

EDITORIAL

IN *BC STUDIES* 109 (SPRING 1996), Justine Brown recalls a lecture in American literature she heard at UBC about a decade earlier. In an article entitled “Nowherelands” she remembered her greybeard professor “gesturing at the foggy landscape with a dramatic sweep” and asking his students: “Do *you* know where we *are*? Because I certainly don’t.”

At first glance this seems odd. Most British Columbians know where they are. They say that they live in the Lower Mainland; on the Sunshine Coast, Vancouver Island, the south coast, the north coast, Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands); in the Interior, the North or South Thompson, the Okanagan (North, South, or Central), the Kootenays (West or East), the Nicola, Cariboo, Chilcotin, Omineca, Stikine, Peace River, or any number of other regions or districts. More and more of us also acknowledge that we live in the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, Stó:lo, Songhees (Lekwungen), Esquimalt, Gitxsan, Heiltsuk, Kwakwaka’wakw, Nlaka’pamux, Nuu-chah-nulth, Nuxalk, Secwepemc, Tsilhqot’in, Wet’suwet’en, and other Aboriginal peoples. Every corner of British Columbia was, and remains, an Aboriginal home or traditional territory, and names like “Haida Gwaii” reflect a resurgent aboriginality. As British Columbians we also know where we stand in relation to the rest of Canada. We are the Pacific Coast, the Pacific Province, the West Coast – even if some insist on calling this place British California, the Left Coast, or Lotus Land.

Our place in relation to the North American continent is somewhat more confusing. The Lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island are at the southwest corner of Canada. Strictly speaking, Vancouver and Victoria are in the Pacific Southwest. But this phrase is never heard. Popular usage favours the continental terms “Pacific Northwest” and “Cascadia.” These have their uses in certain comparative contexts, such as studies of Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland, or botanical studies of the western cordillera. But we at *BC Studies* have found “British Columbia” entirely apposite for investigations of this area’s history, culture, and identity.

Size is a greater problem than location for British Columbians. At almost a million square kilometres, British Columbia is unnecessarily large – larger than Washington, Oregon, and California combined; three times the size of the United Kingdom and Ireland put together; a third larger than France, the largest country in Western Europe;

larger than ... well, here is a website: <http://www.bcrobbyn.com/2012/12/how-big-is-british-columbia/>.

Few British Columbians have visited the province's four corners or even its main islands and inlets. Why is this place so big? It is the only Canadian province even approximately conterminous with one of the four departments of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) – Montreal, Southern, Northern, and Columbia – which existed between roughly 1820 and 1870. During these decades, Quebec and Ontario (Lower Canada and Upper Canada; Canada East and Canada West) were inward-looking colonies clustered along the St. Lawrence River, on the north shore of the Great Lakes, and to the south of the Canadian Shield. The vast expanse of land to the north and west was the HBC territory known as Rupert's Land. The Canadian government acquired this territory in 1870, then carved up the HBC's Montreal and Southern departments to expand the areas of Ontario and Quebec.

British Columbia, by contrast, bears the direct imprint of the HBC. The Company colonized Vancouver Island in 1849, but when the gold rush precipitated the need to exercise some control over the mainland, a new colony was created and named by Queen Victoria in 1858. She looked at available British maps, including several by John Arrowsmith that showed the four departments of the HBC, and imperiously attached the appellation "British" to the Columbia Department, which encompassed the entire cordilleran region between the Rockies and the Pacific. Eight years later the HBC's Vancouver Island colony was merged with mainland British Columbia, and unlike the relatively small American states that were carved from the southern quarter of the Columbia Department – Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and (western) Montana – British Columbia retained its original and vast cordilleran extent when it joined the Canadian Confederation in 1871. In a sense, then, this enormous province is a fossilized relic, a palimpsest of the fur trade created by the administrative fiat of a distant monarch.

British Columbia is so large, and sparsely populated, that new names are still being found for parts of it. Marine biologist Bert Webber coined the term "Salish Sea" in 1988 for the inland waters also known as the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Strait of Georgia, Puget Sound, and adjacent inlets and waterways. The central coastal portion of the Pacific temperate rainforest ecoregion has recently become the Great Bear Rainforest, a name coined in 1993 by Peter McAllister of the Raincoast Conservation Society. The upper reaches and headwaters of the Nass, Stikine, and Taku rivers are now being referred to as the Sacred Head-

waters, the subalpine source of these major wild salmon rivers. These newly coined names emerged from and have been integral to regional conservation and environmental campaigns. How many more names, new coinages, or Aboriginal revivals will be developed to define and make sense of the overwhelming vastness of British Columbia in years to come? Might Queen Victoria's spontaneous, and – to her – eminently sensible, “British Columbia” be changed one day?

