The Legacy of Colonialism

s you saw in Part Two, the First Nations of British Columbia have made a difficult journey over the last two hundred years in the face of the actions of colonial governments and private enterprise. The results of colonialism are not difficult to see. Five hundred years of European settlement in the Americas is painfully and tragically represented in any number of statistics, such as high rates of suicide, un- and under-employment, and substance abuse. This is not to deny impressive and important examples of successful First Nations people. Rather, it underlines the fact that the social inequality experienced by First Nations people is directly linked to the processes of colonization and to the government policies directed at undermining Aboriginal institutions and social organization.

In this section you will study the ways that this colonialism has affected different aspects of First Nations society. One of the greatest impacts was on First Nations economies. The resource-rich province was a prime investment opportunity for businesses and developers, and they paid little or no heed to First Nations land use or resource management. Aboriginal people became workers in a foreign industrial system.

The colonial legacy also had major effects on First Nations communities, especially on the way they were governed under the Indian Act. While all First Nations suffered discrimination under the Act, women were doubly discriminated against. The impact of the residential school system has left deep scars on communities, scars which have been compounded over the generations to affect nearly all

members of some communities. Ironically, despite the government's intentions, the one thing that colonialism did not do was assimilate Aboriginal people into the mainstream. Instead, opposition to such measures helped keep First Nations communities together.

The Métis people are a unique community of people with mixed First Nations and European, usually French, ancestry. These "Children of Contact" formed an important segment of B.C.'s population in the province's early years. Many Métis also moved from their historic homeland in the Prairies to British Columbia after the 1885 Riel Rebellion, and many more came after World War II. Today they are actively seeking to have their identity and Aboriginal rights recognized.

The journey of First Nations people is not over by any means. There are many significant challenges facing them today and communities are working to heal from the legacies of colonialism through social programs, education, and revitalization of language and culture. On the political front, self-determination and self-government are the same goals held by those who resisted and protested at the beginning of the journey. Treaty negotiations are leading towards this end, but their progress has been exceedingly slow, except for the notable case of the Nisga'a, who have settled their land claims and are no longer subject to the Indian Act. Until the other First Nations of the province achieve similar control of government and resources, their journey will continue.



St. Ann's Catholic Church at Chuchuwayha, near Hedley. Behind the peaceful beauty of this scene lie aggresive forces of colonialism: restricting people to reserves, breaking up land with fences, and educating children through church-run schools. All have left their legacies.

Communities in Transition

Before European contact, First Nations communities were self-sustaining and healthy, comprised of members who were confident in their place at the centre of their world. Social structures were in place to deal with the inevitable tensions and conflicts that develop in any culture. However, the growing dominance of Euro-Canadian culture and laws over the last three hundred years has marginalized First Nations people. The local community, usually a village located on a reserve, is still the foundation of First Nations culture, but the imposition of beliefs and legislation from foreign cultures, along with the devastation caused by disease, has diminished the strength of that foundation.

Colonialism had an enormous impact in First Nations communities. Governance, local economies, the health of families, and spiritual practices were thrown into turmoil. This chapter examines some of the significant issues affecting First Nations people as they live in their communities today. Some of these topics are difficult to talk about, but it is important to understand them in order to bring about healing.

The Social Legacy

The impact of B.C.'s colonial past is starkly revealed in government statistics such as those on income, health, and interactions with the criminal justice system. There are dramatic gaps in these statistics between First Nations people and other Canadians, and these inequalities are symptoms of a far bigger problem: the disruption and near destruction of Aboriginal societies by an encroaching settler state. Let's consider a few of the key symptoms of colonialism.

The average income of First Nations people is only 70 per cent of the average income of other

Canadians. The household income of First Nations families is 40 per cent lower than the national average (\$21,800 for First Nation families versus \$38,000 for other Canadian families). The source of income is also important to look at: First Nations people living on reserves in B.C. receive a higher portion of their income in government payments such as employment insurance, pensions, or social assistance than from employment.

The statistics on health also show marked inequalities between Aboriginal people and members of mainstream British Columbian society. Poverty, overcrowding, and poor housing have led to chronic and acute respiratory diseases affecting First Nations people disproportionately. The average age of death is more than twenty years below that of the average non-Aboriginal Canadian. The rate of infant mortality, though improved, is still nearly three times the Canadian average (17.5 versus 7.9 per 1000). More than 33 per cent of all Aboriginal deaths are related to violence, compared with 8 per cent in mainstream society. These statistics highlight a significant discrepancy between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Canadians.

First Nations interactions with the justice and criminal law systems of Canada also reveal the lingering effects of colonialism. First Nations people were not entitled to vote in federal elections until 1960. Activities related to land claims were criminalized between 1927 and 1951. Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their home communities and placed in residential schools, the last of which did not close until the late 1970s.

In 1996, Aboriginal people accounted for slightly less than 3 per cent of the total Canadian population.

However, they accounted for 12 per cent of federal and 20 per cent of provincial admissions to prison.

Why should this be? Careful studies of the judicial process have clearly demonstrated that if an individual is Aboriginal, his or her chance of being incarcerated is higher than with any other group of Canadians.

The statistics on health and other social inequalities are brutal, but there are indications that the situation is changing. For instance, the gap between projected life expectancy of First Nations people and all Canadians is narrowing significantly. Between 1975 and 2000 the life expectancy of male Status Indians increased from 59.2 years to 69.5, compared to 70.3 to 76 for all Canadian males. For women, it increased from 65.9 to 77.2 (compared to 77.6 to 82 for the general population). Data were only gathered for those people registered under the Indian Act, but they reflect a general change in Aboriginal communities. What these numbers mean is that positive changes are being made in the lives of Aboriginal people and they are living longer.

Rules of Exclusion

Who is a "Status Indian"? How is he or she different from a Non-Status person? Aboriginal communities have been split based largely on artificial definitions set out in the Indian Act. Under traditional custom, birth was the only determiner of who you were, but under government control, a person's affiliation could change according to the laws of the day. Only people with status according to the Indian Act can be members of a band, and only band members are supposed to live in reserve communities. Where does this leave relatives who, for one reason or another, have lost their status?

The rules of the Indian Act have historically discriminated against women in many areas, such as land ownership, wills, band elections, and band membership. Before 1951, the Indian Act stated that women could not vote on local band issues. Such rules were derived from the European model based on the

nuclear family and patrilineal descent, whereas First Nations traditionally recognized extended families and in some cases, matrilineal descent. The Indian Act made males the head of the household: women and children were subject to them by law. Status under the Act, and any rights given by it, were determined solely by the man's status. Should a woman with Indian status marry a non-Indian, she and her children would lose their status, and if she married a man from a different band, her status would automatically transfer to her husband's band. Sometimes a woman lost her status involuntarily if her husband decided to enfranchise himself (that is, give up his status under the Indian Act). For men, however, things were different. If a man married a Non-Status woman, he retained his status. His wife also gained status, even if she was not an Aboriginal person. These rules existed until 1985, when they were revoked with the passing of Bill C-31.

Until recently, membership in a band was controlled by the Department of Indian Affairs. Even after the changes to the Indian Act in 1951, determination of status and membership was not put into the hands of band councils. In fact, the rules were tightened by the introduction of an "Indian register." This is an official list of band membership that allows the Department of Indian Affairs to track reserve populations. It was compiled from various less formal lists and records, and did not include all people entitled to membership. Some people were left off simply through clerical errors.

The rules governing who can hold "Indian status" are complex and have changed over the years. For example, until recently, a person could lose status automatically at the age of 21 if both his or her mother and grandmother had gained their status only through marriage. This was called the "double mother" rule. Someone who had grown up on a reserve, sharing in all the cultural practices of the community, could suddenly find him- or herself without status and

forced to find a new home off the reserve

The 1985 amendments to the Indian Act. under Bill C-31, made important changes to band membership to bring it into alignment with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The ability of the Department of Indian Affairs to enfranchise a person or a band arbitrarily was removed, and bands gained more control over membership. Most significantly, women and their children who had lost their status through marriage were able to have their status and membership reinstated.

Governing Communities

Colonial governments and the Canadian state had little regard for traditional First Nations governance systems. Instead, they imposed a European model of governance based on the municipal system. Historically, First Nations in B.C. had hereditary chiefs who held their positions for life. Under the Indian Act, Band Council members are elected for a limited term, as is the head of the Band Council, the Chief Councillor. While First Nations were obliged to accept the European model of governance, in practice many bands choose their hereditary chief to also serve as Chief Councillor for several terms in a row.

In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples identified a number of important characteristics of traditional First Nations governance systems on which Euro-Canadian governments have had a profound effect. These characteristics are important to consider for future development of self-government.

First is the centrality of the land. In the past, a community's relationship with its land—the earth, the water, and air—was the basis for its government. Political action was based on the need for respect for the land and stewardship of its resources. This differs radically from the Euro-Canadian approach of domination and control of the land. As a result of colonial views of land ownership, Aboriginal people either find themselves with no land base, or with



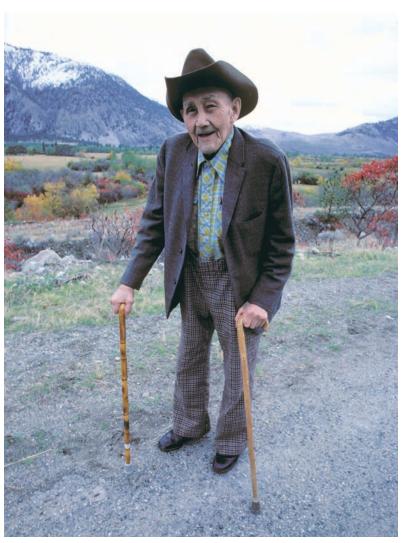
Siyémches (Chief Frank Malloway) is the hereditary chief of the Yakweakwioose Band in Chilliwack. He is a vigorous promoter of the revival of Stó:lō traditional culture.

lands which are much reduced from their original territories. Governance of their lands has been taken away, although in some cases, it has been reclaimed.

Traditionally, the rule of law which directs First Nations governments was grounded in the relationship people had with the land. For some, laws were given by the Creator; for others, they grew out of the natural world. In both cases, these laws were underlying principles that guided the behaviour of people in their society. They were unwritten, but carried out in

daily practice and passed on through oral traditions. However, they were unseen and unheard by the newcomers, who had a different form of laws. Euro-Canadian laws were written down in great detail and based on social control.

The roles that different groups played in their community are further characteristics of traditional governance. The roles of the family and clan were at the core of village organization and formed the basis of membership in the society. A person belonged to their family unit or clan for life. It was an important part of who they were. Under the Indian Act, as we have seen, membership could change.



Elders in First Nations are the keepers of the language, the culture, and the laws. They are looked to for guidance in all manner of community affairs. Colonial governance tended to marginalize Elders. Although they have always remained important to the community, Elders' roles and responsibilities have diminished. Women's roles have also become marginalized, as for many years the Indian Act denied them any political say.

Individuality and responsibility to the larger group go hand-in-hand in many First Nations societies. Self-reliance and initiative add to the success of the community. Often in Western cultures,

individual achievement is seen in opposition to group success. The relationship between the individual and the collective becomes very apparent when you compare government leadership in the past with that under a band council system. Traditionally, leaders were accountable to the whole community. Their individual powers were exercised for the goals of the whole group. They were trained for leadership from childhood and took their responsibility to the group as integral to their role. Band councils, being elected, don't require this accountability, as leaders only need to be voted in by a simple majority. Another characteristic of traditional government that has been impacted through colonialism is consensus decision-making. The process of electing leaders and voting

Okanagan Elder Harry Robinson in the Similkameen Valley. Harry was one of the great storytellers of the Okanagan people. He died in 1990 but his knowledge of the sweeping changes that took place over his lifetime is preserved in two collections of stories, *Write It On Your Heart* and *Nature Power*.

on important issues is very different under a system based on majority vote. Consensus Elders are making major contributions in teaching young people their First Nations languages. Here the Halq'emeylem language of the Stó:lō Nation is being taught.

brings about a sense of unity, as everyone works together to reach total agreement. Majority vote can split people, and has reduced the role of Elders.

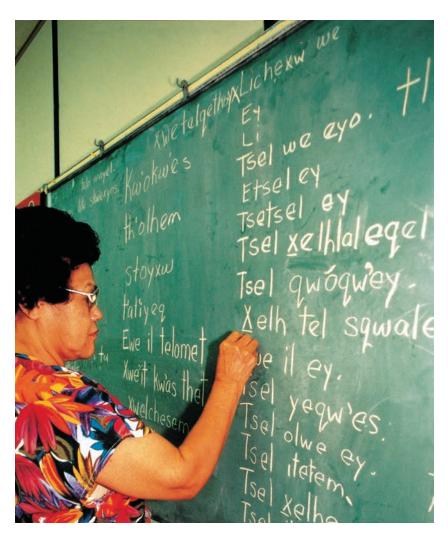
A recent change affecting band councils has the potential to completely alter the make-up of band government. In the *Corbière* case of 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that band members who live off reserve should be entitled to vote in band elections. Until then, only band members who actually lived on the reserve had a say in who made up the chief and council. The impact of this change in band government is still to be determined, as the first elections under the new rules did not take place until 2000

Health-Related Struggles

A series of epidemics during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in British

Columbia had devastating effects in First Nations communities. The last great epi-demic to impact the First Nations of B.C. was the outbreak of Spanish influenza following World War I. This pandemic spread around the world as soldiers returned from the battlefields of Europe and Asia. Many Aboriginal communities in British Columbia were hit hard, resulting in countless deaths.

During the twentieth century the nature of diseases affecting First Nations people changed from short, swift epidemics to lingering chronic illnesses. Most prevalent of these was tuberculosis (TB), an infectious bacterial disease that often affects the lungs or bones.



It is spread easily through coughing and sneezing. Tuberculosis was one of the first European diseases to infect First Nations people after contact, but as people gathered on reserves, where living conditions were often substandard, it took a stranglehold. Many healthy children who were sent to residential schools soon contracted tuberculosis due to the unhealthy conditions found in the schools, where large groups of children lived in close quarters, dormitory style, for most of the year. When they returned home, they carried the bacteria with them.

It could take months or years to cure, and often people were left weakened or crippled after surviving it. Children were the hardest hit by TB. Treatment usually involved sending the patient to an isolation hospital, called a sanatorium, where fresh air and good nutrition played a key role in rehabilitation. Although the disease affected all Canadians, it took a disproportionately high toll on the Aboriginal population. First Nations patients were not normally admitted into provincially run TB sanatoriums, but were sent instead to separate hospitals operated by the federal government. This discrimination, based largely on which government was funding the hospital, reinforced the inequality of health care for First Nations. Not only did patients suffer poor health, the sanatoriums were usually far away from their homes, so they were further isolated from family and friends as they recovered.

That being said, the doctors and nurses who worked in the TB hospitals for Aboriginal people were known to be committed and caring people. George Manuel, who spent eight years of his youth in hospital, recognized this in his book *The Fourth World*.

Far better than I remember the baths and towels, meals, and beds, which were all warm and plentiful, I recall the nurses who brought me those books, and who sat with me those many hours. . . I honour those women who kept me alive as though they were grandmothers of our own nation ¹

In the 1970s and 1980s, the incidence of TB among Aboriginal people dropped considerably, thanks to an improved immunity to the disease, as well as to medical intervention and healthier living conditions. Alarmingly, however, tuberculosis is once again becoming a serious health concern in some Aboriginal communities.

Diabetes is another disease which affects a large number of First Nations people, due largely to the shift in diet from traditional wholesome foods to more processed foods, especially those containing high sugar and starch content. Diabetes is a disease of the endocrine system in which sugars and starches are not properly absorbed due to a lack of insulin. It often leads to serious complications, such as blindness and poor circulation in the lower limbs, which can result in amputation. For Aboriginal people generally, diabetes begins earlier, and the complications are more severe.

