

Vancouver: Changing Geographical Aspects of a Multicultural City

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Within the past half century Vancouver has changed from being a mainly "British" city to one where people of British ethnic origin constitute less than 40 percent of the residents. Much has been written about the individual ethnic groups in Vancouver, particularly about their social and economic problems, but less has been published about their geographical distribution. Only three maps have been prepared, based on the 1981 census.¹

The main purpose of this article is to present a series of distribution maps of several selected ethnic groups in Vancouver city (not the metropolitan area). These maps were prepared by plotting the official census figures reported for the sixty-eight census tracts in Vancouver (plus no. 69 for the University Endowment Lands). On each map one dot represents 100 persons of that ethnic origin. The correct number of dots was placed within each of the sixty-nine census tracts, and the number of dots on the full map represents the distribution of the total population of that ethnic group in Vancouver in the 1981 census.

Information about ethnic origin was not asked for in the 1986 census; thus, current changes in the distribution of ethnic groups cannot be studied again until a few years after 1991. I made introductory comments about the distribution of seventeen ethnic groups in Vancouver in 1981 in a menu-cookbook prepared by the UBC Faculty Women's Club.²

The people who came to the end of the transcontinental railway in Vancouver after 1886 were mainly of British racial origin,³ as were most other settlers of British Columbia of that time. In 1901, when Vancouver

¹ Metropolitan Atlas Series: Vancouver, Catalogue 99-921, 1981 Census of Canada, Ottawa. Among the maps in this booklet were maps of French mother tongue, Chinese mother tongue, and non-official languages (pp. 26-37). These maps are similar to, but not the same as, the distribution of ethnic groups.

² Lari Hooley and Jo Robinson, eds., *Vancouver Entertains* (North Vancouver: White-Cap Books, 1986).

³ The census of Canada used the term "racial origin" from 1891 to 1951 and "ethnic origin" after 1961, traced through the male forefather. Although similar, these "origin" terms are not the same as "nationality."

replaced Victoria as the largest city in British Columbia, 75 percent of its 30,000 population was of British racial origin. A majority of these settlers had migrated to "the West" after having first lived in eastern Canada.

Vancouver's social geography of the early part of this century was based more on income and occupation than on racial differences. "Working" men, with lower incomes, often drawn from the "working classes" of England, built small wooden houses on narrow lots on the east side of the city's commercial core. To this area also came a relatively few working-class emigrants from central and northern Europe. The east side of Vancouver became a racial "melting pot" similar to the multi-racial areas northwest of the city cores in Montreal and Toronto and northeast in Winnipeg, but on a much smaller scale.

Those in early Vancouver who achieved wealth in finance, real estate, and management built their large homes and mansions on larger lots to the west of the city centre. The clerical and service people of "middle class" built their wooden homes west and south of the city's commercial core. The East side-West side economic and social contrasts in Vancouver's British-origin population were apparent early in this century.⁴

Vancouver in 1911

Vancouver's population was recorded in the 1911 census as being 74 percent of British racial origin; this total masks differences in the distribution and origin of these British people. One needs to properly define what is meant by "Vancouver" in 1911. The "metropolitan" area of the city then consisted of five different political units, with a total population of 124,000. The southern boundary of Vancouver city (population 95,000) was 16th Avenue, and the eastern boundary with Hastings townsite was Nanaimo Street. The 1911 census also recorded the population of Lot 301, South Vancouver, and Point Grey (refer to table 1).

The small population of slightly more than 5,000 persons in Hastings townsite and Lot 301 (both were annexed into Vancouver later in 1911) was recorded as 80 percent of British origin. About 200 Scandinavians were the largest non-British group. South Vancouver had the highest percentage (84) of British origin people; the largest numbers of non-British people were about 500 (each) Scandinavians and Germans.

Contrary to present general belief, Point Grey was notably different in

⁴ J. Lewis Robinson, "How Vancouver Has Grown and Changed," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 89, no. 4 (October 1974): 40-48; J. Lewis Robinson and Walter G. Hardwick, *British Columbia: One Hundred Years of Geographical Change* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1973), 25-30.

1911, with only 65 percent of its slightly more than 4,000 population of British origin. The largest group of non-British recorded in the census was 270 Hindus; it is not reported where they lived in Point Grey, although one could expect that they would have been concentrated in one area.

In Vancouver City the largest number of non-British people was about 3,500 Chinese and 2,000 Japanese. They were already well-recognized minority groups, concentrated residentially in what was to become Chinatown on Pender Street and Japantown on Powell Street.

A warning is advisable in looking at the racial origin figures in the 1911 census (table 1). A minor problem is that the figures for the separate municipalities (taken from different census tables) do not add up exactly

TABLE 1
Racial Origins of Vancouver, 1911

<i>Origin</i>	<i>Vancouver + Hastings = City Lot 301</i>	<i>Greater + Vancouver</i>	<i>South + Vancouver</i>	<i>Point + Grey</i>	<i>Metro = Vancouver</i>	
British	69,935	4,140	74,000	13,630	2,820	91,785
English	34,300	2,250	36,600	8,000	1,340	46,500
Irish	11,900	650	12,535	1,720	550	14,910
Scottish	22,800	1,200	24,000	3,770	880	29,130
Other	935	40	975	140	50	1,245
Chinese	3,480	80	3,560	130	150	3,870
Germans	2,660	150	2,825	530	80	3,500
Scandinavians	2,340	205	2,550	470	230	3,415
Italians	2,155	100	2,260	140	65	2,535
Japanese	2,000	45	2,040	20	150	2,500
French	1,720	75	1,800	275	70	2,250
Jewish	960	15	975	10	1	985
Hindus	375	120	500	70	270	730
Unspecified and Other	7,800	140	8,000	2,000	1,100	9,000
Total						
Population	95,270	5,130	100,400	16,165	4,325	124,000
Percent						
British	74%	80%	74%	84%	65%	74%

SOURCE: 1911 census, vol. 2, pp. 170, 232, 372.

across the columns for "Greater" and "Metropolitan" Vancouver. A more serious problem is the large number of persons (about 8,000-9,000) whose racial origin was listed as unspecified. In Point Grey, for example, these unknowns were one-quarter of the population.

