

PEOPLE IN THE WAY:

*Modernity, Environment, and Society on the Arrow Lakes**

TINA LOO

NOT LONG AFTER he was first elected premier in 1952, W.A.C. Bennett went on a tour of northern British Columbia. He asked his driver to pull over at a highway viewpoint where he could look out over the Peace River Valley. Perplexed at the sight of a motionless man in a suit gazing off into space, a passing trapper asked, "Mister, what are you staring at?" Bennett apparently pointed down at the valley and answered with a question of his own: "Look down there. What do you see?"

"I see a small, winding, muddy river."

"Well, my friend," said the premier, "I see dams. And I see power. And I see development. I see roads, highways, bridges, and growing communities. I see cities – prosperous cities with schools, hospitals and universities. I see beautiful homes with housewives baking bread."¹

For W.A.C. Bennett, the value of nature lay in its transformation. Altering nature would not just make British Columbia wealthy, it would also support the emergence of an industrial economy and a particular kind of society – one that was connected, institutionally anchored, urban, wealthy, and domestic. The vision he articulated above the Peace was not limited to the North but was part of an overall plan for provincial development. For Bennett and his Social Credit party, making British Columbia modern depended on conquering the province's geography

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¹ Cited in David J. Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1983), 255.

and realizing the economic potential of its forests, fisheries, rivers, and minerals through massively capitalized resource development.

While it is widely understood that large-scale, state-directed environmental exploitation drove the “rise of British Columbia” in the postwar years, rather less is known about the ideas and practices that informed this process – a process that geographer Eric Swyngedouw calls the “socio-natural production” of modernity.² Focusing on the 1964 Columbia River Treaty, this article examines the agents, techniques, and logic associated with the creation of a modern British Columbia through hydroelectric development, arguing that they were manifestations of an encompassing historically specific ideology of “high modernity.” It then looks at the reaction to the treaty’s provisions and the impact of the High Arrow Dam, making the point that, in their opposition, the “people in the way” of the dam articulated an alternative to the high modernism of Bennett and BC Hydro.³ The politics of nature on the Arrow Lakes reveals that there were “multiple modernities” at play in British Columbia during the 1960s, each of which was characterized by a particular organization of space and time that gave rise to different notions of the good life.⁴ Before turning to these specifics and complexities, however, I begin with an overview of the relationship between modernity and the control of nature in postwar British Columbia, the context for the provincial government’s high modernist project on the Arrow Lakes.

MODERNITY AND NATURE IN POSTWAR BRITISH COLUMBIA

The relationship between modernity and the control of nature that underpinned the “rise of British Columbia” was particularly apparent in the public works initiatives undertaken by the Social Credit government from 1952 to 1972. In twenty years it changed the face of British Columbia, building the infrastructure to support private-sector and particularly foreign investment in resource exploitation. In the 1950s the focus was on transportation: during their first six years in power, Bennett’s “blacktop

² Eric Swyngedouw, “Modernity and Hybridity: Nature, *Regeneracionismo*, and the Production of the Spanish Waterscape,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89, 3 (1999): 443–65.

³ J.W. Wilson, *People in the Way: The Human Aspects of the Columbia River Project* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

⁴ S.N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus* (special issue: “Multiple Modernities”) 129, 1 (2000): 1–30. In the BC context, see Arn Keeling and Robert A.J. McDonald, “The Profligate Province: Roderick Haig-Brown and the Modernizing of British Columbia,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36 (2001): 7–23.

government" spent more money on roads and highways than had been spent in the entire history of the province.⁵ By the end of the decade, not only had all existing public highways in the province been paved or repaved but thousands of miles of new asphalt also linked previously isolated communities.

If highways were the connective tissue of the modern society Social Credit hoped to build, then hydroelectricity was its heart. From the mid-1950s the focus of public works in British Columbia shifted from roads to rivers. For W.A.C. Bennett, domesticating the province's wild rivers was a way of imposing an efficiency on decadent nature. A free, running river was wasteful: water flowed to the sea where its energy was lost forever. Properly harnessed, however, a river's energy could be put to work powering industrial development and expansion, the economic basis for Bennett's new society.

Eager to press his development agenda, Bennett seized on a proposal made by the Kaiser Aluminium and Chemical Corporation of the United States in 1954 to develop a large storage dam near Castlegar on the upper Columbia River.⁶ In return for a fifty-year water licence, Kaiser agreed to build the dam, pay provincial taxes and water licence fees, and return to British Columbia 20 percent of the electricity generated downstream. Bennett was delighted with the deal, predicting the downstream benefit the province would accrue would power the industrialization of the Kootenays. Ottawa, however, was less keen.⁷

Hostile to unilateral provincial initiatives, and insisting on its jurisdiction over international waterways, the federal government quashed the Kaiser deal in 1955 and, through the International Joint Commission (IJC), continued its own negotiations with the United States over the Columbia's future. For Bennett, the episode was a bitter, if instructive, moment. When, in the late 1950s, the IJC's International Columbia River Engineering Board began targeting several locations on the British Columbia portion of the river as potential storage dam sites, it was clear the province had few options. From Social Credit's perspective, the only way to assert provincial jurisdiction over the Columbia's waters and to have any influence over an international process was to make it clear that British Columbia had other energy options; namely, damming

⁵ Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett*, 260.

⁶ A storage dam is a barrier across a river that is capable of holding back or "impounding" a large amount of water and controlling its release to generate flows at specific times that can be used to generate power downstream at dams with power turbines.

⁷ Neil A. Swainson, *Conflict over the Columbia: The Canadian Background to an Historic Treaty* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), 57-65.

the Peace River, whose waters the premier claimed.⁸ Thus was born W.A.C. Bennett's "Two River Policy," a plan to develop the hydroelectric potential of both the Columbia and the Peace Rivers simultaneously. Electricity from the latter would power the industrial development of the province. The economic independence that would come from it could, the premier hoped, be leveraged into greater provincial control over resource development – on the Columbia and elsewhere.

Bennett's gambit carried the day. His plans for the Peace were parlayed into influence over the Columbia negotiations and, ultimately, into greater authority in Confederation.⁹ Signed in 1961, the Columbia River Treaty required Canada to build three storage dams on the upper Columbia (the Duncan, the High Arrow, and the Mica) and to allow the United States to build the Libby Dam in Montana, whose reservoir would extend north across the forty-ninth parallel. Together, the four "treaty dams" doubled the storage capacity of the Columbia River basin. In return, Canada received a total of US\$64.4 million for the flood control benefits that would come as a result of the dams and an entitlement to half the power generated in the United States attributable to the operation of the Canadian storage sites. Disposition of the "Canadian entitlement," or "downstream benefit," was a sticking point between Ottawa and Victoria, and delayed ratification of the treaty for over three years. Bennett maintained that the Canadian entitlement belonged to British Columbia and insisted on the province's right to dispose of it. Because of the Peace project, British Columbia did not need Columbia power. The premier wanted to sell it back to American utility companies and use the revenue to fund construction of the treaty dams.¹⁰ Ottawa took great issue with all of this but eventually capitulated. The Columbia River Treaty was ratified in 1964, and British Columbia sold the downstream benefit to the Americans for thirty years for US\$275 million.¹¹

For all of their importance in reconfiguring the balance of power within Confederation, Bennett's development policies were also significant as manifestations of "high modernity," an ideology that characterized a particular moment in international history. According

⁸ Bennett based his claim on the "fact" that the waters of the Peace lay entirely within the province's borders. Alberta would have disagreed. See Swainson, *Conflict over the Columbia*, 65; see also Mitchell, 286, 289; Paddy Sherman, *Bennett* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), 211-4.

⁹ Swainson, *Conflict over the Columbia*, 358-9.

¹⁰ Secretary of the Interior and Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army, to Director, Bureau of the Budget, 12 August 1962, 3rd draft, re: Columbia River Treaty, W.A.C. Bennett Papers, Simon Fraser University Archives (SFUA), F-55-38-0-18.

¹¹ Swainson, *Conflict over the Columbia*, 399 n54; and Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett*, 323-4.

to the anthropologist James C. Scott, high modernity is best understood as a belief in the ongoing advance of science and technology and their combined power to deliver social benefit, largely by facilitating the domination of nature, something high modernists believed was humanity's destiny.¹² Convinced of the need for and the benefits of systematic change, high modernists around the world sought to deliver them on an unprecedented scale, beginning in the late nineteenth century, but especially after 1945.

Regimes of all political stripes harnessed scientific knowledge and technology to the apparatus of the state, giving birth to "mega projects" like city planning, collectivization, and scientific agriculture. Indeed, part of high modernity's power was its seemingly apolitical character: by embracing the apparent rationality, objectivity, and neutrality of science and technology, high modernists could present and defend their plans for change as impartial and pragmatic, while characterizing any opposition as self-interested and political. Highways Minister Phil Gaglardi's response in 1960 to criticism about his government's Two River Policy was a classic example of this tactic. "I would like to know how we are going to get power if we are going to sit around quibbling about it," he huffed. "We are not interested in the politics of power. We want to be able to turn on a switch and see the lights go on."¹³

In North America hydroelectric development was the most prominent manifestation of the high modernist impulse. In Canada the postwar years saw provincial governments across the country invest resources in river diversion and dam building on an unprecedented scale as initiatives to generate growth and development. Many of these dams were for irrigation, flood control, and water supply, but the majority generated hydroelectricity. Of the 613 large dams built in Canada to 1984, 351, or nearly 60 percent, were constructed in a thirty-year period between 1945 and 1975.¹⁴ Among the better known of these mega projects were those dams built on the Peace, Columbia, St. Lawrence, and South Saskatchewan Rivers as well the Churchill Falls and James Bay projects.

While the statistics might suggest that dam building proceeded smoothly and was uncontested, such was not the case. For all their promise, these mega projects were controversial, and the Columbia dams were no exception. After navigating the complexities of interna-

¹² James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), esp. 88-90.

¹³ Cited in Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett*, 298.

¹⁴ Compiled from *Register of Dams in Canada* (Montreal: Canadian National Committee of the International Committee on Large Dams, 1984).

tional treaty negotiations, W.A.C. Bennett and his government faced the difficult problem of selling the benefits of dam construction to the people who would have to bear the costs of making British Columbia modern. The Columbia River Treaty required Canada to build the treaty dams within nine years of ratification. This was challenging enough, but the task was made all the more formidable as the most important of the dams – the High Arrow Dam – was located in a populated area.¹⁵ People, as well as earth, would have to be moved to meet the obligations of the treaty. This was not considered problematic. Resettlement was both a common result and strategy of high modernist initiatives. In Canada these took the form of urban renewal projects (like the razing of Africville in Nova Scotia) and social planning schemes (like outport centralization in Newfoundland) as well as the relocation of indigenous peoples (like the removal of the Inuit from northern Quebec to the Canadian High Arctic).¹⁶ In each case, governments sought to deliver social benefit to particular groups by compelling them to move. As the history of human migration revealed, the movement of peoples had long been a vehicle for improving their condition. From the perspective of high modernist planning, state-sponsored forced migration was simply a more systematic approach to a strategy adopted by generations of people who had moved to better their condition.

