

ERASING INDIGENOUS INDIGENEITY IN VANCOUVER

JEAN BARMAN¹

CANADA HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY URBAN. More and more people choose to live in cities and towns. Under a fifth did so in 1871, according to the first census to be held after Canada was formed in 1867. The proportion surpassed a third by 1901, was over half by 1951, and reached 80 percent by 2001.²

Urbanization has not benefited Canadians in equal measure. The most adversely affected have been indigenous peoples. Two reasons intersect: first, the reserves confining those deemed to be status Indians are scattered across the country, meaning lives are increasingly isolated from a fairly concentrated urban mainstream; and second, the handful of reserves in more densely populated areas early on became coveted by newcomers, who sought to wrest them away by licit or illicit means. The pressure became so great that in 1911 the federal government passed legislation making it possible to do so. This article focuses on the second of these two reasons.

The city we know as Vancouver is a relatively late creation, originating in 1886 as the western terminus of the transcontinental rail line. Until then, Burrard Inlet, on whose south shore Vancouver sits, was home to a handful of newcomers alongside Squamish and Musqueam peoples who used the area's resources for sustenance. A hundred and twenty years later, apart from the hidden-away Musqueam Reserve, that indigenous presence has disappeared.

¹ This article originated as a paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, May 2007. I am grateful to all those who commented on it and to Robert A.J. McDonald and two anonymous reviewers for *BC Studies* for their observations.

² Data taken from Canadian censuses. The exact proportions (20 percent, 37 percent, 56 percent, and 80 percent) are not precisely comparable due to slightly differing definitions of urban and rural.

This article traces, and reflects upon, the erasure of indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver. Persons who were indigenous to the area, and considered it their home long before the arrival of outsiders, were first removed from the land they called their own and then saw even their memory deliberately lost from view. Having been unsettled, the indigenous Indigeneity they personified could be erased.

Erasure had two purposes. It was an end in itself in the unsettling process whereby, in 1913, residents of Vancouver's most desirable Indian reserve, visible from the city's centre, were persuaded to leave. Erasure also gave the means for the young city to assert that sense of rootedness that is at the heart of Indigeneity without its having to be indigenous to Vancouver. With the totem poles erected in Stanley Park in 1923 to mark the forced removal of the last of its indigenous residents, erasure functioned as a pathway to indigenous Indigeneity's replacement by a sanitized Indigeneity got from elsewhere.

Both forms of erasure served the dominant society but in different ways. The first was intended to grow the city by opening up land for newcomer purposes; the second was more invidious and was intended to create the illusion that Vancouver was indigenous-friendly, even as it rid itself of the real thing.

UNSETTLING RESERVE LANDS

Of the two means to erasure that occurred in Vancouver, the unsettling of reserve lands was the most straightforward. The emptying of reserves was not a uniquely Vancouver or British Columbian phenomenon. When British Columbia joined Canada in 1871, "the charge of the Indians" passed to the Dominion government.³ The Indian Act, 1876, restricted the role of the Department of Indian Affairs to indigenous people defined as having status by virtue of male descent: to be Indian was to have an Indian father. The many women with families by newcomer men were left to their own devices, their offspring generally being termed "half-breeds," a word almost always derogatory in its connotation. Even though no treaties were signed in British Columbia (unlike elsewhere in Canada), except for small parts of Vancouver Island and the northeast corner across the Rocky Mountains, reserves were nonetheless marked out for status Indians, who were expected to reside there out of sight of

³ See Terms of Union, clause 13, reproduced in Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 176-7.

the expanding dominant society.⁴ The Indian Act provided for Indian agents, who were charged with overseeing both everyday life on reserves and residential schools, which were intended to inculcate newcomer ways into offspring.

This centralization of authority in the federal government did not prevent the Province of British Columbia from coveting reserve lands for newcomer settlement. By the terms of entry into Confederation, land not legally transferred to individual owners or for reserves remained the property of the provincial government and was known as Crown land. An 1875 agreement with the federal government establishing a joint commission to confirm reserves contained a contentious clause that had been sought by the province and held that “any land taken off a Reserve shall revert to the Province.”⁵ In other words, to the extent Indians could be persuaded to unsettle reserves, it was British Columbia that benefited.

The country was in a chipper mood at the time Richard McBride became premier of British Columbia in 1903. Convinced of the province’s reversionary right to reserve lands, McBride pushed for the negotiations that would unsettle the province’s two principal urban reserves, located in Victoria and Vancouver, respectively.⁶ In doing so, he reflected larger sets of attitudes in the dominant society. Most everyone agreed that Indians who did not use land set aside for them in ways consistent with newcomers’ assumptions had no right to retain it. Urbanization caused reserves in or near cities to be especially coveted. Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier pronounced in Parliament in April 1911 that “where a reserve is in the vicinity of a growing town, as is the case in several places, it becomes a source of nuisance and an impediment to progress.”⁷ A month later, the Indian Act was amended so that the residents of any “Indian reserve which adjoins or is situated wholly or partly within an incorporated town or city having a population of not less than eight thousand” could be legally removed without their consent if it was in

⁴ On the marking out of reserves, see Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

⁵ Order-in-Council, 10 November 1875, quoted in Robert Cail, *Land, Man, and the Law; The Disposal of Crown Lands in British Columbia, 1871–1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1974), 204.

⁶ Patricia Roy, “Sir Richard McBride,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, available online at <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/index.html>.

⁷ Wilfrid Laurier in House of Commons debate, 19 April 1911, *House of Commons Debates*, 1910–11: 7249.

“the interest of the public and of the Indians of the band for whose use the reserve is held.”⁸

Two years before Vancouver’s Kitsilano Reserve was unsettled and even as the Indian Act was being amended, the Songhees had been displaced in British Columbia’s capital city of Victoria. There was no reason for the Songhees to want to move, and, in fact, they did not want to do so. In 1890, an official of the Department of Indian Affairs attested that they were “to a man determined not to vacate the Songhees reserve which was land held and occupied by their forefathers from time immemorial and consequently dearer to them than anything they could possess.”⁹ It was the promise of easy money, backed by Premier McBride’s determination and Prime Minister Laurier’s consent, that changed minds. The province offered forty-one family heads \$10,000 each, which was deposited in their names in a bank account, with the bank book being handed over once the family had moved to a new reserve at nearby Esquimalt.¹⁰ By the end of 1911, federal legislation had confirmed the reserve’s sale to the province. A visitor a couple of years later caught the prevailing sentiment: “It was an intolerable state of affairs to see such a large area in such a location lying waste, occupied only by a few Indians, and after much negotiation it was bought by the city.” An unexpected consequence was, to the dismay of the dominant society, Songhees “seen driving about the city in their own autos!”¹¹

Reserves were also sought elsewhere in British Columbia. Between 1913 and 1916, a royal commission on Indian affairs toured the province with the goal of rectifying complaints to do with reserves. It received a torrent of proposals. Municipality after municipality requested reserve lands for supposedly higher-minded purposes, ranging from public amenities like parks and exhibition grounds to industrial and residential expansion. Among their number, North and West Vancouver officials

⁸ “An Act to Amend the Indian Act,” assented to 19 May 1911, available online at <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/aboriginaldocs/m-stat.htm>.

⁹ A.W. Vowell to L. Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 5 May 1890, Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), RG 10, vol. 3688, file 13,886-1.

¹⁰ See Grant Keddie, *Songhees Pictorial: A History of the Songhees People as seen by Outsiders, 1790-1912* (Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2003), 148-9. The sale of the Songhees Reserve is tracked in Jeannie L. Kanakos, “The Negotiations to Relocate the Songhees Indians, 1843-1911” (unpublished MA thesis, Department of History, Simon Fraser University, 1982), and set within a larger conceptual framework in Renisa Mawani, “Legal Geographies of Aboriginal Segregation in British Columbia: The Making and Unmaking of the Songhees Reserve, 1850-1911,” in *Isolation: Places and Practices of Exclusion*, ed. Carolyn Strange and Alison Bashford (London: Routledge, 2003), 173-90.