Even as early as 1911, care is needed in inferring cultural characteristics to these people of British racial origin. In Greater Vancouver (100,400 population), only 30 percent of these "British" people were actually born in the British Isles, whereas 44 percent were born in Canada. Vancouver was being settled by people who had first lived in other parts of eastern Canada. The largest group of "Canadians" of British origin was almost 17,000 from Ontario and 5,000 from the Maritime Provinces. One of the themes of the historical part of this article is that early Vancouver was *not* settled mainly by new emigrants from a foreign country.

Vancouver in 1921

Vancouver's population grew relatively slowly during the decade of depression and war during 1911-21, compared with the boom of the preceding decade. The metropolitan area had about 164,000 people in 1921, an increase of only 40,000 persons in ten years. The percentage of residents of British racial origin had increased to 80 percent for the city and 83 percent for the metropolitan area, but these total figures did not tell of internal regional differences (see table 2).

Although the two census divisions that constituted Vancouver city in 1921 had similar total populations, Vancouver Burrard was 81 percent of British origin whereas Vancouver Centre was only 72 percent British. The latter included the residences of most of the Chinese and Japanese and also had a large group of Scandinavians (half were of Swedish origin). Vancouver Centre census division was all of the city north and east of False Creek to Nanaimo Street.

The two most "visible" minorities of this time were the Japanese and Chinese, who had concentrated their residences in particular parts of the city for mutual help and protection. The clustering of Japanese in early Vancouver has been mapped from directories by Dr. Audrey Kobayashi, Department of Geography, McGill University.⁵ In 1908 about two-thirds of the houses along Powell Street between Main and Jackson streets were occupied by Japanese. This concentration was confirmed in a map for 1913, which also showed that a few Japanese lived outside of the area, east-

⁵ Maps to be published in D. Kerr and D. Holdsworth, eds., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

TABLE 2
Racial Origins of Vancouver, 1921

Origin	Van- couver Burrard	+ Van- couver Centre	= Van- couver City	+ South Van- couver	+ Point Grey	= Greater Van- couver
British	49,750	43,850	93,600	29,060	12,270	134,930
Chinese & Japanese	1,720	9,010	Ch. 6,485 Ja. 4,250	555	615	11,900
Scandinavians	1,070	1,590	2,580	900	180	3,740
French	950	1,300	2,250	375	205	2,830
Italians	415	1,175	1,590	250	20	1,860
Germans	575	545	1,120	285	100	1,505
Hebrews	310	960	1,275	60	40	1,370
Dutch	385	350	750	150	105	900
Russians	85	275	360	80	10	450
Greeks	65	265	330	15	10	355
Unspecified	150	125	275	50	80	405
Total Population	56,340	60,880	117,220	32,270	13,740	163,230
Percent British	81%	72%	80%	90%	89%	83%

SOURCE: 1921 census, vol. 1, pp. 538, 540, 542.

ward near Nanaimo Street, some in Mount Pleasant and a few in eastern Kitsilano. Her land-use map of the area for 1918 recorded that most of Powell Street between Main and Jackson streets was used for commercial purposes and Japanese occupied many of the residences on the south sides of Alexander and Cordova streets. The “community centre” for “Little Tokyo” was Oppenheimer Park, where numerous recreational and social activities took place, especially in summer.

South Vancouver and Point Grey had become dominantly “British” in 1921 (about 90 percent) — well more than the percentage of British in Vancouver. The largest group of non-British people in South Vancouver was of Scandinavian origin. In Point Grey, the Chinese and Japanese were grouped together in the 1921 census, and although they were the most numerous non-British people they totalled only about 600. The term

“Hindu” had disappeared from the 1921 census and they are lost among the few “other Asians.”

The suburbs of Vancouver were also showing contrasts in the distribution of people of British racial origin in 1921 (see table 3). Although the total population of 59,000 in six suburbs was 79 percent of British origin (similar to the figure for Vancouver city), there was a major contrast between the three municipalities north of Burrard Inlet and the three along and south of the Fraser River. People living on the North Shore were 86 percent of British origin, whereas those living south of Vancouver were 77 percent of British stock. In the three Fraser River suburbs Chinese and Japanese constituted 11 percent of the population, with a particular concentration in Richmond.

By 1921 the British cultural “roots” of Vancouver (city) residents had already become diluted by time. Half of those who were recorded as of British origin had been born in Canada, and therefore most of these had not likely ever seen Britain. A quarter of the city’s British population had been born in British Columbia, so a new generation was arising to which Vancouver was “home” rather than Britain.

TABLE 3
Racial Origins in Vancouver Suburbs, 1921

<i>Origin</i>	<i>New Westminster</i>	<i>Richmond</i>	<i>Delta</i>	<i>North (city) Vancouver</i>	<i>North (dist.) Vancouver</i>	<i>West Vancouver</i>
British	11,705	13,715	10,055	6,680	2,480	2,110
Chinese & Japanese	1,170	2,580	1,375	185	150	115
Scandinavians	555	460	860	190	120	100
French	320	230	315	140	45	40
Germans	200	150	255	95	45	10
Italians	115	65	115	170	50	2
Dutch	70	160	100	70	10	5
Total Population	14,500	17,710	13,635	7,650	3,000	2,435
Percent British	81%	78%	73%	87%	83%	87%

SOURCE: 1921 census.

Vancouver in 1941

In 1941 about 78 percent of Vancouver's population of 275,000 was of British origin. In the metropolitan area, as defined by the city and its suburbs of that time, the percentage of British origin people was 80 percent. This "British" character of Vancouver was then equal to that of Toronto — well known in eastern Canada for its British roots — but both were less "British" than London, Ontario (88 percent) or Halifax (81 percent). Despite the dominance of people of British origin, only a *minority* of Vancouver residents had emigrated directly from Britain. In 1941, 63 percent of British-origin Vancouverites had been born in Canada but only 34 percent had been born in British Columbia. Vancouver was still a magnet for the westward migration of Canadians.

Those of other European origin totalled only 15 percent in 1941, of whom the largest group was Scandinavian. At that time Vancouver was known as the "Scandinavian capital of Canada" because the 11,000 Scandinavians (14,000 in metropolitan Vancouver) were the largest concentration of people of Scandinavian origin anywhere in Canada.

