

**(RE)DEFINING THE “EH”: READING A COLONIAL NARRATIVE  
IN THE *DICTIONARY OF CANADIANISMS ON HISTORICAL  
PRINCIPLES***

by

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## Abstract

Traditionally, the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* (*DCHP-1*) has been understood as a repository of Canadian national identity. My project, by contrast, sees the *DCHP-1* as a narrative of European colonialization and dominance, which bears an assumption of white privilege in inhabiting, understanding, and articulating the physical, social, and cultural Canadian landscape. Thus, I read the *DCHP-1*, not as a straightforward documentation of Canadian history, but as a historical document in itself, where its contents represent the editors' attempts to define Canada at a particular point in time. My thesis highlights the selective, often subjective, and even biased editorial process that underlies dictionary publications, and the problem that arises from an uncritical reliance on dictionaries as comprehensive and objective sources of authority. Furthermore, I situate the creation of the *DCHP-1* in its sociohistorical context, exploring the ways in which texts such as the *DCHP-1* were implicated in the growing popularity and urgency to define Canadian identity through the course of the twentieth century. A nationalist "skew" in the citations and sources of the *DCHP-1*, then, may be a direct result of the need to appeal to both a national funding organization and a nationalist readership. In addition, I consider how a *DCHP* revision might deal with the inclusion/exclusion and definition of offensive or problematic terms. I then engage in two case studies of *half-breed* and *Iron Chink*, investigating the full usage of these derogatory terms over history in order to illustrate what is lacking in current scholarship and the ways in which these entries need to be updated. Finally, I relate this research to the current project of revising *DCHP-1* and make recommendations for the revised edition, pointing to the ways in which attention still needs to be focused towards addressing the heretofore unproblematic editorial choices of the original *DCHP-1* and towards creating a Canadian narrative that is more culturally sensitive and inclusive.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Overview of the Project

*“The dictionary’s history of writing is about who will speak for a nation and in what terms [...]”* (John Willinsky, *Empire of Words* 177).

*“A dictionary is a collection of somebody’s words in somebody’s book. Whose words are collected and who collects them influence what kind of a book a given dictionary turns out to be, and in turn, whose purposes it can best serve”* (Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler, *A Feminist Dictionary* 119).

I begin this thesis by quoting from John Willinsky’s *Empire of Words* and citing Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler’s definition for *dictionary* in *A Feminist Dictionary* as a means of introducing the stakes of my project on the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* (*DCHP-1*) (1967). The *DCHP-1* is a dictionary of Canadian words defined in their historical context, using a range of quotations that demonstrates changes in meaning and usage over time. The revision of the *DCHP-1*, currently under way at the University of British Columbia, will involve making it available online, updating some words, and adding new headwords. This revision project raises questions of cultural sensitivity and obliges a reconsideration of issues of exclusion and inclusion, especially important given the substantial increase in discourse on multiculturalism since the original publication in 1967.

The *DCHP-1* contains many racializing or racist headwords without sufficient explanations of their strictly historical contexts or to dissect their racist underpinnings. The two examples under consideration are *half-breed* (to mean a person of mixed First Nations and European descent) and *Iron Chink* (to designate a fish-butcher machine that replaced Chinese labourers in the British Columbian fishing industry in the early twentieth century). These two entries contain no tags or notes marking them as racist terminology used by a privileged group of

people with a biased viewpoint at a particular time. Some other problematic entries for different groups of people include *Frog* and *Froggie*, and *peasoup* and *peasouper*, all of which are derogatory names for a French-Canadian person. Then there are the *Sifton's Sheepskins*, and *men in sheepskin coats*, which were used to describe the immigrants from central Europe, especially the Ukrainians, who came to Canada after Sir Clifford Sifton's immigration policy was introduced. These and other entries, while including status labels that mark them as *Slang*, *Historical*, or *Derogatory*, arguably do not provide sufficient information to situate the headwords within their sociopolitical and historical contexts. Even worse are some of the citations themselves: A 1959 citation for *Indian remittance man*, for example, defines the headword as "social outcasts from West Coast tribes [...]" by analogy with *remittance man*, a term usually used to refer to Englishmen whose family paid them regular amounts to keep them from coming home and ruining the family reputation. My research, then, highlights aspects of the *DCHP-1* that may inform *DCHP-2*, and push the project towards a narrative that is less Eurocentric and more sensitive to and inclusive of the wide array of cultures and ethnicities that make up the Canadian fabric.