Numbering 6,745 in 1961, the residents of the Arrow Lakes had lived in the shadow of Columbia development since the end of the Second World War. They had watched the IJC discussions with interest but as late as 1959 had little reason to anticipate the construction of a dam that would threaten their communities. General Andrew McNaughton, the chair of the Canadian Section of the IJC, opposed such an idea, and the province's attorney general expressed concern about the loss of agri-

¹⁵ Testifying before the Comptroller of Water Rights, BC Hydro Chairman Hugh Keenleyside underscored the importance of the High Arrow Dam. In the Authority's view, High Arrow was "really the heart of the whole [Columbia River Treaty] agreement" as it provided approximately 65 percent of the energy benefits and 80 percent of the flood control offered by the treaty. *In the Province of British Columbia, In the Matter of the "BC Water Act," and In the Matter of the Application of the British Columbia Power Commission to Store Water at Arrow Lakes, before A.F. Paget, Esq., Comptroller of Water Rights* (hereafter Water Comptroller's Hearings), Revelstoke, British Columbia, 26 and 29 September 1961, 17-8 and 357. British Columbia Archives (BCA), GR 880, British Columbia Ministry of the Environment, Power and Special Projects Division, Power and Special Projects Files, 1949-76, box 16, file A-15.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Donald H. Clairmont, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1999); Ralph Matthews, *Communities in Decline: An Examination of Household Resettlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1968); and Alan R. Marcus, *Relocating Eden: The Image and Politics of Inuit Exile in the Canadian Arctic* (Dartmouth, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1995).

cultural land.¹⁷ Their confidence was misplaced. McNaughton was not included among the Canadian negotiators who, in January 1961, agreed to the American proposal for a dam outside Castlegar that would raise water levels by thirty-six feet, turning the Arrow Lakes into a massive reservoir.¹⁸

Although the rising waters would flood over 25,000 acres of arable land and fourteen lakeshore communities, displacing approximately 2,000 people, the residents of the Arrow Lakes were not included in the decision-making process.¹⁹ Presented with a *fait accompli*, many in the West Kootenay considered the licencing hearings held by the water comptroller in the fall of 1961 to discuss BC Hydro's application to build High Arrow a "farce."²⁰ Nonetheless, despite the fact that the hearings were convened after the draft treaty had been signed, there was still a high level of local interest and participation.²¹ But when it became apparent that the treaty's provisions were not on the table for discussion, residents' frustration grew. "This is just a hearing," Nakusp resident Hazel Stark told reporters after testifying. "When is there to be an answering?"²² Hydro's resettlement planners thus confronted a growing climate of anxiety, fear, and resentment as they set out to devise and sell a proposal to deal with the displaced and dispossessed – "people in the way," as one of them put it, of progress and modernity.²³

¹⁷ Wilson, *People in the Way*, 16.

¹⁸ BC Hydro, *The New Outlook for the Arrow Lakes* (Vancouver: British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, 1965), 5.

¹⁹ The communities displaced in whole or in part were: Mount Cartier, Sidmouth, Arrowhead, Beaton, Arrow Park, East Arrow Park, Burton, Needles, Fauquier, Edgewood, Renata, Syringa Creek, Broadwater, and Deer Park. BC Hydro, *New Outlook*, 6 and Map 1. The statistics are from Wilson, *People in the Way*, 8 and 41; and BC Hydro, *Columbia Construction Progress: Arrow Project – Review of Construction* (BC Hydro and Power Authority: Vancouver, July 1969), 33.

²⁰ *The Colonist*, 4 October 1961, 2. Interviewed more than ten years after the treaty's ratification, H.D.H. Hunter, one of the Power Authority's lawyers at the time of the hearings, agreed. See Mike Poole (dir. and prod.), *The Reckoning* (CBC, Television, 1977).

²¹ According to the local member of Parliament, H.W. Herridge, "some three hundred property owners protested in writing, [and] another hundred gave evidence." In all, he estimated that a total of 1,000 people attended the hearings, which were held at Revelstoke, Nakusp, and Castlegar in the fall of 1961. See Herridge to Baker, 30 December 1961, and Herridge to Gray, 11 October 1961. H.W. Herridge Fonds, National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG 32 C-13, vol. 81, file 3.

²² *Vancouver Sun*, 2 October 1961, 3.

²³ Wilson, *People in the Way*, 29.

THE NEW OUTLOOK FOR THE ARROW LAKES

While Hugh Keenleyside, chairman of BC Hydro, was concerned about the corporation being perceived as a “soul-less engineering machine,” planners like J.W. Wilson, who was appointed to head its resettlement program in 1964, did not conceive of their job as primarily pastoral.²⁴ The purpose of resettlement planning was less about helping people cope with change and to pick up the pieces of their lives than it was about self-consciously refashioning those lives. Wilson and his colleagues aimed to give the Arrow Lakes District new prospects and its people a new attitude and position from which to engage the world. The difference was captured in the distinction planners drew between relocation and resettlement. Whereas the former simply involved shifting people “up the hill,” the latter “implic[d] a comprehensive and energetic approach in revitalizing a relatively stagnant and depressed region of BC into an active area.”²⁵ For Wilson and Hydro, the dam was an opportunity to engineer a “new outlook for the Arrow Lakes.” Encapsulated in a series of planning documents distributed to residents, their ideas expose the agents, techniques, and the high modernist logic that drove the socio-natural production of British Columbia, and reveal that the process of making the province modern involved nothing less than a fundamental reorganization of space and time at the local level.

High modernism was embraced by all kinds of people, from architects to scientists, political visionaries to engineers, but perhaps no single group exemplified its logic more than planners, in many ways its central agents. Emerging as a profession in the twentieth century, planning was premised on a very modern belief in the revolutionary potential of human rationality. Not only could planners understand the complexities of social reality and, therefore, predict the effects of change, but they could also, in their own estimation, design “systems” – from transportation to sewage, or from housing to health care – that went beyond merely coping with change to actually improving the quality of people’s lives.

²⁴ BC Hydro Chairman Hugh L. Keenleyside, cited in *Vancouver Sun*, 3 May 1966, 9. Hydro did engage in a level of what might be thought of as pastoral care, giving special attention to the needs of senior citizens and those on social assistance in its resettlement planning. It hired long-time civil servant William MacGillivray in January 1965 to meet with the district’s older people and to explain the property assessment and resettlement procedures. In four years he dealt with approximately 200 people, in some cases chauffeuring them around the Kootenays and beyond, helping them to find prospective places to live. As well, Hydro worked out an agreement with provincial social services so that the district’s welfare recipients could receive their compensation money without endangering their welfare payments.

²⁵ H. Peter Oberlander and R.J. Cave, *Assessment of Some Aspects of Re-Settlement in the Arrow Lakes Region, BC*, January 1963, 6. Arrow Lakes Historical Society Archives (ALHSA).

Planning thus centred on developing ways to maximize the possibilities offered by change. As the head of UBC's School of Planning, H. Peter Oberlander, argued, "the planner can offer an alternative to 'backing into the future'... Rather than allowing the 'impact' to take advantage of the Arrow Lakes, the Arrow Lakes can take advantage of the 'impact.'"²⁶ His sentiments were echoed by Hugh Keenleyside. "We have always realized that the Columbia River Development would disrupt the lives of many property owners," he admitted. "However, ... [it] will also give the Region an unusual opportunity to start life afresh, with new and greatly increased potential."²⁷

Short of giving themselves over to people like Wilson and Oberlander, one of the ways the residents of the Arrow Lakes could take advantage of the impact was by informing themselves. Even as BC Hydro was formulating its own strategy for the district, its planners tried to facilitate planning by individual residents, providing them with information. It was only the information they deemed necessary for, while Hydro sought to make its resettlement plans and procedures transparent, it also wanted to control the discussion by setting the terms of debate. To these ends, at the recommendation of J.W. Wilson, BC Hydro began publishing and distributing *The Columbia News Letter* from its newly opened information office in Nakusp, in the central Arrow Lakes, in August 1964. A month later, it published *The Property Owners' Guide*, a booklet that outlined in broad brush strokes how BC Hydro planned to buy the properties required for Columbia development. At the same time, it stationed one of the resettlement program's planners, G.W. Fitzpatrick, in Nakusp and eventually relocated the rest of its planning division there in June 1965. Such measures were undertaken for public relations purposes, and they were recognized by some residents as mechanisms to manufacture consent, but they nonetheless point to BC Hydro's modernist faith in rationality: if people had facts, they could only conclude that the High Arrow development was good for the valley.²⁸

²⁶ "A Regional Development Study for the Arrow Lakes, BC," Community and Regional Planning Studies, Student Project 3 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, September 1964), 8. J.W. Wilson Fonds, Simon Fraser University Archives (SFUA), F-132-2-0-4.

²⁷ H.L. Keenleyside to the Residents of the Arrow Lakes Region, June 1965, in BC Hydro, *New Outlook*, 2.

²⁸ Letter to the Editor from D.R. Collier, *Arrow Lakes News*, 27 March 1968. Clippings File, ALHSA. All the articles drawn from the *Arrow Lakes News* were taken from a clippings file at the Arrow Lakes Historical Society Archives. The articles are arranged by year, but the page number from which the article taken is not recorded. To make it easier to access them for any one who wishes to find them in the clippings file, I have recorded the title of the article as well as the date.

While helping residents to plan gave BC Hydro a public profile in the district, the majority of the power authority's resettlement efforts went into engineering its own designs for the Arrow Lakes. The resettlement proposals framed by its planners reveal the specific techniques and logic of high modernity. In 1960, even before the draft treaty was signed, BC Hydro conducted a census of properties in the Arrow Lakes and a "personal survey" to gauge residents' needs.²⁹ Soon after, it undertook a study of the district's general economic status and worked with federal bureaucrats to assess the area's agricultural potential and the effects of flooding.³⁰ But the extent to which high modernity was a spatial project, conceptualized and facilitated through modelling, is evident in two booklets distributed to residents of the area outlining BC Hydro's general proposals for development.³¹

According to *The New Outlook for the Arrow Lakes*, residents could "remain as near as possible to their accustomed localities" or take "full advantage" of the "opportunity" provided by the flooding to live in "new communities planned for modern living."³² Unlike the existing settlements, the villages and towns designed by BC Hydro's planners would be compact and "nucleated"; that is, each would have a centre around which residential space would radiate. Instead of being scattered along the lakeshore, people would live in subdivisions on safe and quiet residential streets with easy access to schools, hospitals, and churches as well as commercial and recreational services like radio and TV repair shops and curling clubs (Figure 1).³³ Just in case those attractions were not enough, BC Hydro rewarded the first arrivals in each of its settlements with a symbol of the new modern life they were about to begin: an electric kettle.³⁴

²⁹ "Columbia Storage Program Approved," *Arrow Lakes News*, 27 October 1960. Clippings File, ALHSA. Some residents were taken aback at these actions, considering them premature and underhanded. See Timmons to Keenleyside, 20 November 1960, H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG 32 C-13, vol. 81, file 3.

³⁰ P.C. Forward, with the assistance of J.M. Bogyo (BC Power Commission staff), "The Present Economic Status of the Arrow Lakes Valley," 8 June 1961, BCA, GR 880, box 14, file A-3; and Arrow Lakes Project, Agricultural Studies, Preliminary Report on the Agricultural Potential of the Area Affected by the Proposed High Arrow Lakes Dam Project, Economics Division, Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, Ontario, February 1962, BCA, GR 880, box 17, file A-22.

