minority groups, Ann Gomer Sunahara, Kamala Elizabeth Nayar and Wing Chung Ng’s monographs concentrate on the formation of cultural identity within the Canadian nation in the post-World War Two period. Jean Barman’s survey of British Columbia’s history primarily examines the economic situation in the province during the interwar period.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 119.

<sup>49</sup> Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003); idem, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941-67* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007); Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism*; Kamala Elizabeth Nayar, *The Sikh Diaspora In Vancouver: Three Generations Amid Tradition, Modernity, and Multiculturalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999); Barman, *West Beyond the West*. Two notable works that do identify and analyse this period in some depth as fundamental to the movement towards full citizenship for non-white Canadians are Hugh Shewell’s *Enough to Keep Them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) and Kay Anderson’s *Vancouver’s Chinatown*.

In the same way, scholars of human rights have focused on the 1940s and beyond in their interpretations of Canadian history. These authors assert that the circumstances brought about by the Second World War instigated and enabled the era of human rights in Canada. For example, Evelyn Kallen argues that “although there were isolated legislative attempts to overcome ethnic discrimination in Canada as far back as the 1930s... it was not until the end of WWII that an interest in anti-discrimination developed.”<sup>50</sup> Michael Ignatieff bypasses the interwar period entirely in his published lectures, and begins his discussion with the Second World War.<sup>51</sup> Christopher MacLennan affirms that demands for a national bill rights as indicative of a shift in how Canadians perceived of rights and the government’s role in protecting rights arose as a response to the myriad of human rights abuses and racism that occurred during the Second World War period, both within Canada and Europe.<sup>52</sup> Dominique Clément focuses on one aspect of rights history, the human rights associations, which emerged as such in the post-war period and were most active in the 1960s and 70s.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, Ross Lambertson’s stated thesis is that “before the Second World War, there was scant mention of human rights in international law, and the Charter of the League of Nations

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<sup>50</sup> Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada* (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1982), 43.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *The Rights Revolution* (Toronto: Anasi, 2000).

<sup>52</sup> Christopher MacLennan, *Toward the Charter: Canadians and the Demand for a National Bill of Rights* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> Dominique Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-1982* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

contained no explicit mention of the concept... only marginal figures talked about human rights, and no politician took them seriously.”<sup>54</sup>

Although attention to the interwar period is sparse, historians have identified two notable back stories to the human rights story in Canada. One of these is the arrest of Tim Buck and the Toronto Eight, and the subsequent campaign of the civil libertarians; another is the longstanding grievances of Quebec in terms of linguistic and religious rights.<sup>55</sup> However, I argue that there is an important element missing from this narrative: the origins of race-based equality rights activism. This activism has roots in the early twentieth century, in the often contradictory process of politicizing racial identity. In the Western world, this was a process instigated by the First World War and further intensified by the effects of the economic depression of the 1930s. More importantly, this was a process that was dependent on regional circumstances, and which came from within marginalized and racialized communities.

The existing body of literature on human rights in Canada does provide a clear narrative which extends through both the colonial and national periods. In his study of the Canadian Bill of Rights, Christopher MacLennan identifies the origins of the Canadian human rights tradition in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century ideas of natural rights, which were enshrined in the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and the 1791

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<sup>54</sup> Ross Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance: Canadian Human Rights Activists, 1930-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>55</sup> For more on civil libertarians, see, for example, MacLennan, *Towards the Charter*, 14-20; Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance*, 25-32. For more on the French Canadian origins of rights see, for example, José E. Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006): 16-35; and Ignatieff, *Rights Revolution*, 55-84.

United States Bill of Rights. In this narrative, natural rights theory was superseded by a legal-positivist mindset in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the tradition of Edmund Burke and Jeremy Bentham. And, in accordance with the 'Western Civilizations' trajectory, MacLennan concludes that the development of rights ideology remained static "until the emergence of fascism and the outbreak of the world's second major war in a generation."<sup>56</sup> Ross Lambertson similarly engages primarily with Western traditions in his study of the origins of human rights ideologies in Canada. In *Repression and Resistance*, Lambertson concurs with MacLennan that by Confederation, Canadian officials and policy makers distinguished themselves from the American government by rejecting natural rights theory in favour of a legal-positivist approach. Even though the fathers of Confederation consciously rejected natural rights theory in drafting the Canadian constitution, both scholars agree that both the French and American revolutionary traditions as well as the British civil liberties tradition inspired and informed the rights revolution in Canada following the Second World War.<sup>57</sup> However, at Confederation and until the mid-twentieth century, the Canadian constitution assumed "cherished British values," implying such "statutes, conventions, and legal principles as the Magna Carta, the 1689 Bill of Rights, responsible government, the rule

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<sup>56</sup> MacLennan, *Towards the Charter*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> Dominique Clément similarly points to the 18<sup>th</sup> century revolutions, the rise of liberal capitalist democratic states, the English Bill of Rights (1689), the French Declaration of the rights of Man and the Citizen (1789), and the United States Bill of Rights (1791) as the origins of our modern language of rights in "I Believe in Human Rights, Not Women's Rights': Women and the Human Rights State, 1969-1984" *Radical History Review* 101 (Spring 2008): 107-129.

of law, [and] the common law rights of free speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association, and the right to a fair trial.”<sup>58</sup>

But there is more than one conception of rights in Canadian history, and this conventional rights narrative gives short shrift to alternative currents. The conventional narrative argues that the Canadian government assumed a British legal-positivist tradition. This tradition, with its focus on the individual and the protection of property, suppressed any substantial discussion of rights talk until the social revolutions of the mid-twentieth century. Such an interpretation falls in line with Ian McKay’s contention that Canadian nation-building was a project defined by a hegemonic liberal ideology.<sup>59</sup> This approach to understanding Canadian history has been fruitful. However, the liberal order paradigm, and the parallel tendency in the rights literature to adhere to a Eurocentric narrative, has some limitations. One of these limitations, as E.A. Heaman has argued in “Rights Talk and the Liberal Order Framework,” is that the idea of hegemonic liberalism has obscured a key component of the rights narrative. Heaman agrees with McKay that “hegemonic liberalism was characterized by an obsession with property, and with individual autonomy which was also at issue in this case.”<sup>60</sup> But, as she points out, there is a problem in McKay’s conception of the origins of “rights talk.” First, McKay makes a distinction (and connections) between “rights and equality” and

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<sup>58</sup> Lambertson, *Resistance and Repression*, 17. See also, MacLennan, *Towards the Charter*, 8.

<sup>59</sup> Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A prospectus for a reconnaissance of Canadian history” *The Canadian Historical Review* 8:4 (December 2000): 617-634.

<sup>60</sup> E.A. Heaman, “Rights Talk and the Liberal Order Framework” in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 152.

“property and individualism.” In this distinction, rights and equality refers to social and cultural rights, or what we now understand as human rights. Property and individualism, on the other hand, refers to political and economic rights, or what we understand as civil rights. In McKay’s interpretation, in the period immediately following Confederation, civil rights took primacy “in modern liberalism and particularly in its hegemonic version.” Accordingly, liberal discourses of social and cultural rights – what came to be defined as “human rights” – did not develop in Canadian political rhetoric until the Second World War. On this point, Heaman agrees. What she contributes is the consideration of another discourse, admittedly less influential but nonetheless important, which co-existed with McKay’s “hegemonic” liberalism.

A continuous conservative discourse of rights, as Heaman demonstrates, has existed throughout colonial and Canadian national history since the mid-eighteenth century. This “vibrant tradition” was historically based in “the rights of Englishmen and British subjects.”<sup>61</sup> The conservative tradition of rights talk includes the 1764 protest civilian protest against Governor James Murray’s military rule over Quebec, the early nineteenth-century French Canadian reformers represented by Louis Joseph Papineau and the *Rouges*, and Métis and Aboriginal rights claims throughout the nineteenth century. The distinction Heaman makes between hegemonic liberal rights talk and conservative rights talk is that conservative rights were “collective, social, or historical rights,” and therefore, *not* individual.<sup>62</sup> This meant that conservative claims to rights

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

“owed everything to the individual’s relationship to place, neighbour, authority, and nothing to the abstract accoutrements of the human being.”<sup>63</sup> For example, the Métis and Aboriginal protests against colonial intrusions in the late nineteenth century were conservative in that they were about asserting “the right to their continued way of life on the land... and thus a right that existed in their customs and traditions as a people, perhaps even as an Aboriginal people.”<sup>64</sup>

One of Heaman’s most important contributions to the literature is the notion that these conservative (or ‘anti-liberal’) discourses of rights were as influential as the ‘hegemonic’ liberal discourse in defining rights in modern Canada. The Canadian rights revolution has origins in the Western liberal tradition, but the historical narrative can be expanded to accommodate Heaman’s contention of the significance of anti-liberal discourses. As John Ralston Saul has pointed out, Canada is a product of multiple cultures including non-Western influences, most notably indigenous and non-Western immigrant contributions. As such, an exclusive focus on the Western liberal tradition in examining the origins of the rights revolution in Canada is problematic. In *A Fair Country*, Saul argues that the political, cultural, social, and legal bases of this nation are rooted not only in British, but also in French as well as Aboriginal traditions.<sup>65</sup> This argument holds some striking parallels with Heaman’s contentions for the existence of a conservative rights discourse amongst French and Aboriginal Canadians. Essentially,

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>65</sup> John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada* (Toronto: Viking Press, 2008).

these counterarguments to the concept of liberal hegemony mean that the rights revolution in Canada can be re-examined according to a broader understanding of rights-oriented social and political mobilization in Canada prior to the Second World War. This understanding would incorporate Heaman's conservative rights discourse as well as Saul's contention that Canada is, at its core, a Métis nation.

One interpretation of the rights revolution that provides an explanation for the absence of conservative rights discourse, *métissage*, and the contributions of French, Aboriginal, and non-European immigrants in the conventional rights narrative is José Igartua's *The Other Quiet Revolution*. Igartua argues that the English Canadian identity was predominantly defined as "British" in both official and popular rhetoric until the advent of multiculturalism in the 1960s. While Igartua's tendency to distil Francophobia among English Canadians into "racism" downplays the significance of religious and socio-economic difference, this argument is useful because it takes racial identity as its focus. The book begins in 1945, and explores how representations of the Canadian national identity as "British" were challenged by French Canadians, Japanese Canadians, civil rights activists, and in the public debates over immigration. More importantly, Igartua argues that these challenges and debates "were grounded in racial definitions of Canada."<sup>66</sup> Thus, the discursive and conceptual transformation of Canadian national identity in official policy as well as in the popular imagination – from Canada as a British colony (and white settler society) to Canada as a multicultural nation – was thoroughly racialized.

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<sup>66</sup> Igartua, *Other Quiet Revolution*, 13.



This transformation of national identity that occurred in the mid-twentieth century in Canada was, of course, part of the human rights revolution. As Igartua contends, until the 1960s, official government rhetoric as well as popular rhetoric was racialized so that 'Canadian' implied British, Anglo, and white. The predominance of this type of racialized discourse in the archival sources means that alternative discourses not preserved in government documents or mainstream newspapers tend to be neglected. In other words, the chronology of rights in Canada follows a particular trajectory that is incomplete. In the literature discussed above, the rights revolution in Canada involved both a shift in the way Canadians understood their rights as citizens (in terms of human rights as opposed to exclusively civil rights); and, the rise of social activism and movements based on the premise of universal human rights. In Igartua's narrative, as with the general consensus among scholars of human rights in Canada, this shift occurs after the Second World War.<sup>67</sup> In terms of major social and legislative change, this analysis holds firm. This thesis describes the interwar origins of a human rights consciousness which led to that change.

### ***A Note on Sources***

This dissertation constitutes a history of racialization rather than a history of racism, although one conclusion reached here is that racism was intrinsic to processes of racialization in Canada. As such, this study is rooted in a wide range of archival sources, because "racialization operates in and through a range of subjectivities and identities"

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<sup>67</sup> See ftnt. 2, above.

that are “tightly interwoven and mutually reinforcing.”<sup>68</sup> This study is premised on three types of sources: government documents (primarily municipal, but also provincial where municipal conflict was played out in the provincial legislature); records of voluntary and civic organizations; and personal papers and collections. I went into the archives with the hypothesis that processes of racialization were central to the history of this time and place. I was looking for a sense of what people who were living in Vancouver in the 1920s and 30s would have seen, heard, been told, imagined, experienced, understood, spoke, described, recognized, acknowledged, rejected and accepted about race.

I first identified political issues of the day in the mayor’s papers, police records, and city legal department records. More specifically, I looked for records of debates in municipal politics from which processes of racialization could be identified. These key issues were: anti-Oriental legislation; economic reform; the sale of the Kitsilano reserve; the Golden Jubilee; and the various “problems” of crime and immorality associated with Vancouver’s Chinatown. I then looked at the collections of various civic and voluntary organizations, as well as individuals, who were involved in these issues. I found an invaluable source in the personal papers – particularly the scrapbook collections – of public figures such as Bruce McKelvie, Alice Ravenhill, and Foon Sien Wong. From this archival basis, two opposing discourses emerged that framed interwar processes of racialization – the imperialist notion of racial order and the transnational discourse of equality rights. The project then became one of discovering the relationship and interactions between these two discourses in localized processes of racialization.

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<sup>68</sup> Lee and Lutz, *Situating “Race,”* 12.

While the sources contained explicit discussions of the pro-white and anti-Oriental sentiments which gave rise to a clearly focused protest involving the assertion of race-based equality rights centred around a well-defined Chinese-Canadian identity, the way that the Indian identity comes to be used as a means of asserting rights was more difficult to interpret. There were, however, four common aspects in the processes of racialization which produced Chinese and Indian identities, which led to my argument that an important and incipient aspect of the Canadian Indian identity occurred through the arts. These commonalities were: racism against non-white Canadians; the assertion of race-based rights (based on emerging conceptions of indigenism and ethnicity); non-textual articulations via exhibition (arts/crafts; Jubilee); and an emphasis on place (Chinatown/Snaug). What I took from these records were the most explicit articulations of racialization, which represent “common sense” ideas about race in this particular place and time. From this historical “common sense” perspective, I set out to reinterpret stories and events. The stories and events I chose to use in this dissertation are linked in that they played a key role in a larger narrative of racialization – namely, the Canadian narrative of nationalism – which was undergoing a significant transformation during the interwar period.

All written history is, of course, limited because what remains in documents reveals only a fragment of what actually occurred. This thesis does not claim to provide a complete understanding of racialization in Vancouver in the interwar years. Instead, it aims to provide some insight into the major political issues that were being debated in

formal politics which involved racialization in this period, and which had an impact on race-based equality rights activism in the postwar years.

### ***Organization***

Activists, politicians, community leaders, reformers, and intellectuals in Vancouver constructed racial identities as political tools in the interwar years that were later included in the conceptual framework of human rights in the 1940s and 1950s. These racial identities were rooted in a widely accepted and thoroughly racialized popular history that championed a pioneer mythology. This narrative is introduced in chapter two, and further explored in the third chapter of this dissertation. Chapter three also identifies one reason why Vancouver's history was so central to this formative period for human rights concepts. In contrast to the romanticized notion of the victorious pioneer, the real and perceived vulnerability of Anglo-Protestant dominance in this region meant that the economic, social, and political rights and privileges of white Canadians were being ardently and explicitly defended in City Hall. Here, the racial category of white was the first to be asserted as an identity that was explicitly linked to rights, nation and citizenship.

Chapters four and five examine the contradictions inherent to the Indian identity in Vancouver in the 1920s and 30s. By the 1920s, the impact of colonization, legislated racism, and the reserve and residential school systems had led to the very real breakdown of Aboriginal societies and the loss of political power in relation to non-Aboriginal Canadian society. In contrast to the white Pioneer, whose identity derived

from the narrative of the inevitable unfolding of progress, the narrative of the Indian depended on a pre-contact origin. This essence, described here as *indigenism* and represented visually and materially in “traditional” arts and crafts, was manifest as an attachment to place. Within the context of colonization and an oppressive reserve system, the assertion by Aboriginal peoples of indigenous connections to the land as the essence of the Indian identity constituted resistance as well as oppression. In this period, the Indian identity became increasingly political and unified. Paradoxically, one striking characteristic of the newly politicized “Indian” was its marginalization from questions of citizenship. Equally important, however, is that the notion of *indigenism* also provided a cornerstone for a burgeoning Indian rights movement.

While Aboriginal leaders redefined themselves, other non-white communities were also beginning to complicate and assert their racial identities, through the notion of *ethnicity* as distinct from *indigenism*. The sixth chapter looks at the difference between these racialized processes of politicization as they manifested during the 1936 Golden Jubilee Celebrations. The seventh chapter examines the political effectiveness of ethnicity in further depth, and argues that a Chinese-Canadian identity was born in Vancouver during the interwar period. This chapter explores the struggle of the Chinese-Canadian community to promote a respectable civic identity in the city of Vancouver. Using the notion of *ethnicity* as a way of mediating difference was central to this process. This was also a highly gendered process, and one aspect of this drive towards respectability was the representation of Chinese women as the epitome of traditional

Western notions of femininity, capable of producing respectable and morally sound citizens for Canadian society.

Chapter eight, “‘Within the Four Seas All are Brothers,’” examines the distinctive rhetoric of rights articulated by social activists and intellectuals in Vancouver prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, and their contributions to the human rights movement in Canada. There are two points that can be taken from this chapter, and which serve as conclusions to this study. First, the origins of modern rights rhetoric in Canada can be found in the interwar years. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, this period also marks a corresponding turning point in the history of race relations in this country. During the interwar period, racial categories born of imperialism and colonialism as a means of wholesale subjugation were being redefined and employed as the foundation of what was to become a modern and distinctly Canadian conception of rights.

The final chapter of this dissertation offers a commentary on this narrative of racialization by focusing on the contingencies of gender and class. This chapter describes the attempt by police and municipal officials to prohibit white women from working in Vancouver’s Chinatown. This campaign, which reached a climax in 1936/7, continues the story of municipal politics from chapter three, as the situation the Chinatown waitresses faced in 1937 highlights the conflict between organized labour’s official anti-Oriental stance and underlying socialist ideology. The events analysed in this chapter also provide a striking contrast, in the marginalization of Aboriginal people in the local economy and politics (described in chapters four, five, and six) as compared to the

extent of politicization exhibited by the Chinese Canadian community in Vancouver in the late 1930s (described in chapters six, seven, and eight). The protest articulated by the Chinese community against racial discrimination in this period was based on a clear sense of social justice that advocated humanity and the brotherhood of mankind. However, claims for women's rights during this conflict were overshadowed by race-based equality rights claims, and political solidarity was compromised by the naming of rights through clear-cut racial identities. This dissertation concludes by proposing that the limitations of race-based equality rights claims persist as an inherent contradiction in human rights rhetoric today.

**Chapter 2 ~ “A Long Drama of Untamable Courage, Resolution, Heroism, Repellent Cruelty and Romance”<sup>1</sup>: The Pioneer Mythology as Nationalist Narrative**

Two hundred and fifty British Columbian pioneers gathered at the Empress Hotel in Victoria in the spring of 1924 for a banquet of regional gastronomic delights. The feast included steaming bowls of Camosun Consommé and Sooke Clam Chowder, cold filets of Fraser River salmon, roasted Langford Lamb, Saanich Tongue, Barkerville Rolls with Saltspring Butter, Okanagan Fruit Trifle, and Soda Creek Punch. The banquet was also rife with speeches and toasts – to His Majesty the King, the guest pioneers, and the Native Sons and Daughters of British Columbia. Music was performed during the meal, and was followed by an old-time dance. It was a proud evening for these British Columbians, and an emotional one, for this was a reunion of a unique sort. The banquet was held in honour of the noble and rugged pioneers who had “hew[n] their homes among vast forests and streams, often-times surrounded with great perils, wild animals and the savage Indians of the early days.”<sup>2</sup> The event was organized by the British Columbia Historical Association (B.C.H.A.) and the Native Sons and Daughters in the interests of preserving the history of the province. As was fitting, then, the final toast of

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<sup>1</sup> British Columbia Archives and Records Services (BCARS), McKelvie Fonds, Box 26, File 7, BC Diamond Jubilee Celebration, Souvenir Programme, “Synopsis of An Historical Pageant of British Columbia From the Earliest Times to the Present,” 1931: 8.

<sup>2</sup> BCARS, British Columbia Historical Association, Box 7 File 21, “Pioneers Reunion 1924: Transcript of proceedings at May 9<sup>th</sup> banquet, Empress Hotel, Victoria; M. Unwin, Deputy Official Stenographer,” speech by Mayor Hayward, 5-6.



the evening was made by Beaumont Boggs, vice president of the B.C.H.A., to the Native Sons and Daughters of British Columbia.

In his reply to this toast, the Grand Chief Factor of the Native Sons of British Columbia, Victor Harrison, addressed the current purpose of this fraternal organization, which had, since its inception at the turn of the century, moved beyond the simple perpetuation of memory. Harrison asserted that economic progress had brought:

...a great influx of immigrants into this country and we thought we saw signs that the spirit of our forefathers would be forgotten; we thought we saw that good citizenship, as it was understood by them, might, with the influx of so much immigration from distant lands, gradually pass away and die, and so it was that a new duty came to our Society. It was the custodianship of the high principles of good citizenship.<sup>3</sup>

The following year, a second pioneers' reunion was held in Vancouver at the Hotel Vancouver. It was similar to the Victoria reunion, although the Vancouver banquet included a sing-a-long with such favourites as "There's that Little Old Log Cabin," "Auld Lang Syne," and, interestingly, "Old Black Joe." Like the first reunion in Victoria, the Vancouver reunion was held to honour the pioneers and in celebration of the pioneer stock as exemplary citizens.

The pioneer mythology provided a regionally specific justification for the politicization of a white identity that advocated racial supremacy. In the early twentieth

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<sup>3</sup> BCARS, British Columbia Historical Association, Box 7 File 21, "Pioneers Reunion 1924: Transcript of proceedings at May 9<sup>th</sup> banquet, Empress Hotel, Victoria; M. Unwin, Deputy Official Stenographer," speech by Victor Harrison, 17-18.

century, whiteness held a powerful place in the conception of citizenship for many Canadians. This chapter provides an analysis of the pioneer mythology, as a colonialist narrative that was thoroughly racialized, and which was part of the broader project of nation-building. The following chapter then explores parallels between Vancouver branch of the explicitly white supremacist Ku Klux Klan and non-explicitly racist civic organizations that functioned at the levels of popular and electoral politics. I argue that the pioneer myth that provided a regionally based historical narrative that justified the dominance of whiteness in notions of citizenship in British Columbia. As a consequence, “Canadian” was often equated with “white” in municipal politics in the 1920s and 30s.

Forrest D. Pass has argued that the pioneer myth propagated by the Native Sons through their efforts in conserving history, including events like the pioneers’ reunion, was used to “craft a middle-class identity that was self-consciously British Columbian.”<sup>4</sup> The pioneer myth undoubtedly constituted “a vehicle for class formation,”<sup>5</sup> but Pass’s contention that the Native Sons are best understood in terms of class rather than race echoes the problematic class versus race dichotomy that has been effectively refuted in different ways by scholars like David Roediger and Robert A.J. McDonald.<sup>6</sup> This chapter

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<sup>4</sup> Forrest D. Pass, ““The Wondrous Story and Traditions of the Country”: The Native Sons of British Columbia and the Role of Myth in the Formation of an Urban Middle Class,” *BC Studies*, no. 151 (Autumn 2006): 38.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> See, in particular, David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Robert A.J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: 1863-1913* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996). Roediger asserts that class and race became interdependent during the nineteenth-century in the formation of the American working class identity; while McDonald rejects the class/race dichotomy in his analysis of Vancouver for the use of status as more accurate way of analyzing social organization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

examines the pioneer myth as central to the formation of a middle-class identity, but defines class as being implicated with race. As Mariana Valverde has established, nation building in Canada involved “a process through which race, gender and class were intertwined.”<sup>7</sup> The pioneer myth embodied both class and racial identity, and was an important aspect of the ongoing process of constructing the racial category of white.

Whiteness was produced more explicitly in British Columbia before the Second World War because of the vulnerability, both real and perceived, of white dominance in the province. By the interwar period, white colonization and settlement had only recently occurred in British Columbia. Until the turn of the century, the region was predominantly inhabited by Aboriginal people. In addition, the province had experienced substantial and long-standing non-white immigration, particularly from China. Scholars like Coco Fusco, Yasmin Jiwani, and Sherene H. Razack have demonstrated that by the second half of the twentieth century, much of the power of the category “white” derived from its silence, and the meanings attached to this category that have been so deeply intertwined with notions of normality.<sup>8</sup> The predominance of expressions of white supremacy in both popular media and in formal politics in British Columbia – and Vancouver in particular – during the interwar years

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<sup>7</sup> Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), 16.

<sup>8</sup> Coco Fusco, as cited in Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness* (New York: Verso, 1994); Yasmin Jiwani, *Discourses of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender and Violence* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); Sherene Razack, *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002). In an interesting discussion of the significantly more substantial American literature, Peter Kolchin similarly identifies a problematic “dualism” in whiteness studies that pitches whiteness as both “nothing” (invisible) and “everything” (omnipresent, unchanging, and as an independent force). See Peter Kolchin, “Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America,” *Journal of American History* 89:1 (2002): 5.

was a key step in this particular process of racialization, wherein whiteness becomes an invisible backdrop in mid- to late twentieth-century Canadian politics.

One outcome of explicitly defining a white identity in this period was an association between racist activities and respectable civic issues. The promotion of civic responsibility was a key function of both the myth of the pioneer and the non-state organizations like the B.C.H.A. and the Native Sons which crafted and promoted it. As in both the years preceding and following the wars, voluntary organizations played an influential role in the moral project of nation building during the interwar years in English Canada, and British Columbia was no exception.<sup>9</sup> In a liberal-democratic state like Canada, the state presents at least the façade of a neutral position on moral issues, and requires the cooperation of non-state organizations to exercise authority efficiently and effectively. Thus, while municipal and provincial government officials took an officially unbiased stance towards the anti-Oriental sentiments of the day, they felt justified to propose and attempt to pass unconstitutional anti-Oriental legislation and policies because of pressure from non-state interest groups like the Native Sons.

During the 1920s and 30s, the Native Sons of British Columbia were actively involved in municipal politics, as were other non-state organizations with more blatant views on race, like the Oriental Exclusion Association and, of course, the Ku Klux Klan. These civic organizations often had the same political goals, and often defined their interests in racialized terms in both municipal and provincial politics. But, whiteness was

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<sup>9</sup> For the pre-war period, see for example, Valverde. For the post-war period, see, for example, Shirley Tillotson, *The Public at Play: Gender and the Politics of Recreation in Post-War Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

also explicitly defined and asserted at the level of popular consciousness through public history. Popular politics, influenced by the Klan and the Native Sons in Vancouver in this period, was driven by ideologies whose existence did not depend on formal politics. White British Columbians participated in voluntary organizations because these groups offered a sense of belonging and purpose, and justified their place in the province as one of dominance. One of the most compelling rhetorical tools used by the leadership of these organizations was the pioneer mythology.

### ***Deconstructing the Pioneer Mythology***

In January of 1940, McKelvie gave a speech to the British Columbia Historical Society in which he made a clear connection between history, race, and nation-building. In this speech, he asserted that:

[t]he beginnings of every national history are, more or less, shrouded in romantic mystery. It is natural that this should be so, for when orderly processes of society took shape, and forms of government were evolved, the inspirational values of heroic characters and racial enterprises were appreciated as forces for the fusing of individuals into a unified whole.<sup>10</sup>

The “inspirational... heroic characters and racial enterprises,” of course, refers to the pioneers and their colonization efforts. The myth of the pioneer in British Columbia glorified the pioneer, assumed their rights of conquest, and obscured the historical roles of Aboriginal people and those of the early Chinese and Japanese settlers and labourers.

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<sup>10</sup> BCARS, McKelvie, Box 2, File 7, Speech to the British Columbia Historical Association, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1940.

The pioneer myth in Bruce McKelvie's popular histories was circulated amongst the public as magazine and newspaper articles, radio playlets, public talks, and as published books. It was, as McKelvie himself acknowledged, a romanticized version of history. But, this history was also one that was widely enjoyed and accepted by many British Columbians because it obscured the negative effects of colonization and validated white peoples' privileged position in the social, political, and economic order of the province.

The pioneer myth functioned to justify both the hierarchy of whiteness and to promote white racial solidarity because of its underlying discourse of mobility and self-improvement. This mythology was based on established intellectual traditions, which provided a frame of reference that most white British Columbians were familiar with. The idea of progress provided one key conceptual foundations of the pioneer myth, and was rooted in Christian eschatology, or the study of the "end of the world." This was a field of study that examined history as finite, with a purposeful beginning and whose end, according to Christian theology, occurred with the second coming of Christ. The secularization of the idea of progress during Enlightenment resulted in an understanding of history as a product of human action rather than divine will, without a determined end, but always moving forward and in the direction of steady improvement. Nineteenth-century science gave further meaning to the idea of progress, as a natural law, and thus inevitable.<sup>11</sup> Scientific ideas, and in particular Darwin's theory of

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<sup>11</sup> For the notion of progress in relation to human society, see Charles Babbage, *Reflections on the Decline of Science in England and On Some of Its Causes* (London: B. Fellowes, 1830), 1-39; Herbert Spencer, "Poor Laws" in *Social Statics: or, the Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified, and the First of Them Developed* (London: John Chapman, 1851), 311-29; in relation to the human mind, see Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, translated by Harriet Martinuea (London: John Chapman,

evolution, irrevocably affected the way English-speaking societies understood the world around them. The field of anthropology emerged out of these intellectual currents, and theories of the origins of mankind proliferated in academic debate.

By the 1920s, anthropology and ethnography were established fields, distinct from history, and the study of the Aboriginal past was relegated to these “scientific” disciplines. The methodological and ideological premises of early ethnographers whose research primarily took the form of field work, positioned the scholar as impartial observer and Aboriginal people as objects.<sup>12</sup> The Northwest Pacific coast was a major center of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century anthropological attempts to preserve the “vanishing Indian,” notably in the projects carried out in the region by such well-known figures as Franz Boas and Edward Curtis. The conservation of artifacts, study of early Aboriginal migration patterns, and analysis of human skeletal remains, particularly the skull, attracted a good amount of public interest in British Columbia.<sup>13</sup> Underlying these conservation efforts was a notion of human progress and evolution which explained the distinction between the civilized and the heathen.

Regional history was told by white British Columbians as a story of progress. For example, as part of British Columbia’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations, L. Campbell Basanta directed a pageant with a cast of 500, entitled “An Historical Pageant of British

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1853), 1-17; in relation to human knowledge, see William Whewell, *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, Founded Upon Their History*, second edition, (London: John W. Parker, 1847), 16-51.

<sup>12</sup>See, for example, Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the late-nineteenth-century Northwest Coast*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>13</sup> BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 27, File 2, “Indication of Drift of Mankind from North to South along Pacific,” 1923; and “Prehistoric Humans on the Pacific Coast,” 1923.

Columbia from Earliest Times to the Present.” The Pageant begins in “the prehistoric period, long before the great powers were rivals in discovery and exploration, when the Aboriginal tribes held supreme sway over the Pacific Northwest.” This period is characterized by “mystery and magic,” and represented in the form of “a fantastical dream of the Aboriginal tribes.” Here, Aboriginal people and culture are portrayed as heathenistic, as the counterpoint to rational Western civilization. The Pageant then proceeds in a theatrical march through time, with the timeline of discovery up to Confederation, and concludes with the success of Anglo-Saxon settlement and economic development in the post-Confederation period. The pioneers are central figures in this narrative, as the catalysts for the transformation from wilderness to civilization. In this interpretation of history, the conquest of British Columbia through white settlement and control over the land and resources, and with it, the displacement of Aboriginal peoples, is the inevitable result of progress.<sup>14</sup>

There were three main actors in this pioneer myth: the environment, the Pioneer, and the Indian. The dramatic landscape of British Columbia has always been a prominent feature for humans living in the region. As Claire Campbell has shown in the case of the Georgian Bay, the environment has been deeply intertwined with the Canadian culture and experience. The characters of both the Pioneer and the Indian were mythologized largely because of their ability to survive and conquer the rugged wilderness. Their physical strength paralleled the power of nature, reflected in the

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<sup>14</sup> BCARS, McKelvie, Box 26, File 7, “Synopsis of An Historical Pageant of British Columbia from the Earliest Times to Present,” 1931.



immense mountains, forests, ocean and rivers. The pioneer myth was a commemoration “of encounter and adaptation, as ideas of nature inherited from European colonizers are acted out in distinctly North American environments to produce new forms.”<sup>15</sup> Pre-settlement British Columbia was described as “a wilderness of forests and mountains, penetrated by a spider thread of road winding through passes of the Fraser River to the placer gold mines of Cariboo.”<sup>16</sup> This “dense wilderness” contained “vast forests and streams,”<sup>17</sup> and was heralded as “the great territory West of the Rocky Mountains and North of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel.”<sup>18</sup>

Both the Pioneer and the Indian were imbued with qualities of the landscape; the Indian with wildness and savagery, and the Pioneer with ruggedness and strength. In the preface of one of his short stories, McKelvie describes the settlement of British Columbia as “the conquest... by the white men [which] was not an easy task.”<sup>19</sup> The Pioneer, unlike the Indian, rises above nature and conquers the environment: thus, his status as “foundation of this Province.”<sup>20</sup> Along with their female kin, these were “men

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<sup>15</sup> Claire Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind: Nature and History in the Georgian Bay* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>16</sup> BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 26, File 7, BC Diamond Jubilee Celebration, 1871-1931, Souvenir Programme, Victoria, British Columbia, 1931.

<sup>17</sup> BCARS, British Columbia Historical Association, Box 7, File 21, “Transcript of proceedings at May 9<sup>th</sup> Banquet, Empress Hotel, Victoria, M. Unwin, Deputy Official Stenographer” 1924.

<sup>18</sup> BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 2, File 6, “Preface: Natives and Bandits,” 1936-41?.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> BCARS, British Columbia Historical Association, Box 7, File 21, “Transcript of proceedings at May 9<sup>th</sup> Banquet, Empress Hotel, Victoria, M. Unwin, Deputy Official Stenographer” 1924.

and women of rare courage and resource,”<sup>21</sup> who “endured hardships and privations.” And yet, as the following passage describes in an especially poetic fashion, the Pioneer spirit was so stalwart as to triumph over strenuous material conditions:

...how roughly the houses were constructed – of the dreary look outside, and cramped space inside. How the chinks between the logs, through which the wind would sough with a shriek of triumph, were plastered up with clay, or stuffed with moss; of the interior equipage of benches, boards, and bunk-like beadsteads; of the Dutch Oven for baking and cooking; of the drugget [*sic*] rush mats and rugs, made, in part of dog’ hair, by Indians, used for floor covering. Yet in 1857 there was a brightness and a warmth of feeling in every abode, made so by the blithesomeness, the inborn good nature and hospitality of the inmates, who, when visitors dropped in, would:

*Spread out the snowy table-cloth*

*Upon the painted board,*

*And bring the best of everything*

*The larder could afford.*<sup>22</sup>

This emphasis on the moral character of the Pioneer suggests a humanity that contrasts with the character of the Indian, whose primal nature, in the white Anglo-Saxon conception of natural order, had to be conquered, much as the wilderness

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<sup>21</sup> BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 1, File 7, “Radio Playlet for Use of Home Oild [*sic*] Distributors over CNRV: How Kamloops was Saved,” 1936-41.

<sup>22</sup> BCARS, British Columbia Historical Association, Box 7, File 21, “Transcript of proceedings at May 9<sup>th</sup> Banquet, Empress Hotel, Victoria, M. Unwin, Deputy Official Stenographer” 1924.

required taming. In McKelvie's writings, the Indian is conquered through law, as in the Beaver incident in Nanaimo in 1853, when two Indian were tried and sentenced to death for the murder of a white man.<sup>23</sup> The Indian was also conquered through physical force and sheer strength of character. For example, one of McKelvie's stories describes an incident that occurred around 1810 or so, between Chief Kwah of the Carrier Indians and Daniel Harmon, officer in charge of the Fort St. James NorthWest Company post. In this account, Kwah apparently "irritated Harmon," in response to which "Harmon administered a terrific beating to him. It would have been easy for the chief to have started a war. Instead, he gave a feast, to which he invited Harmon, and there publicly thanked him for having taught his *[sic]* sense."<sup>24</sup>

The greatness of the white pioneers was measured against the character of their opponents. The landscape could speak largely for itself, having changed very little between the era of the pioneers and the interwar years when these histories were being produced. The Indian, on the other hand, required some explanation. The Indian was a contradictory character, described as both naïve and childlike as well as cunning, treacherous, and ruthless in war. For example, in his address to the Pioneers Banquet in 1924, Reginald Hayward, then mayor of Victoria and ardent member of the Native Sons, entertained the crowd with a quaint anecdote "of pioneering days." Hayward's story is set in Victoria, along Government Street:

...long before we had pavement or improvements, and there was

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<sup>23</sup> BCARS, McKelvie, Box 1, File 9, "Jury Comes to the Wilderness," 1942.

<sup>24</sup> BCARS, McKelvie, Box 1, File 9, "The Great Chief Kwah of the Carrier Indians," 1940.

an old Indian woman trying to peddle a basket full of clams. Professor Herman picked up a clam out of the basket and opened a pocket knife, opened the clam and pulled out a dollar piece and slipped it into his pocket. The Indian woman was rather amazed. He looked at the basket and picked out another one, opened it and took out a dollar piece and he did it a third time, but when he went to do it a fourth time, the Indian woman says: "Hello, Hello! No more clams!" Professor Herman went up the street, and the poor old lady, she opened every clam she had in the basket.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, McKelvie's radio playlet, "How Kamloops was Saved," portrays the chief of the Shushwap Indians, Lolo, as a stupid and ignorant brute who utters strange half-sentences like "Ugh, my poor chil'len – poor Lolo." In the play, Lolo pesters the chief trader of the Hudson's Bay Company fort, John Tod, much as a child pesters his father. And in the end, Tod, the heroic white man, saves the hapless Lolo and his people from a smallpox epidemic with his European medicine.<sup>26</sup>

But the Indian could not be entirely weak, or their conquest by the white men would have less significance. As much as the greatness of the Pioneer relied on an image of their taming a fierce and unruly environment, it also relied on an image of the Indian as a brutal and cunning foe. The Haida of the pioneer days were described as pirates,

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<sup>25</sup> BCARS, British Columbia Historical Association, Box 7, File 21, "Transcript of proceedings at May 9<sup>th</sup> Banquet, Empress Hotel, Victoria, M. Unwin, Deputy Official Stenographer" 1924.

<sup>26</sup> BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 1, File 7, "Radio Playlet for Use of Home Distributors over CNRV: How Kamloops was Saved," 1936-41.

who killed for revenge but also sometimes killed for no reason, as with the massacre of the white crew of the ship *Atahualpa* in 1805, in the Queen Charlottes. In McKelvie's interpretation of the event, these Indian pirates "would not hesitate to take a treacherous advantage of the visitors towards whom they professed friendship."<sup>27</sup> Aboriginal people were described as "fierce fighters. They were treacherous in attack and ruthless in avenging a real or fancied wrong. They were extremely proud and sensitive." The Pioneers were great because "[t]he Indians resisted," and "did so with bravery and cunning."<sup>28</sup> As the story goes, in due time the Pioneers subdued the Indians, and "the white man's authority was firmly established."<sup>29</sup>

Despite the conquest, or perhaps because of it, the Native Sons maintained respect for the noble savage in their contemporary fraternal activities. Their membership included several prominent Aboriginal leaders. Among these were Frank Assu and Peter Kelly, both of whom were also leaders of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia.<sup>30</sup> The Native Brotherhood of British Columbia formed in 1931, but maintained close connections with the Allied Tribes of British Columbia, whose origins go back to 1915. Kelly, along with Andrew Paull, were key figures in the Allied Tribes, and later the Native Brotherhood. Kelly was Haida, and an ordained Methodist; Paull was a well educated Squamish. Both of these men were educated and were well

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<sup>27</sup> BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 2, File 6, "Preface: Natives and Bandits," 1936-41?

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 1, File 7, "Here and There in B.C.," 1936-41.

<sup>30</sup> Forrest D. Pass, "The Wondrous Story," 17.

positioned in their communities.<sup>31</sup> Their inclusion in the Native Sons can be explained by their “respectable” status in the community, which was interpreted as “acculturation,” as well as by an underlying notion of paternalistic responsibility the noble savage taken from the pioneer mythology.

This sense of duty was a common sentiment in the young province’s history. Following Confederation with Canada, one of the top items on the provincial agenda was the “condition of the Indians.”<sup>32</sup> In 1876, a Joint Reserve Commission set out to survey the Aboriginal reserves and address their grievances.<sup>33</sup> In 1881, six Indian Agents were appointed in British Columbia – three for Vancouver Island, one for the Fraser river

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<sup>31</sup> Philip Druker, *The Native Brotherhoods: Modern Intertribal Organizations on the Northwest Coast* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 168, US Government Printing Office, 1958), 95.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> In 1877, the Commission consisted of Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, Archibald McKinlay, and Alexander Caulfield Anderson. Sproat was jointly appointed by both the Dominion and Provincial governments, McKinlay by the Provincial government, and Anderson by the Dominion. Sproat was born in Scotland, the son of a modest farmer. In 1860, at the age of 26, he moved to Vancouver Island to work as the manager of a sawmill company, where he first encountered “the collision of colonist and Indian when he was obliged to establish his mill on aboriginal land.” Sproat worked in Alberni Inlet on Vancouver Island for five years before moving to England, only to return more than ten years later in 1876 to take the position of Joint Commissioner for the IRC. Alexander Caulfield Anderson was born in Calcutta, India, the son of a retired British army officer who ran an indigo plantation. Anderson moved to England at the age of three, and then to Canada when he was 16 to work for the Hudson’s Bay Company. After his retirement in 1854, he eventually settled in Victoria with his family. In 1876, at the age of 62, Anderson was simultaneously appointed Dominion Inspector of Fisheries for the coast of British Columbia as well as Dominion Commissioner for the IRC. Archibald McKinlay had also worked for the Hudson’s Bay Company, in the interior of British Columbia from at least as far back as the 1830s. McKinlay was appointed Provincial Commissioner for the IRC. Sproat was by far the most energetic commissioner and most prolific writer of the three, and his ideology has been perceived as being more humanitarian and sympathetic to the interests of Native people than most of his contemporaries. See LAC, RG10, Vol.3651, File 8540, Memorandum of Instructions to Archibald McKinlay, Provincial Commissioner, from G. Elwyn, Deputy Provincial Secretary, 23 October 1876; Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Peter Carstens, *The Queen’s People: A Study of Hegemony, Coercion, and Accommodation among the Okanagan of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 77-86; Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 189.

district, one for Kamloops, and one for the Okanagan – to administer approximately thirty-two thousand Native people.<sup>34</sup> In 1887, a Provincial Commission of Enquiry was appointed to look at “conditions among the Indians of the North West coast,” and in 1912 a Royal Commission hearing on Indian claims was held.

Organizations like the Friends of the Indians and, in the interwar period, the Native Sons, lobbied the government for Aboriginal rights on issues like education and citizenship.<sup>35</sup> Alliances were forged between these organizations because doing so served to raise the political, economic and social status of both parties. This cooperation provides an interesting point of contrast to the Native Sons’ anti-Oriental activities. The Oriental does appear sporadically in McKelvie’s history; and, like the Indian, as a contradictory figure. On one hand, McKelvie demonstrates a deep admiration for ancient Chinese culture, as “a civilization that was very advanced in comparison with the then existing status of society in Europe.”<sup>36</sup> At the same time, he portrays the early Chinese in the Province as either petty criminals or superstitious and backwards labourers.<sup>37</sup> The racial designation of Indian did not engender the same virulent, explicit animosity as the designation Chinese in this period, but the Chinese were granted the

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<sup>34</sup> Library and Archives of Canada (LAC), *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1881, xii.

<sup>35</sup> Vancouver City Archives (VCA), AM.0054.013.06600, “Friends of the Indians – Miscellaneous” 1912; Philip Druker, *The Native Brotherhoods: Modern Intertribal Organizations on the Northwest Coast* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 168, US Government Printing Office, 1958), 84; Forrest D. Pass, “The Wondrous Story,” 17-18.

<sup>36</sup> BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 2, File 7, Transcript of a Talk given to the British Columbia Historical Association, “Hoei Shin,” 29 January 1940.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 1, File 7, “Here and There in British Columbia – Opium Smuggling,” 1936; also, Box 27, File 2, Story of the Rain God, Nanaimo, 1934.

vote in 1947 while Aboriginal people had to wait until 1960. The political trajectories of these two groups of Canadians were never parallel but did intersect at points, and during the uncertain period between the wars, both categories of Indian and Chinese were constantly being remade against a provincial heritage of whiteness.

## **Conclusion**

The pioneer mythology provided a popular heritage for British Columbians which clearly designated roles for the categories of white and Indian, and positioned non-whites and non-Indians as “aliens.” During the interwar period, as the next chapter shows, this interpretation of provincial heritage was used by some Vancouverites as a means of guarding economic privilege in municipal politics. The closeness – in some cases, equivalence – between members of racist non-state organizations and government officials during these decades meant that liberal democracy did not always equate with social justice. On one hand, whiteness was constructed in many of the same ways as the racial identities of Oriental and Indian. In particular, two common conceptual strategies were employed – the notion of an innate racial order and the notion of solidarity based on racial identity. But the white identity was also distinct in comparison to the identities of Oriental and Indian. Whiteness was assumed to equate with privilege and dominance within British Columbian society, while the racial identities of Oriental and Indian had already for many years been explicitly used as a means of oppression. During the interwar period, however, Oriental and Indian came to mean something other than subservient within the public realm, as these identities



were being constructed as distinctly Canadian. As a result, an emphatic declaration of whiteness was required in order to maintain its position within the racial hierarchy.

### **Chapter 3 ~ “By Virtue of the Accident of Birth”<sup>1</sup>: Municipal Politics in Vancouver**

An imperial racial order that positioned the white race at the apex of the social hierarchy was well entrenched as “common sense” in the minds of many Vancouverites during the 1920s and 30s. However, white dominance was also particularly vulnerable here, a direct result of migration patterns and the province’s oceanic orientation as well as a longstanding history of Aboriginal dominance – political, social and economic – in the region. British Columbia contained the largest Asian and Aboriginal populations, and white dominance was probably more tenuous in Vancouver than in any other Canadian city at the time. As a result, based on the ideal of imperialist racial order, white racial identities were ardently asserted in political rhetoric. There were, of course, variations in the way white racial identities were ascribed. In the debates which drove municipal politics in Vancouver during the interwar years, white identities were constructed in two ways – as a hierarchy and as a unified category. Class distinctions also played a role in the way white identities were constructed. For example, the anti-Oriental movement, which played a key role in defining whiteness in Vancouver the racial category of Oriental was seen by many to be stable, a result of the visibility of Orientals, which rendered them inassimilable. Anti-Oriental activists were thus able to encourage cross-class white solidarity. In contrast, Eastern Europeans and Indians were deemed

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Vancouver City Archives (VCA), Add. MSS. 600, 567-G-4, c1932. This phrase, “by virtue of the accident of birth,” was used by the Native Sons in their many correspondences with local, provincial, and federal politicians as reason and justification for *not* granting rights of Canadian citizenship to persons of “Oriental” descent.

assimilable, and these categories were understood by many Canadians to be fluid. As a result, nativist and anti-immigrant movements were primarily middle-class movements, an attempt to protect the privileges of class as well as of race.

During the interwar period in Vancouver, the articulation of “white” as a racial identity involved two key conceptual strategies. First, that an inherent racial order existed within any social order; and second, that racial identity engendered solidarity. These conceptual strategies underlay the practices that were used to construct white racial identities. The most effective and widespread of these practices were the (de)regulation of labour and business, the pursuit and denial of political power (particularly (dis)enfranchisement), the regulation of sexuality, and the production of history through various forms of commemoration. Whiteness was used to justify economic, political, and social rights because this racial category embodied the characteristics associated with good citizenship. The pioneer myth provided a regionally specific anchor for grounding these characteristics in a popular history that was particular to the white identity in British Columbia.

