

## EDITORIAL

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**W**E ARE NOT BETTING MEN, but, being aware of the status of Texas hold 'em as the most popular form of community poker these days, we are drawn by the particular alignment of papers in this issue to find some parallels between that game and *BC Studies*. Chronologically, our first cards on the table – our “hole cards” – are a pair of the same suite. Both concern the construction and production of Coast Salish weaving. In “A Curious Clay,” Liz Hammond-Kaarremaa explores the origin and purpose of a powdery, silky “white clay” used in the production of Coast Salish woven blankets. Explorers, ethnographers, scientists, and settlers described a yarn made from mammalian, avian, and botanical fibres of local origin: wool from Salish wool dogs and mountain goats, with minor ingredients of cattail fluff, fireweed fibres, small feathers, and feather-down. Visitors to the Salish Sea area described Coast Salish weavers pounding a white earth or white clay into the moistened fibres with a “sword beater,” a sword-like implement made of yew, to produce a clean, pliable, and feathery yarn. This curious clay was known to the Lekwungen of southern Vancouver Island as *st'ewogw'* and to the Stó:lō of the Fraser Valley as *st'a'uok'*. But why was this substance added to the wool? Hammond-Kaarremaa considers the possible explanations – that it was a grease extractor, a cleansing agent, a whitener, an absorbent oil, a deodorizer, an insecticide. And what exactly was this “pipe clay,” this fine white powder? We will leave the solution up Hammond-Kaarremaa's sleeve for now, but we are left with a sense of the astonishing sophistication of the Coast Salish yarn production process.

In “Classic Salish Twined Robes,” Katharine Dickerson moves from the details of yarn production to the techniques of Coast Salish weaving. She considers the three surviving fully twined and dyed Coast Salish robes dating from before 1850 – now in the National Museum of Finland, the Perth Museum and Art Gallery in Scotland, and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC – all of them made by master weavers for persons of status and rank. “I come to the study of these robes as a weaver familiar with the techniques required to make them,” states Dickerson, and here she unravels and replicates the manufacture of these Coast Salish robes with an analysis that ranges from the function of the spindle to the method of twining (which requires a twist between each warp thread), to the reverse warping method for stringing looms, to the technical basis of twining, warp thread width, twisting shifts, diagonal and directional slants, visual and structural patterns, and colour

placement. She considers the powerful transformative imagery found on spindle whorls and in the contents, decoration, and manufacture of the robes themselves. Of high technical, aesthetic, and spiritual quality, these robes might qualify as the most valuable items of Salish material culture and, Dickerson concludes, possibly “the finest weavings produced by a North American Indigenous culture.”

Bets placed on the value of these contributions, we move on to the “flop,” in which three community cards are laid out, face up. Here we find a second pair closely united by the theme of community abandonment. In “Lucerne No Longer Has an Excuse to Exist,” Ben Bradley considers the desertion and gradual demolition of the town of Lucerne in the Yellowhead Pass in the Canadian Rockies between Jasper and Mount Robson and on the railway route and major travel corridor between Prince George and Edmonton. Established on a right-of-way in 1913 in Mount Robson Provincial Park as the mountain divisional point of the Canadian Northern Railway, the population of this company town peaked at three hundred in 1923 before, a year later, it was demoted to a flag stop in favour of a new divisional point at Jasper. Its most famous resident was novelist Howard O’Hagan, author of *Tay John* (1939), who wrote that Lucerne, even at its peak, was “not so much a town as a boulder-strewn street laid out in the wilderness.” In the 1920s and 1930s provincial parks officials made numerous attempts to have the remains of this “aesthetic problem” removed, something that was finally achieved in 1942 by a party of Japanese-Canadian internees from the coast of British Columbia. Bradley sees Lucerne as “a trackside relic of modern industrial failure” located in the tourist gaze on the mainline of a trans-continental railway, in a park and at British Columbia’s front door, and he charts what he calls the “round[s] of bureaucratic anxiety about the effects on travellers of eyesores around Lucerne.” Striving for a clean, naturalistic aesthetic, park managers considered Lucerne as a candidate for remediation to a natural-looking state. Bradley examines the role of government in managing and manipulating the material landscape of parks and travellers’ views of parks, and he reminds us that “park landscapes are constructed, maintained, and carefully patrolled rather than natural, timeless, and essential.”