Traditionally, this dictionary of Canadian English has been understood as a repository of Canadian national identity. A 2007 *Calgary Herald* article covering the revision project, for example, calls the *DCHP-1* "the bible of Canadiana."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the *Nanaimo Daily News* lauds the *DCHP-1* for containing "the historical documentation [the editing team] feel is a vital part of who Canadians are".<sup>2</sup> So too, in her dissertation study of the *DCHP-1*, Barbara Pritchard Harris reads the dictionary as providing an accurate historical record of the development of Canada as a

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<sup>1</sup> "Eh to Zed, Je Suis Canadien!" *Calgary Herald*: A.14. *Canadian Newsstand Complete*. Jun 26 2007. Web. 13 Sep. 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Krangle, Karenn. "Canadianisms from eh to Z." *Nanaimo Daily News*: C.1. *Canadian Newsstand Complete*. 10 Mar. 2007. Web. 15 Sep. 2011.

country and autonomous nation. Furthermore, as evidenced by these newspaper sources, Canadian English is often popularly conflated with *Canadianness*. One article even asserts that “Canadian English spelling [is] championed by some as a crucial piece of Canadian nationalism”.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Canadian English is used to essentialize Canadian identity, and what is deemed significant and distinctly Canadian is linked with British colonial settler history, as though Canadian history and identity began only with European contact. My project, by contrast, sees the *DCHP-1* as a narrative of European colonialization and dominance, which bears an assumption of white privilege in inhabiting, understanding, and articulating the physical, social, and cultural Canadian landscape, rather than as a text that inclusively defines Canadian national identity. The *DCHP-1* can be read, therefore, not as a straightforward documentation of Canadian history, but as a historical document in itself, where its contents represent the editors’ attempts to define Canada at a particular point in time.

Of course, the recognition of this conflation of Canadian English with Canadian identity is further problematized by the fact that Canada as a nation state was created through the conquest by and settlement of an English-speaking empire. Like Barbara Pritchard Harris, who performed a quantitative analysis of headword distribution in the *DCHP-1*, I would like to add the disclaimer that “the words ‘Canada’ and ‘Canadian’ should be taken throughout to refer to what is now geographically and politically the Dominion of Canada” even though “this terminology is, strictly speaking, inaccurate” (5). In my use of the word “Canadian,” then, I am projecting backwards to cover a history before the coinage of the term or its usage as a designation of the nation state. Of course, while this “obviates the problem of having to refer long-windedly and repetitiously to ‘what is now Canada’ or to ‘present-day Canada’” (Harris 5), even this form of shorthand may betray a problematic way of thinking. Specifically, that we can

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<sup>3</sup> Baute, Nicole. “Canadese Spellchecked into oblivion; Do layoffs at Oxford's Canadian dictionary spell the beginning of the end of our distinct brand of English? A new book argues that would be a shame.” *Toronto Star*: ID.3. *Canadian Newsstand Complete*. 8 Nov. 2008. Web. 14 Sep. 2011.

conveniently use “Canada” to project back towards and describe a pre-Confederation state may in fact obscure the fraught political conflicts over the land and its resources, as well as the violence perpetrated on the Indigenous peoples in the name of securing this land. “Canada,” then, becomes a blanket term which subsumes these Indigenous histories, livelihoods and cultures, and which mythologizes and oversimplifies traumas and wounds in the nation state. Thus, I recognize that even in speaking about Canadian English, I perpetuate an inevitable complicity of the colonial gaze; that Canadian English was borne out of colonial dominance, hegemony, and violence and that it bears all the spectres of that violent history are undeniable.