The rate of diabetes among Aboriginal people in Canada is three times the national average, yet this disease was virtually unknown among them before World War II. There appears to be a higher incidence of diabetes among people living on reserve than off reserve. There is also a gender difference: two-thirds of First Nations people diagnosed with diabetes are women, whereas in the general Canadian population it occurs more frequently among men. To be able to understand and deal with this serious illness in Aboriginal communities, a variety of research and education programs are currently in place, but it is still a fact of life in many Aboriginal homes that at least one family member must constantly watch their blood sugar levels and cope with taking insulin injections daily.

Alcohol abuse is a social disease which, like infectious diseases, was introduced through contact with Europeans. Alcohol was used as a trade item in the fur trade, and Aboriginal people had no physical immunity or social conventions in place for its use. In the twentieth century myriad factors have trapped Aboriginal communities in cycles of alcohol abuse that are very difficult to break. For many Aboriginal communities alcohol and drug abuse are the first hurdles to be overcome before other reforms can be accomplished. Many individuals, families, and communities are facing that challenge, and a wide variety of programs exist, ranging from communitybased self-help groups to intensive treatment centres. The most successful programs seem to be those run by Aboriginal people which use a holistic approach that incorporates cultural as well as emotional and social components.

Alcohol abuse brings with it both personal health issues, such as increased risk of heart disease, liver disease, hepatitis, and certain kinds of cancer, and social consequences. When women drink alcohol during pregnancy, it can result in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in their children, a birth defect which has life-long impacts on their health and social development. The social and emotional effects of alcohol abuse are far reaching, contributing directly to family breakdown, violence, sexual abuse, jail terms, unemployment, and suicide.

HIV/AIDS is the newest disease to threaten the Aboriginal population, and there are warning signs that it could develop into a serious health issue. While the actual number of cases is relatively small, the alarming fact is that the number of HIV/AIDS cases is increasing in the Aboriginal population while it has stabilized among the general Canadian population. Initiatives are being taken to prevent the disease, assist those affected, and provide community support for families of those living with HIV or AIDS.

Rebuilding Families

The key to any community is the strength of its families. The agents of colonialism shattered the bonds of families in the pursuit of their goals of assimilation. Too often, government officials, churches, and social workers failed the families who were supposed to be in their care.

Residential schools did not do their intended job of assimilating First Nations children into mainstream society, but they divided families, nearly destroyed First Nations languages, and created untold numbers of ongoing social problems. Forced attendance at residential schools shattered the traditional notion of families in First Nations communities. In a society built on the extended family, where the whole village is involved in the raising of children, the separation

was terrible. Imagine the fear of a young child being taken away from his or her family, not knowing why, not knowing when they will see them again. Boys and girls were usually kept apart, so even when brothers and sisters were in the same institution they were not allowed to talk to one another. When they returned home for the summer, the children often felt alienated from their friends and family.

Locked away for months or years, children missed the opportunity to grow up in their own families and culture. They did not experience the daily love of their parents and had no opportunity to learn parenting skills. Many people found themselves stuck between two worlds. They lacked the skills to fully participate in their own communities, yet were not prepared for life in Euro-Canadian society.

Many students suffered even more at the hands of individuals who worked in the institutions. Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse created deep emotional pain for their victims. For years, sometimes generations, victims of abuse were silent, hiding their shame and guilt. The fact that there are currently 6,000 lawsuits filed by survivors of residential schools across Canada shows how widespread this abuse was.

When several generations of First Nations people were wounded by the residential school experience, the problems were compounded. Faced with poverty and discrimination in addition to the fall-out of residential schools, parents were often unable to cope. Substance abuse and violence broke up families. Some children were raised by grandparents or other family members; others suffered severe neglect.

With the amendments to the Indian Act in 1951, the federal government handed over responsibility for Aboriginal social welfare to the provinces. In the 1950s, '60s and '70s, social workers, like missionaries and Indian agents before them, believed they knew the best way to take care of First Nations children.

Thus began what is sometimes called the "scoop-up." Children were literally scooped up from their homes and families and sent to foster homes or adoptive parents, resulting in another generation of children being separated from their culture.

Today many First Nations have fought to regain control over child custody and welfare. Some are succeeding in having First Nations children cared for within their own communities, but they cannot do so without adequate financial resources.

First Nations Voices

Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Crey

In the book Stolen From Our Embrace, Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Crey describe how in the past two decades residential school survivors have sought justice and restitution through political and legal channels.

Residential school survivors who returned home from a miserable childhood of abuse and military-style discipline have found themselves

still experiencing, decades later, symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder not unlike those suffered by war veterans or police officers. Panic attacks, insomnia, uncontrollable anger, alcohol and drug use, sexual inadequacy or addiction, the inability to form intimate relationships, eating disorders: the list of symptoms is lengthy, but today it is more likely to form part of the legal documents filed in civil lawsuits than to describe an individual's silent torment. Survivors who sought solace in self-destructive acts discovered that eventually their memories had to be confronted, grieved and healed. There was no more powerful incentive to do so than the fact that many of them had become parents and grandparents who lived every day with the impact of their pain on the most precious ones, their children.

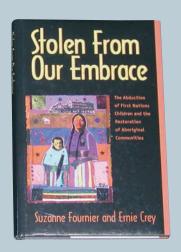
Once survivors were well embarked on their own healing journey, they soon realized that seeking an apology and restitution from the government of Canada and the churches was a healthy, empowering goal to pursue. Even more importantly, the survivors hoped financial compensation could help provide healing resources to ensure the cycle of pain and abuse would not be passed on to each successive aboriginal generation.²

Adjusting to Urban Living

The trend for Aboriginal people to move to urban areas has increased steadily since the 1970s. In British Columbia between 1979 and 1999 the percentage of First Nations people living on reserve decreased from 61 per cent to 52 per cent. This is not quite as great a change as seen in Canada overall, where onreserve populations went from 70 per cent to 58 per cent. Based on these figures, nearly half of B.C. First Nations people registered under the Indian Act live off reserve, primarily in urban areas. National statistics

for Métis people suggest that two-thirds of Canada's Métis people live in large cities.

People move to cities for many reasons. Some move for greater opportunities in employment and education. Others leave their rural communities to get away from negative situations they have experienced there, such as poor housing, family breakdown, and abusive relationships. Many Aboriginal people successfully find employment and make permanent homes for their families in cities. They become part of the fabric of the multicultural mix which characterizes most large communities in the province today. Others face



Restitution

Restitution is an act of restoring something lost or stolen to its proper owner. It also means compensation for an injury.

economic hardship when they reach a city, particularly Vancouver, and often find themselves with as many problems as they had on the reserve. Many are forced to live in the poor districts of a city; some become involved in substance abuse and criminal behaviour. These people are often more visible to the general public than the majority of urban Aboriginal people, which reinforces negative stereotypes and prejudices.

Maintaining their cultural identity is a challenge for many First Nations people living away from their home communities. Some whose families have lived in urban regions for several generations may have lost touch with their relatives, while others who left to escape abuse and violence may not want to have any contact. However many First Nations people keep strong bonds with their families at home, returning to visit when possible, opening their homes when relatives come to the city, and sharing traditional foods

as a way of maintaining the bond.

In most urban areas there are people from diverse First Nations, and it is sometimes a challenge for them to maintain a strong sense of their unique cultural identity. Some First Nations have created urban locals that bring their people together. They organize activities such as Christmas parties for their children and graduation dinners to honour their youth who complete high school, and they support grieving families when a death occurs.

First Nations people living in a city do not receive most federal services to which they were entitled when they lived on the reserve, such as health care, housing assistance, and counselling. Off-reserve government services are usually delivered by municipal and provincial agencies, and many Aboriginal people are not aware of the services available to them. Some argue that they should be able to receive the same

CASE STUDY

Scoop-Up in Spallumcheen

The name Spallumcheen comes from the Secwepemc word meaning "beautiful valley," but for the Spallumcheen band in the North Okanagan their community was less than beautiful in the 1960s and '70s, for most of their children were gone. Social problems had hit this reserve community as they had many others, and provincial social workers felt it was important for some children to be removed from their homes. However, the numbers of children apprehended and the fact they were removed completely from the reserve did nothing to improve the well-being of the community.

In 1994, then Spallumcheen Chief Cinderina Williams made a submission to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples regarding the root of family

breakdown in her community. It began with the residential school systems, which desensitized children to their families and culture.

Many, after years of rigid discipline, when released, ran amok, created havoc with their new-found freedom and would not listen to their parents, Elders or anyone else in a position of authority. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of this background was the unemotional upbringing they had. Not being brought up in a loving, caring, sharing, nurturing environment, they did not have these skills as they are not inbred but learned through observation, participation and

interaction. Consequently, when these children became parents, and most did at an early age, they had no parenting skills. They did not have the capability to show affection. They sired and bred children but were unable to relate to them on any level. 3

This resulted in the second wave of assault on Spallumcheen families. In the 1960s children were literally taken away in busloads, with as many as fifty children apprehended in one year. Many were sent to families in the United States. The book Stolen From Our Embrace describes how on one weekend a social worker chartered a bus to scoop up thirty-eight children from the Spallumcheen reserve. Each



A totem welcomes people to the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. Among many other services, the centre operates a culinary training and catering business.

services as they did on the reserve. To fill the void, a variety of organizations have been established to assist Aboriginal people living in towns and cities. For example, Friendship Centres offer support in many areas, including education programs, child care, youth drop-ins, and assistance to the homeless.

The reality of life in urban regions varies greatly for different Aboriginal people. Some are successfully established but many experience racism, lack of recognition of Aboriginal rights, and poverty. Most Aboriginal people believe that long-term solutions depend on properly funded programs operated by Aboriginal organizations.

of them was placed in a separate foster home. "Spallumcheen became a quiet, dispirited town of adults and elders," write the authors, "with at times fewer than fourteen children left on reserve. Drinking and despair intensified rather than dissipated." 4

Many families who fostered or adopted First Nations children were well-intentioned and loving. Others were not. Because so many homes were needed at once, they were often not screened properly, and children were frequently placed in abusive situations.

Whatever the situation in their new family, the children under the child welfare system were nevertheless strangers in their homes. Once more children were separated from their families and cultural roots. The system was based on the model of the Euro-Canadian family, where two parents raise

the children. It ignored the age-old tradition in First Nations communities where the extended family provided a support network and took care of its own.

One of those who was scooped up was Wayne Christian, who, with his nine brothers and sisters, was sent off to a foster home. He returned to Spallumcheen at the age of seventeen to find his family and community in despair. In 1980, as Chief Councillor of the Spallumcheen band, he took positive action to change the disruptive child welfare system and worked for First Nations communities to regain control of their own children. Under his leadership the Spallumcheen Band Council passed a resolution calling for the power to retain custody of their children within the community. They wanted to be able to find their own solutions to family

breakdown, not leave it to outsiders to take care of.

Wayne Christian was also active in the UBCIC, and with their support, organized the Child Caravan in October, 1980. Hundreds of Aboriginal people from around the province formed a long caravan of vehicles as they drove together to the UBCIC annual assembly in Vancouver. This event raised awareness of the issue not only for First Nations, but for non-Aboriginal people as well.

Their action also stirred a response from the provincial government.
The Minister of Social Services,
Grace McCarthy, met with the band,
resulting in an agreement which gave the Spallumcheen control over their own child welfare program.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

There is little doubt that the attacks from so many fronts-political, social, economic, and cultural—have left First Nations communities in turmoil. Pages of grim statistics reflect the legacy of colonialism. The fundamental issue of who is entitled to live in reserve communities was taken out of the control of First Nations, and imposed forms of governance moved communities a great distance away from traditional government.

Epidemics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which destroyed as much as 90 per cent of the First Nations population in B.C., have given way to equally disturbing but more chronic health issues. Tuberculosis was the most significant disease during the twentieth century, but in more recent years diabetes has affected many families, and HIV/ AIDS looms on the horizon as a new epidemic if steps towards protection and awareness are not taken now.

Alcohol abuse extends its influence far beyond the physical well-being of the individual, affecting the social and emotional health of families and entire communities. It results in cycles of dependency and family breakdown which take incredible courage to overcome.

Families have suffered on another front, that of government intervention. In response to family breakdowns, child welfare agencies pursued policies which removed children not only from their homes but also from their communities, with devastating effects for children and entire villages.

Half of First Nations people live off their home reserves, facing new challenges as they adapt to living in urban centres. Many are able to make the transition while maintaining ties with their relatives at home, but for others the urban experience is fraught with problems of poverty and prejudice.

Métis and Non-Status People in British Columbia

ne of the legacies of colonialism in Canada is the division of Aboriginal people into categories. The fact that the Indian Act labelled Aboriginal people as "status" or "non-status" did not change the depths of their identities, but it changed the way Canadian society viewed them. Moreover, through its policies, the government perpetuated the notion that there were only two major groups of Aboriginal people in Canada, First Nations and Inuit. Only in 1982 with the repatriation of the constitution were Métis included as the third Aboriginal peoples.

The nature of early settlement in British Columbia, dependent on resource-based industries, such as the fur trade and gold rush, resulted in many mixed families, usually with an Aboriginal mother and non-Aboriginal father. The contributions of these families and their children to the building of the province have often gone unrecognized. While the experiences of their descendants have been varied, it is safe to say that many of them have been marginalized by Canadian society.

The words Métis and Non-Status are both used to describe people of mixed lineage, although there have been differing interpretations of their definitions. While the government created the legal definition of "status" and "non-status," Aboriginal people themselves have always held the notion of self-identification as key to their identity.

The struggle for recognition of Aboriginal identity and rights, an enduring commitment for Métis and Non-Status leaders, was given renewed vigour when the Constitution Act of 1982 recognized Métis as one of three distinct Aboriginal groups in Canada. Since this affirmation of their identity as an Aboriginal

people, Métis and Non-Status people have organized councils to promote their culture, to have their role in Canadian history recognized, and to try to attain rights that have been denied them.

Children of Contact

Non-Status and Métis people are the direct result of contact between First Nations and Europeans, tracing their roots to marriages between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men. The earliest settlements in western Canada were male-dominated societies comprised of employees of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company who lived in forts at key locations within traditional First Nations territories. Marriages sometimes came about to form an alliance between a local First Nations group and the traders, and sometimes simply out of a man's desire for companionship and the domestic skills of a woman. The nature of these marriages varied, as described in Chapter 4. Unique marriage ceremonies were conducted in "the custom of the country"—that is, based on the customs of the local First Nations group. These partnerships are often referred to as "country marriages." In British Columbia, the fur trade gave way to the gold rush, and while more non-Aboriginal women arrived as settlers at this time, many of the miners married Aboriginal women.

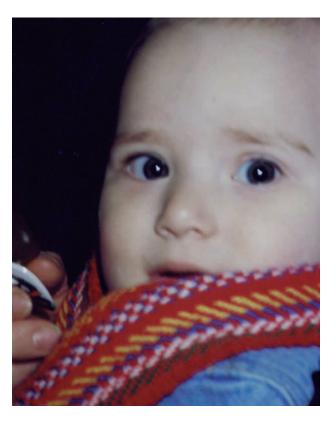
The marriages between Aboriginal women and their fur-trading and gold-mining husbands created a new and significant segment of the early population of the province. Some would argue a new race of people emerged from these unions. Children of mixed marriages had their feet in both worlds, and the knowledge and skills that they gained from the

separate cultures of their parents was advantageous in the economies of B.C.'s early days. But as immigration began to swell the province's population, the children and grandchildren of mixed families became marginalized and often invisible as a unique culture. "Half-Breed" became a term of shame and derision. Some children were accepted by their First Nations relatives, and became part of that community. Many others, however, felt rejected by both worlds.

The separation of children with mixed lineage from their parents' cultures became further entrenched when the Indian Act imposed its own definition of who was and was not "Indian." First Nations women who married non-Aboriginal men suddenly lost their cultural identity, at least officially. They and their children were denied the rights and benefits they would have retained if they had married a man with status. Instead, they were classed as "Non-Status Indians." Officially, they were Indian people who were not registered under the Indian Act. Generally, they were considered to be First Nations people under the common usage of that term. Although they did not have rights and benefits under the Indian Act, it is widely held that they nonetheless retained Aboriginal rights.