Many of the "Europeans" were, in fact, second generation Canadians who had moved west from other parts of Canada. They usually spoke English and had acquired the social and cultural characteristics of Canadians in other cities. The preceding figures (table 2) are another reminder that Vancouver was never a city of numerous *new* immigrants; most of its residents came from elsewhere in Canada. The Vancouver that grew in the first half of this century was created mainly by "Canadians."

The "visible minorities" were few in Vancouver in 1941. Although those of "Asiatic" racial origin made up only 6 percent of the population (i.e., 16,000 persons), they had concentrated into particular areas for mutual help and communication. "Chinatown" had evolved as a densely occupied residential area along Pender Street. It was home for mainly adult males, since little emigration from China was permitted after the 1920s. About 75 percent of the Chinese had been born in Asia.

"Japantown" centred on Powell Street east of Main Street. Audrey Kobayashi's land use map for 1929 showed that Japanese commercial and residential occupation had spread west of Main Street on Powell and Cordova streets, penetrating into "Gastown." The Japanese residential concentration had also expanded to occupy every house on Cordova Street and eastward beyond Princess Street. Another map for 1940 showed little further change. The commercial core along Powell and Main streets served mainly the nearby Japanese residents and was seldom visited by other Van-

couverites. By this time the Japanese had virtually established a self-contained "village" of about 8,000 persons within Vancouver — a visible target for racial hostility. Although the Chinese were similarly concentrated in commercial and residential land uses near Main and Pender streets, their total was slightly smaller (7,000) and they experienced less obvious antagonism. The Japanese differed from the Chinese in terms of their birthplace; only 40 percent of the Japanese had been born in Asia.

The few East Indians, mainly Sikhs, lived near False Creek, where they worked in the sawmills. Because of immigration restrictions few emigrants from India came to Vancouver. "Hindus" (a derogatory term) never formed an areal community group in pre-1940 Vancouver.

Postwar Changes

After World War II, as in other large Canadian cities, the racial and cultural characteristics of Vancouver began to change. Some of the waves of Mediterranean people — from Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal — reached Vancouver, but not in the large numbers that came to Montreal and Toronto. In 1961 Vancouver was still *not* a city of many recent immigrants. However, the increasing number of south Europeans did decrease the percentage of British-origin people in the city. By 1961, those of British ethnic origin had declined to 60 percent in both Vancouver city and the metropolitan area. However, 71 percent of these "British" people were in fact "Canadians" who had been born in Canada. The significant changes in Vancouver's racial composition came after Canada's immigration laws were broadened in 1967 and floods of Asians began to arrive.

Vancouver in 1981

Vancouver is no longer a dominantly "British" city. In 1981, only 40 percent of the population in Vancouver city was of British ethnic origin, and 53 percent were of British stock in the whole metropolitan area. As noted previously, caution is needed in reading "British" cultural characteristics into these statistics; most persons recorded as being of British ethnic origin are Canadians whose forefathers had lived in Canada for several generations. In 1981, only 20 percent of those of British origin in Vancouver had been born outside of Canada. Recent immigration of British people has not been significant in Vancouver.

Similarly, most persons of central and northern European ethnic background were second- or third-generation Canadians whose parents or grandparents had lived for many years in eastern Canada or in the Prairie

Provinces. They have blended into the cultural mosaic of the city. For example, the Germans and Scandinavians, who are major ethnic groups in Vancouver (see table 4), have little geographical or cultural identity in the city.

Vancouver's social geography changed greatly in the two decades between 1961 and 1981. For the first time the city held a large number of immigrants who had come directly from other countries with other cultures. English as a second language became a significant — and expensive — item in the school budget. The present ethnic variety, geographical diversity, and interesting urban landscapes are mainly the result of the arrival of “newcomers” in the past twenty to thirty years, and of the con-

TABLE 4
Population by Ethnic Origin, 1981

<i>Group</i>	<i>Metropolitan Vancouver</i>	<i>Vancouver City</i>	<i>British Columbia</i>
British	612,000	166,000	1,385,000
Chinese	84,000	60,000	97,000
Germans	74,000	19,000	187,700
French	37,000	10,500	92,400
Scandinavians	36,000	8,300	85,000
Indo-Pakistanis	35,000	14,300	56,300
Italians	30,700	15,300	52,800
Ukrainians	29,300	8,500	63,700
Netherlanders	28,300	5,000	72,300
Pacific Islanders	15,100	8,800	17,000
Japanese	11,800	5,300	16,000
Polish	11,500	4,500	23,800
Jewish	11,500	8,000	13,200
Native Indians	11,000	4,700	65,000
Balkans	9,700	4,200	16,000
Hungarians	8,100	3,000	16,000
Portuguese	8,000	6,000	16,200
Greeks	6,300	4,100	8,500
Total	1,250,000	408,000	2,714,000

tinuing inflow of the 1980s which will not be officially reported until 1991. As in other North American cities, some ethnic groups have dispersed throughout the city and others have concentrated into particular areas (see map 1).

The "newcomers" to metropolitan Vancouver's population are identified in table 5 reporting the percentages of people of various ethnic origins *born outside* of Canada in 1981. There are two distinct groups.

TABLE 5
Population Born Outside of Canada, by Ethnic Origin, 1981

<i>Newcomers</i>		<i>Others</i>	
Pacific Islanders	83%	Netherlanders	45%
Spanish	80%	Germans	36%
Portuguese	75%	Polish	36%
East Indians	74%	Japanese	35%
Chinese	73%	Scandinavians	30%
Hungarians	60%	British	20%
Greeks	58%	Ukrainians	10%
Italians	50%		

