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**WORK, WAGES AND WELFARE IN ABORIGINAL-NON-ABORIGINAL RELATIONS,
BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1849-1970**

by

John S. Lutz

**Thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Ph.D. degree in History**

Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa

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ISBN 0-612-04879-9

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ABSTRACT
WORK, WAGES AND WELFARE IN
ABORIGINAL-NON-ABORIGINAL RELATIONS,
BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1849-1970

John S. Lutz
University of Ottawa, 1994.

Supervisor:
Professor Chad Gaffield.

This dissertation focuses on the work-for-pay exchange between aboriginal people and immigrants of European stock -- the two most prominent cultural groups in the early history of British Columbia -- and follows the patterns of this exchange from its origins through to the 1970s. It examines both the material and the rhetorical construction of the "Indian" as a part of British Columbia's labour force, a process described as *racialization*, and emphasizes, as well, the transformation of meaning inherent in cross-cultural exchange. It is a province-wide analysis, the core of which is a micro-history of one aboriginal group, the Songhees people, who live in the area now occupied by Victoria, the capital city.

This examination challenges the long-standing view that aboriginal people were bystanders in the economic development and industrialization of British Columbia outside, and after, the fur trade. From the establishment of the Colony of Vancouver Island in 1849, through Confederation with Canada in 1871 and to the 1885 completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, aboriginal people comprised the majority of the population in present-day British Columbia, and the majority of the work force in agriculture, fishing, trapping and the burgeoning primary industries.

This dissertation charts the subsequent decline in participation of aboriginal people in the capitalist economy from 1885 to 1970. Using a micro-historical study and close attention to aboriginal voices it offers a set of explanations for the changing proportions of work, both paid and unpaid, and state welfare payments.

The micro-history reveals that the Songhees people engaged in two distinct but connected economies and were already familiar with forms of labour subordination prior to the European introduction of a capitalist economy. The Songhees participation in paid labour for Europeans was facilitated by these existing forms of labour organization and depended on the co-existence of their other economies; the Songhees used earnings from capitalist paid labour to expand their non-capitalist economies.

After 1885, new state policies repressed the non-capitalist aboriginal economies and therefore diminished the underlying motivation for aboriginal participation in capitalist work. At the same time, an influx of labour-market competition and a variety of racialized laws and practices restricted the Songhees' ability to get work. Increasingly they were left with seasonal, low-skill and low-wage labour, a niche that maintained them so long as it was combined with a subsistence economy and involved the full participation of adult and adolescent family members.

In the late 1940s and 1950s this pattern too was remade. Legal restrictions dramatically limited the subsistence economies; technological change curtailed the demand for seasonal labour in the canning, fishing and agricultural sectors, particularly affecting aboriginal women workers; and, compulsory schooling regulations began to reduce labour available to the family economy.

At the same historic moment when the combined wage and subsistence economies ceased to be able to support them, the state extended some existing social welfare programs, such as Old Age Pension, to Indians, and expanded other programs, including Family Allowance, to all Canadians.

In examining the patterns of aboriginal-non-aboriginal exchange relations over the long-term, this dissertation argues that high rates of unemployment and welfare-dependency among contemporary aboriginal communities are relatively recent historical phenomena, with observable roots and causes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is both about, and the product of, meaningful and often unequal exchanges. I have benefitted disproportionately from the intellectual generosity of many people and the financial generosity of several organizations over the course of this project. It is a pleasure to acknowledge these debts.

Foremost among these is an enormous debt to Chad Gaffield who introduced me to scholarship in the several meanings of that word. Particularly, Chad revealed to me the insights of social history, taught me the critical evaluation of evidence, when I already thought I had learned these things, and pushed me to do a better job.

While Chad's support, advice and encouragement brought me through the doctoral program in one piece, and are responsible for that which is innovative in this dissertation, Peter Baskerville is responsible for bringing me to a position where I could consider a doctorate. I am one of many inspired to pursue a scholarly career by the work, example and encouragement, of Chad and Peter. I feel privileged to have had them as mentors.

Other scholars who have been particularly generous with their support and ideas, and who have taught and inspired me along this path include Jacques Barbier, Donald Davis, Jim Hendrickson, Cole Harris, Cornelius Jaenen, Ian MacPherson and Eric Sager.

Many including Peter Baskerville, Cairn Crockford, Lorne Hammond, James Hendrickson, Grant Keddie, Sylvia Olson and Bonnie Thompson have unstintingly given me access to their research in progress. These same people along with Jean Barman, Douglas Cole, Ken Coates, Bob Galois, Richard Mackie and Pat Roy have suggested and lent source material and made valuable suggestions.

The University of Ottawa has supported me financially and institutionally through much of my doctoral program while my friends there made it a stimulating and pleasant place to work. Liz Coombs, Barry Cottam, Michel Girard, Lorne Hammond, Marcel Martel, Lorna McLean, Wayne Melvin, and Bill Shannon all deserve special mention. Liz has not only put up with me, but also, put me up, more times than I would like to remind her of.

At the University of Washington, Richard White and John Finlay have been helpful beyond the call of duty and Sasha Harmon has read chapters of my dissertation and shared chapters of her own. In the last few months, I have benefitted immensely from an affiliation with the University of British Columbia. There Dan Clayton, Dan Marshall, Derek Gregory, and Cole Harris have significantly muddied my thinking. Some of that mud has fallen into this thesis.

Many staff at the National Archives and the British Columbia Archives and Record Service have earned my thanks and appreciation, but none more than Brian Young in Victoria. Ernie Fraser at the National Archives patiently reviewed tens, perhaps hundreds, of meters of Indian Affairs documents in a cooperative and timely fashion that ought to be a model for the relationship between researchers and access-to-information officers. Dennis Maddill and his colleague Wendy Nixon at the Department of Indian Affairs, Historical Research Branch have made my research and that of many others so much easier and more pleasant than it otherwise would be.

For sharing their enthusiasm, stimulating ideas, research and kind spirits, Colin Coates, Larry Hannant, Craig Heron, Ruth Sandwell and Sylvia Olsen have been model scholars and friends who have provided me examples to aspire to. Colin's help and humour have added so much joy to this journey. Jenny Sherman, came to dinner and stayed to edit several chapters, now improved by her Tasmanian perspective. Gary Carleton has generously made his computer expertise and facilities available, over and over again.

The happy fact that most of the debts I have racked up have been intellectual and personal, not financial, is the result of the faith of those people who have refereed innumerable grant applications and a number of funding agencies. In particular I wish to thank the British Columbia Heritage Trust, the University of Ottawa, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies and the Canada-United States Fulbright Program for funding different parts of my research.

For reading and revising every page of this dissertation, only to have me mess-up each one again, for encouragement, faith, love and sharing of insight, my ultimate debt and thanks for the most meaningful of exchanges, is to Cheryl Coull.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES	ix
SECTION I	1
CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL CONVERSATIONS	1
CHAPTER 2: BEYOND THE PALE: MAKING RACE	34
SECTION II: PAID WORK IN THE IMMIGRANT ECONOMY, 1849-1970	52
CHAPTER 3: OUTSIDE HISTORY: LABOURERS OF THE ABORIGINAL PROVINCE, 1843-1885	54
CHAPTER 4: CHANGING PATTERNS, 1885-1970	96
SECTION III: THE SONGHEES	143
CHAPTER 5: OF REEF NETS, CAMAS PATCHES, AND POTLATCHES	148
CHAPTER 6: IN THE COMET'S WAKE	168
CHAPTER 7: WORK AND THE RESERVE ARMY OF THE UNEMPLOYED, 1885-1970	205
CHAPTER 8: THE OTHER ECONOMIES: SUBSISTENCE, PRESTIGE AND WELFARE	253
CHAPTER 9: FAMILIES, GENDER AND AGE: THE ORGANIZATION OF HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION	278
SECTION IV	315
CHAPTER 10: THE "WHITE PROBLEM" -- THE STATE AND LIMITATION OF ABORIGINAL ECONOMIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA	315
CHAPTER 11: UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES	345
BIBLIOGRAPHY	354
APPENDIX 1: PAID AND SUBSISTENCE WORK DESCRIBED IN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC SOURCES	378

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE I:	Number of aboriginal coal miners at the Nanaimo mines, 1875-1888	71
FIGURE II:	Number and income of British Columbia aboriginal people involved in the sealing industry, 1882-1910	105
FIGURE III:	Value of trapped fur in British Columbia, 1923-1970 and registered Indian income from trapping and hunting, 1923-1945	108
FIGURE IV:	Number of coastal salmon canneries operating in British Columbia by region	111
FIGURE V:	Aboriginal people employed in canneries by A.B.C. Packers selected years, 1906-1960	114
FIGURE VI:	Number and percentage of fishing licenses held by, and fishing boats operated by, aboriginal people. 1922-1973	116
FIGURE VII:	Income of registered Indians by category, 1898-1945	132
FIGURE VIII:	Songhees population, 1850-1970	167
FIGURE IX:	Payroll of the Empire Cannery, Esquimalt, 1941-1953	241
FIGURE X:	Cowichan Agency relief payments and recipients, quarterly, 1960-1961	248

LIST OF MAPS

MAP I:	Overview of aboriginal British Columbia, 1885	59
MAP II:	Territories of the Songhees	149
MAP III:	Songhees Reserves, Victoria urban area	224

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE I:	Aboriginal and non-aboriginal population estimates for British Columbia, 1835-1901	61
TABLE II:	Average rates of pay, various occupations in British Columbia, 1860-1890	87
TABLE III:	Indian total and working age population in British Columbia	101
TABLE IV:	Relative importance of sources of income, British Columbia Indians, selected years, 1898-1954	115
TABLE V:	Occupations of British Columbia Indians from the federal census and <i>Indians of British Columbia</i> , 1931-1961	124
TABLE VI:	Aboriginal people employed by British Columbia industries, 1940-1945	136
TABLE VII:	Occupations of the Songhees in 1891	213
TABLE VIII:	Occupations of the Songhees in 1910	222
TABLE IX:	Families with wage earners as heads, Indians and non-Indians, Victoria and Esquimalt-Saanich, 1961	249
TABLE X:	Monthly relief payments to non-Indians and Indians, 1916	266
TABLE XI:	Monthly relief ration per Indian family, 1931	268

SECTION I

CHAPTER 1:

HISTORICAL CONVERSATIONS

The Indians generally have views peculiar to the country as to the value of money.
James Lenihan, Indian Agent, 1876¹

We work for our money and like to spend it as we please, in gathering our friends together; now whenever we travel we find friends; the "potlatch" does that.
Delegation of Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs, 1884²

This thesis is about change and exchange. It is an historical study of a particular kind of exchange -- work for pay -- and its connections with changing patterns of *race*, family, and economy in a region of North America characterized by a large aboriginal population and a mix of immigrant groups. My examination focuses, specifically, on the work-for-pay exchange between aboriginal people and immigrants of European stock, the two most prominent cultural groups in the early history of British Columbia, and follows the patterns of this exchange from its origins through to the 1970s. It is both a regional analysis of British Columbia and a micro-history of the Songhees people living in the area now occupied by Victoria, the province's capital.

As a theme, *exchange* is at the heart of many of the interactions between aboriginal North Americans and Europeans. Even before these peoples had ways to converse, they established connections based on the trading of goods, a relationship that formed the foundation for more complex

¹ Canada. Parliament, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, (hereafter Cda. S.P.) 1877 vol. 9, p. 38.

² Speaking to Indian Agent Harry Guillod, quoted in Cda. S.P. 1885, vol. 3, p. 101.

exchanges: wage labour, treaties, conversation and marriage, to name only a few. Viral, genetic and biological exchange accompanied these new interactions.³

Of all these kinds of exchange, I have focused on "work for pay" for two key reasons. First, this type of exchange -- aboriginal work for pay, or the lack of it -- is central to an understanding of the European capitalist expansion into British Columbia and is at the centre of a discussion about the place of aboriginal people in Canadian society. There is a widespread belief that, in this part of the world, aboriginal people remained outside the capitalist economy brought by the Europeans. This view, is reflected in Noel Dyck's recent assertion that:

Unlike other colonial settings, the exploitation of aboriginal people's labour has not been a primary feature of Euro-Canadian settlement. Continuous reliance upon Indian labour by Euro-Canadians has seldom, if ever, occurred. This situation is quite different from that of colonial regimes...where the exploitation of native labour was from the outset a fundamental feature of the economy.⁴

Dyck supports the same point as Robin Fisher's pioneering work on aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations in British Columbia. Fisher argued that with the 1858 gold rush, the colonies which comprise modern British Columbia changed from "...colonies of exploitation, which made use of indigenous manpower, to colonies of settlement, where the Indians became at best, irrelevant...."⁵

³ For the biological exchanges see particularly, Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: the Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and *The Columbian Exchange, Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1972). So entangled did the indigenous and the immigrants become, particularly through intermarriage, that, after a certain point, distinguishing the categories "aboriginal" and "non-aboriginal" requires examination in its own right. Chapter 2 explores the categories of Indian and half-breed in more detail.

⁴ Noel Dyck, *What is the Indian 'Problem': Tutelage and Resistance in Canadian Indian Administration* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1991) p. 29, 165n; see also David McNally, "Political Economy Without a Working Class," *Labour/Le Travail* 25 (Spring 1990), 220n.

⁵ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1977, reprinted 1992), 96.

It is easy to link the post-gold rush "irrelevant Indian" with current reports of high unemployment and high rates of welfare dependency⁶. It is easy to assume, (as surveys show many Canadians do), that ever since the fur trade, aboriginal people have been side-lined on reserves collecting government hand-outs.⁷ These assumptions, based on an interpretation of the past, are playing a prominent role in current policy debate. Recently, Chief Justice Allan McEachern used a variant of this same view as part of his decision to deny aboriginal title in a landmark court case: "[Aboriginal people] were not as industrious in the new economic climate as was thought to be necessary by the newcomers in the Colony....They became a conquered people, not by force of arms...but by an invading culture and a relentless energy with which they would not, or could not compete."⁸ As a focal point for historical analysis, aboriginal work for pay has particular contemporary resonance.

The second reason for choosing to focus on work for pay is that this particular exchange links together the extension of European colonialism with the social history of aboriginal people. The study of paid work has, until recently, been quite isolated from social history and native studies.⁹ Now, increasingly, *social* and *labour* historians are discovering that home and work are not unrelated "spheres" -- that exchange at the workplace is linked to, and often dependent upon, production and exchange at home. The dependence of individuals on wage work and their power as sellers of labour

⁶ Contemporary studies confirm that the labour force participation rates of aboriginal British Columbians are lower, while unemployment and welfare dependency rates are higher, than those of non-aboriginal people; D. Rodney Smelser, *Labour Market Paper: Natives* (Vancouver: Employment and Immigration Canada, Economic Services Branch, B.C. Yukon Region, 1991) p. 7; A.J. Siggner and C. Locatelli, *An overview of demographic, social and economic conditions among British Columbia's registered Indian population*, (Ottawa: DIAND. Corporate Policy, Research Branch, 1980) 36, 39.

⁷ Katie Cooke, *Images of Indians Held by Non-Indians: A Review of Current Canadian Research* (Ottawa: Research Branch, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1984).

⁸ Chief Justice Allan McEachern, *Reasons for Judgement: Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia*, (Supreme Court of British Columbia, 1991) p. 129.

⁹ For a discussion of the "rapprochement" between labour history and other aspects of social history see Bettina Bradbury, "Women's History and Working Class History," *Labour/Le Travail*, 19 (1987), 24-25.

power, hinged on their race, gender and household situation. Having several productive members in the household meant individuals and families were less vulnerable in the workplace.¹⁰ The degree to which the household participated in a subsistence economy also dramatically affected how the household functioned in the labour market.¹¹ In a reciprocal way, familial relations in the household conditioned how individuals arrived at the door of their workplace, and workplace conditions influenced relationships in households.¹² The work-for-pay exchange is therefore an excellent focus for a study of a wide range of social relationships.¹³

The phrase "work for pay" encompasses a range of capitalist relations including, but not limited to, wage labour. In pre-1858 British Columbia most payment for labour and small-scale commodity production such as trapping, fishing or agriculture for a capitalist market, (which I consider as work for pay in this context) was made in goods. After the gold rush and an influx of currency, work was commonly paid for in cash -- in wages or as a "piece-rate".

¹⁰ E. Pleck, "Two Worlds in One: Work and the Family," *Journal of Social History*, 10 (1976) pp. 178-195; for recent Canadian treatments of this issue see Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men and Change in Two Industrial Towns 1880-1950*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990), particularly pp. 77-95; Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993).

¹¹ N. Redclift and E. Mingione, *Beyond Employment: Household, Gender and Subsistence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1985); Phillip Wood, "Barriers to Capitalist Development in Maritime Canada, 1870-1930: A Comparative Perspective," in P. Baskerville, ed. *Canadian Papers in Business History*, (Victoria: Public History Group, 1989) pp. 33-58.

¹² The dynamic relationships between household structure and industrializing capitalism are developed in Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners*, particularly pp. 77-96 and 187-205; for early work in this field see Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, *Women, Work and the Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978); Tamara Harevan, *Family Time, Industrial Time: the Relationship between Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, (New York: Cambridge, 1982); Hans Medick, "The proto-industrial family economy: the structural function of household and family during the transition from peasant society to industrial capitalism," *Social History*, 3 (1976) pp. 291-315.

¹³ Including exchanges that we would normally consider as distinctly "non-economic" such as gift exchanges, see Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions in Exchange in Archaic Societies*, (London: Routledge, 1966); a more recent reconsideration is C.A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities*, (London: Academic Press, 1982).

From today's vantage point, work for pay seems to be a straight-forward form of exchange, but labour historians tell us that the wage labour system should not be viewed as a "natural" form of social relations. An intensive period of indoctrination and coercion was necessary in Europe before workers accepted wage labour and an accompanying work ethic.¹⁴ Compared to barter, work for pay was a complicated exchange, involving delayed rewards, subordination, evaluations of the value of labour by the seller and the buyer, acceptance of a common medium of exchange, work discipline and a specialized division of labour.

Yet even the simplest form of exchange -- barter -- is a process that cannot be taken for granted when it involves crossing cultural boundaries. Consider the exchanges of food that took place shortly after the Coast Salish of Burrard Inlet encountered the first sailing ship. Captain George Vancouver, one of those present at this meeting, recorded in his log:

Here we were met by about fifty Indians in canoes, who conducted themselves with great decorum and civility, presenting us with several fish cooked and undressed of a sort...resembling smelt. These good people, finding we were inclined to make some return for their hospitality showed much understanding in preferring iron to copper.... The major part of the canoes twice paddled forward, assembled before us, and each time a conference was held.... The subject matter, which remained a profound secret to us, did not appear to be of an unfriendly nature, as they soon returned, and, if possible, expressed additional cordiality and respect.They possessed no European commodities or trinkets, excepting some rude ornaments apparently made from sheet copper; this circumstance and the general tenor of their behaviour gave us reason to conclude that we were the first white people from a civilized country that they had yet seen.¹⁵

¹⁴ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London, 1968); for American examples see Jonathon Prude, *The Coming of Industrial Order*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983); Anthony Wallace, *Rockdale: the Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978); Merrit Roe Smith, *Harpers Ferry Armory and the new Technology*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

¹⁵ George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World*, W. Kaye Lamb, ed. (London: 1798, reprint, Hakluyt Society, 1984) pp. 581-2; Vancouver indicates that the two groups communicated "with hand signals" and gives details of the signals used with other Salish groups on p. 551.

Consider this Salish account of the same encounter, focusing, like Vancouver's account, on the exchange of goods:

Old people say Indians see first ship they think it an island with three dead trees, might be a schooner, might be a sloop; two masts and bowsprit, sails tied up. Indian braves in about twenty canoes come down Squamish River, go see. Get nearer, see men on island, men have black clothes with high hat coming to point at top. Think most likely black uniform and great coat turned up collar like priest's cowl. Whitemans give Indians ship bisquit Indian not know what bisquit for. Before whitemans come Indians have little balls, not very big; roll them along ground, shot at them with bow and arrow for practice, teach young Indian so as not to miss deer. Indian not know ship's biscuit good to eat, so roll them along ground like little practice balls shoot at them, break them up. Then whitemans on schooner give molasses same time biscuit. Indian not know what it of, so Indian rub on leg for medicine. You know Indian sit on legs for long time in canoe; legs get stiff. Rub molasses on legs make stiffness so bad. Molasses stick legs bottom of canoe".¹⁶

Clearly there are parallels in the two accounts, suggesting the possible existence of some common meanings. For example, both stress the encounter with the unknown: Vancouver mentions his lack of comprehension of the meetings held by the Squamish; the Squamish their lack of understanding about the nature of the ship, the crew's clothing or the items traded. Both were willing to participate in the exchange of goods, both accounts stressed what they received over what they gave, as though what they gave was of little consequence to them.

What is more striking, however, are the conflicting realities, rooted in radically different cultural premises. The Squamish were engaged in a ritual greeting, making speeches and presenting gifts. The explorers were surveying and glad to have the chance to acquire a few fish, not comprehending that the cordial conferences they were being treated to, were welcome speeches.¹⁷ The explorers remembered that the exchange of iron was most significant to the Squamish, but the Squamish

¹⁶ August Jack Khahtsahlano in J.S. Matthews, *Conversations with Khahtsahlano*, (Vancouver: 1933) p. 11; spelling and grammar from Matthews transcription. For a discussion of interpreting such accounts see below.

¹⁷ See also the account of this encounter from Squamish Andrew Paull, in J.S. Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, vol. 2 (Vancouver: 1932) pp. 49-50.

remembered the biscuits and molasses. What had been food to the Europeans became something quite different in the hands of the Squamish. These contrasting interpretations illustrate that exchange is a process involving the transaction and translation of meaning. When goods changed hands, "what they were good for" was also transformed.

It might be tempting to dismiss this second story as an attempt on the part of the Squamish to tell a joke at their own expense, but that would be to miss an important point. To say what was given does not say what was received. The "molasses stick legs" story is just one example among many of how objects in circulation from one culture to another are sometimes, if not regularly, transformed by the act of exchange itself. This type of story recurs frequently in indigenous accounts of first contact in British Columbia, and elsewhere. In Nuu-chah-nulth oral histories, biscuits and molasses were understood to be bones and blood. By one account the Skidegate Haida took soap offered by the traders to be food. At Massett the first axe-head traded was used as an ornament by the wife of the main chief "Coneyca" who suspended it from her neck.¹⁸ Chinese coins, and fancy boxes from the Sandwich Islands, and woollen blankets knitted in the mills of Lancashire, all acquired new meanings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as part of the art and ritual of the indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest.¹⁹

¹⁸ In recording aboriginal traditions of the first arrival of the Dutch at New York, John Heckewelder heard a similar story. The local people suspended the axes and hoes on their breasts as ornaments and used the stockings as tobacco pouches. A story from the Pacific Island of Vanuatu tells of how Europeans left tobacco on the shore to entice the locals, who mistaking the sticky black knobs for pig faeces, were offended and attacked the ship. John Heckewelder, "Indian Tradition of the First Arrival of the Dutch at Manhattan Island, Now New York," *Collections of the New York Historical Society*, (2nd set, 4 vols. (New York, 1841) I, 71-4; Margaret Jolly, "The Forgotten Women: A History of Migrant Labour and Gender Relations in Vanuatu," *Oceania*, 58, 2 (December 1987) p. 132; the Skidegate and Massett stories are recorded in W.H. Collison, *In the Wake of the War Canoe* (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1915) p. 120; there are several accounts of the Nuu-cha-nulth story including one recorded by C.M. Tate in Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, p. 306.

¹⁹ The best exposition of this transformation process is Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); the fur-trade expression of this phenomena is discussed in Christopher Miller and George R. Hammell, "A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade,"

The transformation process was reciprocal. Aboriginal goods brought into circulation in a European environment also acquired new meanings. In Europeans hands aboriginal ceremonial objects, as well as objects of everyday use, became commodities and curios.²⁰ Some items became "exhibits" or curiosities detached from their original use and meanings. Others were used as proof of the "skill and industry" of aboriginal people in international exhibits. Still others were used by museums and, particularly, missionaries, as proof of the savageness of the very people from whom they were bought.²¹

If something as simple as the movement of an object needs to be "heard and said and talked about, rather than simply seen", what about the meanings embedded in the exchange of goods for labour?²² If, as Nicholas Thomas points out, "the circulation of objects, especially across the edges of societies, civilizations, and trading regimes, is not merely a physical process but is also a movement and displacement of competing conceptions of things, a jostle of transaction forms,"²³ what about the circulation of labour between economies?

Journal of American History, 73, 2, (September 1986) pp. 311-328; for the use of Chinese and British objects in Songhees ceremonials in 1847 see Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1968, after original published in 1859) p. 153; for Chinese coins as part of northwest coast ceremonial objects see Grant Keddie, "The Question of Asiatic Objects on the North Pacific Coast of America: Historic or Prehistoric?" *Contributions to Human History*, 3 (March 1990) pp. 1-26.

²⁰ Wendy Wickwire is able to date precisely when Nlaka'pamux people began exchanging items they had previously refused to sell, in "Women in Ethnography: The Research of James A. Teit," *Ethnohistory* 40, 4 (Fall 1993) pp. 542-3.

²¹ Joanne Macdonald, "From Ceremonial Object to Curio: Object Transformation at Port Simpson and Metlakatla, British Columbia in the Nineteenth Century," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, X, 2 (1990) pp. 193-217; Aldona Jonaitis and Richard Inglis, "Power, History and Authenticity: The Mowachaht Whaler's Washing Shrine," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 91, 1, (Winter 1992) pp. 193-213; Michael Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1992).

²² Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, p. 123.

²³ *Ibid.*

What if, when European merchants and capitalists hired/bought aboriginal labour, aboriginal people were selling them something else? What if, when merchants paid aboriginal labourers in blankets, or in currency, aboriginal people received something else...or when the government paid "relief" to Indians they received something else?²⁴

Vanishing Indians - I

To write history is to be engaged in a number of conversations simultaneously. There is an ongoing conversation between the author and the reader, (the producer and consumer, to extend the exchange metaphor). There is also the conversation with one's research subjects, and to have these, historians must find their conversational partners.²⁵ Traditionally we have sought interlocutors in various archival sources: diaries, letters, government reports. This has meant that when historians have been discussing aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations, we have been doing it almost exclusively with Europeans, almost all of them male. Should it be any surprise if we find that these conversations tell us only about one side of an exchange?

One example of why this evidence needs a critical re-examination concerns the published historical accounts of the origins of industrial sawmilling in British Columbia. These accounts ignore

²⁴ As exotic as the northwest coast and its peoples were to Europeans, the transformations I am suggesting were not in themselves limited to the intersection of off-shore cultures. The transformation of production by workers has long been the subject of labour historians. Grant McCracken has examined the transformation of consumer goods in a range of settings in his *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Stephen Randall, trans. (Berkeley: University of California, 1988) is a more general look at how consumers transform meanings in everyday life.

²⁵ Recent studies of science indicate that historians are not alone in this interactive, reflexive relationship with their research subjects, see Bruno Latour and Steven Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979) and Michael Lynch and Steven Woolgar, eds. *Representation in Scientific Practice*, (London: M.I.T., 1990).

aboriginal workers.²⁶ Most of them are based on the written recollections of observers like R.C. Mayne, whose 1862 travel account reported that the first mill at Alberni has "been erected in a most solid fashion by English labourers....Seventy white men are employed at and about the premises." Given the number of "white men" in the colony, Mayne's figure has seemed more credible than that of Rev. Matthew McFie who, in his *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, mentioned 200-300 hands employed at the Alberni Mill. Yet, both figures are made plausible by artist Frederick Whymper: "Two hundred workmen representing a dozen nationalities, and, including among the number, Kanakas from the Sandwich Islands, and Indians and half-breeds of many tribes -- were busily engaged in the mill and neighbourhood".²⁷

Historian Martin Robin thought "it was not merely shrinking numbers of the "vanishing Red Men" which accounted for the low participation of Indians in the new industrial system. By inclination and habit, the Indian did not fit the new industrial mode."²⁸ But if Whymper is to be believed, aboriginal people were part of the new industrial system. It was Mayne -- by writing only about *white*

²⁶ The Alberni mill, costing \$120,000 to build and eventually capable of cutting 100,000 feet of lumber a day, was the first. It commenced operation in 1861. See: W. Kaye Lamb, "Early Lumbering on Vancouver Island, I & II" *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, 2, pp. 31-53 and 95-144; Myrtle Bergen, *Tough Timber: The Loggers of British Columbia*, (Vancouver: Elgin, 1979); G.W. Taylor, *Timber, History of the Forest Industry in British Columbia*, (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1975); James Morton, *The Enterprising Mr. Moody and the Bumptious Captain Stamp: The Lives and Times of Vancouver's Lumber Pioneers*, (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977); Ed Gould, *Logging: British Columbia's Logging History*, (North Vancouver: Hancock, 1975); Jan Peterson, *The Albernis*, (Lantzville, B.C.: Oolichan Books, 1992).

²⁷ Matthew McFie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, (London: Longman, 1865) p. 51; R.C. Mayne, *Four years in British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, (London: John Murray, 1862) p. 228; Frederick Whymper, *Travel and Adventure in Alaska*, (London, 1868) p. 68; Whymper adds that Mr. Sproat was "a large employer of native as well as white labour...at his sawmill settlement of Alberni..." p. 37 and Sproat himself speaks of when "I first employed Indians at Alberni" in G.M. Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1868, reprinted in Victoria: Morriss, 1989) p. 40. One could make the same case for the Burrard Inlet Mills.

²⁸ Martin Robin, *The Rush for the Spoils: The Company Province 1871-1933*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972) p. 30; see also Paul Phillips, "Confederation and the Economy of British Columbia," *British Columbia and Confederation*, W. George Shelton ed., (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1967) p. 59.

labour -- who *vanished* somewhere between 100-200 aboriginal and Hawaiian (Kanaka) workers, over half the workforce.

In this case we are lucky to have Whympers' exceptional account to cast new light on the composition of the early sawmilling labour force. Nevertheless, the illustration suggests that many contemporary accounts are more likely to mention the number of "men" employed, meaning only "white men", than to mention aboriginal workers, men or women.

Aboriginal people are not the only group given little, or partial, attention in these sources. Other non-*white* ethnic groups, women, and workers in general are also difficult to find. As a result, social historians interested in these other "peoples without histories" have turned to what are called "routinely generated" sources, such as censuses, parish records, tax roles, directories, court records and voters lists. These records were systematically collected for particular purposes and as a result often include groups not much mentioned by elite observers.

However, even here, aboriginal people have been *vanished* more effectively than most. Legally and *racially* defined as *other*, aboriginal people are absent from many sources commonly used by social historians. Prohibited from voting, aboriginal people do not appear on provincial voters lists until after 1949 and not on federal lists until 1960. Confined to reservations, they do not appear on tax rolls. Like other marginalized groups, they were barely touched by directory compilers until well into the twentieth century. Intermittently evangelized, church records are spotty and like many other routinely generated sources, are inconsistent in their use of variant spellings of aboriginal names as well as adopted European ones.

Where routinely generated sources did touch on the lives of aboriginal people, they established a set of categories that reflected the values of the information collectors, rather than the aboriginal people.²⁹ This is particularly true with regard to the census enumerations. The predecessor to the federal census, the "Blue Books" -- statistical registers of the colonies -- annually enumerated the "White Race", "Coloured race" [Blacks and Hawaiians], and "Chinese Race," but not aboriginal people. The federal census of 1871 used these figures and set the population of British Columbia at 10,586, noting in a footnote that "no account is taken of the aboriginal people, details of which are wanting."³⁰

The first federal census of British Columbia, in 1881, made little effort to gather more than the numbers of aboriginal people, and even then underestimated the population.³¹ Most enumerators just wrote "Indian" in the space provided for names and either made no entry under occupation or took little care with this category, making whole nations "fishermen" and others "hunters" or "general labourers". The next census in 1891, though more carefully collected, did not ask about ethnic origin. Where the names of aboriginal people are known from other sources, this census at least provides detailed information on occupation, dwellings, and family structure. The 1901 decennial census put aboriginal people on a special schedule so they were not asked the questions about employment which appear on

²⁹ Nancy Shoemaker, "The Census as Civilizer: American Indian Household Structure in the 1900 and 1910 U.S. Census," *Historical Methods*, 25, 1 (Winter 1992) p. 6.

³⁰ Canada Census, 1870, vol. 4, pp. 376-7.

³¹ An example of the under-enumeration is suggested by observers' reports that the streets of Victoria thronged with Indians, and the census showing only 71 Indian men and 144 Indian women in the city. See Peter Baskerville and Eric Sager, *The 1881 Canadian Census: Vancouver Island* (Victoria: Public History Group, 1990); for other estimates of under-enumeration see Robert Galois and Cole Harris, "Recalibrating Society: The Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881," *The Canadian Geographer*, 38, 1 (1994) pp. 37-53.

the regular schedules. As late as 1951, Indians living on reservations were "neither employed nor unemployed" and so did not appear in census employment tables.³²

Other sources, such as the annual statistical reports of the British Columbia Department of Mines, have used their own "sleights of hand" to make aboriginal people vanish. For example, the annual statistics divided the number of gold miners into only two categories: white and Chinese. As a result, histories of mining have centred around these two cultural groups, yet evidence from other sources reveals that there were numerous aboriginal gold miners.³³ This legerdemain was slightly different with coal mining. Alongside *white* and Chinese coal miners, annual reports do have a category for Indians, but only until the mid-1880s. The reports caution us that the figures do not include miners' helpers, but other sources reveal that miners' helpers were disproportionately made up of Chinese and aboriginal people. While aboriginal people continued to work in the coal mines, their presence went unrecorded in official statistics and unnoticed by historians. The only history of coal mining on the coast declared that the opening of the first mine at Fort Rupert marked a new stage in British Columbia history. "Fort Rupert was something new. With the digging of coal the Indians had become irrelevant." A closer look at the primary documents reveals a different story. Virtually *all* of the coal mined at Fort Rupert, over 3,600 tons in three years, was mined by aboriginal people. Though there were imported Scottish miners at Fort Rupert unsuccessfully exploring for new seams, the Scottish miners did "not raise one square inch of coal."³⁴

³² Canada. *Census, 1951*, volume 4, p. xiv. See the discussion in chapter 4 about the usability of published census material for studying aboriginal people.

³³ British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* (Victoria); T.A. Rickard, "Indian Participation in the Gold Discoveries," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, 2 (1938) pp. 3-18; a discussion of aboriginal gold miners is taken up in Chapter 3.

³⁴ "Irrelevant" quote from Eric Newsome, *The Coal Coast: History of Coal Mining in British Columbia*, (Victoria: Orca, 1989) p. 33; Lynne Bowen's *Boss Whistle: The Coal Miners of Vancouver Island Remember* (Lantzville, B.C.: Oolichan, 1982) does not mention aboriginal people at all; on the Scottish miners not raising any coal see J.E. Hendrickson, "Two Letters from Walter Calquhoun Grant," *BC Studies*, 26 (Summer 1975) p. 12; aboriginal coal miners and miners' helpers are discussed below in

These examples suggest that the historical record has, like the 1951 national census, put Indians in a special category that was neither within the workforce, nor without.

Vanishing Indians - II

To the extent that historians have "created" the past based on documents that have overlooked aboriginal people, we have contributed to creating and recreating aboriginal people as "marginal" subjects. This is particularly surprising considering that the historiography of British Columbia has, in recent decades, focused precisely on questions about *race* and paid work, usually in the context of class. The major debates, about which was more divisive, class or race, have been conducted in the context of *two races: white and Asian*.³⁵

When aboriginal people have been written about, it is rarely in terms of work.³⁶ Most accounts follow one of a very few story lines, usually derived from the metaphor of exchange: gain and

Chapter 3.

³⁵ See W.P. Ward, "Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia, 1870-1939," and Rennie Warburton, "Race and Class in British Columbia: A Comment," and other readings in the "Class and Race" section of Patricia Roy, *A History of British Columbia: Selected Readings* (Mississauga, Ont.: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989); Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1989).

³⁶ The exceptions are Rennie Warburton and Stephen Scott, "The Fur Trade and Early Capitalist Development in British Columbia," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, V, 1 (1985) pp. 27-46; see also the discussion of Rolf Knight and Alicja Muszynski below.

loss.³⁷ Even in the "social science" literature, the word acculturation is often used to describe the aboriginal response to European culture, trading on "a-culturation" -- the loss of culture, not the gain.

One of the earliest and most enduring of the story lines, or meta-narratives, presented "Indians" as obstacles to progress -- their loss was civilization's gain. This perspective, although found in early twentieth-century Canadian texts, is best exemplified in the work of an American, Frederick Jackson Turner. His "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" considered the destruction of indigenous peoples a part of the trial by fire through which a new nation and a new people were born.³⁸ There is also a "progressive" variant: if aboriginal people had to exchange their "primitive existence" for "civilization" under the guiding hand of the missionary, teacher or government agent, it was a good bargain. Although now out of fashion in the scholarly world, these ideas still have wide currency and recently formed the background to a major legal decision rejecting aboriginal land claims.³⁹

A second meta-narrative is sometimes summed up in the words "fatal impact". Trade and contact between an avaricious European world and an (often romanticized) aboriginal culture resulted in the destruction of the latter. This is usually accounted for by superior European technology, the native passivity, and the inherently static nature of "primitive society". There is a strong "presentist" element to this approach, since it is often a thinly veiled critique of a capitalist society which has flattened

³⁷ Occasionally, as in Crosby's *The Columbian Exchange*, the metaphor is explicit.

³⁸ Turner first read this paper in 1893 and it was published in his collection of essays, *The Frontier in American History*, (1920); see also Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

³⁹ In his April 1991 decision on one of the largest land claim cases in Canadian legal history, *Delgamuukw v. B.C.*, Justice McEachern took this position in denying the claim. See the special issue "Anthropology and History in the Courts," *BC Studies*, 95 (Autumn 1992) and particularly Robin Riddington, "Fieldwork in Courtroom 53" for a discussion of how the judge used the work of historians and anthropologists.

indigenous cultures standing in its path. Often this meta-narrative is accompanied by a devaluation of contemporary aboriginal society as being only the "debris" of an idyllic aboriginal past.⁴⁰ Both versions portray aboriginal people as victims of superior force and deny them a role in the making of their own history. But, if all aboriginal-non-aboriginal encounters were only variations on the same theme, how do we explain, for example, why the Haida survived and the Beothuk not?

The third meta-narrative is more subtle. Best known in British Columbia from Robin Fisher's work, it considers the period following first contact as one of cultural effervescence.⁴¹ This is sometimes called the "enrichment thesis" because aboriginal people, who it is argued, had a great deal of control over the fur trade, were able to choose the aspects of the immigrant culture they wished to adopt and thereby enrich their own culture. This narrative restores agency to aboriginal people, but only temporarily. The fatal impact of European settlement, it seems, was not averted, only delayed:

The fur trade had stimulated Indian culture by adding to Indian wealth and therefore to the scope of Indian creativity. Settlement on the other hand, often had the effect of subtracting from Indian wealth and this tended to stultify Indians.

....

The Indians had been able to mould the fur trade to their benefit, but settlement was not malleable; it was unyielding and aggressive. It imposed its demands on Indians without compromise.⁴²

Settlement, not contact, marked the demise of aboriginal culture and history.

Since the initial publication of Fisher's work, the literature on the fur trade elsewhere in North America has effectively illustrated, as the title of one of the volumes states, that aboriginal people were

⁴⁰ Michael Harkin, "Dialogues of History: Transformation and Change in Heiltsuk Culture," (University of Chicago: unpublished Ph.D., 1988); 24; Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, p.10. A recent example of this perspective is Peter Carstens, *The Queen's People: A Study of Hegemony, Coercion and Accommodation among the Okanagan of Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991).

⁴¹ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*; Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia: The Impact of the White Man*, (Victoria: Provincial Museum, 1980); Warburton and Scott, "The Fur Trade".

⁴² Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, p. 111, 211.

"partners" in the fur trade.⁴³ Other work, particularly Richard White's recent *The Middle Ground*, has stressed the mutability of the boundaries between so-called "whites" and "Indians" and the existence of a social and geographical space which was neither wholly aboriginal, nor European, but something in between.⁴⁴

This recent work is particularly useful in the context of this study because it opens a conceptual space in which to challenge the existing meta-narratives all of which imply that the fur trade was the great divide in Canadian history. Instead of being a threshold, "between wilderness and agriculture, ...between communalism and the coming of industrial order,"⁴⁵ between aboriginal people as "partners" and aboriginal people as "obstacles", what if the fur trade was part of a middle ground where meanings were exchanged and transformed and new social relations created?

A series of key questions needs to be addressed. Was continuity as much a feature of aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations, as disruption? To what extent did British Columbia's aboriginal peoples become part of the capitalist economy? Were work sites, like the fur trade, also a "middle ground" where aboriginal and European people came together, and new cultures created? How did

⁴³ Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, *Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600-1870*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1983); Arthur J. Ray, *'Give Us Good Measure': An Analysis of Hudson's Bay Company Post Accounts to 1763*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1978); Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Considered*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1985).

⁴⁴ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1980); Sylvia Van Kirk, *'Mcny Tender Ties': Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870*, (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980).

⁴⁵ Jennifer Brown, "The Blind Man and the Elephant: Fur Trade History Revisited," in P.A. McCormack and R.G Ironside, eds., *Proceedings of the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Conference*, (Edmonton: Boreal Institute, 1990) p. 15.

existing social and familial relations condition integration into the capitalist economy? Did paid labour alter family and community structures in aboriginal communities? If aboriginal and immigrant worlds shaded into each other, how and where is a distinction between the two to be drawn?

Of these questions, only the first two have received significant attention in British Columbia. Two unpublished works by Richard Mackie provide the best evidence that the division between a fur trade economy and wage economy has been imposed by historians. His two theses document the participation of aboriginal people in a wide range of paid labour for the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), including construction, fishing and fish preserving, logging, sawmilling, mining, ice harvesting, cranberry and other agricultural harvesting. They were also employed as ploughmen, messengers, shepherds, and shearers; all this alongside their involvement in the fur trade.⁴⁶

The main challenge to the thesis that aboriginal people were marginalized with the coming of industrial capitalism, is Rolf Knight's *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Indian Labour in British Columbia: 1858-1930*. What was most refreshing about Knight's work is that it broke free of the sources that had circumscribed scholarship in this field and found that oral accounts by aboriginal people were full of references to work.⁴⁷ Knight's sources suggested that aboriginal labourers may have entered the industrial economy in large numbers, and wage labour might have been an important source of income for aboriginal people as late as the Great Depression. In the end, however, he was

⁴⁶ Richard S. Mackie, "Colonial Land, Indian Labour and Company Capital: The Economy of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858," (University of Victoria: unpublished MA, 1984) and "The Hudson's Bay Company on the Pacific, 1821-1843" (University of British Columbia, unpublished Ph.D., 1993) pp. 356-382; instances of aboriginal people being hired as agricultural labour are also highlighted in James Gibson's *Farming the Frontier: the agricultural opening of the Oregon Country, 1786-1846*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1985).

⁴⁷ Knight's book, which I first read over a decade ago, planted the seeds which germinated into this thesis; Rolf Knight, *Indians At Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930*, (Vancouver: New Star, 1978).

unable to arrive at firm conclusions about the extent of aboriginal participation, at least partly because his sources were not systematically examined. Characterizing his own work as an "informal study" he admitted to its preliminary nature: "It will be evident that much of the data for a complete labour history of Indian people in British Columbia is missing here. The present account raises more questions than it answers."⁴⁸

Knight did succeed in his goal of opening new avenues of inquiry that have since been followed by scholars of British Columbia and adjacent territories. Few, however, have followed his lead in examining other than the standard sources. It is not surprising that they have come to different conclusions. By rejecting the assumption, sometimes stated and sometimes implied, that "ongoing traditional values and attitudes somehow limit Indian job capacities," Knight opened a debate that has been joined by Alicja Muszynski and Evelyn Pinkerton. While Knight took pains to emphasize the similarity of aboriginal and non-aboriginal workers,⁴⁹ Muszynski's and Pinkerton's studies of aboriginal fishermen and fish-processing labourers, stressed the differences. In Pinkerton's words, "Work rhythms and work discipline in a pre-industrial society organized by kin obligations and authority of the chief differ, of course, from rhythms of industrial production....Moreover, the safety net offered by Indian communities and by the Indian's ability to rely on traditional subsistence did not create the most favourable conditions for the development of a highly disciplined capitalist workforce...."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Knight, *Indians at Work*, p. 189; Fisher in his 1992 reissue of *Contact and Conflict*, p. xix, flays Knight for his use of "impressionistic evidence and isolated examples" and lack of "systematic or statistical analyses"; ironically Fisher's own work relies wholly on "impressionistic" evidence, offering no statistics in support of his position.

⁴⁹ "Whatever...distinct cultural traditions they maintained, Indian loggers were loggers, Indian longshoremen were longshoremen, Indian cannery workers were cannery workers," Knight, *Indians at Work*, p.10, 22.

⁵⁰ Alicja Muszynski, "Class Formation and Class Consciousness: The Making of Shoreworkers in the B.C. Fishing Industry," *Studies in Political Economy* 20 (1986) pp. 85-116; Muszynski, "Major Processors to 1940 and the Early Labour Force: Historical Notes," *UnCommon Property: The Fishing*

The Muszynski-Pinkerton argument is that aboriginal people were first incorporated into the industrial labour force, in the fish-processing industry at least, because their subsistence economy meant that they could be paid less than immigrants. The cheap price of aboriginal labour was essential to early enterprises, but ultimately the subsistence economy allowed aboriginal people the independence to reject capitalist-work-discipline. Since aboriginal people could not be exploited as much as other labourers, employers replaced them with more tractable Chinese and Japanese immigrants. This thesis raises interesting questions, but the conclusion is not entirely consistent with the evidence that aboriginal women remained vital to the fish processing industry until the 1950s when most of the plants closed. The evidence itself is limited to a sampling of published reports. One is left wondering, what would the authors find if they chose a wider range of sources or another industry?⁵¹

A more historical look at aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations in the adjacent Yukon territory offers yet another explanation for the limited role contemporary aboriginal people play in the wage labour force there. Kenneth Coates' *Best Left as Indians* highlights cultural differences between aboriginal people and immigrants. He concludes that what is often called "a marginal place" in the "white" economy was in some respects a positive choice by aboriginal Yukoners. "The Natives' lack of interest in the aggressive, acquisitive materialism of the industrial world ensured that few accepted the discipline and control of the non-Native work place." Participation in a subsistence economy, with

and Fish Processing Industries in British Columbia, Patricia Marchak, Neil Guppy and John McMullan, eds. (Agincourt, Ont.: Methuen, 1987) pp. 46-65; Muszynski, "Race and Gender: Structural Determinants in the Formation of B.C.'s Salmon Canning Labour Forces," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* (1988), 110; quote from Evelyn Pinkerton, "Competition among B.C. Fish-Processing Firms," *UnCommon Property: The Fishing and Fish Processing Industries in British Columbia*, in Marchak et al., p. 256.

⁵¹ Pinkerton, "Competition among B.C. Fish-Processing Firms," p. 261; Pinkerton notes that some cannery owners preferred Indian labour even when other cheap sources of labour became available; other evidence shows that aboriginal women continued to be the main labour force in rural canneries until technological change and economic consolidation closed these canneries in the 1950s. See Chapter 4.

occasional seasonal incursions into wage labour permitted aboriginal Yukoners to maintain important elements of their culture that would have otherwise been lost.⁵²

At the same time, Coates shows aboriginal choices were severely circumscribed. During and after the gold rush, non-aboriginal attitudes meant aboriginal people were excluded from the mines and otherwise hired as "labourers of last resort." After the Second World War government regulations excluded Indians from outfitting and favoured non-Indian trappers. Their "tangential and peripheral" role may have been a positive choice by aboriginal Yukoners but given the "racial economic barriers barring them from work in the white man's world" there was not much to choose from, particularly in the 1950s and 60s.⁵³

Sarah Carter's work, *Lost Harvests*, is a detailed historic study of the economic relations between aboriginal people and settlers in the Canadian Prairies. Carter found that aboriginal people actively turned to farming when their buffalo-based economy declined. Carter's evidence suggests aboriginal farmers were doing well relative to their non-aboriginal neighbours until the latter complained about unfair competition from the "state-supported Indians." Responding to this pressure the federal government prevented aboriginal people from becoming commercial farmers and encouraged them to take up subsistence farming, a policy that led to long-term poverty. Carter concluded that government policy rather than aboriginal culture was the major factor accounting for the declining economy of aboriginal people. This finding is echoed in Waisberg and Holzkamm's study of the Ojibwa in

⁵² Kenneth Coates, *Best left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*, (Montreal: McGill Queen's, 1991) pp. 65, 69.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 49, 52, 56, 64.

Northwest Ontario, Newell's examination of aboriginal people and fishery regulation in British Columbia, as well as Pritchard's study of the Haisla people on the northern British Columbia coast.⁵⁴

These studies of different places, times and circumstances come to a variety of conclusions. What they have in common may account for their sometimes contradictory conclusions as much as their different spatial, cultural and temporal boundaries. In all of these studies, "Indians" within the respective study areas, are treated as an undifferentiated whole. Yet, there was no single "aboriginal culture", neither on the Prairies, nor in the Yukon. In British Columbia there was a wider range than anywhere else in North America. Nevertheless, Indians are assumed to be a unified "other". The categories of "whites" and "reds", drawn in the historical accounts, have been adopted, repeated and reified by historians, rather than analyzed.⁵⁵ A few years ago, James Clifford suggested we should hold these "dichotomizing concepts" in suspicion. Perhaps, it is time to "attempt to think of cultures not as organically unified or traditionally continuous but rather as a negotiated, present process."⁵⁶

Moreover, there is an ahistoric cant to these works which start the temporal clock with the arrival of merchant or capitalist economies. Might the different conclusions in these regional studies be

⁵⁴ Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1990); for a more contemporary analysis see also Helen Buckley, *From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare: Why Indian Policy Failed in the Prairie Provinces* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's 1992); Leo Waisberg and Tim Holzkamm, "'A tendency to discourage them from Cultivating': Ojibwa Agriculture and Indian Affairs Administration in Northwest Ontario," *Ethnohistory*, 40, 2 (1993) pp. 175-211; Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993); James Pritchard, "Economic Development and Disintegration of Traditional Culture Among the Haisla," (University of British Columbia, unpublished Ph.D., 1977).

⁵⁵ In addition to the works mentioned which treat Indians in the regions as a unity, Georges Sioui, a Huron historian, argues for a common aboriginal culture throughout North America in *For an Amerindian Autohistory*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1992).

⁵⁶ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); see also Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

conditioned by the different indigenous social structures? Some cultures may have been more receptive to, or compatible with, paid labour, while other societies may have discouraged involvement in a capitalist economy.

Finally, with the exception of Knight's work, all of the histories mentioned rely for their main sources on statements of non-aboriginal people about aboriginal people's reasons for going to work, quitting work and habits at work. What different conclusions might be reached if we chose new conversational partners and reevaluated the old ones?

Who Speaks? Rematerializing the Disappeared

The encounters of Europeans and indigenous North Americans were not just the meeting of different peoples, they were the meetings of different histories. Not just two histories, but innumerable histories: English, Salish, Spanish, Nuu-chah-nulth, Tlingit, French... and within each of these, local and individual histories. Understanding these encounters, and the relationships that developed from them, requires the reconstruction of many different pasts.

Since Knight's *Indians at Work* suggested the potential of aboriginal accounts to reorient our understanding of aboriginal histories, a number of autobiographies, biographies, and ethnographies of aboriginal people have appeared in print.⁵⁷ While the extent of the written and oral testimony does not

⁵⁷ Charles Jones with Stephen Bosustow, *Queesto: Pacheenaht Chief by Birthright*, (Nanaimo, B.C.: Theytus, 1981); Harry Assu and with Joy Inglis, *Assu of Cape Mudge: Recollections of a Coastal Indian Chief*, (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1989); Margaret B. Blackman, *During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988) pp. 63-4, 113; Christine Quintasket, *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

approach the volume of accounts left by non-aboriginals, what does remain is richer than we might expect.

In addition to the recent publications, there are several accounts from those born in the early-to-mid parts of the last century which have been in print for half a century, but buried deep in government, missionary or ethnological reports, while others have been tucked in foreign archives.⁵⁸ Still more exist as manuscripts or on cassettes in archives in British Columbia, Washington, and in Ottawa, London and Berlin.⁵⁹ Other accounts from aboriginal people are now available, thanks in part to the "Freedom of Information Act," in the files of government officials, in the form of letters and petitions to the Department of Indian Affairs. Also, in the past few years, British Columbia aboriginal communities have begun to write their own histories. Moreover, as Julie Cruikshank's and Wendy Wickwire's ongoing work illustrates, there is a large amount of aboriginal history stretching back to the contact era, still extant in the stories of people still living in the province.⁶⁰

How should we use and understand these accounts? Like other parts of the conversation, the answer appears to be "carefully". David Murray's recent *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and*

⁵⁸ June Collins, "John Fornby: The Personal Document of a Coast Salish Indian" in *Indians of the Urban Northwest*, Marian Smith, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949) pp. 287-341; Ronald Olson, "The Life Story of A Bella Bella Woman" in "Notes on the Bella Bella Kwakiutl" *Anthropological Records* 14, 5 (1955); Matthews, *Conversations with Khahtsahlano*.

⁵⁹ Both the Secwepemc Cultural Centre in Kamloops and the Coqualeetza Resource Centre in Sardis have large collections of oral history. The diary of Arthur Wellington Clah, a Tsimshian from Fort Simpson, left his journal/diary covering the 50 years 1860-1910 at the Welcome Institute in London, is an important example.

⁶⁰ Julie Cruikshank with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1990); Wendy Wickwire and Harry Robinson, *Write it on Your Heart*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia); Wendy Wickwire, "To See Ourselves as the Other's Other: Nlaka'pamux Contact Narratives," *Canadian Historical Review* LXXV, 1 (MARCH 1994) pp. 1-20.

Representation in North American Indian Texts points out the importance of asking what was recorded and why.

Who were the informants and why did they tell what they told? Of the stories that were told, which were published and why? What happened to the stories in the process of translation, editing and publishing?⁶¹ An example of the pitfalls of using these sources uncritically are the much-reproduced speeches attributed to Salish Chief Seattle, which have been, on closer examination, revealed as a largely fictitious rendering by a local newspaper editor.⁶² These cautions are relevant here, because, for various reasons discussed below, even this body of material under-emphasizes aboriginal involvement in paid labour.

The impact of mediation by non-aboriginal "interpreters" is particularly significant in the ethnographic literature. Franz Boas, often described as the "father of anthropology", studied the aboriginal people of British Columbia as did other internationally known anthropologists.⁶³ What is peculiar about most of the anthropological-ethnographic literature, (which forms the overwhelming bulk of "scholarly knowledge" about aboriginal people), is that it was not interested in what aboriginal people were actually doing from the 1880s to 1960s, when the information was being gathered. Its focus has been, and continues to be, on what aboriginal people did, and sometimes thought, before they met any non-aboriginals. Because the stories sought had as little reference as possible to non-aboriginal worlds, these ethnographers have perpetuated a myth of aboriginal people living a life that was "suspended in

⁶¹ David Murray, *Forked Tongue: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts*, (Bloomington, 1991); these are the same points made by Ian MacLaren with respect to explorers' accounts in "Exploration/Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Author," *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 5 (Spring, 1992).

⁶² Brian Swan and Arnold Krupat, *Recovering the Word*, (Berkeley, University of California, 1987).

⁶³ Including Ruth Benedict, Marius Barbeau, Diamond Jenness, Edward Sapir, Morris Swadesh, Claude Levi-Strauss.

time" outside larger society. In their own way, they too have *vanished Indians* and contributed to the stereotypes that exist around aboriginal people and work.⁶⁴

In addition to the standard ethnographies, some so-called "personal narratives" have survived. Told as autobiographical accounts and recorded in English by ethnographers, these stories, by informants unfamiliar with Euro-american narrative modes, offer rare glimpses into the sets of meanings not central to the ethnographer.⁶⁵ While later accounts were usually reorganized by aboriginal people to "make sense" to non-aboriginal listeners, these narrations seem to integrate contemporary life and paid work with longstanding spiritual belief, as though these were quite reconcilable. In John Fornsbys narrative, to give one example, he explains his decision to work at the Port Gamble sawmill, not in terms of needing money, but as the result of his being spiritually polluted by his wife's menstrual blood, and his subsequent need to leave home.⁶⁶

Autobiographies constitute another form of direct testimony. A few, like Christine Quintasket's *Mourning Dove* are from manuscripts actually prepared by an aboriginal author.⁶⁷ Most of the "autobiographic accounts" come edited and organized by a non-aboriginal ethnologists, or in some cases,

⁶⁴ For example, there is much more in Boas's few personal letters home about aboriginal work in the nineteenth century than in all of his published writings. Fortunately some of his correspondence has now been published in Richard Rohner, *The Ethnography of Franz Boas* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969); Murray, *Forked Tongues*, pp. 101-4.

⁶⁵ June Collins, "John Fornsbys: The Personal Document of a Coast Salish Indian" in *Indians of the Urban Northwest*, Marian Smith, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949) pp. 287-341; University of Washington, Special Collections, Melville Jacobs Collection, Mss. 1693-71-13, Box 112, "George Swanaset: narrative of a personal document". I wish to thank Sasha Harmon for suggesting the Swanaset narrative to me.

⁶⁶ Fornsbys, "Personal Narrative," . Fornsbys saw no contradiction in being a foreman at the hop fields and a shaman. Like a modern first-aid attendant, he tells of being called into the fields to use his powers to cure a man suddenly stricken ill.

⁶⁷ Quintasket, *Mourning Dove*.

by Christian missionaries. What are we to make, for example, of the "autobiography" of Kwakiutl Chief Charles Nowell, by Clellan S. Ford? At best these texts are multi-voiced products "in which we can hear in varying degrees the 'speaking' subject" but only through conventions of the written texts of ethnology or Christianity.⁶⁸

Recent contributions include histories written by aboriginal authors or commissioned by Indian bands.⁶⁹ Most of these have been designed as teaching materials for secondary school students, though others, such as Lizette Halls' *The Carrier, My People*, Daisy Sewid-Smith's *Prosecution or Persecution*, or Joanne Drake-Terry's *The Same as Yesterday*, are works of historical scholarship aimed at a larger audience. On the whole these works attach more attention to the local oral record and so introduce otherwise overlooked voices into the historical conversation, although, as secondary works, they merit the same critical scrutiny one applies to all historical scholarship.⁷⁰

Despite this recent chorus of aboriginal voices, some parts of the past are still not much noticed because the autobiographies, biographies and band histories have largely adopted a variant of the ethnographic voice. These works are self-conscious attempts to stress the uniqueness of aboriginal culture and respond to what readers are interested in. They stress "Indianness", at the expense of more prosaic participation in the "whiteman's world", and continuity, over change. Unpaid, subsistence and craft work are highlighted while paid work, when it appears at all, is usually incidental to other stories.

⁶⁸ Clellan S. Ford, *Smoke From their Fires: The Life of a Kwakiutl Chief*, (Hamden: Archon, 1968); Rev. William Henry Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, J.P. Hicks, ed., (Vancouver: Vancouver Bindery, 1933); See the discussion of autobiographies in Murray, *Forked Tongues*, 65-97.

⁶⁹ The list is now too long to mention. Several of these works are listed in the bibliography.

⁷⁰ Lizette Hall, *The Carrier, My People*, (Lizette Hall, 1992); Daisy Sewid-Smith, *Prosecution or Persecution*, (Nu-Yum Baleess Society, 1979); Joanne Drake Terry, *The Same as Yesterday: The Lillooet Chronicle the Theft of Their Land and Resources*, (Lillooet, B.C.: Lillooet Tribal Council, 1989).

Mary Pratt called this type of accounts "auto-ethnography": aboriginal people telling their own stories but in an idiom heavily influenced by non-aboriginal ethnographies.⁷¹

If paid work does not fit with the goals of ethnographies, auto-ethnographies, aboriginal biographies or in accounts by "white-elite observers", is it any wonder it has disappeared from the published record? Are there *any* primary sources that tend to focus on aboriginal labour? Until 1871 the answer is a qualified no. Qualified, because in the HBC fort journals there are regular, though often elliptic, references to employing aboriginal people in activities such as gardening and construction. Early settlers' accounts tend to make the indigenous inhabitants invisible, but when they are mentioned as being employed their work habits are usually demeaned. Local newspaper reports were apt to mention aboriginal workers, but as a plague that kept wages of white workers down.⁷² On the other hand, missionary accounts, particularly those from the Christian model-village at Metlakatla, do highlight aboriginal labour. These emphasize, even exaggerate, the success of missionaries in "civilizing" their charges. The missionaries wished to show that, thanks to their own efforts, aboriginal people at Metlakatla worked "practically as white men".⁷³

After British Columbia's confederation with Canada in 1871, the observation of, and record keeping about, aboriginal people intensified with new structures of state monitoring. The following year, the federal Indian agents were appointed in British Columbia and by 1882 they were located in agencies around the south of the province with the specific mandate to report on the "progress" of

⁷¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 7.

⁷² See for examples, *Gazette*, May 18, 1860; *Colonist*, June 17, 1862. Many of the upper class settlers, who authored most of the surviving accounts also demean working-class *white* labour as well.

⁷³ See for example Rev. Collison's claim that the Gospel "has civilised and evangelised these men, and prepared them to become docile and industrious, whereas before they were fierce and indolent." Collison, *In the Wake of the War Canoe*, p. 58.

Indians. Agents made annual reports on the main activities of the Indians in their agencies and these constitute some of the most detailed renderings of aboriginal work that have survived. Although heavily laden with moralizing judgements, the early reports were candid and unedited assessments by agents about which Indians were "good", (ie. working and self supporting), "some good" or "no-good" (ie. prone to potlatching but little interested in paid work). After the turn of the century, agents were told to refrain from putting their personal judgements in their reports and to emphasize the "progress" that Indians were making.

In the Indian Agents' reports, both before and after the turn of the century, paid work is, if anything, overemphasized.⁷⁴ Despite this, there were several checks on the extent to which an agent could make himself look good by exaggerating the self-supporting nature of Indians and their incorporation into the workforce. One was the annual income and production statistics that had to be furnished. Agents could not record increases in these figures at the same time as expanding relief expenditures. Agents who did not respond to Indian requests for relief often found themselves under fire from the aboriginal people and missionaries.⁷⁵

The most telling check on government agents are the letters written by aboriginal people, sometimes through a translator, to government officials, and filed with the latter's records. These letters, often protests about unfair behaviour or requests for help, are some of the best surviving evidence of aboriginal peoples' daily struggles to earn a living and maintain control over their lives.

⁷⁴ In 1937 the registrar-archivist of the Department would write: that his records "Contain an almost continuous record of our Indian wards progress...all this related chronologically by our Superintendents, Inspectors, agents....." See Bill Russell, "The White Man's Paper Burden: Aspects of Record Keeping in the Department of Indian Affairs, 1860-1914," *Archivaria*, 19 (1984-85) pp. 50-72.

⁷⁵ The reliability of income figures are discussed in chapter 4.

In addition, there were other government agencies simultaneously collecting information on aboriginal people, with goals that were different, even contradictory, to those of the Department of Indian Affairs. The federal Department of Fisheries established a network of fishery overseers to limit aboriginal fishing rights on every stream in the province. These overseers recorded the numbers of Indians fishing and the size of their catches. The provincial Wildlife Branch likewise established agents to licence traplines, guides, hunters and guns, to limit aboriginal wildlife harvesting. These and other reports of the federal and provincial departments of Mines, Railways, Agriculture and Lands offer some check on the more enthusiastic Indian Agent reports.

Capitalists who depended on aboriginal labour and resources were also attuned to the activities of aboriginal workers. Detailed business records survive from the nineteenth-century fur trade and from fishing and fish-processing industries in the twentieth centuries. These records are particularly valuable because British Columbia employers relied on a work force segregated by *race* and so kept their records according to *racial* divisions.

From the late nineteenth century, aboriginal people have been at the centre of an increasing number of separate, but linked, information gathering enterprises on the part of government, churches, ethnologists and business. Since then, no segment of the Canadian population, outside of hospitals, mental institutions and prisons, was monitored and reported on, to the same degree as aboriginal people.⁷⁶ All these sources are partial, but used critically, they can help rematerialize aboriginal people, recall aboriginal voices, and make the conversation more complete and much livelier.

⁷⁶ Michel Foucault is the best known of those who have written about the expansion of state knowledge through surveillance, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage, 1979).

Micro-studies within Macro-studies

The published literature on aboriginal people and work in British Columbia suffers from a shared problem. In spite of the recognition of Fisher, Knight, Muszynski and others that there was a vast difference in the cultures, environments and histories of aboriginal people, "Indians", and to a much lesser extent, "whites", have been analyzed as though they were unified groups. Even though there are numerous indications of the importance of local culture and local history, in other words, of context, in understanding historical change experienced by aboriginal people these have not been developed. Given the divergent range of experience and the impossibility of discussing it all at once, this "homogenization" is understandable as a first step, but ultimately it conceals more than it reveals.

The analysis of regional patterns is, of course, important. But patterns are just that -- uni-dimensional aggregates that speak to no particular person's experience. They may tell us what happened, to a group as a whole but they do not tell us why, or what the variation was within the group. All the complexities that explain behaviour are smoothed over. It is in order to go beyond the "what" to explore the "why" and the "how", that the kernel of this thesis is a detailed *micro-history* of one aboriginal community.

The *micro-history* method involves the detailed study of individuals within a specific setting, such as a community, workplace, or household, because people participate in exchange, and historic changes, at a personal, family and community level. "The unifying principle of all microhistorical research is that microscopic observation will reveal factors previously unobserved."⁷⁷ The ambition is

⁷⁷ Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in Peter Burke, ed. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 1991); a discussion of the micro-historical approach can be found in Chad Gaffield, "The New Regional History: Rethinking the History of the Outaouais," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 26, 1 (Spring 1991) pp. 64-81. Dorothy Smith also argues for this approach in *Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990).

not just the acquisition of local knowledge, though this is a part of the process of micro-history. Rather, the goal is to use this knowledge to reveal and unravel the context-specific manifestations of general historical processes.

Attention to the larger processes -- the interaction between local and other levels of action: regional, national and global -- distinguishes micro-history from local history. Whereas local history has a tendency to celebrate the particular and the unique, micro-history tends to locate unique local circumstances in relation to more general questions about race, power, gender and the environment.

In the context of the current discussion about historic aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations, the micro-historical approach has an additional advantage. Much of the literature is based on the records of missionaries and the Department of Indian Affairs. From these sources we learn what non-aboriginal people planned and what they did, what official rules were laid out for aboriginal people to follow. What is not easy to discover is the effect these non-aboriginal efforts had on aboriginal people, if any.⁷⁸ The micro-historical approach lends itself to an examination of the policies and their impact, of theory and reality, in a particular context.

The four sections of this thesis highlight the dynamic tension between local conditions and global processes. Each examines overlapping time periods, at different levels of analysis. The first section, this introduction and chapter two, set the parameters for the empirical research by looking at the evidence. This chapter has examined the types of sources used in the following sections and has raised, at a general level, how their "partiality" conditions the use of that evidence. Chapter two is a closer look at interpreting some of these sources by looking at the rhetorical and social construction of the

⁷⁸ This point is forcefully made in J.R. Miller, "Owen Glendower, Hotspur, and Canadian Indian Policy," in Miller, *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991) pp. 323-352.

"Indian" in the context of paid work. This examination of the racialization of aboriginal people in the source material is essential to understanding the evidence in later chapters.

The second section, chapters three and four, is a regional analysis of paid-work by aboriginal people in British Columbia. Chapter three looks at the incorporation of aboriginal labour into the capitalist workforce from 1849 to 1885, the era before the state had begun to collect systematic data on income and employment. This chapter is a discussion of aboriginal labour, put together from a range of aboriginal voices and archival material. Chapter four charts aboriginal labour patterns between 1885-1970, when it became possible to compare statistical data gathered by the state and employers, with a range of manuscript and biographical accounts of aboriginal labourers. In general it can be said these two chapters chart regional patterns of aboriginal paid work.

Section three, chapters five through nine, comprise a micro-history of the Songhees, from a time before Europeans came to their land through to the 1970s. It examines the interaction of the capitalist economy with the Songhees non-capitalist economic formations, and the response of the Songhees society to wage work and welfare payments. If the second section sketched out the "what" of the regional patterns, here the "whys" of particular local responses are explored. Both sections must be understood within the larger conversation about sources, begun in this chapter and developed in the next. The final section returns the analyses to the regional level by looking at the effect of the state on aboriginal paid-work around the province. Important in their own right, these patterns also help illustrate which elements of the Songhees experience were purely local and which were part of a larger process of change and exchange.

CHAPTER 2
BEYOND THE PALE: MAKING RACE

Up until the time when I was a boy we were still Indians. We lived by hunting and fishing and small farming.

Burton Kewayosh, 1960.¹

Tommy Paul...was the most prosperous man on the West Saanich Reserve owning a good house, a gas boat, cultivated fields and some livestock....Practically he was a white man.

Homer Barnett, 1955.²

Most of the sources and much of the discussion about aboriginal-non-aboriginal relationships are conducted using the terms "Indian" and "white". But what did a late nineteenth century observer mean when he/she used the term "Indian" and how does that condition a present-day understanding of historical evidence? Who was being counted when government agents, fur traders, or missionaries counted "Indians" and who was not? In other words, how did "Indian" become defined and what meaning did this term have?

In the sources traditionally used by historians, whether diaries or census registers, it is usually taken for granted that populations can be divided into several distinct *rac*es, or in more contemporary parlance, "ethnic groups": Asian, Indian, *white*, *black*, each with its own distinct characteristics. Even the existing secondary literature on questions of *racism* has treated the category of *rac*e as relatively unproblematic.

¹ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, *Way of the Indian*, (n.p., 1969) p. 5.

² Homer Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia*, (Eugene, Ore.: University of Oregon, 1955) p. 5.

But the whole notion of "Indian" and "white" needs re-examination in light of literature of the past few years. The discussion of *race* as a fixed category has been challenged and the whole concept of a biological basis for *race*, rejected. This new literature has begun asking: if the skin, hair and bone characteristics that we have come to see as distinguishing *race* are no more definitive as boundaries than other markers, like blood group, left-handedness, or myopia, why do we use the former characteristics and not the latter to divide the world into *races*? *Race* has ceased to be seen as an explanatory factor and has become a factor that must itself be explained.³

Vic Satzewich has, for example, argued it is impossible to find an objective and enduring *race*. Instead, he says, we can observe a process of "racialization" -- the creation of a type of "social knowledge" which attaches characteristics to racial "labels".⁴ In this new tradition of scholarship, researchers have turned their attention to the social process by which boundaries between groups are negotiated and some groups are declared by others to be *beyond the pale*.⁵

In this chapter I argue that understanding how "Indian" has been defined as a category is integral to comprehending the place of aboriginal people in the historical literature, in society generally, and in the capitalist market economy in particular. I will argue that "indolent" and "dependent" was (and to some extent still is) a part of the *de facto* definition of "Indian".

³ Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, (Boulder, Co.: Westview, 1993); R. Lewontin, S. Rose and L. Kamin, *Not in Our Genes: Biology, ideology and human nature*, (New York: Pantheon, 1984) p. 127; M. Marger, *Race and Ethnic Relations*, (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1985) p. 12; Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960*, (Macmillan, 1982).

⁴ Vic Satzewich, "The Political Economy of Race and Ethnicity," *Race and Ethnic Relations in Canada*, Peter D. Li, ed. (Toronto: Oxford University, 1990); Nicole St. Onge, "Race, Class and Marginality in the Interlake, 1870-1945," (University of Manitoba: Unpublished PhD, 1990); Rennie Warburton, "Ethnicity, Race, Class and Gender in B.C.: Taking Stock," (Unpublished paper presented to the BC Studies conference, November 1990).

⁵ Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980*, (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991) p. 16.

Racialization is a process through which groups define themselves by excluding others. When Europeans met the different peoples of the Pacific Northwest, racialization was a two-way process. Each incorporated the other into its world-view in terms of already familiar categories. To the Europeans, new and unfamiliar peoples were explained through "scientific" concepts of race. To the Mowachaht and the Nlaka'pamux, Europeans were initially classed as something from a "supernatural" world, since that was their category through which the new and the unexplained could be assimilated. Yet, despite these radically different ways of interpreting the "other" they sometimes came to similar conclusions. Each thought the other cannibals.⁶

Although both the indigenous people and Europeans named and racialized the other, it was the Europeans who made their labels stick. The ability to bestow meanings and name things is both a source and a reflection of power, a power which the Europeans eventually acquired.⁷ Since the vast majority of the historical sources reflect the European racialization of aboriginal people, the rest of this chapter focuses on this side of the racialization process.

When Captain Vancouver called the people of the Northwest Coast "Indians", he placed them in a web of definitions that were already familiar to Europeans.⁸ By this act, west coast aboriginal

⁶ Captain Vancouver perceived that some Coast Salish believed he and his crew to be cannibals; there were many European explorers who levelled the same charge against aboriginal people; Vancouver, *Voyage of Discovery*, p. 551; for an account of the Nuuchahnulth stories about supernatural *white* cannibals see C.M. Tate in Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, p. 307; for Nlaka'pamux racialization of Europeans see Wendy Wickwire, "To See Ourselves as the Others Other"; and for other examples of aboriginal racialization of Europeans see James Ronda, "Exploring the Explorers: Great Plains People and the Lewis and Clark Expedition," *Great Plains Quarterly*, 13 (Spring 1993) pp. 81-90.

⁷ Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the people without history*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) p. 388. For more on naming see Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

⁸ Vancouver was not the first to call west coast people Indians, but interestingly, his predecessor Captain James Cook, used the term 'natives' meaning 'natives of this place' when he spoke about the indigenous people; James Cook, *Captain Cook's Voyages of Discovery*, (London: J.M. Dent, 1906) pp.

people were classified with the aboriginal people of eastern North America and all the indigenous people of Central and South America, not to mention the inhabitants of India. Although the people so categorized spoke hundreds of different languages, had cultures more different from one another than any nations of Europe, and had a vast range of skin colour, facial, and other features, they all fell into a single category: "Indians".

The category "Indian" was pre-made for Vancouver and his explorer contemporaries. By the late eighteenth century there were already elaborate social constructions of "Indians" going back four centuries and ranging from "noble savage" to the "barbaric".⁹ Among the most prominent of these meanings attached to "Indian" was "indolent". Wherever Europeans went in their eighteenth and nineteenth century journeys of exploration, they found the indigenous people to be like the Hottentots of South Africa, characterized by "idleness and sloth".¹⁰ Likewise, nothing, it was said, could rouse the native South Americans from "indolent habits and indifference".¹¹ Authoritative observers reported that "indolence pervades all classes of the Egyptians."¹² In fact, early in the nineteenth century the Frenchman George Depping proposed a moral science, "ethnography," that would study the non-Europeans' indolent character "and the cause of their condition." "When you compare the nations of Asia or Africa with those of Europe," the striking difference, wrote Depping, is that "the former seemed to be plunged into a state of indolence as prevents them performing anything great...The savages of

339-384; Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery*, p. 236; for a discussion of this web of meanings see Robert Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian*, (New York: Vintage, 1978) pp. 12-25 and Smedley, *Race in North America*, pp. 36-72.

⁹ See Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, pp. 3-22; Hugh Honour, *The European Vision of America*, (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975).

¹⁰ Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 45.

¹¹ Gaspar Mollien, *Travels in the Republic of Columbia in the years 1822-23*, (London: C. Knight, 1824) p. 57, quoted in Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 151.

¹² Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 109.

America are so indolent that they chose rather to endure hunger than to cultivate the earth."¹³ Indolent, it seems, was part of the imperial definition of the "other".

This last quotation reveals an ideological reason why non-Europeans might be defined in this way. So long as non-Europeans, aboriginal people in particular, could be defined as "indolent" or "vanishing" and preferably both, the imperial project of seizing the land, resources and labour of the rest-of-the-world, was legitimate. Thus, in the far-away colony of Vancouver Island, the *Colonist* newspaper was participating in a global process, when in 1861 it stated: "As an inferior race...we believe they must give way in order to make room of a race more enlightened and by nature and habits better fitted to perform the task of converting what is now a wilderness into productive fields and happy homes."¹⁴

The same sentiment was still prominent in 1907 when a New Westminster paper reported Reverend R.W. Fraser's comments that God gave North America to the *white* race to develop and use. The Indians, he said, "had failed to utilize what was theirs."¹⁵ This sentiment was also shared by one of the province's premier industrialists, Henry Bell-Irving, president of Anglo B.C. fish canning corporation. "It is the destiny of the white man," he told a federal commission "to be worked for by the inferior races."¹⁶

By starting from a position that "Indian" is a socially created category with attached meanings like indolence and inferiority, it becomes possible to make sense of historical evidence that is otherwise

¹³ George Bernhard Depping, in Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, p. 106.

¹⁴ *Colonist*, February 19, 1861.

¹⁵ *New Westminster Daily News*, November 4, 1907 quoted in Roy, *A Whiteman's Province*, p. 311 n.4.

¹⁶ Henry Bell Irving, of Anglo B.C. Packing Co. quoted in Anderson, *Chinatown*, p. 36 fn. 9.

quite contradictory. How else do you reconcile evidence like that in Charles Forbes' 1862 guide to Vancouver Island that "[Indian] labour cannot be depended on, and with one or two slight exceptions at present forms no point of consideration in the labour market," with that of a principal Vancouver Island newspaper, the *Gazette*, complaining that, "among the numerous drawbacks from which our Colony suffers, is that of the superabundance of Indian labor, to the extent of almost entirely excluding the white working man"?¹⁷

What are we to make of A.A. Harvey's description of aboriginal people as "valueless in the labour market" in his 1867 guide to the colony while in 1875 the Attorney General, George Walkem, wrote "In the present infancy of British Columbia, the Indian of this class have proved invaluable in the settled portions of this province" or Chief Justice Begbie's 1885 assessment that British Columbia Indians were "a race of laborious independent workers"?¹⁸

There are even several examples of one commentator making contradictory statements about the *same* aboriginal groups in the *same* general period. For example, surveyor W.C. Grant in his 1849 report wrote of aboriginal people on southern Vancouver Island: "Those who are able to work are all anxious to be employed. They are very quick at receiving instruction and many of them... were tolerably good hands with the axe and the spade." A short time later, on August 8th 1851, Grant commented in a letter to William Brodie that the native population on Southern Vancouver Island are "as useless as they are harmless". Two years later Grant wrote that the same people, "with the proper

¹⁷ Charles Forbes, *Vancouver Island, its Resources and Capabilities as a Colony* (London, 1862) p. 25; *Gazette*, May 18, 1860.

¹⁸ A.A. Harvey, *A Statistical Account of British Columbia* (Ottawa, 1867) p. 9; George A. Walkem, Attorney General, August 17, 1875 printed in British Columbia, *Papers Relating to the Indian Land Question*, (Victoria: 1872); M.B. Begbie, Bench Books, Vol. XIII Nov 17, 1885, cited in David Williams, *The Man for a New Country*, (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1972) p. 102.

superintendence are capable of being made very useful. They all live by fishing but take kindly to any kind of rough agricultural employment...."¹⁹

We might dismiss this as one man's schizophrenia if it was not a relatively common pattern. Another example is the *Colonist* describing the Indians' "habits of indolence, roaming propensities, and natural repugnance for manual labour" in 1861, while in 1860 and 1862 its editorials complained that *white* men cannot get work because aboriginal people were doing it all.²⁰

At the very least these contradictions are an invitation to examine our sources more closely: to go beyond the observations of elite European observers, to delve into routinely generated sources, and to listen where we can, to the aboriginal side of the conversation. But the paradox may be resolvable in the context of the European association of Indian and indolent. If European observers knew that "Indians" were lazy by definition, yet observed them working everywhere in the colony "with a surprising degree of industry," it was bound to produce some schizophrenic commentary.²¹ This is particularly true when aboriginal "industry" took forms not in keeping with European notions of time, discipline and subordination.

¹⁹ British Columbia Archives and Record Services (BCARS), A/B/20/G76, W.C. Grant, "Report on Vancouver Island"; W.C. Grant in William Grew Hazlitt, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island* (London, 1858) p. 179; James E. Hendrickson, ed. "Two Letters From Walter Colquhoun Grant," *BC Studies*, 26 (Summer 1975) p. 13.

²⁰ *Colonist*, October 23, 1869, February 19, 1861 and June 17, 1862 (excerpted in the epigraph, Chapter 3); Similar contradictions can be found in Robert Brown's account of his Vancouver Island exploration expedition in 1864, see Robert Brown, *Robert Brown and the Vancouver Island Exploration Expedition*, John Hayman, ed. (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1989) pp. 47 and 52.

²¹ The quote is from Governor James Douglas, commenting on aboriginal coal miners at Nanaimo in: Great Britain. Colonial Office, Original Correspondence, Vancouver Island, 1846-1867, (CO) 305/3, 10199, 12345, Douglas to Pakington, August 28, 1852; also CO 305/3, 933, November 11, 1852.

While it is evident that the same European observer could hold apparently opposite ideas about the same aboriginal people at the same time, there is also evidence of the changing racialization of Indians by Europeans over time, thereby affecting historical comparisons. The change is particularly evident in comparing the different construction of "Indian" in the fur trade, colonial and federal periods.

The ship-based sea-otter fur-traders spread, through their accounts, a stereotype of west-coast aboriginal people as "filthy, treacherous, lazy, lascivious, and dishonest."²² They emphasized the physical differences between themselves and the Indians, and the latter's "repugnance", including the practice of flattening the forehead on the south coast and piercing the lip with labrets by women in the north.²³ But by the time the land-based fur traders had been living among aboriginal people for a couple of decades they had remade "Indian" as something less strange. Regular trading gave them a familiarity that replaced, or at least modified, stereotypes inherited from the maritime trade.

Several prominent fur-traders published their thoughts on "Indians" and most recorded something of their feelings in their correspondence.²⁴ As a whole, these traders saw no firm dividing line between themselves and aboriginal people. They could see some of the virtues of their aboriginal trading partners and often could see, in their vices, parallels in European society. Ogden could comment unfavourably on the Indian love for gaming, but pointed out he was also "humiliated by the remembrance of similar scenes" back home. Alexander Ross could find parallels in the practice of

²² Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, p. 78.

²³ Fisher in *Contact and Conflict* develops this contrast more fully.

²⁴ Among the published versions: Alexander C. Anderson, "Notes on the Indian Tribes of British North America and the Northwest Coast" *Historical Magazine*, 7, (1863) p. 80; [Peter Skeene Ogden], *Traits of American-Indian Life and Character*; F.W. Howay argues convincingly that it was Ogden in "Authorship of the Traits of Indian Life" *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 35 (1934) pp. 42-9; William Fraser Tolmie, "Utilization of the Indians," *The Resources of British Columbia* 1, 12 (February 1, 1884) p. 7; J.W. McKay, "The Indians of British Columbia," *BC Mining Journal* (1899) reprinted in the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions, No. 15555.

flattening the foreheads of infants in the European habit of compressing women's waists: "All nations, civilised as well as savage, have their peculiar prejudices." In his first encounters with the Kwakwaka'wakw people at Fort Rupert, J.S. Helmcken could even see their "boldness, bravery, war tendencies and aggressiveness being just what we admire in our own countrymen and ancestors." He was led to the conclusion that:

Their conduct to their friends and the peaceful condition of their villages, their faithfulness, must come in for a big share of praise. Untamed they were open and intelligent, not sneaks. They had plenty to eat, homes to live in, fire and clothing; in fact were provident, self-reliant, as so far well to do. Have civilized [men] much more? ²⁵

The fur traders' actions often spoke louder than their words. Many of the traders and employees of the company formed long-term relationships with aboriginal women. The missionary Bolduc reported that all the French Canadian employees and former employees of the HBC had Indian wives at Willamette in Oregon Territory in 1843; in 1851 C.A. Bayley reported the same for the company employees at Fort Victoria.²⁶ Most of the senior officials of the company on the coast, including James Douglas who later became governor, also married aboriginal or mixed-blood women. All of Douglas's daughters married into *white* society, at the highest levels. Up until the time of Douglas's governorship, the "colour bar" separating aboriginal and non-aboriginal people was quite permeable.²⁷

²⁵ Ogden, *Traits of Indian Life*, p. 79; Alexander Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River...* (London: Smith, Elder, 1849) pp. 99-100; J.S. Helmcken, *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken*, Dorothy B. Smith ed., (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1975) p. 328.

²⁶ Jean B.Z. Bolduc, *Mission of the Columbia*, translator Edward J. Kowrich, (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1979, reprint of 1843 edition) p. 90; London, Public Record Office, CO 30, 15, n. 63 Baynes to Douglas, September 4, 1860; BCARS, E/B/B34.2, Charles A. Bayley, "Early Life on Vancouver Island."

²⁷ For a general discussion of these relationships see Brown, *Strangers in Blood*; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*'.

The creation of the colony of Vancouver Island in 1849 began a process of re-defining and restricting aboriginal people by using the "law" to create entitlements based on *racial* distinctions. At first, carrying on from the fur-trade relationships, Indians and "half-breeds" were not legally distinguishable from non-aboriginal people. In law, at least, they had the same rights to purchase and later pre-empt land, to vote and run for office (subject to the same property qualifications as *whites*), and attend colonial schools (subject to paying tuition).²⁸ Within a year, however, in 1850, Indians were distinguished in law by treaties which "reserved" land for them.²⁹ In 1858 both the separate colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia (formed that year) passed "Indian Liquor Acts" intended to stop the consumption of alcohol by Indians, (though, in fact, the acts penalized non-Indians who sold alcohol to Indians and were largely ineffective). These laws reflected a consensus in the colonies that unlike *whites*, Indians could not *handle* alcohol.³⁰

The third legal distinction that differentiated Indians from *whites* in the colonial period was drawn differently by the Colony of British Columbia and the Colony of Vancouver. British Columbia passed, in 1859, an act to allow "those unwilling from alleged conscientious motives to be sworn" in legal proceedings. These included Jews, Quakers and Roman Catholics as well as aboriginal people who would not swear on the King James version of the bible. The colonial legislature on Vancouver Island stonewalled attempts to introduce a measure that would allow non-Christian aboriginal people to

²⁸ In practice Indians did buy and preempt land but I have found no record of them voting, running for office, or attending schools not explicitly established for Indians by missionaries.

²⁹ For the text of the treaties and the debate over reserves see British Columbia, *Papers Relating to the Indian Land Question*.

³⁰ Colony of Vancouver Island, "Proclamation," 1858; Colony of British Columbia, "Penalty for Selling Liquor to the Natives," 1858; "An Act for Better Prohibiting the Sale or Gift of Intoxicating Liquors to the Indians," 1860.

take an oath and thus testify in court.³¹ Apparently the Vancouver Island legislators were concerned that this would adversely affect whites engaged in the illegal sale of liquor to Indians who had virtual immunity from prosecution by the inadmissibility of aboriginal testimony.³² Until the Colonies were united and a new act passed, testimony of non-Christian aboriginal people was inadmissible in the courts of Vancouver Island. Although they were often prosecuted in them, aboriginal people could not seek protection through the courts.

