

Native Indian Political Organization in British Columbia, 1900-1969: A Response to Internal Colonialism*

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The subjugated peoples with the least likelihood of successful response to domination in recent centuries would appear to have been the aboriginal peoples of the Americas, Australia and New Zealand. Subjugated peoples in the old world — Europe, Asia and Africa — have usually been assured of physical and cultural survival for one or more of three reasons. Their numbers and concentrations have been such that physical survival was rarely in jeopardy; peoples having the same culture have often been dominant elsewhere and so could be called upon for moral support and looked upon as guardians of the culture; and the dominant authority has often recognized and kept intact major elements of the subjugated group's political system. The new world aboriginal peoples faced starkly different circumstances. Except in some of the Latin American colonies they rather quickly became minorities. They were uprooted by European troops and settlers, ravaged by European diseases and brought under the control of European missionaries and officials. They could call on no outside help. The colonial authorities legitimized their own occupation of the land and their own religious, economic and political systems by denying legitimacy to aboriginal culture and systems of authority. The gaining of independence from Europe by the colonies brought no change to the subjugated status of the aboriginal peoples. They had been subject to European colonialism; now they were subject to internal colonialism.

The essential empirical feature of internal colonialism is the continued subjugation of an indigenous people in a post-colonial independent nation state.¹ Subjugation will in every case involve restriction of use of land and

* See end comment for acknowledgements.

¹ This definition accords with the usage of Pablo Gonzalez Casanova and Rodolfo Stavenhagen, who introduced the concept of internal colonialism in articles published in 1963 in the Spanish language periodical *América Latina*. Their first studies in English concerning the concept were: Stavenhagen, "Classes, Colonialism and Acculturation," and Casanova, "Internal Colonialism and National Development," in *Studies in Comparative International Development* I (1965). Among the more influential of those subsequently using the concept have been

resources as well as varying degrees of administrative supervision, social discrimination, suppression of culture and denial of political and other rights and freedoms. (Especially during the first half of this century, Canada's treatment of native Indians provided an example of the full development of these elements of subjugation.) The moral claim of indigenous peoples differs from that of other subjugated groups in that it includes and rests upon the fundamental claim to land and use of resources which derives from prior and rightful occupancy. The fact of continued subjugation of an indigenous people takes its significance from the perception that the subjugation has no greater moral justification in an independent state than in a colony. The utility of the concept of internal colonialism lies initially in its opening a perspective upon the contemporary place of indigenous peoples which is different from the perspective which is commonly maintained, in its own interest, by the non-indigenous ruling group. In the context of an English-speaking new world country the concept delineates not only the indigenous minority but also the immigrant majority — that is, the ruling society composed of persons who are either immigrants or descended from immigrants. The values and incentives associated with voluntary individual emigration to a new land, and the ideologies and policies associated with building a nation where none existed before, not unnaturally result in perceptions which are intolerant of non-assimilating minorities and inimical towards special claims of indigenous peoples.

One facet of nation-building in the English-speaking new world countries has been the development of a particular view of the post-contact history of indigenous peoples. This view assesses continuity by the criteria of racial integrity and persistence of culture elements (such as language, religion, foods, clothing, weapons and means of transport). In this view the indigenous people and its culture existed in a pristine form before contact but have since been subject to irresistible and irreversible erosion and contamination as interbreeding occurred and as culture elements changed. In this view change means cultural diminution and loss

Robert Blauner, who did not confine it to cases involving indigenous groups, and Michael Hechter, who did not confine it to cases involving overseas colonization. The sociologist Menno Boldt was the first to apply the concept in studies of Canadian Indians. Blauner, *Racial Oppression In America* (New York: Harper, Row, 1972); Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Boldt, "Canadian Native Indian Leadership: Context and Composition," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* XII, no. 1 (1980), 15-33, and "Social Correlates of Nationalism: A Study of Native Indian Leaders in a Canadian Internal Colony," *Comparative Political Studies* XIV, no. 2 (1981), 205-31.

of group identity. This view serves to undermine the legitimacy of contemporary descendants of indigenous peoples as claimants of aboriginal rights, and is thus strongly tinged with the self-interest of the immigrant majority. (Policies designed to assimilate indigenous minorities — that is, to treat them as though they were immigrant minorities — may also be an aspect of nation-building. Assimilation serves not only to confirm the ostensible superiority of the immigrant majority's way of life but also to eliminate claimants of aboriginal rights.)

Contrary to the view which has just been described is one which is more apt to be held by indigenous people themselves and which has been adopted in recent decades by a number of anthropologists. In this view culture and its continuity depend not on the maintenance of any particular culture elements but rather on the maintenance of culture boundaries, or lines of demarcation, vis-à-vis other cultures.² In this view it is the maintenance of boundaries, as opposed to what crosses them, that is the critical factor — and it is the perceptions and behaviour of the putative bearers of the culture, and of those whom they encounter in other cultures, which are indicative of whether the boundaries are being maintained. It is this view which is inherent in the concept of internal colonialism, for it places indigenous and immigrant cultures and peoples on an equal conceptual and moral footing, and opens the way to the recognition that indigenous peoples may maintain their identity while incorporating new blood and adopting new ways. This view avoids the self-serving paradox implicit in the other view — in which the immigrant-derived dominant society regards innovation in meeting the challenges of the new land as an essential and creative aspect of the evolution of its own culture (or national character or national identity) while it regards adaptive behaviour on the part of indigenous peoples as mere “aping of the white man” and as indicative of loss of culture and identity. Moreover, the “boundary maintenance” view is fruitful in analyzing the reactions of indigenous groups, for it suggests the possibility of response to internal colonialism by “importing” elements of the majority's culture or political system for use in defence of indigenous culture boundaries.

Students of internal colonialism have tended to assume that the very circumstances of internal colonialism preclude the possibility of conscious

² Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Differences* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969); Erik Schwimmer, “Symbolic Competition,” *Anthropologica* XIV, no. 1 (1972), 117-55. The analogy is to nation states, which are defined essentially by their boundaries rather than by the characteristics of their populations. English-speaking Canadians should have no difficulty with the analogy.

and consistent political action by the indigenous group. The Latin American analysts who introduced the concept accepted the Indians' passive endurance (punctuated by the occasional futile rebellion) as the only possible response to the semi-feudalism prevailing in much of Latin America.³ Elsewhere, in the literature of anthropology and sociology, at least four additional reactions to subjugation have been commonly recognized as having occurred, alone or in combination, among new world indigenous peoples. These are: organized violence in the form of initial warfare or later rebellion; revitalization, or messianic, movements⁴ (such as those led by the prophet Seneca in New England or by Louis Riel in Canada); social breakdown and personal demoralization (manifested in alcoholism, interpersonal violence and suicide); and individual assimilation into the majority society. A sixth response, however, has, in effect, been identified by the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth. Confining his observation to individual members of minority groups which have the option of personal assimilation into the majority open to them, Barth has noted that such persons may reject assimilation and instead "choose to emphasize ethnic identity, using it to develop new positions and patterns to organize activities in those sectors formerly not found in their society, or inadequately developed for their purposes."⁵ In other words, persons who have acquired the skills and knowledge to function as members of the majority society choose instead to use such skills and knowledge to lead their own people in maintaining a collective identity while coping with perpetual minority status.

At its fullest extent the response or strategy which Barth has identified may be expected to include five main activities.⁶

1. Selective adaptation of new culture elements, as well as dropping of old elements, for the purpose of facilitating group survival in post-contact circumstances.
2. Formation and maintenance of a comprehensive organization to emphasize group identity and to conduct transactions with the ruling majority.

³ Julio Cotler, for example, observed that in Peru, "as a result of the structural and normative conditions of dependence in which [the Indians] find themselves with regard to the [land-owning] mestizos, the predominant personality trait is one of fatalism. They also exhibit political lethargy and an inability to modify a situation. . . ." Cotler, "The Mechanics of Internal Domination and Social Change in Peru," *Masses in Latin America*, ed. Irving Horowitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 419.

⁴ Cf. A. F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* LVIII, no. 2 (1956), 264-81.

⁵ Barth, p. 33.

⁶ The first three are derived directly from Barth; the other two follow logically.

3. Pursuit of minority unity in order to maintain group identity and to provide support for the organization.
4. Establishing relations with groups within the majority which are able and willing to provide resources or support.
5. Lobbying government in order to defend and promote group interests.

Barth calls the comprehensive organization a "dichotomizing" organization,⁷ since it serves to maintain the dichotomy (or, one could say, to defend the boundary) between minority and majority. The form and procedures of the organization will likely be adopted, in part at least, from the majority culture, since forms and procedures alien to the majority would hamper ready communication with it and quite possibly even be seen as irrelevant or subversive. Since it is the majority's presence and perceptions which dictate the desirability of unity among indigenous groups, and since the fundamental purpose of the organization is to deal with the majority, the appropriate geographical scope will likely be seen as coinciding with political or administrative units of the majority. Accepting this scope will require the downplaying of any traditional divisions which impede attaining unity within the new scope. As Barth observes, "much of the activity of political innovators is concerned with the codification of idioms, the selection of signals for identity and the assertion of value for these cultural diacritica, and the suppression or denial of relevance for other differentia."⁸

Although the five activities will relate to all aspects of group behaviour, the strategy which the activities embody is quintessentially political, for it involves not only inward and outward group action to defend group interests but also the very determination of what those interests are to be. It also requires interaction with *and within* the political system established by the majority. The strategy may thus be referred to as the strategy or response of political adaptation. In choosing this response to internal colonialism an indigenous people is choosing a precipitous path lying between alienation and assimilation.

The implementation and the success of the response of political adaptation will depend heavily on the attitude of the majority toward the indigenous group and on the nature of the majority's social and political system. Political action among indigenous *majorities*, as in Latin America or in South Africa, may be expected to be directed towards replacing the ruling minority, or at least to be perceived as such by the ruling group.

⁷ Barth, p. 33.

⁸ Barth, p. 35.

In the English-speaking new world countries, on the other hand, the indigenous groups were nowhere a political threat once the new regimes were established, and pluralism prevailed within the ruling majorities. It is in these latter circumstances that the response of political adaptation would seem most likely to be attempted and to succeed. There would appear, however, to have been only two major cases in the new world marked by the early appearance and the continual presence of the response of political adaptation. There would seem to have been no early instances of political organization by Australian Aborigines. The early pan-Indian movements in the United States were directed towards assimilation, and thus did not represent an attempt to ensure group survival.⁹ In Canada east of the Rocky Mountains there were instances of protest and lobbying, but no lasting political organizations. New Zealand presents one major case of political adaptation. The post-contact formation of the Maori Kingship stands as a particularly clear example of the emergence of a comprehensive organization; while the institution of separate Maori electoral activity and guaranteed representation in the national parliament¹⁰ served to formalize certain aspects of minority-majority relations. New Zealand, however, was the English-speaking new world country in which elements of subjugation were least well developed.

British Columbia provides the other major instance. In British Columbia political adaptation was the predominant response attempted by Indian leaders once the immigrant regime had become firmly established. Moreover, among the Indian population none of the other reactions to subjugation became pervasive. Organized violence against newcomers was infrequent and isolated; revitalization movements were localized and temporary;¹¹ social breakdown and personal demoralization, while certainly in evidence, were not sufficient to impede the emergence of leadership or the functioning of organizations; and, as the presence of political adaptation implies, there was an absence of the passivity, fatalism and lethargy evident among indigenous groups elsewhere. In British Columbia, however, as was not the case in New Zealand, political adaptation emerged when the elements of subjugation were well developed. Despite these elements — and despite added legal barriers aimed directly at

⁹ Hazel Hertzberg, *The Search for American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), especially p. 307.

¹⁰ Cf. Pei Te Hurinui Jones, "Maori Kings," in *The Maori People in the Nineteen-Sixties*, ed. Erik Schwimmer (London: Hurst, 1968), pp. 132-73, as well as other studies in the same volume.

¹¹ Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia: Vol. I, The Impact of the White Man* (Victoria: Provincial Museum of British Columbia, 1964), pp. 88-89.