***The Klan in Vancouver: “Altruism is our only Aim”*<sup>1</sup>**

The Invisible Empire of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan maintained a cautious, lawful approach during the interwar years that was very different from the racial violence and intimidation which characterized this organization’s activities in the late

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<sup>1</sup> VCA, 14-F-3, file 11, City Clerk’s Series 20, Letter from the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan Grand Realm Council of British Columbia to City Council, Vancouver City Hall, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1929.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as during the civil rights movements following the Second World War. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Klan were heavily involved in local politics, and strove to maintain the image of a respectable organization with a strong sense of civic responsibility. These years marked the movement's apogee, with membership reaching highs not only in the Klan's traditional stronghold in the American South, but also in the industrial north.<sup>2</sup> The fraternity expanded beyond the borders of the United States for the first time during the 1920s, into places as varied as Cuba, Mexico, New Zealand and, of course, Canada. Only in Canada did the Klan gain a significant following. Canadian Klan activity originated in Montreal in the early 1920s, and soon spread to the West, where the organization attracted its strongest support. The first evidence of the Klan in British Columbia appears in the form of an advertisement for a membership drive in the *Cranbrook Courier*, dated November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1922. Within five years, Klan membership in the province had reached 13 000 men, 8000 of whom lived in Vancouver.<sup>3</sup>

Canadian chapters of the Klan followed the same course as their American counterparts, of pursuing political power rather than using violence as a means towards the goal of racial purity. The American chapters of the Klan in northern industrial cities

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<sup>2</sup> Leonard Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 1-12.

<sup>3</sup> Julian Sher, *White Hoods: Canada's Ku Klux Klan* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983), 32. Sher's citations are somewhat patchy, but he appears to have taken these statistics from issues of the *KKK Canada Action Report* or *The Spokesman* newspaper. For more on the history of the Klan in Canada, see also, Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada 1920-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). In 1927, the population of Vancouver was about 150 000 individuals (prior to the amalgamation of Point Grey and South Vancouver in 1929, which doubled the population of the city of Vancouver). See Derek Hayes, *Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005), 120.

typically tended to attract a wide socio-economic spectrum of members, but predominantly those in skilled and lower level clerical or managerial occupations.<sup>4</sup> Although the membership of the Vancouver Klan is nearly impossible to ascertain, it likely followed a similar pattern. The Klan worked in concert with the British Columbia labour movement and other civic interest groups in the collective protest to end Oriental immigration and curb Oriental economic progress in the province. This was a cross-class movement, whose solidarity was based on the commonality of race. Yet the relationship between the Klan and labour was uneasy. While both the Klan and the Trades and Labour Council cooperated to advocate restrictions on non-white immigration, certain factions within the British Columbia labour movement opposed the Klan as “terrorists” and anti-unionists. The *Federationist*, published by the British Columbia Federation of Labour, was particularly vehement in expressing its antagonism towards the Klan. And in November of 1925, Frank Browne, Labour member for Burnaby, supported by fellow Labour parliamentarian Tom Uphill, attempted to pass a motion condemning the Klan as a hate-mongering organization.<sup>5</sup>

The motion was lost to a forceful opposition led by Conservative M.L.A. R.H. Pooley, who argued that despite the Klan’s history of violence, the newly formed British Columbian chapters had yet to engage in any illegal activity. The Vancouver Klan found support not only at the provincial level of government, but also within City Council and

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<sup>4</sup> Leonard Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*, 60-70; Robert Alan Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958), 45-48; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 62; 108; 119; 120; Shawn Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara: The Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo, New York* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 85-114.

<sup>5</sup> Sher, *White Hoods*, 37.

some factions of the press and clergy, partly because the hallmark racist acts of terror and violence never occurred in Vancouver. More importantly, however, the organization gained support from non-members because the Klan's anti-Oriental sentiments fell in line with popular opinion. Much of the Klan activity in Vancouver's City Hall, however, did not concern anti-Oriental agitation, but was over economic issues such as relief and the price of grain. Here, again, the Klan met with resistance from government officials. The membership of the Vancouver chapter, as with the "Invisible Empire" as a whole, was clandestine, and their refusal to sign their petitions to City Hall meant that some of their civic efforts were disregarded by City Council. While both federal and provincial members of parliament, the Premier, Attorney General, and even the Prime Minister responded to petitions from the Klan signed only with the seal of the Ku Klux Klan, the city of Vancouver had a by-law requiring individual signatures in order for a petition to be considered by the City Council. A letter from the Klan claimed that the organization had already recently been "subject to persecution and methods that were intended to eliminate them... and a set has been made here [in Vancouver] against certain members of the Klan that have been outwardly active in sponsoring issues of Public interest." Nonetheless, the Vancouver chapter of the Klan condemned City Council for ignoring "any issue of public importance set before them," with or without signatures, and insisted that "altruism is our only aim."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> VCA, 14-F-3, file 11, City Clerk's Series 20, Letter from the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan Grand Realm Council of British Columbia to City Council, Vancouver City Hall, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1929; VCA, 14-F-3, file 11, City Clerk's Series 20, Letter from the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan Grand Realm Council of British Columbia to Wm. McQueen, City Clerk, Vancouver City Hall, 6 November, 1929.

Altruism, even when limited to helping only one particular category of the needy, plays an instrumental role in the functioning of a liberal democratic government. As Shirley Tillotson notes in the case of Ottawa, justification for the inclusion and exclusion of racial categories from certain rights and privileges of citizenship was based on charitable contribution and non-contribution.<sup>7</sup> In Vancouver, altruism similarly provided a gauge for defining good citizenship, and affected a wider demographic than earlier in the century because of the economic turmoil of the late 1920s and 1930s. The Klan's altruistic contributions took the form of political involvement, through letters and petitions. The organization was particularly interested in the plight of local farmers, and sought to bring social justice, for example, to white farmers who were forced to sell their cows and rent their farms "to China men because a white man can't pay enough to pay the taxes [*sic*]."<sup>8</sup> For the Klan, these social problems were the result of corrupt or incompetent government. Their petitions included a wide range of issues, including attacks on the misappropriation of government funds; the underqualification of relief officers; the high freight rates for grain in the domestic market as compared to the export market; the unfair distribution of the tax burden on individuals as compared, proportionately, to large companies; and the control of the media by "big interests."

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<sup>7</sup> Shirley Tillotson, *Contributing Citizens: Modern Charitable Fundraising and the Making of the Welfare State, 1920-66* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 103-128.

<sup>8</sup> VCA, 14-F-3, file 11, City Clerk's Series 20, Letter from Mrs. Thomas Keenan, forwarded by the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan Grand Realm Council of British Columbia to City Solicitor, Mayor and Alderman of Vancouver, 18 March, 1929.

These petitions emphasize the Klan's interest in maintaining "good Government," and their own position as respectable and concerned citizens.<sup>9</sup>

The Klan's involvement in popular politics in conjunction with their established stance on white supremacy implies a conceptual connection between respectable citizenship and whiteness. The Klan's influence diminished considerably in Vancouver by the 1930s, because of their extremist position and because most of their agenda had been taken up by other nativist and mainstream organizations. However, the ideal of a white British Columbia, with all the assumptions of citizenship that this entailed, was maintained by subsequent organizations, most notably the White British Columbia League, the White Canada Association and the White Canada Crusade.<sup>10</sup> The Klan met opposition both from labour and members of government, their influence was limited, and their lifespan in British Columbia short. Yet, this explicitly white supremacist organization also found substantial support and cooperation among other civic organizations and within government.

There are several plausible explanations for this support. The Klan actively participated in public affairs and maintained the image of a respectable civic organization that upheld the values of a pre-existing, dominant, Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition. In addition, many of the key goals of the Klan paralleled already widespread concerns – most notably, their interest in economic issues, in weeding out corruption in

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<sup>9</sup> VCA, 14-F-3, file 11, City Clerk's Series 20, Letters from the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan Grand Realm Council of British Columbia to Vancouver City Council.

<sup>10</sup> VCA, 567-G-4, Add. MSS. 600, File 6, "Resolution of the White Canada Association," 1934; VCA, 591-G-3, File 4, White Canada Crusade, "Power in Knowledge; Victory in Action."



government, and in their anti-Oriental position. More importantly, however, acceptance of the Klan as a respectable civic body was based on the familiarity many British Columbians already had with the ideal of a white Canada. The ambiguous responses the Vancouver Klan evoked demonstrate the antagonism some British Columbians held towards extreme forms of racism, but also indicate that explicitly white organizations were not the only place where the ideal citizen was being constructed as “white.” Whiteness was also linked to citizenship by mainstream organizations, in more subtle and pervasive ways.

***The Native Sons and Daughters of British Columbia: “Of those noble men and women who pioneered this country... for the spread of their race”<sup>11</sup>***

The Native Sons of British Columbia was established in 1899 as a fraternity for British Columbians who had either been born in the province or who had lived there since at least 1875. The membership of the Native Sons was predominantly urban and relatively affluent. The organization had seven active posts in the province by 1930, and membership numbers in the hundreds in both Vancouver and Victoria. The Native Sons were highly influential in local politics and in promoting public history during the interwar period. In local politics, the Native Sons focused their activities on the economic problems at hand, and anti-Oriental agitation. In their promotion of history, much of the Native Sons’ energies were directed towards preserving artifacts and local

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<sup>11</sup> British Columbia Archives and Records Services (BCARS), British Columbia Historical Association, Box 7 File 21, “Pioneers Reunion 1924: Transcript of proceedings at May 9<sup>th</sup> banquet, Empress Hotel, Victoria; M. Unwin, Deputy Official Stenographer,” speech by Victor Harrison, Grand Chief Factor of the Native Sons, Nanaimo, 17.

history, and organizing historically based celebrations like Douglas Day and the Pioneer Reunions. According to Forrest D. Pass, these two aims – the pragmatic and the commemorative – functioned in concert to generate a middle class appeal. However, both the pragmatic and commemorative projects were premised on a gendered and racial order that was implicit in defining both British Columbian as well as middle class, two identities which the Native Sons held dear. In other words, the notion of citizenship promoted by the Native sons assumed the supremacy of masculinity and whiteness.

The Native Daughters of British Columbia, the Native Sons' sister organization, was responsible for organizing social events that encouraged a sense of community, promoted marriages between Native Sons and Daughters, and encouraged the breeding of future generations of Native Sons and Daughters. Amidst a flurry of strawberry feeds, basket picnics, and dances, the Native Daughters were primarily concerned with their positions as mothers and wives, and ultimately had the single most important task of "peopling the province" with "the pioneer stock."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the various political and commemorative activities of the Native Sons were centered on this objective.<sup>13</sup> The Native Daughters were also responsible for monitoring the "progress of the pioneers" in terms of male reproduction, by tracking the birth of male children born in the province as prospective members of the Native Sons, and thus, leaders of the community and

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., speech by Mark Bates, pioneer of Nanaimo, 9.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Ibid., speech by Beaumont Boggs, 16. Boggs' address to the Native Daughters was brief, but focused entirely on encouraging these women to "continue to live as your mothers did," referring to their exceptional abilities as wives, child-bearers, and child-rearers.

exemplary citizens.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, the Native Daughters remained in a contradictory position familiar to many Anglo-Saxon middle-class women of their time, wherein their reproductive capacity was upheld and protected while their status as individuals subsumed by assumptions of gender inferiority. This contradiction is explored in detail in chapter five.

The gendered nature of the Native Sons' activities meant that whiteness was constructed differently for men than for women. The public sphere, most notably local politics, business, and wage labour, remained the domain of men. Within this domain, racial order took two forms. In some cases, for example in some areas of their position on immigration and settlement policy, the Native Sons advocated an identity that was primarily Anglo-Saxon. This was an understanding that required a hierarchy within the racial category of white, and provided the basis for the Native Sons' distinct identity as "native" British Columbians.<sup>15</sup> In other cases, and increasingly so throughout the 1920s and 30s, the Native Sons asserted an identity that collapsed the hierarchy of white into a united front to garner support for their political goals, particularly their anti-Oriental activity. And in other instances, these two racial orders – one that divided white further into subcategories, and one that pitched white as a unified category – were employed

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<sup>14</sup> VCA, Add. MSS. 600, 567-G-4, Letter from Harold B. McDonald, Grand Secretary of the Native Sons, to Ernest C. Hope, Esq., Secretary Post No. 9, Native Sons, Fort Langley, 9 November 1927.

<sup>15</sup> The hierarchy of Whiteness in the American context has been termed "variagated Whiteness" by Matthew Frye Jacobson in *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Jacobson notes that the period between the 1840s and 1920s was one of mass European immigration, wherein distinctions were made within the category of White. By 1920, however, Jacobson argues that with the increase of restrictions on immigration, Americans conflated the various White identities into the single category of White, or "Caucasian."

simultaneously, as in a 1933 statement by the Native Sons on economic development in British Columbia.

In the spring of 1933, the Native Sons' Vancouver Post (No.2) submitted a resolution to the members of the Dominion government declaring their support for the federal government's proposed Royal Commission to "investigate and report upon Banking Laws and their reform."<sup>16</sup> The resolution recommended that Leon J. Ladner, member of the Native Sons and a past Member of Parliament, be appointed to the Commission.<sup>17</sup> Further, the Native Sons felt the situation urgent enough to call for the creation of a "British Columbia Economic Committee," whose purpose was to influence government policy. The Committee was to include a Historical Bureau, a Local Affairs Bureau, a Legal Bureau, and a Natural Resources Bureau. In an early report from the Committee, Grand Factor Bruce McKelvie identified the aim of the committee, which was to discover the fundamental causes and effects of an unsound economic structure. Six problems were identified and outlined as contributing to economic instability – the provincial land settlement policy, education, immigration, control of natural resources, foreign trade, and industry and waste.

Although the category "white" is not explicitly spoken in this report, there is a clear connection between this racial identity and the middle-class interests with which this report is concerned. In his report, McKelvie asks a series of questions:

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<sup>16</sup> VCA, Add. MSS. 600, 567-G-4, Letter from Frederick Aubrey, Recording Secretary of the Native Sons of British Columbia, Post #2, to J.O. Lee, Post #9, Murrayville, c/o J.O. Lee, Esq., 11 April 1933.

<sup>17</sup> Ladner was a member of the Native Sons, born in Ladner, British Columbia, in 1885. His father settled in the province in 1858 from England, and the town of Ladner named after his family. Ladner was a lawyer, and a Liberal-Conservative.

Are we, as a people, adapted to the land? Would it not be better to encourage a peasant people to settle, provided that they are of a type who, themselves, or their children will assimilate? How best may we combat the Oriental problem; to do so by legislation has failed. Is it possible to replace them by economic laws? Can we, by the application of economic factors control immigration provincially?<sup>18</sup>

The “we” in this passage remains undefined, except by what it is not. “We” does not refer to peasant people or Orientals, and “we” occupies a dominant position into which others must assimilate or be excluded from entirely. This particular perception of racial order has its origins a long and complex intellectual tradition which includes the Enlightenment conception of the Great Chain of Being, Linneaus’ and Blumenbach’s classifications of the races in the eighteenth century, and nineteenth-century Social Darwinism.<sup>19</sup> In the late nineteenth century, Francis Galton published *Hereditary Genius* and coined the term “eugenics.”<sup>20</sup> In Canada, eugenicists promoted the notion of an

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<sup>18</sup> VCA, Add. MSS. 600, 567-G-4, -“Memorandum for Grand Factor Re Economic Committees of Native Sons of British Columbia” by B.A. McKelvie, April 1933.

<sup>19</sup> Carolus Linneaus originally classified *homo sapiens* into four categories in the tenth edition of *Systemae Naturae*, published in 1758. These categories were: Americanus; Asiaticus; Africanus; and Europeanus. In 1795, in the third edition of *De generis humani varietate nativa liber*, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach expanded this classification system to include a fifth category, the Malayan. Social Darwinism, a theory that the human races are subject to the law of natural selection and human society is a struggle for survival ruled by the survival of the fittest, has been attributed to British philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer. His ideas along these lines were first published anonymously in 1852. For an intellectual history of race in the Western world, see George Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Galton published *Hereditary Genius* in 1869, in which he argued that intellect was transmitted genetically. In 1883, he coined the term “eugenics” to describe a form of social control based on the regulation of reproduction, or selective breeding. See Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 14-20.

innate racial order during the early twentieth century in debates over of public health, immigration, and sexual regulation. Eugenics theory contributed to a belief in “racial degeneration,” and many English Canadians “assumed that white Anglo-Saxons were racially superior and immigrants were welcomed according to the degree to which they approached this ideal.”<sup>21</sup>

The distinction between “we,” “a peasant people,” and “Orientals” has two paradoxical implications. First, it implies the assumption of a racial order where “Caucasian” is further divided into a hierarchy with Anglo-Saxon at the top and Eastern European “peasants” further down the scale. And at the same time, because these “peasant people” can be assimilated, this racial order also amalgamates the various Caucasian groups into the single category “white,” which stands in contrast to and above “Oriental.” These implications demonstrate the fluidity and multiplicity of the racial hierarchy, but are also a result of the specific temporal and regional context within which groups and individuals are racialized. By the end of the First World War, British Columbia had only recently been colonized and settled by a non-Aboriginal populations, and already had a long history of substantial Chinese, Japanese and South Asian immigration. Thus, the notion of a racial order was particularly salient in this region, and was an ongoing point of contention.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 47.

### ***The Hierarchy of Whiteness***

The federal immigration campaigns to settle the West began in 1896 as part of Prime Minister Macdonald's National Policy. At the same time, the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway opened vast areas of land for settlement. Immigration policy favoured a racial hierarchy with Anglo-Saxons as the ideal immigrant, and Southern and Eastern Europeans as inferior but assimilable. Between 1900 and 1910, the population of British Columbia doubled. During this decade, 175,000 British individuals came to British Columbia, making up sixty percent of total immigration.<sup>22</sup> Included in the remaining forty percent were Italians who laboured at Trail and Powell River as railway workers, coal miners, in the smelter and pulp and paper mill; and in the mines at Nanaimo and Cumberland, on Vancouver Island. Also in this category of less preferred immigrant were Doukhobors and Mennonites who settled in the West Kootenay and Boundary regions; and Ukrainians who continued to homestead in rural regions. As Robert A.J. MacDonald has demonstrated, Canadians of British or Northern European heritage used "racial categorizations... to define southern Europeans – whose skin colour was white – as 'non-white.'"<sup>23</sup> He continues by explaining that in the context of British Columbia in the early twentieth century:

The meaning of racial classifications is perhaps best examined in the context of the terms 'immigrant' and 'foreigner,' which conveyed

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<sup>22</sup> Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 137.

<sup>23</sup> Robert A.J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: 1863-1913* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 202.

a more general meaning than 'race.' Whereas 'race' usually implied distinctions of colour, 'immigrant' and 'foreigner' categorized both Asians and certain European groups as non-British, and consequently as outsiders.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the relatively high influx of non-British immigration constituted a threat to native-born and British residents of the province, and non-British newcomers met with discrimination because of their ethnicity as well as their social and economic status as manual labourers.

Of course, this widespread discrimination against "immigrants" and "foreigners" was not uncontested. One particularly interesting defence of the "peasant" immigrant comes from an article that was published in *Macleans Magazine* in the fall of 1929. The article was written by Frederick Philip Grove, a well known Canadian author who lived in Manitoba but was born in Prussia. The article begins with an editorial note, pointing out to the reader that the author's "views on the assimilation of the foreign-born immigrant, expressed in this article, are "different," but they are those of the foreign-born immigrant himself."<sup>25</sup> Grove refers to Eastern Europeans (Poles, Hungarians, and Ukrainians) as "mid-Europeans," and argues that their small-scale self-sustaining farming methods were superior to those used on large scale, machine-operated, credit based Canadian farms. For Grove, race and class are intertwined in the virtues of the peasant, and the experience of making a living from manual labour engender the characteristics

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>25</sup> Frederick Philip Grove, "Assimilation" in *Macleans Magazine*, 1 September, 1929: 7.



that sustain society. He asserts that “it is the peasantry which, so far, has enabled every civilization evolved in the past to survive as long as it has survived. The peasantry of Europe has always fed the cities not only with bread and wine, but with new blood and new manhood.”<sup>26</sup> This “new manhood” is defined as “that... which did the pioneering work of a hundred years ago,” and can be summed up in the one word – “character.” Canada still needed pioneers, and these pioneers had to be immigrants because Canadian-born men had become “soft, mentally and physically.”<sup>27</sup> Grove’s argument uses a geographical frame of reference that pitches the New World against the Old, and also makes a clear distinction between the middle-class Canadians and the working-class immigrant, wherein the working-class immigrant actually has more of the pioneer spirit and character than the actual Canadian-born progeny of the pioneers.

One of the big issues surrounding immigration at both the provincial and federal levels of government, and also in public discourse, in magazines and newspapers, was the question of assimilation. The “peasant” immigrant took his or her place on the racial hierarchy as superior to non-European categories because of a belief that, unlike the Oriental races, at least the second generation would be able to assimilate easily into Canadian society and culture. Even though in many cases these immigrants were described in the same derogatory terms as the Chinese or Japanese, the assumed physiological similarities between the “peasant” immigrant and Anglo-Saxon Canadians were enough to ensure assimilation. Yet, Grove equates assimilation with the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

destruction of a people, and claims that most “peasant” immigrants have no interest in assimilating or identifying themselves as Canadian. Even more interestingly, Grove asserts that “if assimilation means the absorption of one race by another, the absorbing race not to undergo any change by the process, then there is no such thing as assimilation.”<sup>28</sup> This insightful notion that racial or cultural dominance is not impenetrable, and that in practice assimilation invariably affects the dominant race or culture, provides some insight into the Native Sons’ defence of their own social and economic position in the province.

The Native Sons distinguished themselves from everyone else in the province by virtue of their descent from the original pioneer stock, and used this genealogical justification to maintain a hierarchy of whiteness that served to reinforce their middle-class status within the province by conflating the categories of peasant/working class and immigrant.

### ***Anti-Oriental Agitation in the 1920s and The Language of Brotherhood***

In contrast to complicating of the racial order to generate divisions between Anglo-Saxon and non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans, in the discourse of anti-Oriental agitation the central issue of economic competition was often distilled into a battle between white and Oriental. Despite, or perhaps because of their predominantly middle-class membership, the language used by the Native Sons in their capacity as a public interest group advocating for Oriental exclusion employed a rhetoric of equality, and the anti-

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 75.

Oriental campaign took on one form of what George Fredrickson has termed *herrenvolk democracy*, or a rationalized intellectual racism intended to unify individuals across class lines in the interest of maintaining racial dominance.<sup>29</sup> The collective protest to end Oriental immigration and curb Oriental economic progress in the province required the support of more than the middle class. The most widely espoused arguments against Oriental immigration and assimilation had to do with competition for employment and resources, and often required the collaboration of organized labour and the working-classes.

Discrimination against “Orientals” – which included people of Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian origins – was rampant in British Columbia from the first waves of Chinese immigration in the 1850s. But the need for manual labourers in this period, particularly in the mines and on the railway, meant that government and business interests were willing to accept the presence of Asian workers in Canada as a necessary exchange for the profit that could be reaped from cheap labour. During the First World War, Canadian policy on “the Asian question” was subdued, as a precaution in light of the international conflict. Between 1919 and 1939, however, with the end of the war, the completion of the railway, and the influx of European immigration, controls over Asian immigration and the activities of those already in Canada increased. While the interwar period did not see the same violence as the Vancouver race riots earlier in the

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<sup>29</sup> George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

century, this period witnessed the passage of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act and increasing employment restrictions.<sup>30</sup>

These restrictive policies were the result of a collaborative effort that included a diversity of interests, who presented their concerns as a unified front. The concept of *herrenvolk democracy* emerges most clearly in the 1920s in the activities and the discourse produced by the Asiatic/Oriental Exclusion League, an umbrella organization with branches in Vancouver and Victoria, of which the Native Sons were prominent members. The organization began as the Asiatic Exclusion League. The Vancouver branch formed in July 1921, initiated by Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, and originally included mainly trades, service industry, and veteran's interests.<sup>31</sup> The year and a half leading up to the Chinese Immigration Act, which essentially ended Chinese immigration and required Chinese already in Canada to register themselves, saw a steady flow of anti-Oriental lobbying, much of it organized by the League, at municipal and provincial levels of government. By 1922, the same year the Ku Klux Klan arrived in British Columbia, all thirteen Members of Parliament from British Columbia stood together on the issue of immigration. Many MP's from other provinces, and even Prime Minister MacKenzie King, were sympathetic.

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<sup>30</sup> See Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003); Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978).

<sup>31</sup> Gillian Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver workers confront the Oriental Problem" in *BC Studies* 80 (Winter 1988-89), 208; Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 61.

In the spring of that year, William Garland McQuarrie, House of Commons member from New Westminster, introduced a resolution calling for the total restriction of Oriental immigration. McQuarrie was a barrister and solicitor by training, and a Liberal-Conservative. His resolution sparked a debate in Ottawa over the question of immigration, but the debate was a matter of exclusion versus restriction, with virtually all in agreement that the flow of Oriental immigration had to be curbed. In November of 1922, a bill was introduced in the provincial legislature by William Sloan, then Minister of Mines and Commissioner of Fisheries, to completely prohibit "Asiatic" immigration into Canada. Sloan was a gentleman and resident of Nanaimo, from a wealthy, old guard Liberal family, but who had also made his fortune in the Yukon gold rush. He was a native-born member of the Canadian elite, and a prominent Cabinet member. While both the resolution and motion were formally introduced by politicians who advocated the interests of professionals, business, and the middle-class, they had the support a variety of civic organizations, including veterans associations, women's groups, agrarian groups, and labour organizations. The Liberal and Conservative factions also had the support of Labour, in contrast to the usual divisions between business and professional interests and labour interests. This political cooperation was understood by both sides to be in the interests of protecting the white race.<sup>32</sup>

The Chinese Immigration Act took effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1923, restricting but not excluding Chinese Immigration into the country. The number of Chinese entering the

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<sup>32</sup>VCA, 570-F-7, File 199, Add.MSS 641, "Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia," 14 November, 1922; Canadian Parliamentary Guide, (Ottawa: Mortimer and Company, Ltd, 1921-1925); Roy, *The Oriental Question*, 67-77.

country was severely curbed, and in Ottawa the question of Chinese immigration had essentially been laid to rest. The Asiatic Exclusion League went into something of a decline in the period immediately following, and was almost defunct by 1924. But anti-Oriental sentiment persisted in popular consciousness and at the provincial level of government. In late 1924, a revival of the League was initiated by the Vancouver and Victoria Branches of the Native Sons of British Columbia under a new name – the Oriental Exclusion League – which brought the organization back into action with some fervour. This time around, however, the Native Sons rather than the Trades and Labour Congress were the primary movers, even though many of the organizations involved were still labour groups; and, equally as significant, the Native Sons had expressly invited several white organizations to join.<sup>33</sup> The League spoke out on many aspects of the “problem” of Orientals already in the country, including competition for jobs, the detrimental effect of cheap Chinese labour on union activity, the infiltration of the Japanese into the fishing industry, and the impossibility of assimilation, where even inter-racial marriage would never lead to “good Canadian citizenship.”<sup>34</sup>

Thus, the 1923 Immigration Act was only considered a partial victory for the anti-Oriental campaign, and agitation continued. By the late 1920s, while a few calls for total exclusion in immigration persisted, the focus of the collective anti-Oriental campaign had shifted more firmly into the economic realm. The Oriental Exclusion League had dissipated again shortly after its revival in 1925, this time for good, but the racialized

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<sup>33</sup> Roy, *The Oriental Question*, 80.

<sup>34</sup> VCA, 570-F-7, File 199, Add.MSS.641, Ladner Fonds, Oriental Exclusion Association, 1925.

sentiments, ideals, goals, and rhetoric of the League had already become firmly entrenched in political discourse. In 1927, a report was prepared for the British Columbia Legislative Assembly on “Oriental Activities Within the Province.” This report was intended to function as something of a handbook for members of the Legislature, who had, in the past, been confronted with a “lack of statistical and other information in readily available form” about the Orientals in the province. It was far from an objective report. Rather, it was constructed with the unwavering assumption that “the people of British Columbia... by the voice of their representatives in the Legislative Assembly” were “utterly opposed to the further influx of Orientals into this Province.” The report was thorough, and covered population figures, birth rates, education, land ownership, the employment of workers in industries, the distribution of trade and business licenses, the fishing industry, and agriculture. The goal of this particular report was explicit. It was intended to address the concerns of white British Columbians that had been raised in the Legislature since the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act, regarding the “industrial and commercial activities of all Orientals now in Canada and particularly British Columbia.” The ultimate goal was to secure the economic status of white Canadians through restrictive legislation, to protect both “white merchants” as well as white workers, referred to in the report as “white citizens.”<sup>35</sup>

Many of the same organizations that worked together under the aegis of the Asiatic/Oriental Exclusion League continued to cooperate in the late 1920s despite the

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<sup>35</sup> Legislative Assembly, “Report on Oriental Activities Within the Province” (Victoria: Charles F. Banfield, 1927), 3.

dispersal of the umbrella organization. Even without the direction of the League, anti-Oriental agitation continued to be backed by an interclass solidarity in the interests of racial dominance. For example, in November of 1929, a conference was held at the Vancouver Hotel, which included delegates “from many public and semi-public bodies and associations... to have a full discussion of the whole question with a view to asking for such legislation as the conference may consider is best calculated to stop this silent Oriental penetration and to gradually reduce the present menace.”<sup>36</sup> Representatives of municipal, country, and trade interests, including several members of the Native Sons, met to discuss “the owning or leasing of farm lands by Orientals, the exploitation by them of our national resources, and the displacing of white workers and merchants in the cities.”<sup>37</sup> Also on the agenda was the issue of Oriental children in the public school system. This meeting exemplifies the collaborative efforts that went into lobbying the government for more stringent policies to exclude Orientals from economic, social, and political rights. It required cooperation between urban and rural residents of both the middle and working classes. The “Oriental menace” was rendered as one that aimed to destroy the stability of both worker and merchant, whose interests could be amalgamated through a racial identity.

At the same time, this interclass solidarity was tenuous, at best, and divisions within the anti-Oriental campaign were apparent by the late 1920s. In 1928 and 1929,

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<sup>36</sup> VCA, 567-G-4, Add. MSS. 600, Letter from E.H. Bridgman, Chas. E. Hope, and W.C. Woodward to Mr. Alex Hope, Fort Langley, President of the Native Sons of British Columbia, 29 October 1929.

<sup>37</sup> VCA, 567-G-4, Add. MSS. 600, Letter from E.H. Bridgman, Chas. E. Hope, and W.C. Woodward to Mr. Alex Hope, Fort Langley, President of the Native Sons of British Columbia, 29 October 1929.



several “organizations and public bodies” came together to lobby for the creation of an Oriental Trade License Board. This Board was intended to “provide machinery to cope with the growing Oriental invasion into legitimate retail trade channels,” but because of Constitutional tenets embodied in the British North America Act, could not discriminate “along the lines of nationality or race.” In fact, Counsel for the city of Vancouver George McCrossan cautioned Mayor Malkin that the Board might in fact be *ultra vires*. The Act was one in a long line of attempts made by the Legislature to restrict Chinese economic activity, which included the 1878 Chinese Tax Act, the 1884 Chinese Regulation Act, and the 1897 Coal Mines Regulation Act – all of which were deemed unconstitutional. The Trade License Board Act was passed in 1928, but no Board was ever actually established.<sup>38</sup> Aside from revealing strained provincial-federal relations over the issue of race, what is also important about the failure of Trade License Board Act is that it shows that by 1928 the collective anti-Oriental agitation had fractured and lost the support of organized Labour.

The Trades and Labour Council had withdrawn support from some of the mainstream anti-Oriental activities because certain members of the Council felt that the current campaign served only the interests of the business and middle-classes. Also, by this point, the Council had the cooperation of certain factions of Japanese workers. In addition, the influence of the white organizations that were brought into the anti-Oriental campaign by the Native Sons had led to divisions amongst the various interest groups who had cooperated on the immigration question earlier in the decade. By this

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<sup>38</sup> VCA, 15-B-2, File 5, City Clerk’s Office, Series 20, Letter from George E. McCrossan, Corporation Counsel, Law Department, Vancouver, to W.H. Malkin, Mayor-Elect, Vancouver, 16 November 1928.

time, the focus of the campaign centred on the questions of economic restrictions, illegal immigration, Oriental enfranchisement, and the as yet unrestricted Japanese “infiltration” into the province. In the fall of 1929, about thirty representatives from civic organizations and communities met at the Hotel Vancouver. The meeting was organized by the Native Sons and the Vancouver Board of Trade. The most urgent topic on the agenda was a proposal for

the formation of a Province-wide association, to be known as the White Canada Association, with a minimum annual subscription fee of \$1.00, for the purpose of fostering legislation which will prevent further Oriental penetration in British Columbia, and reduce the present menace to our national lives, by means of treaty of revision or otherwise.<sup>39</sup>

The Association was to work in conjunction with the White Canada League, which had been established the year before and had 1700 members. Delegates at this meeting, which primarily consisted of representatives from the municipalities, various farmers’ institutes, the Retail Merchants Association, and City Councils from Langley, Nanaimo, New Westminster, Surrey, Vernon, Maple Ridge, Richmond and Vancouver, voted unanimously in support of forming a White Canada Association.

The Trades and Labour Council was not represented at this meeting, although some individual trades and union men were there. The Council, as a body, had decided

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<sup>39</sup> VCA, 15-B-2, File 5, City Clerk’s Office, Series 20, “Minutes of Meeting Held in the Hotel Vancouver, Vancouver BC” 27 November 1929. According to Charles Hope, who was present at this meeting, the Trades and Labour Council “had Japanese on their Executive Committee” and were thus “in an anomalous position at this meeting.”

that they “would not support any movement which would relieve the pressure on one class of the community at the expense of other classes.” Further, the Council “had Japanese on their Executive Committee” which put the organization “in an anomalous position at this meeting.”<sup>40</sup> The Oriental Exclusion League and the White Canada Association had replaced the Asiatic Exclusion League as the primary organization for white supremacist political lobbying by interwar period. So, while the movement began as a cross class campaign, by the end of the 1920s it had lost a major source of support from organized labour.

The language of interclass solidarity continued, however, and so sure were the advocates of the White Canada Association that they both needed and would eventually gain the support of Labour that they brushed the matter aside and resolved to “take this matter up with the Trades and Labour Council after [the Association’s] plans were more matured.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, while class interests were essentially united on the question of Chinese immigration in the earlier part of the decade, after the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923 class divisions emerged over what to do with the Orientals already in the country. The Oriental question was always a question of Canadian identity, and the protection of some citizens at the expense of others. The objective of the anti-Oriental movement, most ardently expressed by the Native Sons, was a dual one: identifying, restricting, excluding, and eliminating the Oriental entailed identifying

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. “Trades Union man” Reeve Tom Reid of Surrey, was present at this meeting, and made the suggestion of approaching the Trades and Labour Council after the Association was better established.

<sup>41</sup> VCA, 15-B-2, File 5, City Clerk’s Office, Series 20, “Minutes of Meeting Held in the Hotel Vancouver, Vancouver BC” 27 November 1929.

and protecting themselves as white. As one delegate at the incipient meeting of the White Canada Association explained, “this movement was not based upon personal antagonism to either Chinese or Japanese, for many of whom he had personally held a high regard, but it was rapidly becoming a question of whether or not British Columbia could allow the continual displacement of the white race by Orientals, which was assuming alarming proportions...”<sup>42</sup>

***Economic Reform in the 1930s: “In the Best Interests of British Columbia”***<sup>43</sup>

The Native Sons continued their political campaigning into the 1930s primarily as an autonomous organization. In the spring (March) of 1932, the Native Sons offered their support for a resolution introduced into the Legislature by J.W. Berry, M.L.A., asking that Ottawa bring in legislation denying Canadian citizenship to “aliens.”<sup>44</sup> Their resolution demanded “that the Dominion Government be requested to not grant Canadian Citizenship to members of the Oriental races by virtue of the accident of birth.”<sup>45</sup> However, although their activities still included specifically anti-Oriental

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 10, File 3, Report from Native Sons to Hon. Newton Wesley Rowell, PC, KC, and Members of HM Royal Commission Making Inquiry into Federal and Provincial Relationships, 1934,” 4.

<sup>44</sup> VCA, 567-G-4, Add. MSS. 600, Letter from Secretary, Murrayville, British Columbia, to His Worship, Mayor A.W. Gray, M.L.A., New Westminster, BC, 21 March, 1932.

<sup>45</sup> VCA, 567-G-4, Add. MSS. 600, Letter from Secretary, Murrayville, British Columbia, to Hon. W.A. Gordon, K.C., Minister of Immigration and Colonization, Ottawa, Ontario, 22 March, 1932. This letter was also sent to Hon. C.H. Cahan, Secretary of State, Ottawa; R.B. Bennet, PM; and the Hon. H.H. Stevens, Minister of Trade and Commerce.

campaigns,<sup>46</sup> economic reform took over during this decade, as exemplified in the work of Bruce McKelvie and the Native Sons' Economic Committee.

McKelvie's ideas of economic reform were well developed by the time the Economic Committee was formed in 1933, and he was a key founding member. The Native Sons' involvement in economic reform stemmed from a recognition of the limitations of state authority over an economy based primarily on the export of raw resources. In his personal correspondence, McKelvie identified two problems which underlay the failure of the state in this respect, and an economic plan to resolve these issues. The two problems were the geography and environment of the province, and scattered settlement patterns that were a result of a faulty land policy. The existing land policy had been established in 1859, when the Aboriginal population of the province definitively outnumbered the European population, the fur trade and gold rush were far more tempting than agriculture and settlement, and land availability was seemingly abundant. This land policy allowed unrestricted settlement over an area of 370 000 square miles, and pre-emptions of 160 acres for all adult British citizens. The result of this policy was scattered (and thus, unprofitable) settlement and the pre-emption of more land than the pre-emptor could clear and use. McKelvie's solution was to encourage concentrated settlement closer to Vancouver, especially on arable land, and

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<sup>46</sup> See also, for example, BCARS, McKelvie Fonds, Box 26, File 10, "Brief Opposing Granting of Franchise to Orientals in Canada, Prepared by the Native Sons of British Columbia, 1936"; and Box 26, File 10, "California Joint Immigration Committee, various documents, 1937." The Native Sons also continued to offer support to their own kind, in the face of the Depression and in the interests of propagating the pioneer stock. In June 1931, Edward D. Airth from Mission City wrote a letter to the Native Sons asking for assistance. Airth and his family, consisting of two young children and a pregnant wife, were, like many individuals at this time, facing unemployment and poverty. Airth was clear on both his request and his rationale for being deserving of such altruism: "I do not ask for money, I just want work... as I am a Native Son of B.C. of Canadian parents I trust you will be able to assist me." See VCA, 567-G-4, Add. MSS. 600, Letter from Edward D. Airth, Mission City, to Native Sons, 2 June 1931.

to develop a stable home market to support export activity. This home market, however, would require some social engineering – “a peasant class” to work the land and a substantial working-class to function as consumers, and whose labour would extract and process the natural resources so abundant in the province.<sup>47</sup>

McKelvie’s economic plan contained echoes of the rhetoric of the hierarchy of whiteness as well as, more directly, the notion of a collective white identity. The peasant and working class identities were clearly distinguished from the unspoken category of white middle-class Anglo-Saxon, the infamous “we.” McKelvie referred to “our workers” and asserted that if the land were settled by peasant agriculturalists, or “stock men... they [would] give us a market for the products of the forests, mines and water.” At the same time, he collapsed the category of white into a single identity when he addressed the problem of “the Oriental.” For McKelvie, the issue was one of patriotism, and the perpetrators were none other than “we white people.” He goes on to rant:

We have broken the hearts of thousands of our own white race who have tried to produce foodstuffs and have given our patronage to the Chink and Jap, because he gave us two or three cents advantage. Our patriotism was sold for two cents on a bunch of celery or for a nickel and a handful of potatoes.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> VCA, 567-G-4, File 4, Add.MSS.600, Letter from Bruce McKelvie to “Dear Old Fred,” 15 February, 1930.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

When the Economic Committee came into being, its activities were based on McKelvie's plan and the ideological rationale behind the plan, including the notion that racial order played a role in directing economic reform. Petitions to the federal and provincial governments from the Native Sons' Economic Committee used racialized language more cautiously than did McKelvie in his private correspondence, but maintained the underlying concept that racial order was foundational to healthy society.<sup>49</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Racial order was central to the Native Sons' frame of reference, which informed both their *raison d'être* and their civic contributions. The "Oriental" may have been constructed by white British Columbians as "unabsorbable aliens by accident of birth,"<sup>50</sup> but at the same time, white Anglo-Saxon British Columbians were themselves assumed to be the pinnacle of ideal Canadian citizenship only "by virtue of the accident of birth."<sup>51</sup> Therefore, as important as it was to identify, track, and define the problematic "Oriental," anti-Oriental and pro-white organizations like the Native Sons also had to continuously define themselves in order to validate their position of privilege. In the

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<sup>49</sup> BCARS, Bruce McKelvie Fonds, Box 10, File 3, "Memorandum for the Honorable Minister of Lands, from the British Columbia Economic Committee, Native Sons of British Columbia" 1934; and "Report from Native Sons to Hon. Newton Wesley Rowell, PC, KC and Members of HM Royal Commission Making Inquiry into Federal and Provincial Relationships," 1934.

<sup>50</sup> VCA, 567-G-4, ADD.MSS.600, Letter from Secretary of the Native Sons of British Columbia copied to various politicians in Victoria/New Westminster, 1931.

<sup>51</sup> VCA, 567-G-4, Add. MSS. 600, Letter from Secretary, Murrayville, British Columbia, to Hon. W.A. Gordon, K.C., Minister of Immigration and Colonization, Ottawa, Ontario, 22 March, 1932. This letter was also sent to Hon. C.H. Cahan, Secretary of State, Ottawa; R.B. Bennet, PM; and the Hon. H.H. Stevens, Minister of Trade and Commerce.

case of the Native Sons, this was done through commemorative activities – the making of a history through public celebrations, written popular history, and the conservation of both oral history and material artifacts. This was a history that championed the indomitable pioneer of the settlement period, who incontrovertibly conquered the land as well as the people of this vast and wild “sea of mountains.”

This pioneer mythology also shaped the way that the Indian identity was constructed during the interwar period. It was aligned with and reinforced by changes in 19th century science, including the birth of the discipline of anthropology, all of which contributed to a "common sense" perception of civilization and progress that positioned indigenous people at the bottom end of the hierarchy of humanity. Canadian anthropologists, trained in the Boasian tradition, contributed to this perception the idea that not only were indigenous peoples "primitive," but, as the course of evolution dictated, they were becoming extinct. Anthropologists – Marius Barbeau and Edward Sapir, most notably – based their fieldwork on the methodology of salvage ethnology and this idea of extinction via natural selection and evolution. The goal of these anthropologists was to collect as much as they could of what remained of both the material and oral cultures of indigenous people. As a result, aboriginal art and imagery has, for the bulk of Canadian history, been relegated to the realm of "artifact" as opposed to "art." However, a transition from artifact to art occurred during the 20th century. In the interwar period, there were stirrings of an aboriginal/non-aboriginal alliance. One sign of this would be a widespread movement to revive traditional aboriginal art and design.



## **Chapter 4 ~ “A Nation of Artists”<sup>1</sup>: Indigenous Art and Imagery as Paradoxical Sites of Racialization**

In a symbolic gesture of the city’s coming of age, Mayor Gerry McGeer of Vancouver presented a small carving of a totem pole to Sir Percy Vincent, Lord Mayor of London, England, in celebration of Vancouver’s 1936 Golden Jubilee. This argillite (black slate) pole was carved by John Cross, a Haida from Skidegate, British Columbia. The crest at the top of this pole is Grizzly Bear, “holding two human figures, one in his mouth and the other in his paws, indicative of his great strength. At the foot of the pole, Grizzly Bear is seen again devouring a huge fish. In the center is Mankilslas as Great Raven. On his body, between his pendant wings is observed a fish with the miniature head of a raven carved in relief.”<sup>2</sup> Mankilslas was a Haida Chief, who could transform into Raven. His offspring was Thunderbird. The Thunderbird Pole, a full sized totem carved by Chief Joe Capilano Matthias of the Squamish Band, was erected this same year at Prospect Point in Stanley Park during the Jubilee. Three more full sized totems were erected in the park as part of the celebration, at Lumberman’s Arch – two of Kwakwaka’wakw origins and one Haida mortuary pole, containing the remains of a Haida Raven chief.

In British Columbia, by the late 1930s, Aboriginal art and imagery was being repositioned to reflect continuity rather than extinction as the notion of the Vanishing

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<sup>1</sup> British Columbia Archives and Records Services (BCARS), Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, 1939-1954, Box 1 File 3, Alice Ravenhill, “Formation in Victoria of the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts” (1945), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Vancouver City Archives (VCA), AM. 0054.013.04584, Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee, G.H. Raley “An interpretation of the *Legend of Mankilslas*” as related by John Cross, 1936.

Indian was being compromised by the reality of an increasing and visible Aboriginal population. This was the genesis of a political identity, in the construction of a living indigenous culture. By the twentieth century, Aboriginal communities had been severely marginalized as a consequence of institutionalized racism. There were very few places where living expressions of indigenism appeared in mainstream Canadian life. In the interwar period, the most important and evident of these was in the arts.

In this early period, public representations of Aboriginal art and imagery were organized and controlled primarily by non-Aboriginal 'experts.' The following account of the organized revival of Indian arts and crafts in British Columbia demonstrates change, but also the continuity of a colonial perspective. This perspective still considered Aboriginal imagery as primarily aesthetic and historical rather than functional. Thus, Aboriginal imagery was considered in terms of Western perceptions of line, space, design, and form, and therefore as primitive and simplistic. Early attempts to conciliate the discourse of disappearance with the reality of a present Aboriginal people and culture were unstable, and fraught with contradictions. Nonetheless, they provided the groundwork which allowed post-war British Columbian Aboriginal artists like Mungo Martin, George Clutesi, Ellen Neel, and Bill Reid to emerge on the national and international scene as Canadian artists, to reintroduce function and meaning into Aboriginal imagery, and to assert a living Aboriginal culture as a cornerstone of indigenous rights movements.

The 1930s saw a trend in the province's tourism industry to use Aboriginal imagery in advertising campaigns. Prior to the First World War, tourism campaigns in

British Columbia focused primarily on the British heritage of the region, agriculture, and the modern and progressive character of the cities. By the 1930s, however, Aboriginal imagery had become quite popular in provincial and municipal tourist propaganda.<sup>3</sup> This shift in tourism, as with the popularity of the Pioneer mythology, aligned with a broader conceptual trajectory. Like the Pioneer, the Indian stood as a symbol of antimodernism. As Ian McKay has demonstrated, antimodernism was a widespread and international current in the early twentieth century, a “general middle-class search for something *outside* and better than the crisis-ridden modern world it inhabited.”<sup>4</sup> The Great Depression provided fodder for antimodernist thought, which crystallized during this period as a critique of industrial capitalism. The persistence of the notion of the vanishing Indian meant that ‘traditional’ Aboriginal culture provided a perfect site for many English Canadians to indulge antimodernist romantic notions, while maintaining the dominant socio-economic position of middle-class Anglo-Protestant culture in Canada. For many white, middle-class Vancouverites, the most appealing aspects of Aboriginal culture to the antimodernist sensibility were found in the arts and crafts.

During the interwar years, Aboriginal designs and motifs were presented to non-Aboriginal Canadians by private societies, museums, and galleries for the first time as ‘art’ rather than as ‘artifact.’ The transition was complex and inconsistent, and with the exception of the 1927 *Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* show, Aboriginal

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Dawson, *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890-1970* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 69-78.