¹¹ C.F.J. Galloway, *The Call of the West: Letters from British Columbia* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1916), 82.

Among locations mapped on the south side of False Creek, across from the future city centre, was Snaug, located under today's Burrard Street Bridge. Snaug was the basis for a thirty-seven-acre reserve requested in February 1868 by the forty-two persons living there under the leadership of Chief Chip-kay-um and established the next year.¹⁴ Half a dozen years later, the joint Dominion-Provincial Reserve Commission expanded what became known as the Kitsilano Reserve to eighty acres.

As well as this reserve on False Creek, the commission confirmed four other reserves for the Squamish on the north shore of Burrard Inlet, in what would become North Vancouver and West Vancouver, and a principal reserve for the Musqueam on the north arm of the Fraser River in an area that would be amalgamated into Vancouver in 1929. Due to the late date of the Musqueam Reserve's emergence into Vancouver's purview and its location on the city's periphery, it has remained relatively intact.¹⁵

At the time the reserve commissioners visited the reserve on False Creek in November 1876, fifteen men, fifteen women, and twelve children were living there under Chief Chip-kay-um, whom newcomers called Chief George. The federal government was convinced Indians should become subsistence farmers, so it is not surprising the commissioners' basis for approval had to do with agriculture. They reported optimistically "about 8 acs of land partially cleared," although "¾ ac only cultivated principally vegetables."¹⁶ They counted two horses, thirty fowls, and seven geese. Residents would later plant a cherry orchard.¹⁷

The Kitsilano Reserve's stability is attested to by Methodist missionary Charles Tate, who preached at Snaug regularly from 1872 on. Half a century later, he recalled his Sundays there:

They were a hospitable lot, and I was entertained by Chief George and his band in their community house ... There was quite a settlement at Chief George's False Creek Reserve, probably a dozen houses, built

¹⁴ For a summary, see "Reasons for Judgment from the First Phase of the Trial," in *Squamish Indian Band v. Canada*, court file T-1636-41, 5 October 2000, 20-2, 46. Newcomers spelled the chief's name as they heard it being spoken, and this resulted in numerous versions, including Sh-praem, Chipphaim, Chupkeyim, Chipwheim, Chupnum, Chi-kay-m, Schpreme, Chpre, and Chpreame.

¹⁵ On the Musqueam Reserve through time within the context of Vancouver, see Peggy Schofield, *The Story of Dunbar: Voices of a Vancouver Neighbourhood* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2007).

¹⁶ Censuses of False Creek taken 20 November 1876, enclosed with report of the British Columbia Reserve Commission, 1877, D1A, RG 10, vol. 3645, file 7936.

¹⁷ August Jack Khahtsahlano in conversation with Major J.S. Matthews, 16 July 1940, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 114.

of split cedar, saw boards and slabs, and the big community house; a total population, perhaps, of fifty persons all told. It was a settlement of consequence ... Old Chief George was ... a very good kind man, a fine Indian.¹⁸

The Kitsilano Reserve, also known as the False Creek Reserve and Reserve No. 6, acquired much of its appeal for residents through its access to natural resources. Chief Chip-kay-um's great nephew August Jack Khahtsahlano, who lived at Snauq as a child during the 1880s and became a principal informant to Major Matthews, explained how it was not agriculture but the sea that brought the Squamish there, seasonally, in great numbers. According to August Jack, Chip-kay-um was the "first man to go to Snauq; he built first house close to water" in a tiny clearing framed by the towering forest.¹⁹ The reason for the location was the big sand bar that would later be built up as Granville Island: "The Indians had from time immemorial had a fish corral there; two converging fences of brush in the water made from hurdles of twisted vine maple fastened to sharpened stakes driven in the mud to guide the flounders and smelts into the narrow part where they were trapped."²⁰ Others recalled great numbers of salmon, ducks that "rose in clouds," and muskrats.²¹

The reserve's centrepiece was a longhouse made of cedar slabs with an earthen floor. According to August Jack, all around the inside about sixteen inches off the ground was "a bench or platform, about five feet wide; wide enough for two people to sleep side by side on it."²² A Methodist minister who visited in 1894 described the longhouse as being about 150 feet long, with up to four "smoke holes in the centre of the roof to let the smoke from the large fires, about three of them, which, probably at one time, burned in the centre, for there was a regular earth hearth in the middle." By then the benches along the sides had disappeared, but "several families were living around smaller fires in the corners or on the sides."²³ August Jack gave himself a naming potlatch there in about 1895:

¹⁸ Rev. C.M. Tate in conversation with Matthews, 1 July 1932, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 158-9, 171.

¹⁹ August Jack in conversation with Matthews, 19 May 1935, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 44, also 1.

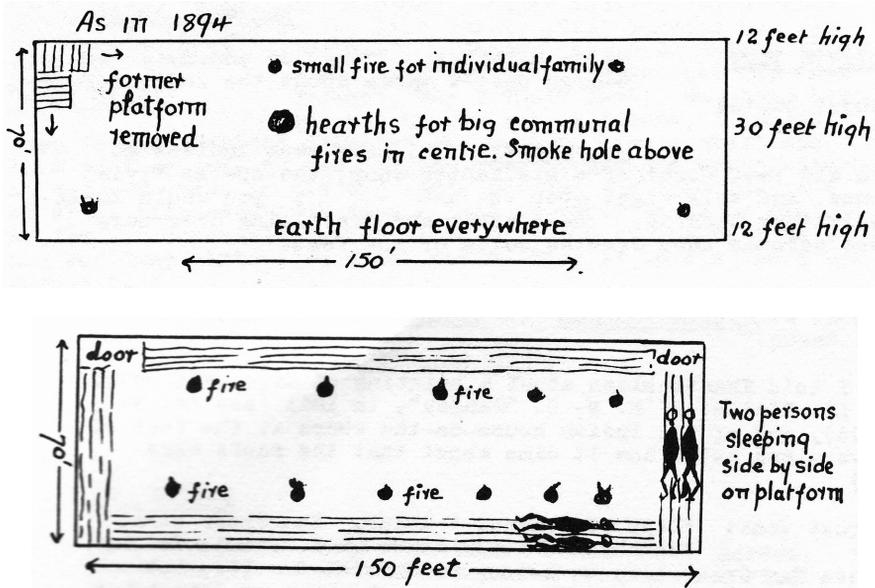
²⁰ August Jack in conversation with Matthews, 7 July 1932, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 12; also Ayatak, or Frank Charlie, in conversation with Matthews, n.d., app. 34.

²¹ Matthews, *Conversations*, app. 34.

²² August Jack in conversation with Matthews, 19 May 1935, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 44.

²³ Rev. G.H. Raley in conversation with Matthews, 9 May 1935, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 281.

I give away about one hundred blankets. I buy them Hudson's Bay store on Cordova Street; two dollars each; double blankets. Then besides that I pay for eighty pound sack of flour; thirty pounds tea, and I buy dishes and spoons, give them away; down at False Creek ... in the big long house. [The spokesman] say this boy called by whiteman's name – August – now they going to give him his proper name, Indian name; same name his grandfather [Khahtsahlano] ... Just one day celebration ... Come from Squamish, Musqueam, Nanaimo.²⁴



Figures 2 and 3: Sketches of False Creek Reserve longhouse by Methodist minister George Raley and August Jack Khahtsahlano. Matthews, *Conversations*, 56, 282.

Typical of British Columbian reserves at the time, the Kitsilano Reserve maintained a relatively steady population of forty-five to sixty inhabitants, most of them related through kinship or marriage.²⁵ August Jack explained how two members of his extended family had houses

²⁴ August Jack in conversation with Matthews, 6 November 1936, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 56.