British Columbia Indians by the Parliament of Canada — there was in the province from the beginning of this century a continual presence of Indian political organizations. The achievement of British Columbia Indians was unique in Canada and exceptional among new world indigenous peoples. The purpose of this article is to examine the background to the emergence of political organizations among British Columbia Indians and to examine the nature and activities of the organizations until 1969. The year 1969 marked a decisive turning point, for the first Canada-wide Indian political organization came into being (in response to the Canadian government's attempt to assimilate the Indians once and for all), and federal funding became available to Indian political organizations.

European Impact and Dual Pan-Indianism

The Indians of British Columbia were geographically divided and culturally diverse. In the territory's 366,000 square miles, extending 800 miles north to south and 400 to 500 miles east to west, there were at the time of European contact upwards of 70,000 persons¹² distributed in several hundred wintering villages. Linguistic diversity was immense. There were seven or eight linguistic groups and some thirty separate languages or discrete dialects. Table 1 lists the language or dialect groups found in British Columbia today, together with the proportion of the registered Indian population now found within each group. The geographical distribution of the groups has changed little since contact and, even though the Indian population declined drastically to some 25,000 by the 1920s, the relative size of the groups has not fluctuated greatly during this century. Today there are more than 60,000 registered Indians divided among some 200 bands, and perhaps an equal number of unregistered Indians in the province. Indians thus make up just under 5 percent of the total British Columbia population.

There is no term used commonly and uniformly today by Indians themselves to refer to the concept of language or dialect group. The term "tribal group" is used frequently while "nation" and "people" are used less frequently. The term "tribe" is occasionally used, but it is quite ambiguous as it more often refers on the north coast to "clan" and elsewhere to "village" or "band." These terms are not applied uniformly by Indians to the groups listed in Table 1. All the south coast groups are within the Salish linguistic group or family of languages; these groups are

¹² See *ibid.*, pp. 38-52, for population data.

TABLE 1

*Native Indian Language/Dialect Groups in British Columbia,
With their Percentages of Total Registered Indian Population^a*

<i>Area</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>%</i>	
North Coast	Gitksan	5.2	Northern Interior	Tlingit	0.3	
	Nishga	5.2		Kaska	1.1	
	Haida	2.8		Tahltan	1.4	
	Tsimshian	6.2		Salteaux	0.3	
	Haisla	1.8		Beaver	0.8	
		21.2		Sekani	1.0	
				Slave	0.7	
					5.6	
West/ Central Coast ^b	Bella Coola	1.3		Central and Southern Interior	Carrier	10.3
	Heiltsuk	2.5			Chilcotin	3.0
	Kwawgewlth	5.6	Shuswap		7.8	
	Nuu-chah-nulth	7.4	Lillooet		5.3	
		16.8	Thompson		5.5	
			Okanagan		3.1	
			Kootenay		0.8	
					35.8	
South Coast	Comox	1.6				
	Island Cowichan	7.6				
	Songish	2.5				
	Fraser					
	Halkomelem	5.1				
	Sechelt	1.1				
	Squamish	2.7				
	Semiahmoo	0.1-				
Puntlatch	0.1-					
		20.7				

^a Derived from Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, "Linguistic and Cultural Affiliations of Canadian Indian Bands," (Ottawa, 1979), pp. 36-48, with modifications according to Wilson Duff, *The Impact of the White Man* (Victoria: Provincial Museum of Natural History and Anthropology, 1964), pp. 15, 25-28. See text for comment.

^b This area includes the west coast of Vancouver Island, the portion of the Island north of Comox, and the mainland coast from Toba Inlet north to the point adjacent to the southern tip of the Queen Charlotte Islands.

rarely referred to individually as tribal groups, although varying combinations of them may be, and all the groups together are often referred to as "Coast Salish." The four interior groups which are also in the Salish linguistic group — the Shuswap, Lillooet, Thompson and Okanagan — are often referred to individually as tribal groups but are also referred to collectively as "Interior Salish." On the other hand, the Gitksan, Nishga and Tsimshian groups, which are commonly referred to

collectively by anthropologists as "Tsimshian" (since the three compose the linguistic group labelled "Tsimshian"), are emphatically perceived as quite separate groups by group members and are never seen by them as having a collective identity. Finally, the term "Fraser Halkomelem," although an appropriate linguistic designation for the people of the lower Fraser River, is not one used among Indians themselves. In two cases common non-Indian usage is not fully appropriate. "Nootka" has been rejected in favour of "Nuu-chah-nulth" by the group's own tribal council; while the spellings "Kwakiutl" and "Kwawgewlth" indicate the same word, with the latter more indicative of the correct pronunciation.

(While Duff's assertion that before European contact the Indians in the particular groups were only "vaguely aware of the other people who shared their language"¹³ seems indefensible (except possibly in reference to the scattered and nomadic people of the northern interior), there is no general evidence to suggest that the language or dialect groups as such were the bases of political organization or activity. As Duff states:

The Indians . . . preferred to govern their affairs more as groups of kinfolk spread over wide areas than as local groups sharing the occupancy of defined territories. Political organization, that is to say, took second place to social organization. A man's influence depended upon his social status, and his power as a leader grew out of obligations which were owed to him through kinship and marriage. The local tribes [i.e., groups which wintered together in one location] were composed of more or less uneasy alliances of such kin-groups; no effective form of organizations was developed above the level of the tribe. . . .¹⁴

The Nishga may have been an exception. Nishga elders of today state that in pre-contact times the chiefs of the clans from the various villages met periodically in a "council of chiefs" to adjudicate disputes and to make decisions relating to defence and warfare.¹⁵ Such meetings would have been facilitated by the fact that the Nishga villages were relatively few in number and close enough for ready communication. Moreover, the highly developed inter-village clan system of the Nishga together with a well-defined concept of Nishga territory would have provided additional means and motive for political decision-making. Certainly the post-contact vitality and success of the Nishga in forming political orga-

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105. It must be stressed that Duff is here using "tribe" to refer not to a language group but rather to a group which wintered together in one location.

¹⁵ Hubert Doolan and James Gosnell (Chairman and President, respectively, of the Nishga Tribal Council), interviews, Aiyansh, May 1980. The term "council of chiefs" is Doolan's.

nizations based on the language group give credence to the view that they were building upon traditional patterns.

There were major cultural differences between coastal and interior peoples. The coastal peoples were one portion of a unique cultural grouping which extended from present-day Alaska south to California. Among these peoples the clan or lineage unit was the basic social unit; within this unit social status was graded according to birth and wealth. The existence of slavery underscored the status distinctions. Large wooden buildings housed the clans and were the scene of elaborate ceremonies, while large wooden canoes allowed travel and trade.¹⁶ The north coast groups (cf. table 1) were distinct in having unilateral matrilineal clans, each with a clearly acknowledged leadership structure in which one chief would be recognized as pre-eminent. Each wintering village, having several clans, would have several chiefs.¹⁷ The west/central coast groups had bilineal or ambilineal descent patterns, and thus did not have distinct clans, although they did have clear designation of social rank.¹⁸ The south coast patterns are less evident in retrospect because of the greater impact of white settlement; however, clans appear to have been present but with more variable and flexible designation of social rank.¹⁹ Among the interior peoples clans were absent; status depended more on individual achievement and contribution; and slavery was absent or little-developed. The interior peoples would thus seem to have been much more equalitarian than the coastal peoples and, in particular, to have avoided developing a clearly acknowledged and self-perpetuating leadership structure such as existed on the north coast.

European contact occurred during the last decades of the eighteenth century. For many decades the European presence was confined to that of traders. During this period Indian society was not drastically affected, for the traders were few in number and the territory, unlike eastern North America, did not become embroiled in European wars in which Indians were induced to take sides. Europeans seeking themselves to exploit rich resources of the territory did not arrive in great numbers until the 1850s. British colonial government was established at about this time, and missionaries and settlers began to arrive.²⁰ White settlement had

¹⁶ Phillip Drucker, *Indians of the Northwest Coast* (Garden City: The National History Press, 1963; first published 1955), pp. 1-27, 107-08, 125 ff.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-23.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 125.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28; Duff, pp. 53 ff.

the earliest impact on the Coast Salish, for they occupied arable land accessible by ship. Here, as the new towns were created, Indians were displaced to nearby locations. In the rest of the province lands were reserved for Indians before white settlement began. Under Sir James Douglas, who retired as Governor in 1864, the colonial authorities pursued a policy, quite generous in comparative terms, in which local Indian communities were allowed to indicate the land they wished to use for residential purposes, and in which the government sought to reserve sufficient land for each Indian family to be self-sufficient (coastal communities, which relied upon the sea for livelihood, were allowed less land than others).²¹ Even before Douglas retired, however, his policy was curtailed to some extent by settler hostility. The entry of British Columbia into Canadian Confederation in 1871 led to the transfer to the federal government of responsibility for Indians and reserved lands. Following the second substantial influx of settlers, which occurred in the first decade of this century, the white demand for farm and ranch land led the provincial and federal governments to cut off land from a number of reserves. This second influx affected mainly the central and southern interior. The Coast and Interior Salish were thus everywhere affected by the proximity of settlers, while the other coastal groups and those in the northern interior were less affected. Nevertheless, the nature and lateness of contact in British Columbia, and the policies pursued by Douglas, generally allowed the Indians of British Columbia to escape the decimation, dislocation or relocation (often including admixture of diverse groups) so common elsewhere in Canada and the United States.

The fact that British Columbia was separated from Canada and had its own policy toward Indians prior to 1871 had major and long-lasting effects on government attempts to deal with the Indian land question in the province. Within British Columbia after Douglas' term there evolved "despite the intentions of all concerned in the beginning . . . a policy that ignored or denied the existence of any native title [to land] and therefore the need to make treaties."²² With the province's entry into Canada in 1871 Indians and Indian lands became a federal responsibility under section 91 (24) of the British North America Act. At various times in the following decades the federal government made clear its desire to have the British Columbia Indians surrender aboriginal title through treaty — as almost all Indians east of the Rocky Mountains came to do. Successive

²¹ Duff, pp. 60 ff.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

British Columbia provincial governments, however, were able to block any federal initiatives because the lands which the Indians would be signing away were now legally vested in the provincial crown. For the same reason provincial agreement was necessary if new reserves were to be created or existing ones enlarged. These circumstances did not exist in the prairie provinces, which were federal territories before they became provinces and in which the federal government retained title to crown land after they became provinces.

Moreover, by the turn of the century British Columbia Indians were developing a marked disinclination to surrender title by treaty or any other means. The only British Columbia Indians who did sign a treaty with the federal government were the Beaver and the Slave, whose land in the Peace River area east of the Rockies was the one major portion of the province held by the federal crown.²³ With this exception, which affects only a fraction of the Indian population, British Columbia Indians have never surrendered title to their land.²⁴ The British Columbia Indians, as an integral aspect of their political development, came to demand that provincial and federal governments acknowledge that the absence of treaties was not to be taken as an absence of agreement on the land question, but rather as proof that Indian title remains in effect. This demand is the essence of the Indian land claim in British Columbia. The lack of response to this demand has induced among British Columbia Indians a pervasive and well-founded conviction that provincial and federal governments have betrayed the initial recognition of Indian title by British colonial officials, by British courts and by British monarchs.²⁵

Federal policy assumed, and sought to promote, the eventual disappearance of Indians as a distinct people. Time appeared to be on the

²³ In 1899 the federal government still held title to this area, the Peace River Block, and was able to extend Treaty No. 8 into the area without the participation or consent of the province. Much earlier Governor Douglas concluded several treaties on southern Vancouver Island between Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company — these had no force once regular government was established. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁴ In recognition of the Indians' not having entered into a treaty relation with the Canadian government, the federal official in charge of Indian affairs in British Columbia was until the early 1970s given a different title — "Indian Commissioner for British Columbia" — and a higher salary than his counterparts in other regions of Canada. Treaties are also lacking in the Yukon, which was part of the British Columbia Indian Affairs region until the 1970s.