<sup>4</sup> Ian McKay, “Tartanism Triumphant: The Construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933-1954.” *Acadiensis*, XXI, 2 (Spring 1992), 8.

artists were not exhibited as such at the National Gallery of Canada until the 1980s.<sup>5</sup>

However, the incipient stages of the national project of creating a unified Canadian cultural identity – which, for English-Canadians, culminated in the Massey Commission of 1949 and the establishment of the Canada Council in 1957 – was dependent on an indigenous presence.<sup>6</sup>

As a newly colonized nation, English Canada did not have a long-standing history of place, or ties of ancestry that faded into time immemorial – in essence, no sense of *volk*. Instead, a complex process ensued whereby English-Canadian artists in search of a distinctly Canadian image, appropriated the *volk* from two key sites: Québécois and indigenous cultures. Starting in 1920, the Group of Seven, supported by the National Gallery of Canada (N.G.C.), produced works that were exhibited to both a Canadian and international audience as symbolic of a distinctly Canadian culture. Most of the Group of Seven paintings exhibited by the N.G.C. depict empty wilderness landscapes, void of humanity. Yet, in places like rural British Columbia, the human presence was difficult to ignore. The American artist Langdon Kihn, in particular, produced numerous portraits of Kootenay, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Gitksan people in this period. While his work garnered significant acclaim in the world of American fine art, his paintings were repeatedly rejected by Canadian galleries and museums. Kihn also worked with Marius Barbeau for several years on National Museum surveys prior to 1927, but his relationship with the

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<sup>5</sup> Leslie Dawn, *National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 272.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the development of the arts in English Canada prior to the 1950s, see Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

anthropologist, as with his status in the Canadian art scene, was uneasy. One reason for this underlying tension was the contradictory message that Kihn's portraits conveyed, of the continuity and humanity of indigenous culture. This message stood in direct opposition to the discourse of disappearance that was maintained through the collective efforts of individuals like Barbeau through the National Museum and the National Gallery.<sup>7</sup>

However, Canadian artists like the Group of Seven and Emily Carr who were supported by the National Museum and the N.G.C., were also drawn to indigenous imagery as part of the British Columbian landscape because the indigenous presence was one key aspect of the Canadian identity that could distinguish 'Canadian' from British or American. These painters integrated the indigenous presence into the empty wilderness landscape; but unlike Kihn's portraits, only objects like homesteads and totems were included. Québécois and indigenous imagery appeared as the subject matter of English-Canadian artists, and rendered not as art, but as symbolic of the past.

As Leslie Dawn has argued, the Canadian landscapes produced by prominent artists like the Group of Seven after the First World War, particularly of rural Quebec and British Columbia, were most often portrayed as void of humanity. Some evidence of culture remained; an "empty wilderness" with only lingering hints of primitive culture that served as an appropriate "background" for a Canadian culture."<sup>8</sup> In the case of Aboriginal imagery, this process of cultural appropriation occurred primarily in British

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<sup>7</sup> Dawn, *National Visions*, 116-181.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 3; 234.

Columbia. There are two reasons for this regional preference. First, the richness of Northwest Coastal art had already been established by anthropologists and ethnologists, in terms of quantity as well as quality. Second, the artistic traditions among the Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-Chah-Nult, and Squamish were continuous and ongoing, and produced an opposing voice to the discourse of disappearance that demanded attention. As Dawn has adeptly demonstrated, major cultural producers like the anthropologist Marius Barbeau, Indian Affairs Deputy Superintendant Duncan C. Scott, and the artists A.Y. Jackson and Emily Carr manipulated this rich bounty of British Columbian Aboriginal visual imagery to reinforce the discourse of disappearance, and to obscure the visibility of Aboriginal people. Nonetheless, this manipulation occurred within a context of "internal contradictions and external opposition," of land claims and assertions of identity that "threatened to destabilize what had long been held as foundational truths for the discipline of ethnography, for the principles of museum collecting, for enacting government policies and legislation, and for acquiring territories."<sup>9</sup>

### ***The British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts Revival***

The Arts and Crafts movement was an international reform movement that was both philanthropic and socialist, and based on an ideology that championed the arts and crafts as a means towards economic self sufficiency and moral uplift. The movement took hold in England, the United States, and Canada during the late nineteenth century,

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<sup>9</sup> Dawn, *National Visions*, 3.

largely based on the philosophy popularized by the British writer, artist, and socialist, William Morris. The socio-economic aspect of this philosophy encouraged a return to a communal village economy, wherein artisans perfected their craft and bartered their wares. Aesthetically, the arts and crafts philosophy advocated imperfection, as “evidence of the essential humanity of the work process; by contrast, the perfections of antique handwork and modern machine production were considered the products of different types of ‘slave’ labour.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, a return to the daily use and production of beautiful, handmade objects was one solution to the ills of industrial society. This movement, in its purest form, was embodied in cooperative rural craft communities like the Shakers in the Northeastern United States. By the early twentieth century, the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement on many reformers and social workers was apparent. Administrators of settlement houses like the Hull House in Chicago and Toynbee Hall in London adapted Morris’ ideas in their social work, believing that art education was the key to the moral uplift of impoverished immigrants.<sup>11</sup>

The Arts and Crafts movement in twentieth-century Canada incorporated variations of these earlier socialist ideas with ‘modern’ antimodernist sentiments. The British Columbia Indian arts and crafts revival was a localized variation of this larger movement. Here, pre-industrial society had consisted of only a handful of white settlers

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<sup>10</sup>Diane Waggoner, Ed., *The Beauty of Life: William Morris and the Art of Design* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 25.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the settlement houses, see Mary Lynn McCree Bryan, Barbara Bair and Maree De Angury, Eds., *The Selected Papers of Jane Addams: Preparing to Lead, 1860-1881* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Mary Lunn McCree Bryan and Allen F. Davis, *100 Years at Hull-House* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990).

and a large population of Aboriginal communities. Thus, for British Columbians, Indians were central actors in the Romantic notion of the primitive, on which the antimodernist image of the idyllic 'pre-modern' society was based. Proponents of the Indian Arts and Crafts revival believed that 'authentic' Indian designs, aesthetics, colours, and techniques could only be produced by authentic Indian people, by means of "inherited ability."<sup>12</sup> In other words, the essence of Indian arts and crafts was its inherently primitive nature. Equally as important to this movement was the notion that because Aboriginal people in British Columbia had been colonized, much of their knowledge of traditional arts and crafts had been lost.

The British Columbia Indian arts and crafts revival overlapped, in theory and in practice, with professional and amateur salvage anthropologists of the day. The most immediate task during the early years of the revival was the methodical process of defining what constituted authentic Indian arts and crafts. In order to do so, traditional Indian culture first had to be defined. In 1938, a book was published in Victoria, British Columbia, with an image of a totem pole adorning the front cover, leaning slightly to the right, as if to express its age and weariness at having stood, neglected, for so long. This book, entitled *The Native Tribes of British Columbia*, was written by Alice Ravenhill, and provided an overview of traditional Aboriginal culture in prehistoric times. Here, culture was defined as "a combination or embodiment of inherited customs and traditions which control their actions, regulate their procedures, and find expression in their

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<sup>12</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 3, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Alice Ravenhill, "Formation in Victoria of the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, 1923-45" (1945), 7.



emotions and arts.”<sup>13</sup> While *The Native Tribes* covered geographic locations, tools, weapons, housing, and food production methods, the bulk of the book focused on Aboriginal arts and crafts. In 1944, Ravenhill published a second book, entitled *A Cornerstone of Canadian Culture: An Outline of the Arts and Crafts of the Indian Tribes of British Columbia*. This monograph was distributed to all of the Indian schools in the province, in order to revive interest in, provide instruction for, and stimulate the production of ‘traditional’ arts and crafts among Aboriginal children. Ravenhill was a central figure in the British Columbia Indian arts and crafts revival, and these two books became a ‘cornerstone’ of the movement.

Born in England in 1859, Ravenhill began her career as an educator in the fields of public health, home economics, and child care. Her interest in Aboriginal arts and crafts only began in the late 1920s, but by the 1930s Ravenhill had already become something of a local authority on the subject. During the 1930s and into the 1940s Ravenhill devoted much of her time to the revival of Indian arts and crafts in British Columbia, a moral endeavor that gained significant publicity and support from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in the province. Ravenhill’s self-education in Indian arts and crafts began with needlework. On hooked rugs, bags, book covers, cushions, and other household objects she reproduced, for sale, various Aboriginal designs garnered from the Provincial Archives. Starting in the late 1920s, Ravenhill also gave public talks “on the characteristics and claims of these provincial tribal arts” at the Island and Victoria Arts and Crafts Society and the Women’s University Club, and the

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<sup>13</sup> Alice Ravenhill, *The Native Tribes of British Columbia* (Victoria: Charles F. Banfield, 1938), 10.

Business Men's "Lunch Club" in Victoria. Ravenhill's needlework designs and her talks were initially met with poor sales, poor attendance, and a general lack of interest. This changed in 1935, when Ravenhill redirected her attention to children. That year, sponsored by the Carnegie Fund, she gave a series of four talks at the Provincial Museum, which attracted a total audience of over 250 children. In the fall of 1936, immediately following Vancouver's Jubilee celebrations, an eight-week course on "British Columbia Indians" was added to the grade school curriculum, "without," in her view, "authentic guidance being provided for the teachers." Ravenhill took up this issue with the school board, and the result of this was the publication in 1938 of *The Native Tribes of British Columbia*.<sup>14</sup>

*The Native Tribes* gained an unexpected and significant endorsement in 1939, when a copy of the book was presented to the Queen of England by Lady Tweedsmuir, a personal friend of Ravenhill's and wife of the Governor General of Canada. The Queen expressed much interest in the book, and wrote Ravenhill that she was "specially desirous of learning more on the subject of the North West Pacific Coast arts and crafts."<sup>15</sup> Following the success of *The Native Tribes*, Ravenhill formed a committee based out of Victoria in 1940, called the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts. This Society was created "with the hope of arousing more interest in our BC Indians and their arts and crafts to promote the exercise of inherited

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<sup>14</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 3, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Alice Ravenhill, "Formation in Victoria of the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, 1923-45" (1945), 2-3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

abilities for their own welfare and for the cultural and commercial advancement of Canada.”<sup>16</sup> Members of the society included Major Bullock-Webster, director of the Province’s school and community drama; Alma Russel, formerly of the Provincial Archives; Dr. G. Clifford Carl, Director of the Provincial Museum; and A.E. Pickford, an expert on “Tribal Customs in various parts of the Province.”<sup>17</sup> The first step for this Society following its formation was to notify provincial and federal Indian Affairs officials in an attempt to raise funds and gain official government support. Ravenhill later corresponded extensively with Harold McGill, Director of Indian Affairs, as well as with R.A. Hoey, who was then in charge of the section concerned with School Curricula and Industrial Training, and Major D.M. MacKay, Indian Commissioner for the province. Despite her efforts, by the mid-1940s Ravenhill despaired that “so far War claims have in every case been quoted as adequate reasons for inability to cooperate in suggestions or to respond to more definite requests.”<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, the Society proceeded with their work, promoting the work of young British Columbian Aboriginal artists within the province, throughout Canada, and abroad. In 1941, a representative body of the Victoria Society was formed in Oliver, British Columbia, “which included from the start three Okanagan Indians.”<sup>19</sup> Two years later, the first British Columbian Indians became honorary members of the Victoria Society, as a result of “several Chiefs and representative individuals” having attended

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 13.

meetings and assisted the Society in its efforts to “arouse more public interest.”<sup>20</sup> In 1944, *A Corner Stone of Canadian Culture* was published, after more than five years of labour by Ravenhill and her assistant, Betty Newton. This project was originally commissioned by the Indian Affairs Office in Ottawa in 1941, to produce twenty wall charts of various designs, “to cover all phases of Indian art work and all parts of the Province.”<sup>21</sup> The charts were accompanied by a handbook containing information on the characteristics, significance, and legendary origins of each design, and then circulated among the Indian schools in the province. The charts and the handbook were eventually published in a condensed book form, for sale to the general public.<sup>22</sup> Ravenhill and Newton were paid \$100 for their work, which did “not much more than cover the cost of materials,” but they felt that their work was “richly worthwhile as sowing precious seed.”<sup>23</sup> Following the publication of *A Corner Stone of Canadian Culture* in 1944, Ravenhill stepped down from the presidency of the Society because of “a disabling accident”; the leadership was taken over by Dr. G. Clifford Carl. In the four years in which she held the position as president, however, Ravenhill’s approach to Indian arts and crafts was established as the foundation of this movement, which was to flourish following the Second World War.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>21</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Letter from Major MacKay to Alice Ravenhill, 17 June 1940; See also Box 1 File 2, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to Major Bullock Webster, 11 February 1941; Letter from G. Clifford Carl to Alice Ravenhill, 21 February 1941; Letter from Alice Ravenhill to G. Clifford Carl, 25 February 1941.

<sup>22</sup> G. Clifford Carl, “Foreward” in Alice Ravenhill, *A Corner Stone of Canadian Culture: An Outline of the Arts and Crafts of the Indian Tribes of British Columbia* (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1944).

<sup>23</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to Beatrice Cave-Browne-Cave, 29 June 1940.

The appeal of Ravenhill's work, and her ability to generate interest in a public sphere outside the fields of anthropology and ethnography, came, in part, from an antimodernist critique and the notion of racial essentialism that were inherent to her approach. In *The Native Tribes*, Ravenhill advocates the importance of studying prehistoric people at that particular juncture in time – in the midst of the Great Depression, the first great crisis of industrial capitalism in Canada. She argued for the importance of understanding pre-industrial artistic skills,

...in a period when comfort and convenience are measured by ability to pay for their provision unrelated to the exercise of individual resourcefulness; when every detail of daily life is supplied on a large scale by mechanized methods; when distance is annihilated by modern devices of transport, [and] the achievements of a people isolated for many centuries from contact with others are apt to be overlooked and deprecated.<sup>24</sup>

A second important aspect of Ravenhill's work is the notion that the knowledge required to produce authentic Indian arts and crafts derived from an innate Indian essence. In a section of *The Native Tribes* entitled "The Study of Racial Origins," she explains that race is studied along four lines: through prehistoric remains, anatomical and physical characteristics, language, and "the type and standards of culture revealed in a people's customs and arts."<sup>25</sup> This idea that the arts are representative of racial essence was similarly upheld by officials with the Indian Affairs Branch. In promotion of

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<sup>24</sup> Ravenhill, *Native Tribes*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

Ravenhill's 1944 publication of *A Corner Stone of Canadian Culture*, R.A. Hoey of the Indian Affairs Office at Ottawa declared on behalf of the Department, that "We believe... that Canadian Indians have a real contribution to make to the prosperity of the Dominion... by the exercise of their innate gifts of conception, technique and intelligence."<sup>26</sup> The work of the Society focused primarily on children, and the revival of arts and crafts in Indian schools, because the innate artistic talents of the Indian were believed to be most accessible in children. As Ravenhill asserted,

Give an Indian boy a pot of paint and a brush and watch results. Without Art School or instruction in method or style, animals, trees, mountains are stored in his mind, alive, and ready to spring out and express themselves in their own vitality and style, stored up by close observation and retentive memory, often constituting an integral part of his life, ready for expression at a moment's notice."<sup>27</sup>

The work that both Ravenhill and Indian Affairs officials were engaged in was motivated by the philanthropic notion of a duty towards the "uplift of the Indians." Where Indian Affairs policy had traditionally favoured assimilation for this purpose, Ravenhill's approach was a return to the racial essence of the Indian through arts and crafts.<sup>28</sup> Her antimodernist stance was a clear critique of European colonization and assimilation. According to Ravenhill, the pre-European Indian was:

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<sup>26</sup> Ravenhill, *A Corner Stone*, 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to the Community Drama Branch, Adult Education Department, Victoria, 12 June 1940.

expert in fishing, hunting, canoe making and house construction. But the death blow was dealt to the exercise of their associated arts and crafts when adventurers and traders and well intentioned missionaries carelessly or ignorantly swept away the deeply seated customs of a hitherto isolated “nation of artists”... with appalling rapidity. Grave demoralization soon followed the introduction of hitherto unknown alcohol, unfamiliar trading methods and diverse factors which left –after a short period of attempted self-defence – a bewildered, irritated people faced with the loss of their lands, their familiar methods of self support, their religion, from which sprang stimulus to their arts and not least, their self respect.<sup>29</sup>

Ravenhill’s understanding of Aboriginal/European relations was also voiced as a protest against Canadian Indian Affairs policy, particularly the Indian day and residential school systems. Here, Ravenhill argued, “the children are confronted with unknown subjects in an unknown language – diverse from their own picturesque forms of expression; a process described by Sir George Maxwell in 1942 out of his wide experience as “crippling and destroying a people’s soul; fatal to self-respect and inducing in the individual contempt for his own race.””<sup>30</sup> In light of her background, it is not surprising

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<sup>29</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 3, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Alice Ravenhill, “Formation in Victoria of the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Arts and Crafts, 1923-45” (1945), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 6. Sir George Maxwell worked for the British civil service in Malaya, eventually taking the post of chief secretary of the Federated Malay States from 1921-1926. When Ravenhill wrote this passage in 1945, British colonial rule over Malaya was in the process of being dissolved as a result of opposition by the Malay people. The Federation of Malaya was established in 1948, and Malaysia gained independence from Britain in 1957, with an indigenous Islamic government.

that, for Ravenhill, the solution to these problems was the revival of Indian arts and crafts.

Despite its apparent contradictions, the ideology of arts and crafts was slowly being integrated into the official workings of Indian Affairs. An Indian Affairs anthropological division was established in 1936, and experts like Diamond Jenness, Douglas Leechman, and Marius Barbeau acted as consultants. The following year, “the revival and advancement of Indian handicraft” became official government policy, but assistance from the federal government was confined almost exclusively to Ontario and Quebec. The reason given for this was that “Indian handicraft projects, to be successful, impose upon the Department an obligation to provide constant supervision and this obligation has until now confined efforts largely to reserves in Eastern Canada.”<sup>31</sup> But, by 1940, Ravenhill’s efforts in promoting the artistic accomplishments in British Columbia had gained the attention of federal Indian Affairs officials, and the production and sale of handicrafts had become official policy on a national scale.<sup>32</sup> Aside from her own publications, Ravenhill’s brief but influential work with the Society in these years was marked by two key accomplishments – the promotion of a young Okanagan artist named Sis-Hu-Lk and a nativity play produced by the children of the Inkameep Indian School.

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<sup>31</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1939-1940).

<sup>32</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1940-1941), 10-12.



***“The Remarkable Gifts of Francois Baptiste”***<sup>33</sup>

Ravenhill began her correspondence with Anthony Walsh in January of 1939. Walsh was a teacher at the Inkameep Indian Day School, situated in the southern end of the Okanagan Valley in the interior of the province, near the town of Oliver. Prior to 1939, both Ravenhill and Walsh had been working unbeknownst to each other, on the common project of reviving Indian arts and crafts among Aboriginal children. Walsh was born in Ireland, and moved to Alberta after the First World War. After several years working on ranches, in forestry, as a cook, berry picking, and as a clerk, Walsh began teaching at Inkameep in 1930. He gained the cooperation of Chief Baptiste George, as well as some of the parents of his students in the task of reviving Indian arts and crafts. In addition to providing time during school hours for art and literary pursuits, Walsh encouraged his students to collect Okanagan legends and stories from their parents which were then interpreted as plays. With the help of their parents and the guidance of their teacher, the children made costumes and performed in these dramas. Starting in 1939, Ravenhill was active in promoting Inkameep’s artistic endeavors in Vancouver and Victoria, and the Inkameep School gained some notoriety within British Columbia. Both *Sis-Hu-Lk* and the Nativity Play came from Inkameep, and attracted significant publicity in the early 1940s, when the *Vancouver Sun* heralded Inkameep as “one of the last strongholds of Canada’s Indian culture.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to Major Bullock Webster, 16 January 1940.

<sup>34</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *Vancouver Sun*, 14 April 1940.

An article published in October, 1940, in the *Family Herald and Weekly Star* reiterated Ravenhill's notion that Indian culture was being revived through the arts and crafts, and brought public attention to her protégé, Sis-Hu-Lk. In this account, Chief Baptiste George of the Inkameep band, who died at 92 years old in 1939,

had seen much history made in Canada during his long life – he had seen the Indian tribes deprived of their natural freedom, and confined to reserves. He had also seen the deteriorating influences of white invasion, and of new conditions. And with that, the passing of the old Indian culture. Fortunately, he lived to see the beginning of the revival of that culture among his own people, due to his wisdom and foresight.<sup>35</sup>

The grandson of Chief Baptiste George, one of the most celebrated representations of that revival, was identified in the person of Francois Baptiste, whose Okanagan name was Sis-Hu-Lk. Sis-Hu-Lk was born in 1921 at Inkameep. His artistic talents for drawing and painting were recognized early on by his family and community, including his teacher, Anthony Walsh. A studio was built for him on the reserve, and he was sent to study at an Indian school for art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, for a brief period in 1940.<sup>36</sup>

Ravenhill was instrumental in promoting Sis-Hu-Lk, within the province as well as in

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<sup>35</sup> BCARS, MS-116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, 2 October 1940.

<sup>36</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *Daily Colonist*, 30 May 1941.

Ontario, Quebec, and in Europe, as “a B.C. full-blooded Indian and a young artist of promise and distinction.”<sup>37</sup>

Sis-Hu-Lk drew and painted animals – horses, squirrels and skunks, mountain sheep and deer, eagles, wild geese, and quail. These creatures were rendered primarily in black and white, in a realistic but somewhat two-dimensional fashion. In January 1940, Ravenhill persuaded lady Tweedsmuir to send several of Sis-Hu-Lk’s pieces to the National Art Gallery in Ottawa.<sup>38</sup> The response Ravenhill received from Arther Lismer, Educational Advisor for the Gallery, was encouraging. Lismer suggested the possibility of an “exhibition of Indian Artists’ paintings in which Sis-hu-lk’s work will predominate.” He was impressed with Sis-Hu-Lk’s work, but was not willing to go as far as Ravenhill in her idea that the Indian’s inherent artistic talent should be encouraged and supported, but left to flourish with as little outside interference as possible. For Ravenhill, artistic talent was part of the innate racial essence of the Indian, and was of value for its primitive, spontaneous, and simplistic aesthetic. Lismer agreed that Sis-Hu-Lk’s style was “a racial characteristic,” but it was one that did not align with “a white man’s idea of anything that appears ‘decorative’ in line and motive,” and he was “not so certain that [Sis-Hu-Lk] should be left “natural” and untrained.”<sup>39</sup> The exhibit was never to happen, because Sis-Hu-Lk, who was then 19 years old and also working as a rancher with his family, did not

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<sup>37</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to J. Harry Smith, Press Manager, CPR, Montreal, 19 June 1940.

<sup>38</sup> BCARS MS116, Box 1 File 1, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to Major Bullock Webster, 16 January 1940.

<sup>39</sup> University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBCSC), Alice Ravenhill Fonds, Box 1 File 2, Letter from Arther Lismer to Alice Ravenhill, 20 July 1940.

produce the larger works that the Gallery commissioned. Nonetheless, he and the children of Inkameep did gain some local, national and international attention, and were influential in bringing Indian arts and crafts into the public eye.

The Inkameep School won honours at the Exhibition of Drawings and Paintings held annually by the Royal Drawing Society of London, and their work was among those selected to show the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace at the first Exhibit of Canadian children's art.<sup>40</sup> In June of 1940, Ravenhill arranged an exhibit for Sis-Hu-Lk at the Windermere Hotel in Victoria. Reviews of Sis-Hu-Lk's work were favourable. One newspaper lauded his drawings and paintings as being "marked by vitality and spontaneity, and reflect[ing] the characteristic Indian qualities of keen observation and memory which is accurate and impressionable."<sup>41</sup> Another pointed to his "vivid realism and a strong sense of decorative design, which promise to carry him into the ranks of foremost Canadian artists."<sup>42</sup> Sis-Hu-Lk received several commissions from this exhibit, which, like the National Gallery commissions, he never fulfilled.<sup>43</sup> No records from Sis-Hu-Lk himself remain in the archives, and his reasons for shunning the art world can only be speculated on. His work as a cattle rancher certainly would have inhibited his ability to produce larger pieces, which would have taken more time that he could afford

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<sup>40</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 3, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Alice Ravenhill, "Formation in Victoria of the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, 1923-45" (1945), 7.

<sup>41</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *The Daily Colonist*, 23 June 1940.

<sup>42</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *The Victoria Daily Times*, 1 July 1940.

<sup>43</sup> UBCSC, Box 1 File 2, Alice Ravenhill Fonds, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to Anthony Walsh, 3 August 1940.

to spare from paid work. Ravenhill repeatedly cited “lack of funds” as an impediment on Sis-Hu-Lk’s development as a professional artist.<sup>44</sup> The most persuasive explanation of Sis-Hu-Lk’s stunted career as an artist lies in the predicament inherent in producing ‘authentic’ Indian art for a consumer market.

Authenticity and economic self-sufficiency were key to the Indian arts and crafts revival. In a bid to gain the support of Indian Affairs officials, Ravenhill pitched her mission as having the possible effect of “stimulating a gradual revival of their former handicrafts among some of our Indians now on Relief as to preserve for our Province some of its unique arts while restoring these dependent people to at least a measure of self-support.”<sup>45</sup> The motive here is twofold: first, to encourage economic self-sufficiency among Aboriginal peoples; and second, to preserve the traditional arts. Preserving the authenticity of these arts, however, was often economically unfeasible. For reformers of the time like Ravenhill, authenticity required specific conditions of production, without tools, or only with very primitive ones, and with intensive labour. This particular concept of authenticity was part of a mindset that emerged during the mid-nineteenth century, as a direct result of anthropological theory and methodology. As Paige Raibmon has demonstrated, this nineteenth-century conception of authenticity was part of a larger discourse of binaries, which linked Indian authenticity to a wider spectrum of associated binaries. Where ‘authentic Indians’ were defined by descriptives like

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<sup>44</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to Major Bullock Webster, 16 January 1940.

<sup>45</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to Major MacKay, 28 May 1940.

irrational, subordinate, subsistent, rural, pagan, traditional, uncivilized, and cultural, the 'inauthentic Indian' was defined by the binary opposite of these concepts – rational, dominant, capitalist, urban, Christian, modern, civilized, and political.<sup>46</sup>

The problem for reformers like Ravenhill with marketing Indian handicrafts and sculpture (including totem poles and masks) was how to integrate authenticity into a capitalist market that favoured high production rates and minimal human labour, without compromising 'authentic' methods, equipment, and materials in production. Consumers who could purchase cheap, imitation, factory made trinkets, like the miniature totems produced in German factories, were not willing to pay high prices for authentic Canadian work. In the visual arts (i.e., painting and drawing), authenticity denoted an aesthetic that was simplistic and childlike, almost crude; here, the problem was less the method of production and more a matter of the politics of fine arts. Even by the 1940s, Canadian art was not yet recognized in the high end international market. Within Canada, the visual arts had been granted a privileged status and greater financial support by the federal government over other cultural forms, and were central to the project of nation building during the interwar years.<sup>47</sup> For Aboriginal artists, recognition from the national and international world of fine art only occurred on unequal terms, which reduced anything produced by Aboriginal peoples into primitive curiosities with

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<sup>46</sup> Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 3-14.

<sup>47</sup> Tippett, *Making Culture*, 63-91; 93-126.

little relative value.<sup>48</sup> As a result, because arts and crafts generated such a meager hourly wage, production would tend to stop if any other type of work was available. Nonetheless, Aboriginal artisans and craftspeople had a long-standing tradition of selling their wares for income, even if sporadically, and the arts and crafts were a standard element of the economy of many Aboriginal communities.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the economic possibilities that reformers and Indian Affairs officials alike perceived, they also encouraged the continued production of Indian arts and crafts for moral purposes – essentially, to redress the injury wrought by colonization. The loss of Aboriginal cultures, reflected in the loss of traditional arts and crafts, was a direct outcome of colonization and settlement. For individuals like Ravenhill, to revive Indian arts and crafts was a moral responsibility with national repercussions, one that had the power to “knit more closely together members of our own country and Commonwealth.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, the project of marketing Indian arts and crafts in British Columbia was carried out with considerable passion, as well as with careful direction. Ravenhill worked closely with Walsh and the children at Inkameep to

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<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Dawn, *National Visions, National Blindness*, 245-260. Dawn’s account of the 1927 N.G.C. *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern*, which featured the work of artists like Emily Carr, the Group of Seven, and Langdon Kihn alongside Aboriginal ‘artifacts’ like masks, totem, and canoe paddles but also included two landscape paintings by Aboriginal artist Frederick Alexie, demonstrates the exclusion of Aboriginal artists from fine arts. Even though Alexie’s work was done in the traditional Western European style of painting, they were assessed as ‘primitive’ by art critics and relegated to the sphere of ‘artifact,’ along with the masks, totem poles, and canoe paddles that were meant to provide a contrast to ‘modern’ Canadian art.

<sup>49</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Report of the Committee on Indian Arts and Crafts, September 1934.

<sup>50</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 1 File 1, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Letter from Alice Ravenhill to Major MacKay, 28 May 1940.

produce Christmas cards for sale to the non-Aboriginal market. On the one hand, Ravenhill provided detailed instruction as to the technique and subject of these cards; she identified the images to be used on the front of the cards, instructed that a background “thumbnail sketch of the tepee” be used on the inside of the cards, and stressed the importance of using colour in the illustrations. At the same time, however, Ravenhill also emphasized the importance of authenticity, in allowing the children to produce original work and “establishing individuality in both the pictorial (outside) message and also in the words used.”<sup>51</sup> Another project initiated by Walsh was a radio production entitled “Songs by the Boys and Girls of the Inkameep Indian School.”<sup>52</sup> But probably the most successful effort at marketing arts and crafts for a non-Aboriginal consumer market carried out by Ravenhill and Walsh was “The Tale of the Nativity.”

“The Tale of the Nativity” was originally staged as a play by the students at Inkameep School in the winter of 1939, and then published in book form the following summer, with illustrations by Sis-Hu-Lk. Both the stage production as well as the book met with a significant degree of media attention and interest from the non-Aboriginal public. This Nativity play was set in the Okanagan Valley, and much emphasis was placed on the regional fauna that appeared on the set. Mary and Joseph take shelter in a cave, where Jesus is born with the help of a gathering of talking animals – a deer, a fawn, rabbits, and chickadees. A miraculous healing of ‘a cripple’ by the baby Jesus is woven

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<sup>51</sup> UBCSC, Alice Ravenhill Fonds, Box 1 File 15, “Inkameep Children’s Drama. On the Production of Christmas Cards” (1942).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., “Inkameep Children’s Drama. Songs by the Boys and Girls of the Inkameep Indian School, Oliver, British Columbia – Radio” (n.d.).



into the tale, as is the weaving of rush mats, a visit from three Great Chiefs, and references to the old Shaman and the Great Spirit. The people in this play live in lodges, eat fish and deer meat, wear fur robes, and fall asleep to the owl's hoot and coyote's howl. The play was performed for the public on several occasions throughout the year. One audience member described the stage as being decorated with "fir boughs, sage brush, wild rose bushes, birds and animals," and the cave as "homelike and natural to the Indian child." This performance was lauded for its "native simplicity," a hallmark descriptive of anti-modernist discourse.<sup>53</sup> For example, the journalist Edna Kells commented that "simplicity, in fact, is the keynote of all the artistic effort which has carried their fame..."<sup>54</sup> while Bob Lowe of the Vancouver Sun asserted that "the beauty of their work lies in its simplicity."<sup>55</sup>

The *Tale of the Nativity* booklet was published by the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts in August 1940, consisted of nineteen pages with eight illustrations by Sis-Hu-Lk, and was sold for 25 cents each. The proceeds from the booklet were to be "devoted to the remuneration of Sis-Hu-Lk for his illustrations and to a fund to enable the committee to carry further these objects, and thus contribute to Canadian culture."<sup>56</sup> The *British Columbia Catholic Review*, who

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<sup>53</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *British Columbia Catholic*, December 1940.

<sup>54</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, 2 October 1940.

<sup>55</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *Vancouver Sun*, 14 April 1940.

<sup>56</sup> Alice Ravenhill, Review of *The Tale of the Nativity* in *The Northwest Bookshelf* (1941): 84-85.

recommended wide circulation of the booklet among Catholics of the province, described the story as having originated “from the minds of children of the first Canadians.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, even though “The Tale of the Nativity” was sold to the non-Aboriginal consumer as being characterized by “naïve simplicity”<sup>58</sup> with illustrations done in a “purely native style,”<sup>59</sup> the type of art and the culture it represented was also being constructed as a component of a Canadian identity. The apparent incongruity of promoting Aboriginal ‘authenticity’ through the single most important legend of Christianity, equal only to the story of the crucifixion, appears to have gone largely uncontested. This accommodation was at least in part voluntary, like the Haida Leaf and Flower Poles that incorporated images of flowers from ‘whiteman’s town’ gardens. At the same time, Ravenhill and the Society purposely focused their attentions on Aboriginal children who were already engaged in the Indian day school system, and whose production of arts was thus more easily directed for a non-Aboriginal market.

After Ravenhill retired from her position with the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, the organization successfully promoted the work of young artists like George Clutesi, through museum exhibitions. During the late 1940s and 1950s, the renamed British Columbia Indian Arts and Welfare Society provided a platform for politically activist Aboriginal artists like Ellen Neel and Mungo

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<sup>57</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *British Columbia Catholic*, December 1940.

<sup>58</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, *Daily Colonist*, 3 December 1940.

<sup>59</sup> BCARS, MS116, Box 2 File 5, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Miscellaneous Magazine Clipping, no title.

Martin to exhibit both their artwork and politics. These exhibitions often contrasted older artifacts with newer works, and challenged the notion of the vanishing Indian by demonstrating both consistency as well as change in Indian arts and crafts. This sense of change derived from the fact of Aboriginal peoples producing their own art, and provided a basis for the development of a distinctly Aboriginal culture. In these final years of the Second World War, both the provincial and federal branches of the Native Brotherhood became increasingly politically active. The rhetoric of human rights and social justice that the war produced certainly contributed to this rising tide of protest, and debates over enfranchisement and compulsory military service were fueled by the British Columbia Brotherhood's public nationalist statements of support for the war, as "the real Canadians."<sup>60</sup> The North American Indian Brotherhood, led by Andrew Paull, was calling for representation of "the Indians of Canada" in Parliament, a Royal Commission to revise the Indian Act, and "a new deal for the Aboriginals of this great country."<sup>61</sup> In 1950, the British Columbia Indian Arts and Welfare Society and its "distinguished founder, Dr. Alice Ravenhill," were officially recognized by the *Indian Time* magazine, a national Aboriginal rights publication.<sup>62</sup> *Indian Time* and the North American Indian Brotherhood, whose leadership was closely connected to and based out of Vancouver, represent the genesis of national-level political mobilization and

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<sup>60</sup> BCARS, MS1116, Society for the Furtherance of BC Indian Arts and Crafts, 1939-1954, Box 2 File 2, Letter from Alfred Adams, President, Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, Vancouver Office, to the Officers and Members of the Native Brotherhood of BC, 7 February 1945.

<sup>61</sup> BCARS, MS1116, Society for the Furtherance of BC Indian Arts and Crafts, 1939-1954, Box 2 File 2, Andrew Paull, North American Indian Brotherhood, Grand National Convention Call, 16 July 1945.

<sup>62</sup> Doug Wilkinson, Publisher, *Indian Time* (Vancouver) November 1950.

organization in Canada at the end of the Second World War. This was a defining moment in the Aboriginal rights movement, and in these formative years one of the keystones of the unified Indian identity that was necessary to carry the movement through was Indian arts and crafts.

### ***Conclusion***

In 1996, Haida artist Bill Reid sold a bronze sculpture, *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii: The Jade Canoe*, to the Vancouver International Airport Authority for three million dollars, making him the highest-paid Canadian artist in history. The original 1991 casting of *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii: The Black Canoe*, a six-ton sculpture, stands in front of the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., as a symbol of “the kernel of the founding nations.”<sup>63</sup> An image of the *Haida Gwaii* currently adorns the Canadian twenty-dollar bill. Yet, Bill Reid’s journey to this position as a Haida artist and icon in Canadian culture intersects at several points with the shifting and contradictory role of Aboriginal imagery in visual representations of Canadian culture and identity. During the first half of his career, Reid was consistently ambiguous about his Indian identity; his decision and ability to promote himself as an “all Indian” artist did not come about until the 1970s, after receiving a Canada Council fellowship. He began his career as a publicist, curator, writer, and broadcaster with an expertise in Northwest Coastal art and culture in the 1940s. While Reid had some Haida ancestry, and ties to the Haida village of Skidegate, his mother was raised to “become more white and less Haida,” and his father was a

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<sup>63</sup> Christopher Dafoe, “An Odyssey of Mythic Proportions: Bill Reid’s *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*,” *Globe and Mail*, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1991, as cited in Tippet, *Bill Reid*, 251.

“white man” in the frontier of Northern British Columbia in the early twentieth century. Reid’s great great-uncle, Charles Edenshaw, and his grandfather, Charles Gladstone, were both Haida artists; but Reid only took up jewelry-making in 1949, at the age of 29. While Reid’s work was certainly inspired by his immediate relatives and his ancestral ties, he learned technique from a jewelry-making course at the Ryerson Institute of Technology in Toronto, and the fundamentals of Northwest Coastal design from two books in particular. One of these books was Robert Bruce Inverarity’s “seminal 1950 work,” *Art of the Northwest Coast Indians*; the other was Alice Ravenhill’s *A Corner Stone of Canadian Culture: An Outline of the Arts and Crafts of the Indian Tribes of British Columbia*.<sup>64</sup>

The paradoxical antimodernist claim to Aboriginal identity by non-Aboriginal British Columbians during the interwar period contributed to the construction of an Indian identity that came to be used as a political and economic tool by the postwar years. For Ravenhill and the arts and crafts reformers, this tool was a means towards national unity and the construction of a Canadian identity and culture. Yet, this identity was still grounded in notions of authentic culture that defined Indian as primitive and simplistic, and therefore implicitly subordinate. The Indian Arts and Crafts revival was based on a notion of inherent racial ability. Art was understood to be an expression of racial essentialism. This notion was central to colonial expressions of racism, but nonetheless also became central to the Indian identity. Aboriginal activists used this same notion of racial essence to generate a sense of unity, mobilize Aboriginal peoples

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<sup>64</sup> Maria Tippett, *Bill Reid: The Making of An Indian* (Toronto: Random House, 2003), 31; 25; 67.

on a national scale, and protest against political oppression. Starting in 1947, the University of British Columbia and the Provincial Museum turned their attention to salvaging and restoring totem poles from the Northwest Coast region. The project involved many Aboriginal peoples, including Kwakwaka'wakw artists Mungo Martin and Ellen Neel, as well as Bill Reid. In 1959, Reid was commissioned by the University of British Columbia to duplicate a series of 30 totem and house poles – a primarily anthropological project. These post-war salvage operations marked a turning point in Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations in Vancouver. As Maria Tippett has argued, “bringing Native artists to work in the city not only reversed the policy of keeping them as far away as possible from the urban centres, it was also the first step in making room... for Native artists in their own right.”<sup>65</sup> By the 1960s, totem poles were a common sight around the city, and had come to symbolize the persistence, vitality, and ongoing presence of Aboriginal art and culture in Vancouver. The totem pole display at Brockton Point in Stanley Park, where all of the totems collected in the Park since the 1920s were moved in the early 1960s, is still “the most visited tourist attraction in all of British Columbia.”<sup>66</sup> Some of the original poles still stand, while others have been moved to museums and replaced by new poles or replicas. These poles hold many stories that the legends tell; but they also tell of a shift in public conception of the Indian, from a symbol of conquest and extinction to a living culture and a “corner stone” of the Canadian identity.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>66</sup> Vancouver Parks Board, <<http://vancouver.ca/parks/parks/stanley/landmarks.htm>>, accessed 10 January 2011.

## Chapter 5 ~ “Before the Whitemans Came”<sup>1</sup>: Indigenous Politics in Vancouver

In 1898, a group of chiefs and headmen of the Northwest coastal tribes gathered in Vancouver to discuss their common grievances. Most pressing on the agenda was the loss of land to white men, and the accompanying disease and poverty amongst their people. The elders decided that what they needed was a mediator – one who was educated in both the ways of the white men and the ways of the Indian. A Council of Warriors was held to select a boy to be educated in both worlds, to be “the eyes, ears, and tongue of [his] people.”<sup>2</sup> As was common at the time, the boy they chose had two names. His English name was Andrew Paull; his Squamish name was Qoitchetahl,<sup>3</sup> after one of his ancestors. Throughout his distinctive career, Paull identified with the name Qoitchetahl, and the legend that surrounded his warrior ancestor.

This chapter identifies the nature of the contradictions that arose out of the same notion of an essentialist Indian identity that was inherent to the Indian arts and crafts revival. In Vancouver, during the interwar period, the ascription of a legally defined Indian identity based on these essentialist ideas enabled the expropriation of the Kitsilano Reservation by the city. The Squamish Band Council asserted the legal

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<sup>1</sup> Vancouver City Archives (VCA), AM.0054.013.06588, Major Matthews Collection (1932-33), “Before the Whitemans Came.”

<sup>2</sup> British Columbia Archives and Records Services (BCARS), MS. 1605, Dobson Fonds, Reel A01179, *Liberty*, 5 January, 1946, “Liberty Profile: Andy Paull” by Robert McKeown.

<sup>3</sup> Also: Xwechtáal, Xwupúkinem, Quithtaál, Quitchetahl.

rights that they did have, but only with limited success because their resistance occurred within non-Aboriginal legal, political, and social systems. But the claim of a “traditional” Indian identity was also a survival strategy and provided a basis for a collective consciousness. The key characteristic of this identity derived from pre-European history, a belief that was articulated particularly clearly in the archival project carried out by Vancouver’s city archivist, J.S. Matthews, entitled “Before the Whitemans [*sic*] Came.”

Andrew Paull was involved in this commemorative event, as well as in the negotiations over the sale of the Kitsilano Reserve. Paull epitomized the twentieth-century notion of the vanishing Indian, who could, when necessary, assimilate into mainstream Canadian society. His work as mediator required that he be fully knowledgeable and functional in the Canadian legal and political systems, and much of Paull’s work as a political activist was carried out through these non-indigenous avenues. However, Paull’s adherence to his identity as Qoitchetahl exemplifies the contradictions he must have experienced in his role as a cultural intermediary. An academic interpretation of the public figure of Andrew Paull, in his position as Band secretary, legal advisor, and advocate for indigenous rights, primarily reveals aspects of his ability to assimilate into white culture. The legend of Qoitchetahl reminds us of Paull’s Aboriginal identity.

The importance of Aboriginal oral tradition, legends, and myths to Aboriginal cultures cannot be understated. Further, there is a difference between oral tradition as a basis of indigenous peoples’ identities *as* indigenous and, for example, the production



and circulation of the pioneer myth, which contributed to the creation of a white identity.<sup>4</sup> This difference has its basis in the notion of racial essentialism, as expressed the Indian arts and crafts movement, which is premised on a long-standing imbalance of power in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations. In the case of the pioneer myth and white identity, the pioneer was constructed – as rugged, noble, thrifty, independent, hard-working, and courageous – in order to reaffirm moral standards that were already normalized in mainstream (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) Canadian culture. These moral standards correlated with the necessary characteristics of the ideal citizen in a political and economic system based on a liberal ideology.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, the perceived essence of the Indian was twofold. First, this essence was ascribed as ‘Other’ by non-Aboriginals – in other words, as fundamentally opposed to established norms. Second, this essence was claimed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples as having its roots prior to this first discursive ascription by Western

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Forrest D. Pass, “The Wondrous Story and Traditions of the Country”: The Native Sons of British Columbia and the Role of Myth in the Formation of an Urban Middle Class,” in *BC Studies*, no. 151, (Autumn 2006), 3-38; and Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and the Politics of Cultural Selection in the Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994). These two important works examine white identities argue that these anti-modernist identities (i.e., ‘the Pioneer’ and ‘the Folk’) were socially constructed, and served to obscure class inequality, and encourage a sense of national unity amongst white people. See, also, chapters 2 and 3, above.

<sup>5</sup> My conception of liberalism in twentieth century Canada derives from Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A prospectus for a reconnaissance of Canadian history” in *The Canadian Historical Review* 81:4, (December 2000): 617-634. In McKay’s definition, liberalism is based on possessive individualism, a circular theory which essentially claims that the rational individual is defined by his capacity for proprietorship – of his own capacities, of land, or of material goods – and that, in turn, only rational individuals are capable of being proprietors. This notion of possessive individualism is more explicitly outlined in C.B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 263-271. Liberalism in Canada emphasized private property and laissez-faire economic relations, and based social, political and economic organization on individualism and self-interest. See Tina Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 8-9.

society in the moment before identity was mediated by Western representations. The feature of this essence that most strongly suggested its pre-contact origins was its attachment to place. Within the context of colonization and an oppressive reserve system, the assertion by Aboriginal peoples of indigenous connections to the land as the essence of the Indian identity constitutes resistance as well as oppression.<sup>6</sup> The problem – and the ultimate failure of this form of resistance in the interwar period – lay in the fact that the process of claiming a pre-European essence occurred within Western discourse and non-Aboriginal systems and institutions of governance. The result was contradiction, because of, in Homi Bhabha’s words, “the impossibility of claiming an origin for the self (or other) within a tradition of representation.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, a fundamental contradiction was inherent in the fact that articulations of both resistance and oppression derived from the same conceptual origin, and because this conceptual origin is embedded in the discourse of the oppressor, in the ideology of Western liberal democracy.

### ***The Legend of Qoitchetahl, the Serpent Slayer of Squamish***

*Qoitchetahl was just a man. Soon after he married, a great serpent swam into the lake above Squamish. The old people feared that the serpent would find its way down to the village. So they sent Qoitchetahl to kill the serpent, or he would not be allowed to come home and sleep with his wife. For ten long years, Qoitchetahl hunted*

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<sup>6</sup> Jyotirmaya Tripathy, “Towards an Essential Native American Identity: A Theoretical Overview” in *the Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 26:2 (2006): 313-329.

<sup>7</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 46.

*the serpent. He washed himself in the icy mountain creeks, and from this water he acquired power. When Qoitchetahl finally happened upon the serpent, the beast was swimming about in the lake above Squamish. The serpent saw the man, Qoitchetahl, and his power; and he said to Qoitchetahl: "Go and get pitch wood and make three sharp sticks. Take one stick and drive it into my head; the other in the middle of my back; and one at the end of my dragon tail." For serpents have two heads, one at each end. Qoitchetahl did as the serpent told him, and killed the serpent. After the killing, Qoitchetahl stayed with the corpse until the flesh swelled and bloated and reeked with the stench of decay, and then shriveled again into the earth, leaving only bones and skin. Then Qoitchetahl took a bone from the serpent, shaped like a club, and turned and followed the river from the lake back to his village. As he approached the first village along the river, Qoitchetahl held the bone in his hand and waved it in the air. Immediately, all the people in the village, young and old, men and women, fell down dead. But Qoitchetahl brought them all back to life with his power. In awe and respectful terror, the people of the village gave Qoitchetahl a beautiful woman for a wife. By the time he arrived at Squamish, he had been given eighteen wives from the neighboring villages along the way. So happy was Qoitchetahl with his many wives that he let his first wife die as a show of his conjugal prosperity. This is the way it was.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> VCA, AM.0054.013.06588, Major Matthews Collection (1932-33), "Before the Whitemans Came." This is my adaptation of the legend as told, in transcripts of an interview, by August Kitsilano to J.S. Matthews, 19 December 1932. The first and last sentences are direct quotes.

In 1892, many generations after Qoitchetahl's conquest over the serpent, Andrew Paull was born in Howe Sound, British Columbia. Soon after his birth, he was sent to live with his grandmother on the North Vancouver reserve. He was six years old when he was selected by the Council of Warriors in 1898. He remembers being "a little runt of a kid and they were all old men – white haired and wrinkled, as old Indians are."<sup>9</sup> According to his own account, when the elders told the boy that he had been chosen to become an intermediary between the Squamish people and non-Aboriginal Canadians, the young Paull unquestioningly accepted his role. Paull was educated on the reserve, and then in the law firm of Judge Cyley in Vancouver between 1907 and 1911, from the age of 15 until he was 19. Throughout his childhood and young adult life, he was tutored by various elders and chiefs on the ways of Squamish government, tradition, and culture. During the 1920s and 30s, Paull lived and worked in Vancouver as a longshoreman, secretary of the Squamish Band Council, legal advisor, journalist, lacrosse player, musician, and interpreter. He was, at various times, organizer, president, and member of the Indian Rights Association, the Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia, the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, and the Brotherhood of Canadian Indians.<sup>10</sup>

Paull was also one of the few Aboriginal members of the Native Sons of British Columbia, along with several high profile Aboriginal chiefs in the province. He maintained his role as mediator between two cultures, and by the mid-1940s presided

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<sup>9</sup> BCARS, MS. 1605, Dobson Fonds, Reel A01179, *Liberty*, 5 January, 1946, "Liberty Profile: Andy Paull" by Robert McKeown.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* See also Herbert Francis Dunlop, *Andy Paull: As I Knew Him and Understood his Times* (Vancouver: Standard Press, 1989).

over the North American Indian Brotherhood, the first national intertribal organization formed for the purpose of achieving Aboriginal rights through constitutional avenues. Paull was, during the first half of the twentieth century, one of Vancouver's most prominent political activists, and his work constitutes a foundation of the Aboriginal rights movement in Canada. His role as a historical figure is important, not so much as representative of his time – there were few in this period who held this type of hybrid position between Indian and white – but as symbolic of the changing situation of his community.