In 1866 the united colonies passed the Land Act which introduced another *racial* distinction. This time directly limiting the ability of "Indians" to participate in the capitalist economy by declaring the province open to pre-emption for a nominal fee, by *whites* only. While *whites* could claim land by right, "Indians" were only able to obtain land with special permission from the Governor.³³

These colonial laws were only the start of a long process. A dramatic re-defining, re-naming and interference in the life of aboriginal people accompanied the arrival of "Dominion" in 1871. In establishing a provincial and federal voter's list the province passed, in 1872, the "Act to Amend the Qualification and Registration of Voter's". This act denied the right of aboriginal people to vote in provincial and federal elections, enshrining in law the de facto exclusion of aboriginal people from the process of governance. When they were disenfranchised aboriginal people comprised over 70 percent of the provincial population. Since the act also disenfranchised the second largest ethnic group in the province -- the Chinese -- legislators were elected by, represented and drawn from the 25 percent of the

³¹ Vancouver Island, "Proclamation," 1859; British Columbia, "The Oaths Act," 1859; "An Ordinance to Amend the law of Evidence," 1865; "An Ordinance to Provide for the Taking of Oaths and admission of Evidence in certain cases," 1867.

³² CO 305/29, A.E. Kennedy to Colonial Office, 10226, September 3, 1866.

³³ There is no good study of aboriginal pre-emption applications to the Governor; the most detailed account is in Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics*, (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1990) pp. 35-42.

population that was "of the white race". In 1876, the rights of Indians (and Chinese) to vote in municipal elections was also removed.³⁴ In effect, the voter acts defined Indians for the first time as an officially marginalized people without a political voice. Legislators responsible only to the minority *white* population were then in a position to establish a series of *race*-based entitlements that further disadvantaged aboriginal people.

The most important of these *racializing* pieces of legislation was the Indian Act of 1876. This law "re-created" Indians by establishing a "definition" of who was and was not "Indian" and enshrined in it the *white* political elite's attitudes about aboriginal people in a law that remained fundamentally unchanged for 75 years. An Indian was "any male person of Indian blood who is reputed to be a member of an Indian band," his wife and his children.³⁵ An "Indian band" was "any tribe, band or body of Indians who own or are interested in a reserve...." In effect, while the legal definition of *Indian-ness* required that one's father have some "Indian blood" the definition had more to do with being attached to a certain piece of land. Nothing in the act suggested that "aboriginal culture" could be used to define "Indians".³⁶

³⁴ The percentages are approximate since they are based on the Blue Books of the Colony of B.C. and the federal census which estimated the 1870 population of B.C. at 36,247 of which 25,661 were Indians and another 1,548 were Chinese. Canada, *Census*, 1871, vol. 4 pp 376-7; a higher estimated Indian population of 29,275 for 1871 was proposed by the 1931 Canada census's historical population data which would increase the percentage of aboriginal people; "An Act to Amend the Qualification and Registration of Voter's Act," S.B.C. 1872, 35 Vict., chap. 37 s. 13. This act was reserved by the Lieutenant Governor and proclaimed in 1875; "An Act to Make Better Provision for the Qualification and Registration of Voters," S.B.C. 1875, 35 Vict chap. 26, s. 22; "An Act to Amend the Municipal Act," S.B.C. 1876 chap. 3; 1883, 51 Vict., chap. 15.

³⁵ This reversed the whole basis of membership for many aboriginal groups who were matrilineal and matrilocal. The state reserved the right to exclude any illegitimate children unless they had shared in the distribution of band moneys for over two years. "The Indian Act", 1876, S.B.C. 1876, c. 18, 3, 3(a); the definition of an Indian as someone "reputed to belong to an Indian band" remained in effect until the 1951 "Act Respecting Indians" S.B.C. 1951, c. 59, s. 2 redefined Indian as "a person who is registered as an Indian" on a band or general list, and a member of a band "means a person whose name appears on a Band List;" band lists had apparently been in existence for most bands since the late 1890s.

³⁶ "The Indian Act," 1876, S.C. 1876 c. 18, 3(1).

The act made Indians "non-persons", clearly stating that "the term person means an individual other than an Indian." Aboriginal people were also spatially segregated from others. "Indian status" with its connection to a certain parcel of land which could not be sold or given away, in combination with the land act which prevented Indians from pre-empting other land, meant that aboriginal people were practically "frozen" to their late nineteenth century locations.³⁷ Most of these were strategically placed in relation to the 1880s subsistence, prestige and cash economies. But when the fur trade declined, resources were exhausted, industry moved, and new laws prohibited longstanding resource harvesting practices, aboriginal people remained tied to the same pieces of land. Their non-Indian co-workers moved on, and pre-empted or bought new land elsewhere.

The new Indian Act implicitly declared Indians to be unable to take care of themselves in many aspects of their economic or social lives. Permission in writing was required from the Indian Agent before an Indian was allowed to sell any hay or wood grown on the reserve, moreover "the proceeds arising from the sale or lease of any timber, hay stone or minerals" did not belong to the Indian but "shall be paid to the Receiver General to the credit of the Indian fund." Indians were not permitted to borrow money on the basis any collateral that they owned on the reserve, including their own house. Nor could Indians sell or give away any property that they acquired through moneys received from the federal government or the Indian band. Indians were not permitted to have alcohol in their possession or to be intoxicated³⁸

The legislation "pathologized" them by declaring them unable to take care of their own affairs and legitimated popular associations of "Indian" and inferior. Placed in a category as subjects, but not

³⁷ Except for city lots, which a small number did purchase. British Columbia, "Proclamation," January 4, 1860; "The Pre-emption Ordinance," 1866; "An Ordinance to Amend and Consolidate the Laws Affecting Crown Lands in British Columbia," June 1 1870.

³⁸ "Indian Act", S.C. 1876, c. 18, 17, 60, 79, 83; Indian Act, S.C. 1880, s. 80.

citizens, Indians found themselves in a civic cell shared with felons and the insane.³⁹ Indeed, the state blurred the boundary between Indians and felons by criminalizing for Indians what was normal behaviour for everyone else -- the consumption of alcohol. Subsequent revisions to the Indian Act criminalized traditional aboriginal practices.⁴⁰

"Backward" was part of the definition of Indian since provisions were made for "progressive" Indians to apply to become citizens, a process known as "enfranchisement". Later, when so few applied to escape their "Indian status", the law was changed so that the state could declare any educated Indian to be *white* and not subject to the Indian Act. Indians who were admitted into university or entered the holy orders or were admitted into the legal profession, automatically lost their Indian status.⁴¹

Despite the legal definitions of "Indian", the contradictions in trying to legislate *race* meant Indian Agents had a hard time drawing boundaries around their charges. As late as 1893 and probably later, Indian bands maintained effective control over their membership, even in the most settled parts of the province. The census of the Cowichan Agency for that year showed one village suffered a population loss of 72 and another a gain of 70. The agent explained:

This is not actually the case, but at the time the census was taken the Indians were residing at the villages named. Many families own a share in the large ranches in different villages, some from the father's side, some from the mother's, and their moveable effects not being many, they reside at either place occasionally as the

³⁹ Prisoners came under closer scrutiny but only for a specified term.

⁴⁰ Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, *An iron hand upon the people: the law against the potlatch on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990).

⁴¹ "Indian Act," S.C. 1876, c 18, s. 86 the sections of the act relating to enfranchisement did not initially apply to the Indians of British Columbia or the North-West Territories because they were thought to be too backward to be considered; amendments to the Indian Act in 1920 gave the Minister of Indian Affairs the power to declare any Indian enfranchised without his consent; this was repealed in 1922 but re-enacted in a milder form in 1933; upon enfranchisement an Indians wife and minor children automatically became enfranchised as well.

fishing, millwork, or agricultural pursuits may offer the best inducements, hence the difficulty of classing many of the families to a particular band.⁴²

In 1893, the Songhees population jumped by 31 with the inclusion by the Songhees of mixed-blood children who had been deserted by their *white* fathers. Under a strict application of the Indian Act these children would not be Indian if their fathers could be proven to be *white*.⁴³

So called "half-breeds" were the subject of constant concern since they posed a challenge to the nineteenth century idea of immutable boundaries between races.⁴⁴ Many, like the Anglican Bishop of British Columbia, believed: "Halfbreed children usually sink into a degraded state, combining the force of the white race with the viciousness and lowness of the savage."⁴⁵ Indian Agent Lomas agreed: "The Half-Breed element is the source of trouble everywhere, as they combine the worst qualities of each people with few redeeming qualities."⁴⁶ For his part, Indian Agent O'Daunt thought that "a breed invariably inclines to the Indian side of the house."⁴⁷

Starting in the late 1890s Indian agents in southern British Columbia, at least, were taking control of band membership away from the members. Indians became the people who were on a band list kept by the Indian Agent, or were the wives or children of male band members. Female band members who married non-Indians ceased to be Indians, as did their children. From this time, "Indian"

⁴² W.H. Lomas, Cda. S.P. 1892, No. 14, p. 115.

⁴³ W.H. Lomas, Cda. S.P. 1894, No. 14, p. 117.

⁴⁴ Smedley, *Race in North America*, pp. 231-54.

⁴⁵ Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia Archives, Bishop Hill's Diary, March 30 1862; thanks to Jean Barman for providing me with a typescript of this diary.

⁴⁶ W.H. Lomas, Cda. S.P. 1894 vol. 10 n.14, pp. 116-8.

⁴⁷ National Archives of Canada (NAC) RG 10 vol 10896; File: 987/1-1-10 pt 1, A. O'Daunt to Assistant Deputy Director, Department of Indian Affairs, March 5, 1923.

in the statistics gathered by the Department of Indian Affairs increasingly reflected only Indians who met the Indian Act definition.

While the Department of Indian Affairs began counting only "registered" Indians, statistics gathered by other federal departments like fisheries or the census, the provincial government, and businesses continued to use a wider cultural definition of "Indian". Henry Pennier, who was of mixed parentage summarized one of the popular tests of "Indian-ness": "We look Indian and everybody but Indians takes us for Indian."⁴⁸

Despite the legal definitions, even in the early 1900s, cultural factors appeared to be a more important than the law when Indian Agents identified Indians. Agent Fougner asked his superiors: "Is there any distinction to be made between supplying a half breed with intoxicating liquor and supplying a registered Indian? I have [concluded] it would depend on the person's mode of life and if he considers himself to be an Indian and is assigned so by his fellows."⁴⁹

Since Indians were not allowed to purchase liquor, but so called "half-breeds" were, there were many attempts to make "half-breeds" into Indians so that the former would not be able to supply the latter with alcohol. In the 1870s, Indian Agent Lenihan suggested that "half breeds residing upon, or in the vicinity of Indian Reserves should be placed upon the same footing as Indians, and held amenable to the law as if they were Indians."⁵⁰ Lenihan's suggestion was reiterated by the Indian Superintendent of B.C. in 1892 and was taken up by the amendments to the Indian Act in 1894. With regard to liquor regulations only, "any person who follows the Indian mode of life, or any child of such person," was

⁴⁸ Henry Pennier, *Chiefly Indian: The Warm and Witty Story of a British Columbia Half Breed Logger*, with Herbert L. McDonald, (Vancouver: Graydonald Graphics Limited, 1972) p. 7.

⁴⁹ RG 10 vol. 10888, 1912-1913, Bella Coola Agency, Letter Book, Iver Fougner, June 7, 1912.

⁵⁰ James Lenihan, *Cda. S.P. 1876*, pp. 53-56.

legally defined as an Indian.⁵¹ Although this extension of the Indian category applied only to liquor regulations, according to Indian Agent Harper Reed, in parts of the province, the habitual consumption of alcohol was enough to make the Indian agent put a half-breed on a band list and so make him or her a full Indian according to the act.⁵²

An awareness of the shifting boundaries around *race* alerts us to the need to be cautious in comparing, for example, population figures over time and between gathering agencies. In the 1880s, for example, the "Indian" population was defined more widely than it was in 1910, even in the Department of Indian Affairs own figures. Other agencies, like the Department of Fisheries as well as employers tended to persist in using a broader, cultural definitions of Indian that often included people of mixed parentage. Even the federal census defined Indians in different ways at different times. Up to 1901 an Indian was someone whose father was an indigenous inhabitant. A child of an aboriginal woman and non-aboriginal man was defined as a "breed" and counted separately. After this the census re-classified "breeds" as Indians. More recently the census uses the self-definition of ethnicity offered by respondent.⁵³

The *racial* characteristics associated with "Indian" also make it a problematic term in using the evidence. More than two centuries have passed since the first Europeans declared the Indians here

⁵¹ "An Act to Further Amend the Indian Act," S.C. 1894, c. 32, 6. NAC, RG 10 vol. 1350 Reel C-13917, File: Cowichan Agency Departmental Circulars, 1892-1910, Arthur G. Smith, Deputy Attorney General of B.C. August 30, 1892. Cda. S.P. 1892, no. 14, pp. 181-88.

⁵² "In backtimes all...half-red who were habitual drunks were placed on the ...Indian List..." RG 10 vol. 10922; File: Stikine-George Campbell; Harper Reed, January 1, 1940.

⁵³ Self-definition has some interesting consequences. In the five years between the census 1981 and 1986 the census records that 'native people' in British Columbia increased by 55 percent, "an increase that is far larger than anything which can be explained by actual growth." Smelser, *Labour Market Paper*, p. 2.

"extremely indolent and lazy"⁵⁴ The great colonial empires have long since crumbled, but the language of empire remains. In evaluating *white* observers' assessments of aboriginal people it has to be kept in mind that in their context "Indian" may have been synonymous with "indolent", as well as other pejoratives, and to treat this testimony accordingly.

Finally, the shifting boundaries and meanings of race require a careful use of terminology and a recognition that any definition is a choice. Since "Indian" acquired particular legal meaning in the early federal period I use the term with its legal meaning(s) defined according to the Indian Act. Otherwise I have preferred to use "aboriginal people" as a more inclusive term, the meaning of which includes indigenous people before the passing of the Indian Act. After the passage of the Indian Act, "aboriginal people" includes "Indians" according to the Act, as well as people that would have been legally "Indian" but lost that status through voluntary or involuntary "enfranchisement", and their offspring. Otherwise, I have retained "Indian" when directly quoting from others.

The term for "everyone else" is equally problematic. In the sources and even today, in informal conversation, "white" is used as a shorthand, despite the multi-ethnic society of British Columbia. I prefer to use the clumsier, but less problematic term, "non-aboriginal people". I have retained the use of "white" when quoting others and have used it in italics as a shorthand for the European, largely anglo-saxon segment of the population that was consciously trying to create British Columbia as a "*whiteman's province*".

⁵⁴ Unidentified member of Vancouver's crew, "A New Vancouver Journal," Edmond Meany, ed., *Washington Historical Quarterly*, 6 (1915) p. 62.

SECTION II

PAID WORK IN THE IMMIGRANT ECONOMY, 1849-1970

The Indian and two klootchmen approached the cabin and started to talk Chinook. The [settlers] did not understand the Indians and could not make the Indians understand them....The Indians were trying to impart some information but could make no headway, so at last, how they managed it I don't know, but the Indians got them to leave the form on which they were sitting....

Then the two Indian girls started bouncing about, jumping in the air backwards and forwards over the form like two wild things, and they could jump like deer.

This went on for fifteen minutes with the White Men very much puzzled, not understanding what it all meant. Eventually the girls tired themselves out and had to give up the performance. Neither succeeded in making themselves understood, and, bye and bye the Indians walked away in disgust.

John Morton, the first homesteader on Burrard Inlet, had just arrived and was receiving his first visit from the local aboriginal people. At first they tried to speak with him in the *lingua franca* of the territory, Chinook. When language failed as a medium of communication, the aboriginal visitors turned to gestures, then action. Still no mutual comprehension. Eventually the attempt at communication was given up.

What was it that the aboriginal visitors were so anxious to convey?

Morton was later told that the male was simply trying to hire out the young women [klootchman in Chinook] as servants: "one who was young and supple, and who proved it by her agility."¹

¹ The events in this story told by Joseph Morton about his father on May 3, 1932 and recorded in J.S. Matthews, *Early Vancouver: Narratives of Pioneers of Vancouver, B.C.*, (Vancouver: J.S. Matthews, 1933) pp. 78-9, relate to 1862.

The disgust of the aboriginal visitors in the story probably focused as much on Morton's inability to speak Chinook jargon, as on the failure to obtain employment. The jargon, a simple language of some 200-500 words was originally based on the Chinook language with a smattering of Nuu-chah-nulth words, and was created by these two peoples to facilitate their own trade. Europeans spread the language to aboriginal groups farther afield and in the process added French and English terms for the goods and customs they introduced.²

From the early nineteenth century to the early twentieth, this Chinook jargon was the language of exchange and the workplace, of the "middle ground" between aboriginal people and immigrants, a place where meanings moved across cultures and were frequently transformed. Without articles, tense or case, and with only one preposition that replaced *for, in, towards, among, on, to* etc...this was a language of deliberate ambiguity and approximate meaning. There was, for example, no easy way to distinguish buying from bartering, trading, or selling, as all were conveyed by the word *mákuk*.

This section, chapters three and four, tries to recreate one aspect of *mákuk* in British Columbia. It examines the work aboriginal performed in the immigrant's economy. The other side of the exchange, the role of paid work in the life of aboriginal people, is taken up in the micro-history of the Songhees, in section III.

² When Hale compiled a word list in 1846 he thought that his 250 words "may be regarded as nearly complete. When the Smithsonian Institution published a Chinook Jargon dictionary in 1863 it contained 500 words of which 221 were from the Chinook language proper, 18 Nuu-chah-nulth, 94 French, 67 English and 21 from various Salish nations. Horatio Hale, "The 'Jargon' or Trade Language of Oregon," in Hale *United States Exploring Expedition... Ethnology and Philology*, (1846, Reprint Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1968), 635-650.

CHAPTER 3

OUTSIDE HISTORY: LABOURERS OF THE ABORIGINAL PROVINCE, 1849-1885

...their habits of indolence, roaming propensities, and natural repugnance for manual labour, together with a thievish disposition which appears to be inherently characteristic of the Indian race, totally disqualifies them from ever becoming either useful or desirable citizens....

Victoria Colonist, February 19, 1861.

For years Victoria has suffered to an extent unknown in any civilized town in the universe from the residence of an Indian population... 'cheap' labor at the expense of a white immigrant population.

Victoria Colonist, June 17, 1862

The contradictions and mixed messages inherent in contemporary records connecting aboriginal people and paid labour are well illustrated by this pair of quotations. Taken from the same newspaper, only 16 months apart, one suggests aboriginal people were "valueless in the labour market," and the other suggests that as a source of cheap labour they were a threat to *white* workers. Which, if either, more accurately describes the relationship of aboriginal people to the paid workforce? To what extent were aboriginal people incorporated into the capitalist workforce of nineteenth century British Columbia?

The auto-ethnographies of several nineteenth century aboriginal people, in themselves and in forcing a re-examination of accounts by government officials, missionaries, travellers and employers, provide a new context to look for answers to these questions. The auto-ethnographies I have drawn upon include all the published and unpublished autobiographical accounts of British Columbia aboriginal people in this era, including oral histories, that I was able to locate in the following collections: National

Archives of Canada, Archives of British Columbia, Yukon Archives, Special Collections of the University of British Columbia and the University of Washington Special Collections.³

The aboriginal accounts available for the period before 1885 include the journal of Arthur Wellington Clah, a Tsimshian from Fort Simpson, spanning the years 1860-1910.⁴ Parts of the life history of Sayach'apis, a Nuu-chah-nulth (b. 1840-2) from Alberni Inlet were transcribed by Sapir and Swadesh⁵ while Charles Jones, a Nuu-chah-nulth (b. 1876) from Port Renfrew has "co-authored" his biography.⁶ Biographical accounts ranging from a few pages to book-length have been compiled on a few others, most in an ethnographic context. These include Coast Salish John Fornsby (b. 1855) from the Skagit nation⁷, Tsimshian William Pierce (b. ~1855)⁸. August Khahtsahlano (b. 1877) from the

³ Among them are all four volumes that meet this criteria in David Brumble III, *An Annotated Bibliography of American Indian and Eskimo Autobiographies*, (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1981); for a full list see Appendix 1.

⁴ Clah learned English from the missionary William Duncan, to whom he taught Tsimshian. The original manuscript is in the library of Wellcome Institute London; I have drawn upon Robert Galois, "The Worlds of Arthur Wellington Clah, 1865-1881" paper presented to the BC Studies Conference, Victoria, B.C., 13 November, 1992.

⁵ Sayachi'apis, interviewed 1910-14 and 1921-22, knew no English. Though Sapir knew some Nuu-chah-nulth, this material was collected with the aid of interpreters, particularly Alex Thomas. Much of the editorial work was by Morris Swadesh. The native text is printed alongside an English translation in Edward Sapir and Morris Swadesh, *Nootka Texts*, (Philadelphia: Linguistic Society of America, 1939) and in their *Native Accounts of Nootka Ethnography*, (Indian University, 1955). Sayachi'apis' biography has been published in different forms including Sapir, "The Life of a Nootka Indian" *Queen's Quarterly*, 28, 3-4 232-43 and 351-67 and in "Sayachi'apis, a Nootka Trader" in *American Indian Life*, E.C. Parsons and B.W. Huebsh, eds. (1922).

⁶ Charles Jones with Stephen Bosustow, *Queesto: Pacheenaht Chief by Birthright*, (Nanaimo, B.C.: Theytus, 1981); Jones and his wife were interviewed in English by Bosustow, a film producer, over a few days in 1976; the text shows signs of considerable rewording.

⁷ June Collins, "John Fornsby: The Personal Document of a Coast Salish Indian" in *Indians of the Urban Northwest*, Marian Smith, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949) pp. 287-341; Fornsby was interviewed in English in 1942 and 1947 by Collins who tried unsuccessfully to direct the questioning. Fornsby so frequently followed his own threads that Collins decided to arrange the material in a loosely chronological life history, deleting some details, and translating the Salish words Fornsby used, into English.

Squamish nation⁹, and George Swanaset (b. 1874) originally Sto:lo¹⁰, two Kwakwaka'wakw, Charley Nowell (b. 1870)¹¹, from Fort Rupert and Mrs. Moses Knight, from Bella Bella (b. ~1870).¹² An autobiography of the plateau Salish Christine Quintasket, (b. ~1885) relates her early experiences.¹³ Other ethnographic sources, not intended as biographic, include incidental references to aboriginal work.¹⁴

All but one of these auto-ethnographies, Quintasket's *Mourning Dove*, are from coastal groups. In part, this unbalanced representation reflects the population distribution of aboriginal people,

⁸ Rev. William Henry Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, J.P. Hicks, ed., (Vancouver: Vancouver Bindery, 1933); the first section of this material was set down by Pierce in 1910 and describes his life to that time; the remainder of the material was arranged by Hicks from Pierce's notes. Both sections suggest that the material is shaped to highlight the transition Pierce made from heathen to Christian.

⁹ J.S. Matthews, *Conversations with Khahtsahlano, 1932-34* (Vancouver: Vancouver City Archives, 1955); and Oliver N. Wells, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbours*, (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987); both interviewed August Khahtsahlano in English, Wells in 1965 and Matthews at intervals from the 1930s to the 1950s; in both cases the material is presented in a question and answer format.

¹⁰ University of Washington, Special Collections, Melville Jacobs Collection, Mss. 1693-71-13, Box 112, "George Swanaset: narrative of a personal document"; interviewed by Paul Fetzer in 1951; I have no information on how this was gathered.

¹¹ C.S. Ford, ed., *Smoke from Their Fires: The Life of a Kwakiutl Chief* [Charles Nowell] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941); Nowell was interviewed in 1940 and spoke English so it was "possible to take down the story of his life exactly as he told it" though Ford says rearranged the events into a more chronological sequence. Ford substituted some of the names of the women with whom Charley had affairs, altered some syntax, but left much of Nowell's non-standard English intact. Brumble, in his *Annotated Bibliography*, p. 106, suggests that Nowell was guided by Ford's questions.

¹² Ronald Olson, "The Life Story of A Bella Bella Woman" in "Notes on the Bella Bella Kwakiutl" *Anthropological Records* 14, 5 (1955); this was collected through the use of the interpreter Mrs William Grant and "slightly modified" by Olson who has put it all in the first person.

¹³ Christine Quintasket, *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography*, Jay Miller, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1990); this is an autobiography in the sense the Quintasket was a writer and translator of aboriginal traditions in her own right but Miller had to reassemble the manuscript from a variety of sources, and he "rewrote each sentence to achieve agreement of subject and verb, a uniform past tense, and appropriate use of pronouns." He offers the manuscript as "my sense of her work".

¹⁴ Diamond Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian* (Victoria: B.C. Provincial Museum, 1955); Wayne Suttles, *Katzie Ethnographic Notes*, (Victoria: B.C. Provincial Museum, 1955).

approximately 80 percent of whom belonged to "coastal" groups. It is also a reflection of ethnographic interest. The coastal groups had permanent winter villages, more elaborate ritual and more material goods and so have drawn more scholarly attention.

Three of the *autobiographers*, Jones, Nowell and Pierce, were the subjects of auto-ethnographies largely due to their prominence as chiefs or, in the case of Pierce, as a missionary. These are accounts of "successes" determined by a distinctly Euro-american criteria. On the other hand the remaining eight auto-ethnographies emphasize success in the "traditional" economy. Ethnographers sought people with as much understanding as possible of "traditional life," so old age and knowledge were the main criteria. Those people whose stories were recorded stood out because they had not "assimilated" and so were not "successful" in the *white* world. All but two of the accounts are from male informants. Moreover, since one of the accounts from an aboriginal women, Mrs. Knight, is very brief, our knowledge of paid and unpaid work is definitely skewed towards what men were doing. This is reflected, to a degree, in the language used. "Work" in both the aboriginal and non-aboriginal accounts means paid work, and is distinguished from subsistence activities like hunting or fishing, gathering of plants or preserving foods, activities which involved the expenditure of much labour, particularly of women, but not for pay. Taking into account their partial nature, these aboriginal voices, along with those captured in letters to government and church officials found in archives, allow a foundation for a renewed discussion of the early years of aboriginal paid labour in British Columbia.

The time-frame examined here is usually described as the period from the creation of the Colony of Vancouver Island in 1849, through the gold rushes, the founding of the giant export sawmills, Confederation, the development and spread of the salmon canning industry, to the completion of Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, an event which tied the province of British Columbia to the North American continental economy. What is remarkable about this chronology is that it only follows the activities of the small *white* minority of the population.

We usually think of the coming of Europeans to British Columbia as the peopling of an area, but the first century of European "settlement" was a period of depopulation. Yet, despite introduced diseases and the dramatically reduced indigenous population, aboriginal people remained the majority long after the first *white* settlement. Of the 34,600 or so inhabitants of the Colony of Vancouver Island and the adjacent islands and shores in 1855, all but 774 were aboriginal. There were probably an additional 25,000-30,000 aboriginal people living in the remainder of what became British Columbia. When British Columbia joined Canada in 1871, there were three times as many aboriginal people as "settlers". In fact, until 1885, British Columbia was, by population at least, an "aboriginal province".¹⁵

This vast aboriginal population was extremely heterogeneous, both culturally and in terms of its history with non-aboriginal people. It was comprised of at least 30 "nations" or ethnic groups, speaking 26 distinct, and largely mutually unintelligible, languages. Each nation had its own customary laws that defined property rights, social and gender relations, and by 1849 each village had its own "history" of exchange with non-aboriginal people or their trade goods.¹⁶

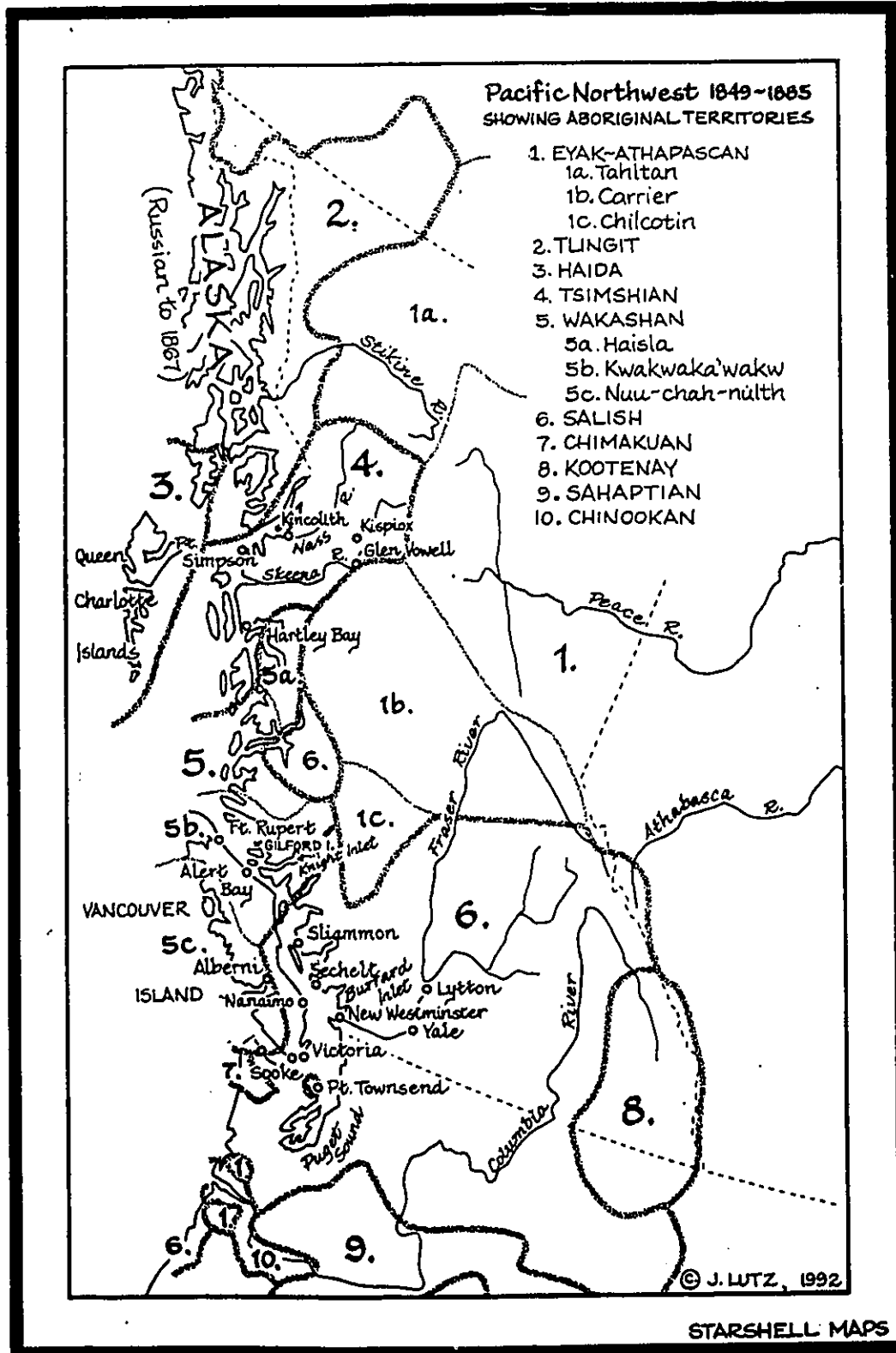
From the closing of the Spanish fort at Yuquot (Nootka) in 1792 and the establishment of the colony of Vancouver Island in 1849, these diverse aboriginal nations accommodated 23 small European "settlements".¹⁷ Until 1824 these "settlements" were fur trading posts, connected by trails and waterways to England, where furs were sent and provisions obtained. In that year Governor George

¹⁵ The full extent of the demographic catastrophe that struck aboriginal people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will never be known -- by the time the first censuses were taken, the worst was already over. Most scholars would agree, however, that it was not until 1900 that the total population of British Columbia reach the levels it had been in 1750. See Table I below.

¹⁶ In 1849 very few aboriginal people had not met a European and even these had experience with European goods traded through intermediaries; for an introduction to this diversity see William C. Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, (Washington, D.C.) vols. 4, 6, 7.

¹⁷ See Arthur Ray, "The Hudson's Bay Company and Native People," in W.E. Washburn, ed. *History of Indian White Relations*, vol. 4 of the *Handbook of North American Indians*, p. 337.

MAP I
 Overview of Aboriginal British Columbia, 1885



Simpson, of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) embarked on a tour of the company's posts, acquired from the Northwest Company three years prior, in what was then called the New Caledonia and Columbia Districts. Few of these posts were making any profit and Simpson soon discovered why. He wrote in his diary that the staff of the Columbia district "...have shewn an extraordinary predilection for European provisions...all this time they may be said to be eating gold; such fare we cannot afford in the present times." Given the cost of transportation, he ordered the staff to cultivate a taste for local salmon.¹⁸

By halving the number of staff and ordering the remainder to become self-sufficient, Simpson's orders produced a fundamental reorientation of the fur-trading posts. On his return trip to the district in 1828, Simpson found that in contrast to the previous routine of importing food, aboriginal people were now depended upon "chiefly for the means of subsistence and for various duties about the establishments."¹⁹ As a result of the expansion into subsistence activities, the settlements grew to embrace activities besides the fur trade. Correspondingly the "various duties," that aboriginal people paid to perform, expanded as well.

The company's labour shortage was made worse in 1849, when the California gold rush prompted the desertion of many non-aboriginal employees. The acting HBC Governor, on his 1849 visit to the west coast, wrote that "at [Fort] Vancouver there is not one white man employed about the

¹⁸ Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958) p. 55.

¹⁹ E.E. Rich, ed., *Simpson's 1828 Journey to the Columbia*, (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, Vol X, 1947) p. 26; see the description of this process from the fur trader's point of view in Richard S. Mackie, "The Hudson's Bay Company on the Pacific, 1821-1843" (University of British Columbia, unpublished Ph.D., 1993) pp. 356-382.

establishment, and I think it will be necessary to break in Indians at the different posts to a great part of the work now done by white men."²⁰

 Table I
 Aboriginal and Non-aboriginal Population Estimates for
 British Columbia, 1835-1901²¹

Year	Aboriginal Population	Non-aboriginal Population	Aboriginal as % of Population
1835	70,000	350	99.9
1851	65,000	750	98.8
1856	62,000	1,000	98.4
1861	60,000	13,624	81.5
1871	37,000	13,247	73.6
1881	29,000	23,798	54.9
1885	28,000	-	-
1891	26,000	72,173	26.5
1901	25,488	153,169	14.3

At other fur trade posts Richard Mackie has documented the wide-scale employment of aboriginal people cutting shingles and spars, picking cranberries, harvesting ice, as well as gardening, fishing, preserving food, and doing general construction.²² Apparently, the comments in the Fort St.

²⁰ Eden Colvile to George Simpson, October 15 1849 in E. Rich, ed., *London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colvile 1849-1852*, (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1956) p. 181.

²¹ Aboriginal population from Duff, *Indian History of British Columbia*, 39-35, and for 1901, from Canada Census. Non-aboriginal population is taken from Douglas's census of Vancouver Island in 1854 which gave 774 whites on Vancouver Island, plus an estimate for the mainland. The 1861 population estimate is from Phillips, "Confederation and the Economy of British Columbia," p. 59. Other estimates are from Canada Census for 1871, 1881 and 1891. Since racial information was not tabulated in 1891 the non-aboriginal population given here is the total population less Duff's estimate for the aboriginal population. See also CO 305/7, 11582, Douglas to Labouchere, 20 October 1856 and CO 305/6, 10048, Douglas to Russell, 21 August 1855.

²² Richard S. Mackie, "Colonial Land, Indian Labour and Company Capital: The Economy of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858," (University of Victoria: unpublished MA, 1984) pp. 26-150, and "The Hudson's Bay Company on the Pacific, 1821-1843" pp. 356-382; Fort Rupert Journal, Nov. 22, 1849 cited in William Burrill, "Class Conflict and Colonialism: The Coal Miners of Vancouver Island During the Hudson's Bay Company Era, 1848-1862," (University of Victoria, unpublished MA, 1987) p. 34.

James journal for the fall of 1853 reflect a common situation: "The few hands available at this Post are insufficient for the duties of the fall and without the assistance of the Indians we could not get through with the work."²³

James McDonald systematically evaluated the importance of aboriginal labour at Fort Simpson using the daily journals. In the early 1830s there were only occasional references to aboriginal people being engaged as guides, hunters and fishermen. The journal for 1838 mentions hiring 240 days of aboriginal labour and the numbers tend upward to 1857, when a peak of more than 3,345 person-days of aboriginal labour were explicitly recorded in the post accounts.²⁴

While some work was available locally for aboriginal people close to the HBC forts like Simpson, others looked further afield. Victoria, the west-coast HBC headquarters, became the capital when the colony of Vancouver Island was established in 1849. As the largest community of non-aboriginal people north of Oregon, it became "the great emporium" for the Pacific Northwest, from Russian America down.²⁵

Since the establishment of the post in 1843, there had been trading visits to Victoria by distant aboriginal groups, but mass seasonal migrations began in the summer of 1853. At that time Governor

²³ Hudson's Bay Company Archives, (HBCA) B.188/a/21. fo. 73 cited in Douglas Hudson, "Traplins and Timber: Social and Economic Change Among the Carrier," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Alberta, 1983) p. 91.

²⁴ James A. McDonald, "Trying to Make a Life: The Historical Political Economy of Kitsumkalum," (University of British Columbia, unpublished Ph.D., 1985), Table 5; McDonald's figures are conservative since they do not include estimates for notations such as "several", "few", "some" or "gangs" and there may be instances where labour was not recorded at all. McDonald's work confirms the 1858 report of Missionary William Duncan who noted "hundreds of Indians, in the course of the year, being employed about...Fort [Simpson]." National Archives of Canada (NAC), Church Missionary Society Records, William Duncan, "First Report from Fort Simpson", February 1858, C2154.

²⁵ British Columbia Archives and Record Services (BCARS), Yale Family Papers, J.M. Yale to Simpson, October 22 1850, in Mackie, "Colonial Land, Indian Labour," p. 89.

Douglas reported a gathering of 3,000 "Indians" at a "potlatch" hosted by the Songhees people who lived across the harbour from the fort.²⁶ The next year aboriginal people from "all parts of the mainland coast south of Cape Spencer, in north latitude 59 degrees" came, not for a potlatch, but to visit Victoria itself. From 1853 through to the 1880s, 2,000-4,000 aboriginal people canoed up to 800 miles to spend part of the year in Victoria.

Why did five to ten percent of the whole aboriginal population north of Puget Sound paddle so far to visit a community that in 1855 numbered only 232? Trading was a major attraction: "So much better was the stock of goods kept" in Victoria, and the prices perhaps better than at closer trading posts that "latterly Victoria interfered a good deal with [the allocated trading areas of each fort]," recalled Roderick Finlayson. "The Indians not knowing the several divisions of the districts, and because time was to them no object, came to Victoria to trade, where there was a large quantity, and a greater variety of food from whence to choose."

As Douglas explained in his dispatches to the Colonial Office, he was not alarmed about being out-numbered ten-to-one during these seasonal visits by "ignorant and barbarous people....For the object of the Indians in visiting this place is not to make War upon the White man, but to benefit by his presence, by selling their Furs and other commodities..."²⁷

²⁶ CO 305/4, 12345, Douglas to Newcastle, October 24th, 1853. Section II, below, examines the Songhees in detail.

²⁷ CO 305/6, 10048, Governor James Douglas to Russell, 21 August 1855; CO 305/14, 9267, Douglas to Colonial Office, 8 August 1860; BCARS, A/B/30/F49.1 Roderick Finlayson, "History of Vancouver Island the Northwest Coast," p. 57.

Curiosity was no doubt another. H.H. Bancroft, having interviewed many of the early *white* residents of Victoria thought that at first, "the natives were quite curious as to what was going on among the white men, and would come from a distance, and in large numbers to see the strangers."²⁸

The third and key reason why aboriginal people returned year after year was, as Douglas reported in 1853, that the migrants "have been attracted to the colony by the reported high price of labour."²⁹ Already, he said, "a great part of the agricultural labour of the colony, is at present performed by means of the Natives, who though less skilled and industrious than the white men, work at a comparatively much cheaper rate, so that on the whole, they are exceedingly useful to the colonists".³⁰

Douglas had been a career fur trader with the HBC and was both their Chief Factor at Fort Victoria and Governor of Vancouver Island until 1858, when he relinquished his post with the company. He had a reputation for being an acute observer of aboriginal behaviour when it came to relations with non-aboriginals, and used this knowledge to advantage when dealing with them. He is often credited with formulating and maintaining an "Indian policy" which made harmonious relations with aboriginal people *the* priority, and so is credited for the relatively peaceful nature of British Columbia's settlement process. Certainly, as an observer of aboriginal people he was less critical than many of his

²⁸ Indeed the "whites" became something of a tourist attraction for the local Songhees people. Skagit John Forsnby was given a tour of Victoria by Songhees Michael Cooper who took pains in the late 1890s to show his visitors "the little log house where white people first stayed" and to explain the use of the plough and the stove; Forsnby, "Personal Narrative," p. 325; H.H. Bancroft, *History of British Columbia, 1792-1887*, (San Francisco: The History Company, 1887) pp. 130, 427.

²⁹ Douglas to Barclay July 13, 1853 in Hartwell Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters 1846-1851* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1979).

³⁰ CO 305/4, 9499, Douglas to Newcastle, July 28, 1853.

contemporaries. He believed aboriginal people should be accorded the same rights to land as others and that, although they were in their natural state "barbarous", they were capable of "civilization".³¹

Like Douglas, nearly all of the early colonists who left records mention the hiring of aboriginal labour. The first *bona fide* colonist, W.C. Grant, hired aboriginal people on his "farm" and reported in 1853 that, aboriginal people "with the proper superintendence are capable of being made very useful. They all live by fishing but take kindly to any kind of rough agricultural employment, though their labour is not to be depended on for any continuous period." Colonist J.S. Helmcken used Indians "chiefly from the north" to clear land for his home, and the colony paid "scores of Indians" in HBC blankets to clear the land around the surveyor's office. From 1849 and throughout the 1850s, the Puget Sound Agricultural Company hired aboriginal people on its farms as herders, sheep shearers, ploughmen and women; the colony employed them to build roads, and individuals hired them to farm and clear land. Missionary William Duncan noted in 1857 that around Victoria "most of the Farm Servants employed here by the settlers are Chimsyan (Tsimshian) Indians -- and they all give them a good character."³²

The enthusiasm of the coastal aboriginal people for these seasonal work migrations literally overwhelmed the small colony. Douglas informed the Hudson's Bay Company in 1854 that:

The Natives...have congregated in large bodies this season in the settlements, to which they have been drawn from almost every part of the coast between this place and 57th

³¹ See Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, pp. 71-2; Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, p. 35-39.

³² The bills of the colony for 1852 included payments of goods and wages made to Indians and other parties for improvements and repairs made on the governor's premises for £22.14.10; to Indians for labour in surveys of £6.15.5 and £28.12.2 to 'Indians and others' engaged in making public roads; BCARS, A/C/20/Vi/2A, Letters to the Hudson's Bay Company from Vancouver Island Colony, May 18, 1853; the Tsimshian were from the Skeena River area around Fort Simpson, see William Duncan, "Journal", 11 July 1857, quoted in Jean Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla: A Victorian Missionary in British Columbia* (Ottawa, 1974), 40; W.C. Grant in William Grew Hazlitt, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island* (London, 1858), 179; Dorothy B. Smith, *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken* (Vancouver, 1975), p. 134. Mackie, "Colonial Land, Indian Labour", p. 140.

degree of north latitude by the prospect of obtaining employment as labourers and procuring by their industry supplies of clothing for themselves and families. The settlements have in fact been overrun by those wild migrations.³³

These migrations seemed wild to Douglas and the colonists partly because of the battles that flared up between encampments of the different aboriginal peoples. Many of the aboriginal groups who visited Victoria had unfriendly relations with each other, relations that sometimes erupted into warfare on the outskirts of the town, aggravated by the ease of access to alcohol in Victoria.³⁴

Because of the frequent violence between aboriginal groups, Douglas, at the start of the 1855 seasonal visit, called the chiefs together and "spoke to them seriously on the subject of their relations with the whites, and their duties to the public, and after exacting a pledge for the good behaviour of their respective Tribes...I gave them permission to hire themselves out as labourers to the white settlers, and for the public works in progress." He reported at the end of August that "the greater number of those people have lately departed with their earnings to their distant homes, and will not return to Vancouver's Island, before the spring of 1856; those who still remain about the settlements will spend the winter here...."³⁵

Here, Douglas points out a central feature of these migrations -- the "greater number" came to Victoria for a work season that lasted from early spring to late summer. Although the economies of the aboriginal peoples varied between nations and even between villages, depending upon their access to

³³ Douglas added that "Under proper restraints their labour would advance the Colony; but from their turbulent thievish disposition, it is impossible to prevent discord arising between them and the white settlers and I would therefore rather dispense with their presence." BCARS, A/C/20/Vi2A, Douglas to Barclay, June 15, 1854.

³⁴ One account of these "pitched battles" on the outskirts of Victoria is given by Charles Wilson, *Mapping the Frontier: Charles Wilson's Diary of the Survey of the 49th Parallel, 1858-1862...* G.F.G. Stanley, ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970) p. 74.

³⁵ CO 305/6, 10048, Douglas to Lord Russell, August 21 1855.

resources, they all followed a seasonal migration cycle. The coastal groups had "permanent" winter villages and from these they moved to seasonal camps for harvesting bulbs and berries in the spring and summer, and to fishing sites in the summer and fall. Winter was the season for hunting, trapping, and, importantly, it was the ceremonial season. But from 1853 onwards, a spring and summer working visit to Victoria became a part of the seasonal cycle for many west-coast people from as far away as Russian America.

A missionary account of this modified seasonal-round highlights the melding of "subsistence" and paid work economies among the Tsimshian at Fort Simpson in 1857:

In mid Feb about 200 go to Victoria or American ports about 500 miles [south]. Of those that remain they disperse where they make canvas and boxes etc..., gathering in March to harvest and preserve small fish [eulachan], trading many to Fort. Then they go hunting and trading and large numbers of other Indians come here to trade. At the latter end of April about another 100 go to Victoria.

At the latter part of the year the Indians who went south return bringing great quantities of rum and various kinds of property....³⁶

Other accounts confirm that it was common for aboriginal people who could not find work in Victoria in the 1850s and 1860s to continue south into the American territory of Puget Sound. John Fornsbey, a Coast Salish living in Puget Sound first saw "Northern Indians" when 40-50 of them came to work at a Puget Sound sawmill around 1865. From Port Townsend James Swan wrote that the Northern Indians "yearly come to Victoria and whenever they get a chance, come over here to work -- the men at our mills or among the farmers, where they prove themselves faithful and efficient; and the women, by their cleanly habits, their bright dresses and hoop skirts...winning the hearts or purses of the bachelors."³⁷

³⁶ NAC, Church Missionary Society, C.2./0 Appendix C. reel A-105, William Duncan, First Report from Fort Simpson, February 1858.

³⁷ June Collins, "John Fornsbey," p. 301; James Swan, "Northern Indians," *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, (October 4, 1860) reprinted in Swan, *Almost Out of This World* (Tacoma, Wash.: Binfords, 1971), p. 99; CO 305/7, 3963, Douglas to Sir George Grey, 1 March 1856; and CO 305/7 5814, 10 April 1856.

While the summer migrants from the north laboured on the farms and on public projects, there was also year-round employment for aboriginal people whose homes were close to the settlements as servants and cooks for the richer colonists. Aboriginal people also supplied the immigrants with partridges, salmon, potatoes and berries as well as shingles, lathes, mats and baskets. Venison supplied by aboriginal people formed a large part of the early colonists' diet. At Nanaimo, for example, the colonial surveyor reported that "the inhabitants are principally dependent on the Indians who sometimes bring as many as 63 deer in a day from Sechelt or Jervis Inlet."³⁸

The economy of the territory expanded beyond fur and food when aboriginal people of northern Vancouver Island brought coal to the attention of the fur traders and then, in 1846 when the traders directed the Royal Navy vessel *Cormorant* to the coal. "With the assistance of the Indians they collected about 60 tons."³⁹ The Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl) at the mines told the HBC that "they would not permit us to work the coal as they were valuable to them, but that they would labor in the mines themselves and sell to us the produce of their exertions". They were, however, only prepared to work the mines seasonally, when it did not interfere with their subsistence and ceremonial activities. It is an indication of the relative power of the HBC and the Kwakwaka'wakw that the former accepted the latter's claim without question.⁴⁰

³⁸ CO 305/3, Rev. R.J. Staines to Thomas Boys, 6 July 1852; Smith, *Reminiscences*, p. 134; CO 305/3 Douglas to Earl Grey, October 31, 1851: "Deer and game of all kinds abound and could be bought for some trifle such as Tobacco Powder and shot; the price of a grouse in those days being two charges or twice as much as it cost to kill it." BCARS Mss. E/B/B34.2, Alfred Charles Bayley, "Early Life on Vancouver Island" p. 6. BCARS, A/C/20/Vi/2A, File, Letters to the Hudson's Bay Company from Vancouver Island Colony, James Douglas, February 2, 1853; W.C. Grant in Hazlitt, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, p. 16.

³⁹ James Douglas to the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, December 7, 1846, in Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ E.E. Rich, ed., *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver..., 1825-1838*, (Winnipeg, 1941) pp. 244, 334.

Between 1849, when the HBC established Fort Rupert at the coal mines, and 1851 when the seam was exhausted, the Kwakwaka'wakw people mined 3,650 tons of coal for which they were paid the "one blanket 2½ pt.s or equivalent in Grey Cotton for every two tons delivered at the Fort". In the summer of 1849 alone, an estimated 800 Kwakwaka'wakw surface-mined the coal and in Douglas's opinion, "the industry and perseverance they exhibited in that pursuit is truly wonderful and astonished every person who visited that spot."⁴¹

In Nanaimo, starting in 1852, the Fort Rupert experience was repeated after trader Joe McKay, then Governor Douglas, were led to various seams of coal by the local people. Douglas sent the HBC's *Cadboro* to the spot "and succeeded in procuring, with the assistance of Indians, about 50 tons of coal in one day." He wrote: "The natives, who are now indefatigable in their researches for Coal, lately discovered a magnificent seam over six feet in depth.... Such places are left entirely to the Indians, who work, with a surprising degree of industry, and dispose of the coal to the Agents of the Hudson's Bay Company for clothing and other articles of European manufacture." In 1853 "nearly all" of the Nanaimo people were engaged in coal mining "and display a high degree of zeal and industry, in advancing the work of the establishment...." An able man, reported McKay, "can earn at the rate of one shirt per diem."⁴²

⁴¹ The reference is to a blanket of 2½ points specifying the quality of blanket; Douglas to the Governor and Committee, September 3, 1849, April 3, November 16 and December 22, 1850 in Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters*, pp. 46, 84, 132, 140; Eden Colville to Sir J.H. Pelly, February 6, 1850, in Colville, *London Correspondence*, p. 17; see also Burrill, "Class Conflict and Colonialism," p. 54.

⁴² CO 305/3, 10199, Douglas to Pakington, August 28, 1852; also CO 305/3, 933, November 11, 1852; BCARS, A/C/20/Vi/A, James Douglas, Letters to the Hudson's Bay Company from Vancouver Island Colony September 3, 1853; BCARS, "Nanaimo Correspondence," J.W McKay to Douglas, September 9, 1852; aboriginal people were also the first workers at the short-lived coal mine on the Skidegate River, Queen Charlotte Islands in 1867-69, see Mifflin W. Gibbs, *Shadows and Light: An Autobiography*, (New York: Arno Press, 1968) pp. 101-106.

With the removal of the surface coal and the need to dig shafts and use pumps, the Hudson's Bay Company brought skilled miners from Great Britain. However, as Douglas noted in 1857, aboriginal people remained crucial to the mining operations: "The want of Indian labor is certainly a great inconvenience for the miners but really they must learn to be independent of Indians for our work will otherwise be subject to continual stoppage."⁴³

In addition to work in the mines:

Hundreds of natives, mostly women, being employed who conveyed the coal alongside the ships in canoes which was paid for by tickets so many representing a Ton or its proportion. The same rule was applied to the removal of goods or building material as we had no roads or carts to convey the same, and it was a curious sight to see the string of Natives of both sexes working like Ants in one continuous line over the trail to where they deposited their loads.⁴⁴

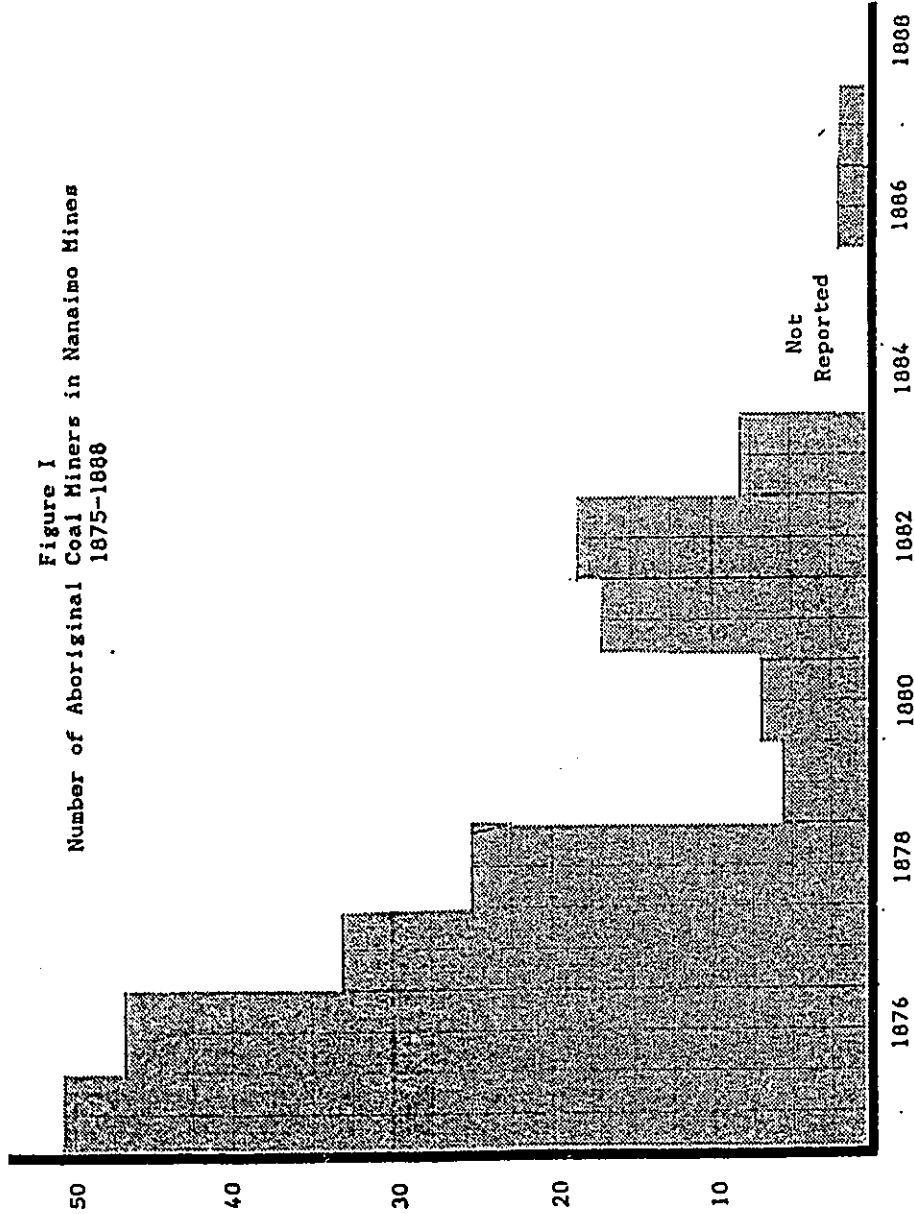
Although partly displaced by Chinese labour in the various coal mines that subsequently sunk shafts around Nanaimo, in 1877 it was noted by the Indian Reserve Commissioner that "the Nanaimo Indians...have hitherto been chiefly employed about the coal mines as labourers".⁴⁵ Figure I shows the number of aboriginal people miners in the underground coal mines around Nanaimo according to the

⁴³ Douglas to Stuart, August 22, 1857 quoted in Burrill, "Class Conflict," p. 127.

⁴⁴ Bayley, "Early Life" p. 6. Hazlitt, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, p. 166 also comments on the aboriginal men working in the mines and the women conveying to the ships in canoes.

⁴⁵ In 1864 explorer Robert Brown tried to hire Indian packers at Nanaimo "but found it impossible...every Indian being engaged at the coal mines." In 1882 the Indian Agent overseeing Nanaimo noted that the aboriginal people there "find constant employment at the coal mines and wharves" and in 1883 George Dawson told the Immigration and Colonization Committee of the House of Commons "that a considerable number, not only of Chinese but of Indians are employed in the underground works and gain good wages," *Resources of British Columbia*, 1, 9 (November 1883) p. 10; Cda. S.P. 1878, 8, lx; 1883, 54; Robert Brown, *Vancouver Island Expedition 1864*, (Victoria: Colony of Vancouver Island, 1864); Albert Westly was among the Nanaimo people who worked in the mines at this time; fifty years later, he was an informant for the anthropologist Homer Barnett, see Homer Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia* (Eugene, University of Oregon Press, 1955) p. 6.

Figure I
Number of Aboriginal Coal Miners in Nanaimo Mines
1875-1888



Source: B.C. Department of Mines, Annual Reports. Does not include miner's assistants.

British Columbia Department of Mines. The statistics stop reporting "Indian" miners after 1887, but the reports of Indian Agents and others suggest they had not disappeared from the mines.⁴⁶

In 1888 the Indian Agent for Nanaimo noted "many Indians are again working at the coal mines at Nanaimo, taking the place of the Chinese; the fear of accident by explosions deterred them for some time, but now the high wages paid has attracted them again to the mines." In 1900 the agent again noted that the Nanaimo and Chemainus people "derive quite a bit of employment in the coal mines." As late as the 1913 McKenna-McBride Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, the testimony shows that the coal mines were a major source of employment for the Nanaimo people.⁴⁷

Gold, like coal, was first offered to the HBC in trade by aboriginal people; initially, in 1851, by the Haidas of the Queen Charlotte Islands, and in the mid-1850s by the Interior Salish of the Fraser and Thompson Valleys. In both cases these exchanges started small gold rushes but the *white* miners were "obstructed by the natives in all their attempts to search for gold" and "when [the whites] did succeed in removing the surface and excavating to the depth of the auriferous stratum, they were quietly hustled and crowded by the natives who...proceeded to reap the fruits of their labours."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ The Department of Mines statistics do not include miner's assistants which may account for part of this discrepancy since most conflicting reports do not specify what positions aboriginal people held in the mines.

⁴⁷ Cda. S.P., 1889, 13, pp. 100-102, 1900, "Cowichan Report"; BCARS, GR 1995 reel B-1454, McKenna-McBride Commission Testimony, pp. 266, 276; the published report of the McKenna-McBride Commission gave the occupations of the Nanaimo Band as: "Fishing, farming, and working for wages in the mines, as stevedores, trimming coal in ships, etc." Appendix C.

⁴⁸ Quote from CO 305/3, 3742, Douglas to Earl Grey, 29 January 1852; CO 305/3, 9263, Staines to Boys, July 6, 1852; CO 305/3, Douglas to Earl Grey, October 31, 1851; CO 305/3, 8866, Captain A.L. Kuper to Admiralty, July 20, 1852; CO 305/9, 5180, Douglas to Labouchere, 6 April 1858.

In 1858 however, some 30,000 non-aboriginals surged into the Fraser Valley and up the Thompson, completely overwhelming the few thousand aboriginal inhabitants, who, nonetheless, continued to work alongside them. In 1858 James Moore reported that the "whole tribe of Yale Indians moved down from Yale and camped on Hill's Bar, about three hundred men, women and children, and they also commenced to wash for gold" and Governor Douglas reported that "it is impossible to get Indian labor at present, as they are all busy mining, and make between two and three dollars a day each man."⁴⁹ A May 1858 letter from Fort Hope, noted "the Indians are getting plenty of gold, and trade with the Americans. Indian wages are from three to four dollars a day."⁵⁰

In addition to mining, many aboriginal groups along the Fraser, Thompson and Nicola rivers took up packing supplies as a vocation. Bishop Hills, who ventured into the gold fields in 1860 remarked on the ubiquity of aboriginal packers, both men, women and youths. "The traffic between Yale and the upper country ie. to Lytton about 80 miles is carried on the backs of Indians...." Chief Justice Begbie, who regularly travelled this circuit, recalled that "no supplies were taken in [to the gold districts] except by Indians.... Without them...the country could not have been entered or supplied in 1858-1860".⁵¹ Aboriginal accounts confirm their involvement in the packing trade. The Shuswap still tell stories of their neighbours, the Lillooets passing through Alexandria on the Fraser River en route to

⁴⁹ James Douglas in T.A. Rickard, "Indian Participation in the Gold Discoveries," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 2 (1938): 13; and *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 3 (1938) p. 218; There are other estimates of between 200 and 500 aboriginal people mining at Hill's Bar compared to 50-60 white miners in Hazlitt, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, p. 137; Robert M. Ballantyne, *Handbook to the Goldfields...*, (Edinburgh: A. Strahan, 1858) p. 18.

⁵⁰ Mr. Walker at Fort Hope, May 1858, quoted in Bancroft, *History of British Columbia* p. 392; for more on Indian mining and some estimates of returns see Bancroft, pp. 406-7, 454.

⁵¹ Bishop Hills thought he was witnessing a major transformation : "There is now an abundance of work for the Indians. So much so as to make many give up their former method of living and live as the whites." He quoted *Spintlum*, a Thompson River chief, as saying "plenty of packing--plenty of money" for Indian workers, Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia, Bishop George Hills, Diary, June 18, July 1, 1860. M.B. Begbie in H.L. Langevin, *British Columbia*, (Ottawa: Parliament, 1872) p. 27.

the gold fields of the Cariboo with their pack trains. There is also an account from Swa-lihs, a Sto:lo known to the miners as Captain John, who piloted river boats up the difficult stretch from Hope to Yale and freighted supplies upriver from Yale, saving, by his own account some \$2,000.⁵²

Edgar Dewdney engaged aboriginal people to pack supplies over the Hope Mountains for the building of the Dewdney trail to the Kootenay mines:

I picked out 18, some men and some women. The old Indians were quite as good, if not better than the young ones. One couple, 'Polalee', which means powder, and his wife, each at least 60 years old, were two of my best. The old woman packed a barrel of sugar, which weighed 125 pounds, and she was a small woman, and weighed very little more, if as much as the sugar....I shall never forget what pleasure and enjoyment I had when walking over the frozen summits on a bright sun shiny early morning....⁵³

Aboriginal labourers also worked building the Cariboo Road through the Fraser Canyon and along the Thompson River.⁵⁴

With the 1858 gold rush and the consequent growth of Victoria came even more opportunities for paid work in the city and even larger migrations of aboriginal labour; soon thereafter whole aboriginal villages were seasonally deserted by wage-seekers. Making for the Queen Charlotte Islands on board *HMS Alert*, James Cooper met the whole population of Masset, heading for Victoria. At Skidegate, meanwhile, Chief "Estercana" asked the officers of the *Alert* to "tell Mr Douglas and the man-of-war to send my people home; I wanted to build a house this summer [but] nearly all my people

⁵² Augusta Tappage, *The Days of Augusta*, J.E. Speare, ed. (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1992) p.15; "The Story of the Conversion and subsequent experiences of Captain John as narrated by himself," (1898) unpublished manuscript in the Chilliwack Museum told by Captain John in Chinook and transcribed by Rev. Barraclough quoted, in Wells, *The Chilliwack*, pp. 129-31.

⁵³ Quoted in R.E. Gosnell, "Bygone Days of British Columbia," *Vancouver Daily Province*, November 14, 1908 p. 19, this reference courtesy of Jeremy Mouat; Bishop Hills also commented on the importance and strength of aboriginal women packers in his diary.

⁵⁴ *British Columbian*, October 1 and 15, 1862; G.M. Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sir Sanford Fleming's Expedition through Canada in 1872* (Toronto: 1873, reprinted 1970) p. 313.

are away at Victoria."⁵⁵ That summer, Douglas reported over 4,000 aboriginal people visiting Victoria for the purposes of exchange, double the number of non-aboriginal inhabitants in the town.⁵⁶

Despite the large increase of the non-aboriginal population after 1858, Douglas reminded the colonial office in 1860 that, "When not under the influence of intoxication [the aboriginal people] are quiet and well conducted, make good servants and by them is executed a large proportion of the menial, agricultural, and shipping labour of the Colony. Besides their value as labourers they are of value commercially as consumers of food and clothing...."⁵⁷

Others made similar observations. Remembering his first sight of Victoria's James Bay, Colonel Wolfendon saw "a gang of Indians--it may be one hundred--under Grizzly Morris, a contractor,... with pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow making Belleville Street along the water." Between 1859 and 1864 the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works employed aboriginal people on other public work projects on Vancouver Island. Indeed all the major public projects in the colonies, from building roads to laying out the Collins Overland Telegraph, and performing the Boundary Survey relied on aboriginal labour.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ BCARS, Colonial Correspondence, F347/26a James Cooper, "Report by the Harbor Master at Esquimalt to the Acting Colonial Secretary": Cooper also reports that a large number of the 400 residents of 'Laskick' a village on the Queen Charlotte Islands were also in Victoria and that the aboriginal people of Russian Alaska were familiar with the conditions in Victoria; Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla*, 58; one of the Haida men from Skidegate was employed about this time as a domestic in the Victoria household of Mifflin Gibbs, *Shadow and Light*, pp. 102.

⁵⁶ CO 305/14, 9267, Douglas to Colonial Office, August 8, 1860.

⁵⁷ CO 305/14, 8319, Douglas to Colonial Office, July 7, 1860; one major shift that happened during the gold rush was that aboriginal labour was increasingly being paid in cash, instead of goods. Previously the goods most sought after as pay were blankets, which were commonly used as 'potlatch' gifts.

⁵⁸ Sto:lo *Xe'ílhatel* as well as Edmund Peter's grandfather worked on the boundary survey, see Wells, *The Chilliwacks* p. 137; see also Wilson, *Mapping the Frontier*; Edgar Fawcett, *Some Reminiscences of Old Victoria*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912) p. 84; Robin Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and the Indian Land Policy," *British Columbia: Historical Readings* eds. W.P. Ward and R.A.J. McDonald

In 1861 a visitor to Victoria recorded that "Indians are seen everywhere throughout the town -- in the morning carrying cut wood for sale; the women, baskets of oysters, clams etc...fish being generally sold by Indians". In his eye-witness account of Victoria in the 1860s Edgar Fawcett emphatically stated: "Indians performed all the manual labor."⁵⁹

So prevalent was aboriginal labour that in 1862 the *Colonist* actually complained that Victoria was suffering from an abundance of "cheap" Indian labour "at the expense of a white immigrant population." A letter to the editor added that while hundreds of *whites* remained unemployed, capitalists "employ Indian Men to do not only common labourer's work, but tradesmen's work, such as painters and carpenters."⁶⁰

In addition to gathering in and around Victoria, aboriginal people were relocating to the gold-mining communities at Fort Hope, Lytton, Yale, Wild Horse Creek and New Westminster, the capital of the new colony of British Columbia.⁶¹ Christine Quintasket joined this migration. Her family moved to Fort Steele at Wild Horse Creek from their home in Washington Territory to cut wood and labour for

(Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1981), 155; Douglas to Barclay, October 8, 1851 in Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters*, 222.

⁵⁹ Fawcett, *Some Reminiscences....*, p. 84.

⁶⁰ Sophia Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest: February to April 1861 and April to July 1870* (Victoria: Provincial Archives, 1974) p. 79; Fawcett, *Some Reminiscences*, p. 84; *Colonist*, June 17, 1862, September 24, 1862; one of the thousands of coastal aboriginal people who moved to Victoria for periods of up to several years, Arthur Wellington Clah, worked in a variety of occupations in Victoria, including as a store clerk, see Galois, "The Worlds of Arthur Wellington Clah, 1865-1881."

⁶¹ It was not just neighbouring people who migrated to the gold rush town. In 1860 Chief Estercana of the Skidegate Haida on the Queen Charlotte Islands said that at least one of his people and perhaps more were at Yale or Hope. BCARS, Colonial Correspondence File F347 26a, James Cooper, "Report by the Harbor Master at Esquimalt to the Acting Colonial Secretary."

the Northwest Mounted Police post there. Like other aboriginal families, they relocated seasonally, and sometimes for longer periods, to work in the new communities.⁶²

Aboriginal people were not made redundant by the influx of immigrants, just less visible in the cosmopolitan society of the gold-rush colonies. When the gold rushes had passed and most of the immigrants had abandoned the diggings, aboriginal people, their numbers reduced by disease, were still on their ancestral lands. Gold mining remained as an addition to their modified seasonal cycle. In 1871 Alfred Selwyn of the Geological Survey of Canada remarked that "nearly all the Indians of the Fraser above Yale have now become gold washers. They return to the same spot on the river year after year, at the season of lowest water, to wash the sands, and, it is asserted, can almost always earn for a day's labour from one to two dollar's worth of gold". The next year the *Colonist* reported that "from \$15,000-\$20,000 is annually contributed to the wealth of the Province by mining on the Thompson and Fraser Rivers, which is carried on almost exclusively by the Natives at low water." In 1876 a local storekeeper estimated the aboriginal harvest of gold on the Thompson River to be between \$20,000 and \$30,000 annually. In 1886 it was estimated that the bands around Lytton made \$10,000 from gold panning alone.⁶³ Aboriginal people, Indian agents and the mining department regularly recorded the bands along the Fraser and Thompson panning gold into the twentieth century.⁶⁴

⁶² Quintasket, *Mourning Dove*, pp. 10, 166, 171; Cracroft estimates 1,000 aboriginal people living at Yale in 1861 and mentions that some were engaged as servants, *Lady Franklin*, pp. 53-3; at Lytton, the population of 250 was 80 percent aboriginal and "the Indians... very industrious and peaceable. Their chief employment is gold mining and packing supplies to and from the interior with their own horses of which they have in great numbers," *Lovell's Gazetteer 1870-3*, p. 181; Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, p. 111.

⁶³ Alfred C. Selwyn, "Journal and Report of Preliminary Explorations in British Columbia," *Report of Progress for 1871-72*, (Ottawa, 1872), 56; *Colonist* November 26, 1872; Bishop Hills Diary, September 7, 1876 quotes the local missionary as estimating the annual yield at \$20,000 and the local storekeeper as estimating it at \$30,000; J.W. McKay in Cda. S.P. 1887, v. 5 p. 83.

⁶⁴ Mrs. Lena Hope, "rocked gold" with her grandparents at Spuzzum early in the twentieth century: "They wash gold in them rockers, that was only the way that we got something to spend in stores," in Wells, *The Chilliwack*, p. 193; Cda. S.P. 1886, 4, 87-92; BC. S.P. 1900, 724.

Besides mining and packing, the aboriginal people of the southern Interior took up farming on their own behalf and worked as farm labour for others. In 1874 the Catholic missionary C.J. Grandidier, wrote from Kamloops that "The Indians in this part of the country are now quite awake to the necessity of working, of following the examples of the whites, they look to the future and are afraid for their children's sake if they do not work." Writing on behalf of the people of the Fraser valley Alexis, Chief of Cheam, asked the Indian agent for advance warning if he visited "in order to unite our people who are now a little dispersed as they are working for the whites." Both the missionary and the chief used "work" to refer to paid work.⁶⁵

"Work" also meant paid work to the Attorney General of British Columbia who wrote in 1875, but reflecting back to the colonial era:

Every Indian therefore who could and would work -- and they were numerous -- was employed in almost every branch of industrial and domestic life, at wages which would appear excessively high in England or in Canada. From becoming labourers, some of the Natives ... engaged on their own account in stock breeding, in river boating, and in 'packing', as it is termed, as carriers of merchandise by land and water; while others followed fishing and hunting with more vigour than formerly to supply the wants of the incoming population. The Government frequently employed those living in the interior as police, labourers, servants, and as messengers entrusted with errands of importance.⁶⁶

Admittedly, Attorney General George Walkem was involved in a case of special pleading. He was justifying the colonial government's lack of a clear Indian policy and its stingy allocations of reserves by suggesting that aboriginal people were primarily wage workers as compared to agriculturalists. Yet in spite of its partiality, other evidence -- a few letters from aboriginal people, like the one from Alexis above, and the statements of missionaries and Indian Agents fighting for larger reserves -- bears out Walkem's statement that aboriginal labour was widely employed.

⁶⁵ NAC RG 10, Department of Indian Affairs, Vol. 1001, items 82, 186, C.J. Grandidier to I.W. Powell, July 2, 1874 and Alexis to James Lenihan, September 5, 1875.

⁶⁶ BC. S.P. 1875, George Walkem, "Report of the Government of British Columbia on the Subject of Indian Reserves," p. 3; Walkem was trying to make the case that only a small fraction of British Columbia aboriginal people were agriculturalists and the remainder did not need reserves of 160 acres per family that were allotted on the prairies.

A re-examination of the early factory system in the colonies shows aboriginal people were also among the region's first factory workers and dominated the early factory labour force. The "modern" factory arrived on Vancouver Island in 1861 when Captain Stamp commenced operation of the largest sawmill on the west coast of North America, a steam-powered mill that cost \$120,000 to build and was eventually capable of cutting 100,000 feet of lumber a day. For the Tseshaht people of the Alberni Inlet, where the mill was located, the industrial revolution arrived at the end of a cannon. When the Europeans arrived to set up the mill they chose the site where the local people had their winter village. The mill's operators "bought" the site from the local people for "Some 50 blankets, muskets, molasses and food, trinkets etc..." but obviously the local people had a different idea of the exchange than the mill owners -- they refused to leave. They were introduced to capitalist property relations when the mill managers trained their cannons on them.⁶⁷ Ultimately they agreed to move, and when they returned to the mill site it was as workers.

The mill manager recorded: "When I first employed Indians at Alberni, the price of their labour was two blankets and rations of bisquits and molasses for a month's work for each man, if he worked the whole time." Piecing together the workforce from various accounts of visitors to the mill during its three years of operation, it seems likely that over half of the 200 employees were aboriginal.³⁶

⁶⁷ BCARS, Colonial Correspondence, File 107/5, W.E. Banfield to the Colonial Secretary, September 6, 1860, from Lorne Hammond, unpublished manuscript on W.E. Banfield; James Morton, *The Enterprising Mr. Moody and the Bumptious Captain Stamp* (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977), pp. 22-3; H.C. Langely, *Pacific Coast Directory for 1867* (San Francisco, 1867), 158.

³⁶ For a discussion of the labour force and the disappearance of aboriginal labour see page 9 in chapter one above and Frederick Whymper, *Travel and Adventure in Alaska* (London: John Murray, 1868) p. 37, 62; G.M. Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life* (London, 1868, reprinted in Victoria, 1989), 40; Taylor reports that over its operation, the mill paid out close to \$300,000 in wages. He does not indicate his source but the payroll of the Burrard Inlet Mills cited below suggest this figure is credible; G.W. Taylor, *Timber, History of the Forest Industry in B.C.*, (Vancouver, 1975), 23.

Two more giant export sawmills were established on Burrard Inlet between 1863 and 1867. Both rivalled the Alberni Mill in size, but unlike their predecessor, they continued to operate into the next century. Together, these were the largest industrial operations in the colonies.³⁷

Whole aboriginal communities relocated to the Burrard Inlet sawmills and in the 1860s and 70s, evidence, buried in a number of disparate accounts also indicates that the majority of the workers inside and outside these factories were aboriginal. Recalling this period, mill manager R.H. Alexander wrote: "Our mill hands were largely composed of runaway sailors and Indians...." but it is clear the runaway *white* sailors were a minority.³⁸

In 1875, when the mills were employing between 60 and 100 men each, Walkem wrote "our lumber mills alone pay about 130 Indian employées over \$40,000 annually. Each individual receives from \$20 to \$30 per month and board...In the present infancy of British Columbia, the Indian of this [labouring] class have proved invaluable in the settled portions of this province." Another estimate from the Indian Reserve Commission's census taker in 1879 placed their income considerably higher: "from the saw mills and other concomitant interests...a sum variously computed at from \$80,000 to \$100,000 finds its way annually into the hands of the natives."³⁹ Although it does not provide an exact comparison, the total payroll for the nine sawmills in the Burrard Inlet-Fraser River district, according to the 1881 census, was \$126,950, paid to 252 employees.⁴⁰

³⁷ Morton, *Enterprising Mr. Moody*, 59; Taylor, *Timber*, 28.

³⁸ R.H. Alexander, "Reminiscences of the Early Days of British Columbia, Address to the Canadian Club of Vancouver," *Proceedings of the Canadian Club of Vancouver 1906-1911* (Vancouver, 1911), 111; Visiting Burrard Inlet in November 1875, geologist George Dawson noted disparagingly, "while Europeans or at least Whites fill the responsible posts, Indians (Squa'mich), Chinamen, Negroes & Mulattoes & Half breeds & Mongrels of every pedigree abound". G.M. Dawson, *The Journals of George M. Dawson: British Columbia, 1875-78*, eds. Douglas Cole and Bradley Lockner (Vancouver, 1989), 115.

³⁹ Walkem, "Report of the Government of British Columbia," 3; George Blenkinsop Census Taker for the Indian Reserve Commission. Notebook, 1879, RG 10, vol. 10,012A.

⁴⁰ Canada, *Census of 1881*, Vol. 3, Table XXXIV p. 380.

At the same time as the Burrard Inlet sawmills were hiring aboriginal workers, sawmills in Puget Sound, just south of the Canadian border in Washington State employed "hundreds and sometimes thousands of the Northern Indians," who, according to ethnologist and Indian Agent James Swan, congregated every spring at Port Townsend looking for wage work.⁴¹ Who were these northern Indians? One of them, William Pierce, remarked that in the mid-1870s his co-workers in a Puget Sound sawmill included Haida from the Queen Charlottes, Tsimshian from the north coast, Nass and Skeena Rivers, as well as Bella Bella, Bella Coola, Kitamaat and Kwakwaka'wakw from the central coast and Tlingit from Alaska.⁴²

A decade later, 1875, another of the "Northern Indians," Charles Nowell, a 17 year-old Kwakwaka'wakw from Fort Rupert recalled arriving in Burrard Inlet after returning empty-handed from seeking work in Washington State:

...I was dead broke, and went over to North Vancouver in a small canoe to the sawmill and asked the manager if he could give me a job. He told me I could be a fireman in the sawmill. I says, "I never did it before, but I will try and do my best." He says there is another Indian there who has been working there for two years and will tell me what to do."⁴³

As Nowell's reference to "firemen" suggests, these mills were large industrial operations, operated by steam power, complete with high risk of industrial accidents. A nearby sawmill in New Westminster, manned by a handful of whites, and "Indians, half-breed and Chinamen" was described by Morley Roberts, a non-aboriginal labourer, a few years later:

in the half-open mill, one storey up in the air, I passed the days with the whirl of the belts above and below, the scream of the circular saws as it bit the advancing log..., with the strips

⁴¹ J.G. Swan, "The Haida Indians of Queen Charlotte's Island: in *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge* (1876) vol. XXI, p. 14.

⁴² J.P. Hicks, ed., *From Potlatch to Pulpit, the autobiography of W.H. Pierce* (Vancouver, 1933) p. 15; In 1876 "Hundreds and sometimes thousands of northern Indians congregate every spring" to trade and work at Puget Sound mills, according to J.G. Swan, "The Haida Indians of Queen Charlotte's Islands, British Columbia" *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*, XXI (1876) pp. 2, 8.

⁴³ Nowell found working as a fireman too hot so he switched to loading lumber onto the ships, for \$2 a day, then became a tally man for \$7.50 per day. Clellan Ford, *Smoke from their Fires: the Life of a Kwakiutl Chief* (Hamdon, Conn., 1938), 134.

of bitten-wood thrown out in a stream, and the clouds of smaller sawdust, with the smiting of mallets on wedges in the cut, and the heavy fall on the greasy skids of the divided tree. And then, in the pool below, stood a long figure with a pole balancing on a round log, pushing it into its place, then hammer driving in iron clamps or dogs, and the chain revolving on the drum, dragging the ponderous tree to the saw, and then its rolling over and over on to the carriage, and afterwards more saw screaming and saw-dust and wedge driving. So hour after hour, till the trees, rude and huge, fall into planks and boards and squared timbers ... and the sawdust burning in the gaping furnaces to drive the saw again. Then sudden whistle screaming, and hurrying figures...then dinner devoured, not eaten, and a smoke, and the whistle, and the saws turn quicker and quicker, and all is to do again till dark and supper and rest.⁴⁴

Some of the aboriginal workers moved into skilled jobs, like Squamish Dick Isaac, sawyer, Jim Franks and Alex Tom who ran saw carriages in the late 1880s or fireman Charley Nowell who was promoted to be tally man in the Burrard Inlet Mill.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the majority of the aboriginal workers, like the non-aboriginals, were unskilled. August Khahtsahlano and his half-brother Dominic Charlie were two of the many aboriginal people who cut wood for the mills. Among these loggers in 1876 were most of the men of the Sechelt people on the Sunshine Coast north of Burrard Inlet.⁴⁶ Skagit John Fornsby, recalled his first paid job was at age ten, in 1865, he was hired to grease the "skids" over which the logs were hauled from the forest to these mills.⁴⁷ Aboriginal people made up

⁴⁴ Morley Roberts, *The Western Avernus or Toil and Travel in Further North America* (London, 1887), 181-2; Dick Isaacs (Que-yah-chulk), a Squamish from North Vancouver lost one arm working in the Hastings sawmill in 1886, Matthews, *Conversations*, p. 14; Boas recounts his meeting in Vancouver with an aboriginal man who had lost his arm in a sawmill accident and was unemployed as a result, Rohner, *Ethnography of Franz Boas*, p. 87.

⁴⁵ Matthews, *Conversations*, p. 157; Knight, *Indians at Work*, p. 114; Nowell, *Smoke from Their Fires*, p. 134.

⁴⁶ Khahtsahlano later worked in the W.L. Tait Mill, and the Rat Portage Sawmill, Matthews, *Conversation with Khahtsahlano*, p. 56, 64; Wells, *The Chilliwacks*, p. 168; In 1876 the 55 men of the Sechelt band cut 1,300,000 cubic feet of saw logs for the mills for which they received \$3 per thousand, the same rate paid to white loggers; Cda. S.P. 1878, 8 "Report of the Indian Reserve Commissioners," lix.

⁴⁷ Collins, "John Fornsby" p. 307.

a significant part of the logging crews, and most of the sawmill labour, and numerically dominated the longshore-men and -women who loaded the timber onto the ships.⁴⁸

While the sawmills of Burrard Inlet were getting into full swing, the second major factory-based industry -- salmon canning -- was in its infancy. First attempted in 1867, it was not until 1870 that continuous production started. Within a decade the canneries were also large, "modern" factories employing hundreds of people each and using steam boilers and retorts to heat and cook the salmon and seal the cans.⁴⁹ The sawmills may have employed hundreds of aboriginal people, but the canneries employed thousands.

From the first arrival of Europeans on the coast, aboriginal people supplied them with fresh fish. In the 1840s the Hudson's Bay Company even began a small export business in salted salmon using aboriginal men as fishermen and aboriginal women to process the fish.⁵⁰ When advances in technology and a European demand for canned fish encouraged the establishment of salmon canneries, aboriginal men continued to supply the canneries with fish; aboriginal women, alongside Chinese men, processed the fish inside the canneries.

There is little firm evidence as to the size and composition of the commercial fishery in the 1870s but in 1881 the census estimated 1,045 fishermen in British Columbia. An indication that aboriginal people comprised the vast majority of the fishery comes from two different observers, who in

⁴⁸ In May 1862 the *Colonist* reported that the smallpox epidemic had caused the native longshoremen to leave the lumber yards and they were obliged to hire white men and pay them \$2.50 a day instead of the usual \$2 to unload lumber. See also Knight, *Indians at Work*, pp. 123-130.

⁴⁹ Duncan Stacey, *Sockeye & Tinplate: Technological Change in the Fraser Canning Industry, 1871-1912* (Victoria, 1982); Keith Ralston, "James Symes" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, XI p. 866.

⁵⁰ Mackie, "Company Capital."

1882 and 1883, estimated that in those years 1,200-1,300 aboriginal men comprised the fishing fleet for 11 canneries on the Fraser alone. One of these estimates, from a journalist writing for the monthly periodical *British Columbia Resources* added that the total number of *whites* involved in the industry, including cannery managers, overseers, engineers and fisherman totalled only 300.⁵¹

In 1884 the Fisheries Official for British Columbia described the labour force employed at the salmon canneries as composed of 1,280 Indians (men and women), 1,157 Chinese and 273 *whites*. "The white men are generally employed as foremen, mechanics and fishermen, Indians fish for and clean salmon, and Chinamen make the cans...fill them and solder them up, etc..."⁵²

Farther north, at the canneries on the Skeena:

Chinamen are employed at the fishery, but the much greater part of the work is now done by Indians. The men enter into contract to supply salmon, and the women and the children are handy workers and most useful in the various steps necessary to prepare fish for market."⁵³

Cannery work differed from sawmill labour in that there were jobs for the whole family. Alfred Carmichael, the foreman in charge of the aboriginal women workers at the Windsor Cannery on the Skeena in 1891 wrote a detailed description of the labour force. Aboriginal men fished, and women

⁵¹ "Salmon Pack for 1883, Fraser River Canneries, *Resources of British Columbia*, 1, 4 (June 1883) p.4; McTiernan, Cda. S.P, 1882, p. 61; visiting the Delta Cannery on the Fraser River in 1882 Newton Chittenden found all the fish boats manned by Indians and the cannery labour force consisted of 160 Indians and 280 Chinese "under the supervision of experienced white foremen." Newton Chittenden, *Travels in British Columbia*, (Victoria: Gordon Soules, 1984) p. 29.

⁵² T. Revelly, Fisheries Agent to Nicholas Flood, August 22, 1884 printed in Cda. S.P. 185, No. 54a, p. 395.

⁵³ Cda. S.P., 1882 vol. 5 pp. 130-160. Missionary Thomas Crosby remarked that when the first cannery opened in Rivers Inlet in 1883, they immediately hired 200 aboriginal people, quoted in Harkin, "Dialogues of History," p. 289.

made nets and worked inside the cannery, sometimes cleaning fish and often filling the cans. Children were hired for light work such as labelling, stacking or cleaning fish oil off the cans.⁵⁴

In the late 1880s the ethnologist, Franz Boas, who had travelled extensively along the coast observed:

The fisheries on the coast are operated chiefly with Indian help. The owner is at the same time the trader from whom the Indians buy the European goods they need. The salmon fisheries and the canning plants are all situated in the larger Indian villages because the Indians do the fishing. They are paid in scrip with which they pay the trader for their necessities. This makes it possible to operate the fisheries with a minimum amount of capital.⁵⁵

The censuses of 1881 and 1891 provide interesting points of comparison. The 1881 census shows 1,264 men employed in 14 canneries along the mainland coast from the Fraser to the Nass, 114 women and 2 boys (under 16 years) all paid a total of \$243,456. The 1891 census shows 31 canneries on the mainland employing 4,115 men, 970 women, 232 boys and 127 girls under 16, for total wages of \$525,215.⁵⁶ Evidence from workers, from employers and from fisheries inspectors all concur that the women and children were virtually all aboriginal, while the largest ethnic group of men in the canneries were the Chinese, followed by aboriginal men, and a few *white* overseers.

⁵⁴ Alfred Carmichael wrote a detailed description of the work in a cannery on the Skeena in the early 1890s. BCARS Add. Mss. B1 C21, "Account of a season's work at a Salmon Cannery."

⁵⁵ R.P. Rohner, *The Ethnography of Franz Boas* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969), 6, 9.