Because this thesis project explores implications of Canadian dictionary-making and lexicography vis-à-vis Canadian nationalism within a postcolonial context, I begin by drawing from postcolonial theory and focus particularly on issues of language, naming, and power, asking what is at stake in the publication of a Canadian dictionary and even unpacking the very idea of “Canadianness” itself. In order to situate the *DCHP-1* within the larger discipline of linguistics and lexicography, I then briefly examine the processes of dictionary-making, drawing from specific studies of the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, such as those done by Charlotte Brewer and John Willinsky. In doing so, I highlight the selective editorial process that underlies dictionary publications, and the often subjective, perhaps even biased, nature of this process. While editorial bias in any dictionary is inevitable to some extent, I argue that the problem arises from an uncritical reliance on dictionaries as comprehensive and objective sources of authority. In addition, I consider how other dictionaries have dealt with the inclusion/exclusion and definition of offensive or problematic terms. I also situate the creation of the *DCHP-1* in its sociohistorical context. Drawing from the works of writers who trace the growing popularity and urgency to define Canadian identity through the course of the twentieth century, I explore the ways in which texts such as the *DCHP-1* were implicated in the process of “inventing nations,”

but for a very “select part of the population” (Edwardson 5). In particular, I demonstrate how the release of the *DCHP-1*, which was timed to coincide with the Canadian centenary (Scargill vii), corresponds to a sharp increase in discourse about Canadian identity and nationhood. A nationalist “skew” in the citations and sources of the *DCHP-1*, then, may be a direct result of the need to appeal to both a national funding organization and a nationalist readership. I then engage in two case studies of *half-breed* and *Iron Chink*, investigating the full usage of these derogatory terms over history in order to demonstrate what is lacking in current scholarship to situate such problematic headwords and the ways in which these entries need to be updated. Finally, I relate this research to the current project of revising *DCHP-1*. At the end of this thesis project, I make some recommendations for the revised edition, pointing to the ways in which attention still needs to be focused towards addressing the heretofore unproblematic editorial choices of the original *DCHP-1* and towards creating a Canadian narrative that is more culturally sensitive and inclusive.

## 1.2 Canadian Nationalism in a Postcolonial Context

Numerous writers have negotiated the notion of the “nation” in their work, problematizing the idea of a homogenous national identity or even subverting the idea that “nationhood” can actually be articulated. Benedict Anderson famously argues in *Imagined Communities*, for example, that “nation-ness, as well as nationalism are cultural artefacts of a particular kind” (4). For Anderson, the nation is necessarily imagined, communally and socially constructed by those who occupy positions of power and privilege and perceive themselves to be part of the nation. Such communities, Anderson asserts, are “both limited and sovereign” and hinge upon a national identity construction in which subaltern groups are excluded and a history of violence and conflict whitewashed (224). Furthermore, such an identity construction is rooted in the history of European imperialism; it is, as Eva Darias-Beautell describes it, an “intricate

self-legitimizing colonial operation by which the West enters and codifies the Other, turning it into an object of knowledge, appropriating it through stereotypic descriptions and thus acquiring supremacy over it” (121).