People were considered non-status for reasons other than marriage. They, their parents or grandparents may have lost their status through enfranchisement, either voluntary or involuntary. For example, people who earned a university degree were automatically enfranchised and so lost their status. In some cases, people who were out on the land when the registrar came by their community were missed from the band list. Some of the issues of loss of status were addressed under Bill C-31, which amended the Indian Act in 1985 to restore Indian status to women who lost their status through marriage. Their children could also apply for status, as could those who were previously enfranchised.

In some regions of the country, families of mixed



 Today many Métis people are teaching their children to be proud of their heritage. Here Rielle Angelique Grover is wearing a traditional Métis sash at a Métis gathering in 2002.

marriages developed unique cultures, blending aspects of both sides into a distinct culture or race. This culture was recognized as early as the days of French colonization, when the term Métis, meaning "mixed," arose. In eastern Canada, Métis people trace their ancestry to the earliest colonizers. On the Canadian Prairies, originating from the Red River settlements in Manitoba, a strong and vibrant people with their

Métis sash

The Métis sash was traditionally made with a finger-weaving technique used by First Nations of Ontario. This method had long been used to make clothing and useful objects such as tumplines out of plant fibres, and was adapted to use wool after European contact. The governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan have created the Order of the Sash, which recognizes the achievements of Métis individuals.

own language identified themselves as Métis, and were recognized by governments as having land rights. However, as you will see, these rights have yet to be realized.

Métis people stand strong in their identity as a distinct Aboriginal group and do not consider themselves included in the term "First Nations." However, the meaning of Métis is contentious and is interpreted in various ways today. To some, it refers to anyone of mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parentage, while others maintain that it specifically refers to those who can trace their ancestry to the Red River days on the Prairies. The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples discusses Métis identity in terms of two key features, ancestry and culture.

It is primarily culture that sets the Métis apart from other Aboriginal people. Many Canadians have mixed Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal ancestry, but that does not make them Métis or even Aboriginal. Some of them identify themselves as First Nations persons or Inuit, some as Métis and some as non-Aboriginal. What distinguishes Métis people from everyone else is that they associate themselves with a culture that is distinctly Métis. ¹

The Commission's recommendation about Métis identity reflects two criteria that are important to the Métis community: self-identification and community acceptance. People must identify themselves as Métis and be accepted by the nation of Métis people "on the basis of criteria and procedures determined by that nation."

It is the last statement that points to the area of controversy. What criteria will be used to define Métis? The answer to the question will have major political and economic implications for the Métis people.

Roots of the Métis Nation

The roots of Métis culture lie in the fur trade. French and Scottish traders married First Nations women,

usually Cree, Ojibwa, or Salteaux. Many Métis people are descendants of the children of these marriages. Their cultural heritage is a mix of customs, but is especially influenced by the French and First Nations traditions. Métis families and communities were recognized as early as the 1600s.

During the fur trade era, Métis people made an important contribution. Being from two worlds, they could act as intermediaries between both. They worked as interpreters and guides for the fur trading companies. They assisted the traders as they pushed westward. Métis helped provide food for the forts, becoming expert buffalo hunters.

Distinct Métis communities grew up on the Prairies near the trading posts. A unique language evolved, called Michif. It is a blend of languages. A unique lifestyle evolved as well, combining the fiddle music of the French and Scottish with the First Nations skills and knowledge of managing the resources of the land. The roots of a distinctive social culture appeared.

Michif

Michif is the language of the Métis, developed during the beginning of Métis culture. It blends ancestral languages to create a new language. There are several dialects. The most well known combines Cree, French, and English. Other dialects incorporate other First Nations languages such as Ojibwa, Salteaux, and Assiniboine. Today it is considered an endangered language because there are fewer than 1,000 speakers, most of them in the Prairie provinces and neighbouring American states.

Here is an example:

Les Canadiens come across, les Sauvagesses mâci-wîcamâweyak and then puis êkwa les enfants ê-ayâwâ-cik. La Sauvagesse namôya kaskihtaw en français takitotât ses enfants. Le Français namoya kaskihtâw ses enfants ta-kitotât en cri. En français êkwa kitotêw. êkwa quelques les deux kiskinohamahk kîkwây. ohci pîkiskwêw rien que en cri ekwa en français.

Translated into English, this means:

When the French Canadians came from across the ocean, they started to marry Indian women and then they had kids. The Indian woman couldn't speak French. The Frenchman couldn't speak Cree to their kids, so he spoke to them in French. Some of them learned to speak French and Cree. Therefore he speaks only French and Cree (mixed).

The woven sashes became an emblem, and the beadwork which was inspired by First Nations and European design became highly regarded. Other Aboriginal groups referred to the Métis as "the flower-beadwork people" because of their elaborately decorated clothing and belongings, such as embroidered gun sheaths and beaded pipe bags.

In the nineteenth century buffalo hunting and the production of dried buffalo meat called pemmican were central to the Métis economy. Many Métis people also took up farming. They adopted long, narrow strip farms similar to those used in Quebec.

A well-defined political system was fostered in the Métis communities of the Prairies. It was particularly focussed on being democratic, ensuring everyone had a say and a vote. In the early 1800s the Métis elected buffalo councils to manage the buffalo hunt. Captains were elected to lead the hunts. The Métis had become a unique people, and saw themselves as belonging to a distinct nation.

In 1811 the Hudson's Bay Company, with Lord Selkirk, began the Red River Settlement in what is now Manitoba. This was a British settlement scheme for the Red River Valley. Many Métis families moved there, and a large percentage of the settlement was Métis. But economic action that went against their crucial export of pemmican caused the Métis to organize and demand rights to the land. Protest came to a head, and the Métis and some settlers confronted each other in 1816 at what has become known as the Battle of Seven Oaks. This protest was a unifying event for the Métis Nation, and proved that its members could speak up for their rights.



Most Métis people look to Louis Riel as an inspiration for ongoing pursuit of their rights. In 1998, when the government of Canada apologized to Aboriginal people in the Statement of Reconciliation, Riel was finally vindicated. The man who had been hanged for treason more than one hundred years earlier was declared one of the Fathers of Confederation.

Riel and the Northwest Rebellion

In 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company sold Rupert's Land to Canada. This was the vast territory in western Canada that the company claimed as its own. Neither the Métis nor the First Nations inhabitants were consulted. Under their inspiring leader, Louis Riel, the Métis protested what they saw as a move to take away their rights to the land. Their action played a major role in Manitoba becoming a province.

Under Riel, the Métis created their own provisional government in Red River. They drew up a list of demands which included making Manitoba a province and protecting Métis lands. In 1870, after some violent confrontations between Métis and non-Aboriginal settlers, Canada did make Manitoba a province. The Métis way of life was to be protected, as was title to the land. The law decreed 1.4 million acres of land for the children of the Manitoba Métis.

During the conflict, the provisional government had executed one of the non-Aboriginal settlers. Once Manitoba became a province, the Canadian military moved in. Riel, expecting retribution for the execution of the settler, moved across the border to the United States.

The people soon realized that, despite the law, Métis rights were not going to be honoured by the federal government. Many people left Manitoba, forced to move west where they could carry on their traditional lifestyle, but without a land base. Saskatchewan became the focus of Métis society

MÉTIS VOICES

Leona Point

Even though Métis and Non-Status live in both worlds, we still feel tied to Mother Earth and her different faces throughout the year. In spring, breakup comes and the sap runs. For Métis and Non-Status people, these bring certain activities, meanings and memories.

I was raised most of my life in Quesnel. Growing up in Quesnel was not always easy. Many of our Métis families and friends were very poor. Our dads would try to find work. Sometimes they would have to travel long distances. My dad and many other Métis men would work in the sawmills. In those days B.C. had a lot more sawmills than now. When there was no work, our families would get together and help each other. A lot of people we called relatives were not related by blood. We were all related in another way because we could speak the same language. We could also share the same experiences. The best part of all was the help we gave each other by sharing our home and our food. We laughed and cried like a close-knit family. We shared what we had with each other.

Most of the Métis women were like my mother. They very seldom worked outside the home. If they did, they usually worked as housekeepers or waitresses. A lot of families, like my family, were large. Mothers were kept busy feeding and clothing the children. They also had to keep the house in order. My mother used to

sew just about all of our clothing. We hardly ever bought store-made clothes. We used to go to sleep at night with the purring of the sewing machine. My mother would sew until the early hours of the next morning. She also used to sew for a lot of other people.

Other mothers would help their families by selling their beadwork or making moccasins for the children. All the mothers spent a lot of time raising their families. As time went on, a lot of the things our parents did to survive became hobbies, like my mother's sewing and beading.

We didn't have the abundance of material possessions that you have now. We did not have a television or new clothing. Life was difficult for many. A lot of us did not have running water or inside bathrooms. One family I heard about did not even have doors in one place that they lived.

When a lot of us look back to remember all this we are sad thinking of the conditions that we lived through. All of us would like to forget the sad times. But we had a lot of good times too. We laughed at the funny things that happened to our people. It's sad that chores meant that some people didn't have a chance to learn how to read or write but family chores were important. They brought us together. ²

during the 1870s. Also during this time the buffalo on which they depended for food was hunted to near extinction. By 1885, many Métis and First Nations people were starving. The government was doing nothing to help them, so they vowed to help themselves.

They called Louis Riel back from exile. Under the combined leadership of Riel and Gabriel Dumont, the Métis and First Nations people mustered a force to take military action against the government. This has become known as the Riel Rebellion or the Northwest Rebellion of 1885. It took place in northwestern Saskatchewan, near the settlements of Duck Lake and Batoche. After initial wins by the Aboriginal forces, the Canadian government crushed the rebellion. Riel was arrested for treason and on November 16, 1885, he was hanged. But in the Canadian parliament, future prime minister Wilfrid Laurier defended Riel and the Métis.

To tell us that Riel, simply by his influence, could bring these men from peace to war, to tell us that they had no grievances, to tell us that they were brought into a state of rebellion either through pure malice or through imbecile adherence to an adventurer is an insult to the people at large and an unjust aspersion on the people of Saskatchewan. I say they have been treated by this government with an indifference amounting to undisguised contempt, and if this rebellion be a crime, I say the responsibility for that crime weighs as much upon the men who by their conduct have caused the rebellion as upon those who engaged in it—I say, give these men justice, give them their freedom, give them their rights. 3

The aftershocks of Riel's execution are still reverberating today.

PROFILE

H.A. "Butch" Smitheram

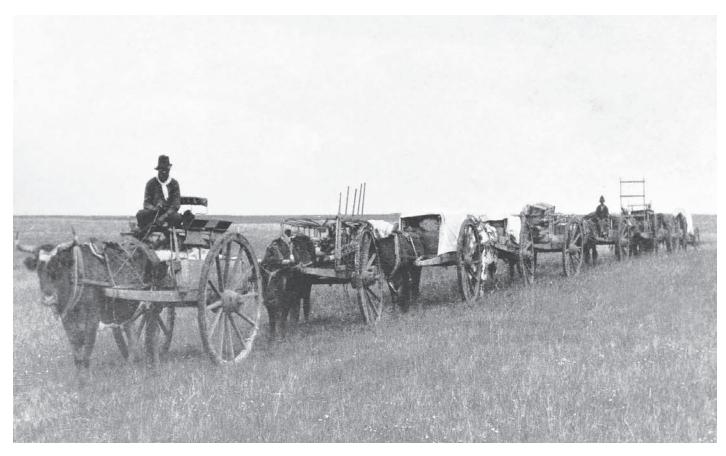
Born in 1919, the son of an Okanagan mother and an English father, Butch Smitheram was denied Indian status because of his mother's marriage. After working at a number of jobs, including as deputy Indian agent in the Kamloops agency, he decided to direct his energies towards organizing the Métis and Non-Status Indians of British Columbia. He made his intentions clear in an early speech:

If we are to rise above the mediocrity of the common herd, we must widen our view, develop our inherent curiosity, bolster up our courage, exercise our self-discipline, and wrap the whole lot with enthusiasm. There is no doubt that there are future lawyers, doctors and teachers sitting at your table every day . . . Your children are the wealth of the nation—give them the opportunity and the inspiration and they will build on the foundations that you have laid for them.4

Tirelessly, Smitheram recruited new members. Local associations were formed throughout the province. Membership was open to "any unregistered person of native Indian descent, who is one-quarter or more Indian blood but does not have treaty rights."

As the provincial groups were starting, Smitheram also saw a need for a national voice. He put forward the idea to Métis leaders from the Prairies, and out of this came the Native Council of Canada. Smitheram wrote the constitution and bylaws of this council.

Butch Smitheram was named to the Order of Canada in 1982. He died a short time later.



Many Métis people who migrated westward from Manitoba used what became known as "Red River carts" (shown above) to move their households. In B.C., the Métis community of Kelly Lake was founded 80 kilometres southeast of Dawson Creek in a region rich with resources. The people who settled in Kelly Lake continued the social customs and culture they brought from the Prairies.

The Long Struggle for Recognition

After the 1885 conflict Métis families migrated west, many of them to northeastern British Columbia. Some Métis gathered on the shores of a small lake in the Peace River region, south of Dawson Creek where, in 1893, they founded Kelly Lake, the only Métis community in British Columbia. After World War II, thousands of Métis people from the Prairies moved to British Columbia. They often faced similar social and economic conditions as the indigenous population of Non-Status people living in the province.

Both Métis and Non-Status people coped with a lack of acknowledgement of their identity and Aboriginal rights. So overt was the racism in British Columbia that for much of the past century some people felt they needed to keep their Aboriginal heritage secret. People speak of the "lost generation" who felt compelled to hide their identity, some women going so far as to wear light-coloured make-up when they went to town. Poverty was common for many people, both for those living in rural communities and those in urban centres.

A renewed drive to organize for political action came in 1968, with the creation of the British Columbia

Association of Non-Status Indians, or BCANSI. Its main goal was to improve the opportunities for Non-Status Aboriginal and Métis people in British Columbia by increasing access to education. It began largely through the efforts of one man, H.A. "Butch" Smitheram

At the same time as the BCANSI was growing, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs was also getting established. The two bodies became the dominant voices of Aboriginal politics in B.C. Often they held their annual conventions at the same time in the same city. Both groups received funding from B.C.'s First Citizens' Fund, a fund set up by B.C. Premier William Bennett to assist Aboriginal groups.

In the mid-1970s, BCANSI evolved into a different type of organization than Smitheram had envisioned. It sought to unite status and non-status people, and its name was changed to the United Native Nations in 1976. The Native Council of Canada changed too, and is now called the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. It continues to act as an advocate for Métis and Non-Status people.

United Native Nations Society

The United Native Nations Society has as its motto, "Working Together for Our Children." It is organized through local chapters throughout the province. Each local is managed independently. The locals work with members on and off reserve; with local bands and tribal councils; friendship centres; local Aboriginal organizations and Métis locals in their areas.

The society has undertaken important initiatives to improve conditions for all Aboriginal people, including Status, Non-Status, and Métis people. Since 1977, it has provided housing through its B.C. Native Housing Corporation. Since 1985, the corporation has helped to house more than 2,000 families and assisted more than 6,000 families with home improvements and renovations. Another program is the Family Reunification Program, which helps Aboriginal people regain contact with their

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

Philosophy of the United Native Nations Society

The UNN is nondiscriminatory in our service to all Aboriginal People regardless of false definitions created by the Indian Act.

The UNN exercises an open-door policy with strict accountability in relation to all our political, economic and social activities.

The UNN believes in full participation, and the exercise of our traditional systems with respect to all Aboriginal nations in their territories.

The UNN fully practices and encourages, with its membership, ethical standards of honesty and openness in all business dealings and in management of finances and administration.

The UNN believes in providing opportunities for employment of Aboriginal people to give them work experience and do so through our administration and program activities.