²⁵ "British Justice" thus became a powerful and positive symbol and slogan among the British Columbia Indians, with the British monarch seen as the living embodiment of the justice which was denied in Canada. Cf. Forrest LaViolette, *The Struggle for Survival* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 141. For a concise discussion of legal aspects of the land claim, see Douglas Sanders, "The Nishga Case," *BC Studies* 19 (Autumn 1973): 3-20.

federal side, for in British Columbia "the Indians were declining in numbers; and it was fully expected that they would pass out of the picture as a distinct element of the population within a couple of generations."²⁶ In the meantime the federal Indian Act provided the legal authority for supervision of Indians and provided the means by which a person could cease to be an Indian as legally defined. The Indian Act of 1886 defined as Indian "any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band . . . any child of such person [and] any woman who is or was lawfully married to such person,"²⁷ (and in order to give effect to the provision, an initial list or registry of Indians was compiled and maintained by the Department of Indian Affairs). Indian status is thus derived through descent on the male side from the males initially registered, or is granted to a non-Indian woman who marries a status Indian. Status Indian women lose their status upon marrying a person not registered as an Indian. The Act allowed, and the Department encouraged, individual Indians to relinquish their status. The distinction between status and non-status Indians is thus not strictly racial. Full-blooded Indians may be non-status (in some cases because their ancestor missed the initial registration — more often because they or a male forebear relinquished status) and persons without any Indian blood may be status Indians (because they have married status Indian husbands). Only status Indians may live (and be buried) on reserves and receive services from the federal government.

Supervision of Indians was effected through "agencies" — eventually there were twenty in British Columbia — each with a white "Indian agent" in charge. The agents dealt with local grievances and disputes; sought to encourage commercial, agricultural and occupational pursuits appropriate in the larger society; and worked closely with police and missionaries to suppress violence, to limit the influence of those opposed to authority, and to compel the schooling of Indian children.²⁸ Eventually the federal government came to provide directly to Indians the range of health and welfare services provided to non-Indians by the provinces.

The Indian Act withheld the federal franchise from Indians while other federal and provincial legislation attached special prohibitions and

²⁶ Duff, p. 62.

²⁷ Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Treaties and Historical Research Centre, "The Historical Development of the Indian Act" (Ottawa, mimeo., 1978), p. 61. This provision remains unchanged.

²⁸ Cf. the annual reports of the agents published in the annual reports of the Department of Indian Affairs.

penalties to the Indian use of alcohol. An early amendment to the Act outlawed certain traditional Indian ceremonies — notably the potlatch, which was the foundation of the coastal clans in British Columbia. The anti-potlatch provision,²⁹ which was inserted at the request of Indian agents and missionaries, who saw the potlatch as uncivilized and pagan, gave the agents and police a convenient means of discouraging assemblies of any sort, and the jailing of potlatch holders removed the Indian leaders with the most traditional authority. It is noteworthy, however, that prosecution of potlatch holders did not commence until the early 1920s, some three decades after the amendment to the Act. While a monumental potlatch among the Kwawgewlth at Alert Bay is commonly regarded as having triggered the prosecutions, it is also the case that the commencement of prosecutions coincided with the first province-wide Indian political activity. A further amendment to the Act, in 1927, was aimed directly at the British Columbia Indians and was intended to suppress political activity by the Indians in pursuit of their land claim. The amendment prohibited the soliciting or receipt of money from any Indian “for the prosecution of any claim.”³⁰ The potlatch and fund-raising prohibitions were removed in 1951 and the federal franchise was granted to Indians in 1960 — the provincial franchise had been extended to Indians in British Columbia in 1947.

Although a full examination has yet to be made into the effects of Christian missionary activity in British Columbia upon Indian political organization and relations with government, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the missionary efforts did have important effects in these areas. Permeating the missionary enterprise from its major beginnings in the 1860s was a certain critical ambivalence — or, at least, what must be seen in retrospect as an ambivalence. On the one hand the enterprise could appear to be, and certainly claimed to be, an autonomous effort of the churches. Yet the missionary goal was both to save and to civilize the Indians — the two aspects were one and the same — and this goal was in complete accord with the government goal of Indian assimilation. Indeed it was undoubtedly the case that government officials and the white public in both Britain and Canada looked upon the missionary effort as essential to both the immediate pacification and the longer-term assimilation of the Indian population. The missionary enterprise thus

²⁹ Indian Act, RSC 1927, c. 98, sec. 140. The provision was aimed also at the sun-dance ceremony among plains Indians.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, sec. 141.

could become and did become part and parcel of the governmental enterprise to assimilate the Indian people. At the local level the Indian agents, the police and military officials were especially solicitous of the safety and well-being of the missionaries; missionaries often travelled to their postings with government officials or were conveyed in navy vessels; officials visiting a locality would rarely fail to visit the missionaries and would often attend mission church services or stay in the homes of the missionaries; and in some cases the missionaries were appointed as justices of the peace with power to appoint constables and to effect search, seizure and arrest.³¹ In such circumstances the local Indians could scarcely have detected any fundamental distinction between religious and secular authority — nor would their own traditions have prepared them to perceive such a distinction. The fusion between religion and government was most explicit and evident in the schooling of Indian children. Education was seen by the churches and by the government as the primary means of civilizing the heathens. The fusion of religion and government and of the goals of church and state is illustrated in the Department of Indian Affairs annual report of 1927.

[The] informal union between church and state still exists, and all Canadian Indian schools are conducted upon a joint agreement between the Government and the denominations. . . . The method has proved successful, and the Indians of Ontario and Quebec . . . are every day entering more and more into the general life of the country. . . . The irresistible movement is towards the goal of complete citizenship. . . . In the civilized tribes, who have met and withstood the first shock of contact with civilization, there is an appreciable gain, not only in numbers, but in physical standards. These latter people have long ago proved their worth, and only need to develop and mature under protection until they, one and all, reach their destined goal, full British citizenship.³²

The widespread conversion of the Indians to the practice of Christianity in a matter of two or three decades is one of the more striking phenomena in the post-contact history of British Columbia. The obvious failure of traditional beliefs and experience to account for and to allow control of the post-contact circumstances in which the Indians found

³¹ Examples of such instances may be found in the annual reports of the Indian agents from the 1880s through to the 1920s and also in such works as William Henry Collison, *In the Wake of the War Canoe: A stirring record of forty years' successful labour, peril and adventure amongst the savage Indian tribes of the Pacific coast . . .*, edited and annotated by Charles Lillard (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1981; first published in 1915).

³² Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report, 1927*, p. 8.

themselves may explain any collapse of traditional belief and practice, but it does not by itself explain the rapid and widespread adoption of the religious practices brought by the Europeans. Several factors would appear to provide some explanation for the rapid conversion. Most of the missionaries devoted great effort to learning the local language, and seem often to have encountered hostility until they could speak the language. The devastating epidemics of European diseases were at least in some cases,³³ and probably in many, explained by the missionaries as being the result of failure to practise Christianity. The missionaries' own obvious immunity to the diseases must have made such an explanation seem rather credible. In several cases, notably those of William Duncan among the Tsimshian at Metlakatla and of Bishop Durieu among the Coast Salish, local theocracies were established, and in these the pressure to convert was intense. Under Durieu the penalty for not attending church was a flogging of 40 lashes.³⁴ More generally the Christian ceremonies, especially in the form of immense mass meetings bringing many villages together, may have served some of the same purposes as traditional ceremonies such as the potlatch among the coastal peoples.

It is possible and likely that Indian leaders may have felt an additional inducement to profess Christianity. To oppose Christianity would be to risk losing prestige and influence among their own people as well as to invite the active hostility of both missionaries and government officials.³⁵ Certainly the annual reports of the Indian agents contain many indications that unconverted leaders were looked upon with mistrust and suspicion while those who had converted were regarded with trust and favour. It would seem reasonable to suppose that some Indian leaders did profess Christianity as the result of a conscious and rational decision to seek to maintain something of their traditional role. Indirect evidence for this possibility lies in the leaders at times being among the last of their people to convert — as Robin Fisher has observed, "Resistance was particularly strong from those who had a greater investment in the continu-

³³ Edwin M. Lemert, "The Life and Death of an Indian State," *Human Organization* XIII (No. 3, 1954), p. 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁵ A poignant story is told among the Nishga about the last chief to remain unconverted. On the instructions of the missionary, J. B. McCullagh, the recalcitrant was tied-up and carried bodily into Sunday service. Untied, the chief placed his fingers in his ears and kept them there through the service. Shortly thereafter, while hunting with a new shotgun, which he was carrying with his finger in the barrel to prevent the entry of snow, he tripped and blew off his finger. He proceeded to McCullagh for first aid and baptism.

ation of the old lifestyle . . . [and] older people and Indian leaders often rejected Christianity in the early years. . . .³⁶

The differences between Roman Catholic and the Protestant missionaries and their approach to the Indians proved to have major consequences for later Indian political activity. The earliest Catholic missionaries came from Quebec and from Europe, travelling by ship directly to the southeast and with fur trading brigades into the interior. The first arrivals were mostly French Canadian, Belgian or French, while later ones were mostly Irish.³⁷ The Protestant missionaries — mainly Anglican and Methodist, but also Presbyterian and later Salvation Army — were of British origin and confined their activities largely to the west/central and north coasts, where the Catholics had either made little effort or attained little success. Local missionary efforts could thus be especially effective because there was in most cases no Catholic-Protestant competition at the village level. As a result of the division of enterprise the Indians of the interior and south coast (with the exceptions of those at Telegraph Creek and along the lower Thompson River, who became Anglicans, and of those around Chilliwack, who became Methodists) accepted Catholicism while those of the west/central and north coasts became Protestants. It happened also that almost every language group became virtually all Catholic or all Protestant. Only the Thompson, Fraser River Halkomelem, and the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples came to include substantial numbers of both Catholics and Protestants.³⁸

The Protestant missionaries and the government officials (both federal and provincial) had much in common. The officials were mostly of British origin and most were themselves Protestant. The missionaries, in social class origin, in education and because of their church positions, were usually the social equals or superiors of the officials. Contact and mutual support could for these reasons be especially close. The Protestant missionaries could thus be particularly effective as advisors to the Indians

³⁶ Robin Fisher, "Missions to the Indians of British Columbia," in John Veillette and Gary White, *Early Indian Village Churches: Wooden Frontier Architecture in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), p. 11. Fisher provides a concise and sensitive account of the missionary enterprise in British Columbia, and Veillette and White's volume contains a bibliography of works on missionary activity.

³⁷ Lemert, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

³⁸ Mention of the religion of each band in the province is made in the 1904 annual reports of the Indian agents. These same reports contain various observations and comments indicating the close co-operation between agents and missionaries. Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report, 1904*.

in dealings with governments. While seeking to suppress the potlatch and other traditional Indian practices and symbols, a number of Protestant missionaries, perhaps most notably several Anglican missionaries on the north coast, at the same time gave active support to the Indians in promoting their land claims. The Anglican missionaries perhaps appeared to the Indians as an especially potent ally, for the British monarch, the symbol of justice to the Indians, was the head of the Anglican Church.³⁹ The various Protestant denominations, moreover, allowed some indigenization of Protestant symbols and practices — missionaries were adopted into clans, some wore clan raiment while preaching and administering communion, and some allowed traditional Indian symbols to be incorporated into church architecture and altar fixtures. A number of Protestant missionaries had their wives with them, and these women could communicate and work directly with the Indian women and children as male missionaries could not. The Protestants encouraged Indians to seek church office, and several did — most notably Peter Kelly of the Haida, who became an ordained Methodist clergyman, and Frank Calder of the Nishga, who graduated from the Anglican Theological College of the University of British Columbia. Finally, the majority of Protestant missions were removed from the possibly deleterious effects of substantial white settlement, for the west/central and north coast locations usually lacked arable land and were for the most part accessible only by sea.

