

EDITORIAL

CONFRONTING THE MAZE of communities, territories, and topics considered in this issue of *BC Studies*, we are reminded of Cole Harris's observation in a review (on p. 139 of this issue) of Philip Resnick's *The Labyrinth of North American Identities* that "one gets lost in labyrinths" and that "readers can easily get lost in the complexity of North America" – or, we might add, British Columbia. The articles in this issue touch down variously in Creston Flats in the East Kootenay; in the Treaty 8 Territory of the Fort Nelson First Nation; in Vancouver, Victoria, and Prince George; and in the aptly named False Creek near the heart of the provincial metropolis. Compounding the variety and emphasizing the diversity of this vast province, our review essay features books set in South Langley in the Fraser Valley, Boswell on the east shore of Kootenay Lake, and Ginty Creek south of Anahim Lake in the West Chilcotin. We have the province covered from its northeastern to its southern corners, east and west; from the boreal forest to the temperate south coast; from the Peace River to the Kootenay River; and institutionally from the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality to the False Creek Residents Association. Our authors also represent a tangle of disciplines, from history, through environmental studies, Indigenous governance, law, and business to psychiatry, psychology, and public health. Like Theseus, who used a ball of string to escape from the maze on Crete after slaying the Minotaur, we editors seek a viable thread or two to guide readers through this labyrinth of places and people.

Useful strands from which to spin such a filament are evident in James Murton's thought-provoking review essay "The Long Question of Food and Land." Drawing on the pioneering ethnobotanical work of Nancy Turner, Murton notes that farming "has a much longer history here than settler British Columbians have realized. Anthropogenic landscapes, including wapato swamps, estuarine gardens, and camas beds once dotted the coastal landscape, providing abundant food." Murton also notes that later, in the settler era, the scarcity of "the rich plains and valley bottoms so necessary for farming" contributed to the fraught nature of disputes over farmland. Less than 5 percent of the land in British Columbia is arable, and agricultural land has been promoted by land clearing, safeguarded by diking, and, since 1973, protected by the ALR (Agricultural Land Reserve).

Brought together with similar strands in Anne Dance's "Dikes, Ducks, and Dams..." these notions of deep-rooted engagement with a limited agricultural ecumene begin to lead us onward. Dance offers a nicely turned environmental history of a thirty-kilometre stretch of the Kootenay River known as the Creston Flats, just south of Kootenay Lake. This floodplain of natural marsh and rich alluvial soil is confined to the east and west by the Selkirk and Purcell mountains. This was the traditional territory of the Yaqan Nu?kiy band of the Ktunaxa (Kootenay) people, whose subsistence activities embraced the entire valley bottom of Kootenay River. "Harvesting plants such as cattails and dogwood berries that flourished on the flooded river's bottomlands, the Ktunaxa also used their knowledge of the river during hunting expeditions," notes Dance. Floods were a part of life. The Ktunaxa moved upriver during the winter, "travelling across the frozen water on snowshoes, and downriver in the spring, using their distinctive sturgeon-nosed canoes."

But in the late nineteenth century, settlers started building dikes as protection from the Kootenay River's annual floods, which hindered the development of agricultural land. In this rich study, Dance details the transformation of the Creston Flats landscape. She considers the process and politics of agricultural reclamation on this area after 1882 and the network of dikes that resulted; she examines the support lent to the Libby Dam on Kootenai River in nearby Montana by Creston farmers who, somewhat surprisingly, welcomed it as a means to improve their own properties through flood control; and she explains the unsuccessful attempt after 1945 to drain Duck (Sirdar) Lake, immediately south of Kootenay Lake. This campaign engaged local landowners against the BC Fish and Game Branch, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and the West Kootenay Association of Rod and Gun Clubs, and led to the formation in 1968 of the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, a seven-thousand-hectare (seventeen-thousand-acre) area of provincial Crown land on the Kootenay River system. In considering these stakeholders' agendas, Dance engages with issues of agricultural reclamation, river management, fish and wildlife conservation, the hydroelectric impact of the Columbia River Treaty, and much pertinent local and academic writing.

Two related articles strengthen the thread of concern about land, resources, and their appropriate use by addressing some of the challenges presented by shale gas development in northeastern British Columbia. They focus on the traditional territory of the seven hundred members

of the Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN, formerly the Fort Nelson Slavey Band and now the Dene-thah), a Dene- and Cree-speaking people who occupy ten reserves containing altogether ninety-five-hundred hectares. Together, these articles make a forceful argument that the claims of different regional stakeholders – First Nations residents, various levels of government, and outside corporate interests – must be recognized in order to allow appropriate levels of cooperation and consultation about the resource. Accordingly, Kathryn Garvie et al. address issues of land use, resource extraction, regulatory structure, Aboriginal title, and the need for consultation between government and First Nations.