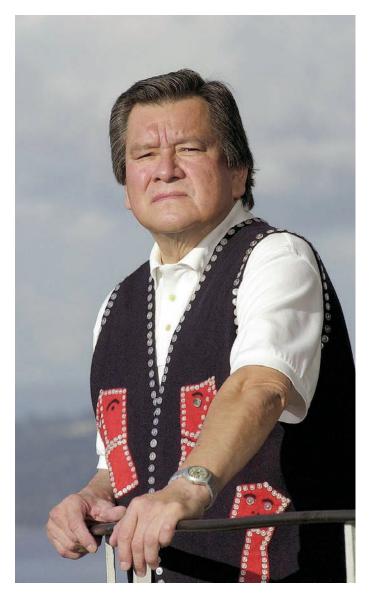
The UNN believes in working with community people to become independent of our offices and self-reliant in their own right.

The UNN actively supports the principle of equity of access for all Aboriginal People to programs, funds, policies, and resources of the governments.

The UNN believes in commitment, hard work, and achievement through our own efforts as a means to our long-term goals.

The UNN believes fully in taking direction on policy, political activity, and economic efforts from its membership and designs our programs and administration to meet the priorities and needs expressed by them.5

families following adoption or foster care. The *Nu-Sayla* (My Vision) training program helps Aboriginal people with career planning and job search strategies.



Bill Wilson was a leading activist in Aboriginal politics in B.C. for over three decades. He was the founding president of the United Native Nations Society, where he served from 1976-1981. He also co-founded the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of B.C. and served as vice-president of the Native Council of Canada in 1982–83.

Organizing the Métis

When the Constitution Act of 1982 recognized Indians, Inuit, and Métis as Canada's three distinct Aboriginal peoples, the struggle for recognition took a giant leap forward. Still, it did not define Métis or determine where Non-Status people fit in. Ongoing discussions about a correct definition for Métis have been very controversial.

Following the recognition of Métis in the constitution, the Métis National Council was created in 1983. It is recognized by federal and provincial governments as the national body representing the Métis Nation in constitutional negotiations at the national level, and in important matters concerning the Métis on the international stage. The Métis National Council represents five provincial groups, stretching from British Columbia to Ontario.

The Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia (MPCBC) is the elected governing organization for the Métis in the province. Among its many roles, the council acts as the political representative for its members to governments and funding agencies, and advocates for its members.

After 1982, a great deal of organizational work was done to establish locals in communities throughout the province and build awareness of Métis issues. Through this development work, many people rediscovered their Métis identity. Often they knew a little about their Aboriginal heritage, but had never been able to express it. By joining together with people in their own communities who shared similar backgrounds, they felt a renewed sense of identity and self-pride.

Through the locals, people were able to register as Métis. Three main criteria were considered. The first two, self-identification and community acceptance, were key to the democratic philosophy of the Métis movement. No acknowledgement by outside agencies was important. The third came to the heart of the question posed earlier: what criteria are used to define Métis? The answer in British Columbia is that you are

accepted as Métis if you can show genealogical proof of your Aboriginal ancestors.

The Métis seek rights in two areas, land and resource rights, and self-governing rights. They seek greater control of their own lives within the broader Canadian society. They seek a land base in the Prairie provinces or compensation for the lands they once owned but lost through development. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Métis leaders knew that to achieve full recognition of their identity and their rights, a specific and widely accepted definition of Métis would be necessary. Pursuing Métis land



The flag of the Métis Provincial Council of B.C.

Three generations of a Métis family (clockwise from top left): Roxanne, Sara, and Mickaella Laslo at a Métis Week gathering in Maple Ridge, B.C., in March 2002.





Métis gatherings, such as Batoche Day, provide opportunities for people to celebrate their culture.

MÉTIS VOICES

Doreen Yvonne Magee

Doreen Yvonne Magee is a Métis Elder in the Kootenay region. In September 1999 she was called as a witness in the case known as *R. v. Howse*, in which Métis hunters were charged with various infractions including hunting out of season. In her testimony, she described her personal rediscovery of her Métis identity.

Myself, I was not really aware of my Métis heritage until about seven years ago. I knew there was always something at home when I was young but actually, in our family, we were more ashamed of it because of the sad things, and I say this with absolutely no prejudice intended in any way, but we were never accepted by Indian people or by normal society. We weren't. My mother and her sisters and brothers often said that they were ridiculed in school and called Nitchee which meant half-breed and so on. And I think this problem exists today, still today, that this is a sad and sore point. That we actually are a nation from Canada. We should be accepted as such. A Métis could come from nowhere else in the world, only from Canada. I'm proud of that. I'm very proud of that. I wish the Canadian government was as proud of

that as we are. But anyway, to get back to this, my mother's family, it's through my mother's lineage that I am Métis. We could trace our line back to the paper that my great-grandfather signed for land in Manitoba . . . I have never cured a hide or anything, I would like to know how but I never—after I grew a little older, that part of our life was kind of hid until 1995 when we became aware that there was a Métis organization in B.C. We joined it, became a part of it and worked hard to be part of it . . . I felt the singing, the dancing, the music playing. My people did it when they were young. It's always been a part of our life to this very day. We do it with our own family and that was something I felt an instant rapport with when we joined with other Métis people somewhere that—that the feeling was just there. It was almost like a homesickness in me when it started, when at the first AGM I went to and they had the gathering and it started. It was just like I had been there before . . . I don't know for sure how to—how to end this except to say, I don't believe Métis people are asking for anything that shouldn't be theirs . . . I am very proud to be a Métis. And I'm always sorry, it's a sad fact that my mother and her people, especially in that particular generation, couldn't feel the pride of being a Métis. 6

CASE STUDY

Métis Commission for Children and Family Services

magine that government social workers come into your home to check on your living conditions, look in the refrigerator and see only a few items sitting on the shelves. Based on this observation, they believe your children do not have adequate food, and they add this evidence to other information that legally allows them to take your children away from you. What they have missed are the pantry shelves in another room well stocked with jarred moose meat, dried fish, and other traditional foods.

This scenario is just an example of what Aboriginal families face when outside government agencies have the power to remove their children, with no consultation with the local community, and no understanding of cultural practices, be they Métis or First Nations. Since the 1950s, the provincial government has had legislated authority for Aboriginal social welfare. As you saw in Chapter 10, this often resulted in Aboriginal communities being unable to make decisions about their own children.

Aboriginal children have been significantly over-represented in the case files of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. In the past few years, only 8 per cent of the under-eighteen population in BC were Aboriginal children, but 30 to 40 per cent of the children in the care of the ministry were Aboriginal.

Who should provide assistance and support for Aboriginal children and their families? The strong belief that Aboriginal groups should be able to control their own social welfare services went unrealized for years, until the mid 1990s. Finally policies were put in place that make it possible for Aboriginal communities to administer their own assistance to Aboriginal children and families.

It was in this climate of change that the Métis Commission for Children and Family Services was born in September 1999 with the aim of protecting Métis family values, eliminating poverty, and promoting the self-sustaining capacity of Métis people and communities.

The commission is affiliated with the Métis Provincial Council, although it is registered separately under the Societies Act. A director is appointed in each of seven regions in the province, and each is approved by the Métis Provincial Council. With offices in Victoria, its staff includes an Executive Director and Special Policy Advisor.

The commission does not deliver services; it develops policies and advises the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia as well as government organizations. Working within the framework of provincial legislation, it defines operational standards for the delivery of culturally appropriate services for Métis children and families. Among its many other roles, the council provides advice on social issues pertaining to Métis people, including social issues in the Tripartite Self-government Negotiations process of the Métis Provincial Council of B.C.



■ Two young girls enjoying each other's company at a Métis gathering in Maple Ridge in 2002.

The creation of the Métis Commission for Children and Family Services is significant for Métis people at several levels. The work it does in supporting Métis cultural identity for children and families throughout the province serves as a unifying force for the Métis community. In addition, the commission plays a solid leadership role in the development and implementation of Aboriginal social welfare matters for the whole province. It stands as a positive sign, to Métis and non-Métis alike, of the growing recognition that the Métis community is achieving in British Columbia.

For instance, one of the commission's current priorities is to see provincial legislation changed to restructure social welfare funding. At present, service agencies are funded based on the number of children they have in care. But the commission joins others in arguing that apprehension should not be the ultimate goal. Funding must support keeping families together and having fewer children in care.

Another example of the commission's leadership role is its ongoing work in the formation of Regional Aboriginal Authorities. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the province moved to decentralize delivery of all social services. This has turned into an opportunity for Aboriginal groups in the province to finally be able to make their own decisions about their children who are vulnerable.

In its discussions and negotiations to implement changes to social services, the province has officially recognized the government-to-government relationship it has with four leading Aboriginal groups, including the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia.

In June 2002, recognizing the need for a unified stand, Aboriginal leaders met in Tsawwassen to agree on a way to work together to assert their inherent right of governance over the lives of their children and families. All the leaders sought one ultimate goal: the care of their children. They signed what is called the Tsawwassen Accord, whereby they unanimously voted to work together to develop Regional Aboriginal Authorities to lead the way in reducing the numbers of Aboriginal children in care. The accord sets out the terms under which the Aboriginal Authorities will be organized, calling for a stand-alone authority rather than one that blended Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service delivery.

And so, at an historic ceremony held at the UBC Museum of Anthropology on September 9, 2002, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the province and four Aboriginal groups: the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, the First Nations Summit, the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia, and the United Native Nations. Nine other organizations signed as supporting members, including the Métis Commission for Children and Family Services.

The purpose of the MOU was to put into action a decision-making process for the well-being of Aboriginal children and families that:

- 1. is on a government-to-government basis:
- 2. recognizes that First Nations, the Métis Nation, Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples assert jurisdiction over their children and families, regardless of residency;
- 3. recognizes the importance of transferring the delivery of services to Aboriginal communities;
- 4. draws on the expertise of Aboriginal service delivery agencies and research institutions;
- 5. reflects the historic and new relationship established at Tsawwassen on June 11, 2002.

Scott Clark of the United Native Nations said, "We are committed 100 per cent to working together for our children-First Nations, Métis, Non-Status, Status, and the many First Nations and Inuit children who come from abroad and call British Columbia home." 7

As the Regional Aboriginal Authorities are created, Métis representatives sit at the table with other Aboriginal people, working together to improve the quality of life for all their children. For the Métis Commission for Children and Family Services, its involvement is seen as a major achievement, one in which Métis people are accepted as equal partners.

claims in the Prairie provinces was one of the driving forces to shape a definition linking the Métis to the homelands. So it was that on September 27, 2002, delegates to the Métis National Council Annual Assembly in Edmonton, Alberta, unanimously voted to accept a definition of Métis that ties it to the historic Métis Nation. As part of the definition, the assembly also approved definitions of terms which clarify the national definition of Métis. (See sidebar.)

The importance of the democratic rights of every Métis person was at the heart of another historic decision made at the assembly, which voted to hold nation-wide ballot box elections for the President of the Council. "For the first time in our history it gives our people the right to vote for the national leadership. Power to the people," said President Gerald Morin after the vote was passed. "This is history in the making. We have taken some major steps in realizing Riel's dream "

The implications of the new definition are extremely powerful. For "Red River" people—those who trace their ancestors to the original families who were given scrip—it means a stronger and more unified voice in political, economic, social, and cultural realms. For others of mixed lineage who do not fit the new definition, it will undoubtedly create a number of feelings, including confusion and anger. Some feel that the definition is exclusionary.

Genealogical

Tracing family descent from an ancestor.

Scrip

Scrip, or Land Scrip, is a certificate issued to Manitoba Métis families entitling them to 240 acres or money for the purchase of land, issued in compensation for lands lost by the Métis after the Northwest Rebellion.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

National Definition of Métis

As Adopted at the Métis National Council's 18th AGA in Edmonton, AB, September 27th - 28th, 2002

National Definition of Métis

Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation. Moved: David Chartrand, MB Second: Al Rivard, SK

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY Defined Terms in National Definition of Métis

WHEREAS on September 27, 2002 the Métis Nation adopted a national definition of Métis; and

WHEREAS within the definition there are defined terms;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Métis Nation adopts the following defined terms for its national definition of Métis:

"Historic Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-Breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland;

"Historic Métis Nation Homeland" means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-Breeds as they were then known;

"Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation, which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "aboriginal peoples of Canada" within s.35 of the Constitution Act of 1982;

"Distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples" means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes. 8

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Métis and Non-Status people are in many ways the "Children of Contact," since they are mostly descended from Aboriginal women married to fur traders. Children of mixed families formed an important segment of British Columbia's population in its early years but became more and more marginalized as the province grew. Both governmental policies and societal attitudes left many people with no Aboriginal benefits and a feeling of shame towards their Aboriginal identity.

On the Prairies a distinct Métis culture developed, with its own language, culture, and customs. The battles of the people for recognition of their culture under the leadership of Louis Riel were significant events in Canada's history.

In British Columbia the struggle by Métis and Non-Status people has taken different paths. At first attempts were made to unify both groups under the umbrella of the British Columbia Association of NonStatus Indians and later the United Native Nations Society.

Official recognition of the Métis as one of Canada's three Aboriginal peoples in the Constitution Act, 1982, led to concerted political action to organize and register Métis people, and as a result many people rediscovered their roots. Still, the definition of Métis was very controversial. Two elements, selfidentification and community acceptance, were agreed upon, but the third key element regarding ancestry was not. Some believed anyone with mixed lineage could be Métis, while others believed Métis heritage was linked to the original Red River settlements in Manitoba. At the Métis National Council Annual Assembly in September 2002, the delegates voted unanimously to link the definition of Métis to the Red River ancestry. The implications of this decision will bring both challenges and opportunities to Métis and Non-Status people in the coming years.

First Nations Society Today

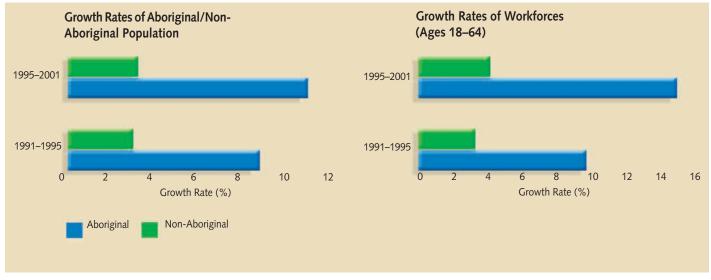
diverse than it ever was in the past, as people bridge two worlds, the traditional and the contemporary. No longer is it necessary to live completely in either world, for First Nations people have the capacity to live in both. It is possible to live on the land, but still have satellite communication with relatives in cities. Computers can be used to assist people to get in touch with their language and culture. The choices are many for First Nations people as they, their beliefs, and their Aboriginal rights are slowly given more respect by mainstream Canadian society.

The First Nations population has the fastest growth of any group in Canada, which means a surge in the number of children and youth rising up to take

their place in the unfolding society of the twenty-first century. What the future holds for them depends on the work of present leaders in overcoming the legacies of the past and achieving self-determination for all Aboriginal people.

Building Healthy Communities

There are approximately two hundred First Nations bands in British Columbia, most with a central community and a number of different parcels of reserve land. Some are located in or near urban centres, but many are remote and isolated. Conditions vary greatly as to services that are available. On some reserves the basic necessities that most Canadians take



The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) estimates that between 1995 and 2001 the Aboriginal population in Canada increased at a rate more than three times that of the non-Aboriginal population.

DIAND estimates that between 1995 and 2001 the number of Aboriginal people in the workforce increased at a rate 4.5 times that of non-Aboriginal people. ¹

for granted, such as adequate housing, water, and sewage systems, are substandard. Social conditions on some reserves are still troubled, with substance abuse and suicide being ongoing problems. While suicide is often considered an issue for teenagers, they are not the only age group feeling so desperate that they take their lives.

Aboriginal people living in urban centres face similar problems as those on reserves, although their isolation takes the form of separation from family and culture. For many who migrate to a city, finding housing and employment can be difficult.

What can be done to enhance the lives of First Nations people in their communities, be they on reserve or off? A two-pronged attack is required: healing past abuses, and building new opportunities to face the future equipped with a sense of pride in identity and ability.