The other half of this pair is also a Rocky Mountain card. It shows a Crowsnest Pass denomination, five hundred kilometres south of Yellowhead and Lucerne, at the 49th rather than the 52nd parallel, and on the southern mainline of the Canadian Pacific Railway rather than on the tracks of the Canadian Northern. Here we follow the demise of two more company towns regarded as aesthetic blemishes on a gateway

into British Columbia. Tom Langford's "Class and Environmental Justice Politics in the Demolition of Natal and Michel, 1964-78," considers the fate of those who lived in these East Kootenay mining towns, brought to their knees by air pollution, corporate ambition, and government policy. With assiduous attention to the archival and analytical dimensions of his story, Langford traces (1) the relocation, between 1964 and 1978, of about half the residents to the town of Sparwood and (2) the dispersal of the remainder, unable to afford Sparwood house prices, to Fernie, Creston, the Okanagan, or the Alberta portion of Crowsnest Pass. Langford reaches two important conclusions. The first concerns the significant role, in the spring of 1967, played by "a large group of women who used contentious political tactics to try to get some action from those in positions of authority." These collective protests against pollution, Langford attests, "are a testimony to the deep bonds of solidarity across women's family and friendship networks." The second concerns the demolition of Natal and Michel, which "spawned unique environmental protest actions" that, according to Langford, "signalled the beginnings of an environmental justice movement in Canada."

The third card in our "flop" is Nichole Dusyk's "Clean Energy Discourse in British Columbia, 1980-2014," which reflects upon the BC government's energy policy between 1980 and 2014. By analyzing published policy texts – energy plans, related strategies, and throne speeches – Dusyk shows how the term "clean energy" became the government's "dominant energy storyline" in these years. Defining discourse as the ideas, intent, and content of language, and storyline as "the narratives that reduce complex discursive spaces to manageable form," Dusyk notes that the rhetoric of cleanliness "has moral and spatial orderings that associate it with what is good and desirable," and she argues that the clean energy storyline has become "a tool to expand both large hydroelectricity and natural gas extraction in the province," even as it works (in the contested case of the Site C Hydroelectricity project on the Peace River, for example) to marginalize First Nations and local residents, minimize recognition of environmental and social costs, and permit community displacement, loss of agricultural land, destruction of wildlife habitat and corridors, and infringement on land and treaty rights.

With a pair in hand, another on the board, and a valuable fifth article on display, stakes on this issue should be climbing, even before the "turn" reveals a fourth community "card." This is Anika Stafford's remarkable account of the ways in which deeply ingrained binary conceptions of gender are manifest in primary school settings and can work to reinforce heteronormative hierarchies even when they are challenged and com-

plicated. In “‘I Feel Like a Girl Inside’: Possibilities for Gender and Sexual Diversity in Early Primary School,” Stafford reports on three months of ethnographic research in a Vancouver kindergarten classroom, providing a rare and thoughtful glimpse of the challenges facing those on the “front lines” of education in the junior grades. Her account is well-grounded in the relevant specialist literatures but succeeds – through presentation of, and reflection upon, four compelling vignettes – in offering key insights into how gender norms shape everyday school life. More than this, Stafford speaks to current debates about whether boys and girls should be educated separately, points to the importance of engaging with “difference” in ways that avoid othering, and offers convincing arguments for valuing children’s literacy, sense of justice, and creativity.

There are strong five-card hands to be made from these six offerings, but the fifth community card, the “river,” needs to be played before showdown. Prior to doing that, though, we should run our analogy into the ground by noting the current practice, in poker games, of placing a card in the discard pile before each community card round. Though these cards are not put in play, they are essential to the integrity of the game, just as peer-review and (unfortunately) rejection are necessary for the legitimacy of academic journals – all of which offers us opportunity to thank our reviewers and to console those whose articles we could not bring into play. Finally, then, the “river.” This is also in some sense a free card. This year, the journal is inaugurating the *BC Studies* Prize, to be given annually to the author of the best paper published in the journal during the preceding calendar year. The first recipient of this award is Caroline Grego for “Maybe National Park: Consultation, Conservation, and Conflict in the Okanagan-Similkameen,” published in Issue 186 (Summer 2015). The runner-up is Mica Jorgenson for “‘Into That Country to Work’: Aboriginal Economic Activities during Barkerville’s Gold Rush,” in Issue 185 (Spring 2015). Each of these fine, now freely available, articles is derived from a master’s thesis, Grego’s in geography at the University of British Columbia and Jorgenson’s in history at the University of Northern British Columbia. Congratulations to both authors. We thank our jury, drawn from the editorial board of *BC Studies*, for their work in adjudicating this award, and we acknowledge the many financial contributions from the universities and colleges of British Columbia that made it possible. Special thanks go to the UBC Museum of Anthropology for its generous donation and to Musqueam artist Susan Point, who munificently allowed us to use one of her beautiful designs to produce a striking plaque for the prizewinner.

*Richard Mackie and Graeme Wynn*