²⁵ See, for instance, Memo, Ottawa, 16 May 1913, in DIA, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2. See also "Reasons for Judgment," 45-9, 57 (for biographies of some of the principal Kitsilano Reserve residents, see 50-9). The populations and familial relationships on British Columbian reserves are detailed, reserve by reserve, in Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, Minutes of Meetings.

on one side of the longhouse and two on the other side. Also living there was his stepfather Chinalset, or Jericho Charlie, born about 1830, who used his large dugout canoe to freight goods between Hastings Mill (established on the south shore of Burrard Inlet in 1865), the small settlement at Gastown to the west, and logging camps.²⁶ As well, Chief Chip-kay-um's only child and her white husband, who worked as a bull puncher (i.e., he drove oxen), made their home there. As recalled by an arrival of 1882, "John Beatty, and his Indian wife, lived on the reserve with old Chief George; they had a cabin on the reserve."²⁷

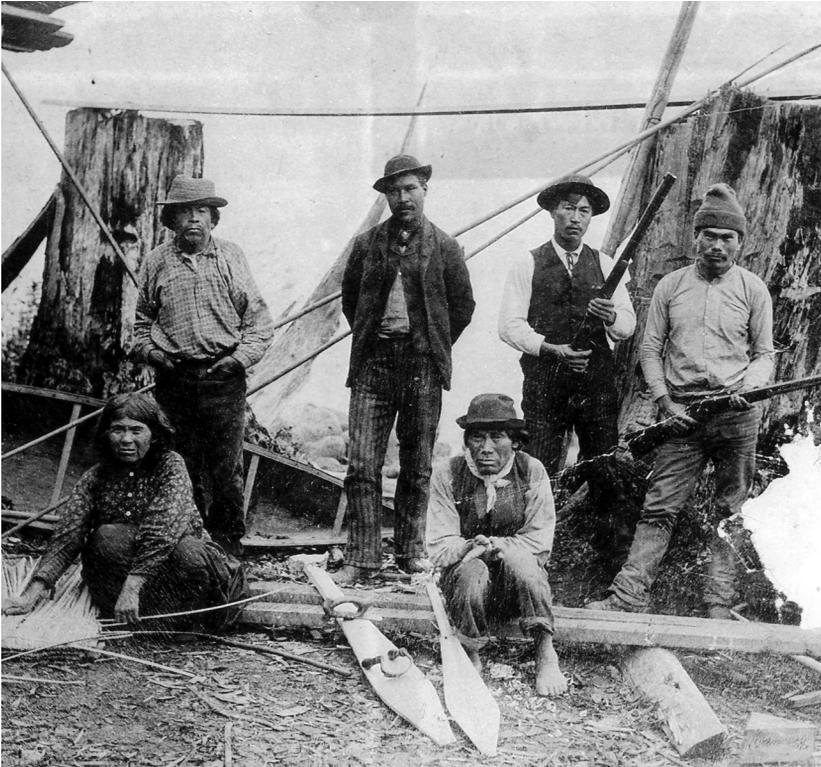


Figure 4: Kitsilano Reserve, 1891. Left to right Yamschloot or Mary, Chinalset or Jericho Charlie, William Green, Peelas George, Jimmy Jimmy, and Towhuquamkee or Jack. City of Vancouver Archives, P.I.1.

²⁶ August Jack in conversation with Matthews, 23 August 1937, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 45, also 4-5, 82, 284.

²⁷ William Mackie in conversation with Matthews, Vancouver, 9 September 1937 revised, City of Vancouver Archives, Add. Ms. 54.

Initially, the Kitsilano Reserve added a bit of colour to newcomers' everyday lives. When the Canadian governor general, the Marquis of Dufferin, visited the young province in 1876 and his wife expressed a desire to see some Indians in their natural surroundings, she is said to have been conveyed to False Creek, where she had her hand firmly shaken by an elderly woman remembered as the "Virgin Mary."²⁸ A woman who lived across False Creek recalled how, "in 1891, False Creek was so quiet on a Sunday that we could hear the Indians singing at their services on the reserve as far as our place at English Bay; we used to sit on the shore and listen."²⁹ Reserve residents could be useful. An English woman who visited the new city of Vancouver with her husband, who was there to hunt game, told of heralding a canoe from the other side of False Creek: "After much calling and whistling, our Indian (William by name) came out of his house, and through [my husband] Algernon's stalking-glass we saw him packing in all haste, with the assistance of his 'clotchman' (Chinook for woman); at last he came, and we started."³⁰

Vancouver's rapid growth changed attitudes. By the turn of the century, it had overtaken Victoria as the province's principal city. The next decade saw the population of what was then a much smaller entity extending south only as far as 16th Avenue quadrupling to one hundred thousand. An intricate system of street railways, which sometimes preceded settlement, drew attention to the reserve. So did visual proximity to the city's most exclusive residential area, the West End, with its prized beach on nearby English Bay. August Jack mused about the various houses along the shoreline of the reserve, saying that "you could see them all from English Bay bathing beach."³¹

Increasingly, as Robert A.J. McDonald explains, the "people of Vancouver came to view the False Creek Reserve as critical to the city's continued growth."³² In 1886 and 1902, ten of the reserve's eighty acres were alienated to the Canadian Pacific Railway to build a trestle bridge across False Creek and then a rail line that was to pass through

²⁸ Eric Nicol, *Vancouver* (Toronto: Doubleday 1979), 45. The story may be apocryphal, given that it did not make it into either Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, *My Canadian Journal, 1872-78* (New York: Appleton, 1891) or Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, *Journal of the Journey of His Excellency the Governor-General of Canada from Government House, Ottawa, to British Columbia and Back* (London: Webster & Larkin, 1877).

²⁹ Mrs. Percy Nye in conversation with Matthews, n.d., in Matthews, *Conversations*, app. 34.

³⁰ Mrs. Algernon St. Maur, *Impressions of a Tenderfoot During a Journey in Search of Sport in the Far West* (London: John Murray, 1890), 139.

³¹ August Jack in conversation with Matthews, 19 May 1935, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 45.

³² R.A.J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1996), 217.

the reserve.³³ These actions paled before the growing determination to snatch the reserve itself. Several sets of stakeholders, or interest groups, played a role.

The first concerted attempt to acquire the Kitsilano Reserve occurred in the first years of the new century, when, as described in press accounts, “prominent business men of the city” determined to put it to “a practical use” consistent with the self-confident boosterism grounded in real estate speculation that characterized Vancouver during these years. The goal of using the reserve “for public exhibition and other purposes for the general good of every citizen” became more self-interested the more it was described.³⁴ The refined plan for “a midsummer fair and carnival” complete with “railway, tram and water facilities” was a mildly disguised economic venture wherein “business men would reap a harvest each year from the throngs that would be visiting.”³⁵

While businessmen were acting in expected ways, a second set of stakeholders might have sided with reserve residents. Legally, the federal government, through the Department of Indian Affairs, was the only body with authority to act, and the sole reason that the Indian agent for the Vancouver region hesitated to accede to businessmen’s desires had to do with the value of the reserve land, which he initially pegged at \$1,800 an acre (or about \$125,000) rather than the \$500 an acre (or \$35,000) that businessmen proposed to pay.³⁶

A third set of stakeholders who might have been sympathetic to the Kitsilano Reserve’s Squamish residents was also apparently comfortable with their removal. According to contemporary accounts, “the Roman Catholic clergy, missionaries to the Indians, are somewhat desirous to see the Indians moved away, provided of course that the Indians are treated fairly in the transaction.” The other Squamish reserves were under close Catholic oversight and were much more strictly regulated according to missionaries’ preferences than was the Kitsilano Reserve, which was located on the far side of Burrard Inlet and False Creek: “The missionaries look upon the reservation as nothing more or less

³³ “Reasons for Judgment,” 15.

³⁴ “Want a Grant of the Reserve,” *Province*, 28 May 1902. There was at least one earlier attempt, described in L. Vankoughnet to E.D. Dewdney, Ottawa, 18 April 1889, DIA, RG 10, vol. 3816, file 56,943. My interest in erasure, from the perspective of Vancouverites, means I have preferred contemporary press accounts as being closest to attitudes at the time, except where other sources elaborate upon or contradict them.

³⁵ “Indian Reservation May Be Lost to Vancouver,” *Province*, 7 June 1903.