Certainly political and economic solutions are important, such as self-government and economic development; social programs and educational oppor-

tunities are other tools for change.

Much work is being done in breaking the cycles of physical abuse and substance abuse. Many programs are available which tap into the spiritual roots of First Nations culture, and Elders play a leading role in the healing. Traditional ceremonies such as sweat lodges are being incorporated into the healing process.

One specific group of people that is actively working towards wellness is the survivors of residential school abuse. Following the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the federal government established the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in 1998 to provide support for people in building sustainable healing processes to overcome the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools.

Aboriginal Healing Foundation

In 1998 the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was given a ten-year mandate and \$350 million to help Métis, Inuit, and First Nations communities heal themselves, and to help bridge the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It supports grassroots projects that are attempting to respond to the healing needs of many thousands of survivors, their families, and descendants. It sees its role as a facilitator in the healing process, providing resources, promoting awareness, and building on the strengths and resiliency of Aboriginal people.

The foundation is funding projects such as healing circles, sex offender programs, leadership training for healers, parenting skills, curriculum development, and sexual abuse programs. As of the year 2000, 1,686 communities were being served by activities funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Among the participants, 57 per cent were First Nations people on reserves, 29 per cent were First Nations people off reserve, 11 per cent were Métis, and 3 per cent were Inuit.

A photo exhibit entitled Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential School is one example of healing and reconciliation work that aims to promote awareness of the residential school system and tolerance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The exhibit relates the history of residential schooling through historical photographs and selected

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Ovide Mercredi, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations

If you heal a person, you will heal a family, A family will help heal a community, A whole healthy community Can be a proud nation. documents from the collections of the National Archives of Canada and various religious groups.

Another project that received funding is the Indian Residential School Survivor Project, the first gathering of its kind, which offered self-help, clinical, and cultural workshops to over 1,000 participants at the University of British Columbia in 2002.

In January 2001, 344 projects were underway, including projects targeted at youth, women, men, survivors, and intergenerationally-impacted people.

The Indian Act in the **Twenty-First Century**

As anachronistic as it may seem, the Indian Act still regulates the lives of First Nations people and Indian reserves are still a reality in British Columbia today. People registered under the Indian Act today are issued a "Certificate of Indian Status" card which bears the person's photograph, description, registry number, the name of the band to which the individual belongs, and the family or band number.

There are a number of misconceptions about what entitlements First Nations people receive under the Indian Act. For example, many members of the general public believe that Aboriginal people do not have to pay taxes. In fact, Aboriginal people are required to pay taxes the same as every other Canadian citizen, except in circumstances on reserve where tax exemptions are covered by the Indian Act. Section 87 of the Act recognizes the unique constitutional and historic position of Aboriginal people in Canada, and the exemption is intended to preserve the rights of First Nations people to their reserve lands, and to ensure that the use of their reserve lands is not eroded by taxation. The Act states that the "personal property of an Indian or a band situated on a reserve" is tax exempt, and this applies to goods, income, and some on-reserve services. For example, on-reserve

stores do not have to charge sales taxes, and many bands operate gas stations which offer fuel at a lower cost to people with status cards. Only people who are registered Status Indians living and working on reserves are exempt from paying income tax. Status Indians living or working off reserves are still required to pay income tax.

While the Indian Act prevents non-Aboriginal governments from taxing the property of Status Indians on reserve, it does allow First Nations to collect property taxes on reserve. Bylaws allowing such tax collection must be approved by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Some members of the Canadian public feel that it is unfair for any Aboriginal people to be exempt from taxes. However, many First Nations would argue that the amount of money is insignificant compared to the vast profits and taxes that have been generated by the resources of the non-reserve land, none of which has benefited First Nations.

In the summer of 2002, the Minister of Indian Affairs introduced a new revision of the Indian Act, partly to bring it in line with the Canadian Charter of Rights, but also to change the ways that reserves are governed, from how leaders are elected to ways of making them more financially accountable. Many First Nations leaders see this as yet another unilateral move by the federal government to make decisions on behalf of First Nations people. Chiefs at the Assembly of First Nations rejected the plan to change the Indian Act and offered their own process for making the important changes that would affect them and their people. As this book is being published the federal government's First Nations Governance Initiative (Bill C-61) is still under discussion and the outcome is unclear.

Anachronistic

Old-fashioned or out of date; out of harmony with its period.

Economic Development

Self-government alone, in the words of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), "would be an exercise in illusion and futility." It needs to have a solid economic foundation. For this and other reasons, economic development is of prime concern to First Nations.

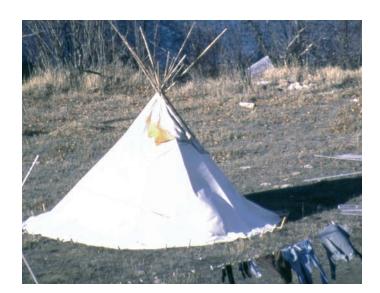
Unemployment is a major problem for First Nations communities because many have only a limited economic base. Several factors contribute to the problem. For example, few jobs are typically available on reserve, First Nations people have historically not had access to loans for starting businesses, and Aboriginal people have the fastest growing population rate of any group in Canada, meaning there will be more young people looking for jobs than ever. The RCAP Final Report estimated more than 300,000 jobs will be needed for Aboriginal people across the country between 1991 and 2016 to

meet Canadian standards of employment levels and to provide for the growth in population.

In the past, many programs trying to improve economic conditions have not been successful. Often this was because an emphasis was placed on the individual rather than the collective or group. Programs targeted at assisting individuals ignore the holistic or integrated nature of First Nations communities. Approaches that emphasize the collective strengths are found to be more successful. This comes back again to the importance of self-government.

Economic independence for First Nations groups throughout the province will require different solutions depending on their situations. No formula can be applied everywhere, for it is a complex process that will require support of governments, community members, and neighbouring non-Aboriginal residents.

What kind of economic opportunities do First



Richard Jacobs making a tipi for the Ktunaxa Tipi Company near Creston. Traditionally most Ktunaxa (Kootenay) people used animal hides for tipi covers, but in the Lower Kootenay area, reeds or rushes were sewn together. Today canvas is used and the tipis are double-stitched and have interlocking seams. A finished tipi is shown on the right.

Nations communities seek? In its consultation with communities across the country in the 1990s, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples heard about six major goals:

- 1. All Aboriginal people, including Métis, need to have a secure land and resource base.
- 2. Canadians need to respect agreements, such as treaties that have been made
- 3. Economies need to provide choices for people and provide a decent income. Jobs should help develop self-esteem and identity by enabling people to choose to work in traditional occupations, such as hunting and fishing, or join the market economy.
- 4. New economies need to be self-reliant and sustaining for the individual and the community as a whole. They must go beyond simply allowing

- for survival, and should bring growth and prosperity.
- 5. First Nations governments must be allowed to function fully in carrying out the administration of their lands and resources. Their people need to be the ones deciding on how economic development will take place, how it will be organized and carried out.
- 6. Finally, new economic development should incorporate First Nations customs and values.

There are many positive examples of self-reliant economic development around the province. These ventures adapt traditional knowledge and skills to modern enterprises, or embrace new fields or technologies. Many are related to the use of resources or to tourism

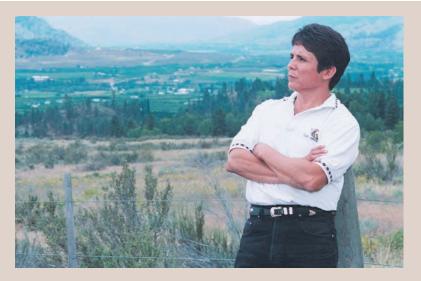
PROFILE

Osoyoos Band

In the southern B.C. interior, the Osoyoos Band runs ten businesses, including one of Canada's top vineyards, a recreational vehicle park, and a golf course.

The Osoyoos Band occupies 32,000 acres of land between Gallagher and Osoyoos lakes, including the largest tract of unspoiled desert in Canada. In the past ten years it has shifted its focus from ranching and small farming to diversified businesses: the 18-hole Inkameep Canyon Desert Golf Course, vineyards, a Readi-Mix business, an RV park, as well as construction and retail businesses.

In 2001 the band signed an agreement with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for an investment of \$2.8 million for a major new economic development plan. The Nk'Mip Project will include Nk'Mip Cellars, the first Aboriginal-owned winery in Canada, expanded vineyards, a Desert Interpretive Heritage Cultural Centre, spas, and accommodation facilities. Plans are also underway for a 125-unit housing development, Inkameep Manufactured Home Park.



"We're business people," Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Band told the media in 2001. "Our goals are to build a strong future, to pursue the good life, prosper from our investments, and earn our place in the local economy, thereby earning our freedom." 2

The Osoyoos Band currently has more than 1,000 acres of prime Vinifera grapes grown on its land, and many B.C. wineries have made award-winning wines from grapes grown there.

Resource Management

An important factor in strengthening the economies of First Nations communities is a return to local control and management of resources. For most of its modern history, British Columbia has been a resource-rich province whose products are exported

around the world. But First Nations people are not full participants in managing these resources, even though the fish, trees, and minerals are being taken from their traditional territories. Changing economies around the globe mean that resources are becoming less important, and in recent years forestry and fisheries have been in severe decline. At the same time, First

CASE STUDY

Gitxsan Resource Management in the Past and Present

Ithough the Gitxsan live 300 Akilometres inland from the ocean, their society shares features of Northwest Coast culture. Their language, Gitxsanlivimuxw, is related to the Tsimshian and Nisga'a languages. Gitxsan territory covers about 30,000 km² in the upper Skeena River watershed. This large territory is managed by Wilp or House Groups. These are closely aligned extended family groups which have stewardship over particular territories. Rights to territories and resources therein are hereditary, passed on from generation to generation through the matrilineal line. The head chief of the Wilp holds a great deal of power in managing the resources and economy of the people, but he or she requires the support of the people of their Wilp to successfully manage the lands and increase the group's wealth. These hereditary rights are reaffirmed at public ceremonies called yawk or potlatches. At the yawk, narratives called adaawk are recounted and dramatized. The adaawk tell of the origins of the House Group's relationship with its territories through encounters of ancestors with supernatural creatures or natural phenomena on their lands. The adaawk may only be told by members

of the Wilp, and the accompanying privileges of dances and songs are also restricted to members. Connected with the territories and the adaawk, as well, are the crests which are displayed on regalia, robes, house fronts, and totem poles.

Colonization and settlement radically changed the way the Gitxsan were able to manage their resources. Forestry became the leading industry in the region, and while it offered some paid employment to Gitxsan people, it removed control of the forests and other resources from the Wilp. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Gitxsan and the Wet'suwet'en took the governments of Canada and British Columbia to court, seeking a solution to long-outstanding issues of Aboriginal title and land claims. Their case, commonly referred to as Delgamuukw, was to a great extent based on their traditional laws which governed the House system. Much of the evidence recounted the adaawk of each Wilp, and stated for the record the individual hunting, fishing, and berry sites managed by each chief. The initial judgement of the B.C. Supreme Court, which denied the validity of adaawk and other oral histories as evidence,

was overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1997. The federal court acknowledged that the Gitxsan and the Wet'suwet'en hold Aboriginal title and that the adaawk are admissible in Canadian courts

Following the Delgamuukw decision, the Hereditary Chiefs of the Gitxsan signed a Reconciliation Agreement with the Province of British Columbia. In part, the province agreed that the Gitxsan would play a major role in managing the resources of their traditional territories. This includes Wilp-based forestry planning and a concerted effort to improve the depleted salmon stocks in the Skeena River.

Part of the challenge for the Gitxsan in reasserting control in the management of the resources in their traditional territory is to re-introduce holistic management. Under government control, for example, salmon are managed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, a federal body. The land which forms the habitat of the salmon, however, is governed by the provincial government, as is the forestry industry, which has an enormous impact on salmon habitat.

Continued

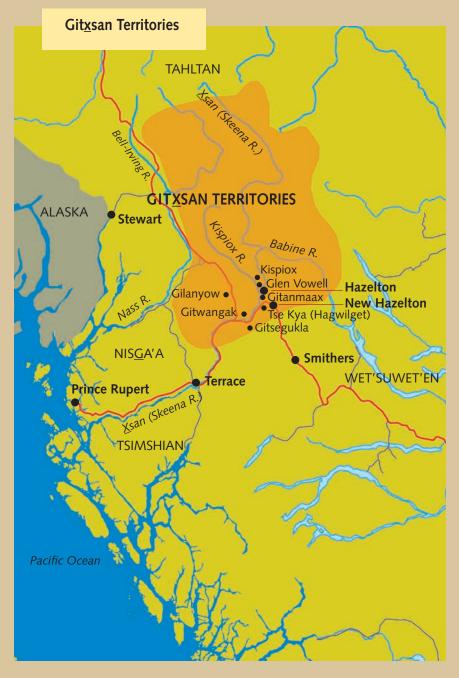
Nations have been able to become more involved in managing their resources through advances made through the treaty process and other initiatives.

The resource-based industries in B.C. are giving way to technology, information industries, and service industries. However, resource management and information are closely linked. The 1996 Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples noted: "From an Aboriginal perspective, the successful use and sustainable management of natural resources have always been knowledge-intensive, drawing on a base built up over many centuries and that still has much to contribute, even as mainstream scientific and technical

The Gitxsan model for forestry management combines First Nations knowledge with the latest technology. It puts environmental and cultural considerations first when it comes to deciding where and how logging will take place in their territories. Inventory maps which show significant biological, ecological, and cultural elements are crucial to the model. This has involved mapping in great detail each resource using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. These maps show everything from trade and access trails to sites for medicine gathering and berry-picking, spiritual camps and ancient villages, as well as fishing sites and hunting territories. The Gitxsan are acknowledged as leaders in using "high-tech" GIS technology to assist with continued stewardship of their ancient territories.





knowledge makes another kind of contribution." The service industries, likewise, are linked with resource use, in areas such as resource planning, accounting, tourism, and recreation. Consequently, the knowledge and skills that many First Nations people have are important, even in our changing economy.

The key is having control. Many First Nations people live in the rural areas of the province where the resource industries are located. They are well positioned to apply their knowledge to utilizing the resources in a manner consistent with the First Nations traditional values.

A good example is Yun Ka Whu'ten Holdings, the non-profit company run by the Ulkatcho band near Anahim Lake. The company, whose name means, appropriately, "People of the Land" in the Ulkatcho language, integrates resource management with forestry activities. For instance, they needed to find a way to balance traditional mushroom harvesting with environmentally sound logging practices, so undertook a five-year study to research the question.

Community involvement is central to the operation of the company. Laurie Vaughan, president and CEO, explains that the company's projects must benefit both the land and the community. The company talks with the community about its priorities in managing the land. Its diverse activities include harvesting timber for a local sawmill and conducting a moose inventory. When the inventory reported a significant drop in the moose population, changes were made to the hunting limits the following year. For more long-term improvements in moose numbers, the band applied to have a conservation officer enforce wildlife regulations in the area. By working through government agencies but also involving the local community, the Yun Ka Whu'ten Holdings have worked out a successful method of controlling resource management in their territories.

Land claims will be another avenue for resource management. Most negotiations include clauses which

return control of resources to the First Nations. In some regions of the province, however, communities continue to watch their land and resources being used without any benefits to them or any input into their management.

Tourism Services

In recent years many First Nations in B.C. have developed businesses and services to attract tourists to their communities. Such ventures have the advantage of promoting pride in their culture while also providing employment and business revenues. One example is the Quw'utsun' Cultural and Conference Centre in Duncan, on southern Vancouver Island. The centre opened in 1990 and now employs 55 people. It attracts 45,000 visitors a year, over 60 per cent from outside Canada. Along with exhibits of Quw'utsun' cultural history, the centre features the work of Quw'utsun' knitters, carvers, and jewellery makers. Nearly 3,500 Quw'utsun' people live in the Cowichan Valley today.