⁵⁶ *Census of 1881*, vol 3, Table LI, p. 474; *Census of 1891*, vol. 3, Table I, p. 149. The Indian Agent for the Fraser River Area reported in 1882 that 400 aboriginal women were employed inside the Fraser River canneries and a visitor to one of these canneries, the Delta Cannery that same year found the fish boats manned by Indians while the cannery labour was comprised of 160 Indians and 280 Chinese under a *white* foremen. A journalist for *British Columbia Resources* estimated in 1883 that the total cannery labour force on the Fraser River included 700 Chinese men. "Salmon Pack for 1883, Fraser River Canneries, *Resources of British Columbia*, 1, 4 (June 1883) p.4; McTiernan, Cda. S.P., 1882, p. 61. Chittenden, *Travels in British Columbia*, p. 29.

Based on the census figures, the average income per cannery labourer in 1881 was \$176 or \$58.66 a month for the three month season. This lends credibility to the observation by ethnologist Johan Jacobsen, who wrote, in the same year, that most of the young people from the Saanich reserves north of Victoria were at the Fraser River canneries, earning \$50-60 per month. He was astounded at the high wages.⁵⁷ A comparison with Table I shows why. This average monthly wage compares favourably with that of a skilled tradesman. Of course, the tradesman might have work for most of the year, but on the other hand, an aboriginal family of four working in the canneries for three months, might earn the same annual wage as the tradesman, before they moved to their other income earning and subsistence activities.

The best province-wide survey of aboriginal seasonal employment in the early 1880s comes from the 1881 annual report of the Commissioner for Indian Affairs. Starting on the north coast and chronicling the activities of the aboriginal bands he met as he travelled south, I.W. Powell remarked that, in the Cassiar region, close to what became the Yukon border, where gold had been mined since 1874, the Tahltan Indians "are honest and trustworthy and exceedingly industrious, being most useful as packers and labourers....A good many [Tsimshian] and [Haida], as well as natives from some of the more northern tribes of Alaska find remunerative occupation in the district, canoeing and packing along the various mining creeks."⁵⁸

On the Queen Charlotte Islands where a fish-oil refinery was established in 1876 "the past summer has been a very successful one for the [Haida]...who have made considerable money in

⁵⁷ He was surprised that many Indians consider a 25¢ piece the smallest change; J.A. Jacobsen, *Alaskan Voyage, 1881-83: An Expedition to the Northwest Coast of America* translated from the German text of Adrian Woldt by Erna Gunther (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) p. 6.

⁵⁸ Unless otherwise cited, the following data relating to 1881 is taken from the Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for 1881, in Cda. S.P., 1882 vol.5 pp. 130-160.

supplying the oil company here with dogfish, and those who chose to work had little difficulty in making five or six dollars per diem."

 Table II
 Average Rates of Pay, Various Professions
 in British Columbia, 1860-1890 (dollars per day unless specified)⁵⁹

Occupation	1860	1864	1883	1890
Indian Agent			200/mth	
Indian Dept. Constable			40/mth	
General Labourers	2.50	3.00-4.00	1.75-2.00	1.25-2.50
Coal Miners			3.00-4.00	
Gold Miners				1.75-3.00
Colliery Labourers			2.50	
Skilled Tradesmen	5.00	4.85	3.50-4.00	4.00-6.00
Laundresses		2.10/doz shirts		10.00-18.00/mth
Longshoremen				50¢/hour
Lumbermen		48.50/mth	60-75/mth	1.50-2.25
Millhands		60/month	1.25-2.50	
Farm Labour			\$1.00 & board	

At Kincolith on the Nass River "the Indians were all, - men, women and children, employed at the Fisheries...making a little pocket money at the cannery in order to supply themselves with other comforts." Further south, among the Tsimshian at the Skeena River "there are two large canneries, consequently Indians from all the tribes within a hundred miles visit the place, both with a view of obtaining lucrative occupation, as well as taking their own winter's supply of salmon for home

⁵⁹ 1860 wages from Anglican Diocese of British Columbia, Bishop Hill Collection, Text 57, Box 3, File 3, Bishop Hill to the Secretary, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, May 8, 1860, courtesy of Ira Chaikin; 1864 from Matthew McFie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia* (London, 1865) pp. 499-500; 1883 from Canada, *Province of British Columbia, Information for Intending Settlers* (Ottawa, 1883) p. 23 and G. Sproat "Cost of Labor on Farms," *The Resources of British Columbia*, I, 9 (November 1, 1883) p. 14; 1890 from Cda. S.P. 1891 "Immigration Agents' Reports", 95-7. Longshoreman rate from Biggar, *Canadian Handbook* p. 20 and farm labor from Urquhart, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series D196-207; The figures for 1860-64 are converted to dollars at the rate of one pound to \$4.85. Indian agent's salary from Indian Affairs Annual Reports.

consumption."⁶⁰ The Kwakwaka'wakw people of Alert Bay found work fishing for, and working in, the cannery there, while the Fort Rupert Kwakwaka'wakw travelled to work at the Fraser River fisheries.⁶¹

On the west coast of Vancouver Island an Indian agent had just been appointed for the Nuuchah-nulth (Nootka) in 1881 and he described their seasonal round: they made fish oil for sale to *white* traders in December and began sealing in February: "In the month of June, or as soon as sealing is over, they begin to travel, some to potlatches, some to Victoria, New Westminster or the American side for goods or work; others are scattered along the coast fishing until it is time to get their winter supply of dry salmon up the rivers; this secured, they settle at their villages in November."⁶²

Six years prior, the Indian Superintendent had declared Nuuchah-nulth the richest of any Indians he had met with. "Were a proper disposal made of their immense gains they could without a doubt, live independently, and furnish themselves with every comfort, and even luxury to be wished for...it is not uncommon for any Indian to realize \$500 to \$1,000 per annum. In the mid-1880s when the

⁶⁰ The Tsimshian also conducted a freighting industry along the Skeena which began in 1865 and by 1895 was employing two hundred people and forty canoes; a fuller account of the Tsimshian economy can be found in J.A. McDonald, "Images of the Nineteenth-Century Economy of the Tsimshian" in *The Tsimshian: Images of the Past; Views for the Present*, M. Seguin, ed. (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1984) p. 45.

⁶¹ Powell in Cda. S.P., 1882 vol. 5. pp. 139-140, 148; for the Fort Rupert people see Charles Nowell cited in Philip Drucker and R.F. Heizer, *To Make My Name Good: A Re-examination of the Southern Kwakiutl Potlatch* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) p. 215.

⁶² Harry Guillod in Cda, S.P. 1882, p. 57; Cairn Crockford, "Changing Economic Activities of the Nuuchah-nulth of Vancouver Island, 1840-1920" (University of Victoria, unpublished Honours Thesis, 1991) nicely charts the expansion of paid-work among the Nuuchah-nulth as an extension of their subsistence economies.

off-shore sealing industry was underway each Nuu-chah-nulth "would make almost twice as much in one sealing season as the average white man would make in a year".⁶³

The Indian Agent on southern Vancouver Island reported that several of the villages in his Agency have been almost deserted, "men, women and children having found paying employment at the salmon canneries on the Fraser." The agent for the Fraser Valley made similar comments: "All the Indians included within these extensive limits have enjoyed a golden harvest by having the most lucrative employment at the various canneries on the Fraser....all who chose to work could net \$4 or \$6 a day without exertion".⁶⁴

In addition to working the canneries, mills and mines, the Indian Superintendent noted that "The river steamers all prefer Indian crews, from the fact that the natives are found to be the most willing and active. During the previous seasons no difficulty was experienced in obtaining native deck hands at \$15 or \$18 per month, now the steamers were glad to get them for \$45 and \$50 and even at this rate with difficulty...." In addition to working on steamer crews the local Indian agent pointed out "there are a good many men also who make a considerable money at getting out cord wood and selling it at \$2.50 per cord to the river steamers....There is no class of labour to compete with them at the fisheries or at steamboating on the Fraser River." George Swanaset and Harry Mussel, both Salish from

⁶³ In the 1870s a missionary complained that the "in less than two months they are able to make money enough to buy food and clothing for a whole year and without much labour. They understand that in farming they must work very hard all year to make less than they do now by two months sealing and fishing" quoted in Crockford, "Changing Economic Activities," p. 38; Cda. S.P., 1915 in Crockford, p. 47; for the sealing industry see Peter Murray, *The Vagabond Fleet: A Chronicle of the North Pacific Sealing Schooner Trade*, (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1988) and Briton Cooper Busch, *The War Against the Seals: A History of the North American Seal Fishery*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queens, 1985).

⁶⁴ W.H. Lomas in Cda. S.P. 1882, pp. 160-2 and McTiernan, *ibid*, p. 166.

the Chilliwack area, were among the many aboriginal people who worked as a deckhand on the run from New Westminster to Victoria and cut wood for the steamships and locomotives.⁶⁵

Moving inland up the Fraser Valley, Powell reported that "railroad construction has enabled the inland natives in this part of the province to do quite as well as their brethren on the Lower Fraser, from other industries." In 1882 alone Andrew Onderdonk, one of the main CPR contractors, estimated he paid at least \$40,000 for aboriginal labour.⁶⁶

Historian Robin Fisher has argued that "the effect of frontier settlement was to diminish Indian wealth" but Powell finished his overview with the observation that "there was never a time in the history of the Province when the Indians have been so prosperous as during the present year." A comparison with the provincial standard wages (see Table II), lends credence to Powell's report.⁶⁷

Although the superintendent's claims that aboriginal people could earn wages of \$5 to \$6 per day "without exertion" seem exaggerated, the daily wages most frequently mentioned from 1879 to 1887 of between \$1.75 and \$2.50 per day seem to agree with other estimates of aboriginal monthly wages and the 1881 average cannery income from the census. These wages attracted aboriginal migrants from the northernmost coastal villages in the province to the Fraser River in increasing numbers. In each of the years 1885-1887, from a total provincial aboriginal population of around 25,000, the Indian agents

⁶⁵ Powell in Cda. S.P. 1884 p. 107; McTiernan, in Cda. S.P. 1882, p. 166; "George Swanaset: narrative"; Wells, *The Chilliwack*, p. 164.

⁶⁶ Cda. S.P., 1882 p. 61; Tsimshian from Port Simpson and the Nass also came to work on the E & N railroad construction on Vancouver Island in the mid-80s, see Cda. S.P., 1886, vol. 4, p. 80.

⁶⁷ Cda. S.P., 1882 vol. 5 pp. 130-160; Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, p. 111; since coastal people put such great emphasis on wealth he argued that this "stultified" their culture. There are other indications that the peak of prosperity for many aboriginal groups came after settlement. See Chapters 6,7 10.

estimated 3,000 to 3,500 aboriginal people camping on the Fraser, working, or looking for work, at the canneries. An additional number were employed in the northern canneries.⁶⁸

In the late 1870s or early 1880s aboriginal people also expanded their wage-work migration beyond the fish canning season into the autumn to pick hops and fruits in the Fraser Valley and Puget Sound. This annual migration took on huge proportions. One Indian agent reported that following the 1885 canning season 6,000 aboriginal people -- one quarter of aboriginal population in all of British Columbia travelled to the Washington Territory hop fields. Like the canneries, the hopfields were a source of employment for whole families, men and women, children and the elderly.

Given these numbers, it is no surprise that in aboriginal accounts of this period, salmon canning, and hop picking loom large. In the 1880s John Fornsby's narrative describes his work as the foreman of hop-picking crew in Puget Sound; Charles Nowell tells of following his girlfriend to the hopfields of Washington State; Sayach'apis tried to recruit the tribes from southern Vancouver Island and the Fraser Valley to come to a potlatch but found them en route from the canneries to the hopfields, and August Khahtsahlano was interviewed by J.S. Matthews while his wife was hop-picking.⁶⁹

In addition to paid-labour these aboriginal accounts also highlight aboriginal entrepreneurs. Some like Sayachi'apis and Arthur Wellington Clah were active traders, who bought furs, fish, fish oil, and took them to Victoria, exchanging them for goods they would resell up the coast. Charles Jones

⁶⁸ "Salmon Pack for 1883, Fraser River Canneries," *Resources of British Columbia*, 1, 4 (June 1883) p. 4; Newton Chittenden, *Travels in British Columbia*, (1882, Reprint, Victoria: Chittenden, 1984) p. 29; McTiernan in Cda. S.P., 1882, p. 61; 1885; 1886, v.4, p. 84; 1887.

⁶⁹ Cda. S.P., 1886 vol 4 pp. 81-84; Collins, "John Fornsby" pp. 324-330; Sapir and Swadesh, *Nootka Texts*, pp. 149-50; Matthews, *Conversations*, p. 82; Ford, *Smoke from their fires*, pp. 133-4.

was heavily engaged in the process of catching dog-fish and refining the oil for sale in the Victoria market.⁷⁰ Others, like Haida carver Charles Edenshaw turned their artwork into a profession.⁷¹ Edenshaw's cousin, Henry Edenshaw of Massett and the Tsimshian Dudoward family at Port Simpson were among those that owned their own trading vessels. Others established stores including the Dudoward family, Constance at Hesquiat, Mack at Ohiat, August at Ahousaht, John at Kyuquot Jim at Chicklesaht, Stephen Cook at Alert Bay, as well as others at Aiyansh, Kincolith, Lakalsap, Massett, Skidegate, Hazleton, Anidmaul, Bella Bella, Village Island, and Kyuquot.⁷²

Aboriginal people also ran several smaller sawmills that were scattered throughout the province, most first established by missionaries, to encourage them to adopt capitalist-Christian ethics. Missionary William Duncan established a sawmill and a soap factory at Metlakatla by 1871 and other mission-mills followed at Alert Bay, Glen Vowell, Hartley Bay and Kispiox. The Anglican mission at Massett also helped the local people establish a clam cannery.⁷³

To what extent were aboriginal people involved in the capitalist economy of British Columbia? There is little argument that, prior to 1849, aboriginal people provided the furs that were the foundation of the capitalist economy and much of the food that the fur traders lived on. Although hard to find them in the historical record, it seems evident that after the founding of Colony of Vancouver Island, aboriginal people continued to play a major role in the expanding economy. Aboriginal workers cleared

⁷⁰ Galois, "Arthur Wellington Clah,"; Jones, *Queesto*, p. 47; Sapir and Swadesh, *Nootka Texts*, pp. 141-147 and passim.

⁷¹ Edenshaw is now one of the best known of Haida argillite carvers. See Margaret Blackman, *During My time, Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1988) p. 72.

⁷² Knight, *Indians at Work*, pp. 60-2.

⁷³ Knight, *Indians at Work*, pp. 114, 123-4; Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, pp. 69-70; Charley Nowell worked in the Alert Bay mill in 1897-8, see Ford, *Smoke from their fires*, p. 167.

the first farm fields in British Columbia and helped build many of the early structures. They were the original labour force in the coal mines, the placer gold mines, and continued to work as miners through the nineteenth century. Aboriginal labourers dominated the early factory labour force in the sawmills and canneries, as well as the workforce on the docks and steamships. The public works of the colony and the province, from the boundary survey to the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, all relied on aboriginal labour.

The census of 1881 revealed that the manufacturing establishments in British Columbia, primarily canneries and sawmills, were, on average the biggest of all the provinces in Canada in terms of numbers of employees and capital invested. In 1881 the proportion of British Columbia's population working in the manufacturing sector ranked fourth in Canada after Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. British Columbia had become one of the most industrialized provinces in the country, on the basis of a population that was over half aboriginal.⁷⁴

How widespread was aboriginal involvement in paid labour? A crude estimate based on the reports of the Indian Agents suggests that of the 28,000 aboriginal people in British Columbia in 1885, over 85 percent belonged to bands that earned substantial incomes through paid labour or entrepreneurial activity. The remaining 15 percent, although not wage labourers, continued to participate to a lesser degree in the economy as fur traders.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Canada, Department of Agriculture, *Census of Canada, Bulletin No.s 8 and 10* (Ottawa: 1892); by 1891, largely on the basis of the rapid expansion of the canneries on a proportional basis, more British Columbians were employed in manufacturing than any other province. Aboriginal cannery employees accounted for a large part of this figure.

⁷⁵ This estimate subtracts the population figures of the Indian Affairs census for the bands listed as living primarily or exclusively on trapping, hunting and fishing, from the total aboriginal population. The bands subtracted are: 239 people in Chilcotin, 600 on the coast, 300 of Kootenays and 2,000 for tribes not visited. See Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia: The Impact of the White Man*, (Victoria, 1965), 35-40 for estimates of tribes not visited.

In the late 1880s the language of the canneries from the Skeena to the Fraser, in the sawmills and on the docks, in fact any place where large amounts of labour congregated, was the hybrid Chinook. Franz Boas cautioned that it was impossible to get around British Columbia, outside the major cities, without knowledge of the language and another German traveller noted that to "the traveller...it may be more useful than all the modern languages combined."⁷⁶

The paid work of aboriginal people fit a specific pattern. It was largely seasonal. Most aboriginal people in British Columbia did not decide whether to engage in paid labour or subsistence work -- they did both -- at different times of the year. Moreover, much of the work was organized along family lines. As George Blenkinsop noted in 1879, "the various numerous industries on the [Fraser River] requiring a large number of working hands, there is no want of employment for [Indians] both young and old, men, women and children...."⁷⁷

Franz Boas, was surprised when he first visited British Columbia in 1886: "The stranger coming for the first time to Victoria is startled by the great number of Indians living in this town," he wrote in 1886. "We meet them everywhere. They dress mostly in European fashion.... Certain Indian tribes have already become indispensable on the labour market and without them the province would suffer great economic damage."

⁷⁶ Rohner, *Ethnography*, 9; Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg, "A Visit to the Anglo Saxon Antipodes," trans. John Maass, *BC Studies*, 50 (Summer 1981) p. 36; the provincial business directory for 1877/78 published a Chinook-English, English-Chinook dictionary for the benefit of its readers; T.N. Hibben, *Guide to the Province of British Columbia for 1877-78*, (Victoria, 1877) pp. 222-249; BCARS, Add. Mss. 2305, Alfred Carmichael "Account of a season's work at a Salmon Cannery, Windsor Cannery, Aberdeen. Skeena" ca. 1885 records the widespread use of Chinook in the Skeena canneries in the mid-1880s; Catherine Peacock, "Salmon Canning in British Columbia," *Good Words*, (1894) p. 608; Knight, *Indians at Work*, pp. 112, 123.

⁷⁷ "The majority of the Indians on the Lower Fraser River prefer working for the whites to cultivating their lands...During the fishing season these Indians earn from \$1 to 2½ dollars per diem which gives them a sufficiency of cash to supply all themselves with all the necessaries of life without resorting to the cultivation of the soil for a livelihood." George Blenkinsop, Census Taker for the Indian Reserve Commission, RG 10, 10,012A, Notebook, 1879.

The federal Minister of Justice, Alexander Campbell had a similar reaction:

Almost all the labour of the province is done by Indians and Chinese. All the steamboats in which we travelled were manned by Indians -- the Stevedores and longshoremen and the labourers you find about the streets are for the most part Indians. All the fishing for the canneries is done by them and in all these occupations they compare favourably with the labouring classes elsewhere....⁷⁸

While the official statistics for coal mining, gold mining, and many of the extant records of sawmilling have made aboriginal people disappear from the workforce, other evidence suggests that they were working in all these industries. If aboriginal people were invisible to some contemporary observers, others like Franz Boas, saw them everywhere. These, with the autobiographical accounts and a re-examination of the missionary, federal, provincial and employer records, all contribute to a re-appraisal of the early labour force in British Columbia. Twenty-five years after the gold rush, and despite a dramatic population decline, aboriginal people remained at the centre of capitalist economic activity.

⁷⁸ BCARS, A/E/Or3/C15, Alexander Campbell, "Report on the Indians of British Columbia to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs" October 19 1883; it is an exaggeration to say that all of the fishing was done by Indians, but the figures quoted above suggest that the vast majority of fishermen were aboriginal.

CHAPTER 4:
CHANGING PATTERNS, 1885-1970

The Indians do not now, nor can they expect to in the future, make as much money as formerly in any line of industry or business....

A.W. Vowell, Indian Superintendent, 1894¹

If you don't own your own boat, the only way to make a living is to rent the boat from the packers and fish all year round. We didn't have to work that way before. In the old days there was time for commercial fishing, a time for oolichan fishing and processing, a time for mountain goat hunting, a time for berries. The Nass River people have always traded their oolichan oil. If you don't fish oolichan, you're not Nishga.

Murphy Stanley, Nishga, 1979²

So completely had aboriginal people vanished in the historical record that in the twentieth century historians have hardly looked for them at all. But if aboriginal people were, in the 1870s and 1880s, labouring "...in the sawmill, the logging camp, the field, the store in fact in every department where labour is required..."³ then what became of them? Did they continue to work in these enterprises into the twentieth century? If they vanished from the work-force when did this happen? As a step towards answering these questions this chapter charts the changing patterns of aboriginal paid work after 1885 by examining the main industries in which aboriginal people were employed.

¹ Cda. S.P. 1895, No. 14 p. 202.

² Quoted in Ulli Steltzer and Catherine Kerr, *Coast of Many Faces*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1979) p. 8.

³ James Lenihan, Cda. S.P. 1876, p. 56; see also a similar statement by Indian Superintendent Powell, Cda. S.P. 1877, pp. 33-4.

For this more recent period the record of aboriginal work is more accessible, though not much explored. Work histories from aboriginal workers are available and these can be supplemented by more routine sources generated by a state that was becoming increasingly regulatory and bureaucratic.

In addition to the "auto-ethnographies" mentioned in the last chapter, several other life-histories and briefer accounts include significant discussion of paid-work.⁴ These include the auto-ethnographies of Augusta Evans, Shuswap, (b. 1888), Florence Edenshaw Davidson, Haida (b. 1896), Ed Sparrow, Coast Salish (b. 1898), Rose Sparrow, Coast Salish (b. 1902), Henry Pennier, Coast Salish-French (b. 1904), Harry Assu, Kwakwaka'wakw (b. 1905), John Wallace, Sto:lo (b. 1905), Beth White, Tahltan (b. ~1905), Mary Johns, Carrier (b. 1913); James Sewid, Kwakwaka'wakw (b. 1913), Joyce Albany, Coast-Salish (b. 1919), Theresa Jeffries (b. 1932) and Gilbert Joe (b. 1933), the latter two both Salish from the Sechelt nation.⁵

Many of these auto-ethnographies portray rich and detailed accounts of aboriginal lives and work in the twentieth century. Each offers a kind of "thick-description" of one life, in a particular place, time, and set of circumstances. Each auto-ethnography poses a question to the historian: how typical were the experiences of the author? What can these personal accounts tell us about the experience of British Columbia aboriginal people?

The mere fact that their narratives have been recorded make their authors exceptional. Two of the authors were chiefs -- James Sewid and Harry Assu. Sewid was specifically chosen as a subject of

⁴ Appendix I summarizes the paid work experiences in the auto-ethnographies that offer substantial work-histories. For a broader discussion of the use of this type of source see Chapter 1.

⁵ Additional brief accounts of aboriginal fishery and cannery workers on the Skeena River, and relating only to work there, Elizabeth Spalding, (b.1918), Emma Nyce, (b.~1930), Maurice Nyce, and Dorothy Young, (b. 1925), all Nishga, as well as Herb Ridley, Rosie Temple, and Hazel Stewart, all Tsimshian, can be found in Joan Skogan, *Skeena: A River Remembered*, (Vancouver: British Columbia Packers, 1983).

an "autobiography" because of his success in the "non-Indian world". Assu, who actively sought a collaborator to write his auto-ethnography was also proud of his success in both "worlds". Other than these two, the subjects of the other auto-ethnographies are exceptional only in their longevity, memory, or story telling ability -- none of them could be called exceptional in terms of economic success, although Mary Johns and Florence Davidson have become informal leaders in their own communities.⁶ All but three, (Augusta Evans, Mary Johns and Beth White), belonged to coastal groups, so again interior people are not as well represented.

Another way to answer questions about the representativeness of individual histories is to turn to the statistical evidence gathered by various agencies for different routine purposes between 1885-1970. From the mid-1880s to the 1940s the Department of Indian Affairs also expanded the types of information it was gathering about registered Indians, including, from 1900-1946, estimated annual incomes. This collection was explicitly linked to the Department's goals of assimilation:

The Department would like to know more of the domestic life of the natives, with a view to remedying, if possible, undesirable habits. It would also like to have a more detailed description of the Indian's house, stables, and other buildings, the conditions in which the houses are kept, and the employment that usually occupies the attention of women.⁷

From the late 1870s the federal Department of Fisheries expanded its collection of data on matters relating to fur sealing, fishing and canning with a view to regulating access to marine resources. Different agencies of the provincial government also became involved in gathering information on aboriginal people. In 1926 the province established a Game Branch with wardens around the province enforcing the regulation of hunting and trapping. The provincial labour department began an annual

⁶ An account of the circumstances surrounding the creation of the manuscripts is given upon the first citation.

⁷ NAC, RG 10 vol. 1350 reel C-13917 file: Cowichan Agency Departmental Circulars, 1892-1910, A.W. Vowell, March 9, 1896.

count of aboriginal people in wartime industries during the Second World War, due to a general wartime labour shortage that was exacerbated by the internment of Japanese Canadians.

These statistics help to put the auto-ethnographies in context, while the auto-ethnographies provide a fuller understanding of the available statistical series. The two sets of evidence are complementary in another fashion, since they focus on different elements of the aboriginal economy. The statistics focus on the formal capitalist economies, while the life stories accord major places to informal work, and work for the subsistence and prestige economies. The auto-ethnographic works also inject an experiential dimension into the historical conversation that is definitely lacking in the data series. All of the sources, and the statistical evidence in particular, has to be understood in the context of the racialization and the bureaucratic construction of race, described in Chapter Two.⁸

The year 1885 marks an important juncture for aboriginal people in British Columbia -- the end of a long century of steep decline in aboriginal population levels. The aboriginal population continued to decline after 1885, but much more slowly until the nadir was reached with the 1918-19 flu epidemics. The personal accounts convey the devastating effect of disease more vividly than the statistics. Augusta Evans, a Shuswap from Soda Creek, succinctly describes 60 years of epidemics:

It must have been about 1860, that smallpox time. My grandmother told me. She lived through it. Not many did....They died like flies, yes.....Then the 'flu came, yes. Years, after the flu came. It was when the soldier boys were coming home [1918-9]. My grandmother was old then, old and weak, I guess...She lived through the smallpox, but not the flu.⁹

Phillip John, of the Ehhatteht Band (Nuu-chah-nulth) put it this way:

We had a lot of people living in the other places before the measles came around with that civilization. Our medicines didn't work for those European diseases. And the injections and liquid stuffs we were given didn't seem to help too much. Our people got sick and stayed sick

⁸ In particular, the different racialization of Indians by different agencies, affects the comparability of statistical series.

⁹ Mary Augusta Tappage Evans, *The Days of Augusta*, (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1973), pp. 30-1.

and died. The Asian flu in 1918 took lots of them. They were just packing the dead into the [burial] caves.¹⁰

The accounts of William Pierce, John Fornsbys, Mary John, Harry Assu and Florence Davidson all tell of the personal effects of the epidemics.¹¹ After 1919 a slow increase in registered Indian population began, an increase which became very rapid in the decade 1949-59.

Ironically, the levelling of the aboriginal population in 1885 coincided with the historical moment when they became a minority population. Even slowly declining aboriginal populations were in marked contrast to the catapulting population of immigrants which used the new railway to move to British Columbia. In 1881 aboriginal people comprised 55 percent of the population of British Columbia but by 1901 only 12 percent, and by 1961 a mere 2.3 percent.¹²

Employment Patterns by Industry

The Railway

The year 1885 was important to aboriginal people for another reason. That year the last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was driven into British Columbia soil, directly linking the province to the Canadian economy and labour market.

¹⁰ Phillip John interviewed by Ulli Steltzer and Catherine Kerr for their book, *Coast of Many Faces*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1979) p. 134.

¹¹ Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, p. 56; Collins, "Fornsbys," p. 309; Assu, *Assu*, pp. 23-4; Bridget Moran, *Stony Creek Woman: The Story of Mary John* (Vancouver: Tillacum, 1988) pp. 19-24; I know little about how and when Moran recorded Mary John's account, related in Mary John's voice in the book. Moran met John in 1976, though it seems the material was recorded in the mid-1980s; Margaret B. Blackman, *During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988) pp. 63-4, 113; Blackman met with Davidson at intervals from 1976 to 1981 with prepared questions and the sessions were taped. The transcripts have been organized and "tidied up" by Blackman at Davidson's request. The manuscript was read back to Davidson before publication.

¹² Census of Canada, 1881, 1901, 1961.

Table III
Indian Total And Working Age Population in British Columbia
According to Department of Indian Affairs¹³

	1800	1885	1911	1929	1939	1949	1959
Total	80-100,000	27,994	25,149	22,607	24,276	27,936	36,229
Men 16-64 ¹⁴		6,862	6,464	6,413	7,755	9,403	
Women 16-64		6,871	6,114	5,817	6,657	8,054	
Total 16-64		13,733	12,578	12,230	14,412	17,457	

Besides opening British Columbia to massive immigration, the last spike of the CPR signalled an end to a major source of employment for aboriginal people along the Fraser and Thompson Rivers. Although recent histories of the railway's construction have focused on the contribution of Chinese labourers, aboriginal people were a significant part of the construction labour force. George Swanaset, Salish from the Lower Fraser area, only 10 years old in 1884, remembered that "all the Indians worked on the railroad at that time."¹⁵

¹³ Canada, Indian Affairs Branch, *Annual Reports and Census of Indians in Canada*. The estimates for 1929 do not include 2,500 nomadic Indians whose existence was apparently apocryphal. 1800 and 1885 estimates from Duff, *Indian History of British Columbia*, pp. 35-40.

¹⁴ For 1939 age range for men, women and total is 17-65 inclusive, while in 1949 it is 16-69.

¹⁵ Swanaset, "Personal Narrative;" some Lillooet also found work for the railway, see Terry, *The Same as Yesterday*, p. 317, n2.

From 1879 through to 1885 the Indian Agents along the line reported that large numbers of aboriginal men were employed in construction, or in packing supplies for the railway. Commissioner Powell was told by just one railway contractor, presumably Andrew Onderdonck, "that he had paid out nearly \$300,000 for Indian labour alone" over the course of the railway's construction.¹⁶

The completion of the railway not only ended construction work, but also cut out much of the work of the freighters and packers, who since the gold rush, had moved goods along the Fraser and Thompson Rivers into the interior. In 1882 Newton Chittenden reported "hundreds of pack animals filing by, driven by Indians, carrying supplies into the interior" through Lytton. After railway completion, freight was moved to Lytton, Ashcroft or other interior points by rail; the freighters' work was limited to linking the rail line to more remote communities.¹⁷

The railway's completion in 1885 also threw over 6,500 Chinese labourers out of work.¹⁸ Prior to the early 1880s the Chinese had competed with aboriginal people mostly in placer mining and in domestic service. With the ending of railway construction these workers moved immediately into many of the industries that had been the nearly-exclusive domain of aboriginal labourers.

¹⁶ Cda. S.P., 1886, vol. 4 pp. 87-8, 118; This would average to \$50,000 a year for 6 years and so roughly agrees with the estimate of \$40,000 Onderdonck paid to aboriginal labourers in 1882 alone. Cda. S.P., 1882 p. 61.

¹⁷ Chittenden, *Travels in British Columbia*, p. 43.

¹⁸ Although immigration records show that 15,701 Chinese arrived in British Columbia between January 1881 and July 1884, a Royal Commission in 1884 found 10,492 Chinese in the province, an increase of 6,142 over the Census of 1881. These figures roughly coincide with the estimate from the contractors that 6,500 Chinese were employed in 1882. The use of these Chinese labourers peaked in late 1883 and thereafter they increasingly looked for other work; Peter S. Li, "Immigration Laws and Family Patterns: Some Demographic Changes Among Chinese Families in Canada, 1885-1971," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, XII, 1 (1980) p.61; Canada, *Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration: Report and Evidence*, (Ottawa: 1885), pp. 363-5; David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns*, (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1988) p. 32.

By 1884 the Indian Agent for the Fraser Valley was noticing that his charges were being displaced "in the labor market by Chinamen, especially in all kinds of light work....Day by day they come to find that the large influx of Chinese into this country is a great misfortune to Indians."¹⁹ The depression of the early 1890s temporarily closed many employment opportunities, but the Indian Superintendent noted that, in the longer run, it was due to an increase in competition that "the native cannot now so readily obtain work or get as high wages as they did in former years."²⁰

Sealing

The regional economies of aboriginal people varied considerably, both before the arrival of immigrants and after. While employment was falling off dramatically along the route of the CPR in 1885, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, employment was expanding in a new form of an old activity -- sealing.

The Nuu-chah-nulth had traded seal skins with Europeans since the 18th century, hunting the seals in their canoes from the shore. In the 1870s the rise in demand for seal-skin coats in Europe pushed prices up and European entrepreneurs outfitted deep-sea sealing schooners which followed the migrating seal herds from Panama to the Aleutian Islands. Aboriginal men signed on in large numbers as hunters.

There is considerable information available for the number of sealers, sealing vessels and seal skins harvested from the early 1880s to 1911. Shipping regulations required that the crews be recorded and the Department of Fisheries took a particular interest in the seal harvest. The interest was due to the fact that the fur seals migrated along the British Columbia coast to their breeding rookeries in Alaska. Which country had the right to harvest the seals became a major international issue and

¹⁹ P. McTeirnan, Cda. S.P., 1884, p. 106.

²⁰ A.W. Vowell in Cda. S.P. 1893, 14 pp. 223-4.

American authorities began to seize Canadian ships. Because of these seizures and claims for compensation, as well as declining seal populations, these meticulously kept statistics were offered as evidence in international tribunals.

The industry was well underway in 1891 when 286 Indians were listed by the Fisheries Department as crew on sealing boats and the federal census (conducted by the Indian agent) showed 40 percent of Nuu-chah-nulth men claimed sealing as their main occupation. At its peak, in 1896, 889 aboriginal people participated in the sealing fleet, the majority drawn from the Nuu-chah-nulth population of the West Coast Indian Agency, whose population, men, women and children, was estimated that year at 2,800.²¹ From the mid-1890s aboriginal hunters comprised the majority of the seal hunters, their percentage, relative to *white* hunters, fluctuating between 51 and 73 percent of the total.²²

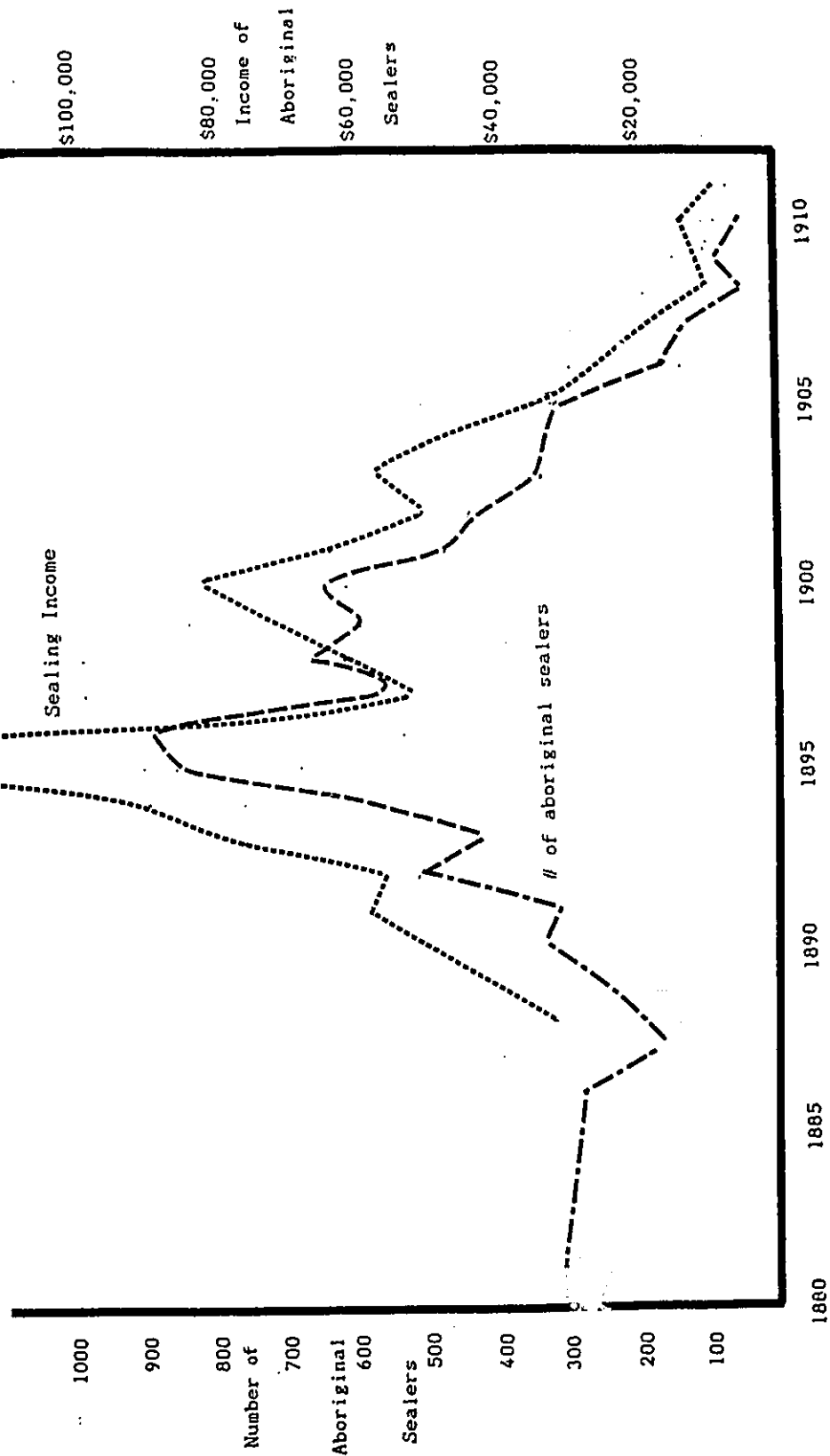
Charley Nowell and Charles Jones were among the aboriginal people who worked on the sealing schooners and who left a record of their experience.²³ Sealing was a lucrative occupation while it lasted, though the level of income for any one hunter was highly variable from year to year. Charley Jones recalls sealers earning \$1,000 in a good year, and in 1892, one of the best years, sealers from Ahousat earned an average of \$1,200 each. Other sealers made between \$200 and \$600 that year, while those who were on schooners seized by American authorities only took home \$40 to \$60 for the season. The routine statistics generated by the Department of Fisheries give a better indication of the average

²¹ For number of aboriginal sealers see Figure II. For population see Cda. S.P. "West Coast Agency, Annual Report", 1896.

²² Canada, Department of Fisheries, *Annual Reports*, 1895-1905.

²³ Ford, *Smoke from their fires*; Jones, *Queesto*, p. 35; Peter Webster's father was also a sealer, who was at sea for as long as six months at a time in the early 1900s; Peter Webster, *As Far as I Know: Reminiscences of an Ahousat Elder*, (Campbell River, B.C.: Campbell River Museum and Archives, 1983) p. 22. The pelagic seal hunters were all men, but several took their wives along as boat steerers, and at least one aboriginal woman, Mary, the wife of Chief Joseph of Opitsah worked as a cook on these vessels. George Nicholson, *Vancouver Island's West Coast, 1762-1962*, (Vancouver: George Nicholson's Books, 1965) pp. 254-5.

Figure II
 Number and Income of British Columbia Aboriginal People
 involved in the Sealing Industry, 1882-1910⁴



sealing income. These suggest an 1892 average income for all hunters, *white* and aboriginal, was closer to \$94. However, after 1900, when comparable figures from the Department of Indian Affairs become available, they show that aboriginal hunters earned twice the income of all seal hunters taken together (See Figure II).²⁴ Figure II shows the industry had a 30-year life until over-hunting and the consequent international prohibition of pelagic sealing effectively killed one of the most lucrative coastal occupations and the Nuuchahnulth's main employer. The dramatic effect of this decline has been documented by Crockford who uses Indian Affairs statistics to suggest the total income for aboriginal people in the West Coast Agency fell from over \$181,000 in 1900 to just over \$41,000 in 1916.²⁵

Trapping

It was trapping that first brought most aboriginal people into contact with the economy of non-aboriginals. James Sewid's father trapped in the 1840s-50s to finance potlatches. Mary John's step-father and husband in the Vanderhoof area, Beth White's father in the Atlin area, Florence Davidson's husband in the Queen Charlottes, Harry Assu at Cape Mudge, and Ed Sparrow in the lower mainland, were all trappers at some time in their lives.²⁶ Like sealing, fishing and other industries employing

²⁴ Cda S.P. 1915 cited in Cairn Crockford, "Changing Economic Activities of the Nuuchahnulth of Vancouver Island, 1840-1920," (University of Victoria: unpublished B.A. Honours Thesis, 1991) 38, 47; Jones *Queesto*, p. 8, 35; Jones also says that his father could make \$9,000-\$14,000 a year principally from sealing, but these seems inflated.

²⁵ For Nuuchahnulth involvement in the industry see Crockford, "Changing Economic Activities" p. 70; for a history of the sealing industry see Peter Murray, *The Vagabond Fleet: A Chronicle of the North Pacific Sealing Schooner Trade*, (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1988) and Briton Cooper Busch, *The War Against the Seals: A History of the North American Seal Fishery*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queens, 1985).

²⁶ James Spradley, ed. *Guests Never Leave Hungary: The Autobiography of James Sewid, a Kwakiutl Indian* (Kingston: McGill Queen's, 1989) p 27; anthropologist Spradley choose Sewid as an example of an Indian "who has made such an exceptional adjustment to culture conflict." Sewid was interviewed in English between 1966-68 and the manuscript read back to him. Changes were made for grammatical consistency and to place events in chronological order and the manuscript was cut down;

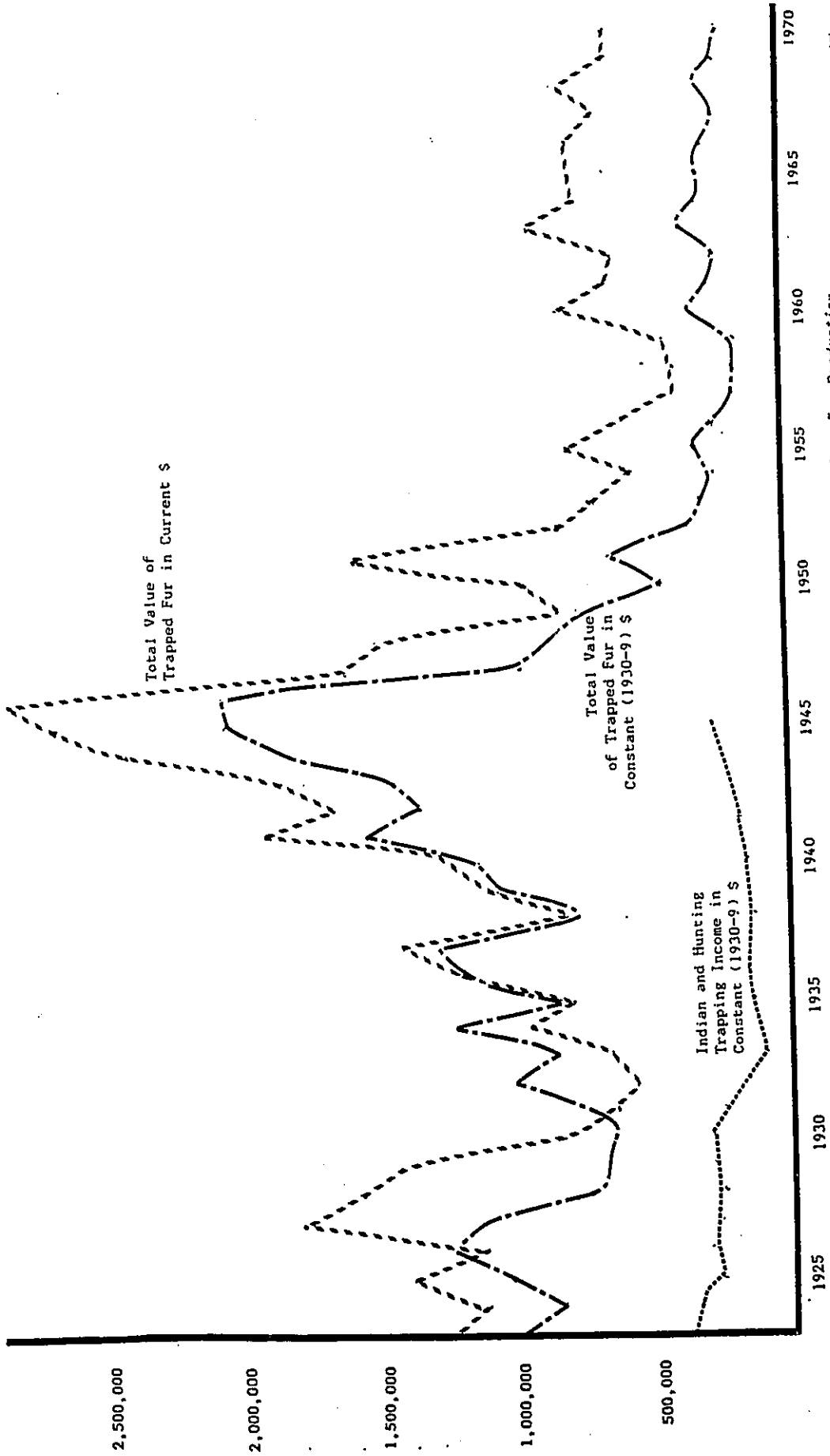
concentrations of aboriginal people, trapping too was a seasonal industry. Although trapping took place in much of the province, by the 1920s it remained the main source of income only in the north. Figure III takes a closer look at the trapping economy of the province from 1922-1970. The top line in Figure III shows the total trapped fur production in British Columbia in constant (1930-9) dollars. It is apparent that the fur industry, like sealing, was quite volatile, with prices and supply fluctuating widely from year to year. Although the fluctuations continued, during World War Two prices and trapping incomes rose dramatically making it the most lucrative trapping period this century. (See also Figure VII). After the war, the industry went into a steep decline from which it has not recovered, and total incomes and employment in the industry has fallen accordingly.

The aboriginal share of the industry had been in decline since 1892, when the Superintendent of Indian Affairs wrote that for the first time aboriginal people were facing significant competition from non-aboriginal trappers. This was exacerbated in 1926 when the provincial government required registration of traplines. Many aboriginal people found that traplines their ancestors had worked for generations had been registered by non-aboriginals. The effect of this loss of traplines is conveyed to some extent by the lower line in Figure III, which shows aboriginal trapping and hunting income in constant (1930-9) dollars.

A major socio-economic study of British Columbia Indians, conducted in 1954 by a team of researchers under H.B. Hawthorn, confirms the post-war decline of both the trapping industry and aboriginal participation in it. There were 2,382 Indians licensed to trap in 1949, but in 1954 only 401

Moran, *Stoney Creek Woman*, pp. 29, 78, 81; Beth White in Yukon Archives, Yukon Women's Project Sound Recording (Transcripts) file 13-5. Beth White's real name is not given here in accordance with the access agreement made to use material from this collection; Blackman, *During My Time*, p. 109; Assu, *Assu*, 62; Leona Marie Sparrow, "Work Histories of a Coast Salish Couple," (University of British Columbia, unpublished Masters Thesis, 1976) p. 263; Sparrow interviewed her grandparents Ed and Rose Sparrow in 1976 specifically about their work histories and recorded their answers. Much of the transcript is available in the thesis. This is the most detailed personal account of aboriginal work available in British Columbia.

FIGURE III
Value of Trapped Fur in British Columbia, 1923-1970
and Registered Indian Income from Trapping and Hunting, 1923-1945



Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Fur Production*.
 Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Reports*.

Indians derived their main living from trapping, while another 409 trapped as a supplementary source of income. In 1956 only 10 percent of the traplines in the province were registered by Indians.²⁷

James McDonald's study of Kitsumkalum actually maps the part of this decline that occurred in an important trapping region of the province along the Skeena River and studies of the Carrier and Nishga support his findings.²⁸

Fishing and Cannery Labour

While the decline of the trapping industry was felt most in the north where aboriginal communities like Fort St. James found themselves without alternatives, on the coast the commercial fishing industry was changing in ways that affected much larger numbers. Commercial fishing was concentrated in coastal regions but people from as far inland as Lillooet (on the Fraser River), Kispiox (on the Skeena River) and Telegraph Creek (on the Stikine River), and into the Chilcotin Plateau as far east as Kluskus Lake, migrated seasonally to participate.²⁹ Coupled with the existing concentration of

²⁷ Mary John describes the family trapping enterprise in her biography, Moran, *Stoney Creek Woman*; H.B. Hawthorn et al, *Indians of British Columbia: A study of contemporary social adjustment* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1960) p. 101. Department of Indian and Northern Development, Treaty and Historical Research Office (DIAND-THRO), file U-24, F.R. Butler at Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Indian Superintendent's Conference, British Columbia and Yukon Region January 16-20, 1956, p. 9.

²⁸ James A. McDonald, "Trying to Make a Life: The Historical Political Economy of Kitsumkalum," (University of British Columbia, unpublished Ph.D., 1985) figures 9 and 10; the declining trapping economy of the Carrier in south central British Columbia is documented in Douglas Hudson, "Traplines and Timber: Social and Economic Change Among the Carrier," (University of Alberta, unpublished Ph.D., 1983), and of the Nishga along the Nass River in northwest B.C. in Stephen A. McNeary, "When Fire Came Down: Social and Economic Life of the Niska," (Bryn Mawr College, unpublished Ph.D., 1976) p. 197.

²⁹ Maureen Cassidy, *From Mountain to Mountain: A History of the Gitksan Village of Ans'payaxw*, (Kispiox: Ans'payaxw School Society, 1984) 39; Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report (DIA-AR), 1901, p. 285; Skogan, *Skeena*, p. 77.

aboriginal people on the coast, these migrations meant that the fishing industry was the largest employer of aboriginal labour from the 1880s through to the 1960s.

From the 1,400 fisherman employed by the canneries in 1882, the fleet grew to employ 12,675 by 1929. Between the years 1925-1940 the fishing fleet was 30 to 40 percent aboriginal. The cannery labour force grew as well and by 1929, the Department of Indian Affairs estimated that of the 27,720 Indians in British Columbia, 11,488 or 41 percent, "engage in the several branches of the commercial fishing operations."³⁰

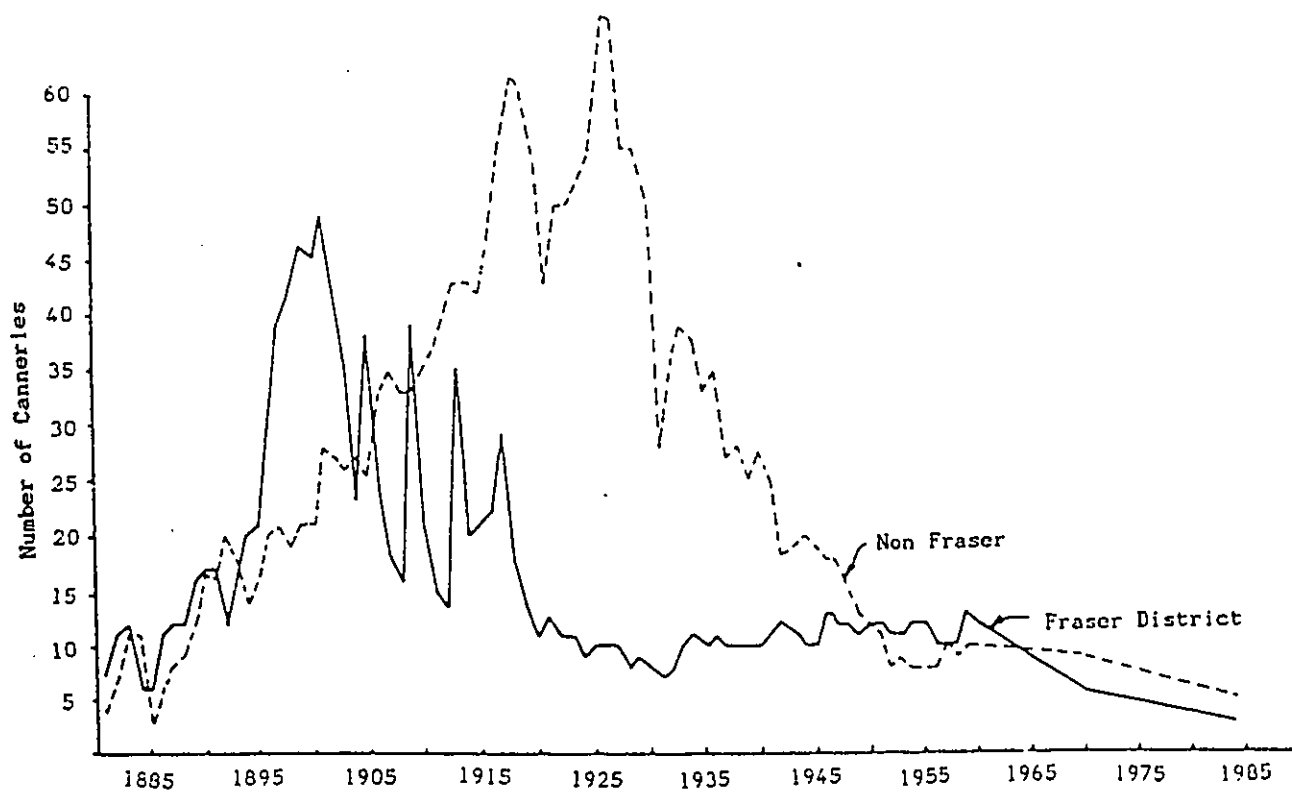
The importance of the fisheries is reflected in the auto-ethnographies. Of the authors, all the coastal men, with the exception of Henry Pennier, fished commercially sometime in their lives. James Sewid, Harry Assu, Charles Nowell, Charles Jones, Ed Sparrow, Gilbert Joe, owned their own fish boats.³¹ The aboriginal cannery workforce was heavily dominated by women, even though a few men like Charles Nowell and James Sewid, also worked in the canneries. Like so many aboriginal women, Rose Sparrow, Florence Davidson, Mary Hopkins, Emma Nyce, Elizabeth Spalding, Dorothy Young, Rosie Temple, Hazel Stewart, and Theresa Jeffries all worked in the canneries. Children also found employment here, and contributed to the family income: Florence Davidson recalls starting work in the canneries at age 11; James Sewid and Ed Sparrow started at age eight.³²

³⁰ Department of Fisheries *Annual Report*, 1929-30, p. 105; M.C. Urquhart and K.A.H. Buckley, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1965) p. 396.

³¹ Sayachi'apis, John Fornsbey, August Khahtsahlano, George Svanaset, John Wallace, and James Spradley fished but do mention owning their own boats. Other aboriginal fishermen are highlighted in Skogan, *Memories of the Skeena*.

³² Sparrow, "Work Histories," p. 30; Spradley, *Guests*, p.58; Blackman, *During My Time*, p. 82; Colleen Bostwick, "Oral Histories: Theresa Jeffries," *Labour History*, 2, 3 (1980) pp. 8-15.

Figure IV
 Number of British Columbia Coastal Canneries,
 1881-1970 by Region



Source: Canada, Sessional Papers; K. Warriner, "Common Property Rights and Regional Subordination in a Staples Economy," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 25, 4 (1988).

The fishing industry and the canneries that employed such a large percentage of aboriginal people were, however, in decline over the latter part of this study period. Several factors contributed to this decline, among them technological change and financial consolidation. The introduction of gas powered boats in the 1920s meant that greater distances could be travelled faster. Later, in the 1930s and 1940s gas-powered boats combined with refrigeration to allow the transportation of fish over longer distances for processing. Previously it had been necessary for fish to be processed within a day of being caught, requiring many small canneries close to the prime fishing sites -- sites that aboriginal people had identified centuries before and established as village locations. Keeping fish fresh for longer meant canneries could be consolidated into a few large operations that were finally located in two main centres: Vancouver and Prince Rupert. Figure IV shows the rise and fall of the cannery industry.³³

The dramatic effect of the consolidation on the number of aboriginal women and children employed in the canneries is illustrated by the workforce of Anglo British Columbia (ABC) Packers, variously the second or third largest operator of canneries on the British Columbia coast. ABC Packers at their peak in 1917 operated 12 canneries but by 1965 operated only four.³⁴ Figure V shows the number and percentage of aboriginal people (overwhelmingly women) employed by ABC. The graph exhibits two trends, the closing and consolidation of canneries and a declining proportion of aboriginal people in the remaining operations. Cannery closures affected fishermen as well as the cannery

³³ John McMullan, "State Capital and the B.C. Salmon Fishing Industry," pp. 107-152 and Keith Warriner, "Regionalism, Dependence, and the B.C. Fisheries: Historical Development and Recent Trends," pp. 326-350 in Patricia Marchak, Neil Guppy and John McMullan, eds. *UnCommon Property: The Fishing and Fish-Processing Industries in British Columbia*, (Toronto: Methuen, 1987); Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993).

³⁴ The 1960s witnessed another round of cannery closures and lay-offs. By 1970 only 1,500 of 3,700 shoreworkers were aboriginal; Pinkerton, "Indians in the Fishing Industry" pp. 260-1; Muszynski, "The Creation and Organization," pp. 140-1.

labour force. Many canneries provided boats to aboriginal fishermen on a share basis, boats that were no longer available when the canneries closed. At Klemtu, George Brown noted:

We have about sixty families in the village; only nine or ten people own a fishing boat. When the cannery was still open, our men fished on company boats. The ones that didn't go fishing worked in cold storage. All the women worked during canning season. But the plant closed in 1968. For forty years we had got used to working all the time. Then they closed her down, quit operating. That when things went from bad to worse....Prices here are about double Vancouver's. Many people are on welfare; that's why it hits us so much.³⁵

A different comparison illustrates the same trend. Whereas in 1892, 16 Fraser River canneries employed between 640-800 aboriginal women, by 1953 that number was down to 10 canneries employing a total of 91 aboriginal women and men.³⁶

The timing of the changes in the fishing sector is different. A long term decline in the number of fishing licences, discernable from 1925, was temporarily reversed by the internment of Japanese fishermen during the war when aboriginal fisherman benefitted from high prices and reduced competition. After the war the decline continued. The numbers of Indian fishermen fell between 1948-53 -- even though the total number of fishermen increased. In his auto-ethnography Harry Assu observed that "the number of our native people fishing in their own waters here on the coast has fallen off with poor harvests and the restrictions on fishing. While our people lost out in many places, the number of non-Indian "fishermen" buying seiners on these waters built up."³⁷ (See Figure VI).

³⁵ Mary Hopkins, also of Klemtu added: "All the women were working. When the canneries closed, there were no more jobs for us. All the women have time. We were really sad when we heard it; some of them cried. Now we only get welfare. I get old-age pension." Steltzer and Kerr, *Coast of Many Faces*, pp. 46, 49.

³⁶ British Columbia, *Sessional Papers* (BC S.P.), 1893, "Report of the British Columbia Fishery Commission" estimated that each of 20 canneries employed an average of 40-50 aboriginal women; 1953 figure from Hawthorn et al., *Indians of British Columbia*, p. 113.

³⁷ Assu, *Assu*, p. 74.

Figure V
 Aboriginal People Employed in Canneries by
 A.B.C. Packers, Selected Years 1906-1960

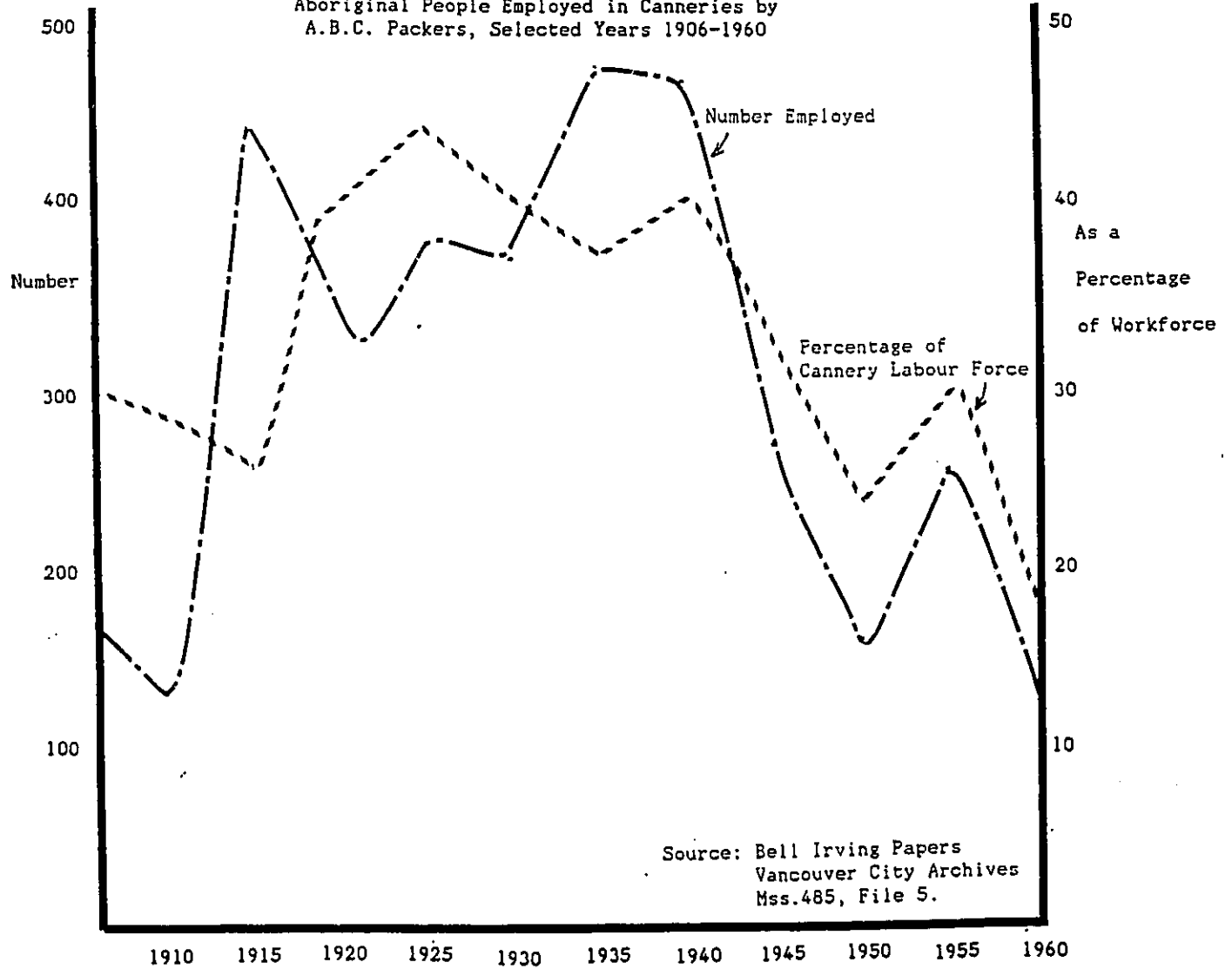


Table IV shows that although fishing's contribution to aboriginal income rose in the war years, it was declining by 1954. Aboriginal fishermen held their relative position a decade longer in the northern fishing district but after 1964 the share of licenses going to aboriginal people in this district also fell off.³⁸ The year-to-year decline was often small but the long term effect was striking. In 1883 the canneries of the Fraser River area alone employed 1,000 to 1,200 aboriginal fishermen; 70 years later less than 100 were employed in fishing in the whole lower coast area.³⁹

Table IV
Relative Importance of Sources of Income
British Columbia Indians, Selected Years, 1898-1954⁴⁰

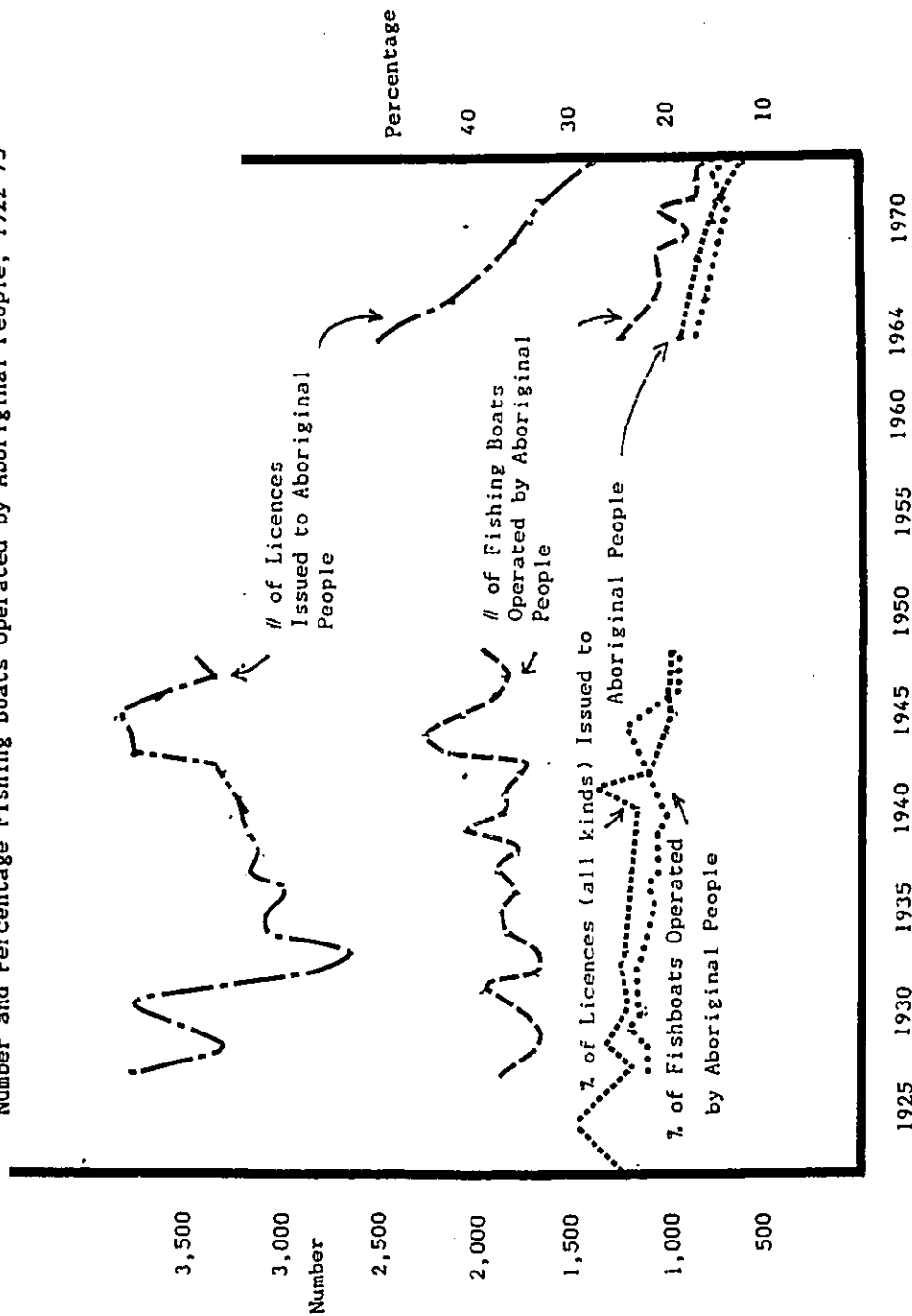
Year	Wages	Agric.	Fish	Trap Hunt	Other Ind.	Rents Royalty	Relief/ Welfare
1900	23.2	16.9	28.0	10.1	21.4	0.0	0.3
1905	29.5	18.4	20.9	13.2	17.6	0.0	0.5
1910	28.3	25.0	22.3	11.5	12.1	0.1	0.6
1915	18.5	39.8	21.7	7.0	10.5	0.8	1.6
1921	20.6	32.3	25.4	8.1	10.2	2.3	1.1
1925	23.1	29.3	19.8	12.8	8.7	5.1	1.2
1930	31.6	22.7	18.9	12.5	7.0	3.4	3.8
1935	19.2	25.3	23.9	8.3	6.5	5.7	8.6
1940	25.3	23.4	24.1	7.9	7.9	6.2	5.1
1945	35.5	18.2	31.0	7.0	5.3	1.3	1.6
1954	62.6	4.2	10.3	1.2	3.0	1.7	16.9

³⁸ Hawthorn, *Indians of British Columbia*, 115; M.J. Friedlaender, *Economic Status of Native Indians in British Columbia Fisheries*, (Vancouver: Environment Canada, Fisheries Operations Branch, Technical Report Series PAC/T-75-25, 1975).

³⁹ *Resources of British Columbia*, 1, 4 (June, 1883) p. 4; Cda, S.P. 1886, vol.4 p. 84; Hawthorne, *Indians of British Columbia*, p. 114.

⁴⁰ To total income from the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports tables "Sources and Values of Incomes" is added the amount spent in direct relief taken from the 'Appropriation Accounts' also in the Annual Reports. The figures for 1954 are from a survey of a sample of 5% of British Columbia Indian males and 1.5% of females reported in Hawthorn *Indians of British Columbia*, p. 221.

Figure VI
Number and Percentage of Fishing Licences and
Number and Percentage Fishing Boats Operated by Aboriginal People, 1922-73



Source: 1922-48, Department of Fisheries Annual Reports. 1964-73, Friedlaender, "Economic Status".

John Pritchard's examination of the economy of Kitimaat, a Haisla community on the mid-coast, provides a local account of the declining aboriginal participation rate in the commercial fishery. At the turn of the century the whole village went to the canneries to fish and can fish; in 1953 only half the village, 223 went and 228 stayed. In 1954 there were 77 men fishing, but in 1977 only one third, 26 continued to fish.⁴¹ This local study, the statistics, and the auto-ethnographies all show similar trends. Since the Second World War aboriginal employment in the sector that had provided them with the most employment was in relative and absolute decline.

Agricultural Industries

Aboriginal people were involved in agriculture in two distinct ways. Some raised crops and stock on their own account as farmers and ranchers, for both the commercial and domestic economies. A larger number provided wage or piece-rate labour for other farmers.

The source that best suggests the extent of aboriginal farming is the Department of Indian Affairs income estimates.⁴² Despite the characterization of British Columbia aboriginal people as non-agricultural, this sector supplied more income to British Columbia Indians than any other at the beginning of the century and between 1910-26, (Figure VII). In the latter part of the period studied, farming declined in importance as a source of income for aboriginal people, though as Table IV suggests, it remained, even in 1961, the third largest employer after fishing and forestry.

⁴¹ John Pritchard, "Economic Development and Disintegration of Traditional Culture Among the Haisla," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of B.C., 1977) pp. 108-9.

⁴² The reliability of these estimates is discussed below.

The best extant description of aboriginal farming in the Pacific Northwest is Christine Quintasket's account of her family's ranching experience. Born around 1885, Quintasket was Interior Salish from the Colville people. Her family ranched just south of the Canadian border in eastern Washington and pastured their horses in the Kettle Valley on the Canadian side. Making a living meant moving regularly and Christine spent a considerable part of her life on the Canadian side of the border.

In order to finance the ranch, her parents both worked on pack trains taking supplies from Walla Walla, in American territory, to Fort Steele in Canada, and Quintasket herself was born on one of these packing trips. When cash was needed the family moved to Fort Steele and Quintasket's father worked cutting wood for the Northwest Mounted Police; to supplement farming income he also unsuccessfully tried to run a road house, tried gambling as a vocation (also unsuccessfully) and worked as a freighter.⁴³

The Quintaskets ranched in the 1910s and 1920s when agriculture contributed the largest share to aboriginal income in the province, up to 39 percent. From that time through to the early 1950s agriculture comprised a declining share of aboriginal income, accounting for less than five percent in 1954. Despite this small share, agriculture was the main employer of Indians in three of the 18 Indian Agencies in the province in 1954, when the wealthiest Indian in the province was said to be a rancher in the Okanagan Agency with assets of over \$500,000.⁴⁴

⁴³ Christine Quintasket, *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990) pp. xxi-xii, 10,157,166,171,185. Quintasket worked as a seasonal agricultural labourer for much of her life, but also took vocational courses and worked as a teacher at the Inkameep Indian Reservation near Penticton, B.C. around 1917-1918.

⁴⁴ Hawthorne, et al, *Indians of British Columbia*, pp. 140-1; there is also a brief sketch of Okanagan Harry Robinson's ranching career in Harry Robinson, *Write it on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*, Wendy Wickwire, ed. and compiler (Vancouver: Talon/Theytus, 1989) p. 13.

Although agriculture was concentrated in the southern interior of the province and in the coastal river valleys, many aboriginal people from other parts of the province expanded their seasonal migrations to take in seasonal paid labour in the Fraser Valley and Puget Sound.⁴⁵ Eleven of the 21 existing work histories of aboriginal people describe this. (See Appendix I). Seasonal migration to the hop fields of the Fraser Valley and Puget Sound were part of Charley Nowell's and John Fornsby's experience in the 1880s. John Wallace was born "to be a hop picker" at Hulbert's Hop Yard in the Fraser Valley on September 25, 1905 when his family was there picking.⁴⁶ Around the same time Henry Pennier worked nearby at a single hop farm employing 700 "Indians from all over the [province] They'd bawl me out in their own languages and I'll bet my last bale of hay that there were seven or eight different Indian languages there."⁴⁷

Estimates of the numbers involved in these migrations remain sketchy but suggest that the peak years for the migrations may have been the late nineteenth century.⁴⁸ A 1912 estimate shows the continued importance of seasonal agricultural labour for many aboriginal people. That summer a

⁴⁵ Ranching and agriculture of the Okanagan Indians is discussed in Duane Thomson, "The History of the Okanagan: Indians and Whites in the Settlement Era, 1860-1920," (University of British Columbia, unpublished Ph.D., 1985) pp. 245-334; Michael Ames, "Fountain in a Modern Economy: A Study of Social Structure, Land Use and Business Enterprise in a British Columbia Indian Community," (University of British Columbia, unpublished B.A. Essay, 1956); a brief discussion of a Harry Edward's Fraser Valley dairy farm operated 1917-1950, in Wells, *The Chilliwacks*, pp. 97-8.

⁴⁶ Ford, *Smoke From Their Fires*, pp. 133-4; Collins, "Fornsby," p. 329; Wells, *The Chilliwacks*, p. 197; Harry Robinson was also born when his mother was working as on a seasonal agricultural labour migration, Robinson, *Write it on Your Heart*, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Pennier, *Chiefly Indian*, 57.

⁴⁸ James Burrows found that agricultural employment opportunities for aboriginal people in the Southern Interior Plateau was decreasing by 1910, from a peak which he thought occurred before the turn of the century; James Burrows, "'A Much Needed Class of Labour': The Economy and Income of the Southern Interior Plateau Indians, 1897-1910," *BC Studies*, 71 (Autumn 1986) pp. 27-46; In 1885 the Department of Indian Affairs estimated that a quarter of British Columbia's aboriginal population, migrated to the fields of Washington State; DIA, Annual Report, 1886 vol. 4 pp. 81, 84.

Vancouver newspaper estimated 1,500 aboriginal hop-pickers were employed in the Fraser Valley alone.

This description suggests the family involvement, as well as the racialization current at the time:

Today [the summons] came and they sailed out, old and young, with their baskets to gather in the hops. The vines cut down, they separate the hops from the leaves. The foreman is all watchful that the work be cleanly done and that only the hops go into the baskets, by the number of which are pickers paid. Few are too old or too young to go hop picking. The wrinkled old dame approaching senility can sit in the field and use her fingers in the work and the children, whose chubby cheeks, at least, afford no evidence of race decay are eager to join in the same task. The pay is usually \$1 a box of 100 pounds of green hops.⁴⁹

Indian agents' reports reveal that while seasonal agricultural labour remained a source of aboriginal income, its importance was also dwindling by the early 1950s. An estimate from Canadian Regional Employment Offices placed the average number of Indians migrating to the United States in the early 1950s at 1,800 men and 1,555 women. Most of these were agricultural labourers from British Columbia. They estimated that a similar number migrated within British Columbia itself to engage in seasonal agricultural labour.⁵⁰ But by 1957 only 300 British Columbia Indians participated in the hop harvest in British Columbia and the United States.⁵¹

The Indian agent's observations are supported by Michael Ames' study of the Xaxli'p (Fountain) community. Xaxli'p people told Ames that in 1951, 38 of their 41 families went hop-picking; four years later only four families and six women (whose husbands stayed to work construction) participated in the migration.⁵²

⁴⁹ Vancouver *News Advertiser* September 28, 29, 1912 in NAC RG 10 vol. 11197.

⁵⁰ NAC, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, RG 26 vol. 106 file: 1/1-15 part 8: "Indian Migrant Workers," Report for the International Labour Organization, October 1953.

⁵¹ NAC, RG 10, vol. 8423 801/21-1 reel C-13835, W.S. Arneil, Indian Commissioner for B.C. to Indian Affairs Branch, May 27, 1957; the published annual reports of the Department mention the declining participation in the seasonal migration in 1951-1953, 1957 and 1959.

⁵² Ames, "Fountain," p. 54. The Fisheries officers often noted when aboriginal people in this area left fishing to go to the hop fields. In 1948 the local official noted "On August 20th almost the entire fishing population moved from this area to the hop-yards on the lower Fraser Valley...." and returned

This community study and diminishing references to this form of labour in the auto-ethnographies, lends weight to the Indian agents' observations that many fewer aboriginal people participated in seasonal harvesting in the 1950s than 70 years earlier.

Forest Industry

An overall picture is also hard to come by for the forest industry. We do know all of the twelve aboriginal men who left work-histories, from all parts of the province, worked at some time as loggers, wood-cutters, boom-men, sawmill labourers, or pole cutters. Charles Jones turned to logging at the turn of the century when the sealing industry shut down, and was a logger for the rest of his life, though "when the jobs in the logging industry were scarce, I often went fishing."⁵³ Although logging activity was widely distributed throughout the province, it was most intensively pursued in the coastal regions. Codere's study of the Kwakwaka'wakw and Pritchard's of the Haisla found widespread involvement in hand-logging early this century. This is probably true for many of the other coastal aboriginal communities, since we know that Gilbert Joe's Sechelt father, Florence Davidson's Haida husband, and Nuu-chah-nulth Charles Jones, were among those participating in this industry.⁵⁴

When legislative changes forced an end to hand-logging in 1910, aboriginal people, in several cases, formed their own logging companies or found employment as wage labourers for larger logging

on September 21; NAC, RG 23 vol. 662 file: 712-2-72 part 4, K.C. Messer, Fisheries Inspector, Yale-Lytton Sub-District, 1948.

⁵³ Jones, *Queesto*, p. 91; Jones also worked as a brakeman on a logging railway, in a machine shop, and as a farm labourer, telegraph repairman and in the forest industry doing everything from boomman, chokerman, rigging slinger, faller, hook tender and woods foreman.

⁵⁴ Frank Fuller, "Gilbert Joe" *Labour History* 2/3 (1980) 16-19; Blackman, *During My Time*, p. 109; *Queesto*, *Queesto*, p. 90-1.

firms. Pritchard found that the peak of Haisla logging took place between 1917-24, although they were also active as loggers during the Second World War and the immediate post-war period.⁵⁵

One indicator of the relative importance of the forest sector to aboriginal people is the decennial census, the other being a survey of aboriginal occupations done by Hawthorne *et al* in 1954. Table V is compiled from the census reports and the occupational survey and shows the number of British Columbia aboriginal people located by broad occupational categories, 1931-1961. The census suggests a relative increase in the importance of the forest industry and a decline in agriculture. The 1954 figures provided by Hawthorne confirm an increase in the relative importance of the forest industry as an employer. There are however, serious questions about the reliability of the federal census which began tabulating occupational category by race in 1931. This might have been an important source for the study of ethnic and racial groups in Canada, but for aboriginal people at least, a closer examination shows these tabulations are misleading if used alone.⁵⁶ For example, the 1951

⁵⁵ Helen Codere, *Fighting With Property: A Study of Kwakiutl Potlatching and Warfare, 1792-1930*, (Seattle: University of Washington, 1972) pp. 43-8; Blackman, *During My Time*, p. 109; Assu, *Assu*, p. 66; Spradley, *Guests Never Leave Hungary*, 75; Pritchard reports extensive hand-logging among the Haisla of Kitimat and its decline in Pritchard, "Economic Development and the Disintegration," pp. 122-7; Jones, *Queesto*, p. 94, writes about forest unions excluding Indians.

⁵⁶ One example for where there is comparative data, fishing and fish processing, illustrates this. For fishing the census of 1931 shows 2,591 aboriginal fishermen. The Department of Fisheries statistics show that 3,505 licenses were issued to aboriginal people that same year. Even allowing for some fisherman to have taken out more than one licence (ie. for salmon and halibut) suggests some under-counting of fishermen. In the censuses of 1951 and 1961 the under-counting becomes extreme. The census of 1951, for example, shows 200 aboriginal people employed in the fishing, trapping and hunting industries combined, out of a total of only 794 aboriginal people employed in all occupations in the whole province. Meanwhile, fish licenses issued in years either side of the census indicate an annual employment of 2-3,000 aboriginal fisherman in those years. Hawthorn's 1954 survey recorded 401 full-time trappers, 400 part-time trappers, 2,164 full-time fishermen and 240 part-time fishermen.

In terms of the fish processing labour force the reliability of the census is even worse. The 1941 census shows 372 aboriginal people working in all kinds of manufacturing, including fish processing, yet the records of the A.B.C Packing Company show that this company alone hired 455 aboriginal cannery workers in the 1940 season. Perhaps this vast discrepancy is a result of the April census date, a period when canneries are not usually operating and fishermen are in port.

It is also possible to compare the census of 1941 with the statistics gathered by the British Columbia survey of industries that year (Table V and VI). Comparison of the two tables shows a rough consistency in construction and mining categories but a vast discrepancy in the manufacturing category.

census decided not to include the occupational status of Indians living on reserves: Due to their unique economic circumstances, Indians living on reserves at the time of the 1951 Census were classified as a separate group from those "in the labour forces" and those "not in the labour forces".⁵⁷

In 1961 this "census apartheid" of Indians was rescinded and they again appear in the categories of "in" or "out" of the labour force with other Canadians. Still, the coverage is such that the utility of the census appears to be confined to hinting at shifts in a few occupations that the census takers seemed better able to enumerate, notably the professional and service categories, though even in these cases it is doubtful the numbers themselves are reliable.

It is possible, from the auto-ethnographies and agents reports to say that the forest industry has continued to be a major employer of aboriginal people in the province, but it is difficult to chart changing patterns of aboriginal participation for the period after 1954. Interviews with aboriginal men in the coastal towns of Queen's Cove, Kingcome and Owikeno, suggest logging has employed a part of the male labour force formerly engaged in fishing, but also highlight that once the local area has been logged, even this is tenuous employment.⁵⁸

The only local study of an aboriginal economy based on logging is that of the Carrier people in north central B.C. Based on interviews with an employer, Douglas Hudson argues that the period 1946-1964 marked the boom years for logging operations in that area and the peak years of aboriginal employment in the sector. After that the "gypo" logging operations and local sawmills which employed

The Department of Labour statistics show about 3,000 aboriginal people in the manufacturing category, while the census only shows 248 men and 303 women. The Department of Labour surveys show more aboriginal men and women in many subcategories of manufacturing, including 715 men and 1081 women in food processing, than the census shows for the total.

⁵⁷ Canada, *Census, 1951*, volume 4, p. xiv.

⁵⁸ Interviews with Dave Dawson at Kingcome and Charlie Johnson at Owikeno, in Steltzer and Kerr, *Coast of Many Faces*, pp. 68, 82, 135.

Table V
Occupations of Indians From the Federal Census and *The Indians of B.C.* ¹

	1931			1941			1954		1961		
	Male	Fem.	Total	Male	Fem.	Tot.	Primary	Supp	Male	Fem.	Tot.
All Occup.	6886	778	7664	7077	641	7718	7293	1637	4567	1134	5701
All Agric.	2170	152	2322	2042	142	2184	1203	221	611	102	713
Farmers	1191	97	1288	1025	73	1098	689	134			
Labourers	976	55	1031	1017	69	1086	514	87			
Fish/Hunt& Trap Total	3724	29	3753	3725	24	3749	2565	640	413	14	427
Fisherman	2576	15	2591	2355	7	2362	2164	240			
Hunt/Trap	1148	14	1162	1370	17	1387	401	400			
Logging ²	189	0	189	594	0	594	1353	330	880	13	893
Mining	18	0	18	55	0	55	43 ³	17	55	1	56
All Manuf	122	481	603	113	259	372	1082	207	1583	339	1922
Fish Canning	46	452	498				1076	205			
Food Prod.	-	-	-	55	248	303	-	-	648	319	967
Wood Prod	-	-	-	15	0	14	1	-	867	4	871
Construct	20	0	20	38	0	38	117	19	125	2	127
All Transport	240	0	240	311	0	311	205	9	363	22	385
Railway	237	0	237	299	0	299	112	1	-	-	-
Trade/Comm	32	2	34	35	3	38	51	4	65	47	112
Retail	-	-	-	-	-	-	47	4	44	40	84
All Service	18	83	101	29	204	233	110	27	165	26	191
Domestic	8	78	86	0	199	66	5	-	46	259	305
Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	46	66	112
Health/Welf	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	45	188	233
Clerical	-	-	-	2	1	3	9	1	-	-	-
Other Labr	342	30	372	118	4	122	547	161	148	47	195
Public Adm	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	159	21	180

¹ Canada Census, 1931, Table 49; Census of Canada, 1941: Table 12; Census of Canada, 1961, Bulletin 3.2-10, Table 11; 1954 figures from H.B. Hawthorn, C.S. Belshaw and S.M. Jamieson, *The Indians of British Columbia: A Study of Contemporary Social Adjustment*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1958) Table VIII p. 75. This survey appears more reliable than the census.

² Including Forestry work but not including sawmilling, except in 1954 sawmilling is included.

³ Includes smelting which employs 25 as primary occupation and 15 as supplementary.

most of the aboriginal forest workers were displaced by multinational firms who brought in workers from "outside".⁵⁹

Other Occupations

When it comes to aboriginal people, the decennial census has to be treated with more than the usual degree of scepticism. It does however, hint at the importance of domestic service as a long-standing employer of aboriginal women. Visitors to nineteenth century British Columbia commented on the ubiquity of aboriginal washer women and domestics, and the biographies are emphatic about this. Of the seven women for whom we have work histories, six mention that at different times in their lives, they were paid to do laundry, domestic work, or cook in camps, restaurants or on fish boats. (See Appendix I).

Two biographies from the interior, Beth White's and Mary John's, extend to the 1960s, when both women left their previous seasonal occupational activities and found work in the service industry. Mary John started work in the Vanderhoof hospital in 1959 and in 1972 became a teacher of the Carrier language and history at the local school. Beth White owned and operated a gas station in Atlin from 1960-67.⁶⁰ From the census, it appears that they were representative of a small but growing group in the 1960s of aboriginal people finding employment outside the resource industries. Since the late nineteenth century a few aboriginal British Columbians have found employment in the professions, particularly in the clergy, which attracted a small but influential group including W.H. Pierce and Peter Kelly, or like Christine Quintasket, as teachers.⁶¹ Although the numbers remained small, the 1960 and

⁵⁹ Hudson, "Traplines and Timber," p. 145.

⁶⁰ Moran, *Stoney Creek Woman*, pp. 99, 103.

⁶¹ Pierce, *Potlatch to Pulpit*; A.P. Morley, *Roar of the Breakers: A Biography of Peter Kelly* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967); Quintasket, *Mourning Dove*, p. xii.