The Catholic missionaries, for the most part differing from the government officials in religion and country of origin, and often not having English as their first language, could not be expected to be as useful to the Indians in dealing with governments as were the Protestants. In any case, the Catholics do not appear to have aided in promoting land claims. The Catholic effort was apparently much more directed toward suppressing and eliminating traditional social organization and was in major

³⁹ The juxtaposition of Anglicanism and devotion to the ideals of British justice (cf. note 25, above) was especially evident among the Nishga, the group which is conspicuous for its early political organization in pursuit of its land claim. Anglicanism actually gained ground among the Nishga subsequent to the establishment of the missions, for the large Greenville population switched from Methodism to Anglicanism. Today only the smallest Nishga village, Canyon City, which consists of Salvation Army adherents, is not Anglican. The resident white Anglican clergy have always played an active part in Nishga political activity, while the Salvation Army officers have always declined to do so. For a thorough analysis of the Nishga land claim activities, see Edwin Peter May, "The Nishga Land Claim 1873-1973" (unpublished MA thesis, Department of History, Simon Fraser University, 1979).

instances — notably among the Coast Salish⁴⁰ — highly successful in this endeavour. There appears to have been very little overt indigenization of Catholic symbols and practices — the interiors of the mission churches, indeed, appear to have been exact replicas of those in Quebec and Europe.⁴¹ The lifestyle of the single and celibate priests was perhaps not fully understood for what it was, and the priests could not deal directly with the Indian women. There was evidently little encouragement to Indians to take up orders, and no British Columbia Indian became a priest, although within the Catholic villages, as in the Protestant, Indians were assigned to various positions whose authority was delegated from the missionary. Finally, the majority of Catholic missions were located in the areas which were soon subject to the full onslaught of white settlement, commerce and transportation. The immigrants were mostly English-speaking and of Protestant background, from Ontario, Scotland, England and the United States. As the Indians learned English from the newcomers they also encountered “the skepticism, agnosticism and anti-Catholic attitudes of white loggers, fishermen, and others,” and as a result there occurred a “precipitous decline of delegated native leadership [which] presently extended to the erosion of priestly authority.”⁴²

Although the Catholic missionary effort continued, and while the majority of south coast and interior Indians remain nominal Catholics today, Catholicism did not become a positive and unifying element in subsequent Indian political organization. Protestantism, on the contrary, did. The major differences between the subsequent Indian political organization of the west/central and the north coast, on the one hand, and of the south coast and the interior, on the other, would appear to rest in part on the differing nature and effects of the Protestant and Catholic missionary activities. Of equal importance in explaining the differences would appear to be the unique social organization of west/central and north coast peoples. The clans would seem to have provided both the leaders to respond to Christianity and a traditional social structure which could adapt to Christianity yet still survive in recognizable form. R. W.

⁴⁰ Cf. Lemert, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ Cf. the photographs in Veillette and White.

⁴² Lemert, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Lemert is referring specifically to the collapse of Bishop Durieu's theocracy. He notes also that this system was seriously affected in 1892 “with the arrest, trial, and conviction of a highly regarded Oblate priest, Father Chirouse, for his acquiescent role in the double flogging of an adultress in one of the interior villages of the Lillooet Indians. . . . The trial was widely publicized and its effect was to seriously damage and weaken the entire social control system of the priests by removing its underlying sanction of force and coercion.” *Ibid.*

Nicholas has observed that "aboriginal acephalous political systems" in the United States have had more difficulty than systems with firm leadership roles in responding to external pressures,⁴³ and the British Columbia experience supports this observation. The conjunction of British Protestantism and the indigenous clan structure on the British Columbia Coast was historically fortuitous, yet fateful for the later history of British Columbia Indians.

The churches and the Canadian government through the schooling of Indian children contributed to the formation among British Columbia Indians of a particular pattern of "pan-Indianism" — that is, a unified outlook and awareness of common features and interests beyond the level of the individual tribal group. Before contact there was mutual awareness among neighbouring language groups, as indicated by the pre-contact Chinook lingua franca along the coast and by trade between coastal and interior groups, but there was no pan-Indianism. While there is probably too little recognition of the role of Indian employment in commerce and industry in the development of post-contact pan-Indianism,⁴⁴ the major force and influence in this development in British Columbia would seem to have been the Indian residential schools — just as these schools undoubtedly were in the development of pan-Indianism in the United States.⁴⁵ The residential schools (each of which, it will be recalled, was run by one of the denominations) brought together Indian children from differing language groups and kept them away from their families for long periods, thus promoting an expanded Indian awareness and identity. But in British Columbia, because of the geographical basis of the religious division, the schools to a large extent confined this expanded identity to the west/central and north coast, on the one hand, and to the remainder of the province on the other. Five of the seven Protestant schools were located on the west/central and north coast; a sixth was at Lytton serving the Thompson River Anglicans; and the seventh, Coqualeetza, while located in the Methodist enclave at Chilliwack, received many of its students (including Frank Calder) from the Protestant coastal areas.

⁴³ "Factions: A Comparative Analysis," in *Political Systems and the Distribution of Power*, A. S. A. Monographs 2 (London: Tavistock, 1965), p. 55.

⁴⁴ Rolf Knight argues that the effect of widespread industrial and other employment of Indians has been underestimated. *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1978).

⁴⁵ Hertzberg, p. 303; Robert K. Thomas, "Pan-Indianism," in *The Emergent Native Americans: A Reader in Culture Contact*, ed. Deward E. Walker, Jr. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), pp. 740-41.

Eight of the nine Catholic schools were located on the south coast or in the interior — the ninth served the Catholic southern Nuu-chah-nulth on the lower west coast of Vancouver Island. Protestantism and Catholicism themselves became elements in the new identities — and added an element of antipathy, for the religious instruction taught that adherents of the other faith were misguided if not heretical. George Manuel has commented that the admonition that any dealings with Protestants would lead to everlasting burning in the fires of hell was sufficiently stark as to have at least some effect on him and other students in the Kamloops Residential School.⁴⁶

As befitted the union of church and state which they exemplified, the schools, besides seeking to inculcate Christianity, sought to implant attitudes and skills which would promote assimilation. The separation of children from their families and villages removed them from traditional influence and the schools sought explicitly to eliminate the use of Indian languages. Children were punished with strapping in both Protestant and Catholic schools for speaking their own language — whether in or out of the classroom. George Manuel argues persuasively that until well after the Second World War the schools served the purposes of Christianity and government by inculcating a passive acceptance of authority and by actively suppressing tendencies of individual students towards initiative and leadership. Manuel's own experience is instructive — especially in light of his being the first interior Indian to gain a reputation for standing up to government and to gain a wide following among the interior Indian people. He was taken to the Kamloops school in the late 1920s. While never beaten himself, his most vivid memories are of seeing other students strapped for using their own language and of seeing one teenager whipped into unconsciousness with a length of rubber hose for running away from school — the whipping would have stopped earlier had the boy cried out, but he refused to. Suffering from mastoiditis, Manuel was held without anesthetic over a table and operated upon by a priest using an ordinary knife. Subsequently he was found to have tuberculosis and was transferred to the Methodist "preventorium" for Indians at Coqualeetza. His schooling was never resumed. His formative years were thus spent away from his home and family and in confinement with Indians from all over the province. Manuel now regards the tuberculosis as having saved him from the corrosive soul-washing of the school and so as having allowed him to retain more traditional values, to

⁴⁶ Interview, Vancouver, March 1980.

develop ideas about the rights of his people and to have the self-confidence to stand up for those rights.⁴⁷ In contrast, leaders who attended Protestant schools, while mentioning the suppression of language and the irrelevancy of some of the curriculum, do not have strongly negative memories of their schooling.⁴⁸

Signs of condescension by west/central and north coast people toward interior and south coast people, and a corresponding resentment, are by no means absent today — although such feelings would seem more evident among older people. Some older Kwawgewlth will still allude to the former practice of taking slaves from among the Coast Salish and in so doing deprecate the idea of contemporary political co-operation with the Coast Salish. Jokes told privately among the west/central and north coast people tend to place the Coast Salish in the same light as Newfie jokes place Newfoundlanders. North coast people will at times make comments critical of the interior Indians' adoption of some aspects of Plains Indian culture — such as the wearing of feathered headdress on ceremonial occasions and the everyday wearing of the cowboy hat with feather. Interior Indians will make corresponding comments about the north coast adoption of three-piece suit and tie as the proper dress for meetings — presumably a habit acquired from the British missionaries.⁴⁹ Manuel has summed up the matter diplomatically: "Coastal people have traditionally taken such a pride in their own culture that they tend to look down on interior Indians, whose way of life is a good deal less elaborate."⁵⁰

All in all there can be little doubt that the potential for political communication and organization was greater within the coastal language

⁴⁷ Manuel, interviews. I have been told of a teen-aged girl who was, in the 1950s, punished in one school for bed-wetting first by being draped, in chapel in front of the other students, with the wet sheet. When this proved unsuccessful her head was shaved — also in chapel. In the 1950s friends of mine who lived directly across the river from the Kamloops Residential School observed priests striking Indian boys with lengths of rope to encourage the boys to greater efforts in hauling out cattle which had fallen through the ice.

⁴⁸ At least this is true of those whom I have interviewed.

⁴⁹ One Shuswap elder described his unease when he attended his first meeting with north coast people and found himself among, in his words, "those sharpies in three-piece suits." He also observed that when the Native Brotherhood held its first convention in the interior, in Kamloops in 1959, the white Kamloops businessmen were amazed to see Indians in suits and wearing ties, and thereafter the businessmen gave better treatment to the local Indians. At the same time the interior Indians responded "like country cousins" to the presence of the Convention. (Interview, 1980)

⁵⁰ George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World* (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1974), p. 136.

groups at the time of European contact than it was within the groups of the interior. The Nishga may even have achieved organization before contact. The coastal groups occupied fairly compact territories in which communication by water was relatively easy and rapid. They were concentrated into relatively few large villages. The interior groups extended over larger territories within which communication had usually to be by foot, and was thus slower and more difficult, and these groups were scattered in smaller villages. The coastal peoples had a more structured social organization than did the interior peoples. Social organization was especially structured, in the form of clans, among the north coast peoples. The Protestant missionary effort, on the west/central and north coasts, would seem to have had a less damaging effect on traditional social organization than did the Catholic effort and white settlement in the remainder of the province. On the coast, however, Catholicism and white settlement did affect one major group, the Coast Salish. That Indian agencies tended more on the west/central and north coast than on the south coast and in the interior to coincide with individual language group territories probably also enhanced language group self-awareness on the west/central and north coasts. Schooling promoted a pan-Indian identity beyond the level of the language groups, but simultaneously tended to mold the pan-Indian sentiments and perceptions within the limits of the Protestant west/central and north coasts, on the one hand, and of the Catholic south coast and interior, on the other. Within the latter areas, however, as the more extensive and more scattered and numerous language groups might suggest (and as later political development confirmed) the pan-Indian sentiments were less well developed than in the former areas. While promoting the two pan-Indian identities the school system simultaneously implanted elements of suspicion and prejudice between them.

There is one final background element which must be pointed to. Indian political activity in British Columbia before 1969 was the political activity of status Indians. The substantial non-status population did not display interest in Indian political activity nor did the politically active Indians seek the support of non-status Indians. The missionary effort among Indians was directed almost entirely towards Indians living on reserves. Government did not acknowledge or even perceive non-status Indians as a meaningful and identifiable group. All this was eventually to change. Non-status Indians would themselves become an important force within Indian politics, while the question of the relation between status and non-status Indians, both in pursuit of the land claim and

within Indian organizations, would become a most critical issue. Here too the dualism in pan-Indian identity would be apparent and have its effect on the outcome, for the clan structure functioned to override the status/non-status distinction. Clan affiliation and the right to participate in clan ceremonials did not depend on the Indian Act, and as a result the west/central coast and north coast political leaders came even before 1969 to see themselves as acting on behalf of non-status Indians and ultimately, after 1969, they came to regard non-status support and participation as essential to the legitimacy of Indian political claims and political action. The south coast and interior leaders did not share the perceptions and sought to maintain their political organizations exclusively of and for status Indians.

Indian Political Organizations to 1966

LaViolette, Drucker, Manuel and Posluns, Duff, Kopas, Hawthorn et al, Mitchell, Fisher and Patterson⁵¹ have dealt with Indian political organizations in the period before 1966, but there has been no account dealing specifically and comprehensively with the organizations. Kopas' thesis, however, deserves recognition as the first work to focus on the general phenomenon and as one containing a number of conclusions which remain valid today. While it is likely that early political organizations did exist for which no evidence is available, such organizations were almost certainly short-lived and confined to particular agencies. In his examination of the period before 1890 Fisher identifies no political organizations, although he does point to a number of protest actions and petitions and states that "the first steps in political action" were taken by the Tsimshian (in fact the Nishga) in 1887 when they resisted attempts to survey their land.⁵² In response a federal-provincial commission of inquiry was sent to the Nass Valley to hear the Nishga complaints.