³¹ BC Hydro, *New Outlook*; and *New Communities for the Arrow Lakes* (Vancouver: BC Power and Hydro Authority, June 1966).

³² BC Hydro, *New Outlook*, 15; and "New Communities Must Satisfy You," *Columbia News Letter*, 21 October 1964.

³³ BC Hydro, *New Outlook*, 15.

³⁴ "Nakusp Family Receives Gift from BC Hydro," *Arrow Lakes News*, 24 November 1966. Clippings File, ALHSA.

DIAGRAM A

A New Community

FOR APPROXIMATELY 150 FAMILIES

A—TOWN CENTRE:

- Shops and offices
- Government office and police
- Community hall
- Canadian Legion
- Church
- Hotel
- Service Station
- Memorial Park
- Parking Lots

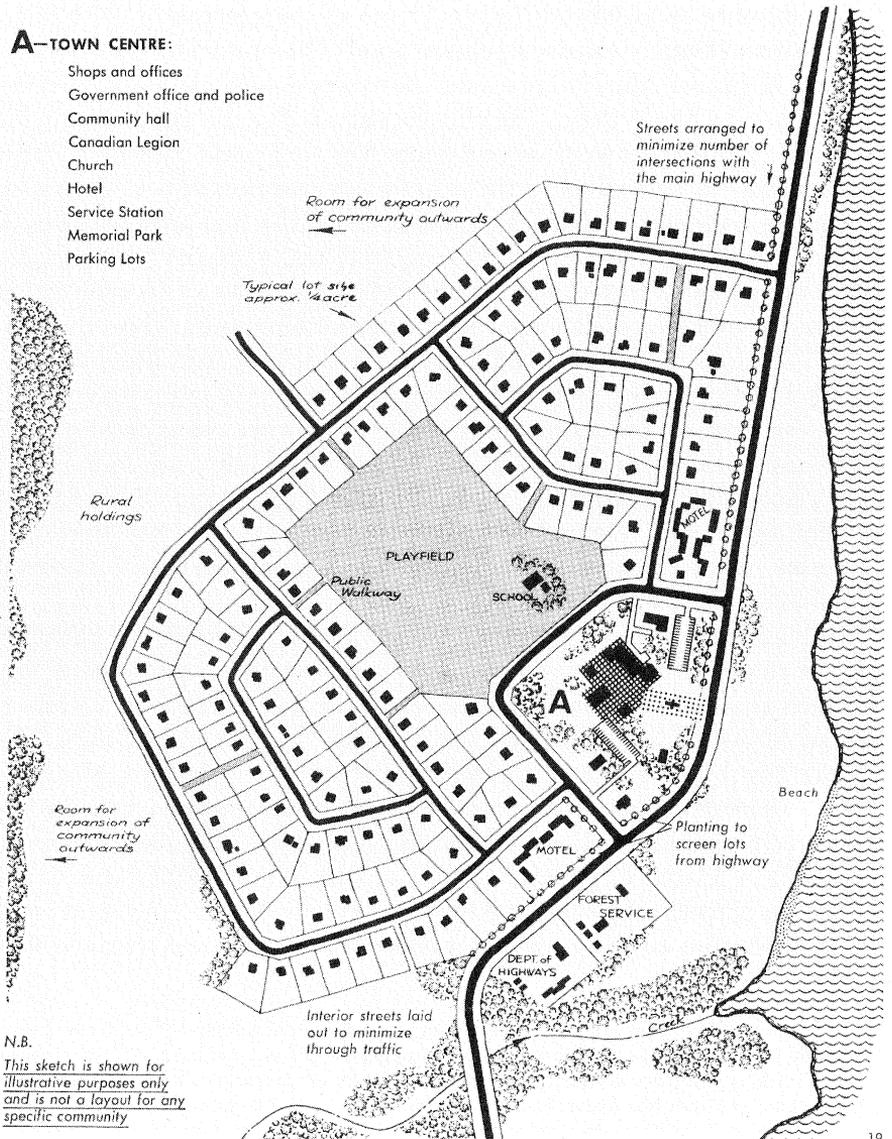


Figure 1: BC Hydro, *The New Outlook for the Arrow Lakes* (Vancouver, British Columbia and Power Authority, 1965), 19.

By reorganizing space, planners aimed to reconfigure social relations in a way that would facilitate the emergence of formal political structures. The consolidation and centralization inherent in the settlement pattern outlined by BC Hydro's planners was not only designed to make for more efficient access to, and delivery of, services but also to increase community. A social good in itself, from the perspective of BC Hydro, this consolidation was also a political good. The lack of local government and, in general, the "unorganized" nature of the district proved vexing to planners like Wilson. The village councils that did exist were, in his view, "small and served by non-professional, general-factotum staffs, and they are bedevilled by the existence of fragmented boundaries, all having unorganized fringes around them."³⁵ For planners, working in the Arrow Lakes was made all the more difficult because "there was no existing 'power structure' for Hydro to grapple with."³⁶ Consolidating and rationalizing settlement could increase community. From the first, BC Hydro recognized it could not easily implement its plans without local institutions. Part of its "new outlook" was thus motivated out of a desire to create community sentiment, or, more precisely, recognizable community structures – not out of any altruistic sense but for the purposes of what James Scott calls "legibility" and control. Resettlement required that BC Hydro know where people were – to be able to see and locate them on a landscape – and to have political structures through which to deal with them.

Planners were not, however, simply concerned with reorganizing individual villages and towns. They also sought to consolidate and centralize settlement in the Arrow Lakes as a whole as a way of reconfiguring social relations and, through them, economic ones. The existing settlement pattern of scattered knots of people living along the lakeshore dated back to the turn of the twentieth century. Attracted by the mining boom in the neighbouring Slocan Valley, immigrants from central Canada, England, Sweden, and the Netherlands came to the region between the 1890s and the First World War to farm or to work in lumbering and saw-milling and on the railways and sternwheelers

³⁵ Wilson, *People in the Way*, 34-5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12. Interestingly, in their initial survey of the economic potential of the Arrow Lakes, BC Hydro's planners made a point of enumerating the "People in the Area." This was not a simple recapitulation of census data; rather, it was "a list of community leaders, spokesmen and other representatives of the populace, together with a brief description of their status in the community" – perhaps designed to help the power authority communicate more effectively. Foreword, with the assistance of J.M. Boygo, "The Present Economic Status of the Arrow Lakes Valley," 105-9.

that grew up alongside and served these industries.³⁷ Many carved out farms and orchards in the Inonoaklin Valley west of Edgewood and outside Nakusp, and on strips of land along the river from Revelstoke to Arrowhead, near Fauquier and Renata, at the narrows between the two lakes.³⁸ They were “a different class of people”: in contrast to their neighbours in New Denver, Kaslo, and Nelson, “there was little of the get-rich-quick mindset: people came to stay.”³⁹ Most of these lakeshore communities were small in size and connected by water. Residents rowed to where they needed to go or took one of the area’s sternwheelers, which began service in the late 1880s.⁴⁰

As was the case in many BC communities with a substantial English population, the Great War signalled the beginning of a series of changes for the Arrow Lakes.⁴¹ Settlement slowed, reflecting a decline in the agricultural and mining economies. After the Depression and Second World War, however, forestry revived. The BC government granted a tree farm licence to Celgar, an affiliate of an American-based forestry company, whose operations on the lakes boomed in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴² Full employment propelled the region into the modern industrial age, a transition symbolized by the proliferation of highways and cars and the end of sternwheeler service in 1954. For all that, and despite their new prosperity, residents did not abandon their farms and the small communities that surrounded them. Although they no longer worked their holdings full-time – if very much at all – they remained attached to the land and “deeply tied to the lake, in practical as well as aesthetic ways.”⁴³

For BC Hydro’s planners, this made no sense. The settlement pattern had no rationale other than perceived “necessity or sentiment” on the

³⁷ Donald Waterfield, *Continental Waterboy* (Toronto: Clark Irwin, 1970), 7; and Wilson, *People in the Way*, 8–14.

³⁸ Waterfield, *Continental Waterboy*, 8.

³⁹ Barbara MacPherson, *Columbia River Committee Report: Arrow Lakes Report* (Nakusp: Nakusp and District Round Table and Economic Development Board, 25 May 1994), 4. More generally, see Cole Harris, “Industry and the Good Life around Idaho Peak,” *Canadian Historical Review* 66, 3 (1985): 315–43.

⁴⁰ Waterfield, *Continental Waterboy*, 5; and Robert D. Turner, *Sternwheelers and Steam Tugs: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Pacific Railway’s British Columbia Lake and River Service* (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1998), 261.

⁴¹ Wilson, *People in the Way*, 8–9.

⁴² Waterfield, *Continental Waterboy*, 9. In 1961 BC Hydro’s planners estimated that between 60 percent and 65 percent of the gross income of Arrow Lakes residents was attributable to forestry, mainly logging, sawmilling, and cedar pole cutting. Foreword, with the assistance of J.M. Boygo, “Present Economic Status,” 29.

⁴³ MacPherson, *Arrow Lakes Report*, 4.

part of residents.⁴⁴ If the Arrow Lakes were to become modern, they would have to be “re-spatialized” – a different settlement pattern imposed on the entire area. Instead of a dozen or more communities, the region’s population would be consolidated into just four: New Burton, New Fauquier, and New Edgewood (purpose-built to replace existing settlements that would be flooded out) and Nakusp (Figure 2).⁴⁵ These new compact communities would be linked to each other and the outside world by a system of paved highways that would improve the “speed, continuity, and safety of travel” both for residents and, more important, for outsiders, whom the planners considered the lifeblood of the area.⁴⁶

Two maps tell the tale of transformation. According to Figure 3, “Yesterday’s Region” consisted of small, old-fashioned, almost illegible settlements (suggested, perhaps, by the script employed) that were poorly linked to each other and the rest of the province. Indeed, much of the map consists of blank white space, suggesting the limits of both knowledge and possibility that inhered in such a settlement pattern. In stark contrast, “Tomorrow’s Region” is unabashedly modern, consisting of larger communities whose ties were not just provincial but international, stretching across the forty-ninth parallel (Figure 4). As well as illustrating the rhetoric of planning, these maps suggest that the socio-natural production of high modernity on the Arrow Lakes turned on connection, integration, and the broadened geographical horizons and, hence, the enlarged social and economic futures that would come as a result.

The maps and models used to communicate the transformation that the Arrow Lakes District would undergo were key planning tools, and they illustrate high modernity’s logic. High modernity defined rationality in terms of centralization and straight lines, and efficiency in terms of speed, access, and flows of people and goods into and out of the district. These habits of mind grew out of a particular way of seeing. The “synoptic,” bird’s-eye (or God’s-eye) view embodied in BC Hydro’s town plans or in its maps of Yesterday’s and Tomorrow’s Regions, as well as the profile of the Columbia River and its tributaries (Figure 5), was emblematic of the simplified view of reality that lay behind all high modernist projects.⁴⁷ From the planners’ lofty vantage point,

⁴⁴ BC Hydro, *New Outlook*, 12.

⁴⁵ “Three New Communities for the Arrow Lakes,” *Arrow Lakes News*, 10 February 1966. Clippings File, ALHSA.