1970 censuses document definite employment increases in the professional, government and service sectors.⁶²

The census, and Hawthorn's survey, record a continuing involvement of aboriginal people in the transportation sector. Longshoring, mentioned as employing Songhees men in Victoria and the Squamish in Vancouver in the 1860s, continued to provide occupations for the Songhees until the Second World War, and through the 1970s for the Squamish, though aboriginal participation declined overall. Whereas in the 1930s aboriginal workers comprised about 40 percent of the membership in the International Longshoreman's Union serving all B.C. ports, by 1951 the percentage was down to three. Thompson, who investigated aboriginal longshoring in 1951 found "the decline in membership seems to be in inverse ratio to the degree of stabilization of employment in the longshoring industry." The union strove to de-casualize longshoring by formalizing labour relations with seniority rights and call-up lists. These provided more hours of work for those with seniority but to maintain standing, longshoremen had to work when their name came up. This adversely affected aboriginal workers, who had taken advantage of the casual labour market, to fish in the summer and engage in ceremonial activities in the winter.⁶³

The railways employed several hundred aboriginal people as section hands and trackmen but the censuses suggest this employment has been dropping since the 1940s, reflecting perhaps, the effect of technological change on railway maintenance. The growing numbers employed in the census transportation sector capture the effect of provincial highway expansion in the 1950s, and the resulting

⁶² The census probably enumerated these sectors more effectively than the resource industries.

⁶³ Frances W. Thompson, "Employment Problems and the Economic Status of the British Columbia Indians," (University of B.C.: unpublished Masters of Social Work Thesis, 1951) p. 36; interview with John Barrie, Regional Director of the International Longshoremen and Warehouseman's Union, May 23, 1951

highway maintenance work. Both Mary John's and Beth White's husbands found full-time jobs working for the highways department in the 1960s.

Aboriginal Entrepreneurs

Archaeological and other evidence make it clear that aboriginal people were "traders" long before Europeans ever came into their territory. It is not surprising then, that European goods were added to these trading networks and that aboriginal people continued to act as traders, middle-men and -women, and eventually retailers. The accounts of Sayach'apis and Arthur Wellington Clah are excellent examples of these "entrepreneurs" who took aboriginal produced/harvested goods to urban markets and brought back consumer goods for sale in distant aboriginal communities.

In the nineteenth century aboriginal entrepreneurs were considered success stories and highlighted by Indian agents wishing to illustrate Indian "progress". As a result there are occasional reports like that from the Indian Superintendent in 1892, noting that in the Northwest Agency "the Indians own saw-mills, and dog-fish oil manufacturies, they also have many stores and have commenced in a small way to can salmon and clams."⁶⁴ There is also a clear entrepreneurial element to the small scale commodity production like fishing, farming and logging that engaged large numbers of aboriginal men and women before and after the turn the century.

Some aboriginal people continued to work their own farms and fish boats in the 1970s, while Beth White, and probably others besides, opened gas stations. Nonetheless, the relative importance of small-scale commodity production and entrepreneurial enterprises in general seems to have been shrinking. Relative income figures show the proportion of aboriginal earned income gained through

⁶⁴ Cda. S.P. 1895 No. 14, p. 204; 1903 No. 27, pp. 281-5.

wage labour climbed at the expense of commodity production like fishing, farming and trapping (Table IV).

Non-wage Income

Statistical records are silent on a number of other activities that loom large in the auto-ethnographies. One of these is home-based production of items for sale -- mentioned in all the existing work histories of aboriginal women. Florence Davidson recalled her mother weaving baskets, place mats, and hats all winter long, "from the time she finished picking and putting up berries until spring." Her weaving "she sold in June when we went to the mainland to work in the canneries." Davidson learned how to weave and knit, and sold baskets to the local store owner for \$1.25 each. According to Mary John, "the families depended on wives and mothers and grandmothers to make moccasins, jackets and mitts out of hides." All over the province, aboriginal women worked on home production to provide income for their families. For Mary John's family, selling her home-manufactures, door to door in Vanderhoof, was often the only source of cash income during the Depression.⁶⁵ Rose Sparrow, Florence Davidson and her mother, and many other women knitted "Cowichan Indian Sweaters" in the evenings and off-seasons. Some men, like Florence Davidson's father, also earned part of their living as carvers.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Mary John remembers asking: "Would you like to trade a pair of moccasins (or a trout or a whitefish or a pail of berries) for some of your old clothing for my children?" in *Stoney Creek Woman*, pp. 70, 78, 100.

⁶⁶ Blackman, *During My Time*, 72, 86 112, 122, 128; Evans, *The Days of Augusta*, p. 52; White, "Yukon Women's History Project;" Sparrow, *Work History*; Assu records that after the Cape Mudge cannery burnt down the Cowichan women still accompanied their husbands to Cape Mudge where the men fished; instead of their former cannery work the women spun wool and knitted, Assu, *Assu*, 63; Barbara Lane, "The Cowichan Knitting Industry," *Anthropology in British Columbia*, 2, (1951) 14-27; see also Hawthorn et al, *Indians of British Columbia*, 257-67.

The Indian Affairs Department thought that "Indian handicraft, although only a part-time activity in most families, represents an important source of income." The Department set up a branch to encourage and market these home-manufactures.⁶⁷ The importance of handicraft production in one community is examined below.

The Subsistence Economy

The auto-ethnographies also stress that, from the 1880s through to 1970, many aboriginal men and women continued to work at subsistence activities, or enjoy the food-gifts of others who still utilized these food resources.⁶⁸

Initially, the subsistence economy conditioned when aboriginal people were available to work in the capitalist economy. As we saw in the last chapter, the Kwakwaka'wakw of Fort Rupert and the Nanaimo people were only willing to dig for coal, for example, when it fit into their subsistence economy; likewise the Tsimshian from Port Simpson, and the Nuu-chah-nulth from Barclay Sound all came to Victoria at periods compatible with their food fishery.

In the 1890s game and fishing regulations began to prescribe when aboriginal people could participate in subsistence activities, and several aboriginal observers have noted a connection between these laws and a new dependence on wage labour. Charles Jones noted: "If we get caught hunting out of season, we get into trouble. After they had passed this law, we had to start eating white man's food, as that was the only way to stay alive. So, to pay for the white man's goods, we had to make money,

⁶⁷ NAC, RG 26 vol. 106 file: 1/1-15 part 8, "Indian Migrant Workers," Report for the International Labour Organization, October, 1953.

⁶⁸ Blackman, *During My Time*, pp. 111-4; Moran, *Stony Creek Woman*, pp. 27, 70.

and the only way we could do that was to work for the white man's companies....."⁶⁹ The Quintaskets planted their crops in the spring and then left the ranch to gather native foods "which were always relished more than potatoes and vegetables. We never missed the annual fall hunt until it was forbidden by the state game department."⁷⁰

Where capitalist work opportunities opened up for men, as they did in most parts of the province, subsistence activities fell increasingly to the women. Jo-anne Fiske has shown that these activities remained vital to the economy of the Carrier in particular. Fiske found that in recognition of their increased importance as providers, Carrier women began to take on expanded roles in the political life of their communities.⁷¹

Although various studies, including Hawthorne's 1954 provincial examination, Mooney's look at Coast Salish patterns on Vancouver Island and Kew's research on the Musqueam Salish suggest that food gathering continued in most aboriginal communities, all suggest the declining importance of the subsistence economy since the Great Depression.⁷²

⁶⁹ Jones, *Queesto*, p. 38; Webster, *As Far as I Know*, pp. 42-4; NAC, RG 10 vol. 8570 file: 901/1-2-2-2, Andrew Paull speaking at a conference on the Indian Act July 20-1, 1955; aboriginal testimony before the McKenna-McBride Commission, quoted in Thomson, "History of the Okanagan," pp. 203, 209.

⁷⁰ Quintasket, *Mourning Dove*, p. 174.

⁷¹ Jo-Anne Fiske, "Fishing is Women's Business: Changing Economic Roles of Carrier Women and Men," *Native People, Native Lands: Canadian Indians, Inuit and Metis*, Bruce Alden Cox, ed. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988) pp. 186-197.

⁷² Hawthorne et al, *Indians of British Columbia*, pp. 215-30; Kathleen A. Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Indian Economies and Domestic Organization," (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1976); John Kew, "Coast Salish Ceremonial Life: Status and Identity in a Modern Village," (University of Washington, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1970) pp. 32-4.

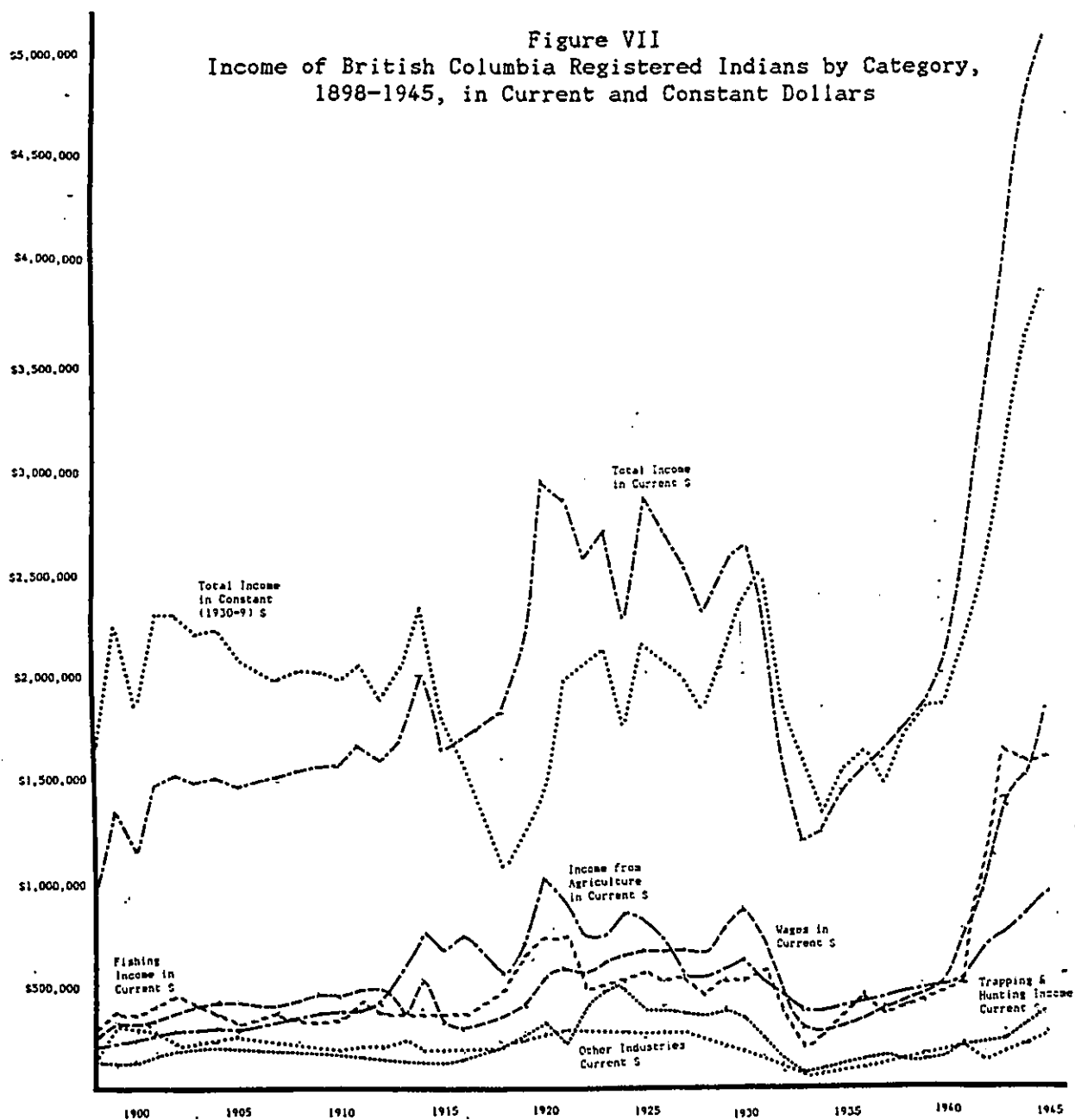
Income Patterns, 1898-1945

The records of Indian incomes gathered by the Indian agents offer a good explanation as to why aboriginal people focused their attention on the subsistence economy during the Depression -- their incomes plummeted precipitously.

The Department of Indian Affairs was intensely concerned with the involvement of Indians in the capitalist economy. In written reports Agents took great pains to describe the range of work opportunities available to aboriginal people. Beginning in 1877 they were also asked to report on the income of the bands in their jurisdiction. For reasons discussed below, the estimates do not appear to have much reliability until 1898 when more precise categories were established for income reporting.

Figure VII shows the income of Registered Indians according to the estimates of the Indian agents from 1898-1945. The income is divided into categories: farming, fishing hunting and trapping, wages, and "other industries", a residual category which includes home-manufactures, canoe-making, self-employed logging and other entrepreneurial incomes. It suited the agenda of the Department to include estimates for value of agricultural produce, game hunted and fish caught for subsistence use in their respective categories. These estimates produced values above the cash income of Indians, but if accurately done, could provide a good indication of the combined subsistence and cash "income".

In Figure VII income from each of these categories is shown in current dollars, as recorded at the time. Total income is also expressed in current dollars and has also been converted into constant dollars or "real income" to allow comparison over time.



Source: Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Reports* and Canada, *Yearbook*, 1941-45.

How reliable are these income estimates? Prior to the turn of the century, the Department itself did not put much stock in the figures. The system of reporting was refined in 1898 when the Department sent a flurry of circulars to agents clarifying what was to be included in each category. Precise instructions on how to estimate aboriginal income were included in a letter from the British Columbia Indian Superintendent to Indian agent W.H. Lomas, August 4, 1898. The relevant part of the letter reads:

[Regarding the] 3rd column[,] wages earned, you can get at this for the present approximately only by estimating the number of your Indians and their time whilst employed for the canneries, otherwise that when taking fish, work at the sawmills other than contracts[, plus] any other work for which they were paid wages. [Regarding the] 5th [fishing] and 6th Columns [trapping and hunting] add to the monies earned for fishing at the canneries and fishing for the markets the following estimates, say half the food or any other proportion you may think correct is the product of hunting and fishing, [say] 1/6 hunting and 2/6 fishing[, then] estimate the fish at 4¢ per lb and meat @ 8¢ per lb. Say each adult consumes 2lbs of meat or 3lbs of fish each day reckoning for this estimate 180 days in the year hence adults x 120 [days] for fish x 3lb + 60 [days] for meat x 2 lbs + children at half rations = lbs fish @ 4¢ = lbs meat @ 8¢ = earned by hunting and fishing to which you must add earned by fishing for canneries [and] earned by fishing for market. By questioning the Indians closely on your rounds you can get sufficient data to enable you to make a very close estimate of the quantities required by the department. The proportions which I have given you above are merely arbitrary for illustration but you can readily obtain from the Indians the kinds of food on which they subsist and where they procure it.⁷³

For some categories of income the agent was probably able to obtain precise figures. Local traders could supply the value of furs that had been purchased from Indians. At least one agent obtained "a statement showing the total earnings of all the Indians employed" at the various canneries.⁷⁴ It is clear from the letter above, however, that a large part of Indian income was an estimate rather than a recording of employers' statistics.

⁷³ NAC, RG 10, vol. 1350, file 252-3, J.H. MacKay to W.H. Lomas, August 4, 1898.

⁷⁴ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,155, file: CR 37, pt A., M.S. Todd to C.C. Perry, Asst. Commissioner for B.C., April 1, 1935 and September 28, 1936.

The agents could not survey every Indian in their agency every year, or even visit every reserve in remote parts of the province. They were however, in a position to know about prices being paid for furs, fish, logs, and labour, the length of the season, and the overall prosperity of the bands relative to previous years. Moreover, the gathering of these statistics was of considerable importance to the Department and the agents because it was a key indicator of the so-called "progress" of Indians.

In 1901 Secretary of the Department in Ottawa sent a memo to the B.C agents demanding more reliable statistics, noting that in some cases agents were recording incomes that could not possibly support the population in their jurisdictions. The Indian Superintendent for the province checked the figures provided by the agents, and at the turn of the century at least, rejected incomplete and obviously erroneous statistics. With his 1902 report Indian Superintendent for B.C., A.W. Vowell, noted he was enclosing the agents' statistical reports which were, initially received "as usual, in nearly every instance, the latter were more or less inaccurate...." This meant, he added, "delaying the transmission of these returns to their destination, and entailing upon this office much labour that should not have been necessary considering the full and repeated instructions received by the agents as to what is required in that respect." In the following years he expressed satisfaction that the reports were now being received in "good condition".⁷⁵

Scholars who have examined the statistics in relation to their own local studies found them to be reasonably reliable estimates. Helen Codere's examination of income figures for the Kwakiutl Agency from 1903-1939 found a few anomalies. She noted that income from fishing and wages may not be clearly distinguished. Cannery income appears in "wages" category in some years and in "fishing" in others; this Codere attributes to a change in agents. Despite such inconsistencies, she concluded that overall the income statistics were good approximations of economic activity. James Burrows has

⁷⁵ NAC RG 10, vol. 1327, Secretary of the Department to Indian Agents, May 28, 1901; A.W. Vowell in Cda. S.P. 1902, vol. 11 No. 27 pp. 221-4.

examined the figures and the worksheets that the agent in the Kamloops-Okanagan Agency used. He also considers them to be "approximate only".⁷⁶

An internal check of the data shows consistency between the conditions the agents were recording in their written reports and the statistics they provided. Perhaps a more interesting test is a comparison of the overall income patterns with the particular comments in aboriginal biographies, and against some of the other statistical series. Certainly the income crashes recorded in the biographies during the Depression are reflected in the income levels reported in the annual reports, as are the boom years of the Second World War.

The changing relative share of income from different industry categories is also largely consistent for comparable evidence from other government agencies. The income category for the West Coast Agency follows closely the yield of the pelagic sealing industry recorded by the Department of Fisheries (see Figure II above). The Department of Indian Affairs estimates from fishing are consistent with the Department of Fisheries figures for the number of licenses issued to aboriginal fishermen and the number of canneries operating (see Figures VI). Indian's hunting and trapping income is consistent with the overall trend in the trapping industry (see Figure III). There is one apparent anomaly: the rapidly rising income from 1942-5 evident in the Indian Affairs figures (Figure VII) does not coincide with employment levels in the manufacturing sector evident in Table VI.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Codere, *Fighting With Property*, pp. 34-5, 41; James K. Burrows, "'A Much Needed Class of Labour': The Economy and Income of the Southern Interior Plateau Indians, 1897-1910," *BC Studies* 71 (Autumn, 1986), p. 30.

⁷⁷ Table V shows that aboriginal employment peaked in the manufacturing industries in 1943 but Figure VII shows income continues to rise. The same figure shows that over half of the income came from the fishing and trapping sectors, but still leaves unexplained how wages would increase as manufacturing labour dropped. If there is an explanation for this anomaly it may lie in non-manufacturing wage labour, such as soldiering, logging, agricultural labour which may have absorbed the displaced factory workers.

Table VI
Aboriginal People Employed in British Columbia Industries, 1940-45⁷⁸

Industry		Year					
		1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Canning/Food Processing							
	Men	316	715	650	1636	1549	1331
	Women	525	1081	1775	1767	1423	1611
Logging/Wood Processing							
	Men	195	137	1045	703	721	698
	Women	0	0	3	15	10	11
Oil Refinement Plants							
	Men	54	65	89	164	97	86
	Women	0	0	14	4	2	3
Longshoring/Coast Shipping							
	Men	129	137	45	0	6	15
Shipbuilding							
	Men	0	76	107	60	51	35
Construction/Building Mat.							
	Men	20	50	216	244	119	81
Mining							
	Men	11	20	13	20	18	15
Other Industries/Utilities ⁷⁹							
	Men	36	26	806	204	170	188
	Women	0	2	1	5	16	5
TOTAL MEN		761	1,428	3,196	3,032	2,714	2,605
TOTAL WOMEN		535	1,083	1,794	1,767	1,510	1,445
TOTAL BOTH SEXES		1,286	2,511	4,990	4,823	4,244	4,050

In sum, it seems that although these figures cannot be accepted as exact records of Indian incomes, given the alternatives, they appear reasonable indicators of relative levels of income from various sources as well as accurate reflections of relative changes of income levels over time.

⁷⁸ From British Columbia, Department of Labour, Annual Reports, in British Columbia, *Sessional Papers*, 1940-1945. Does not include fishing, trapping or agriculture.

⁷⁹ Includes: explosives, building supplies, garment manufacturing, fur and leather manufacturing, laundries, printing and publishing, metal trades, miscellaneous manufacturing and utilities. No aboriginal people reported as being employed in brewing, tobacco, household furnishing, jewellery, paint manufacturing, or smelting.

These relative changes are expressed in Table IV which considers work income and the amount of annuities, rent, trust payments and welfare payments distributed to British Columbia Indians as a percentage of total income for selected years from 1900-1954.

Figure VII and Table IV indicate that wage work has generally been increasing in importance to the incomes of aboriginal people over time, except during the depressions that accompanied the First, and preceded the Second, World Wars. Agriculture's contribution rose to a peak in the 1920s and has subsided since then. Fishing income was most important at the beginning of the century and during World War II and has dropped off since. Relief and Welfare payments comprised an insignificant part of aboriginal incomes until the Depression, when many non-aboriginal Canadians also turned to the government for assistance. State payments to aboriginal people begin to be a real presence only after the Second World War.

Putting the income into constant dollars (Figure VII) and thereby showing "real income" or purchasing power sheds another light on the matter. Figure VII shows that the real income of British Columbia Indians was greater when the statistics first become available, in 1899, to 1914 than at any other extended period up to World War Two.⁸⁰ Yet there is other evidence that prior to 1899 aboriginal incomes had been even higher. Indian Agent reports starting in 1892 and continuing through to the turn of the century, consistently report that "there has been a gradual falling off in the earnings of Indian...."⁸¹ It appears that aboriginal people's incomes were already on the decline when consistent estimates first became available.

⁸⁰ Codere's study of the Kwakwaka'wakwa shows that their real incomes peaked before 1914, Helen Codere, *Fighting with Property*, pp. 43-48.

⁸¹ See the reports by A.W. Vowell, Indian Superintendent for B.C. in the Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs from 1892-1903. Quote from Cda. S.P. 1904 No. 27, pp. 314-320; Burrows suggests that the income of the interior people in the Kamloops-Okanagan probably peaked prior to 1900, and was declined in the twentieth century, see his "A Much Needed Class," p. 45.

Cyclical Patterns: Depression and War

From Figure VII it is apparent that aboriginal people shared the increase in war-time employment from 1914-19 alongside other Canadians. Yet, despite the rising dollar income, war-time inflation caused real income (constant dollars) to plummet. Real income rose through the 1920s until it hit the pre-war levels in 1929-1930, then it plummeted again.

Mary John described the effect of the 1930s Depression on her community. "Our hard life became harder.... Employment for our men became scarce and finally non-existent. By the end of the Depression the only work available for the men was relief work....Many times relief money was the only cash which was circulating on the reserve."⁸² Figure VII indicates that her experience was probably widely shared among registered Indians in British Columbia. Indians rode the roller-coaster of the national and international economy along with other Canadians. They experienced sharp dips in 1914, 1924, and 1927, and then the full impact of the Great Depression.

Similarly, the rise in wages and employment that Florence Davidson recalls during World War Two is dramatically reflected in the income statistics and in the information gathered by the provincial Department of Labour.⁸³ From 1939-1945 the Department of Labour added an "Indian" category to the annual surveys it sent to all major industrial firms asking about ethnicity of employees, hours worked, and rates of pay. Table VI shows a summary of this enumeration. These indicate that during the war

⁸² Moran, *Stoney Creek Woman*, pp. 77-81; see also Pennier, *Chiefly Indian*, p. 58; Assu, *Assu*, p. 66; Spradley, *Guests Never Leave Hungary*, p. 95.

⁸³ Blackman, *During My Time*, p. 120.

years aboriginal people were hired in industries and occupational categories outside the range where they had previously been concentrated. Employment in these enumerated industries doubled between 1940 and 1941, and almost doubled again to a peak in 1942. The detailed figures from which Table VI is drawn show the record employment levels were caused, in part, by hirings in such industries as explosives and chemicals, the metal trades, utilities and, notably, in shipbuilding, where in 1942 there were 107 aboriginal men employed.⁸⁴ The same figures also suggest that movement of aboriginal people into these industries was only temporary. After 1942 employment declined steadily through to 1945.

The industries not included in the Department of Labour Surveys -- fishing, trapping and agriculture -- also employed record numbers of aboriginal workers. Figure III shows that this was a period of record high incomes for trappers and Figure VI illustrates that it was also a period of high employment in the fisheries. In addition, 270 British Columbia Indians enlisted in the armed forces by 1945.⁸⁵ All the statistical evidence confirms the wartime recollections of Florence Davidson, that for aboriginal people World War Two was a time of economic prosperity unprecedented since the 1880s.

Occupational Concentration by Region

The statistics evidence gathered on a provincial basis reveals provincial trends, but at the same time hides the variation, between the different regional and local economies of aboriginal people with different access to employment. The personal accounts in the auto-ethnographies better illustrate that the economies in which aboriginal people worked varied from region to region.

⁸⁴ British Columbia. "Report of the Department of Labour", *Sessional Papers*, 1943, p. K28.

⁸⁵ DIA-AR 1945, p. 161.

The auto-ethnographies of coastal people like James Sewid, Charley Nowell and Harry Assu, all Kwakwaka'wakw, Florence Edenshaw Davidson, Haida, W.H. Pierce, Tsimshian, and the shorter sketches of Theresa Jeffries, Ed and Rose Sparrow, George Swanaset, Gilbert Joe and John Fornsbys, all Coast Salish, and Sayach'apis and Charles Jones, both Nuuchahnulth, all stress the importance of the fishing industry. On the coast, men typically fished, in their own boats or in cannery-owned boats, and women, children and elderly worked in the canneries. Supplementary activities such as logging, trapping and home-manufacturing were usually combined with fishing as sources for income.⁸⁶ From the biographical accounts we know that when the fishing season was poor, many Salish, Nuuchahnulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw of both sexes and all ages migrated in the late summer to work in the hop and berry fields of the Fraser Valley and Puget Sound. In addition, Cowichan men like Albert Westly who lived between Chemainus and Nanaimo, specialized in working in the neighbouring coal fields as well as in the sawmills and on the docks. On Vancouver Island, the Salish, the Kwakwaka'wakw, and particularly the Nuuchahnulth, worked the sealing fleet as long as it flourished.

In the south and central Interior, as well as up the Fraser Valley the accounts of Mary John, Augusta Evans, Christine Quintasket, Harry Robinson and Henry Pennier, recall that farming, ranching, agricultural labour and for the men, logging, were the most important industries. Aboriginal men also worked on railroad construction, cut railway ties, and worked as section hands. Here, clearing land,

⁸⁶ Spradley, *Guests Never Leave Hungary*; Blackman, *During My Time*; Ford, *Smoke From their Fires*; Sparrow, "Work Histories of a Coast Salish Couple,"; Assu, *Assu*; Collins, "John Fornsbys," pp. 287-341; Bostwick, "Oral Histories: Theresa Jeffries," pp. 8-15; Fuller, "Gilbert Joe" pp. 16-19; Sapir and Swadesh, *Nootka Texts*.

cutting firewood and placer mining for gold were occupations that almost every family turned their hand to when cash was needed.⁸⁷

In British Columbia's far north, where there had been other mining-related work opportunities in the late nineteenth century, in the twentieth century trapping was the main cash-earner. Beth White, a Tahltan woman, who trapped with her husband, recorded that cash-earning opportunities remained limited to trapping through to World War Two. Her husband supplemented their income with occasional work in mining camps, packing and guiding. Trapping was also a major source of income for the Carrier people in Mary John's community of Stoney Creek in north central British Columbia.⁸⁸

Yet within this diversity there are strikingly common patterns. All but two of the auto-ethnographies suggest aboriginal people were concentrated in seasonal occupations, primarily fishing, canning, trapping, agricultural harvesting, and logging, as well as other low-skill work like cutting wood, and domestic service.⁸⁹ Within these limited occupational choices, they were extremely mobile, often working three, and even as many as five different occupations, in a "normal" year -- in addition to participating in subsistence and ceremonial economies. In all parts of the province, the aboriginal economy involved whole households. Finally, between 1885 and 1970 most of their paid work shared one of two characteristics, and sometimes both: the industries themselves were in decline, or aboriginal participation in the industries was declining. From the end of the First World War to the present, the aboriginal population has been increasing against this backdrop of declining employment opportunities.

⁸⁷ Moran, *Stoney Creek Woman*; Evans, *The Days of Augusta*; Pennier, *Chiefly Indian*. Burrows has explored this economy for the turn of the century in "A Much Needed Class of Labour"; Robinson, *Write it on Your Heart*, pp. 12-3; see also Hawthorn et al, *Indians of British Columbia*, pp. 141-158.

⁸⁸ Yukon Archives, Yukon Women's Project Sound Recording (Transcripts) file 13-5.

⁸⁹ The exceptions are William Pierce, who became a minister in his early 20s and Joyce Albany, who became a secretary and had a white collar career.

How did aboriginal people get trapped in declining industries? Why did they cease to get jobs in industries where formerly they predominated? How did existing social and familial relations affect employment patterns? What effect did paid labour have on existing aboriginal economies? The following chapters explore the specific causes of changing work-for-pay patterns in the specific context of one aboriginal community.

SECTION III

THE SONGHEES

"Indians face starvation as Winter Approaches," warned the headlines of *Victoria Colonist* on the morning of October 16, 1960. John Albany, the chief of the Songhees people on Southern Vancouver Island, confirmed the desperate predictions: "It is going to be a tough winter. It is going to be worse than ever."

Compare this to the report, of October 25, 1881, 80 years prior, also about the Songhees: "The great bulk of these Indians are really well off this winter; having had good crops of potatoes, the salmon run promising well and so many of them having earned good wages during the summer...." In the summer of 1881 the aboriginal villages around Victoria had been "almost entirely deserted, men, women, and children having found paying employment at the salmon canneries on the Fraser River...." In addition to fishing and canning, a contemporary observer noted that the Songhees "men on the wharves and otherwise, and the females as washerwomen, seamstresses, laundresses, earn much and spend it all in the City."¹

What are we to make of these observations made less than a century apart? Some rough income estimates for the two periods help to put these comments in perspective. In 1881, the agent estimated that the Indians of southern Vancouver Island "brought back over \$15,000 in wages from the fisheries," not to mention their other sources of income. A 1969 survey of 60 percent of the labour

¹ W.H. Lomas, Cda. S.P. 1882, pp. 160-2; British Columbia Archives and Record Services (BCARS), A/E/Or3/C15, W.F. Tolmie to Sir Alexander Campbell, Federal Minister of Justice, August 21, 1883.

force among the Indians in the same area found their total earned income to be \$31,385. If we convert the 1881 figures to 1969 values and extrapolate the 1969 incomes to cover the whole labour force we can get roughly comparable figures, although the result is almost unbelievable. The per capita income of southern Vancouver Island Indians from fishing alone was \$92.46 in 1881 (in 1967 dollars), and per capita earned income from all sources only \$56.93 in 1967. Even allowing for the crudeness of the comparison, changing definitions of "Indian" and wide margins of error, the different sources suggest a need to explore why the Songhees and other aboriginal people of the Saanich Peninsula earned less in the 1960s than in the 1880s.²

This section asks whether a "century of progress" for Canada could have been a "century of impoverishment" for aboriginal people, by focusing on one community's experience. It is a micro-history looking at exchange, material life, household organization and work at home and outside, of the Songhees people as well as their Coast Salish neighbours on Southern Vancouver Island.

The Songhees are now an "Indian band" whose ancestral home is the territory now occupied by the urban core of Victoria, British Columbia and adjacent islands. Prior to 1876, "Songhees" referred to a collection of family groupings, speaking the *Lkungeneng* dialect of Straits Salish. The Indian Act of that year split the Songhees into three bands, the Esquimalt, Discovery Island, and the Songhees, by

² Aziz found an earned income of \$31,385 in a survey of 80 members of the 156 member labour force. His sampling technique is not stated but if representative, the total income of the labour force would be \$61,201; divided by the total south island Indian population of 1,075 yields a per capita income of \$56.93. The 1881 figure of \$15,000 has been inflated according the wholesale price indexes in Table K33 F.H. Leachy, ed. *Historical Statistics of Canada*, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983) to its value in 1969 dollars of \$61,118; divided by the 1881 south island population of 661 this yields a per capita income of \$92.46. The real 1969 income could be 40% higher before it would exceed the 1881 value. Moreover we know that the 1881 figure only accounts for one of the income sources so total 1881 income was undoubtedly higher. Salim Akhtar Aziz, "Selected Aspects of Cultural Change among Amerindians: A Case Study of Southeast Vancouver Island" (University of Victoria, unpublished MA, 1970) pp. 33-5.

tying each group to a reserve and defining an Indian band to be a group of Indians for whom land had been allocated. Subsequently the Discovery Island band was merged with the Songhees Band.

Some of the information we have on the Songhees has been aggregated with other Salish groups into the larger unit of the Cowichan Agency, an administrative area created by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1881 encompassing the east coast of Vancouver Island south from Comox to Sooke. Other information comes from examinations of the southern portion of the agency, southeast Vancouver Island, including Victoria, Saanich Peninsula and Sooke. Much of the official information we have comes on the "Indians" of the Cowichan Agency comes from the Indian Agent for that agency, who reported to a provincial "superintendent" who reported, in turn, to the "secretary" of the department.

The Songhees people were singled out for a detailed study because of their situation when it came to taking advantage of the capitalist economy. They are an example of a people whose territory was settled early in the period of European-aboriginal contact and which has had continuous interaction since then with the immigrant economy. Secondly, the Songhees found an urban centre growing up on their land and around their reserve. From the 1860s onward there was a wide diversity of possible vocations in this urban area. Finally, the Songhees are an important group because of a uniquely favourable financial situation resulting from an exchange of the reserve originally allocated to them, for another in the suburbs of Victoria. As a part of the 1911 relocation agreement every family received \$10,000 in cash. Compared to most aboriginal groups in the region they were advantageously located when it came to proximity to wage-work opportunities, and for the years immediately after 1911 at least, well provided with investment capital. If any band in British Columbia was well situated to take advantage of the capitalist economy, it was the Songhees.

This section is divided into this introduction and four chapters. The first of these (Chapter 5), examines the exchange relations within Straits Salish society immediately prior to their introduction of

European settlement. This is based on accounts of Salish people, assembled and filtered by ethnologists. Straits Salish, the Songhees among them, had a dynamic social structure that responded to external and internal stimuli. The range of responses available to them was conditioned by their past experience and extant social structures. An appreciation of this structure and history is a precondition to comprehending the Songhees side of the historical conversation.

Chapter six explores the beginning of the work-for-pay conversation with the arrival of fur traders intent on establishing a settlement in Songhees territory in 1843. Chapter seven follows this conversation through to 1970. These two chapters look at the relationship between the Songhees' long-standing "prestige economy" and the new "capitalist economy" for answers about when and why aboriginal people joined the work-for-pay exchange; what "pay" became in Songhees society; how was paid-work accommodated by Songhees society, how did employers accommodate Songhees social organization?

Chapter eight follows the parallel evolution of other Songhees economies. Paid work accounted for only a portion of the labour that aboriginal people performed. Much of their labour was directed to a subsistence economy that met their needs for food, shelter, transportation and implements. How and when did the immigrant settlement in the Songhees territories and the opportunities for paid-work affect the subsistence economy? Sharing subsistence resources and the redistribution of wealth was an integral part of Songhees social organization. How did these patterns interact with the new welfare economy based on Department of Indian Affairs' policy of providing "relief" to the destitute?

Up to this point the chapters in this section have looked at the interaction of the different economies and social organization. Chapter nine looks more closely at changing relationships between the social organization of household production and work for pay. How did household relationships, and the contributions of different members to the household economy, change with different access to

paid-work? To what extent were gender roles affected by the new opportunities for work, or by the changing demographic profile of the Songhees?

The preceding chapters have considered the role of aboriginal people in the immigrant economy. The next chapters take a detailed look at another aspect of *máku*, the role of the immigrant economy in the life of the Songhees.

**CHAPTER 5:
OF REEF NETS, CAMAS PATCHES, AND POTLATCHES**

In reef-netting, however, the gear was assembled and operated by a group working under the direction of the owner of the location or his deputy. The owner gave the crew part of the catch in exchange for their help; he hired them. This type of cooperation might be called capitalistic.

Wayne Suttles, *Economic Life of the Coast Salish*³

The head man knows how to put it together. There's a hole left in the middle [of the net] which each piece touched. Its big enough to a big salmon to go through but it won't; if it goes through it dies. That's the way its made.

Louie Pilkey, Saanich⁴

The Songhees had their first face-to-face exchange with Europeans in June 1790 when the Spaniard Don Manuel Quimper coasted along southern Vancouver Island, passing through the entire territory of the Lkungen speaking people, later known as the Songhees. Their permanent and seasonal villages were spread along the southern coast of Vancouver Island from Esquimalt Harbour to Cordova Bay, and through the Islands as far east as San Juan Island [See Map II].⁵

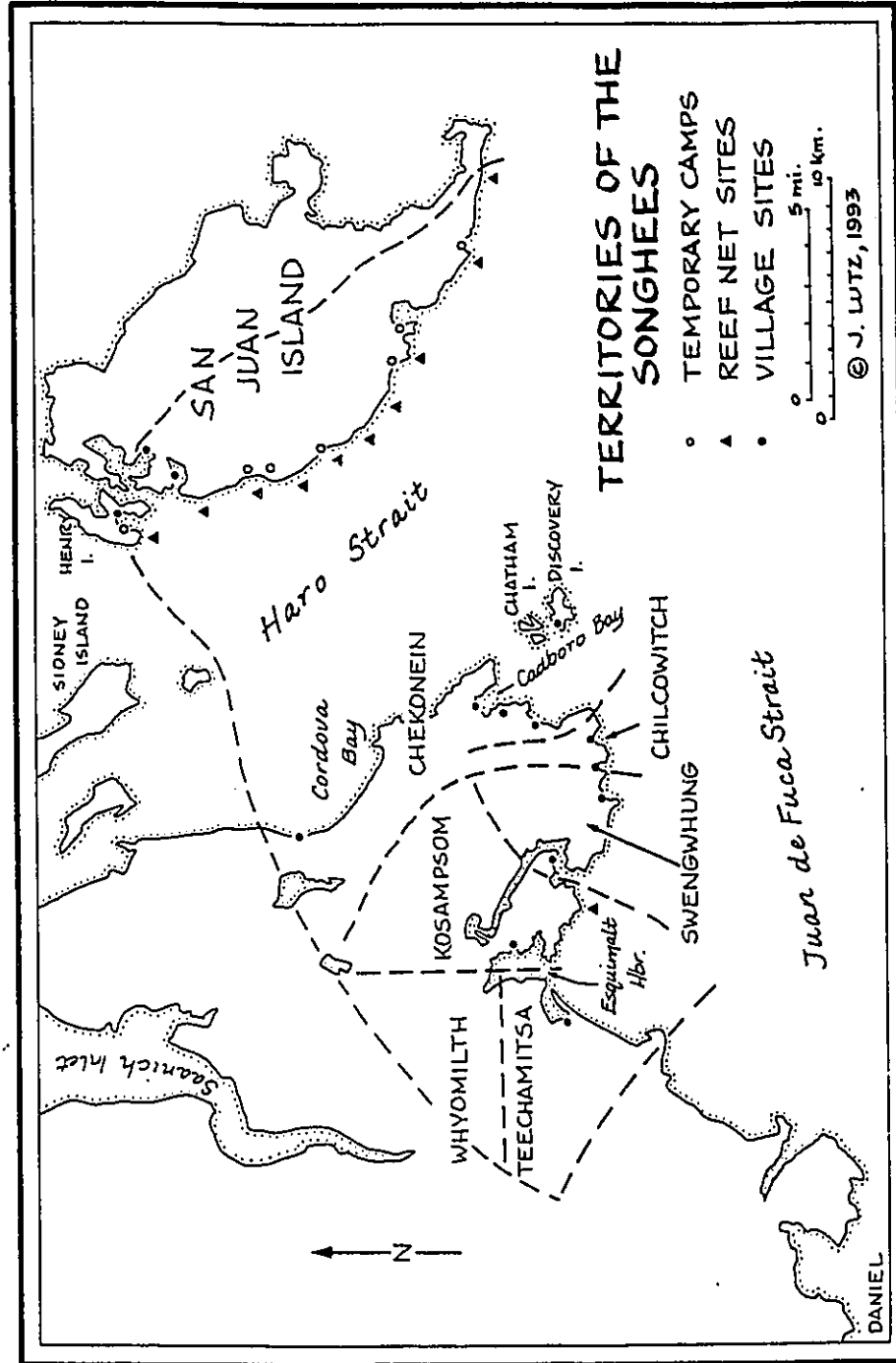
The Songhees paddled out to Quimper's ship from their summer camps on the islands of Haro Strait and gave him information, (how they understood each other is not recorded), about the coast and their neighbours. Quimper then crossed to the south side of the straits before returning to Vancouver Island and what he called Córdoba (Esquimalt) Harbour. Here he met three canoes which

³ Wayne Suttles, *Economic Life of the Coast Salish of Haro and Rosario Straits*, (New York: Garland, 1974) p. 486.

⁴ Quoted in Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 163.

⁵ The Mitchell Bay Indians on San Juan Island claim descendance from Songhees who had villages at Open Bay on Henry Island, Taleqamus, Garrison and Wescott bays, and opposite Spieden Island, all on San Juan Island, see Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986) p. 133 and Map II.

MAP II
Territories of the Songhees



Based on Wilson Duff, "The Fort Victoria Treaties," *BC Studies* 3, (Fall 1969) 3-57; Wayne Suttles, *Economic Life of the Coast Salish of Haro and Rosario Straits*, (New York: Garland, 1974) and Alexander N. Easton, "The Archaeology of Straits Salish Reef Netting: Past and Future Research Strategies," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes* 24, 2 (1990) 161-177.

had also come from across the straits, to harvest what Quimper called "seeds", but more probably berries or bulbs.⁶

Quimper identified Esquimalt as a good anchorage and it became a stop-over for subsequent Spanish explorers. In 1791, two Spanish ships under Eliza, revisited the harbour. One of them, the *San Carlos*, anchored in the harbour for several weeks while the other, explored the islands and straits east and north of Esquimalt. The second encounter stands out on account of a violent exchange. According to the Spaniards: "It was in this harbour that the Schooner *Saturnina* was obliged to open fire in order to protect the launch of the packet-boat *San Carlos* against the canoes of the natives: the launch had approached them and they made determined efforts to take her."⁷

This event may coincide with a story that survived among the Songhees suggesting that at least one of them, s[^]ntl'o?áy?l, known in English as Jimmy Chickens, was pressed into service on a Spanish ship where he served for three years before escaping back to his native village. The Spanish records do

⁶ Henry R. Wagner, *Spanish Explorations in the Strait of Juan de Fuca*, (New York: AMS, 1933) p. 206; it is possible that the Songhees saw the vessel the *Washington* in 1789 when Robert Gray entered the Strait and penetrated 50 miles before "finding he did not meet with encouragement as a trader" and turned back. Gray was looking for sea otter pelts which were not found in the Straits of Juan de Fuca; see Vancouver, *Voyage*, p. 502.

⁷ Cecil Jane, *A Spanish Voyage to Vancouver and the North-West Coast of America*, (London: Argonaut, 1930) pp. 34, 38; Kendrick's translation of the story has the incident occurring in Haro Strait, also Songhees territory and reports that the longboat fired, "killing some of them." John Kendrick, "The End of the Northern Mystery: The Spanish in Juan de Fuca and Beyond, 1790-1792," in Robin Inglis, ed., *Spain and the North Pacific Coast*, (Vancouver: Vancouver Maritime Museum, 1992) p. 105; Richard Inglis points out in his article, "The Spanish on the North Pacific Coast: An Alternative View From Nootka Sound," in the same volume, that Spanish sailors, in contrast to their officers, were often brutal in their behaviour towards aboriginal people at Yuquot; similar behaviour may have precipitated violence in Songhees' territory.

not mention seizing any aboriginal people (some were "bought" at other locations) and down-play the violence.⁸

By contrast the expedition of the Spaniards Galiano and Valdes, the following year, emphasized peaceful exchange. This time they had an escort into Esquimalt -- Tetacus (Tatoosh) a leading man of the Makah nation -- on friendly terms with the Songhees -- hitched a ride with them.⁹

As Galiano and Valdes coasted they recorded the most detailed surviving accounts of early European-Songhees exchanges. Near Esquimalt, several canoes came alongside with four or five aboriginal people in each, offering what the Spanish journal calls "sheepskins", in exchange for copper. The two parties could not come to terms and no bargain was made; instead the aboriginal people offered what the Spanish took to be "fruit, like figs in shape, black, and of a floury character, with a salt taste" in return for some strings of glass beads.

This account is reminiscent of the "molasses sticks legs" story the Squamish told of Vancouver's visit, only this time it was the Spanish who did not comprehend what was offered to them: they understood "sheepskin", when what they were offered was almost certainly dog-skin; and mistook dried clams for salty "figs".¹⁰

⁸ Marjorie Mitchell, "A Dictionary of Songish, A Dialect of Coast Salish" (University of Victoria, unpublished MA in Linguistics, 1968) p. 102; Martinez bought a boy and a girl in 1789, Malaspina bought 22 children in 1791 in Nootka Sound for one or two copper sheets each, Eliza purchased a total of 52 children on the coast in 1792; apparently the children were intended to be taken to Mexico to be instructed in Christianity, see Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University, 1973) pp. 118, 306-14.

⁹ Jane, *A Spanish Voyage*, 34-5; that same year Captain Vancouver passed through the Straits of Juan de Fuca but was principally interested in the south shore.

¹⁰ Jane, *A Spanish Voyage*, p. 34-5; the Songhees had no sheep but used the wool of dogs to make their cloaks. The transformation from clam to fig probably occurred because the Songhees dried clams, as the Spaniards dried figs, on a string. For the "molasses sticks legs" story see Chapter 1.

Further into Haro Straits other canoes came alongside offering "mulberries"¹¹:

We gave them each a metal button, and they made more gifts of the same kind in order to receive something in exchange, not being lavish in their offerings but bartering, seeing that for each thing which they presented we gave them a string of beads or a piece of sea biscuit. They also gave us [shells]...and there was also taken from them a dogskin cloak decorated with feathers and a tanned skin.¹²

These exchanges succeeded in spite of the fact that in many respects the Songhees' world view could not have been more unlike that of the Europeans they were meeting. The gap was neatly summarized in a "conversation" between Tetacus and the Spaniards, Valdes and Galiano, recorded in the latter's journal:

[Tetacus] assured us that he had seen [an eagle] swoop down suddenly from a height to the sea near his house, fasten it on a whale and bear it away. Valdes retorted that he must have been sleeping when he believed he had seen such an extraordinary thing, and he assured us that he was as wide awake as now....¹³

The Songhees world was inhabited, not just by humans, plants and animals, but by spirits associated with living things and "natural" phenomena. "Spirits", both benevolent and otherwise, could move from the visible world to parallel, invisible worlds or worlds located under the sea, underground or in the sky. In special circumstances, such as during vision quests, in dream-states, or near-death experiences, humans could visit these other worlds and return with special knowledge, powers or with a guardian from the spirit world.¹⁴

¹¹ Another "transformation" since mulberries (*moraceae*) are not native. More likely they were given salmonberries (*rubus spectabilis*) the only berries which were both ripe at the time of Quimper's June visit and a significant part of the Songhees diet.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 40.

¹³ Jane, *Spanish Voyage*, p. 35; Kendrick has analyzed this journal trying to understand how they communicated with one another. He concludes from internal evidence that some communication definitely transpired, but that Galiano may have exaggerated the extent to impress on his superiors his success in establishing friendly relations with the local people. See Kendrick, "The End," p. 107.

¹⁴ The major anthropological sources about the Songhees are: Franz Boas, "The Lku'ñgen" *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, (1890) pp. 57-82; Wayne Suttles, *Economic Life of the Coast Salish of Haro and Rosario Straits* (New York: Garland, 1974); Homer Barnett, *Coast Salish of British Columbia*, (Eugene, Ore.: University of Oregon, 1955) and Charles Hill-Tout, *The*

One of the most direct and least mediated accounts of the Salish connection with the spirit world is in the personal narrative of John Fornsby, a Salish man from the Skagit nation, closely related to the Songhees. Fornsby told how certain people acquired powers, sometimes hunting or fishing power, canoe-building, healing, gambling or protecting power. These powers were usually associated with animals, trees or natural forces, although in more recent times certain people acquired the spirit power of locomotives and steamships. Youths, male and female, often acquired their first spirit helper on a special quest for this purpose. Spirit helpers also made themselves known in dreams. Fornsby's power came from the river where he swam and from the lizard and snake. One of the most common ways he used to call forth his power was to sing.¹⁵

The first salmon caught in a season were ritualized and symbolically treated as an honoured guest, as were bear and deer when they were hunted. The reverence for food also extended to the inanimate: prayers were said before berry picking and the first berries were eaten after a ritual of thanks. The artist Paul Kane, visiting the Songhees in 1846, described a dance performed "both before and after any important action of the tribe, such as fishing, gathering camas, or going on a war party."¹⁶

While to the Salish, the land and sea-scape and all living things had a spiritual dimension, to the newcomers all of these could be measured precisely in three dimensions and recorded, drawn or mapped in two dimensions. Even humans could be rendered in a two dimensional form -- the newcomers seemed to have an insatiable desire to capture the people of the Pacific Northwest in this

Salish People, (Vancouver: Talon, 1977); other important material on the relationship of the larger group of Coast Salish people to the spirit world is found in Diamond Jenness, *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian* and in Collins, "Personal Narrative."

¹⁵ Collins, *Ibid*, p. 322; Suttles, *Economic Life*, pp. 327-331, 448; see also William W. Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives: Native Historical Accounts of a Coast Salish Culture*, (Seattle: University of Washington, 1993) pp. 165-98; Diamond Jenness, *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, (Victoria: B.C. Provincial Museum, 1986) p. 48.

¹⁶ Collins, "Personal Document," p. 296; Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, p. 150.

fashion. The only spiritual presence on the newcomer's horizon was that of their one God who had deputized the Europeans with dominion over all other living things -- including aboriginal people.

As vast as the gulf was between the two peoples, there were also bridges. Both organized their society along class lines, both had hierarchical systems of authority, and parallel ideas about the sexual division of labour.¹⁷ From their first meetings with the Spanish ships of Quimper, Galiano and Valdes, there was also a recognition of the mutual benefit of exchange. Both groups had surpluses and both had systems of property ownership that benefitted individuals who engaged in exchange.

The Europeans brought with them a "fee-simple" concept of property relations where ownership could be bought and sold; where the current owner was solely responsible for the management and disposal of the property and had exclusive control over the wealth derived from it. In the European social system, stress was placed on the importance of the accumulation, investment and hoarding of wealth as a route to increasing status and comfort.

The Songhees, in common with the other west-coast aboriginal peoples, had a more intricate system of property relations. It encompassed material goods as well as "spiritual property" and involved several different categories of "ownership".¹⁸ Valuable resource gathering sites like reef-net locations, seal-rocks, and camas beds were "owned" by extended families, not individuals. The family heads

¹⁷ The Songhees were divided into three classes according to Suttles, "good people" or nobles, from which the headmen would be drawn, "worthless people," or commoners, and slaves. Boas and Hill-Tout believed there were four classes, including a separate middle *nitcnanit* class, or parvenus, who were not of the nobility but had acquired considerable wealth. Wayne Suttles, "Private Knowledge, Morality and Social Classes among the Coast Salish" in Suttles, ed. *Coast Salish Essays*, (Seattle: University of Washington, 1987) pp. 3-14; Boas, "Lku'ñgen," p. 569; Charles Hill-Tout, *The Salish People*, p. 130.

¹⁸ The following section draws on Suttles, *Economic Life*, particularly 325-425, on his "Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes," pp. 3-14 and on Homer Barnett, "Culture Element Distributions: IX Gulf of Georgia Salish" University of California *Anthropological Records*, 1, 5, (1939).

stewarded and managed the use of resources. This was both a right, with benefits attached, and a responsibility. Ownership was inherited, not bought, and renewed by distribution at ceremonial feasts of the surpluses from the resource. Failure on the part of the family head to manage the resource productively, implied a loss of spiritual power and meant a loss of prestige; bad harvests, if protracted, could mean loss of position. As with the European system, stress was placed on the accumulation of wealth through exchange, but status (and ownership rights) was only obtainable in the Songhees' world by a ceremonial redistribution of that wealth.

Another level of ownership applied to the remaining territory, where no single family had particular claims. The Songhees owned this land in common. Clam beds were usually in this category as were hunting territories. All Songhees could hunt, gather on, and otherwise use, this land, as could members of other groups by permission.

A third level of ownership applied to some tangible and spiritual items, such as nets, weirs and other portable goods used at resource sites, as well as houses, canoes and regalia. These were family property, sometimes under the stewardship of the members of the family that assisted in their manufacture, and in other cases, under the head of the family. Ownership of these did not have to be renewed and could be bought, traded, or wagered.

Families also owned spiritual and knowledge "goods". These were passed from grandparent to grandchild and included the family genealogy, with its associations to the spirit world and to illustrious ancestors, a stock of names derived from these stories, as well as songs and dances that recounted them. This type of property was not normally bought or sold, but could be given.

Finally, individuals owned what we might call "private property". This included utensils of

everyday use, wealth goods held in preparation for distribution, and spiritual knowledge derived from personal visions. Slaves were included among the private property of those who could afford them. "Wealth included those articles which could be used as potlatch goods, articles which were acceptable in the payment of debts...articles which were consumption goods, but more or less luxury items...."¹⁹ This category of property most closely approximated the Europeans' "fee simple" concept. These goods could be traded, given as gifts, or gambled at the discretion of the owners. Husbands and wives held their property separately; usually at death a husband's property would be transferred to his sons; a wife's property to her daughters.²⁰

Although food was gathered by individuals, often from sites owned by families, it was subject to special regulations that acknowledged its connection to the spiritual world. Food was often described as *xe'xe* or "sacred".²¹ Certain foods, like the first salmon caught each season, had to be treated ritually and distributed accordingly.²² Food was shared with those who visited, with those who asked for it, or those who appeared to need it. Families could accumulate food for a feast but it could not be hoarded in times of want.

Wayne Suttles described the goods in the Straits Salish economy as circulating in two distinct but articulated economies. Food circulated in a "subsistence economy" where individual gatherers and heads of families had some, but not full control over its distribution. Other goods, including slaves owned by individuals and families circulated in a "wealth" or "prestige economy". The two economies functioned separately but were interconnected at various points. Food, which was relatively abundant was not normally directly convertible into wealth. Food was exchanged only for other food and could

¹⁹ Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 381.

²⁰ Barnett, *Coast Salish*, p. 250-1.

²¹ Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 50.

²² Erna Gunther, "A Further Analysis of the First Salmon Ceremony," *University of Washington Publications in Anthropology*, 2, 5 (1928).

only be converted into wealth indirectly; surplus food could be given as "gifts" to one's in-law for which they were bound to return wealth goods. Otherwise, surpluses of food were only convertible through the freeing up of labour to be dedicated to the production of wealth goods.²³

Before the introduction of exotic European goods on the Northwest Coast, the most important wealth goods among the Songhees were "blankets". These blankets, woven from cedar bark, dog wool and the wool of mountain goats traded from other nations had a prestige value that far exceeded their utility. Because of their value, portability, and divisibility, blankets also functioned as a medium of exchange.²⁴ Other wealth goods including slaves, canoes, elk-skin armour, weapons, regalia, and ornamental items such as cowrie and dentalia shells were also traded.²⁵

The Songhees economy and social structure were devoted to the production of surplus wealth goods for which the Salish had many uses. Gambling was a popular pastime and large sums were wagered. "They are so passionately fond of this [gambling game *lehállum*] that they frequently pass two or three consecutive days and nights at it without ceasing," reported Paul Kane who was at Fort Victoria when the Cowichans came to gamble with the Songhees. Gambling success was seen as a demonstration of special kind of spiritual power, and was often accompanied by songs to summon these spirits. An indication of the stakes that might be involved comes from John Fornsbey, who recounted a

²³ The strongest case for two separate but connected economies is in Suttles, "Affinal Ties, Subsistence and Prestige among the Coast Salish" in his *Coast Salish Essays*, 15-25; see also Homer Barnett, "The Nature of the Potlatch," in Tom McFeat, ed. *Indians of the North Pacific*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966) pp. 81-91.

²⁴ Haiqua shells were another medium of exchange, see Robert Galois and Richard Mackie, "A Curious Currency," *The Midden*, 22, 4&5 (October and December 1990) pp. 1-3, 6-9.

²⁵ Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 325; Barnett, *Coast Salish*, p. 257.

session in which his uncle wagered a canoe worth \$100 against a slave of his Snohomish competitor. "My uncle pretty near won the slave," he recalled, but in the end "he lost his canoe."²⁶

Goods, and later money, were also needed to purchase services from those with special powers. Fornsby paid the elder who gave him his adult name, t'sa'lwulq; when Fornsby came to Victoria to heal the Songhees Michael Cooper, he was paid for his services in goods. Boas heard from his Songhees informants that rich people often held a shaman on a sort of "retainer" to protect their welfare.²⁷

Patrick George, a Lummi Salish recalled that, even after the Europeans arrived, his people purchased certain "magic spells" to assist them in hunting, fishing, or in pursuit of a suitor: "It costs money to learn a [a spell] and it takes time. The young man comes and sits beside the old man who knows it. He pays each time and it may take a year to learn it....You might have to pay a hundred dollars, whether you've learned it or not."²⁸

Gifts were needed as well to pay those people whose job it was to prepare the cradle for newborn children, to perform different functions at potlatches, to prepare the dead for burial, to name only a few. Gifts were also given at winter spirit dances, according to the accounts collected by Paul Kane in 1846 and Boas in 1889, to mark the "coming out" of people announcing the acquisition of new powers gained on a spirit quest, to claim the right to use a prestigious ancestral name, or the right to

²⁶ Collins, "Personal Narrative," p. 304; Kane, *Adventures of an Artist*, p. 152; other observed noted blankets, canoes, horses watches, guns, ammunition, clothes, and slaves as gambling stakes, see Lynn Maranda, *Coast Salish Gambling Games*, (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, Mercury Series 93, 1984) pp. 26-7, 44-6.

²⁷ Boas, "Lku'ñgen," p. 569.

²⁸ Quoted in Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 384.

perform particular ritual dances and songs. Heavy payments were required to induct people into the prestigious secret societies and to pay compensation to others should they be offended.²⁹

The central feature of the prestige economy, and the most important reason for accumulating goods in Salish society was the potlatch complex. "Potlatch" is a "Chinook Jargon" word for a variety of ceremonies among west-coast aboriginal people which involve the distribution of gifts. Although all the west-coast nations and some of the British Columbia interior nations held potlatches, the nature of the events which comprised a potlatch and the occasions when they were held varied widely. For the Songhees and other Straits Salish, potlatches were held periodically to mark significant events, including marriage and the inheritance of rights such as those of the "head" of family. Potlatches might also be held to wipe away shame caused by oneself or one's family. Among the Songhees, potlatches were usually hosted by a number of families, each with its own event to memorialize.³⁰

Marriages were arranged between two families of similar social standing in different communities, and were cemented by an exchange of property, followed by a chain of reciprocal food and wealth exchanges. Several recorded Songhees stories emphasize the romantic attraction between young people which suggests an ideal of mutual attraction between the young people themselves prior to marriages being "arranged".³¹ Among commoners, marriage ceremonies were quite simple but higher status members of Straits Salish society staged elaborate wedding feasts. These were highly ritualized, diplomatic events which often served to establish or renew peaceful relations between two communities.

²⁹ Robert Brown, "On the Vegetable Products Used by the North-West American Indians...", *Transactions of the Botanical Society* (Edinburgh, 1868) p. 393; Collins, "Personal Narrative," pp. 319, 325; Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, pp. 149, 151; Boas, "The Lku'ñgen," pp. 570, 572, 575, 578-9; Suttles, *Economic Life*, pp. 492-4.

³⁰ Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays*, pp. 8, 17.

³¹ See the stories collected by Charles Hill Tout *The Salish People*, pp. 135-155 and those recorded by Robert Brown and printed in John Hayman ed., *Robert Brown and the Vancouver Island Exploring Expedition*, (Vancouver: UBC, 1989) pp. 179-196.

One such event tentatively dated in the late 1850s, involved the marriage of a Songhees "chief" waxo'1' to the Swinomish daughter of Chief Joseph. The relatives of the bride sent messengers to the Lummi, the Lower Skagit and the Upper Skagit in addition to the Songhees wedding party.³²

The guests arrived on the appointed day, singing their spirit-power songs. A *xadsa'tl* competition was held, involving two teams, one from the Lummi and the other from the Skagit nation, each trying pull members of the opposing team over a horizontal pole. Later, the guests were feasted, and the next day, gift giving began. The hosts had their blankets and other presents piled high on the roof of a house. They called the name of each of the special guests and as the guest came forward, the appropriate number of blankets were passed down. Then a raft was made between two canoes and piled high with gifts, in this case, blankets, caps, shirts, and guns, but on other occasions slaves too. This was a "free-for-all". When the raft was pushed about 20 feet off-shore the new couple began to throw the goods to the assembled people. The recipients held long poles and jostled each other as they extended the poles attempting to "catch" the goods as they were thrown towards shore:

They threw caps first. That was the first cap that came in. [The Swinomish] had never seen caps before. My father got one. The people got sticks to catch things. They threw them up so high that people could get them with their sticks. One man cut shirts up and gave each person a piece. The Indians here had never seen shirts before. They threw blankets. If four fellows caught the same blanket on their sticks, they tore the blanket into four pieces. Finally they got guns and threw them up to....The Skagits got their first guns and first blankets at that time. These were little blankets with marks on the end.³³

³² This description is from Collins, "Personal Narrative," pp. 302, 317, 320; Fornsby also described his own marriage (circa 1875), which was a simple affair between two "common people." Another marriage of a high ranking Songhees dated c. 1840-5 is described in Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, pp. 39-40; for a Songhees account of marriage that ended hostilities between the Squamish and the Songhees see Hill Tout, *Salish People*, p. 142; there is a description of prenuptial negotiations in Chapter 9.

³³ The blankets with marks on the ends are reference to the 'points' that the HBC used on blankets to mark their quality. Two and a half points was the standard although blankets have as many as four points. When Fornsby says that the Swinomish had never seen caps or shirts before he apparently means that they had never had caps or shirts before and may mean that these were not common, rather than unknown. Collins, "Personal Narrative," p. 309; a parallel description of a Songhees potlatch in 1873, from a non-aboriginal perspective can be found in J.D. Edgar, "A Potlatch Among Our West

In return for the gifts from the Songhees "chief" and his wife, sometime later the Swinomish went to Victoria and brought food gifts there.³⁴

The guests at a potlatch were, in a sense, paid to witness the ceremony and thereby acknowledge the legitimacy of the wedding, the inheritance, the name claimed, the erasing of shame, or other purpose of the potlatch. But the relationship was more complex, since, in accepting gifts the recipient was also accepting his/her own obligation to return a gift at a future potlatch of their own.³⁵ Barnett described the relationship this way:

Donor A at his potlatch might give twenty blankets to B. When B in turn gave a potlatch, he invited A and gave him any number that he wished, let us say fifty. This gift was called by a term signifying "thanks for coming to my potlatch." At the same time, but separately, so that the distinction was clear, B added twenty blankets which were in reality a repayment of A's twenty blankets....When A again gave a potlatch and called B's name, he would give any number he pleased, say twenty-five, and then add fifty more as a return of the fifty given him by B.³⁶

The most honourable thing a Songhees could do was to give away more wealth than any of his predecessors, leaving himself materially impoverished but socially enriched. Since, however, he knew his peers were accumulating property in an attempt to potlatch still greater amounts, the "chief" and his family had a powerful incentive to begin accumulating immediately, for their next potlatch occasion.

Coast Indians" *The Canadian Monthly and National Review* 6, 2 (August 1874) pp. 93-99.

³⁴ This may be the 'wedding ceremony' described by Wilson in 1858 in G.F.G. Stanley, ed. *Mapping the Frontier: Charles Wilson's Diaries...*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970) p. 29; Jenness describes a Songhees wedding as does Hill Tout, see BCARS, Ms. Diamond Jenness, "The Saanich Indians of Vancouver Island," pp. 83-4; Charles Hill-Tout, "Report on the Ethnology of the South-Eastern Tribes of Vancouver Island, B.C.," 1907 reprinted in Ralph Maud, ed. *The Salish People* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1978) vol. 4, pp. 132-4.

³⁵ This relationship between gift giver and receiver has been analyzed in detail in other social settings in C.A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press 1982) pp. 41-69.

³⁶ Barnett, *Coast Salish*, pp. 257-8.

In many respects, the incentives to accumulate were stronger among the Songhees than in the alien society that was establishing links with them in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Although not so highly stratified as north-coast aboriginal societies, even among the Songhees one's social rank was known with regard to other individuals and it was possible to "ratchet" one's social rank up one position at a time.

The *Lkungeneng* language of the Songhees reveals the emphasis on accumulation and distribution: the word for "leader", *siem*, also translates as "rich". The worst fault one could have in this society was to be *séxws^xw*, or lazy. Those consistently lazy, no matter what their class, were considered lower than the lowest-born.³⁷ The association of *siem* and rich makes sense in the context of Songhees society. Although individuals possessed wealth with which to pay for certain services and hold small potlatches, most productive resources were those owned by families and controlled by the heads of families.

The social relationships surrounding family-owned reef-net sites and camas beds bear special investigation because they loomed large in Songhees life and conditioned relationships with the European immigrants. The Songhees and other Straits Salish depended heavily on fish for subsistence but unlike their neighbours, had no major salmon rivers. To intercept the fish on their way to the Fraser and other spawning rivers the Straits Salish perfected a complicated technique of reef-netting. Songhees' families owned a dozen or more of these reef-net sites, most of them along the west shore of

³⁷ Mitchell, "A Dictionary of Songish," pp. 87, 89; Barnett, *Coast Salish*, pp. 141, 243-5, 248; Suttles, "Private Knowledge," pp. 6-9; this was a common sentiment on the northwest coast -- someone who was lazy and had to ask food from others was a "dried fish slave" among the Tlingit, see Frederica de Laguna, "Under Mount Saint Elias: The history and culture of the Kakutat Tlingit," *Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology* 7, (1972).

San Juan Island (see map I).³⁸ These were reefs located along the coastal migration route of the sockeye salmon, where the water was both shallow and the route for the fish constricted. Men wove elaborate nets each year with cord made by women, and during the sockeye run the net was suspended between two canoes at these special sites. When a school of salmon swam into the net, the floor was raised and the salmon lifted into the canoes.

Like most elements of Songhees life, the harvesting of food had a spiritual component inseparable from its material use. A specialist in ritual would advise and assist in making the net, and a hole, called a vulva, would be left in the net, though the Salish believed that no salmon would pass through it. Even the fishing camps were ritually constructed to mirror the fishing process: the crews of the two different canoes lived in separate structures with the fish-drying racks between them. New captains had to be specially invested, and wore a distinctive hat as a mark of their position. Songs were sung to lure the fish into the net and to thank the fish as they were being gathered. A ceremony was held to honour and thank the first sockeye salmon to be netted at each reef location.³⁹

Each reef-net site was owned by an extended family and managed by the *siem*. The owner might fish as captain of the reef-net crew or, among the Songhees, Boas reported that it was more common to "hire" a good fisherman who received in payment the catch of two days and a few blankets.⁴⁰ The crew of 6-14 men was "hired" by the *siem* from kin and non-kin within or without the Songhees who would feed them through the fishing season, as well as pay them with a share of the catch. The crew would start preparations in May: making the net, establishing the fishing camp, and

³⁸ The description of reef-netting is from Suttles, *Economic Life*, 152-222 and N. Alexander Easton, "The Archaeology of Straits Salish Reef Netting: Past and Future Research Strategies," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes*, 24, 2 (1990) pp. 161-177.

³⁹ Gunther, "A Further Analysis of the First Salmon Ceremony."

⁴⁰ Boas, "The Lku'ñgen" p. 568; Suttle's aboriginal informants used the word 'hire' to describe the engagement of captain and crew. Quote from Suttles, *Economic Life*, pp. 31; see also pp. 219, 485-9.

placing anchors, to be ready for the start of the sockeye salmon run in mid-July. According to most informants crew members would each take their shares of the catch first and then continue fishing for the owner, though Songhees Ned Williams reported that in his experience the crew would change every day, each taking a share and the owner getting the surplus.⁴¹

If it was a poor salmon season, the owner of the reef-net site might be impoverished since he had to feed the crew regardless of the catch. In good years the surplus, might however, be enormous. In 1892, when the fish runs had already started to come under pressure from commercial cannery fishing one observer noted:

When fish are running in good numbers ten to fifteen Indians form a crew for a reef net, and a haul can be made every minute or two if necessary. Some of the Indians are very expert at this kind of fishing and have taken as many as 2,000 salmon in a day. In such cases the clutchmen ["klootchmen" Chinook jargon for Indian women] come out with canoes and boat the fish ashore so that the operations of those engaged in fishing will not be interrupted.⁴²

Reef-net sites were not the only resource sites owned by families. Ownership extended to rich terrestrial locations as well. Although usually remembered as the "salmon people" the Straits Salish inhabiting Haro and Rosario straits and the straits of Juan de Fuca and Georgia, could just as accurately be called the "camas people". They had altered their environment to ensure regular and reliable crops of camas (*Camassia quamash* and *C. leichtlinii*), a flowering plant whose bulb provided the bulk of the

⁴¹ Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 221.

⁴² Collins, 1892 quoted in Boxberger, who accepts the estimate that, on average, the Straits Salish consumed just under 2 lbs of fish per day or 600 lbs per person per annum; estimating a normal daily catch to be 1,000 fish at 5 lbs per fish, the product of one day at one reef net would feed almost 9 people for a year, see Daniel L. Boxberger, *To Fish in Common: the Ethnohistory of Lummi Salmon Fishing*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1989) pp. 15-16; for another estimate that "under exceptionally favourable conditions...a single net may secure as many as 2,000 fish in a day" see Richard Rathbun, "A Review of the Fisheries in the Contiguous Waters of the State of Washington and British Columbia," *Report of the U.S Commissioner of Fisheries for 1899*, (Washington, 1900) p. 231.

starch in their diet. Prime camas patches were owned by the extended families. Father De Smet, a Jesuit missionary who spent years among the Salish, called camas "the queen root of this clime".⁴³

The Songhees established their villages along the southeast coast of Vancouver Island in a micro-climate which, although surrounded by inlets of the ocean, was the driest, sunniest property in the entire Pacific Northwest. The Songhees territory experienced moist cool winters, and warm, dry summers which meant only drought resistant trees and plants with bulbs survived. Many varieties of these bulbs were harvested and used by the Songhees but the camas was of primary importance in their diet. Sometimes called an "onion" by Europeans from its resemblance, the bulb of the camas has a sweet taste to it when steamed. Early *white* visitors to the Straits area commented on the aboriginal use of camas and usually commented favourably on the flavour.⁴⁴ Although naturally occurring, the camas was husbanded and cultivated by aboriginal women who harvested this crop in May-June when in flower and easily visible, separating out the *death camas* (*Zydaedenus venosus*) with its white flowers from the patches of edible camas with their blue flowers. This "weeding" and harvesting also served to loosen and aerate the soil and, at least among some groups of the Coast Salish, the seed would be broken from the stems and planted in the loose soil.⁴⁵ In order to maintain the open meadows necessary to the propagation of the camas, Songhees owners regularly burnt the prairies at the end of season: "Their object is to clear away the thick fern and underwood in order that the roots and fruits on which they in a measure subsist may grow more freely and be more easily dug up."⁴⁶

⁴³ Father P.J. De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels over the Rocky Mountains in 1845-46* (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847) p. 117; Suttles, *Economic Life*, pp. 58-63, 488-9.

⁴⁴ De Smet, *Oregon Missions*, p. 117; Charles Wilkes, *Life in Oregon Country Before the Emigration*, Richard Moore, ed. (Ashland, Oregon: Oregon Book Society, 1974) p. 45; Vancouver, *Voyage*, 262.

⁴⁵ Bernhard Stern, *The Lummi Indians of Northwest Washington*, (New York: Columbia, 1934) pp. 42-3.

⁴⁶ BCARS, A/B/20/G76, Report of the first colonial surveyor, W.C. Grant, "Report on Vancouver Island, 1849".

The best record of family ownership that we have for the camas beds dates from shortly after the establishment of the Colony of Vancouver Island.⁴⁷ In order to acquire formal title to the lands that he had occupied and to open up settlement for the newly established colony, Governor James Douglas, at the behest of the colonial office, signed individual treaties in 1850 with six family groupings that together comprised the Songhees: the Teechamitsa, Kosampson, Swengwhung, Chilcowitch, Whyomilth, and the Chekonein. Unlike his treaties with the Saanich Indians, where Douglas found it "impossible to discover among the numerous claimants the real owners", the Songhees people were quite clear in their meetings with Douglas, which groups had rights to particular pieces of land. (See Map II). The treaties recognized the prior ownership of each of these groups to a specific territory including the camas patches.⁴⁸

Ironically, it is almost certainly the open camas prairies, maintained by the Songhees' regular burning, that attracted European settlement to their territory.⁴⁹ When he first visited in 1842, Douglas called the site a "perfect Eden". To Douglas, the existence of such a place more resembling "the close sward of a well managed lea, than the produce of an uncultivated waste" was scarcely believable. But believe this he did, and because of this vast prairie, "nearly 6 miles square containing a great extent of valuable tillage and pasture land equally well adapted for the plough or for feeding stock," he chose the

⁴⁷ Mr. and Mrs. Tom James of the Songhees (Discovery Island) told Suttles in the 1940s that the camas beds around Victoria were open to anyone, but the evidence of the treaties and his other Salish informants suggest it more likely that the camas prairies and islands were 'owned' but that relations or others were permitted the use of them; Suttles, *Economic Life*, pp. 59-64.

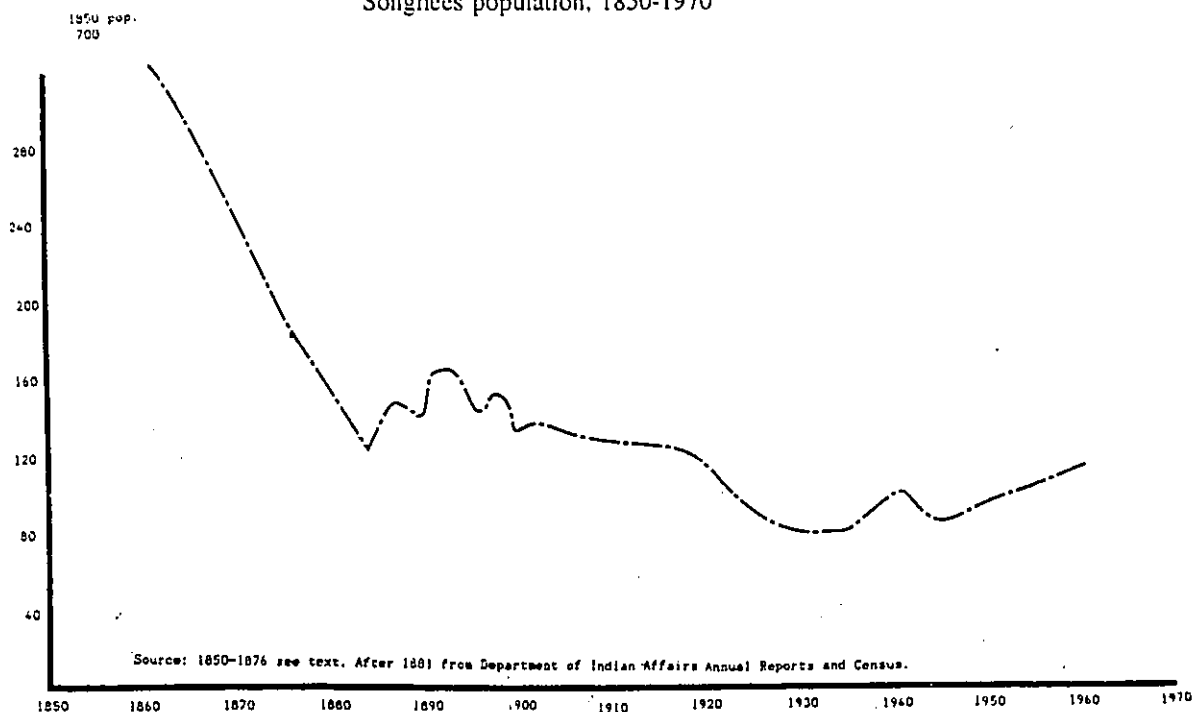
⁴⁸ Wilson Duff, "The Fort Victoria Treaties," *B.C. Studies*, 3, Fall 1969, pp. 8-9.

⁴⁹ All over the Straits area the first choice of European settlers was the cleared camas fields of the Salish, see Richard White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: the Shaping of Island County, Washington*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980).

site to build the future headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company and later the colonial and provincial capital of British Columbia.⁵⁰

In retrospect it is clear Douglas's Eden, was "Meeqan", as the local people knew it, one of the Pacific Northwest's prime camas "fields". Douglas *had* stumbled upon "a well managed lea" -- except the style of management and ownership was not one that he understood.

FIGURE VIII
Songhees population, 1850-1970



⁵⁰ James Douglas to James Hargrave February 1843 in G.P. de T. Glazebrook ed. *The Hargrave Correspondence*, (Toronto, 1938) pp. 420-1; James Douglas to John McLoughlin, July 12, 1842 printed in "The Founding of Fort Victoria" *The Beaver*, (March 1943) p. 4; Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1868, 1989) p. 42.

CHAPTER 6:
IN THE COMET'S WAKE

Saw a luminous streak in the heavens this evening, which lasted from dusk until 9 o'clock when the moon rose and obscured it...forming an arc of about 90 degrees....We cannot account for this phenomenon....

James Douglas, March 17th, 1843¹

The Indians suppose the stars to be little people and the region they live in to be much the same as this world down below. As one of the girls looked up at the little people twinkling overhead, one of them said to the other..."That's the little man to my liking; how I would like him for my lover!"....When the girls awoke in the morning it was in Starland, with their lovers by their sides....

Tomo, as related by Robert Brown, 1864²

In March and April of 1843 a brilliant comet, the most spectacular cosmic event of the century, stretched itself across half of the Songhees' night sky, and remained visible even during day.³ It first appeared on March 15, just as the first steamship on the Pacific Northwest dropped its anchor in Songhees territory, firing its cannons to call attention to itself.

It is impossible to know now what impression the coincidence of the comet and the arrival of the *Beaver* may have had on the Songhees. To the Coast Salish, the heavens were a world parallel to their own and the Songhees knew instances of the "star people" coming to earth as falling stars and taking up human form. Of course, by this time the Songhees had been in contact with Europeans for 50

¹ British Columbia Archives and Record Services (BCARS), A/B/40/D75.4A James Douglas, Diary of a Trip to Victoria March 1-21, 1843.

² This is a Songhees story as told by Tomo, a mixed blood and retold by Robert Brown, in John Hayman, ed. *Robert Brown and the Vancouver Island Exploration Expedition*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1989) pp. 179-80; Franz Boas also recorded this story in Franz Boas, *Indianische Sagen von den Nord-Pacifischen KÜste Amerikas*, (Berlin, 1895), translated in an unpublished manuscript at BCARS by Dietrich Bertz.

³ European observers declared this comet to have the longest tail ever observed; Fred L. Whipple, *The Mystery of Comets*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985) p. 84.

years and had, no doubt, sized them up as something other than heaven-sent. But, whether or not the coincidence of the two arrivals affected the reception of Douglas and his party, they signalled a new era in the social relations of the Songhees.

The fur traders were expecting the worst. Sir George Simpson had written the Governor and Committee, in March 1842, "there is a very large population of daring fierce and treacherous Indians on, and in the neighbourhood of the Southern Shore of Vancouver's Island...." Douglas, a little over a month before arriving to establish the post, wrote a friend that the aboriginal people whose land he was to occupy "are however numerous and daring having as yet lost no trait of their natural barbarity so that we will have both trouble and anxiety in the first course of training."⁴

But the anxiety was misplaced. The next morning canoes arrived from every side and surrounded the steamboat. "All shook hands, and the Chief, a young man about twenty years of age," escorted James Douglas, the senior HBC officer, Captain McNeil of the *Beaver* and Jean Baptiste Bolduc, a Catholic missionary, on a long walk "into the interior of the island" seeking the most favourable location to build the fort that would become the HBC's headquarters on the west coast, and ultimately, Victoria, the capital of a colony.⁵

On the third day after his arrival Douglas spoke to the "Samose" (Songhees):
...and informed them of our intention of building in this place which appeared to please them very much and they immediately offered their services in procuring pickets for the establishment, an offer which I gladly accepted and promised to pay them a blanket (2½) for every forty pickets of 22 feet by 36 inches which they bring.

⁴ Simpson quoted in "The Founding of Fort Victoria," *Beaver*, outfit 273 (March 1943) p. 3; James Douglas to James Hargrave, February 5, 1843 in G.P. de T. Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence 1821-1843*, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938) pp. 420-1.

⁵ Jean Baptiste Zacharie Bolduc, *Mission of the Columbia*, Edward J. Kowrach, ed. and trans.(Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1979) p. 107.

According to Douglas, the Songhees borrowed 14 axes and set about the work.⁶ Douglas's account is substantially confirmed by the letters of the missionary Bolduc. With the exception of Sunday, a day of rest, the missionary reported that nearly all the Songhees men "were working to cut stakes for the new fort". Unfortunately neither account mentions the means by which this transaction took place. The Songhees' language was quite different from the languages spoken around the other HBC forts; presumably the two conversed in Chinook.⁷

The construction of the fort resumed in earnest in June when the staff and effects of the just-closed northern forts Taku, Stikine and McLoughlin were delivered to the site of the new Fort Victoria. The Songhees continued supplying pickets, firewood and salmon, berries and other foodstuffs, all without any need for "training" or coercion.⁸

In light of the consequences for the Songhees, it seems ironic that they welcomed, and assisted with, the building of Fort Victoria. But in the context of the time, the history of the Songhees and the knowledge that was available to them, the welcome was consistent with the Songhees' own priorities.

For the Songhees, providing pickets and provisioning the fort only meant expanding activities they already engaged in. The main novelty was that, for the first time, the abundant food and forest

⁶ Douglas, *Diary of a Trip to Victoria*, March 1-21, 1843.

⁷ Douglas certainly spoke Chinook and Bolduc was in the process of acquiring the jargon; when Bolduc went to the Songhee's camp he was accompanied by a "Canadian" named Gobin, an interpreter. It is not clear whether Gobin translated Bolduc's French into Chinook or into a dialect of Straits Salish. See Bolduc, *Mission of the Columbia*, p. 93, 109.

⁸ The log of the HBC vessel *Camosun* from August and September records this employment. Printed in *Beaver*, March 1943, pp. 8-9. Douglas wrote to Simpson on November 16, 1843 that "the resources of the country in fish, are only known as yet through the supply procured in trade from the Natives, which was abundant after the arrival of the salmon in July, other kinds of fish were not regularly brought in, a proof of their being, either, less sought after or not so easily caught." H.B.C Archives D.5/9 printed in Lamb, "Founding of Fort Victoria" p. 90; BCARS, A/B/30/F49.1 Roderick Finlayson, "History of Vancouver Island the Northwest Coast" describes the construction of the fort.

resources were directly convertible into rare wealth goods. That the Songhees wanted to be paid in blankets was also not new. The Songhees already acknowledged blankets as wealth items; in the Songhees own economy, the blankets, made of the wool of dogs and mountain goats, were very difficult to make. The dogs had to be specially bred and isolated from other breeds and mountain goat wool was a rare commodity traded with the Squamish on the mainland. Once acquired, dog or mountain goat wool had to be cleaned, carded and spun and then woven on a warp of cedar fibre by women specially trained in these arts. In the hands of the Songhees, the trader's machine-woven woollen blankets were not the "trade goods" that they were to the HBC -- they were "potlatch goods" with all the associated prestige and spiritual qualities that were attached to the potlatch.

To build Fort Victoria, Douglas offered them one wool blanket of standard quality (2½ points) for 40 logs, 22 feet long and three feet in diameter, brought several miles. This event was not just an exchange, it was a transformative process that linked two value systems. The Songhees might easily have driven the traders away, as the Chilcotin did elsewhere but instead they accepted the offer. It allowed the Songhees to transform something of little value -- cedar trees were abundant in their territory -- for something rare. The HBC transformed relatively cheap goods for expensive labour and building materials.

The Fort was 150 yards square, so the palisade alone, (before the construction of any buildings) required 600 three foot wide pickets and therefore injected 15 blankets into the Songhees' economy; this was probably several times the normal, annual increment of hand-made blankets.⁹ Another measure of the relative value of the blanket to the Songhees was Bolduc's purchase of a canoe 42 feet long and three feet wide, with a six foot bow, capable of carrying 30 people, for four blankets. In this transaction the Songhees were in a good bargaining position relative to Bolduc, who needed

⁹ Bolduc, *Mission of the Columbia*, p. 110; BCARS, A/B/30/F49A Roderick Finlayson, "Biography."

transportation. It is hard to imagine they did not charge at least the going rate, and yet Bolduc also thought he made an excellent deal. I paid, he said, "the modest sum [in blankets] of seven and one-half piastres. I am certain a similar model could not be bought for less than ten pounds in Canada." When he engaged the "chief" of the Songhees "Tsamics" or "Tsumishs" and a crew of ten to take him to Whidbey Island, a trip which took two days each way, the price was one blanket.

These "negotiated" exchanges between the Songhees and the fur traders were accompanied by other exchanges that were not negotiated, and the latter produced friction. The fur trade records contain two incidents of open and general confrontation. The first of the conflicts arose from the different understanding property rights and agriculture practised by the two cultures. The traders used the very prairie where the Songhees had for generations cultivated their own root "vegetables", camas and lily bulbs, and grazed their cattle upon it. At first, not surprisingly, the Songhees people did not understand the newcomers' agricultural system, particularly animal husbandry in which the cattle devoured their food supplies. Furthermore, to the Songhees, cattle seem to have been considered game, like other such large mammals, and so were fairly "harvested".

The Songhees became pointedly aware of the sense of ownership the Europeans felt towards these oxen and horse in the spring of 1844 when the fort's chief factor, Roderick Finlayson, announced that "unless the cattle killed were paid for I would demolish all the [Songhees'] huts and drive them from the place" with his cannons. Initially the Songhees resisted the demands and with the help of their Cowichan neighbours laid seige to the fort. But after a demonstration in which an aboriginal house was destroyed with one cannon shot the Songhees opted to pay restitution. Secure in their fort, with its bastions and cannons, the fur traders had introduced the Songhees to the new regime of property relations. In the words of the chief factor, they "learned that it was wisest to be submissive and we made farmers and bull drivers of them."¹⁰

¹⁰ Finlayson, "History of Vancouver Island."

The next incident revealed a further incentive the Songhees may have had for welcoming the fur traders into their territory in the first place: the Songhees apparently expected to maintain their right to control access to their territory. By preventing other groups from trading directly with the fort, the Songhees would have become "middlemen" and profited from both ends of the exchange. Attempting to control access to the fort was a policy followed by other aboriginal people throughout what is now British Columbia.