³⁶ “To Secure the Indian Reserve,” *Province*, 4 June 1902.

than a hotbed of drunkenness and situated too close to the city to be a desirable residing place for their charges.”³⁷

A fourth set of stakeholders made its appearance just as victory seemed assured. Vancouver businessmen learned, to their consternation, that it was necessary that “the consent of the Indians interested in the land be obtained.”³⁸ Headlines in Vancouver’s leading newspaper – “Indian Reservation May Be Lost to Vancouver” and “Reservation May Be Ours” – underline the full extent to which the reserve’s residents had not previously been a consideration.³⁹ The benign view held that, in comparison with Vancouver’s rapidly growing population, there were “very few Indians living on this reservation” and that, therefore, “so far as they are concerned, a better provision could easily be made for them at some other place, just as convenient.”⁴⁰ A more critical perspective, which was offered at a public meeting overseen by the mayor, held that “the reserve as at present is of no use to any one, and is moreover an eyesore to the city and an easy resort for criminals.” Vancouver business interests claimed there were “only eleven Indians on the reserve, and only about an acre and a half under cultivation.”⁴¹

It soon became clear that this overlooked set of stakeholders had a mind of its own. Like the Songhees with regard to their reserve, the Squamish living on the Kitsilano Reserve under Chief Chip-kay-um did not want to leave. Earlier, in 1901, they had refused, and now they did so again.⁴² The local Indian agent reported on a meeting held there in January 1904:

Chief says that he does not want to sell the land because it belonged to his Grandfather ... He didn’t want to leave this place where he was born and it is the place where his dead relatives are buried – none of the men on the place want to sell it – the Queen gave him and his people the land.⁴³

A Vancouver newspaper crisply summed up another meeting on the reserve in April 1904: “After a short consultation the Indians decided that they were unanimously opposed to selling or surrendering the

³⁷ “Reservation May Be Ours,” *Province*, 7 October 1903.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Province*, 7 June 1902 and 7 October 1903, respectively.

⁴⁰ “Want a Grant of the Reserve.”

⁴¹ “To Secure the Indian Reserve.”

⁴² The earlier refusal followed a provincial request made in May 1901 (Memo from W.R. White to the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 25 March 1913, D1A, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2).

⁴³ R.C. McDonald, Indian Agent, quoted in “Reasons for Judgment,” 42.

reserve or any portion of it for any price or any consideration whatever."⁴⁴ Chief Chip-kay-um, who had been in charge since at least 1868 when he spearheaded the initial request for the reserve, died three years later.⁴⁵

Following another abortive attempt in 1908-09 to wrest the reserve away,⁴⁶ events stagnated until early 1913, when a new stakeholder took the lead. About the same time as an American railway company offered \$1.5 to \$2 million for the reserve, which it sought for a terminal and docks, and the federal Harbour Commission was eying it for much the same purpose, the province stepped in.⁴⁷ Even as the federal Department of Indian Affairs was mulling the offers but putting them on hold until the Commission on Indian Reserves reported, provincial authorities acted.⁴⁸ Their justification lay in British Columbia's having reversionary rights to reserve lands.

In a transaction culminating in early April 1913, due process played no role, nor was federal approval sought. Vancouver magistrate H.O. Alexander, who was fluent in the trade jargon of Chinook, which all of the Squamish understood, acted as intermediary on behalf of the province and, more particularly, of Attorney General W.J. Bowser, who represented Vancouver in the legislature. According to Alexander's version of events, some reserve residents approached him about a deal similar to that the province had negotiated with the Songhees. He thereupon organized a closed meeting on the reserve in March 1913, at which he read over in Chinook a draft sale agreement that all those

⁴⁴ "Indians Refuse to Vacate," *Province*, 25 April 1904.

⁴⁵ "Reasons for Judgment," 50.

⁴⁶ "An Election Bribe for the Citizens of Vancouver," *Province*, 20 October 1908; "City Control of Kitsilano Reserve," *Province*, 24 November 1908; "Says Ottawa Has Promised Reserve," *Province*, 23 February 1909; "Will Not Give Up Kitsilano Reserve," *Province*, 4 March 1909. Also, in 1904, eleven acres were leased to a lumber company for a fifty-year term, which would automatically terminate if the reserve was sold (Memo from W.R. White to the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 25 March 1913, DIA, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2).

⁴⁷ Telegram from Deacon, Deacon and Wilson to Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Vancouver, 20 April 1913; Memo from W.R. White to the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, 25 March 1913, DIA, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2. See also "Offered Indians One and a Half Million Dollars," *Vancouver World*, 4 April 1913; "Militia Want Indian Lands at Kitsilano," *Vancouver World*, 9 April 1913; "Kitsilano Indian Reserve Bargain," *Vancouver World*, 11 April 1913. In "Success in Struggle: The Squamish People and Kitsilano Reserve No. 6" (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1978), 72-5 and *passim*, William Zaharoff attributes the reserve's sale to deteriorating economic conditions among the Squamish people from 1912 onward. This perspective is too limited, given that the process had been ongoing for some time and was sped up by the emergence of competing interests; that it was the promise of ready cash that changed the minds of those actually living on the reserve; and that the Squamish more generally, centred on reserves on the north shore of Burrard Inlet, played at most a minor role in the negotiations and did not benefit from the sale.

⁴⁸ "Offered Indians One and a Half Million Dollars."

present signed, almost all with their mark.⁴⁹ The amount was far less than what the Squamish had anticipated, being \$11,250 per family head, or about \$220,000 in total.⁵⁰ Unlike the Songhees, they were not allocated a new reserve; the expectation was that they would move to one of the existing Squamish reserves on the north shore of Burrard Inlet or to others located further north.

Before the deal could be finalized, news leaked out of the much larger offers being entertained by federal authorities, which came out to about \$50,000 per family head. Fearful of the Squamish changing their minds, Attorney General Bowser personally stepped in. According to one of the Squamish present, at a meeting with heads of families held in the magistrate's office, he proffered cheques with the following warning: "There you are. Here is your cheque with your name on it for \$11,250. Take it. If you do not, you will never get a cent for your reserve." The Squamish refused the cheques, one of them explaining: "Mr. Bowser and Magistrate Alexander, listen to me: If you owned some property and one man came and said he would give you \$11,250 for it, and another man came and said he would give you \$50,000, which would you take? I think it is best for us to wait a little while until the Indian land commissioners are here." At this point, according to this insider account, the attorney general offered what might be seen as a threat: "When the commissioners have gone, you will get nothing at all for your land, not one cent. All you will get will be a portion of land somewhere in the Squamish Valley in return for the Kitsilano reserve. Now which do you prefer, \$11,250 or nothing? Here is your cheque. If you want it, you can take it, and draw your money for the land; or you can leave it." Before stalking out, the attorney general told the Squamish that the next Tuesday they could have the money in cold hard cash: "Take it or you'll never get a cent."⁵¹ Another report based on first-hand information has "the Provincial Government" making "threats that they would be driven off by the Police if they did not consent to sell."⁵²

⁴⁹ "Red Men Took Cash from Mr. Bowser This Morning," *Province*, 9 April 1913; "Offered Indians One and a Half Million Dollars." The ongoing interaction between Alexander, Bowser, and others seeking to profit from the sale are detailed in Zaharoff, "Success in Struggle," 79-110, based on British Columbia, Attorney General, Correspondence Inward, 1912-16, British Columbia Archives; and Special Committee: Kitsilano Indian Reserve, Evidence and Minutes of Hearings, British Columbia, Clerk of the House, *Papers of the House*, 1916.

⁵⁰ W.E. Ditchburn, Inspector of Indian Agencies, to Secretary of Department of Indian Affairs, Victoria, 26 April 1913, DIA, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2.

⁵¹ W.J. Bowser, quoted in "Indians Decline Bowser's Cheques," *Victoria Daily Times*, 3 April 1913.

⁵² Joseph Cole to W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Inspector, Vancouver, 18 May 1913, DIA, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2.

