

We Are British Columbia: Essays of Interpretation

Glenfir School Students
Grades Eight and Nine

Edited by Gerald W. Fussell

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(Glenfir School, P.O. Box 1800, Summerland, BC V0H 1Z0)

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IN THE SPRING OF 1998 Summerland social studies teacher Gerald Fussell presented his Grade 8 and 9 classes with a project designed to challenge them to "achieve the highest possible level they can." Students were to gather information on some of the interesting events and people in British Columbia history and write reports on their findings.

The task Mr. Fussell set before his class was certainly demanding. Students gathered preliminary information locally and raised funds for a trip to Victoria. There they conducted research in the British Columbia Archives, the Royal British Columbia Museum, and various other locations and conducted a number of interviews. A period of intense writing, editing, and rewriting followed. Everyone was motivated by plans to prepare his or her work for publication. *We Are British Columbia: Essays of Interpretation* is the result of their efforts.

Although *We Are British Columbia* contains some factual errors and could have been edited more rigorously, anyone wanting to know what thirteen-to-fifteen-year-old students are capable of will find it most interesting. The students have uncovered plenty of fascinating details about a wide

variety of British Columbians and different places in the province. It is interesting to view BC history through the eyes of young people and see what information caught their attention. There are fourteen articles on Aboriginal peoples, land claims, the Queen Charlotte Islands, education, and major and minor figures (both men and women) in our history. The articles make good use of quotations and footnotes, a feature that indicates the breadth and depth of the students' research. The book has an attractive cover, is well laid out, and is neatly coil-bound. It has likely found its way into many homes in the community and been passed on to proud grandparents.

We Are British Columbia is a tribute to the energy and enthusiasm of the students involved in its production. Considering the age of the students and the short timeline under which they operated, it is an impressive example of a high school history project. In his recent book, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, historian Jack Granatstein lamented the failure of our schools and universities to properly teach Canadian history. A reading of this student-produced book would likely give him hope for the future.