The desire to control this trade is consistent with the Songhees' abandonment of their previous village sites over 1843-44, one at Swhaymaltheith (Esquimalt Harbour) and the other, the main village at Sungayka (Cadboro Bay) to a site immediately adjacent the new fort.¹¹ Finlayson recalled that during the construction of the fort a large number of Songhees men camped around them, and looked on; after that "the natives for some time after our arrival kept aloof and would not come near....however soon got rid of their shyness began to remove from their village at Cadboro Bay and erect houses for themselves along the bank of the harbour." Sometime, thereafter, probably in 1844, the wood behind the Indian village caught fire and threatened the fort. Finlayson used this as his rationale "to remove them to the other side of the harbor, which at first they declined to do, saying that the land was theirs...." After "a great deal of angry parlaying" the Songhees agreed to move to a point 400 yards across the harbour if Finlayson and his men would assist them.¹²

From their locations on the harbour the Songhees were in a better position to police their monopoly. When the Bellingham Bay Salish came to trade in 1845, the Songhees allowed them in, but robbed them of their newly traded goods as they left the harbour. Having the Songhees control the

¹¹ The concentration of most Songhees at these two sites was itself a recent adaption. Previously, each of the Songhees family groups had occupied its own winter village, Wilson Duff, "The Fort Victoria Treaties," *B.C. Studies*, 3, Fall 1969, 3-57.

¹² Finlayson, "Biography," and "History of Vancouver Island."

trade was antithetical to the HBC. Finlayson decided that "this was a clear case in which I was bound to interfere to protect the friendly Indians coming to trade with us." Finlayson's account of this incident is interesting for how it differs from another observer's. Finlayson recalls sending "his interpreter" to get the Songhees "to restore the goods they took from these friendly Indians, as otherwise I would have to take action on their behalf...." After considering the matter "these robbers came to the fort and delivered up the goods." In Finlayson's words, "...thus these wild savages were taught to respect British justice."¹³ A different explanation for the free passage granted other aboriginal groups is offered by Berthold Seemann, who visited the fort in 1846, and noted that "Certain supplies to the chiefs keep them in good humour with their intruding visitors."¹⁴ James Deans, who did not arrive at Fort Victoria until 1853, offered a perspective that supports Seemann's earlier conclusion:

the celebrated King Freezy chief of the Songhish tribe, was completely under the control of the Hudson Bay Company to whom he rendered himself valuable by being at all times ready in consideration of a small donation of blankets etc... to exert his authority in quelling any disturbance that broke out or was impending among his subjects. He also possessed considerable influence over surrounding tribes and was frequently in the service to the company in staying hostilities among them.¹⁵

When, in 1847, the Songhees assisted the company by "taking up arms against a body of Cape Flattery Indians, who threatened to attack the Fort in retaliation for a whipping of one of their number," Douglas interpreted this as "convincing proof" of their loyalty to the company. For their part, the Songhees may well have been using the opportunity to re-establish a measure of control over their own territory and to establish themselves as intermediaries between the fort and the Makah of Cape Flattery;

¹³ Finlayson, "Biography"; in his "History of Vancouver Island" Finlayson says the visitors were from Whidbey Island.

¹⁴ Berthold Seemann, *Narrative of the Voyage of HMS Herald During the Years 1845-51*, (London: Reeve and Co. 1853).

¹⁵ BCARS, E/B/D342, James Deans, "Settlement of Vancouver Island," 1878.

on the other hand, they may have expected to be financially rewarded, as Deans suggested, from assisting the traders.¹⁶

While the HBC began to refer to the Songhees as "our Indians," the Songhees seem to have regarded the traders in terms that might be understood as "our whites." Whereas their previous village at Cadboro Bay had been pallisaded, the new Songhees village on the Victoria harbour was not. The Europeans, within their barricades were evidently more afraid of the Songhees than the reverse. The Songhees probably saw the HBC fort as their protection against attacks of Northern peoples, against whom their previous village had been fortified.

The move from their former village sites to Victoria harbour is consistent with another reason the Songhees had for accepting the fort, access to employment. Henry Charles, an elder of modern day Beecher Bay Band, told Wayne Suttles his people were Clallams from across the Strait of Juan de Fuca who "moved over to Victoria when the whites came in order to make shingles and plant potatoes for them." Later when the young people started drinking, the Clallams moved some distance away, to Witty's Beach and then to Beecher Bay.¹⁷

For the Songhees, work for pay in goods was not dissimilar from working for a share of the catch at the reef nets. After the fort was built, the Chief Factor Finlayson wrote that he employed his men to clear the land around the fort to raise vegetables and cereals.¹⁸ "Gradually," Finlayson recalled,

¹⁶ Finlayson, "History of Vancouver Island" and "Biography;" Douglas to Governor and Committee November 6, 1847 in Hartwell Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters 1846-1851* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1979) p. 16.

¹⁷ Suttles, *Economic Life*, 11; when Paul Kane visited the Fort in 1847 he called the local people Clallams, not Songhees, his confusion may stem from the temporary combination of these two peoples.

¹⁸ The plains that had first attracted Douglas turned out to be unsuitable for farming, they were too dry and the soil too shallow.

"we got some of the young natives to assist, paying them in goods, and found them very useful as ox drivers in ploughing the land." By 1847 "some of these wild Indians" were also employed as assistant dairymen carters, and sheep shearers. As herdsmen, their new duties included protecting the cattle from other aboriginal groups that had not yet accepted the immigrants' concept of cattle ownership.¹⁹

Walter Colquhoun Grant, the first surveyor, employed aboriginal labour at his farm and in his surveys along the south coast of the Island and reported "those who are able to work are all anxious to be employed."²⁰ The Songhees were also hired as canoe-express men transporting mail and passengers between Forts Victoria and Nisqually.

The HBC officials, in particular, were most interested in the availability and quality of the local labour supply. At other posts, the journals often commented about the unwillingness of aboriginal people to work. This lends some credibility to a HBC deputy governor's assessment that the Songhees were "very well disposed, and seem more inclined to agriculture than most I have seen. They raise a good many potatoes on their own account, and are always willing to work for the company."²¹

After 1849 and the establishment of the Colony of Vancouver Island with its capital at Fort Victoria, the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, a subsidiary of the HBC, established four farms around Fort Victoria and "a force of men and Indians were employed to clear land and cultivate it...." Finlayson recalled: "[Aboriginal] Labour was cheap in those days hence the facility with which those operations were carried out." The actual numbers of Songhees hired by the traders is rarely recorded,

¹⁹ Finlayson, "History of Vancouver Island,"; W.F. Tolmie, "Utilization of the Indians," *The Resources of British Columbia*, 1/12 (February 1, 1884) p. 7.

²⁰ Finlayson, "Biography"; BCARS, James Douglas to W.F. Tolmie, August 13 1857, Country letter book, p.171; Tolmie, "Utilization of the Indians," p. 7; BCARS, W.C. Grant, A/B/20/G76, Report on Vancouver Island, 1849.

²¹ Eden Colville to Sir George Simpson, October 15, 1849 in Rich, *London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colville*, p. 181.

but in April 1851, before large numbers of other aboriginal groups began migrating to the fort, Douglas reported "about 100 Indians employed in clearing Brush and trees and bringing new land into cultivation." James Douglas, who succeeded Finlayson as chief factor, repeatedly remarked on the use of aboriginal people as "rough carpenters" who built or helped build many of the early structures, including his own house. The company's doctor also noted that "the Indians at this time made shingles" which they sold to the new colonists for their roofs.²²

In addition to performing farm, clearing and construction labour, the Songhees provided the fort with the majority of its food requirements. The Fort Victoria Journals, which survive from 1846 to 1850 show the Songhees to be the fort's largest trading partner. Unlike other nations which brought furs or oil, the Songhees traded primarily in food. In 1849 alone, the fort salted 500 barrels of salmon and "We could not take one half of the fish brought in by the Indians for sale," Douglas reported. Surveyor Grant gave another example of the extent of the provision trade in 1851: "On one day a few canoes brought as many as 3000 salmon to trade."²³ The Songhees also supplied the fort and growing community with potatoes, clams, oysters, lathes and baskets.²⁴

²² See for examples Douglas to Barclay, September 1 1850, Douglas to Barclay April 16 1851 in Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters* pp. 17, 115, 170, 174; Smith, *Reminiscences*, p. 127; Finlayson, "Biography,"; when Kane was at Fort Victoria in 1847 he saw 40 Songhees with ten non-aboriginal people building a new warehouse, Kane, *Wandering of an Artist*, p. 145.

²³ He added though that "the only fisherman as yet being Indians their supplies are precarious and uncertain." suggesting perhaps that aboriginal people used provisions as a lever in their disputes with the immigrants. The estimate is quite plausible given the estimates by Collins and Rathbun, quoted in Chapter 5, that a single net could catch 2,000 salmon a day; see W.C. Grant to Brodie, August 8, 1851, in J.E. Hendrickson, ed. "Two Letters from Walter Colquhoun Grant," *BC Studies*, 26 (Summer 1975) p. 12.

²⁴ Douglas to Governor and Committee, October 27 1849, in Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters*, p. 63. Cairn Crockford has quantitatively evaluated the trade at Fort Victoria in "Fort Victoria Journals" unpublished paper presented to Columbia Department Fur Trade Conference, Victoria B.C. October 1-3, 1993.

The Songhees became still more valuable to the company after 1849 when the discovery of gold in California induced large numbers of non-aboriginal company employees to desert. In the spring of that year, Finlayson acknowledged, "even our ships were left with insufficient crews. This state of affairs was partly remedied by employing Indians on board in the Coast shipping..." and by employing "Indians" to replace the labourers on the land. Songhees workers were not only available and eager for work, they were also a bargain compared to non-aboriginal labour. When, in 1853, aboriginal labourers were paid \$8 a month, *white* labourers could not "be procured under the rate of \$2 and \$2½ dollars a day so that we cannot afford to employ them on public works."²⁵

When the Songhees welcomed the European fur traders, they were inviting them into an existing set of social relations. The particular history of the Songhees, and their systems of labour subordination meant that the exchange relationships that developed at Fort Victoria differed from those in other parts of the Pacific Northwest. The Songhees, like most nations on the coast used slaves to do menial work for their owners. But the Songhees labour-hiring practices at reef-net sites was shared only by their immediate Straits-Salish neighbours.

Slavery was the fate of captives taken in inter-village raiding and was a long-standing way of organizing labour among the Coast Salish, and more generally among the people of the west coast. Once captured, slaves were often traded to distant groups to make escape more difficult. They might also be "acquired" through procreation, as slaves' children inherited their parents' status.²⁶ In addition to being bought and sold, slaves might also been won as a gambling wager, or received as a "gift" in the context of potlatches.²⁷

²⁵ Finlayson, "Biography," p. 16; Finlayson, "History of Vancouver Island," pp. 35-6; BCARS, A/C/20Vi2A Douglas Letters to the Hudson's Bay Company of August 26, 1853.

²⁶ Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 305-6; Barnett, *Culture Element Distribution*, p. 267; Collins, "Personal Narrative," p. 303.

²⁷ A female slave was given to one of the participants in an 1863 potlatch in the Songhees village, according to Matthew MacFie, *Vancouver Island*, p. 431.

In Songhees society slaves were the single most valuable items of property. Although they laboured for their owners, they also had a value in the prestige attributed to those who could afford slaves. A rich Songhees *siem* might have had two or three slaves, but most people had none. Although owners held the slave's right to life, under normal circumstances the ethnographic evidence suggests that they were rarely abused by their owners, with whom they shared the same house and ate the same food.²⁸

The aboriginal people visiting different HBC forts thought the day to day treatment of slaves was not that different, it would seem, from the HBC's treatment of its employees. The Nishga who visited Fort Simpson and the Chinook at Fort Vancouver, observed how employees were subject to harsh and sometimes arbitrary discipline. The "servants" as the HBC called its employees, performed all the hard physical labour and lived in poverty compared to the "officers". This looked like slave/owner relationship to these aboriginal people, who offered at different times to buy one of the Bay men. Fur trader William Tolmie recalled that free "Tshinooks of the Lower Columbia and the Indians thence to Puget Sound would not work for new-comers, any individual so-doing being reproached as placing himself on the level of a slave." The same was evidently true of upper class Nishga from the north.²⁹

The Coast Salish also found that they could transform their slave's labour into wealth by renting them to the Europeans. The Songhees *siem*, *ci'lem*, rented or sold a Twana captive named Peter Solomon to the fur traders in the mid-1840s. When emissaries from the Twana came to Fort Victoria,

²⁸ Paul Kane saw a Songhees slave killed by her owner in 1846, Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, p. 149; for a general description of slavery see Donald H. Mitchell, "Predatory Warfare, Social Status and the North Pacific Slave Trade," *Ethnology*, 23, 1 (1984) pp. 39-48; and Mitchell and Leland Donald, "Some Economic Aspects of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian Slavery," in *Research in Economic Anthropology*, 7 (1985) pp. 19-35.

²⁹ Tolmie, "Utilization of the Indians" p. 7; Stephen A. McNeary, "When Fire Came Down: Social and Economic Life of the Niska," (Bryn Mawr College, unpublished Ph.D., 1976) p. 382.

their recollection is that they were told by the traders: "Oh no, this is a good boy. We want him here working for us. He says he does not want to go home and when he does we'll take him back. He wants to stay here and work for us and we'll pay him." The Twana were apparently satisfied by this explanation but to smooth over relations, the HEC gave each Twana a blanket and the group was given two boxes of biscuits.³⁰

Despite the fur traders statement to the Twana that they would have no more slaves working for them, many of the commodities purchased by the fort must have been gathered and manufactured in part or in total by slaves.³¹ Certainly, as late as 1860 some of the Salish made "a great deal of money by sending their slaves to work for the whites, and appropriating their wages. A Chilukweyuk Indian, whose slave was employed for several months by the [Boundary] Commission pocketed a large sum of money in this way the money was of course paid to the slave, but his master was always near at hand on pay-day to look after the dollars."³²

In other parts of the coast it took a decade or more before local aboriginal willingly worked for wages. The Songhees took up paid work within days of the fur-trader's arrival. Bolduc reported that "all the men" cut pickets for the fort. It seems likely that the reef-net production system meant that

³⁰ Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, pp. 61-3.

³¹ Louie Pilkey, remembered that the Saanich Chief, 'Lesceum' had ten slaves whom he put to work raising potatoes for sale to the whites, in Suttles, *Economic Lives*, p. 305; Charles Jones reports that his grandfather, a Nuu-chah-nulth from Port San Juan had 16 slaves, each costing 600-700 blankets, engaged in the manufacture of dog fish oil. Five male slaves fished while the six female slaves dressed and rendered the fish. The remaining slaves shuttled Jones' grandfather and canoe loaded with barrels of oil to and from Victoria, Jones, *Questo*, p. 27.

³² Captain Wilson, "Report on the Indian Tribes inhabiting the country in the vicinity of the 49th Parallel of North Latitude," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, N.S. v. 14 (1866) p. 290.

there was a previous history of labour subordination separate from slavery, and therefore a willingness to work for pay at an earlier date than, for example, the Chinooks or Tsimshians.³³

At the other end of the Songhees social scale from slaves were *siem*, the heads of extended families. *Siem*, or "chiefs" as the newcomers usually called them³⁴, held the privilege (and obligations) of managing the most important harvesting sites and organizing the labour.

When the Beaver arrived laden with new work opportunities, the Songhees' *siems*, accordingly, organized and supervised the labourers. Father Bolduc wrote of his experience hiring Songhees workers: "I engaged Tsamies...who is chief of the tribe to conduct me to Whidbey Island....I gave him a blanket on the condition that he give me ten men for a crew."³⁵ In 1855, when James Douglas wanted to ensure an orderly process of hiring aboriginal workers, he "called the chiefs together...exacted a pledge for the good behaviour of their respective tribes" and gave them permission to hire their people out as labourers.³⁶ Similarly, at other locations along the coast, the *siem* were labour brokers for their extended families.³⁷

³³ Tolmie, "Utilization of the Indians," p. 7; Bolduc, *Mission of the Columbia*, p. 110.

³⁴ After 1876 "Chief" acquires a legal meaning defined by the Indian Act.

³⁵ Bolduc, *Mission of the Columbia*, p. 110.

³⁶ CO 305/6, 10048, Douglas to Lord Russell, August 21 1855.

³⁷ For example the Fort Rupert journals record that chiefs were paid at the same rate as labourers, to 'supervise'. Sealing schooners would negotiate with chiefs to bring a whole crew from a single village. CO 305/6, 10048, Douglas to Lord Russell, August 21 1855; Fort Rupert Post Journal, November 22, 1849 quoted in Burrill, "Class Conflict," 34; for sealing see Crockford, "Changing Economic Activities of the Nuu-cháh-nulth," p. 58.

The brokerage system worked well for the HBC in the early years of the fort when it was not unusual to have 40 to 100 people working on a single project, building or clearing land.³⁸ The system also worked for the *siem* who maintained control over access to the new wealth goods. In addition to arranging labour for the fort the *siem* were also provisioning it, by intensifying their workers' reef- and duck-netting and converting this food into wealth.

At the same time, the Songhees system of property rights allowed for the harvest of such food resources as deer, clams, and oysters by whomever gathered them, *siem* and commoners alike. This part of the provision trade enabled individuals to accumulate wealth independent of the hereditary chiefs. The potential to circumvent the chiefs' near-monopoly on accumulating surplus wealth increased with settlement and the growing number of potential employers.³⁹ The ability of the *siem* to marshal the main resources was further weakened by the settlers' appropriation of many of their resource sites.

In some cases the appropriation of Songhees land was without any form of compensation, as when the traders grazed cattle on the camas patches. But in 1850 Governor Douglas moved to formalize the acquisition of Songhees "whose land we occupy" by a treaty. Douglas wrote that he:

summoned to a conference, the chiefs and influential men of the Songhees tribe....After considerable discussion it was arranged that the whole of their lands, forming...the District of Victoria, should be sold to the Company, with the exception of Village sites and enclosed fields, for a certain remuneration, to be paid at once to each member of

³⁸ Douglas to Governor and Committee, April 16, 1851 in Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters*, p. 17; Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, p. 145.

³⁹ Dick, J.D. Helmcken's servant, who was paid two blankets and a shirt per month, probably hired himself out, and owned his pay as personal property. Certainly, the diary of Arthur Clah, who came to Victoria from Port Simpson in the late 1850s, shows he hired himself out. Galois, "Arthur Wellington Clah;" Smith, *Reminiscences*, p. 131; examinations of other west coast aboriginal groups have also suggested that the rise of wage labour coincided with the declining power of chiefs, Hudson, "Traplines and Timber," p. 86; McNeary, "When Fire Came Down," p. 197.

the Tribe. I was in favour of a series of payments to be paid annually but the proposal was so generally disliked that I yielded to their wishes and paid the sum at once.⁴⁰

Though it is not clear what the Songhees made of this proposition, according to Douglas they exchanged their land for a sum of three blankets for each male head of family, with additional blankets to the "chiefs". In total the Songhees sold their land for 371 blankets and a cap. The question of whether the Songhees understood the nature of the exchange proposed to them, comes immediately to mind, particularly given the different systems of property relations at work in the different societies. The language in which the transactions took place was not noted, and in any case, in the translation from one to the other, there was certainly room for the transformation of meanings. Within three weeks of making the treaty Douglas wrote to the HBC:

I informed the natives that they would not be disturbed in the possession of their Village sites and enclosed fields, which are of small extent, and that they were at liberty to hunt over the unoccupied lands, and to carry on their fisheries with the same freedom as when they were the sole occupants of the country.⁴¹

We will never know what the Songhees understood then by the agreement but it is not inconceivable that they had an approximate understanding of the terms and bargained hard for payment. The treaty guaranteed them their village sites and fields which were threatened by encroachment. They were guaranteed fishing rights, and fishing was the mainstay of their subsistence economy as well as a new route through supplying the fort with fish. Moreover, most of the Songhees fishing sites were off San Juan Island, across Haro Strait and were unaffected by the treaty. They were guaranteed hunting, and it would seem, gathering, rights on all "unoccupied" lands. Even the most prescient among the

⁴⁰ Douglas to the Governor and Committee, November 6, 1847 and Douglas to Archibald Barclay, September 3, 1849 in Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters*, pp. 16, 39.

⁴¹ In fact the formal text for these treaties was supplied some time after the agreement with the Songhees from a New Zealand treaty with the Maori. It was and copied onto the page above the names of the Songhees men and their "X's" added so the precise words in the treaty could not have been read to the Songhees, however the written treaty closely follows the statements in Douglas's letter. See BCARS, A/C/Vi2, "Fort Victoria Correspondence Outward to the Hudson's Bay Company..." May 16, 1850; Duff, "Fort Victoria Treaties;" Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics*, pp. 17-25.

Songhees, or fur traders, in 1850 would have had a hard time imagining the extent of "occupation" that would prevail 40 or 50 years later. Probably the Songhees thought they were being compensated for the lands, and particularly the camas patches, that had already been occupied. Since this land had been taken, and it did not look like the Songhees could get it back, some payment was probably accepted as better than none.

Moreover, the formal declaration of ownership of the land by Douglas mirrored the form of a potlatch -- a public ceremony where rights were proclaimed and gifts distributed. Each individual was called by name, given his gifts, and the gifts took the form of the potlatch standard -- the Hudson Bay blanket. It is easy to trivialize this exchange from a present day perspective, but the blankets received were, as we have seen, a princely sum in the economy of the Songhees. This new concentration of wealth goods among the Songhees was probably unprecedented.

In the days and months following, Douglas signed treaties with the Saanich bands to the north of the Songhees, with the Clallam and Sooke bands to the west, the Nanaimo and the Fort Rupert Kwakwaka'wakw. Whatever it was that the aboriginal people thought they were agreeing to, they did it willingly. The Cowichans even sought out and asked Douglas to sign a treaty with them, an invitation which Douglas declined, saying that no *whites* wanted to settle there yet, so the land was not needed.

How did this payment for land, work and the resulting infusion hundreds of blankets and shirts affect Songhees society? Not in the way many *white* authorities expected. Botanist and amateur ethnologist Robert Brown remarked in the 1860s: "I had often commiserated a poor-looking man lounging about, his only covering a threadbare tattered blanket, and on inquiry be surprised to learn that he was one of the wealthiest men in the tribe, and had several hundred blankets stored up in air tight

boxes, of native manufacture, in his lodge."⁴² Visiting the Songhees Reserve in 1866, Bishop Hills remarked: "It is surprising to find how much property is often possessed by Indians. Though naked almost as to their attire Indians will often possess several hundred pounds worth of blankets."⁴³ Brown added "The chiefs are under the necessity of frequently giving these *potlatches* in order to preserve their popularity...and accordingly we generally find these dignitaries about the poorest men in the tribe.":

These coast Indians are very avaricious in the acquisition of property....Though muskets, canoes etc...are all carefully collected, yet most of these articles owe their acquisition to blankets, and an Indian, in describing the wealth of another, will indicate this by telling how many *peessie* (or blankets) he has. This hoarding up of blankets is the engrossing passion of these people....⁴⁴

Blankets in the hands of the Songhees were transformed from utilitarian covers of non-aboriginal society and a form of payment for land and labour, to measures of wealth and status. Most likely, the treaty payment of 1850 was the main source of gifts for the potlatch hosted by the Songhees three years later. This a potlatch brought 2,000 guests to their village and was probably the largest event of its kind ever to have taken place among the Songhees or their neighbours.⁴⁵ In this context it is obvious why the Songhees rejected Douglas's proposed annual annuity -- the wealth had to be concentrated to have the most effect.

Albert Westly, a Nanaimo who potlatched with the Songhees, observed that "in the days before the white man came, fifty blankets or fifty goat skins were a tremendous accumulation, and very few men even amassed so many." When an appropriate sum was finally accumulated, a few guests from one

⁴² Brown, *Robert Brown*, p. 158-9.

⁴³ Bishop Hills' Diary, June 3, 1866.

⁴⁴ Brown in *Robert Brown*, p. 158.

⁴⁵ CO 305/4 No, 9 p. 89. Douglas to Newcastle, October 24th, 1853.

or two villages would be invited to potlatch. Subsequently, however, "Hudson's Bay blankets were bought in bales of fifty and distributed by tens and twenties."⁴⁶

While documentation of Songhees potlatches is rare and fragmentary, the events themselves were, by those rare accounts, increasingly frequent, and grand. Artist Paul Kane was told of a potlatch that occurred prior to his visit in 1846, and added that such events, hosted by the Songhees or their neighbours, took place every three or four years. Already by 1846, HBC blankets were the main currency in which potlatches were measured. In the feast described by Kane, 12 bales -- 600 blankets, were distributed.⁴⁷

John Fornsby was at a wedding potlatch hosted by the Songhees in the late 1850s in Puget Sound, and mentions a return potlatch at the Songhees village a short time later. This may have been the same potlatch described by Wilson, in 1859 when he watched as several Songhees "chiefs" *each* "gave away between 3 & 400 blankets"; MacFie, in 1863, describes the gifts as "cotton cloth by the hundreds of yards, blankets to the value of hundreds of pounds" and described these potlatches as annual events.⁴⁸ By good fortune, the newcomers triggered a tremendous inflationary spiral in the Songhees' prestige economy, and it guaranteed them an eager labour force.

At another potlatch photographed sometime between 1867 and 1870, F. Dally noted "bales of blankets and \$1500 were given away". In 1873 "the grandest affair of that kind that has been held upon

⁴⁶ Quoted in Barnett, *Coast Salish*, p. 256.

⁴⁷ The potlatch Kane was describing may be the same one mentioned by Frank Allen as having taken place ca. 1840-45 in Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, pp. 39-41; Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, p. 145.

⁴⁸ Collins, "Personal Narrative," p. 309; Charles Wilson, *Mapping the Frontier: Charles Wilson's Diary of the Survey of the 49th Parallel, 1858-1862...* G.F.G. Stanley, ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970) p. 74; McFie, *Vancouver Island*, p. 431.

Vancouver Island for many years, came off...at Victoria" hosted by Chief Scomiach of the Songhees. Scomiach personally distributed over \$1,000 in blankets to the 2,000 assembled, and the total value of goods given away by all the families participating amounted to \$8,000-\$10,000 during the week.⁴⁹ Three years later, at a potlatch given by the neighbouring Saanich people the Indian Superintendent saw "three members of one family (brothers) give away 3,500 blankets, no doubt the savings of many years.... Goods to the value of \$15,400 were distributed ere the affair ended".⁵⁰

Although, the late 1850s to 1880s was a catastrophic time of population decline for the Songhees, yet the potlatches not only persisted, but increased in their frequency and in the wealth distributed. In fact, the high death rate may have contributed to the frequency; with more deaths, more potlatches were required to mark the inheritance of ownership and leadership, and the names and privileges that went with it. That commoners could also now accumulate wealth in the wage-labour system added to the inflation. George Mitchell, of the Comox Salish who potlatched the Songhees, noted that in prior times only people with special powers could "hold the people". Now even "clam diggers," as he called poor men, could do it.⁵¹

The early capitalist economy fit well into the existing Songhees system. Much of the new work requiring many labourers -- agriculture, fishing and later fish canning -- was seasonal, with heavy

⁴⁹ Wilson, *Mapping the Frontier*, p. 74; Royal British Columbia Museum, F. Dally, Album #5, p. 3; McFie, *Vancouver Island*, 430-1; Edgar, "A Potlatch Among our West Coast Indians" p. 97; an 1872 potlatch on the Songhees reserve was photographed by Richard Maynard, photos at BCARS, PN 6810.

⁵⁰ McFie, *Vancouver Island*, pp. 430-1; Dr. W. W. Walkem, describes one day of yet another potlatch that occurred in 1875 on a Saanich Reserve where he saw 500 sacks of flour, 200 Hudson's Bay blankets and 8 goat's wool hand-made blankets distributed; W.W. Walkem, *Stories of Early British Columbia*, (Vancouver: News Advertiser, 1914) pp. 114-115; I.W. Powell, in Cda. S.P. 1877, pp. 32-4.

⁵¹ Quoted in Barnett, *Coast Salish*, p. 257; hosting potlatches spread from the upper class to commoners in other west coast societies around the same time: for Kwakwaka'wakw see G.M. Dawson, "Notes and Observations on the Kwakwaka'wakw People of Vancouver Island and Adjacent Coasts made during the summer of 1885," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Section 2, (1887) p. 17; for the Tsimshian see Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, p. 126.

demands in the summer and fall. There was only a slight demand for labour in the winter, the main potlatch-ceremonial season, so it was possible for the Songhees to participate fully in both economies. Even in year-round industries, the Songhees often worked until they had accumulated the sums required for potlatch goods, then quit. In 1883, I.W. Powell described the difficulty of keeping deck hands in the winter, despite the high (\$50) monthly wage.⁵² The work visits from up-coast nations to Victoria were also timed to allow both the gathering of subsistence foods and participation in winter ceremonial activities. Evidence suggests that the reason why so many Songhees participated in the capitalist economy was so that they could more fully participate in their own.

Few non-aboriginal immigrants could reconcile the motivations that led aboriginal people into the work force with their own work ethic. Indian Agent, James Lenihan, in recounting his experience with a Salish band in the Fraser valley, expressed the general confusion among the newcomers about Salish economic motivations:

The Indians generally have views peculiar to the country as to the value of money. One band, numbering about fifteen families, applied to me in the spring for some agricultural implements and seeds. I questioned the Chief respecting a "potlatche" which he had held the previous winter, and ascertained that he himself and two of his headmen had given away in presents to their friends, 134 sacks of flour, 140 pairs of blankets, together with a quantity of apples and provisions, amounting in value to about \$700, for all of which they had paid in cash out of their earnings as labourers, fishermen and hunters.⁵³

When George Walkem observed a Saanich potlatch in 1875, he was struck by the incompatibility of the Salish system of social elevation with that of his own culture: if the host was now "the greatest chief, he was now also one of the poorest Indians to be found from Cape Flattery to the

⁵² Given the Songhees motivation for working it is possible higher the wages may have increased the turnover; I.W. Powell in Cda. S.P., 1884 p. 107.

⁵³ Lenihan says that on reasoning with the chief he agreed to discontinue the Potlatch and was given \$80 in seeds. Cda. S.P. 1877, 38.

northern end of Queen Charlotte Island." Never, before or since, have I witnessed, he said, "a man transform himself so rapidly from a state of plenty to one of poverty."⁵⁴ George Grant, accompanying Sanford Fleming on his cross-country inspection of possible CPR routes thought that the Salish custom of potlatching "to the Anglo-saxon mind borders on insanity." Similar comments can be found scattered throughout the accounts of missionaries, government agents and travellers.⁵⁵

White observers interpreted the potlatch as something that the Songhees did either for fun or out of sheer perversity. They did not see that potlatching for what it was: the central institution of Songhees culture. For the Songhees, it was the nexus that held together the prestige, subsistence and the new capitalist economy. Wage work, though useful as an adjunct to the prestige economy, was clearly an adjunct.

The primacy of the non-capitalist economy among the Salish particularly and west-coast aboriginal people generally, reinforced *white* attitudes about their work habits. Robert Brown's 1864 account of the Cowichan Indians, presents "a very lazy set, only labouring to get a bare sufficiency of fish food." They were lazy, he said, because they "only car[ed] to work if they got high wages." Brown described how Indians in the remotest locations had refused to sell him fish if they thought the price not high enough, even though they had no other potential purchasers. He found the Cowichans would rather attend a potlatch than work for wages, and so he had to wait until they were ready to work.⁵⁶ Douglas previously noted at the coal mines in Nanaimo, and at Fort Rupert, that when it was

⁵⁴ Edgar "A Potlatch" p. 99; Walkem, *Stories*, p. 119; Powell, Cda, S.P. 1876, p. 34.

⁵⁵ George M. Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sir Sanford Fleming's Expedition through Canada in 1872* (Toronto, 1873), pp. 319-20; Knight has a similar story from a different source that may describe a response to Big George's Potlatch by a rival, in *Indians at Work*, p. 114; Capt. C.E. Barrett-Lennard, *Travels in British Columbia With the Narrative of A Yacht Voyage Round Vancouver's Island*, (London, 1862), p. 60.

⁵⁶ Brown, *Robert Brown*, pp. 47, 66, 115.

time to engage in their seasonal subsistence or prestige economies, the aboriginal people there would quit working for pay, and return to paid work when there was time in their own economic cycle.⁵⁷

Employers too, were constantly frustrated that aboriginal people might have their own reasons for working for wages and would choose when they would enter the labour force or leave it. Colonist W.C. Grant's words: "Their labour is not to be depended on for any continuous period," are echoed repeatedly in the period.⁵⁸ Employers' difficulties in coping with such an independent, non-capitalist agenda helps to explain why the aboriginal workforce was simultaneously described as "unreliable," "indolent" and "indispensable".

The Songhees enjoyed a virtual monopoly on work contracted by the colonists until their grand potlatch of 1853 brought thousands of aboriginal people to Victoria for the first time. There they saw the new wealth of the Songhees and the opportunities for paid work. The following year many returned. Governor Douglas reported 2,000 aboriginal visitors to Victoria in 1854, most looking for work. Every year thereafter, until the 1880s, 2,000-4,000 aboriginal people from all over the coast congregated seasonally in Victoria.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Douglas to Stuart, August 22, 1857 in Burrill, "Class Conflict," p. 127.

⁵⁸ W.C. Grant in Hazlitt, *British Columbia and Vancouver Island*, p. 179; Begbie in Langevin, *British Columbia*, p. 23 put it another way: "Accordingly, after years of civilization [an Indian] constantly relapses, for a time at least into the painted savage, and goes hunting or fishing -- or starving -- as relaxation."

⁵⁹ With the exception that the years immediately following the 1862 smallpox epidemic; CO 305/4 12345, Douglas to Newcastle, October 24th, 1853; CO 305/6 10048, Douglas to Russell, August 21, 1855.

These aboriginal sojourners from the north and Puget Sound increasingly competed for work with the Songhees, particularly in seasonal labour.⁶⁰ The Songhees apparently began to specialize in more permanent jobs, including as domestics for the colonists. J.S. Helmcken "had Dick, my Indian for a servant and cook" whom he paid two blankets and a shirt per month. Dick was later married and his wife joined him at the Helmcken house as a domestic. Other aboriginal people were hired for "chopping wood, carrying water and doing odd jobs".⁶¹ Reverend Staines wrote in 1852 he was busy teaching his aboriginal cooks how to prepare venison, beef or mutton, and supervising the "Indian" servants who were responsible for "trading venison, partridges, salmon, mats, berries, etc..." from other Indians who supplied these.⁶²

The gold rushes that swept the territory between 1858 and 1866 brought the Songhees people new opportunities for work as Victoria grew temporarily to hold 10-15,000 non-aboriginal people. This influx also brought a cash economy to British Columbia. Whereas previously both aboriginal people and company servants had been paid in goods from the company storehouse, increasingly they were paid in cash.

⁶⁰ In July 1856 the American Indian agent at Bellingham noted most of the aboriginal people from there had gone to Victoria, see Daniel Boxberger, *To Fish in Common: the Ethnohistory of Lummi Salmon Fishing*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) p. 24; the Suquamish and the Stillaguamish from Puget Sound also came to Victoria in the 1850s see Ruby and Brown, *Guide to Indian Tribes*, pp. 225, 228.

⁶¹ Dick and his wife preferred to live in their lodge in the Songhees village than in the Helmcken's house. Later Dick became a sheep farmer. Dorothy B. Smith, *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken*, (Vancouver: University of B.C.) p. 131; for northern people preferred to the Songhees as agricultural labour see C.M.S. C.2./0 Appendix C, reel A-105, William Duncan to Rev. H. Venn, Secretary of the Committee of the C.M.S., July 27, 1857.

⁶² CO 305/3, Rev. R.J. Staines to Thomas Boys, July 6, 1852; Smith, *Reminiscences*, p. 134. CO/305/3 Douglas to Earl Grey, October 31 1851. During the 1862 Smallpox epidemic special permits were granted to 'Indian' servants so they could not be compelled to leave with the other aboriginal people who were driven away. *Colonist*, May 28-30, 1862.

Songhees men supplied venison, fire wood and building materials to the booming city, ferried passengers and freight from ship to shore, and worked as unskilled and semi-skilled labourers. They also worked extensively loading and unloading ships. Women expanded their subsistence work into commercial production. At a time when skilled tradesmen were earning \$4.85 (see Table II) the *Colonist* newspaper asked "Need any be idle, when the very squaws are making four and five dollars a day, in bringing in oysters from Victoria Arm, Soke or Cowichan and peddling them around town? They monopolize the whole trade; not a white man or a civi[li]zed man enters the field against them." Songhees women also worked as domestics, seamstresses, and laundresses for the thousands of miners who passed through town. Edgar Fawcett remembered that "the men and the young women went out washing by the day, from seven to six o'clock, at fifty cents." They also sold fish, eggs and mushrooms door-to-door. Their calls "as they passed the doors might be heard at all hours. "Ah, Culla Culla (grouse and ducks), "Mowich", (venison), "Oolally" (berries), "Sooke Oysters," "Salmon," and "Cowichan potatoes"...."Ick quarter" or "King George Quarter" (twenty-five cents) bought almost anything."⁶³ The language sung out in the streets of Victoria was Chinook jargon.

Another source of income that derived from capitalist exchange and expanded with the gold rush was what contemporary observers described as "prostitution". However, the exchange of sex for payment, like other cross-cultural exchanges, had room for different understandings each side. Prostitution may describe the relationship that non-aboriginal men thought they were engaged in but there is room to question that this was how the relationship was viewed by participating aboriginal

⁶³ San Francisco *Times*, August 27, 1858 cited in Hazlitt, *British Columbia...* pp. 208, 215; Cracroft passed through a street that "was chiefly the resort of the Indians"; Sophia Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest: February to April 1861 and April to July 1870* (Victoria, 1974) p. 79; *Weekly Victoria Gazette* June 18, September 3, October 9, 1859; *Colonist*, October 21, 1862, p. 3; Macfie, *Vancouver Island*, p. 484; Fawcett, *Some Reminiscences of Old Victoria*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912) p. 284.

women. What if the context of the sale of sex in the two cultures was quite different and what was sold, was not the same as what was purchased?⁶⁴

It seems certain that a portion of what the Europeans called prostitution was the coerced "rental" of women slaves. Slaves, according to the social relations of aboriginal society, could be prostituted by their owners. From the first appearance of Europeans on the coast, the hiring out of women slaves to the fur trader/sailors had been a sideline venture. With the gold rush, slave-prostitution became an industry.

The best estimates available for the gold-rush influx suggest that over 30,000, almost entirely men, headed to the gold fields in 1859 alone, and many of these passed through Victoria. The miners provided an enthusiastic market, actively seeking out and purchasing sexual services. The small city was, moreover, the site of the Pacific's major British naval base, and, in the words of Reverend Matthew MacFie, "the extent to which the nefarious practices referred to are encouraged by the crews of Her Majesty's ships is a disgrace to the service they represent".⁶⁵ Aboriginal women greatly outnumbered non-aboriginal women in Victoria and were represented in like proportion in the sex-trade.

The exchange of sexual services for goods or cash is another illustration of how the Songhees and their neighbours adapted their own form of social organization -- in this case slavery -- to the capitalist economy -- in order to expand the prestige economy. In 1859, a "chief" of the Toquat [a Nuuchah-nulth] group replied to Captain Prevost's question about slaves: "All they captured were now sent

⁶⁴ Caroline Ralston argues in her study of Hawaiian women that "the term 'prostitution', with its undeniable sexist and moralistic connotations, is inapplicable as a description of the...casual sexual encounters in which money or material favours are exchanged," in her "Ordinary Women in Early Post-Contact Hawaii," in Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 57.

⁶⁵ Matthew MacFie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia* (London: Longman, Green, Longman Roberts and Green) p. 471.

to Victoria and bought by the Indians there because they fetched a higher price than anywhere else," up to \$200 each, and the reason was -- "too apparent."⁶⁶

William Banfield, trader and government agent, one of a handful of non-aboriginal people living on the west coast of Vancouver Island in 1859, remarked on the trade:

The Cape Flattery Indians are the principals of this vile traffic, they are rich in material wealth -- they taunt, intimidate and wheedle the Vancouver Indians, taunt them with poverty, intimidate them by superiority of wealth and numbers and wheedle them by false promises into a cowardly onslaught on small tribes; a number of slaves will be the result which will be readily exchanged at Cape Flattery or Port San Juan for Blankets or muskets....The poor creatures when they get into the hands of masters about such places as Victoria or Ports in Puget Sound, the females are appropriated to the vilest purposes....

Between 1855 and 1859, on the short stretch of western Vancouver Island, between Clayoquot and Ahousat alone, Banfield estimated hundreds of slaves had changed hands.⁶⁷ That the new value of slaves led to increased inter-tribal warfare and slave-trafficking, was an ironic outcome of the new capitalist economy -- given the aliens' "civilizing impulse". Expeditions to Victoria by northern peoples seeking wage work incorporated en route slave-raiding missions.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ NAC, Church Missionary Society, C.2./0 Appendix C, reel A-105, Captain J.C. Prevost to Secretariat of the Committee of the C.M.S., April 4, 1859; The Toquat tribe itself was reduced to "a few old men and women" by these raids, see Hills Diary, February 6, 1860; Douglas Cole and David Darling, "History of the Early Period," in Wayne Suttles, ed. *Handbook of North American Indians*, Volume 7 (Washington: Smithsonian, 1990) p. 130; Barnett, *Culture Element Distribution*, p. 267; Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 306.

⁶⁷ C.M.S. C.2./0 Appendix C, reel A-105, William Banfield, to Captain J.C. Prevost, November 21, 1859. Bishop Hills Diary, February 6, 1860.

⁶⁸ See for example Douglas to Labouchere August 26, 1856, 9708, CO 305/7 p. 82 describing one such raid by 'northern Indians' on the Cowichan and in his letter of June 13, 1857, 7950 CO 305/8 p. 71 the attack by northern peoples on a Clallam village; July 25, 1859, 6949 CO 305/10 p. 179 describes a battle at Victoria between Haidas and Tsimshians; NAC, C.M.S. C.2./0 Appendix C, reel A-105, William Duncan to Rev. H. Venn, Secretary of the Committee of the C.M.S., October 6, 1857.

Victoria was the "Indian capital of the coast", and its slave-trade capital. Nations from up and down the coast congregated at the Songhees reserve to buy, sell, and prostitute slaves. In 1861 Bishop Hills found among the Cowichan people a Haida woman sold in Victoria for \$300 and "let out to the depraved whites" for the purposes of prostitution. A few months later he recounted how a 12-year-old Bella Bella girl, prostituted by her Tsimshian owners, had escaped in Victoria, and was returned, by the police, to her owners.⁶⁹

The sale and pimping of slaves comprised a significant part of the sex trade in Victoria but in other cases the transactions are more complex, particularly in the 1860s and later when slavery dwindles in importance. There is little to go on, but one account from an aboriginal source raises enough questions to suggest something else was transpiring. This account was collected by George Hunt among the Kwakwaka'wakw, and puts a different perspective on the exchange of sex for pay. It tells of:

...a commoner HawasElal' who was a "clay face" as they call those who never give a feast to their tribe. He was instructed by his wife that they should go down to Victoria with her three pretty girls [by earlier marriage] that they should become prostitutes among the whites, for none of them had a husband.... Now they went to Victoria, five in a long nosed canoe. Now they arrived in Victoria and became prostitutes, the three pretty sisters and their mother. They staid one winter in Victoria and then they went home. Now HawasElal' obtained much money from this and immediately they bought an expensive copper, "Dry-Mouth-Maker- Cause-of-Shame" Then [his wife] and her three daughters bought the copper and gave it to HawaSElal'. Now the youngest of the three daughters became sick and she was sick in bed before she died. And then the second of the children dies, and then the eldest one also died.

HawasElal's brother-in-law said that his nieces had been bewitched on account of the fact that HawasElal was a common man and real chiefs do not allow common men to buy coppers. So he returned the copper and not long after that HawasElal' died himself.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Bishop Hills Diary, October 12, 1861, January 25, 1862; Sproat in *Scenes and Studies*, p. 67 says that a young woman slave in Victoria would be worth 50 blankets or \$150 dollars (£30).

⁷⁰ Franz Boas, *Contributions to the Ethnography of the Kwakiutl*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925) pp. 93-4; W.M. Halliday, *Potlatch and Totem: Recollections of an Indian Agent*, (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1935); see also Ford,

It is interesting that the moral is a warning to common people not to try and be chiefs. What might be called "prostitution" is not problematized. The story lends credence to accounts by non-aboriginal observers that the women of other groups, the Haida, and Tlingit as well as the Kwakwaka'wakw, used what the *whites* called prostitution, to earn wealth independently of men in order to potlatch and enhance their own status in their society.⁷¹ As with other cross-cultural transactions, the context and meaning of the exchange, varied from society to society.

The Songhees reserve may have been a "disreputable rendezvous" to the Bishop and the Indian Agent, but for aboriginal people from up the coast it was their only campsite when they visited the city. The reserve was certainly home to prostitution, the extent to which the Songhees themselves participated is difficult to determine. It is clear from contemporary accounts by both aboriginal and non-aboriginal observers that many of the aboriginal women working as prostitutes came from outside Victoria and had no connection to the Songhees. When commentators singled out by name those nations that were involved in prostitution, the Songhees were never mentioned, and the *Colonist* noted that the proximity of the Songhees "is not necessarily the cause of so much demoralization to the white population...as resulted from the presence of the large number of Northern Indians."⁷² The Songhees involvement in gold-rush prostitution may have been limited to the provision of slaves purchased from other groups.

Smoke from their fires,

⁷¹ Albert P. Niblack, *The Coast Indians of southern Alaska and Northern British Columbia*, (1888, Reprinted, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970) pp. 338, 346-7; NAC, CMS C.2./0 Appendix C, reel A-105; William Duncan, First Report Fort Simpson, February 1858; J.A. Jacobsen, *Alaskan Voyage, 1881-83: An Expedition to the Northwest Coast of America* translated from the German text of Adrian Woldt by Erna Gunther (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) pp. 8-9.

⁷² I.W. Powell, "Annual Report for 1872-3," p. 24; *Colonist*, October 20, 1862.

More than was Bargained For...

The Songhees' exchange of commodities, work and land for goods and cash had its basis in their own society. But the Songhees could not anticipate all that would accompany the more formal exchanges. While material exchange enriched the ceremonial life of the Songhees, other non-material dimensions took a major toll on them as European society introduced many more new ways to die than new ways to live.

Unlike other exchanges, the viral and bacterial exchanges between the Songhees and the newcomers were almost totally one-sided. Before the arrival of Europeans, the Northwest Coast, like the rest of the Americas, seems to have been free from lethal density-dependent infectious diseases. All of the epidemic diseases that are documented on the Northwest Coast in the first century of contact: smallpox, malaria, measles, influenza, dysentery, whooping cough, typhus, and typhoid fever, were part of the cargo brought by European visitors or immigrants, as were venereal diseases and tuberculosis.⁷³

The first epidemic of new diseases, smallpox, probably hit the Songhees in 1775 before they even met a European. Vancouver noted the tell-tale pock marks on the skin of many of the Songhees' Georgia Strait neighbours in 1792, as well as abandoned villages full of skeletal remains.⁷⁴ Several

⁷³ Although tuberculosis has been found in pre-contact osteological remains elsewhere in the Americas no evidence has yet been found on the Northwest coast, Robert T. Boyd, "Demographic History, 1874-1874" in Wayne Suttles, ed. *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 7, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990) pp. 141-5.

⁷⁴ It was almost certainly introduced to the Northwest Coast by the Spanish expedition of Bruno de Hezeta and Bodega y Quadra; George Vancouver, *Voyage*, p. 262; there is debate about whether Vancouver's observation of empty villages and bones is a reflection of the seasonal movement of people and their graveyards at permanent villages, or of widespread depopulation.

studies of smallpox on populations with no immunity have concluded that a one-third mortality rate is a conservative estimate.⁷⁵

Thereafter, historical and ethnographical evidence confirms that the Songhees suffered epidemics every 24-30 years, as new generations with no immunity grew up. Smallpox reappeared in 1801, and it or measles swept the area in 1824. There is evidence that the Songhees were struck by some epidemic in 1841-42, since they related the sickness to their baptism at Fort Langley by Father De Smet in 1841.⁷⁶

When James Douglas and the Reverend Bolduc visited the main Songhees village at Sungayka in 1843, they met the remnants of a larger population that had concentrated here after considerable depopulation. Bolduc counted 525 individuals "and many were absent". A few days later 1,200 aboriginal people assembled at Sungayka for a service led by Bolduc, though some of these are stated to have been "Kawitskins" and "Isanisks" in addition to Songhees.⁷⁷

The first real census of the Songhees, and one from which it is possible to estimate pre-1775 populations levels, was conducted by Douglas as he made his treaties with Songhees and other south Island groups in 1850. His careful count revealed a population of 1,649 aboriginal people on southeast Vancouver Island, and this after the measles and influenza epidemic that "made great havoc" in 1848. Douglas's census of the six "Tribes or Families" that comprised the people he called Samose (Songhees)

⁷⁵ Boyd, "Demographic History," p. 138.

⁷⁶ Boyd, "Demographic History," p. 145; The Songhees appeared to have escaped the smallpox epidemic of 1853 but there is evidence that they were struck by some epidemic in 1841-42, since they related deaths to their baptism by Father De Smet in 1841, see Bolduc, *Mission of the Columbia*, p. 108.

⁷⁷ Probably Cowichan and Saanich people, see Bolduc in Father P.J. De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels over the Rocky Mountains in 1845 and 1846* (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847) pp. 57-8.

accounted for 122 "men with beards, 134 women, 221 boys and 223 girls which sums precisely to 700."⁷⁸

Applying methods of disease demography to Douglas's census provides an opportunity to re-examine the accepted estimates of pre-contact populations on the south island. Two scholars who have estimated the pre-epidemic population of southeast Vancouver Island including the Songhees and Saanich, agree on a population of 2,600-2,700⁷⁹. However, using their own formulas on Douglas's careful census (and taking into account Bolduc's observation of some mortality in 1841) suggests a population of 3,825 as a conservative estimate for the southeast island population, of which 1,624 were Songhees.⁸⁰

The presence of Fort Victoria in their territory meant the Songhees had more regular contact with carriers of exotic diseases, but it also gave them earlier access to vaccinations than most aboriginal groups. As a result of vaccination, Douglas reported in 1853 that the Songhees were spared the smallpox epidemic that was devastating aboriginal populations across the Straits of Georgia.⁸¹

⁷⁸ BCARS, James Douglas, Private Papers, 2nd Series, B 20 1853; see also Duff, "Fort Victoria Treaties," p. 23; while Chief Factor Finlayson estimated a pre-1848 population of 1300 for southeast Vancouver Island, comprised of 700 Songhees, 500 Saanich and 100 Sooke his estimates are proven low by Douglas's later census; BCARS, O/A/P19, Lt. Commander Wood, to the Secretary of the Admiralty, November 19, 1848; the Songhees told Kane in 1847 that they could muster 500 warriors, but this may have been a strategic over-estimate, Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, p. 145.

⁷⁹ James Mooney, "The Aboriginal Population North of Mexico," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, 80, 7 (1928), p. 15; Boyd, "Demographic History" p. 144; these estimates are based on the additive method of ethno-historical population reconstruction which enlarges a reliable, dated anchor population by simple addition to compensate for known epidemics. Where specific mortalities are known they are used, otherwise average mortalities from epidemiological literature are applied.

⁸⁰ This uses Douglas's count of 1,649 for the South Island in 1850 as the anchor and inflates it according to Boyd's formula, estimating a 10 percent mortality from 1848 measles, a five percent mortality from the 1841 affliction described by Bolduc, 10 percent mortality in 1824, 20 percent mortality in 1801, and 30 percent mortality from the first smallpox epidemic in 1775. A slightly higher mortality would suggest a population over 5,000.

⁸¹ BCARS A/C/20/Vi/2A James Douglas, Letters to the Hudson's Bay Company, February 16, 1853.

Vaccination and the speedy removal of the Songhees to their Discovery Island village site meant that the 1862-3 smallpox epidemic, which had ruinous effects on the northern coast, only had a small impact of the Songhees.

Yet despite the meliorations that reduced impact of smallpox, the Songhees population still plummeted from the 700 Douglas counted in 1850, to 285 in 1864, and to 182 in 1876, largely owing to disease and alcohol related deaths.⁸² Venereal diseases and tuberculosis evidently accounted for a large number of the deaths. In 1849 Surveyor Walter Grant thought that among the Songhees' neighbours, the Sooke people, with which he was most familiar, "at least two thirds of the population were diseased either with scrofula or syphilis. The annual mortality is considerable...."⁸³ In taking his census in 1872 the new Superintendent of British Columbia Indians concluded that "Consumption, Bloody Flux, Syphilis and various cutaneous eruptions are common" to the Straits Salish including the Songhees.⁸⁴ Reports by the Indian Agents also show that measles, smallpox and influenza continued to take their toll on the younger and older members of the Songhees through the nineteenth century, while tuberculosis and venereal disease struck at those in the prime of life.

Out-migration, which for some aboriginal groups contributed to population decline, was not a significant factor in the decline of the Songhees. Although many Songhees women married into the non-aboriginal community and ceased to be counted as Songhees, this was more than compensated for by non-Songhees women marrying Songhees men. Douglas's 1850 count, the 1876 census by the

⁸² Boyd argues that the Songhees suffered a 46 percent mortality in the 1862-3 epidemic but I am inclined to agree with Keddie's assessment, based on newspaper reports, that very few Songhees suffered from small-pox in 1862; Boyd, "Demographic History,"; Grant Keddie, "The Victoria Small Pox Crisis of 1862," *Discovery*, 1993; Boyd "Demographic History," p. 144.

⁸³ BCARS, A/B/20/G76, W.C. Grant, "Report on Vancouver Island," 1849; Scrofula is apparently a reference to a cutaneous symptom of tuberculosis, Boyd, "Demographic History," p. 137.

⁸⁴ National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG 10 vol. 11213; File 1; consumption and the cutaneous eruptions are likely references to tuberculosis.

reserve commission, and the federal censuses of 1881 and 1891, all show more adult women among the Songhees than adult men.⁸⁵ Some cases of non-Songhees men moving onto the Songhees reserve to live with a Songhees women are also recorded; often these men, or at least their children, were "adopted" into the band. It was also common for Songhees women to return to the reserve with their children after having lived with a non-aboriginal partner off the reserve for some time.⁸⁶

A more significant portion of the population decline is accounted for by alcohol-related deaths. Alcohol, also introduced by the Europeans, became widely available during the gold rush. The Songhees' urban location gave them easy access to alcohol, increasing their mortality rates in several ways. Alcohol poisoning, (or poisoning by the other substances added to liquor sold to Indians,) more deadly fights, and more accidents, particularly since the journey from the Songhees village to the rum shops was made by small canoe, account for some of the population decline. Chief Freezy of the Songhees, who met his death crossing the harbour in an inebriated state in 1864, was one of these victims.⁸⁷

Despite its ill effects and low quality, alcohol was one of the most popular items of exchange for both aboriginal and non-aboriginal traders. The trade in alcohol was technically illegal but so profitable that the law was easily evaded; the illicit nature of the trade also meant that the spirits sold to aboriginal people were "of the vilest and most destructive kind, manufactured on the site from pure

⁸⁵ BCARS, James Douglas, Private Papers, 2nd Series, B 20 1853; NAC, RG 88 vol. 499, 1876-77; Canada Census, Manuscript, 1891, 1891.

⁸⁶ The membership of the Songhees was not rigidly defined in 1870s and 80s despite the restrictions of the Indian Act, so whole families might relocate to take up residence with relatives on other reserves, but it was equally true that others would move onto the Songhees reserve, which from the point of view of work, was a desirable place to be.

⁸⁷ *Colonist*, November 11, 1864.

alcohol....diluted with salt water, and flavoured [with]...camphine [sic], creosote, and even sulphuric acid...to give strength and flavour." Consumed in large quantities these brews were fatal. The *Colonist* estimated in February 1859 that 400 Indians in the Victoria area had died from the use of alcohol in the previous eighteen months, and even if exaggerated, other evidence suggests alcohol-related deaths were a real problem.⁸⁸

By the time Franz Boas visited the Songhees in the 1880s, the "drunken Indian" stereotype was already a part of their popular image. His dismissal of the Songhees as "terrible drunkards," who are "always full of whiskey" has to be understood in this context, as does the Indian agent's 1882 comments that "the Songhees village is one of the most degraded on the coast."⁸⁹ As Bishop Hills pointed out, alcohol abuse and alcohol-related deaths were endemic in the non-aboriginal gold-rush community as well, only the effect on the small Songhees population was more visible.⁹⁰

"Whiskey may have killed its tens," observed J.S. Helmcken, the best known doctor in Victoria from 1851 through to his death in 1920, "but imported diseases its hundreds".⁹¹ Indeed it seems possible that the popularity of alcohol among the Songhees may have been a way of coping with, and escaping from, the personal anguish, as well as the cultural disruption, caused by repeated deadly epidemics and persistent chronic diseases.

⁸⁸ *Colonist*, February, 28, 1859; CO 305/29 10225, Governor Kennedy to the Colonial Office, September 3, 1866.

⁸⁹ *Colonist*, November 11, 1864. Boas in Ross, *The Ethnology*, pp. 22,45; The Indian Agent, Lomas added that the aboriginal people acquired these 'vices', from 'degraded' whites, Cda. S.P. 1883, p. 53.

⁹⁰ *Colonist*, February 28, 1860; Edgar, "A Potlatch" p. 94; Hills Diary, March 30 and September 22, 1862.

⁹¹ Smith, *Reminiscences*, 329.

Disease, drunkenness and prostitution, all a result of exchanges with the immigrants, were the reasons offered by a faction of the Victoria business community to justify ridding the city of aboriginal people. As the city grew, the Songhees Reserve land came to be considered among the most commercially valuable in the city. After 1858 the Victoria City Council, the *Colonist* newspaper and prominent citizens regularly called for the removal of the Songhees from the city core. Objections to their removal were two-fold. First was the legal difficulty. Douglas's 1850 treaty with the Songhees granted them the reserve in perpetuity. This was confirmed by the Indian Act of 1876 which declared that the majority of eligible Indians in a band must consent to any surrender of reserve land and the Songhees did not want to move.⁹²

The second problem was the value of aboriginal people to Victoria as employees and consumers. "I see no present necessity for removing them," advised Dr. Tolmie in 1883. The men and women perform valuable work, he said, earn much and spend it all in the city. "This money might otherwise go to Chinamen who would spend but a fraction of it in the province."⁹³ Not only did the Songhees depend on the town, the town depended to some extent on the Songhees. This was true in a number of ways, for if the Songhees were moved, the Commissioners of the Indian Reserve wondered in 1864 "what is to be done" with the visiting Indians who come to work and trade? There were 85 licensed public houses in Victoria in 1866, numerous unlicensed ones, and 20 wholesale or "gallon" houses many depending on the "Indian trade".⁹⁴ The Indian superintendent noted that "much

⁹² The negotiations leading up to the removal of the Songhees are described in Genie L. Kanakos, "Negotiations to Relocate the Songhees, 1843-1911," (Simon Fraser University, unpublished MA, 1982).

⁹³ BCARS, A/E/Or3/C15, W.F. Tolmie to Sir Alexander Campbell, Federal Minister of Justice, August 21 1883; W.H. Lomas, Annual Report for the Cowichan Agency, 1887, noted that "several have regular employment in the city and these would have to rent or buy houses if their reserve was sold."

⁹⁴ CO 305.23 10589, "Report of the Commissioners of the Indian Reserve," May 27, 1864; CO 305/29 100225, Governor A.E. Kennedy to Colonial Office, September 3, 1866.

opposition has been given to any intended removal of these Indians by traders and others...."⁹⁵

Aboriginal people accounted for a significant percentage of the business conducted in Victoria. The supplying of goods for potlatches, was big business, and in the 1860s and 1870s the Songhees were among Victoria's best customers: "many traders among us realise very large profits from their dealings with the Indians-indeed it is stated that one street in our town is almost entirely supported by them."⁹⁶

Although Victoria's economy slowed down through the 1870s as the impact of the gold rushes diminished, the mid-to-late 1870s and early 1880s saw the opening of two new seasonal industries which, at first, seemed to have an inexhaustible demand for aboriginal labour: salmon canning and hop farming. When Johan Jacobsen first visited Victoria in 1881, he was surprised that "the streets of this town swarmed with Indians of all kinds." At the reserve he visited, "most of the young people had gone to the Fraser River to fish for the canneries." That year the Indian Agent for the Songhees was reporting that "the great bulk of these Indians are really well off this winter" and the following year "Indian labor is much in demand at higher wages than has ever before been paid."⁹⁷

Referring to the Songhees in the mid-1870s, a federal official, James Edgar wrote, "he often has hoarded many hundreds of dollars of wealth in coin or kind, which he delights to gamble or give away...he can easily make a round sum each year above his actual needs." Edgar concluded: "To imagine that a West Coast Indian is poor, is a great mistake."⁹⁸

⁹⁵ I.W. Powell, Cda. S.P. 1876, p. 45.

⁹⁶ Victoria, *Gazette*, May 18, 1860; "I do not hesitate to add, that two thirds if not more, of the Indian retail traders in Victoria depend for support upon the open prostitution carried on within the confines of the city. All the Indian liquor manufactured and sold in Victoria is purchased with means derived from the same source, I.W. Powell to George Walkem, November 6, 1873 in British Columbia, *Papers Relating to the Indian Land Question*, p 122.

⁹⁷ BCARS, A E Or3 C15, W.F. Tolmie to Sir Alexander Campbell, August 21, 1883; W.H. Lomas in Cda. S.P. 1882, pp. 160-2; Lomas, in Cda, S.P. 1883 p. 53; Jacobsen, *Alaskan Voyage*, pp. 5-6.

⁹⁸ Edgar, "A 'Potlatch' Among Our West Coast Indians," p. 96; Cda. S.P. 1876, p. 34.

CHAPTER 7:

WORK AND THE RESERVE ARMY OF THE UNEMPLOYED, 1885-1970

When we apply for work people tell us we do not pay taxes and so cannot get work, as all the public work is kept for the poor white men just now.

George Chictlan, Songhees, 1894¹

Although on account of the influx of labourers of all nationalities, and from other causes...there has been a gradual falling off in the earnings of Indians for some years past.

A.W. Vowell, Indian Superintendent, 1903²

The year 1885 was a watershed for the Songhees. January first saw the proclamation of amendments to the Indian Act prohibiting potlatches, the central feature of the aboriginal prestige economy. November seventh marked the completion of Canadian Pacific Railway and the start of a massive invasion of labourers into their wage-economy.

The anti-potlatch laws were the result of a strong lobby of Indian agents, the first Indian superintendent, I.W. Powell, and missionaries, to the department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa.³ Powell, and many of the early missionaries considered that "Patlatches, not only retard civilizing influences, but encourage idleness among the less worthy members of the tribe...." Missionary Duncan, who had worked among the Songhees and was considered, in the 1870s, to have had the most success in "civilizing Indians," argued "there can be no progress in civilization" while potlatches were allowed to

¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 3688, file: 13,886-1 "Report of a Meeting" May 4, 1894.

² Cda. S.P. 1904, no. 27, p. 320.

³ The best general description of the anti-potlatch legislation is in Douglas Cole and Ira Chaiken, *An Iron Hand Upon the People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990); for a specific community's experience see Daisy Sewid Smith, *Prosecution or Persecution*, (Cape Mudge, British Columbia: Nu-Yum-Baleess Society, 1979).

continue. Another protestant missionary working among the Songhees, Thomas Crosby, concurred: "of the many evils of heathenism, with the exception of witchcraft, the potlatch is the worst...."⁴

The intent of the anti-potlatch law was to hasten the assimilation of aboriginal people by striking at the institution which tied their society together. Crosby concluded that, "the potlatch relates to all the life of the people, such as giving of names, the raising into social position, their marriages, births, deaths." In banning the potlatch the government was effectively banning the whole prestige economy as well as the hereditary ownership of the subsistence economy's key resource sites, which could only be validated through potlatching.⁵

To the missionaries and government agents, aboriginal engagement in paid work was an indication of assimilation and could not be reconciled with the potlatch economy. But the Songhees were not making a choice between the prestige economy or the capitalist one. The Songhees had grafted capitalist paid work onto their existing economy. For the Songhees, their accumulation of goods in the paid-labour economy was, in large part, directed at the potlatch and the prestige economy. Without the potlatch there was little incentive in Songhees society to engage in paid work.

At first, both the Songhees and Victoria merchants resisted attempts to enforce the anti-potlatch laws. Moreover the initial legislation proved to be unenforceable because the law included no definition of "potlatch", a Chinook word which meant "gift" and "gift giving" as well as a "gift-giving ritual."⁶

⁴ I.W. Powell in *Report of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for British Columbia for 1872 & 1873*, (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1873) p. 8, (reprinted as CIHM No. 16227); Thomas Crosby, *Among the An-ko-me-nums or Flathead tribes of Indians of the Pacific Coast*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907) p. 106.

⁵ Crosby, *Among the An-ko-me-nums*, p. 107.

⁶ Douglas Cole and Ira Chaiken, *An Iron Hand Upon the People*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990) pp. 36-9.

Nonetheless, agents and missionaries continued to use the legislation and the threat of prosecution to suppress the potlatch as they lobbied the government to revise the laws. In 1895 the laws were strengthened to prohibit the giving away of anything at a congregation of Indians, thereby forcing many of the potlatches underground, especially after a series of successful prosecutions were mounted between 1907 and the 1920s.⁷ Nonetheless potlatches and dancing continued, more covertly, and in 1936 the Minister Responsible for Indian Affairs introduced amendments that would have made accumulation of any property that *might* be used for potlatching illegal. This latter amendment was dropped in the face of public opposition, but illustrates the department's frustration at not being able to stamp out this barrier to "civilization".⁸

The laws were only one of the many pressures on aboriginal people to abandon the potlatch system. The school that operated on and off on the reserve, first by Anglicans and then Catholics, taught against the potlatch, as did other denominations at their religious services. The increasing ability of individuals to sell their own labour power independent of the *siem* put pressure on the systems of authority and governance and all around them was the example of a growing population that celebrated individual accumulation.

Even without the pressure of the anti-potlatch laws, the Songhees had begun to adopt some of the immigrants' economic priorities. By 1886 their consumption patterns had changed -- as Franz Boas noted in his diary. He found people wearing European clothes and "only a few old houses are still inhabited. The Indians have built themselves others according to the European plan."⁹

⁷ NAC RG 10 vol. 1,350 reel C-13917, file: Cowichan Agency Departmental Circulars 1892-1910, August 4, 1895.

⁸ Cole and Chaiken, *An Iron Hand Upon the People*, pp. 147-150.

⁹ Franz Boas, *The Ethnography of Franz Boas: Letters and Diaries of Franz Boas Written on the Northwest Coast from 1886 to 1931*, Ronald P. Rohner, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969) p. 21.

There is another indication in the mid-1880s of a shift away from the primacy of the prestige economy in an account by Sayachi'apis, a Nuu-chah-nulth, who invited the Songhees to a potlatch. While the Salish potlatched in the winter and spring, among the Nuu-chah-nulth, the first menses of one's daughter, an event unpredictable as to its timing, was the most important occasion for a potlatch. Sayachi'apis called upon the nations of southern Vancouver Island to celebrate his daughter's maturation in the fall. The Nanaimo, Comox, the Clayoquot, the Nitinaht, and many others, replied according to protocol, and attended. However, the Songhees, whom Sayach'apis messengers found working at the canneries in the mouth of the Fraser River, along with the Makah, Saanich, Cowichan, and others, turned down the invitation. They told Sayach'apis "he was too late." They were on their way to harvest hops in Washington State. Contrary to Robert Brown's experience 20 years earlier, where Cowichans refused work to attend a potlatch, the Songhees and others who declined this invitation were now more interested in earning money. Sayach'apis was distressed to see them all forsaking their obligations and the traditions of their grandparents; he told them that they had "hops for grandparents" whom they honoured instead.¹⁰

As important as the pressures on the potlatch were, the most immediate impact on the Songhees' economy came from the lay-off of Chinese labourers after the peak in railway construction. Whereas, in the 1860s Edgar Fawcett remembered that, "Chinese were almost as rare in...Victoria as Turks," the 1881 census for Victoria showed 1,344 Chinese, and the 1891 census, 2,080.¹¹ In 1884, at the canneries, aboriginal people found that "their places had been taken by Chinamen in cleaning and

¹⁰ Edward Sapir and Morris Swadesh, *Nootka Texts*, (Philadelphia: Linguistic Society of America, 1939) p. 149.

¹¹ Edgar Fawcett, *Some Reminiscences of Old Victoria* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912) p. 84; the Blue Books of the Colony of British Columbia for 1870 show 1,548 Chinese. Of the Chinese, 211 were in Victoria whose non-aboriginal population was at that time 3,270. See Canada. Census 1870, vol. 4 pp. 376-7; Canada Census, 1881, vol. 1, 1881, p. 290; 1891 vol. 1. p. 332.

canning the fish."¹² Around Victoria, many of the unemployed Chinese "of the poorer classes" were attempting to make a living by bootlegging liquor to the Songhees. An Indian Agent observed that even "the poor Indian women and old men, their boys and girls, [who] used to make considerable money every summer picking berries" have been "ruined" by "large numbers of Chinamen".¹³

One of the reasons for the popularity of Chinese workers was their cheapness. When thousands of Chinese labourers hit the labour market at once, the wages paid to unskilled labour fell by 50 percent.¹⁴ The Chinese in British Columbia were a true landless proletariat -- they either worked or they starved. For aboriginal people, work-for-pay was still a supplement to a base subsistence economy; the Songhees were not wholly dependent upon work for sustenance, rather much of their "earnings" were "saved" for potlatch goods. When wages fell to a near subsistence level, the Songhees lost little by leaving paid work to the immigrants.

There were other reasons for the popularity of Chinese labour. In the case of domestic servants, one prominent Victorian, J.S. Helmcken, observed that unlike the Chinese, his Songhees servants objected to "living in". Another observer testified to a Royal Commission on Chinese immigration, that it was more prestigious to have an oriental houseboy.¹⁵ The "exotic" nature of Chinese may also account for the partial displacement of aboriginal women by Chinese women in Victoria's red light district.¹⁶

¹² McTiernan in Cda. S.P., 1885, p. 105.

¹³ McTiernan in Cda. S.P., 1885, p. 105; NAC RG 10 vol. 3772 file 35139, Loren P. Lewis to A.W. Vowell, January 29, 1887.

¹⁴ Cda. S.P. 1897, vol. 11, No. 14, pp. 185-7.

¹⁵ Arthur Bunster, testifying to the Select Committee on Oriental Immigration, 1879, cited in James Morton, *In Sea of Sterile Mountains: the Chinese in British Columbia*, (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1974) p. 69

¹⁶ J.S. Helmcken, *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken*, Dorothy B. Smith ed. (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1975) p. 187; the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration in 1885, conducted what appears to be a very thorough census of Chinese in British Columbia in that year,

A third reason was often given by employers for employing the Chinese -- their supposed reliability relative to aboriginal people. Some employers, like cannery owner Charles Todd, characterized aboriginal people as "short-sighted and unreasonable. Even after their advances they come down late, giving excuses that their hay took time, or something like that."¹⁷ Later, the trade magazine *Lumberman and Contractor* repeatedly claimed that the forest industry needed oriental labour because "Indians" were too ready to quit to go to a potlatch. By contrast, Chinamen, the magazine said, would find a replacement if they could not come to work.¹⁸ From an employers point of view Chinese labourers probably *were* more reliable and easier to discipline because they were more dependent on wage labour. Aboriginal people were not as dependent and they were engaged in a set of alternative economic systems that affected their availability for work.

Yet, in evaluating this evidence offered by contemporary observers, we have to appreciate that the Chinese were "racialized" as much as "Indians." These positive assessments of Chinese came in the context of employers arguing that they were necessary as cheap labour. Arguing that aboriginal people were unreliable and that they could not do the job was also a tactic to ensure the Chinese would be welcomed and the overall labour force would be large enough to keep wages down. There were also many commentators who had no interest in employing Chinese, often branding them as "lazy" and "thieving," the same derogatory terms directed at aboriginal people.¹⁹

identifying towns in which even one or two Chinese lived, and counted 70 Chinese prostitutes. Cda. S.P. 1885 no. 54a, Appendix C.

¹⁷ British Columbia Archives and Record Services (BCARS) GR 213: Commission on the Salmon Fishing Industry in BC 1902, 14th session, evidence of C.F. Todd, quoted in Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993) p. 84.

¹⁸ *Lumberman and Contractor*, 1906, quoted by Morton, *In Sea of Sterile Mountains*, p. 201.

¹⁹ See the comments in the Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, in Cda. S.P., 1885, No. 54a.

The laid-off Chinese railway navvies particularly affected industries that previously absorbed a large portion of the aboriginal labour force but they were only one part of the massive wave of immigration that began to flow along the new railway line. Between the completion of the railway in 1885 and the census of 1891, some 40,000 people immigrated to British Columbia, more than doubling the non-aboriginal population. The Songhees population continued to decline.

An indication of the year-to-year fluctuation of the Songhees population is available after 1883 when the Indian agent was supposed to conduct an annual census of each band. After 1917 a census was made every five years.²⁰ Year-to-year variations may be attributable partly to enumeration error, as well as movement in and out of the band. The steadily downward trend through to the 1930s is the result of an extraordinarily high death rate due primarily to disease.²¹

Smallpox continued to make regular appearances, taking its toll in spite of widespread vaccination. In 1875-77, at least two Songhees died from the disease, and a larger number in 1892; smallpox affected the Songhees again in 1895, 1902 and 1909.²² The 1888 measles epidemic with its

²⁰ Agent Lomas reported that the census in 1891 was a reliable one because he was able to take the count of each band, "all at once" presumably instead of his usual practice of counting the families when his visits to the reserve coincided their theirs -- or merely subtracting reported deaths and adding births to the previous years census. In 1892 he reports that he was unable to take a census; Cda, S.P. 1892, vol. 10, no. 14, p. 115; 1893, vol. 10, no. 14, p. 233; Agent Robertson, Cowichan Agent after 1900 reported in 1913 that he did not always visit each reserve each year so sometimes he updated the census by the deduction of deaths and addition of births reported by the band. BCARS, GR 1995 file: reel B-1454 McKenna-McBride Commission, transcript of evidence, June 10, 1913, p. 263.

²¹ It is evident that the bands largely controlled their own memberships through the 1890s despite the regulations in the Indian Act. In 1889 the Cowichan Indian Agent pointed out that the Comox band increased by virtue of families moving onto the reserve and in 1892 that 72 inhabitants of one band moved to another band's register to take advantage of work opportunities. The agent added 31 to the population of the Songhees in 1893 adding "youths and children, who though having Songhees mothers, had white fathers who had practically deserted them," but removed them from the list again in 1894, Cda. S.P. 1890 no. 12, p. 99; 1893 no. 14, p. 233; 1894 no. 14, p. 117.

²² Powell, Cda S.P. 1877 pp. 32-3; 1878 vol. 8 pp. 47-50; NAC RG 10 vol. 1001 file: Letters received by the B.C. Indian Superintendent 1873-6, #109, James Morrison to Lenihan, July 25, 1875; RG 10 vol. 1350 reel C-13917 file: Cowichan Agency Departmental Circulars 1892-1910, A.W. Vowell, Visiting Indian Superintendent, July 9, 1892, February 15, 1902, Indian Agent New West to W.R.

"high mortality" was brought back to Vancouver Island from the Washington State hop fields. Measles also spread at the canneries, killing over 24 aboriginal children at the Beaver Cannery alone in 1898, and apparently accounting for most of the 13 deaths among the Songhees that year.²³

The sharp population declines in 1892-93, visible in Figure VIII are attributable to an influenza epidemic which caused "a high death rate" on its own, and contributed to the deaths of many of the young men already suffering from "lung disorders" and children previously afflicted with "mesenteric disease."²⁴ Through the 1890s, the agent noted that "the young men between the ages of 16 and 30 seem particularly liable to lung disease" in other words, tuberculosis.²⁵ Influenza struck again in 1895 and was responsible for killing nearly 100 aboriginal people in the Cowichan Agency, and probably accounts for 20 deaths among the Songhees.²⁶

In the late 1880s the declining population of the Songhees was not noticeable in the labour market alongside the influx of labour that followed the railway completion. The enlarged labour force was absorbed by the boom which followed the CPR's completion. On Vancouver Island the economy was also being accelerated by the construction of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway and the largest ship-repair dock in the Commonwealth at the Esquimalt naval base.

The 1891 census takers enumerated Victoria at the tail end of that boom and, although the enumerators did not ask about "race" or ethnicity, it is possible to locate the Songhees in this census by

Robertson Cowichan Indian Agent, March 30, 1909; RG 10 vol. 1351 reel C-13917, W.R. Robertson, Diary, March 1903.

²³ Lomas in Cda. S.P., 1889 vol. 13 pp. 100-102; RG 10 vol. 1348 reel C-13917 file: Cowichan Agency Miscellaneous Correspondence 1893-1906, J.H. Todd and Sons to William Lomas, August 23, 1898 and A.W. Vowell, August 22, 1898.

²⁴ Cda. S.P. 1892 vol. 10 no. 14 pp. 115-118.

²⁵ Cda. S.P. 1892 vol. 10 no. 14, p. 115; 1894 vol. 10 no. 14, pp. 116-8.

²⁶ W.H. Lomas and A.W. Vowell, Cda, S.P. 1896 no. 14, pp. 153, 186.

comparing names in the manuscript to those of Indian Affairs band censuses. These names can be further confirmed by tracking the enumerator until he arrived at the Songhees reserve in his circuit through the city, and by checking the information that was collected concerning birthplace of the respondent, their mother and father. Unlike the 1881 census which missed over half the Songhees, the 1891 census includes virtually the whole band.²⁷

Of the 47 Songhees men between ages of 15 and 65 enumerated in 1891 all but seven have occupations listed. Six of the seven with no occupations are young men in their teens or early twenties. Of the 51 Songhees women between the ages of 15 and 65, only 10 have occupations listed. The occupations listed and the numbers employed are as follows:

Table VII
Occupations of the Songhees in 1891
According to the Manuscript Census

Songhees Men Age 15-65 Occupations Listed in 1891 Census	Songhees Women Age 15-65 Occupations Listed in 1891 Census		
Fisherman	12	Charwoman	9
Sawmill Hand	10	Washerwoman	1
Sealer	3	No occupation	41
Carpenter	3	TOTAL	51
Longshoreman	3		
Farmhand ²⁸	3		
Policeman	1		
Baker	1		
General Labourer	1		
Gardener	1		
Soap Factory	1		
Messenger Boy	1		
No occupation	7		
TOTAL	47		

²⁷ Less than half the Songhees were caught in the census of 1881, and of those that were enumerated information on work was left blank or was listed as "labourer".

²⁸ In the Annual Report of the British Columbia Department of Agriculture for 1891, the local correspondent J.W. Tolmie remarked that around Victoria experienced farm hands were scarce, wages were high, and "natives seldom condescend to work on farms." BC S.P. 1891, p. 795.

The occupation category of the census provides a snapshot of paid work in April of 1891 but suggests more permanence than the economy actually provided. The enumerator listed only one occupation per person, but the other evidence that we have suggests only those in skilled trades, like the baker, and professions, like the policeman, had a single job all year. Fishing, farming, sealing, gardening, were all seasonal work, and sawmill and longshoring work was volatile according to the business cycle. The work in the other seasons, such as the autumn migration to the hop fields (which involved most of the Songhees not permanently employed) or cannery labour (which probably employed most of the women during the late summer) is not hinted at in the census.

When the world-wide depression of the early 1890s hit Victoria, the new order became visible. Indian Superintendent Vowell remarked in 1892 on "the cessation of business operations in many places throughout the country, such as shutting down or working at half capacity, etc, of the saw-mills...." Owing to the depression, "combined with the increase of white labour, the native cannot now so readily obtain work or get as high wages as they did in former years."²⁹

The combination of depression and immigration hit the Songhees particularly hard. One band member, Joe Etienne, told the agent at an 1894, band meeting: "Times have been very bad in Victoria and nearly all of us who used to get work in the town cannot now get a day's work". George Chictlan explained: "When we apply for work people tell us we do not pay taxes and so cannot get work, as all the public work is kept for the poor white men just now."³⁰

²⁹ Cda. S.P. 1893, no. 14, pp. 223-4.

³⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 3688, file 13,886-1 "Report of a Meeting" May 4, 1894.

One of the stand-bys for the Songhees when wage work was scarce had been "peddling fish" to stores, restaurants and homes. By the time this depression hit, new federal regulations prohibited commercial fishing except in a specified "season". Federal fisheries laws introduced a new distinction which separated for the first time, a food fishery from a commercial one and began to regulate both.³¹ As Joe Etienne told the agent "a man can now only get fish to eat and now we are told we must have permission to take fish, but may not sell any." It seemed to him that in being refused permission to sell fish, they were being driven out of the capitalist economy, and back to subsistence. "We are not as our fathers were, we live like whitemen, does the government want us to go back and live on fish and deer?"³²

The Indian agents' own observations confirmed the Songhees' gloomy reports. "The depression in trade has affected all the bands to a greater or less degree," summarized the Cowichan Indian agent in 1894. "Employment in the saw-mills, coal-mines and municipal works has been closed to them, and their employment on farms has also been limited."³³

The one bright spot in this economy was continuing expansion in the cannery industry (See Figure IV). In the 1870s and 80s "the well paid employment at the saw mills and hop-fields weaned the young men from hunting and the cultivation of the land," Agent Lomas reported, but in 1895 "these industries are closed to them [so] they have to fall back entirely upon the canneries to obtain sufficient means of support."

The Indian Superintendent, described the situation in 1901:

³¹ The invention of the idea of a "food fishery" as distinct from a commercial fishery is developed in Newell, *Tangled Webs*, pp. 62-89.

³² NAC RG 10 vol. 3688, file 13,886-1 "Report of a Meeting" May 4, 1894.

³³ Cda. S.P. 1895, Annual Report of W.H. Lomas, 1894.

Every year, as time advances, proves that the days when Indians had, to all intents and purposes, a monopoly of the work to be done each season at the canneries and hop-fields are rapidly disappearing. These sources of employment, at which large earnings are gathered in by the Indians (men and women), are being gradually closed against them owing to the advent of peoples of all nationalities, who flock into the country seeking such employment periodically. The most formidable rivals that the Indians have to contend with, numerically, are the Chinese and the Japanese. The former have been co-labourers in the canneries for years, and did not so very much interfere with the natives as they found employment chiefly within the canneries, whilst the latter, who have of late been entering the country in hordes, and who compete with the Indians as fishermen are, are reducing the earnings by over-competition, etc, to such an extent as to make it no longer a source of profit to the Indians, the latter having to travel distances from their homes and to meet considerable expenses attendant thereupon.³⁴

Aboriginal people were being partly or wholly replaced with "white" or Asian labour in the industries where they had earlier been the largest component of the labour force. In examining the main employers, one by one, the Indian agents observed: "The employment of oriental labour has displaced the Indians in certain lines such as farm work, cutting of cord wood," as well as domestics, launderers and charworkers. Cannery and agricultural jobs were also under assault by immigrant competitors: "The earnings of the Indians at the canneries, hop-fields and other pursuits, have not been as great as in the past: the competition in the labour market continues to be greater each year." Whereas aboriginal men had dominated the fishery at the mouth of the Fraser River as late as 1891-94, by 1901-04 they were the smallest ethnic group of fishermen.³⁵

In the long run, even more significant than losing part of their seasonal occupations and part-time work to low-wage Asian labour was the loss of steadier, more permanent jobs to "white" labour:

Less than a score of years ago many Indians along the sea-coast of the province found profitable employment working as deck-hands, and at other such labour on the

³⁴ A.W. Vowell, Indian Superintendent for B.C. in Cda. S.P. 1902, no. 27 pp. 284-9.

³⁵ Vowell in Cda. S.P. 1902 no. 27, pp. 284-9; NAC RG 10 vol. 3988, file 154,635, Lomas to Vowell, March 30, 1897; Cda. S.P. 1892 vol. 10 no. 14 pp. 115-118; Cda. S.P., 1904 vol. 11 no. 27, pp. 254-61; David J. Reid, "Company Mergers in the Fraser River Salmon Canning Industry, 1885-1902," *Canadian Historical Review* LVI/3 (September 1975) p. 285.

passenger and freight steamers plying to and fro; of late years however, white labour has almost wholly supplanted that previously employed.³⁶

Even on the docks, where they had always found work, "now white men are being hired first." Taken together, the agents' reports suggest a steady decline in the economic condition of the Songhees after 1885. In 1897, sixteen years after his appointment as Indian Agent, Lomas described the Songhees as in "the poorest condition ever."³⁷

Through the 1890s the agents noted the continuing desire of aboriginal people to work, and the decreasing options open to them. "Most of the Indians of the superintendency have a fondness for the earning of money....Where there is money to be made, the Indians are eager to earn it," wrote Indian Superintendent A.W. Vowell, in 1901. But "as time advances, they find many of the channels closed against them through which in former times, when white settlers were few and the extent of country open to them almost limitless, they obtained all the necessaries of life...."³⁸

A temporary shortage of *white* labour in 1899 and 1900 meant better years for the Songhees, but by 1902 the Indian Affairs officials were back to what had become a familiar theme in the reports:

They cannot now, or ever again, expect to make as much money as formerly when they were about the only people available to carry on the limited industries of the country; whitemen, Chinamen and Japanese and others, are daily increasing in the province and are, naturally, doing much of the work that fell to Indians in the past.³⁹

That *whites* would "naturally" take their jobs did not seem obvious to the Songhees. George Chictlan's 1894 complaint that the Songhees were not being hired on public work projects was still

³⁶ A.W. Vowell, in Cda. S.P. 1902, no. 27, pp. 288-9.

³⁷ NAC RG 10 vol. 3988 file 154,635, W.H. Lomas to A.W. Vowell, March 30, 1897.

³⁸ Vowell in Cda. S.P. 1902 no. 27 pp. 284-9; Vowell in Cda. S.P. 1904 no. 27 pp. 314-320.

³⁹ W.H. Lomas in Cda S.P. 1900, no. 14, p. 222; 1901, no. 27, p. 241; A.W. Vowell in Cda. S.P. 1903, no. 27, pp. 281-5.

valid 10 years later when provincial Government Agent John Baird, told the Indian Affairs Department, "I am unable to give Indians work as I received orders from the works department not to employ Indians if white men were available." Indian Affairs officials were also being pressured to hire *whites* to do labour on Indian reserves. Federal M.P. Ralph Smith wrote the local Indian Superintendent: "I understand that there are works to be done this season and so I want to appoint the white labour."⁴⁰

In 1903 the Cowichan Agent, now W.R. Robertson, remarked that most of the Indians in his agency were "unable to procure work away from home except during the fishing season when they are in demand. About the Songhees he said, "fishing and working for the white men in the city of Victoria form their chief means of livelihood."⁴¹

After a decade of declining employment there was a considerable improvement in the Songhees paid-work possibilities starting in 1905 when J.H. Todd and Sons established the Empire Cannery on the nearby Esquimalt Indian reserve. For the Songhees work at the Empire Cannery was close to home though it was seasonal, it was reasonably dependable. For the employers, the Songhees provided a stable local labour force and they adapted one of the Songhees longstanding forms of labour organization. The Empire Cannery employed Songhees chief, Michael Cooper "to secure labour and to look after the Indian Help". Cooper's role as labour broker or "Indian Boss" continued through to 1933 when he wrote to the Indian Affairs Department: "I look after employment of Indians at Empire Cannery, see that they receive employment and proper pay and living conditions". The *siem*/chief's role in managing the labour of his group may have diminished but it had not disappeared. He was also

⁴⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 1348 reel C-13917 file: Cowichan Agency Miscellaneous Correspondence 1893-1906, Letter 350, John Baird to W.R. Robertson, July 24, 1904; RG 10 vol. 1023 reel T-1459 file: British Columbia Superintendency, Correspondence 1894-1905, Ralph Smith, MP to A.W. Vowell, August 31, 1905.