A week later, on 18 April 1913, the Squamish capitulated. “Natives Grinned When They Became Owners of Fat Bank Accounts” is how Vancouver’s principal newspaper summed up the province’s victory. Early on a Tuesday morning, Bowser and Alexander met twenty “heads of families,” including two women, at an “uptown bank,” where, in order to appease any doubters, \$250,000 in gold could be viewed in a vault. Each family head was offered “a bank book, showing a balance to his account in the Canadian Bank of Commerce of \$11,250” in exchange for putting “his mark to a receipt” and thus relinquishing any interest in the Kitsilano Reserve.⁵³ By “the stroke of 12 o’clock noon,” according to a press account, “the last of the band” had “accepted their bank book.”⁵⁴

The real and psychological distance that separated the two stakeholders was caught in two events on that fateful day. The first involved “a squaw with a baby in her arms who stood waiting for her husband to come out of the manager’s room with his bank account.” According to a newspaper account, despite her looking “longingly at the comfortable seats in the bank for the use of the customers,” no one invited her to sit down, and “she took her baby and went and crouched for rest on the hard edge of the base of a marble pillar,” whereupon “the passing throng looked down on her.”⁵⁵ About the same time this mother was being relegated to the past, the attorney general was holding a press conference looking to the future. He proclaimed how this “eyesore to the citizens of Vancouver for many years and hindrance to the development of the city” would now make “as much profit as possible for the entire province.”⁵⁶ Later in the day, he reiterated this dichotomy when he described, in virtually the same breath, how the Squamish would now be “away from the temptations of the city” and how “this very valuable property ... should net us a million dollars profit.” The attorney general was gleeful over what he termed “one of the best real estate transactions ever carried out in the province.”⁵⁷ The fear expressed in a Vancouver newspaper a week earlier that the sum the provincial government offered was “much less than their market value” had become a point of pride to the attorney general even before the Squamish had actually departed.⁵⁸ The two worlds could not have been further apart.

⁵³ “Red Men Took Cash. For a list of the twenty family heads as compiled by H.O. Alexander, the magistrate who arranged the sale, see Peter Byrne, Indian Agent, “False Creek Indians,” 4 June 1914, DIA, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2. One individual received only \$5,000.

⁵⁴ “Red Men Took Cash.”

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Attorney General W.J. Bowser, quoted in “Red Men Took Cash.”

⁵⁷ “An Act of Greatest Benefit to Vancouver,” *Province*, 9 April 1913.

⁵⁸ “The Rights of the Red Man,” *Vancouver World*, 4 April 1913.

To ensure no minds were changed and no due process intervened, not only was a “big scow” at the ready to tow household goods away but, in the pattern established in Victoria, the pass books were kept by the bank until their holders physically departed the reserve within a promised day or two.⁵⁹ Vancouver newspapers had a field day, sending photographers to intrude into every aspect of what was seen as a turning point for the city. Accounts waxed sympathetic, albeit stereotypically, at how “many of the young men and some of the older men, too, had been born in the waterfront shanties, and had toddled their first Siwash toddles down to the beach when the West End was still a forest.” One report described how “an old, old Indian ... carrying a roll of blankets ... only vaguely comprehended that some great change in his place of abode was happening.”⁶⁰ At noon on the day of departure, Magistrate Alexander gave \$100 in cash to each of the family heads, ensuring that, as a newspaper put it, “easy money jingled pleasantly in their pockets.” Then, as they physically departed, he and the bank manager handed over the red pass books, each already containing the \$100 withdrawal.⁶¹

Within two days every one of the twenty-some families, totalling sixty to seventy people, had been moved out. The majority headed to reserves on the Squamish River in Howe Sound, to which they usually went in the summer as part of their seasonal economic round from their homes on False Creek.⁶² Having unsettled the reserve, the government burned most of their homes to the ground.⁶³

This erasure of indigenous Indigeneity from Vancouver was momentous not just for the men, women, and children who departed. A ninety-year-old woman, who, at the time, was a young bride living on English Bay, still remembered watching the many canoes filled with boxes and baskets pulling away from the beach across the water. In her recollection, “the houses they left behind were fired as they pulled away.” She told a great-great-niece that the people must have left things behind that they could not take in the boats but that everything was ashes before nightfall. It all made her “a bit angry and very sad.”⁶⁴

⁵⁹ “Red Men Took Cash.”

⁶⁰ “Moving Today from the Kitsilano Reserve,” *Vancouver Daily Times*, 10 April 1913.

⁶¹ “Moving Out From Old Home at Kitsilano,” *Vancouver Daily Times*, 9 April 1913; “Moving Today from the Kitsilano Reserve.”

⁶² Report of Peter Byrne, Indian Agent, New Westminster, 5 May 1913, D1A, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2.

⁶³ W.E. Ditchburn, Inspector of Indian Agencies, to Secretary of Department of Indian Affairs, Victoria, 26 April 1913, D1A, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2.

⁶⁴ Mary Wilkinson in conversation with Shirley Cuthbertson, who shared the conversation with Jean Barman, 17 March 2007.

The deed was done. Indigenous Indigeneity was erased from False Creek. One stakeholder, the province, had shortcut the process, bypassing the federal government, who was legally charged with the oversight of Indians. A Victoria newspaper's characterization of the province's action as "unjustifiable and immoral," "the greatest scandal in the history of the Provincial government of British Columbia," and liable to "a term in the penitentiary" if undertaken by "an individual in the community" might have comforted concerned bystanders, but that was all.⁶⁵ The next days, months, and years saw rancorous name-calling, contention concerning payments being made to non-band members but not to reserve residents who were temporarily away, and arguments between the stakeholders over title to the land, none of which undid the erasure.⁶⁶ Apart from a vigorous Parliamentary debate over the legality of the transaction, in which everyone agreed that the reserve had been "a blemish" on Vancouver that needed to be removed, the federal government, including the Department of Indian Affairs, did nothing to undo an action that clearly infringed upon federal responsibilities to the Squamish.⁶⁷

Unlike title over the Songhees reserve in Victoria, title over the reserve on False Creek long remained in dispute. The Harbour Commission, which had had an eye on the reserve prior to the provincial action, expropriated the property for development in 1916, which it had the legal authority to do, and held it for a decade before abandoning its interest in it.⁶⁸ In 1930, eight acres were alienated for the present Burrard Street Bridge, and in 1934 four acres were alienated for the Seaforth Armouries. What was left remained vacant, apart from passing squatters. August Jack lamented how, two decades after the Squamish were cajoled off the reserve, "cherry trees gone wild; there yet; all go to pieces; not look after him."⁶⁹ In his words: "The orchard went to ruin, the fences fell down, and the houses were destroyed. A few hops survived and continued to grow until the building of the Burrard Bridge covered them up." August Jack considered it more than a little ironic that "I received a formal invitation to be present at the opening of the great bridge as a guest of the city."⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Editorial in *Victoria Daily Times*, 9 April 1913.

⁶⁶ Immediately subsequent events are detailed from a federal perspective in DIA, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2; in "Reasons for Judgment."

⁶⁷ House of Commons debate, 24 April 1913, *House of Commons Debates*, 1912-13, 8669-8764.

⁶⁸ Enclosure with the relevant sections of the law in Maitland, Hunter & Maitland to Minister of Interior and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Vancouver, 8 January 1915, DIA, RG 10, vol. 3741, file 28835-2; and "Reasons for Judgment," 16. Zaharoff, "Success in Struggle," 148-79, traces the various manoeuvres concerning control over the former reserve through time.

⁶⁹ August Jack in conversation with Matthews, 19 May 1935, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 45.

⁷⁰ August Jack in conversation with Matthews, 7 July 1832, in Matthews, *Conversations*, 6.

Only in the last decades of the twentieth century did the land acquire its present-day appearance. The Squamish, who amalgamated in 1923 (except for a minority known as the Burrard Band), argued that, for any reserve's surrender to be legitimate, all the Squamish needed to agree to it. In 1947, the Squamish officially surrendered the Kitsilano Reserve to the federal government, whereupon the province formally conveyed the land to its federal counterpart, which then broke it up into parcels for sale separately.⁷¹ Half of the land became the present Vanier Park, containing the Vancouver Museum, Planetarium, and Maritime Museum; the other five parcels were used for private commercial and housing developments.⁷²

UNSETTLING STANLEY PARK

In sharp contrast to the province's illegal but effective erasure of indigenous Indigeneity from the south side of False Creek in 1913, events on the one thousand-acre peninsula on the south shore of Burrard Inlet that would become Stanley Park were longer lived and more complex. Erasure occurred in two stages.