⁵¹ In addition to the previously cited works there are: Drucker, *The Native Brotherhoods* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958); Leslie Clifford Kopas, "Political Action of the Indians of British Columbia" (unpublished MA thesis, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of British Columbia, 1972); H. B. Hawthorn, C. S. Belshaw, and S. M. Jamieson, *The Indians of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960); Darcy Mitchell, "The Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia: A Study in Pressure Group Behaviour" (unpublished MA thesis, Department of Political Science, University of British Columbia, 1977); Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977); and E. Palmer Patterson, "Andrew Paull and Canadian Indian Resurgence" (unpublished PhD thesis, Department of History, University of Washington, 1962).

⁵² Fisher, pp. 205-10.

The Nass chiefs presented their case with eloquence and dignity, but were met with statements of legal technicalities which they could not comprehend. Again and again they explained that they owned all the land and had never given it up, and they objected to being given a few small reserves. How was it that the land no longer belonged to them, but to the Queen?⁵³

By the turn of the century Indian protest groups concerned with the land question, or aboriginal rights more generally, were becoming less sporadic in nature and more able to survive for months if not years. The Nishga Land Committee, composed of the hereditary chiefs from each Nishga village, emerged at this time to press the Nishga land claim. It was apparently the first lasting Indian political organization in the province and it definitely was the first one of substance. Among the indigenized aspects of the Anglican church evolving among the Nishga before the turn of the century was the holding of huge and lengthy "revival meetings." Among the vivid childhood memories of one Nishga elder of today is the sight of hundreds of people ("whole villages") walking on the frozen Nass River on their way to these meetings. In these meetings the hereditary chiefs gave speeches on any matters of concern to the Nishga — prominent in these speeches was anxiety over threats to the sanctity of the Nishga "hunting grounds." By at least 1909 the chiefs, some sixteen in number, had formed themselves into the Land Committee, which included among its structural features the rotating of its chairmanship among the different villages. The Committee would thus appear to have used the revival meetings as a prime method of public education on the land question.⁵⁴ In 1909 the Committee arranged meetings with the leaders of other north coast tribal groups to form the Indian Tribes of B.C.⁵⁵ Also in 1909, under the guidance of J. A. Teit, a white trapper and later an anthropologist, of Spences Bridge, a group of southern interior chiefs formed the Indian Rights Association.⁵⁶ In 1913 the Nishga Land Committee presented its land claim petition in Ottawa. The petition, like various later actions of the Nishga, proved of seminal importance in Indian politics. In 1915 the southern interior group, now calling itself the Interior Tribes of B.C., met, endorsed the Nishga peti-

⁵³ Duff, p. 68; see also pp. 61-69.

⁵⁴ Interview, Aiyansh, May 1980 and Victoria, June 1981; photographs on display in the Nishga Tribal Council office, Aiyansh; LaViolette, p. 133; Duff, p. 106; May, pp. 65 ff.

⁵⁵ Mitchell, p. 121.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

tion and sent Teit and eight chiefs (seven Salish and one Kootenay) to Ottawa with their own petition.⁵⁷

In 1916 the Indian Tribes of B.C. and the Interior Tribes of B.C. met in Vancouver to form the Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia for the purpose of pursuing the land claim. The organization retained its initial vigour for some half dozen years. Non-Indian advisors played a continuing role, although the Reverend Peter Kelly (Haida) and Andrew Paull (Squamish) became the acknowledged leaders as president and secretary, respectively. Mitchell observes that "the local level of the Allied Tribes remained essentially unorganized, while the Executive Committee was structured in a highly formal fashion" and that "the mission school educated, politically minded leadership often had considerable difficulty in communicating its doctrine of 'strength through unity' to a geographically scattered and culturally diverse population."⁵⁸ Northern interior groups were never involved; the Nishga, while continuing to give verbal support, withdrew by 1922; and despite explicit attempts to paper over the coastal-interior differences, the interior chiefs and Teit also withdrew. Kelly and Paull's energetic advocacy, however, led to the formation in 1926 of a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons to inquire into the organization's land claim on behalf of all B.C. Indians. The Committee rejected the claim, and the provision prohibiting fund-raising in pursuit of claims was added to the Indian Act. The Allied Tribes soon collapsed.

The Native Brotherhood of British Columbia (NBBC) was formed beginning in 1931⁵⁹ and is today the longest-lived Canadian Indian organization. It was founded by Alfred Adams (Haida) on the model of the Native Brotherhood of Alaska, in which some of Adams' relatives were active. The formation of the NBBC is the only case prior to 1969 in which a model from outside British Columbia was followed — but the Alaska model was hardly a foreign one to the north coast, for Haida occupy the southern Alaska Panhandle and the Indians of the entire Panhandle share the north coast culture. While the main activity of the NBBC has always been that of representing the interests of Indian commercial fishermen, from the beginning it concerned itself with wider issues as well. (The Brotherhood newspaper, the *Native Voice*, which began publication in 1946, and was until 1969 the province's only In-

⁵⁷ *Native Voice*, April 1968, contains a photograph of the delegation.

⁵⁸ Mitchell, pp. 67 and 64.

⁵⁹ Drucker, *The Native Brotherhoods*; Duff, p. 106.

dian newspaper, dealt consistently with such wider issues.) In this sense, as well as in the perception of its founding members, the Brotherhood was a successor to the Allied Tribes. Peter Kelly, the president of the Allied Tribes, was a founding member and remained one of the prominent leaders until his death.

Native Indians had not been allowed to become commercial fishermen until 1923,⁶⁰ and so not until then did many Indians have the incentive and the income to obtain large motorized boats. Only with the advent of such boats did Indians attain the ability to travel among coastal villages in relative speed and safety at all seasons of the year. By the turn of the century English had become sufficiently widespread among the Indians to provide the radically new potential for communication among the differing language groups, but only with the coming into Indian hands of the larger motorized boats did the potential materialize. In the last and most active years of the Allied Tribes of B.C., Kelly and Paull were conveyed from village to village along the coast by Indian commercial fishermen. In the Native Brotherhood Adams and other leaders had their own boats, while those who did not could always count on a ride to the next village.⁶¹ Commercial fishermen, moreover, could contribute money as well as movement — because of this unique base of support the Brotherhood was able to survive during a period of several decades (1931-1955) as the only substantial Indian organization in the province.

Protestantism served as a unifying and integrating factor in the Brotherhood. Hawthorn et al have pointed to the “background of religious belief” and “the religious foundation of the Brotherhood,” as “symbolized by the fact that the leadership is drawn almost entirely from well-known Protestant families, that the Protestant form of worship is incorporated into procedures,” and “that ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’ is the official theme song of the movement.”⁶² Beside Adams and Kelly, other prominent leaders before 1969 were William Scow (Kwawgewlth), Guy Williams (Haisla) and Frank Calder (Nishga). Andrew Paull joined the Brotherhood in 1942, became the Brotherhood’s first business agent, and set up the first head office — in Vancouver. Paull was the only Roman Catholic ever prominent in the Brotherhood. Any good relations he had with the Brotherhood’s north coast leaders did not last long. In 1944 he was suspended as business agent and quit the organization. Patterson

⁶⁰ LaViolette, p. 138.

⁶¹ Guy Williams, interview, Kincolith, April 1980.

⁶² P. 475.

states that "it seems to be true that Paull was especially active among Roman Catholic Indians. It is probable that this association became clearer after he broke with the NBBC."⁶³

The Native Brotherhood structure rested on locals or branches. Each branch had its own vice-president and secretary and held periodic meetings, while the general organization held annual conventions. The Nishga or Nass River Branch was formed in 1932 at a meeting in Greenville⁶⁴ — the meeting was organized by Arthur Calder, who had been one of the leaders of the Nishga Land Committee, and attended by Alfred Adams. Frank Calder, Arthur's adopted son, then 17 years old (and close school friend of Adams' son Oliver), served as secretary of the meeting and was appointed branch secretary, a position he held until he became general secretary of the Brotherhood in 1949. The Nishga leaders accepted the Nass River Branch enthusiastically as a means not only of meeting their needs as fishermen but also, and critically, as a means of continuing the activities of the Nishga Land Committee. Most of the surviving members of the Land Committee were present at the Greenville meeting.

Each of the other west/central and north coast tribal groups had active NBBC branches. The Kwawgewlth and Nuu-chah-nulth, or sub-groups within them, were at times restive within the Brotherhood, but both groups contributed leaders to the organization. The Island Salish had a branch, and there were several among the mainland Coast Salish, but these did not attain the vitality of the other coast branches. There were at times nominal branches in the interior, but these consisted of only a few individuals. The Native Brotherhood was always an organization of the west/central and north coast.

The North American Indian Brotherhood (NAIB) was formed by Andrew Paull commencing in 1943 while he was still with the NBBC. While Paull claimed a cross-Canada and even a continental base for the NAIB, and organized several meetings in central Canada (including the founding meeting), the NAIB in British Columbia was an organization of the south coast and the central and southern interior. Roman Catholic clergy were often present at NAIB meetings. The NAIB and the NBBC were very much rival organizations. Until Paull's death in 1959 the NAIB lacked a firm organizational structure and was largely a by-product

⁶³ Patterson, p. 232; see also pp. 205 ff.

⁶⁴ This and the following information is based upon an interview with a Nishga elder who was present at the Greenville meeting and subsequently played a leading role in the Nass River Branch.

of Paull's personality, although Henry Castillou, a white Williams Lake lawyer, was an influential advisor. George Manuel later wrote that Paull was "one whom we came to know and love in the interior," and that "there was no doubt that the North American Brotherhood was always a support group for Andy Paull's own powerful and unique personality."⁶⁵

Within British Columbia the NAIB does not appear to have had any formal structure. In the interior, however, Paull arranged the formation of an organization called the Confederacy of the Interior Tribes of British Columbia. While Paull is not linked to the Confederacy in any of the published sources which mention it, Frank Calder recalls travelling with Paull as Paull organized several of the early meetings.⁶⁶ All the meetings appear to have taken place at Kamloops. Possibly the earliest took place in 1945.⁶⁷ Frank Assu, who was not an interior Indian but a Kwawgewith and a follower of Paull's,⁶⁸ served as president of the Confederacy for a time. In 1947 a Special Joint Parliamentary Committee was considering amendments to the Indian Act in Ottawa. In the spring Guy Williams, by this time Paull's successor as NBBC business agent, was invited by the Committee to speak to it on behalf of all B.C. Indians, since the Native Brotherhood was the only organization the Committee was aware of in the province. Williams did so on May 2. On July 3 Assu held a meeting of the Confederacy in Kamloops attended by twenty-four persons — most of whom were Shuswap, and eight of whom were chiefs of bands. The twenty-four signed a resolution which Assu sent to the Parliamentary Committee objecting to the NBBC's having been asked to provide a spokesman for all B.C. Indians: "We wish to say that the Native Brotherhood of B.C. did not represent our views or opinions and that their delegates did not have our permission to speak for us and that Guy Williams . . . did not speak for us, and we repudiate everything he said. . . ."⁶⁹ The Confederacy held meetings occasionally in subsequent years but did not establish any substantial presence.

⁶⁵ Manuel and Posluns, pp. 84 and 97.

⁶⁶ Interview, Victoria, June 1981. Hawthorn et al, 474, attribute the formation of Confederacy to Basil Falardeau (Shuswap), but it would seem to be the case that Falardeau was at most present at one of the early meetings — certainly Falardeau was a member of the organization, and he may have served as chairman at some early meetings (as he did for later ones).

⁶⁷ Hawthorn et al, p. 474.

⁶⁸ In 1948, however, there appears to have been a falling-out between the two, and Assu replaced Paull for a year as president of the national manifestation of the NAIB. Patterson, pp. 278-315.