⁴¹ W.R. Robertson in Cda. S.P., 1904 vol. 11, no. 27, pp. 254-61.

appointed supervisor of the crew for Indian Department road work on the reserve.⁴² As intermediary between the *white* economy and the prestige economy, Cooper's experience was common to many high-status "Indian bosses" and recruiters, particularly for the canneries and hop fields which required a guaranteed number of workers for a specified season.⁴³

In his different roles, Chief Cooper symbolized both continuity and adaptation. Although he was chief, and *siem*/chiefs were the customary organizers of labour among the Songhees, he did not inherit his right to be head of a family-group. In 1896 he became the first Songhees chief to be elected according to the Indian Act, which only recognized one "chief" in a band, though there had been several *siem*; Cooper's predecessors had all been chiefs according to traditional inheritance rights. Mary Kamia, grand-daughter of Cooper's predecessor, Chief Scomiach, suggested Cooper was elected for his ability to serve as intermediary between the Songhees and the non-aboriginal community -- Cooper's mother was Songhees; his father, a British soldier stationed on San Juan Island in 1864, near where the Songhees conducted their reef-netting. According to Kamia, Cooper was elected over his competitors, both high-born "hereditary" leaders, because "Willie and James didn't no [sic] how to talk English very well."⁴⁴

⁴² NAC RG 10 vol. 1349 reel C-13917, file: Cowichan Agency Miscellaneous Correspondence 1906-1915, J.H. Todd and Sons to W.R. Robertson, Cowichan Indian Agent, August 23, 1909; RG 10 vol. 4093 reel C-10,187 Indian Affairs Black Series, 600,198 File: Michael Cooper, February 17, 1933; RG 10 vol. 9170 B-45, Songhees Indian Reserve Road Work, June 6, 1925.

⁴³ The continuation of the organization of labour by 'chiefs' in these two industries continued in other parts of British Columbia through to the 1950s, at least, alongside an increasing tendency of aboriginal to sell their own labour as individuals, or through Chinese or other labour contractors. Charley Nowell and Harry Assu both described their experiences as labour contractors in their auto-ethnographies, Assu, *Assu and Ford, Smoke From their Fires*.

⁴⁴ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050, file 33 part 7; Mrs. Edwards to Minister of the Interior, March 17, 1915; *Colonist*, January, 11, 1936; Fornsbey also talks about the rivalry for the chieftainship between Cooper and the traditional chiefs in Fornsbey, "Personal Narrative," p. 325; Cooper could claim connection to an important Songhees *siem*, his maternal grandfather, see William W. Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives: Native Historical Accounts of a Coast Salish Culture*, (Seattle: University of Washington, 1993) pp. 39-41.

The Indian Agent was happy with Cooper's election, reporting he "has always been a steady, sober and industrious man" even though, he added, it was rumoured that he had "white blood in his veins". It would appear that industriousness, and his ability to serve as a mediator between the Songhees and non-aboriginal people, not high birth, made him a *siem* to the Songhees. He remained the elected chief until his death in 1935, with the exception of the interval 1916-1922.⁴⁵

In its early years of operation, the cannery required about 100 employees for a two-month season, many more than the Songhees could supply, so aboriginal women from all over southern Vancouver Island were recruited. In its first season the manager wrote the Cowichan Indian agent with a request to send:

10, 15, or 20 more Indian women or grown up girls who would assist in washing fish, filling cans etc. You know that the Empire Cannery at Esquimalt is a very desirable spot for them as they can come down by rail, there is good camping ground at the reserve and good water etc. Please advise if you could pick up this quantity for us around Duncans or Somenos etc at short notice....The Empire Cannery is very busy and we have a general shortage of labour.⁴⁶

Labour shortages in the canning industry continued through to 1909 when "large numbers of Indians coming from the west coast and other places" came to work at the Empire cannery, and became more general between 1907-1913 as Victoria's economy experienced a boom unprecedented since the gold rush.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ NAC RG 10 vol. 3938 reel C-10,164 Black Series 121,134, W.H. Lomas to A.W. Vowell, November 2, 1894; RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: Cowichan Agency General B-45, A.H. Lomas, Indian Agent to William Robert, August, 8 1922; *Victoria Times*, February 5, 1906 p. 5; *Colonist*, July 6, 1905, p. 3; January 11, 1936.

⁴⁶ NAC RG 10 vol. 1348 reel C-13,917 file: Cowichan Agency Miscellaneous Correspondence 1893-1906, J.H. Todd and Sons to W.R. Robertson, July 24 and 26, 1905; *Colonist*, July 4, 1905, p. 7; August 7, 1907, p.7.

⁴⁷ United Church Archives, Toronto, 78.092c, file 97, E.K. Nichols to A.B. Sutherland, June 19, 1909; *Colonist*, June 13, 1906 p. 9; July 12, 1907, p. 5; Vancouver *Province* September, 18, 1909 p. 1; Peter Baskerville, *Beyond the Island: An Illustrated History of Victoria*, (Windsor: Burlington, Ont., 1986) p. 68.

A detailed survey of the Songhees band taken in November 1910 provides a clear picture of their employment during the boom. The survey, done by the Indian Agent at the request of the Department of Indian Affairs, was meant to evaluate their ability to manage a large sum of money which would result from the sale and relocation of their reserve. Even though it is unlikely that this survey captured all paid work, it offers a more complete picture than the earlier census since it indicates the main jobs held by the band members through the year, not just at the time of the survey.⁴⁸

According to the survey, of the 31 men over age 16, all but one had at least one occupation listed and 12 listed more than one. There were similarities with the 1891 census. Relatively few were employed in skilled trades (a boat builder, a baker, and butcher). For the rest of the men, work was mostly seasonal. But there had also been several shifts in the 20 years since the last census of occupations.⁴⁹ Sealing had disappeared as an industry. Sawmilling had almost disappeared as a source of employment, confirming the agent's comments that *white* labour had displaced aboriginal people in the mills. The impact of the Empire Cannery is felt in the 20 percent (6) men who listed that as a part-time occupation, but the cannery took its fish from the fish traps near Sooke and did not provide employment to aboriginal fisherman, whose numbers had declined from 12 in 1891 to 3 in 1910. Stevedoring-longshoring was now the biggest single source of work, employing 40 percent (12) of the men full- or part-time. Other jobs included: general labourer (4), gardening (1), deckhand (1), logger or sawmill worker (2), laundry worker (1), construction worker (1), fish curer (1), and hunting/fishing guide (1).

The decline of fishing as a source of income was reflected in this census. Two of the three men that mentioned fishing as their only source of income were aged 72 and 59 respectively. "I could

⁴⁸ The following information for 1910 is taken from NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050 file 33.3 pt. 7, "Census of the Songhees Band of Indians" November 21-5, 1910.

⁴⁹ The Songhees were enumerated in the 1901 census but on special forms for aboriginal people, forms which had no place for occupation.

not make a good living at fishing and had to go out to work," was how Harry Williams of the Discovery Island Songhees expressed it 1913. Williams illustrated the new seasonal rounds in Songhees economy. After fishing season, he worked at the Empire Cannery, and then went hop picking in Washington State (where he made \$3 per day for 2-3 weeks); for the rest of the year he pulled stumps for farmers.⁵⁰ Tommy James, also living on Discovery Island, fished during a four-month season for the local market and said that, depending on the year, he made between \$50-\$200 before expenses.

Table VIII
Occupations of the Songhees in 1910

Songhees Men Age 16-65 Occupations Listed in 1910 Survey (12 listed more than one Occupation)		Songhees Women Age 16-65 Occupations Listed in 1910 Survey	
Longshoreman	12	Cannery Labour	4
Fisherman	9	Fishing/Clamming	4
Cannery Labour	6	Domestic Work	4
General Labour	4	Laundry	2
Sawmill/Hand Logger	2	Sewing	1
Construction	1	Housewife	11
Boat Builder	1	Student	3
Butcher	1	TOTAL	29
Deckhand	1		
Baker	1		
Gardener	1		
Laundry Worker	1		
Hunting/Fishing Guide	1		
Fish Curer	1		
No occupation	1		
TOTAL	43 occupations listed for 31 men		

Of the 29 women over age 16 on the census, just over half were listed with occupations. Of these, four did domestic work, four cannery labour, four fishing/clamming (two on their own account and two with their husbands), two worked in a steam laundry, and one at fancy sewing work and hide tanning. Of those with no occupation listed, 11 were mentioned as housewives only, and three were in

⁵⁰ BCARS, GR 1995 reel B-1454, Testimony Before the McKenna McBride Commission on Indian Land Claims, June 10, 1913, p. 199-200.

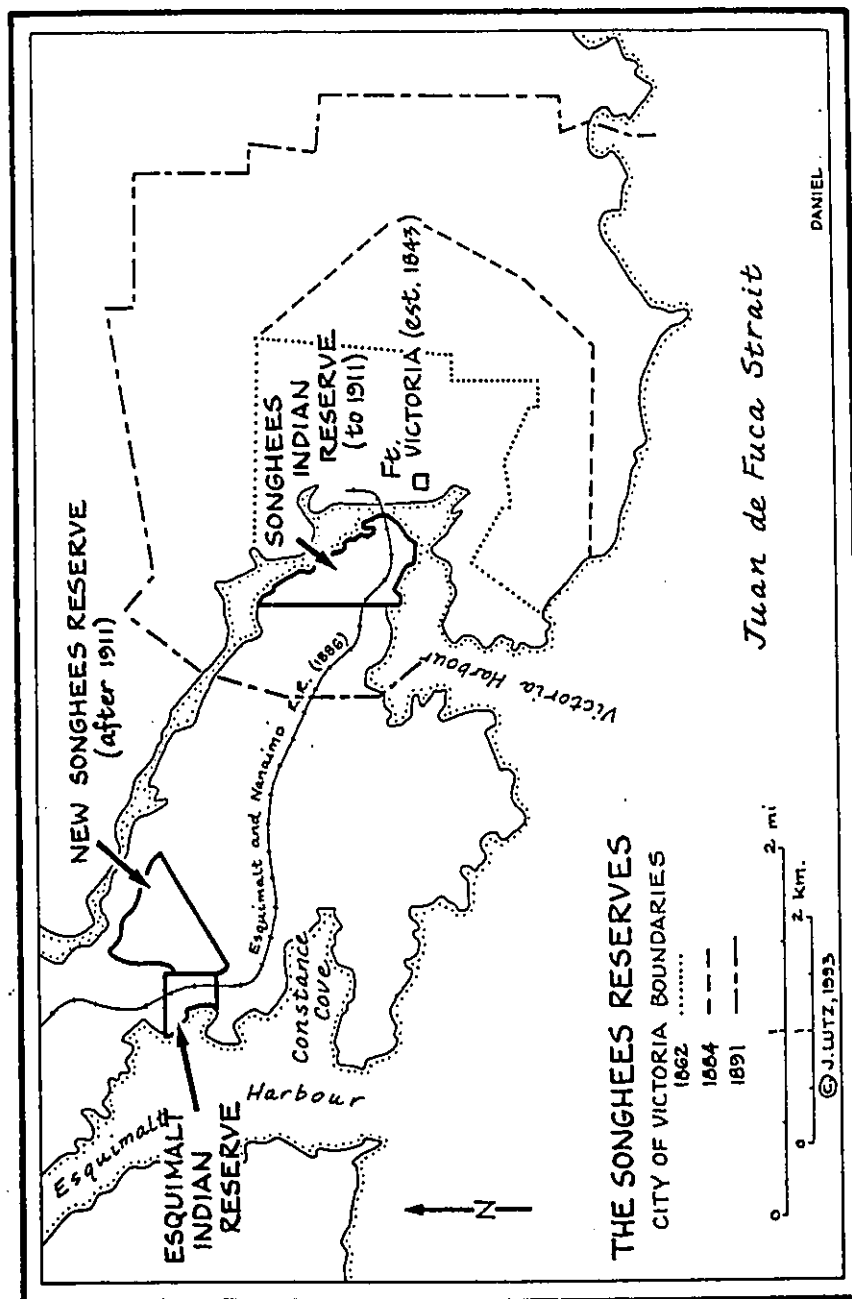
school. The census itself makes no mention of hop picking but the agent's correspondence makes it clear that "nearly all" the Songhees migrated to Washington to pick hops for a few weeks each autumn leading up to 1910.

The 1910 census was in preparation for the 1911 agreement between the federal government and the Songhees in which the latter exchanged their city-centre reserve for cash and a reserve adjacent the Esquimalt reserve [See Map III]. Since the late 1850s Victoria business and other interests had lobbied the federal, provincial and municipal governments to relocate the Songhees from the valuable real estate they occupied in the heart of the city. For 50 years the Songhees resisted all the offers and threats put to them. Chief Cooper's major preoccupation, for the first 15 years as chief, was the pressure from the city of Victoria, the province and the Department of Indian Affairs to relocate his community. Finally, in 1911, he negotiated, on terms agreeable to the majority of the band, the exchange of the city-centre reserve for one on the outskirts, adjacent the Esquimalt reserve. Although the negotiations for the move were conducted in English, this land transfer, probably like the original Treaty in 1850, was explained to the band members in Chinook. Ironically, the new reserve was formerly a Puget Sound Agricultural Company farm, cleared by the Songhees as one of their first jobs in the wage-economy.⁵¹

The relocation suddenly placed the Songhees among the richest aboriginal people in the province, if not the country. As part of the settlement, the 41 heads of families received \$10,000 in cash, plus the value of their "improvements" including houses, barns, stables, fences, and fruit trees. Chief Cooper, it was revealed later, was paid an additional \$28,000 for his assistance in negotiating the deal. The Songhees insisted that the money be paid to them directly, not, as was required by the Indian

⁵¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050 file: 33/3, part 7, H. Dallas Helmcken to Richard McBride October 26, 1910.

MAP III
Songhees Reserves, Victoria Urban Area



Act, held in trust for them by the Department of Indian Affairs. This condition of sale was so extraordinary the federal government passed a special piece of legislation⁵².

Two years later, Indian Superintendent Ditchburn was asked by the Department of Indian Affairs to account for how the Songhees had spent their nearly half-million dollars. The nature of the request and the response both suggest the racialization of Indians within the Department of Indian Affairs. After collecting their receipts, examining their bank accounts and interviewing individuals, Ditchburn concluded that although a few had "squandered their money," overall, "the Songhees...have done as well, if not better, with their money than the same number of white people, in a much higher stage of civilization, would have done."⁵³ Of the total received in 1911, 19 percent remained as cash on hand. About 40 percent of the total could be accounted for in the value of assets purchased, mainly houses, furniture, horses, buggies implements and stock. Another 19 percent was invested in interest-bearing deposits, loans or in real estate. The remaining 22 percent had been spent or given to relatives.

While Ditchburn was examining the personal finances of the Songhees, the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission on Indian Land Claims was conducting its own hearings in Victoria. The commissioners concluded the Songhees were generally "prosperous, virtually all have money in the bank and good homes well furnished." Of the Chatham and Discovery Islanders they wrote: "Fishing, sheep raising and working for wages etc, also weaving sweaters, and selling seaweed to Chinese" were their sources of income and in all they too were "comfortable and prosperous."⁵⁴

⁵² The improvements taken together were valued at \$20,172. *Colonist*, March 22, 1916 p. 3; the two negotiators for the province did even better earning, \$30,000 and \$70,000 respectively; BC S.P. 1912, p. C270; Canada, *Statutes of Canada*, 1911, vols. 1-2, Chap. 24 pp. 225-7.

⁵³ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050, 33/3 pt. 7, W.E. Ditchburn to Duncan C. Scott, December 11, 1913.

⁵⁴ BCARS, GR 1995; reel B-1454, McKenna McBride Transcripts, June 14, 1913 and Final Report Volume and Table. In the final report the commissioners say that the Songhees are employed "in the mills, as stevedores, teamsters, fishermen, etc...also two storekeepers, one baker, etc..." but the evidence of Indian Agent Robertson explicitly states that no Songhees work in the mills.

With the new capital provided by the reserve settlement several of the Songhees moved into entrepreneurial endeavours. Charlie Gunion and Johnny Gabriel started stores on the reserve and Robbie David started a chicken farm. Austin Albany, the butcher, established his own shop -- which failed by 1913 "owing to keen competition and giving too much credit" according to the agent. Several of the men bought express wagons and teams of horses, yet, despite the influx of cash most of the Songhees continued their work as usual. In his 1913 report, the agent confirmed the general prosperity of the Songhees, as well as the other Indians in the agency: "On the whole they have all done much better during the past year than in any previous year, as times have been good and all classes of unskilled labour have been in great demand. Any Indian who was desirous of obtaining employment could easily have his wants fulfilled at good wages."⁵⁵

The same year, however, the fisheries department introduced new salmon fishing regulations making it more difficult for aboriginal people to make a living from fishing. The new rules prohibited Indians from obtaining "independent" fishing licences, a privilege only allowed to *whites*. Non-*whites* who wanted to fish had to do so under a limited number of less lucrative special "cannery licences" controlled by the canneries.⁵⁶

The fishing regulations and the next depression, which swept the country in 1914, affected the aboriginal pool of unskilled labour severely. In his report for that year the Indian Superintendent for British Columbia reported: "the principal sources of income of these Indians are hunting, fishing, working at canneries, hop-picking, stevedoring, boat and canoe building and general day labour." But, he added, "the amount of revenue obtained from the last named source was not as great as has been the

⁵⁵ Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report, (DIA AR) 1913 pp. 283-4.

⁵⁶ NAC RG 23, Department of Fisheries, General File, reel 5, file 6, part 8; see also Newell, *Tangled Webs of History*, p. 77 and Chapter 10.

case for some years as the period of depression affected the Indians in this respect to quite an extent."⁵⁷ The Department attributed the general inability of aboriginal people to get employment outside the resource industries to widespread racism: "When applying for work outside of the reserve he is often refused because white men are as a rule unwilling to work alongside of Indians."⁵⁸

A pattern was increasingly evident. In times of depression and labour surplus, aboriginal people were excluded from the remaining employment on the basis of being "Indian" with all its racialized associations, and left to fend for themselves in their subsistence economy, or on relief from the state. In times of labour shortage they were welcomed back into the workforce. The Songhees, and more generally, aboriginal people in British Columbia, were being placed in a functional role that Karl Marx called the "reserve army of the unemployed," only in this case "reserve" had a double meaning.⁵⁹

By 1917 the expansion of war industries turned a labour surplus into a shortage and aboriginal people were again drawn into the labour force. "The past year has been one of great prosperity for the Indians of southwestern British Columbia..." according to the Indian Affairs officials, due to:

...the extraordinary high prices paid for all kinds of fish, and the great scarcity of unskilled labour. Never in the history of the province have such high prices been paid for fish as in the past year. Even the poorer variety, known as dog salmon, sold for as high as 67 cents each. On the west coast some Indians are known to have earned as much as \$1,000 in a single week.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ DIA AR, 1915, pp. 102-3.

⁵⁸ DIA AR, 1912 p. 396; 1911 p. 385.

⁵⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: International, 1954) p. 644. Engels was not talking about Indian reserve labour, but he might as well have been, when he added that when business is bad the industrial reserve army "is paid below the value of its labour and is irregularly employed or is left to be cared for by public charity, but...is indispensable to the capitalist class at times when business is especially lively...." in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (Moscow, 1962) p. 468.

⁶⁰ DIA AR, 1918 p. 38.

The following year the Department's annual report stated: "The prevailing wage paid for farm labourers and for work in the saw mills and logging camps was higher than at any time previous....In the lumbering industry wages were exceptionally high and Indians engaged in that work earned from five to eight dollars per day."⁶¹

Through the good times, and the not-so-good, and despite the legal prohibitions, many of the Songhees continued to hold and attend potlatches. The agent's diary shows the Songhees potlatching in 1898 and attending other local potlatches in 1903, 1906 and 1907. The *Colonist* reported Songhees Johnny George's potlatch in January 1901 and compared its 300 guests favourably to Willie Jack's potlatch of the year prior "even though the expense was not as great." Willie Jack held another large potlatch in May 1910, attended by the Coast Salish nations from Nanaimo south and in June the Songhees participated in the Quamichan's potlatch.⁶²

Although the potlatch persisted through this era it was also transformed. Sometime between the first prohibition in 1885 and the 1920s, perhaps to avoid persecution, its name was changed. Events previously associated with "potlatches" began to be performed under the auspices of the other main Salish winter ceremonial, the "spirit dance" or simply "winter dance". Instead of a four or five day potlatch, a winter dance would happen over the course of one night. Whereas previously, thousands of dollars were redistributed to thousands of guests, after the turn of the century only hundreds of dollars were given at much smaller gatherings. The smaller potlatches were perhaps a reflection of the Songhees diminished economic circumstances, a response to the prohibitions against the potlatch, or a new preoccupation with accumulation and paid work at time when they were illegal. Still, dance or

⁶¹ DIA AR, 1919 pp. 52-3.

⁶² NAC RG 10 vol. 1351 reels C-13917, C-13918, Cowichan Agency Agent's Diary, January 1898; May and June 1910; *Colonist*, January 20, 1901; there are also photos of a Songhees potlatch dated 1895, and another between 1902 and 1904 at the B.C. Provincial Museum, see for ie. PN8927; BCARS photo HP031889.

potlatch, the "main work" of giving gifts remained for all the old reasons except one major one. The need to pass on the rights to valuable resource sites diminished as the sites themselves were lost to urbanization and new state regulations which appropriated control over hunting and fishing.⁶³

Potlatching and dancing were still important enough in 1911 that nine of the 41 family heads who had received the \$10,000 cash settlement as part of the relocation package, built two houses each, one for living in; another, at a cost of between \$500 and \$1000 each, for potlatches and spirit dances. According to Suttle's informants, after 1911 there was a "glorious potlatch" where "the greater part" of the cash distribution was spent. Although "greater part" is certainly an exaggeration, Peter George described how one family, wanting to commemorate a member lost at sea on a commercial sealing trip, threw coins by the handful along the muddy shore; another threw silver coins into the crowd "like a man sowing grain."⁶⁴

This may be the same event described by the Vancouver Sun:

[Songhees] Willie Jack, on this great occasion filled his plug hat with silver half dollars and walked proudly around between two rows of his admiring tribesmen. To each one he handed a shining new half dollar. This has remained the record for generous giving every since....Other gifts in the shape of canoes, blankets, and many things were distributed besides by this generous chieftain, who added to his reputation for generosity.⁶⁵

⁶³ The best account of this transformation is in Wayne Suttles, "Spirit Dancing and the Persistence of Native Culture among the Coast Salish," in Suttles, ed. *Coast Salish Essays*, p. 199-208; see also J.E. Michael Kew, "Central and Southern Coast Salish Ceremonies Since 1900," in Suttles, ed. *Handbook of North American Indians*, pp. 476-480.

⁶⁴ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050 33/3 pt. 7; Suttles, *Economic Life of the Coast Salish*, p. 316. There were also "potlatch houses" on the Discovery Island reserve in use in 1911 according to the McKenna McBride Commission, BCARS, GR 1995; reel B-1454 McKenna McBride Transcripts, June 14, 1913.

⁶⁵ *Sun*, August 21 1916; Willie Jack was a hereditary "chief" or "siem" but was not the elected chief of the band.

In the face of strong resistance from aboriginal people and some vocal opposition from the public, from 1884 to 1914 the Department of Indian Affairs were reluctant to prosecute potlatchers.⁶⁶ The Songhees' Indian Agent generally turned a blind eye to the events until a 1914 potlatch at Cowichan when Agent Robertson announced at the end that there were to be no more. This prompted southern Vancouver Island chiefs and councillors, Michael Cooper and William Roberts of the Songhees among them, to send a letter of protest to Ottawa.

The protest pointed out that the Indians who participated in the potlatch at Cowichan were well-off, and well-equipped with lands and houses as well as stock and other property. "The government they say has put a stop to their catching fish or hunting game on their lands and they desire to know what will be the next step to limit their liberties."⁶⁷

The chiefs wrote:

We like the white people want to have some fun. We know they have their dances -- they have their celebrations during which lots of money is spent....Therefore we humbly petition the government not to interfere with our celebrations -- we let the white people have theirs therefore we expect to have ours. We are oppressed from all sides we never have any satisfaction given to our many petitions sent in - We notice that all times the white people are listened to but we seem forgotten. Now our patience is coming to an end....⁶⁸

Mr. W.E. Ditchburn, of the Department of Indian Affairs responded that although the department had been endeavouring to use moral suasion to end potlatching, "of late years this practice had been increasing among some tribes. There had been a tremendous waste of money, which the Indians should have saved and used in developing their holdings. The physical and moral effect of such

⁶⁶ For a fuller discussion of the laws and resistance see Cole and Chaiken, *An Iron Hand Upon the People*, pp. 30-9.

⁶⁷ NAC RG 10 vol. 9174, B 75; Vancouver *Sun*, August 21, 1916; *Colonist*, June 17, 1914.

⁶⁸ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,174 file: B75, Cowichan Chiefs to Superintendent of Indian Affairs, December 22, 1914.

celebrations had been shown beyond a doubt to be pernicious. The practice had a degrading influence, which among some tribes had proved a serious matter." Statistics showed, according to Ditchburn, "that, in the past twenty years, among those tribes in which the practice of holding potlatches had been most prevalent, the Indian population had seriously declined. While this might not be wholly due to the practice, it was certain that it was to a great extent the outcome of the custom."⁶⁹

Despite government admonition and pressure, the prestige economy continued. In August 1916 the *Vancouver Sun* reported: "When the Indian families come down from their reservation villages to work in the salmon canneries of the Fraser River they look forward to the potlatches which will take place when they return home with the money they have earned."⁷⁰

During World War One, the Department of Indian Affairs re-marshalled its argument around resources required for the war effort, and the "wasteful" nature of potlatches. In 1918, the Indian Act was amended to enable agents to try potlatchers without a judge. Staff was instructed to "carefully observe the movements of your Indians and check any tendency in the direction of preparing for one of these ceremonies."⁷¹ In 1921, after the agent W.R. Robertson tried but failed to keep the Songhees from a potlatch in Cowichan, charges were laid against the principals.⁷²

It is harder to get a picture of the employment history of the Songhees in the 1920s but indications suggest a continuation of the pattern of seasonal work in the canneries for many as well as

⁶⁹ *Colonist*, June 17, 1914.

⁷⁰ *Vancouver Sun*, August 21, 1916.

⁷¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,174 file: B 75, Duncan Campbell Scott to all agents, October 21, 1918.

⁷² NAC RG 10, vol. 9,174 file: B75, Indian Agent to Michael Cooper, January 24, 1921; W.E. Ditchburn to the Department of Indian Affairs, February 19, 1921.

occasional work longshoring for a portion of the men.⁷³ The men also benefitted from occasional on-reserve public works, paid for by the Department of Indian affairs.⁷⁴ Only one Songhees, Louie Kamia, held down a skilled position: "I am employed in Victoria City as a baker" he said in 1919. In order to be close to his work, he purchased a house in the city with his share of the reserve settlement.⁷⁵

Hop picking continued to be a seasonal occupation in the summer and early autumn for many including Chief Cooper. As with fishing, some years were good, some poor. Jimmie Freezy (Freezie), one of the Songhees migrants, wrote Agent Lomas in 1923: "I left Victoria in July to pick berries and worked for four months at Puyalup and made so much money I bought a car that cost \$225." Unfortunately he lent the car to his boss who wrecked it in a traffic mishap. Hop picking was particularly important in those years when the salmon failed to materialize, like 1926 when "the supply of salmon has been very limited and consequently there has been very little work for the Indians. In fact," the Empire Cannery manager added, "those that are on the reserve and living close by could easily attend to the packing which amounts to a few hours daily three times a week."⁷⁶

Throughout the 1920s, several references in the correspondence remark that in the summer "most of the people" were away working. For women a variety of work was available. Some worked

⁷³ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: Cowichan Agency General B-45, Chief Michael Cooper to W.H. Lomas, Indian Agent, January 13, 1925, asks about funds to do road work on the reserve: "I would like to get it done before some of the boys start working at the cannery next month."

⁷⁴ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: Cowichan Agency General B-45, A.H. Lomas Indian Agent to Secretary, DIA, July 23, 1925 and November 8, 1924; \$1,000 authorized to be spent on Songhees road and this employed 13 men of the Songhees men for a brief period. Similarly repairs to the cemetery the year previous gave a week's wages \$17.60 to 10 of the men.

⁷⁵ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050 file: 33/3 pt 6, Louie Kamia to Indian Agent, March 1, 1919.

⁷⁶ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: Cowichan Agency General B-45, Jimmy Freezie to W.H. Lomas, Indian Agent, 1925. Chief Michael Cooper to A.H. Lomas, March 1, 1929; RG 10 Vol. 9,172 file: B-63, J.H. Todd and Sons to A. H. Lomas, July, 31 1926. We are discouraged "as in every year so far by this date we have had very much better results from the traps."

at the Empire Cannery in season, Mrs. Huddy Dick worked at the Cold Storage Plant at Ogden Point and Mrs. Andrew Tom and her daughters worked at the herring reduction works at Cowichan Gap.

There are a few indications that the 1920s were reasonably prosperous years for the Songhees. One is that little relief was given out by the agent. Even if their current income did not sustain them, based on an examination of their estates, most families could still had something of their cash settlement to fall back on. Of the four who died in the 1920s, two still had a considerable amount of cash in their accounts, one had no cash but owned property off-reserve. The fourth died with no assets.⁷⁷

The 1929 onset of the Great Depression, like the previous 1892 and 1914 depressions, seemed to hit the Songhees harder than their non-aboriginal neighbours and income statistics confirm this. Four years into the Depression, when the average Canadian income from wages and salaries was 61 percent of its 1929 level, the average for Indians was down to 37 percent of the 1929 level. In explaining this the Department of Indian Affairs pointed to racism as the reason why Indians were in more need than others: "The Indian was the first to be thrown out of work when the depression started and evidently will be the last to be again absorbed when the conditions improve."⁷⁸

By 1932 the agent was getting an unprecedented number of letters asking for help: "We have nothing to eat. I will ask your assistance please for supplies, for food for my family its necessary I could not get anny[sic] work no where". One man, Charles, wrote he needed food "for I have no work

⁷⁷ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: Cowichan Agency General B-45; Rev. C.M. Tate to W.H. Lomas, Indian Agent, August 5, 1923; J.D. McLean, Ass't. Dep. Superintendent to A.H. Lomas Indian Agent, April 4, 1924; Chief Michael Cooper to A.H. Lomas, January 13, 1925; March 1, 1929; RG 10 Series B-3g Reel 2739-40, Songhees Estate Files.

⁷⁸ DIA AR, Report of the Deputy Superintendent, 1935, p. 10; J.L. Taylor, *Canadian Indian Policy During the Inter-War Years, 1918-1939*, (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1984, p. 93.

to do, the cannery is working but I can't get in to[o] many workers so please...."⁷⁹ By January 1933 Frank George wrote "I'm the only one on the reserve that is not getting any relief which I need as much as the rest."⁸⁰

Despite the lack of work, potlatching continued though secretly in the repressive climate that developed since the first World War. References to potlatches/dances only occur on those infrequent occasions when the agent and police found out about them, such as in February, 1933. According to the police informants, Chief Cooper himself distributed money and otherwise took "a very prominent part" in a dance-potlatch ceremony at the Cole Bay Reserve in Saanich, attended by over 800 aboriginal people. When the police reported this to the Indian agent, Cooper's \$30 per month chief's allowance was permanently cut off.⁸¹ A decade later, another police report documents an "Indian dance" on the Songhees reserve, attended by 350 people from the reserves south of Nanaimo, in which an unspecified amount of money was given away.⁸²

Relief payments were paid in kind to a value of \$4 per month. This was less than one quarter of the \$16.50 non-Indians were getting from the province and municipalities, as Mrs. Dora Ross, an Indian through marriage, pointed out to the Department.⁸³ The agents, aware of the inadequate relief rates, encouraged Indians to return to subsistence activities or home-manufactures as supplements. The

⁷⁹ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file B-45, Lizzie Fisher to H. Graham, Cowichan Indian Agent August, 1932; Charles to H. Graham, August 6, 1932.

⁸⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: B-45, Frank George to H. Graham, January 14, 1933.

⁸¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 4,093 reel C-10,187 file: Indian Affairs Black Series 600,198, Charles Perry, Assistant Indian Commissioner for BC to H.W. McGill, Deputy Superintendent General, February 25, 1933.

⁸² NAC RG 10 vol. 9,172 file: B-63, Sergeant C.C. Jacklin, British Columbia Police to R.H. Moore, Mar 16 1943; a spirit dance in 1939 on the Saanich Reserve was also the subject of a police report, RG 10 vol. 11,297, R.C.M.P. Report, February 27, 1939.

⁸³ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: B-45, Mrs. Percy Ross to H. Graham, January, 8, 1935; this disparity is examined in more detail in the next chapter.

importance of this non-wage income was highlighted by Mrs. Ross: "I can't possibly make out on the \$4.00 [per month] grocery order and I can't get any other help as I live on the Reserve. The Indians here might make it do but they can do other jobs, also make sweaters etc.. I have no means of adding anything to the allowance."⁸⁴

Women's home production, a consistent supplement to employment income since the establishment of a cash economy, took on primary importance.⁸⁵ Sweaters were traded to storekeepers for food, until supply outstripped demand. Susan Cooper wrote the agent in March 1933: "I owe a great deal to the store which I will pay by making sweaters[,] but the store keeper will not let me trade with sweaters for groceries any more after I pay him all because he has to[o] many sweaters on hand right now so that is why I am asking you for some groceries." Later in the year Elsie Kamia wrote the agent: "I understand you are buying Indian sweaters I have one made -- the stores in town offer small money for them so I wondered if you could help us -- many women in this reserve make them." According to one knitter, a sweater in 1935 could bring in as much as \$4.50; with wool costing only 3 cents a pound, the net payment to the knitter would have been close to the \$4.00 monthly grocery order available through relief.⁸⁶

Another means of supplementing relief was clamming, for food and for sale, but this required transportation. "Everybody is digging clams except me," wrote Robbie Davis in 1934, "I have no boat or

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, and H. Graham, to George Davidson, B.C. Superintendent of Welfare, January 17, 1935.

⁸⁵ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: B-44, George Pragnell, Inspector of Indian Agencies to Secretary DIA, December 14, 1934.

⁸⁶ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: B-48, Mrs. Susan Cooper to H. Graham, Indian Agent, March 15, 1933; Mrs. Elsie Kamia to H. Graham, December 6, 1933; 1935 price from an interview with a March 1994 interview with Priscilla on Tsartlip Reserve, in Sylvia Olsen, "Cowichan Indian Sweaters," Unpublished paper, University of Victoria, 1994.

canoe". As a result, "I wish you would give me relieve [sic] for it is about three weeks from the time I did went out of grocery...please hurry."⁸⁷

Hop picking continued through the 30s but wages were so low that in 1932 many who went south did not even make enough to pay for their passage home and so were stranded. Even still, the Inspector of Indian Agencies, though he had previously tried to dissuade Indians from this annual migration, wished them well in 1933: "Unfortunately there is nothing else for them in the way of employment in B.C., with the exception of those who may get work in the canneries."⁸⁸ Berry picking, locally and in Washington State, took some off the relief roles for the summer, but they were back on again in the fall.⁸⁹

By 1935 the band members were forced to write a memorial to the agent asking for an immediate distribution from the Songhees band trust account:

We would point out that no member of the Tribe at the present time, with the exception of one man, is employed and that one man is only engaged in part-time employment. Owing to the conditions prevailing with regard to employment generally, it is impossible for any of the members of the band to obtain employment. In consequence members of the Band and members of their families are suffering from want of the necessaries of life.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ NAC RG 10 vol 9,170 file: B-45; Mrs. Percy Ross to H. Graham, January 8, 1935; Robbie Davis to H. Graham, December 8, 1934.

⁸⁸ NAC RG 10 vol 9,170 file: B-44, George Pragnell to Secretary, DIA, June 15, 1933.

⁸⁹ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file B-44 Pragnell to Secretary, DIA, July 30, 1932; file B-45, Frank George to H. Graham, April 4, 1933. "Please continue my relief as the Strawberries are getting on soon and then we won't be bothering you any more." RG 10 vol. 9,172 file: B-63, Joe Thomas, Winslow to Mr. Moore, July 5, 1937, remarked that he paid 8 hop pickers an advance of \$20 but they did not arrive so the employer wants Joe to reimburse him \$160.

⁹⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: B-45, Memorial of the Songhees Band, March 15, 1935.

The Esquimalt band took the extraordinary step of consulting a law firm to force the Department of Indian Affairs to make an interest distribution from band funds.⁹¹ The records do not indicate if a distribution was made, but the department continued to issue its \$4 per month to virtually every family in the band.

By this time, the main focus of Chief Cooper's liaison work between the Songhees and the Department of Indian Affairs related to matters affecting the welfare of the band and the provision of relief to the indigent. "Apart from my duties as Chief of the Songhees," Cooper wrote that he was "frequently called upon not only by Chiefs of other bands from various parts of this Island, but also from members of the Tribes for advice on matters affecting themselves personally and sometimes effecting [sic] the welfare of the Tribe." Cooper wrote the agent that he gave his time and services freely:

because, in the first place they have no other Indian adviser than myself, and in the second place it is very difficult and sometimes it is expense prevents them from going to call on you personally and as your time is very much taken up with the Tribes under your jurisdiction I am frequently called to act and do things for them, which, under ordinary circumstances, would be performed by yourself.⁹²

In some cases, the agent invited Cooper's advice as to whether an individual needed relief, while in others, Cooper initiated measures to get relief to elderly or destitute Songhees. In recognition of the value of his role as middleman, the Department of Indian Affairs actually put Cooper on salary until he reportedly participated in a potlatch.⁹³ After Cooper's death in January 1936, Songhees chiefs

⁹¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,172 file: B-63, Davey and Baker, Barristers and Solicitors to R.H. Moore, October 6, 1939.

⁹² NAC RG 10 vol. 1,349 reel C-13917 file: Cowichan Agency Miscellaneous Correspondence 1906-1915, Michael Cooper to W.R. Robertson, April 7, 1910.

⁹³ Cooper was on salary from before 1910, when his salary was raised from \$20 to \$30/month, until he resigned in 1916; his salary was reinstated in 1927 at \$40/month and cut off in 1933; NAC RG 10 vol. 1,349 reel C-13917 file: Cowichan Agency Miscellaneous Correspondence 1906-1915, H. Dallas Helmcken to W.R. Robertson, March 17 and March 22, 1910; RG 10 vol. 4,093 reel C-10,187, Indian File 600,198, A. Lomas, to Secretary, DIA, August 13, 1928, J.D. McLean to A.Lomas, October 3, 1928.

did not assume his role as labour broker for the cannery, nor were they salaried but they did carry on the ambiguous role of cultural/economic mediator between the Songhees and state via the Indian Agent. The chiefs' new brokerage tasks revolved largely around welfare.⁹⁴

The Depression wiped out whatever was left of the liquid assets from the 1911 settlement -- judging by what the Songhees owned at death. Of the 13 band members who died between 1929 and 1958, and for whom the estate records survive, none left more than \$300 worth of assets, over and above their house and lot on the reserve; most left barely enough to pay for their funerals; several did not have that.⁹⁵

There was some room for optimism in the Department's Annual Report for 1937: "The re-employment of Indians in industrial activities showed some improvement." However, as they candidly pointed out, "preference largely continues to be given to unemployed whites".⁹⁶ The work situation started to change in 1939; by 1940 the relief list was down to 12 and in 1943 it was down to four "old widows and invalids," according to Chief Percy Ross. Songhees men were all employed by 1942-3, many of them by the local shipyards trying to meet the wartime ship-building demand.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ A large part of the correspondence between the chief and the agent from 1910 through the 1950s relates to provision of welfare services to needy Songhees. See particularly NAC RG 10 vol. 4,093 reel C-10,187; vol. 1,349 reel C-13917; Black Series 600,198; RG 10 Vol.s 9170, 9172, 9173 and 9174; Jeremy Beckett described this new connection between the state aboriginal people, mediated by chiefs, as 'welfare colonialism' in *Torres Strait Islanders: custom and colonialism*, (Cambridge: New York, 1987); See also Robert Paine, *The White Arctic: Anthropological Essays on Tutelage and Ethnicity* (St. John's, Nfld.: Memorial University, 1977). Cooper's death is reported in *Colonist*, January 11, 1936.

⁹⁵ NAC RG 10 Series B-3g reel 2739-40, Songhees Estate Files; this included nine of the heads of households who received the cash settlement.

⁹⁶ Cda S.P. Annual Report of the Indian Affairs Branch, Ministry of Mines, 1937, p. 112.

⁹⁷ This included Percy Ross, who became a delegate to convention of Boilermaker's Union, Dave Fallardeau, Jack Dick, George Thomas, and Louie Kamia. NAC RG 10 vol. 9,172 file: B-57, Percy Ross to R.H. Moore, May 21, 1943, also file B-58.

The Songhees' experience of being drawn back into the labour force was shared by aboriginal people all over the province. R.W. McLeod, federal fisheries supervisor for British Columbia, stated that a "large percentage of male Indians, physically fit, found remunerative employment in the logging industry, auto highway upkeep, railroad track repair, and agricultural pursuits." As a result, he added, aboriginal subsistence fishing was much reduced.⁹⁸

The war also increased the value of Songhees land for leasing and brought applications from "Oriental" market gardeners wanting their unused acreage. While the local agent wished to accept these applications, particularly for aged Indians who would otherwise be on relief, D.M. McKay, the Indian Commissioner for B.C. requested "he discourage the leasing of Indian lands to Orientals as much as possible." After much correspondence, the head office of the Department of Indian Affairs over-ruled the British Columbia Commissioner's wishes and allowed the leases.⁹⁹

Expanded war-time demand and the government's removal of Japanese-Canadians from coastal areas, also combined to increase the requirement for Songhees labour in the fishing and canning industries. In 1944, the Empire Cannery added four herring canning lines to its three salmon lines, more than doubling its labour force. Herring canning also expanded the work season from two summer months for salmon to include the four fall months for herring. The annual payroll at the Empire Cannery jumped tenfold from its 1941-3 levels to \$59,250 in 1944.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ NAC RG 23 vol. 662 file: 712-2-72 part 4, R.W. McLeod, Supervisor of Fisheries, "Report" 1943; the provincial situation is described in Chapter 4.

⁹⁹ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050 file: 33/3 pt 6, R.H. Moore to D.M. McKay, Indian Commissioner, January 26, 1941; McKay to Secretary Indian Affairs Branch, April 2, 1941; Director, Indian Affairs Branch to Moore, April 8, 1941; McKay argued against the leases, he said, because of protests against Asian farmers by the B.C. Minister of Lands, the British Columbia Fruit Growers Association, the British Columbia Marketing Board, and local farmers' organizations.

¹⁰⁰ Information on employment at Empire Cannery comes from University of British Columbia Special Collections (UBC-SC), J.H. Todd and Sons Business Records, boxes 2-6.

Figure IX shows the cannery payroll from 1941 to 1952, with figures for employment of women where they are available. A comparison of wages and employees suggests that from 1944 to the cannery's closure in 1951 the herring lines employed 40-80 aboriginal women from September to December, in addition to the 15-20 that worked the summer on the salmon lines. The expanded demand drew aboriginal women from all over the south island as well as a few elderly Songhees men.¹⁰¹ The men who continued to fish made good incomes owing to high prices and absence of competition from ethnic-Japanese.¹⁰²

A couple of Songhees men enlisted in the military early in the war and a few others were drafted later on, making a total of six who did military service.¹⁰³ Compared to a \$4 monthly relief cheque, the pay of an enlisted man looked pretty good. Mrs. Frank and Mrs. Dick received \$85-93 per month, which included a portion of their husband's pay plus a wife's and child's allowance.¹⁰⁴

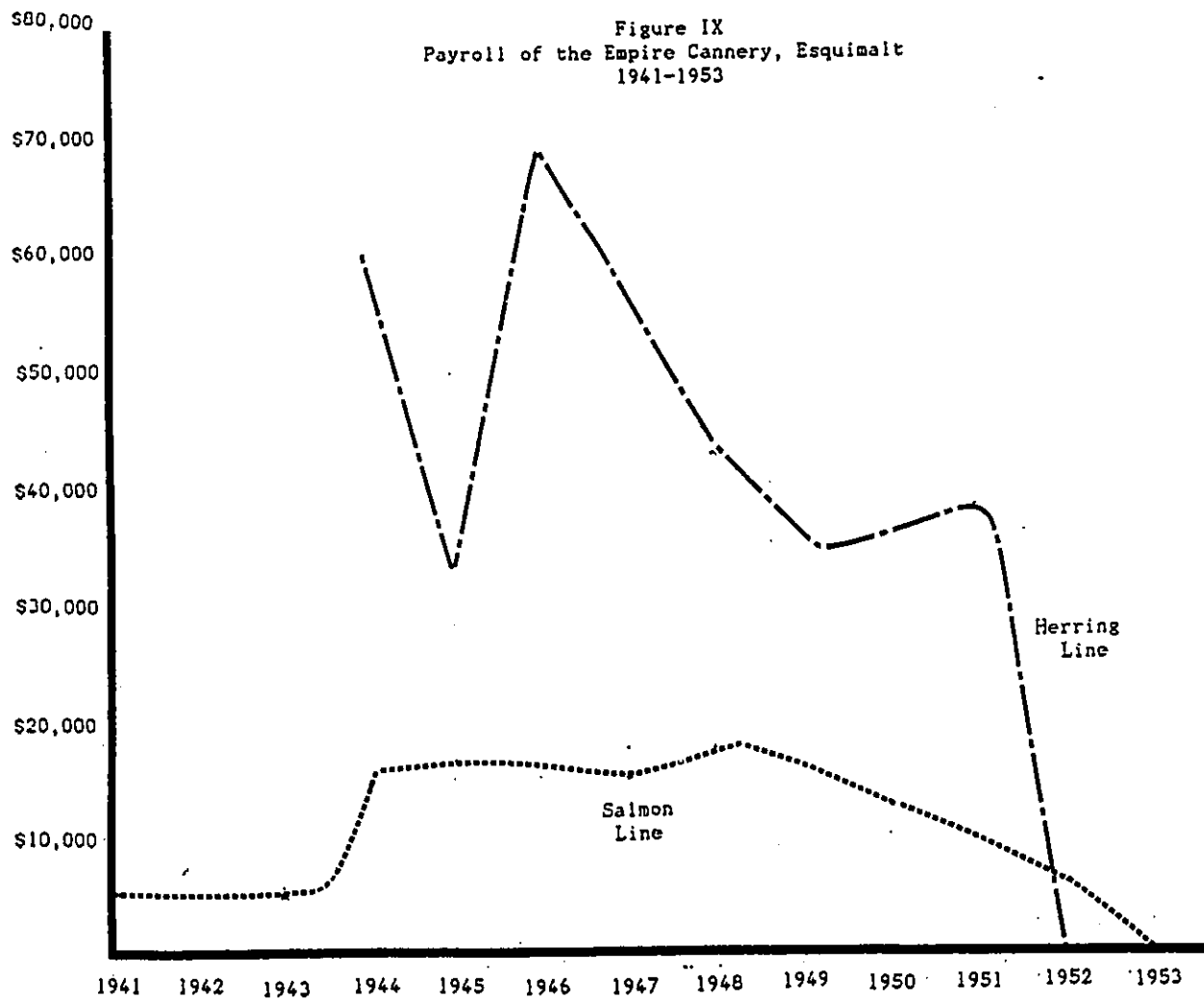
The war drew women and children back into the workforce in a way that had not been seen since 1919. The Agent's report for 1946 noted "women and elderly people, as well as the older children worked in the canneries and berry and hop-fields, both in British Columbia and the State of

¹⁰¹ Songhees Hamlet Kamia worked casually for the cannery in 1941 earning only \$31; in 1943 he earned \$188, and in 1944, \$200; he worked 5½ months in 1948 grossing \$960, and 6 months in 1949 grossing \$1,474. C. Fletcher worked 8½ months in 1941 for \$806, 9 months in 1943 for \$1,134, 10 months in 1944 for \$1,633, 1 month in 1944 for \$171; and 11½ months in 1945 for \$1,799; Jack Dick worked 2 months in 1944 for \$106.35; Harry Dick four months in 1944 for \$271; Edward Joseph worked 4 months in 1943 for \$613 and 9½ months in 1944 earning \$1,447; J. James was a casual employee in 1943 earning \$32 while George Cooper earned \$128 in 1944. The pay sheets for individual female employees have not survived.

¹⁰² DIA AR 1944, 46.

¹⁰³ Among those that were overseas include Frank and Walter George, George Patrick, Frank Albany and one of the Dick brothers. NAC RG 10 vol. 9,172 file: B-58, Minutes of Songhees Band Council Meeting June 25, 1944; Percy Ross to R.H. Moore, July 20, 1944; Moore to W.A. Green, February 19 1945. Lila Dick received an allowance of 93.12 monthly as her husband was in the armed forces.

¹⁰⁴ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file B-49 A.H. Brown, DND Dependents Allowance Board to R.H. Moore Indian Agent, April 14, 1941.



Source: U.B.C Special Collections: J.H. Todd and Sons Records, Box 2, File 11.

Washington.... Conditions were good and work plentiful for Indians of all ages." Berry pickers earned an unprecedented 85¢ an hour and the hop companies paid pickers five cents a pound. "Crops were good and the returns to the Indians were most satisfactory," reported the agent.¹⁰⁵

Several factors coming together in the immediate post-war period reshaped the Songhees economy once again. First, the return of demobilized servicemen and ethnic Japanese from detention camps alleviated the war-time labour shortage. Second, and even more important in the long-run, was an overall slackening in the demand for low-skill seasonal labour, which since the depression of the 1890s had been the mainstay of the Songhees' economy. In the meantime, the ongoing process of limiting access to subsistence food resources meant the alternative economy was less and less available. Finally, the state began a dramatic expansion of welfare payments to Indians.¹⁰⁶

In 1945, family allowance payments were extended to all Canadians. The new injection of cash income was particularly important to aboriginal communities given that the allowance came year-round regardless of weather, strikes or other factors which often limited seasonal employment. There was a catch however. Payment was conditional on school-age children regularly attending school for the 10 months it was in session. Family allowance was withheld for any child not in attendance all month and the July and August cheques were not issued if children were not in school all June and all September. Moreover, families were not technically eligible while working in the United States. Accepting family allowance meant school-age children could no longer accompany their parents in their work rounds, and could no longer contribute directly to the family economy for most of the year.

¹⁰⁵ Susan Cooper who had a difficult time finding work, was employed at a Steveston cannery in 1942 and at Empire Cannery in Esquimalt in 1943. NAC RG 10 vol. 9,172 files: B-56B-57, Susan Cooper to Moore, Dec 17, 1942; Cooper to R.H. Moore, October 16, 1943; DIA AR 1946, p. 197.

¹⁰⁶ This point is developed in Chapter 8.

Indian agents were positively gleeful about this additional tool at their disposal to put a stop to "the Indian wandering habits". The agents reported: "A marked improvement in school attendance and enrolments stems in part from the emphasis on education in the Family Allowances legislation...." School attendance increased 35 percent in 1946 following the introduction of family allowances the year before.¹⁰⁷

While more children stayed behind to attend school, the family allowance policy did not initially deter many aboriginal people from taking advantage of the exceptionally high wages being paid to hop pickers as the booming Washington economy produced its own labour shortages.¹⁰⁸ At its post-war peak in 1949, the hop and berry yards of Washington State drew 900 people from the Cowichan Agency alone, over a third of the agency's population, from June to September inclusive. Thereafter the numbers dwindled until 1957 when none of the Songhees, nor any others from the Cowichan Agency made the trip. The introduction of mechanical hop pickers in the Fraser Valley that same year further reduced the British Columbia demand for agricultural labour.¹⁰⁹

The Empire Cannery operated its herring line for the last time in 1951 and closed completely in 1952. Like so many other canneries on the coast, Empire fell victim to financial consolidation and technological change. Improved refrigeration techniques meant fish harvested at the firm's traps in

¹⁰⁷ NAC RG 10 vol. 8,571 file: 901/1-2-2-5 pt 1, Colonel Jones, Supervisor of Family Allowances Ottawa, Report at Conference of Indian Agents and Executive Staff of Indian Affairs Branch, B.C. October 21, 1946; NAC RG 29 vol. 2,361 file: 264-1-17 pt 1, W.R. Bone, Regional Director of Family Allowance, Victoria to N.B. Curry, N.B. National Director of Family Allowance, February 2, 1946; RG 26 vol. 106 file: 1/1-15 part 8, "Indian Migrant Workers," Report for the International Labour Organization, October 1953.

¹⁰⁸ In 1948-9 there was also an increase number of British Columbia aboriginal people doing seasonal logging work in Washington State; DIA AR 1947, 1948, 1949 and 1950.

¹⁰⁹ NAC RG 10 vol. 8,423 801/21-1, reel C-13835, W.S. Arneil, Indian Commissioner for B.C. to Indian Affairs Branch, May 27, 1957; Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa, Central Registry Office, (DIAND-CR) 974/21-1 vol. 1, J.V. Boys, Superintendent, Cowichan Agency, Report for the Quarter Ending June 30, 1956, July 18, 1956.

Sooke could be transported to a cannery on the Fraser River and processed more cheaply there than by maintaining a separate cannery in Esquimalt. With its closing, Songhees women, in particular, lost their most regular source of employment. In 1953, only 26 Indians in whole Cowichan agency found work in fish processing, and most of these in herring packing and salting plants on the Gulf Islands rather than in their major historical employers, the salmon canneries.¹¹⁰

The same year that Empire closed, the federal and provincial governments extended old-age-security allowances to Indians. Four Songhees over age 70 were eligible for the \$40/month payment.¹¹¹

While the number of cannery jobs was shrinking, aboriginal fishermen were also under increasing pressure. The Cowichan Indian Agent (now called Superintendent) remarked in 1954 that "With the return of numerous Japanese fisherman to the Pacific Coast, Indians are again finding it difficult to negotiate contracts with the fish canners who prefer to deal with the Japanese because of their dependability in paying accounts. Poor fishing conditions last year also resulted in the majority of Indian fishermen being financially 'broke' during the winter months."

With the closure of work opportunities and the opening of social welfare programs to aboriginal people, the importance of the wage economy fell relative to an increasingly robust welfare economy. In his December quarterly report for 1955 the Cowichan Indian Agent noted that "requests for relief assistance have been unusually heavy....Fortunately," he added, "the Indian women of this agency derive

¹¹⁰ H.B. Hawthorn et al., *Indians of British Columbia: A study of contemporary social adjustment*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1959) pp. 115-6.

¹¹¹ Other British Columbians had been receiving old age security since 1927. In 1948 the Department of Indian Affairs started paying Indians over 70, \$8 per month in lieu of old age security. In 1950 this was raised to \$25 per month. NAC RG 10 vol. 2375 file 275-3-4[1], "Indians Transferred from Aged Assistance to Old Age Security" December 31, 1951; NAC RG 29 vol. 1,889 R170/110 Department of National Health and Welfare, J.I. Clark, to Joy Peacock, November 2, 1968.

a very considerable income from knitting sweaters."¹¹² By the time unemployment insurance benefits were extended to the fishing industry in 1958, the Superintendent reported that there was only one Songhees left fishing, and he fished only part-time and so was ineligible.¹¹³

In that year, the agent conducted a rough employment review and found the majority of Songhees men earned their living in unskilled intermittent jobs "in neighbouring booming grounds and sawmills, and in various jobs in Victoria such as contracting, coal yards, etc...." Their neighbours, the Esquimalt, were benefiting from their harbour-side reserve location. "Most derive their livelihood from leases on the Reserve. At present three large sawmills are located there."¹¹⁴

In 1960, the Department of Indian Affairs undertook a "labour force survey" of the young men on southern Vancouver Island with a view to helping them find employment. The survey found 14 Songhees men between 16 and 24, all "unskilled". Five were still in school and one in prison. Of the other nine, four were listed as casual labourers and five, unemployed.¹¹⁵ In August of 1960, the Director of Indian Affairs wrote a local member of Parliament that "The economic situation on Vancouver Island (and indeed in B.C. generally) is extremely poor." He added that under the circumstances there was no point in continuing the labour survey since there was no work to be found.¹¹⁶ Two months later, the Victoria newspaper headlines read, "Indians Face Starvation as Winter Approaches".

¹¹² DIA, 974/21-1, vol. 1, J.V. Boys, February 1, 1956.

¹¹³ DIAND-CR 974/21-1 vol. 1, K.R. Brown, Superintendent, Cowichan Agency, Semi-Annual Report for the Period Ending June 1954, June 23, 1954, DIA AR, 1958.

¹¹⁴ NAC RG 10 vol. 6,933 file: 901/29-1 pt 1, K.R. Brown to W.S. Arneil, March 26, 1954.

¹¹⁵ National Archives of Canada, Vancouver Regional Repository, (NAC-VRR) RG 10 vol. 84-85 316 500351 file 29-12.

¹¹⁶ NAC RG 10 vol. 6,933 file: 901/29-1 pt. 2, H.M. Jones, Director, Indian Affairs to H.C. McQuillan M.P., August 5, 1960.

A more precise view of the employment opportunities for aboriginal men and women is captured by Kathleen Mooney's survey of Victoria directories for the two decades 1952-1971. Directories tend to enumerate only the more successful and permanently located of economically marginal groups so Mooney's study tends to overemphasize the successful Indians. In 1961, she found 106 Indian men from southeast Vancouver Island, including the Songhees, with occupations. Of these, 34 (32 percent) were engaged in the forest industry, 30 (28 percent) were general labourers, and 24 (22 percent) in skilled trades. Only six men (5.6 percent), on southeast Vancouver Island were fisherman. Five were farmers, one a dentist, one an armed forces officer, one a book keeper, and one a clerk. She noted that "in practice many men were only seasonally employed and with little stability at that."¹¹⁷

Relief records reveal the seasonal nature of the cash-economy and the compensating value of welfare payments. Complete relief records survive for the Cowichan Agency, which included the Songhees, for the year April 1, 1960 to March 31, 1961. Figure X shows that during the peak employment season a quarter of the Indians on the agency were receiving relief; over the winter when seasonal employment was scarce, just over 50 percent were receiving relief. In addition, 145 families received family allowance in the Cowichan Agency and 106 individuals received old-age or disability pensions.¹¹⁸

In 1962 the relief load was higher still. Even in peak employment season -- August -- the Indian Agent was reporting 50 percent of Indians in the Cowichan Agency, 1,600 individuals were on full relief, requiring an annual expenditure of \$150,000. "In spite of the proximity of industries and businesses including farming, fishing, logging, sawmilling, wood processing and shipbuilding, a

¹¹⁷ Kathleen A. Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Indian Economies and Domestic Organization," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1976, pp. 89, 97. In 1970, on the Tsawout Reserve in Saanich, the main income earners in seven of the twelve households surveyed was employed only seasonally; the dentist was Roger Ross.

¹¹⁸ NAC-VRR RG 10 V84-5 vol. 500351 file 41-12; DIAND-CR 208/29-1.

disturbingly high rate of unemployment exists with its attendant low living standards and demoralization, and excessive food relief expenditures."¹¹⁹

The employment situation continued to worsen, if anything, over the next decade. In 1971 only 92 men could be identified in Mooney's directory survey as employed, 15 percent less than a decade prior, and more were in low-skill occupational classes. Thirty-five men (38 percent) were listed as forest industry workers, 24 (26 percent) as labourers; only 12, half the number of a decade before, were in skilled trades, six in professions, five were fishermen, and one a farmer. Indian men were represented in 20 occupations in 1971, down from 22 in 1961. The occupational status of Victoria-area Indians is confirmed by the 1971 federal census which showed 73 percent of Indian men in the unskilled occupational category, compared to only 19 percent of non-Indians living in similar "blue-collar" neighbourhoods.

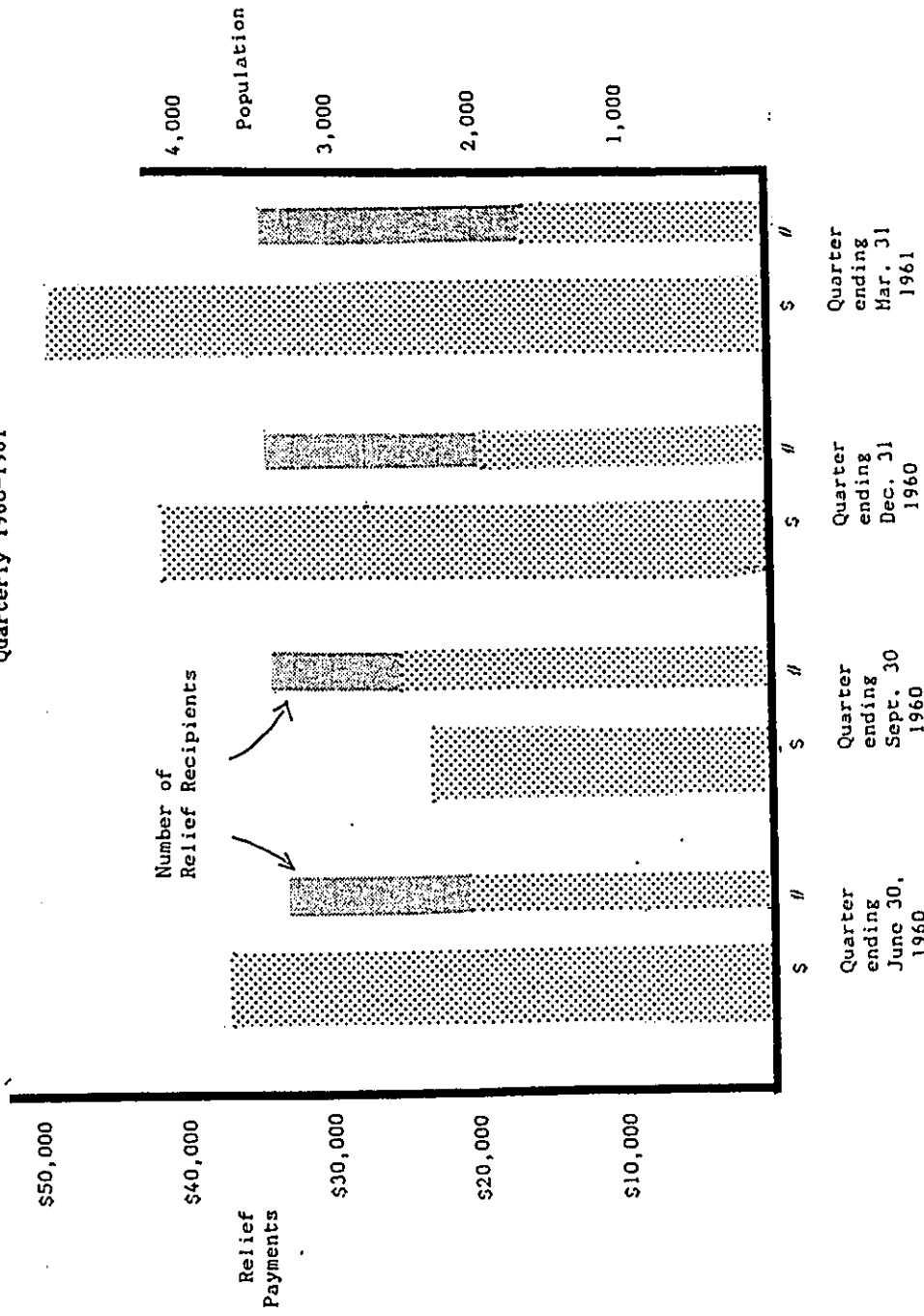
Low skill and low wage occupations characterized over three quarters of Victoria area Indian men, workers who evidently bore a disproportionate share of unemployment. Mooney's census statistics show that Indian men were unemployed, on average, once every 4.17 years, compared to once in every 33.3 years for non-Indians. She found a 36 percent unemployment rate among Indian men, aged 20-59, in 1971.¹²⁰

Mooney's survey of directories is substantiated by a more inclusive 1967 study of southeast Vancouver Island conducted by the Capital Regional District (CRD). The CRD identified 234 Indian men as being "in the labour force", but only 156 of them lived on reserves. Of those on reserve, 31 were full-time students and five were physically unable to work. Of the remaining 120, 36 (30 percent)

¹¹⁹ DIAND CR file 901/21-2 vol. 3. "Excerpt from the Quarterly Report - Cowichan Agency for the period ending August 31 1962."

¹²⁰ Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Coast Salish Employment," p. 402.

Figure X
Covichan Agency Relief Payments and Recipients
Quarterly 1960-1961



Source: NAC Vancouver, RG 10 Acc. 84-5 vol 500,351 file 41-12.

were listed as unemployed. For the Songhees, the statistics were slightly better. Thirty-five Songhees men were identified as in the workforce, 24 of them on reserve. Of the latter, six were students, and two unemployable for physical reasons. Of the 18 remaining, 15 were listed as labourers or craftsmen, two in the service industry and one as a professional (dentist). Four (22 percent) were unemployed. Most of those that were employed were engaged in seasonal work.¹²¹ The Songhees appear to have been faring better than the rest of the agency. Almost half of the agency population of 1,617 was on relief.¹²²

Table IX
Families with Wage Earner as Heads, Indians and Non-Indians
Electoral District of Victoria and Esquimalt Saanich, 1961¹²³

Indians	Total Families #	Families with Wage Earner Hds		Average Income of Head \$	Average Income of Family \$
		#	%		
S. Saanich & E. Saanich	74	22	30	2,700	3,400
Cole Bay & Union Bay	26	15	58	1,200	1,200
Sooke 1 & 2 & Beecher Bay	15	8	53	1,600	1,700
Malahat	10	1	10	300	300
Pacheena & Gordon River	17	11	65	5,200	5,200
All Indians	142	57	40	2,200	2,360
Non-Indians	40,288	26,548	66	4,400	5,200

¹²¹ Capital Region Planning Board of British Columbia, *Indian Communities and Land Use Planning*, (Victoria: Capital Region Planning Board, 1968), Appendix.

¹²² D.B. Fields and W.T. Stanbury, *The Economic Impact of The Public Sector Upon the Indians of British Columbia*, (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1973) p. 48.

¹²³ Includes all the Victoria area Indian bands except the Songhees. Statistics compiled from Canada Census, 1961 in Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Indian Economies," p. 175; as discussed in Chapter 4, the census tended to under-enumerate aboriginal occupations and under-enumerate the least successful; as a result aboriginal income may be biased upward in these figures.

An occupational study of Songhees men in 1969 identified only 25 in the on-reserve labour force and broke down employment as follows:

Fishing and Cannery Workers	7
Forestry Workers	6
Miscellaneous	6
No Employment	6
TOTAL	25

On the basis of interviews it was apparent that only 20 percent of those showing occupations in 1969 were regularly employed.¹²⁴

The statistics were notoriously poor when it came to enumerating work by women. Domestic labour, seasonal cannery work, home production of knitted goods for sale, are all missed in income and occupational statistics. To some extent these gaps can be filled through other sources. Mooney found in her 1971 interviews that aboriginal women were less likely to be employed than non-aboriginal women.¹²⁵ "Seasonal, unsteady and part-time berry, potato and weed picking or bulb sorting was said to be almost the only source of employment available for women, children and older people, involving the adults in twelve sample households." Directories for 1951-71 produced a list of 101 Indian women on southeast Vancouver Island. Of those, Mooney could only find 14 women who had information on employment listed for at least five years.

She found that "even the knitting of Cowichan sweaters, long an important source of supplementary has become increasingly unprofitable. Although an Indian owned and operated sweater

¹²⁴ From a survey taken in 1969 by Salim Aziz, "Selected Aspects of Cultural Change Among American Indians, A Case Study of Southeast Vancouver Island," (Unpublished MA thesis University of Victoria, 1970) pp. 34-5.

¹²⁵ Kathleen A. Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Coast Salish Employment: A Test of Two Approaches to the Indian's Niche in North America," *Journal of Anthropological Research* vol. 32 no. 4 (1976) p. 399.

store is located on the reserve, and people in ten of the 15 sample households used to knit regularly, only four continued to do so."¹²⁶

Other evidence suggests the diminished earning power of women. The statistics of relief payments made to "indigent Indians" suggests very strongly that the patterns of the unrecorded economy followed that of the more observable one, at least in this period. In terms of income, Indian women were even more disadvantaged than men. In 1972, Marjorie Mitchell estimated the median income from all sources, paid work and social assistance for Indian women was \$975 per year, compared to \$3,400 for Indian men.¹²⁷ Not only did an Indian male's chance of unemployment greatly exceed those of his non-Indian neighbour in 1971, a family was much less likely to have the advantage of a second income that might support it.¹²⁸

Comparing the 1891 and 1910 censuses with the surveys from the late 1960s highlights the important transformations that had taken place in Songhees economic lives. The population of the Songhees band, 134 in 1890 was almost identical to the 131 in the band in 1967¹²⁹ but the percentage of the population in the workforce had dropped dramatically.

¹²⁶ Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Indian Economies and Domestic Organization," p. 89; Mitchell estimated that the sweaters brought in less than a dollar an hour in 1972 in exchange for "both physically hard work in washing the wool and monotony," in Marjorie Mitchell, "Social and Cultural Consequences for Native Indian Women on a British Columbia Reserve," *Atlantis* 4, 2 (Spring 1979) p. 183.

¹²⁷ Mitchell, "Social and Cultural Consequences," p. 183.

¹²⁸ Mooney, *Ibid*, p. 259.

¹²⁹ Cda. S.P. 1891; Capital Region Planning Board of B.C., *Indian Communities*, appendix 1.

In 1891 the census showed 35 percent of the Songhees with occupations, while the 1967 survey showed only 15 percent of Songhees with occupations.¹³⁰ The decline in labour-force participation suggested by this figure reflects fewer opportunities for paid-employment of Songhees women, but these were under-enumerated in any case. We can avoid some of the ambiguities inherent in this comparison by focusing on the segment of the Songhees that other evidence suggests had the highest rate of persistence in the labour force and in statistical measures of labour, adult males. In 1891 84 percent of Songhees males (on reserve) 15 to 65 years of age were employed, but in 1967 only 58 percent of the males (on reserve), aged 15 to 55 were listed as employed.¹³¹ The Songhees had become "increasingly unemployed" in the twentieth century.

This comparison of the 19th century censuses and the studies of the 1960s and 1970s is instructive but like long term comparison it also raises important questions. For example, how did the subsistence economies respond to the dramatic changes in paid-work opportunities? How did the prestige economy respond? When and why did the state intervene with social welfare programs? What was the response of Songhees families to the changes in their multiple economies? These questions are taken up in the next two chapters.

¹³⁰ No Songhees women were listed as having an occupation in the 1967 survey. This seems unlikely, even given other surveys which emphasized the very limited wage work available to Indian women, and suggests women may have been left out of the study altogether.

¹³¹ The figures are not precisely comparable. Definitions of "employment" may vary over time, and the 1967 figures consider 15 not 16 to be "working age"; 1891 figures are from Cda. Census Manuscript, 1891 and 1967 figures are from Capital Region, *Indian Communities and Land Use Planning*, Appendix.

CHAPTER 8:

THE OTHER ECONOMIES: SUBSISTENCE, WELFARE AND PRESTIGE

Indians living away from the settlements are much better off in this respect than those whose reserves are surrounded by white settlers, for they can always procure venison, which is still plentiful, and there is no one to enforce the game acts of the Province; whereas in the settlements the laws relating to game and salmon are rigidly enforced, and the Indian who formerly lived by fishing and hunting may not shoot a deer eight months out of twelve.

W.H. Lomas, 1888.¹

Conditions were better back in the early 1900s, we didn't have so many whitemen breathing down our necks. Used to be able to go down to the creek and hook a salmon whenever we got hungry. Now there is a policeman watching all the time.

Andy Paull, July 20-1, 1955.²

The Songhees had always managed to integrate distinct economic systems into their social life. Before Europeans arrived with their early forms of capitalism, the Songhees subsistence and the prestige economies functioned with different rules and different schedules. Even the hierarchies of the two economies were not entirely symmetrical. Although control over productive subsistence resources was the main access route to the status in the prestige economy, prestige also existed in stories, songs, names, and other forms of spiritual "wealth" accessible to people from all classes.

When fur traders wanted to hire aboriginal people as paid labour, the addition of the new set of economic relations was not a dramatic rupture for the Songhees, particularly since the forms of labour subordination and organization were comparable to the Songhees own reef-net fishery. But Europeans and Songhees characterized paid work in the capitalist economy in different ways. Europeans saw it as an alternative to the Songhees economic system while to the Songhees it was complementary. When the fur traders offered to purchase goods and seasonal labour, this "new economy" fit well with the existing Songhees' economies and was incorporated into them. In this way the Songhees joined the

¹ Cda. S.P. 1889 vol. 13, p. 100-101.

² NAC RG 10 vol. 8570, file 901/1-2-2-2, Andy Paull speaking at a conference on the Indian Act, July 20-1, 1955.

capitalist economy without being entirely encapsulated within it. Yet, like most of the exchanges that took place between the Songhees and newcomers, there were transformations taking place on both sides. While the Songhees used capitalist wage work to their own ends, and consumed goods from the capitalist economy according to their own rules, capitalist employers used Songhees labourers for their, different, goals. How did the capitalist, subsistence and prestige economies interact? And, what was the effect of the addition of an alternative economy -- welfare -- on aboriginal-non-aboriginal relations?

Earlier I noted that the arrival of the fur traders and their economic system immediately affected the subsistence economy. Europeans occupied the main Songhees' meadows to farm and graze their cattle and so dispossessed them of prime camas and other root-gathering fields. The initial Songhees response to this invasion was to eat the camas-fattened livestock, but when the fur-traders forced their demands for compensation to the point of violence, the Songhees backed down.³

The Songhees acceptance of the new situation hinged on several factors. First, it was going to be difficult to displace the Europeans from their fort. Second, should they succeed, there was fear of reprisal from other Europeans should the Songhees besiege the fort. Moreover, the lack of further resistance to the occupation of the plains may have also reflected the fact that the nearby islands were also stocked with camas and inaccessible to cattle. Finally, the Songhees reluctance to force the issue was an acknowledgement that the loss of the camas fields, may have reflected an acknowledgement that this was part of an exchange which had its compensations. One of the immediate compensations was that Europeans had supplied a substitute for camas -- the potato. The Songhees had obtained potatoes from Fort Langley, or aboriginal intermediaries, several years earlier and began cultivating them. When Douglas surveyed the site of Fort Victoria in 1842 he commented on the "many small [potato] fields in cultivation"; he took the large size of the Songhees' potatoes as an indication of the fertility of the soil and this convinced him of the suitability of the site he had chosen for a fort. By 1849 the Songhees had

³ See Chapter 6.

followed what was becoming a familiar pattern and had expanded their subsistence potato production into a cash crop for sale to the colonists.⁴

Although the Songhees eventually acquiesced to their dispossession from the plains it was not without a sense of grievance. The potato did not fully displace their desire for camas or the social life of the camas harvest camps. Twenty five years after the establishment of Fort Victoria, G.M. Sproat, a sympathetic observer of aboriginal people, wrote of the Songhees: "One of the bitterest regrets of the natives is that the encroachment of whites is rapidly depriving them of their crops of this useful and almost necessary plant."⁵

Despite their early adoption of the potato and many of the refined European foods like biscuits, sugar, molasses, rice and flour into their ceremonial life and, increasingly, into their regular diets, as late as the mid-1860s the Songhees still gathered foods and medicinal plants from the uncultivated areas around Victoria. Botanist Robert Brown noticed that "notwithstanding the advent of civilised luxury among them....Every where on Vancouver Island Indians gather roots of *Pteris aquilina* and boil and eat them as a great luxury [sic]. The Thongeisth [Songhees], near Victoria, call this "Slee-uk" and still use them...." Brown said that the Songhees gathered *Berberis Aquilifolium* "much esteemed as a tonic particularly for cases of syphilis and other venereal diseases now becoming common among the Indians."⁶

⁴ James Douglas to John McLoughlin, July 12, 1842 printed in "The Founding of Fort Victoria," *The Beaver*, outfit 273 (March 1943) p. 6; Eden Colvile to Sir G. Simpson from Fort Victoria October 15, 1849, in E.E. Rich ed., *London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colvile*, p. 182.

⁵ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1868, 1989) p. 42; Sproat was appointed as the Indian Reserve Commissioner, but the provincial government considered his land, water and timber right allocations to native people too generous, see Robin Fisher, "An Exercise in Futility: the Joint Commission on Indian Land in British Columbia, 1875-1880," *Historical Papers*, (1975) p. 81.

⁶ Robert Brown, "On the Vegetable Products Used by the North-West American Indians...." *Transactions of the Botanical Society* (Edinburgh, 1868) pp. 380, 392-3.

The newspapers of the late 1850s and early 1860s are also full of accounts of the local people bringing in products of the land, especially deer, and of the sea, including fish, oysters, and clams, into Victoria to sell to the urban settlers. No doubt the added population and the commercial demand for these products put pressure on the local resources, but these "country foods" still remained available for food and for sale.

The ability of the Songhees to harvest and sell fish and game over the "unoccupied lands" in their traditional territories had been guaranteed in the 1850 treaties. Piece by piece, in law and regulation, these guarantees were slowly eroded. The first step in that direction came in the Colony of Vancouver Island's April 1859 "Act for the Preservation of Game" which was amended and expanded in 1862. The act limited the season, not for the taking of game, but for selling it, and just in the area close to Victoria. Commercial hunting of deer and fowl was closed to the Songhees for half the year, from January 1st to July 1st. The intent was to limit aboriginal commercial hunting in favour of the *white* "sportsman". In the amended act of 1862 the restrictions extended to the fishing rights of the Songhees. The use of nets at the Songhees fishing-sites in the upper reaches of Victoria harbour, and in "any lake pond or standing water in the Colony" was prohibited to preserve fish for anglers.⁷

A new Act in 1869 made it illegal to possess the carcass of a deer, elk, grouse, or partridge for the purpose of barter or sale between the first day of March and the 20th of August. According to these amendments, the mere possession of such could be considered *prima facie* evidence of intention to sell and hence a crime, except in the case of "*bonâ fide* settlers".⁸

⁷ The 1862 act extended the closed season to all hunting, not just commercial hunting. The closed period for most species of fowl was February 1 to September 1; BCARS, Colonial Office 306, Vancouver Island Acts, reel B-63, "A Bill to Provide for the Passage of an act for the Preservation of Game"; *Vancouver Island Acts* "An Act to Amend an Act for the Preservation of Game," September 5, 1862.

⁸ *British Columbia Laws*, "An Ordinance entitled the Game Ordinance, 1869," March 12, 1869 further reduced the hunting season; "An Ordinance entitled the Game Ordinance, 1870", April 20, 1870.

The colonial acts formed the foundation for the game acts of the province. By the 1880s the Indian Agent observed that the Songhees people had been severely affected by the legal removal of local subsistence resources from their control. The agent, W.H. Lomas, explained in 1887 that "the lands that once yielded berries and roots are now fenced and cultivated, and even on the hills the sheep have destroyed them." Occupation of resource gathering sites was not the only effect of the "settling of the land," for even where there was no settlement, "game laws restrict the time for the killing of deer and grouse, and the fishery regulations interfere with their old methods of taking salmon and trout." Lomas thought that this had little effect on the young people who had wage work and could buy food, but "the very old people who formerly lived entirely on fish, berries, and roots, suffer a great deal through the settling up of the country."⁹

The following year, Lomas emphasized that it was the game laws, not lack of game that was causing hardship:

Indians living away from the settlements...can always procure venison, which is still plentiful, and there is no one to enforce the game acts of the Province; whereas in the settlements the laws relating to game and salmon are rigidly enforced, and the Indian who formerly lived by fishing and hunting may not shoot a deer eight months out of twelve.

Lomas specifically noted that "the strict Provincial Game Acts and Fishery Regulations make the food supply for the old people a very serious matter."¹⁰ Prosperity of the young and the destitution of the old is explained, in part, by the separation between the wage and the subsistence economy, which paralleled the pre-existing distinction between the prestige and subsistence economies. According to Agent Lomas, "with the younger men the loss of these kinds of food is more than compensated for by the good wages they earn, which supplement what they produce on their allotments." However, he observed that "Indians are often generous with the food they have taken in the chase, but begrudge

⁹ Cda. S.P. 1888 vol. 13, pp. 105-7.

¹⁰ W.H. Lomas, Cda. S.P. 1888, vol. 13, pp. 105-7; Cda. S.P. 1889, vol. 13, pp. 100-102.

giving what they have paid money for, without suitable return." The game laws combined with more younger people moving into the wage-work economy, meant there was less subsistence food to be shared.¹¹

In his auto-ethnography Charles Jones, of the Nuu-chah-nulth people living adjacent to the southern Vancouver Island Salish, confirms the separation of the cash and subsistence economies.

Jones' experience, in this regard, was apparently similar to that of the Songhees and their neighbours:

I was still quite young when the Pacheenaht people started to trade at the white man's stores and use the white man's currency.... After we had traded with the white man for some time...we got into the habit of using his kind of money to buy things, and we also got into the habit of using the white man's food, such as beans, flour and sugar in our diet.

But, Jones noted:

We didn't use money for everything, however. People would help each other without taking money. If someone was short of dried fish or dried meat for the winter, he could always count on some from the other people in the village....¹²

The laws ending commercial hunting and limiting commercial and subsistence fishing caused starvation among the elderly -- a situation unknown before the arrival of Europeans. Of all the groups located on the resource-rich Northwest coast, the Songhees and other Straits Salish had lived in an environment replete with a vast range of resources, insulated them from the occasional failure of one or even several food sources.¹³

¹¹ W.H. Lomas, Cda. S.P. 1888, vol. 13, pp. 105-7.

¹² Charles Jones with Stephen Bosustow. *Queesto: Pacheenaht Chief by Birthright*, (Nanaimo, B.C.: Theytus, 1981) p. 54.

¹³ There were, however, variations in access to these resources by family and community, as well as seasonal variation and annual fluctuations in supply which made scarcity a possibility. See "Coping with Abundance: Subsistence on the Northwest Coast," pp. 45-67, and "Variation in Habitat and Culture on the Northwest Coast," pp. 26-44, in Wayne Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays*. Unlike other coastal groups, the Songhees' stories do not dwell on starvation or scarcity as a theme.

The response of the federal government was to institute a substitute "welfare economy" administered by the agent. The game laws forced him, he said, to dispense relief to alleviate "many cases of extreme destitution".¹⁴ In December 1888, the chief and headmen of the Songhees petitioned the Indian Affairs Department to provide relief from the band's own funds to destitute old people, including seven women: Gleacacweeah, Tolayuk, Swasseeah, Tolass, Annick, Clakamah, Cockquasseeah, one old man, Lapulauwah, and an orphan, Annie. In passing on this petition a few days later, H.M. Moffat, acting Indian Superintendent, regretted that it was too late for one woman -- she had died in the interim. Moffat asked to "to be authorized to supply at intervals, if necessary, a sack of flour and a few groceries to each of the applicants until spring sets in..." meanwhile assuring the department "that economy in distribution will be strictly enforced". The department did authorize relief, which consisted of one three-point blanket per person plus one sack of flour, one pound of tea, five pounds of sugar, one tin of yeast powder, and ten pounds of rice.¹⁵

The provision of "relief" to aboriginal people was an innovation that the federal government brought to British Columbia after Confederation, adding a whole new articulation to the aboriginal economies. The new federal Indian commissioner characterized the earlier colonial policy as: "let the Indians alone....Money payments by the Government, on account of the native race, have been restricted to expenses incurred by Indian outrages."¹⁶ After 1871 the state, in the form of the Indian Affairs

¹⁴ W.H. Lomas, Cda. S.P. 1888, vol. 13, pp. 105-7; Cda. S.P. 1889, vol. 13, pp. 100-102.

¹⁵ NAC RG 10 vol. 3803, reel C-10,141, H.M. Moffat to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, December 21, 1888; by law the revenue from leased reserve land belonged to the Songhee's but these funds were held by the Department of Indian Affairs.

¹⁶ I.W. Powell, *Report of the Superintendent...for 1872 & 1873* p. 10; Colonial officials confirm Powell's observations, with the exception that the colony distributed "gifts", rather like a potlatch, to mark the Queen's birthday celebrations. In the debate over whether the Colony should join Confederation, British Columbia's Attorney General defended this policy, "My esteemed colleague...says we have no Indian policy. I say that our policy has been, let the Indians alone." in James Hendrickson, ed., *Journals of the Colonial Legislatures of the Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1851-1871, Vol. V, Journals of the Legislative Council of British Columbia 1866-1871*, (Victoria: Provincial Archives of B.C., 1980), p. 568.

Branch (later Department), assumed responsibility for preventing starvation among the Songhees -- starvation that resulted from the actions of another arm of the state, the provincial government, as well as the settler's appropriation of food gathering sites. State relief was a functional substitute for subsistence and could have easily been seen as a form of compensation -- an exchange -- for its alienation.

While "relief" was a new addition to their multiple economies, there were elements in the provision of relief that had existing parallels in the Songhees subsistence economy. Relief payments came in the form of "gifts", principally food. In the Songhees own economy food circulated separately from wealth, and anyone who was in need received food if it was available, without payment. To the degree that the Songhees saw relief payments in this light, acceptance put the recipient under no obligation beyond sharing one's own food with the agent when he came to visit. In the context of the Songhees subsistence-prestige economy, accepting food from the agent would give him some "status". That this is what happened is suggested by the Songhees word for Indian agent: **si?éms t^?^xW^Elng^xw*, which translates roughly to mean, "siem/chief of the Indian people". Another indication of how "relief" was transformed as it became incorporated into the aboriginal world-view was the way the Songhees would ask for assistance. They would occasionally ask the agent for "muckamuck," or food in the Chinook jargon, or they would ask for their monthly "potlatch", which literally means gift in the Chinook trade jargon.¹⁷

When the 1890s depression forced many engaged in wage labour back to the subsistence economy, itself in decline, the relief economy began to compensate for the failing capitalist one. The

¹⁷ NAC RG 10 vol. 1312, reel C-13,908, file: Inspectorate of Indian Agencies Correspondence Out, 1910-1911, W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Inspector to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, November 10, 1911; RG 10 vol. 11,155, file: C.R. 37 pt. A, James Smith to Ditchburn, September 14, 1931 and Johnny Galakawmei to E.G. Newnham, August 1, 1933; Mitchell, "Dictionary of Songish," p. 143.

winter of 1892-3 was particularly hard because, the agent reported, "saw-mills have been closed for some time, thus throwing many young men out of employment". They might have been all right, he added, but the extremely long winter with deep snow prevented many from obtaining fish in bays, rivers, or from hunting and hauling firewood. As a result, relief costs went up.¹⁸

Lomas' supervisor, A.W. Vowell wrote him in November 1893, warning him to keep costs down and informing him that the budget for relief had been exhausted, so none could be paid "at present". "Relief should only be given where there is a danger of starvation, or in the case of extreme old age or sickness.... In the future, before rendering assistance, Agents should assure themselves that every effort has been put forth towards support, both by the applicant for relief and such of his friends or relatives as could reasonably be expected to assist him."¹⁹ Agents were warned not to promise any relief:

even to the old and destitute; because, although the Department may recognize the propriety of helping destitute aged and sick Indians when in absolute want...to make such promises in advance...is simply to assure other Indians...that they need not exert themselves in the matter as the Government will look after them.²⁰

The agent though the decline in paid work in Victoria was the cause of an expansion of home production of food. Although the Songhees reserve was largely exposed rock, each year from 1891 through to the drought of 1896 the agent noted the addition and expansion of kitchen gardens among the Songhees²¹. He also mentioned another addition to the Songhees domestic economy during this period

¹⁸ Cda., S.P. 1894, vol. 10 no. 14, pp. 116-8.