⁴⁶ BC Hydro, *New Outlook*, 7.

⁴⁷ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 57–9. See also Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6, and Introduction generally.

The General Outlook

We have always intended to provide residents displaced by the Columbia Project with an opportunity to resettle in new communities in the area. In preparation for this, we presented general resettlement proposals to the people in the Central Arrow Lakes last summer and then obtained their views about the proposals by door-to-door surveys.

These surveys showed that some 66 families would like to resettle in a new community at Fauquier; 12 would relocate at Edgewood; 31 planned to stay in the Burton area; and about 30 intended to move to Nakusp.

The results of the surveys provided a basis for several public and private bodies to complete their own plans — there will be a new school at Fauquier, as well as the Forest Service Ranger Station and the Department of Highways Yard; most of the present denominations are interested in establishing churches in Fauquier; and several people have indicated their interest in operating stores and motels there.

Fauquier is thus likely to become the supply centre for the surrounding area, serving a total of about 120 families including those in the Inonoaklin Valley. Being close to the Needles Bridge and a major highway junction it should have the best growth prospects of all the new settlements.

Diagram I shows the Central Arrow Lakes area as it may be when all these changes have taken place.

**DIAGRAM I
ANTICIPATED SETTLEMENT
PATTERN
CENTRAL ARROW LAKES**

Existing Households ○
Anticipated Resettled Households ●

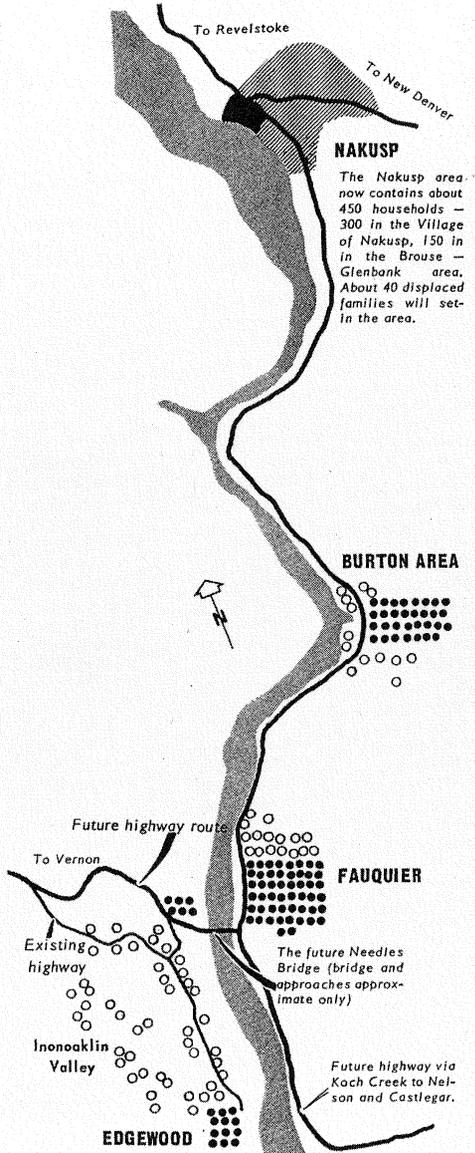


Figure 2: BC Hydro, *New Communities for the Arrow Lakes* (Vancouver: British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, 1966), 2.

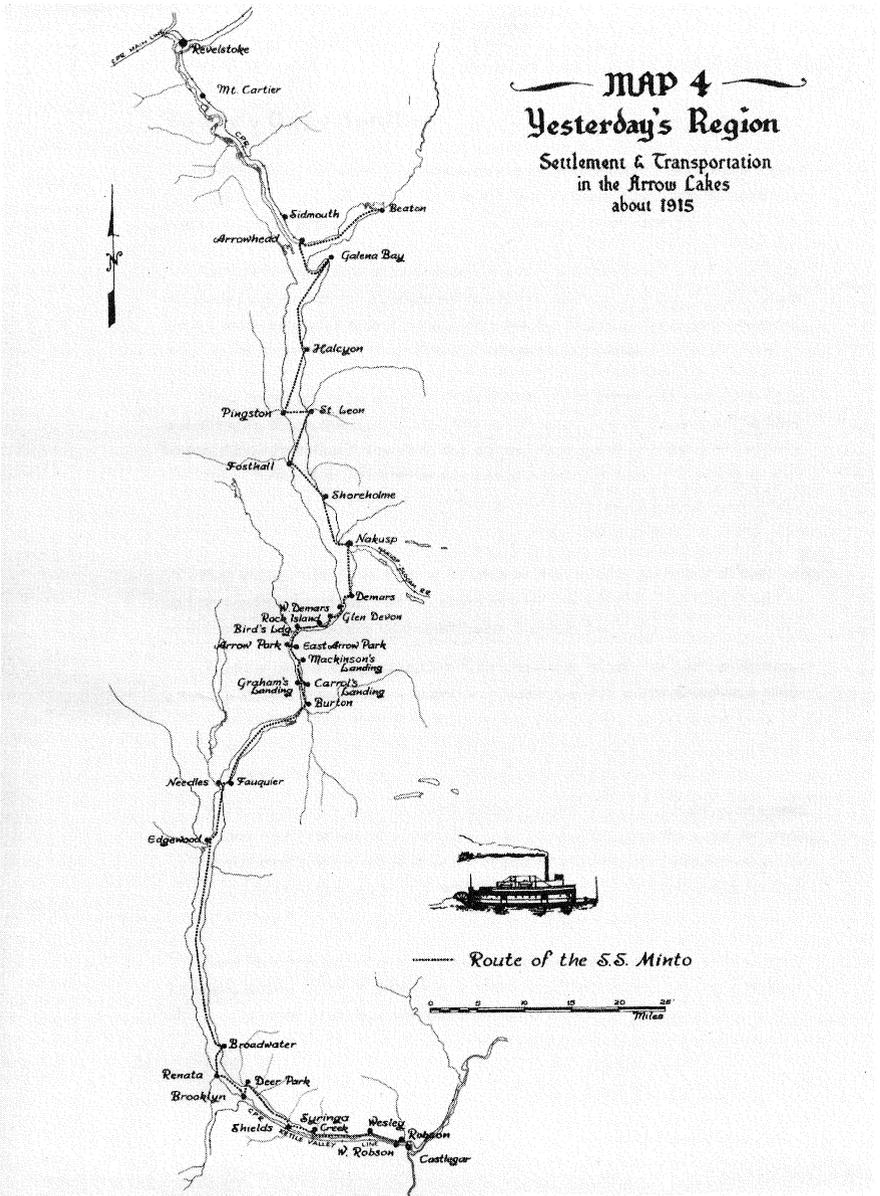


Figure 3: BC Hydro, *The New Outlook for the Arrow Lakes* (Vancouver: British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, 1965), 13.

the messy lived experience of people on the ground receded, allowing them to apprehend the whole and frame solutions they believed were as comprehensive as their viewpoint.

Making the Arrow Lakes modern may have required the reorganization of space, as exemplified by BC Hydro's maps and models, but it also involved the reconfiguration of time. Other scholars have made this observation, arguing that modernity is characterized by a fundamental rejection of the past and an embrace of the future. So, for instance, S.N. Eisenstadt refers to the "breakdown of all traditional legitimations of the political order," the "question[ing] of the very givenness" of the status quo, and the "continual confrontation between more 'traditional' sectors of society and the so-called modern centers" as characteristics of the modern condition.⁴⁸ Marshall Berman noted that modernity "destroys both the physical and social landscapes of our past, and our emotional links with those lost worlds." As a result, people experienced and perceived it as "a radical threat to all their history and traditions."⁴⁹

For the residents of the Arrow Lakes, however, the relationship of modernity to history was communicated more viscerally and in less academic terms. There, all that was solid did not so much melt into air as go up in smoke. As part of the resettlement process, BC Hydro employees burned many of the houses and outbuildings on lands that were below the high-water line, some of which dated back to the turn of the century. While BC Hydro offered many reasons for doing this – most of them having to do with safety and liability – for the residents of the Arrow Lakes the sight of their homes and their history going up in flames was a searing reminder of what one local journalist called the "match-happy march of progress."⁵⁰

As symbolically powerful as the burnings were, the relationship of modernity to history on the Arrow Lakes was more complex than the destruction of old buildings implies. Rather than reject the region's past entirely, the BC Hydro's planners used aspects of it to naturalize the new communities they envisaged. For all the benefits that might have come from compact settlement, BC Hydro's planned communities were completely new, lacking in the temporal depth. There were none of the markers that signalled a diversity of accumulated experience that makes settlements home. There were no old buildings, no worn paths across fields that signalled where people wanted go rather than where

⁴⁸ S.N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, 1 (2000): 5, 4, and 12.

⁴⁹ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 35, 16.

⁵⁰ "Trial by Fire," *Arrow Lakes News*, 27 January 1966. Clippings File, ALHSA.

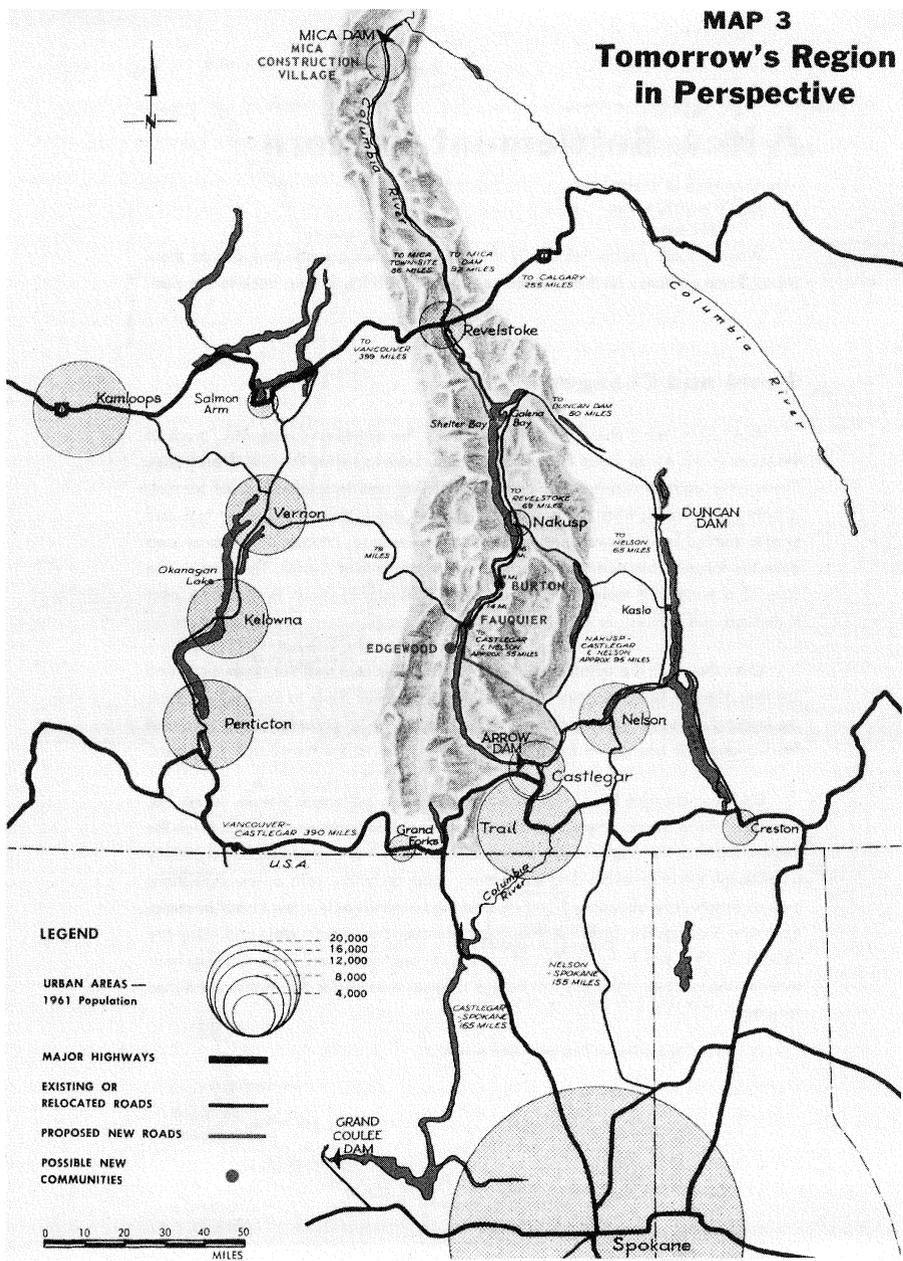


Figure 4: BC Hydro, *The New Outlook for the Arrow Lakes* (Vancouver: British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, 1965), 11.