Another successful First Nations tourism operation is the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council's Tin Wis Resort Lodge. The Tin Wis is located just south of Tofino, on the open waters of the Pacific Ocean. In a joint venture with Best Western, a former residential school has been converted into a posh resort. Tin Wis is owned and operated by the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation. It opened in 1994 and currently has revenues of approximately \$3 million per year. Best Western provides the resort with global marketing and operational expertise. Nuuchah-nulth cultural components include storytelling programs, art exhibits, and Aboriginal foods on the menu. About 70 per cent of the summer season staff are First Nation members. The work experience enables them to pursue tourism-related training or to use their earnings for further education or other pursuits.

On Haida Gwaii, the Qay'llnagaay Lodge and Heritage Centre is a major economic development project of the Skidegate Band. The centre, which is



currently in the conceptual design phase, will include a Bill Reid Teaching Centre with studios for working with wood, argillite, prints, drafting, silver, gold, and textiles. The Haida Gwaii Museum will expand to include exhibits on Haida culture and history, natural history, and information on Gwaii Haanas National Park. The Canoe House will be renovated to accommodate four 50-foot canoes, including Bill Reid's famous cedar canoe Loo Taas.

The focus of Qay'llnagaay Lodge will be adventure tourism, including guided kayaking, boat tours to Haida heritage sites, nature tours, and guided sports and freshwater fishing. The lodge will incorporate

Sunrise on Haida Gwaii. The Skidegate Band has plans to develop a major adventure tourism centre, the Qay'llnagaay Lodge, to bring more visitors who can enjoy the natural beauty of Haida Gwaii—and provide employment for Haida people.

traditional Haida designs and will serve traditionally prepared seafood.

The Doig River First Nation, located 80 kilometres northeast of Fort St. John, is a small community that is attracting several thousand people to its annual three-day rodeo. Combining traditional rodeo events with a cultural celebration including musicians, dancers, and drummers, the event gives First Nations people

from the surrounding area a chance to showcase their talents and unique cultures. The rodeo also provides temporary employment for youth and adults, and generates revenue for the community.

These are just examples of the types of tourist destinations and events that First Nations are offering. The Aboriginal Tourism Association of B.C., with a comprehensive web site at www.atbc.bc.ca, offers information on such ventures in all regions of the province.

The Urban Experience

Women make up the largest segment of First Nations people who live in the cities. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples found that in 1991, 56 per cent of people with Indian status in cities were women, while 53 per cent of Non-Status and Métis people were women. In addition, urban Aboriginal women more often are heads of families, while men are frequently single. Many factors contribute to these statistics, usually having to do with housing and family. Some women lost their status through marriage, so were unable to stay on the reserve. Those who gained back their status under Bill C-31 have sometimes found that there are not services available for them to move back. Others have felt compelled to move to a city to escape abusive relationships.

For Aboriginal people living in urban centres, it is important to build a sense of community with which they can identify. Friendship Centres are important in bringing Aboriginal people together in cities and towns. These centres, run by First Nations staff, offer many services, from providing food or shelter, to educational and recreational programs. They cater to all ages. Many have day care programs, special programs for youth, and Elders' groups that guide and advise them.



Artwork on the building that houses the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. The Centre includes a gallery and gift shop where First Nations artists sell their work.

British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

The Friendship Centre movement in British Columbia began in 1963 with the formation of the Vancouver Indian Centre Society from what was originally the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club. The centre's aim was to provide services to Aboriginal people living in Vancouver. By the mid-1960s, the number of First Nations people moving to urban areas had increased to the point where support organizations were formed in many centres across the province. Friendship Centres were established in Port Alberni in 1965, in Nanaimo in 1968, in Williams Lake and Prince George

in 1969, and in Fort St. John in 1970. Today there are 24 Friendship Centres throughout the province.

In the early years, Friendship Centres were primarily places where Aboriginal people could socialize and receive emotional support, as well as get referrals to social service agencies. In the mid-1970s Friendship Centres began to provide services in the areas of employment, substance abuse, family support, legal services, and cultural retention, as well as promoting understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Education

Education has always been of extreme importance for First Nations people. Despite all the inequities, discrimination, and violence that educational systems have sometimes dealt them, they have understood the need to participate in the Canadian education system in order to be able to successfully participate in Canadian society. This is why in the past some parents reluctantly agreed to send to their children off to residential school.

The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recognized the economic impact of education and training:

Few topics received more mention during our public hearings than education and training as part of a strategy for change. Knowledge, expertise and experience are essential for Aboriginal people to regain control over economic development institutions, to manage their lands and resources, to expand their business base and to participate, if they choose, in the mainstream economy. 3

For generations, control of education was removed from the hands of First Nations people. At first it was shared by the federal government and the churches. The 1946 Special Joint Committee on the Indian Act recommended that Aboriginal students should be integrated into mainstream schools, and subsequently in the 1950s many Aboriginal students were sent to public schools in the provincial system, often against the wishes of parents. As the authors of the policy paper "Indian Control of Indian Education" point out, there is a difference between true integration and simply transferring students into a public school:

Integrated education must respect the reality of racial and cultural differences by providing a curriculum which blends the best from the Indian and the non-Indian traditions. Integration viewed as a one-way process is not integration, and will fail. In the past, it has been the Indian student who was asked to integrate: to give up his identity, to adopt new values and a new way of life. This restricted interpretation of integration must be radically altered if future education programs are to benefit Indian children. 4

While the province provided educational services for many First Nations students, the Department of Indian Affairs was still responsible for the funding. Consequently, tuition fees were paid through what were called Master Tuition Agreements, a transfer of money from the federal government to the province. First Nations people had no say in the distribution of the money.

An important turning point in Aboriginal control of education came with the release in 1972 of the policy paper mentioned above, "Indian Control of Indian Education." Produced by the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations), it outlined the philosophy, goals, principles, and directions which were believed would form the foundation of an educational program for First Nations students. It emphasized pride, understanding of other Canadians, and living in harmony with nature. Among its recommendations were two key principles: local control of education, and parental responsibility in setting educational goals for their children. In 1973 the federal government adopted the policies of the

report and began to support the move towards greater control by First Nations.

There is still a long way to go before the goals of "Indian Control of Indian Education" are achieved. However, there have been positive steps in recent years. Since the 1970s, some bands have taken the control of education into their own communities, and through federal funding, operate their own schools on their reserves. Bands who choose to participate in the public school system now have more control over the funding of their students and negotiate Local Education Agreements between themselves and the local school board.

In 1987, the provincial government tabled a sweeping survey of the entire education system, known as the Sullivan Report. It was critical of the failure of the public school system to achieve its goal of parity for Aboriginal students. In response, the government initiated changes, including the Local Education Agreements, special funding for Aboriginal language and culture programs, and the creation of a new branch of the Ministry of Education, the Aboriginal Education Branch. Another important outcome of the Sullivan Report was the development of the B.C. First Nations Studies course, for which this book is the text.

A leader in Aboriginal education is the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), a provincial First Nations collective organization that facilitates communication and support for First Nations educators by conducting research, collecting data, and offering professional development. It also plays an important role in communicating with federal and provin-cial governments to ensure that First Nations concerns are addressed. Publications written by First Nations educators are commissioned and distributed through FNESC, with the goal of putting control of Aboriginal education into the hands of Aboriginal communities.

Early in 2001 the B.C. Human Rights Commission began an inquiry into the failure of the public school system to meet the needs of Aboriginal students, in an initiative called Aboriginal Education: Pathways to Equality. It planned to investigate the delivery of education services to Aboriginal students in the province, and was to hold public hearings in the fall of 2001. However, the hearings were suspended, and it is unclear whether they will resume in the future.

The provincial teachers' body, the B.C. Teachers' Federation (BCTF), has also taken steps to better serve First Nations students by establishing its Task Force on First Nations Education. A number of initiatives have grown out of this province-wide discussion by teachers, including increased awareness of the racism facing students and a review at the school level of the inclusiveness of the school environment. The Employment Equity Program is a significant policy which encourages districts to recruit, retain, and support Aboriginal teachers.

Teachers in public schools are predominantly non-Aboriginal, but for several decades the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University have offered undergraduate and post-graduate programs to train First Nations teachers. Since 1984 UBC has offered a graduate program in education to students of First Nations ancestry. Called Ts'kel, (the Halq'emeylem word for golden eagle), it provides students an opportunity to conduct advanced research into important issues facing First Nations education, such as the effects of residential schools and local control and administration of schools. It is important for First Nations people to be represented at all school levels, and teaching in all subject areas, not just in First Nations programs.

Today, Aboriginal students around the province usually begin their formal education with a pre-school experience. Many provide unique, culturally relevant programs for children. Parents and communities recognize the importance of instilling cultural values

and language at an early age. Aboriginal Headstart is a federally funded program for early childhood education. It literally gives students a head start for when they reach primary school. It has five main components: language and culture, foundations for reading and writing, health and nutrition, social support programs for the family, and parental involvement.

Once students begin their formal education, they

may attend a public school or a band-run school. An example of a successful band-run school is the Chief Atahm School in Chase, an immersion school in which most of the subjects are taught in the Secwepemc language.

A number of post-secondary programs exist around the province that offer special courses aimed at First Nations students. At the Institute of Indigenous Government in Vancouver, students take a one-year or

CASE STUDY

Aatse Davie School

atse Davie School has been operated by the Kwadacha Band since 1993. Prior to that time the school was operated by the Department of Indian Affairs, which first established a one-room school in 1963. The Kwadacha Band is located at Fort Ware, approximately 570 km north of Prince George. The band has 350 members, with approximately 270 living on reserve. The village lies at the confluence of the Fox, the Kwadacha, and the Finaly rivers in the Rocky Mountain Trench.

Aatse Davie School is named after a prominent and respected member of the Fort Ware community. Aatse means "grandfather," and many people in Fort Ware consider Aatse Davie to be their grandfather in spirit (if not their actual grandfather). His generosity, kindness, and humanity guide the mission statement of Aatse Davie School, which is dedicated to ensuring that each student's learning is maximized accord-ing to his or her ability.

The current school building was erected in 1983; a full-size gym, two new classrooms, and a reception area were added in 1999. The school is now organized into two wings. The South wing consists of a Kindergarten Class, a Grade 1 Class, and a Primary (Grade 2 and Grade 3) Class. The North wing has students from Grades 4 to 10, who rotate from class to class, working with different teachers for each subject. All students receive instruction in the Sekani language for several hours each week.

Fort Ware is one of the most isolated communities in British Columbia. Access is predominantly through smallplane air travel, which entails a one- to two-hour flight from Prince George, depending on the weather. In 1992 a logging road from Mackenzie was extended as far as Fort Ware. The travel time from Fort Ware to Prince George by road is from ten to twelve hours, depending on the road conditions.



two-year interdisciplinary program studying many aspect of indigenous governance, with concentration in one of four areas: Indigenous Government Administration, Indigenous Economic and Social Development, Indigenous Political Development and Leadership, and International Indigenous Relations. The institute is run in partnership with the University of British Columbia, and on completion of a two-year program students are awarded an Associate of Arts degree and

can transfer into the First Nations Studies program at the University of British Columbia to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree.

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, based in Merritt, offers post-secondary courses in four theme areas: The Land, Wellness, Economic Development, and Governance. In conjunction with the University College of the Cariboo, it offers a Bachelor of Social Work degree, and many students transfer their





Grades 5 to 9

Aatse Davie School is developing a reputation for innovative educational changes. In 1995 a sophisticated computerized learning system was installed, which enables students in K-10 curriculum to work independently in a number of programs, including math and reading. During 1995–96, 57 per cent of students achieved a year's growth in these core programs. Several students achieved two years' growth in both subjects, and one student completed three years in both subjects. Prior to 1995-96, the average academic gain in these core subject areas was between .2 and .4 years of growth per year.

The long-range plan for the school is to offer a graduation program within five years. With its state-of-the-art computerization and committed support from parents, teachers, and the community, the Aatse Davie School aims to be a model for other First Nations communities.

The Aatse Davie School lobby is a welcoming place.

PROFILE

Native Education Centre, Vancouver

The Native Education Centre has been offering training programs to the Aboriginal community in Vancouver since 1967. Its present facility is a beautiful West Coast longhouse which holds up to 250 students. With current enrolment of 300, it has become British Columbia's largest Aboriginal private college.

The Centre began with the Adult Basic Upgrading program encouraging urban Aboriginal people to achieve Grade 12. Skills training and university transfer programs have evolved over the past twenty years and the present programs include:

Aboriginal Adult Basic Education Office Administrative Training Family and Community Counselling Early Childhood Education Aboriginal Criminal Justice Aboriginal Tourism Management Aboriginal Land Stewardship Sun Circle Elders Care Program First Host **Entry Level Tourism**

The Centre describes its philosophy as follows:

Native education is what we believe in and is also what makes us different from other colleges. Our English, Sciences, and Socials have the true cultural history built into them. Being taught by Aboriginal instructors, the Aboriginal perspective sheds a different light on these subjects and the books that are regularly used in these courses. All programs are based on the principles of Aboriginal education:

- 1. Respecting traditional knowledge.
- 2. Teaching the cultural and spiritual values of First Nations.



3. Addressing the community needs of First Nations that can best be met by professionally trained Aboriginal people. 5

The college has had many Aboriginal people from across North America pass through its doors in the last 33 years. Many have gone on to be leaders in their communities, as well as actors, teachers, police officers, and counsellors. Over 3,000 students have graduated, and they have left with more than a certificate or diploma in hand; they have realized that their goals are achievable and that there are educators who care. Most importantly they have awakened pride in their culture and the spirit of learning with other Aboriginal people. They have attended cultural ceremonies and met Aboriginal role models who encourage them and prove that dreams do come true.

credits to degree programs at the major universities. The En'owkin Center in Penticton is operated by the Okanagan Tribal Council and aims to record, preserve, enhance, and continue First Nations cultures through education.

These are just a few of the programs that offer First Nations students opportunities to extend their education in settings that are controlled by Aboriginal people.

Language Renewal

Language is central to the survival of First Nations cultures, as it conveys meanings and ways of thinking that cannot be translated. According to information from the 1991 census, 12 per cent of Aboriginal people in British Columbia speak an Aboriginal language, while nearly 35 per cent would like to learn their native language. As you can see from the chart below, many languages in British Columbia are considered to be endangered, as fluent speakers age and diminish in number.

Many factors have contributed to the decline of Aboriginal languages, the most significant being the effects of the residential school system. However, many other aspects of mainstream culture have had their influence as well, from English in the workplace

First Nations Languages in BC 6

Number of languages identified as:

- Flourishing (over 80% of all age groups fluent): 0
- Enduring (over 60% of almost all age groups fluent): 2
- Declining (at least 50% of adults are speakers): 10
- Endangered (80% of older population are speakers, but no speakers under age of 45):
 20
- Critical (fewer than 10 speakers): 5

to ubiquitous television and radio broadcasting, especially since satellite television enables remote communities to share the same plethora of channels as urban centres. For young people today, there is often no practical need to learn their language.

However, there is a powerful cultural need for people to retain their ancestral language, since it is intimately linked to their identity. Knowing one's languages goes beyond simple communication; it acts as a tangible symbol of who you are and connects you with your roots.

Most First Nations have taken action to save their languages from extinguishment and to revitalize their use in homes, schools, and public ceremonies. Programs are being developed to teach First Nations languages in elementary and secondary schools, and also for community members in night school classes in reserve and urban communities. Through the advent of multimedia technology, educational bodies are able to find new ways of teaching languages through web sites and CD-ROMs. Several languages have been approved for credit as a second language for graduation from high school and entrance into college.

It is crucial to have fluent speakers teaching language classes, but it is not always possible for these people to undertake the usual teacher training programs. Their knowledge is so uniquely valuable that the B.C. College of Teachers, which certifies teachers before they are permitted to teach in schools, certifies First Nations language teachers who are sanctioned by their local community rather than completing a university program. Since a structure was needed to carry out this local review of prospective language teachers, bodies called Language Authorities have been set up throughout the province. These are comprised of fluent Elders who are called upon to establish criteria to certify proficient speakers.