The articles in this issue reflect the vastness and diversity of this place still called British Columbia. First up is Deidre Cullon's examination of the summer ceremonies of the Kwakwaka'wakw of Vancouver Island and adjacent mainland islands and inlets. Much has been written about the Kwakwaka'wakw winter ceremonial, with its intriguing dances, masks, art, drama, and interaction with the spirit world, but the less-studied summer ceremonial is here interpreted as an important religious occasion. Fish and fish traps (specifically, salmon and salmon traps) played a prominent role in this event, and, in Cullon's reading, the “spirituality of the summer ceremonial was sensitive to salmon ecology and helped to sustain the ongoing salmon resource.”

In “Beyond Chinatown: Chinese Men and Indigenous Women in Early British Columbia,” Jean Barman finds that, through the end of the nineteenth century, one in six Chinese men formed loving or sexual partnerships with a local indigenous woman. This occurred most often in what Barman calls “British Columbia's hinterland”: Seabird Island, Chilliwack, Chehalis, Hope, Yale, Lytton, Cache Creek, Clinton, Nicola Valley, Princeton, Rock Creek, Osoyoos, Cranbrook, Fort Steele, Port Essington, Fort St. James, and Omineca.

Chinese marriage also figures prominently in Shelly Dee Ikebuchi's unpacking of a scandal involving Victoria's Chinese Rescue Home, founded in 1886 “as a safe haven for Chinese prostitutes, slave girls, or those who were thought to be at risk of falling into these roles.” Two years later, a white man connected with the Home was accused of kidnapping and selling two young women from the Home, Ah Lin and Loi Ho, one to a man in the United States and one to a local Chinese man named Ah Chee.

Ron Verzuh's article takes us to Trail in the West Kootenay region and introduces us to the worker poets at the union newspaper. Between the 1930s and 1950s – in the era of the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) – these scribes used poetry and cartoons in their fight against “Canada's Citizen Kane,” Selwyn Blaylock of the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada.

In “The Insuring Crowns: Canada’s Public Auto Insurers,” Malcolm Bird examines the history, role, and continuing relevance of the publicly owned Crown corporations that still provide automobile insurance in three western provinces: the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC), Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI), and Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI). Bird considers the reasons for the persistence of these organizations when other Crown corporations have been privatized, and he concludes that they serve specific and valuable political and policy needs.

The Research Note by Bradley P. Tolppanen, which concludes this issue, inventories and comments upon writing about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police schooner *St. Roch* and its redoubtable skipper, Superintendent Henry A. Larsen. Now housed at the Vancouver Maritime Museum, the *St. Roch* completed three epic voyages between 1940 and 1950, including two transits of the Northwest Passage and one through Panama, which made it the first vessel to circumnavigate North America. At a time of heightened strategic interest in the Arctic and the Canadian North, we judge this annotated bibliography to be a useful source of perspective on contemporary issues often discussed in the media and elsewhere with too little understanding of the past.

Richard Mackie and Graeme Wynn

SPECIAL NOTICE

In Memoriam. With sadness we note the passing of the founding co-editor of *BC Studies*, Margaret Prang, who died in January just short of her 92nd birthday. Born in Ontario in 1921, Margaret joined the UBC History Department in 1957 and, with political scientist Walter Young, founded this journal in 1968. In *BC Studies* (Winter 1978-79), Prang and Young recalled the circumstances: “By the sixties it was clear that the gap left by the demise of the *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* [in 1958] was too large to ignore and growing larger. Not only were there more students of British Columbia’s history in need of a magazine to publish their research, but economists, political scientists, geographers and anthropologists were also concerned about the lack of a regional publication.” Prang and Young foresaw the role of the journal with clarity. With articles in this issue originating in departments of Anthropology, Education, Sociology, History, Political Science, and Library Services, we are pleased to maintain the rich multidisciplinary focus that Prang and Young envisaged for *BC Studies*.