When Paull was born, in the late nineteenth century, the Aboriginal population was being overtaken numerically by non-Aboriginal settlement in the province as a whole. By the end of the First World War, the non-Aboriginal population dominated.<sup>11</sup> The colonial project of allocating reserve lands, which had begun in the province in the early 1850s, was not completed until 1938. During the interwar years, a complex series of negotiations over reserve lands ensued between three major parties – the provincial and federal governments and Aboriginal peoples. The final reserve boundaries, made in 1938, appeased provincial and federal government officials, but dismissed Aboriginal

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<sup>11</sup> In 1871, when British Columbia entered Confederation, the total population of individuals designated non-Aboriginal in the province numbered only about 10 000 – less than 30% of the total population. By 1901, this number had jumped to about 150 000, now constituting over 80% of the total population. Considerable gains were made in this demographic, to over 95% by 1921, and 97% by 1941. In contrast, the population of individuals designated Aboriginal shifted from being a majority of 70% to a minority of 3%. It is significant to note, however, that the Aboriginal population, in real numbers, remained close to 25 000 individuals throughout these decades. These statistics are taken from the Census of Canada, as interpreted by Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991), Table 5, 379.

claims to title to the land.<sup>12</sup> Within this context of demographic and spatial colonization, there were two major projects concerning Indians that were being carried out in Vancouver in the 1920s and 30s. The first was an administrative project of enfranchisement and the accompanying redistribution of reserve lands; the second was an anthropological project of commemoration and preservation.

Both of these projects were, in part, administered through the paternalistic bureaucracy of the Indian Affairs Branch, whose policies had long been informed by the assumption that 'traditional' Aboriginal culture was vanishing, and being replaced by a superior Euro-Canadian culture. Although this notion of the vanishing Indian persisted into the interwar period, these two projects – the administrative and the anthropological – created a forum for assertions of a living indigenous identity and culture. These assertions were voiced in the media, as well as in City Hall and the Provincial Legislature. They were based on the evidence of a living indigenous culture based on the notion of a racial essence, whose most explicit articulation was being manufactured at this time in visual representations, through art and imagery.

### ***The British Columbia Land Question and Enfranchisement Policy***

The land question had been ongoing in British Columbia since Governor James Douglas laid out the first Indian reserves on Vancouver Island in the early 1850s. In 1876, a Joint Reserve Committee was appointed by both the federal and provincial governments, to survey and establish the reserves throughout the province. The land

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<sup>12</sup> Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 216-261.

question proved to be so complex, relations between provincial and federal government officials so incongruous, and Aboriginal claims to land title so persistent, that the Joint Reserve Committee disbanded after two years without resolution. In 1912 the McKenna-McBride Commission was appointed for the same purpose. After four years, the Commission published their findings, which allocated very small reserves scattered throughout the province. Again, disputes between provincial and federal levels of government, and resistance by Aboriginal organizations rendered the land question unresolved. In 1923, yet another Commission was appointed. This time, both the provincial and federal governments came to an agreement in a modified version of the McKenna-McBride recommendations, but the Aboriginal claim to land title remained unsettled. The principle Aboriginal voice during these negotiations was the Allied Tribes of British Columbia, of which Andrew Paull was a key member. Paull, along with several other Aboriginal leaders, pleaded their case to the 1923 Commission; to Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1924; and to a special joint committee in 1927. In all of these cases, the Allied Tribes argued that Aboriginal title to the land must first be acknowledged before disputes over the size and location of reserves, and the rights to the resources therein could be considered and settled. In all of these cases, the argument was rejected, often with hostility.<sup>13</sup> In 1938, the final surveys were made by the provincial and federal governments, without acknowledgement of Aboriginal land title.

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<sup>13</sup> For a detailed account of the land question in British Columbia, from the 1850s to 1938, see Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002). See also, Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1923-1924), "British Columbia Indian Land Settlement," 7-8; Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1926-1927), "Parliamentary Inquiry into the Claims of the Allied Tribes of

This interwar conflict over the land question and the general trend towards shrinking reserves was one part of a much longer era of restriction and oppression.<sup>14</sup> During the 1880s, ceremonies like the potlatch and “Indian Dances” were banned. The pass system was put into effect on the prairies at this time as well.<sup>15</sup> By the interwar period, the late nineteenth century idea that Indian culture – and therefore the Indian race – was vanishing as a result of natural social evolution was supported by a bleak reality. Economic, political, social, and physical segregation, oppressive government legislation, industrialization and urbanization, and the loss of land and resources had taken its toll on many Aboriginal communities in the province. As a result, many of the decisions made and actions taken by Indian Affairs officials, sympathetic members of the public, and Aboriginal leaders like Andrew Paull, were based on the assumption that assimilation was inevitable. However, the population of “the Indians,” as recorded by the Canadian census, showed that this demographic was not declining, but holding steady over the course of the interwar period.<sup>16</sup> Many believed that an authentic Indian culture no longer existed, but that the remaining Indians had failed to fully assimilate into mainstream Canadian culture. In an attempt to address this perceived problem, and

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British Columbia.” The inquiry concluded that “the claims of the Indians were not well founded, and that no aboriginal title, as alleged, had ever existed.”

<sup>14</sup> For a general overview of the situation in Canada in the post-Confederation period, see, for example, Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 261-262; 306-318; in the British Columbian context, see Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977; 1992), 175-211.

<sup>15</sup> For an analysis of the criminalization of the potlatch, see Tina Loo, “Dan Cranmer’s Potlatch” in *The Canadian Historical Review* 73:2, 1992; for an analysis of the pass system, see F.L. Barron, “The Indian Pass System in the Canadian West, 1882-1935” in *Prairie Forum* 13:25, 1988.

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 11.



to relieve themselves of the financial burden of administering Aboriginal peoples and the conflict over land, the Indian Affairs Branch changed their enfranchisement policy to hasten assimilation.

In his annual report for the year ending in March 1919, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Duncan C. Scott proposed that:

the provisions with regard to enfranchisement [be] further extended so as to enable the Department to enfranchise individual Indians or a band of Indians without the necessity of obtaining their consent thereto in cases where it was found upon investigation that the continuance of wardship was no longer in the interests of the public or the Indians.<sup>17</sup>

Scott's proposal was passed at the 1920 session of Parliament, as amendments which repealed sections 107 and 122 of the Indian Act – two clauses that had been in effect since 1857. Sections 107 and 122 had restricted enfranchisement to property owners, and required a six year waiting period prior to enfranchisement, followed by a six year period of tutelage following enfranchisement. As a result of these stringent regulations, only 102 persons had been enfranchised in the Dominion of Canada over a period of 58 years.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1918-1919), 32. In 1913, Duncan C. Scott was appointed deputy superintendent general of Indian affairs. Scott administered the department with a policy of authoritarianism and repression. At a federal level, then, Indian Affairs was characterized by paternalism and neglect, a tradition that continued for more than a decade after Scott's retirement in 1932, through his successor, Harold W. McGill. For more on Scott and McGill, see Hugh Shewell, *Enough to Keep them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 93-170.

<sup>18</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1919-1920), 13.

In 1918, Section 122A of the Indian Act, which dealt with enfranchisement, had been amended to allow for non-property owning men and unmarried women over the age of 21 to be eligible for enfranchisement. In addition, the six year waiting period was done away with. Between 1918 and 1919, 227 individuals were enfranchised, the majority of these from the Six Nations band in southern Ontario.<sup>19</sup> The 1920 amendment was intended to further accelerate enfranchisement, to bring the Indian Affairs Branch closer to “the ultimate object of [its] Indian policy... to merge the natives in the citizenship of the country.”<sup>20</sup> Much to the chagrin of Indian Affairs officials, only 167 individuals were enfranchised that year.<sup>21</sup> Overall, however, the 1920 amendment did manage to increase rates of enfranchisement, and at least 1600 individuals were enfranchised between 1920 and 1940.<sup>22</sup>

Enfranchisement during the interwar period was a twofold question of economy and identity. The enfranchisement provisions of the Indian Act were not only concerned with the right to vote. Certain unenfranchised Indians – for example, returned soldiers and some Indians not living on reserves – had the right to vote federally, but were still considered wards of the Crown and subject to the provisions of the Indian Act. Instead, enfranchisement indicated economic independence from the federal government, self-

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<sup>19</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1917-1918), 21.

<sup>20</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1919-1920), 13.

<sup>21</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1920-1921), 20.

<sup>22</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1920/21-1939/40). These figures show a considerable increase over the number of individuals enfranchised prior to the 1918/1920 amendments; however, in the whole of Canada, less than 100 individuals per year were enfranchised between 1925 and 1937.

sufficiency, and assimilation into the mainstream liberal capitalist economy. Between 1920 and 1940, enfranchisement was intended as a solution to the problem of excessive expenditure by the department, particularly by the Indian agents in British Columbia.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, enfranchisement also meant that individuals “ceased to be Indians within the meaning of the Indian Act,”<sup>24</sup> and were instead identified, for legal and political purposes as well as economic, as Canadian rather than as Indian. As Hugh Shewell argues, a combination of factors including economic depression, a general societal trend towards secularization, and Aboriginal contributions to and participation in the World Wars, “ultimately redirected Indian Affairs policy toward ideas about integrative citizenship and the assumption that Indians desired to be fully part of civil society.”<sup>25</sup> Since Confederation, the problem had changed from figuring out how to contain and suppress the Indians in order to allow for white settlement, to the problem of Indian inclusion into broader Canadian society. The difficulty with this new policy directive was that the notion of citizenship was complicated by the fact of Aboriginal peoples being captive indigenous nations living with a white settler society. Integrative citizenship offered only two options – separate development in some form of apartheid, represented in this case by the reserve system, or assimilation into existing patterns of citizenship. The widespread poverty and unemployment on many of the reserves in British Columbia pointed to the unfeasibility of the first option, while the second

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<sup>23</sup> Shewell, *Enough to Keep them Alive*, 93-116.

<sup>24</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (1931-1932), 8.

<sup>25</sup> Shewell, *Enough to Keep them Alive*, 95.

embodied a basic contradiction for many Aboriginal people. While citizenship was upheld by officials in charge of the Indian Affairs Branch as a progressive and positive social factor, citizenship through assimilation was seen by many indigenous people to be a subjugating and repressive practice.<sup>26</sup>

The enfranchisement amendments of 1920 ultimately failed to decrease the “Indian” population, and thus failed to lighten the fiscal burden on the federal government. The Indian Affairs Branch operated under a strained budget, and the Indian agents in British Columbia in particular were warned repeatedly about excessive expenditures.<sup>27</sup> The financial responsibility of administering the Indians in this province was compounded by the time and effort being put into the various Commissions and hearings over the land question. In Ottawa, Paull and other Aboriginal leaders were not able to convince provincial and federal politicians to acknowledge Aboriginal title to the land in British Columbia during the final decades of the prolonged process of reserve making.

However, the conflict over land was also being played out at a local level. In the case of the Kitsilano Reserve, Paull and the Squamish Band Council were at least able to delay the transaction by asserting their rights to land title. The Kitsilano Reserve, situated in the heart of the city, was considered ‘abandoned’ (in accordance with Indian Act regulations) by the Squamish Band in 1915, and was eventually absorbed by the city of Vancouver. This transaction was extremely complicated, antagonistic and protracted.

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<sup>26</sup> Shewell, *Enough to Keep them Alive*, 168-169; Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 172-173.

<sup>27</sup> Shewell, *Enough to Keep them Alive*, 107-110.

Over 85 years elapsed before the transaction's final conclusion with the Kitsilano Agreement in 2000.<sup>28</sup> From the earliest years of conflict the Squamish Band Council was clear about asserting their claim to the Kitsilano Indian Reserve, and supported this claim with the legal authority of the Royal Proclamation, the decisions of the 1876-8 Joint Reserve Commission, and the Indian Act. The Squamish Band Council, led by Andrew Paull, 'assimilated' – they used the "ways of the white men" to defend their own legal, political, and economic interests as Indians. This assimilative process was fraught with contradictions, and their voice was ultimately overwhelmed by the needs of a rapidly growing metropolis and the myth of the vanishing Indian.

#### ***The Village of Snauq / Kitsilano Indian Reserve #6***

*Raven has never left this place, but sometimes it feels like she has been negligent, maybe even a little dense... there is horror in having had change foisted upon you from outside. Raven did not prepare us for the past 150 years. She must have fallen asleep sometime around the first smallpox epidemic, when the Tseil Watuth Nation nearly perished, and I am not sure*

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<sup>28</sup> Two accounts of the specifically urban experience of dispossession which focus on aspects of this 85 year conflict are Jean Barman, "Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver," *BC Studies* 115 (2007): 3-30; and, Jordan Stanger-Ross, "Municipal Colonialism in Vancouver: City Planning and the Conflict over Indian Reserves, 1928-1950s," *Canadian Historical Review* 89:4 (December 2008): 541-580. Barman's article examines the removal of indigenous people from the Kitsilano Reserve during the 1910s as part of a broader trend of federal government legislation which supported municipalities' efforts towards urban development (see pp. 6-20). Stanger-Ross's study looks at how city officials in Vancouver attempted to acquire Kitsilano Reservation during the 1930s and 40s in the interests of civic development as part of a larger trend of municipal colonialism. In accordance with this thesis, Stanger-Ross's article focuses exclusively on "the ideas articulated within the Vancouver city government" (548).

*she ever woke up.* <sup>29</sup>

On July 23<sup>rd</sup> of the year 2000, members of the Squamish Band had a final vote on a land claim settlement with the federal government. Of the 1487 ballots cast, 1313 voted to accept the 92.5 million dollars offered to the Band from the government of Canada, in exchange for surrendering over 1330 acres of land, including the 76 acres that made up the Kitisilano Indian Reserve No. 6 at False Creek.<sup>30</sup> The Kitisilano Agreement, as the settlement was known, concluded more than 85 years of dispute over this territory. This area was used by the Tsleil Watuth and the Halkomelmen people of the Musqueam tribe during the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century as a common garden, for gathering camas (a root vegetable), berries, oysters, and clams, and cultivating wild cabbage, mushrooms and other plants. After a series of smallpox epidemics which decimated the human population, the Tsleil Watuth and Musqueam invited the Squamish to help repopulate the region. A group of Squamish from Lil'wat,<sup>31</sup> moved to this area to live year-round by at least by the 1850s.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Lee Maracle, "Goodbye, Snauq" in *Our Story: Aboriginal Voices on Canada's Past* (Doubleday Canada, 2004), 205.

<sup>30</sup> *Squamish Nation News*, Bulletin 13, "Kitisilano, Bouillon, and Omnibus Trust Actions Settlement," 24 July 2000; *Squamish Nation News*, Bulletin 10, "The 'Kitisilano' Agreement," 7 July 2000. The land surrendered by the Squamish Band in this agreement was: 76 acres at Kitisilano IR6; 74 acres of Bouillon lands at Capilano IR5; 163 acres at Yeakwaupsum IR18; 18.5 acres at Mamaquam IR20; 360 acres at Squamish Island IR21; 234 acres at Skwulwailum IR22; 292 acres at Ahtsam IR23; 82.3 acres at Stawamus IR24; 20.5 acres at Capilano IR5; 4.48 acres at Mission IR1; 7.54 acres at Seymour IR2; 3 small parcels on Capilano IR5; and the land under Third Street on Mission IR1.

<sup>31</sup> Also, 'Lillooet.'

<sup>32</sup> Lee Maracle, "Goodbye, Snauq," 200-219.

The Kitsilano Reserve was first surveyed around the existing Squamish village of Snaug in 1877 by the Joint Reserve Commission. Between 1877 and 1913, the Canadian Pacific Railway expropriated two parcels of land on this reserve as a right of way.<sup>33</sup> Sometime between 1911 and 1915, the reserve was abandoned by the Squamish. There are several accounts of this event. One of these is August Jack's version, as recorded by Vancouver's city archivist J.S. Matthews:

The Indians moved away from old Snaug in 1911, and the remains of those buried in the graveyard on the reserve close to First Ave about the foot of Fir or Cedar street were exhumed and taken for re burial at Squamish. The orchard went to ruin, the fences fell down, and the houses were destroyed; a few hops survived and continued to grow until they were destroyed by the building of the new Burrard Bridge...<sup>34</sup>

A second account of the event comes from R. Rowe Holland, a solicitor who worked on the Kitsilano Reserve dispute during the late 1930s and 1940s.<sup>35</sup> Holland interviewed Hamilton Reid in 1945, the Barrister who negotiated the "purchase" of reserve lands through a system of voluntary abandonment and reversion in and around Vancouver 30 years earlier. According to Holland's account, the 29 or so Squamish living

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<sup>33</sup> *Squamish Nation News*, Bulletin 7, "Squamish Nation 1977 Omnibus Trust Action," 19 November 1999.

<sup>34</sup> VCA, AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, "Before the Whitemans Came," August (Jack) Kitsilano, Conversation with J.S. Matthews, 7 July 1932.

<sup>35</sup> In 1937-8, the Vancouver police department petitioned the City of Vancouver, the Squamish Band and the Parks Board to clean up the Kitsilano Reserve, as it had become a "hive on inequity [*sic*]." Holland acted as council for City Hall in this event. See, for example VCA, 33-D-3, File 5, Mayor Series 483, "Removal of Squatters from Kitsilano Reserve, 1937-1938." In 1944-6, Holland again acted as legal counsel for the Federal Government in negotiating a surrender of the reserve. See, for example, V. C.A., AM0054.013.06608, Matthews Collection, "Kitsilano Indian Reserve."

at Snauc were offered \$300 000 in 1915 by the Provincial government to move off the Kitsilano reserve, take up residence on another reserve with the consent of that Band, and to disinter the bones of Indians buried on the old reserve. By authority of the Indian Act, if these conditions were met, the reserve would be considered abandoned, and the lands would revert to the control of the Provincial government. When Holland asked Reid to comment on Squamish allegations that this transaction was not legitimate, Reid responded that “all the deals would have been carried through except for the fact that the Provincial government didn’t have the necessary monies to pay for the Reserve.”<sup>36</sup> A third account of the event comes from a statement concerning the Kitsilano Agreement, put out by the Council for the Squamish Nation in 1999. In this account, the Provincial government coerced the Squamish into selling the reserve in 1913, and then “put all the Kitsilano residents on a scow and towed them to the North Shore and to the Squamish Valley, after which the Province burned their homes.”<sup>37</sup>

As Jean Barman has clearly demonstrated, rapid urban growth during the early twentieth century led to the perception that Aboriginal reserves were an eyesore, a hindrance, and an obstacle to progress. Government officials, local businessmen, and the clergy collectively agreed that the reserve at False Creek had to go – and so, the Squamish were forcibly removed.<sup>38</sup> By 1915 the Kitsilano Reserve, situated along the shores of False Creek, facing a quickly developing and densely populated residential

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<sup>36</sup> VCA, AM0054.013.06608, Matthews Collection, “Kitsilano Indian Reserve,” Transcript of interview of Mr. Hamilton Reid, Barrister, by R. Rowe Holland, 26 September, 1945.

<sup>37</sup> *Squamish Nation News*, Bulletin 7, “Squamish Nation 1977 Omnibus Trust Action,” 19 November 1999.

<sup>38</sup> Barman, “Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity,” 6-20.



district, was empty of any obvious sign of settlement. After the First World War, a municipal make-work project to clear the Reserve was created to appease unemployed veterans. The buildings and gardens from the old village had already been destroyed, and so the workers “cut down and burnt all the beautiful trees which had taken hundreds of years to grow, and which were the equal of Stanley Park.”<sup>39</sup> Local residents soon discovered that the area was slated for industrial development, and by the early 1920s a campaign to ‘save’ the Kitsilano reserve had begun.

Between 1919 and 1929, this campaign was led, in large part, by Vancouver’s illustrious city archivist, Major J.S. Matthews. Matthews wrote numerous letters to influential men and newspapers, repeatedly petitioned government officials, and worked tirelessly to raise public awareness in his fight to acquire the Reserve as a public park space.<sup>40</sup> In July of 1924, a “deputation...of well known men” attended a meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners to request that the city purchase the Reserve to use as a park. There were many reasons to turn Kitsilano Reserve into a public park – the need for more park space in this densely populated residential area; the overcrowding at nearby Kitsilano Beach; the growth of the city westward, towards the Kitsilano area; and the traffic congestion on the Granville Street bridge that would eventually lead to the

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<sup>39</sup> VCA, 547-C-4, File 27, Add. MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, “Presentation of Haddon Park; Early Efforts to Save Kitsilano Indian Reserve for Park,” Letter from J.S. Matthews, City Archivist, Vancouver, to T.P.O. Menzies, Curator, City Museum, Vancouver, 5 September 1930.

<sup>40</sup> For a complete biography of Major J.S. Matthews, see Daphne Sleight, *The Man Who Saved Vancouver: Major James Skitt Matthews* (Vancouver: Heritage House Publishing, 2008).

need for a new bridge which would connect both sides of False Creek.<sup>41</sup> Between July and September of that year, there was a proliferation of newspaper articles in support of this proposal.<sup>42</sup> Matthews had personal reasons for leading this campaign – the Matthews family home was situated on Maple Street in Kitsilano, right next to the reserve. But his motivations also came out of a deep sense of civic duty, and he argued that while modernization was a positive force, it needed to be balanced.<sup>43</sup>

Parklands were essential to urban development in order to sustain standards of living. Matthews saw British Columbia as “the greatest playground in North America, the “Alps” of the New World,” where people from the south and the east would congregate in large numbers, to enjoy the cool summers and mild winters. He also argued that “the passage of time will put the Indian Reserve more and more in the centre of the city until finally it will absolutely surround it.”<sup>44</sup> For the next four years, Matthews continued to lead the campaign to save Kitsilano Reserve, writing letters that were published in local newspapers under pen names, agitating for the city to extend the existing Kitsilano Beach by purchasing the reserve,<sup>45</sup> and petitioning the Board of Park Commissioners.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> VCA, 547-C-4, File 27, Add. MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, “Presentation of Haddon Park; Early Efforts to Save Kitsilano Indian Reserve for Park,” Circular from J.S. Matthews, City Archivist, Vancouver, 5 July 1924.

<sup>42</sup> VCA, 547-C-4, File 27, Add. MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, “Presentation of Haddon Park; Early Efforts to Save Kitsilano Indian Reserve for Park,” *Province*, 9 July 1924; *Vancouver Evening Sun*, 10 July 1924; *Citizen*, 10 July 1924; *Vancouver Star*, 5 September 1924; ? 10 September 1924.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Sleight, *The Man Who Saved Vancouver*, 35-36.

<sup>44</sup> VCA, 547-C-4, File 27, Add. MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, “Presentation of Haddon Park; Early Efforts to Save Kitsilano Indian Reserve for Park,” Notes by J.S. Matthews, City Archivist, Vancouver, on the need for a park in Kitsilano, n.d.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

Between August and December of 1927, Matthews shifted his focus to two blocks of beachfront on Ogden Street that were owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway, and were situated in between Kitsilano Beach and the Indian reserve.<sup>47</sup> While the purchase of the Kitsilano Reserve was still under debate at City Hall, Matthews was convinced that if the Ogden Street properties were purchased as parkland, this would encourage both public and city officials of the need to further extend the park into the reserve lands.

In 1928, Matthews' campaign to turn the Kitsilano Reserve into a public park finally yielded some results. In the summer of that year, Harvey Haddon, a wealthy businessman from London who had dealings in Vancouver, purchased the Ogden St. properties as a gift to the city for a park.<sup>48</sup> Serious discussion about purchasing the Reserve, in the newspapers and at City Hall, also began by the end of 1928. The biggest issue under consideration at this point was the legal status of the reserve. There were three parties who claimed ownership of the reserve – the provincial government, the federal government, and the Squamish Indian Band. In August, 1928, the *Daily Province* published an article on the Kitsilano Reserve which summed up popular opinion on the

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<sup>46</sup> VCA, 547-C-4, File 27, Add. MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, "Presentation of Haddon Park; Early Efforts to Save Kitsilano Indian Reserve for Park," Letter from J.S. Matthews, City Archivist, Vancouver, to Mr. W.S. Rawlings, Superintendent of the Parks Board, Vancouver, 27 March 1927 and 14 May 1927; Reply from Rawlings to Matthews, 19 April 1927 and 27 May 1927.

<sup>47</sup> VCA, 547-C-4, File 27, Add. MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, "Presentation of Haddon Park; Early Efforts to Save Kitsilano Indian Reserve for Park," *The Province*, 7 August 1927; *Vancouver Daily*, 9 August 1927; Letter from Matthews to Newton J. Ker, Land Agent, CPR, Vancouver, re: purchase of 2 blocks on Ogden Street, 11 August 1927; *Morning Star*, 2 September 1927; *Province*, 10 December 1927.

<sup>48</sup> VCA, 547-C-4, File 27, Add. MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, "Presentation of Haddon Park; Early Efforts to Save Kitsilano Indian Reserve for Park," Letter from J.S. Matthews, City Archivist, Vancouver, to T.P.O. Menzies, Curator, City Museum, Vancouver, 5 September 1930.

claim of the Indians to the reserve.<sup>49</sup> The article argued that “the Squamish Indians, are already, as wards of the government, receiving all that they are entitled to, and all the favors that can be safely conferred on them, it is difficult to see how they can benefit from the sale of the Kitsilano Reserve.” Further, there was the question of equity – the reserve was valued at \$700 000, but this value was attributed “neither to the Indians or the People of Canada, but the people of Vancouver!”<sup>50</sup> The value of the reserve derived from the growth and prosperity of the city of Vancouver, a result of the investment of the residents of city – a demographic in which the Indians were not included. Thus, Indian claim to the reserve was rejected in popular discourse, but remained an issue in the official negotiations because of a provincial-federal dispute over land title and reversionary interest.

In light of the city’s newfound desire to purchase the reserve, the “abandonment” of the reserve by the Squamish in the 1910s became a point of contention. During the early stages of negotiation, the Province claimed ownership of the reserve based on Hamilton Reid’s account of events occurring in 1915. Whether or not the Province paid the Squamish residents of Snaug in the end was immaterial; the reserve was legally abandoned, and the Province claimed reversionary interest in accordance with Indian Act regulations. The Dominion government, however, asserted that title was not legally surrendered, and claimed interest in the reserve on behalf of

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Harris, *Making Native Space*, 236; Jean Barman, *Stanley Park’s Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing 2005), 106-107.

<sup>50</sup> VCA, 547-C-4, File 27, Add. MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, “Presentation of Haddon Park; Early Efforts to Save Kitsilano Indian Reserve for Park,” *The Daily Province*, “Kitsilano Reserve,” 11 August 1928.

the Squamish Band. Upon further investigation, it was discovered by one of the city's lawyers, L.G. McPhillips, that the previous provincial government under Premier John D. McLean had passed an Order in Council agreeing to turn over their reversionary interests in the Reserve to the Dominion Government for the sum of \$350 000. McPhillips was unclear "by what process of reasoning the late Government acted in this way,"<sup>51</sup> and confided his suspicions to the Mayor of Vancouver, W.H. Malkin, that it seemed "to be a very extraordinary performance as the Provincial Government for the sum of \$350 000 without interest agreed to convey to the Dominion property worth \$720 000 in order that they may make the City pay that sum to them."<sup>52</sup>

Thus, despite public opinion that the Indians had no legitimate interest in the proceeds of the sale of the reserve, because the Dominion government had legal claim to the Province's reversionary interests as trustees for the Squamish Band, the reserve was now "subject to all the provisions of the "Indian Act" and [could] not be sold without the consent of the Indians given by formal surrender."<sup>53</sup> George McCrossan, counsel for the city, immediately advised that a subcommittee be appointed "to officially interview the Indians and to request the opportunity of attending an official conference with them and the officials of the Indian Affairs Branch, where the whole matter might be discussed in a friendly way." McCrossan specifically advised that

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<sup>51</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, "Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City," Letter from R.H. Pooley, Attorney General, Victoria, to L.G. McPhillips, Esq., K.C., Vancouver, 19 December 1928.

<sup>52</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, "Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City," Letter from L.G. MacPhillips, Vancouver, to Mayor W.H. Malkin, City Hall, Vancouver, 28 December 1928.

<sup>53</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, "Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City," Letter from Chas. Stewart, Minister of the Interior, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, to William McQueen, City Clerk, City Hall, Vancouver, 22 January 1929.

Andrew Paull be contacted, as “the representative or agent of the Indians themselves,” through Alderman Dean who was “well acquainted with Mr. Andy Paul [*sic*] and might be able to give the Committee some further information, as he knows their attitude.”<sup>54</sup> Paull and the Squamish Band Council, of course, had been formally petitioning the federal government for Aboriginal land title for several parcels of land, including the Kitsilano Reserve, since at least 1923. By the time McCrossan’s subcommittee met with them, Paull and the Band Council were familiar with the extent of their legal rights as Indians. The subcommittee presented the Squamish Band Council with a proposal in early January, 1929. The proposal offered a \$400 000 purchase price, to be paid on a 10 year payment plan without interest, and a clause that “the City... have the immediate use and occupation of the Reserve for public purposes.”<sup>55</sup>

The Squamish Band Council took almost 3 months to respond to this proposal, and when they did, their demands were clear and firm. The city’s subcommittee, consisting of Mayor Malkin, Alderman Dean, and Alderman Lembke met with Indian Affairs Superintendent General Duncan C. Scott and representatives of the Squamish Band Council, including Andrew Paull, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, 1929.<sup>56</sup> At this meeting, they were presented with the resolution of the Squamish tribe, passed unanimously five

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<sup>54</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, “Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City,” Letter from George E. McCrossan, Corporation Counsel, City Law Department, Vancouver, to William McQueen, City Clerk, City Hall, Vancouver, 1 February 1929.

<sup>55</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, “Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City,” Letter from George E. McCrossan, Corporation Counsel, City Law Department, Vancouver to Charles Stewart, Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, 5 January 1929.

<sup>56</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, “Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City,” Letter from Mayor W.H. Malkin, City Hall, Vancouver, to William McQueen, City Clerk, City Hall, Vancouver, 21 March, 1929.

days earlier. The resolution demanded a purchase price of \$750 000. A payment plan was agreeable, but the Squamish Band would be paid \$400 000 first, and the Dominion to Province payment of \$350 000 for reversionary interests was to be paid only after the band had been paid.<sup>57</sup> The response of the City to this resolution indicates the degree of authority held by the Squamish Band Council in this particular instance. Rather than showing any animosity that their original proposal was rejected, the City appears to have been grateful to have had this meeting. In his subcommittee report from the March 29<sup>th</sup> meeting, McCrossan asserts:

This is the first time a definite proposal of a practical nature has been received by the City, and the first time any direct contact has been made with authorized representatives of the Indians. Your committee considers it very fortunate that they were able to meet at the same time the Deputy Superintendent General and officials of the Department of Indian Affairs and authorized representatives of the Indians themselves.<sup>58</sup>

Further, instead of trying to decrease payments to the Squamish Band, the City instead made various attempts to waive the \$350 000 to the Dominion that would then go to paying the Province for reversionary interests.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, "Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City," Resolution of the Squamish Tribe Relative to the Sale of the Reserve, 24 March 1929.

<sup>58</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, "Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City," Letter from George E. McCrossan, Corporation Counsel, City Hall, Vancouver, to William McQueen, City Clerk, City Hall, Vancouver, 25 March 1929.

<sup>59</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, "Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City," Letter from George E. McCrossan, Corporation Counsel, City Hall, Vancouver, to Mayor W.H. Malkin, City Hall, Vancouver, 5 April, 1929; and Letter from George E. McCrossan, Corporation Counsel, City Hall, Vancouver, to Mayor W.H. Malkin, City Hall, Vancouver, 25 September 1929.

The onset of the Great Depression put a hold on negotiations, as funds for public parks were difficult for the economically struggling city to justify. An assessment of the reserve made in October 1929 set the value of this property at \$250 000, a price that was deemed unacceptable to the Squamish Band Council.<sup>60</sup> The city expropriated a right of way through the Reserve for the Burrard Street Bridge in November, and paid the Squamish compensation for damages and losses.<sup>61</sup> After this point, the paper trail for the Kitsilano purchase disappears for seven years, until the problem of crime and squatters on the reserve renewed municipal interest in the property. In the summer of 1936, the Vancouver Police Department under the leadership of Chief Constable W.W. Foster determined that the Kitsilano Reserve had become “a menace to the City” and a “hive on inequity [*sic*].”<sup>62</sup>

Foster asserted that the overgrown brush on the Reserve created a perfect hiding place for petty criminals, and that the Indian Affairs Branch should be forced to take on the responsibility of clearing the area. By November of that year, approval and funds had been secured from the Indian Affairs Branch, but there remained the problem of evicting the 87 non-Aboriginal squatters who were currently living on the Reserve. The squatters sent a petition to City Hall “for a stay of eviction proceedings on the promise to move peaceably on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1937,” which would allow them to stay

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<sup>60</sup> VCA, 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, “Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City,” Letter from J.W. Allen, Vancouver Real Estate Exchange Limited, to Mayor W.H. Malkin, City Hall, Vancouver, 9 October 1929.

<sup>61</sup> VCA, 112-D-5, File 3, Law Department Series 481, Copy of Resolution passed by the Council of the City of Vancouver, 13 October 1930.

<sup>62</sup> VCA, 75-D-4, File 17, Police Board Series 181, “Jungle on the Kitsilano Indian Reserve,” Letter from H.S. Wood, Police Magistrate, Vancouver, to A. Grundy, Acting Chief Constable, Vancouver, 27 June 1936.



through the winter. Their request was granted.<sup>63</sup> By the end of April, however, there were still 16 individuals squatting on the reserve. Of these, 5 were children, and one was an 89 year old man. These were not the criminals envisioned by Foster. Most of them claimed that they were looking for work, and would leave if they could find some work.<sup>64</sup> These remaining squatters were evicted by force, but by the summer, four floats, five shacks, four boats and a cabin had appeared on the Reserve, which had “been put in this place since the reserve was cleared. The owners are mostly engaged in fishing. They say they would move out immediately if they knew where they could go.”<sup>65</sup>

As with the sale of the Kitsilano Reserve, however, the city needed to get approval from the Squamish Band in order to proceed with the clean-up and evictions. On the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1936, the Vancouver Parks Board sent a letter to the Squamish Band Council requesting permission. The Council took almost 2 months to respond, and did so, again, in the form of a resolution. This resolution, like the resolution pertaining to the sale of the Reserve, demonstrated a clear understanding of the legal and economic interests of the Squamish people. The resolution gave permission only under the following conditions – the Band would not be charged for the clean-up; Indians would be employed on the clean-up; the Squamish Council had the right to terminate

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<sup>63</sup> VCA, 115-C-1, File 13, Law Department Series 480, Letter from Fred Howett, Acting City Clerk, Vancouver, to D.E. McTaggart, Esq., Corporation Counsel, Vancouver, 10 November 1936.

<sup>64</sup> VCA, 33-D-3, File 5, Mayor Series 483, “Removal of Squatters from Kitsilano Reserve, 1937-1938,” Letter from A. Grundy, Deputy Chief Constable, Vancouver, to Mayor George C. Miller, City Hall, Vancouver, 28 April 1937; Letter from Corporation Counsel, Vancouver, to E.G.H. Verner, Engineering Department, Vancouver, 29 April 1937; Letter from Deputy Minister, Department of Lands, Victoria, to Mayor George C. Miller, City Hall, Vancouver, 7 May 1937.

<sup>65</sup> VCA, 33-D-3, File 5, Mayor Series 483, “Removal of Squatters from Kitsilano Reserve, 1937-1938,” Letter from A. Grundy, Deputy Chief Constable, Vancouver, to Alderman J.W. Cornett, Acting Mayor, Vancouver, 15 June 1937; Also, letter from Mayor to A. Wells Gray, Minister of Lands, Victoria, 22 June 1937.

the project at any time; the Council and Indian Affairs Branch would retain control and ownership of the Reserve; and the site would not be used as a public park or bathing beach. In conclusion the Council asserted that they had decided to allow the clean-up because if the reserve was “made clean and decent in appearance, it seems to us that it will only make the public more desirous of obtaining it and hastening [sic] the day when the money will be forthcoming for that purpose.”<sup>66</sup>

The Kitsilano Reserve was not surrendered by the Squamish people until the year 2000, and in the six decades that ensued between, the land in question was effectively expropriated by non-Aboriginal interests and development. Yet, the astute business savvy of the Squamish Band Council during the interwar era negotiations indicates a high degree of political and economic adaptation among the Squamish leadership. This fact contradicts the idea held by Indian Affairs officials that the Indians had failed to assimilate because the number of individuals who were enfranchised remained so low. The official failure of assimilation via enfranchisement did not correspond with the reality of integration. The Squamish Band Council itself was an example of adaptation, a form of organization patterned after non-Aboriginal Canadian society. The Council was organized in 1923 and consisted of sixteen Squamish chiefs; its chief purpose was to “transact the affairs of [the Squamish] people in cooperation with the Indian Department.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, the Council’s role in negotiations over the reserve provides

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<sup>66</sup> VCA, 33-D-3, File 5, Mayor Series 483, “Removal of Squatters from Kitsilano Reserve, 1937-1938,” Resolution of the Squamish Indian Council, Council House, Squamish Indian Reserve, 22 February 1937.

<sup>67</sup> “Who Can Represent a First Nation Before the Courts? The Squamish Case: Te Kipilanoq v. British Columbia” in <Four\_Arrows@Canada.com> 20 January 2008.

evidence of the changing situation of the Aboriginal community in this period, whereby assimilation was occurring, but on terms established by the Squamish themselves.

Another clear example of this self-directed assimilation was the appointment of Andrew Paull as intermediary, an act that showed both foresight and a willingness on the part of the Squamish to work within the parameters of non-Aboriginal institutions and worldviews. Squamish resistance to non-Aboriginal intrusion on their lands using the skills and knowledge of the colonizers began with the first signs of European settlement, and continued throughout the twentieth century. This form of resistance was not particularly unusual in British Columbia – it was carried out by many Aboriginal groups, for example the Nisga’a and the Okanagan tribes.<sup>68</sup> Despite this active and prolonged process of adaptation and resistance, however, Aboriginal groups made little headway with the government in regards to the land question. As Cole Harris has adeptly demonstrated, the distribution of land in British Columbia at the end of the 1930s was “an imposed geography, a product of a colonial encounter, one that Native people had resisted and even had shaped in some details, but had not been able to stop.”<sup>69</sup>

Despite official rhetoric, then, that integration was the supposed goal of Indian Affairs policy, assimilation was, as Jean Barman has argued, “a holding action” in

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<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 162-164; LiLynn Wan, “Space, Power, and the Emergence of the Liberal Order: A Comparative Study of the Okanagan and the Mi’kmaq, 1870-1890” (M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 2005).

<sup>69</sup> Harris, *Making Native Space*, 261.

disguise.<sup>70</sup> The regulations surrounding the reserves in British Columbia were not structured in such a way as to encourage economic self-sufficiency, one of the supposed goals of enfranchisement. Instead, both land and assimilation policies functioned to stifle any possibility of economic development among Aboriginal communities. The twentieth-century policies of the Indian Affairs Branch evolved out of a long-standing colonial tradition with intellectual roots in paternalism, racism, and evolutionism – what David Maybury-Lewis has termed ‘neo-evolutionism.’ This way of thinking dictates that indigenous peoples need to overcome their inherent ‘backwardness’; thus, “an indigenous society is urged to abandon its traditional way of life and often its language as well, usually in the hope that in doing so it will cease to exist as a society altogether. Its individual members, now no longer embedded in their backward society, will disappear into the population of the rest of the country.”<sup>71</sup> In Vancouver, attempts to put this theory into practice during the 1920s and 30s were confronted with a series of contradictions.

For the Squamish Band Council, a contradiction was inherent in their attempt to exert economic and political power *as* Indians through a system and set of institutions designed to subordinate individuals *because* of their identity as Indians. Even though the Squamish Band Council were able to assert some degree of control in the Kitsilano Reserve negotiations, their position was fundamentally compromised, and the representatives of non-Aboriginal society ultimately dictated the fate of the reserve.

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<sup>70</sup> Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 173.

<sup>71</sup> David Maybury-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2002), 13.

This result was, to a significant extent, determined by the ascribed legal identity, and the rights and restrictions therein, of the Indian. However, the fact of a legally ascribed racial identity is not sufficient to explain the scale and frequency of land expropriation as it occurred throughout the province during these decades. The popular image of the Indian, generated through public commemoration and exhibition, was of an ‘authentic’ Indian. This Indian identity was incompatible with the reality of modern Canadian society, and thus, this type of Indian either no longer existed, or was vanishing as a result of progress – the success of colonization, urbanization, industrialization, and the establishment of a capitalist economy. The myth of the Vanishing Indian served to justify the expropriation of the Kitsilano Reserve as a matter of social evolution in the public mind. Yet, because the ‘authentic’ Indian identity claimed an essential ‘Indian-ness’ based in pre-European history, it also provided a discourse of resistance.

### ***Conflating Race and Place***

As Cole Harris has argued, the core of settler colonialism “is about the displacement of people from their land and its repossession by others... Indian reserves were at the heart of colonialism in British Columbia.”<sup>72</sup> From this perspective, there were two distinct geographies at play – a colonial geography and an Aboriginal geography. One was displaced by the other, but each existed at some point “both on the

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<sup>72</sup> Harris, *Making Native Space*, xxiv-xxv.

ground and in the imagination.”<sup>73</sup> What transpired over nearly seven decades, between the first reserves surveyed by the Hudson’s Bay Company and the conveyance by the province of reserve lands to the Dominion in 1938, was that the Aboriginal geography was being superseded on both of these levels of existence. The fight over land occurred on the ground in Ottawa, the Provincial Legislature in Victoria, and City Hall in Vancouver, through advocacy for land title and negotiations over the sale of reserve lands. At the same time, in different but equally contradictory ways, the Aboriginal geography was also being actively restored in the popular imagination.

Major J.S. Matthews’ archival collection entitled “Before the Whitemans Came,” was assembled in 1932-1933. The collection was primarily a compilation of locations and descriptions of “Indian Villages,” landmarks, and place-names around the city of Vancouver. Also included were transcripts of interviews and conversations between Matthews and the “following gentlemen... Rev. C.M. Tate, Early Indian Missionary; Professor Chas. Hill Tout; Andrew Paull (Qoitchetahl) Secretary, Squamish Indian Council; J.F.C. Ball, Indian Agent, Vancouver; August Jack, Kitsilano; and Yahmas, Queyahchulk, Chilahmunst and Ayatak.”<sup>74</sup> These transcripts provided accounts of first contact, with James Cook at Nootka, George Vancouver at First Narrows, and Simon Fraser on the Fraser River; pre-contact fishing, hunting, gathering practices; the origins of names, like Capilano and Kitsilano; family histories; memoirs from the ‘early days’ of white settlement; and myths and legends surrounding certain places and landmarks.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>74</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Introduction, signed J.S. Matthews, Kitsilano Beach, 1933.

The information was then compiled, by Matthews, into a narrative account written for popular consumption and to commemorate such civic events as the anniversary of Captain George Vancouver's landing at Nootka Sound. This narrative account – also entitled "Before the Whitemans Came" – was a story of peaceful conquest, the unfolding of European destiny, and the triumph of progress for Western civilization.<sup>75</sup>

Beyond its immediate purpose of engendering a sense of the right of conquest, as well as civic unity and pride by affirming a common heritage amongst white Vancouverites, Matthews' collection was informed by salvage ethnography. This branch of ethnology was a dominant element of Canadian anthropology throughout the twentieth century. Between 1910 and 1925, Edward Sapir worked as Chief of Anthropology for the Canadian National Museum. Sapir was an American anthropologist who was trained under Franz Boas. Boas, Sapir, and Marius Barbeau, one of Canada's most prominent anthropologists, were leading figures in the practice of salvage ethnography. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, anthropological projects were informed by the idea that traditional indigenous cultures were being rapidly destroyed by modernization. Thus began a panic to 'salvage' all remnants of indigenous cultures, including songs, artifacts, clothing, legends and myths, place names, and language. What was salvaged, however, was always selective. For example, as Andrew Nurse has argued, Barbeau's reconstruction of traditional Huron-Wyandot culture, undertaken between 1911 and 1914, was "created in his imagination and in the archives and artifact collections of the Anthropology Division, which did not reflect the complexity of his

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<sup>75</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, "Before the Whitemans Came," Draft.

informants' lives."<sup>76</sup> Barbeau's conception of traditional culture – as was common among anthropologists of the time – was one that was assumed to be static and incapable of adaptation, because change would indicate a corruption of authenticity. Thus, the logical conclusion that anthropologists came to again and again was that traditional indigenous cultures (and, by default, identities) were extinct, or well on their way.

Regardless of individual anthropologists' intentions, the image of the Indian created by salvage ethnography had a significant influence on government policy. The Indian Affairs Branch's goal of assimilating the Indians, administered through enfranchisement and the reserve and residential school systems, was based on the notion that traditional culture was extinct or in the process of disappearing. However, another aspect of salvage ethnography was the idea that traditional culture was incompatible with mainstream modern Canadian society. This conceptual opposition can be read in Matthews' collection, when analysed as a site of resistance. This resistance took the form of assertions of an Indian identity whose essence and rights derived from a pre-European existence. In the interviews and conversations with individuals like Andrew Paull and August Jack, both Squamish who had lived at Snauc, two assertions of resistance were most apparent which parallel the sentiments that arose out of the Indian arts and crafts movement. First, there was a conviction that the Indian identity was deeply intertwined with a sense of place. These connections to the land were primordial – traditional land use practices and sacred sites, identified through

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<sup>76</sup> Andrew Nurse, "'But Now Things Have Changed': Marius Barbeau and the Politics of Amerindian Identity" in *Ethnohistory* 48:3 (Summer 2001): 444.



oral tradition, and the re-mapping of the land with place names that had long-since “fallen into... disuse.”<sup>77</sup> Second, there was an articulation of morality that condemned colonization and modernity. This morality was expressed through accounts of myths and spiritual beliefs, as well as in more immediate concerns about basic survival as a people who had been forcibly dispossessed from their land.

The project of compiling Squamish place names began in 1932, and took nearly a year to complete. This was a joint project, between J.S. Matthews as city archivist and the Squamish Indian Council. In the end, 250 places were identified and mapped in and around Vancouver, along with any information that could be found about the origins, traditional use, and spiritual significance of that place. When this project was being carried out, only one Squamish place name was still in use by non-Aboriginal Canadians – the village of Musqueam. Matthews diligently interviewed “a large number of Indians,” particularly a group of a dozen or so elders, as well as “two or three white pioneers” to identify these place names and determine their location and spelling. Throughout this project, Andrew Paull acted as Matthews’ informant as well as interpreter. At the completion of the project, Squamish Chief Matthias Joe Capilano allegedly declared: “That was a part of our history which had been lost; we have it now.” The Squamish Council then passed a resolution of thanks to the city archivist.<sup>78</sup>

Salvaging place names was, for Matthews, an anthropological project that had value in the fact that indigenous geography was no longer in use. Value was attributed

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<sup>77</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Introduction, signed J.S. Matthews, Kitsilano Beach, 1933.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

to its extinction, to the fact that these place names represented a remnant of a dying culture. But, for Aboriginal people – for the members of the Squamish Council, and the Squamish Band; and for the elders who were interviewed, like August Jack<sup>79</sup> and Andrew Paull – this collection of place names represented the survival of a culture. For Jack and Paull, the place name project was also a method of decolonization – of re-mapping Squamish territory as resistance to an oppressive colonial geography. This understanding of geography, rooted in pre-European settlement, was at the core of Paull’s ongoing campaign for Aboriginal title to the land. Whereas Matthews understood Squamish place names as a logistical matter – “a practice no less necessitous to residents in a wilderness clothed in forest than names for streets and districts in a city are to us”<sup>80</sup>—this project had a deeper meaning for the Squamish people.