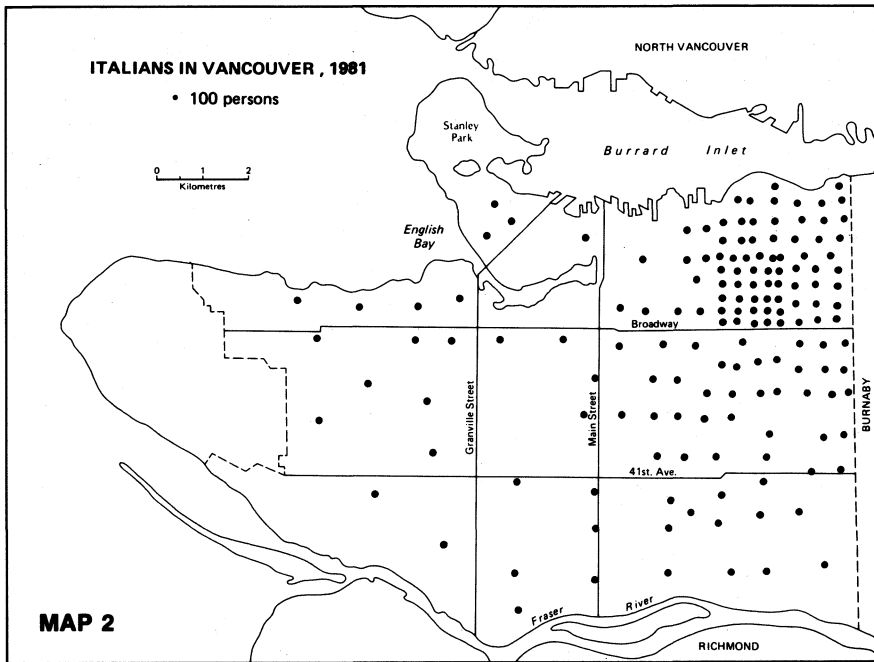
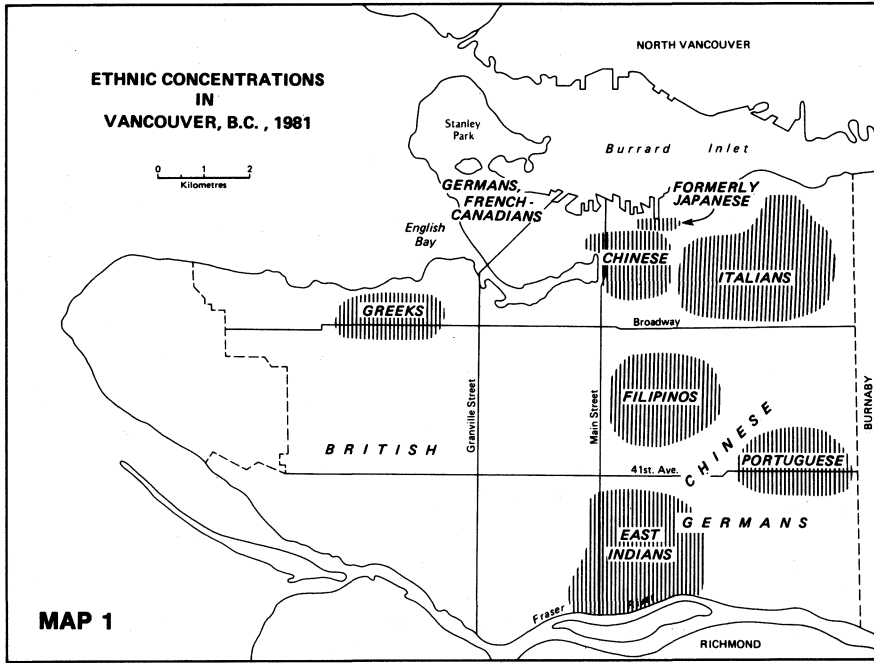
European Origins

Similar to the waves of postwar immigration into Montreal and Toronto, but in smaller numbers, Vancouver was the destination of many people from Mediterranean Europe, mainly Italians but also Greeks and Portuguese (table 4).

Italians

A few Italians came to Vancouver and British Columbia early in this century. In 1911 and 1921 about 2,000 persons of Italian racial origin were recorded in Vancouver; however, there was little further immigration for forty years. The early Italians settled on the east side of Vancouver and developed a strip of stores and restaurants along Commercial Drive. The 5,000 Italian-origin people in Vancouver in 1951 were mainly second- or third-generation Canadians.

Postwar Italian emigrants came to the same east-side area where they could receive communication and employment help and take part in local



community affairs. Their children and recent arrivals have continued to find homes in this northeastern part of the city and also have spread eastward into North Burnaby, where Italians made up the largest group of non-British people in 1981. About half of the Italians in metropolitan Vancouver were born in Canada (table 5), indicating that differences can be expected between older- and younger-generation Italians.

The distribution of Italians in 1981 is shown on map 2. About 70 percent of them lived in northeastern Vancouver, and 40 percent were concentrated in the area east of Victoria Drive and north of Broadway. However, even in this area of Italian concentration they are the second most numerous non-British ethnic group, after the Chinese. The stores and businesses of "Little Italy" along Commercial Drive are a visual part of the interesting urban landscape of Vancouver, and this commercial presence has also become apparent along East Hastings Street. As the map indicates, Italians are few and dispersed on the west side of Vancouver.

Greeks

Although most pre-1940 European emigrants settled on the east side of Vancouver, the Greeks were an exception. There were only about 600 Greeks in Vancouver in 1941, and they lived near their church in the Kitsilano district west of False Creek.

Many of the postwar Greek emigrants came to the original area of Greek settlement in Kitsilano, where they could join in neighbourhood community and cultural life and receive communication assistance. By 1981, 60 percent of Greeks lived on the west side of Vancouver (map 3). The attempt to integrate commercial and residential land uses was never quite achieved by the small Greek community, as was done by the Japanese, Chinese, and Italians. Several Greek entrepreneurs started restaurants along West Broadway and later also on Fourth Avenue. These, however, are intermixed with other commercial establishments and therefore, despite attempts to promote a "Greek Village" concept along West Broadway, the concentration of Greek activities there is less apparent than that of the Italians in "Little Italy."

In the Kitsilano area, north of 16th Avenue and between Arbutus Street and Alma Road, Greeks are the most numerous non-British group. They average about 300 persons per census tract. A newer, small cluster of Greek-origin people had formed by 1981 near Arbutus Street and 33rd Avenue, close to their new church. It will be a measure of the amount of integration of the Greeks into Vancouver's social fabric if this area shows a larger

concentration in the 1991 census. Very few Greeks live in the suburbs of Vancouver; the 1981 census recorded only about 400 in each of Burnaby, Delta, and Surrey.