The role of the Language Authority goes beyond certifying teachers, however; it acts as advisor to

develop language programs and supports their use wherever possible. It is also seen in some locales as the authority for creating new vocabulary. With modern technology there are so many objects with names only in English, and many First Nations feel it is important to create words for things such as computers, dishwashers and televisions to be able to fully communicate in their language.

It will take a great deal of work to regain the losses in First Nations languages. While the desire to have them renewed is almost universal, the practicalities are not so easy to achieve. Schools can make a beginning, but it is really in families and communities where the most significant change will happen.

MÉTIS VOICES

Gregory Scofield

In his autobiography, Thunder Through My Veins, Métis poet Gregory Scofield recalls the time he spent at the Native Education Centre in Vancouver after he had dropped out of high school:

> The Native Education Centre was like heaven compared to public school. It was an adult basic-education program in Vancouver that provided upgrading and cultural/ spiritual courses for urban *Native people. The entire* program, except for math, was taught from a Native perspective, using the works of Native writers and spiritual people. As well, there were

classes in beadwork and leatherwork, hidetanning and drum-making, classes on powwow singing and dancing, and even traditional Native cooking.

. . . Everyone treated me as an equal, more so than I'd ever felt in public school. I was excited to be with my own people and to meet students from tribes from across Canada: Nishg'a,



Haida, Salish, Blackfoot, Mohawk, Cree, and Ojibway. To some degree we were all displaced people, survivors who had either been through foster care, in jail, or on the streets. Some of the students had lost their children to social services or had come out of abusive, drinking relationships. All of us were struggling to heal the past, to find some sort of meaning in who we were. 7

PROFILE

Dave Elliott and the SENÇOÏEN Alphabet

The SENÇOÏEN alphabet was devised by the late Dave Elliott. Dave was born on the Tsartlip reserve in June 1910. Like many Saanich families of the day, he fished and travelled over the historical homeland of the Saanich. His family knew all of the places by their original SENÇOÏEN names. Dave once said, "I saw how our old people lived before our own speaking system was broken down. Our people were the wealthiest on earth. We needed nothing. We lived in a virtual paradise."

Then came regulations forbidding the Saanich People from fishing, hunting, and food gathering over their traditional lands. Government policies of the day dictated that the families who were struggling to survive had their children taken away to residential schools. There, the Saanich children began to experience denial of the SENÇOÏEN language and culture. Over the years, this created a communication gap between those who were still at home speaking SENÇOÏEN and those who had begun to be educated and assimilated into the white education system.

In the early 1960s, Dave Elliott became a custodian at the Tsartlip Indian Day School, attended by most of the Saanich children. Dave recognized the rapid decline in the use of SENÇOÏEN and the knowledge of the language and culture. The late Phillip Paul led an initiative to establish the Saanich Indian School Board. The SENÇOÏEN language was immediately offered as part of the curriculum of the band-operated school.

Realizing that without a method of recording the language it would eventually be lost, Dave began to write down SENÇOÏEN words phonetically. He soon discovered that upon returning to read previously recorded words, he could not understand what he had written. Dave studied with a linguist in Victoria, learning the International Phonetic

Alphabet and other orthographies. The main difficulty with these systems was that some of the complex sounds of the SENÇOÏEN language required numerous symbols to be represented, resulting in long and complicated words. Dave decided to devise his own alphabet, using only one letter to denote each sound. He purchased a used typewriter for \$30 and set out to make the SENÇOÏEN writing system accessible to his people. During the winter of 1978 the Dave Elliott SENÇOÏEN Alphabet was created. In 1984 the Saanich Indian School Board adopted the Dave Elliott Alphabet to help preserve the SENÇOÏEN language and history.

Dave Elliott's legacy is the revitalization of the SENÇOÏEN language. Today, Apple iMac computers with a TrueType SENÇOÏEN font are used extensively in the teaching of the language, both at LÁU, WELNEW Tribal School, and throughout the surrounding public schools of Saanich School District 63.

The B.C. Ministry of Education is advocating similar uses of technology elsewhere in the province as valuable tools in the task of revitalizing indigenous languages before it is too late.

Muskeg Video Productions has produced a thirty-minute video that tells the story of the development of the SENÇOÏEN writing system from the first experiments on paper towels to the use of custom-made computer software. This documentary has been shown on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network as part of the series Finding Our Talk.8

CHAPTER SUMMARY

rist Nations people have survived the legacy of colonialism to face the challenges and opportunities of twenty-first century Canada. While there are still huge gaps in the socio-economic conditions of First Nations people compared to the total Canadian population, there are signs of significant improvement, such as the growth of the First Nations population and increased life expectancy. The social ills of communities, both on reserve and off, still require much work but many programs are available to assist with the healing.

In recent years, several B.C. First Nations have taken responsibility for economic developments in their communities. A variety of successful businesses are operating, from vineyards to rodeos. Many ventures are tourism-related and serve the dual functions of providing employment and fostering pride in First Nations cultures.

First Nations communities are also increasingly taking control of education for their own people. Band schools fulfill this need for some First Nations; as well, there are adult training programs such as the Native Education Centre in Vancouver and the Enow'kin Center in Penticton, and a number of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions. The revitalization of First Nations languages is key to the survival of traditional cultures. With the active participation of Elders, many communities are offering First Nations language classes for young people and adults.

Self-Government and Treaties

ne of the principal goals of First Nations people in the twenty-first century is self-determination, to regain the control of their lives and lands that was taken away by colonization. Self-government is a key component in this struggle, and different forms of governing are being pursued by various First Nations in B.C. The Sechelt Indian Band was the first band in Canada to achieve self-government. With the settlement of the Nisga'a land claim in 2000, the Nisga'a Lisims Government became another model for self-government.

Over fifty groups, including many Tribal Councils, are currently in the process of trying to negotiate land claims under the B.C. Treaty Process, a lengthy, expensive procedure that involves six distinct stages. In 2001-02 the treaty process was put on hold while the B.C. government conducted a province-wide referendum on treaty negotiation. The long-term impacts remain to be seen. Meanwhile, federally, the government is again making changes to the Indian Act—changes that do not offer First Nations more control over their own affairs.

Models of Self-Government

The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) noted that public opinion in Canada and throughout the world acknowledges that self-determination is a basic right for First Nations people:

The right of self-determination is vested in all the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. The right finds its foundation in emerging norms of international law and basic principles of public morality. By virtue of this right, Aboriginal peoples are entitled to negotiate freely the terms of their relationship with Canada and to establish governmental structures that they consider appropriate for their needs. ¹

Self-determination includes a number of factors. One of the most important is self-government, the right of a people to govern themselves in a way that they determine. Having a say in how the resources of their traditional territories are used and being able to derive economic benefit from the resources are crucial. If these can be achieved, First Nations people will be able to make improvements in economic, social, and cultural conditions in their communities.

The Canadian Constitution recognizes the inherent right of self-government, but how will it be put into action and what form will it take?

There is more than one way that self-government can be put in place, since First Nations communities have varying needs and circumstances. The situation of the Musqueam who are surrounded by the largest urban area in the province is quite different from that of the Tahltan in the vast northwestern corner of the province.

The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples described three different models of self-government that First Nations groups might choose: the Nation Government model, the Public Government model, and the Community of Interest government model.

The Nation Government model is based on an identified group of people, usually a band or a group of bands, that identify as a First Nation, with a traditional land base, controlling the local governance of their territories. A Nation Government would have a constitution that states, among other things, its beliefs and values, its areas of responsibility, and who can be a citizen. The governing body would have jurisdiction over certain lands that are part of its traditional territories. It also would have responsibility for its members, who may or may not live in the territories. Land is an important issue in this style of government, since it will usually be the basis for the identity of the group. Most treaty negotiations are working towards a Nations Government model.

The Public Government model includes all the people who live in a certain region, not just the First Nations people. It has authority over everyone who lives within its boundaries, like other Canadian governments such as a province or a municipality. However, it incorporates traditional First Nations cultural values and practices throughout its jurisdiction. An example of such a government is Nunavut, in the eastern Arctic. This type of government could be put into practice in a region of a province if

a band and local municipal government merged, or if existing local governments in predominately Métis communities were changed.

The Community of Interest model is a more limited type of government that might be used in places where people come from different First Nations but share common needs and interests. Members would join together voluntarily to take on specific responsibilities rather than an all-encompassing government structure. For instance, people might join together to form a body that will provide First Nations educational or health services. Certain factors would need to be in place for this model to work. There would need to be a large enough population willing to put it into practice and other levels of government would need to be willing to empower the Community of Interest government. Land is less of an issue with this type of government: because its members would be from diverse backgrounds, they could not associate with one traditional territory. The Community of



Wilpsi'ayuukhl Nisga'a, the magnificent new legislative building in New Aiyansh, seat of the Nisga'a Lisims Government.

Interest model would suit people living in cities, away from their home communities or reserves, who otherwise would not have access to self-government.

At this writing, true self-government is still in the future for most First Nations. Two groups have been in the vanguard of making self-government happen. The Sechelt Indian Band has had a unique form of local

government since 1986, while the Nisga'a Nation signed a modern treaty in 2000, resulting in the Nisga'a Lisims Government. For the rest of the province, the struggle continues. How will self-government be achieved? Most First Nations of the province hope it will be through the negotiation of treaties through the British Columbia Treaty Commission.

CASE STUDY

Sechelt Self-Government

The Shishalh or Sechelt people live in the region that is often called the Sunshine Coast, just north of Vancouver. Their traditional territories include the islands and fjords north of Howe Sound. Reserve lands total more than 1,000 hectares.

The Sechelt Nation has a unique form of self-government, very much like municipal governments elsewhere in the province. Even before their selfgovernment solution was negotiated, the Sechelt people were well known for their enterprise, seeking to manage their own affairs in any way possible under the Indian Act. They managed the reserve lands, looked after the band revenues, and carried out local taxation. In the 1970s and '80s they decided that the only way to make social and economic improvements in their community was to forge new relationships with government. This meant making changes to the laws that governed them.

The leaders of the Sechelt Band made recommendations to the federal government about how the new laws should look and entered into negotiations with the Department of Indian Affairs to create a new blueprint for selfgovernment. Instead of the band council system, which comes under the ultimate

authority of the Minister of Indian Affairs, the community was set up as a legal body with the same powers as other local governments, such as the ability to buy and sell property, borrow money, and enter into contracts. The legislation gave the community the power to write its own constitution. The Sechelt Indian Band would own its land in fee simple rather than having the limited powers of the reserve system.

In September, 1986, the members of the Sechelt Band voted in favour of the self-government agreement. The next month Parliament passed the Sechelt Indian Band Government Act. The following April the British Columbia Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a bill to give the Sechelt community municipal status. As a result, the Sechelt people moved from the federal government under the Indian Act, to the provincial government under the Municipal Act.

At the same time as they were negotiating self-government, the Sechelt people began the land claims process, submitting their comprehensive land claim proposal in 1984. Progress was inevitably very slow, but the Sechelt Indian Band was the first band in B.C. to have their framework agreement (Stage

2) signed and also the first to have their agreement in principle (Stage 4) signed.

Sechelt Chief Garry Feschuk said at the time of the AIP signing, "It is fitting that the Sechelt Indian Band, first to have assumed every available authority under the Indian Act, first Band in Canada to have achieved self-government, first to have settled all of its specific claims, should be the first to enter BCTC Stage 5. I attribute this continuing level of achievement to the determination and perseverance of my people, and I thank them all, particularly the Elders, for their unfailing support. This success is also a manifestation of our good relations with all our neighbours, both native and nonnative."

Under its treaty, the Sechelt Band's successful self-government model will continue. The present land base will become treaty lands, as will additional lands from their traditional territories, bringing the total to nearly 2,000 hectares. Terms of the AIP provide for a cash settlement of \$42 million, of which \$40 million will be for the Sechelt Prosperity Fund and \$2 million for a Sechelt Transition Fund.

The Treaty Process

For over 125 years, First Nations people have been seeking treaties to recognize their Aboriginal title and lands. Today, the treaty process is finally underway. Many people are frustrated, however, with the time it is taking to reach agreements.

The first step was the Constitution Act, 1982, which recognized and affirmed "existing Aboriginal and treaty rights." In 1986, the federal government conditionally agreed to negotiate treaties, but only under existing policies. The province of British Columbia still would not recognize Aboriginal rights or entertain the idea of treaties. This changed finally in 1989 when the province agreed to deal with Aboriginal issues and formed the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (now the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services).

The B.C. Treaty Commission (BCTC) was formed

in 1992 through an agreement among the government of Canada, the government of British Columbia, and the First Nations Summit, whose members represent the majority of First Nations in British Columbia. In 1993, both the First Nations Summit and the provincial legislature formally approved treaty negotiations, and in 1995, the federal government passed an act to officially recognize the B.C. Treaty Commission. Both government acts became effective in March 1996.

Tripartite (three-party) meetings are held with representatives and lawyers for each First Nation, the government of Canada, and the government of British Columbia. The three parties discuss what will be included in the final treaty.

According to Section 1.1 of the B.C. Treaty Commission Agreement, a First Nation is "an aboriginal governing body, however organized

Six Steps in the B.C. Treaty Process

Stage 1.

Filing a Statement of Intent to Negotiate a Treaty.

To be accepted into the treaty process, a First Nations governing body must submit a Statement of Intent that meets the commission's criteria for Stage 1. The governing body must describe its organizational structure and how it was established.

Stage 2.

Preparing for negotiations and assessing readiness.

Stage 3.

Negotiating a Framework Agreement.

This is a negotiated agenda which sets out the issues to be negotiated in the next stage. It identifies the subjects for and objectives of the negotiations, and establishes a timetable and the procedural arrangements for the negotiations.

Stage 4.

Substantive negotiation.

At this stage, issues are discussed to produce the Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) that contains all the features of the eventual settlement.

Stage 5.

Finalization.

At this stage, all parties formalize the agreement needed in the AIP to produce a Final Agreement and the agreement is enacted by settlement legislation.

Stage 6

Implementation.

At this stage, settlement legislation is implemented: the terms of the agreement are carried out by all parties.

and established by aboriginal people within their traditional territory in British Columbia, which has been mandated by its constituents to enter into treaty negotiations on their behalf with Canada and British Columbia."

The First Nations Summit is an umbrella group that brings together all those nations participating in treaty negotiations. However, treaty negotiations are conducted on a government-to-government basis.

There are three different types of First Nations governing bodies that participate in the treaty process.

Some groups are defined as a traditional government whose political organization is based on hereditary leadership or other traditional systems. In other cases an individual band established under the Indian Act is negotiating on its own. Most negotiating groups, however, are tribal councils, which bring together the bands within the traditional territories of one First Nation. In total, fifty separate negotiating groups have filed claims.

The negotiations involve hundreds of meetings among the representatives for the three parties.

First Nations Voices

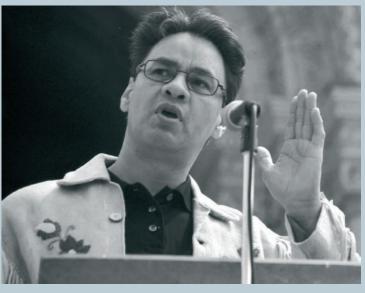
Grand Chief Edward John Speaking on Social Justice in Land Claims

The following is an excerpt from a speech by Grand Chief Edward John to Premier Ujjal Dosanjh at the First Nations Summit Meeting in Prince Rupert, September 2000.

We're all here to stay, and that's what the Supreme Court of Canada said in that famous decision in Delgamuukw/Gisday'wa. We have to find solutions to reconcile our people's interests, our people's Aboriginal rights and title, and the Crown's interests and the Crown's title. We, as First Nations people, should not have to be put to the proof that we are Aboriginal peoples. We sit around here [at the table] and we know we're Aboriginal peoples, that we are the descendants of our ancestors here, and that we have responsibility to the future generations.