⁶⁹ Canada, Parliament, Session 1947, Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons appointed to continue . . . consideration of the Indian Act,

In the provincial election of 1949, held two years after the grant of the provincial franchise to Indians, Frank Calder was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Atlin riding, which includes the Nishga and Tahltan territories in the northwestern portion of the province. He was the first Indian elected to a legislature in Canada. While the extension of the franchise to Indians was effected as an afterthought to accompany the lifting of the racial restrictions which had prevented Chinese, Japanese and East Indians from voting, it was still the case that the Atlin riding was allowed to continue with a majority of Indian voters — rather than being gerrymandered to eliminate the majority. Calder now became the most prominent Indian in the province and maintained this prominence until after 1969 (he was defeated in 1979). Calder was elected as a member of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, and continued as a CCF and then New Democratic Party member until after 1969. In the election of 1949, however, the Native Brotherhood had endorsed the governing Liberal-Conservative Coalition, in an explicit gesture of gratitude for the Indian franchise. Two years later Guy Williams attempted to form the "Indian Non-Partisan Party." The founding meeting was attended by persons prominent in each west/central and north coast group except the Nishga.⁷⁰ Nothing further occurred. Williams' action remains as the only attempt to transpose directly into Indian politics an organizational form established in non-Indian politics, the only initiative towards having an Indian organization compete directly with non-Indian organizations, and the only effort to form an Indian organization for the purpose of participating in provincial politics. Williams was later active as a Conservative and then as a Liberal, and was ultimately appointed as a Liberal member of the Canadian Senate.

George Manuel (Shuswap) came to be regarded as the successor to Paull as spokesman for the interior peoples. Manuel, although like Paull largely self-educated, had acquired a broad knowledge of Indian society and the workings of government, and an interest in historical and constitutional questions. He also benefited from the advice of Henry Castillou. By 1957 he was concerned specifically with organizing interior Indian

Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (No. 41, 9 July 1947), pp. 2050-51 (cited hereafter as Parliamentary Committee on Indian Act, *Proceedings*.) Assu's covering letter stated, misleadingly, that the Confederacy had been "organized" at the July 3 meeting. For Williams' presentation to the Committee and the Committee's questioning him about the state of Indian organization in B.C. see No. 17, 2 May 1947, pp. 781 ff.

⁷⁰ Kopas, pp. 132-33. Kopas does not state this fact explicitly, but his list of persons includes no Nishga.

people in pursuit of improvements in medical services. Unlike Paull, Manuel was a thorough and patient organizer, aware of the need to create strength, awareness and self-sufficiency at the band level as the basis for wider political organization. Manuel hitchhiked through the interior on his organizational rounds. For many decades the railways had been virtually the sole means of transportation available to Indians in the interior. Kamloops and Spences Bridge were the major Indian meeting places in the interior precisely because they were the two railway junction points. But many Indian villages were far from any railroad. It was the automobile which opened the interior villages to political organization. Hitch-hiking was a feasible means of travel for an Indian only after automobiles had been acquired by a minimal number of Indians (a stage reached in the mid-1950s), since whites in the interior have always tended to avoid giving rides to Indians.⁷¹ Like the motorized fishing boat on the coast, the automobile in the interior proved a catalyst in the emergence of Indian political organizations.

In 1958 Manuel approached the NBBC with the proposal that efforts towards coastal-interior co-operation be undertaken. The idea emerged of holding the 1959 NBBC convention in Kamloops. In the same period a Joint Parliamentary Committee was once again examining the Indian Act and seeking comment from Indian organizations. Manuel, with some travel funds, spent parts of 1958 and 1959 travelling throughout the interior and Fraser Valley for the purpose of organizing delegates to the Kamloops meeting and for the purpose of consulting these groups in preparation of a brief to the Parliamentary Committee. Manuel was joined in his efforts in 1959 by Oscar Peters, chief of the Hope band and one of the few Coast Salish who belonged to the NBBC. Together they formed what they referred to as an "aboriginal rights committee" with Peters as chairman and Genevieve Mussell (white status-Indian chief of the Skwah band of Chilliwack) as vice-chairman. The other active member was William Walkem (Thompson), chief of the Spences Bridge band.⁷²

The 1959 convention of the Native Brotherhood in Kamloops proved to be of pivotal importance to the furtherance of political organization in the interior and to the progress of the Nishga land claim. The formation

⁷¹ Manuel, interview, February 1980. My own memories of growing up and travelling in the interior confirm this point. Indian hitch-hikers were few in the early 1950s but numerous by 1960. The pick-up pattern was almost exclusively racial.

⁷² Parliamentary Committee on Indian Act, *Proceedings* (No. 7, 26 May 1960), p. 621; Kopas, pp. 138-39; Manuel and Posluns, pp. 99-120; Manuel, interviews, February and March 1980.

of the Nishga Tribal Council (which is discussed subsequently) had occurred in 1955. The Tribal Council sent a delegation of eight to the Kamloops convention — even though the eight, led by Calder, were leaders of the Nass River branch of the Brotherhood (and Calder was Brotherhood general secretary) they regarded themselves explicitly as representing the Tribal Council. George Manuel and the Nishga both hoped that the Native Brotherhood would be amenable to co-operation with the interior Indians, perhaps even to the point of revising and extending its own structure and goals to include the interior, and that the Brotherhood would take the lead in pressing the land claim on behalf of all B.C. Indians. It was an assembly of the politically active Indians in British Columbia — with three elements evident: the Brotherhood itself (led by Kelly), the Nishga, and Manuel's Aboriginal Rights Committee. Convention discussion was heated. The Nishga came close to walking out of the convention — and thus out of the Native Brotherhood. None of the three elements was satisfied with the convention. Kelly promised to consult with Manuel before making the Native Brotherhood's presentation to the Parliamentary Committee and to travel to Aiyansh to consult with the Nishga Tribal Council. Kelly did not consult Manuel before making the Brotherhood's presentation to the Parliamentary Committee. He did travel to Aiyansh, but he did not persuade the Nishga that they could rely upon the Native Brotherhood for substantial help in the land claim.⁷³ The 1959 convention moved the Nishga to independent action on their land claim and moved the interior Indians to develop a separate political organization. The Native Brotherhood now became more exclusively a fishermen's association and was never again expected to transcend its west/central and north coast foundation. Manuel later observed that the Native Brotherhood was unable to become strong in the interior "because of their identification with commercial fishing and with Protestantism."⁷⁴

Not having been consulted by the Native Brotherhood, Manuel proceeded to establish an organization exclusively of interior Indians. Peters dissociated himself from this activity, leaving a residue of some bitterness among the Interior Salish. The new organization was on the one hand a continuation of the Aboriginal Rights Committee and on the other hand a revival, in a substantial form, of the interior manifestations of the North American Indian Brotherhood. As Manuel explained to the Parliamentary Committee in May 1960:

⁷³ Manuel, interviews, February and March 1980; Calder, interview, June 1981.

⁷⁴ Manuel and Posluns, p. 97.

We first formed what might be called an aboriginal rights committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Peters. . . . We travelled to the various [interior] agencies and areas in British Columbia. . . . Things went so well that we felt we should organize into the North American Indian Brotherhood, which was Andy Paull's organization, because we did not want to see it die. So at a meeting at Kamloops it was decided by means of a secret ballot election, that I should be president of the organization which I represent here today.⁷⁵

Manuel has subsequently confirmed that in 1960 he regarded himself as taking Paull's place as spokesman for the interior Indians and as ensuring the continuation of the NAIB.⁷⁶ The new organization, however, used the name "Aboriginal Native Rights Committee of the Interior Tribes of B.C." in appearing before the Parliamentary Committee in May 1960 — evidently because this name had been used in correspondence with the Parliamentary Committee commencing before the Kamloops meeting at which Manuel became President of the NAIB.⁷⁷ Henceforward, however, "North American Indian Brotherhood" appears to have been used exclusively as the name of the organization. The new NAIB was the first substantial Indian organization of the interior. Its area of strength included the central and southern interior as usually defined (that is east and north of Hope) as well as the eastern lower Fraser Valley — the latter area was, in fact, included as part of the "interior" when the word was used by NAIB leaders. A feature of the NAIB distinguishing it from all other Native political organizations in the period was its having women (including Mussell and Gertrude Guerin, of Musqueam) in executive positions.

Manuel presented to the Parliamentary Committee a list of all the bands which supported his extensive brief to the Committee in 1960. These bands, whose support had been gained in Manuel's travels in 1958 and 1959, contained 12,584 of the 16,046 Indians in the "interior." Nine agencies and two Lillooet bands in the Vancouver Agency were canvassed by Manuel. Every band in the Kamloops, Kootenay and Williams Lake agencies was in support. Bands containing a majority of the population in the Burns Lake, Vanderhoof, New Westminster, Merritt and Lytton agencies were in support. The Okanagan Agency was the only holdout — Manuel claimed partial support in three of the six bands.

⁷⁵ Parliamentary Committee on Indian Act, *Proceedings* (No. 7, 26 May 1960), p. 621.

⁷⁶ Interview, February 1980.

⁷⁷ It is thus not surprising that some observers may conclude that there continued to be two distinct organizations. Cf. Kopas, pp. 138-39.

Manuel did not divide support according to language or dialect group. In this dimension he had the support of every Chilcotin, Lillooet and Kootenay band; the support of eleven of the seventeen Carrier bands, fourteen of the eighteen Shuswap bands, nine of the fifteen Thompson bands; partial support in three of the six Okanagan bands; and the support of twelve of the twenty Coast Salish bands in the eastern Fraser Valley.⁷⁸ In his appearance before the Parliamentary Committee, which provided his first major public forum, Manuel was accompanied by Walkem and Mussell. Frank Calder, who was in Ottawa at the same time with the Nishga Tribal Council, accepted Manuel's invitation to appear with Manuel before the Committee to give help "on the question of Indian lands."⁷⁹

For the next few years the NAIB was active under Manuel's presidency.⁸⁰ At the annual convention in Chilliwack in March 1963, Manuel proposed common action by all B.C. Indians, and he pressed this point in ensuing months.

Our most pressing needs are the Indian Land Question and the settlement of Indian Claims. These questions are of equal concern to all Indians of our province, regardless of our cultural background, regardless of whether we live in the Interior, along the Pacific Coast, or in the timberlands of the north.⁸¹

Evidently despairing of achieving the goals he had set for the NAIB, Manuel resigned from the presidency and from the NAIB and joined the Native Brotherhood in 1963, stating that "I have decided to join the ranks of those Indians who have the desire to see provincial unity for all the Indians of B.C."⁸² The move to the NBBC did not prove successful or of consequence. The NAIB, now considerably weakened, continued to exist. Benjamin Paul (Coast Salish) and Gus Gottfriedson (Shuswap, of Kamloops) were the subsequent presidents. Len Marchand (Okanagan, of Vernon) was another prominent member in the 1960s.

On the coast prior to 1966 several organizations of a new type came into being. While the Nishga Land Committee had been composed of the leaders of one tribal group, it had been concerned primarily with the

⁷⁸ Parliamentary Committee on Indian Act, *Proceedings*, No. 7, 26 May 1960). pp. 619-21. Manuel was the first to use the tactic of demonstrating support band-by-band. The tactic reappeared in the late 1970s.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 591, 621. For discussion of the Nishga Tribal Council, see below.

⁸⁰ Cf. Patterson, p. 373.

⁸¹ *Native Voice*, November 1963, as quoted in Kopas, p. 144.

⁸² *Ibid.*

question of land. The new organizations were formed exclusively to act for particular tribal groups, but they were composed of the people rather than merely the leaders of the groups, and they were concerned with a broad range of issues. Perhaps Frank Calder's greatest contribution to Indian politics was his forming the Nishga Tribal Council in 1955. The founding of the Tribal Council is looked back upon by its contemporary leaders as a revival of the Nishga Land Committee, but it is also the case that the Tribal Council derived in good part from the Nass River Branch of the Native Brotherhood. The Nass River Branch continued to exist formally, and Calder continued as general secretary of the Native Brotherhood, but in local Nishga perception the Nass River Branch was very much eclipsed by the Tribal Council. The Tribal Council differed from the Nass River Branch in having a wide range of social and economic objectives. Like the Branch and the Land Committee, the Tribal Council represented all Nishga and only Nishga. The status/non-status distinction was ignored. Anglican hymns were sung and prayers were said at the opening and closing of meetings, and the resident white Anglican clergy participated fully in Council proceedings. The Nishga Tribal Council executive structure included equal representation from each village, and later from the off-reserve centres of Prince Rupert and Port Edward as well, but the Tribal Council itself consisted not of the executive or representatives but of the Nishga people themselves. Every Nishga could participate with equal vote in Tribal Council assemblies. The Tribal Council was thus a blend of tradition and modernity, for the clan chiefs could be influential at the executive level while democracy prevailed in selection of the executive and the making of major decisions. In 1969, still under Calder's leadership, and with fellow NDP MLA Tom Berger as counsel, the Nishga brought their land claim to the courts.⁸⁸ Through the historic outcome of their court case, through the structural and philosophic model of their Tribal Council, and through the direct action of Tribal Council leaders, the Nishga came to have the most profound effect upon Indian politics during the post-1969 period.