Portuguese

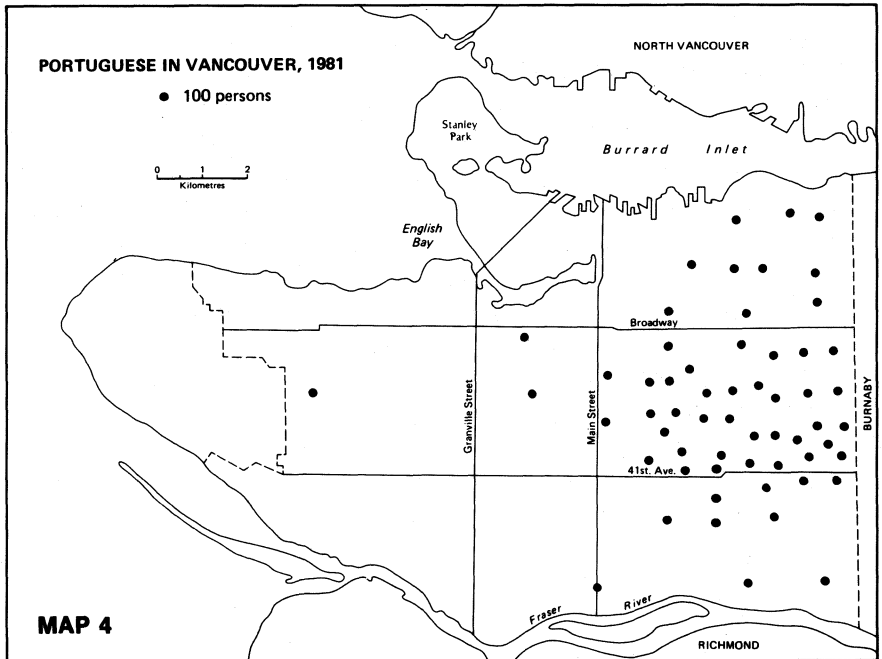
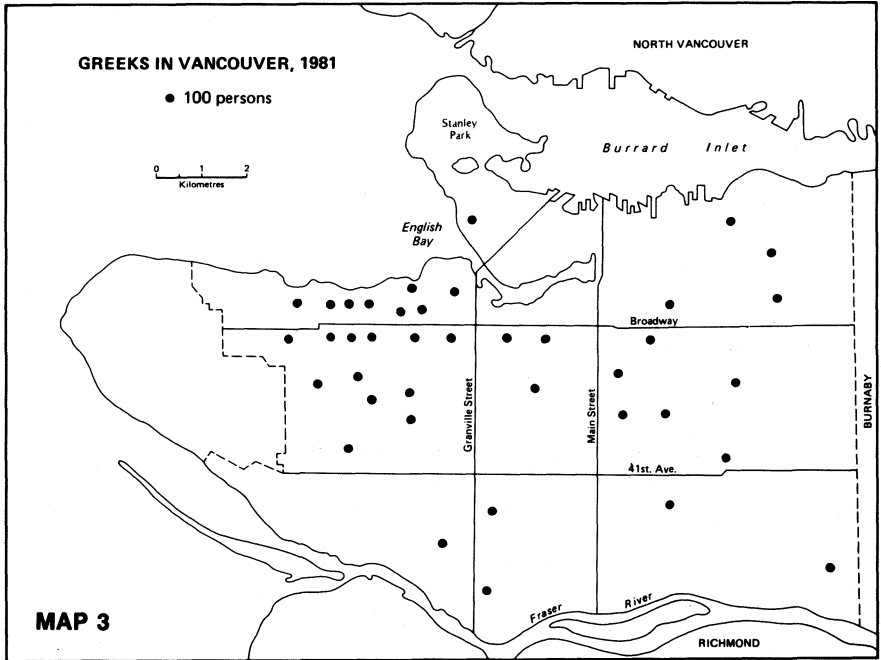
Most of the Portuguese are recent arrivals in Vancouver. In 1981, 75 percent of them had been born outside of Canada. Many who came in the 1950s were from the Azores islands and included numerous interrelated family groups. They often became labourers, particularly in construction trades. Most Portuguese (95 percent) lived on the east side of Vancouver in 1981 and only a few, such as 600 in Burnaby, lived outside of the city. The main residential concentration of Portuguese was east of Fraser Street, between 25th and 45th avenues (map 4). In this area, along and north of Kingsway, they were the second largest non-British group after the Chinese. It is not apparent what attracted the Portuguese to this area, but their distribution was one of the most concentrated of European people in Vancouver. Despite the areal concentration, the Portuguese have made very little visual impact upon Vancouver's urban landscape.

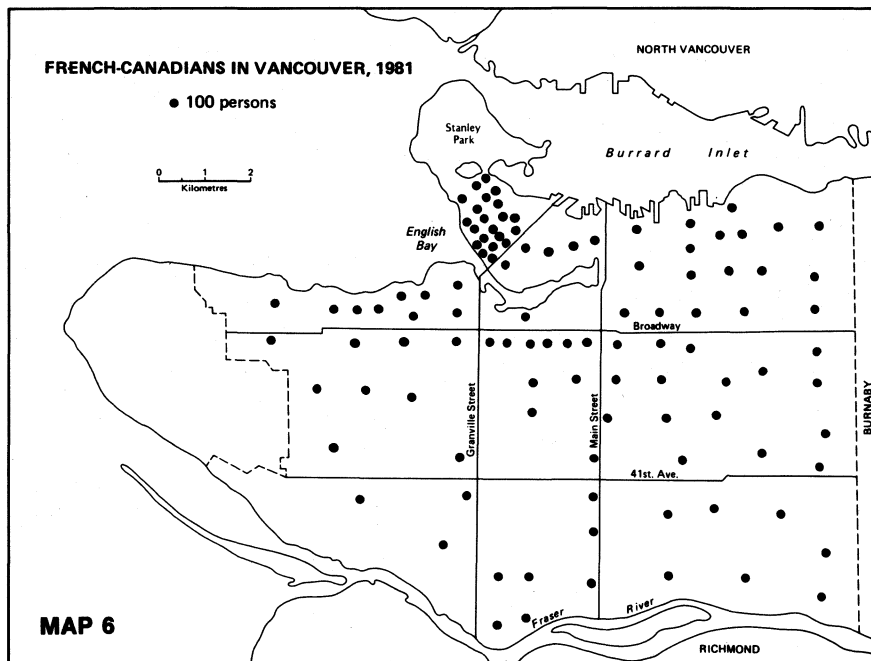
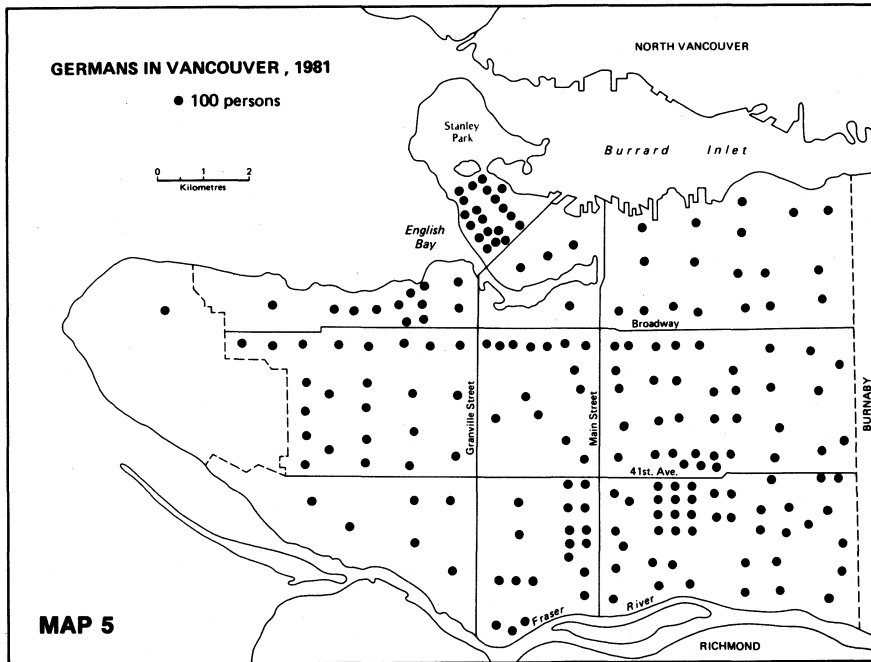
Germans