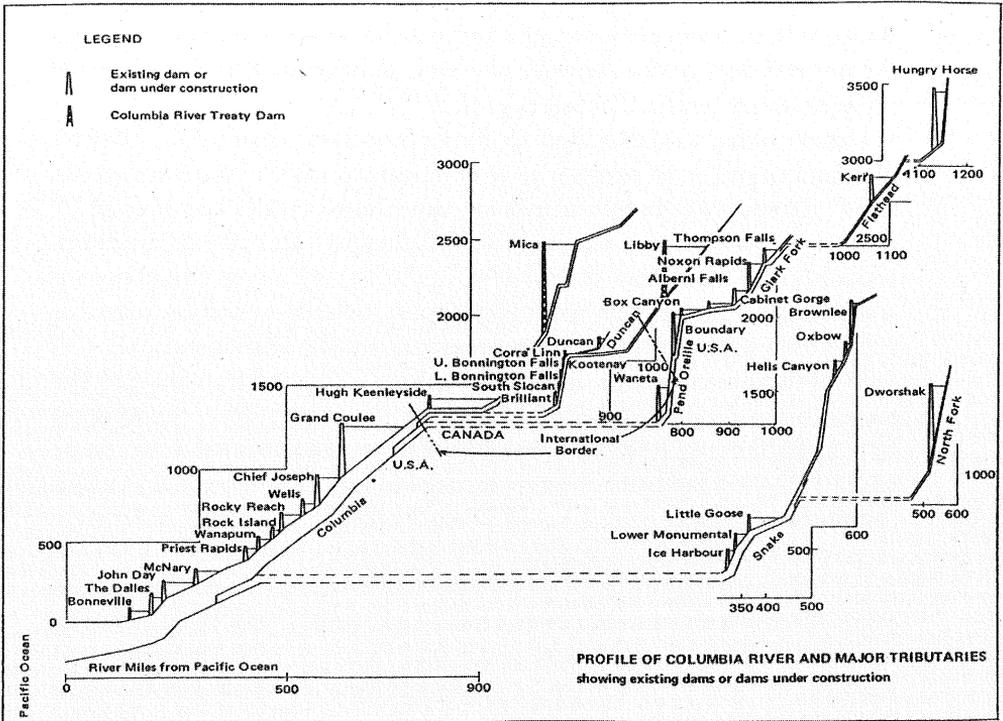


Figure 5: BC Hydro, *Columbia Construction Progress* (Vancouver: British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, 1969), 5.

the planned and paved roads wanted to take them; instead, there was only a uniform newness that was reinforced with every shiny kettle BC Hydro handed out.

In an attempt at mitigation, BC Hydro agreed to move some old buildings – houses, churches, community halls – to its new town sites or to higher ground in settlements that would not be completely flooded. A church and community hall were to be relocated to New Burton, “good quality” houses to New Fauquier, and Edgewood’s war memorial would be re-established.⁵¹ BC Hydro also bought the SS *Minto*, one of the last sternwheelers to operate on the Arrow Lakes, and offered to give it to anyone who would restore it or turn it into a museum.⁵²

⁵¹ BC Hydro, *Community Resettlement Proposals: Central Arrow Lakes* (Vancouver: BC Hydro Columbia Development, November 1965), 14 and 19.

⁵² When no one took them up on it, the *Minto* rapidly fell into disrepair, and BC Hydro was forced to “give it a Viking funeral”; that is, to burn it. To this day, one of the most common images in both the business establishments and homes of Nakusp is a photograph of the SS *Minto* burning. Not able to save the actual vessel, BC Hydro commissioned a painting of it, presenting it to the Village of Nakusp. “Hydro presents Minto Oil Painting to Nakusp,” *Arrow Lakes News*, 21 August 1968. Clippings File, ALHSA.

As well, there were plans for a museum at Revelstoke to commemorate the pioneer days of the Arrow Lakes and to celebrate the development brought about by the Columbia project.⁵³

Landscaping was also used to confer historical depth. BC Hydro's planners urged it to provide new communities with "nursery-grown trees" that would "hasten a mature appearance to the community."⁵⁴ Aimed at masking the extent of the dislocation and easing residents' transition to their new lives, these initiatives speak to the planners' sophisticated and subtle uses of the past, which is not captured in characterizations of the modern project as wholly anti-historical.

BC Hydro not only used the past to ease residents' transition to the future, but it also became directly involved in writing history. In addition to commissioning a local history of Renata, a community that would be completely flooded by the reservoir, its planners also became historians themselves.⁵⁵ Documents like *The New Outlook for the Arrow Lakes* were in part historical narratives that characterized change over time and provided justification for a particular trajectory into the future. For planners, the history of the district was one of early growth followed by stagnation. The Arrow Lakes of the 1960s was, in J.W. Wilson's view, the land of "Rip Van Winkle," a place that time – and modernity – had passed by.⁵⁶ From this perspective, the Columbia River development offered a needed boost: the infusion of labour, capital, and infrastructure would transform the district, catapulting it into the modern age. If BC Hydro's planners were any indication, then the agents of modernity did not so much reject the past as they invented and invested themselves in a particular version of it as a way of anchoring their vision of the future.

If BC Hydro's "new outlook" points to the need to rethink the relationship between modernity and history, revisiting the importance of the past to high modernist projects, then it also suggests that what was really problematic for planners was the present. While the planning documents construct both a past and a future for the region, the present is completely missing. *The New Outlook* gives us a picture of the district in 1915 and after treaty dams were built. Curiously, there is neither a

⁵³ Wilson, *People in the Way*, 105ff. Recognizing that the rising waters of the reservoir would flood eleven cemeteries, BC Hydro developed a plan to acquire the property and contact the next-of-kin, giving them the choice of having their relatives' graves moved to new sites or leaving them undisturbed (if that were practical). In all cases, Hydro also put up plaques to commemorate the flooded cemeteries.

⁵⁴ BC Hydro, *Community Resettlement Proposals*, 15.

⁵⁵ Mary Warkentin and Rose Ann Rohn, *The Story of Renata, 1887-1965* (Renata, BC: n.p., 1965).

⁵⁶ Wilson, *People in the Way*, 9.

discussion nor a graphic representation of the Arrow Lakes in 1965, when the planning documents were generated.

In many ways the absent present is an extreme exemplification of the logic of high modernity. High modernist thinking was characterized by a simplified view of social reality. Indeed, James Scott makes the case that simplification was the key to state planning, arguing that planners had no interest in capturing the complexity of lived experience, even if that were possible. Instead, “seeing” like a high modernist state necessitated acknowledging only those elements of reality that furthered a particular development plan – as with BC Hydro. Its planners acknowledged the past only to the extent that it could be contained within their development agenda. The present, on the other hand, was less susceptible to such schematic treatment. Motivated by the authority of their own experience, people were much more likely to take issue with the paring down of the complexities within which they lived. Rather than grapple with the existing politics, personalities, emotions, and interests of the here-and-now, BC Hydro’s planners took the logic of simplification a step further and eliminated the messy present altogether. With the present gone, the path from the past to the future was clear – or so it seemed.

“IS CANADA BEING ROOKED ON THE COLUMBIA TREATY?”

As J.W. Wilson recalled, however, what happened on the Arrow Lakes was a rueful reminder of how the best laid plans “gang aft agley.”⁵⁷ As negotiations between Canada and the United States continued in the early 1960s, and even while BC Hydro formulated its resettlement plans in the middle of the decade, British Columbians took a hard look at the treaty’s provisions and its potential environmental impact. While some ordinary people publicly expressed their support for the treaty, the loudest voices belonged to those who contested the claims of BC Hydro and W.A.C. Bennett. Many of them, like Margaret “Ma” Murray, publisher of the *Bridge River-Lillooet News*, wondered if Canada was “being rooked on the Columbia Treaty.”⁵⁸ Inside and outside the district,

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁵⁸ “Ma Murray’s Eye Opener on the Columbia,” a supplement to the *Bridge River-Lillooet News*, 15 November 1962. W.A.C. Bennett Papers, SFUA, F-55-39-0-20. Bert Herridge, the member of Parliament for Kootenay West, was “swamped” with protest letters. Over the fall of 1962, for instance, he got more than 5,000 letters and cards from all over the province and the country supporting his stand against the treaty. See Herridge to Moore, 9 March 1960, H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG 32 C-13, vol. 81, file 2; and Herridge to Harris, 30 December 1962, H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG 32 C-13, vol. 81, file 4. In Vancouver, a group of individuals

people considered it a bad economic deal. The real costs of building the four treaty dams had not adequately been taken into account by either the federal and provincial governments or BC Hydro, and Canada's negotiators had not struck a particularly advantageous agreement: for instance, Canada was to receive no compensation for the flooding caused by the Libby Dam but was committed both to paying the cost of acquiring the land for the Libby reservoir from private owners and of clearing the Canadian portion of the reservoir site.

For some, the treaty's economic harm was compounded by the fact that High Arrow flooded arable land – a scarce commodity in British Columbia. The contradiction exasperated Muriel Yield of Edgewood. "They are always telling us that we do not grow enough food for ourselves," she observed, testifying before the water comptroller in 1961. "And yet they are ready to destroy hundreds of acres which are good producing land if it were cultivated and if we had good roads."⁵⁹

Others who took a public stand against the treaty did not share Yield's confidence that agriculture could be the economic engine of the region. Like W.A.C. Bennett, they pinned their hopes instead on expanding the area's industries by developing the province's energy resources. For a few, hydroelectricity was obsolete. Instead of investing public money in old technology, the province would do better to develop nuclear power, the energy of the future.⁶⁰ For the majority who believed hydroelectricity could spur the province's development, the Columbia River Treaty was wanting in other respects. Some used Bennett's arguments against him, pointing out that if the Peace project could meet the province's electricity needs, then developing the Columbia was unnecessary. Others insisted that if the Columbia were developed, it should be in a way that generated electricity for Canada. For the forty representatives of Kootenay chambers of commerce, the "real travesty" of High Arrow was that it was a storage dam and not a power dam.⁶¹

Presumably, displacing more than 2000 people and flooding valuable farmland would have been justified – or at least more justifiable – if High

organized themselves into the Columbia River for Canada Committee in July 1962 and in two years distributed 36,000 copies of its eight-page pamphlet detailing the shortcomings of the Columbia River Treaty. See Columbia River for Canada Committee, Submission to the External Affairs Committee of the Canadian House of Commons regarding the Draft Columbia River Treaty, n.d., H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG 32 C-13, vol. 85, file 21.