Homi Bhabha argues that “our sense of nationhood is discursively constructed: it is narrativized” (as qtd in Edwards 12), and it is this narrativization of Canadian history that numerous scholars have problematized. In particular, they explore how Canadian cultural identity is largely shaped by the privileged, dominant discourse that perpetuates a continual erasure of the violence and oppression perpetrated upon the nation’s subaltern groups. This cultural identity, Stuart Hall argues, is an internalized knowledge that “ha[s] the power to make [these subaltern groups] see and experience [*themselves*] as ‘Other’ [...] as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm” (225-6). Additionally, Sunera Thobani, problematizes the “master narrative of the nation” (4), arguing that the constitution of the “national subject as belonging to a higher order of humanity”—a process she calls “exaltation”—“has had devastating consequences for this subject’s excluded Others, as well as for the interactions among them” (248). This process of exaltation, according to Thobani, has attributed “particular national character traits” to the Canadian national identity as “inherent aspects of the members of this community” (7). The result is the “reproduction of the colonial hierarchies underpinning white supremacy” (Thobani 248), and the further exclusion and oppression of the nation’s Others (defined by Thobani as Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and refugees). For Thobani, Canadian national identity “has been deeply racialized since its inception in colonial violence” and “remains inextricably infused with the colonial tropes of white racial supremacy and western civilizational superiority” (249). Thus, if the Canadian citizenship rights “of settlers, nationals, and immigrants remain based in the institution of white supremacy” (Thobani 74), what is at stake is a questioning and subverting

of those underlying assumptions of the legitimacy of European settler history in informing citizenship policies and in creating Canada's "master narrative".

Similarly, in his work on allegorical figures in nineteenth and twentieth-century Canadian literature, Daniel Coleman argues that "by means of [a] conflation of whiteness with civility, whiteness has been naturalized as the norm for English Canadian cultural identity" (5). Moreover, John Ralston Saul argues that Canada "suffers from a contradiction between its public mythologies and its reality," with the mythology often "turn[ing] into a denial of complexity" and maintaining a "manageable appearance of simplicity—a single language, a single culture, a single or dominant race" (3, 8). The creation and sustaining of this centralized mythology, however, "invariably required the real and prolonged use of state force" including "repeated wars against minorities, the forbidding of minority languages, the centralization of government and, of great importance, the writing of a centralized justificatory history" (Saul 8). The result of this state force, then, is a "'white-washing' [of] the history of conflict, [...] a process of forgetting/remembering in national narratives which engenders" an imagined collective memory (Edwards 130). For Justin Edwards, this forgetting "results in a re-remembering, a re-telling of the national tale, that foregrounds an imagined brotherhood and unity" (130).

### **1.3 The Role of Language in the Nation State**

Invariably, when analyzing the nation state, we must consider that one of the "main features of imperial oppression is control over language" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 7). As Ashcroft et al. argue in *The Empire Writes Back*, language "becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order', and 'reality' become established" (7). Likewise, Foucault describes language as "form[ing] the locus of a tradition, of the unspoken habits of thought" (*Order* 297). This is especially important to consider because, as Foucault argues, "the production of truth is a

function of power,” and in turn, “we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth” (as qtd in Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 165). A negotiation of the dominant culture’s language, therefore, is also a “struggle for power—that power focused in the control of the metropolitan language” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 165). Thus, for postcolonial writers and scholars, language is the site of an implicit political struggle. Deborah Cameron reminds us that “speech and writing are not just about representing private mental states”; they also help “naturalize and reproduce certain beliefs and assumptions” as they function as “forms of public actions [and] symbolic affirmations of an individual’s or a society’s values” (142). So too, Benedict Anderson emphasizes that the “capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities” is the “most important thing about language” (as qtd in Willinsky, *Empire* 201). The enforcement of linguistic power, then, may be seen as an example of Foucault’s power/knowledge, combining “the deployment of force and the establishment of truth” in order to enable colonial dominance (*Discipline* 184).