People of German background have been a significant part of the ethnic mix of Vancouver throughout this century. In 1901, Germans were the second largest non-British people in Vancouver, after the Chinese, and they retained this position in 1981 (table 4). Only one-quarter of the 74,000 Germans in metropolitan Vancouver live in Vancouver city; Germans are, therefore, a major component of the population in Vancouver's suburbs, including 11,000 in Surrey and 7,500 in Burnaby.

Germans, like other central and northern Europeans, are mainly second- or third-generation Canadians; the 1981 census reported that only 25 percent were born in Germany. They have had little desire to remain "different" and have been absorbed into the general cultural, European-based, mix of the city. Physical facilities or institutions that might be called "German" play very little part in the urban landscape of Vancouver. Some of their cultural roots have been maintained by their Lutheran churches; one of the distinctive subgroups has been the Mennonites, many of whom have moved to Vancouver from the Fraser Valley.

People of German ethnic origin were dispersed throughout all parts of Vancouver in 1981, but about 60 percent live on the east side of the city (map 5). The main concentration was in south-central Vancouver, south





of 33rd Avenue and between Main Street and Victoria Drive. This area had several German churches and the largest concentration of people of Mennonite religion. However, even in this area Germans were outnumbered by the Chinese.

A second minor German concentration was in the West End, where people of French-Canadian and German backgrounds constitute the largest number of non-British residents. Many Germans lived in the apartments near Denman Street. The attempt to promote Robson "strasse" as a German commercial strip has been only partially successful. Commercial activities run by Germans are dispersed among other businesses along Robson Street — like those of Greeks on West Broadway. Otherwise, people of Germanic origin were spread throughout Vancouver, averaging at least 200 or 300 persons in most of the sixty-eight census tracts.

French

The Canadian census does not differentiate between persons of French ethnic origin who came directly from France and those whose parents were born in Quebec or eastern Canada. The 1981 census reported that only 2,000 persons of French ethnic origin, out of 37,000 in metropolitan Vancouver, were born in France. Essentially, therefore, the distribution of French in Vancouver refers to French-Canadians. "French" is also defined in the census as a mother tongue, and this is the basis of the map in the Metropolitan Atlas Series: Vancouver (p. 26). Map 6 is based on ethnic origin figures for the census tracts. Despite the two different definitions of "French," and therefore different numbers, the two maps show similar distribution patterns.

Although it is not known how many French-Canadians living in Vancouver were born in Quebec, their long residence in western Canada is indicated by their loss of language. Of the 37,000 ethnic French in metropolitan Vancouver in 1981, only 20,000 listed French as their official language and only 6,000 spoke French at home. In Vancouver city, only 2,000 reported that French was the language used at home.

Fewer than 30 percent of the French (Canadians) in metropolitan Vancouver lived in the city itself in 1981. French-origin people are, therefore, notable parts of the population in Surrey, Burnaby, and Coquitlam. The latter are remnants of the original French-Canadian settlement after 1907 near the sawmills in Maillardville.

The French-Canadian population in Vancouver declined by almost 4,000 persons between 1971 and 1981. This decrease was spread through-

out all parts of Vancouver except in the West End–Fairview area where the numbers increased. In 1981, persons of French ethnic origin were the most numerous non-British people in five of the thirteen census tracts in the West End. They were also in significant numbers in the area south of Broadway and east of Oak Street. French-Canadians were few in south-central and southwestern Vancouver (see map 6).