For example, when Matthews asked August Jack about ‘Chulks,’ also called Erwin Point, near Kew beach in West Vancouver, Jack responded with a story about a boulder:

When the gods were fixing the geography of the earth they threw this stone at the top of the mountain... The stone missed the mountain and landed at Chulks, and is there yet. One of the gods put the boulder in a sling, and then swung the sling around and around his head to work up speed and force; somehow the sling as it flew touched something; some say the raven’s wing... and the big stone

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<sup>79</sup> August Jack was also called August Kitsilano. In a conversation with J.S. Matthews, August states: “The name I go by ordinarily is August Jack, that is, August, son of Supple Jack, but according to the Whitemansmans law I should be August Kitsilano, and I have assumed that name, sometimes signing my name Kitsilano, usually Haatsalano.” See VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Remarks of August Kitsilano, (n.d.). The name August Jack will be used throughout the text, and August Jack (Kitsilano) in the references.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

missed the mountain, and now you see it in the crevage [*sic*]... That shows you what power the Squamish Indians had in those days. That power. You see, in those days Squamish Indians were very powerful.<sup>81</sup>

For Jack, as with many indigenous peoples, place was “intertwined with memories and associations, stories, property rights, the doings of the [people] from the time of their creation accounts.”<sup>82</sup> Place was the foundation of a common identity. The use of legend and myth was a form in which to convey these memories, associations, stories, property rights, and doings in a way that encouraged a sense of community through the production and dissemination of a common heritage. In the context of forced displacement, as was a central aspect of colonialism in British Columbia, place, and the various meanings that are attached to a place, also became a discourse of resistance.

This discourse was an assertion of a belief system that was anti-colonial and anti-capitalist. For example, in Andrew Paull’s account of the arrival of Captain Vancouver at Nootka Sound in 1792, he describes the “tradition among the Indians of early days that a calamity of some sort would befall them every seven years; once it was a flood, on another occasion disease wiped out Whoi-who... It so happened that Capt. Vancouver visit[ed] in 1792 came in the ‘seventh year’ the year in which some calamity was expected.”<sup>83</sup> This moment of contact, which represents the beginning of colonization, is

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<sup>81</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Interview with August Jack (Kitsilano), 1932.

<sup>82</sup> Harris, *Making Native Space*, xvii.

<sup>83</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Conversation with Andrew Paull (Andrew Qoitchetahl), Vancouver, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1932.

described by Paull as a calamity – a contrast to Matthews’ description of this same historic moment as being “the threshold of a great achievement.”<sup>84</sup> In another example, after giving an account of the legend associated with Siwash Rock in Stanley Park, Jim Franks declared to Matthews, “I’m Indian, not Siwash. My face to the front; my body behind. I may have black face, but it in the front... whitemans call me “Siwash,” I say to him “Go to hell.””<sup>85</sup> In this staunch declaration of defiance to a derogatory racial label is interesting to note that Franks claimed an Indian identity, rather than a Squamish identity.

The most striking articulations of morality and resistance in Matthews’ collection are found in discussions about food and work, the two most pressing concerns on the minds of many residents of Vancouver during these Depression years. Food and sustenance, in pre-European indigenous lifeways, were inextricably tied to place, or the land. Many of the conversations and interviews transcribed in “Before the Whitemans Came” have to do with the hunting, fishing, collecting, gathering, processing, distributing, and abundance of food prior to European settlement. Dick Isaacs, a 75-year old Squamish man living on the North Vancouver Reserve, recounted: “Oh, lots of food in those days; walk right up to bear and deer, and shoot, him fall down, no scared. No noise then; he never hear gun... Indian just walk right up with bow and arrow; shoot just like walk up tame cow. Shoot duck just same. Indian very good with bow and arrow.” Dick Isaacs also related a story to Matthews about the first Squamish settlement at

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<sup>84</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Draft.

<sup>85</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Interview with Jim Franks, twentieth November 1932.

Snauq, a place that was chosen because it had “plenty food, land of plenty.”<sup>86</sup> Similarly, after describing Squamish butchering, gutting, drying, and smoking processes for meat and salmon, August Jack commented, “Indians had plenty here long ago... lots of food.”<sup>87</sup> The abundance that characterized pre-European lifeways, when the Indian lived off the land, was then contrasted with the poverty of the Depression era.

For August Jack, the problems of the Depression were linked to the alienation of the consumer from the production of food, an outcome of modernization and the capitalist economy. As Jack asserted, “whiteman’s food change everything.”<sup>88</sup> In the late nineteenth century most Aboriginal people in British Columbia lived in rural areas and were not economically dependent on the government or the emerging capitalist market. Instead, these people were actively engaged in a variety of self-directed productive activities. In this sense, Aboriginal people were not the dependent wards described in the Indian Act. They constituted the majority of workers and agriculturalists, produced marketable goods such as fish and other food supplies, and, until the land question was dealt with, were the de facto proprietors of much of the

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<sup>86</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Conversation with Dick Isaacs, translator Andrew Paull, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1932.

<sup>87</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Conversation with August Jack (Kitsilano) 26<sup>th</sup> October 1932.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

land.<sup>89</sup> Dick Isaacs remembers self-sufficiency and “plenty of mowich (food) here” before the turn of the century.<sup>90</sup>

By the 1930s, however, things had changed. The reserves were cut back over the decades, until most were incapable of supporting the communities assigned to them. Hunting and fishing grounds were taken over by agriculture and development, and wildlife and fish stocks declined and were regulated. Jack himself was “looking for a job, had a good stand of cedar up the Squamish River, but could get no one to buy his logs; was hard up himself; had to go to the Indian office to get money for food.” This, despite being, as Matthews describes him, “a splendid manly Indian of sound sense, excellent character, hard worker, and well regarded by those who have dealings with him. Mrs. August Kitsilano is an equally interesting character, a most picturesque elderly lady of quiet demeanor, and quite pretty.”<sup>91</sup> Jack’s accounts of Aboriginal peoples’ first reactions to European foods were characterized with a dark humour – tea biscuits that the Indians used as targets for shooting practice, or thought were bones; molasses that the Indians thought was medicine; and jam that the Indians took for blood. These

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<sup>89</sup> Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia 1858-1930* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1996), 114-121.

<sup>90</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Conversation with August Jack (Kitsilano) 26<sup>th</sup> October 1932, addendum.

<sup>91</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Conversation with August Jack (Kitsilano) 26<sup>th</sup> October 1932.

accounts also contain an underlying criticism of industrialization and modernization: the wastefulness of white methods of food production and the problem of consumerism.<sup>92</sup>

For people like August Jack, who was unemployed and living on the Kitsilano Reserve in a tent as late as 1937, colonization, industrialization, and modernization meant the loss of self-sufficiency.<sup>93</sup> In other words, before the 'whitemans' came, there was "lots of food them days; Indians no go City Hall for relief." This sense of nostalgia is reiterated by Matthews in his narrative, but moderated by the necessity of conquest. Matthews agrees, "that seventh year was the most calamitous of all their unnumbered years; the end of their ancient race." However, he sees this as inevitable, the work of "the hand of fate," which had, "since the dawn of time, reserved the New World, vacant and empty, for a new home for the European people... And the whitemans 18<sup>th</sup> century gave birth to a new and grander epoch in the chronicle of the human race."<sup>94</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The difference was this.

In the 1920s and 30s, most non-Aboriginal Vancouverites saw a piece of land of approximately 70 acres in size, known to them as the Kitsilano Indian Reservation. This land was "bounded on the South by First Avenue, on the west by Chestnut Street, and

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<sup>92</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, "Before the Whitemans Came," Conversation with Rev. C.M. Tate, Methodist Indian Missionary, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1932; Conversation with August Jack (Kitsilano) 26<sup>th</sup> October 1932.

<sup>93</sup> VCA, AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, "Before the Whitemans Came," August (Jack) Kitsilano, Conversation with J.S. Matthews, 7 July 1932; AM0054.013.06612, Matthews Collection, "Indian Wives of Whitemen," August Jack Kitsilano, Conversation with J.S. Matthews, 7 and 8 July 1937.

<sup>94</sup> VCA, AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, "Before the Whitemans Came," Draft.

on the North and East by False Creek... included in that portion of Vancouver zoned by the City council as usable for two-family dwellings only.”<sup>95</sup> In the 1920s, J.S. Matthews put forth a vision of this land as a public park, within “easy access to residents on both shores of False Creek... [and] which, from its central position, will be located in the middle of the dense populations of Fairview, Kitsilano, and West End.”<sup>96</sup> Matthews imagined this land as a playground, a bathing beach, and part of a “magnificent driveway twenty or more miles long, running out Georgia street, around Stanley Park, back over Beach avenue and Pacific streets to Burrard street, thence across the new Burrard bridge to Indian Park...”<sup>97</sup> By the late 1930s, with the negotiations over the sale of the reserve at a stalemate, Chief Constable Foster of the Vancouver City Police described the land as:

an area which is strategically advantageous to the operations of thieves and burglars who operate in the Kitsilano area... The brush which covers the whole of the reserve affords excellent cover, and provides concealed trails which enable petty criminals to easily avoid capture, and having access to False Creek also enables them to make away, at their convenience, with the proceeds of their crime. “Jungle Town”, which borders the Reserve, also facilitates their

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<sup>95</sup> VCA 33-A-5, File 5, Mayor Series 483, “Sale of the Kitsilano Reserve to the City” Letter from J.W. Allen, Vancouver Real Estate Exchange, to Mayor W.H. Malkin, City Hall, Vancouver, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1929.

<sup>96</sup> VCA 547-C-4, File 27, Add.MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, “Presentation of Haddon Park; Early Efforts to Save Kitsilano Indian Reserve for Park” Circular from J.S. Matthews, Vancouver, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1924.

<sup>97</sup> VCA 547-C-4, File 27, Add.MSS.336, Vancouver Museums and Planetarium Association Fonds, “New City Parks are being Advocated with Glorious Twenty Mile Driveway,” *Vancouver Stars*, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1924.



operations.<sup>98</sup>

All of these visions depend on assumptions about the nature of land and the relationship between humans and the land. In this perspective, the land is inanimate, and can be divided into parcels, owned, and therefore sold. Consideration of the land focuses primarily on its location in relation to urban development and its size.

The Squamish vision of this land, or imagined geography, was different. August Jack's grandfather, Haatsa-lah-nough, and his brother Chip-kaay-am, were the first Squamish to settle and build a village at this place, probably at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This place was called Snauq, and was "a good place where there are lots of moose, elk, Beaver, bear, deer and duck as well as lots of salmon."<sup>99</sup> Before the Squamish settled there, the Musqueam would fish along the sandbars, "with hurdle nets made of twisted vine maple and sharp stakes so as to make a hurdle... The hurdles ran for hundreds of feet. The fish came in with the tide, entered the wide-mouth of the corral [sic], and were caught when the tide went out." The village of Snauq was situated within the territory called Ulksen. This territory included "all of the promontory of Point Grey from its western extremity in an easternly [sic] direction for an undefined distance in miles; practically both land and water from Point Grey to West End and Shaughnessy" – essentially, all of what the colonial geography identified as the city of Vancouver. Ulksen was Musqueam territory, but the Squamish and Musqueam

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<sup>98</sup> VCA 75-D-4, File 17, Police Board Series 181, "'Jungle' on the Kitsilano Indian Reserve," Letter from W.W. Foster, Chief Constable, Vancouver City Police, to A. Grundy, Acting Chief Constable, Vancouver City Police, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1936.

<sup>99</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, "Before the Whitemans Came," Conversation with Dick Isaacs, translator Andrew Paull, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1932.

were “always very good friends.” Snauq was a relatively recent settlement for the Squamish, but the place was Ulksen since time immemorial.<sup>100</sup>

For the Squamish, place was tied to pre-European history, and derived its essence from the continuity of myths, legends, and bloodlines, as well as land use and resources. In other words, the land was inextricably tied to animal and plant life, and sense of place derived from an animistic world view. In this perspective, humans are part of the land. This perception of land was fundamentally opposed to the colonial geography, which was based on a liberal ideology that centered on the individual and the ownership of property. This fundamental conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perceptions of land were central to the Indian identity. The Indian identity became more politically charged as the twentieth century progressed, as Aboriginal peoples continued to advocate for land title while at the same time resisting institutionalized racism, government regulation, and economic oppression. During the interwar period in Vancouver, ‘Indian’ was still in its incipient stages, and not yet imbued with the meanings that would later carry the indigenous rights movements of the second half of the century. The peculiar position of the Indian, as a legal identity as well as in the popular imagination, was paradoxical. Whereas government officials had forcibly imposed the Indian identity as a means of subjugation and oppression, and champions of colonization had envisioned a vanishing race based on an image of a primitive but noble savage, advocates for Aboriginal rights also centered their claims on a common pre-European Indian identity. The limit on the success that Paull and other

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<sup>100</sup> VCA AM0054.013.06588, Matthews Collection, “Before the Whitemans Came,” Conversation with Frank Charlie, 6<sup>th</sup> November 1932.

activists for Aboriginal rights achieved was, in part, a result of the contradiction inherent to resisting oppression within the systems, institutions, and discourses that produce that oppression. Nonetheless, Aboriginal peoples did find ways to re-construct the Indian identity as a collective identity capable of political change. The revival of language, place names, and myths and legends provided a means of protest for indigenous peoples by promoting the notion of a collective identity that was not vanishing, but fully alive and present.

*Post Script:*

In the spring of 1988, the False Creek area was bought by Hong Kong businessman Li Ka Shing for \$320 million dollars. The court records read that “it was sold for a song by Premier Vander Zalm.”<sup>101</sup> Lee Maracle, a direct descendant of the Snauq Squamish, describes her reaction to this paradox at the occasion of the Kitsilano Reserve settlement between the Squamish people and the government of Canada in the year 2000:

It is such an irony that the first “non-citizen immigrant residents” should now possess the power to determine the destiny of our beloved Snauq. I know it shouldn’t but somehow it makes me happy, like knowing that black Indians now people the Long Island Reservation in New York State... Like the Squamish, [the Chinese] endured quietly until assuming citizenship in 1948. For one of them to become the owner of this choice piece of real estate is sweet irony... There is

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<sup>101</sup>Maracle, “Goodbye, Snauq” 218.

hope in irony.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

## **Chapter 6 ~ “Raven’s doctrine was ‘The end justifies the means’”<sup>1</sup>: The Golden Jubilee Celebrations as an Exhibition of Racial Difference**

Posters for the 1936 Golden Jubilee announced an invitation to the world from the city of Vancouver, to a ten-week long “joyous festival of gaiety, carnival and pageantry... Spectacular fêtes of sea, air and land... Melody, drama, [and] historic scenes reinvoked.” In celebration of 50 years of incorporation, city officials took on a heavy schedule of civic development in Vancouver. Construction on a new City Hall, occupying a full city block between West 12<sup>th</sup>, Cambie, West 10<sup>th</sup>, and Yukon Streets, began on the third day of that year, and was completed eleven months later, on December 1<sup>st</sup>. The style of the new building blended Art Deco and Modernism, with clean lines forming an imposing façade, and a twelve-story clock tower. A statue of Captain Vancouver was placed in front of the building. A fountain was also constructed at Lost Lagoon, near the entrance to Stanley Park, in honour of the Jubilee. These civic improvements were accompanied by an advertising campaign to draw tourists into the city during the summer months. Posters and pamphlets announcing the various attractions and exhibitions held in the city were distributed across Canada, the United States, and Britain. One oversized poster was brilliantly illustrated with brightly colored images of the King and Queen of England, a panoramic view of Vancouver, and a majestic mountain range. The advertisement also boasted two of the main attractions in the

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<sup>1</sup> Vancouver City Archives (VCA), AM.0054.013.04584, Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee, G.H. Raley “An interpretation of the *Legend of Mankilslas*” as related by John Cross, 1936.

Jubilee celebrations – a Chinese Village and an exhibition of “Primitive Indian Ceremonies.”<sup>2</sup>

This chapter makes the distinction between *ethnicity* and *indigenism* through an analysis of these exhibits at the Golden Jubilee Celebrations. From this early period of race-based rights activism, both the production and exhibition of popular representations of Indian and Oriental identities followed separate paths. One striking difference in the Jubilee events was that the Chinese exhibits were funded, organized, and executed entirely by the Chinese Benevolent Association (C.B.A.) and members of the Chinese community in Vancouver, while the Indian exhibits were staged with very limited input from local Aboriginal communities. This difference reflected two distinct histories of racialization. While “the Oriental” and “the Indian” were similarly considered sub-citizens in a moral sense, and excluded from full citizenship rights both politically and economically, the politicization of each racial category differed fundamentally because “Orientals” – Chinese, Japanese, or South Asian Canadians – were considered immigrants as opposed to indigenous. Like the land title question, the formal debate over immigration was one that occurred at a federal level. However, while local public interest in Aboriginal land title was negligible, many Vancouverites felt that they had an urgent stake in matters of immigration because of the supposed infiltration of the “Oriental menace.”

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<sup>2</sup> VCA, PD 1427, “Poster for Golden Jubilee, 1886-1936.” See, also, VCA, Add. MSS. 177, 513-C-3, File 4, Vancouver Golden Jubilee Society Fonds, “Official Posters,” 1936; and Map Cabinet B, Drawer 1, “Posters,” 1936.

During the nineteenth century, regional and international exhibitions were “supposed to illustrate progress and the superiority of ‘civilization’ over ‘barbarism,’ but civilization, unfortunately, was not as spectacular or visually exciting as exotic and gaudy barbarism.”<sup>3</sup> Elsbeth A. Heaman describes these early exhibitions as containing a fundamental contradiction in promoting the ideal of progress through the spectacle of barbarism. Because of this contradiction, one unintended consequence of the act of exhibition was that it provided the possibility of subversive interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, although the Aboriginal exhibitions during Quebec’s 1908 tercentenary celebrations reinforced deep-rooted racial stereotypes, Aboriginal people also used the celebration to affirm their presence and demonstrate their cultural autonomy.<sup>5</sup> As with both the nineteenth century exhibitions and the 1908 Quebec tercentenary, the exhibitions that were part of the 1936 Golden Jubilee celebrations were intended to demonstrate the virtue of progress, but simultaneously provided an arena for racialized peoples to subvert this larger narrative. During the Jubilee, this type of subversion was particularly effective because of the strength of antimodernist sentiment in the face of a collapsing capitalist economy.

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<sup>3</sup> Elsbeth A. Heaman, *The Inglorious Arts of Peace: Exhibitions in Canadian Society during the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 285.

<sup>4</sup> This notion is based on Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec’s Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), see pp.171, 174, 179, and 181-182.

### ***Exhibiting the Indian***

The Indian Affairs Committee began planning for the summer festivities in January of that year. The Indian exhibitions were planned by a small committee consisting almost entirely of non-Aboriginal men, with the exception of a female secretary and one Squamish individual – Andrew Paull. The chairman of the committee was the Reverend George H. Raley, a Methodist minister. In 1914, at the age of 50, Raley had replaced the Reverend Charles M. Tate as principal of Coqualeetza Indian Residential School in Sardis, British Columbia, and had held this position for twenty years. Both Tate and Raley acquired a reputation for treating the students well, and many considered Coqualeetza an exemplary school. In 1936 Raley was 72 years old, and his interest in Aboriginal people and culture was longstanding and well developed. Raley was a collector, an amateur salvage anthropologist. He was particularly interested in the idea of preserving Aboriginal culture by commercializing Indian arts and crafts. Following his experience as chair of the Indian Affairs committee for the Jubilee, he published a book describing the totem poles at Stanley Park, and the legends associated with each. When he died, Raley left a collection of more than 600 Northwest Coast artifacts, which were eventually acquired by the Museum of Anthropology.<sup>6</sup>

A second member of the Indian Affairs Committee was Professor Charles Hill-Tout, a prominent amateur anthropologist. Hill-Tout was born in England where he initially studied theology, and moved to Canada 1892, where he lived until his death in

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<sup>6</sup>For more on Raley, particularly his career as a residential school principal, see Paige Raibmon, “‘A New Understanding of Things Indian’: George Raley’s Negotiation of the Residential School Experience” in *BC Studies* 110 (1996): 69-96.



1944. He was recognized for his field work among the Salish people. He held fellowships in the Royal Society of Canada, the American Ethnological Society, and the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain. At various times, he served as president of the Anthropological section of the Royal Society of Canada and the Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver.<sup>7</sup> Thomas Philip Oxenham Menzies also sat on the committee, as curator of the Vancouver City Museum. Like Hill-Tout, Menzies was born in England. He moved to Vancouver in 1925 where he made his living variously as a watchman, sailor, private detective, government employee, and shipyard labourer. Menzies had no formal training in natural history, but he did have a keen interest and enough personal charm to receive an appointment as curator of the Vancouver City Museum by 1926, a position he held until at least 1949.<sup>8</sup> Another member of the Indian Affairs Committee was the Indian Agent for Vancouver, F.J.C. Ball. Ball acted as Indian Agent for this district for eight years, from 1930 to 1938, after working as an agent in the Okanagan Valley for ten years.<sup>9</sup> Andrew Paull also sat on this committee, as representative of the Squamish Band Council. In the spheres of anthropology and Indian affairs in Vancouver, this was a relatively powerful assemblage of individuals, whose representation of the Aboriginal identity during the Jubilee celebrations was considered authoritative by the public and government officials alike.

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<sup>7</sup>University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBCSC), Charles Hill-Tout fonds, "An inventory of his fonds in Rare Books and Special Collections, The Library of the University of British Columbia Prepared by: Melanie Hardbatt" (August 2002); George Woodcock, "Charles Hill-Tout," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.canadianencyclopedia.ca>, accessed 14 May 2009.

<sup>8</sup> National Research Council, United States, National Research Council of Canada, *Handbook of the Scientific and Technical Societies of the United States and Canada*, (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council, 1937), 228.

<sup>9</sup> Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1919-1939.

The first meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was held sometime in January or February of 1936. In the course of their activities, the committee organized three main events: the Indian Canoe Regatta, the Indian Exhibit building, and the totem pole exhibition. The Indian Canoe Regatta was held on August 15, and eleven fifty-foot canoes manned by “a large number of Indian contestants... from many distant parts” competed in a three mile “World Championship” race.<sup>10</sup> The race, an exhibition of beautifully carved and decorated canoes as well as teams of Indian men from tribes around the province, was won by the Saanich Braves of Vancouver Island, to the delight of cheering hordes of Vancouverites and tourists alike.

Both the canoe and the Indian body had long been the subject of exhibition for non-Aboriginal audiences. The Canadian Court display at the Great Exhibition of 1851, held in London’s Crystal Palace, was dominated by a giant canoe suspended from the ceiling. Aboriginal artifacts were prominent in the Canadian displays in the various World Exhibitions held in Paris, New York, and London throughout the 1850s. Although the inclusion of Aboriginal artifacts declined during the 1860s, there was a revival in the 1870s, and by the 1880s, not only artifacts but Aboriginal people were a central aspect of Canadian displays. For example, during the 1893 Chicago fair, the Canadian display included models of Inuit and Kwagiulth encampments complete with Inuit and Kwagiulth people. Aboriginal dances were also a popular spectacle at these exhibitions.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the nineteenth-century exhibitions, however, the canoe races at

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<sup>10</sup> VCA, AM.0054.013.04584, “Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee: Vancouver City Museum and Art Gallery Curator’s Report, June-August 1936.”

<sup>11</sup> Heaman, *The Inglorious Arts*, 151; 298-303.

the 1936 Vancouver Jubilee celebrated physical skill, competition, and sportsmanship, rather than being a static display of primitive lifeways.

The Indian Exhibit building was another attraction organized by the committee, intended to allow Aboriginal artists and craftspersons to display and sell their work. Aboriginal arts and crafts were displayed as commodities during the Jubilee, rather than as museum artifacts as they were in nineteenth-century exhibitions. During the interwar period, Aboriginal handicrafts produced for a non-Aboriginal market were plentiful, and were being produced by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal entrepreneurs alike. Artists like Charles Gladstone, Bill Reid's Haida grandfather from Skidegate, as well as Japanese craftsmen, were carving replicas of totem poles and canoes to fill the American and European demand for cheap curios. Not until Bill Reid's breakthrough as an Aboriginal artist – marked by a Canada Council arts fellowship in 1968 and a solo exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1974 – would Aboriginal art garner the same status, and therefore prices, as non-Aboriginal art. Nonetheless, the interwar period marked an early shift in this development.<sup>12</sup> Aboriginal artists and craftspersons sold their work during the Jubilee as participants engaged in a capitalist market, rather than as objects of display themselves who were somehow economically disconnected from non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Most of the discussion during the Indian Affairs Committee meetings concerned the acquisition of totem poles from various Aboriginal groups, particularly from Chief

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<sup>12</sup> Maria Tippett, *Bill Reid: The Making of An Indian* (Toronto: Random House, 2003), 45-49; 79; 151; 193-199.

Joe Capilano Matthias of the North Vancouver Squamish, and from the Haida at Bella Bella. There had initially been some attempt to enlist more participation from Aboriginal communities on the planning committee, but by the spring of 1936 Indian Agent Ball reported that “no further word was available as to the participation of these [Indian] bands.”<sup>13</sup> By the end of March, the committee had secured a contract for the carving of the Thunderbird totem pole from Chief Matthias. Reverend Raley and T.P.O. Menzies had been to visit the chief, and were satisfied with the arrangement. As Raley reported, “he felt the Jubilee Committee was now practically in control of the pole which was to represent the Squamish tribe.” He suggested that Ball call a meeting as soon as possible, so that the Committee could discuss “the official adoption of the pole” with the Squamish Band Council.<sup>14</sup> This meeting was held at the end of April, where “this Thunderbird Totem Pole was accepted formally by the Squamish Indian Council of Chiefs, as the representative Crest or Symbol of their Tribe.” The decision was also made to place the Squamish Pole at Stanley Park and Prospect Point as “permanent and historic attractions.”<sup>15</sup> Ske’dans, the Haida mortuary pole, was similarly erected in Stanley Park as “a contribution from the Haida Nation to the Golden Jubilee.”<sup>16</sup>

The Thunderbird Pole was formally presented to Mayor McGreer and the city of Vancouver by the Indian Affairs Committee on August 25<sup>th</sup>, and erected as a permanent

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<sup>13</sup> VCA, AM. 0054.013.04584. “Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee: Minutes,” [n.d.] 1936.

<sup>14</sup> VCA, AM. 0054.013.04584. “Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee: Minutes,” 30 March 1936.

<sup>15</sup> VCA, AM. 0054.013.04584. “Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee: Minutes,” 20 April 1936.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

public monument for “the double reason of commemorating the meeting below this point of Captain George Vancouver on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1792, and also to honour the Squamish people who were the original owners of Stanley Park.”<sup>17</sup> The irony of celebrating both the colonizer and the colonized in the same monument appears to have gone unnoticed by the Indian Affairs committee members. Representations of Aboriginal imagery, like this Thunderbird monument, came to represent the victory of colonization, and were therefore oppressive. At the same time, the totem contradicted the conventional narrative of progress, and thus created the arena for an alternate discourse of resistance to that narrative.

The Indian Affairs Committee was not only concerned about acquiring totems poles as physical objects, but also collected the legends that accompanied these poles. The Committee, swayed no doubt by the anthropological interests of Raley, Hill-Tout, and Menzies, were “strongly of the opinion” that the legends were “part of the poles, which would be valueless without them.”<sup>18</sup> The legends were important to anthropologists because they were understood to be embedded in pre-European Aboriginal discourses and systems of understanding. At the same time, it was well understood among this circle that totems were not an ancient or traditional art form, but something that had developed fairly recently, only since the 1700s.<sup>19</sup> These

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<sup>17</sup> VCA, AM. 0054. 013. 04584, “Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee: Vancouver City Museum and Art Gallery Curator’s Report, June-August 1936.”

<sup>18</sup> VCA, AM. 0054.013.04584. “Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee: Minutes,” 20 April 1936.

<sup>19</sup> VCA, AM. 0054.013.04584. “Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee: Totem Poles,” Excerpt reproduced from an article by Dr. R.G. Large, 1958.

discourses and systems of understanding that gave rise to the legends were ever-evolving, and accommodated the experience of colonization. For example, the Leaf and Flower Pole of the Haidas of Yan, stolen by the Royal Canadian Air Force and eventually acquired by the Museum of Northern British Columbia in Prince Rupert, incorporated elements of European influence. The legend tells that the Haida “greatly admired the garden flowers in the “whiteman’s” town, and when they came home [from Victoria] were the first to adopt them as a family emblem and have them carved on their totem pole.”<sup>20</sup>

While it is difficult to ascertain the specific motivations behind the Committee’s work, the fact that the Committee included a representative from the Aboriginal community, that they paid living artists to create exhibits for the Jubilee, and they were aware of the continuity of a living Aboriginal culture are significant. The Indian Exhibit at the 1936 Jubilee provides one example of a broader shift in public representations of the Indian identity, where Aboriginal imagery was presented as part of a living culture rather than simply a relic from the distant past. In the case of the Jubilee, this shift was directed by a small group of intellectuals, and informed by the methods, theories, and ideologies of professional anthropology. Change, adaptation, and accommodation characterized Indian arts and crafts in the 1930s and 40s, as it was being reconceived in relation to the Canadian identity. The canoe races, the Indian Exhibit building which housed Aboriginal artisan vendors, and the public display of totem poles during the

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<sup>20</sup> VCA, AM. 0054.013.04584. “Golden Jubilee, Indian Affairs Committee: The Leaf and Flower Pole of the Haidas of Yan, Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia,” 1958.

1936 Jubilee suggest a different sensibility than that which informed the ‘spectacle of barbarism’ of the Victorian-era exhibitions.

The Indian exhibits at the Jubilee reinforced the notions of racial difference, racial essentialism, progress and antimodernism inherent to the pioneer mythology. At the same time, the antimodernist “discourse of disappearance”<sup>21</sup> was being challenged by an alternate discourse that asserted the continuity of Aboriginal culture. As chapter four has demonstrated, the pre-European Indian, the counterpoint to the Pioneer in regional mythology, was represented most visibly in Vancouver in Aboriginal art and imagery. Yet, the functionality of arts and crafts as vehicles of cultural meaning depends on the act of exhibition. As Timothy Mitchell has argued, exhibition does not occur exclusively at organized events like the Jubilee celebration, but also in places like museums, theatre, public gardens, zoos, the farms of the countryside, and the streets and facades of the cities. Exhibition is not only an event, but also a way of “organizing the view,” of “rendering up the world as a thing to be viewed,” and of ordering the world “so as to represent.”<sup>22</sup>

The erecting of totems as permanent public monuments in Stanley Park is one example of the extension of Aboriginal imagery beyond the parameters of organized exhibition, and into everyday life. In the 1920s, the Art, Historical and Scientific Society

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<sup>21</sup> This term is taken from Leslie Dawn, *National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006). In Dawn’s analysis, in the 1920s this “discourse of disappearance” was not, by any means, uncontested; but was still dominant during this decade because it was constructed and maintained by a small but elite group of non-Aboriginal anthropologists and government officials in the 1920s, most notably Marius Barbeau of the National Museum and Duncan C. Scott of the Department of Indian Affairs.

<sup>22</sup> Timothy Mitchell, “The World as Exhibition” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31:2 (April 1989): 221-222.

of Vancouver embarked on a project to set up an Indian Village in Stanley Park, a large part of which was to acquire totem poles.<sup>23</sup> Totems were erected in public spaces around the city as monuments to the Aboriginal peoples who had once dominated this region, and, as such, became a key component of Vancouver's identity as a Canadian city. While the legal issues of land claims and Aboriginal rights garnered limited support in this period, the totem pole, as well as various other 'traditional' Aboriginal arts and crafts, generated much interest among the non-Aboriginal public. Thus, Aboriginal art and imagery, which assumed and defined racial essentialism – namely, indigenism – was a key site of politicization.

### ***The Oriental Spectacle***

(Pender Street, Vancouver, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936):

*A strange mixture of Orient and Occident, contrast of the old and new, was seen in the parade which marked the opening of the Chinese village here. Gongs whose hollow tones have rumbled down through the ages, contrasted with the harsh sound of gear changes on modern trucks, uniforms of the Kitsilano Juvenile Boys' Band with the gorgeous panoply of the Five Generals of the Hun Dynasty.*

*In the splendour of silk and satin, gold and silver, rode the Chinese carnival queen, surrounded by her pretty maids of honor. Fantastic lanterns... waved clear in the July sunlight like cut-outs from a brilliant Chinese print.*

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<sup>23</sup> Hilary Stewart, *Looking at Totem Poles* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1993), 81-84.



*A Chinese with a pick and shovel, seated on a section of railway line,  
was a reminder to Canadians that Chinese helped to build the Canadian  
Pacific through the Rockies to Burrard Inlet.*

*A solitary figure marching between guards of honor – Nam Mo,  
Buddhist priest, was dignified and striking in his scarlet robes and black hat.  
He beat a solemn measure on a ceremonial gong... [and] waved his fan good-  
humouredly to the applauding crowds as he and his troupe made their  
victorious progress.<sup>24</sup>*

The Jubilee exhibitions were organized by the Chinatown community and the Chinese Benevolent Association as a public display of a Chinese Canadian consciousness. For many Chinese Canadians in Vancouver, the characteristics of the Chinese race and the cultural values perceived to be inherent to the particular racial designation of “Chinese” were held up as being akin to the values of Canadian citizenship. From a broad perspective, the political motivations behind the Jubilee exhibits paralleled the national anti-Immigration law campaign, which was being carried out in both the legal and political spheres. From a local perspective, however, the most immediate motivations for the production of this identity had to do with the problems of crime and vice in Chinatown on the one hand, and the consolidation of a permanent Chinese community on the other.

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<sup>24</sup> VCA, Add. MSS. 1108, 613-G-1, Yip Family Fonds, File 2, Scrapbook, “Chinatown – Golden Jubilee, 1936,” newspaper clipping.

In 1923, the Canadian government passed the infamous Chinese Immigration Act. Many scholars accurately describe the two decades following the passage of the 1923 Act as one in which British Columbia's Chinese community withered.<sup>25</sup> The Chinese population in the province dropped by fifty percent in the two decades between 1923 and the repeal of the Immigration Act in 1947. This decline was a result of outmigration and a lack of natural increase, as well as starvation by malnutrition, high rates of suicide, and various mortal illnesses resulting from poverty. Equally important, however, is that this period also saw 'a victorious progress,' in the birth of a community in Vancouver that self-identified as both distinctly Canadian and Chinese. This progress – of integration if not assimilation – was being presented during the city's Jubilee.

The Chinese exhibits in this civic celebration were elaborate by any standards. Headed by the Chinese Benevolent Association, with Foon Sien Wong as secretary and publicity manager, the Chinatown community constructed a "Chinese Carnival Village" as their contribution to the civic celebrations. The village was erected along Pender and Carrall Streets, "in the heart of Chinatown." The Arch-Tower, a massive structure that stood 85 feet tall at the corner of Hastings and Carrall Streets, marked the entrance and welcomed visitors to both the Carnival Village and Chinatown. The structure was "a spectacle of brilliant magnificence... constructed entirely of bamboo without the aid of a nail, rivet or bolt to bind it together," and was resplendent with red paint and "real

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 81; Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver 1945-1960: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 16; and Patricia E. Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 75-77.

gold... used with apparent abandon in order to maintain the proper lustre.”<sup>26</sup> Originally erected in Hong Kong, the Arch-Tower was dismantled and reconstructed in Vancouver with the permission of the Chinese government. Under constant guard, both day and night, this edifice reportedly took over one million hours of labour to construct, and was insured for \$100 000. In addition to the Arch-Tower, the Village included a replica of an ancient Madarin Palace, a Buddhist Temple, a stage for dance and theatre performances as well as fashion shows, and a Pagoda. The Pagoda housed “fabulous treasures of the Orient, incredulous to the western mind,” including “porcelain vases, cloisonné, pottery, earthenware, exquisitely carved jade, ivory, and ebony, gorgeously embroidered ceremonial robes, time-faded parchments of the first printing nearly four thousand years old... whose total monetary value may reach nearly one million dollars.”<sup>27</sup>

The Chinese Carnival Village represents an astonishing effort and investment by the Chinatown community, a venture that becomes even more remarkable in light of the economic strain of the Great Depression and the funnelling of so much of Chinatown’s time and money in support of the war in China during this period. Why did the Chinatown community sacrifice so much of its scarce resources to erect a Carnival Village in celebration of a city in which the Chinese were marginalized, discriminated against, and oppressed by virtue of their race? There were, of course, reasons. Three key motivations for this excessive display were the birth of tourism as a government

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<sup>26</sup> Vancouver City Archives, Add. MSS. 1108, 613-G-1, Yip Family Fonds, File 2, “Chinatown – Golden Jubilee 1936.”

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

supported industry; a flaring of Chinese nationalism as a result of the Sino-Japanese war; and the politicization of the Chinese Canadian identity.

As Michael Dawson has demonstrated, the interwar period was a crucial time in the development of the tourism industry in British Columbia. By the late 1930s, over 300 000 tourists from the United States were visiting the province each year, and automobile travel also brought tourism from within British Columbia and from other Canadian provinces. In addition, the 1930s mark the roots of a government-supported tourist industry in Canada, and a widespread recognition of the economic possibilities of tourism.<sup>28</sup> The Chinese exhibits at the Jubilee fell in line with this consumer driven attitude. As others have argued, public response to the Chinese exhibits at the Jubilee revealed “a reversal of the way the city had traditionally acknowledged the presence of Chinatown within the community.”<sup>29</sup> Chinatown was now regarded with pride by Vancouverites. Doubtless, this change in perspective was due, in part, to the commodification of the Chinese, as Chinatown became a popular tourist destination in Vancouver. However, while consumption played a significant role in the publicizing of Chinatown and the Chinese, there were also moral and political motivations for this publicity.

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Dawson, ““Taking the ‘D’ Out of ‘Depression’”: The Promise of Tourism in British Columbia, 1935-1939” *BC Studies* 132 (Winter 2001/2): 32-33. For a more thorough account of tourism in British Columbia, see Michael Dawson, *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890-1970* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), 156.

One of these motivations was directly related to international affairs. The overarching theme of the Chinese exhibitions was Old China, and the architecture, clothing, religion, artifacts, aesthetic, and culture of “ancient China” – and *not* Chinatown of the 1930s – was put on display for Vancouverites and tourists alike. An illustration adorning one pamphlet advertising the Jubilee shows the figure of “Old China” in traditional Chinese garb, shaking hands with a figure wearing a Royal Canadian Mounted Police hat, labeled “Young Canada.” The exhibits also emphasized the contributions of the Chinese to Canada’s history, from the gold rush to the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway.<sup>30</sup> This emphasis on Old China and the contributions of the Chinese in Canada can only be partially explained by reasons of aesthetics or marketing. Campaigns to provide relief for war-torn China peaked after 1937, with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war, but relief work in Vancouver had been ongoing throughout the civil war and reconstruction period which preceded Japanese aggression by two decades. The 1936 exhibitions were linked to a broader nationalist project instigated by the rise of the Kuomintang in China in 1927, whose nationalist call was aimed at all Chinese, both at home and overseas.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the Chinese Carnival Village was, in part, an expression of ethnic pride and an effort to generate a positive image and international support for nationalist China.

The Chinatown community in Vancouver, however, were as much part of the *huáqiáo* culture as they were Chinese nationalists. *Huáqiáo* were the overseas or

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ng, *The Chinese*, 16-17; See also chapter 7, below.

sojourner Chinese, and were part of a longstanding, ongoing, and widespread diasporic tradition.<sup>32</sup> *Huáqiáo* meant connections to China, but also to those places over the seas – in this context, to Canada, British Columbia, and Vancouver. The organizers of the elaborate displays at the Jubilee, who also made up the leadership of the Chinese Benevolent Association, described themselves as “Vancouver’s public spirited Chinese citizens.” For the Chinese, a major impetus for their participation in this event was to close the gap between notions of Chinese and Canadian—essentially, to demonstrate to the public a positive image of “East meets West.” A pamphlet distributed by the Chinatown Organizing Committee promoting the events declared that “Vancouver’s Chinese residents are particularly qualified to participate in the celebrations of Vancouver’s Golden Jubilee, because Chinese history in British Columbia extends over a period of one thousand years.” The purpose of these events was not only to celebrate the City’s fiftieth anniversary, but also to “show the influence and significance of ancient Chinese civilization in relation to our Western civilization.” The contributions of the Chinese in Canada, from the first explorers who arrived in “slow moving junks” in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century, to Captain John Meares’ landing at Nootka sound with a boatload of

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<sup>32</sup> For more on transnational diasporic traditions in Canada, see, for example, Vic Satzewich and Lloyd Wong, eds, *Transnational Identities and Practices in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); and Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999). For more on the history of the Chinese diaspora, see, for example, Laurence J.C. Ma and Carolyn Cartier, *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility and Identity* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); and Gungwu Wang, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Chinese craftsmen, to the gold rush and the railway, were highlighted in the propaganda and exhibits that were displayed to the public during the Jubilee.<sup>33</sup>

The Chinese exhibitions for the Jubilee included a number of performances by both professionals brought in from China as well as British Columbian-born members of the Chinese community. Performances during the Jubilee included shows by the “diminutive Chinese acrobat,” Tan Soot, and the Peiping Acrobatic Troupe; artists’ demonstrations, including poetry, embroidery, seal-cutting, ivory carving, and painting; re-enactments of life in Old China; an “Oriental seer”; Chinese magicians; and traditional Chinese dancing. All of these performers were professionals, brought in from mainland China or Hong Kong. They provided a carnival-like atmosphere, and entertainment for both Chinese Canadian and non-Chinese audiences. These performances, which capitalized on a longstanding fascination with the ‘exotic’ Orient by Western society, constituted one type of human performance on exhibit during the Jubilee. Entertainers versed in the ancient arts and traditions, brought to North America directly from China and put on display, made clear to the public the wonders of ‘ancient Chinese civilization’ as well as the human connections that still existed between Old China and Canada.

A second type of performance on exhibit at the Jubilee came from within Vancouver’s Chinese community. The parade on Pender Street, which officially opened the festivities on July 18<sup>th</sup>, included “girls, boys, and men in national gay costume... Many are British Columbia-born, but they recreated Chinese life in carefully-schooled

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<sup>33</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, 613-G-1 File 2, pamphlet, “Vancouver Chinatown Golden Jubilee, 1886—1936” (1936).

pageantry.” The opening parade was organized by the Chinese Benevolent Association, and its president, Leong Yee Chung, announced that the purpose of the celebration was to “pay respect to Vancouver on the date of its Golden Jubilee.”<sup>34</sup> The performances and exhibits staged by native-born and resident Chinese included re-enactments of ancient China, and traditional music and dancing, but also on offer were a beauty pageant, fashion show, and tea. While the Jubilee exhibits offered an arena for the expression of racial pride by virtue of heritage and the ancient civilization of China, these public celebrations also provided a stage for exhibiting Chinatown as ‘modern’ and ‘Western’ – in other words, as a *respectable* community in Canada. These Chinese exhibits pose a striking contrast to the Indian exhibits that were held at this event, even though both were exhibitions of racial/cultural difference. This difference was a result of historical contingencies, which, by the 1930s, had resulted in discrepancies in the degree of political opportunity to which each group had access and in the ability of each to mobilize resources.

### ***Conclusion***

These exhibits presented during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations clearly point to the varying degrees, methods, and effects of politicization within two racialized communities in Vancouver during the interwar period. One key consistency, however, is that politicization occurred as a double-edged sword because it reinforced notions of racial essentialism and difference as a way of naming and asserting rights. Yet,

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<sup>34</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, 613-G-1 File 2, newspaper clippings, “Chinatown on Parade” (1936).



indigenism also meant political, social, and economic marginalization, because of a persistent belief in an essential pre-European identity and the reality of legislated racism via the Indian Act. This widespread marginalization meant that indigenous activism was severely limited until the 1950s, when indigenous rights were recognized in international politics, and amendments were made to the Indian Act. In contrast, the politics of ethnicity allowed for a greater extent of political autonomy. Chinese Canadian activism flourished in this period, and the insistence of a politically, socially, and economically active Chinese Canadian presence in Vancouver helped to define a modern Canadian race-based equality rights movement.

## Chapter 7 ~ Huáqiáo<sup>1</sup>: The Politics of Ethnicity in Vancouver

Anti-Chinese sentiment had progressed to such a degree by the interwar years that Foon Sien Wong, a public figure and spokesperson for Vancouver's Chinatown for over 50 years, remembered this period as "the Dark Ages."<sup>2</sup> These decades were undoubtedly a time of widespread segregation and exclusion, of restrictive immigration laws and economic persecution. However, it was also during this period that the Chinese community in Vancouver began to establish a Canadian-Chinese identity, achieving the franchise in 1946. Wing Chung Ng has convincingly argued that the process of identity formation for the Chinese in Vancouver over the last century was one marked by discontinuity between the pre- and post Second World War periods. In his analysis, the war marked the end of a cultural identity forged by the first generation of Chinese pioneers, and was replaced by new immigrants in the 1940s and 50s who had a different sense of "being Chinese."<sup>3</sup> The interwar period, however, can also be examined in terms of continuity—as the root of the development of a Chinese Canadian identity.

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<sup>1</sup> *Huáqiáo* (pinyin), or 華僑, means "overseas Chinese" and refers to ethnic Chinese living outside of mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan. See, also, chapter 9, below.

<sup>2</sup> University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBCSC), Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 12 File 8, William E. Willmott, "Interview with Foon Sien, 22 May 1961."

<sup>3</sup> Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 18.

This chapter explores the politicization of the Oriental identity, with a focus on the Chinese community in Vancouver during the interwar period. Like whiteness, the Oriental identity functioned as both hierarchy and as a unified racial category, according to changing international political relations as well as socio-economic influences. Notably, however, the deconstruction of 'Oriental' in this period, specifically in the distinction between Chinese and Japanese, also gave rise to racial/cultural identities that were linked to an ideal of Canadian citizenship. A case study of the development of a Chinese Canadian identity in Vancouver in this period provides some insight into this process of politicizing racial identity in Canada.<sup>4</sup> Chinatown and its residents were being

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<sup>4</sup> The term "Oriental" has, historically, been used to describe a linguistically, culturally and ethnically diverse and varied range of individuals. In Vancouver, these individuals were primarily of Chinese, Japanese, or South Asian descent. Each of these groups was represented demographically in Vancouver, each was discriminated against in terms of immigration and citizenship, and each resisted, to varying degrees. However, in this dissertation I focus exclusively on the Chinese community for several reasons. The South Asian population in British Columbia between 1900 and 1940 never exceeded more than 2500 individuals (or, at most, half a percent of the total population of the province). The debate over South Asian immigration peaked with the Komagata Maru incident 1914, when a boatload of 400 South Asian immigrants were turned away in Vancouver based on the 1908 Order-in-Council popularly known as the "Continuous Journey Clause." By 1921, there were less than a thousand individuals of South Asian descent left in the province. The Japanese population, while approaching the Chinese by 1931 with over 22 000 individuals (as compared to over 27 000 Chinese), was concentrated in the more rural Fraser River Valley region during the interwar period. Japanese immigration was also controlled, through a "Gentleman's Agreement" between the Canadian and Japanese governments. While both South Asian and Japanese identity formation and agitation for rights constitute an important aspect of Canadian history, during the interwar period in Vancouver the most concentrated anti-Oriental efforts were directed at the Chinese community, and many of the most explicit arguments against discrimination were voiced from within this same community. For more on the debate over South Asian immigration in 1914, see Vancouver City Archives (VCA), Add. MSS. 69, Henry Herbert Stevens Fonds, 509-D-7, File 1, "Hindu Immigration" (1912-1914); File 5, "Hindu Enfranchisement/ Oriental Immigration," (October 1915 – September 1922) and "Immigration – Asiatic" (1913-1915). See also Norman Buchignani, Doreen M. Indra, and Ram Srivastiva, *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985); Kamala Elizabeth Nayar, *The Sikh Diaspora In Vancouver: Three Generations Amid Tradition, Modernity, and Multiculturalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Andrew Parnaby and Gregory Kealey, "The Origins of Political Policing in Canada: Class, Law, and the Burden of Empire" *Prairie Forum* 31:2 (2006): 245-271;. For more on Japanese Canadian identity and activism in Vancouver, see Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was: A History of Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982); Masumi Izumi, "The Japanese Canadian Movement: Migration and Activism Before and After World War One" *Amerasia Journal* 33:2 (2007): 49-66; Shannon Jette, "Little/Big Ball: The Vancouver Asahi Baseball Story"

constructed and represented as a *disreputable* place and people in the interwar years. A long tradition of racism informed this perception, and it was closely linked to issues of crime and morality during the 1920s and 30s. This chapter explores how this long-standing image of ill-repute was publically challenged by the Chinatown community in the 1930s.