The traditional territories of the FNFN comprise some seventy-two-thousand square kilometres of northeast British Columbia, much of it now Crown land contained in the Northern Rockies Regional Municipality. Under the terms of Treaty 8, signed with the Canadian government in 1910, the Dene-thah agreed to share their traditional land on the condition – so wrote the Treaty 8 commissioners – “that the treaty would not lead to any forced interference with their mode of life.” This included the right to “be as free to hunt and fish after the treaty as they would be if they had never entered into it.”

A century on, Dene-thah traditional territory has been found to contain three of the four large shale gas basins in British Columbia – the Liard Basin, the Horn River Basin, and the Cordova Embayment, all of which are within the Greater Sierra Oil Field. Trapped deep underground within shale rock formations, these natural gas reserves are best extracted with the controversial technology known as fracking (horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing). Garvie et al. outline the rapid growth, in the last ten years, of natural gas exploration and development on FNFN territory, an expansion that amounts to an LNG boom that challenges existing provincial oil and gas governance structures, regulation, and environmental laws. The financial stakes are immense. By the end of 2012, the BC government had collected more than \$3.6 billion in land sales and royalties from the Horn River and Liard basins alone. Garvie et al. conclude that the shale gas boom in northeast BC involves “a race for industrial tenure, landscape disturbance on a massive scale, threats to wildlife, risks to water quality and quantity, and a high level of GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions.” Increasingly, they argue, the boom will require fuller consultation with First Nations and, especially, greater attention to “the constitutionally protected treaty rights of the Treaty 8 First Nations on whose territory this development will proceed.”

Sarah McCalla's case comment also speaks to current concerns relating to land use in British Columbia, but the land in question is a mere 3.83 hectares (nine acres) of waterfront property (street address: 88 Pacific Boulevard) at the eastern end of False Creek in Vancouver, "North America's most expensive city." Acquired in 1988 by Concord Pacific Developments, this former industrial property, known as Area 9, was designated as a public park (Creekside Park) in 1990 under the terms of an agreement between Concord, the City of Vancouver, and the Province of British Columbia. In return for setting the area aside as a park, the city and provincial governments allowed Concord to increase residential density at other former Expo '86 properties on False Creek, where it has since built over ten thousand units of housing. Concord, however, continues to use Area 9 as a sales centre and parking lot. In May 2014, the False Creek Residents Association filed a petition in the Supreme Court of British Columbia for judicial review of the City of Vancouver's continuing approval of Concord's commercial use and sales activity in this designated park space. The petition is now (December 2014) being considered by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. McCalla leads us through the history of Area 9, the background to this petition, and the intricacies of relevant BC property law.

From this debate between Vancouver's wealthiest urban landowners our Theseusian string leads us, in a manner entirely reflective of the yawning disparities within the province, to a tragic snapshot of the homeless in Vancouver, Victoria, and Prince George. In "Regional Patterns of Substance Use," Isabelle Linden and her colleagues examine the frequency and type of substance abuse in these three cities between May and September 2009. They interviewed 250 people in Vancouver, 150 in Victoria, and 100 in Prince George – 500 out of an estimated homeless population of more than 3,000 in the three urban centres. Their findings make for stark and harrowing reading. The nine categories of abused substances include cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, and crystal meth. Linden et al.'s most desolate findings are that 40 percent of all participants self-identified as Aboriginal – 75 percent in Prince George, 35 percent in Vancouver, and 32 percent in Victoria – figures that match those of other studies, which also show that, in Canada, "people of Aboriginal descent are often overrepresented in homeless populations." We more fortunate British Columbians and Canadians must surely hope for the development of both leadership and policy prescriptions that might, Theseus-like, enable the ill-fated among us to escape from the labyrinth of despair and homelessness documented here and elsewhere.

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For a remarkable third year in succession, the Theodore C. Blegen Award of the American Forest History Society has been awarded to an article published in *BC Studies*. The Blegen Award, established in 1972, recognizes the best scholarship in forest and conservation history published beyond the society journal *Environmental History*. The 2012 award went to Lynne Davis for “Home or Global Treasure? Understanding Relationships between the Heiltsuk Nation and Environmentalists” in *BC Studies* 171 (Autumn 2011); the 2013 recipient was Richard Rajala for “Streams Being Ruined from a Salmon Producing Standpoint’: Clearcutting, Fish Habitat, and Forest Regulation in British Columbia, 1900-45,” in 176 (Winter 2012-13); and the latest winners are Nancy J. Turner, Douglas Deur, and Dana Lepofsky for “Plant Management Systems of British Columbia’s First Peoples” in 179 (Autumn 2013). Congratulations to these *BC Studies* authors for their original and excellent scholarship and, of course, to our peer reviewers for their careful and valuable comments on these and other articles.

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