Why is it that the governments tell us that in order for us to be Aboriginal peoples, we have to go to the courts to prove who we are? Why is it that the governments say that in order for them to recognize any rights of our people, that we have to go to the courts and put our people to the proof that we have rights in our territories? We know we have those rights.

Social justice. I think the governments need to quit hiding behind the lawyers, find that



Grand Chief Ed John speaking in front of the Legislative Buildings in Victoria.

political will. Find it in your heart to say, "Look, these First Nations have rights. These First Nations have Aboriginal rights and we recognize those. That these First Nations in the province of British Columbia, without exception, have Aboriginal title and they don't have to go to court to prove it." That's social justice.²

The Creation of the Nisga'a **Lisims Government**

Since they first resisted the imposition of reserves in the 1880s, the members of the Nisga'a Nation never gave up their struggle to have sovereignty over their traditional territories. It took over 115 years to achieve, but in the year 2000 Nisga'a citizens finally saw the dream of self-government in their own territories become a reality. As Joseph Gosnell, president of the Nisga'a Tribal council, said when the treaty received royal assent, "Our canoe has landed."

What a long journey the Nisga'a canoe of selfgovernment took before arriving. At every attempt to make their case, the chiefs were ignored or had obstacles put in their way. Then, in 1949 a young man named Frank Calder took advantage of the new laws permitting First Nations people not only to vote in provincial elections, but to run as candidates. Calder ran for the CCF party (forerunner to the NDP) and



The Nisga'a Lisims Government, which replaced the Nisga'a Tribal Council, is the governing body of the Nisga'a Nation, but each of the four communities along the Nass River still retains its local government. The Nisga'a Lisims Government passes laws which affect its citizens and lands, but federal and provincial laws still apply. As in most other places in Canada, laws of different levels of government overlap. Specific Nisga'a laws relate to language and culture.

won the large northern riding of Atlin, becoming the first Aboriginal person elected to the British Columbia legislature. As well, he was president of the Nisga'a Land Committee (changed to Nisga'a Tribal Council) and it was in his name that the Nisga'a took the question of Aboriginal title to land to court.

Finally, in 1976, the Nisga'a seized the first opportunity to present their land claims case under the federal government's comprehensive claims policy. The lengthy negotiations would take nearly twentyfive years, but the Nisga'a weren't going to give up after close to 100 years of struggle. When the B.C. Treaty Commission began in the 1990s, the Nisga'a decided to stay outside that process, as they were already progressing on their own. As their negotiations drew closer to completion, the treaty became a very public topic. There were those who opposed the treaty, believing it would give too much money, land, and power to the Nisga'a and create a "foreign territory" where Canadian laws do not apply. Some members of the Nisga'a Nation itself did not support it. They felt it did not give enough and that certain benefits under the Indian Act, such as an exemption from paying taxes, would be lost. However, the treaty was widely supported by most Nisga'a citizens and passed through both provincial and federal parliaments, including the final body, the Canadian Senate. It received royal assent in 2000. The Nisga'a Treaty is the first modernday treaty entered into in B.C.—the first since Treaty 8 was signed in 1899.

What did the Nisga'a gain through their long journey? Primarily they gained self-government, full control of a portion of their traditional territories, and financial compensation for the rest of their lands. The cash settlement was \$196.1 million, to be paid over

Royal assent

In Canada, the U.K., and other Commonwealth countries, royal assent is the formal consent of the sovereign, or his or her representative, to a bill passed by Parliament.

Timeline to Nisga'a Lisims Government

Three Nisga'a chiefs meet Prime Minister Macdonald in Ottawa.

1886

Chief Sgat'iin refuses entry to reserve surveyors.

1887

Nisga'a and Tsimshian chiefs meet with Premier Smithe in Victoria, demanding a treaty.

1890

First Nisga'a Land Committee is formed.

1913

Nisga'a petition the British government for treaties as set out in Royal Proclamation.

1949

Nisga'a chief Frank Calder is elected to the B.C. legislature.

1955

Nisga'a Land Committee is re-established as the Nisga'a Tribal Council.

1968

The Calder case first goes to court.

1973

Supreme Court decision in Calder case split on continued existence of Aboriginal title.

1976

Nisga'a begin Comprehensive Land Claims process.

1990

B.C. joins land claims negotiations.

1996

Agreement in Principle ratified.

2000

Nisga'a treaty signed and Nisga'a Lisims Government comes into effect.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

President Joseph Gosnell of the Nisga'a Nation

The following is an excerpt of a speech given by Nisga'a President Joseph Gosnell at the Canadian Club in Toronto on May 15, 2000.

> After more than a century of struggle, we are once again a self-governing people. Free citizens of Canada. Full and equal participants in the social, economic, and political life of this province, of this country. With all the rights, and all the responsibilities.

> No longer wards of the state, no longer beggars in our own lands, we are now self-determining and selfactualizing. Today, no longer disenfranchised, we are free to make our own mistakes, savour our own victories, and stand on our own feet.

This is all made possible because of the Nisga'a Treaty, which was passed into Canadian law on April 13, 2000.

The Treaty is a triumph for the Nisga'a people—and all Canadians—and a beacon of hope for Aboriginal

people around the world. A triumph, I believe, which proves to the world that reasonable people can sit down and settle historical wrongs. Which provides that a modern society can correct the mistakes of the past. As Canadians, we should all be very proud. 3



fifteen years, and the land amounted to 2,019 square kilometres. Other features included a sum of \$37.5 million paid for lost revenues from the forest resources on Nisga'a land. Also, there was support for initiatives in managing and seeing economic benefit from Nisga'a fisheries and forestry resources, such as \$10.3 million towards the Lisims Fisheries Conservation Trust to support fisheries science.

Alternatives to the Treaty Process

Some nations have not joined the treaty process and others have recently opted out. They look for different approaches to reaching just settlement. The leading group in seeking alternatives is the Interior Nations Alliance.

The Interior Nations Alliance is composed of six nations: Southern Carrier, Tsilhqot'in, St'at'imc, Secwepemc (Shuswap), Nlaka'pamux, and Okanagan. Their spokesperson is Chief Arthur Manuel, son of George Manuel. They collectively support each other in developing an alternate process to the B.C. treaty process; one that would not involve the extinguishing of Aboriginal title in exchange for reduced treaty rights. In the following interview, Arthur Manuel explains how the Interior Nations Alliance approaches the settlement of land claims.

FIRST NATIONS VOICES

Chief Arthur Manuel

This is an excerpt from an interview with Arthur Manuel published in the newsletter Talking Circle.

Talking Circle: How do you see that rebuilding process starting? What is the foundation?

Arthur: We need to go back to the root cause—the unjust human relationship between settlers and indigenous people—and change it. That process of decolonization will be painful and difficult for both sides, but it is a very important step for Canada to take. Both sides will have to make a deep moral commitment. Rather than trying to bring about this change through treaties, I think we need a different approach, one based on developing relationships for co-managing and sharing resources. And these relationships must be developed in the context of human rights, aboriginal title and autonomy in areas such as language, culture, and traditional activities.

I look forward to a more dynamic relationship in which First Nations can share proportionately, according to their population size, their skills, and their ability to work and invest. But it will take a long time to get there—for Native people to learn new skills, break out of their dependency, One of the keys and close the gap economically. is public education. Both sides have the obligation to become educated about history and the issues involved. This is just starting. We're seeing changes to the education system, and more of the story is getting told. But much more education is required.

TC: You represent the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council on the Interior Nations Alliance. Could you explain what its aims are?

Arthur: Our alliance is not looking to sign treaties with the federal and provincial governments. We believe that the treaty process, which uses a "settler approach" that divides up the land and resources in an "us-versus-them" model, doesn't offer a real solution. It doesn't satisfy human rights or fundamentally change the settler-indigenous people relationship. It reduces the relationship to a real estate deal. It leads to the extinguishment of aboriginal rights and title, even though Delgamuukw affirmed that aboriginal title exists and cannot be extinguished.

Instead, we want to pursue a different approach based on a "relationship model." We want to work jointly with government, business, and the public, using the wealth of our traditional territories, to improve the quality of life for First Nations people. 4

Direct Action

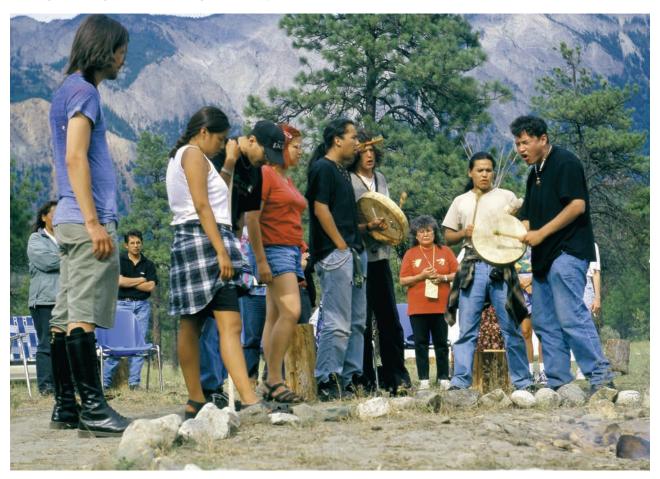
Throughout most of the history of contact with outside settlers, First Nations people have protested their grievances peacefully and with dignity, usually attempting to meet with politicians on a nation-to-nation basis. The violence that characterizes the struggle for rights in other countries has not been a part of the B.C. experience.

However, anger and frustration with the persistent struggle for recognition of rights and title have resulted in some groups and nations taking direct action, which has usually been in the form of blockading a road or access route.

Typically a band or community with a particular and significant grievance, having tried every other

avenue of change, enacts a public demonstration by blockading a logging road, public highway, or railway track. The resolve of all members of the community, from youth to Elders, to stand their ground, demonstrates the undying commitment to achieve recognition of what they believe is owed them.

In recent years one group, the Native Youth Movement, has emerged as a strong, militant voice for land claims and other issues. The movement developed in Vancouver in the 1990s as young urban Aboriginals who felt excluded from the treaty process formed an informal association. One of their first actions was the 1997 occupation of the B.C Treaty Commission Offices. Thirty Aboriginal youth spent two days and a night in the downtown Vancouver



Participants in the Native Youth Movement at a gathering near Lillooet in 1998.

office, protesting the lack of representation by youth in the treaty process. They refused to leave until the commission agreed to meet with them. More recently, the Native Youth Movement has supported members of the Secwepemc Nation in their protests at the Sun Peaks ski resort development near Kamloops, and proved their determination and defiance in a long occupation of lands near the development. Referring to the Native Youth Movement's participation in protests at Skwelk-wek'welt, where Sun Peaks is located, Chief Arthur Manuel of the Neskonlith reserve told the media in 2001, "The spirits of the Native Youth are high. They know that they are undertaking a serious problem but they are determined to face up to the challenge . . . I must say that I am very proud of the young people who are helping us protect our Aboriginal title in the Skwelkwek'welt area." 5

The 2002 Provincial Referendum

When the Liberal government was elected in B.C. in 2001, it promised to hold a province-wide referendum on the treaty negotiation process. From the time it was announced until the results were in, the referendum was controversial. First Nations opposed it, and they received support from a wide range of non-Aboriginal organizations, including churches, labour unions, environmental groups, as well as many individual British Columbians.

The referendum was conducted by mail, at a cost of \$9 million. Meanwhile the treaty process that had been underway since 1990 was essentially put on hold.

First Nations organizations in B.C. and across Canada rejected the idea of the referendum and also objected to the wording of the questions put to the public. Lawyers for the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) stated: "In our opinion, many of the questions are unconstitutional, in the sense that the area and scope of the questions falls outside



The First Nations Summit considered the referendum a stalling tactic by the provincial government to try to impose its views on such issues as self-government and taxation. Many non-Aboriginal organizations supported First Nations in their opposition to the referendum.

the jurisdictional powers of the Province . . . The referendum questions seek a mandate to perpetuate an outdated colonial relationship, many features of which have been expressly repudiated by the courts."

Among other ways of protesting the referendum, the Hupacasath Nation in Alert Bay filed a motion before the Supreme Court of B.C. to have the language of the referendum declared unconstitutional. The court dismissed the case shortly before the referendum results were announced.

In April 2002 Elections B.C. mailed out over 2.12 million referendum packages to registered provincial voters. A total of 736,480 ballots were returned and

considered valid, meaning that less than 36 per cent of the voting population chose to respond. The UBCIC and other First Nations organizations encouraged voters to actively boycott the referendum by mailing unsigned ballots to specified collection points. They collected over 28,800 ballots, many of which were disposed of at public ceremonies. Hupacasath Chief Judith Sayers held a ceremonial burning of ballots: a cardboard canoe dubbed the S.S. Referendum was stuffed with ballots, lit with a flaming arrow, and sent out to sea to burn.

In a press release following the results of the referendum, Herb George, a member of the First Nations Summit political executive said: "A substantive majority of more than 1.5 million British Columbians chose to boycott or spoil their referendum ballot. This clearly shows most British Columbians saw this for the ill-conceived and flawed process it was. No matter what the results are, they do not represent the views of the majority."

Despite the low voter response, Premier Gordon Campbell called the referendum an incredible milestone in the history of treaty-making in British Columbia and an unprecedented act of direct democracy. Of the voters who sent in valid ballots, the majority were in favour of the province's questions. The government said this amounted to overwhelming support for its statements of principles for conducting treaty negotiations.

Speaking on behalf of B.C. First Nations involved in the treaty negotiation process, Lydia Hwitsum of the First Nations Summit said in a press release: "Let's now place the referendum where it belongs—in the mirror behind us, never to be forgotten as a blight on our history and a reason for a year being wasted at the negotiation table. Together, we must now get back to effective good faith treaty negotiations immediately for the good of First Nations and British Columbians alike." 7

Questions and results of the 2002 referendum on the treaty negotiation process.

- 1. Private property should not be expropriated for treaty settlements: 84.52% voted Yes.
- 2. The terms and conditions of leases and licences should be respected; fair compensation for unavoidable disruption of commercial interests should be ensured: 92.12% voted Yes.
- 3. Hunting, fishing and recreational opportunities on Crown land should be ensured for all British Columbians: 93.14% voted Yes.
- 4. Parks and protected areas should be maintained for the use and benefit of all British Columbians: 94.5% voted Yes.
- 5. Province-wide standards of resource management and environmental protection should continue to apply: 93.63% voted Yes.
- **6.** Aboriginal self-government should have the characteristics of local government, with powers delegated from Canada and British Columbia: 87.25% voted Yes.
- 7. Treaties should include mechanisms for harmonizing land use planning between Aboriginal governments and neighbouring local governments: 91.79% voted Yes.
- 8. The existing tax exemptions for Aboriginal people should be phased out: 90.51% voted Yes. 8

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Self-determination in governing communities, lands, and resources is of paramount importance to First Nations. One way to achieve self-government is through the negotiation of treaties. Most First Nations in the province are pursuing this route through the B.C. Treaty Commission, although it is a slow and frustrating process. Others, such as the Interior Nations Alliance, seek alternate ways to self-government. The Nisga'a Nation achieved self-government in 2000 after more than a century of struggle. Its negotiations took place outside the B.C. Treaty Commission, but the Nisga'a Treaty, the first modern-day treaty entered into in B.C., was passed by both the provincial and federal parliaments and the Senate of Canada.

For self-government to work, communities must have a solid economic base, so it is crucial that communities devise plans for economic development. Putting control of resource management back into

the hands of First Nations communities can be done by working with governmental agencies and local industries, as well as through treaty negotiations.

The treaty negotiation process suffered a setback in 2002 when the B.C. government conducted a province-wide referendum on treaty negotiations. The First Nations Summit and many other Aboriginal organizations denounced the referendum on the grounds that the rights of the minority should never be subject to the whim of the majority. As well, they objected that the referendum questions failed to make any reference to the Crown's obligations to do justice after more than a century of denying Aboriginal rights and title. Many non-Aboriginal organizations supported First Nations in their opposition to the referendum, and only 36% of voters cast valid ballots. At this time it remains to be seen what impact the referendum will have on treaty negotiations.