⁵⁹ Water Comptroller's Hearings, Nakusp, British Columbia, 29 September 1961, BCA, GR 880, box 16, file A-15, 431.

⁶⁰ For instance, see Job to Herridge, 4 February 1960, and Ford to Herridge, 14 February 1960, H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG 32 C-13, vol. 81, file 2.

⁶¹ "Nakusp Meeting United in High Arrow Protest," *Arrow Lakes News*, 1 December 1960. Clippings File, ALHSA.

Arrow generated electricity for Canadian use. It was just this sentiment that lay behind much of the public support for the McNaughton Plan, or Dorr Diversion. An alternative plan for harnessing the power of the Columbia, it involved blocking the Kootenay River near the forty-ninth parallel and turning its flow back into the Columbia through a series of power dams. While the McNaughton Plan precluded the construction of the Libby Dam and avoided flooding the Arrow Lakes, it would inundate 87,000 acres of rich wildlife habitat in the east Kootenay. Nonetheless, it enjoyed broad public support largely because it would generate electricity.⁶² If, as one engineer argued, “power ... is worth flooding any valley, [then] we get far more Canadian power from flooding the East Kootenay than we do by flooding around the Arrow Lakes.”⁶³

Flooding was only the most obvious environmental effect of the treaty that elicited criticism. Early on, residents raised concerns about High Arrow’s impact on the lakeshore. The Nakusp village council complained about the loss of beaches and dockage but framed its concerns in economic terms, calling attention to the detrimental effects such losses would have on recreational possibilities for both residents and, more important, tourists.⁶⁴ They asked BC Hydro to build new, gently sloping beaches, something that would require it to buy out the properties of yet more residents.⁶⁵ Hydro recognized the problem but found the village council’s proposal for building a sandy beach to be unfeasible on engineering and economic grounds;⁶⁶ instead, its engineers treated the Nakusp waterfront as they would a riverbank that needed to be stabilized. They gave it a “rip rap” finish, “covering [the shore] with huge pieces of jagged rock weighing up to 2000 pounds each” – something which did not (and still does not) entirely meet with local approval.⁶⁷

⁶² Poole, *The Reckoning*.

⁶³ Text of a talk given to the Vancouver branch of the IEEE, 1 April 1963, by R. Deane and P. Eng, W.A.C. Bennett Papers, SFUA, F-55-38-0-19. Not everyone agreed with Deane’s assessment, especially Hugh Keenleyside, Chairman of BC Hydro. See Hugh L. Keenleyside, *Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside*. Vol. 2: *On the Bridge of Time* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 50.

⁶⁴ “Nakusp Dockage Creates Problems,” *Arrow Lakes News*, 2 June 1966. Clippings File, ALHSA.

⁶⁵ “Public Meeting Discusses [sic] Nakusp Waterfront,” *Arrow Lakes News*, 23 June 1966; “Nakusp Village to Hold Plebiscite August 6, on Waterfront Slope,” *Arrow Lakes News*, 4 July 1966; and “BC Hydro Studies Two Beach Proposals,” *Arrow Lakes News*, 14 July 1966. Clippings File, ALHSA.

⁶⁶ “Sandy Beach Not Feasible Says Mr. Milligan,” *Arrow Lakes News*, 2 June 1966. Clippings File, ALHSA.

⁶⁷ “Nakusp Dockage Creates Problems,” *Arrow Lakes News*, 2 June 1966. Clippings File, ALHSA.

Residents and the provincial Fish and Game Branch also realized that rising water levels would seriously compromise fish and wildlife populations. Kokanee salmon and rainbow and dolly varden trout – all valuable game fish – were particularly vulnerable to the changing water levels, temperatures, and flows that would come as a result of High Arrow. These conditions compromised the survival of both eggs and adult fish and, according to the province's fisheries biologists, would result in a decline in all three species of nearly 70 percent.⁶⁸ The news galvanized the district's rod and gun clubs as well as its MLA, Randolph Harding, and the local press, all of whom raised the alarm.⁶⁹ In response, BC Hydro and the provincial Department of Recreation and Conservation established in 1967 what, at the time, was promoted as the "largest man made spawning channel in the world" at Meadow Creek, near the Duncan dam site outside Revelstoke.⁷⁰ While Meadow Creek was successful, no steps were taken to address the loss of wildlife habitat. In addition to calling attention to High Arrow's impact on fish, scientists predicted the dam would displace beaver, muskrat, waterfowl, and upland game birds. However, neither the province nor BC Hydro made any attempt to ameliorate the situation at the time.⁷¹

Despite the concerns about the distribution of economic and environmental costs and benefits raised by the Columbia River treaty, there was no public opposition to building big dams or to the idea that growth was a social good that could be delivered through state-sponsored mega projects. The consensus stretched across the political and social spectrum, from Social Credit on the right to the New Democratic and Communist Parties on the left, and from business to labour. The NDP insisted it supported Columbia development but, as leader Robert Strachan pointed out, that did not mean it had to back High Arrow.⁷² Nigel Morgan, leader of the province's Communist Labour Progressive

⁶⁸ Fish and Game Branch, Department of Recreation and Conservation. "Effects on Fish and Game Species of Development of Arrow Lakes Dam for Hydro-Electric Purposes," March 1965, 26-38, BCA, GR 880, box 21, file A-62.

⁶⁹ "BC Hydro Dams," *Arrow Lakes News*, 29 September 1966; "Meadow Creek Run Draws 250,000 Red Fish," *Arrow Lakes News*, 29 October 1969; "7 Million Trout Spawn Lost, Burton Grounds," *Arrow Lakes News*, April 1967 (no specific date given; from ALHSA clippings file); "60 percent of Spawning Grounds to be Flooded," *Arrow Lakes News*, 20 March 1968; "Comments from Your MLA in Victoria," *Arrow Lakes News*, April 1968. Clippings File, ALHSA.

⁷⁰ "BC Hydro Dams," *Arrow Lakes News*, 29 September 1966; "Meadow Creek Run Draws 250,000 Red Fish," *Arrow Lakes News*, 29 October 1969. Clippings File, ALHSA.

⁷¹ Fish and Game Branch, Department of Recreation and Conservation, "Effects on Fish and Game Species of Development of Arrow Lakes Dam for Hydro-Electric Purposes," 1965. BCA GR 880, box 9. 38.

⁷² Strachan to Wells, 21 November 1961, H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG32C-13, vol. 81, file 3.

Party, agreed. While he considered the treaty a “sellout,” Morgan urged the Bennett government to “get an immediate start on the development of the Columbia,” envisaging an “electrical grid to power a vast new Canadian industrial complex in Western Canada.”⁷³ Local chambers of commerce, from which some of the most organized criticism of the treaty and High Arrow emerged, established “development,” or “re-development,” committees, suggesting that what they took issue with was the particular plan of resource development and not development per se.⁷⁴ Indeed, many chamber members would have found themselves in agreement with the BC Federation of Labour, which supported developing the Columbia’s hydroelectric potential as a means of creating “many new industries” and “thousands of jobs for Canadians.”⁷⁵

What critics wanted was resource development controlled by Canadians for the benefit of Canadians, and they used the rhetoric of economic nationalism to make their case. Under the treaty’s provisions, the electricity generated by the Duncan, High Arrow, and Mica Dams would fuel American industries, further disadvantaging Canadians. “Increasing US power output will not reap for us or for our children the full benefit of this rich heritage,” argued W.C. Muir of the Trail and District Smelter Workers’ Union. “Canadian officials must look to projects capable of on-site Canadian power generation controlled by Canadians.”⁷⁶ The Citizens’ Protective Association of Edgewood-Needles-Fauquier agreed, calling attention to the degree of economic control the Americans already exerted.⁷⁷ An organization calling itself the Save the Columbia for Canada Committee echoed these sentiments, throwing its support behind the McNaughton Plan because it would “Keep Canada’s Hand on the Switch” (Figure 6).⁷⁸ Reporters for the *Arrow Lakes News* joined the fray as well, making the argument that the valley and the country had been sold out for a fast buck. They seized on comments by influential outsiders like Larratt Higgins to build

⁷³ *Pacific Tribune*, 17 March 1961, 1.

⁷⁴ For instance, the Columbia River Development Committee was established “with the objective of ensuring that the area derives the highest possible benefits from the developments which will take place in the event the Columbia River Treaty is carried out.” Enevoldsen to Herridge, 23 December 1964, H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG 32 C-13, vol. 85, file 19.

⁷⁵ *Pacific Tribune*, 25 August 1961, 1.

⁷⁶ Waterfield, *Continental Waterboy*, 99-100.

⁷⁷ “High Arrow Brief, Citizens Lower Lake,” *Arrow Lake News*, 23 November 1961. Clippings File, ALHSA.

⁷⁸ They also published a pamphlet further outlining their position, arguing that “either we first put this great resource to use for Canadians or we surrender it to American interests.” Save the Columbia for Canada Committee, “Develop the Columbia River for Canada: the Golden Triangle of Power Potential,” 3, W.A.C. Bennett Papers, SFUA, F-55-39-0-20.



THE ABOVE POSTER IS BEING WIDELY DISTRIBUTED IN B.C. BY THE SAVE THE COLUMBIA FOR CANADA COMMITTEE.

Figure 6: Save the Columbia for Canada Committee, reprinted in *The Pacific Tribune*, 20 September 1963, 12.

their case. Reflecting upon the impact of the agreement, the Ontario Hydro economist observed that, "under the treaty[,] Canada is a puppet dangling at the end of strings manipulated in Washington."⁷⁹ With a federal government willing to compromise Canadian sovereignty, it was "no wonder," as one protest group told parliamentarians, that "the French Canadian becomes a separatist."⁸⁰

The political dimensions of the economic threat to Canada posed by the Columbia River Treaty were more fully articulated in 1964 when, just three weeks after its ratification, plans for the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA) became public. Having signalled its willingness to sell its resources cheaply by signing the treaty, Canada had, according to Larratt Higgins, inadvertently invited Americans to exploit its natural resources further through schemes like NAWAPA.⁸¹ A plan for a continent-wide diversion of water unveiled by California engineer Ralph M. Parsons and considered by the American Senate, NAWAPA called for collecting water from the rivers of Alaska, British Columbia, and Yukon, and redistributing them through a system of 177 lakes and reservoirs to water-scarce areas in the western United States and northern Mexico. Damming the Peace, Kootenay, and Columbia were the keys to the plan. Doing so would turn the Rocky Mountain Trench into a reservoir some 800 kilometres long and sixteen kilometres wide, flood large portions of British Columbia, and alter the climate of the region.⁸²

Not only did the treaty and the Parsons Plan allow "the United States to develop beyond the limits of its [own] resources" but it also threatened the environmental, economic, and political integrity of Canada.⁸³ Some

⁷⁹ "General McNaughton [sic] Speaks Out on Columbia Treaty," *Arrow Lakes News*, 7 June 1962. Clippings File, ALHSA.