In *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o reflects at length on the role of language in enabling the colonial project and in disempowering those groups the imperial powers sought to control. For Ngũgĩ, language is both “a means of communications and a carrier of culture,” and as such, “is the collective memory bank of a people’s experience in history” (13, 15). Thus, oppressing a people’s language through the “destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people’s culture,” as well as “the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser [...] was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised” and the continuation of colonial control (Ngũgĩ 16). English, therefore, is a language that carries the spectres of its colonial past. Alastair Pennycook’s *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*, for instance, explores the development of language policies and teaching practices throughout a colonial past and “demonstrates how the discourses of colonialism still adhere to English” (2). For Pennycook,

English Language Teaching (ELT) is a product of colonialism both because colonialism “produced the initial conditions for the global spread of English,” and because “it was colonialism that produced many of the ways of thinking and behaving that are still part of Western cultures” (19). In our study of Canadian English, then, we must be aware of the vestiges of colonial perspectives inherent in a language historically employed as a tool of colonization and of the ways in which these perspectives can influence the very discourse of linguistics and philology.

Particularly useful here is Joseph Errington’s linguistic work on textual remains of the European colonial past, in which he examines texts such as “maps, censuses, photographs, monuments,” translations and recordings of Indigenous speech, and other documents as “parts of a colonial archive: legacies of very different times and places which differ hugely in their form and content” (1). Errington investigates the work of colonial linguists who produced texts about contact languages, arguing that the “intellectual work of writing speech was never entirely distinct from the ‘ideological’ work of devising images of people in zones of colonial contact” (5). For Errington, the grammars, dictionaries, word lists produced by colonial linguists constitute “reports on work which made languages objects of knowledge, so that their speakers could be made subjects of power” (3). Thus, I read the *DCHP-1* as part of the colonial archive and as reflecting colonial ideologies. After all, if we read “for signs of authors’ times,” we can discover the “gaps or ‘silence’ in the textual record,”—such as “excluded facts, over-simple categories, elided stories”—and understand them as “symptomatic of tensions which animated broader colonial projects” (Errington 2).

#### **1.4 The Dictionary’s Authority and the Dictionary-Making Process**

In order to read the *DCHP-1* as a “colonial archive,” we must also understand the practices and biases that inform the dictionary-making process. As tools of instruction and

historical records on language use, dictionaries participate in language politics and policies and in the construction of a national identity. First off, what do we mean when we say we are “reading” a dictionary or reading a narrative in a dictionary? Carolyn Miller’s work “examine[s] the connection between genre and recurrent situation and the way in which genre can be said to represent typified rhetorical action,” which thus also “involve[s] situation and motive” (151-2). Miller argues that if we understand “genre” as a “type of discourse classification [...] based in rhetorical practice” (155), then “studying the typical use of rhetoric [...] tells us less about the art of individual rhetors [...] than it does about the character of a culture or an historical period” (158). Thus, I read the dictionary as a genre and consequently as social action in order to look at both the symbolic and functional values that dictionaries have. On the surface they define words. But if, as Miller contends, “a genre embodies an aspect of cultural rationality” due to its nature as a “recurrent, significant action,” then reading the dictionary as a genre can serve “as an index to cultural patterns” (165).

Dictionaries are often invested with a certain sense of authority; in other words, they not only comment on but also provide guidance on word usage to the reader. Jonathon Green describes, for instance, how the dictionary is still popularly viewed “as a guardian of linguistic purity; [...] a repository of society’s collective knowledge; [...] [or] a guardian of absolute and eternal truth and of the moral and ideological values of society” (365). Consequently, “a great deal of responsibility rests on dictionaries, because they are regarded [by the general public] as an authoritative source for words” (Henderson 71). Rosamund Moon notes, for instance, that “dictionaries only succeed because of an act of faith on the part of their users, and that act of faith is dependent on those users believing their dictionaries both authoritative and beyond subjectivity” (as qtd in Green 17). Moreover, dictionaries often act as tools of instruction, and many people “turn to dictionaries for guidance with their own writing” (Lynch 226); in addition

to using dictionaries to look up definitions, therefore, people also “open a dictionary when they have to *use* words and aren’t sure how they’ll be received” (Lynch 226). Where does this sense of the dictionary’s unquestionable authority come from? In his work on the editorial processes behind the *OED*, Willinsky suggests that “the authoritativeness of the dictionary may unduly rest on [an] imagined comprehensiveness” because the “discretionary process is buried from view in the editorial offices of the publisher” (“Cutting English” 14). After all, because of the sheer size and volume of most dictionaries, it is often tempting for readers to view dictionaries as fairly comprehensive collections, taking for granted the fact that no dictionary can possibly provide *full* coverage of any language—or any subset of a language for that matter—and that editorial processes cull the possible headwords and decide which to include and which to exclude.