The Nuu-chah-nulth formed their organization in 1958, calling it the Allied Tribes of the West Coast. The Nuu-chah-nulth (or "Nootka," as they were at the time referred to in English) had for some years held annual assemblies at Port Alberni to receive the "B.C. Special" monies from the DIA. In 1958 an Indian sports festival, financed by the provin-

⁸⁸ James Gosnell and Hubert Doolan, interviews, Aiyansh, May 1980. Nishga Tribal Council, "Constitution," and minutes and resolutions of annual meetings; Douglas Sanders, "The Nishga Case," *BC Studies* 19 (Autumn 1973): 3-20.

cial government as part of the province's centenary celebrations, was held along with the annual assembly. The Allied Tribes of the West Coast was formed on this occasion. Jack Peter, one of the Nuu-chah-nulth chiefs, and a vice-president of the NBBC, was the main organizer — he became the first president, while William Tatoosh became vice-president. One of the speakers at the first meeting was George Watts, then thirteen years old, who raised certain questions about organizational finances.⁸⁴ The new entity was similar in structure and philosophy to the Nishga Tribal Council and it too proved to be a permanent organization. The greater number of Nuu-chah-nulth villages and the much larger extent of group territory, however, rendered unity and co-operation more difficult to attain.⁸⁵

In 1964 the Southern Vancouver Island Tribal Federation (initially called the Southern Vancouver Island Allied Tribes) was formed among Coast Salish bands in the Cowichan agency on Southern Vancouver Island. Wilson Bob was the first president; Philip Paul, the first secretary. Paul wrote in 1965 that "our aim is to strive for betterment of our Indian people in all phases of their living, to bring a better understanding between our people and the Indian Affairs Branch, to help our people shoulder their share of responsibilities in all their affairs."⁸⁶ The Federation experienced great difficulty in attaining stability. At this same time another Coast Salish group, the Sechelt, formed the Sunshine Coast Tribal Council — it held several annual meetings but did not become a permanent organization.

The main factor common to the formation of the Nishga, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Island Salish and Sechelt political organizations was the prior existence within these groups of branches of the Native Brotherhood. In the case of both the Nishga and Nuu-chah-nulth the Native Brotherhood provided precedent in tribal group organization and gave experience to

⁸⁴ In the 1970s Watts became president of the organization (now called the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council) and one of the half-dozen most influential Indian leaders at the provincial level.

⁸⁵ George Watts, interview, Vancouver, February 1981; Hugh Watts, interview, Vancouver, February 1981; William Tatoosh, interview, Port Alberni, May 1980; Parliamentary Committee on Indian Act, *Proceedings* (No. 7, 27 May 1960), p. 718; comments of Jack Peter delivered to Southern Vancouver Island Tribal Federation, 10 December 1967, contained in SVITF, "Minutes of Convention of December 9 and 10, 1967, Duncan, B.C."

⁸⁶ Letter to J. V. Boys, Indian Commissioner for B.C., 27 January 1965. The organization was at times referred to simply as the "Vancouver Island Federation," but this term does not indicate any expansion from the organization's original South Island, Coast Salish base.

individuals in leadership. In the case of the Coast Salish the Brotherhood provided some precedent but little in the way of experienced leadership. Moreover, as was not the case with the Nishga and the Nuu-chah-nulth, the formation of the Southern Vancouver Island Tribal Federation may have been regarded as a means of removing the Brotherhood from the area — in any case the South Island Branch of the Brotherhood collapsed completely at the time the Tribal Federation was formed. A further important factor is that all four tribal group political organizations were formed by Indian leaders and Indian people. Government actions played no part (and officials took some years to recognize the significance of the new type of organization). The Indian leaders were not responding to any immediate exigencies or incentives deriving from the Indian act, from parliamentary inquiries, or from other government activity. The tribal group political organizations were as indigenous as it was possible to be at the time, and in the process the Nishga were, as before and later, the political pathbreakers.

Attempts Toward Unity: 1966-1968

In early 1965 the federal government introduced legislation to establish an Indian Claims Commission and to provide assistance to Indian groups in presenting their claims. Indian spokesmen responded with distrust and criticism, believing that the government was seeking to impose its own method and terms of settlement. In the summer of 1965 Guy Williams, now President of the NBBC, called for Indian action to oppose the legislation, and the Nishga Tribal Council proposed that all Indian organizations meet for that purpose. Similar sentiments were evident in other parts of the province, and in March 1966 some forty persons from the south coast and southern interior met in Vancouver — at this meeting the name “Confederation of Native Indians of British Columbia” (CNI) was proposed and a committee, whose only prominent members were leaders of the NAIB or the Southern Vancouver Island Tribal Federation (SVITF), was struck to meet with spokesmen of west/central and north coast groups. One committee member subsequently stated: “This is an attempt [at] forming an executive body . . . all member organizations will retain their identity. . . . But it may become a permanent organization to deal with problems . . . in the future.”⁸⁷ The CNI was thus conceived of initially as what might be termed a “coordinating forum,” a body which was intended neither to replace nor supplant existing or-

⁸⁷ *Native Voice*, May 1966.

ganizations but rather to serve their common interests. It was the first such entity in British Columbia. The first full meeting of the CNI took place in November 1966. By this time, some of the assemblies of chiefs organized by DIA at the district level were assuming a modicum of life of their own and were calling themselves district or tribal councils — several of these nascent organizations were acknowledged as members of the CNI. The major participants in the November meeting, however, were the established organizations: the NBBC, the NAIB, the SVITF, the West Coast Allied Tribes (as the West Coast District Council). Also participating was a spokeswoman for the Homemakers' Clubs. The Nishga Tribal Council did not participate itself, although Calder and other Nishga leaders continued to be active in the NBBC. The CNI placed a full-page ad (signed by the established organizational participants and the district or tribal councils — altogether twelve in number) in the *Native Voice* of December 1966 criticizing federal land claims policy and stating: "We have confidence that with the formation of the Confederation, the Indians of British Columbia have attained unity and are now in a position to speak with one voice on the main matters of concern starting with the land question."⁸⁸

Indian leaders were evidently unanimous in demanding that the government deal directly with B.C. Indians on the land question rather than using the Claims Commission as the intermediary. By the autumn of 1966 Arthur Laing, the Vancouver MP who was the Minister of Indian Affairs, had accepted this demand provided that the Indian spokesmen could demonstrate that they represented at least 75 percent of the status Indians. (A third alternative would be to take the claim directly to the courts — this alternative was the one later adopted by Calder and the Nishga Tribal Council in 1969). Whether the CNI, with its loose structure (e.g., any individual person who attended meetings was evidently allowed his say) and with the majority of its active organizers from the south coast and interior, should be the spokesman for B.C. Indians in dealing directly with the government on the land question now became the main issue in Indian politics. At the February 1967 annual NBBC convention Calder was elected to the prestigious post of Chairman of the Legislative Committee (to replace the recently deceased Peter Kelly). Calder's first important action was to propose that "the executive head" of each Indian organization meet to draw up a firm and clear "constitutional basis for provincial Indian unity."⁸⁹ Under Calder's proposal the

⁸⁸ December 1966.

⁸⁹ Kopas, p. 152.

south coast and interior people would have only two or three delegates (from the NAIB, the SVITF and the nascent Sechelt district council) while the organizations from the NBBC territory (including the NBBC, the Nishga Tribal Council and some half-dozen nascent tribal or district councils) would have seven or eight — the CNI itself might even be completely ignored, on the ground that it was not itself actually an organization. The NBBC convention approved the Calder proposal. In the early summer of 1967 Guy Williams apparently sent a letter to the CNI announcing the NBBC's withdrawal from the CNI — although it would seem that his having done so was not widely known until many months later.⁹⁰

The years 1967 and 1968 were a time of unpredictability and instability. Among all the organizations only the Nishga Tribal Council appears to have provided firm support to its leaders and avoided major internal stress. The *Native Voice*, the NBBC's newspaper, provides the only public record of the events, yet its editorials and reporting were strongly critical of the NBBC leadership.⁹¹ The CNI did not meet again until September 1967 when an executive was chosen and Philip Paul of the SVITF was elected President. The CNI thus ceased to be a "coordinating forum" and became an organization itself. (It may be regarded, like the NBBC, as something of an umbrella group, for its membership included geographical components with separate organizations.) Calder and his proposal were heavily criticized at the September meeting. A CNI constitution was approved by the meeting for forwarding to individual bands and organizations for further discussion.⁹² At the SVITF convention in December at Duncan the first public discussion took place among the presidents of the five established organizations: Wilson Bob (SVITF), Gus Gottfriedson (NAIB), Guy Williams (NBBC), Jack Peter (West Coast Allied Tribes) and Frank Calder (Nishga Tribal Council). The other four endorsed Calder's proposal, which was by then called "the unity constitution."⁹³ Wilson Bob and Philip Paul, the most prominent leaders of the SVITF, and who took opposite positions on Calder's proposal, were both defeated in the convention in their attempts to retain executive office. Ross Modeste, who supported the proposal,

⁹⁰ *Native Voice*, March 1968.

⁹¹ In the February 1968 issue Calder's actions were referred to as "dictatorial," the NBBC was referred to as part of a "splinter group," and NBBC actions were referred to explicitly as destructive of unity.

⁹² *Native Voice*, September-October 1967.

⁹³ SVITF, "Minutes of Convention of December 9 and 10, 1967, Duncan, B.C."

became President. Modeste, Gottfriedson, Williams, Calder and Peter became commonly known as "the Big Five."

On 3 February 1968 a meeting was held at the Musqueam reserve in Vancouver under the auspices of the Big Five. The CNI was itself one of the groups sending representatives to the Musqueam meeting. Calder, not having copies for distribution, read out his unity constitution, explained that it would create "the Indian Land Claims Committee," and asked the meeting to approve the constitution. While it is now impossible to gauge the balance of opinion at the meeting, it is quite clear that the Big Five and the unity constitution met strenuous opposition. All the critics named in the *Native Voice* account were Coast or Interior Salish. Benjamin Paul, the past-president of the NAIB, stated that at most the Big Five represented only 7,000 Indians, that Gottfriedson did not speak for the NAIB, and that for any effective land claims action "we must have a mandate from the people" rather than self-generated action by the Big Five acting independently of their organizations.⁹⁴ Gertrude Guerin, of Musqueam, a former vice-president of the NAIB and now representing the CNI, said:

My voice is not for organizations, my voice speaks out for my people in little villages, unorganized people in isolated areas who must have area representation. The organizations here represent coastal areas. In other areas the needs are different, and they must have a voice.⁹⁵

The meeting eventually voted not to approve Calder's constitution, but to send it to bands and organizations for discussion.

On February 10, Calder, Williams and Gottfriedson met in Nanaimo with Modeste and some other members of the SVITF executive. On the same day Calder and Williams issued a press release stating that at the meeting "the constitution of the new organization known as the B.C. Indian Claims Committee was accepted. They will now meet with the Minister of Indian Affairs to settle the B.C. Indian Land Claims."⁹⁶ In response, a protest meeting was held by the CNI in Vancouver on February 13. At this meeting Philip Paul stated:

Every chief and band councillor in B.C. should be heard by the Land Claims Commission. And they should be allowed to elect leaders who will not manipulate them to serve their own ends. The elected leaders . . . should not

⁹⁴ *Native Voice*, February 1968.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

commit themselves to any political party. At the present time we are victims of politicians.⁹⁷

At about this same time the Cowichan band, the largest in the province and the only large band in the SVITF, withdrew from the SVITF in protest over the Nanaimo meeting. Modeste, who later stated that he had not known the purpose of the Nanaimo meeting until it was taking place, resigned as president of the SVITF later in 1968 and was replaced by Philip Paul. In the NAIB Don Moses replaced Gottfriedson as president. Nothing more appears to have been heard of the B.C. Indian Claims Committee, while the CNI (in which Benjamin Paul replaced Philip Paul as president) and the NAIB faded away in 1969 and 1970.