⁸⁰ Columbia River for Canada Committee, Submission to the External Affairs Committee of the Canadian House of Commons Regarding the Draft Columbia River Treaty, 8, H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG 32 C-13, vol. 85, file 21.

⁸¹ Larratt Higgins, "Resource Development: Integration or Cooperation," Address to the Woodsworth Foundation Conference on Continentalism versus Nationalism, University of Toronto, 12 November 1966, 6, H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG 32 C-13, vol. 89, file 8.

⁸² The Ralph M. Parsons Company, *NAWAPA North American Water and Power Alliance* (Los Angeles and New York: Ralph M. Parsons Company, n.d.). Although hydroelectricity is often advertised as clean energy because it does not require burning fossil fuels, research suggests that the reservoirs created for hydro generation, particularly in tropical areas, can be significant sources of carbon dioxide and methane; that is, of the greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. Indeed, some Canadian research indicates that the Grand Rapids Dam in northern Manitoba makes a contribution to global warming for every kilowatt-hour of electricity generated that is equivalent to that produced by a gas-fired generator. See Patrick McCully, *Silenced Rivers* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 141-4; and World Commission on Dams, *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making* (London: Earthscan, 2000), 75-7, and chap. 3 generally.

⁸³ Higgins, "Resource Development: Integration or Cooperation," 2.

viewed the environmental destruction caused by Columbia River Treaty dams and those envisioned by NAWAPA as a manifestation of Canada's degraded political status, evidence of the power of the United States to transfer the risks and costs of its development to jurisdictions beyond its borders. "We are a small nation living alongside a very powerful nation," Nakusp resident Donald Waterfield told broadcaster Jack Webster in 1970, "and water is the most limiting mineral ... that there is. You can get along without iron, without aluminium, without gold, without silver, but you have to have water."⁸⁴ In his view, Canada would have very little choice but to accept its role as "continental waterboy."

For some critics, American control of Canadian resources could only lead to political integration. For Larratt Higgins, "the Columbia River Treaty and Protocol ... stand as the basic blueprint for the development of all Canadian resources in the name of continentalism."⁸⁵ General Andrew McNaughton, former chairman of the Canadian Section of the IJC, went further. In his view, both the Columbia River Treaty and NAWAPA represented nothing less than the colonization of Canada by American corporate interests. "Colonialism was bad enough when it was imposed by the East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in the early days," the general observed in 1966, "but colonialism is something no free people will stand for today ... [T]hey're asking us to put ourselves under the NAWAPA scheme, under a great big, what I call monstrous corporation."⁸⁶ Concerns about the economic and environmental impacts of hydroelectric development were thus intertwined with broader issues of global power and self-determination, making the conflict over the Columbia River Treaty and NAWAPA fundamentally political, a struggle for "environmental justice."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ CKNW Radio Interview of Donald Waterfield by Jack Webster, 27 July 1970, ALHSA.

⁸⁵ Higgins, "Resource Development," 1.

⁸⁶ Cited in Waterfield, *Continental Waterboy*, 211.

⁸⁷ The environmental justice literature makes the case that modernization has resulted in an inequitable redistribution of environmental benefits and harms. Despite claims that particular development schemes serve the public interest, some groups have come to bear a disproportionate burden of environmental degradation. Bringing class and race to the foreground of an analysis of environmental harm, this literature challenges its readers to consider powerlessness as a cause of environmental destruction and to link calls for the preservation of particular environments and ecosystems to movements for social and political justice. For an introduction, see "Environmental Justice Movement," in Robert Paehlke, ed., *Conservation and Environmentalism: An Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Garland, 1995), 250-3; and Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (New York: Longman, 2000), chap. 6. Key case studies include Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Boulder: Westview, 1990); and Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Two Canadian examples are Anastasia M. Shkilnyk, *A Poison Stronger than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985);

“WHO WANTS TO LIVE IN VICTORIA?”

While the story of the “people in the way” of the dam is a parable for the struggle for Canadian sovereignty, around the Arrow Lakes the larger geopolitical issues raised by Higgins, Waterfield, and McNaughton were joined to and complicated by other concerns. In the West Kootenay, the battle against the treaty and BC Hydro’s resettlement plans was waged to protect a way of life. That did not mean, however, that it was any less political. The sentimental language that residents used to detail the social and environmental impact of High Arrow masked the hard values and practices that animated the good life they wished to preserve – values and practices that were embedded in a particular organization of space and relationship to history.

The stories many residents told about the impact of the dam were Edenic narratives of a paradise lost: the Columbia River Treaty had turned the region into the “valley of the dammed,” destroying a peaceable kingdom of small-scale farmers and orchardists, loggers and trappers. Joseph and Florence Adshead recalled the “happy years” they spent in the area around Burton. “We had all our own wood for heat; water, fruits of many kinds, good garden, beautiful flowers, ornamental trees and shrubs,” they noted. Then the “dark cloud of the High Arrow dam became a reality ... Truly a paradise lost forever, except in memory.” Roy and Francis Collier considered their lives on the Arrow Lakes to be “like the Garden of Eden ... before the devil arrived on the scene,” while the children of the Morton family looked back fondly to the days when they “always had lots to eat, but no money.” When the dam came, “all their [parents’] work was drowned under 40 feet of water and neither of them lived very long after.”⁸⁸ No appraisal process could compensate many residents adequately for what they would lose under the waters of the High Arrow reservoir. “How do you pay Jake Reimer and his wife for the 40 years of toil they have put into their home and orchard?” asked journalist Allan Fotheringham. “How do you compensate Harry Epp who has been there since 1919 for the peace and quiet he will lose?”⁸⁹

As both Hydro and the residents of the Arrow Lakes discovered, it was close to impossible to do so. The question of compensation for the 1,280 properties involved was in many ways the focal point of much of

and Maude Barlow and Elizabeth May, *Frederick Street: Life and Death on Canada's Love Canal* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2000).

⁸⁸ Excerpts from *Whistle Stops along the Columbia River Narrows: A History of Burton and Surrounding Area* (New Burton: Burton New Horizon Book Committee, 1982), cited in MacPherson, *Arrow Lakes Report*.

⁸⁹ *Vancouver Sun*, 6 July 1964, 7.

the conflict between the two, and it remains a live issue to this day. Short of the difficulties of assessing the value of “intangibles” like Harry Epp’s peace and quiet, there was a great deal of disagreement over whether property appraisals would be done on the basis of market value – which in an area about to be flooded was quite low – or replacement value. Compounding the problems was the “semantic fog” surrounding BC Hydro’s pronouncements and the procedures it instituted for carrying out appraisals. As J.W. Wilson put it, the power authority insisted it would be “fair and generous,” promising it would “discuss” and “negotiate” with property owners, but under no circumstances would it “bargain” with them.⁹⁰ Perhaps in an attempt to forestall such bargaining, BC Hydro refused to provide property owners with an itemized appraisal, opting instead to present only a final dollar figure. While that might have prevented owners from closely comparing their assessments, it only added to the sense that the power authority was not acting in good faith. The environment of secrecy bred rumours about BC Hydro’s real intentions, which, regardless of their substance, worked to poison the atmosphere even further.⁹¹

For Ruby Kirkman, however, even the most generous of appraisals and the most transparent of procedures would fall short of satisfying the residents of the Arrow Lakes. “You see,” she told reporter Frank Rutter in 1966, “people don’t want money – they want their home.”⁹² For Kirkman and others, “home” was much more than a particular physical structure or piece of land. It was the way the region looked, smelled, and sounded – all of which was transformed by the dam. The dissonance was jarring for many and alienating for some who struggled with the metamorphosis of the familiar into the strange.⁹³ While high water certainly changed the appearance of the lakes, causing the beaches to disappear, even more disconcerting were the effects of low water. When levels fell below 1,430 feet, the lakeshore was exposed, revealing stumps, mudflats, and sinkholes – eyesores and hazards for both people and

⁹⁰ Wilson, *People in the Way*, 31–2, 40, and 43, and chaps. 5 and 6 generally.

⁹¹ For instance, Robert J. Roder of the Arrow Lakes Water Resources Committee alleged that BC Hydro’s employees and their friends were forcing people to relocate from certain waterfront properties, insisting that the reservoir would render their banks unstable. After removing those residents, BC Hydro insiders bought many of these desirable properties for themselves or their friends and relatives at a cost well below market value. Roder to Herridge, 6 February 1967, H.W. Herridge Fonds, NAC, MG 32 C-13, vol. 89, file 10.

⁹² *Vancouver Sun*, 5 May 1966, 19.

⁹³ On the need for a Canadian history that takes the senses seriously, see Joy Parr, “Notes for a More Sensuous History of Twentieth-Century Canada: The Timely, the Tacit, and the Material Body,” *Canadian Historical Review* 82, 4 (2001): 720–45.

wildlife.⁹⁴ If low water coincided with dry periods and even the lightest of winds, there were dust storms so severe that “people driving the highway north from Nakusp to Revelstoke [had] to use their headlights in the daytime.”⁹⁵ Others experienced “breathing and allergy difficulties.”⁹⁶ For Janet Spicer, whose family farm backed onto the lakeshore, these storms were “no different from those one sees happening in Ethiopia, Somalia, or the Sudan.” The difference was that in those places, “man’s environmental degradation is acknowledged to be supreme,” whereas no one took responsibility for what had happened on the Arrow Lakes.⁹⁷

While the impact of turning “a real and living river” into a reservoir was most apparent through visual changes in the landscape, residents also apprehended the transformation through their senses of smell and hearing.⁹⁸ After the flood the waters of the Arrow Lakes were “stale-smelling,” and when very much of the lakeshore was exposed, the air was filled with a “foul decay odor” from the decomposing organic debris that BC Hydro had neglected to remove before the reservoir was filled.⁹⁹ The trees, shrubs, and bushes that mouldered underwater had once been part of the rich and diverse ecosystem of the foreshore and supported a variety of insectivorous birds. The decline of fish stocks brought about by the destruction of spawning grounds also affected the populations of birds that depended on them. Over time, the numbers of mergansers, buffleheads, and goldeneyes declined as well. With the overall loss of habitat and biodiversity that came with dam construction, the residents of the Arrow Lakes experienced what Janet Spicer called their own version of a “silent spring.” No longer was birdsong a part of the soundscape of the lakes, as it had been for generations.¹⁰⁰

Moving and evocative, the nostalgic language of transformation and loss spoken on the Arrow Lakes was as political as the rhetoric of economic nationalism levelled against the treaty. The battle against High Arrow was a fight for local autonomy, for a set of values that was defined by and embedded in a particular organization of space and time. Rather than centralized settlements, the residents of the Arrow Lakes preferred decentralized, localized settlements characterized by both small-scale production and wage labour in the industrial economy.

⁹⁴ BC Hydro Electric System Operating Review: Final Report for the Arrow Reservoir (upstream). Prepared by Resource Systems Management International, Inc., 29 June 1994, 2-4.