### ***From Gold Mountain to the Slums of Chinatown***

Chinese immigration to Vancouver had begun with the gold rush of 1858. Until 1911, the Chinese population in Vancouver wavered at about 3500, with a high degree of transience due to seasonal employment. The male to female ratio in this period stood at about twenty-eight men to every woman; that is, fewer than one hundred women and children, most of these belonging to the wealthier merchant families. By 1921, the population had doubled. The number of women and children had also increased, to 600 Chinese women in Vancouver and over 500 children enrolled in public schools in the city. During this period, there was a proliferation of Chinese regional and surname associations. In 1918, the Chinese Benevolent Association became an umbrella organization, an arrangement that “epitomized a paradox whereby subethnicities among the Chinese were at once recognized and transcended as a result of a desire for larger unity and community.”<sup>5</sup> In this period of virulent racism, which found expression in official legislation as well as the anti-Oriental riots of 1887 and 1907, the associations

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*Sport History Review* 38:1 (2007): 1-16; and Michiko Midge Ayukawa, *Hiroshima Immigrants in Canada, 1891-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Ng, *The Chinese*, 15; 16.

also served to protect the Chinese against “Canadian discrimination.”<sup>6</sup> The prevalent belief among white British Columbians was that the Chinese were inferior and inassimilable, a sentiment that culminated in the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act. This act virtually ended Chinese immigration into Canada, and was part of a national anti-Oriental campaign spearheaded by British Columbian politicians and businessmen.<sup>7</sup>

Drawing on a long-standing tradition of racist beliefs and discriminatory practices, municipal government officials, police, local trade and businessmen, journalists and editors constructed an image of Chinatown in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that was characterized by vice and immorality.<sup>8</sup> While gambling, narcotics, bootlegging, and prostitution were undeniably part of life in Chinatown, this part of Vancouver was also home to many legitimate businesses, homes, families, and organizations. Although not all Vancouverites of Chinese descent lived in Chinatown proper in the 1920s and 30s, the area along Pender, Carrall, and Columbia streets was a hub of business, politics, and social life for most. Even more significant than demographic distribution, as Kay Anderson has demonstrated, was the conceptual

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>7</sup> For detailed accounts of the history of racist legislation and anti-Oriental activity in Canada, see, for example, Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978); Harry Con, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg and William E. Willmott, *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Community in Canada*, ed. Edgar Wickberg (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982); Patricia Roy, *A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858—1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989) and *The Oriental Question*, 55-130; Peter S. Li, *The Chinese in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> For an excellent discussion of the European/Canadian perception of Vancouver’s Chinatown from the 1880s to 1917, see Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), 80-105.

association between “Chinese” and “Chinatown.” In Anderson’s interpretation, place was inherent to racial discourse, and Vancouver’s Chinatown was “a social construction with a cultural history and a tradition of imagery and institutional practice that [gave] it a cognitive and material reality in and for the West.”<sup>9</sup> Anderson argues that this construction was, in large part, a “European creation.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, during the interwar period, white business and tradespeople – the self proclaimed ‘respectable citizenry’ – agitated for more stringent anti-Oriental policies. Supported by factions of the media, the majority of politicians in city hall, and the Vancouver Police department, Chinatown was marginalized through a discourse based on racial discrimination, segregation, and persecution. Thus, even after the passage of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, the ‘problem’ of Chinatown persisted in the minds of many Vancouverites.

As Patricia Roy has convincingly demonstrated, the campaign for a “White Man’s Province” that was carried out by so many British Columbians throughout the early twentieth century had two dimensions – economic and moral.<sup>11</sup> Concern for economic interests played out in City Hall, in the form of agitation for restrictions on Chinese employment, trade and business. In the spring of 1928, five years after the Immigration Act was passed, local businessmen in Vancouver were still petitioning the provincial government for more restrictions on Chinese business in the city. In a letter to the premier, thirty-two “business men, traders and trading corporations of the city of

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<sup>9</sup> Kay J. Anderson, “The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77:4 (1987): 581.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Roy, *A White Man’s Province*, 267.

Vancouver” clearly articulated their ultimate goal, which was “to ensure that British Columbia shall be a Province in which Canadians of European origin, and incoming settlers of European origin, shall always be in a dominant majority for carrying on industrial, mercantile and agricultural pursuits.”<sup>12</sup> Increased restrictions, like the Trade License Board that was established in 1929 (but remained inactive) and the economic reforms proposed by the Native Sons in the 1930s, met with limited success. Nonetheless, an explicitly anti-Oriental discourse persisted in City Hall at least into the 1940s.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, animosity towards the Chinese derived as much from moral concerns as it did from the perception of unfair economic competition. By the 1930s, Chinatown had become “a metaphor for racial contamination” for many Vancouverites.<sup>14</sup> This view was primarily the result of three factors. First, earlier stereotypes of the Chinese which played on fears of sexual predation and public health issues persisted in this period. Secondly, the emerging pseudo-scientific field of eugenics was beginning to have some

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<sup>12</sup> British Columbia Archives and Records Services (BCARS), Add. MS. 3, Pattulo Fonds, Reel A1800, Vol. 28 File 6, “Letter to BC Premier MacLean from Businessmen of the City of Vancouver,” April 1923. Emphasis in original.

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 3, above. See, also, for example, BCARS, MS 0012, Halford D. Wilson Papers, Reels A0660 and A1800, Correspondence, 1938-1942. Wilson was a city Alderman who continued the anti-Oriental fight into the 1940s. His focus shifted from implementing immigration and economic restrictions against the Chinese in the 1930s to preventing Japanese enfranchisement and calling for the registration of all Orientals in the country in order to weed out illegal Japanese immigrants in the 1940s. Wilson was something of a political opportunist, and his shifting anti-Oriental focus was closely related to public sentiment which, in turn, was influenced by international relations between Canada, China, and Japan. Indeed, by 1952, Wilson was Chairman of the Vancouver Civic Unity Council, and was publicly lauded for his firm conviction “that there are fine people in every race, color and creed. Mr. Wilson sets a good example as he leads the Civic Unity Council in its humanitarian work.” See VCA, PAM 1952-177, *Civic Unity: A News Bulletin on Intercultural and Interracial Relations* (December 1952), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 107.

influence on government policy by the 1920s. Third, Chinatown had, effectively, been spatially ghettoized by municipal officials and the police department such that the red-light district, with all of its attendant social evils, was segregated into the same few city blocks.<sup>15</sup> In an appeal to City Hall for funding for bullet-proof vests and more police dogs, the chairman of the Police Commission invoked the stereotypes of “chinamen” and “negros,” as “low-type foreigners.” He argued that “Vancouver [was] an important seaport city... responsible for attracting and harbouring a large foreign population and undesirables of various races. This [made] the work of policing the city more difficult and dangerous as compared with interior cities.”<sup>16</sup> In the 1920s and 30s, the Vancouver Police Department were still preoccupied with eradicating gambling and clearing up the “slum conditions” in Chinatown.<sup>17</sup> Like the Kitsilano Reserve, Chinatown in the interwar period, and, by extension, the Chinese themselves, were seen as a space (and, in the case of Chinatown, a race) characterized by immorality, crime, and vice.

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<sup>15</sup> For discussions on stereotypes of the Chinese in North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 3-22; Roy, *A White Man's Province*, 13-36. For a thorough account of eugenics in Canada, see Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990). For more on the spatial marginalization of Chinatown, see David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatown: Towns Within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 80-83; Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 82-105.

<sup>16</sup> VCA, Police Board, Series 181, 75-C-1, Letter to L.D. Taylor, Mayor of Vancouver, from W.H. Lang, 23 December 1927.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, VCA, Police Board, Series 181, 75-B-4, File 4, “Morality Squad Reports, 1919-1920”; 75-B-5, File 5, “Morality Squad Reports, 1922”; 75-B-6, File 1, “Morality Squad Reports, 1923-24”; 75-B-7, File 2, “Morality and Liquor Control Squad's reports, 1925-1927”; 75-C-1, File 3, “Morality Squad and Liquor Control Squad reports, 1928” (available: for April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November); 75-C-1, File 3, “Chinese Lotteries – Police Department Report, 1933”; 75-C-1, File 6, “Police Court Reports, 1930”; 75-C-5, File 6, “Crime in Vancouver – report of the Chief Constable” (1931); 75-C-6, File 4, “Chinatown – gambling” (1932); 75-C-7, File 11, “Chinese Lotteries” (1932-1933); and 75-D-1, File 18, “Gambling Houses – Report on” (1933-1934).



In addressing this relationship between space and race, Kay Anderson draws on the work of Edward Said to argue for “a social reality... constructed not democratically but within a hegemonic framework that is rarely questioned.”<sup>18</sup> Like Said, Anderson takes as her subject the dichotomies of Oriental and Occidental, East and West, Christian and non-Christian – and examines how these dichotomies were constructed and ordered hierarchically. For Anderson, both ‘the Chinese’ and ‘Chinatown’ were constructed by Europeans in opposition to the categories of ‘white’ and ‘Western.’ Anderson also relies heavily on the theoretical work of Antonio Gramsci, particularly his concept of cultural hegemony, wherein race is the “most effective unifying concept in the making and extension of European global hegemony.”<sup>19</sup> In this interpretation, constructed racial identities are not only imposed, but “those on the receiving end of identity classifications come to live within the paradigm fashioned by their oppressors and define their own identities accordingly.”<sup>20</sup>

One problem with the notion of hegemony as Anderson uses it is that she homogenizes ‘white’ (a category which includes “politicians, bureaucrats, owners of capital, labour unions, judges, police” as well as workers), and equates ‘white’ with “the ‘ruling’ sector.”<sup>21</sup> A second difficulty with attributing the construction of racial categories to hegemonic racial discourse is that it does not allow for the possibility of

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<sup>18</sup> Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

resistance from within the hegemonic framework of racism. In *Vancouver's Chinatown*, then, the hegemonic racial discourse produced by 'white British Columbians' becomes an essentialist and monolithic component of the category of race. This suggests the imposition of racial oppression from a dominant group onto a subordinate group, a unidirectional and homogenous hierarchical exercise of power. This conception of power seems less accurate than the more complex process which Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*. There, he describes power relations as defining "innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of an at least temporary inversion of the power relations."<sup>22</sup>

Hegemony, as employed by Anderson, negates the possibility of explaining power in these terms. This chapter seeks to deconstruct the notion of hegemony, to better understand the complexity of identity in Vancouver's Chinatown in the 1920s and 30s.

### ***'Chinese Canadian' (as distinct from 'Chinese in Canada')***

By the 1930s, Vancouver had a well established Chinatown, and in the province of British Columbia, there was a total Asian population (including the designations of Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, and Other) estimated at over fifty thousand.<sup>23</sup> The Chinese population in Vancouver in 1931 was reported to be 13 000.<sup>24</sup> Countering the outflow of Chinese back to China as a result of exclusion and the Depression, many

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<sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 27.

<sup>23</sup> Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 170—1.

<sup>24</sup> Ng, *The Chinese*, 16. This number for Vancouver constitutes about half of the total Chinese population in the province of British Columbia.

Chinese moved into Vancouver from the interior regions of British Columbia. Despite this localized demographic movement, the virtual end of immigration following the 1923 Act actually led to a transition from a community characterized by transience to one that was markedly more stable and well defined.

In response to racial oppression, Chinese organizations “intensif[ied] their collective endeavours to fend for themselves.”<sup>25</sup> Several regional associations reorganized themselves as national bodies, and Chinese language schools and recreational societies flourished during this period. Chinese nationalism was also on the rise in Vancouver because of events that were occurring in China. In 1927, the Kuomintang came to power and formed the Nanjing government, advocating Chinese national unity, national dignity, and national pride. Links to the Old World were strong, and the Chinese in Vancouver were heavily involved in relief efforts. Thus, Chinese consciousness in Vancouver during the interwar period was shaped by Old World politics as well as by Canadian discrimination in the form of social, spatial, economic, and political confinement. This period was characterized by a genesis of community identity, of self reflection and self definition as both Chinese and Canadian.

Evidence of these stirrings of a Chinese Canadian consciousness can be identified in the history of the Chinese associations. In addition to reorganization on a national level, the C.B.A. began to open itself to the wider community in Vancouver in the 1930s. According to Foon Sien Wong, this shift was motivated by the belief that “discrimination was partly our own fault because we [did] not publicize our community... then we

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

opened our doors to the newspaper men and publicize the affairs of the Chinese community. This led to a better relation with the Canadian public.”<sup>26</sup> Trained as a lawyer in Vancouver and Chicago but unable to practice in Canada because of his race, Wong was nonetheless an influential voice in municipal government, the Chinatown community, the courts, and the media during the interwar years.<sup>27</sup> Wong was most influential in the 1940s and 50s, when he became president of the Chinese Benevolent Association in Vancouver, and his political career as a whole was marked by two major successes. These were his campaigns for enfranchisement with the Provincial Government between 1945 and 1947, and his campaigns to liberalize federal immigration laws starting in 1949. However, Foon Sien Wong’s career as an activist began well before the 1940s. During the interwar period, Wong and the Chinese Benevolent Association were instrumental in the project of creating a respectable public

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<sup>26</sup> UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 12 File 8, William E. Willmott, “Interview with Foon Sien, 22 May 1961.”

<sup>27</sup> Foon Sien Wong was unable to practice in Canada because in order to practice, he would have had to have membership in a professional association. The first requirement for membership in these associations (including law, accounting, and pharmacy) was that the individual had to be a British subject or Canadian National. Foon Sien Wong was born in China, and therefore considered a Chinese National, and an Alien in Canada until the Canadian Citizenship Act was passed in 1947. In 1910, Canadian citizenship was defined under the Immigration Act to differentiate domiciled British subjects from non-domiciled. The 1921 Canadian Nationals Act again declared a separate status for domiciled British subjects as well as their non-domiciled wives and families as Canadian nationals. Both of these statuses were amalgamated into a single designation of citizenship in the 1946 Canadian Citizenship Act. However, the Chinese in British Columbia were excluded from the 1910 and 1921 Acts for two reasons. First, in 1874, the British Columbia government disenfranchised all “Chinamen,” thus restricting these individuals from citizenship rights. Second, during the early twentieth century, the Chinese government deemed all Chinese, including those born and/or residing outside of the mother country, to be Chinese Nationals, a status that was maintained by Canadian government officials and policy makers. See Valerie Knowles, *Forging our Legacy: Canadian Citizenship and Immigration 1900-1977* (Ottawa: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000) and Larry Wong, “The Life and Times of Foon Sien” in *British Columbia History* 38:3 (2005): 6-8.

image of Chinatown and its residents. Some of the most explicit articulations of this image and its associated identity were apparent in the Golden Jubilee exhibits in 1936. the struggle of the Chinese Canadian community to promote a respectable civic identity in the city of Vancouver in the 1930s. This was a highly gendered process, and one key aspect of this drive towards respectability was the representation of Chinese women as the epitome of traditional Western notions of femininity, capable of producing respectable and morally sound citizens for Canadian society.

***“Little Flower[s] of China Over the Seas”<sup>28</sup>***

The Chinese Jubilee Queen was at the center of attention in both the parade and opening ceremonies for the Chinese Carnival Village. Her position in the limelight during the Jubilee parallels the central position of Chinese women in the broader project of creating a respectable public image of Chinatown and its residents. As Joan Sangster has demonstrated, starting in the interwar period and “multiplying at a furious pace” in the postwar years in Canada, beauty contests provided a forum for expressions of identity, community, and pride.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, while these contests allowed for a certain degree of empowerment, Sangster argues that “at their heart, [they] were still disciplinary cultural practices that reproduced hegemonic relations of class, race, and gender subordination.”<sup>30</sup> The Chinese Jubilee Beauty Pageant may have reinforced

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<sup>28</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, 613-G-1 File 2, newspaper clippings, “Chinese Queen” (1936).

<sup>29</sup> Joan Sangster, “‘Queen of the Picket Line’: Beauty Contests in the Post-World War II Canadian Labor Movement, 1945-1970” *Labour: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas*, 5:4 (2008): 83; 85.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

gender and class subordination, it also served to link racial identity with the notion of respectability. The Pageant was a crucial component of both the Carnival as well as the broader project initiated by the leadership of the Chinese Benevolent Association to promote a respectable image of the Chinese community in Vancouver. One of the more tyrannical intentions of the 1923 Immigration Act was to prevent women from emigrating in order to discourage family life, and thus deter permanent settlement and natural increase. The women who were already in Vancouver, then, constituted a precious resource for the Chinese community. During the late 1930s, these women were presented to the public through exhibitions like the Jubilee Beauty Pageant and in the media as epitomizing Western ideals of femininity while retaining a distinctly Chinese identity.

As Yuen-Fong Woon has shown, the experiences of Chinese women in British Columbia were heavily influenced by Canadian immigration policies for almost a century. The head tax was first imposed on Chinese immigrants in 1885, with the intention of severing the flow of Chinese labourers and their families into Canada. The tax was increased over years so as to become prohibitive to the majority of potential immigrants by the early twentieth century, and culminated in the virtual exclusion of Chinese immigration with the 1923 Immigration Act. When the Act was repealed in 1947, restrictions were put in place so that only Canadian citizens could bring their wives and children into the country. As a result of longstanding and institutionalized anti-Oriental discrimination, the number of Chinese residents in Canada who had obtained citizenship were few, and the new immigration policy had a limited effect.

Three years after the repeal of the Act, immigration from China to Canada was effectively cut off, when relations between the two nations soured over the outbreak of the Korean War. For the next two decades, Canadian immigration policy towards ethnic Chinese migrants gradually became less discriminatory, while China's restrictions on emigration became more severe. In 1967, major revisions to the Canadian immigration Act finally removed racial bias as grounds for eligibility; however, China's restrictions on emigration were not lifted until more than a decade later.<sup>31</sup> Woon argues that this century of continuous restrictive immigration policies in conjunction with "patriarchal tradition in South China, British Columbia's frontier conditions, [and] white racism combined to keep Chinese wives a small minority in Canada until the late 1940s."<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, women were present in British Columbia from at least the 1860s onward. These women, who came by both legal and illegal means, included the wives of merchants and labourers, domestic slaves, serving girls, and prostitutes.<sup>33</sup> By the 1930s, the number of female immigrants from China had decreased significantly, however the resident Chinese population in Vancouver now included an important new demographic – the native-born Chinese woman.

In July of 1936, the local Vancouver dailies announced that "Grace Kwan, British-Columbia born Chinese girl, who is called "Little Flower of China over the Seas," has

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<sup>31</sup> For a comprehensive historical overview of Canadian immigration policy, see Ninette Kelley, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> Yuen-Fong Woon, "Between South China and British Columbia: Life Trajectories of Chinese Women" *BC Studies* 156 (Winter 2007/8): 84-85.

<sup>33</sup> For more on the Chinese women who immigrated to Canada in the period between 1860 and 1947, *Ibid.*, 86-93.

been elected as the Chinese Jubilee Queen.”<sup>34</sup> Kwan was then 18-years old, the daughter of the Reverend and Mrs. Y.N. Kwan, and a graduate of Fairview High School of Commerce.<sup>35</sup> Kwan was in the limelight repeatedly over the course of the Jubilee celebrations. After her coronation, she participated in the opening parade, and then accompanied the Mayor of Vancouver in the official opening and inspection tour of the Chinese Village the following day.<sup>36</sup> Like the re-enactments performed by “British Columbia-born” Chinese that were part of the opening parade, the Chinese Jubilee Pageant showcased young, native-born Chinese.

After the 1923 Immigration Act was passed, the focus of reformers and activists interested in race relations, immigration, and citizenship turned to the native-born and/or raised Chinese in the province. One striking problem in the 1930s was the contradiction inherent in having restrictive immigration policy as well as limitations on political and economic rights imposed on the Chinese in Canada while at the same time allowing for the growth of a significant demographic of native-born and naturalized ethnic Chinese Canadian *citizens*. In other words, the rights of citizenship which, in theory, should apply to all Canadians were compromised because of concurrently existing discriminatory laws.<sup>37</sup> As Timothy Stanley has argued, the Chinese Canadian

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<sup>34</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, 613-G-1 File 2, newspaper clipping, “Chinese Queen,” July 1936.

<sup>35</sup> Fairview High School of Commerce was located at 1540 West Broadway at Granville Street, and in operation between 1918 – 1963.

<sup>36</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, 613-G-1 File 2, newspaper clipping, “In the Chinese Village,” July 1936.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, UBCSC, Angus Family Fonds, Box 3 File 4, Henry Forbes Angus, “Underprivileged Canadians” in *Queen’s Quarterly* (Summer 1931): 445-460; UBCSC, Angus Family Fonds, Box 3 File 8, “Canadian Immigration: The Law and its Administration,” reprinted from *American Journal of International Law* (January 1934): 76-82; UBCSC, Angus Family Fonds, Box 3 File 12, “The Legal Status in



identity was more than just an amalgamation of Canadian and Chinese nationalism. This identity “articulated something completely new,” and, like all identities, the Chinese Canadian identity was “never fixed but, rather... continuously defined and redefined through processes of ascription and of self-definition.”<sup>38</sup> And so, a key aspect of the Jubilee celebrations was to portray the native-born Chinese *as* Chinese Canadians.

In addition to the Beauty Pageant and parade re-enactments, the events exhibiting the second generation also included a fashion show and a tea. These stage events of the Jubilee, particularly the fashion show “demonstrating the latest whims of Oriental feminine fancy,” appears to have stirred a keen public interest among Vancouverites in locally-born or resident Chinese women.<sup>39</sup> The public presence of Chinese women in Vancouver had been virtually non-existent until after the First World War. The influx of a number of prostitutes into Vancouver from China and Hong Kong starting in 1900 created the perception among many Vancouverites that “all Chinese women here were prostitutes and the native-born women were afraid to go out on the streets.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, when Chinese women, in particular, were put on public display during

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British Columbia of Residents of Oriental Race and their Descendants” in *The Legal Status of Aliens in Pacific Countries* (1937): 1-12; and, chapter 9, below.

<sup>38</sup> Timothy J. Stanley, ““By the Side of Other Canadians”: The Locally Born and the invention of Chinese Canadians,” *BC Studies* 156 (Winter 2007/8): 110; 109.

<sup>39</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, 613-G-1 File 2, pamphlet, “Vancouver Chinatown Golden Jubilee, 1886—1936” (1936).

<sup>40</sup> UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 12 File 8, William E. Willmott, “Conversation with Berching Ho on campus, 11 May 1961.”

the Jubilee, a general fascination developed among Vancouverites with “the charm, gracious manner and beauty of Chinese women and girls.”<sup>41</sup>

A growing curiosity among the public about these previously invisible fellow British Columbians inspired the publication of an extensive newspaper article written by Mamie Moloney that included excerpts from interviews with Chinese women. This article provides some insight into how Chinese women were both presented to and perceived by the public during the 1930s. The representation of Chinese women in Maloney’s article is multifaceted. Chinese women are constructed as specifically Chinese, but at the same time their domestic virtues are upheld as a positive influence, and well suited to Canadian society. Moloney commends the Chinese women of Vancouver for their “filial piety,” described as “part of the Chinese tradition of honouring their ancestors that two generations of Canadian ways has not obliterated.” Interestingly, this contrast between Chinese and Canadian “ways” espouses a form of family organization which includes extended relations and in-laws over the nuclear family structure. For Mrs. Edward B. Gung, “Canadian born Chinese wife of Dr. Gung who practices among his compatriots in Vancouver,” the tradition of wives living with their mothers-in-law “wasn’t so remarkable, just a different point of view.”<sup>42</sup>

Moloney goes on to describe Chinese weddings as “a mixture of both Occidental and Oriental customs,” and home-life as being “much like any Western ménage.” She points out that although most Chinese businesses are situated in Chinatown, many

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<sup>41</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, 613-G-1 File 2, pamphlet, “Vancouver Chinatown Golden Jubilee, 1886—1936” (1936).

<sup>42</sup> Mamie Maloney, “Mother-In-Law Trouble not Known in Chinese Families,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 2 September 1936.

homes are scattered throughout the city, and in the suburbs. Chinese homes, she declares admiringly, are furnished primarily in “the western manner” with an exotic “note of Chinese culture.” Chinese families eat western breakfasts and lunches, while dinners are “confined to Chinese dishes.” Even the physical body is described in an assimilative light. A Western diet is credited for physiological changes in the Chinese body, where “many have noticed how much bigger-boned and taller the second generation of Canadian Chinese have become.” Moloney also emphasizes the more superficial physical appearance of Chinese women, with detailed descriptions of the cut and material of “their native dress” in which “the slim, softly rounded figures” of “the Chinese girls are most attractive.” Although this is the traditional dress of the modern Chinese woman, Moloney is careful to point out that most of the Chinese women in Vancouver generally prefer western garb for everyday wear. Chinese women pass their leisure time “just as they do in Point Grey, Kitsilano, Shaughnessy, Grandview.” There are Chinese women’s church auxiliaries and Chinese Girl Guides. Chinese women apparently pattern their organizations after those of white women, “with the fostering of international friendship and goodwill between Canada and China, as its goal.”<sup>43</sup>

This emphasis on the “westernized” but still distinctly “Chinese” physical body, superficial appearance, and domestic life aligned Chinese women with traditional norms upheld by moral reformers. At the same time, the Chinese woman represented a distinct cultural identity. In 1937, as part of a relief effort for China, the Chinese Youths’ Association put on a benefit tea and fashion parade that was widely publicized in

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

mainstream media. Chinese women were once again put on display for the wider Canadian public, as exotic objects of beauty to be admired. The tea included song and dances, and a parade of “Chinese dress from the most ancient eras to the modern day,” to educate the Canadian public on Chinese culture and history. According to the Chinese interviewed for newspaper articles and the conclusions reached by journalists, these events were also successful in inspiring a sense of cultural pride and coherence within the Chinese community.<sup>44</sup> The image of Chinese women represented in the media and in public displays was one that construed these women as the epitome of traditional notions of femininity, capable of producing respectable and morally sound citizens for Canadian society.

### ***Conclusions, and an Introduction***

The Chinese Canadian identity that was presented to the public by the Chinatown community in the 1930s was shaped by developments in tourism and consumerism in British Columbia, as well as connections to China and the nationalist revolution. One of the most striking aspects of the politicization of the Chinese Canadian identity in this period was its gendered nature. Chinese women were put on display for the general public as emblematic of the virtues of both China and Canada. Chinese women were also represented as working women, but these representations were constructed to convey a sense of cultural pride and unity. Chinese women worked in

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<sup>44</sup> The Vancouver Sun, 23 November 1937; The Province, 23 November 1937; The News-Herald, 24 November 1937; The Vancouver Sun, 24 November 1937.

factories, fruit stores, beauty culture and dressmaking – all respectable occupations.<sup>45</sup> But the pride of Vancouver’s Chinese community were its educated women, doctors, nurses, teachers and other professionals, many of whom graduated from the University of British Columbia, and most of whom returned to China to work, as opportunities within Canada were limited. Women like Myrtle Hosan, “daughter of a pioneer Chinese family in Vancouver,” who became head of the department of statistics in China with the Nanking government, and Victoria Chung, who was born in British Columbia and worked in China as a medical doctor, were publicly lauded by the media and admired by Chinese and white Vancouverites alike.<sup>46</sup>

As several scholars of have convincingly argued, the first-generation migrants from China to Canada identified themselves very differently from the native-born generation.<sup>47</sup> Second generation, Canadian-born ethnic Chinese came of age during the interwar period in significant (though limited) numbers. These locally born Chinese population remained a “tiny” number in relation to the number of overseas born Chinese in Canada, but “as a group... had relatively strong social and cultural capital as it was overwhelmingly made up of people from merchant households.”<sup>48</sup> While the first-generation maintained ties to China, and understood themselves as well as the locally-born generation as *Huaren* (“Chinese”), the second generation aligned themselves more

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<sup>45</sup> For a more detailed treatment of Chinese working women, see Tamara Adilman, “A Preliminary Sketch of Chinese Women and Work in British Columbia, 1858—1950” in *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992).

<sup>46</sup> The Vancouver Sun, 2 September 1936.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Stanley, “By the Side,” 122-126; 129-139; and Ng, *The Chinese*, 40-59.

<sup>48</sup> Stanley, “By the Side,” 117.

closely with the *Huáqiáo* identity. Although the term “Chinese Canadian” did not come into common parlance in Chinese language circles until the 1940s, this identity was articulated in English beginning in the 1920s. The birth of the Chinese Canadian identity was directly linked to the emergence of a generation of locally born Chinese, and came into being in the context of heavy racial discrimination and oppression.

## **Chapter 8 ~ “Within the Four Seas, All are Brothers”<sup>1</sup>: Ethnicity, Indigenism, and the Interwar Rhetoric of Rights**

Foon Sien Wong died in 1971 after a long and committed career to civil and human rights activism in Canada. His funeral was one of the largest that Vancouver’s Chinatown had ever witnessed. In 2008, Foon Sien Wong was designated a National Historic Person by the Canadian government for his contributions towards social justice. Wong is best remembered for his work in the late 1940s and 50s as president of the Chinese Benevolent Association (C.B.A.) and as an active member of various civil and human rights organizations. In public memory, he is particularly notable for his campaign to liberalize Chinese Immigration laws after the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1947.<sup>2</sup> However, as his early career as a translator, cultural mediator, and liaison officer demonstrates, Wong was also a central actor in advocating for rights during the interwar period.

This chapter examines the rhetoric of rights articulated by social activists and intellectuals in Vancouver prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, and their subsequent contributions to the human rights movement in Canada. A common equality

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<sup>1</sup> University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBCSC), Thomas Moore Whaun papers, Box 1, File 3, “A Memorandum to the Progressive Conservative Party” c. 1960.

<sup>2</sup>< [http://www.pc.gc.ca/culture/ppa-ahp/itm3-/page01\\_e.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/culture/ppa-ahp/itm3-/page01_e.asp)> accessed June 2010; See also UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 12 File 8; and UBCSC, Foon Sien Wong fonds. Over the course of his lifetime, Wong was an active member of the Wong Kung Har Society, the Chinese Canadian Citizens Association, the Chinese Trade Workers Association, the Vancouver Civic Association, the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews and the Vancouver Citizenship Council.

rights rhetoric, based on assumptions of racial essentialism and difference, was being produced in multiple sites. This commonality was a result of interconnections between local circumstances and struggles, and broader social movements. The analysis is divided into three sections. The first examines the rhetoric produced by social activists Foon Sien Wong and Thomas Moore Whaun; the second part looks at examines the rhetoric produced by Andrew Paull and the leadership of the Native Brotherhood; and the final section of this chapter the rhetoric produced by H.F. Angus (University of British Columbia) and Hugh Wesley Dobson (United Church of Canada) for both a national and an international audience. In one sense, while the late interwar period marks the common origin of modern rights rhetoric in Canada, it also reveals a parallel turning point in the history of race in Canada. The racial categories of Oriental and Indian both originated as discursive tools of colonial oppression. In the interwar period, these categories were both being redefined to connote a political identity for the purpose of attaining certain rights and privileges within the Canadian nation.

My main argument here is twofold. First, the Oriental was politicized and redefined as Chinese Canadian (and, as Japanese or Sikh or Hindu Canadian), representative of “the ethnic minority” or “the Other.”<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the category of Indian – by virtue of its patriarchal relationship with the dominant figure of the Pioneer in the public imagination, subjection under the Indian Act, and the ongoing campaign to assert an Aboriginal identity, rights and land title – constituted the basis for a separate

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the origins and an analysis of the term and meaning of “Chinese Canadian,” see Timothy J. Stanley, ““By the Side of Other Canadians”: The Locally Born and the Invention of Chinese Canadians” in *BC Studies* 156 (Winter 2007/08): 109-139. See, also, chapter 7, above.



discussion, one that rejected the notion of Canadian citizenship as a justification for rights. Secondly, these racial categories became one of the bases of Canadian human rights discourse in the postwar era. Most interpretations of the development of a modern rhetoric of ethnic or race rights in Canada tend to point to the Second World War and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights as the inception point.<sup>4</sup> While the focus on how these major international events influenced the Canadian context is both accurate and important, this chapter examines transnational connections in Canada that preceded the war, and their contribution to the early development of rights rhetoric and activism.<sup>5</sup>

### ***The Rights of Ethnicity: Foon Sien Wong and Thomas Moore Whaun***

In his introduction to *Canada's Rights Revolution*, Dominique Clément asks the question, “[t]o what degree can rights discourse promote social change?” For Clément, “[p]art of the answer lies in studying how activists used human rights principles to identify problems in their community and guide their ideas and strategies for change.”<sup>6</sup> This section seeks to do just that, in a particular time and place. Problems that arise out of social conflicts are inherent to human rights discourse, and provide a concrete

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Dominique Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution: Social movements and Social Change, 1937-1982* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 41-55. See also Ross Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance: Canadian Human Rights Activists, 1930-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 196-242; Michael Ignatieff, *The Rights Revolution* (Toronto: Anasi, 2000), 42-50; and Evelyn Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada* (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1982), 43. See, also, chapter 1, above.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 1, footnote 13, above.

<sup>6</sup> Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution*, 5.

narrative to which abstract concepts of rights may be anchored. As chapters six and seven of this thesis have demonstrated, Foon Sien Wong was active in constructing a respectable representation of the Chinese in Canada and in agitating for social justice in the 1930s. What is important here, however, is to recognize that Wong was able to bring about real legislative change after the Second World War for two reasons, both of which find their roots in the interwar period. First, the Chinese community in Vancouver was politicized and consolidated during the interwar years such that they were able to exercise some influence *as* Chinese Canadians in provincial and federal politics. And secondly, it was during these years that Foon Sien Wong established himself as a political activist and spokesperson for this nascent Chinese Canadian community.

Although less celebrated in historical memory than Foon Sien Wong, Thomas Moore Whaun was probably the most prominent political activist in Vancouver's Chinese community during the interwar period. Whaun was a newspaperman, whose career as an activist was most notable for his campaign against the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act. Both Wong and Whaun were born in China but moved to Vancouver at a young age. Both received university degrees from the University of British Columbia, and both were involved in local, national, and international campaigns for social justice. In the 1920s and 30s, both Wong and Whaun found themselves in the novel position of being Canadian-raised and educated professionals who were politically active but disenfranchised on the basis of their race. They drew from a tradition of trans-national migration out of China that spanned the globe by the late nineteenth century – the *huáqiáo* (“sojourning Chinese”) nationalist tradition – to advocate inclusion in the

Canadian nation. This combination, of local experience and transnational perspective, gave rise to a rhetoric of rights that simultaneously demanded an end to discrimination based on race or ethnicity while asserting specific rights for the Chinese in Canada that were defined by a racial or ethnic distinction. In other words, this rhetoric of rights imagined Canada as a nation capable of encompassing racial or ethnic difference.

Foon Sien Wong's conception of human rights derived from personal experience as well as his interpretation of the history of the Chinese in Canada. Wong was born in China around the turn of the century, and was living in Cumberland, British Columbia with his family by 1910. His father was a merchant, and ran a successful general store. Wong finished high school in Cumberland, and then moved to Vancouver to study law at the University of British Columbia. Wong successfully pursued a career within the judicial system despite the fact that he was disenfranchised in Canada, and thus ineligible for the membership in professional associations required to practice law. In the early 1920s he landed his first job as official court interpreter for the Province of British Columbia. His career included such cases as the infamous 1924 trial of Foon Sing Wong for the murder of Janet Smith.<sup>7</sup> In the 1930s, Foon Sien Wong began working for the Chinese Benevolent Association in various capacities. He held the position of secretary for several years, and was appointed publicity agent for the Chinese

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<sup>7</sup> For more on the case of Wong Foon Sing and Janet Smith, see Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 141; Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 44.

Benevolent Association in 1937. He remained within the leadership of the C.B.A., serving as president in 1948 until his retirement in 1959.<sup>8</sup>

This brief biographical sketch provides the context for Wong's interpretation of the history of the Chinese in British Columbia, and its corresponding history of social activism. This history began in the mid-nineteenth century, when Victoria was the hub of the Chinese community and "a lot of Chinese had gold claims" along the Cariboo Gold Rush trail, between Yale and Barkerville.<sup>9</sup> For Wong, however, rights advocacy for the Chinese in Canada began with the Chinese Benevolent Association and the 1906 Chinatown riots. As Wong related in a 1961 interview:

...the Chinese were brought over [to Canada in the 1880s] on contract to build the railroad, and the understanding was that they would return to China at the company's expense. But when the Chinese finished the job, the company renigged [*sic*] on the agreement, refuse to take them back. The Canadian Government said they had no responsibility, and the same with the B.C. government. So the Chinese were stuck – as one Canadian newspaper said at the time, "with the smell of the grease still about them and nothing to eat." So there was a lot of unemployment and the C.B.A start to help those unemployed. At

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<sup>8</sup> UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection Box 12 File 8, William E. Willmott, "Interview with Foon Sien," 22 May 1961; and UBCSC, Foon Sien Wong fonds, Boxes 1 & 3, Scrapbooks. See also Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 75-77.

<sup>9</sup> UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 12 File 8, William E. Willmott, "Interview with Foon Sien," 22 May 1961.

first it started just as handing out food, circulate from one store to another, with no other organization, no building. That was 1889.<sup>10</sup>

Then, in 1896, Chinatown was burned to the ground, and its inhabitants moved across Hastings Street into the red light district. Unemployment was rampant among Chinese labourers in this period, and the C.B.A. quickly became an employment agency. In 1906, there was a race riot in Chinatown. In response to the riots, the C.B.A. incorporated under the provincial laws of British Columbia, and engaged in a legal battle with the federal government, suing for \$100 000 in damages to Chinatown properties. This was the first legal action by the C.B.A. that was a clear declaration of the right to not be discriminated against in Canada on the basis of race.<sup>11</sup>

In Wong's interpretation, the C.B.A. (and his own longstanding involvement in the organization) was a vehicle for social activism and change. In 1923, when the Chinese Immigration Act went into effect, a permanent Chinese community had begun to form based on segregation, isolationism, and taciturnity – what Foon Sien Wong referred to as the "Dark Ages."<sup>12</sup> Not only were welfare and employment dealt with internally, but the C.B.A. also functioned as government and judiciary, complete with judge and jury. Yet, it was also during this period that the leadership of the Chinese Benevolent Association, with Wong as secretary, recognized the need to heighten the community's profile within the Canadian state by publicizing Chinatown through local

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<sup>10</sup> UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 12 File 8, William E. Willmot, "Interview with Foon Sien," 22 May 1961.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> See chapter 7, above.

English language newspapers, public exhibitions, and marketing Chinatown as a tourist destination. Once “better relations” had been established with “the Canadian public” – i.e. / by the postwar period – Wong was able to campaign successfully for the franchise and less stringent immigration policy.<sup>13</sup>

Wong’s activism was based on a concept of humanity that was fundamental to the ideologies of both Christian Social Gospel as well as Confucianism. In 1949, Wong began his annual trips to Ottawa to campaign for easing immigration and citizenship restrictions against the Chinese. This process was incremental, and one that Wong continued for eleven years, until his retirement. In 1950, Wong’s campaign saw some results in three changes that were made to immigration policy. First, the age for children of Canadian residents allowed to be admitted into Canada from China was raised from nineteen to twenty-one years. Second, women were allowed to bring their husbands and children over from China based on the premise that men were then allowed to bring their wives and children into the country. And third, Chinese Canadian women who married Chinese men would not lose their citizenship. As Wong explains in hindsight, even though these changes in relation to women “didn’t affect very many people,” he wanted “to establish [a] principle of equality.”<sup>14</sup> This principle of equality was one that appears in Wong’s rhetoric prior to the war, and which also provided the basis for his campaign for immigration and citizenship rights in the postwar era.

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<sup>13</sup> UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 12 File 8, William E. Willmott, “Interview with Foon Sien,” 22 May 1961.

<sup>14</sup> UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 12 File 8, William E. Willmott, “Interview with Foon Sien,” 22 May 1961.

Wong's social activism in the postwar era had close ties to two key developments of the interwar period – the publicizing of a respectable Chinese community and a principle of equality based on a Confucian/Social Gospel conception of humanity. The latter, of course, had roots in earlier times, but Wong's version was one that was shaped by the context of the Great Depression, and thus characterized by a belief in universal rights. In 1945, Wong worked alongside Thomas Moore Whaun at the offices of the Chinese language newspaper *Xin Minguo Bao* (*The New Republic Chinese Daily*) and in the national campaign for the enfranchisement of Chinese Canadians. Wong's work with Whaun in this period highlights a third (and related) key interwar development: the transnational connections that characterized rights advocacy in British Columbia prior to the Second World War. As Christopher MacLennan has shown, the legislation of human rights in the Canadian Bill of Rights was a result of both domestic and international developments. According to MacLennan, the international influence manifested in an expression of "the belief of universality."<sup>15</sup> This fundamental premise of universalism and the accompanying recognition that human rights were an international concern were enshrined in modern rights rhetoric, in the United Nations Charter of Rights and Freedoms. For early social activists like Wong and Whaun, a transnational perspective was central their political activity well before the 1940s. The campaigns they engaged in during the interwar period were defined by a transnational

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<sup>15</sup> Christopher MacLennan, *Toward the Charter: Canadians and the Demand for a National Bill of Rights* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 4; 60-82.

perspective that resulted from close connections between the Chinese communities in Vancouver to what was happening politically in China.

The beginning of the twentieth century marked the end of dynastic rule and imperial intrusion, and the uneasy birth of the Republic of China. The revolution led by Sun Yat-sen was intended as a declaration of solidarity and autonomy, and a rejection of both monarchical and foreign control. The 1920s and 30s were decades of intense political conflict in this part of the world. In 1925, the revolutionary leadership passed from Sun Yat-sen to Chiang Kai-shek. Two years later, in 1927, the tenuous alliance between the Kuomintang (K.M.T.) and the Communist Party of China (C.P.C.) dissolved, which instigated a civil conflict that would last for over two decades. This struggle for power between the K.M.T. and the C.P.C. was further complicated by the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, which lasted from 1931 until the end of the Second World War. The *Xin Minguo Bao* was well known as an organ of the K.M.T.<sup>16</sup> But, this project was not about partisan politics for either Wong and Whaun – neither of them were members of the K.M.T. or the C.P.C. Wong was a staunch supporter of the Liberal party of Canada, and Whaun asserted a non-partisan stance throughout his life. Looking back in the 1960s and 70s, both men asserted that they had deviated from their declared political positions only once – in support of Conservative Douglas Jung’s successful run for Member of Parliament for Vancouver Central in 1957.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For more on the Kuomintang in Vancouver and the Chinese Press in Vancouver in the postwar period, see Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*, 7; 24; 49-50; 76; 85-88; 104.

<sup>17</sup> UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 12 File 8, William E. Willmott, “Interview with Foon Sien,” 22 May 1961; UBCSC, Foon Sien Wong fonds, Box 1, Scrapbook; Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*, 75-77; UBCSC,



What motivated men like Whaun and Wong to engage in political activism during the interwar period, then, was not primarily party loyalty or partisan politics. As Wing Chung Ng has argued, the K.M.T.'s rise to power in the 1920s, followed by the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in the 1930s, gave rise to a culture of nationalist-fueled "China-bound activities" in Vancouver.<sup>18</sup> This expression of overseas support, which was recognized by the K.M.T. in China as playing a significant role in the republican revolution, provided the Chinese community in Vancouver with a sense of political empowerment. As Ng asserts, the Chinese in Vancouver, "[f]rom a position of relative powerlessness in Canada... show[ed] what they could do from afar when their native country was in crisis."<sup>19</sup> Thomas Moore Whaun, who was born in China, moved to Canada in 1907 at the age of fourteen, and lived in West Vancouver (and not in Chinatown) for much of his adult life, offered a parallel interpretation of the psychological connection between China and Canada. As Whaun explains,

...[m]ost Chinese came to Canada to better their livelihood. But some of us are here to acquire a modern education to help China to regain her independence, for our nation had a series of unspeakable humiliations and military defeats by the West and Japan in the last century. Such disasters made us lose our faith in five thousand years of our cherished civilization. Consequently, we were afflicted by an inferiority complex. I even anglicized my name from Wong Tung Mow to

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Thomas Moore Whaun Papers, Box 1 File 8, Letter to Cousin Asta, 19 March 1958; and Box 1 File 2, "An Autobiographical Sketch," 17 November 1972.

<sup>18</sup> Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

Tom Moore Whaun to mollify my psyche and frustration! Thus, every thinking Chinese was obsessed in seeking a solution of how to rejuvenate the motherland.<sup>20</sup>

For Chinese living in Vancouver, the drive to “rejuvenate the motherland” manifested in a redefinition of Chinese in nationalistic terms, in accordance with the transformative events occurring in China. However, this redefinition was also localized, in the consolidation and popularizing of a specifically Chinese Canadian identity, and the accompanying political agitation for citizenship and immigration rights that followed. In essence, Chinese “nationalism” in Vancouver manifested as an ethnic identity that was not bound to a specific nation-state, wherein the rights of the Chinese in Canada were based on a nascent conception of “universal human rights.”<sup>21</sup>

For both Wong and Whaun, the transnational scope of their activism can be traced as far back as their experiences as students at the University of British Columbia. Whaun graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of British Columbia in 1927, and worked as a newspaper journalist, editor, and manager for fifty years in Vancouver, between 1923 and 1973. Like Wong, Whaun was a longtime resident of Vancouver. However, of the 78 years he lived in Canada, he spent less than half as a

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<sup>20</sup> UBCSC, Thomas Moore Whaun Papers, Box 1 File 2, “An Autobiographical Sketch,” 17 November 1972.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of “Chineseness” (or, an assertion of “Chinese” as a primary signifier of identity) as implying “nationality/ethnicity,” see Stanley, “By the Side,” 109-110. For a discussion of “universal human rights” see Kallen, *Ethnicity and Human Rights*, 14; MacLennan, *Towards the Charter*, 61-69; Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance*, 376-377; and Maxwell Yalden, *Transforming Rights: Reflections from the Front Lines* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 117-118. In essence, these scholars agree that one fundamental premise of modern (i.e., post 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights) rights ideology is that of the universality of certain basic rights by virtue of one’s humanity.

Canadian citizen.<sup>22</sup> During the anti-immigration law campaigns, then, Whaun, along with most of his Chinese Canadian contemporaries, operated as aliens or illegal immigrants for whom formal political avenues of protest were closed. These individuals, like many politically marginalized groups, resisted through indirect forms.<sup>23</sup> In the case of the anti-immigration law and enfranchisement campaigns in Vancouver, this resistance bypassed national legislation and state oppression by looking to the international arena. In other words, a transnational community provided ideological, strategical, and organizational direction, material support, as well as the human relations and connections that were vital to the success of these campaigns.

This “sojourner” community of “diverse, mobile, and global Canadians” included illegal immigrants and labourers, but also a small but influential contingent pioneered by Wong and Whaun – the scholars.<sup>24</sup> Despite being one of the four categories that were exempt from exclusion under the 1923, the number of Chinese university students in Canada was minuscule even by the end of the 1930s.<sup>25</sup> By the mid-1930s, only a handful of Chinese students had attended the University of British Columbia, including Foon Sien Wong, and only eleven of these had graduated, including Thomas Moore Whaun. These early students opened the doors for a new generation of native-born, Western-

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<sup>22</sup> UBCSC, Thomas Moore Whaun papers, Box 1 File 1, Various Correspondences with H.L. Keenleyside, 1949-1950. Whaun was granted citizenship in 1950.