This understanding of the dictionary as a source of authority on language has been especially explored by scholars studying the *OED*, which is regarded as the most comprehensive dictionary of the English language, a “monument of learning about the English language and hence a symbol of the nation’s culture” (Brewer, *Treasure-House* 104). In her study of editorial biases influencing the dictionary, for example, Charlotte Brewer remarks that whether or not the editors intended to be so, “arbitrators they undoubtedly were. Well before 1933, the [*OED*] was established as a final authority whose definitions were quoted in courts and even Parliament” (*Treasure-House* 102). This notion that the dictionary “was, or should be, a guardian of the nation’s language and a treasure-house of its great writers was early established and proved extremely difficult to resist” (Brewer, “OED1”). For Willinsky, moreover, this “faith in the inheritance of a disciplined language can be felt in the uncritical reliance on reference works such as the *OED*,” and his work looks at “who has been called upon to authorize and underwrite the definition of the language” (*Empire* 7, 9).

With this in mind, I briefly examine Brewer’s and Willinsky’s respective works on the

*OED*, as their in-depth analysis of the *OED* and its publishing history largely inform my approach to the *DCHP-1*. Brewer's ongoing project performs a detailed analysis of the *OED*, looking at the selection of citation sources, inclusion/exclusion of certain headwords, and other editorial choices made in the dictionary's first publication and in all its subsequent publications. Brewer's research extends to the digitization of the *OED* (otherwise known as the *OED-3*), utilizing the electronic resource to conduct her study as well as to keep track of how the *OED-3* continues to be edited today. Though such a comprehensive study is beyond the scope of this thesis, I believe Brewer's approach and methodology would be worthwhile applying to the *DCHP-1* later on.

Brewer's work on the *OED* poses important questions about the (perceived) authoritativeness of the dictionary as a "treasure-house" of the English language and the ways in which it was both influenced by and in turn influenced cultural and linguistic modes of thought. Her current ongoing project analyzes the *OED*'s quotations and quotation sources, in order to understand the "foundations of the dictionary's representations of the English language" ("About the Project"). Notably, Brewer stresses that "in making their selection of vocabulary, the *OED* lexicographers were constrained by the cultural attitudes of their time" (*Treasure-House* 112); as such, the dictionary's definitions and usage labels "record cultural assumptions [...], providing invaluable evidence of social attitudes relating to race, sex and the body, gender, politics and so on from the Victorian period through to the 1970s and 1980s" (Brewer, "Loss"), an important point to keep in mind when parsing other dictionaries such as the *DCHP-1* as well. One of these cultural assumptions, according to Brewer, included the belief that a dictionary's responsibility was to regulate the language, and consequently, the nation's culture, identity, and values" (*Treasure-House* 112). The process of choosing which words to include and exclude, then, was heavily influenced by the belief that it was the *OED*'s duty "to preserve the best words in the

language rather than record the worst” (*Treasure-House* 104). Inevitably, such an approach led to a skewed representation of both sources and headwords, including a preference for literary quotations (especially from Shakespearean works) and a tendency to favour Standard English over colloquialisms or slang. Brewer reminds us, moreover, that “cultural factors also played an important role, not only in deciding which words should be included, but how they should be defined and illustrated” (“Culture”). Her project seeks to destabilize some of the unquestioned, comprehensive authority of the *OED* as an all-encompassing record of the English language by illuminating the ways in which the personal beliefs, biases, and personalities of individual editors have influenced the dictionary’s outcome.