⁹⁵ “Nakusp Ponders Suing Hydro,” May 1977, no reference noted. Clippings File, ALHSA.

⁹⁶ MacPherson, *Arrow Lakes Report*, 12.

⁹⁷ Spicer to Johnson, 20 January 1993, reprinted in MacPherson, *Arrow Lakes Report*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*; and BC Hydro Electric System Operating Review, 2-4.

¹⁰⁰ Spicer to Johnson, 20 January 1993.

This was a society that historically took pride in its self-reliance and where social goods and services were delivered through mutual aid or by voluntary associations rather than by the state.¹⁰¹ Indeed, it was this combination of independence and connection that many residents cherished most about their lives; and they were willing to sacrifice much to hold on to it – like access to a greater range of goods and services, which BC Hydro promoted as a benefit of Columbia development. Even children like Victor Flick seemed to understand this at a profound level. “Old Edgewood, even though it was a bit old-fashioned, it was better than New Edgewood,” he wrote in a school essay. “The store in Old Edgewood was where you could listen to men telling stories of old, while you ate a chocolate bar. In New Edgewood all you can enjoy listening to in the store is a cash register.”¹⁰²

At the core of this independence and definition of a good society was a strong sense of individualism, which was manifested in comments like those of Heather Gates: “The good thing about this country’s that we can do as we damn well please,” she declared. As well, it was this individualism that lay behind the distaste many residents harboured for the new communities BC Hydro’s planners designed and for the spatial reorganization of their lives it would impose. The idea of living in towns surrounded by neighbours was anathema to many, whose individualism manifested itself in the scattered settlement pattern that characterized the Arrow Lakes as well as in a desire to be left alone. “We won’t move there,” they insisted. “The neighbours are too damn close.”¹⁰³ Local publisher D. Stanley chastised J.W. Wilson for not anticipating this response. “Planners, like yourself, should have realized that the reason people [are] living in this valley is because they don’t want to live cheek by jowl with neighbours in a pretty subdivision,” he wrote. “People living here have 40 acres to hide out on.”¹⁰⁴ After visiting the district, *Vancouver Sun* columnist Allan Fotheringham observed that “the older people fear being forced into becoming cave dwellers in an apartment house in Castlegar or Nelson or some other centre that might as well be New York for any resident of Renata.”¹⁰⁵ Responding to BC Hydro chairman

¹⁰¹ Wilson, *People in the Way*, II-2. For a discussion of this as a different form of liberalism, see Craig Heron, “Laborism and the Canadian Working Class,” in *Canadian Working Class History: Selected Readings*, eds. L.S. MacDowell and I. Radforth (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1992), 355-81.

¹⁰² Hilder to Wilson, 25 June 1970, J.W. Wilson Fonds, SFUA, F-132-2-0-10.

¹⁰³ *Vancouver Sun*, 9 May 1966, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Comments from Columbia River: General Survey questionnaire, J.W. Wilson Fonds, SFUA, F-132-2-0-10.

¹⁰⁵ *Vancouver Sun*, 6 July 1964, 7.

Hugh Keenleyside's suggestion that the residents of the Arrow Lakes needed to see how people in the outside world lived, West Kootenay resident Peter Warkentin's frustration was evident. "That's the whole bloody point," he fumed. "We're here because we don't like what we've seen of the so-called outside world."¹⁰⁶ Some, like farmer Christopher Spicer, went further in their critique. "Who wants to live in Victoria?" he asked, taking issue with the assumptions that underlay BC Hydro's plans about what constituted a normative life.¹⁰⁷

If opponents' notion of a good society manifested itself in a particular configuration of space, then it was also characterized by a different relationship to time or, more precisely, to the past. BC Hydro's planners framed the district's history as one of decline and stagnation, but the residents of the Arrow Lakes saw their history as one of resilience, animated by the same pioneering spirit of individualism that brought white settlers to the valley at the turn of the twentieth century. In their view, this past was not something to be escaped or, at best, to be seen as a prologue to a high modernist future but, rather, something that lived on in the present as part of their identity, something that had propelled them forward and would continue to do so. "Today, without any government help in the way of first class roads, aggressive agricultural development schemes, or promotion of any sort, the economy of this valley begins to show visible improvement," Christopher Spicer testified at the water comptroller's hearings in 1961. On their own, without any outside catalyst like dam construction, the valley's residents had secured "the promise of better times ahead."¹⁰⁸

It was just this individualism and collective achievement that was threatened by the high modernism of W.A.C. Bennett's government. Columbia development would destroy more than a physical place; it would also destroy a set of political values. For many of the dam's opponents, the Arrow Lakes were invested with more than aesthetic value: they embodied time and history. "After having made something out of nothing, it is not a very pleasurable position to see the thing ruined and go under water," observed Andrew Puocki. "What hurts is that you are losing the land on which you worked, where you know every bit of it, where you got accustomed to it, you know how to farm it. It is full of remembrances, of your failures and your successes. It becomes part of you."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ "Refugees from Arrow Dam," *Western Producer*, 27 January 1966.

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Waterfield, *Continental Waterboy*, 64.

¹⁰⁹ Water Comptroller's Hearings, Nakusp, 29 September 1961, BCA, GR 880, box 16, file A-15, 446-7.

Residents like Puocki had put a good deal of human labour into creating a settlement geography that represented the good life – an independent life. Longtime resident Ed Picard reiterated this theme of independence. “Now this is all I’m going to tell you about the old days on the Columbia River and Arrow Lakes,” he told his interviewer. “Those were days of freedom and happiness. There was nothing we wanted then. We could have everything that was.”¹¹⁰ The Arrow Lakes Farmers’ Institute agreed. According to it, the smallholdings between Revelstoke and Arrowhead were enormously productive: one farm alone near Nakusp had quadrupled its local sales in the 1950s. Tiny Renata and its orchards contributed 10 percent of the total British Columbia cherry crop in 1950.¹¹¹ Even those who did not market what they grew but consumed it themselves contributed to the overall economic health of the region. While urbanites might be inclined to see the subsistence farm as a sign of poverty or backwardness, the Farmers’ Institute argued that each was a form of investment, contributing as much as \$2,000 per year to a family income.¹¹² As a result of both the market and subsistence operations, the valley had achieved a level of self-sufficiency in the 1960s. “Fresh, well-graded local produce has completely eliminated similar California items in season,” an institute representative noted in 1961.¹¹³ “The Arrow Lakes Valley *can* produce all the main fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, and poultry products.”¹¹⁴

For Christopher Spicer, Andrew Puocki, and Ed Picard, the Arrow Lakes were a political landscape, a landscape of freedom. Degrading that landscape degraded their autonomy. Dam construction and flooding would “eliminate ... independent initiative.”¹¹⁵ Preserve the land, and a way of life and the freedom that was rooted in it would also be preserved. In that sense, the resistance to the Columbia River Treaty was deeply conservative. In rejecting the high modernist vision of W.A.C. Bennett and BC Hydro, the residents of the Arrow Lakes repudiated some core values and assumptions about the benefits of centralization and a future based on large-scale industrial production; instead, they insisted on living

¹¹⁰ Cited in Milton Parent, *Faces of the Past* (Nakusp: Arrow Lakes Historical Society, 1989), 5.

¹¹¹ Waterfield, *Continental Waterboy*, 64–5.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 67.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹¹⁵ Christopher Spicer testimony, cited in Waterfield, *Continental Waterboy*, 65.

in a present shaped by practices rooted in the district's past, on scattered smallholdings, supplementing their subsistence with wage labour.

While they took issue with the high modernism of BC Hydro's "new outlook," those who opposed High Arrow and the power authority's resettlement plans cannot entirely be categorized as anti-modern. Life on the lakes before the flood was cherished for many reasons, but authenticity – the search for which was a central part of anti-modernism – was not one of them.¹¹⁶ For all their localism and the value they gave to face-to-face relationships, the people of the Arrow Lakes also celebrated their connection to Canada – as their economic nationalist sentiments suggest. For all their pride in economic self-sufficiency based on small-scale production for local consumption, there was little harkening back to the glories of a pre-modern past. The fact was that most people in the district derived at least part (and in some cases a sizable part) of their income from industrial wage labour in large, and in some cases multinational, corporations like COMINCO or Celgar. And for all their critique of BC Hydro's resettlement scheme, they accepted many of the central values that underlay it, embracing rationality, efficiency, and standardization. For many frustrated property owners, the problem with the power authority's resettlement plan was that its implementation was irrational: instead of settling all the properties in a certain district and then moving on to the next, BC Hydro seemed to adopt a strategy of "picking off" key properties one by one, regardless of where they were located, as a way of increasing the pressure on individuals it suspected would be difficult.¹¹⁷ BC Hydro's motives were made all the more difficult to discern because of the "suspicious shroud of secrecy" surrounding its property assessments, something that only added to some residents' fears of being taken advantage of and that fuelled their calls for greater transparency and certainty.¹¹⁸ "We would all like some information about the proposed flooding of our land," said an exasperated Harold Catherwood of Sidmouth. "After all, we would like to make our own plans for the future."¹¹⁹ Even those who were anxious to settle and had no interest in discerning BC Hydro's motives were critical of the assessment process. It was slow and inefficient, and, even

¹¹⁶ T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

¹¹⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 11 May 1966, 13.

¹¹⁸ "The Suspicious Shroud of Secrecy," *Arrow Lakes News*, 17 February 1966; and "Hydro Should Provide Plans for Resettlement," *Arrow Lakes News*, 13 August 1964. Clippings File, ALHSA.

¹¹⁹ "Lack of Information on Land Troubles Arrow Lakes Valley," *Arrow Lakes News*, 4 December 1964. Clippings File, ALHSA.

more maddening, it was inconsistent. Different appraisers came up with different numbers, and “woe betide the land owner who got on the wrong side of some.”¹²⁰ Diverse as these critiques were, they all made the same point: the problem with BC Hydro’s resettlement operations was that they were not modern enough.

The criticism levelled against High Arrow and the hydro authority’s resettlement plans are thus better understood as expressions of an alternative modernity, one framed in opposition to the high modernism of Bennett and BC Hydro. It was one that valued local autonomy and gave a relatively small role to the state in creating a good society, relegating that responsibility instead to individuals and communities. As Bert Herridge reminded Hugh Keenleyside, the community hall, recreation facilities, hospital, and water system in Nakusp were all financed and built by local residents, without any state assistance. Evidence of the “progressive nature” of the Arrow Lakes, this bode well for the district’s future.¹²¹ In the emphasis it placed on decentralization and voluntarism, the alternative modernity articulated on the Arrow Lakes was one that stretched back to the nineteenth century in the Kootenays. It is perhaps for that reason that its articulation in the 1960s and 1970s strikes us as nostalgic. But its sepia tones should not disguise the fact that it had deep and vital roots in the rural spaces of Canada – roots that allowed it to challenge the hegemony of high modernism and, in many cases, to outlive it.

¹²⁰ Quote from MacPherson, *Arrow Lakes Report*, 7. See also “The Slow Grind,” *Arrow Lakes News*, 3 March 1966; and “Some Not Pleased with Hydro Payments,” *Arrow Lakes News*, November 1965. Clippings File, ALHSA.

¹²¹ Water Comptroller’s Hearings, Nakusp, BC, 29 September 1961, BCA, GR 880, box 16, file A-15,