The first unsettling was initiated prior to Vancouver's formation in 1886 and the designation of the peninsula as Stanley Park a year later. The principal site in this area according to Archivist J.S. Matthews' map of "Indian Names for Familiar Places" was Whoi Whoi on the northeast shore. Indigenous people had long made use of Whoi Whoi, nearby Chaythoos, and other sites on the peninsula, as is indicated by middens, or trash heaps, some eight feet deep and four acres in size, that were uncovered during road building around the new park in 1888.⁷³

The joint dominion-provincial commission charged with marking out reserves visited Burrard Inlet in November 1876. The commissioners counted fifty persons whom they identified as "Skwamish" in the vicinity of Whoi Whoi, including August Jack Khahtsahlano's immediate family, but refused to allocate a reserve.⁷⁴ The reason had to do

⁷¹ "Reasons for Judgment," 76.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 15-7. The five private developments are, from east to west, Molson Brewery, Parkview Towers Apartments, the shoreline Fisherman's Wharf, and the Pennyfarthing condominiums and commercial structures (two parcels).

⁷³ City of Vancouver Archives, SGN 91.

⁷⁴ The sequence of events is described in Jean Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch, and Brockton Point* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour 2005), 36-41, based on DIA, RG 10, vol. 3642, file 7624, and vol. 3645, file 7936; RG 88, vol. 494; A.C. Anderson Diary, British Columbia Archives, MS 559; Archibald McKinlay Diary, British Columbia Archives, E/C/M21; and correspondence with Reserve Commission, British Columbia Archives, GR-2982 and GR-294.



Figure 5: Middens uncovered during road building around Stanley Park, 1888. City of Vancouver Archives, SGN 91.

with the peninsula's having been supposedly set aside as a government reserve prior to British Columbia's joining Canada in 1871. While no documentation has ever been located to indicate that such a reserve had been officially created,⁷⁵ the provincial government took for granted that the peninsula had, as with Crown lands, reverted to the province on entry into Confederation.⁷⁶ Consistent with this view, a Victoria resident who, in 1875, sought "to preempt 160 acres of land" on the peninsula was informed by the province that "several persons had asked for sections of land" and that "if disposed of it would be sold at public auction."⁷⁷ The commissioner appointed by the BC government, who was personally sympathetic to the request, telegraphed the provincial commissioner of lands and works to ask "if the Prov Government would allow us to lay off a small reserve at this place" but received a negative response.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret*, esp. 28 and 164-5.

⁷⁶ The province's basis for doing so lay in the British North America Act, 1867, which, in Section 109, states that all lands belonging to a province at the time of union should continue to belong to it and, in Section 117, that provinces "shall retain all their respective Public Property not otherwise disposed of in this Act, subject to the Right of Canada to assume any Lands or Public Property required for Fortifications or for the Defence of the Country." British Columbia possessed no military establishments apart from a Royal Navy base on Vancouver Island, and so all of the properties listed on an enumeration compiled by the provincial legislature in January 1873, including a "military reserve" of 950 acres (380 hectares) "south of First Narrows, Burrard Inlet," were thereafter treated as Crown land belonging to the province.

⁷⁷ Joseph N. Thain to Joseph Trutch, Lieutenant Governor, Victoria, 1 April 1876, British Columbia Archives, box 2, file 14/727/76.

⁷⁸ 16-17 November 1876, entry in McKinlay Diary; McKinlay and Sproat to F.G. Vernon, Howe Sound, 27 November 1876, British Columbia Archives, GR-2982; also Sproat to Elliott, In Camp, Howe Sound, 27 November 1876, and Joint Indian Reserve Commissioners to Elliott,

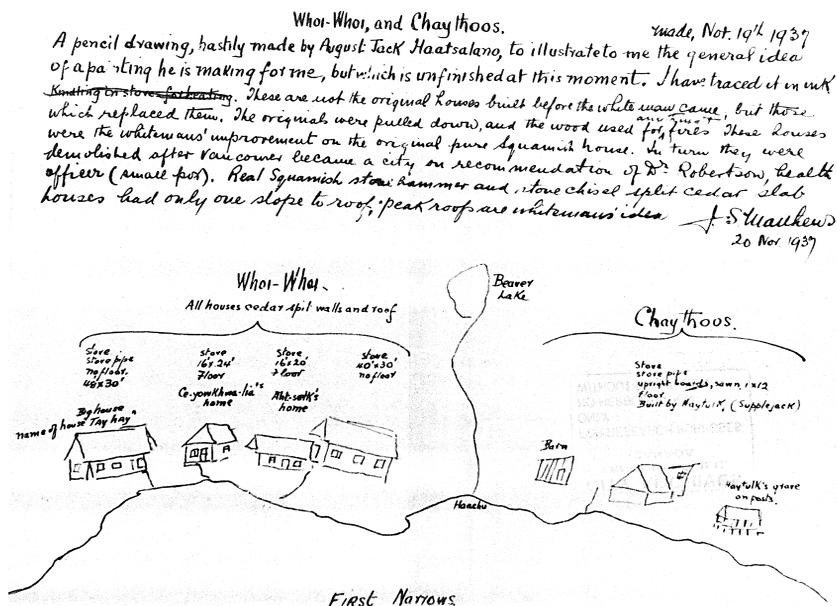


Figure 6: August Jack Khahtsalano's sketch of Whoi Whoi and Chaythoos as they existed during his childhood there in the 1870s. City of Vancouver Archives, Add. Ms. 54, Stanley Park file.

The residents of Whoi Whoi and its vicinity were assured they “would not be made to remove in a hurry” and gradually migrated to the other Squamish reserves.⁷⁹ The last to live on the peninsula was a woman known as “Aunt Sally,” sister of Chém chuk and Kwe áh jilk, both of whom were enumerated at Whoi Whoi in 1876. She had a house and orchard on two acres that she had fenced off near Whoi Whoi.⁸⁰ By the time Aunt Sally died there in 1923, the name itself had been erased. For the September 1912 visit to Vancouver of the governor general, the Duke of Connaught, a wooden arch was erected downtown. After he departed, the leftover structure was moved to Whoi Whoi, which was henceforth known as Lumberman’s Arch.

By the time of Aunt Sally’s death in 1923, which appeared to conclude the first stage of the erasure of indigenous Indigeneity from Stanley Park, the second stage was under way. It had two components, one centred on legal

In Camp, Howe Sound, 27 November 1876, British Columbia, Provincial Secretary, British Columbia Archives, GR-294.

⁷⁹ 16–17 November 1876, entry in McKinlay Diary.

⁸⁰ I am grateful to Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy for identifying Squamish names and relationships for me.

dispossession, the other a sleight of hand by which a sanitized Indigeneity obscured the unsettling and erasure of indigenous Indigeneity.

The stakeholders in this second stage of erasure shifted from the province to the municipal and federal governments, the two levels joining forces to dispossess indigenous families who had lived on the peninsula since the early 1860s. The federal government's presence was essential as it had by now wrested the peninsula away from the province. In 1881, the Canadian government had requested the Colonial Office in London to transfer to it all reserves acquired in British Columbia during the colonial period (when the future province belonged to Britain) that it no longer needed for military purposes.⁸¹ Despite the British government's being unable to determine that it had ever held the peninsula or, indeed, most of the other supposed reserves, it eventually decided that the best course was to return whatever it might once have possessed.⁸² Only in 1906 did the federal government assuredly acquire ownership of the peninsula. That year, the Privy Council in London extended a ruling declaring the federal government the owner of nearby Deadman's Island to all of Stanley Park.⁸³ Assured in its ownership, two years later the federal government gave the city a ninety-nine-year renewable lease to Stanley Park.