<sup>23</sup> Lisa Rose Mar, “Beyond Being Others: Chinese Canadian as National History” in *BC Studies* 156 (Winter 2007/08), 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-24.

<sup>25</sup> Canada, Acts of the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, *An Act Respecting Chinese Immigration: Chinese Immigration Act 1923, passed in the session held in the thirteenth and fourteenth years of the reign of His Majesty King George V.* Vol. 1. Public General Acts (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1923), 3.

educated, middle-class Chinese Canadians who would form the core of the social justice movements in the post-war period. By the late 1950s, the Chinese student population at the University of British Columbia had risen to well over 200, and the Chinese Varsity Club became a hub of social and political activity for Canadian-born Chinese students.<sup>26</sup>

Even though the Chinese Varsity Club of the University of British Columbia was not recognized as an official student club by the Alma Mater Society until 1956, Chinese students in Vancouver began to organize themselves by the 1930s. In the interwar period, the Varsity Club, alternatively called the Chinese Students' Association or the University Students' Association, often recruited both high school and university students, but the club was led by the university contingent, and supported by the Chinese Consul for Western Canada. In 1931, the Vancouver Chinese High School and University Students' Association circulated its second annual edition of *Forward*, an English language publication dedicated to "a broader internationalism among all races."<sup>27</sup> The life-span of the publication was short-lived, but provides some insight into transnational community of which Wong and Whaun were a part, and the transnational perspective which informed their social activism in Vancouver.

The intention of this publication, according to its editor-in-chief, Fred H. Yew Pon, was twofold: first, to engender internationalism but, second, to remind "all students in Greater Vancouver and in other parts of Canada, as well as other countries" of "those principles of right living and thinking" that were "bound to be a vital source in

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<sup>26</sup> Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver*, 47.

<sup>27</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, Add. Mss. 1108, 613-G-1 File 2, Fred H. Yew Pon, "Preface," in *Forward 2* (May 1931), 7.

obtaining the goodwill and respect of our Canadian and other friends.”<sup>28</sup> This was an expression of the *huáqiáo* (“sojourning Chinese”) nationalist tradition, and students were defined as “sojourners” regardless of the fact that many of them were Canadian born, or permanent residents.<sup>29</sup> But the *huáqiáo* tradition in this particular context also encouraged a rhetoric universal rights that engendered international goodwill and cooperation. Students were impelled to be “ambassadors,” to “bring about a better international and interracial understanding... since in these days democracy rules in most of the countries in the world and the people determine the affairs of the state.”<sup>30</sup>

The articles contained in this forty page publication included such titles as “Is Friendship Necessary to Mankind?” by Andrew Lam, in which he discusses the importance of international friendship; “A Plea For a Modification of Canada’s Most Unfair Chinese Immigration Restrictions” by Quene Yip; “Impressions of a Doctor” by Wong Tai Wai, a tirade on racism in Canada and the place of the second generation of Chinese; “China Among the Nations” by Thelma Y. Chong, in which she describes China as “a giant slumbering”; “The Student movement in China” by Buck S. Chong; “What of the Future” by Hilda Hellaby, which discusses the future of Canadian-born Chinese; “Trade Between Canada and the Orient” by Thomas H. Wong; and “Immigration and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> *Huáqiáo* nationalism constitutes a phenomenon that was widespread among the Chinese diaspora by the late nineteenth century. For more on *Huáqiáo* nationalism, see Ng, 13, 14, 17; Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1981), 118-127; and David T.H. Lee, *A History of the Chinese in Canada* (Taipei: Canada Free Press, 1967), 227-320.

<sup>30</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, Add. Mss. 1108, 613-G-1 File 2, Philip Y. Chu, “The Duties of the Chinese Students Abroad” in *Forward 2* (May 1931), 10.

Citizenship” by Fred H. Yew Pon, in which he sums up the purpose of the publication when he states:

China is slowly but surely awakening with the thousands of well-educated and in many cases brilliant young men and women students, who, in a great many cases, are educated in the Canadian schools and universities, and who, in many cases, are native-born in Canada. Some day these students, with their knowledge of both lands and races, will be the ambassadors of Canada’s good-will or bad-will accordingly as she chooses to give them the same rights and privileges that she accords to other aliens...<sup>31</sup>

While the publication also contained two articles relating to sports and recreation, its content heavily emphasized notions of reciprocal interracial/international influence, and promoted international cooperation and goodwill based on the idea of universal rights and the equality of the races.

The experience of being a “sojourner student” had a foundational influence on Whaun’s later career and activism in Vancouver. Despite the fact that the two publications that Whaun was affiliated with as public relations and advertising manager were both official organs of the Kuomintang, Whaun rejected strict adherence to any political ideology.<sup>32</sup> Declaring a “hate” for politics, and denying affiliation with any

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<sup>31</sup> VCA, Yip Family Fonds, Add. Mss. 1108, 613-G-1 File 2, *Forward 2* (May 1931), 22; 35.

<sup>32</sup> Whaun worked as advertising manager for the *Canada Morning News Daily*, whose offices were located at 288 E. Pender Street in Vancouver, from 1923 until 1929. He then worked as public relations and advertising manager for *The New Republic Chinese Daily (Xin Minguo Bao)*, whose offices were located at 531 Main Street, Vancouver, from 1933 until 1973. See UBCSC, Thomas Moore Whaun Papers, Letter to Hon. David Barret, 16 July 1976.

political party, he instead advocated an ideology of universal rights. Whaun celebrated the “intellectual freedom” he experienced in the 1920s at the University of British Columbia, where “communist card-carrying members” openly roamed about campus. He advocated self-determination, expressed in his mantra to “proclaim to the world in quiet dignity that you stand for no nonsense. Then it will respect your rights.”<sup>33</sup>

Working his way through college as a dishwasher, greengrocer, English teacher to new immigrants, foreman at Seaside Park, court and general interpreter, and finally as a public relations and advertising manager, Whaun remembers his education in Canada as being “a hell of a struggle,” characterized by “much indignity due to racial discrimination.”<sup>34</sup> It was out of this context of his early experiences with social, economic, and political discrimination in conjunction with an awareness of the political and economic possibilities of Canada that his work as a social activist began. As a student in the 1920s, Whaun was described as being “thoroughly versed in Chinese affairs” and was often “found explaining the situation in the Far East to a group of interested students” who were “indebted to him for a broader and truer understanding of China.”<sup>35</sup> Whaun’s long-standing career as an anti-racist activist was grounded in a transnational approach, and began with his campaign starting in 1923 against the Chinese Exclusion Act. From this point until his retirement in the 1970s, Whaun

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<sup>33</sup> UBCSC, Thomas Moore Whaun Papers, Box 1 File 8, Letter to Cousin Asta, 19 March 1958.

<sup>34</sup> UBCSC, Thomas Moore Whaun Papers, Box 1, File 2, “An Autobiographical Sketch” 17 November 1972.

<sup>35</sup> UBCSC, Thomas Moore Whaun Papers, Box 2 File 6, *The Totem* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Yearbook, 1927).

advocated “equality before the law” based on the Confucian tenet of universality, that “*within the four seas, all are brothers.*”<sup>36</sup>

In the parliamentary debates over 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, those who supported restricting immigration argued that the issue was primarily economic.<sup>37</sup> For many who identified as Chinese and were living in Vancouver, however, this Act was not only an economic, but also a political and moral issue. Resistance to exclusion in Canada was also a question of migration, tradition, and right, the core of *huáqiáo* nationalism.<sup>38</sup> In this interpretation, resistance to the 1923 Act, including Whaun’s letter writing campaign, represents one aspect of a movement to protect the right to maintain a “transnational migrant community.”<sup>39</sup> According to Lisa Rose Mar’s research, based primarily on two Chinese language newspapers (one of these being *Xin Minguo Bao*, where Whaun worked for forty years):

Canada’s imposition of anti-Chinese immigration laws between 1885 and 1947 incited universal opposition among Chinese Canadians. From their ancestral villages in Guangdong’s countryside to North America’s corridors of power, Chinese organized resistance to their exclusion. They mobilized resources in Canada, China, Hong Kong, and the United States, creating political influence

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<sup>36</sup> UBCSC, Thomas Moore Whaun papers, Box 1, File 3, “A Memorandum to the Progressive Conservative Party” c. 1960.

<sup>37</sup> Roy, *The Oriental Question*, 73.

<sup>38</sup> Mar, “Beyond Being Others,” 15-16.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.



by drawing together all the linkages between their Pacific world and Canada.<sup>40</sup>

The concept of a right to transnational migration, based on a longstanding history of global diaspora, inspired and unified resistance against restrictive immigration laws in Canada throughout the twentieth century. Thus, the transnational scope of this movement, with its underlying assumption of the right to transnational mobility, informed the beliefs, strategies, language, and intentions of local activists in Vancouver, including the protest led by Whaun against the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act and Wong's activism in connection with the Chinatown community in the 1930s.

### ***The Rights of Indigenism: Andrew Paull and the Native Brotherhood***

While Chinese Canadian activists developed a rhetoric of rights based on a transnational migratory identity, Aboriginal Canadian activists were starting to take a pan-Indian approach in their ideological and strategic direction during the interwar period. By the height of the American Indian Movement in the mid-1970s, this direction had matured into an assertion of indigenism, an identity based on the social construct of "the Indian." In 1982, indigenous rights in Canada became constitutional rights under section 35(1) of the *Canadian Constitution*, where the term "Aboriginal" is used to name Canadian indigenous peoples. In this section, "the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada" were "recognized and affirmed."<sup>41</sup> As such,

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>41</sup> Canada, *The Constitution Act*, Sec 35(1), 1982.

interpretation of indigenous rights was placed under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Canada. However, as section 35(1) clearly states, Aboriginal rights pre-existed the Constitution. The assertion of indigenous rights and land title during the treaty-making process in the 1870s, led by Chiefs like Poundmaker and Big Bear, shaped the completion of Confederation, and has occurred in a continuous manner for the extent of the existence of the Canadian nation.<sup>42</sup> Even so, the notion of a unified Indian identity which superseded national boundaries (both colonial as well as indigenous) as a basis for rights advocacy did not manifest until the early twentieth century. As Jacqueline Patricia O'Donnell has shown, the formation of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia in 1931 marked the beginning of a pan-Indian strategy and organization in the province.<sup>43</sup>

The first organized campaign advocating Aboriginal rights in British Columbia in the post-Confederation period was carried out by the Nisga'a in the 1890s. When members of a royal commission visited the Nass Valley in 1887 and told the Nisga'a that they did not have any legal rights to their lands, the Nisga'a responded with laughter and disbelief, followed quickly by anger.<sup>44</sup> The Nisga'a chiefs demanded a treaty recognizing their rights to a portion of their traditional territory, compensating them modestly for the remainder, and guaranteeing them certain powers of self-government.

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<sup>42</sup> For more on Poundmaker, Big Bear, and the Confederation process, see Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples From Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), 292-318.

<sup>43</sup> Jacqueline Patricia O'Donnell, "The Native Brotherhood of British Columbia 1931-1950 : A New Phase in Native Political Organization" (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1985), 41-57.

<sup>44</sup> Hamar Foster, "Honouring the Queen's Flag: A Legal and Historical Perspective on the Nisga'a Treaty" in *BC Studies* 120 (Winter 1998/99), 12.

When the commissioners said that such a treaty was out of the question, and that the law would not permit it, the chiefs were astonished. One of the Nisga'a who was present, Charles Russ, explained to the commissioners:

When they made the laws that you speak about, they had never been to see us ... I would like to ask, sirs, if there was one chief of the Naas present when that law was made, and whether they asked him to speak for the Naas people? ... You see these chiefs present laugh. We cannot believe the words we have heard, that the land was not acknowledged to be ours. We took the Queen's flag and laws to honour them. We never thought that when we did that she was taking the land away from us.<sup>45</sup>

This was the start of organized protest against the Canadian government in British Columbia, which coalesced around the assertion of Aboriginal rights and land title.<sup>46</sup>

In 1907, the Nisga'a Land Committee was formed, spearheaded by Charles Barton and Arthur Calder. The committee worked both independently and with other tribes with a single goal of settling the land question. When the Allied Tribes of British

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<sup>45</sup> British Columbia, "Papers Relating to the Commission appointed to enquire into the state and condition of the Indians of the North-West Coast of British Columbia," *British Columbia Sessional Papers* (1888), 432-433.

<sup>46</sup> The Nisga'a Final Agreement was signed in 2000, after over a century of agitation for Aboriginal rights and land title. This agreement was settled based on the 1973 Calder Decision in the Supreme Court of Canada, which constituted the first legal recognition of Aboriginal land rights in Canada and instigated the modern day treaty process. Modern day treaties since Calder include: the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement; the 1978 Northeastern Quebec Agreement; the 1992 Gwich'in Agreement; the 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement; the 1994 Sahtu Dene and Métis Agreement; and the 2000 Nisga'a Final Agreement. For more on the Nisga'a and modern day treaties, see, for example, J.R. Miller, *Lethal Legacy: Current Native Controversies in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004), 106-164; *BC Studies: The Nisga'a Treaty*, 120 (Winter 1998/99); and The Nisga'a Lisims Government Website, <http://www.nisgaalisims.ca/nisgaa-final-agreement>.

Columbia formed in 1916 under the leadership of Andrew Paull and Peter Kelley, they worked in concert with the Nisga'a Land Committee to have their claims for Aboriginal land title brought to the courts and recognized by the federal government.<sup>47</sup> In 1927, in response to twenty years of organized petitioning by the Nisga'a and the Allied Tribes, a parliamentary joint committee declared that no claim to land title in British Columbia had been established. That same year, Section 141 was added to the Indian Act, which prohibited "raising money and prosecuting claims to land or retaining a lawyer," thus effectively banning the pursuit of land claims and land title.<sup>48</sup> The Allied Tribes, whose main function was to raise money to pursue land claims and title, was disbanded. It was in this context of exclusion from juridical and political means of protest that the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia came into being.

When the Native Brotherhood was formed in 1931, general consensus among the leadership was that tribal affiliation (and inter-tribal conflict) and an exclusive focus on Aboriginal rights and land title had led to the failure and subsequent demise of the Allied Tribes. Accordingly, the Native Brotherhood adopted a different approach. First, for the initial five years of its existence, the Native Brotherhood focused heavily on establishing a broad membership base. Secondly, although Aboriginal rights and land

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<sup>47</sup> For a succinct history of the Allied Tribes of British Columbia as precursor to the Native Brotherhood, see O'Donnell, 30-31. Although the Allied Tribes were, technically, a province-wide organization in that it encompassed several Interior (Okanagan, Lake or Senjextee, Thompson River, Lillooet, Kootenay, Chilcotin, and Carrier) as well as Coastal (Nisga'a, Tsimshian, Gitskan, Haida, Bella Coola, Cowichan, and Stol'o) groups, there was no apparent cohesive strategy, and much fragmentation at the tribal level.

<sup>48</sup> Canada, Parliament of Canada, *Amendment to the Indian Act*, Section 141, 1927. See, also, Foster, "Honouring the Queen's Flag," 25; and idem, "We are Not O'Meara's Children: Law, Lawyers, and the First Campaign for Title in British Columbia, 1908-28" in Hamar Foster, Heather Raven, and Jeremy Webber, eds., *Let Right Be Done: Aboriginal Title, the Calder Case, and the Future of Indigenous Rights* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 71.

title remained a central goal of the organization, the leadership of the Brotherhood approached this goal with a view of social, economic, and political integration into the Canadian nation. This was a contradictory position: an integrationist approach which simultaneously asserted hereditary rights and therefore, in the conceptual world of the time, the preservation of racial distinctions. As such, the Native Brotherhood expanded their agenda to include advocacy for educational reform and economic provisions to support and encourage self-sufficiency among Aboriginal people in the province. And thirdly, in contrast to the narrow focus on specific land claims and the attachment to tribal loyalties that had limited earlier activism, the Brotherhood operated with the overarching goal of achieving social, political, and egalitarian rights within the Canadian nation for all Aboriginal Canadians while maintaining a distinct status based on an indigenous racial identity.<sup>49</sup> As O'Donnell has convincingly demonstrated, from its inception the leadership of this organization had clearly "recognized the need to subordinate tribal loyalties to create a new identity as Canadian Indians in order to change their minority status."<sup>50</sup>

The difficulty in the interwar period with this approach to identity-driven rights advocacy was a matter of historicity. The 1876 Indian Act, passed five years after British Columbia joined Canada, defined "Indian" in legal and political terms as a homogenous social category and identity for the first time. An identity based on an assumption of

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<sup>49</sup> Philip Drucker, *The Native Brotherhoods: Modern Inter-tribal Organizations on the Northwest Coast* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1958), 104-111; Canada, Parliament of Canada, *Minutes and Proceedings of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons to Revise the Indian Act* (Ottawa, 1946, 1947, 1948), 787, 833; and O'Donnell, "The Native Brotherhood," 52-54; 58.

<sup>50</sup> O'Donnell, "The Native Brotherhood," 72.

racial homogeneity and subordination was thus imposed on a large number of diverse linguistic, cultural, and political groups. As such, this forced status primarily connoted racism and colonial oppression, and not an identity. In other words, there was a discrepancy between the act of creating a racialized population through legislation in 1876 and the lived experiences of those individuals recognized as “Indians” by the Canadian government. Until the First World War, Aboriginal leadership in British Columbia tended to self-identify and represent themselves politically as members of individual tribes or nations, or as alliances of tribes or nations.<sup>51</sup> When the Native Brotherhood was created, the principle of racial solidarity was positioned as an ideological cornerstone of the organization. However, the construction of a unified Canadian indigenous identity was still in its nascent stages, complicating the argument for group rights. Yet, by the late-1940s, the Native Brotherhood was calling for the “maintenance” and “preservation” of “Indian identity,”<sup>52</sup> and in 1944, Andrew Paull founded the North American Indian Brotherhood, which was explicitly organized around a pan-Indian ideology.<sup>53</sup>

As I have shown in chapters four, five, and six of this thesis, the production of a common Indian identity from which to advocate for indigenous rights as well as integration within the Canadian nation occurred in British Columbia in the interwar

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 26-40.

<sup>52</sup> BCARS, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, 1939-1954, Box 2 File 2, British Columbia Native Publishing Company, *The Native Voice* (June 1950); and Ibid., (December 1946).

<sup>53</sup> BCARS, Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts, Box 2 File 2, North American Indian Brotherhood, Grand National Convention Call, 16 July 1945. See, also, Herbert Francis Dunlop, *Andy Paull: As I Knew Him and Understood His Times* (Vancouver: Standard Press, 1989), 216-219.

period through tourism, civic exhibitions, and the revival of Indian arts and crafts. These representations contributed to the construction of an Indian identity, which, in turn, provided the foundation for a pan-Indian approach to activism. The pan-Indian approach taken up by Paull and the leadership of the Allied Tribes, and then by the Native Brotherhood in the 1930s, was a precondition to the coalescence of organized activism in the post-war period, and a movement that had the ability to champion indigenous rights within the sphere of modern international law. As Sharon Venne has argued, indigenous peoples have historically been the *object* of international law rather than *subjects* since earliest contact, as embodied in the doctrine of discovery and the right to discover and claim “new” lands and people.<sup>54</sup> The ongoing struggle to assert indigenous right at an international level – in other words, to reposition indigenous people as subjects of international and treaty law – is now at the forefront of the Assembly of First Nations’ strategy.

The effectiveness of pan-Indianism as a means of protest in the second half of the twentieth century has been compromised by divisions among Aboriginal Canadians. As Howard Ramos has demonstrated through a quantitative study of Aboriginal protest in Canada between 1951 and 2000, there are three main factors that account for protest in this period. These are resource mobilization, political opportunity, and collective identity. According to Ramos’ findings, political opportunity is the prime motivator of protest activity, but resource mobilization is necessary to engage in protest when

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<sup>54</sup> Sharon Helen Venne, *Our Elders Understand our Rights: Evolving International Law Regarding Indigenous Rights* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1998), 10-16.

political opportunities are created. Further, Ramos asserts that resources as well as political opportunity “are largely allocated to specific local communities and status groups,” thus inhibiting what he terms “PanAboriginal” (i.e., pan-Indian) mobilization.<sup>55</sup> As Ramos also points out, government response to Aboriginal protest between 1951 and 2000 was characterized by the reification of tribal, community, status, and organization distinctions, and resource allocation was controlled primarily by the Canadian federal government. Therefore, in this period, the effectiveness of pan-Indian approach was compromised by the government’s strategy, which functioned to fragment pan-Indian organization and interests.

Ramos’ study is significant because it brings attention to the relationship between the factors that account for activism. Where Ramos demonstrates that political opportunity is dependent on resource mobilization, this study adds to the discussion by asserting that a collective identity was a necessary precursor to both political opportunity as well as resource mobilization. In other words, a collective identity – i.e., “Indian” – was first imposed on a population by the Canadian government through the 1876 Indian Act in order to gain control of political opportunity and resources. During the interwar years, this same collective identity was politicized by rights activists as a means of advocating for and creating political opportunities and of attaining resources. While the pan-Indian/PanAboriginal identity has been, since its inception, limited, its significance endures. Evidence of this can be seen in two key sites. First, in the

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<sup>55</sup> Howard Ramos, “What Causes Canadian Aboriginal Protest? Examining Resources, Opportunities and Identity, 1951-2000” in *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 31: 2 (2006), 226. See also, idem, “Opportunity for Whom?: Political Opportunity and Critical Events in Aboriginal Canadian Mobilization, 1951-2000,” in *Social Forces*, 87:2 (December 2008): 795-823.



persistence, expansion, and development of pan-Indian/PanAboriginal organization over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, for example in the prominence of national organizations like the Assembly of First Nations.<sup>56</sup> And second, in the notion that even in explicitly local instances of Aboriginal protest, the assertion of *indigenous* rights as such depends on the notion of a collective identity. This sense of collectivity finds its roots in the interwar period, in the politicization of the Indian identity.

Unlike the Chinese, whose longstanding *huáqiáo* tradition provided an established cultural identity as well as longstanding transnational connections, Aboriginal cultures in British Columbia during the interwar period had been effectively suppressed, in some cases to the point of near extinction. The revival of “traditional” arts, represented in Alice Ravenhill’s efforts, marked a turning point in the development of a cohesive Indian culture and identity on which later Aboriginal rights activists would base pan-Indian arguments.<sup>57</sup> Early expressions of a pan-Indian approach were, to be sure, tenuous and limited. The international connections that were actively and explicitly forged in the 1970s and beyond were not yet apparent. However, the pan-Indian approach of the Native Brotherhood can be interpreted as being transnational in scope for two reasons. First, the pan-Indianism of the Native Brotherhood involved alliances between different indigenous nations, a strategy that supported the tenet of

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<sup>56</sup>Other contemporary political organizations based on PanAboriginal constituencies include the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, and the Native Women’s Association of Canada. See, for example, Ramos, “What Causes Canadian Aboriginal Protest?” 215-216.

<sup>57</sup> See chapter 4, above.

universality and a more expansive definition of rights.<sup>58</sup> And secondly, kinship ties provided established connections across the American border. Most notably, the founder of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, Alfred Adams, held strong connections with relatives in the United States, specifically in Alaska. When the British Columbia organization was created in 1931, it was based on the structural and ideological model of the Native Brotherhood of Alaska.<sup>59</sup> Connections between activists in Canada and the United States provide some insight into the co-existence of kinship-based identities with pan-Indian national identities as an essential component of Aboriginal activism in the interwar period. As the campaigns to Ottawa for land title headed by the Allied Tribes and the conflict over the Kitsilano reserve that played out at city hall in Vancouver demonstrate, the Indian identity was a limited and contradictory one, and indigenous rights were difficult to assert within the parameters of the Canadian legal and political systems.<sup>60</sup>

While there were some similarities between Chinese and Aboriginal activists, most notably in the parallel establishment of a racial identity framed in relation to Canadian citizenship, differences are also apparent. A unified indigenous identity was beginning to crystallize, but, unlike Chinese Canadian activists, Aboriginal activists had no sojourner culture or powerful international connections to draw from. Instead, the

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<sup>58</sup> I use the term indigenous “nations” rather than cultures, groups, or tribes based on the understanding that advocacy for Aboriginal rights and land title in Canada since Confederation has been based on the assertion of pre-Confederation treaty rights, and wherein treaties constitute agreements between nations. See, also, Dale Turner, *This is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>59</sup> O’Donnell, “The Native Brotherhood,” 41; See also, Drucker, *The Native Brotherhoods*.

<sup>60</sup> See chapter 5, above.

politicization of the Indian was a slow process, in light of a half-century of systematic cultural destruction through restrictive legislation, the appropriation of land and resources, and economic marginalization. Aboriginal Canadian activists, like their Chinese Canadian counterparts, also looked beyond local resources for strategic and ideological direction. However, in contrast to Chinese Canadian agitation for inclusion in the nation by means of citizenship and immigration rights, advocates for Aboriginal rights asserted a key aspect of their political identity as being outside the constitutional auspices of the nation.

A clear divergence is apparent in the trajectories of each of these identities at this particular point in time. Oriental was redefined as Chinese Canadian or Japanese-Canadian in order to claim the right to citizenship, and then to citizenship rights. In contrast, the ideology behind the Aboriginal rights movement was the assertion of the rights of non-citizenship, or indigenism. Thus, the rhetoric of rights as it pertained to race was produced in the interwar period as two separate discourses; one which focused on the rights of ethnic minorities and the other which focused on indigenous rights.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Canada, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom* (1982). The significance of this distinction lies in its persistence over time, for example, wherein the rights to not be discriminated against on the basis of “race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability” are protected under section 15 (1) of the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, while Aboriginal rights and freedoms are not only distinct, but “not affected by the Charter” by virtue of section 25 of the Charter.

***The Rights of Humanity: H.F. Angus and Hugh Wesley Dobson***

Proponents of race and human rights in Canada during the interwar period faced a much different situation than during the postwar era. In the wake of the Holocaust, the idea of international governance over the protection of rights crystallized, and manifested in the form of the United Nations and its affiliate organizations. In contrast, during the 1920s and 30s, social activists and intellectuals who engaged in rights advocacy lacked the same legitimacy that later activists enjoyed. As numerous scholars have correctly argued, a widespread rhetoric of universal human rights was not apparent until the post-war period.<sup>62</sup> Yet, a common transnational perspective, or tendency, can be identified in the interwar years. This transnational perspective eventually gave rise to a discourse that asserted universal rights and political inclusion, which, in turn, were premised on the notion of racial distinction as something that must not be the occasion of discrimination. It provided a foundation for the strategies and ideologies held by both Chinese and Aboriginal Canadian social activists. However, this ideology of universal rights was not simply a product of state oppression and a lack of alternative options, limited to marginalized groups within Canada. Instead, the notion of the universal rights apparent in the *huáqiáo* and pan-Indian perspectives paralleled a similar trend in the early development of mainstream Canadian rights rhetoric. This trend towards internationalism was articulated, legitimized, and popularized in mainstream political discourse by an elite group of mainly white intellectuals, including

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<sup>62</sup> See ftnt. 4, above.

two Vancouverites who were key players in national and international politics during the interwar period.

One such intellectual was Henry Forbes Angus, whose ideas about race, rights, immigration, and citizenship were developed in the context of his work as an academic, his experience as a long standing resident of Vancouver, and his involvement in the Institute for Pacific Relations (I.P.R.). Angus' work is representative of a small but influential group of intellectuals who were politically active during the interwar years in the nascent and closely related fields of domestic race relations and international affairs.<sup>63</sup> Angus was born in Victoria in 1891, educated at McGill and Oxford Universities in civil law, and worked as a professor and Dean at the University of British Columbia from 1919 until his retirement in 1956.<sup>64</sup> Angus published prolifically on various subjects throughout his life, and his books and articles were widely read by audiences both national and international, academic and political. Between 1931 and 1934, Angus

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<sup>63</sup> These intellectuals included such individuals as the Americans Edward C. Carter, who was a former YMCA activist and was one of the founders of the IPR, and Owen Lattimore, who served as editor of the IPR journal, *Pacific Affairs*; William Holland, an economist from New Zealand, who served as General Secretary of the IPR; Inazo Nitobe, chairman of the Japanese IPR and former Under Secretary of the League of Nations; Chinese national scholar Hu Shih; and the British historian, Arnold Toynbee. Closer to home, Angus' Canadian colleagues included Canadian military general, Sir Arthur Currie, who was also Angus' old schoolteacher; Dr. Norman MacKenzie, who became president of the University of British Columbia in 1944; and British Columbia politicians Harold Winch, and Angus and Grace McInnis. See Alan Raucher, "The First Foreign Affairs Think Tanks" in *American Quarterly*, 30:4 (1978), 498-499; UBCSC, Angus Family Fonds, Box 72, File 1 (Correspondence Series), William L. Holland, "IPR Memoirs – 1930-1960"; Box 1, File 2, H.F. Angus, "Chapter IV: International Affairs, 1927-1937" (c. 1963): 223-227; 248-249.

<sup>64</sup> Angus died in Vancouver in 1991. In his lifetime, Angus served as member of the Rowell-Sirois Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, member of the Royal Commission on Transportation, Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission of British Columbia, member of the Energy Board of British Columbia, member of the Social Science Research Council, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, and the Institute of Pacific Relations, and Presidency of the Royal Society of Canada and the Political Science Association. See Robert M. Clark, ed., *Canadian Issues: Essays in Honour of Henry Forbes Angus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), v. – viii.

published four works which represent a distinctly Canadian expression of rights ideology that emphasized the notion of universal egalitarianism in light of Vancouver's specific circumstances.<sup>65</sup> All four of these articles were written for and circulated among an audience living outside of British Columbia, and all four address the issues of Canadian immigration policy and international relations by drawing from a regional (British Columbian) context.

Angus' central goal in these articles was to advocate for the repeal of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act. He maintained that the Act was "irrational" and that repeal was inevitable in the face of current international relations. In "Canadian Immigration: The Law and its Administration," Angus asserted:

...Canadian immigration law and administration... are not likely to remain in their present form. It is not that their provisions run counter to Canadian opinion. As we have seen, the operative provisions are largely those made by Orders-in-Council of relatively recent date. But the more intimate relations which are slowly developing between the nations of the world are not consistent with the sharp division of the human race into Chinese and other, with the sharp demarcation between Asiatic and non-Asiatic, with the exceptional treatment

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<sup>65</sup> UBCSC, Angus Family Fonds, Box 3 File 5, "A Contribution to International Ill-Will" in *Dalhousie Review* 13 (1933-1934), 23-33; Box 3 File 4, "Underprivileged Canadians" in *Queen's Quarterly* (Summer 1931): 445-460; Box 3 File 8, "Canadian Immigration: The Law and its Administration," reprinted from *American Journal of International Law* (January 1934): 74-89; and, Box 3 File 12, "The Legal Status in British Columbia of Residents of Oriental Race and their Descendants" in *The Legal Status of Aliens in Pacific Countries* (1937): 1-12.

of nations with which an agreement, treaty, or convention exists.<sup>66</sup>

In Angus' mind, the problem, or the reason for the existence of discriminatory legislation, was primarily due to a widespread but unfounded fear of economic competition. Official rhetoric supporting anti-Oriental legislation echoed that fear, citing economic concerns rather than explicitly racial considerations.<sup>67</sup> Angus' key rhetorical leverage in advocating the repeal of the Immigration Act was the dismissal of racial prejudice and economic fear as a "fallacy" and the result of emotionally driven "panic."<sup>68</sup> Angus refuted the economic anti-Oriental stance in several ways. He argued these people were "not maintained at public expense," as popular sentiment would imply.<sup>69</sup> Further, and more to the point, Angus asserted that "the exclusion of Orientals appears here as a method (though a crude one) for insisting on fair conditions of work and fair wages."<sup>70</sup> In refuting this 'crude' assumption of racial inferiority, Angus pointed to a misconstrual of the Canadian identity as the underlying problem that gave rise to the misperception of economic competition. The exclusion of Oriental Canadians from the popular notion of Canada as a whole, he argued, was not valid because of the

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<sup>66</sup> Angus "Canadian Immigration: The Law and its Administration," 88. Angus uses the terms "Asiatic" and "Oriental" interchangeably, to refer to individuals of Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian descent. I maintain the original in quotations, and use "Oriental" in the text throughout.

<sup>67</sup> See chapter 3, above.

<sup>68</sup> Angus, "A Contribution to International Ill-Will," 29-33.

<sup>69</sup> Angus, "Underprivileged Canadians," 450.

<sup>70</sup> Angus, "The Legal Status," 11.

existence of second generation Canadians of Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian descent who were Canadian citizens by virtue of naturalization.<sup>71</sup>

The position of second generation Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian Canadians constitutes the first of three recurring themes in Angus' publications in the 1930s. The second of these themes is the argument that the alien status of Orientals in Canada was based on race rather than nationality, which meant that full assimilation (specifically, through intermarriage) was improbable. The third recurring theme in Angus' works is a call for social justice based on the transnational notion of universal rights. On the first point, Angus contends that Canadian policy towards "Asiatic Canadians" was ultimately irrational because it did not take into consideration the second generation. Immigration policy encouraged legal migration into the country, and naturalization policy granted native-born second generation "Asiatic Canadians" the status of citizenship while still subjecting them to anti-Oriental discrimination. In the 1920s and 30s, this demographic was just coming of age. Angus observed that "within the schools there is no hostility between the children of different races... as soon... as we begin to deal with men and women instead of with boys and girls our behavior changes and we begin to put obstacles in the way of their exercising political rights or earning their living..."<sup>72</sup>

The reason for persistent discrimination against the second generation, in Angus' mind, was that, in popular opinion as well as in Canadian immigration and

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<sup>71</sup>Angus, "Underprivileged Canadians," 451-452.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 448.



enfranchisement law, “race, and not nationality, makes the alien.”<sup>73</sup> He argued that this misconception has as much to do with notions of race as they do with ideas of nation:

Canadians of Asiatic descent are generally looked on as foreign or alien, even though they have acquired our nationality in accordance with our laws. The reason is that race is more obvious than nationality; race is permanent, while our culture is acquired slowly, and even in the second generation may not have been acquired completely. It follows that when such phrases as “public opinion,” “the wishes of the taxpayers,” “the welfare of Canada,” “Native sons of Canada,” [and] “our national heritage” are used – and they are used only too frequently – it is tacitly assumed that they exclude persons of Asiatic race.<sup>74</sup>

One consequence of this distinction between race and nationality, according to Angus, was that successful assimilation of Oriental persons into Canadian society was unlikely. Not only was race “obvious,” but it was also likely “permanent” because, according to Angus, inter-racial marriage was “quite rightly looked upon as a dangerous adventure.”<sup>75</sup> And, because race was not only “obvious” but “permanent,” there existed

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<sup>73</sup> Angus, “Underprivileged Canadians,” 453. See, also, idem, “A Contribution to International Ill-Will,” 23-24. Here, Angus argues that “in exercising its power to control immigration into Canada, the Parliament of Canada... hit on the idea of dividing the human race into two categories” based on race – Chinese and non-Chinese. In assessing the legal position of “Orientals in British Columbia” Angus ascertains that “discrimination is made on racial and not on national grounds. Thus a disability imposed on Chinese affects equally all men and women of Chinese race, whether they are by nationality Chinese, American, or British, and does not affect a Chinese national of African race.” See Angus, “The Legal Status,” 3. Although Angus is generally consistent in maintaining this distinction between race on the one hand, and nationality on the other, at one point Angus equates culture with race, citing that culture was the modern terminology for the outdated language of race. See Idem, “Canadian Immigration,” 89.

<sup>74</sup> Angus, “Underprivileged Canadians,” 452. This point is reiterated more succinctly in Angus, “The Legal Status,” 3, where he states: “Race is obvious; nationality is not.”

<sup>75</sup> Angus, “Underprivileged Canadians,” 455. Angus’ reasoning for his anti-intermarriage stance is the possibility of “biological objection.” This is the idea that some races are “biologically incapable of mixing

“a widespread belief that even in the second or third generation Canadians of Oriental race are less Canadian than their fellow Canadians of other races.”<sup>76</sup> It is paradoxical that this position on intermarriage, which argues that race never ceases to be visible, should co-exist with an advocacy of social justice. Yet, the notion of difference and of clearly delineated racial categories as basis for advocating for social justice that is implied by this position performs the same rhetorical function as the process of redefining racial categories for the purpose of rights advocacy taken on by Chinese and Aboriginal communities in this period.

Inter-racial marriages aside, natural increase within the Japanese and Chinese communities was a common premise for anti-Oriental agitation.<sup>77</sup> Angus advocated a more inclusive definition of Canadian, but his real concern “the most serious consequence... that some thousands of our fellow-citizens have been embittered by treatment which no ordinary man or woman could fail to resent.”<sup>78</sup> At the core of Angus’ logic was a conception of universal social justice. His call to repeal the Chinese Immigration Act was articulated as a demand that “Asiatic Canadians” be treated by the government as “human beings.”<sup>79</sup> His defense of “Asiatic Canadians” was as much a call

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with other races so as to produce a homogeneous type with characteristics which are considered desirable,” whereby characteristics refer to “mental and moral characteristics.”

<sup>76</sup> Angus, “The Legal Status,” 11.

<sup>77</sup> Angus, “A Contribution to Ill-Will,” 26-28; and, idem, “Underprivileged Canadians,” 454.

<sup>78</sup> Angus, “Underprivileged Canadians,” 452. For a discussion on naturalization policy, see idem, “The Legal Status,” 10.

<sup>79</sup> Angus, “A Contribution to International Ill-Will,” 24.

to redefine “the Canadian conception of justice.”<sup>80</sup> His was a distinctly Canadian expression of rights that not only spoke to regional circumstances, but was also shaped by transnational notions of universal equality. His concern for the rights of people of Chinese and Japanese descent in Canada was motivated by two related factors – his interest and involvement in international affairs and his Christian moral principles. The former is represented here in his long-standing affiliation with the Institute for Pacific Relations, and the latter in his connections with United Church minister Hugh Wesley Dobson.

As Angus noted in 1931:

The importance of friendly trade relations with the Orient is being more and more appreciated. The continuance of these relations must depend on our treating the citizens of Japan and China with courtesy and in a way consistent with their self-respect. It must also depend on our treating our own citizens of Japanese and Chinese race in such a way as to show that we do not consider their race a ground for dislike or hostility.<sup>81</sup>

Angus’ writings in the 1930s were deeply influenced by his involvement in international affairs, most explicitly through his affiliation with the Institute of Pacific Relations (I.P.R.) between 1927 and 1937. The Institute of Pacific Relations was formed in 1925 as a cooperative effort spearheaded by the Y.M.C.A., in conjunction with missionaries and representatives from educational institutions, commerce, and labour who had pre-

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<sup>80</sup> Angus, “Underprivileged Canadians,” 445.

<sup>81</sup> Angus, “Underprivileged Canadians,” 458-459.

existing transnational ties. Throughout its existence, the organization stubbornly upheld a politically neutral stance, and focused on the exclusive goal of engendering peaceful cooperation among the Pacific nations. The history of the organization is best described in the words of American representative William Holland, who served as research assistant, international director, and secretary general of the I.P.R., respectively, for a total of thirty-one years.

In 1961, Holland reflected most eloquently and succinctly on the achievements of this seminal international non-governmental organization:

Hailed in the 1920s as “a lily in the barnyard of politics,” denounced in a Communist journal in the 1930s as an “Institute of Pirates and Robbers,” and accused in 1952 by the late U.S. Senator Pat McCarran of having caused the “loss” of China, the IPR in its thirty-five years of existence (1925-1960) held thirteen international non-official conferences, published two reputable journals on Asian problems, carried out an extensive international research program in most of the Asian and Pacific countries, and published approximately 1300 scholarly books and popular pamphlets. It prospered between 1928 and 1944, came under attack in the United States between 1947 and 1950, was the target of a highly publicized investigation by the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security in 1951, lost most of its financial support from corporations and foundations after 1952... and dissolved itself at the end of 1960...<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> UBCSC, Institute of Pacific Relations, *Correspondence Series* Box 72 File 1, William Holland, “Source Materials on the Institute of Pacific Relations: Biographical Note” (1961), 91. For more on the I.P.R., see also Raucher, “The First Foreign Affairs Think Tanks,” 493-513; John K. Fairbank, “William L. Holland and the I.P.R. in Historical Perspective,” *Pacific Affairs* 52:4 (1979-80): 587-590; and Lawrence T. Woods,

Because of the breadth and inclusive, non-partisan structure of the organization, historical analysis of the intention, purpose, achievements, and influence of the I.P.R. is problematic. As Holland explained, “like the proverbial elephant, [the I.P.R.] was many different things to different people and at different periods.”<sup>83</sup>

For H.F. Angus, the I.P.R. provided an important perspective in assessing local issues, and inspired him to generate solutions for British Columbia’s race problems. Angus saw his role in the I.P.R. as a representative of Canada, whose task was to engage in “friendly conversations” with representatives of other nations bordering the Pacific through conferences; to identify and dispel “ill-founded” prejudices and to promote, instead, “rational discussion”; and to return to Canada to disseminate knowledge that would “help to create a healthy background for international relations.”<sup>84</sup> In 1928 and 1929, Angus travelled to Kyoto and Shanghai for I.P.R. conferences. On returning to Vancouver, and after “unpacking the little treasures” he had brought back, Angus found himself painfully aware of anti-Oriental discrimination at home. He was also “impressed with the importance of the issues that had to be faced and with the dangers of delay... and decided to attempt to improve the position in British Columbia of immigrants of Oriental race and their descendants.”<sup>85</sup> This effort took the form of the various

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“Regional Diplomacy and the Institute of Pacific Relations,” *Journal of Developing Societies* 8 (1992): 212-222.

<sup>83</sup> UBCSC, Institute of Pacific Relations, *Correspondence Series* Box 72 File 1, William Holland, “Source Materials on the Institute of Pacific Relations: Biographical Note” (1961), 91.

<sup>84</sup> UBCSC, Angus Family Fonds, Box 1 File 2, H.F. Angus, “Chapter VI: International Affairs, 1927-1937” (c.1963), 223.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

publications examined above, as well as lobbying politicians and business and community leaders. One of Angus' most striking memories from this period was a talk he gave to a group of "ministers of religion." He told these men that he thought it "detestable that they should have separate churches for Japanese or Chinese instead of mixing them with Christians of other races in one community for the worship of God."<sup>86</sup> His admonition was met with "sullen silence" by this venerable audience, but this one incident reveals both the potential of Christian doctrine as well as the probability of church resistance to progressive racial politics.

The I.P.R. "was inaugurated as a Christian project," and came into being as a child of the Y.M.C.A., premised on their mission work in Japan and China.<sup>87</sup> Although the original idea of basing the organization on "Christian principles" was quickly replaced by a general policy of non-affiliation in official I.P.R. rhetoric, Canadian representatives to the I.P.R. operated within the parameters of an explicitly Christian doctrine throughout the 1920s and 30s.<sup>88</sup> In Canada, the work of the I.P.R. was supported by two key organizations. One of these was the Canadian Institute of International Affairs (C.I.I.A.), of which H.F. Angus was a key member. The C.I.I.A. was the official representative branch of the I.P.R. in Canada.<sup>89</sup> The second was the Committee on Christianity and

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>87</sup> BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, Hugh Wesley Dobson, "Committee on Christianity and Race Relations, BC Conference" (May 1931), 1.

<sup>88</sup> UBCSC, Institute of Pacific Relations, *Correspondence Series*, Box 72, File 1, Galen M. Fisher, "A Bird's Eye View of the I.P.R." (1937): 13.

<sup>89</sup> UBCSC, Angus Family Fonds, Box 1 File 2, H.F. Angus, "Chapter VI: International Affairs, 1927-1937" (c.1963), 248-255.

Racial Relations on the Pacific Coast, an organ of the United Church of Canada. The Committee on Christianity and Racial Relations was formed in 1928 by Hugh Wesley Dobson, was active throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, and its membership included such prominent local activists as the Reverend Andrew Roddan, Dr. S.S. Osterhout, the Reverend K. Shimizu, and Rev. C.R. McGillivray. Born in Ontario in 1879, Dobson was ordained into the Methodist church in 1906. After ministering in Manitoba and Saskatchewan for twenty years, Dobson moved to Vancouver in 1925 to take up the position of Associate Secretary for the Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the newly-formed United Church of Canada. He held this position until his retirement in 1951.<sup>90</sup> A colleague of Angus, Dobson also spoke and published prolifically on the subject of race-relations during the 1930s. The two men operated within the same professional and social circles, and often worked together.<sup>91</sup> While Dobson has been described by scholars as being discriminatory in his anti-miscegenation position<sup>92</sup> and anti-semitic rhetoric,<sup>93</sup> he also articulated a rhetoric of social justice premised on the

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<sup>90</sup> For more on Hugh Wesley Dobson, see David Elliott, "Hugh Wesley Dobson (1879-1956): Regenerator of Society," in Neil Semple, ed., *Papers: Canadian Methodist Historical Society* (1991).

<sup>91</sup> BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Paper, MS-1605, Reel A01179, Hugh Wesley Dobson, "Minutes: Racial Relations Group Meeting" (April 1939).

<sup>92</sup> Roy, *The Oriental Question*, 148.

<sup>93</sup> Alan T. Davies, *How silent were the churches?: Canadian Protestantism and the Jewish Plight During the Nazi Era* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997), 144, note 2. Here, Davies cites an anonymous anti-semitic comment, and asserts that "the views expressed are probably an accurate reflection of a certain element in the United Church as well as society at large during the 1920s. Hugh Dobson, a former Methodist who served as western secretary of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service from 1925 to 1951, frequently indulged in anti-semitic comments in his early correspondence, blaming the Jews for undermining prohibition and other social evils."

Christian tenet of the brotherhood of humanity which informed many social gospel activists in Canada.

When the Committee on Christianity and Race Relations on the Pacific Coast was formed, Dobson was adamant that “inter-racial attitudes within the province were vitally related to racial contacts in world affairs in the area surrounding the Pacific Ocean, and, therefore, the home phase of the problem was part and parcel of the world phase of the problem.”<sup>94</sup> In 1930, Dobson gave credit to the I.P.R. for contributing significantly to “the development of better understanding between nations and races” through its 1927 Honolulu and 1929 Kyoto conferences. He went on to assert that “[t]his better understanding and growth of a sense of interdependence of nations and races has favoured the spread and development of Christian attitudes between races.”<sup>95</sup> This sense of both the problem of and solution to race-relations as being inherently transnational in character was a key aspect of Dobson’s rhetoric, and, as with the rhetoric produced by other activists in Vancouver at the time, was coloured by the notion of universal rights. In all of his discussions and writing on the subject of race-relations, Dobson was careful to use the term *Christian attitudes* rather than *Christianity*. In other words, he advocated a universal equality regardless of religious affiliation that was nonetheless explicitly premised on Christian tenets that were themselves interpreted as asserting the universalism of human beings’ needs, qualities,

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<sup>94</sup> BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, Hugh Wesley Dobson, “Report of Committee on Christianity and Race Relations Appointed by the B.C. Conference of the United Church,” (May 1929), 1.

<sup>95</sup> BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, Hugh Wesley Dobson, “Report of Committee on Christianity and Race Relations” (May 1930), 1.



rights, and responsibilities. Dobson's definition of *Christian attitudes* was, of course, based on biblical teachings. This definition was premised on two key doctrines: the brotherhood of humanity and the primacy of morality. The notion of the brotherhood of humanity originates in the precept that "God has made of one blood all the nations," and that therefore, all persons are sacred.<sup>96</sup> Humanity, then, is a single family under the patriarchal figure of God – the human race, or Christian brotherhood of humanity.<sup>97</sup>

For Dobson, the 1920s was "a period of transition from community and national systems of production and distribution to a world system." As a result, by the 1930s there was a widespread global "awakening to the interdependence of nations and races."<sup>98</sup> In British Columbia, this 'awakening' highlighted the longstanding patterns of conflicts involving discriminatory practices against Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian residents. In 1935, after five years of consideration, Dobson and his committee concluded that to address the problem of discrimination in the province, changes to

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<sup>96</sup> BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, Hugh Wesley Dobson, "Christian Attitudes on Racial Relations and on Contacts Between Peoples of Different National Origins" (c. 1930-31). The citation is taken from Acts 17:26. The idea of the unity and oneness of all nations is also articulated in Matthew 28, and in the book of Paul. The idea of "the sacredness of all persons" is taken from an interpretation of the life of Jesus, as described in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

<sup>97</sup> Christian doctrine is also founded upon the tenet of exclusivity in terms of religious affiliation. Thus, while Dobson preached political, economic, and social equality, and used a language that implied an acceptance of the plurality of religion as well, his loyalty to the Christian doctrine meant that conversion was likely still the ultimate goal. For example, in 1933, Dr. Osterhout asserted in a report the Committee on Christianity and Racial Relations that conversion was a key aspect of the United Church's Oriental Missions in Vancouver. Thus, at the grassroots level, the project of instilling *Christian attitudes* to fight racial discrimination involved conversion to *Christianity*. As Osterhout warned, "Christianity is on trial. If it should fail here, on its own soil... how shall we hope for the Christianization of the world?" See BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, S.S. Osterhout, "Oriental Missions in Vancouver" (1933).