¹⁹ NAC RG 10 vol. 1350 reel C-13917; file: Cowichan Agency Departmental Circulars 1892-1910, A.W. Vowell, Indian Superintendent for B.C. November 30, 1893.

²⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 1350, reel C-13917, file: Cowichan Agency Departmental Circulars 1892-1910, A.W. Vowell to all Indian Agents, August 20, 1894.

²¹ Cda. S.P. 1892 vol. 10 no. 14, pp. 115-118; 1894 vol. 10 no. 14, pp. 116-8; 1895 vol. 9 no. 14, p. 199; in 1896 drought ruined the Songhees gardens and the agent wrote that "Many are so disheartened that very few gardens are worked this season." Cda. S.P. 1897 vol. 11, no. 14, p. 185.

-- the keeping of cows.²² Because of the shortage of pasture on this urban reserve, cows were allowed to graze at large over the reserve and were frequently the cause of friction between the Songhees and the city. The city animal catcher repeatedly impounded their cows for being unlawfully on roadways and the unfenced right-of-way expropriated from the Songhees by the E&N Railway in 1886. Finally, the fines imposed for impounded animals forced the urban Songhees to sell off their cattle, though several families on the Discovery Island reserve continued to run sheep.²³

Relatively little mention was made of the subsistence economy in the agents' reports or in their correspondence with the Songhees in the decade leading up to their relocation. The references made suggest that in spite of the increasing restrictions, at least the younger Songhees continued to fish and hunt. In November 1901, when A.W. Vowell tried to gather the Songhees to speak about exchanging their reserve, he found they were all away "hunting or fishing." The agent's diary commencing in 1904, makes regular reference to the men being away "shooting at the lagoon," or references like: "[Chief] Cooper returned from a hunting trip, no game, got lost in the mountains...." In September 1908 Robertson noted: "Very few Indians at home in Songhees. All away hunting or fishing." From 1904 there is no mention of relief payments to any of the Songhees until January 1907 when agent Robertson noted "Gave relief orders for wood to Mrs. Friday and for food to Mrs. Fallardeau", both elderly women.²⁴ In the winter of 1910-11 Robertson received requests for relief from four of the elderly

²² Other bands on Southern Vancouver Island had moved into domestic farming much earlier. The Esquimalt and the Saanich people acquired domestic animals by the 1860s and were at least provisioning themselves, if not selling surpluses for cash. An 1872 survey showed the Esquimalt band of 77 people had two goats, one horse, nine pigs, 130 hens, 30 geese, 12 ducks and a few vegetables and fruits being grown. The Saanich bands, numbering 307 people had 15 cattle, six horses, many hogs and raised potatoes and turnips. The Songhees band, located as it was adjacent the city, had no land under cultivation and no domestic animals in 1872, see NAC RG 10 vol. 11213; file: 1.

²³ NAC RG 10, vol. 1348, reel C-13917, Chief Michael Cooper to William Lomas, Indian Agent, Cowichan, June 12, 1899. Lomas, in Cda. S.P. 1892 vol. 10 no. 14; pp. 115-118; 1895 vol. 9 no. 14; p. 199; BCARS, GR 1995; reel B-1454, W.R. Robertson testifying before the McKenna McBride Commission, June 10 1913, pp. 277-8.

²⁴ NAC RG 10 vol. 1351 reel C-13918 file: Cowichan Agency Agent's Diary 1896-1922; RG 10 vol. 3688 file 13,886-3, Vowell to Sifton, November 4, 1901.

among the Songhees and two from Discovery Island, one of whom was missing one arm and could not easily fish for himself.²⁵

The best indication of the extent of household food production comes from a 1910 inventory made of "improvements" on the original reserve in preparation for moving the Songhees to their new reserve on the outskirts. The census showed that the 41 Songhees families owned 11 barns, 217 fruit trees and, in all, 72 acres cleared. Chicken sheds were mentioned in connection with most houses. A few of the Discovery Island people ran flocks of sheep totalling 178 animals in addition to their flocks of chickens and geese.²⁶

After the move, several families extended domestic production into commercial propositions. Ten of the 41 families who received the cash settlement purchased flocks of chickens, the numbers of chickens ranging from 35-50, and one man, Robbie David, bought a flock of 270 to make chicken and egg raising his main business. Ten families bought ploughs and mowers and other horse-drawn farming implements to work their land. One man, Sam Qullamult, purchased 12 sheep.²⁷

The most significant interference with the subsistence economy of the Songhees came in the form of fishery restrictions. In the colonial period, the Songhees had been prohibited from fishing along the Victoria Inlet gorge, one of their prime fishing sites. By 1890, regulations prevented them from

²⁵ NAC RG 10 vol. 1312 reel C-13,908 file: Inspectorate of Indian Agencies Correspondence Out (Indexed) 1910-1911, W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Inspector to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, November 10, 1910; Ditchburn to W. Robertson, December 8, 1910; February 16, 1911; March 7, 1911.

²⁶ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050 33/3 pt. 7; BCARS, GR 1995 reel B-1454, Harry Williams testifying before the McKenna McBride Commission, June 10 1913.

²⁷ NAC RG 10, vol. 11,050 33/3 pt. 7, December 11, 1913.

selling fish outside of a specified season²⁸. Then the Songhees were told how they could fish. In 1916 the reef nets they had used since long before they sighted Europeans, were outlawed as "fish traps". "Traps" had to be licensed, and the only licenses locally went to J.H. Todd and Sons who owned the Empire Cannery. Thereafter, the Songhees men were not permitted to use their reef nets to supply the cannery. Instead they women were invited to process the fish in the cannery.²⁹

Next, the Songhees were told where they could and could not fish. In 1921 Simon Johns wrote the Indian Agent saying: "The Esquimalt and Songhees Indians have always fished at Goldstream for their winter's food, but this year they have been forbidden." He added that he had a copy of the Indian Act which gives Indians the right to fish at anytime for their own use. "You know the run of salmon is only for a short time, so please advise me at once. Should we be prosecuted, would the department engage a counsel to defend us?" There is no response on file to Johns' request.³⁰

New restrictions in the 1920s limited the rights of aboriginal people to fish for food and required they first obtain permits from fisheries officials or Indian agents. In 1928 George Pragnell, Inspector of Indian Agencies, commented: "There seems to be a general complaint amongst the Indians that the more generous policy in fishing for food purposes as promised has not materialized. Permits are hard to get and the presumption seems to be that the Indians will necessarily break the law regarding

²⁸ Jean Kanakos, "The Negotiations to Relocate the Songhees Indians, 1843-1911" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1983) p. 57; Canada *Statutes*, 1890, p.lxii-lxiii; 1878 p. lii; 1889 pp. xli-xlii.

²⁹ Dave Elliot, *Saltwater People*, Janet Poth, ed. (Saanich, British Columbia: School District 63, 1983) p. 60; John McMullan, "State, Capital, and the B.C. Salmon-Fishing Industry," in Patricia Marchak, et al. eds. *Uncommon Property*, (Toronto: Methuen, 1987) p. 110.

³⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: Cowichan Agency General B-48, Simon Johns to A.H. Lomas Indian Agent, November 10, 1911; Johns, who was himself from the Sooke band, was subsequently declared *persona non grata* by the agent and ordered to leave the Songhees reserve.

the sale of fish...." Pragnell noted that Indians were no longer allowed to fish at the sites where they had previously located their villages expressly for the purposes of the fishing.³¹

The 1930s Depression had a devastating effect on the cash employment of the Songhees and again threw them back to their subsistence economy. Only this time the tightening web of laws severely limited what they could harvest. The land over which they had formerly hunted and harvested wild foods was largely settled; much of it was farmed by the 1930s. Hunting was restricted to a limited season in the fall and winter. In 1933 the Songhees were further restricted by the provincial game department who demanded that, even when hunting in season, Indians get another set of permits, this time for game shot for food purposes. This, according to one of the agents, referring particularly to the agency immediately north of the Cowichan Agency -- but reflecting a more general situation -- had a dramatic effect: "In the past Indians have been accustomed to procure game and fish for food without interference, but this last year the regulations have been strictly enforced which has worked a hardship on the Indians and thrown them more or less on relief."³²

There was a Catch-22 for the Songhees in this situation. Squeezed out of the subsistence economy by regulation and appropriation of the subsistence resources, they were forced onto relief. But relief for Indians was based on the principle that it would be supplemented by subsistence foods. An examination of relief paid to aboriginal people shows that they were expected to gather part of their food from nature, including all their protein requirements, while non-Indians were not.

³¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,147 file: Shannon "Fishing 1914-41," G.S. Pragnell, Inspector of Indian Agencies, October 5, 1928.

³² Emphasis mine; NAC RG 10 vol. 11,153, file: Trapping, "Extract from Kwakewlth Agency Monthly Report for February 1934"; RG 10 vol. 11,147 file: Shannon "Fishing 1914-41", M.S. Todd, Indian Agent, to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, November 11, 1940.

The province established an indigent fund in 1880 for people living outside municipalities, since municipalities had the responsibilities for looking after the poor. Indians were not eligible for the provincial fund and continued to receive assistance from the federal government. For the first three decades, the provincial payments were made on a case-by-case basis so it is hard to make direct comparisons between provincial payments to *whites* and federal payments to Indians. However, by 1912, thanks to an increasing bureaucratization in the provincial civil service, a standard list of provincial monthly relief was promulgated and some comparisons are possible. Table X compares provincial relief to that given by the Department of Indian Affairs.³³

Table X
Monthly Relief Payments to Non-Indians and Indians

Monthly Relief to Non-Indians Single Person - 1912-16	Monthly Relief to Indians Single Person - 1910-16
25 lbs of flour	25 lbs of flour
3 lbs rice	4 lbs of rice
8 lbs sugar	4 lbs sugar*
1 lb tea	1/2 pound tea*
1 pack of yeast cakes	
3 lbs salt	* only to the sick
6 lbs salt bacon	
5 lbs of white beans	
4 lbs dried apples	
3 lbs lard	

³³ NAC RG 10 vol. 1312, reel C-13,908, file: Inspectorate of Indian Agencies Correspondence Out 1910-1911, W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Inspector to Secretary DIA, November 10, 1910; in this letter Ditchburn authorizes 50 lbs of flour to one recipient, perhaps because the relief was intended for his wife as well, but 25 lbs was the standard rate for Indians. The ration list for Indians was consistent over a long period, changing little from 1888 to 1945. Rates for non-Indians from BCARS, GR 150 cited in Bonnie Thompson, "Voices from a Not Too Distant Past: Pre-1930s Indigent Fund," unpublished paper presented to the Qualicum Conference, Parksville B.C., January 1994; policy on sugar and tea only for the sick see, RG 10 vol. 1350 reel C-13917; file: Cowichan Agency Departmental Circulars 1892-1910, A.W. Vowell to all agents May 11, 1900.

Why this dramatic difference in relief payments between Indians and *whites*? Given that relief was meant only to stave off starvation, why were assumptions about minimum sustenance for Indians different from that of *whites*? Was it a simple matter of "racism"?

As an explanation "racism" does not tell us very much; essentially it is another way to say that there was a *race*-based difference in the allocation of resources. Why there was a *race*-based difference is a question explored in Chapter 2. How *racial* distinctions became manifested in relief allocations is part of the process of racialization.

Indians came to be seen as people who needed less relief than *whites* largely because of the continuation by many aboriginal people of a subsistence economy.³⁴ The federal authorities, in providing Indians only with carbohydrates and tea, assumed that protein and the necessary vitamins and minerals found in fruit and vegetables, as well as salt, would come from the native subsistence economy. Even though the Songhees lived in an urban area beside non-Indian neighbours, there was a *racialized* expectation that, as Indians, they would get protein from fishing and hunting and the other necessities from gathering.

This two-tiered system, where only Indians were expected to provide their protein from their subsistence economy, was still in effect through the 1920s and into the 1930s. In 1922 provincial relief for *whites*, began being paid in cash at the value of \$15 per month. This increased for *whites* in 1924-5 to \$20 per month and in 1926 to \$25. In 1920 British Columbia introduced Mother's Pensions for indigent *white* mothers. Single *white* mothers, or mothers with disabled husbands were eligible for monthly payments of \$42.50 if they had one child, and an additional \$7.50 for each child under 16. In

³⁴ There also seems to be an undercurrent in the Department of Indian Affairs records that "Indians were content with less" but this is seldom stated explicitly.

1927, elderly indigent *white* British Columbians were eligible for an Old Age Pension of \$20 per month.³⁵ By contrast, aboriginal families, whether single mothers, the elderly or large families had to make due on the standard \$4 per month paid by the federal government "in kind" from a list provided to store keepers.

Table XI
Monthly Relief Ration per Indian Family, 1931
to a maximum value of \$4.00³⁶

49 lbs flour
6 lbs sugar
3 lbs, 7 oz. rolled oats
12 ozs baking powder

and limited quantities of
tea
rice
beans
salt pork

Municipalities were responsible for *whites* who lived in urban areas. In 1931, when the Depression was in full force, non-Indians around Victoria were supplied with relief by the city to the value of \$16.50 per month. For their Songhees neighbours, the standard relief remained at provisions worth \$4.00 per family per month, substantially unchanged from the rations provided to the destitute Songhees elderly in 1888.³⁷

³⁵ Allan Irving, "The Development of a Provincial Welfare State: British Columbia 1900-1939," in Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert, eds., *The 'Benevolent' State: the Growth of Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: Garamond, 1987) pp. 159, 162; Thompson, "Voices from a Not Too Distant Past".

³⁶ NAC RG 10, vol. 9172, file: B-63, H. Graham to Henry John, Indian, April 20 1931; RG 10 vol. 9,170, file: Cowichan Agency General B-45, Mrs. Elizabeth Joseph to H. Graham, Cowichan Indian Agent, April 1, 1930.

³⁷ At the beginning of the Depression men working in relief camps were paid \$2 a day, though this was soon reduced to \$7.50 per month, Irving, "The Development of a Provincial Welfare State," p. 163; NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170, file: Cowichan Agency General B-45, Mrs. Percy Ross to H. Graham, January, 8, 1935; file B-48, E.M. George to H. Graham, Indian Agent February 9, 1932: George writes: "I wrote to you at the begging [sic] of last month about getting some relief but I haven't heard anything of it yet.

Indians were expected to make up the difference between relief and their minimum food requirements from their gardens, the land and the sea. The Secretary of the Department made this explicit. In asking agents to reduce relief costs he pointed out that "the Indians, while lacking their regular amount of employment might do more than they are doing to help themselves by fishing for their own needs and gardening."³⁸ In describing the Cowichan Indians, north of the Songhees, the Inspector of Indian Agencies said "as whole [they] should not be too bad off during the depression as many can grow their own food if they want and have fish at their door".³⁹

The importance of subsistence and household production is poignantly illustrated by the case of a family that could not participate in these economies and relied entirely on relief. Left on her own with a young son when her husband was imprisoned in 1935, Dora Ross had no extended family among the Songhees. Her husband, Percy, had been an orphan with no siblings and she was non-aboriginal with no family in the community. Unconnected to the other Songhees families, unskilled in the knitting of Cowichan sweaters, which sustained many families, and unknowledgable about "country foods," Dora Ross and her son had no options but relief. She petitioned both the Indian Department and the British Columbia Department of Social Welfare: "I can't live on four dollars groceries a month, no meats, vegetables, the necessities of clothing, lights, soaps, face and washing. We'd be rotten with scurvy or some sort of thing and be public charges."⁴⁰

The white people here are getting five dollars per week; so I don't expect to get that much." The agent wrote back on February 9 telling him he could get relief worth \$4 per month.

³⁸ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,155, file: CR 37 pt. A, A.F. MacKenzie, Secretary, DIA to C.C.Perry, Ass't. Indian Commissioner, B.C.

³⁹ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170, file: Cowichan Agency General B-44, George S. Pragnell, Inspector of Indian Agencies to Secretary, DIA, July 30, 1932.

⁴⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170, file: Cowichan Agency General B-45, Dora Ross to Mrs. Murie, B.C Dept. of Social Welfare, January 4, 1935.

She wrote the Indian agent:

I have no means of adding anything to the allowance. The boy and I have both been sick and we haven't fully recovered. I can't be expected to go out to work. I have the boy to take care of.... I have to have meat and vegetables and other things. Also something must be arranged for my lights. Surely I'm not to sit around in the dark.⁴¹

Even firewood which could have been obtained from the Songhees land, was difficult to obtain for this family with no kin connections in the community.

Mrs. Ross was particularly galled because she became an "Indian" through marriage. Unmarried, she would have been entitled to the \$16.50 offered to indigents by the city and married to an imprisoned *white* husband she would have been eligible for mother's pension, reduced during the Depression, but still \$35 monthly.⁴² The agent was embarrassed by this situation, particularly when Mrs. Ross described her situation in the letters section of the Victoria paper. He ensured that Mrs. Ross received a little more than "regular Indians" by allocating a further \$3.50 a month for a milk order for her son. However, when Mrs. Ross's case came to the attention of the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa, the agent was told that she was to be treated on the same basis as any other Indian.⁴³

Some young Indians responded to the low relief rates allocated to "families" by getting married and starting their own family. In 1933 the Indian Affairs Department responded to this tactic with a circular advising agents that "any Indian marrying while unable to support himself and wife will be given no separate allowance for a period of at least one year from date of marriage," and that newly married couples would have to continue to share in the allowance already provided for their families.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Ibid*, Mrs. Percy Ross to H. Graham, January 8, 1935.

⁴² Irving, "Development of Provincial Welfare State," p. 163.

⁴³ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170, file: Cowichan Agency General B-45, H. Graham, to George F. Davidson, B.C. Superintendent of Welfare, January 17, 1935.

⁴⁴ NAC RG 10, vol. 11,155, file: CR 37 pt. A., A.F. MacKenzie, Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs to E.G. Newnham, April 20th, 1933.

Faced with spiralling welfare costs and pressure on its own budget, in 1936 the Department of Indian Affairs issued "definite instructions" that able-bodied Indians were not to be given relief.⁴⁵ By this time Percy Ross was out of jail and able to help his family. However, the subsistence options needed to supplement relief were very much limited. Clams were one of the few resources which the Songhees still had unregulated access to, for food and for sale.⁴⁶ The new Songhees reserve was more suited to agriculture than the previous one, so many families directed more attention to the planting of kitchen gardens.

The upsurge in employment brought by the Second World War, led most Songhees men and women back to paid-work and, as the Department of Fisheries noted, the increase in war work meant there was less of a demand for food-fishing permits. "The majority of the local Indians are working in the shipyards doing war work, consequently a very small number of food fishing permits were required." The Fisheries Inspector at Squamish expressed the general condition: "Most able-bodied Indians were making good wages as labourers in various wood harvesting camps, and as railway section hands; this sub-district being practically drained of all its young men eligible for military training. Indians are getting much higher prices for their field crops and farm animals and it does not pay them to neglect these matters for the time taken up in catching and curing salmon."⁴⁷

The plentiful supply of work was used as an excuse by the Fisheries Department to further reduce aboriginal access to food resources. Since so many were employed in commercial fishing during

⁴⁵ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: Cowichan Agency General B-44, George S. Pragnell, Inspector of Indian Agencies to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, December 21, 1936. "Cowichan Indian Agency Report No. 7."

⁴⁶ NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: Cowichan Agency General B-45 Lizzie Fisher to H. Graham, Cowichan Indian Agent, August, 1932; Charles to H. Graham, August 6, 1932; Robbie Davis to H. Graham, December 8, 1934.

⁴⁷ NAC RG 23 vol. 662 file: 712-2-72 pt. 4, Thomas Lightly, Fisheries Inspector, "Report 1942"; F.J. Winlow, Fisheries Inspector, Squamish Sub-district, "Report 1943"; NAC RG 10 vol. 9172, file B-57, Percy Ross to R.H. Moore, May 21, 1943; RG 10 vol. 9,170, file: Cowichan Agency General B-44.

the war, the Chief Inspector of Fisheries wrote one of the Indian agents: "It is felt that Indians engaged in the commercial fishing during the height of the season do not require food permits...."⁴⁸

Declining access to the subsistence food, was by 1946, reflected in the Department of Indian Affairs augmentation to the monthly relief schedule to include some fresh meat, other proteins (beans and peanut butter) and tinned vegetables. The value of the monthly relief, still paid in kind, rose to \$10.10 for a family of three, including a two-month old baby, but the Indian Agent himself admitted this was less than half what such a family needed to live on when he unsuccessfully petitioned Ottawa to increase this allowance.⁴⁹

When the economy declined again for aboriginal people in the 1950s and increased numbers returned to the relief-subsistence combination they protested the new limitations on subsistence fishing. Andy Paull, editor of the *Indian Voice* magazine told a conference in 1955:

Denial of food will result in sickness. They give us the permits to fish when they know the food is not there. If they took the tea away from the British, the pea soup away from the French, the Spaghetti away from the Italians, where would that leave them? That's what they're doing to us.

Conditions were better earlier in the century he said, "at least then a hungry Indian could go down to the creek and hook a salmon -- now they have to watch the salmon swimming by."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,147 file: Shannon "Fishing 1914-41", J.A. Motherwell, Chief Supervisor of Fisheries to M.S. Todd, M.S. Indian Agent, Alert Bay, May 20, 1940; this repeated the pattern of World War I where the Fisheries Officer decided not to give licenses to people who had other jobs during the period of peak war-time labour demand, NAC RG 10 vol. 11,147 file: Shannon "Fishing 1914-41", W.M. Halliday, to W.E. Ditchburn, June 16, 1919.

⁴⁹ The monthly ration for a family of three in 1946 consisted of 49 lbs of flour, 24 oz. baking powder, 10 lbs rolled oats, 10 lbs of sugar, 1 lb of tea, 4 lbs lard, 6 lbs beans, 2 lbs butter, 6 tins milk, 10 cakes soap, 3 tins tomatoes, 5 lbs fresh meat, 1 small salt bag, 1 jar of peanut butter. NAC RG 10 vol. 9174, file: B72, R.H. Moore to Cowichan Merchants, January 9 1946 and Moore to Indian Commissioner for April 3, 1945.

⁵⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 8570 file: 901/1-2-2-2, Andy Paull speaking at a conference on the Indian Act, July 20-1, 1955.

Clam digging remained one of the few means by which the Songhees people could still harvest food without restriction. Clams were gathered both for subsistence use and commercial sale, an activity which was an increasingly important source of casual employment for southeast Vancouver Island aboriginal people. In 1960, when the federal fisheries department instituted a closed season for commercial harvesting of clams between June and November, Songhees Chief Albany considered it another step in the federal government's appropriation of aboriginal resources. We had at one time a full open season for digging clams, he said:

Now through regulations, it is only seven months. They tell us the clams are no good from June to November, but Indians feel the clam is really at its prime then. Those are the months Indians used to put up their food for the winter. For many hundreds of years Indians were eating clams in those months.

Albany noted that since they could not sell clams, by this time a mainstay of the Songhees economy, but could eat them, clams were about all they would have to eat. Based on relief alone it was still conceivable that the newspaper headlines: "Indians Face Starvation" could be a reality in 1960.⁵¹

A decade later, when Katherine Mooney surveyed the Songhees and other aboriginal groups on south-east Vancouver Island, she found the use of subsistence foods further curtailed by increasing population densities. As one Saanich woman put it "Clams are hard to get now -- pollution.". Some men continued to harvest crabs and sea urchins, while "in most households the women and children dig clams and sometimes collect oysters." However, she found that although "the males in most households frequently hunt game or ducks or fish or do both...[they] have done less hunting in the past several years with the growing observance of legal restrictions and the disappearance of hunting areas...."⁵²

⁵¹ Albany claimed clam digging and commercial fishing accounted for 80 percent of their livelihood, *Colonist*, October 18, 1960, p. 1.

⁵² Kathleen Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Indian Economies and Domestic Organization," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976) pp. 227, 236; Michael Kew describes the same pattern among the Musqueam in "Coast Salish Ceremonial Life: Status and Identity in a Modern Village." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1970.)

There was still a lot of support among the Salish people she interviewed in 1971 for the ideal of sharing food but, Mooney was told, this was less and less the reality. "Its not the same now the old people are passing away. We don't have big cooks on the beach -- crabs and so onIt used to be one big family like. For example if someone came home with fish, he'd invite everyone." Items like game, ducks and shellfish, are frequently shared only with the family "for the simple reason that they are scarce and not obtainable in any great quantities at once. Others get their own game in the hunting season -- on the island, there's not much any more."⁵³

In 1970 the collection of wild berries continued but was largely replaced by waiting until commercial berry fields were opened up for free picking at the end of the season. Then, large numbers of Indian women, children and the elderly from the southeast Island reserves picked large quantities for freezing, or less commonly, canning. With the assistance of men, many also picked free potatoes at the end of the potato season. Many households also had their own kitchen gardens and fruit trees.⁵⁴

Some subsistence food, like sea urchin, continued to be harvested because they were unavailable commercially and considered a delicacy.⁵⁵ More often, however, Mooney found subsistence foods were harvested, not out of preference for the food or an allegiance to an ideal, but simply out of need. Inter-family sharing networks maintained along the lines of traditional kin relationships were in fact cultural adaptations required to ameliorate "the long term prevailing uncertainties of Indian life."⁵⁶

⁵³ Mooney, *Ibid*, 235-6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

In 1971 Mooney found another continuity in the boundaries separating subsistence from the prestige and capitalist economies: "an omnipresent distinction exists between home-grown, baked, gathered, hunted, [and] fished delicacies and store bought goods." The former were given away freely but the latter, like a century before, were given only to close family or on specific ceremonial occasions.⁵⁷

Although Mooney found an overall decline in the extent of sharing foodstuffs, chiefs, 'high-born' or other "big men", in the 1960s still provided for community functions such as the potlatch/winter dances, and gave food to needy people. In the 1960s community functions focused on the "Winter Dancing" with its combined elements of the potlatch and that of "Spirit Dancing". After the anti-potlatch laws were removed in 1951 the winter dances increased in frequency as did numbers of participants. In this way the subsistence economy was still connected to the ceremonial -- in order to gain respect and be a "big man" it was necessary to be generous with food as well as goods and cash. Wayne Suttles described one of these "modern" potlatches in the Cowichan Agency, in March 1960. The main "work" was to pass on hereditary names from deceased relatives. Dancing preceded the naming. The dancers were paid for their "work" by the host family. Those in attendance, official witnesses to the naming, were also given "gifts" -- ranging from a mountain goat wool blanket, through flannel blankets and kerchiefs, to 50 cent pieces. Two families were primarily involved in the naming but other families used the opportunity to make announcements of their own, and also paid their witnesses.⁵⁸

The "work" and the accompanying meals for the 600-800 people in attendance (provided by the hosts) lasted from 9 p.m. until 3 a.m. when the dancing -- which lasted to well past daybreak -- began.

⁵⁷ Mooney, *Ibid*; W.H. Lomas, Cda. S.P. 1888, vol. 13, pp. 105-7.

⁵⁸ Wayne Suttles, "Spirit Dancing and the Persistence of Native Culture among the Coast Salish," in *Coast Salish Essays*, (University of Washington, 1987) 199-208.

Each time a dancer moved out onto the floor, some member of his or her family moved around the crowd distributing 50 cent pieces to selected members of the audience to "help" the dancer. Meanwhile the dancers passed fruit to the crowd, and as a final act, the host community distributed 300 pounds of sugar. Suttles estimated that in the Coast Salish area there was a dance like the one described, every Saturday night throughout the winter, and smaller dances every night in many locations. Although different in form from the potlatches of a century earlier, the dances and particularly, the gifts, affirmed the persistence of a non-capitalist economy in which one's stature was measured by how much one gave away.⁵⁹

The Songhees' history since the arrival of European exhibits a complex pattern of distinct but articulated economies changing and shifting in relative importance. Whereas they were able at first to add the capitalist paid work onto their prestige and subsistence economies, by the late 1880s the precedence of the prestige and subsistence economies seems to have given way to the capitalist one. Potlatches declined in their frequency, size and wealth distributed, and potlatch invitations were turned down in favour of work opportunities. Meanwhile, aboriginal consumption patterns in terms of clothes, houses and household goods began to follow the patterns of non-aboriginal society.

The experiences of the 1880s, early 1900s and the Second World War demonstrate that when there was a wage alternative to the subsistence economy, the Songhees took it. Yet, as long as a viable subsistence economy existed, it had important implications for the Songhees relationship to the capitalist economy. Unlike other participants in the labour force, the Songhees and other Indians did not *have* to sell their labour to survive. By contrast to the immigrant labourers, both Asian and European, the Songhees had a viable alternative the capitalist economy.

⁵⁹ Suttles, "Spirit Dancing"; See also Pamela Amoss, *Coast Salish Spirit Dancing: The Survival of an Ancestral Religion*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978) and Kew, "Coast Salish Ceremonial Life in a Modern Village."

The gradual erosion of Songhees access to subsistence resources reduced their independence from the wage economy, but the state intervened with enough relief to keep a combined subsistence-welfare economy viable. As laws and development reduced the amount of subsistence foods available, the state intervened with relief, but at a rate well below that paid to non-Indians. The state's alternative to the subsistence economy was the expansion of the welfare system.

CHAPTER 9:

FAMILIES, GENDER AND AGE: THE ORGANIZATION OF HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION

We are doing everything possible to secure all the Indians we can from the different parts of B.C. and will be able to give employment to all the men, women and children offering.

B.C. Packers, 1913¹

My husband's mother was left with seven young children.... She would work in the fish cannery and the kids when they were young would go down and work for ten cents an hour.

Joyce Albany, 1990²

Recent literature on gender and colonialism in North America and the Pacific has challenged the way we look at the pre- and post-colonial experiences of aboriginal peoples by offering three propositions. The first is that non-European gender and household relations have been subject to change in both pre- and post-colonial societies. The second proposition: men and women -- and I add the young and the old -- experienced colonialism differently. The processes and structures of colonial societies, and their post-colonial successors, have had different effects and implications for people at various places in aboriginal social structures.³ The third: gender and age are not separable as categories

¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 1349 reel C-13917, BC Packers Assoc. to R. Stuart, February 6, 1913.

² Esquimalt Municipal Archives, 990.16.1, file: Oral History Project, Joyce Albany Interview, August 17, 1990.

³ Sahlins, *Historical Myths*; Margaret Jolly and M. Macintyre, *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and Colonial Impact*, (Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Margaret Jolly, "The Forgotten Women: A History of Migrant Labour and Gender Relations in Vanuatu," *Oceania*, vol. 58 no. 2 (December 1987) pp. 119-137; Karen Anderson, *Chain her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth Century New France*, (New York: Routledge, 1993); Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement

of analysis from *race* and social position/class. Not only did colonialism, for example, have differential impacts on men and women, but *white* women, aboriginal women, upper class women, working class women, and women slaves all experienced them differently.⁴

Each of these propositions, and particularly the first one, are hard to test, given the nature of the available sources. Historians normally rely on written documents which are woefully inadequate given that aboriginal societies were non-literate, and that even in literate societies, few records describing household relations remain. Different problems concern oral testimony. The ethnographers who collected oral histories describe a so-called "traditional lifestyle" as though it had been fixed from time immemorial. To a large extent this is also true of the auto-ethnographies produced by aboriginal people themselves, both because of the adoption of the ethnographic voice and because "traditional" stands opposed to "European" as a touch stone of "Indian-ness." With the limited exception of the legends, what we are left with is an description of aboriginal household and gender-based organization in the "ethnographic moment" when most of the informants were raised, that is the period immediately surrounding the arrival of fur-traders.

Fur traders' records are of little use in this regard. The Songhees had a distinctly gendered production system, but the first immigrants in Songhees territory made little mention of it. In north-coast aboriginal societies, where descent was traced matrilineally, women were prominent and

Era in Western Canada," *Great Plains Quarterly*, vol. 13, (Summer 1993) pp. 147-161; Ellice B. Gonzalez, *Changing Economic Roles for Micmac Men and Women: An Ethnohistorical Analysis* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1981).

⁴ Kathleen M. Brown, "Brave New Worlds: Women's and Gender History," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser. vol. L, no. 2, (April 1993) p. 316; Denise Riley, *'Am I that Name?': Feminism and the Category of Women in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1988).

European's frequently speculated about gender-roles.⁵ By contrast, the Songhees and other Coast Salish, like the Europeans, recognized descent bilaterally, that is from both the paternal and maternal lines. The Songhees' *siem*, heads of households, which European's identified as "chiefs", were all male. This position, along with its prerogatives and obligations generally passed from a *siem*, on his death to his eldest son, and if there were no sons then to a brother and his sons. Because they controlled access to major resource sites, the *siem* controlled the wealth of the households and "owned" the major items of property and prestige goods as well as the most important ceremonial privileges.⁶

Europeans observed that villages consisted of a number of extended families each occupying a large winter house. Blood relationship was the primary tie within the household, usually consisting of a male family head, his sons and their children, his unmarried sisters and daughters, his brothers and all their wives. In addition to these relatives it was common to have widows, orphans, and perhaps nephews included in the household, as well as slaves. Although blood relationship was theoretically as strong on the maternal side as the paternal, wives usually lived with their husband's family, so in practical terms, patrilineal relationships tended to be stronger.

Songhees' households were large and Europeans were awed by the size of their houses. Paul Kane in 1847 described their "lodges" as "the largest buildings of any description that I have met with among the Indians. They are divided in the interior into compartments, so as to accommodate eight to ten families." Rush mats were used to partition off the house. Their size is also suggested by Father

⁵ Laura Klein, "'She's One of Us, You Know': The Public Life of Tlingit Women, traditional, historical and contemporary perspectives," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, VI, No.3 (1976) pp. 164-183.

⁶ Barnett, *Coast Salish*, pp. 246-9.

Bolduc's account of his 1843 visit to the Songhees village of Sungayka when he was able to crowd all present, over 500 people, into one of house.⁷

Except for the fact that *siem* might have more than one wife, which the Europeans did find notable, the newcomers could easily see him as an aboriginal equivalent to an aristocratic patriarch -- indeed they sometimes referred to important *siem* such as Chee-al-thuk of the Songhees, as "kings" and their wives as "queens".⁸

These informal titles and the identification of certain *siem* as chiefs, recognized that family-households were the basic political unit in Songhees society. All decisions about collective action, such as when and whether to move to a seasonal camp, to hold a feast, to wage war, were made between family heads within households. Even within households, adult members were not accountable to the *siem*; the latter's authority lay strictly in his ability to persuade and reward. Inter-households cooperation depended on the closeness of the historic blood and kin ties, as well as the stature and the

⁷ Bolduc, *Mission on the Columbia*, p. 108; Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, p. 152; a similar description of Songhee's houses in 1846 can be found in Berthold Seemann, *Narrative of the Voyage of HMS Herald During the Years 1845-51*, (London: Reeve and Co. 1853); when the Songhees fled the smallpox in Victoria in 1862 and moved to Discovery Island, six families -- three headed by brothers and the other three by other relatives -- shared a house; Suttles counted seven families comprised of 40-45 people, in one 1880s Lummi household (Lummi were Straits Salish neighbours of the Songhees with whom they potlatched and intermarried) in *Economic Life*, p. 277-8; a physical indication of the size of the larger houses comes from a house at Garrison Bay on San Juan Island, a former village site of the Songhees which surveyors measured as 600 feet long by 40 feet wide; see Gary J. Morris, *Straits Salish Prehistory*, (Lopez Island: Morris, 1993) p. 11.

⁸ Chee-al-thuk, generally known to the whites as King Freezy, until his death in 1864 is perhaps the best example; the *siem* of the Chemakum branch of the Clallams living at Port Townsend across the Strait of Georgia was known as the "Duke of York" and one of his wives' as Queen Victoria. Lucile McDonald suggested that the names were applied to the latter in "friendly ridicule" by the Hudson's Bay Company employees in McDonald, ed., *Swan Among the Indians: Life of James G. Swan*, (Oregon: Binfords and Mort, 1972).

persuasive ability of the respective *siem*. Households were so independent that, even within a single village, one might not even get involved in another's wars.⁹

Each family in a household harvested resources from the sites that belonged to them. Tasks that required larger amounts of labour were often organized along household lines, while certain activities such as reef-netting, mentioned earlier, might involve others as hired help. If it seems clear that family was the basic production unit, it is less clear what constituted a family among the Songhees in 1843. One way to examine this question is to look at the terminology used to define kin relationships. In the dialect of Straits Salish, *Lkungenang*, spoken by the Songhees, there were unique terms which described the parent-child relationship. The Songhees appeared to have separate terms to linguistically distinguish siblings and cousins but since most Coast Salish groups did not make this distinction it is likely that cousins moved easily between families of adult siblings. Beyond the parent-child, sibling-cousin, distinctions, a Songhees was equally closely related to any kin separated from the speaker by the same generational difference. One's grandparents and grandparent's siblings were called by the same name, as were great-grandparents and their siblings and so on, for six generations. Aunts or uncles on both sides were not distinguished from parent's cousins. A Songhees was "closely related" to a much larger kin network than the European newcomers.¹⁰

Since resources were abundant, there was an advantage to large family sizes -- the more labour available for accumulating surplus food and goods, the higher the status a family could achieve. There

⁹ Barnett, *Coast Salish*, 241-4.

¹⁰ Mitchell, "A Dictionary of Songish," p. 85, 99, 107-11; Suttles, *Economic Life*, pp. 294-5; Barnett, *Coast Salish*, p. 240.

is no direct evidence of the average family size but the Songhees' stories do provide an indication that the ideal was very large.¹¹

Men, women, children and the elderly had particular roles in production but our knowledge of these is limited and often inferential. Many of the roles were structured in a way that was largely transparent to Europeans who restricted their comments to practices which contrasted with their own. Ethnologists who have studied the Songhees brought their own set of filters to the subject. All of the ethnographic work on the Songhees, with the exception of Marjorie Mitchell's dictionary of Songhees, has been conducted by male investigators depending on male informants. These sources are richer in detail concerning men's occupation and perhaps over-emphasize male activities. Much of what we know of women's and children's activities come from "listening to the silence" in the existing accounts.¹²

The gender division of labour was based on zones of exclusion, derived from the belief that women were "polluted" while menstruating and following childbirth and would drive away the spirits of fish and animals if they even touched the fishing or hunting equipment, and weaken or destroy the spiritual power of male hunters. Men were responsible for hunting and fishing, as well as building. Women, children and the elderly harvested domestic and wild "crops" and shellfish. Women were in charge of food preservation and preparation as well as the production of textiles and most woven

¹¹ Charles Hill Tout, *The Coast Salish IV*, Ralph Maud, ed. (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1978) pp. 135-155.

¹² Even Erna Gunther's important investigations of the adjacent Clallam and Puget Sound Indians concentrate on "male activities". For a discussion of this problem as systemic in ethnographic literature, see Marjorie Mitchell and Anna Franklin, "When You Don't Know the Language, Listen to the Silence: An Historical Overview of Native Indian Women in B.C." in B.K. Latham and R.J. Pazdro, eds., *Not Just Pin Money*, (Victoria: Camosun College, 1984) pp. 17-36 and Nancy Bonvillain, "Gender Relations in Native North America," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 13, 2 (1989) pp. 1-28; Klein, "She's One of Us, You Know" p. 165.

products.¹³ Men were not prohibited from doing "women's work" and for short periods, where time was of the essence, some tasks, like harvesting camas or shellfish, might involve whole households.¹⁴

Men and women worked in separate but interdependent productive activities. Men fished and hunted; women made the baskets and other vessels in which the food would be stored, and preserved the catch so that food would be available throughout the year and for feasts. Men made the nets for catching fish, deer, or ducks, from twine made by women. Men produced most of the protein in the Songhees diet, women produced the carbohydrates, starches, and other vegetables and fruits essential to their diet.

Subsistence production was relatively balanced by gender but when it came to the production of prestige goods, women's contribution probably dominated. Men played a role -- through the acquisition of slaves in warfare and in manufacturing canoes as well as other hunting implements that might be given at a potlatch -- but the most important wealth items were blankets woven by women. Women and children gathered and prepared the cedar bark for the warp. The wool for the weft was partly mountain goat wool traded from the Squamish and Nooksack on the mainland, but the main source was the Songhees' only domesticated animal -- a dog specially bred for its wool. These dogs were the property of women who kept them segregated, often on small islands, in order to prevent cross-breeding with other dogs. The women sheared these special dogs.¹⁵ These were the most valuable items the

¹³ Suttles believes that while women made the twine, most reef and other nets were made by men, *Economic Life*, p. 235-40.

¹⁴ Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 57, 69; Vancouver visiting a Salish village in 1790 described "nearly the while of the inhabitants...about 80 or 100 men, women and children, were busily engaged... rooting up this beautiful verdant meadow in quest of a species of wild onion," *Voyage of Discovery*, p. 545.

¹⁵ Erna Gunther, *Indian Life on the Northwest Coast of North America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972) appendix 2. Gunther, "Klallam Ethnography," p. 221; F.W. Howay, "The Dog's Hair Blankets of the Coast Salish," *Washington Historical Quarterly*, IX, 2 (April 1918) pp. 83-91; one of Paul Kane's paintings held at the Royal Ontario Museum shows Songhees women weaving such a blanket and spinning dog wool with a sheared dog in the foreground; Suttles writes that hunting dogs

Songhees offered in exchange to the first Europeans they encountered.¹⁶ In addition to the blankets, women also made baskets and mats as trade and gift items, harvested and stored camas which was exchanged for the products of other nations, and tanned the hides that were occasionally items of exchange.



Every family owning a resource site or claiming inherited status, had to periodically distribute wealth goods and "feast" outsiders and it was the women who provided much of the wealth and husbanded the food. Women also controlled the reproductive sphere, from decisions about whether or not to abort,¹⁷ through childbirth, to the caring for infants and young children. Raising of children was a task that a mother, (who might bear her first child at age 16 or 17), shared with other women in the household as well as her parents and parents-in-law.

The value of women in Coast Salish society was reflected in the marriage ritual performed by those of high-status. After a marriage was arranged by intermediaries, it was customary for the groom to arrive at the bride's house with his father and other male relatives to make a ritual request to allow the marriage. The door was always barred to them and only after entreaties by the groom's relatives would the party be admitted. Having gained admittance, further entreaties would be to no avail. The groom's party would retire, leaving the groom sitting on the floor inside the bride's family home where he might remain for several days, ignored and unfed by his future in-laws. Every day the groom's party would return for more speech-making about the desirability of the union, the generosity of the boy's

were owned by men, Suttles, *Economic Life*, p. 103.

¹⁶ Jane, *A Spanish Voyage*, p. 34-5; Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery*, p. 524.

¹⁷ Although incidents of abortion were related to Barnet and Suttles, there is no indication of the frequency; there are no indications that infanticide was practised; Barnett, *Coast Salish*, p. 136; Barnett, *Culture Element Distribution*, p. 255; Suttles, *Economic Life*, pp. 483-500.

relatives, the virtues of the boy and the girl. Finally, the bride's family would relent and accept a gift from the groom's family, initiating a series of reciprocal gift exchanges.¹⁸

Although tasks were specifically gendered, gender was not necessarily determined by biological sex. Boas noted among the Songhees that "sometimes men assume women's dress and occupations and *vice versa*. Such individuals are called *st'o'mEtcE*." There are few other ethnographic mentions of this, perhaps reflecting the choice of ethnographers to avoid a delicate subject, but there are some historical references.¹⁹

The practice of polygyny among men of high status was, in part, a recognition of the importance of women as producers of goods and reproducers of labour. Polygyny had other practical and social purposes. Marriages were often diplomatic unions, establishing a basis for friendly relationships between households, particularly households in different villages and different nations. This connection provided each set of in-laws with some access to the resources controlled by the other and some measure of "safe passage" through the others' territories.²⁰ It also established a gift-exchange cycle whereby one's in-laws would bring the rare and valuable commodities of their territory as gifts. Recipients were bound, however, to return the equivalent on a return visit. Finally, for the

¹⁸ Although the male party would humble himself in this way to obtain his wife, the rough equivalence of the marriage gift and the return gift by the bride's family suggests that acquiring a good son-in-law was at least as valuable as a good daughter-in-law.

¹⁹ Boas, "Lku'ngen," p. 571; Boas notes that this custom was found all along the North Pacific Coast; an aboriginal transvestite was castrated by British sailors on the Columbia River in the 1840s, according to Lorne Hammond, "Adulterers, Murderers, Orphans and Transvestites: A Look at the Periphery of Fur Trade Masculinity," paper presented to the Columbia Department Fur Trade Conference, Victoria 1993; Charles Nowell mentions transvestites among the Kwakwaka'wakw in Ford, *Smoke From Their Fires*, p. 68-9.

²⁰ Since these marriages were unions between households, not villages or nations, a visiting party of in-laws might still be victims of predatory attacks of one's in-laws' neighbours.

siem, increased status was associated with many wives and inter-village links which widened one's potlatch community and increased the number of high-ranking guests which might attend.

The European arrival created new gender-based opportunities and it closed others, and in both cases, put pressure on the existing production system. Europeans were eager to hire the Songhees as labourers for construction, land clearing, ploughing, and as paddlers for express-canoes. All these fell into the category of "male work" in both the Songhees' and fur-traders' world-view.

Women, who had previously been responsible for the creation of the most valuable of the wealth goods, particularly textiles, found their importance undermined. The men who laboured for the fort were paid in blankets -- wealth good items -- that had previously only been produced through female labour. Moreover, the fur traders brought sheep to the island in 1849; after that, to the reduced extent that hand-woven blankets continued to be made, sheep wool was substituted for the dog wool. Wool-bearing dogs, which had constituted the largest part of many women's personal wealth, lost their value.²¹ The naturalist Berthold Seemann, reported in 1846 that: "Since the Hudson's Bay Company have established themselves in this neighbourhood, English blankets have been so much in request that the dog's hair manufacture has been rather at a discount, eight or ten blankets being given for one sea otter skin."²²

With the availability of new blankets, the style of clothing remained "a blanket brought around the body and held with a wooden skewer on the shoulder," but the fabric changed. Richard Mayne noted that: "On my first visit to this place [1849], this was a rather a picturesque costume, as they

²¹ Myron Eells, *The Indians of Puget Sound: the Notebooks of Myron Eells*, G.P. Castile, ed. (Seattle: University of Washington, 1985) p. 122; Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *A Guide to Indians Tribes of the Pacific Northwest*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1992) p. 225.

²² Berthold Seemann, *The Voyage of the Herald*, (London, 1853) p. 109.

mostly wore native blankets made of dog's hair and stained various colours, but now [1862] they use English blankets....²³

Devalued, the dogs were left to interbreed with others so that by 1889 Boas declared the special wool dogs "extinct for some time".²⁴ Nonetheless, a small part of the women's blanket-making skill remained useful in the new economy: shearing the dogs had been a woman's job among the Songhees, so this may explain why sheep-shearing is the only labouring occupation at the fort where women are named as workers.²⁵

In addition to paid labour, and probably even more important as a source of new income to the Songhees, was provisioning the fort. In this arena as well, most of the provisions, fresh fish and game, were the products of male enterprise. Women contributed, to a lesser extent, through their control over potato crops (which the Songhees had been growing for several years by 1843) and in the harvest of clams and oysters for sale.²⁶

The immediate effect of the arrival of whites was to elevate the importance of Songhees men as producers of wealth relative to women. But since the prestige and subsistence economies were separate, the little of this new wealth that was spent on imported foodstuffs was given away at the potlatch. Women's role in the subsistence economy likely remained essential, even as it was made more difficult by European encroachment on camas beds and other harvest sites.

²³ Mayne, *Four Years in B.C.*, p. 282-3.

²⁴ Boas, "Lku'nigen," p. 566.

²⁵ Tolmie, "Utilization of the Indians," p. 7.

²⁶ Douglas to Governor and Committee, October 27 1849, in Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters*, p. 63; Sophia Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest: February to April 1861 and April to July 1870* (Victoria, 1974), 79; *Weekly Victoria Gazette* (18 June, 3 September, 9 October 1859); *Colonist*, October 21 1862, p. 3; Fawcett, *Some Reminiscences of Old Victoria*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912) p. 284.

Paradoxically, while the role of women as manufacturers of wealth goods diminished they became more important as marriage and sexual partners. The shortage of women relative to men in the newcomer's society contributed to raising their value. Charles Bayley, arriving in 1851, noted that outside the fort there were log shanties "occupied by half breeds, Iroquois, French Canadian and Kanakas (Hawaiians) ...most of them living with native women."²⁷ In 1860 Royal Navy Admiral Baynes observed that "the White people in the Forts are very much mixed up with the Indians from the immorality which I fear has been encouraged amongst the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company."²⁸

It seems likely these early unions were similar to those described in the 1860s. In a fusion of the two economies, the newcomer would offer the father of a native woman, or the owner of a female slave a "bridal gift"; a variety of reciprocal obligations were probably initiated, but it seems that in general the new "husband" felt less obligation and had less incentive to maintain the lifelong cycle of ritual exchanges that normally accompanied Songhees marriages. If the arrangement ceased to be satisfactory or the man moved, his "country wife" was often abandoned or returned to her family. Typically, missionaries and some government agents translated this type of marriage into their own terms as "bride-purchase," concubinage, or prostitution.²⁹

The custom among the lower classes of white men in this province, of purchasing Indian women (the Indian form of marriage) and keeping them a time, is another of the obstacles in the way of social and moral advancement. After a short time the women, with the issue of the concubinage, is returned to her tribe to eke out a future miserable existence, and in this way a generation of half-breeds is growing up for

²⁷ BCARS, E/B/B34.2, Charles A. Bayley, "Early Life on Vancouver Island;" London, Public Record Office, CO 30, 15, n. 63 Baynes to Douglas, September 4, 1860; Seemann remarked in 1846 that many of the employees were themselves "half-caste", *Voyage of the Herald*; Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties:" *Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870*, (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980) discusses the wide-spread phenomenon of fur traders marrying aboriginal women and the benefits such liaisons brought to both parties.

²⁸ London, Public Record Office, CO 305/15, no. 63 Baynes to Douglas, September 4, 1860.

²⁹ Possibly some Songhees women had shorter liaisons with the crews of the naval vessels. Esquimalt became a seasonal base for the Royal Navy in 1846 and a permanent one in 1865; for more on prostitution see Chapter 8.

which provisions will have to be made, or suffer them to become a disgrace to society and trouble hereafter to the State.³⁰

It is difficult to tell how widespread the practice of local women forming relationships with immigrant men was. From the comments of Bayley and Baynes, above, and the experience in other parts of the Pacific Northwest it would seem that the overwhelming number of resident immigrant men, up to the gold-rush at least, formed partnerships with Songhees or other aboriginal women.³¹ Surprisingly, this "out-marriage" did not upset the gender balance of the Songhees. Douglas's 1850 census showed 122 "men with beards", 134 women, 221 boys and 223 girls and the subsequent censuses show that the male-female ratio remained relatively constant.³²

The loss of Songhees women to immigrant men was apparently made up by women from neighbouring nations marrying into the Songhees. The presence of the fort made the Songhees relatively wealthy compared to their neighbours, and so desirable as marriage mates. It was also valuable for distant nations to have relatives in Victoria so they could trade unmolested at the fort, and have a place to stay when they came. Moreover, the Songhees had a reputation for being unusually clever, and for having powerful spirit-allies. There are aboriginal accounts of Songhees men marrying Swinomish, Twana, Cowichan and Saanich women.³³

³⁰ I.W. Powell, Report of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for British Columbia for 1872 and 1873 (Ottawa, 1873). For bride "purchases" or "rental" see Hills's diary, June 10, 1861, March 17, 1862.

³¹ Fornsby, "Personal Narrative," discusses the prevalence in Puget Sound; see also Jean Barman, "Imagining the 'Halfbreed': British Columbia in the Late Nineteenth Century," unpublished paper presented to the American Historical Association, 1992.

³² BCARS, James Douglas, Private Papers, 2nd Series, B 20 1853; there is more discussion of Songhees population changes in chapter 6.

³³ Fornsby is quite explicit about the relative wealth of the Songhees in his account of one such marriage between a Songhees *siem* and a Swinomish women, in "Personal Document;" Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, pp. 41; BCARS, ms. Diamond Jenness, "The Saanich Indians of Vancouver Island," pp. 83-4; Charles Hill-Tout, "Report on the Ethnology of the South-Eastern Tribes of Vancouver Island, B.C.," 1907 reprinted in Ralph Maud, ed. *The Salish People* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1978) vol. 4, pp. 132-4.

The increasing amount of work available to individuals through the 1850s and, particularly, with the advent of the gold rush, probably put additional pressure on the system of family and household production as individuals became able to earn an income independently of the *siem*. In addition to doing farm and construction work, supplying foodstuffs and firewood, men were hired onto steamboats, in the sawmills and on the docks. Women, too had expanded work opportunities, particularly as launderers, domestics and as suppliers of provisions and sexual services. Opportunities for out-marriage also expanded for women.

Yet, for all its disruption, the gold rush left the household basically intact as a production unit, and *siem* enriched beyond their previous experience. This was on account of the increasing value of the *siem*'s control of resource sites, reef-net locations in particular, as the demand for fish among the immigrant community escalated. Many of the Songhees continued to engage in the reef-net fishery at their sites along San Juan Island through the 1860s.³⁴ Longstanding Songhees domestic products, canoes, paddles, and baskets were in high demand by gold-rush society as were carved miniature "curiosities". The rush mats which Bishop Hills saw in production by women in King Freezy's household in 1860 were highly sought after by the miners as bedding. Francis Reinhart, a 59'er, described them as "just the thing to spread on the ground under our blankets and roll them up in when we travel. We bought several, some colored and quite nice."³⁵

The Songhees continued to live in extended families despite deaths from disease and alcohol abuse and a drastically reduced birth/infant survival rate. In 1887, Indian Agent Lomas reported there

³⁴ Hills Diary, November 9, 1862; Michael Cooper, who became chief was conceived at the fishing site on San Juan in 1863. *Colonist*, January 11, 1936.

³⁵ Hills Diary, January 17, 1860; Herman Reinhart, *The Golden Frontier: The Recollections of Herman Francis Reinhart 1851-1869*, Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., ed., (Austin: University of Texas, 1962) p. 143; Fawcett, *Reminiscences*, pp. 283-4.

was only one child for every two adults among the Songhees.³⁶ Consolidation of households maintained their basic structure even in the face of the shrinking populations.³⁷ Chief Freezy, reputed to have at one time as many as 15 wives, and six in 1859, still had several at least, upon his death in 1864, so the polygynous nature of the household had not been entirely disrupted.³⁸ Slaves were still a part of the household economy, though their function changed to bringing in cash rather than subsistence.³⁹

Potlatches continued to be the focus of household production, occurring with increased frequency, and with more wealth being distributed to larger numbers of people. As previously discussed, the decimation by disease of high-born families probably meant that distant "common" relatives would be next in line to inherit "noble" names and positions, and increased wealth available to non-nobles meant they too could participate more fully.⁴⁰

When the composition of the Songhees household began to shift in the 1870s, it had more to do with intensified evangelization than with the changing economy. Although Catholics and Anglicans had been working with the Songhees from 1859-60, and the former had baptized and married several of the Songhees, it was after Shee-hat-son's 1870 conversion to Methodism that the new life style called for by the Christians gained a foothold. According to the missionary accounts, which have to be understood as

³⁶ W.H. Lomas, in Cda. S.P. 1888, vol. 13, pp. 105-7; in most years leading up to 1934 deaths exceeded births by two to three a year with the exception of 1919 when the Spanish flu increased the death toll slightly.

³⁷ For details on population decline see chapter 6; when Bishop Hills visited Chief Freezy's house in 1860 he described it as containing only three small families. Bishop Hills Diary, January 17, 1860.

³⁸ Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of British Columbia, 1792-1887*, (San Francisco: The History Company, 1887) p. 51.

³⁹ See Chapter 6.

⁴⁰ George Mitchell described the widening of the circle of those who could potlatch in Barnett, *Coast Salish*, 253.

evangelical tracts, Shee-hat-son, a *siem*, apparently saw in the Methodists an alternative to the widespread drinking that was consuming his community.⁴¹

Christianity impinged on his household structure in several ways. The prohibition on polygamy changed household composition. Pressure from the missionaries was reinforced by the sex-imbalance in the immigrant population. Any woman who preferred a man of her own could easily have one. The shift away from polygamy, again according to the missionary Thomas Crosby who ministered to the Songhees, was gradual:

It was a matter that could not have been forced upon them, but gradually they arranged it. The oldest one, perhaps, was put away with an ample dowry. Another, who had no family ties, married another man who had no wife....The one whose growing family of little ones laid heavy responsibilities upon her was usually retained.⁴²

It seems doubtful that the process worked as smoothly as Crosby described but the decline in polygamous marriages is also suggested by the available statistics. The 1876 census by George Blenkinsop of the Indian Reserve Commission was the first to enumerate the Songhees by "family". In that year, as in 1850, the number of adult women (162) exceeded men (155), and female youths (9) exceed males (7). Of the adult men, eight apparently had two wives, and two including, the "chief"

⁴¹ Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Vancouver Island, "Registre de baptêmes" records 3 baptisms and one marriage involving Songhees partners from 1861-64; the difficulty faced by the Catholics and Anglicans is described in Bishop Hills "Diary", and William Duncan's letters to the Church Missionary Society; for an account of the Methodist missions see Thomas Crosby, *Among the An-ko-me-nuns or Flathead tribes of Indians of the Pacific Coast* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907) pp. 27-30.

⁴² Crosby, *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Scomiach, had three.⁴³ By 1891, according to the census, no man, Scomiach included, had more than one wife.⁴⁴

As important as the dismantling of polygyny was, the missionaries' encouragement of new forms of social organization probably had more impact. First, they offered their religious sect as a new way for the Songhees to define themselves, separate from households which had previously been the largest social unit. In adopting Methodism, She-hat-son set himself apart from the nominal Catholicism of the other Songhees and in taking the temperance pledge, set himself apart in terms of temporal activities. Thereafter, a new wedge separated the already atomized Songhees households from one another. Second, the missionaries encouraged the converts to build houses in the Euro-American style, holding only a conjugal family. The missionary reported with pride that as soon as Shee-hat-son became a Christian, he "built himself a neat little house, and moved out of the old lodge with all its associations of heathenism." Amos, as She-hat-son was christened, was joined by his wife Sarah, and their home became the Methodist meeting place for 14 of the Songhees who subsequently broke from Catholicism.⁴⁵

⁴³ Scomiach was sometimes written Scomiach, and sometimes his English name "Jim" was used. Opposite the name of each adult male, Blenkinsop indicated the number adult women, male and female youths and children in the immediate family. Other members of the "non-nuclear family" are listed under the adult male with whom they are associated, and are identified as "orphan", "widow", "halfbreed", "sister" or often just "woman". Three Songhees families had unidentified, apparently unrelated, adult women (not widows or orphans), who may have been slaves, living with them. The census does not allow us to be certain, but in counting the neighbouring Esquimalt Band, adult sisters were clearly identified, and in both the Songhees and Esquimalt censuses widows and orphans are indicated: NAC RG 88 vol. 494, 1876-77.

⁴⁴ Cda. 1891, Mss. Census; Shoemaker raises the definite possibility that the census taker deliberately, or through misconception or deception on the part of the aboriginal people, failed to record multiple wives in 1891, but by this time the Indian Agent had a personal acquaintance with the Songhees families and would have drawn attention to polygamous relationships. See Nancy Shoemaker, "The Census as Civilizer: American Indian Household Structure in the 1900 and 1910 Censuses," *Historical Methods*, 25, 1 (Winter 1992) pp. 4-11; John Lutz, "Superintending the Songhees: Naming, Knowledge and the Extension of Dominion Over Aboriginal People," unpublished paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Ottawa, 1993.

⁴⁵ Crosby, *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Through the 1870s and 1880s, Indian officials reported the Songhees erecting "modern" houses which held only one family, so that when Franz Boas visited the reserve in 1886 "only a few old houses are still inhabited. The Indians have built themselves others according to the European plan."⁴⁶ A few "longhouses" were maintained as separate dance and potlatch houses.

The nuclear family idealized by the missionary was economically feasible in the altered circumstances of the 1880s in a way that it had not been before. Previously, a large household ensured the labour force necessary to harvest resources like camas and salmon which were abundant, but only for short periods. By the mid-1870s, a small household could earn enough at wage labour to purchase subsistence that was less and less available from the land. Abundant wage labour opportunities meant that even small families, with both parents and the elder children working, could accumulate sufficient wealth goods to hold their own potlatch, something that would have previously required the combined effort of a large household.

Opportunities for the economic independence of women, and the cash contribution of children and the aged, which had increased with the gold rush, increased even further in the late 1870s-early 1880s with the establishment of the salmon-canning and hop-growing industries. The new canneries appropriated the gendered division of work already established in aboriginal societies: native men fished and women mended nets and processed fish. Older men worked alongside women in mending nets. The infirm looked after the infants, while even young children had work cleaning cans.⁴⁷ In peak seasons, every available person would be brought in and infants placed in a corner where they could be

⁴⁶ Boas, in Rohner, ed. *Ethnography of Franz Boas*, p. 21.

⁴⁷ Sarah Albany worked in canneries with before she married Chief Michael Cooper, and her children including future Songhees chief John Albany earned 10¢ an hour washing cans. Esquimalt Municipal Archives, "Interview with Joyce Albany".

watched.⁴⁸ In this way a modified system of family-based production was perpetuated by the canneries.⁴⁹

By the 1880s some, if not most, aboriginal people, had relaxed the prohibitions against women handling fishing equipment, and some women fished with their husbands (the boats required a puller and a fisher). In 1883, the Indian Agent for the Fraser River records an aboriginal husband and wife fishing team, (the wife pulling the boat, and the husband handling the net) making \$240 in 14 days.⁵⁰

Initially the canneries hired more aboriginal men as fishers than they hired women as processors, but by the 1890s competition from European and Asian fishermen eroded the demand for aboriginal men, while demand for aboriginal women workers continued to grow into the twentieth century.⁵¹ This high demand for female cannery labour was in many cases the main reason the men were employed as fishermen: "The real reason that you want to have... [cannery-owned boats] and get Indian fishermen is they bring their families around and you have Indian women and boys, and some of the men, not fishermen to work in the canneries".⁵²

⁴⁸ Carmichael "Account of a season's work".

⁴⁹ This has parallels in Tamara Harevan's description of the incorporation of pre-industrial family production modes into factory life in New England, see her *Family time, Industrial Time: the Relationship between Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community*, (New York: Cambridge, 1982.)

⁵⁰ Cda. S.P. 1883, p. 60; The industrial fishery apparently also eliminated the practice of the "first salmon" ceremony and aboriginal concerns about the ritual disposal of fish remains, which was recorded among the Songhees as late as 1859, see Stanley, *Mapping the Frontier*, p. 29.

⁵¹ McTiernan 1882 Annual Report, p. 61 reports 1,300 Indian men employed at the fisheries and paid an average of \$1.75/day for a season of 90 days while the canneries employed 400 women in the same season, who earned \$1/day.

⁵² NAC RG 10 vol. 1349 reel C-13917, item 412, Great West Packing Co Ltd to W.R. Robertson, Cowichan Indian Agent, February 20, 1913; B.C. S.P. 1893, "B.C. Fishery Commission Report," testimony of F.L. Lord, p. 117; RG 10 vol. 3908 Black Series file 107297-2, reel C-10160, "Minutes of a Royal Commission at Victoria involving the fishing privileges of Indians of British Columbia," 1915.

Family-based production was also the norm for the hop fields which began demanding large amounts of labour in the late 1870s. Moreover, the hop picking season closely followed the canning season, allowing families to participate in both. "Indian women and children are always the most eager to go to the hop fields, where they always earn considerable sums of money," noted the Songhees' agent. This economy paralleled the prestige economy. In contrast to subsistence production, in which aboriginal people pooled their resources, in the cash economy the Indian agent noted "among these Indians, the wife's purse is generally entirely separate from the husband's."⁵³

The Songhees responded to economic and demographic forces by shrinking their household size. In contrast to the multiple family household described by Kane, of the 32 households enumerated in 1891, 15 were composed of only a couple or a couple and their children. Sixteen, or half the households had others beside the nuclear family, and one had a single member. The extended households often had adult brothers or sisters and their families (five cases), elderly widows/widowers living with their children (four cases) or married children and their families living with their parents (three cases). Twenty years later, singles comprised 14 of 38 households, nuclear families 20, and "extended families" only four; the extended families were comprised, in two cases of a grandson living with a grandmother, and two cases of children of a former marriage of one spouse living with the new couple.⁵⁴

⁵³ Cda. S.P. 1887, 5, 92; 1888, 13, 105; studies of other coastal groups suggest that the separation of the earnings of husbands and wives was common elsewhere as well: Carol Cooper, "Native Women of the Northern Pacific Coast: An Historical Perspective 1830-1900," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 27 No. 4 p. 56; Klein, "She's One of Us," p. 167; in 1913 Indian Agent Charles Cox reported that Nuu-chah-nulth men and women keep their incomes separate, in Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing, Victoria, Indian Claims, December 1913 vol. 8, 135, in Crockford, "Changing Economic Activities", 43.

⁵⁴ Despite Shoemaker's observation that census takers often "civilized" Indians by reconstituting their family structures in Euro-American terms, the 1891, 1901 and 1910 censuses drawn upon here do not seem to have suffered from this; the Songhees family structures, particularly in 1891 do not resemble non-aboriginal families and as Shoemaker points out, English speaking aboriginal people close to urban centres, were better enumerated than others. Cda. 1891 Mss. Census; NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050, file 33.3 pt. 7, "Census of the Songhees Band of Indians" November 21-5, 1910; Shoemaker, "The Census as Civilizer."

The shrinking household size is apparent in a comparison of Kane's 1847 observation that households contained eight to ten families, with Bishop Hills 1860 observation that Chief Freezy's house contained only three small families, and the 1891 census which found an average of five people in each household. By 1901 the average household size had shrunk to 3.4 and by 1910, as a result of a large number of singles, it was 2.3.⁵⁵

Household demographics also show changing patterns of household formation. When the Europeans first arrived, marriages among the Songhees were arranged by parents with a view to making alliances. It was not uncommon for a *siem* to marry women much younger than himself. Although by 1891 no polygamous relationships show up in the census, males were, on average, four years older than their wives; several husbands were a decade older, and one was 35 years older than his wife. Two decades later, the situation had reversed itself. In 1910 wives were, on average, a year older than their husbands. In this period it was not uncommon for a wife to be more than five years older than her husband. The older age of wives compared to their husbands may reflect women's increasing ability to choose their own partners, frequently marrying into the large pool of non-aboriginal bachelors. Of the eight single Songhees women under 25 in the 1901 census for whom there was information on marriage, all married non-Indians. Only two of the nine single Songhees men under 25 listed in the 1910 census and for whom marriage information is available, married non-Indians. Since aboriginal men less frequently married non-aboriginal women, the pool of partners available to them declined. Four of the single Songhees men under 25 in 1901, who lived past 40, never married.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Cda. Census Mss. 1891, 1901; NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050 file 33/3 pt 7 "Census of the Songhees Band of Indians," 1910; Bishop Hills Diary, January 17, 1860.

⁵⁶ This information is drawn from the Cda. 1901 Mss. Census and compared to genealogy tables built up from the 1910 census, and estate files from 1903 to 1965, in NAC RG 10 Series B 3 g reel 2739-40, file 37-3-23, supplemented by the Cowichan Agency correspondence files.

From 1902 to 1910 the Annual Reports of the British Columbia Indian Superintendent emphasized the contribution of women to the household economy:

The Indian women, it may be remarked, are also money earners to no inconsiderable extent. During the canning season and at the hop fields they find profitable employment; they engage extensively in the manufacture of baskets, which they dispose of profitably to the tourists and others; they cure and dress deer and cariboo skin, out of which they make gloves and moccasins, and they frequently find a market for dressed skins intact, they being useful for many purposes; mats from the inner bark of the cedar and rags are also made, some of which are of an attractive and superior quality; they make their own and their children's clothing, being much assisted in the latter by sewing and knitting machines; they also gather large quantities of berries, which in some cases they sell among the white people, a major portion is, however, dried for winter use; in doing chores and laundry work for white neighbours they also find considerable employment.⁵⁷

Although in this passage, the Indian superintendent was reflecting on the provincial scene, Songhees women could be found engaged in every activity he mentioned. However, the dressing of hides, gathering and selling berries, and the making of mats and baskets were less and less important as the Songhees access to resources diminished. Instead, Songhees women expanded their sewing and knitting.⁵⁸ Sometime prior to 1872, aboriginal women adapted their longstanding knowledge of spinning wool and decorative blanket patterns to the preparing of knitted woollen items, having learned knitting from the immigrants. The knitting of what came to be called "Cowichan sweaters" by the Cowichan people and other Coast Salish, including Songhees, later grew into a major source of income for women.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ A.W. Vowell in Annual Report of the British Columbia Indian Superintendent's Office, July 19, 1906, in Cda, S.P. 1907 No. 27, p. 268; this passage is repeated nearly verbatim in the reports through the decade.

⁵⁸ As early as 1862 Bishop Hills found women sewing machines on the Songhees reserve; in the 1880s, when relief was issued to men, it included a shirt and trousers, but when issued to women, it included needles and nine yards of both flannel and cotton; NAC RG 10 vol. 3803 reel C-10,141; Indian Affairs Black Series, 53,283, H. Moffat to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, December 21, 1888; Hills Diary, February 1 and March 13, 1862.

⁵⁹ Barbara Lane, "The Cowichan Knitting Industry," *Anthropology in British Columbia*, 2 (1951) 18-9.

As the Songhees gradually added kitchen gardens, a practice noted in the annual reports of the early 1890s, and as chickens became part of the domestic economy, women's and children's roles in household production expanded to include these responsibilities. By 1910 most Songhees homes had a chicken shed attached and there were probably others like Mrs. Williams (Discovery Island Band) who were responsible for 60 chickens and 21 geese; her daughter had her own flocks.⁶⁰

Women became increasingly economically independent in the 1880s but their legal position in the household and community was dramatically weakened by the application of the Indian Act of 1876. According to the act, women could not vote on matters concerning the band, nor could they serve as chief or councillor. In practice, this did not alter the political situation of aboriginal women but it removed any possibility for them to assume more power as productive relationships evolved.

More significant was the Indian Act's stipulation that if a Songhees woman married a non-Indian, or an Indian of a different band, she lost all rights to return to live with her birth-family; after such a marriage she could not inherit her parents' house or land, even after her marriage ended in divorce or widowhood. Previously, according to the Coast Salish rights of bilateral kinship, she could rejoin her family at their residence at any time and could inherit land and house from them, particularly in cases where she had no brothers. Subsequently, women were much more dependent on their husbands.⁶¹

Employment opportunities for both men and women declined in the Depression of the 1930s and both turned their attention back to the subsistence economy. Women also expanded production of

⁶⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050 33/3 pt 7; BCARS, GR 1995 reel B-1454; transcripts, McKenna-McBride Commission, June 10, 1913, pp. 198-99.

⁶¹ Marjorie Mitchell, "Social and Cultural Consequences for Native Indian Women on a British Columbia Reserve," *Atlantis*, 4, 2 (Spring, 1979) pp. 183.

sweaters, and for many families this was the only cash income.⁶² Due to the home-based nature of the work, estimates of production are tenuous and hard to come by. One contemporary observer in the 1930s thought that aboriginal women on southern Vancouver Island produced about 500 a year. By 1950 production had increased so that there were three major dealers, one of these, Norman Lougheed, was buying 1,500 sweaters a year; in 1960 Lougheed bought 5,000 sweaters. The Indian superintendent confirmed the importance of the sweater industry as late as 1955. J.V. Boys noted that poor fishing, bad weather during the agricultural season and in the fall shut-down of logging and sawmills had produced a grim employment situation for men in the agency. "Fortunately," he added, "the Indian women of this agency derive a very considerable income from knitting sweaters." One indication of the value of the industry is the 1959 estimate, from one of the three main sweater dealers, that he paid \$185,000 that year to aboriginal knitters in the Cowichan Agency.⁶³

Knitting fit well with the other elements of the aboriginal economy because it could be done in the evenings and seasons when there was little other work; it also allowed parents, particularly women, to work at home and provide their own child care, and it was an enterprise where most of the family could contribute. One knitter from southern Vancouver Island recalled about the early 1930s:

I was eight years old when I started knitting with my mother. Our dad went fishing once in awhile but it was seasonal. My dad used to card the wool, my mom would spin and knit. They paid us \$4.50 [for a sweater]....When I first got started we bought

⁶² In his October 1930 the Inspector of Indian Agencies wrote that in the Cowichan Agency, the sale of Indian sweaters was constantly increasing, NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170 file: Cowichan Agency General B-44, George S. Pragnell, Inspector of Indian Agencies to the Secretary of DIA, October 26, 1935; for the importance of sweater production during the depression see Chapter 6.

⁶³ Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa, file 9748/21-1 vol. 1, J.V. Boys, Superintendent, Cowichan Agency, "Report for the Quarter Ending December 31, 1955"; E. Blanche Norcross "Cowichan Indian Sweaters," *The Beaver*, (December, 1945), 18-19; Norman Lougheed, Sweater Dealer from a newspaper clipping quoted in Olsen, "Cowichan Sweaters," p. 16; in 1954 the Duncan Chamber of Commerce had estimated that the Cowichan sweater trade in that area alone was a \$40,000 per year industry, quoted in Lewis, *Indian Families*, p. 124.

the farmer's wool for 3¢ a pound. We washed it in the spring and summer so it was ready in the winter.⁶⁴

Another knitter interviewed by Sylvia Olsen recalled learning to knit from her mother before she was a teen: "We were like contractors--we knit sleeves for mom - but we never got paid for it." Lane noted that although Indian men also took up knitting, this practice was dying out by the 1940s "due to the modern prejudice that it is women's work". The knitting industry, she concluded, "has had far reaching effects on...the status of women. The latter now have an independent year-round source of income, while the men are usually dependent on seasonal labour. The earning power of women has had repercussions in the marriage pattern and in family life generally," giving women more independence.⁶⁵

Knitting was even more important for single mothers. Left with eight children when her husband died in the mid-1950s, Priscilla, a Saanich woman, living on a reserve just north of the Songhees, recalled:

I was knitting about seven sweaters a week at that time. I stayed up most of the night. I would first pack wood up from the beach for the fire. Then I would knit all night. I always liked knitting. All the kids would go to sleep and I would knit....The kids had to eat and we had to work where ever we could.⁶⁶

The ability of women to contribute financially to the household was further enhanced by the Family Allowance program instituted in 1945. Although payments were made for each child, the cheques were payable to their mothers. Like knitting, family allowance provided year-round income and so was particularly valuable in the Songhees' seasonal economy.

⁶⁴ "Cecilia" interviewed by Sylvia Olsen in "Cowichan Sweaters,".

⁶⁵ Olsen, *Ibid*; NAC RG 10 vol. 9,170, various letters; George S. Pragnell, Inspector of Indian Agencies to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, "Cowichan Indian Agency Report No. 6," October 26, 1935; Lane, "Cowichan Knitting Industry," pp. 14-17.

⁶⁶ Olsen, *Ibid*.

The cash contribution of Songhees women to the household probably peaked in the late 1940s when family allowances could be added onto June-to-December employment at the Empire Cannery and sales of sweaters knitted from December to June.⁶⁷ The cannery's closure in 1952 changed women's situation completely. Instead of six months work next door to their home, there was one, or at most, two months' employment in the hop yards of Washington State. But even the hop fields were in decline. Those that remained were experimenting with mechanical harvesters so that by 1960 even this option was largely closed. The money available from knitting was also in relative decline. Rising costs of wool and reduced prices resulting from mechanical competition meant that knitters were making less than one dollar an hour in 1972.⁶⁸

From the 1950s through to the 1970s, when non-aboriginal women were increasingly attracted into retail, food and beverage, clerical, nursing and teaching occupations, aboriginal women were largely excluded from these jobs by a combination of inadequate academic preparation and racism.⁶⁹ Mooney's research shows that in stark contrast to earlier times, in these two decades aboriginal women were much less likely to be employed than non-aboriginal women. Mitchell's 1972 study of aboriginal women in a Victoria-area reserve confirms Mooney's research, finding that for those few who had employment, "the median for the year was an absurd \$183." By comparison, Indian men who lived on

⁶⁷ See Chapter 7; in 1946 and 1947 the Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs noted that Cowichan sweaters were turned out "in considerable quantity" at "higher than prewar prices." Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report, 1946 and 1947*, pp. 206-7.

⁶⁸ Mitchell, "Social and Cultural Consequences," p. 183; Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Indian Economies and Domestic Organization," p. 89.

⁶⁹ Joyce Albany's account of the elementary schooling provided the Department of Indian Affairs shows that it was not up to the standard provided by the province in public schools. Moreover, when it came time to go to high school, it was free for "provincial tax-payers" but Indians had to pay high fees. Albany was hired as a secretary for a law firm and eventually the School Board but said that her sisters looked for work in Vancouver on account of the fact that they were known as "Indians" in Victoria. See "Joyce Albany Interview".

the reserve earned a median of \$1,900, and non-Indian women in the Victoria area earned an average \$2,600.⁷⁰ Increasingly, aboriginal women were able to provide cash to the household economy only through their claim on state payments in the form of family allowance, old age pension, or welfare. They were still able to participate to a small degree in the subsistence economy, but this had minuscule importance to the household economy compared to five and ten decades earlier.⁷¹

The experience of women within the household economy, and their post 1950s reliance on state payments had its direct parallels among the elderly and the young. Among the Songhees, household production and reproduction was ordered as much by age as by gender. The coming of Euro-american society overturned the relative importance of the old *vis à vis* young adults in Songhees households and society even more profoundly than it affected gender roles.

Previously, the aged stood at the apex of Songhees society. The *siem* who controlled the most productive resources were often elderly men. The spiritual wealth of the community, which ensured the material wealth, was very much in the hands of the older members as was the intangible wealth that lay in family genealogies, rituals and "special knowledge." Finally, the practical experience of the elderly in everyday activity from gathering food, to warfare, including the skilled arts of hand-crafted items, was of enormous importance to the household.

Just who was "old" in a Songhees household was probably defined by a combination of generational positioning and one's ability to contribute materially to the household economy. The term in the Songhees dialect for great-grandchildren and great-grandparent is the same, *ch'^m?ch'^m?iqw*, suggesting the generational circularity which started anew with the birth of great-grandchildren. In

⁷⁰ Mooney, "Urban and Reserve Coast Salish Employment," p. 399; Mitchell, *Ibid*, p. 184.

⁷¹ This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

terms of generational position one has been "replaced" when one becomes a great-grandparent suggesting that this was "old".⁷²

In terms of one's contribution to the household economy, men were considered old when they could no longer perform the arduous physical activities typical of men in their prime, such as canoeing long distances and packing heavy game. Women became "old" in a certain sense, at menopause, since they could no longer bear children.⁷³ Blindness seems to have been a common affliction among adult Coast Salish and the blind were probably considered "old" at whatever age the affliction struck. Taking all of these factors together, there were probably few people not considered old by the time they reached 55.⁷⁴

However, old did not imply "unproductive" since the elderly, including those with physical limitations, contributed to the household in a number of vital ways. Skill acquired over the years meant that the elderly were often the best carvers or weavers, and so made important contributions to a household's wealth goods. Merely living to an old age was thought to suggest the possession of much power. Owing to this power and their accumulated knowledge, the old were sought out when younger people became sick, when the resources failed to provide sustenance and at other times of crisis. The elderly were also responsible for child care while parents were engaged in production activities; in addition grandparents had the special responsibility of conveying their knowledge and stories to

⁷² Mitchell, "Dictionary of Songish" p. 40; Amoss, "Coast Salish Elders," p. 230.

⁷³ On the other hand, post-menopausal women could no longer pollute hunters or their gear and so were actually free to perform an expanded range of activities as long as their physical strength permitted.

⁷⁴ Amoss, "Coast Salish Elders," p. 231; Boyd, "Demographic History," p. 137; Cda. S.P. 1894 vol. 10, no. 14, p. 116, W.H. Lomas: "the number of old people who are blind is remarkably large in this agency, indeed nearly all the old have a tendency to disease of the eye."

grandchildren. According to Patricia Amoss, "mature adults bore children and fed them, but it was the grandparent generation that raised them."⁷⁵

The fur traders arrival may have initially buttressed the importance of the elderly, so long as labour for the newcomers was organized by the *siem* and conducted along household lines, but soon thereafter old people seem to have been most disadvantaged by the new order:

The very old people who formerly lived entirely on fish, berries and roots, suffer a great deal through the settling up of the country....With the younger men, the loss of these kinds of foods is more than compensated by the good wages that they earn, which supplement what they produce on their allotments; but this mode of life does away with their old customs of laying in a supply of dried meat, fish and berries for winter use, and thus the old people again suffer....⁷⁶

As previously mentioned, the first recorded request for relief by the Songhees was for seven old women of the band, one old man, and an orphan, in an 1888 letter on their behalf from the Songhees chief and council. The Indian superintendent passed on their recommendation to his supervisor in Ottawa adding that the named elderly "Indians are friendless and deserving of sympathy".⁷⁷

This exchange of letters prompted by the request suggest a number of changes in Songhees society. The former system of the households maintaining the elderly and non-related dependents was evidently breaking down. The increase in wage labour, the move to smaller houses centred around a more closely related "conjugal family", diminishing access to subsistence resources, all disadvantaged the elderly. The extraordinary death rates among the Songhees implied that many elderly (and these

⁷⁵ Amoss, *Ibid*, p. 232.

⁷⁶ Lomas in Cda. S.P. 1888, 13, 105.

⁷⁷ NAC RG 10 vol. 3803 reel C-10,141 file: Indian Affairs Black Series 53,283, Headmen and Councillors of the Songhees Band to I.W. Powell, December 1888; H. Moffat, to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, December 21, 1888.

were preponderantly women) were left without adult children to assist them. Many had no grandchildren and thus the chain through which spiritual and practical knowledge was normally passed, was broken. A few of the lucky ones combined in households with their orphaned grandchildren, or other orphans; but seldom were orphans old enough to provide for the aged. In 1888, the agent thought that given the lack of foods available from the subsistence economy, large households were a positive disadvantage: "it is quite a heavy burden for a young man to have aged relatives."⁷⁸

The Songhees' letter also suggested the disproportionate number of elderly widows compared to widowers. Some of the imbalance is accounted for by the practice of polygyny where the death of a single *siem* would leave several widows; more generally it seems to reflect the pre-1860 practice where husbands were older than their wives, together with the more dangerous production activities of men in both pre-contact (hunting, sealing, fishing, slave-raiding) and in post-contact (fishing, logging and particularly sawmill labour) societies. Even as late as 1901, widows were on average 13 years younger (54) than widowers, whom they out-numbered more than two to one.⁷⁹

Over the next decade the Songhees Indian agent commented frequently on the hardships faced by the elderly:

the old people are often destitute. The running of logs in the rivers prevents their weir fishing; the game and fishery regulations, which are enforced in the settled districts, have in great measure taken away their old means of support; added to which is the fact that the Indians do in great measure neglect their old people when they become

⁷⁸ W.H. Lomas, in Cda. S.P. 1889 vol. 13 p. 102.

⁷⁹ Mss. Census, 1901. NAC RG 10 vol. 11,050 33/3 pt 7. There were seven widows in 1901 with an average age of 54 and the three widowers with an average age of 67; in 1910 there were 6 widows with average age of 67 and 2 widowers whose average age was 74. Widows of childbearing age frequently remarried but by the time they passed 50 the ratio of available men to women fell and widows over this age seemed likely to remain unmarried for the rest of their lives. The special disadvantage that widows faced is discussed by Alice Bee Kasakoff, "Who Cared For Those Who Couldn't Care For Themselves in Traditional Northwest Coast Societies?" *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, XII 2 (1992) pp. 299-302; and Mitchell, "Social and Cultural Consequences," p. 183.

helpless, and if I were not constantly urging (and giving relief when absolutely necessary) many would die of starvation.⁸⁰

The value of the elderly as producers and reproducers of knowledge in the household continued to fall as wage work increased and subsistence work declined. The material knowledge of the elderly: weaving, wood-working, net-making and food-gathering skills became less important to households than the ability to speak English, or at least Chinook jargon. Some of the new work, as in the hop fields and canneries, relied more on endurance than skill, while in other skilled occupations like fishing, aboriginal methods were being replaced, often by law, with new technologies requiring different skills. The spiritual knowledge of the elders was constantly being denigrated by the missionaries and in the church-run schools, and the spiritual power of the elders to protect themselves from disease and poverty was apparently in decline.

The shift in generational power became evident at the political level in 1884. Although the band had no mechanism to depose the hereditary leader, Scomiach, they did elect a council according to the provisions of the Indian Act "to take the authority out of the hands of the old chief who has always been a strong supporter of all old customs." The new council immediately applied for a school on their reserve and promised to "compel the attendance of the children".⁸¹

When Scomiach died in 1894 his office immediately fell to Charlie Freezie, his nephew and the grandson of King Freezy, as well as a member of the new council mentioned above. When Charlie Freezie (anglicized as Fraser) died six months into his term, an election was called for the first time,

⁸⁰ Cda S.P. 1894 no. 14 p. 117; it seems unlikely that unrelated old people were given any less consideration in aboriginal society than they were in non-aboriginal society; moreover, since Indians were federal charges they were not eligible for the provincial old age homes that were established at this time for "the friendless elderly".

⁸¹ W.H. Lomas in Cda. S.P. 1885, p. 98.

according to the Indian Act, rather than having chieftainship passed on according to traditional rules.⁸² Michael Cooper, of mixed blood, connected to a chiefly family through his maternal grandfather, and the son of a British army officer, was elected; the new chief was 30 years old and had lived his whole life in a world dominated by the Euro-american economy.⁸³

The rift between generations was encouraged and exacerbated by the Department of Indian Affairs who correctly identified the elders as the glue that held the Songhees' social institutions together. Testifying before the McKenna-McBride Commission in 1913, Lomas' successor as Indian Agent for the Songhees, William Robertson, explained that the young men did not like to oppose the older members of the band who cling to older customs. "The result is that the young Indian is kept from progressing....when a boy comes back from school to live in a new and better life, he is opposed by the older Indians and eventually he gets back into the old ways." Asked by the commissioners how he proposed to deal with the "pernicious influence of the older men," Robertson replied "It is kind of a "waiting policy" -- that is waiting for the older men to die off." Robertson added that older people were responsible for the frequent potlatches and that active prosecution might serve to break up the practice.⁸⁴

Potlatching, with its successor institution, winter dancing, never entirely died away among the Songhees so the importance of elders as teachers has not been entirely eradicated. Since the lifting of the potlatch ban in 1951 and the resurgence of winter dancing, the status of elders has risen dramatically in Salish aboriginal communities to the point where they are again seen as the most valuable members

⁸² NAC RG 10 vol. 3938 reel C-10,164 file: Indian Affairs Black Series 121,134, W.H. Lomas, to A.W. Vowell, November 2, 1894; *Colonist*, January 11, 1936.

⁸³ Cooper's connection to the warrior Skwa'le~'st is described in Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, pp. 39-41, 54; for his father see his obituary in the *Colonist*, January 11, 1936.