Despite the general failure of new organizations in the 1966-69 period, one successful exception did appear — the Indian Homemakers' Association of British Columbia. Evolving from DIA-sponsored women's clubs at the band level, the organization was formed in 1968. The immediate impetus to the organization was protest against proposed DIA policy changes affecting the reforms which DIA employee Ray Collins had implemented in off-reserve Indian education. The first board of directors was composed exclusively of Salish women from the Fraser Valley and the southern interior, but the Association later expanded into other parts of the province.⁹⁸

Conclusions: Political Adaptation to Internal Colonialism

Political adaptation was the predominant response of British Columbia Indians to internal colonialism. Those who sought to exert influence among their own people beyond the strictly local level and to press demands upon government formed organizations as the means of doing so — and in so doing became acknowledged as leaders by their own people. Compared to the forming and maintaining of political organizations there were no other activities among the Indian population at the district, major area or province-wide level that were remotely similar in scope, regarded as nearly as important, or which occupied anything like as much time and energy on the part of those regarded as Indian spokesmen. The pre-eminent leaders — Peter Kelly, Andrew Paull, Frank Calder and George Manuel — as well as those who aided them, were

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, April 1968.

⁹⁸ Indian Homemakers' Association of British Columbia, "Constitution" and annual reports; Edna Rose, "Indian Education in an Alternate School," (unpublished essay, Department of Political Science, University of British Columbia, December 1980); Ray Collins, interview, Vancouver, May 1981.

men who had the skills and knowledge to function fully in the majority society (that is, to earn livings away from reserves and out of touch with other Indians) but who chose instead to devote themselves to the uncertain struggle on behalf of their own people.

The form and procedures of the organizations were adapted from the majority society. The predisposition to form organizations and the ability to maintain them appear to have been strongly affected by the differing traditional social organization of the coastal and interior Indian peoples and by the differing impact of Protestant and Roman Catholic missionary activities and residential schooling. The acceptance of Christianity by the Indians may be seen as the importation of a new culture element which served, in part, to facilitate group survival in post-contact circumstances. In addition, the use of organizations with forms and procedures taken from the majority was itself adaptation of a new culture element to ensure group survival. The combination of the two new elements was especially evident on the north coast, where the two prominent political leaders, Kelly and Calder, were also the two persons with the most prominent attainments in the sphere of Christianity. The fact that both devoted their major efforts to politics rather than Christianity is suggestive of the relative importance they attached to the two spheres, and provides implicit support for the view that one motive for the adoption of Christianity by Indian leaders was to provide a protective cover for political action in defence of group interests. George Manuel, the only one of the four major leaders who was not an avowed Christian, was seen as a "communist" by the white officials in the Kamloops Indian Agency when he began agitating for better services to Indians,⁹⁹ and his criticisms of Catholic residential schooling can hardly have endeared him to the Catholic clergy. Kelly, Paull and Calder, however, could be seen as good Christians and so no pejorative labels were attached to them — even though their activities were just as damaging as Manuel's to the government goal of assimilation.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ H. A. (Butch) Smitheram, interview, Vancouver, November 1981. (Smitheram, the first Indian to become an assistant Indian Agent in Canada, was on the staff of the Kamloops Agency in the 1950s.) On the other hand, Davie Fulton, the Progressive Conservative MP for Kamloops in the 1950s, thought highly of Manuel and invited him to Party meetings. The "communist" Manuel was even the holder of a Conservative Party membership card which had been mailed to him unsolicited.

¹⁰⁰ In contrast to the long and detailed answers which he gave to most of my questions, Calder gave a succinct reply to the question "Why did you take up theology?" He replied simply, "That was how I could best serve my people." Interview, June 1981. In the internal correspondence of the 1950s and 1960s between De-

In the period before 1969 the following Indian political organizations were formed in British Columbia:

- 1908(?) Nishga Land Committee
- 1909 Indian Tribes of British Columbia
- 1909 Interior Tribes of British Columbia
- 1916 Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia
- 1931 Native Brotherhood of British Columbia
- 1943 North American Indian Brotherhood (of Andrew Paull)
- 1945(?) Confederacy of the Interior Tribes of British Columbia
- 1955 Nishga Tribal Council
- 1958 Allied Tribes of the West Coast
- 1959 Aboriginal Native Rights Committee of the Interior Tribes of British Columbia
- 1960 North American Indian Brotherhood (of the Interior)
- 1964 Southern Vancouver Island Tribal Federation
- 1964 Sunshine Coast Tribal Council
- 1966 Confederation of Native Indians of British Columbia
- 1968 Indian Homemakers' Association of British Columbia

From the formation of the first organization there was only one interregnum in which no organization existed — that following the collapse of the Allied Indian Tribes, which was the result not of any change in Indian goals but rather of the parliamentary rejection of the land claim and the outlawing of claim-related fund raising by Indians.

While the formation of several of the early organizations was influenced by white advisors, all the later organizations were formed and led by Indians. Indian political organization depended upon the presence of self-directed Indian leaders who could communicate with differing language groups and with government. Communication involved skill in use of spoken and written English as well as the ability to travel freely. Travel freedom came to coastal Indians after 1923, when Indians came in some numbers to have motorized fishing boats, and to interior Indians in the late 1950s, when a minimal number of Indians came to own automobiles. From the beginning the west/central and north coast served as one enclosure within which organizations appeared, while the south coast

partment of Indian Affairs field staff station on the north coast and their superiors in Vancouver there is no hint of criticism or suspicion of Kelly or Calder, even though both are mentioned fairly often. Letters from Kelly or Calder to DIA officials in Vancouver were directed to the Indian Commissioner once they reached the Vancouver office — the marginal comments and instructions which the Commissioners wrote on the letters before returning them to their subordinates for follow-up were invariably respectful.

and the central and southern interior served as the other. No political organizations appeared in the northern interior prior to 1969. On the west/central and north coast one organization, the Native Brotherhood, emerged and attained stability and success in linking all the language groups while the Nishga Tribal Council and the Allied Tribes of the West Coast emerged as the organizations of particular language groups. Both language group organizations grew out of branches of the Native Brotherhood; both were relatively stable; and both, like the Native Brotherhood, remained influential after 1969. Thus each of the organizations which formed on the west/central and north coasts after 1927 proved to be permanent organizations.

The other post-1927 organizations emerged within the south coast and/or southern interior. While Andrew Paull's importance as a political educator is beyond challenge, it is the case that his North American Indian Brotherhood of the 1940s and 1950s and his Confederation of the Interior Tribes were organizations in name more than in substance. George Manuel's North American Indian Brotherhood of the 1960s and the Confederation of Native Indians were comparable to the Native Brotherhood in having the potential of becoming the voice of a number of tribal groups. Possibly this potential was weakened from the beginning in that both Manuel's NAIB and the CNI were formed not fully in response to self-sufficient Indian demand (as the Native Brotherhood, the Nishga Tribal Council, and the Allied Tribes of the West Coast had been) but partly in response to government initiatives in the form of the parliamentary committee hearings of 1960 and the land claims initiatives of 1965. In addition, Manuel's NAIB and the CNI lacked the financial resources of the Native Brotherhood; the peoples of the central and southern interior were more scattered than those of the west/central and north coasts; and the Roman Catholicism of the south coast and the interior, unlike the Protestantism of the west/central and north coasts, did not serve as a factor promoting political integration. The Indian Homemakers' Association began with the same constituency as did Manuel's NAIB, but it was able to build upon well-established and government-supported local chapters and so became the only stable and permanent organization of the south coast and the interior.

Pursuit of the aboriginal land claim was the sole purpose of the four organizations formed before 1927 and a major aspect of all those formed afterwards except for the Indian Homemakers. Of the organizations formed after 1927, however, only the Nishga Tribal Council came to pursue land claims as a primary goal. The land claim, together with the

related philosophy of injustice, provided the primary incentive and rationale for seeking Indian unity through organization and for seeking to influence government. The continuing appeal of the land claim as the motive for organization and Indian unity depended in turn on the absence of treaties in British Columbia. The absence of treaties largely explains the acceptance of British Columbia as the geographic entity within which unity would be sought. While the land claim and the philosophy of injustice provided the framework for "the codification of idioms" and for the development of new "signals" or symbols for a new province-wide Indian identity,¹⁰¹ the claim and the philosophy were not of sufficient force to overcome the dual pan-Indianism which divided the west/central and north coast peoples from those in the remainder of the province. No stable province-wide comprehensive Indian political organization emerged — even though there was a widely expressed desire for such an organization. Each of the two pan-Indian outlooks, however, was manifested in comprehensive organizations within its sphere. The events of 1959 and those following 1965 were characterized by attempts to gain some form of unity of the established organizations of the west/central and north coasts with the emerging organizations of the south coast and the interior. The failure of these attempts re-emphasized and reinforced the dual pan-Indianism.

What was still missing in the political adaptation response to internal colonialism was a developed view of the appropriate basis of political organizations and the appropriate relation among organizations. Dim and ill-defined though they were, two approaches were evident before 1969. The original Confederation of Native Indians of 1966 as well as Calder's unity constitution involved what could be termed a "co-ordinating forum" in which organizations would come together without losing their identity. In this approach the organizations, whether of single language groups or more inclusive, would have primacy and there would be no place for individual bands. A second approach would have some form of organization or forum in which all bands were directly represented by their chiefs. Philip Paul favoured this approach on the grounds that the chiefs would remain responsible to the people while the organization leaders would not. In this approach the chiefs would have primacy while organizations would have no place — clearly this approach denied the relevance of the language group as a basis of organization. Neither approach favoured the *de facto* political division into the two pan-Indian

¹⁰¹ Cf. Barth's observation cited in note 8, above.

identities; both favoured British Columbia as the entity for Indian unity. A third approach, that of direct individual membership of status and non-status Indians in one province-wide Indian organization, was not considered before 1969. After 1969 all three approaches came to be attempted simultaneously and during the early 1970s it appeared that the dual pan-Indianism had been overcome. In the early 1980s, however, the old duality was again in evidence, with south coast and southern interior spokesmen (those who had committed themselves and their political fortunes to the chief and band approach) on the defensive against spokesmen, mainly from the west/central and north coasts, who favoured a combination of the other two approaches (in which the language group was to be the primary basis of organization).

Today in Canada, with Indian political organizations so prominent in constitutional and economic policy considerations, it is all too easy to remain unaware of the enormous burden of indifference, discouragement and outright hostility which the dominant society and its government placed in the way of early Indian political organization. There may also be a tendency today, as members of the white majority continue to be the principal manufacturers of provincial history, for a specious satisfaction to be taken in the absence in British Columbia of the massive dislocation and genocide of indigenous people which has been so tragically evident elsewhere. The explicit aim of the majority in Canada was to eliminate a people and its culture and the means chosen were the ones regarded as the most appropriate. Among the means were the discouragement and suppression of Indian political activity. Indian leaders in British Columbia overcame the obstacles and established a political tradition which remains vigorously alive today not only in the province but also across Canada, for British Columbia Indians have since 1969 played a disproportionately large part in the contemporary national Indian political organizations.¹⁰²

¹⁰² The Native Council of Canada, the national non-status political organization, was formed at the initiative of Butch Smitheram, who wrote the organization's constitution. Gloria Gabert (née George) subsequently became President of the NCC; she is the only woman to have attained the highest office in one of the national Indian organizations. George Manuel served as President of the National Indian Brotherhood from 1970 until 1977. The World Council of Indigenous Peoples, whose founding assembly was held in Port Alberni in 1975, was organized chiefly by British Columbia Indians, and Manuel became its first President. In 1982 Bill Wilson became vice-president of the NCC.

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