<sup>98</sup> BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, Hugh Wesley Dobson, "Committee on Christianity and Race Relations" (May 1931).

citizenship policy were necessary. In a petition to the federal and provincial governments, the committee, as representative of the United Church of Canada, argued that because the Canadian population was really a “polyglot... of racial elements and nationality... a more uniform standard of citizenship” was necessary. In addition, the committee advocated the extension of the franchise “to all persons born and reared in Canada, so that they may be permitted to exercise their full responsibility as citizens.”<sup>99</sup> In rhetoric, this idea of citizenship extended to all “races” and all persons. Throughout the 1930s, Dobson identified the two “main problems so far as British Columbia is concerned” as being, first, “relations between the main stock of population (Anglo-Saxon) and aboriginal North American Indians” and, secondly, “relations between Occidentals and Orientals.”<sup>100</sup> Yet, in practice, the bulk of the publications, public talks, petitions to government, and mission work connected with the United Church and the I.P.R. focused on the situation of Chinese Canadians in British Columbia, and manifested in campaigns for enfranchisement and the liberalization of immigration policy.

The reason for this discrepancy in the intensity of their effort has much to do with the impact of international affairs in the Pacific region on local politics in Vancouver. However, the character of activism from within the Chinese Canadian community as compared to that which was occurring within the Aboriginal community in Vancouver also shaped the nature of activism among these potential allies. By the

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<sup>99</sup> BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, Dr. W.H. Smith, “Resolutions of the Committee on Christianity and Racial Relations” (1935).

<sup>100</sup> BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, Hugh Wesley Dobson, “Christianity and Race Relations” (c. 1930s).

1940s, when the first political publications emerged out of the Canadian Aboriginal community and Aboriginal activists began officially to organize in conjunction with Aboriginal activists in the United States, Dobson did expand his focus to include advocacy for social justice for Aboriginal Canadians.<sup>101</sup> But in the 1920s and 30s, anti-racist activism in Vancouver was premised on an assumption of difference that distinguished indigenism from ethnicity. The very different socio-economic, political, and legal position of the Chinese community in Vancouver as opposed to the situation of Aboriginal people both enabled and constrained race-based equality activism for each of these groups. While Chinese Canadian activists were able to draw on a culture of transnational migration and the rhetoric of Nationalism that emerged out of revolutionary China, Aboriginal Canadian activists were only beginning to forge an indigenous political identity that would come to provide a similar sense of political solidarity. The rhetoric of rights that developed in the interwar period in Vancouver was one that drew on transnational currents and the notion of universal rights. While a commonly held definition of universal human rights did not crystallize until the 1948 United Nations Declaration, this analysis of interwar rights rhetoric suggests the significance of transnational influences prior to the Second World War, particularly among Chinese activists in Vancouver, to the broader history of human rights in Canada.

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<sup>101</sup> See BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, Hugh Wesley Dobson, "Eighteenth Annual Report, General Board of Evangelism and Social Service" (1942); BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01179, various files on Andrew Paull, the Native Sons (previously "The Native Brotherhood"), and Aboriginal activism throughout the 1940s.

## **Conclusion**

Until Douglas Jung was elected to Parliament as Member for Vancouver Central in 1957, the formal debate in City Hall, in the Legislature in Victoria, and in Ottawa over the rights of Oriental Canadians was articulated almost exclusively by white Canadians. Nonetheless, the struggles that Chinese and Aboriginal activists engaged in at the local level were part of a broader, transnational public discussion about race, rights, and citizenship. The interwar years saw the genesis of international nongovernmental organizations, among them the League of Nations, and thus provided the first modern international forum for the discussion of rights. The most active international nongovernmental organization on the West Coast of Canada was not, however, the League of Nations, but the Institute of Pacific Relations. The leadership of Canadian Council of the I.P.R., based in Vancouver, was dominated in the interwar period by H.F. Angus, then head of the political science department at the University of British Columbia. Scholars have argued that the I.P.R. was subsumed by economic concerns, as the precursor of such organizations as the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation initiative.<sup>102</sup> However, the I.P.R. was created in 1924 as a conference for “the discussion of racial and international problems... based on Christian principles”<sup>103</sup> Although the Institute officially became “free of religious

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<sup>102</sup> Woods, “Regional Diplomacy,” 212-213. See also Raucher, “The First Foreign Affairs Think Tanks,” 493-513; and Fairbank, “William L. Holland,” 587-590.

<sup>103</sup> UBCSC, Institute of Pacific Relations, *Correspondence Series*, Box 72, File 1, Galen M. Fisher, “A Bird’s Eye View of the I.P.R.” (1937): 13.

limitations” within its first year of existence, Canadian representation in the I.P.R. remained firmly connected to organized religion and Christianity.<sup>104</sup>

The rhetoric of rights produced by H.F. Angus and his colleague, the Reverend Hugh Wesley Dobson, was articulated in their various publications and circulated among policy makers in Victoria and Ottawa. This rhetoric combined three ideological elements: the social gospel ideal of the “Oneness and Brotherhood of Humanity”<sup>105</sup>; the international nongovernmental organization focus on trade, peace and cooperation; and the discourse of local social activists who advocated rights based on a transnational notion of egalitarianism. The ideals and language of the Social Gospel, which preached brotherly love and equality, were implicit in the rhetoric expounded by Angus and Dobson. Both wrote prolifically for both a Canadian and international audience on the subject of race relations. Their writing was heavily influenced by the particular situation in Vancouver during the 1920s and 30s – as home to the largest and increasingly politicized Chinese population in Canada, a country which maintained racist enfranchisement, citizenship, and immigration legislation aimed specifically at this racial demographic despite an ever increasing economic dependence on Asia in the context of a domestic economic depression.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> BCARS, Hugh Wesley Dobson Papers, MS-1605, Reel A01178, Hugh Wesley Dobson, “Christian Attitudes on Racial Relations and on Contacts Between Peoples of Different National Origins” (1930).

## Chapter 9 ~“Keep Canada Canadian”<sup>1</sup>: A Grain of Salt

This dissertation has shown how processes of racialization that occurred during the interwar period created a conceptual foundation for the human rights rhetoric which emerged in popular discourse following the Second World War. Clearly defined racial categories became the basis for political identities which enabled certain groups of individuals to advocate for rights at the level of formal politics within the Canadian state. Chinese Canadian politics in Vancouver gave rise to a rhetoric which asserted the rights of ethnicity, and which directly influenced human rights discourse, while the notion of indigenism fuelled pan-Indian activism. Ideas of white supremacy, on the other hand, faded into the background of formal politics, and the racial category of white became an unspoken assumption in rights discourse. This study has focused on three specific and interconnected trajectories of identity-making to reveal one important process of racialization in Canadian history – namely, constructing and employing racial identities as a rhetorical means of advocating for rights. And yet, racialization is never the only relation of power that determines events.

This final chapter examines government and police attempts to prohibit white women from working for Chinese employers in Vancouver during the 1920s and 30s.

The story of Chinatown’s white waitresses reveals two key insights into the effects of

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<sup>1</sup> Tom MacInnes, *Oriental Occupation of Canada* (Vancouver: Sun Publishing Company, 1927). “Keep Canada Canadian” is the title of the eighth chapter in MacInnes’ book, in which he argues: “I think a man should be concerned for the purity of his race; that is, for keeping the main blood stream of it free from any alien blood... however excellent such alien blood may be in itself, and in its own kind. A mix of sugar and salt is the spoiling of both” (82).

racialization. First, it shows that whiteness was not always a position of privilege because racialization is also a class-based and gendered process. Second, it reveals inter-racial connections and solidarity between the waitresses and the restaurant owners, as well as intra-racial conflict born out of class and gender divisions within the white community. In other words, the following account focuses on two aspects of racialization that were not being debated in formal politics at the time, and were not included in postwar human rights discourse – women and inter-group solidarity. The exclusion of women’s rights and the isolation of racial categories in this early manifestation of human rights rhetoric was a result of selective politics, and, as a consequence, this rhetoric was limited as a means of achieving social justice.

### ***Chinatown’s White Waitresses***

British Columbia was not the first province to attempt to legally prohibit white women from working for Chinese business owners. Manitoba, Ontario, and perhaps most ardently, Saskatchewan, had implemented similar laws as early as 1912.<sup>2</sup> Agitation for formal restrictions on racially mixed workplaces in British Columbia began in 1915, and in 1919, an Amendment to the Municipal Act was passed by the British Columbia Legislature.<sup>3</sup> This Amendment, however, was not applicable in the city of

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<sup>2</sup> For the Saskatchewan Act, see James St. G. Walker, *Race, Rights, and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada* (Waterloo: Sir Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), chapter 2; and Constance Backhouse, *Colour Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup> Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914–41* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 43

Vancouver, and in 1922 the Trades and Labour Council and the Great War Veterans Association passed resolutions to City Council in support of a municipal bylaw that was initially entitled “The Employment of White Girls by Asiatics.” The bylaw was deemed *ultra vires* by the Vancouver City Solicitor, and was replaced by a provincial statute, “The Women and Girls Protection Act,” the following year.<sup>4</sup> This provincial legislation prohibited white or Indian women from working for Oriental employers if a Chief of Police should deem the morals of these women in jeopardy. The oft-stated rationale behind this Act was that the Chinese, in particular, exerted a corrupting influence on young women, coercing them into a life of drugs and prostitution. A key influence on this way of thinking derived from the so-called “war on white slavery,” a nation-wide campaign to stop the forcible trafficking of women in the sex trade. The Women and Girls’ Protection Act applied throughout the province, including Vancouver, and was met by protest from the Chinese Benevolent Association (C.B.A.) and the Consul for China as being unconstitutional and degrading to the Chinese. As a result, the term “Oriental” was removed, thus officially making invisible any racially discriminatory reading of the Act while conferring on the Chief of Police considerable discretionary authority in assessing moral danger.

However, the racial designations of white and Indian did remain on the books. Since the seventeenth century, Aboriginal women in the West have been subject to a double misconception in terms of economic dependency, as both racialized Others and

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<sup>4</sup> Vancouver City Archives (VCA), Law Department Series 480, 115-C-1, File 42, Letter from City Solicitor to City Clerk, 26 April, 1922; Letter from City Solicitor to City Clerk, 1 May, 1922.



as women.<sup>5</sup> These women were, of course, central in to the fur trade economy. In post-Confederation period, women contributed in the domestic sphere as well as in a variety of wage labour jobs. Most notably, on the Pacific Coast, Aboriginal women worked in the canneries alongside white women and Chinese men, as three key sources of cheap labour.<sup>6</sup> Aboriginal women thus set precedents for notions about working women, as well as about interracial relations in British Columbia. When the Protection of Women and Girls' Act was passed in 1923, the status of white women was conceptually aligned with that of Aboriginal women. Although it may seem odd that Aboriginal women were associated with white women in this statute, both groups of women were inherently economically dependent because of their gender and race, and thus not entitled to the rights of (un)employment. On the other hand, Chinese women were not included in this statute because it was considered both appropriate and natural for Chinese women to be dependent on Chinese men. Thus, while economic dependence was inherent to all women, cross racial dependency was seen a problem. Aboriginal and white women had to be protected from possible sexual interaction with Chinese men in the interests of

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<sup>5</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670—1870* (Winnipeg: Watson-Dwyer, 1980). As Sylvia Van Kirk has conclusively demonstrated, interracial marital unions between Aboriginal women and white men formed the social and economic bases of the Canadian West in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. The highly influential status of Aboriginal women in fur trade society was premised on their roles as wives and mothers, their positions as intermediaries in trade, and their labour – from domestic work to building and manning canoes. During the nineteenth century, this status was challenged first by the emergence of mixed blood women, and then by widespread European settlement and the increasing presence of white women in the West. By Confederation, British culture and its ascribed racial prejudices predominated in settler society, and interracial marital unions were deemed iniquitous in the eyes of the courts and government officials, and in the popular mind.

<sup>6</sup> McMaster, *Working Girls*, 146. For more on Aboriginal women and labour, see Rolf Knight, *Indians At Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia, 1858—1930* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1996), especially 127—34.

maintaining racial segregation. In practice, however, the Act was only used to ‘protect’ white women. Between 1923 and 1931, it was scarcely used at all.

Then, in 1931, the Act came dramatically into play when Vancouver’s Chief Constable C.E. Edgett tried to remove all of the white waitresses from the B.C. Royal Café in Chinatown. Edgett’s actions, perhaps motivated by the murder of Mary Shaw,<sup>7</sup> were abruptly discontinued when lawyers for the B.C. Royal Café pointed out that “no by-law had been passed forbidding the employment of such waitresses.” Edgett was not able to produce sufficient bona-fide evidence of the danger to the morality of these women to justify police action under the requirements of the Protection of Women and Girls Act, and the case was dropped.<sup>8</sup> But this was not the end of the Act’s deployment. In 1935, Alderman H.D. Wilson, a virulently racist politician with affiliations and support from such organizations as the Asiatic Exclusion League and the Native Sons of British Columbia, began a notorious campaign to “clean up” Chinatown. In October of that year, six restaurants were given notice to dismiss their waitresses, but the new Chief Constable, Colonel W.W. Foster, denied any association between this police activity and Alderman Wilson’s political campaign or anti-Oriental position. As the penalty under the Protection of Women Act of \$100 was insufficient to cause any real disruption to Chinese business, Foster, with the support of Licence Inspector Urquhart, threatened instead to cancel the business licences of the three cafés that refused to comply.

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Shaw was a waitress in Chinatown who was allegedly murdered in 1931 by her Chinese admirer, one Dick Lee. The response to this murder was minimal. See Roy, *The Oriental Question*, 145—6.

<sup>8</sup> VCA, Law Department Series 480, 115-C-1, File 42, Letter from Edgett to G.E. McCroassan, City Solicitor, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1931; Letter from McCroassan to Edgett, 6 January, 1932.

However, charges against the cafés were dismissed in court on the grounds that the Chief of Police had failed to prove that individual waitresses were being morally compromised.<sup>9</sup>

Police Chief Foster proved to be considerably more persistent and morally dogmatic than his predecessor, Edgett, but his efforts only served to stimulate a more vigorous reaction from the café owners and waitresses. By early 1937, he had compiled a list of all of the white girls working in Chinese restaurants for the purpose of investigation. Unfortunately, much to the ire of Foster, “it was found that a great many of these girls gave their wrong names” and that the Chinese restaurant proprietors “treat the matter as a joke, stating they made arrangements by which the police instructions could be overlooked.”<sup>10</sup> In addition, the restaurants were swapping employees to such a degree that Foster found his original list quite useless. In the spring of that year, a combined effort to protest Foster and Urquhart’s campaign was undertaken by the café proprietors and the waitresses—the proprietors by taking legal action, and the waitresses by appearing at City hall to make “a dramatic plea to be allowed to retain their jobs... their means of livelihood.”<sup>11</sup> This conflict between police and municipal officials, and the Chinese café owners backed by the Chinese Benevolent

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<sup>9</sup> VCA, Law Department Series 480, 115-C-1, File 42, Letter from City Solicitor Lord to City Clerk Woodford, 11 October, 1935; Letter from Chief Constable Foster to City Solicitor Lord, 16 October, 1935; Letter from Lord to Foster, 17 October, 1935; Letter from Fred Howlett, Acting City Clerk, to D.E. McTaggart, Corporation Counsel, 9 January, 1936; Letter from McTaggart to Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Vancouver, 10 January, 1936; Letter from Howlett to McTaggart, 15 January, 1936.

<sup>10</sup> VCA, Vancouver Mayor Series 483, 33-D-6, file 4, Letter from Foster to Mayor George C. Miller, 27 February, 1937; Letter from Foster to Miller, 6 March, 1937.

<sup>11</sup> VCA, Vancouver Mayor Series 483, 33-D-6, File 4, Letter from Freeman V. Murphy, Solicitor, to Mayor George C. Miller, 6 May, 1937; *The Vancouver Sun*, 16 September, 1937.

Association and the white waitresses who worked for them reached a climax in the fall of 1937. The three cafés targeted by Foster—Toy Wing’s B.C. Royal Café, Charlie Ting’s Hong Kong Café, and Harry Lee’s Gee Kong Café, all on East Pender Street—continued to operate after their licences were cancelled. The waitresses insisted publicly that they were well treated and that their moral integrity was in no danger, through interviews with the media and then by marching to City Hall in protest. The women also enlisted a lawyer, as well as the support of the Vancouver Mother’s Council, the Women’s Labour League, and the Hotel, Restaurant and Culinary Employees and Bartenders Union.

The latter ally was in a contradictory position. The Hotel, Restaurant and Culinary Employees and Bartenders Union (Local 28, Vancouver), who championed the white waitresses’ bid to claim compensation for lost wages from the City, were, during the mid-1920s, affiliated with the Asian Exclusion Association. The Union supported “white only” workplaces and the Protection of Women and Girls’ Act at the time of its passage, but the contradictory effects of racial segregation and labour rights became apparent by the late 1930s. When the Act was actually implemented in 1937 by police and city officials, the Union found itself backing the white waitresses, who in turn were advocating the rights of Chinese employers. In an attempt to assert both their anti-Asian sentiments and the labour rights of the waitresses, the Union only advocated obtaining a pension from the city for the waitresses’ loss of wages, and not their reinstatement in the Chinatown cafés.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBCSC), Hotel, Restaurant and Culinary Employees and Bartenders Union fonds, 1910—1981, Box 5, Local 28 – Vancouver, “Minutes,” October 1924, April 1925.

By the end of September of 1937, Wing, Ting, and Lee came to an agreement with city council to dismiss all of their white waitresses in exchange for the return of their business licences. The restaurant owners, led by their spokesperson, C.B.A. secretary Foon Sien Wong, asserted that while the City had no legal authority to cancel their licences, the proprietors were willing, as a “goodwill gesture” to “cooperate” and be “reasonable.” This concession was not, however, to be seen as absolute acquiescence on the part of Chinatown café owners as they consented only to dismiss their presently employed white waitresses, and not to re-employ any white women “for the balance of the year,” a total of three months. Nonetheless, this compromise appears to have satisfied the police and city council.<sup>13</sup> Once again, as in 1923 when the original Act was amended, in 1931 when Edgett failed to remove the waitresses from the B.C. Royal café, and in 1935 when Foster was unsuccessful in his attempt to close down the Chinatown restaurants, the Chinese community was able to assert some influence. In each of these cases, incremental victories were achieved on the grounds that racial discrimination was unconstitutional, not so much in itself, but because the measures taken to impose it were beyond the authority held by local or provincial governments.

The waitresses were equally straightforward and fervent on their position in the matter. Kay Martin, who had worked at the Hong Kong Café for Charlie Ting for more than a year, insisted that she had no issue working for a Chinese employer, that the wages and hours were good, and that she had always been treated well. The feeling

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<sup>13</sup> VCA, Vancouver Mayor Series, 33-D-6, file 4, Letter from Denis Murphy, solicitor, to Oscar Orr, City Prosecutor, 29 September, 1937.

among the waitresses in general in regards to their employment was apparently one of “perfect satisfaction.” Several of the waitresses offered harsh criticism of the moral reformers who, in their minds, were oblivious to the actual situation in Chinatown. Martin asked vehemently “what the “old women” who are trying to get the girls out of Chinatown would do for them when they lose their jobs,” while a fellow waitress condemned these reformers as “a bunch of fussy old bridge-playing gossips who are self-appointed directors of morals for the girls of Chinatown.”<sup>14</sup> The waitresses clearly distinguished themselves in terms of age and class from the female moral reformers who were allegedly protecting them, and were firm in their rejection of the association between Chinatown and the Chinese, and immorality. As one woman declared, “if a girl is inclined to go wrong, she can do it just as readily on Granville Street as she can down here.”<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to the response of municipal officials to agitation by Chinese employers, the protests of the white waitresses, led by their spokesperson Margaret West, were virtually ignored. The waitresses marched to City Hall a total of three times during this course of events to bring their grievances to the mayor; twice they were turned away without so much as a meeting.<sup>16</sup> In the third instance, thirty waitresses attended a civic social services meeting to demand reinstatement of their jobs or compensation for lost wages from the City, armed with their solicitor, Garfield King.

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<sup>14</sup> The Vancouver Sun, 17 September 1937.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Vancouver Sun, 16 September 1937; The Province, 24 September 1937.

This demonstration was met with indifference from Mayor Miller, who simply asserted that these women had no claim as they were “not wards of the city.” After all, Miller declared to the “girls,” they “should not have much trouble in getting other jobs.”<sup>17</sup> Despite the Mayor’s assurances, however, at least some of these women did have trouble finding employment. Two months after their official dismissal as employees at the Chinatown cafés, the city of Vancouver once more threatened to take away the licences of the Hong Kong Café and the Gee Kong Café for allegedly re-employing white women. The licences were restored after the C.B.A. employed a lawyer to protest the action. What had happened was that two of the ex-waitresses had been unable to find relief or employment, and had returned to their former employers for help. Harry Lee and Charlie Ting, the employers in question, had been giving the women meals. Not wanting to be charity cases, the women returned the favour by doing some work in the restaurant. The attitude of the restaurant owners, the Chinese community, and the waitresses was summed up in a defiant statement by Foon Sien Wong, who declared, “the girls were hungry and could not get on relief, and if the girls did do a little work in return, what of it?”<sup>18</sup>

Until the 1930s, women in Vancouver were not entitled to municipal relief because unlike white men, as Gillian Creese has pointed out, their right to work had not

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<sup>17</sup> Vancouver Sun, 12 October 1937; The Province, 14 October 1937.

<sup>18</sup> The News Herald, 24 November 1937.

yet been established.<sup>19</sup> By 1933, however, as a result of the effects of the Depression and the demands of unemployed women, city relief was granted first to widows and deserted wives, and then to single women. Relief for women, however, was difficult to actually access, and this provision was highly regulated. Further, the fact that many women, single or otherwise, supported dependants was virtually ignored. A key aspect of relief policy for women during the 1930s was a prevailing patriarchal mindset which held to a “social definition of men as breadwinners and women as dependants regardless of the situation of individual workers.”<sup>20</sup> This fundamental gender inequality in the area of (un)employment rights was publicly condemned by Foon Sien Wong as, ironically, “man’s inhumanity to man.” Wong compared the ideals of Confucianism with that of Canadian social welfare practices, arguing that the values upheld by the Chinese, in accordance with the tenets of Confucianism, were in fact superior to the current values of “the Western world.”<sup>21</sup>

This sense of social justice was not an anomaly, and was key to the struggle of the Chinese towards attaining citizenship rights. Charlie Ting, one of the café owners whose licence was cancelled for feeding a white woman, is representative of the emphasis on social values upheld by the Chinese community during the interwar period. Ting was president of the C.B.A. in Vancouver, and on the event of his death in 1939,

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<sup>19</sup> Gillian Creese, “The Politics of Dependence: Women, Work and Unemployment in the Vancouver Labour Movement Before WWII” in *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992), 376.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>21</sup> The Vancouver Sun, 24 November, 1937; The News Herald, 24 November, 1937.



was heralded as “Charlie the Christian,” a man whose religion was that “of the helping hand,” and to whom no person in need “ever went to for aid in vain.”<sup>22</sup> As a result of long-standing racism in Canada, the Chinese had always relied on their own community for assistance in times of need, and this mindset extended beyond the boundaries of race to the white waitresses who worked in Chinatown during the 1930s. However, the campaign of the Chinese community in the 1930s to establish a politicized racial identity based on notions of citizenship and respectability took precedence over the struggle of women to attain (un)employment rights. The Chinatown waitresses were gendered and racialized such that they came to represent the epitome of immorality. Race-based equality rights depended on notions of respectability, and thus could not effectively align with the campaign for the rights of working women, who were in many ways perceived as the counterpoint of respectability. In the end, the rights claims of Chinese business owners overshadowed women’s right to employment in City Hall, in the courts, and in the media.

### ***Political Solidarity and Women’s Rights***

The 1937 waitress incident is useful as an early example of inter-group political solidarity, in which a rhetoric of equality was used which simultaneously asserted race rights and women’s rights. However, and perhaps more importantly, the outcome of the conflict also demonstrates how gender considerations complicated the rights debate, and was obscured by race-based equality rights claims. Women’s rights were not

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<sup>22</sup> The Vancouver Sun, 20 March, 1939.

recognized in human rights codes in Canada until the 1969 British Columbia Human Rights Act.<sup>23</sup> In the interwar period, working women were discussed in moral rather than political terms. For reformers and the police, working women were perceived as either victims of sexual predators or as morally lax. As Carolyn Strange and Lindsay McMaster have demonstrated, the social purity movement which gave rise to the panic over white slavery and the 1923 Women and Girls Protection Act also encouraged conceptual associations between the working girl and the prostitute.<sup>24</sup> Even more alarming for reformers, in the case of the Chinatown café waitresses, was the interracial aspect. As McMaster argues, the fact that working women and Chinese men inhabited a mutual space in the labour market was regarded by the media as a ““vile condition”... and this had a strong effect on how the working girl came to be represented – in the West more than elsewhere in Canada – as a symbol of imperilled whiteness.”<sup>25</sup>

The waitresses involved in the Chinatown café dispute in Vancouver, however, were neither the innocent young things nor the depraved trollops that moral reformers and the police had construed. It was true that these women were generally young, their average age being 22. However, most had already been working for years, since they were 18 or 19. Out of the thirty waitresses who protested to City Council in the fall of

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<sup>23</sup> Dominique Clément, ““I Believe in Human Rights, Not Women’s Rights”: Women and the Human Rights State, 1969-1984,” *Radical History Review* 101 (Spring 2008): 111.

<sup>24</sup> Carolyn Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880—1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 53—88; McMaster, *Working Girls*, 88—120.

<sup>25</sup> McMaster, *Working Girls*, 147.

1937, one-third of them were married and most had children.<sup>26</sup> These were not the single, unattached women who dominated the female workforce in the early twentieth century, and who were the targets of earlier social reform campaigns. The fact that some of these waitresses were married and all had dependants who were, in most cases, children, presents a challenge to conventional interpretations of moral reform activity in Canada that focus on the single working woman.<sup>27</sup> As Lynn Weiner has shown in the American context, by the 1930s young, single, working women had become somewhat acceptable, while the working mother or wife surfaced as a new point of contention. The perceived problem, which became a hot topic in public debate, pertained to the “consequences of a woman’s employment outside the home on the physical and psychological health of her young children.”<sup>28</sup> While the early stirrings of this demographic shift is also apparent in Vancouver, established perceptions of white

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<sup>26</sup> The Vancouver Sun, 12 October 1937; The Province, 14 October 1937.

<sup>27</sup> McMaster defines the ‘average working girl’ in her study according to Linda Kealey’s description of “young, single, and in the labour force only until marriage or family responsibilities precluded further wage work.” Although she does briefly acknowledge a growing segment of the female workers as married, and the presence of divorced and widowed women, she gives even less consideration to working mothers. Marianna Valverde similarly argues that the sexual morality of young, single women was the central target of the social purity movement. Lynn Weiner’s study of shifts in the female work force in the United States presents the insightful argument that the labour force shifted from being dominated by single young girls to wives and mothers after the Second World War. Her main focus, however, is on those middle class women who chose to work out of a desire to improve their standards of living. McMaster, *Working Girls*; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991); and Lynn Y. Weiner, *From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labour Force in the United States, 1920—1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

<sup>28</sup> Weiner, *From Working Girl*, 98—9.

women that emerged out of earlier reform campaigns with single young women at their core, particularly the white slavery panic, persisted.<sup>29</sup>

In the early twentieth century, white slavery narratives were being published prolifically by moral reformers, through church publications as well as secular newspapers and magazines. Although both the police and the Immigration Department pointed to the sensationalizing and exaggerated character of the media's white slavery narratives, they all agreed that Canadian women were endangered by the proximity of American cities and the influence of American women of loose moral character who crossed the border into Canadian cities. For example, in 1910, the Immigration Department made a public statement denying the charge "that Montreal was a receiving port for British immigrant girls of immoral character," and that British immigration was not the problem. Instead, the Department charged that the problem of immorality stemmed from the cities, and women coming into Canada from the United States.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, a 1908 report by immigration officials and the Chief Constables of Victoria, New Westminster, and Vancouver concluded that in the interest of curbing prostitution in these cities, inspectors were necessary at the United States-

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<sup>29</sup> For an account of the intellectual underpinnings of the white slavery panic in Canada through an examination of the social purity movement, see Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*. For more on the white slavery panic in Canada, see also J.G. Shearer, *Canada's War on the White Slave Trade* (Toronto: The Board of Moral and Social Reform, 1912); BCARS, GR-1547, Immigration Department, RG76 Vol. 569 File 813739, Reel B1242, "Report of the Standing Committee on Equal Moral Standard and Prevention of Traffic in Women," 22 July 1913.

<sup>30</sup> Montreal Herald, 4 August 1910.

Canadian border, “where nine-tenths of the undesirable classes, and I may say the scum of the Western country, drift in here from across the line.”<sup>31</sup>

In the winter of 1907, following the first international agreement concerning the trafficking of women and children, Detective Edward Foster of the Dominion Police travelled from Ottawa to Vancouver by rail. From December of that year until February of the following year, he was engaged by the federal Department of Immigration to clear the cities of Vancouver and Victoria of “immoral women.”<sup>32</sup> Within three months, Foster managed to relieve Vancouver of eighty American prostitutes by deporting these women back to the United States.<sup>33</sup> Foster’s work was part of an ongoing campaign by the Immigration Department to clear these Western cities of undesirable immigrants under a new provision to the Immigration Act which came into effect in 1906. This provision allowed for the expeditious deportation of undesirables who had been in Canada for less than two years. Under the provision, ‘undesirables’ were defined as:

... those who are feeble-minded, idiotic, epileptic, insane, paupers, destitute, professional beggars, vagrants, public charges or likely to become such, those afflicted with a loathsome disease or convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude, prostitutes or those who procure or attempt to bring into Canada prostitutes or women for immoral

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<sup>31</sup> BCARS, GR-1547 Reel B1136 File 741425, Letter from R.G. Chamberlain, Chief Constable, Vancouver, to A.B. Munro, Medical Inspector and Immigration Agent, Vancouver, 11 January 1908.

<sup>32</sup> BCARS, GR-1547 Reel B1136 File 741425, Letter to Detective Edward Foster from L.M. Fortier for the Superintendent of Immigration, 18 November 1907; Letter to Foster from W.D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration, 5 February 1908.

<sup>33</sup> BCARS, GR-1547 Reel B1136 File 741425, Letter to W.D. Scott from A.S. Munro, Medical Inspector and Immigration Agent, Vancouver, 12 February 1908.

purposes.<sup>34</sup>

It would appear that under the Immigration Act, non-Canadian prostitutes were seen as being irredeemably depraved, with deportation as the only option despite a heavy demand for women in the West at this time.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, for reformers, Canadian women who had fallen by the wayside, ended up as prostitutes in American cities, and been deported back to Canada as undesirables were seen as being in need of refuge, protection, and salvation.<sup>36</sup>

One year before Foster's appointment in the West, Dupont Street in Vancouver was the hub of the city's vice district. Following a police crackdown, the red light district relocated to Canton Alley and Shanghai Alley, the heart of Vancouver's Chinatown.<sup>37</sup> In 1907, police raided these two streets, as well as Harris Street, which was also a part of the Chinatown district, and rounded up 37 American women for deportation. The women were ordered to go, but "instead of leaving they simply scattered all over the city," and left the police department scrambling to "drive them back into the [Chinese] district."<sup>38</sup> Despite agitation by the C.B.A. and other leaders of the Chinese community

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<sup>34</sup> BCARS, GR-1547 Reel B1136 File 741425, Report by Obed. Smith, Commissioner of Immigration, re: Deportation of Undesirable Immigrants, 19 December 1907—11 January 1908.

<sup>35</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the economic and social demand for women in the Canadian West, see McMaster, *Working Women in the West*.

<sup>36</sup> Shearer, *Canada's War*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Daniel Francis, *Red Light Neon: A History of Vancouver's Sex Trade* (Vancouver: Subway Books, 2006) 27; Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 73—105.

<sup>38</sup> BCARS, GR-1547 Reel B1136 File 741425, Letter from A.S. Munro, Medical Inspector and Immigration Agent, Vancouver, to R.G. Chamberlain, Chief Constable, Vancouver, 27 December 1907; Letter from Chamberlain to Munro, 11 January 1908.

to clean up the area, the city did little to remedy the situation. Unable to expel the prostitutes, police and government officials were only able to restrict the physical boundaries of the brothels. This spatial congruence between Chinatown and the red light district continued throughout the first half of the twentieth century, reinforcing conceptual associations between race and sexual vice for many white residents of Vancouver. The image of the Chinese man as sexual predator provided a convenient catalyst to the notion of the innocent young girls turned fallen women.

The mindset established by this international campaign, the social purity movement in Canada and the white slavery panic persisted to some degree into the 1930s in Vancouver. The police, under the leadership of Colonel W.W. Foster, drew justification for their actions in the fall of 1937 from the rhetoric of moral reform. As part of his evidence against the six cafés whose licences were revoked, Foster presented abstracts from police diaries dating from 1935 to 1937. Although there were only 9 incidents of alleged prostitution recorded over the course of 3 years, and none of these convictions, it was enough to justify police action, demonstrating the widespread acceptance of the images of sexually corrupt Chinese man and the vulnerable white woman. Even more compelling is the fact that of the nine incidents recorded in these diaries, three cases were described simply as a white woman “living with a Chinese man,” with no mention, proof or evidence of illicit sexual activity whatsoever.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> VCA, Vancouver Mayor Series 483, 33-D-6, File 4, Vancouver City Police Department Report, 18 September 1937.

The Chinatown waitresses continued to protest their loss of employment, appearing before City Council again in the spring of 1939. In response, Colonel Foster presented a letter to the Mayor written by a woman who had allegedly fallen prey to the corrupting influence of Chinese men. In this letter, he reports the experience of an innocent young girl from Winnipeg, who moved to Vancouver in search of work, ended up in a Chinatown Café on Pender Street, and with the help of “a bottle of White Horse Whisky” brought to her by a “Chinaman,” turned inveterate prostitute within the course of three weeks.<sup>40</sup> Foster’s response is significant because it clearly follows the language and form of the white slavery narratives published by moral reformers twenty years prior. In other words, these same concerns about the morality of women were maintained by the Police Department and many city officials in the 1930s. This conflict demonstrates the enduring strength of what James Walker has defined as “common sense,” or a prevailing mentality, that becomes entrenched in law even after that mentality begins to change.<sup>41</sup>

The conflict over the employment of white women by Chinese men tells us much about the effectiveness of race-based equality rights discourse in the interwar period in Vancouver. The encounter between race, gender, and class was played out in the details of the events that took place in 1937, and in the larger stories that can be teased out from these details. During the interwar period, the Chinese were not entirely barred from the status of Canadian national or citizen, nor were white women.

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<sup>40</sup> VCA, Vancouver Mayor Series 483, 33-F-3, File 11, Letter from Foster to Mayor, 29 April, 1939.

<sup>41</sup> James St. George Walker, “The Quong Wing Files” in *On the Case: Explorations in Social History*, Ed. Franca Iacovetta and Wendy Mitchinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 217.



However, citizenship for each of these groups was partial, and was not yet synonymous with political equality or full civil rights. For white working women, race, gender, and class considerations structured the nature of their experience as Canadians such that the duty of the state to protect their race and gender superseded their rights to employment, and, in the uneasy economic milieu of the Depression, compromised their ability to survive. Whiteness, in this case, imposed restrictions on those designated as such. In contrast, the shifting perceptions of race in relation to the category of Chinese gave some political clout to the Chinese restaurant owners during this dispute that the waitresses did not have.

### **Conclusion**

This account of Chinatown's white waitresses reveals two of the limitations of race-based rights rhetoric. First, human rights rhetoric in the postwar era failed to address women's rights as part of its agenda.<sup>42</sup> As Dominique Clément has pointed out, "Western human rights norms were based on a "false universalism"" whereby "states failed to recognize women's difference as a basis for unequal treatment."<sup>43</sup> Second, human rights discourse isolates racial categories and links race to culture, thereby promoting the notion of racial essentialism and excluding individuals who do not conform to established racial or cultural standards. This is because the politics of

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<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Shirley Tillotson, "Human Rights Law as Prism: Women's Organizations, Unions, and Ontario's Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act, 1951." *Canadian Historical Review* 72:4 (1991): 532-557.

<sup>43</sup> Clément, "'I Believe in Human Rights,'" 112.

ethnicity and indigenism during the interwar period was selective, and human rights rhetoric was an expression of one reality – but was not, as this rhetoric proclaims, universal. This account of interwar Chinatown shows how, despite claims of universalism, inter-group solidarity was limited by a rhetoric of rights that was dependent on rigidly defined racial categories and that obscured gender and class inequalities.

## Chapter 10 ~ Conclusion

In the 1920s and 1930s, the city of Vancouver was home to a vibrant race culture that was premised on the myth of a pioneer heritage. This racialized narrative told of an evolutionary struggle occurring within, between white and Indian, and implied an invasion from without, by the alien Oriental.<sup>1</sup> So forceful was the clash between these three races along the Pacific Northwest Coast during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that by the end of the Second World War, the race politics of British Columbia held center stage in the national theatre. As such, this study of race and rights in Vancouver in the interwar years comprises more than a representation of events common to Canadian cities in this period. The intensity of Vancouver's race culture meant that the influence of debates originating out of both Vancouver's City Hall and the provincial legislature in Victoria became key influences on national processes pertaining to race relations in the second half of the twentieth century. Racialization in Vancouver in this period was a highly political process, and a study of this process gives rise to two broad conclusions. First, this time and place – Vancouver during the interwar period – was one key point of origin for modern Canadian rights politics. Second, understanding the particular way that race was politicized in Vancouver in this period

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Anne McClintock's notion that imperialism relegates indigenous peoples to an anachronistic space and time, Sherene Razack describes this mythology as one where "if Aboriginal peoples are consigned forever to an earlier space and time, people of colour are scripted as late arrivals, coming to the shores of North America long after much of the development has occurred." Sherene Razack, *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002), 3.

corrects a fundamental problem in present-day Canadian race historiography and politics, namely the isolation of racial categories.

Much of the current literature on race and rights in Canada reinforces a conventional chronology that situates the emergence of race-based rights politics after the Second World War. In the first chapter of *A History of Human Rights in Canada*, Ross Lambertson explains the logic behind this chronology through a historiographical assessment.<sup>2</sup> He concludes that resistance to discrimination in Canada in the pre-1945 era did occur, but only as isolated incidents, products of “subcultural isolationism.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, Lambertson uses the criterion of group advocacy and intergroup solidarity to determine the absence of an interwar human rights discourse. This dissertation contributes to the story of human rights in Canada by showing how racialization was a precursor to the group advocacy and inter-group solidarity that flourished in the post-war era.

Racial equality as a rights norm in human rights discourse was also dependent on the universalist language that emerged during the interwar period, in the ideologies of pan-Indianism, the *Huáqíáo* tradition, and the Christian principle of the brotherhood of humanity. This discourse, which in its specific combination of these elements was a product of regionally specific circumstances, represents the genesis of an inter-ethnic/racial/cultural solidarity in Canada. Lambertson inadvertently points to the political significance of resistance in British Columbia, when he cites the Society of

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<sup>2</sup> Ross Lambertson, “Domination and Dissent” in *A History of Human Rights in Canada*, ed. Janet Miron (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2009): 11-24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Friends of the Indians of British Columbia and the Sikhs' Khalsa Diwan society as exceptions to the rule of "subcultural isolationism" – without noting that half of his exceptions come out of British Columbia. This dissertation demonstrates that Lambertson's discussion of "individual" resistance and what he calls "exceptions to [the] rule of subcultural isolationism" can be read as a more cohesive narrative.<sup>4</sup>

The established chronology and approach to human rights history also unintentionally reinforces rigid racial categories and identities – and thus reproduces "subcultural isolationism." There are several reasons for this tendency. First, histories of race are often interpreted by scholars as a top down imposition of power by one racialized group, and the correlating suppression of rights of another group. This is, in part, a result of the second formative influence on this body of literature. The notion of agency is relatively recent in the historiography, and integrating historical agency into histories of oppression poses certain problems which scholars continue to struggle with. The most persistent and striking of these is the essentializing of racial identity, whereby scholars, in articulating racialization, reproduce that process of racialization by writing it.<sup>5</sup> Third, the literature often follows a Marxist argument which obscures the complexity of race politics, and sees race as a tool of class power rather than as a historical

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> This paradox is similar to the one discussed by Denise Riley in *"Am I That Name?": Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). In this interpretation of feminism, Riley argues that the naming and use of the category of 'women' by feminists in order to challenge patriarchy, serves to reinforce oppression by reproducing those categories that enable structural oppression.

determinant in and of itself.<sup>6</sup> Finally, scholars have tended to naturalize the concept of race rather than problematizing race, and as a result have generally accepted that immigrant and indigenous histories were fundamentally different.<sup>7</sup>

This dissertation contributes to the historiographies of both race and rights, and to the broader history of citizenship in Canada by addressing some of these conceptual puzzles that have been raised through the collective works of a wide-ranging scholarly community. What this study of Vancouver clearly shows is that the way previously marginalized racial identities were constructed and used by activists, community leaders, politicians, reformers, and intellectuals changed in the early twentieth century, from being predominantly a tool of oppression to becoming a means of asserting rights of citizenship. This process of redefinition was influenced by international currents. Whiteness, like the marginalized identities of Indian and Oriental, was also articulated as a defense of rights, and was similarly shaped by local as well as international politics. The path that race-based rights followed in Canada, of course, was that blazed by the Aboriginal and Chinese Canadian activists described in this thesis, rather than those proponents of white supremacy. Race-based rights in Canada were thus premised on a contradictory conceptual foundation. This was one that simultaneously asserted universal rights and human equality, while at the same time assuming fundamental differences within humanity and the existence of natural racial essences.

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<sup>6</sup> See Introduction, 19-23, above.

<sup>7</sup> See *Ibid.*, 23-24, above.

Despite the common notion of universality found in both early Aboriginal and Chinese Canadian activism, these two movements diverged from their very inception. The politicization of the Chinese Canadian community in Vancouver was closely aligned with notions of Canadian citizenship, and was based on an established tradition which asserted the transnational rights of migratory cultures and communities. In contrast, the politicization of the Aboriginal community in Vancouver was centered on the notion of indigenism, of attachment to place since time immemorial. As a result, discussions of Aboriginal rights had to be carried out on different terms, outside of the citizenship regime, and through pan-Indian strategies. Indigenism meant that Aboriginal rights were excluded from mainstream Canadian human rights discourses in the immediate postwar period, but this exclusion (like the Chinese community's assertion of inclusion into the debate over definition of Canadian citizenship and rights) was not entirely imposed. Instead, Aboriginal leaders like Andrew Paull and activists like Thomas Whaun and Foon Sien Wong made strategic choices about how to deal with a common subjection to racism. These individuals laid the groundwork for both race-based equality and indigenous rights activism on a national scale in the postwar period.

At the same time, organizations like the Institute for Pacific Relations, and scholars like H.F. Angus and Hugh Wesley Dobson, advocated the necessity for stable domestic race-relations in order to establish beneficial international trade relations with Pacific Rim countries. This small but highly influential circle of academics was undoubtedly motivated by economic interests, but their work was also a response to activism from within marginalized and racialized communities in Vancouver. A common

rhetoric of universal rights was articulated in the early I.P.R. publications, by Angus and Dobson, as well by other key political actors on the national stage from Vancouver who were associated with this circle, most notably Grace and Angus McInnis, Chief Dan George, and Douglas Jung. This rhetoric was regionally specific, but had a substantial impact on both the histories of race and of rights in this country that far exceeded the boundaries of Vancouver, or even of British Columbia.

By the 1970s, partly as a result of persistent activism from First Nations and “ethnic minorities” based on this rhetoric that argued for universal citizenship rights regardless of racial difference, the Canadian federal government took up the task of recognizing these types of rights. In terms of policy, this recognition was embodied in the 1969 *White Paper*, the 1982 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and, eventually, through multiculturalism policy. Multiculturalism policy was born out of the recommendations of the 1969-1971 *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, an attempt by Trudeau’s government to address the issue of Quebec nationalism. However, in practice, multiculturalism policy developed in such a way that by the 1980s, it primarily functioned as a means of supporting the integration of “non-Charter ethnic groups” into Canadian society. Multiculturalism is now defined as “ethnic diversity,” and is deemed to be “integral to Canadian society.”<sup>8</sup> This citizenship strategy, created and maintained by the state, seeks to simultaneously establish equality while encouraging and reinforcing difference. Differences are defined ambiguously and somewhat interchangeably as “racial,” “ethnic,” and “cultural.” Multiculturalism policy

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<sup>8</sup> Marc Leman, “Canadian Multiculturalism” (Canada, Political and Social Affairs Division, 1999), 3.



has been primarily implemented through various ‘initiatives,’ some intended to combat racial discrimination and others to protect and promote cultural identity.

One key criticism of multiculturalism policy in Canada is that it is “divisive because it emphasizes what is different, rather than the values that are Canadian,” and thus compromises any unified sense of Canadian nationalism.<sup>9</sup> Many contemporary scholars and political commentators have observed the various limitations of multiculturalism policy, and there is a convincing argument to be made against the validity of this notion. The interpretation of Canadian history offered in this dissertation contributes to that discussion by locating in one of the origins of human rights consciousness a similar issue. In the concept of rights described in this thesis, the human rights movement is based on a historical paradox, whereby the activism which gave rise to this movement was heavily constrained from its genesis. This constraint was a result of the fact that strategies of resistance in this place and time period relied on conceptual origins that were embedded in colonial discourses and institutions.

This paradox reappears in multiculturalism. The parallel is strikingly articulated in the 2005 documentary film produced by Anne Marie Nakagawa called *Between: Living in the Hyphen*. The film examines the contradictions of multiculturalism in Canada through Nakagawa’s interviews with “multi-ethnic Canadians.”<sup>10</sup> One character muses that “multiculturalism never imagined someone like me...” This assertion holds two

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Anne Marie Nakagawa, *Between: Living in the Hyphen*. 43 minutes 43 seconds. National Film Board, 2005. These individuals are identified as “multi-ethnic” because they have one biological parent from a European background, and one from a visible minority background.

important historical implications. First, that multiculturalism in Canada is based on a conception of Canadian *heritage*, which implies a tradition premised on moral beliefs and values – rather than history.<sup>11</sup> Canadian heritage, as this dissertation has shown, includes the pioneer myth, and the racialized narrative of a white settler society. As *Between* reveals, elements of this tradition can still be identified in present-day conceptions of Canadian citizenship. Second, multiculturalism relies on rigid racial/ethnic/cultural categories because to deny these distinctions would require a denial of both history as well as the conventional rhetoric of human rights. The present study has demonstrated that the same paradox can be found in processes of racialization that occurred in the interwar period. The impact of this paradox, now as then, is pointedly articulated in the opening narration of the film, in the words of poet Fred Wah:

Better watch out for the crow, better watch out for the goat, that's the mix, the breed, the half breed, métis, quarter breed, trace of a breed, true demi semi ethnic polluted rootless living technicolour snarl to complicate the underbelly Panavision of racism and bigotry across this country. I know, you're going to say that's just being Canadian... Canadian isn't a racial identity... quite a soup, Heinz 57 varieties, there's a whole bunch of us who've grown up as resident aliens, living in the hyphen...<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Canada, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982). Section 27 of the Charter states: "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." This clause has provided the foundation for multicultural policy in Canada since 1982.

<sup>12</sup> Nakagawa, *Between*.

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