⁸⁴ BCARS, GR 1995 reel B-1454, Transcripts of the McKenna-McBride Commission, pp. 289-293.

of the community.⁸⁵ The resurgence of the social importance of the elderly among the Songhees overlaps with their increased financial independence. Very vulnerable since the breakdown of extended family support in the 1880s, the aged enjoyed freedom from economic want for a period after the 1911 transfer of the Songhees to their new reserve, and the cash settlement that accompanied it. All heads of households, including the old widows and widowers were eligible for the \$10,000 cash. This financial security was, however, wiped out by the Depression, and the elderly again became the most vulnerable of the Songhees.⁸⁶

To be Indian and elderly was to be impoverished through discriminatory state policy. Unlike their non-Indian neighbours, the Songhees did not benefit from the federal Old Age Pension which was introduced in 1927. Non-Indians over 70 years old received \$20 per month, compared to the \$4 per month given to indigent Indians of all ages.

Not only were elderly Indians excluded from old age pension, they were also ineligible for the Department of Indian Affairs relief if the agent thought that their children ought to be supporting them. In 1928 the B.C. Commissioner for Indian Affairs wrote to the daughter of a northern Vancouver Island woman:

I have to inform you that it is not the intention of the department to provide food for Indians who have close relations who are in a position to support them, and as it is shown that she has three daughters and a son, it is felt that between the three of you the needs of your mother can be well provided for.⁸⁷

In 1940, Mary Quocksister, another aboriginal women from northern Vancouver Island, went public with the inequity faced by the aboriginal elderly:

⁸⁵ Amoss, "Coast Salish Elders," p. 239-40.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of the dissipation of the cash settlement by the depression and the measuring of the wealth of the Songhees at death, see chapter 8.

⁸⁷ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,155 CR 37 pt. A., W.E. Ditchburn to Daisy Price, October 4, 1928.

The Indian Department allows me four dollars a month on which to live....If I were a German-born galvanized Canadian...I should now be getting the old-age pension of twenty dollars a month....Now I leave to the people of Canada to see that...I may spend my few remaining days without starving to death in this land of plenty.⁸⁸

It took 22 years for the Department of Indian Affairs to respond with a plan that gave registered Indians over 70 a meagre pension of \$8 in cash and \$10 in groceries per month. In 1951 the pension was increased to \$25 per month inclusive of groceries. Not until 1952, were Indians over 70 placed on the same footing as other Canadians, becoming eligible for the full old-age pension of \$40 per month. After that, destitute Indians between 65-70, could also qualify for a pension. For the first time in 40 years, elderly Songhees could live independently with a minimum level of comfort or make a financial contribution if living with others.⁸⁹

The elderly had been the long-standing educators for Songhees youth and often worked alongside children in the same household activities. Like their grandparents, children contributed to the household economy by assisting with subsistence production and child care of younger siblings and cousins. The opening of hop- and berry-picking employment and the canneries in the 1880s meant Songhees children as young as seven were also able to directly contribute to the cash economy.

From the 1860s, missionaries and government officials mounted an intermittent campaign to replace the elders as educators by placing children in schools for ten months of the year. Initially, the Songhees showed little enthusiasm for schooling, since children's labour power was a valuable part of household production. The different denominations that proselytized among them showed little staying

⁸⁸ Mary Quocksister, "Asks Justice," *Vancouver Sun* August 23, 1940.

⁸⁹ NAC VANC, RG 10 V1984-85/316 Box 21, File 988/29-5 pt.1, Indian Affairs Branch to All Indian Agents, April 26, 1948 and June 1, 1950; NAC RG 29 vol. 1889; File: R170/110, J.I. Clark, Principal Research Officer, Department of Health and Welfare to Joy Peacock November 2, 1968; *Thunderbird*, (June 1, 1949) p. 8, (November supplement, 1950) p. 4; see also Kasakoff, "Who Cared," p. 292.

power. The Anglicans opened a school on the reserve in 1862, but it did not survive the decade. The Wesleyans made a brief attempt in the mid 1870s at running a school. In the 1880s, the Indian Agent reported that among the Songhees:

There are nearly forty children of school age in the village and no attempt is being made to educate them by any denomination. The Indians themselves wish to have a school but as it has been proposed for some time to remove these Indians from the vicinity of the city I have delayed recommending the expenditure of money in the construction of the school house etc until a more settled state of affairs was arrived at.⁹⁰

Not until the 1890s when the Catholic Sisters of St. Anne established a school on the reserve was there regular schooling. Thereafter, the school had some success in that many children attended for part of the year, but many also left during those periods were they were most useful in the household economy. Among the Songhees, the key periods were the summer, early fall (canning, hop and berry harvesting) and at the winter solstice (when low tides made clamming lucrative). In 1899, school teacher, Sister May, complained that in general "Indian parents and grandparents are in the habit of retaining their children from school for very trifling reasons."⁹¹ Some of the children were enrolled at the Catholic residential school on Kuper Island or the Methodist residential school at Chilliwack in the Fraser Valley.⁹²

The Family Allowance Act of 1945 added a financial disincentive to the administrative pressure aboriginal parents felt when they took their children out of school. Children who were not in full-time attendance at school were not eligible for payment. Full-time attendance at school meant children were not available for the hop harvest, for clamming, or for babysitting their much younger siblings, and they

⁹⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 3772 reel C-10,136; File: Indian Affairs Black Series file 35139, W.H. Lomas, Indian Agent to J.W. Powell, Indian Superintendent, January 31, 1887.

⁹¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 1348 reel C-13917, file: Cowichan Agency Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1893-1906, Sister May, Songhees School to W. McLaughlin, November 22, 1899.

⁹² Once enrolled at the residential schools attendance was compulsory, and was enforced by the agent who occasionally issued warrants for the arrest of children who ran away; NAC RG 10 vol. 1351 reel C-13917; File: Cowichan Agent's Diary, 1892-1910, see January 1904, August 1906 for examples.

were available for only part of the salmon-canning season. Compulsory school attendance removed children from productive roles in the household economy until after age 16 when they could legally quit.⁹³ In place of a direct contribution, children's participation in the household economy became indirect -- after 1945 they entitled households to state payments in the form of family allowance, and if needed, supplementary welfare funds. By 1955 the Cowichan Indian superintendent reported "the agency was administering Family Allowances for more than 1,500 children at the end of the year, out of a total agency population of 2,873."⁹⁴

Just as children became less productive in terms of physical contributions to the household economy after the Second World War, the composition of the Songhees household was being reshaped to include more dependent children and fewer productive adults. When Douglas surveyed the Songhees in 1850, 66 percent of the population were children. By 1891, the percentage of the population under 16 had been reduced to 35.4 percent. In 1934 the population under 16 comprised 26 percent of the population, reaching its nadir at the end of the Depression, 1939, at 19 percent. After this, the Songhees population began to grow, slowly, perhaps reflecting acquired immunity among adults and improvements in medical care. The percentage of children began to rise thereafter, consistently comprising 35-38 percent of the Songhees population over the decade 1949-59.⁹⁵

This increase in the numbers of children in the average family occurred at the historical moment where Songhees households were least able to financially accommodate them. Since the 1880s, the economy of the Songhees had functioned because several members of the household combined their

⁹³ NAC RG 29 vol. 2361; File: 264-1-17 pt 1, W.R. Bone, Regional Director of Family Allowance, to N.B. Curry, National Director of Family Allowance, February 23, 1946; despite state payments, in terms of contribution to the household economy, children probably became a net liability, requiring the state payments and more for sustenance.

⁹⁴ DIAND, File 9748/21-1 vol. 1. J.V. Boys, Superintendent, Cowichan Agency, Report for the Quarter Ending December 31, 1955.

⁹⁵ BCARS, James Douglas, Private Papers, 2nd Series, B 20 1853; Cda. S.P. 1892 vol. 10 n.. 14; population appendices; Canada, *Census of Indians in Canada, 1917-1959*; For details on population decline see chapter 6.

income from seasonal employment and supplemented their earnings with subsistence labour of the whole family. But as household size rose in the 1950s, the number of productive members contracted. By 1953 adult males were the only members in most households able to earn wages, but their seasonal employment, which alone had never sustained a household, was also under pressure. When male heads of household were unemployed, as they were increasingly in the 1950s and 1960s, there were no other resources for Songhees families to fall back on except state welfare payments.

SECTION IV

CHAPTER 10:

THE "WHITE PROBLEM" -- THE STATE AND LIMITATION OF ABORIGINAL ECONOMIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

When applying for work outside of the reserve he is often refused because white men are as a rule unwilling to work alongside of Indians.

Department of Indian Affairs, 1912¹

In that House of Commons in Ottawa, there's a couple of hundred white men, and sometimes I think that all they do is dream up new laws against the Indians! They've pushed the old ways out so we can never go back.

Charles Jones, 1976²

In several respects the Songhees were far from typical. Few other aboriginal groups in the province were as favourably located when it came to access to an urban market.³ Moreover, the Songhees were unique in that each head of family received a large cash settlement --\$10,000 -- in 1911, as part of the exchange of their urban reserve for a suburban one. As a result, it is somewhat puzzling that the particular experience of the Songhees, mirrors the provincial patterns of increasing and decreasing involvement in the capitalist economy sketched out in Section II.

Aboriginal peoples around the British Columbia had different access to subsistence resources and paid work. Their cultures, histories and experiences with immigrants varied dramatically. Yet, in

¹ DIA AR 1912 p. 396.

² Charles Jones with Stephen Bosustow, *Queesto, Pacheenaht Chief by Birthright*, (Nanaimo, B.C., Theytus, 1981), p. 55.

³ Only the Squamish and the Musqueam whose reserves are now surrounded by greater Vancouver had equivalent access, but because of the later development of Vancouver, the Songhees had a 40 year head start.

spite of this diversity, some of it drawn out in other local studies,⁴ one key theme emerges from a close look at the Songhees -- the "state" played a primary role in shaping aboriginal access to the capitalist, subsistence, prestige and welfare economies -- but it was a role complicated by the fact that the arms of the state did not act in concert. Exploring this aspect of aboriginal non-aboriginal relations in the expanded provincial context permits an answer to one aspect of the question: what explains the extent to which the micro-history of the Songhees reflects the provincial patterns of aboriginal employment described in Section II?

In one respect the Songhees were typically of several aboriginal peoples. Other groups, including the four Kwakwaka'wakw villages which relocated to be close to Fort Rupert when it was established in 1849 and the 10 Tsimshian villages which moved to the site of Fort Simpson on the north coast, wanted to benefit from trading with, and working for, the European newcomers.⁵ For similar reasons, when the Haida dug as much gold as they could without having access to explosives, they invited the Hudson's Bay Company to establish a fort among them; the Cowichan also asked that a fort be established in their territory; the Haisla of Kitamaat and the Nisga'a at Kincolith on the Nass River asked for a sawmill to be built there.⁶ There were also some aboriginal groups who showed little initial interest in working for, and trading with, the *whites*. The Chilcotin people, for example, showed little

⁴ McDonald, "Trying to Make a Life: The Historical Political Economy of Kitsumkalum"; Harkin, "Dialogues of History: Transformation and Change in Heiltsuk Culture"; Thomson, "History of the Okanagan"; Carstens, *The Queen's People: A Study of Hegemony, Coercion and Accommodation among the Okanagan of Canada*; Douglas Hudson, "Traplines and Timber: Social and Economic Change Among the Carrier," (University of Alberta, unpublished Ph.D., 1983); Stephen A. McNeary, "When Fire Came Down: Social and Economic Life of the Niska," (Bryn Mawr College, unpublished Ph.D., 1976); Codere, *Fighting With Property*; Pritchard, "Economic Development and Disintegration Among the Haisla".

⁵ Robert Galois, *Kwakwaka'wakw Settlements, 1775-1920: A Geographical Analysis and Gazetteer*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994); Daniel Clayton, "Geographies of the Lower Skeena," *BC Studies*, No. 94, (Summer 1992) p. 31.

⁶ C0 305/4, 12345, Douglas to Colonial Secretary, 24 October 1853; Douglas to Governor and Committee, February 24, 1851 in Bowsfield, *Fort Victoria Letters*, 156; Cda. S.P. 1881, no. 5, 143; RG 10, Vol. 11007, W.H. Collinson to the Reserve Commissioner, October 10, 1887.

welcome to the Hudson's Bay Company whose fort in their territory was short-lived. It was the twentieth century before *white* settlers and the capitalist economy became a significant presence in their territory.⁷

The aboriginal people who were early entrants into the capitalist economy tended to be those who had distinctly articulated prestige economies of their own. When these aboriginal workers joined the capitalist economy it was for purposes integral to their own, often non-capitalist, priorities. Helen Codere's study of the Kwakwaka'wakw, shows that for them, work for wages and production of goods for sale increased the frequency of potlatches, as well as the number of guests and the wealth distributed. She calls the period between the founding of Fort Rupert in 1849 and 1921, "the potlatch period."⁸

Codere charted the increasing number of blankets given at Kwakwaka'wakw potlatches going back over a century, (numbers which were well remembered by her informants owing to the importance of establishing relative prestige levels). The number of blankets distributed at the greatest single potlatch in the following 20-year periods gives an indication of the striking increase in wealth available and distributed: 1829-48: 320 blankets; 1849-69: 9,000 blankets; 1870-89: 7,000 blankets; 1890-1909: 19,000 blankets; 1910-29: 14,000 blankets; 1930-49: 33,000 blankets. Billy Assu, a Kwakwaka'wakw from Cape Mudge, wrote that his first memories were of his father's 1911 potlatch: "My father worked for the money to give that potlatch for many years. He gave away goods and money to the value of more than \$10,000."⁹

⁷ See Terry Glavin and the People of Nemiah Valley, *Nemiah, the UnConquered Country*, (Vancouver: New Star, 1992); A.G. Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia*, (1904; Reprint, Smithers, B.C.: Interior Stationary, 1978) pp 123-4; Hudson, "Traplins and Timber".

⁸ "The Kwakiutl had a potential demand for European goods in excess of any practical utility the goods might have possessed. This can be seen both as a stimulus to the Kwakiutl integration in their new economy and as a direct stimulus to the potlatch," Codere, *Fighting With Property*, 126.

⁹ Codere, *Fighting With Property*, 124; Harry Assu with Joy Inglis, *Assu of Cape Mudge: Recollections of a Coastal Indian Chief* (Vancouver, 1989), 39.

Among the Haida increased work and trade meant that the number of new totems being raised with the accompanying gift-giving ceremonies reached a peak between 1860-1876. In 1884 a delegation of Nuu-chah-nulth chiefs expressed their views about the purposes of work saying "we work for our money and like to spend it as we please, in gathering our friends together; now whenever we travel we find friends; the 'potlatch' does that."¹⁰ Like the Songhees, aboriginal people in many parts of the region made wage labour work for them, not just the other way around.

These aboriginal people entered the work force on their own initiative but where and when the work opportunities opened up was something they could not control. Nor did they have control over the process whereby they were "racialized" as Indians and assigned a particular role in the hierarchy of wage relations. As Europeans settled among the aboriginal people, and began working alongside them, some were willing to admit that "Indians" worked "better than many whitemen;" "equal, if not superior to a man of our own race"¹¹. But there were others in prominent positions, like the editors of Victoria's *Colonist* newspaper, who, even while aboriginal people were performing the bulk of the labour in the city, could say:

...though they are possessed of "bone, muscle, energy and intellect," their habits of indolence, roaming propensities, and natural repugnance for manual labour, together with a thievish disposition which appears to be inherently characteristic of the Indian race, totally disqualifies them from ever becoming either useful or desirable citizens....The [type] of "bone, muscle and intellect" that is required here differs materially from the Indian or African. It is Caucasian - Anglo-Saxon bone...that we want.¹²

¹⁰ Cda. S.P. 1882, 160, 170; Cda. S.P. 1885, 3, 101; Brink, *The Haida Indians*, 42.

¹¹ These quotes from Bishop Hills Diary, June 5 and August 8, 1861, see also June 21, 1862; I.W. Powell and P. McTiernan in Cda. S.P. 1882, p. 155, 166.

¹² *Colonist*, February 19, 1861.

This was to be "a White Man's Province" where employers were publicly chastised for hiring "Indians".¹³ When the *Victoria Gazette* called for a dispassionate examination of "whether it would not be better for us as a colony to encourage white labor, and discourage Indian, as far as lies within our power," it came down heavily on the side of discouraging Indian labour.¹⁴ And discourage it, was just what the laws of the colony, and subsequently the provincial and federal governments, did.

Willing or unwilling participants in the capitalist economy, aboriginal people all over the province experienced the effects of laws explicitly aimed at controlling their economies as well as other laws which, in the process of their administration had that same effect. Even more fundamental were the laws and regulations which defined Indians and established a set of race-based privileges and limitations.¹⁵

In 1872 the "Act to Amend the Qualification and Registration of Voter's" removed the right of aboriginal people to vote in provincial and federal elections. One of the impacts of this act was that, not being voters, aboriginal people and Chinese were also legally prohibited from the professions of law and politics.¹⁶ More profound was that the aboriginal majority of the population was thereafter at the legislative mercy of the *white* minority who used the state to further disadvantage aboriginal people.

When the federal Indian Act of 1876 *pathologized* Indians as legal minors it prohibited them from buying, selling or consuming alcoholic beverages. The prohibitions against alcohol had a far-reaching effect in limiting aboriginal employment since it kept aboriginal people out of the hospitality

¹³ *Colonist*, September 24, 1862.

¹⁴ *Victoria Gazette*, May 18, 1860.

¹⁵ This aspect of the laws is explored more fully in Chapter 2.

¹⁶ Chapter 2 and Anderson, *Chinatown*, p. 47.

industry. While fortunes were made in Victoria by supplying Indians with liquor [a crime], and a tavern was operated on the reserve from 1862 to after 1879¹⁷, it was against the law for Indians to engage in the extremely profitable liquor trade themselves. The Indian Act made it illegal for aboriginal people to own or be employed in establishments that served liquor, thus cutting them right out of one of the province's main industries until after 1956 when the last federal laws restricting "Indians" from consuming alcohol were withdrawn. This prohibition kept aboriginal people out of one of the most common forms of rural enterprise, and one of the most profitable urban ones.

Many aboriginal people took up another common form of rural enterprise, the general store. Though there were no prohibitions against running a store, there were limits on what Indians could sell. As the Pharmaceutical Society of B.C. pointed out, no products containing alcohol including, medicines, cod liver oil, hair oil, vanilla and other extracts, even perfume, could be legally stocked by aboriginal merchants.¹⁸

There was another effect of legal minority conferred by the Indian Act which had far-reaching implications for aboriginal entrepreneurs. Indians did not own their *own* land. Non-Indian entrepreneurs could borrow using their house and land as collateral and use these loans to invest in stock, boats, logging equipment, or more land. Indian reserves were owned by the crown in trust for Indians - they could not be mortgaged. This lack of borrowing power disadvantaged Indians in every enterprise that required capital investment.¹⁹

¹⁷ RG 10 Vol 3623, file 5119, Patrick Everett to I.W.Powell, September 22, 1875.

¹⁸ British Columbia Archives and Record Services (BCARS) GR 1071, Box 1, file 9, Frederick H. Fullerton, Manager, Pharmaceutical Association of the Province of B.C. to the Indian Advisory Committee of British Columbia, November 29, 1950; also Box 2, file 8; it is unclear from this correspondence to what degree this prohibition disadvantaged aboriginal store owners.

¹⁹ In the fishing industry in particular, it meant that Indians were more dependent on canning companies than other *races* who could mortgage to raise capital and buy their own boats.

The Voter Registration and Indian Acts may have been the most significant individual pieces of legislation affecting Indians, but they were accompanied by a long stream of legal enactments which had two consistent aims. First the state alienated control over resources which had previously rested with the indigenous occupiers, and second, it gave *whites* preferential access to the resources. This pattern of alienation of aboriginal control of resources and then denial of access on the same terms as *whites* is visible in every major economic resource: fish, timber, fur, and minerals. But the first and most important alienation came in the form of land.

The full impact of the alienation of land from aboriginal to colonial, provincial and federal control lies beyond the scope of this discussion, but certain elements are important in the context of the aboriginal economies.²⁰ By limiting the size of the reserves allocated to less than 20 acres per family, (compared to the 160 acres allocated to Indian families on the prairies) and by preventing aboriginal people from pre-empting land (whites could pre-empt 320 acres, or 160 acres west of the Cascade Mountains) the colony and the province effectively transferred most of the land owned and used by aboriginal people in southern and central British Columbia to *white* farmers and ranchers.²¹

Although federal Indian policy and the Indian Agents made a concerted effort to turn aboriginal people into agriculturists, the size, soil and location of most the land left to Indians made that an impossible task. In the remaining areas where conditions were favourable for agriculture, Indians did

²⁰ A fuller discussion may be found in Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1992) pp. 39-52; George Edgar Shankel, "The Development of Indian Policy In British Columbia," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Washington, 1945) pp. 89-144; Robert E. Cail, *Land, Man and the Law: the Disposal of Crown Lands in British Columbia, 1871-1913* (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1974); Duane Thomson, "A History of the Okanagan: Indians and Whites in the Settlement Era, 1860-1920," (University of B.C., Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 1985).

²¹ "An Ordinance to further define the law regulating the acquisition of Land in British Columbia," March 31, 1866; "An Ordinance to amend and consolidate the Laws Affecting Crown Lands in British Columbia," June 1st 1870; Lands Act S.B.C 1888 section 5 prohibits Indians from occupying crown land except by special permission of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

take up farming, but against enormous odds. When the Department of Indian Affairs applied to the province on behalf of Indians for grazing land which was regularly leased to *whites*, Indian Superintendent Vowell reported "that all such applications have been invariably refused." The Indian agents complained that "the provincial authorities will not sell or lease lands to Indians," are "chasing the Indian's horse off the Crown Ranges," and denied them water rights necessary for irrigation in favour of *whites*. Thus, through its control over pre-emptions, reserve allotments, grazing and water rights, the province curtailed aboriginal movement into commercial agriculture.²²

Aboriginal people were also denied other assistance provincial and federal departments of agriculture offered white farmers. The Indian Superintendent for southwestern British Columbia admitted to the McKenna-McBride Commission in 1913 that agricultural assistance for *whites*, was not available to Indians. Noting the relative success of non-Indian fruit farmers, the commissioners asked the Cowichan Indian agent:

You know as a matter of fact that the fruit growing industry of this province has been developed largely by the efforts of the Agricultural Departments of both the federal and provincial governments in sending out experts who lecture at different places and which have started such things as Farmer's Institutes. Have the Indians been able to avail themselves of this instruction?

²² A.W. Vowell in Cda. S.P. 1904, No. 27 pp. 314-20; RG 10 vol. 10,872, 901/20-10 pt. 2, E. McLeod, Indian Agent, Lytton to M.B. Jackson, Chairman of the Game Conservation Board of BC, May 20, 1925; H.E. Taylor, Indian Agent Williams Lake to C.C. Perry, Assistant Indian Commissioner for BC, January 24, 1936; Cda. S.P. 1880s; an eloquent condemnation of the province's policy towards grazing and water rights for aboriginal people is provided by Chief Johnny Chillitza's testimony to the House of Commons, Special Committees of the Senate and House of Commons to Inquire into the Claims of the Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia....Session 1926-27, *Proceedings, Reports and Evidence*, (Ottawa, 1927) pp. 141-5; for other instances of discriminatory allocation of water and grazing rights see Thomson, "History of the Okanagan," pp. 273-5, 330-2.

"No Sir," was the response.²³ In fact, the only "assistance" to aboriginal farmers was a single inspector whose job was to ensure aboriginal orchards were sprayed with pesticides, not to improve the aboriginal crop, but to prevent pests from spreading to nearby white orchards.

The pattern of alienation and discriminatory regulation is also apparent in the federal government's attempt to make fishing a "white man's" industry. Until Confederation, aboriginal people controlled access to the fisheries and managed it according to their own complex system of law.²⁴ After 1871, the federal government claimed the sea and the resources in it, by virtue of the British North America Act and the agreement which brought British Columbia into Confederation; in 1877 the federal Fisheries Act was extended to British Columbia.²⁵

From the time before the arrival of Europeans to the expansion of salmon cannery operations in the late 1870s, fishing had been conducted by aboriginal men in British Columbia and aboriginal women processed the fish.²⁶ The large sums earned by aboriginal people in fishing and canning as the commercial fishery expanded in the 1880s drew competition from *whites*, Chinese and later Japanese. This inundation of immigrant fishermen put pressure on the fish stocks and the federal government responded by imposing a licence-system for fishermen between 1888-1892. Thereafter, the canneries agreed on a voluntary quota system which set an upper limit on the number of Indians and Asians that would be allowed to fish.²⁷

²³ BCARS, GR 1995, reel B-1454, McKenna-McBride Commission Testimony, June 10, 1913, p. 279.

²⁴ The fishing rights of the Songhees had been interrupted to an extent by the colonial government. See Chapter 8.

²⁵ Newell, *Tangled Webs*, p. 10.

²⁶ See Chapters 3 and 4.

²⁷ Newell, *Tangled Webs*, pp. 64-70.

When the voluntary system proved unstable, the state intervened in 1913 with a system of "white preference" for licences. White fishermen were granted independent licences, and were able to sell their fish at higher prices than non-white "attached fishermen." Aboriginal and Asian fishermen could only get a licence by applying through individual canneries, where they had to sell their fish at the offered price. The government's stated intention was to increase the share of *whites*-only licences in the industry by 10% a year at the expense of Indians and Asians.²⁸

The canning companies responded that they too desired a "white man's" industry: "We have always been loyally anxious to employ white fishermen and have in every instance given good and competent white fishermen the preference," wrote the president of the largest cannery corporation on the coast, B.C. Packers. His company "voluntarily offered to employ a steadily increasing proportion of white fishermen (commencing at 20 percent of the total number) which we believe the only method calculated to attain the desired result, viz, the settlement of a large number of white fishermen on the coast."

B.C. Packers made the case, apparently accepted by the Department of Fisheries, that "the issue of [independent] fishing licences to Indians is especially to be depreciated. They are wards of the Dominion Government and specially treated and protected....It is not deemed advisable to grant Indians "Independent" licences as they are liable to misinterpret the reason and become difficult to manage by the authorities."²⁹

²⁸ Pritchard, "Economic Development and Disintegration," p. 72.

²⁹ NAC RG 23, Department of Fisheries, General File, reel 5, file 6, Part 8, William Henry Barker, B.C.Packers, to the Hon. J.D. Hazen, Minister of Fisheries, August 19, 1913.

These new regulations prompted 80 aboriginal fishermen from Northern B.C. to protest to the fisheries department:

During the present season we were told by the officials of your department that we could not purchase an Independent Licence as it was only for white men.... We have fished on the various rivers of Northern British Columbia for a good many years and many of us have our own boats and fishing gear and we think we are entitled to have an independent licence to catch salmon, provided we comply with the regulations laid down by your department. We are natives of this country and as fishing is one of our means of livelihood, and we are loyal British Subjects, we think that it is only right and fair that if we have the money to purchase a licence, and the other qualifications necessary, we be allowed to have these independent licences.³⁰

William Halliday, Indian Agent at Alert Bay pointed out the effect of the license system to Duncan Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, in 1916: "No Indians at present in District No. 2 can get an independent licence and as the number of attached licences are limited many of them can get no chance whatever to fish...."³¹

The influx of *whites* and the licence limitation discouraged native fishermen. One aboriginal witness told the 1917 Fisheries Commission:

The Indians always get smaller licences every year....We are liable to not fish in some years. There is very few Indians fishing now to-day compared with before.

Q. But do they want to fish?

A. Sure they want to fish, but lots of fellows just stay home; can't get no licence.³²

Without any elected legislators to intercede on their behalf, Indians depended on the Indian Agents to intercede with the Department of Fisheries, which they often did, but usually with little effect. In 1919, Agent Halliday told his superiors that fisheries officers had arbitrarily decided not to give

³⁰ NAC RG 23, reel 5, file 6, Part 8, Indians of Northern B.C. to the Minister of Fisheries, August 11, 1913.

³¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,147 file: Shannon "Fishing 1914-41", W.M. Halliday, to Duncan Scott, July 28, 1916.

³² Fisheries Commission Evidence, 1917, p. 274 quoted in Pritchard, "Economic Development and Disintegration," p. 79.

licences to Indians who had not fished the year previous. Since there had been a high demand for spruce wood in 1918 for wartime airplane construction, 46 Indians from Halliday's Kwawkweth Agency who normally fished, had logged and now could not get back into the fishery. In turning down their applications, the Inspector of Fisheries was prepared to admit that he had "a great reluctance in granting salmon gillnet licences to Indians," because he said, "they are so persistent in going up streams" and fishing in their traditional territories, "...where they are not permitted."³³

While disadvantaged compared to *whites* when it came to gillnet licenses, aboriginal people were absolutely prohibited from holding a licence to operate the more profitable purse-seine equipped boats. Beginning in 1886 seine boats appeared in the Pacific salmon and herring fishery. Bigger than other fish boats, and requiring a larger crew and more technology in the form of power winches, seine boats were more efficient harvesters under most conditions. Purse-seine licences, the Indian Agents were told, were limited to "persons of the white race". An agent was compelled to write Johnny Scow, an Alert Bay applicant, "that no Indian has ever yet been given a purse seine license and that they have not changed their policy." Not until 1923 did the combined pressure from Indians and Indian Agents persuade the Fisheries Department to allow Indians to purchase seine licences on the same basis as *whites*.³⁴

While barriers were being placed in front of Indians engaged in the commercial fishery, between 1894 and 1911 aboriginal rights to fish for their own food purposes were also increasingly circumscribed. First, the federal government made it illegal for aboriginal people to catch fish in the traps, weirs and reef nets they had used long before Europeans arrived. Then, the regulations required that aboriginal people obtain a permit from Fisheries officers before they could catch fish for food. In

³³ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,147 file: Shannon "Fishing 1914-41", W.M. Halliday, to W.E. Ditchburn, June 16, 1919; E.G. Taylor, Inspector of Fisheries, Nanaimo, to W.M. Halliday, May 14, 1919.

³⁴ NAC RG 10 vol. 11,147 file: Shannon "Fishing 1914-41", W.A. Found, Department of Marine and Fisheries, to J.D. McLean, Acting Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, September 9, 1920; W.M. Halliday, to Johnny Scow, May 20, 1922.

theory any Indian could get one of these; in practice the Fisheries officials limited the numbers of licences issued, and the times and places when they could be used. In certain periods, such as the three years 1919-1921, food fishing was banned entirely on the Fraser River and its watershed, depriving over 8,000 aboriginal people of the main item in their subsistence economy.³⁵ Referring to the proliferation of fisheries laws, Nuu-chah-nulth Peter Webster thought: "All of these things made it easy to get into trouble with the law. I think a lot of us became "criminals" without really knowing the reason."³⁶

In addition to laws that were explicitly "racial" in their design, there were also state policies that disproportionately affected aboriginal people due to their niche in the economy. The so-called "Davis Plan" for the fisheries, unveiled by the federal government in 1968, is an example. Intended to reduce the number of fishermen and raise average fishing incomes by eliminating the smaller, and technologically less efficient part of the fleet, it targeted precisely the category that the majority of aboriginal fishermen fell into. The effect on aboriginal fishermen who had remained in this industry is reflected in Figure VI.

The Davis plan froze the size of the fishing fleet and issued permanent licences to large producers that had caught over 10,000 lbs (4,540 kg) in either of the previous two years. To the smaller boats, the government issued temporary licenses, two or more of which could be converted into permanent licenses if combined and attached to one new boat. Licenses immediately became costly and

³⁵ Cda. S.P. Federal Fisheries Department Annual Reports, 1906, pp. 206-11; NAC RG 10 vol. 1350 reel C-13917 file: Cowichan Agency Departmental Circulars 1892-1910, A.W. Vowell to Indian Agents, June 20, 1905; RG 23 vol. 1,233, file 726-34-4; W.E. Ditchburn testifying before the British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1922; Pinkerton, "Indians in the Fishing Industry," pp. 251-4; McMullan, "State Capital and B.C. Salmon Fishing Industry," p. 109-110.

³⁶ Peter Webster, *As Far as I Know: Reminiscences of an Ahousat Elder*, (Campbell River, B.C.: Campbell River Museum and Archives, 1983) pp. 37, 43.

difficult to obtain. Small boat owners required new, bigger boats and another temporary licence, just to stay in the industry. Small operators, who could not afford to expand, had to sell to those who could.³⁷

The cost of licenses, new boats, and increasing electronic gear needed to compete with the now over-capitalized fleet, accounted for a part of the decline of aboriginal fishermen described in Section 2 above, as did the decline in fish stocks accelerated by the high-tech fleet. The Davis plan was also intended to promote a leaner canning industry, in which fewer plants operated at maximum efficiency. Larger fish boats with the capacity to stay at sea longer assisted in this plan, but more significant was the federal government's offer to buy and scrap the older fishing vessels owned by the canneries to reduce the size of the fleet. Most of these cannery-owned vessels were fished by aboriginal men who could not afford to buy their own boat.³⁸

In 1979 Dave Dawson from Kingcome Inlet summarized the impact of the changing fishery regulations on his community:

Thirty years ago, fishing was our people's life, and everyone had a boat; today there is only one boat in Kingcome. There are many reasons why we no longer fish, but I think that the licensing that came in after the war, that probably had a lot to do with it. Before the war the majority of fishermen on the coast were Indians with small boats. Licensing pushed the small boats out--you had to fish a minimum every year to keep a license.³⁹

Friedlaender's 1975 study of the fishing fleet bears out Dawson's observation. He demonstrated that the Davis Plan in particular, forced a significant number of aboriginal fisherman from the industry between 1964-1973.⁴⁰

³⁷ Newell, *Tangled Webs*, pp. 150-2.

³⁸ These events accelerated an on-going process of merging of the major cannery companies and the closure of canneries, see *Ibid*, pp. 152-3.

³⁹ Steltzer and Kerr, *Coast of Many Faces*, p. 82.

⁴⁰ Friedlaender, *Economic Status; Assu, Assu*, 74.

Aboriginal workers and entrepreneurs in other industries also had to deal with informal "racialized" policies that limited aboriginal labourers and entrepreneurs, though these are more difficult to find in the written record. The logging industry provides one such example. The appropriation of aboriginal control of the forests was clearly laid out in law, but thereafter the discrimination against aboriginal people with regards to the forest industry took place at a staff level.

The Songhees clearly had control over the forests in their territory when James Douglas arrived to build Fort Victoria in 1843. The local Songhees supplied cedar pickets from forests in their territory for the construction of the fort. As far as the colony was concerned, the Songhees surrendered their rights to the timber around Victoria via the 1850 Fort Victoria Treaties.

The colony formalized its claim over all the forests with a Land Ordinance in 1865, declaring that timber belonged to the crown and requiring leases be obtained before it could be harvested. Despite the timber ordinances, aboriginal men continued, without molestation, to supply much of the wood from their ancestral lands to the growing settlements.⁴¹ In 1888 the province required a "handlogger's licence" to cut timber anywhere in the province not already "alienated" and the government began to enforce its claims over timber so many aboriginal people on the coast took out handloggers' licenses.⁴²

⁴¹ August Jack Khahtsahlano was one of these loggers, as was George Swanaset, and Peter Kelly, see: J.S. Matthews, *Conversations with Khatsahlano*, (Vancouver: 1955); University of Washington, Special Collections, Melville Jacobs Collection, Mss. 1693-71-13, Box 112, "George Swanaset: narrative of a personal document". I wish to thank Sasha Harmon for suggesting the Swanaset narrative to me; Allan Morely, *The Roar of the Breakers: a biography of the Reverend Peter Kelly*, (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967); For work histories of 20th century aboriginal loggers see the account of John Wallace in Oliver Wells, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbours*, (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987) pp. 199-104; Pennier, *Chiefly Indian*; James Spradly, ed. *Guests Never Leave Hungary: The Autobiography of James Sewid* (Kingston: McGill Queens, 1989); Leona Sparrow, "Work Histories of a Coast Salish Couple," University of British Columbia, Unpublished Master's Thesis, 1977.

⁴² A handlogger paid an annual fee of \$10 and could cut timber on unalienated lands providing he did not use power equipment. Hand loggers cut timber on steep slopes close to the shore, limbed the trees, took the bark off one side, and used the weight of the tree and the natural lubrication of the sap to

At its turn-of-the-century peak, hand-logging provided a major part of the income of non-urban coastal people throughout British Columbia., including the Kwakwaka'wakw, Haisla and Tsimshian and, among the Coast Salish, the Sechelt, Sliammon, Semiahmoo.⁴³ The year 1904 saw the beginning of a three-year timber rush which alienated over 11.4 million acres of the best forest land, handicapping handloggers who could only cut in areas not already under some form of timber lease or sale.⁴⁴ The provincial government contributed to the industry's demise in 1907 when it stopped issuing hand-loggers' licences altogether. Although this halt was temporary, when sales resumed, the new conditions, according to the Kwawkwalth agent, made them difficult for them to obtain:

Until recently many of the younger men have been engaged in hand-logging operations, but the recent action of the government of the province in not renewing hand-logger licenses did away with that means of livelihood. The licences are again being issued, but the conditions of issue are so difficult, necessitating a special trip to Victoria, that it is questionable whether many of them will be in a position to avail themselves of the opportunity.⁴⁵

Codere's study of the Kwakwaka'wakw documents their declining employment after this change.⁴⁶

Some displaced aboriginal people found work as wage labourers for logging companies while others invested in the power equipment necessary to bid on the smaller timber sales. The legal status of

propel the tree into the water. The system required little equipment other than axes, saws and a jack to lift the trees over obstacles. Gosnell, *Yearbook of British Columbia* p. 249; *Crown Charges for Early Timber Rights* p. 10; S.B.C. 1888, Lands Act.

⁴³ Indian Reserve Commissioners in Cda. S.P. 1878, vol. 8, Appendix D, p li. P. O'Reilly, Indian Reserve Commissioner in Cda. S.P. 188, vol. 13, p. 147; 1889, vol. 13, p. 195ff; RG 10 vol. 1312 NAC reel C-13,908 file: Inspectorate of Indian Agencies Correspondence Out, W.E. Ditchburn to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, November 7, 1910; Helen Codere, *Fighting with Property* (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1966); James McDonald, "Trying to Make a Life; the Historical Political Economy of Kitsumkalum," (University of British Columbia: Unpublished Ph.D., 1985); Pritchard, "Economic Development and Disintegration."

⁴⁴ *Crown Charges for Early Timber Rights*, p. 10; Cda S.P. 1903, p. 292 the Kwawkwalth Agent says that hand loggers cannot get timber there. By 1916 it was even difficult for the Haida in the remote Queen Charlotte Islands to find unalienated land. Cda. S.P. 1916, p. 96.

⁴⁵ W.M. Halliday in Cda. S.P. 1910 No. 27 p. 245.

⁴⁶ Codere, *Fighting With Property*, pp. 30-39.

"Indian" made it harder for aboriginal people to obtain credit and therefore raise capital logging. John Pritchard's research into the economy of the Haisla revealed there were other "extra-legal" obstacles as well. By definition, it is difficult to find written evidence of "unwritten policy" but Pritchard has produced some interesting inferential evidence suggesting the British Columbia Forest Service had a "policy" of allocating only marginal timber lands to native people.⁴⁷

When aboriginal people applied for prime areas, it appears they were turned down outright or the Forest Service forced the sale to go to public auction, something they rarely required for applications from non-aboriginal "white" firms. In one such case, in 1924, the Assistant District Forester wrote on the rejected application of Haisla Ed Gray, "There is a good body of timber in here and we do not want it alienated by any Indian Reserve Applications."⁴⁸ The forest service also used the "lazy Indian" stereotype to deny aboriginal people access to the forest. On Haisla Fred Woods' application one forester wrote: "Applicant (an Indian) will employ his fellow men which speaks for itself regarding the output to be expected."⁴⁹

With access to the "publicly owned" forest being increasingly denied them both by regulation and alienation, aboriginal people found they did not even have access to the forests on their own "reserves". This policy was articulated in the following exchange between the McKenna-McBride Commissioners and Indian Agent William Robertson:

Commissioners: You heard a good deal from the Indians that owing to the practical prohibition from cutting timber that they were impeded in clearing the land?

Robertson: Well, the department won't stop any Indian from cutting timber for bona fide clearing purposes.

⁴⁷ James Pritchard, "Economic Development and Disintegration of Traditional Culture Among the Haisla," Unpublished Ph.D., University of British Columbia, 1977).

⁴⁸ BCARS, Timber Sale Records, 6710, 1924 quoted in Pritchard, "Economic Development and Disintegration," p. 147.

⁴⁹ Timber Sale 31736, 1942, quoted in Pritchard, p. 148.

Commissioners: But the Indians are not allowed to log for the purpose of selling?

Robertson: No sir.

Commissioners: In other words they are not allowed to do what a white man could do on his own land?

Robertson: That is so.⁵⁰

While limitations on aboriginal participation in the forest industry increased, the non-aboriginal logging industry was expanding at a rapid rate. In areas where big logging companies were engaged in clear-cutting, they were also devastating another main industry of aboriginal people -- trapping. Nuu-chah-nulth Peter Webster remembered:

The lumber people like MacMillan Bloedel seemed to own the entire forest. This made it illegal to get trees for canoes and cedar bark for weaving except from our tiny reserves. When the loggers moved in the animals that we hunted and trapped disappeared. Their destruction of the forest is easy to see. Our use of the woods was hardly noticeable.⁵¹

Another Nuu-chah-nulth, Charles Jones, made a similar observation: "Ever since the logging came, there's been no more deer or wolf or elk or beaver. They've all disappeared. Maybe they've been killed off, or maybe they've just moved on to somewhere else."⁵²

⁵⁰ BCARS, GR 1995 reel B-1454, McKenna McBride Commission, Transcripts, William Robertson Examined. June 10, 1913; see also RG 10 vol. 1348 reel C-13917 file: Cowichan Agency Miscellaneous Correspondence 1893-1906, Item 273, John Coburn to W.R Robertson, Indian Agent Cowichan, May 22, 1903; Codere documents other instances in which Department of Indian Affairs policies put up obstacles in front of aboriginal loggers, *Fighting With Property*, p. 37.

⁵¹ Webster, *As Far as I Know*, p. 43.

⁵² Charles Jones with Stephen Bosustow, *Queesto, Pacheenaht Chief by Birthright*, (Nanaimo, B.C., Theytus, 1981) p. 38; Indian Agent Earl Anfield told the Indian Committee for BC in 1951 that "another problem is growing more prevalent these days with the advent of large logging concerns under management licenses, such as Columbia Cellulose Company. Ltd, whose timber operations are wiping out a great many traplines which have been hereditary areas for Indians for generations. These people feel that they are entitled to compensation for loss of livelihood as trappers," NAC RG 10 vol. 11080 file: 168/20-10 pt 1, letter April, 11, 1951.

By the time logging started to have a major effect on game populations, the animals too belonged to her Majesty. The crown claimed wildlife for the first time in the Colony of Vancouver Island's April 1859 "Act for the Preservation of Game," amended and expanded in 1862. Both acts limited aboriginal use of wildlife and commercial hunting done by aboriginal people to supply urban butcher shops, in favour of the "sportsman".⁵³ In 1865 the separate colony of British Columbia prohibited the sale of deer, elk, grouse or partridge from March through August even in unsettled areas and in 1869 made the *intention* to sell game illegal; the mere possession of animal carcasses could be considered *prima facie* evidence of intention to sell, except in the case of "*bonâ fide* settlers".⁵⁴

The province assumed control of wildlife after Confederation and increased limitations on access to game by extending the closed season. In 1896 the Game Act prevented Indians from selling deer in any season, and applied the closed hunting season to Indian subsistence hunters. By 1911 deer could only be hunted three and a half months each year, and Indians were limited to harvesting three deer a year. An amendment in 1913 allowed the provincial game warden to give permits to Indians to kill additional deer for food, but under restrictive circumstances specifying the number of deer and the length of time the permit was in effect. Amendments to the Game Act in 1927 coupled with the federal Migratory Bird Act meant that by this date there was hardly an animal, bird or fish that was not regulated by the provincial or federal government.⁵⁵

⁵³ *Vancouver Island Acts* "An Act for the preservation of Game," April 20, 1859; "An Act to Amend an Act for the preservation of Game," September 5, 1862.

⁵⁴ *British Columbia Laws*, "An Ordinance to prohibit the unseasonable destruction of Game," April 1, 1865; "An Ordinance to prohibit the unseasonable destruction of Game" March 4, 1867; "An Ordinance entitled the Game Ordinance, 1869," March 12, 1869 further reduced the hunting season; "An Ordinance entitle the Game Ordinance, 1870", April 20, 1870.

⁵⁵ R.S.B.C. 1888, 52, 3,1.; "Game Protection Act, 1895" and "Game Protection Amendment Act, 1896"; R.S.B.C. 1897, C88; R.S.B.C. 1927, 98, 9; R.E. Gosnell, *Year Book of British Columbia*, (Victoria, 1911) p. 318; Thomson, "History of the Okanagan," p. 201-2.

A circular letter issued to the Indian Agents by the provincial Game Warden in 1913

emphasized the paternal and discretionary nature of the control over food permits:

I do not intend to grant any permit to any Indian except under the recommendation of the Indian Agent.... In considering such applications I would require to know...the age of the Indian, number in his family and other information which would be of assistance to me in deciding whether he is entitled to such a permit or not....

The rationale for the policy was also expressed in the circular:

[Y]oung Indians who are capable of obtaining work are not entitled to them, it is for the more older class of Indians who have been in the habit of hunting all their lives and feel more severely the enforcement of the present games laws....

The local warden also expressed his interest in whether the applicant was "sober and industrious" and warned that any abuse of the permits "would simply result in all such permits being cancelled."⁵⁶

The Provincial Game Warden deliberately stated his goal of eliminating the subsistence economy in favour of wage labour. He told the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission that Indians did not need to hunt deer in the fall, because "...in many places there is work for Indians haying and harvesting and giving Indians permits to hunt deer at this time of year simply encourages them to do nothing else."⁵⁷

Provincial laws also targeted the trapping industry. First the province legally limited the trapping seasons⁵⁸, then, in 1921 it assumed the right to allocate traplines territories. Not recognizing provincial authority over their traplines, many aboriginal people refused at first to register them and as a

⁵⁶ NAC, RG 10, 80-1/51 vol. 1, file 516, "Circular Letter from the Provincial Game Warden's Office, April 28, 1914; Williams to Lemmens, January 15, 1914, quoted in Thomson, "History of the Okanagan," p. 202.

⁵⁷ NAC, RG 10, 80-1/51 vol. 1, file 516, quoted in Thomson, "History of the Okanagan," p. 202.

⁵⁸ The trapping season did not coincide with the season of prime furs, but started and ended a month late, according to many aboriginal trappers, see NAC RG 10, vol. 10872, file 901/20 pt.1, Geo. S. Pragnell, "Special Report re: Trapping" September 12, 1923.

result their traplines were open to registration by *whites*. Even when aboriginal people accepted provincial authority and applied for traplines, there is strong evidence, from aboriginal people, from Indian Agents and even from the game wardens themselves, that the provincial Game Department gave preference to *whites*.

After a year-long survey of trapping in the province, Inspector of B.C. Indian Agencies, George Pragnell, found in 1924 that the "almost universal complaint by the Indian is that their lines are seized upon by white men under cover of the law...." Pragnell pointed out to the Game Board that most of the province was already allocated to traplines according to an aboriginal system:

"For all time...his trapline has always been immune from molestation, or theft...from his fellow tribesmen. They have always, and even do now, respect each other's rights, even though said trap line might not be in use for many years."⁵⁹

The effect of discriminatory trapline registrations was felt all over the province. From near 100 Mile House, George Archie, Secretary of the Canim Lake Band wrote the Department of Indian Affairs for help:

The white people are taking Indian traplines and the Indians cannot trap....This is a pity for the Indians to lose their traplines and only way to get their food in winter....I have my trap line taken away from me from Mahood Lake whom I trap now for twenty-five years....I would like you to help me on that case and get back my trap lines and so I can support my family and them other Indians also.⁶⁰

From Fort St. James in north-central B.C., the non-aboriginal matron of the hospital wrote: "It appears to me that in this district, there has been a systematic loping off of Indian lines, in favour of white men,

⁵⁹ Emphasis in the original: NAC RG 10 vol. 10,872 file 901/20 pt 1, George Pragnell to Chairman and members, Provincial Game Board, August 21, 1924.

⁶⁰ NAC RG 10 vol. 10872, file 901/20-10 pt 2 Archie George to W.E. Ditchburn, December 1, 1927.

and in the case of Louis Billie has rendered it necessary for him to be put on the ration list...." From Kamloops Chief Prince wrote:

Lots of Indians around here have their traplines taken by white men...and my own trapline I registered but I went there last spring and found whitemen still trapping there.... The Indians are natives to here you know and then a white come along and says "this is my place" and the Game Warden believes them. He never listens to Indians. Mr. Muirhead, the Game Warden here, is a straight man, but he doesn't much care for Indians. He prefers white men to Indians.⁶¹

Not only was the Game Board unwilling to entertain arguments about prior aboriginal trapping rights, they were prepared to deny aboriginal people any rights to fur-bearing animals. In 1925 the Game Board declared that the whole "Eastern District" of the province would be subject to an indefinite closure to the harvest of fur-bearers. The Indian Agent for the area declared:

I cannot too strongly emphasize upon the fact that this closed season is going to create a hardship on the majority of the bands, greater than any law or regulation heretofore passed by any government and if rigidly carried, will no doubt be the means of putting a number of them in their graves, more especially the Chilcotin tribe which have been depending on fur for most of their living.⁶²

At the same time the province began to require aboriginal people obtain a permit from the Government Agent or Provincial Constable before hunting for their own food. As Indian Agent McLeod pointed out to the Game Board: "In outlying places where there is only weekly mail service this means that three or four weeks may elapse before the applicant gets permission to stop starving."⁶³

⁶¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 10872 file: 901/20-10 pt 2, Chief Louis B Prince and his councillors to J.H. Pragnell, Indian Inspector, January 1, 1929; Grace E. Bloomfield, Field Matron Fort St. James to J.H. Pragnell, January 28, 1929; for accounts from the Finlay Peace River in the northeast of B.C. George Pragnell to the Chairman and Members of the Provincial Game Board, October 1, 1924; for Vancouver Island see RG 10 vol. 11,153, file: Trapping, M.S. Todd, Indian Agent Alert Bay to B. Harvey, Game Warden, Courtenay, November 30, 1938.

⁶² NAC RG 10 vol. 10872, 901/20-10 pt 2 E. McLeod, Indian Agent, Lytton to M.B. Jackson, Chairman of the Game Conservation Board of BC, May 20, 1925.

⁶³ Ibid.

McLeod thought that the policy was calculated to drive aboriginal people out of a subsistence economy and onto relief, to benefit the white trapper and sport hunter: "Many of the Indians can eke out a living from wild life without the need of getting government relief, if left free from persecution. Such a policy will sap their self-reliance and drive them more than ever to look for government aid." Moreover, he added, "the white settlers, almost without exception are commonly known to live practically the year round on wild game, yet one never hears of them being prosecuted." The Game Branch was not sympathetic and proceeded with the closure and permit system.⁶⁴

From the far northwest of the province Indian Agent Harper Reed wrote that "Swedes" had taken most of the best traplines from the Indians so "Chief John Jack with most of his Band are now in town and it is reported that the Indians have come into Teslin also, and now they are sitting around doing nothing at a time when in years gone by, they used to go out...for the Beaver hunt."⁶⁵

As the turnover of aboriginal trapping grounds continued, the relationship between the federal Department of Indian Affairs and the provincial Game Branch became openly hostile. When W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Commissioner for B.C. met Bryan Williams, the Provincial Game Commissioner, on the steps of the Legislature in 1938, a shouting match broke out in which Bryan told Ditchburn "that the

⁶⁴ Ibid; W.E. Collinson, Indian Agent Prince Rupert to W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Commissioner for BC, September 24, 1925; McLeod to all Chiefs in his district, June 30, 1926; M.B. Jackson, to E. Macleod, June 10, 1925. In 1928 the Game Branch banned the sale of tanned moose, deer and elk hides threatening the livelihood of many native women who subsisted on this industry. The Department of Indian Affairs made a direct appeal to the B.C. Attorney General who overruled the restriction; see RG 10 vol. 10872 file: 901/20-10 pt 1, Frank Calbreath, Merchant, Telegraph Creek, to J.H. McMullan, Provincial Game Warden, December 31, 1928; Harper Reed, Indian agent, Telegraph Creek to W.E. Ditchburn, Chief Inspector of Indian Agencies, December 31, 1928.

⁶⁵ NAC RG 10 vol. 10,872 file: 901/20-10 pt 1, Harper Reed, Indian agent, Telegraph Creek to W.E. Ditchburn, April 2, 1929.

applications for Indian trap-lines filed by our Indian agents on behalf of the Indians throughout British Columbia were not worth the paper they were written on."⁶⁶

The British Columbia Game Department's hostility towards aboriginal people stemmed from three sources and may suggest the motives underlying other provincial policies. From its origin, the Department resented aboriginal claims to ownership of wildlife resources and made a determined effort to station "wardens" throughout the province to enforce provincial regulation over aboriginal practice:

Many of the Indians are raising their old story of rights to the land and rights to the game and fish....In consequence it has been necessary to take a firm stand with them, as they quite refused to listen to reason....some of them not only being sent to gaol, but also losing some valuable furs.⁶⁷

There were also financial reasons for the refusal of the province to give native trappers "an even break". The province earned income from the trapline registration fees of white trappers, but not from Indians.⁶⁸ The third, and perhaps more fundamental reason, appears to be the game department's assessment that:

The Indian, could, if he chose, make his living by the sweat of his brow, just as well as anyone else...[and] if he were forced to do so it would tend towards the general prosperity of the country. Everybody knows how scarce labour has been during the past summer...and what an aid the Indian might have been had they chosen to get down to steady work....⁶⁹

⁶⁶ NAC RG 10 vol. 10872 file: 901/20-10 pt 1, W.E. Ditchburn. W.E. to Bryan Williams, July 4, 1929.

⁶⁷ British Columbia, *Sessional Papers*, (hereafter B.C. S.P.) 1917 "Game Warden's Report" p. O16.

⁶⁸ RG 10 vol. 8,571 file: 901/1-2-2-5 pt 1, Report of district officers Conference, October 21, 1946.

⁶⁹ B.C. S.P. 1907, "Game Warden's Report" p. F11; the Game Department also harassed "Asiatics" and recommended that they be "prohibited from shooting altogether".

Letters from aboriginal trappers, asking for help in getting their lines back, fill files at the Department of Indian Affairs in the 1920s.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the reallocation of traplines to white trappers continued through the 1930s and 40s over the protests of aboriginal people, Indian Agents, and the Native Brotherhood of B.C.⁷¹ By 1956, according to the Game Commissioner's figures, only 10 percent of British Columbia traplines were operated by aboriginal people.⁷²

Aboriginal employment in other areas was also circumscribed by provincial laws and policy decisions. One of the most important of these was the government policy not to employ aboriginal people on public works projects, especially roads -- a policy the Songhees criticized in 1894.⁷³ Premier McBride confirmed this policy himself in 1909 and evidence from aboriginal people indicates that in some areas at least, this policy was in effect through the depression.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Louis B. Prince to the Chief Inspector of Indian Affairs, January 1, 1929. Department of Indian Affairs, "Special Report on Trapping" September 12, 1923, and other correspondence in the National Archives of Canada (NAC) RG 10 vol. 10872, file 901/20-10 pt. 2.

⁷¹ NAC RG 10 vol. 10872, file: 901/20-10 pt 2 Alfred Adams, and H.D. Bailey Native Brotherhood of B.C. to Indian Commissioner for BC, January 27, 1941; RG 10 vol. 8571 file: 901/1-2-2-5 pt 1, Report of district officers conferences, October 21, 1946; RG 10 vol. 11,153 file: Trapping, T.R.L. MacInnes, to the Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, February 27, 1939 contains a petition signed by 153 aboriginal people from the North Coast region protesting the reallocation of traplines.

⁷² Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), Treaty and Historical Research Office, file U-24, F.R. Butler at Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Indian Superintendent's Conference, British Columbia and Yukon Region January 16-20, 1956, p. 9; the shrinkage of trapping areas of the Kitsumkalum between the 1920s and the 1980s is pictorially illustrated in McDonald, "Trying to Make a Life," figures 9 and 10.

⁷³ NAC RG 10 Vol. 3688, file 13,886-1 "Report of a Meeting" May 4, 1894; see Chapter 7.

⁷⁴ BCARS, GR 441, Section 30, Box 35, item 340, Premier Richard McBride to the Government Agent at Hazelton, 1909; "The Indians were refused from the government to labour on any government roads and to let only white men work," in RG 10 vol. 10872 file: 901/20-10 pt 2, George Archie, Secretary of the Canim Lake Band to W.E. Ditchburn, December 1, 1927; Thomson, "Employment Problems and the Economic Status of the British Columbia Indians," p. 41, interview of unidentified aboriginal man fired from his public works job in Vancouver in the 1930s due to complaints that the city was employing someone who was not a taxpayer.

The province stymied aboriginal entrepreneurial activity in other ways. Joe Elkins, an aboriginal man from the Williams Lake Agency tried to obtain a provincial licence to purchase fur in 1936, but, as the Indian Agent reported, "being an Indian he was barred from getting the necessary licences". When he bought a truck and tried to buy beef from local farmers to sell to butchers, the province would not permit him to buy or lease the meadow lots needed to graze the cattle, nor would it issue the provincial trucking licences because he was an Indian.⁷⁵

Ironically, given the statutory exclusion of aboriginal people from so many fields of employment, employers often used their "favoured status" as a rationale for not giving them jobs. The Department of Indian Affairs noted this "tendency on the part of employers of labour to refuse employment to Indians considering that they are a public charge and it is not necessary to give them employment where there are white applicants for the job." The province and city governments also used the rationale that, since they did not pay property taxes, they were not entitled to jobs that were paid with taxpayers' money.⁷⁶

It was another *Catch-22*. In times of labour surplus, like the depression just prior to the First World War, the Fisheries department used the argument of aboriginal access to a subsistence fishery not to allow them equal access to the commercial fishery. When there was a labour shortage, the subsistence economy was attacked because it allowed aboriginal people to stay out of the wage-labour force. In the 1907 annual report of the B.C. Game Branch, one warden offered what seemed to the Branch's own view:

⁷⁵ NAC RG 10 vol. 10872 file: 901/20-10 pt 2, H.E. Taylor, Indian Agent Williams Lake to C.C. Perry Assistant Indian Commissioner for BC, January 24, 1936 and the response February 6, 1936.

⁷⁶ Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, Report of the Deputy Superintendent, 1935, p. 10; NAC RG 10 Vol. 3688, file 13,886-1 "Report of a Meeting," May 4, 1894; RG 10 vol. 10872 file: 901/20-10 pt 2, George Archie, Secretary of the Canim Lake Band to W.E. Ditchburn, December 1, 1927; Francis Thompson "Employment Problems and the Economic Status of the British Columbia Indians," University of B.C.: Masters of Social Work Thesis, 1951, p. 41.

As long as they could hunt, or put in weirs to trap trout or salmon on their way up streams to spawn, and do the occasional day's work to get enough money to buy a little tea and sugar, they were contented, and the idea of steady work scouted. It must be admitted that this state of things is most unsatisfactory....⁷⁷

And when the labour shortage was over? Aboriginal people found themselves squeezed out of both the capitalist and subsistence economies. In the eyes of the Department of Indian Affairs: "The policy of the Game Branch is now to handle [food hunting] permits very sparingly, the argument being that if an Indian is destitute enough to need deer meat, the Department can give him relief rations."⁷⁸ All over the province, aboriginal trappers and hunters were forced out of both the cash and subsistence economy and onto relief -- but as we saw in Chapter 8 -- relief could sustain aboriginal people at a minimum level only if they had access to subsistence food.

The Department of Indian Affairs resented the limitations on the aboriginal subsistence economy for its own budgetary reasons and conducted a longstanding battle with the Provincial Game Department and the Federal Fisheries Department with very limited success. *White* fishermen, trappers and sport hunters had more political influence than the disenfranchised Indians, and the subsistence economy continued to erode.

⁷⁷ B.C. S.P. 1907, "Game Warden's Report" p. F11; the Game Department also harassed "Asiatics" and recommended that they be "prohibited from shooting altogether"; during the Second World War, when a labour shortage again existed and aboriginal people were hired in large numbers in the commercial fishery, the abundance of wage work was used as an argument to deprive them of their subsistence fishery. NAC RG 23, General File, reel 5, file 6, Part 8, William Henry Barker, B.C. Packers, to the Hon. J.D. Hazen, Minister of Fisheries, August 19, 1913; RG 10 vol. 11,147, Shannon "Fishing 1914-41", J.A. Motherwell, Chief Supervisor of Fisheries to M.S. Todd, Indian Agent, May 20, 1940.

⁷⁸ NAC RG 10 vol. 10872, 901/20-10 pt 2 E. McLeod, Indian Agent, Lytton to M.B. Jackson, Chairman of the Game Conservation Board of BC, May 20, 1925; "They should either give up their land or be made to respect the game laws," was the conclusion of the Provincial Game Warden in B.C. S.P. 1917 "Game Warden's Report," p. 06.

At the turn of the century, Indian Agents estimated that less than one percent of aboriginal income came from the government. During the Depression this rose to four percent. By 1954 that figure was 17 percent. In 1966, 25.4 percent of the on-reserve Indian population in British Columbia received financial assistance, more than eight times the provincial average. In 1968 the percentage dependent on social assistance had increased to 28 percent and in 1974, to 35 percent.⁷⁹

As the Songhees micro-history illustrated, it would be an exaggeration to say that legislative and the other policy factors outlined here were solely responsible for the declining participation of aboriginal people in the wage economy, and their increasing presence in the welfare economy. Other factors were also at work. Employers did not hire aboriginal workers because of their own attitudes about Indians, or the perception of their customers attitudes.⁸⁰ White workers used their racialized views of aboriginal people and objected to working alongside them.⁸¹ Compulsory schooling broke up elements of the family economy while the education system, driven by missionary-teachers, left young people ill-equipped for the post-war world and its technological change.

⁷⁹ D.B. Fields and W.T. Stanbury, *The Economic Impact of The Public Sector Upon the Indians of British Columbia*, (Vancouver: University of B.C., 1973) p. 46; Andrew Siggner and Chantal Locatelli, *An Overview of the Demographic, Social and Economic Conditions Among British Columbia's Registered Indian Population*, (Ottawa: Research Branch, Corporate Policy, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1981) p. 39.

⁸⁰ More than 90 percent of the aboriginal people surveyed by Aziz in 1969 felt that they were regularly discriminated against in employment and they were not offered jobs even when they were the most qualified. Racism was particularly effective in blocking aboriginal people from working in the retail sector owing "to the prejudice of buyers against being served by Indians." RG 10 vol. 8423 801/21-1 reel C-13835, Ross Modeste, and Chief Richard Thevarge November 21, 1963; Salim Aziz, "Selected Aspects of Cultural Change Among American Indians, A Case Study of Southeast Vancouver Island," Unpublished MA thesis University of Victoria, 1970, pp. 46, 80; this survey was confined to South East Vancouver Island but there is similar evidence from around the province.

⁸¹ Charles Jones is an example of an aboriginal worker who met resistance from white-dominated unions.. He was kept out of the International Woodworkers of America until the 1950s because he was 'Indian'. Jones, *Queesto*, p. 94; See also Thompson "Employment Problems," p. 9.

Some aboriginal people made choices that allowed them the most independence from full dependence on wage labour. Moreover, while the choices available to Indians in the capitalist economy were shrinking, from the 1940s on opportunities in terms of social welfare payments were expanding, for Indians and non-Indians. Aboriginal people apparently balanced what could be gained from the wage economy, the subsistence economy, the traditional potlatch economy, and the welfare economy, and made their own choices. The files of the Department of Indian Affairs and the letters columns of newspapers show that Indians regularly protested alienation of their resources and discriminatory laws to their agents and the public. Although their effect was limited, it not insignificant.

Aboriginal choices took place within a framework of laws and regulations established by "the state." But it was a "state" that did not speak with one voice, or act only in one direction. The relationships between the federal Department of Indian Affairs and the Department of Fisheries or the provincial Game Branch show conflicts between levels of government and between departments within levels. Alongside their better-known efforts to suppress aboriginal ceremonies and reorder political life within aboriginal communities, the Department of Indian Affairs did carry Indian protests to other state agencies, and sometimes succeeded in amending discriminatory laws, like those allocating fishing licences by *race*, and changing racist policies. Nonetheless, without a voting constituency, the Minister of Indian Affairs had limited power against the vocal and voting constituency of the Minister of Fisheries, for example. At a provincial level, the federal department of Indian Affairs had even less influence.

The end result of inter-department and inter-government struggles was a set of laws imposed on aboriginal people with the full coercive force of the state's police power behind them. Laws and policies, emanating from different levels of the state, and enshrined in legislation did more than limit where and when Indians could participate in the capitalist and subsistence economies. The Indian Act, voters registration acts, fisheries acts, game acts, land acts, timber legislation, and agricultural policy all

helped *define* what it meant to be Indian and what it meant to be *white*. With every act that affected Indians and non-Indians differently, governments were defining *race*, to the disadvantage of aboriginal people.

Because the Songhees lived in an urban setting they were among the first aboriginal peoples affected by legislation, particularly that which forced them from their subsistence economy. But as federal and provincial legislation and enforcement expanded to regulate fish and wildlife, even in the remotest parts of the province, other aboriginal groups felt the same kinds of pressure. And, as their protests suggest, some individuals like Songhees Joyce Albany, recognized this form of state racialization for what it was: "Believe me," she told the *Colonist*, "we very often sit down and talk about the White Problem."⁸²

⁸² *Colonist*, January 30, 1973.

CHAPTER 11
UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The Government has made a nice little nest
for us and we don't want this little nest.
Unidentified Kispiox Man¹

British Columbia Supreme Court Justice Allan McEachern's 1991 decision on the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en's claim to 54,000 square kilometres of the province is a pointed reminder of the importance, today, of the past. The 54 hereditary chiefs representing 76 *houses* of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en peoples and the battery of lawyers representing the governments of Canada and British Columbia, all appealed to history as justification for their position.

The case was extraordinary because the stakes were so high and because the three-year trial was so long and complex. Also, because the success or failure of the claimants rested on the acceptability of different kinds of historical evidence. McEachern rejected the *adaawk* or "orally-transmitted" history presented by the aboriginal plaintiffs and so rejected their case, in favour of the written sources of the defendants. The latter's "marvellous collections" of manuscripts, he said, "largely spoke for themselves."²

McEachern, clearly, is not an historian himself, but his prejudice with respect to sources reflects the conventional historical practice in British Columbia. It is not surprising then that, with

¹ Quoted in Maureen Cassidy, *From Mountain to Mountain: A History of Gitksan Village of Ans'pa yaxw* (Ans'pa yaxw School Society, 1984) p. 40.

² "I am unable to accept *adaawk*, *kungax* and oral traditions as reliable basis for detailed history but they could confirm findings based on other admissible evidence." Allan McEachern, *Reasons for Judgement: Delgamuukw v. B.C.*, (Smithers, B.C.: Supreme Court of British Columbia, 1991) p. 17, 52; for a discussion of the importance of this case to historians and other social scientists see the special issue on the case in *BC Studies*, 95 (Autumn 1992).

respect to aboriginal involvement in paid work, an important issue in the case, McEachern reached the conventional conclusion: since the fur trade aboriginal people have been left outside the developing capitalist economy.³

Like many historians who have written about British Columbia, McEachern was misled by his sources. Relying exclusively on partial texts by *white* observers -- texts which incorporated in the very definition of "Indian" the connotations of "indolent" and "dependent" -- he heard only one side of an extended exchange. Yet, the historic conversation between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in British Columbia is, at least partly, accessible and it calls for interpretation. By comparing aboriginal accounts with those of non-aboriginal ethnographers, employers, missionaries, government agents, travellers and by examining the routinely produced documents of a range of bureaucracies, a rich and complex series of interactions -- and unintended consequences -- becomes apparent.

What emerges are the roots of the present-day aboriginal-non-aboriginal relationship -- reaching back centuries before Europeans ever ventured into the Pacific. The Songhees micro-history, presented above, reveals one example of how today's social patterns are linked to early contact experiences, and how these in turn were products of long-standing, very local, histories. The Songhees, responding in a manner consistent with their history and social structure, welcomed Europeans. Other aboriginal groups with different histories were less welcoming, less willing to participate in the capitalist economy and their histories have developed in somewhat different ways. "Colonialism," as it developed here, was itself part of an interchange negotiated differently in different contexts and times.

Many of the early interactions between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples can be summed in the Chinook word, *mákuk*, loosely translated as "exchange". Barter, gift-exchange, or work-for-pay

³ McEachern, *Reasons for Judgement*, p. 129.

may seem at first glance to be relatively simple transactions, but a closer look reveals a vast potential for ambiguity, misunderstanding and creative transformations of meaning, particularly when cultural boundaries were crossed. The Songhees' study reveals that the motivation for engaging in any transaction was variable from one side of the bargain to the other, as was the whole meaning of the exchange process. Even the meaning of the items exchanged transformed as they moved from one culture into another.

The transformative potential of exchange re-emphasizes the pitfalls of relying on only one side of the historical conversation in trying to reconstruct the whole. To take an example: from a European perspective the Songhees sold their territory, now occupied by the city of Victoria, for the trifling sum of 371 blankets and a cap. But what was the meaning of this transaction from a Songhees point of view? The Songhees may have considered the blankets a gift in exchange for the temporary use of their land. Or they may have understood the treaty as we do today, concluding that given the *de facto* occupation of their land they made the best bargain under the circumstances. In either case it is important to understand that the price they exacted was far from trivial. Viewed from the vantage of their prestige economy, the bargain made the Songhees the wealthiest aboriginal people in the region at the time.

When we extend this expanded view of exchange to work-for-pay, it becomes obvious that there was enormous room for "slippage" in the nature of what was being exchanged and what the mutual obligation might be between an employer and the employee. If a European employer and an aboriginal worker had different ideas about what was being exchanged, it might not be surprising that the European would raise concerns about "indolence" or lack of dependability.

Although it seems ironic, given the unintended consequences, the Songhees acceptance, even welcome, of the *whites*, is understandable in this context. The potential for extracting the newcomers'

wealth, through paid-work, meshed with the Songhees' own forms of labour subordination and labour organization directed by the *siem*. Wealth garnered from paid work was transformed into potlatch goods. By this joining of the two economies Songhees people raised their status in northwest coast society. Given the different meanings and motives and conflicting systems of property rights it is not surprising that there were collisions between the indigenous people and the immigrants. What is surprising is that so few Europeans could ultimately impose their frameworks on what were initially much larger numbers of aboriginal people. The Songhees case illustrates one of the means by which this "conquest" was accomplished.

While the Songhees response was a local one, it was one response among countless others, as aboriginal economies became linked to a global extension of European capitalism. The Songhees example reminds us of the complexity and variability of these different interactions and the danger of broad-brush theoretical approaches. The simplicity of the progression from "traditional" to "modern" suggested by "modernization" theorists was lost on the Songhees, who used the "modern" to buttress the "traditional". Likewise the predictions of the "dependency theories" are confounded by the agency of the Songhees. These aboriginal people did not simply succumb to the assault of capitalism, Christianity, or a technologically superior culture. They used or adapted parts of European culture, incorporating aspects of the new stimuli into their own societies. Where they saw their interests threatened, particularly by the appropriation of their resource base, they protested and took up arms.

Another conclusion that emerges from juxtaposing fragments of both sides of the historical interchange, rejects the thesis that aboriginal people were made irrelevant by the gold rush. Historians have accomplished what disease, violence and social disruption could not. By writing history based on the impressions of certain immigrant groups, the historiography has made aboriginal people "disappear". Yet, there is abundant evidence that, from before the 1850s, aboriginal people were not only incorporated into the capitalist economy, but the existence of the early capitalist economy was dependent

on them. Without aboriginal participation, coal would not have been mined in British Columbia in the 1840s and 50s, export sawmills would not have been able to function in the 1860s and 70s, canneries would not have had a fishing fleet, nor the necessary processors in the 1870s and 80s. These were the economic activities that kept the colonies viable, the British interested in *British Columbia*, and contributed to making the colony attractive to the distant Canadas when Confederation was negotiated in 1871.

Why then, if aboriginal people were so eager to work for wages from the 1850s to the 1880s, were so many unemployed and on welfare in the 1960s and 1970s? What accounts for the declining aboriginal participation in all the industries where statistics are available to measure it? How can we explain why fewer Songhees men and women were employed in 1969 than in 1891? The micro-history reveals a complex array of answers to these questions.

In 1885, the long-standing campaign by missionaries against the potlatch system was taken up by the federal government which banned the potlatch, the central element of the Songhees and other northwest coast peoples' prestige economy. Missionaries and government agents identified, correctly, the potlatch as the centrepiece of a non-capitalist economic system but they made the mistake of thinking that it was anti-capitalist. The potlatch system had been the Songhees' motivation for accepting the capitalist economy and it continued to be their main reason for working for pay. In attacking the potlatch-prestige economy, the churches and the state were also attacking the Songhees' motivation for participating in the capitalist economy. The more successful the colonizers were in breaking Songhees culture, the more they eroded their cultural reasons for working.

In point of fact, the anti-potlatch laws were not immediately effective. Although the number and size of potlatches diminished soon after the laws went into effect, the Songhees and their Coast Salish neighbours continued to potlatch on a smaller scale. Within the limits imposed by the new

society, Songhees people continued to pursue objectives rooted in their prestige economy and directed to wealth-giving at potlatches. Accounts from Victoria in the nineteenth century suggest the Songhees continued to be active in all of the prestige, capitalist and subsistence economies. After the turn of the century, more vigorous enforcement of the laws drove the potlatch underground, diminishing the vitality of the prestige economy.

At the same time as the state was beginning its assault on the prestige economy, the end of railway construction released some 6,500 Chinese into the wage-labour economy, and the beginning of passenger service from eastern Canada brought another 35,000 people into the province over the next six years. Aboriginal people were being washed out of capitalist economy by a flood of low-wage labour.

Before the completion of the railway, large and small employers were dependent on aboriginal labour. By contrast, the immigrants that rode the rails into British Columbia were competitors for aboriginal jobs; "white preference" became the order of the day. One by one, on the docks, on steamships, in the mills, even in public works, as the non-aboriginal population increased, "whitemen" were "naturally doing much of the work that fell to Indians in the past."⁴ It seemed natural to the *white* observers because "whites" were "our countrymen" and "our people". In the nineteenth century this attitude ran down from the top levels of government. In 1898, even the Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, condemned the spending of money on Indian schools because it was "educating these Indians to compete industrially with our own people... a very undesirable use of public money."⁵

⁴ Cda. S.P. 1903 No. 27; A.W. Vowell, pp. 281-5.

⁵ Cda. *House of Commons Debates*, 1897 col. 4076, June 14, 1897; DIA AR 1898, xxvii quoted in Barman, *West Beyond the West*, p. 172.

The racialization process that affected aboriginal people in British Columbia was complicated by the ethnic mix of the workforce. In the more skilled jobs on steamships, in sawmills, and in the more lucrative work on the docks, aboriginal people were largely displaced by *white* labour. In low-skill agricultural, domestic or cannery work they were partially displaced by Chinese immigrants. Aboriginal fishermen were displaced by Japanese fishermen.

Historically, aboriginal people had a relationship to the land that differed from all the immigrants, and in a paradoxical way, this was enshrined in the new set of laws. Not permitted to preempt land, aboriginal people were tied to reserves -- land they could occupy but could not own. Their unique relationship to the land extended to the food gathered from it. In 1887 the Indian agent began informing his supervisor that settlement of their territory and, more importantly, the enforcement of new game and fishing laws, meant that the subsistence economy was no longer a full-time option.

In 1888 the Department of Indian Affairs began issuing relief to the elderly and destitute among the Songhees, a "temporary measure" that initiated a new, parallel, and long-term "welfare economy". When other arms of the state continued to limit elements of the subsistence economy, the Department of Indian Affairs expanded "relief". Between the subsistence and welfare economies, the Songhees, unlike the immigrants, never became fully dependent on the sale of their labour in the capitalist economy.

The historical combination of their independence, their different motivations for participating in the capitalist economy, and the racialized place accorded aboriginal people by the immigrant society, meant that the Songhees became, in several senses, "a reserve army of the unemployed" for the capitalist economy of British Columbia. Although at any given time one or two Songhees worked in skilled trades or the professions, the majority were drawn into the capitalist economy when it boomed, as it did between 1907-1913 and 1940-1949. When it slumped, preference was given to "the poor whites".

The Songhees' experience is an example of how a group of aboriginal people maximized the opportunities presented to them by a set of parallel economies, but also how, over time, the choices available to them had been shrinking. Restricted by a variety of state policies on agriculture, the hospitality industry, and public works, disadvantaged vis à vis *whites* in the fishing and logging industry; and the last hired on account of *racism* in the expanding retail and white-collar sectors, they were limited to the seasonal jobs few others wanted. In this situation many Songhees created for themselves an economic system based on a mixture of low-wage seasonal employment for the whole family, subsistence harvesting, later supplemented by relief rations, and participation in a modified-prestige economy.

Songhees production had been organized by family units before the arrival of Europeans and a century later this was still true -- only the nature of the family had itself been transformed by the encounter with colonial and post-colonial capitalism. The re-ordering of the Songhees' different economies happened in coordination with a re-ordering of household structure towards a smaller unit composed primarily of parents and their unmarried children. As the immigrant society affected men differently than women, and children differently than adults, the relative contribution of family members to the household economy ebbed and flowed with each new constraint and opportunity. In these circumstances, schooling was a hinderance. The work open to aboriginal people did not require education, and children were valuable contributors to the family economy as subsistence harvesters and workers in agricultural harvesting and fish canning.

The low-skill sectors of the economy occupied by aboriginal workers in the mid-twentieth century were also among the most vulnerable to technological change. The 1950s saw the closure of numerous fish canneries around the province, including the Empress Cannery that had sustained the Songhees, as well as some mechanization of the hop fields. Squeezed from their niche in the wage

economy and faced with severe limitations on their subsistence economy, many turned to the only option that was expanding in the 1950s and 1960s -- the welfare economy.

The patterns that emerge from the Songhees experience also suggest that the "state" was not a single entity but acted in many directions at once, some at odds with the others, and some allied on particular issues with the Songhees. The different objectives, and access to power, of the federal Department of Indian Affairs compared to the federal Department of Fisheries and the provincial Game Branch, explain much about the extension of a welfare economy to aboriginal British Columbians. Relief was paid to Indians by one agency primarily because regulations of the other agencies limited access to both their subsistence and cash economies. "Welfare colonialism" was not something the state moved into recently or willingly.⁶ Not only did a wide range of federal and provincial laws and policies limit the types paid work aboriginal people could participate in, they effectively created the category of "Indian" as "outside the economy" and, over time, as "dependent on the state." Laws were not only *racist*, they were *racializing* -- defining and redefining racial categories.

The patterns of aboriginal employment in British Columbia establish a new vantage point for viewing the history of the province. The idea that aboriginal people became "irrelevant" to the development of British Columbia after the gold rush is clearly wrong. Even after 1885 when the capitalist economy had ceased to be dependent on aboriginal labourers, and aboriginal people had become a small proportion of the population, they remained vital to several sectors of the economy. Moreover, what can be described as the "marginalizing" of these aboriginal people was an active process that made them surprisingly central to different organs of the Canadian and British Columbian state: Indian agents, police officers, fisheries agents, timber inspectors, game wardens, and social

⁶ The term is from Robert Paine, *The White Arctic: Anthropological Essays on Tutelage and Ethnicity*, (St. John's, Nfld.: Memorial University, 1977) pp. 3, 46; see also Jeremy Beckett, *The Torres Strait Islanders: custom and colonialism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 16-17, 172-7.

workers. Restricting the access of aboriginal people to their own economies was a central feature of the colonial project of transferring the resources of British Columbia to non-aboriginal people for "development". As the on-going appeal of the McEachern decision on the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en land claim case to the Supreme Court of Canada reminds us, the exchange process is not over yet.

The ambiguities and ironies of exchange run in several directions. The newcomers -- who wanted to assimilate "Indians" -- isolated them instead and made an independent people "dependent" on the state. The Songhees -- who accepted the newcomers in order to augment their own wealth -- found themselves impoverished. A century-and-a-half of exchange and change has brought, and continues to bring, unintended consequences into the aboriginal-non-aboriginal relationship.

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The conventional distinction between primary and secondary sources break down in this study for several reasons. First, since this study examines both the material and rhetorical construction of aboriginal lives, what might be considered a secondary source for describing aboriginal life will be a primary source when it comes to considering the rhetorical construction of those lives. Second, the traditional reasons for distinguishing primary and secondary sources, the *prima facie* reliability of the former compared to the latter, dissolve under close scrutiny, as David Murray and Ian MacLaren show in their works cited below. Finally, in this study which spans 140 years, there are many works, like Hawthorne et al, dated 1958 that are both a primary source, according to the traditional division, for the period in which they were written, and a secondary source for prior periods.

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APPENDIX I

PAID AND SUBSISTENCE WORK DESCRIBED IN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC SOURCES

The following chart is a summary of all the auto-ethnographies relating to British Columbia mentioned in the body of the thesis that contain substantial accounts of the paid and unpaid work of the subject. A "Y" under a category indicates that the person named mentions doing that kind of work at some point, in their auto-ethnography, while a "." indicates no mention. Since only two of the auto-ethnographic accounts are specifically focused on work, it is likely that for many individuals the list below is only a partial account. The categories of work abbreviated across the top of the chart are: subsistence, sealing, trade, fishing, canning, logging, trapping, hop picking, freighting, ships crew, agricultural labour (which excepts hop picking but includes self-employment in commercial agriculture), public works, sawmill labour, service industry (including paid domestic work), and handicraft production. Sources are not repeated from the bibliography if they appear there under the name of subject.

Name	Birth Year	S u b s i s t e n c e	S e a l i n g	T r a d e	F i s h i n g	C a n n i n g	L o g g i n g	T r a p p i n g	H o p p i c k i n g	F r e i g h t i n g	S h i p s c r e w	A g r i c u l t u r a l l a b o r	P u b l i c w o r k s	S a w m i l l l a b o r	S e r v i c e i n d u s t r y	H a n d i c r a f t p r o d u c t i o n	
Sayach'apis ¹	1841~	Y	Y	Y	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
John Fornsby ²	1855	Y	.	.	Y	.	Y	.	Y	.	.	.	Y	Y	.	.	.
William Pierce ³	1855~	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y
Charley Nowell ⁴	1870	Y	Y	.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	.	.	.	.	Y	.	.	.
George Swanaset ⁵	1874	.	.	.	Y	.	Y	.	.	.	Y	Y	.	Y	.	.	.
Charles Jones ⁶	1874	Y	Y	Y	Y	.	Y	Y	.	.	.	Y	.	.	.	.	.
A. Khahtsahlano ⁷	1877	Y	.	.	Y	.	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y	.	.	Y
Mr. Quintasket ⁸	1885	Y	.	Y	.	.	Y	Y	.	Y	.	Y	.	.	.	Y	.
Augusta Tappage	1888	Y	.	.	.	.	.	Y	.	.	.	Y	.	.	.	Y	Y

¹ Edward Sapir and Morris Swadesh, *Nootka Texts*, (Philadelphia: Linguistic Society of America, 1939) and Edward Sapir, "Sayachi'apis, a Nootka Trader" in E.C. Parsons and B.W. Huebsh, eds. *American Indian Life*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1922) 297-323.

² Also did theatrical performances and was a healer, June Collins, "John Fornsby: The Personal Document of a Coast Salish Indian," in Marian Smith, ed. *Indians of the Urban Northwest*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949) 287-341.

³ Main career was as a minister.

⁴ Also worked for Indian agent, assisted ethnographers and was a labour recruiter; Clellan S. Ford, ed. *Smoke From their Fires: The Life of a Kwakiutl Chief*, (Hamden: Archon, 1968).

⁵ University of Washington, Special Collections. Seattle. Melville Jacobs Collection, "George Swanaset: narrative of a personal document." Mss. 1693-71-13, Box 112.

⁶ Also worked as a railway brakeman.

⁷ J.S. Matthews, *Conversations with Khahtsahlano*, (Vancouver: Vancouver Archives, 1933).

⁸ Appears in the bibliography under the name of Christine Quintasket who provides more information on her father's occupation than her own. He also earned living as gambler, she was a teacher.

Name	Birth Year	S	S	T	F	C	L	T	H	F	S	A	P	S	S	H
		u	e	r	i	a	o	r	o	r	h	g	u	a	s	a
		b	a	a	s	n	g	a	p	r	e	r	b	w	r	a
		s	l	d	h	n	g	p	s	i	p	i	l	m	v	d
		i	i	e	i	i	i	p	.	g	c	c	i	i	i	i
		s	n	.	n	n	n	i	.	t	r	u	c	l	v	c
		t	g	.	g	g	g	n	.	.	e	l	W	l	e	r
		.	.	.	.	.	.	g	.	.	w	t	k	.	.	.
Florence Davidson ⁹	1896	Y	.	.	.	Y	.	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y	Y
Ed Sparrow ¹⁰	1898	Y	.	.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	.	.	Y	Y	.	.
Rose Sparrow	1902	Y	.	.	.	Y	.	Y	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y
Henry Pennier ¹¹	1904	Y	.	.	.	Y	Y	Y	Y	.	.	Y	.	.	.	.
Harry Assu	1905	Y	.	.	Y	.	Y	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Beth White ¹²	1905~	Y	.	.	.	.	.	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y	Y
Mary John ¹³	1913	Y	.	.	.	.	.	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y	Y
James Sewid ¹⁴	1913	Y	.	.	Y	Y	Y	Y	.	.	.	Y	.	Y	.	.
Joyce Albany ¹⁵	1919	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y	.
John Wallace ¹⁶	1925	.	.	.	Y	.	Y	Y	Y	.	.	Y	.	Y	.	.
Theresa Jeffries ¹⁷	1932	.	.	.	.	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y	.	Y	.
Gilbert Joe ¹⁸	1933	.	.	.	Y	.	Y	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

⁹ Margaret B. Blackman, *During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988).

¹⁰ Also was band business manager and secretary. Both Ed and Rose Sparrow's accounts come from Leona Sparrow's manuscript.

¹¹ Also sold "bootlegged" liquor.

¹² Also ran a gas station with her husband; Yukon Archives, Whitehorse, Yukon Women's Project Sound Recording (Transcripts) File 13-5.

¹³ Also worked in the local hospital and became a teacher; Bridget Moran, *Stony Creek Woman: The Story of Mary John*, (Vancouver: Tillacum, 1988).

¹⁴ Also did performances for tourists; James Spradley, ed. *Guests Never Leave Hungary: The Autobiography of James Sewid, a Kwakiutl Indian*, (Kingston: McGill Queen's, 1989).

¹⁵ Had a career as office worker, band manager, book keeper; Esquimalt Municipal Archives, Oral History Project, Joyce Albany Interview, August 17, 1990, File 990.16.1.

¹⁶ Also did construction and worked as a carpenter and guide; Oliver N. Wells, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbours*, (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987).

¹⁷ Worked for the Department of Indian Affairs coordinating craft training programs and then for the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians as a Field Worker; Colleen Bostwick, "Oral Histories: Theresa Jeffries," *Labour History*, 2, 3 (1980) 8-15.

¹⁸ Frank Fuller, "Gilbert Joe," *Labour History*, 2, 3 (1980) 16-19.