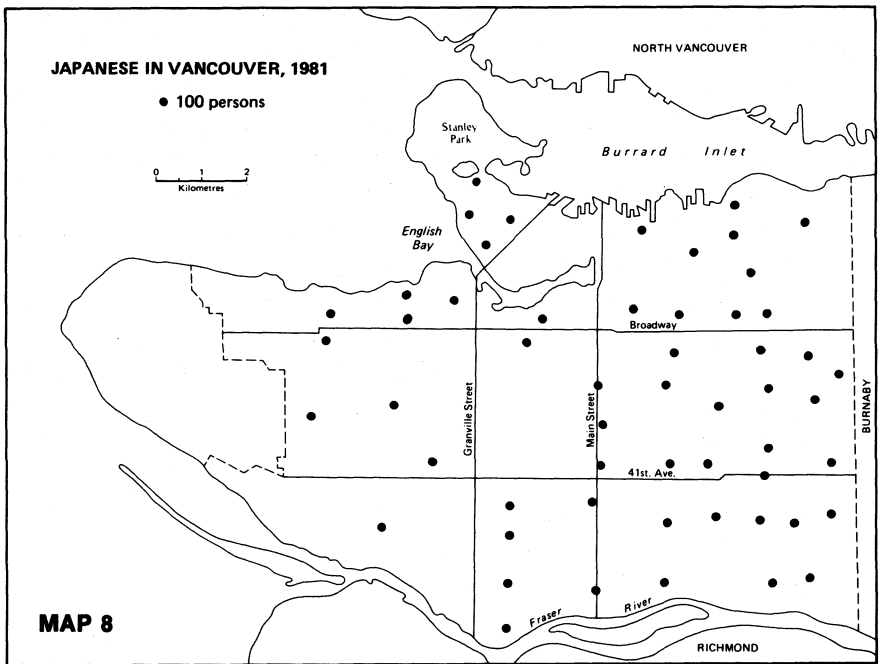
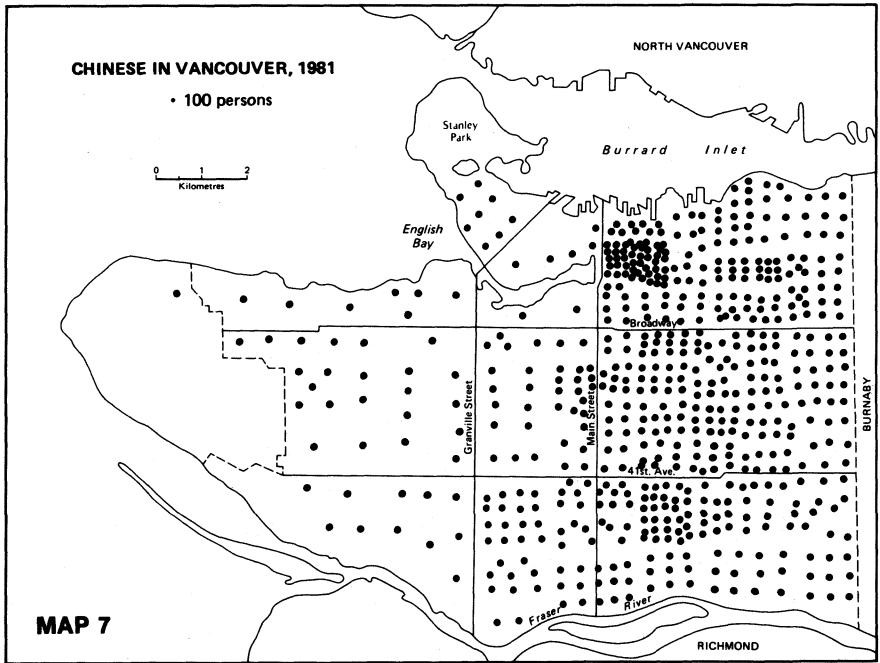
Asiatic Origins: Chinese

The distinctiveness of Vancouver as a multicultural city came from the arrival of thousands of Asians after 1961. Chinese-origin people now constitute the largest group of non-British people in the city (table 4), making up 15 percent of Vancouver's population in 1981. About 73 percent of these were born outside of Canada. Chinese-origin immigrants have come from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, and other southeast Asian countries, rather than directly from mainland China. Although the census groups all Chinese ethnic-origin people together, they come from a variety of cultures and different countries. "Asiatics" have various political backgrounds, as do "Europeans." Since 1981, thousands of Chinese have continued to come to Vancouver, mainly from Hong Kong. The Chinese probably exceeded 100,000 in metropolitan Vancouver in 1988.

The original "Chinatown" residential area along Pender Street is now mainly a colourful commercial strip with excellent restaurants and import stores attracting both Vancouverites and visitors. Although Chinese-origin people are still strongly concentrated in Strathcona, east of old Chinatown, they are also dispersed throughout the city (map 7). About 80 percent of the Chinese lived in the eastern half of Vancouver where they constituted the largest non-British ethnic people in every census tract except in the concentration of South Asians near south Fraser Street.

Even in the dominant "British" west side of the city, Chinese are the most numerous non-British people in half of the census tracts. Reports of the real estate markets in 1987-88 indicated a major flow of generally wealthy Chinese into the residential areas of South Granville, Kerrisdale, and the University Endowment Lands. The 1991 census should confirm this movement into the western parts of Vancouver. Such a future distribution of the Chinese would be an interesting parallel to that of the British in the first part of this century, with low-income Chinese living on the east side of the city and high-income professional and management Chinese residing on the west side.

The areal spread of Chinese throughout Vancouver, and into the sub-



urbs, particularly into Richmond, is an interesting geographical study of both concentration and dispersal. These changing geographical patterns reflect the changing social position of the Chinese from rejection to acceptance.

Japanese

Prior to 1941 a cohesive, compact Japanese community was concentrated just east of Vancouver's original commercial core. They had limited interaction with other parts of the city even though 60 percent of them had been born in Canada. Another major Japanese community was at Steveston, on the south arm of the Fraser River south of Vancouver, where they were a significant part of the fishing industry. This concentration pattern changed during World War II when most of the Japanese, including those who were Canadian citizens, were moved to camps in the Interior of B.C. and in Alberta and Ontario. Very few of them returned to Vancouver after the war.

Recent emigration from Japan has been relatively small compared with the large numbers from other east and south Asian countries. Only 35 percent of the 5,000 Japanese in Vancouver in 1981 were born outside of the country. One of the interesting geographical changes has been the present complete dispersal of the Japanese throughout the residential areas of the city. Although 65 percent lived in the eastern half, no census tract had a concentration of Japanese-origin people. Although people of Japanese origin are now prominent in Vancouver's financial activities, they are no longer a strongly visible part of the city's landscape (see map 8).

South Asians

The newest arrivals to Vancouver's ethnic mix are people of Indo-Pakistan origin; three-quarters of them were born outside of Canada. They are mainly Sikhs from the Punjab part of India but include others from south and southeast Asian countries, Fiji, East Africa, and the Caribbean. They prefer to be known as "South Asians" rather than East Indians. This more inclusive term, therefore, includes people with a variety of religions, cultures, and political origins. They are not a homogeneous group.