The target for unsettling was half a dozen families who, since the early 1860s, had lived east of Whoi Whoi on the north and south shores of Brockton Point. They consisted in the first generation of newcomer men, most of whom had settled down with Squamish women whose families lived nearby. The women had, in effect, invited newcomer men whom they fancied onto their territory.

The Indian Act's reliance on paternal descent meant that the wives were denied status as Indians, as were their descendants through the generations. Principle and practice did not necessarily mesh. The Brockton Point families were generally considered to be indigenous, so much so that almost all offspring in the second and third generations were as a matter of course whipped off to residential schools intended

⁸¹ Report of a Committee of Privy Council, 25 February 1880, National Archives (London), co 42/760; and *Correspondence and Papers in Reference to Stanley Park and Deadman's Island, British Columbia* (Ottawa: S. Dawson, 1899), 7. The request was in line with the federal government's interpretation of Section 17 of the British North America Act, which states that all lands "required for Fortifications or for the Defence of the Country" belonged to the Dominion of Canada and not to the province.

⁸² Internal memo, Colonial Office, London, 29 February 1884, and draft minute for Marquis of Landsdowne, 20 March 1884, National Archives, co 42/778; also *Correspondence*, 7-8. The sequence of events is described in Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret*, 85-8.

⁸³ This case is detailed in Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret*, 163-5.

for status Indian children.⁸⁴ Much as with the chief's daughter on the Kitsilano Reserve, some Brockton Point offspring resided, intermittently or permanently, on the reserves established for their Squamish cousins on the north shore of Burrard Inlet. Most continued to live at Brockton Point, men longshoring on the Vancouver waterfront alongside their Squamish relatives. The racial exception was a white couple, who had been invited to settle among the families at Brockton Point after the wife nursed one of the Squamish wives back to health.

As with the Kitsilano Reserve, so with Brockton Point: the press encouraged Vancouverites to see themselves as distinct from, and superior to, this indigenous presence in their midst. Acting on a tip, a newspaper sent an investigative reporter to Brockton Point just a month after the Kitsilano Reserve was emptied in April 1913.

The wayfarer comes upon a group of about a dozen unpainted, tumble-down shacks and sheds, with one or two cottages in a better state of preservation. On the shore in the vicinity is a jumble of logs and other flotsam and jetsam of the harbor, interspersed with the remains of boats and canoes, fallen into decay with the exception of one or two which are still in use. These shacks are surrounded by a

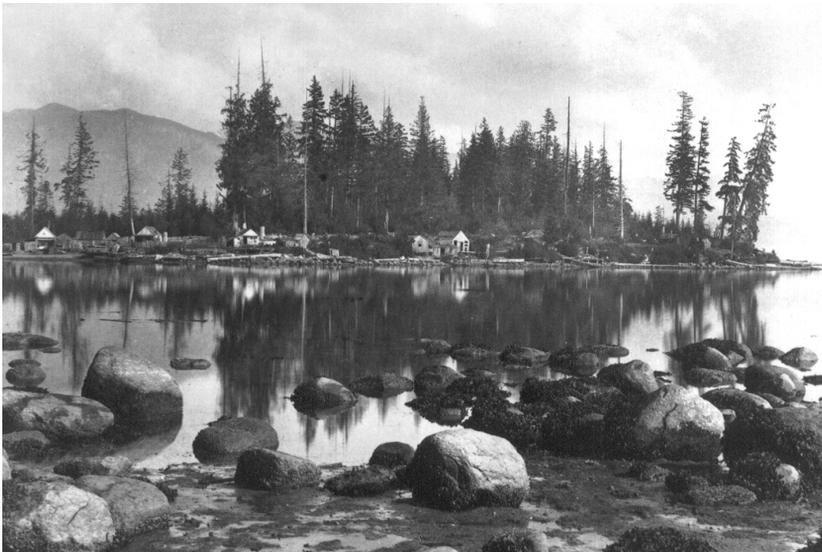


Figure 7: South shore of Brockton Point, photographed by Edouard Deveille in 1886. Library and Archives Canada, PA-06228.

⁸⁴ For specifics, see Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret*, 110-22.

rude fence of palings, and present, just now, an uncouth picture, with their mossgrown, ill-made roofs, some roughly shingled, some merely boarded, open in places to the sky, with rusted stove pipes thrust through gaps in the roof, in the midst of the flowering fruit trees.⁸⁵

Now that Vancouver had a long-term lease to the park, the onus was on the Vancouver Parks Board to protect this jewel in the city's crown. The perception that the Brockton Point families were indigenous caused the board to turn to the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs to remove them, only to be informed that they do "not come within the scope of this Commission."⁸⁶ The federal Department of Indian Affairs was beseeched. "On the peninsula which comprises the park, several groups of Indians and half-breeds have small holdings," ran the letter sent in 1919, to which came the reply that there was "only one of pure Indian blood [Aunt Sally], the balance being either half-breeds or whites" who were of "no particular interest" to Indian Affairs.⁸⁷

It was four years later that the City of Vancouver managed to persuade the federal government to join in a legal suit to dispossess the families. The federal government's participation meant that the time period within which the defendants had to prove adverse possession, commonly known as squatters' rights, was raised to sixty years from the twenty required by the city. The long time period during which individuals, or others taking their place in an unbroken line of succession, had to demonstrate continuous residence in order to retain the small plots on which they were living meant that most defence witnesses were elderly Squamish men and women who spoke in their own language. Their testimony asserting the families' presence at Brockton Point prior to 1863 did not persuade the judge trying the case, who then had his decision overturned by the BC Court of Appeals, which credited the witnesses. The case went to the Supreme Court of Canada, which accepted the contention of the lawyers for the city and federal government that "native Indians have no idea of time" and therefore their testimony should not be credited.⁸⁸

The Brockton Point families were unsettled. Those living on the south side of Brockton Point, whose houses were considered to spoil

⁸⁵ "Have Their Home in Stanley Park," *Province*, 10 May 1913.

⁸⁶ 19 July 1913 meeting, Vancouver Parks Board, Minutes, City of Vancouver Archives.

⁸⁷ T.B. Jones, Barrister, to Minister of Lands, Vancouver, 5 June 1919, and W.E. Ditchburn, Chief Inspector of Indian Agencies, to Department of Indian Affairs, 28 July 1919, D1A, RG 10, vol. 4089, file 521,804.

⁸⁸ See Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret*, 216-17. The cases, including testimony and reasons for judgment at the various levels, are detailed on 184-220.

the view of the park from downtown Vancouver and vice versa, were forced out in 1931. Their homes were then burned to erase any indication of their longtime presence on the peninsula. In part because the homes of the extended family living on the north side of Brockton Point were less visible to Vancouver residents, they were permitted to remain. The last family member died in 1958, whereupon all evidence of their longtime presence was similarly obliterated.⁸⁹

This final erasure of indigenous Indigeneity from Vancouver was not simply an end in itself, as was the case with the Kitsilano Reserve and Whoi Whoi; rather, it was the impetus for the replacement of indigenous Indigeneity with a sanitized Indigeneity got from elsewhere. Following the initial decision against the Brockton Point families in the BC Supreme

Court in 1923, the Vancouver Parks Board put up four Kwakwaka'wakw, or Kwakiutl, totem poles as "the first step towards the erection this year of a replica of an Indian village of the British Columbia coast on the cleared space west of 'Auntie Sally's' cottage which adjoins the Lumberman's Arch." The proposed Indian village at the former Whoi Whoi would be named for, and honour, "the Kwagwelth Indians" of northern Vancouver Island.⁹⁰



Figure 8: Defense witness Thomas Abraham. *Province*, 6 November 1923.

⁸⁹ See Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret*, 221-50.

⁹⁰ 6 February 1924, Vancouver Parks Board, Minutes; 11 March 1924, directors' meeting, minutes, Art, Historical and Scientific Association, City of Vancouver Archives, Add. Ms. 336, file 546-F-1; "Totem Poles Are Placed," *Sun*, 6 February 1924. The poles are described in Vickie Jensen, *Totem Poles in Stanley Park* (Vancouver: Subway Books, 2003), and S.W.A. Gunn, *The Totem Poles in Stanley Park* (Vancouver: White rocks, 1965).