As the sawmills closed during the 1970s in the False Creek area of central Vancouver, South Asians began to cluster near the large sawmills along the Fraser River in south Vancouver. In 1981, about 60 percent of those of Indo-Pakistan ethnic origin lived in southeastern Vancouver, mainly near their large temple west of Knight Street. They were also a significant com-

ponent, intermixed with the Portuguese, in the residential area on both sides of Kingsway. As the map indicates, South Asians were few on the west side of Vancouver; 86 percent lived on the east side. Their "town centre" was a strip of stores along Main Street south of 49th Avenue, which is known as "Little Punjab." There, the distinctive saris and turbans are still visible, but are seldom worn by the young generation (see map 9).

Only 40 percent of the South Asians in metropolitan Vancouver lived in the city itself; the majority were in South Burnaby and in the suburbs south of the Fraser River, where they are an important element in small fruit and vegetable production.

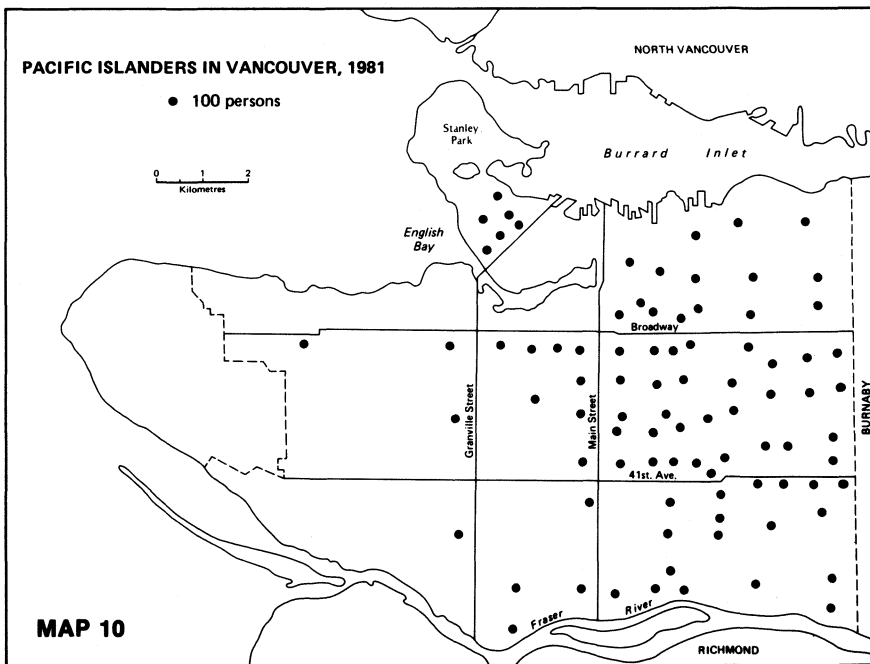
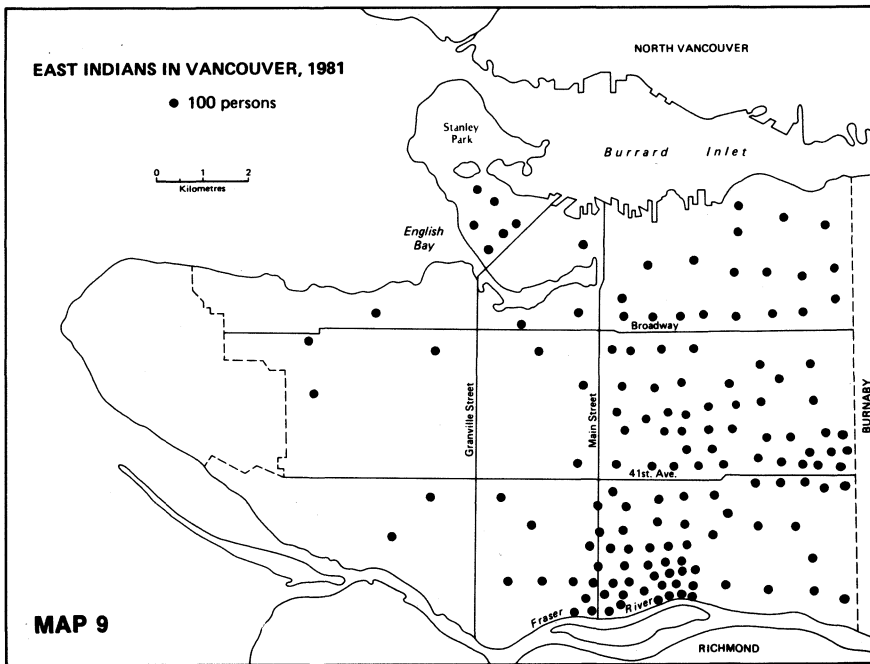
Pacific Islanders

Vancouver's connections with Pacific Rim countries were further strengthened by the recent arrival of a few thousand Filipinos. Although the 1981 census did not differentiate the place of origin of those of "Pacific Islands" ethnic origin, their birthplaces indicate that most came from the Philippines, and some from Fiji. About 11,000 Pacific Islanders in metropolitan Vancouver had been born in the Philippines. Their "newness" to Vancouver is indicated in table 5 showing that they constituted the group with the highest percentage of people born outside of Canada. Like most other non-British people, about 80 percent of Pacific Islanders lived on the east side of Vancouver. However, probably because they are recent arrivals, they have not found residences in particular areas; their homes are dispersed throughout the east side (see map 10). Although Filipinos were already half the number of South Asians and Italians on the east side of Vancouver in 1981, their geographical dispersal and variety of occupations have made them much less visible in the social life of the city.

Conclusion

Although persons of British ethnic origin made up less than half of Vancouver's population in 1981, the preceding comments have stated indirectly that the west side of the city was still predominantly British. In discussing the distribution of ethnic groups in Vancouver, one may need to be reminded that people of British ethnic origin are still the most numerous single ethnic group in all but five of the sixty-nine tracts in Vancouver. However, in the eastern part of the city these British-origin people are a minority amid the *combinations* of people of other racial origins.

The east and west sides of Vancouver are quite different in their social and racial geography. The "multicultural" character of Vancouver is



mainly on the east side; the west and particularly southwest are still the residential areas of Canadians of mainly British ethnic background, most of whom were born in Canada. These east-west differences in ethnic distributions also appear in contrasts in incomes and politics.

It should be interesting to study the 1991 census to see if the multicultural characteristics of east side Vancouver have spread to the west side. One may also wish to see how the suburban municipalities on the north side of Burrard Inlet differ in ethnic character and distribution from those municipalities south of the Fraser River.