As to the reason for this, a Vancouver newspaper pronounced that the Kwakiutl together with the Haida, who were tucked even further away from Vancouver on the Queen Charlotte Islands, were “the most advanced of all British Columbia Aboriginal tribes in culture.” They were distinguished by “strong physique and higher mental capacity” and a “far higher degree of courage and intelligence than their more easy-going and pusillanimous cousins of the south.”⁹¹ The Squamish presence at Whoi Whoi and Brockton Point was overlaid with the material culture of a wholly different people who lived a safe distance from Vancouver. A few short weeks after the initial victory over indigenous Indigeneity, its counterpart got from elsewhere was in place.

The Parks Board’s action was not unique to Vancouver but, rather, reflected the enormous popularity during these years of romanticized Indigeneity. This was an age when anthropologists, notably Franz



Figure 9: Canadian all-star soccer team in front of the totem poles erected near Lumberman’s Arch (subsequently moved to present location at Brockton Point) by Vancouver Parks Board after victory in BC Supreme Court in 1923. City of Vancouver Archives, CVA 99-1327.

⁹¹ Stephen Golder, “Indian Village in Stanley Park,” *Province*, 12 April 1925, magazine.

Boas among the Kwakiutl, were making the province's indigenous heritage fashionable in sanitized forms that did not affect the realities of newcomers' everyday lives. The passion to rehabilitate the imaginary Indian who existed prior to the arrival of outsiders was very different from coexisting with real people.

While the Indian village never came to fruition, the totem poles, subsequently relocated to Brockton Point, have become the single most popular attraction in Vancouver. For residents and visitors alike, they provide an encounter with Indigeneity safely removed from real life.

REINSCRIBING INDIGENOUS INDIGENEITY

The story of indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver is not, however, over. The Kitsilano Reserve was unsettled and the last families removed from Stanley Park, but that is not the end of the story. As with all erasures, however determined and intentional, faint impressions sometimes linger.

Some of these faint impressions are relatively easy to re-erase. Such was the case with *Who! Who!*. To the consternation of the Vancouver Parks Board, on Aunt Sally's death, her daughter, Mariah Kulkalem, who lived in the family home, hired a lawyer to look after her interests. She had every reason to do so. The Parks Board's attempted end run a decade earlier to get the Department of Indian Affairs to remove the Brockton Point families had turned attention to the Kulkalem family's "long and uninterrupted occupation of about two acres of land," from which the department "fail[ed] to see how they can be removed unless they are compensated for giving up any claim to the same."⁹² Aunt Sally's daughter began entertaining offers for the property, to the horror of the Vancouver Parks Board. It found itself forced to dicker, and it negotiated a price of \$16,500 in the expectation that the federal government would ante up, since it had charge of Indians. Before anything was settled, rumours began floating of a higher offer from a prospective buyer who intended to build "a modern apartment house in the middle of Stanley Park."⁹³ The board chair took the initiative and paid Mariah Kulkalem out of his own pocket, being reimbursed a year later by the Canadian government.

A symbolic re-erasure followed. Immediately upon taking possession of Aunt Sally's property in late 1925, it was noted in the minutes of the

⁹² W.E. Ditchburn, Chief Inspector of Indian Agencies, to Department of Indian Affairs, 28 July 1919, DIA, RG 10, vol. 4089, file 521, 804.

⁹³ "W.C. Shelly Bought Acreage to Prevent Commercial Venture Being Launched," *Sun*, 30 October 1939; 26 November and 10 December 1925, Vancouver Parks Board, Minutes.

Vancouver Parks Board that “the buildings and fences were forthwith destroyed by fire and later the fruit trees were cut down and destroyed.” Robert Cole, a young boy of ten living with his family at nearby Brockton Point, retained the image in his head all his life: “I watched them burn it. The fire department came down and poured gas all over it and lit it up and ‘way she goes.’”⁹⁴

A second faint, lingering impression of indigenous Indigeneity has been relatively easy to tolerate: the Squamish living on the other side of Burrard Inlet and the Musqueam residing on Vancouver’s far edge. Also relatively easy to tolerate are newcomers from elsewhere in British Columbia and Canada who migrated to the city during the Great Depression and into the present day. They can, much as Coll Thrush describes with regard to Seattle, be alternately dismissed as nuisances or patronized as guests.⁹⁵ Apart from the Musqueam, these groups are landless in Vancouver, except as private property owners on a par with newcomers.

More recent events have not been nearly so comfortable. Whereas the indigenous families who made their home on the peninsula that became Stanley Park remain erased in favour of sanitized Indigeneity, deprived even of signage to recall their presence there, the Kitsilano Reserve has reinscribed itself onto the consciousness of Vancouver. The irregular process by which the province unsettled the reserve was never lost on the Squamish people. Initially, it was a matter of money, and no one much minded when, in June 2000, the Squamish negotiated a \$92,500,000 settlement with the federal government regarding a legal action launched in 1977 over aspects of the expropriation of the Kitsilano Reserve and of part of a North Vancouver reserve.⁹⁶

Then, in August 2002, the Squamish won a court case over the ten acres of land lying under the Burrard Street Bridge that had been expropriated from the reserve by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1886 and 1902. In the late 1980s, the CPR had attempted to sell the land, which, according to the original agreement, reverted to the Squamish on no longer being used for its designated purpose, and they had successfully sued.⁹⁷

The reinscription of indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver in a twenty-first century form was initiated in August 2006 when the

⁹⁴ 26 November 1925, Vancouver Parks Board, Minutes; Robert Cole, conversation with Michael Steele in City of Vancouver Archives, Steele Papers.

⁹⁵ Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

⁹⁶ David Hogben, “Band Has No Plans Yet for the Property Expropriated for Railway 116 Years Ago,” *Sun*, 29 August 2002.

⁹⁷ Another decision (“Reasons for Judgment”) dismissed Musqueam and Burrard claims to the Kitsilano Reserve and confirmed the Squamish as the rightful former owners.

Squamish announced plans to generate revenue by erecting five or six large billboards, each ten feet by thirty feet, on its reacquired property. The billboards would be visible to everyone travelling over the Burrard Street Bridge, as would other billboards to everyone crossing the two bridges from Vancouver to North Vancouver and West Vancouver, both of which pass above Squamish reserves.⁹⁸ The Squamish explanation to Vancouverites – “I don’t think a lot of people are even aware there’s a reserve in Vancouver that is Squamish Nation’s reserve” – was an understatement, for such an initiative was completely at odds with civic sensibilities.⁹⁹ It was possible, some critics charged, that the plan was a ploy to get concessions in other, less sensitive areas that would equally financially benefit the Squamish.

The consequence is a potential confrontation over a twenty-first-century version of indigenous Indigeneity. Roadways free of billboards, except when passing through an Indian reserve, have become a staple of British Columbian life. In line with this perspective, the number of billboards in Vancouver has shrunk from some twelve thousand at one point in time to a handful, mostly in privately owned parking lots. As to the reason, one commentator explained:

Vancouver likes to see itself as urbane, organic, green – a global model of sustainability and livability. The anti-Vegas. And the image the city has so carefully crafted for itself does not include big honking commercial billboards at the entrance to major bridges. These types of signs couldn’t possibly meet the standards of good taste that have been artificially set in these parts.¹⁰⁰

Negotiations relating to this reinscription of indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver were ongoing as of late 2007. It remains to be seen whether the hasty erasure of indigenous Indigeneity a century earlier has come full circle.

⁹⁸ Nsoibh O’Connor, “Band Says Aesthetics Not up for Discussion,” *Vancouver Courier*, 16 August 2006.

⁹⁹ Toby Baker, quoted in O’Connor, “Band Says Aesthetics Not up for Discussion.”

¹⁰⁰ Gary Mason, “Squamish Billboards Debate Threatens to Get Ugly,” *Globe and Mail*, 3 April 2007.