Similarly, John Willinsky seeks to “meet the mythical comprehensiveness of [*OED*] with a description of the realistic limitations of actual lexicographical practice” in order to challenge some of the dictionary’s “claims of comprehensiveness and systematic coverage” (“Cutting” 44, 63). In his work on the dictionary compilation process and the use of in-house and external reading volunteers in conjunction with the editorial team, Willinsky points to the “disquieting exclusion zones” that appear in the dictionary, despite editors’ beliefs that their “craft is marked by the application of a delicate sensibility and years of educated subjectivity” (“Cutting” 46). As Willinsky reminds us, though the editors’ “lexicographical practices [may seem] ‘perfectly sensible,’ [...] that sensibility is shaped by the culture which that language embodies” (“Cutting” 46). Willinsky further considers the *OED*’s “place in the construction of a usable past, a selective tradition” in his book *Empire of Words*, examining “areas of underrepresentation in citation and the introduction of new technologies in covering the language” such as internet databases and online corpuses (5, 8). For Willinsky, the *OED* is as much a “nineteenth-century artifact” as a treasure-house of the English language, and as such, even “in all of its magnificence, could reasonably be considered as the last powerful outreach of an imperial age” that continues to

“shape the modern understand of the word on a global scale” (*Empire* 13).

Perhaps what gives historical dictionaries their “distinctive character and scholarly claim” above all else are the citations (Willinsky, *Empire* 188). After all, for a historical dictionary such as the *OED* or even the *DCHP-1*, the quotations accompanying each definition are “the basis of its claim to scholarly and historical authority” as they identify the “authorised users of the language and the connotations and nuances of the way words are actually used” (Brewer, “Importance”). In addition to acting as a source of authority for users of the dictionary, however, citations inform lexicographical work as well during the editing process, as they “constitute the ‘raw material’ of the Dictionary” by providing the “primary evidence” from which definitions are “divined and constructed” (Brewer, *Treasure-House* 127). The quotations are what Brewer calls the “bedrock of the lexicographical enterprise,” and she argues that they “dictate the definitions that the lexicographers find and the picture of language that their dictionary paints” (*Treasure-House* 129). Of course, the citations’ influence over dictionary definitions is not a unidirectional one. As Willinsky points out, in “citing others for illustrative purposes, or as warrants for conclusions drawn, one turns their words to one’s own use” (*Empire* 194). As such, citations “reflect both the times in which they are written and the times in which they are selected,” communicating “the intentions of the author overlaid by those of the editor” (Willinsky, *Empire* 206). Similarly, Jonathan Green asserts that “no matter how disinterested [...] the definer” may wish to be, inevitably the resulting definition “must reflect some form of prejudice” as “neither the individual lexicographer nor the team of which he or she may form a part, can escape their social background and the mindset that forms them” (15, 23). Thus, given what we know of the ways in which national ideologies, individual biases, and the larger sociohistorical context can influence a dictionary’s final product, an examination of a dictionary’s citations demands that we ask “whether such variations tell us about the English

language itself, or about the lexicographers and the materials available to them” (Brewer, *Treasure-House* 129). For, although the lexicographers “articulate no cultural manifesto,” each choice to include one source—or one headword—over another has the cumulative effect of “reinforc[ing] a particular set of cultural values” (Brewer, *Treasure-House* 189).

In his examination of the citation selection process, Willinsky notes that different dictionaries have tended to favour different criteria, and the *OED* “decided to put the entirety of their faith in the printed record of the language,” relying especially upon those who were considered to be the “great writers” of the English language (Willinsky, *Empire* 6). Scholars such as Dennis Taylor have commented on the *OED*’s preferential and problematic reliance on literary sources, and the ways in which this reliance “skews the representative character of the sampling” (as qtd in Brewer, “Literary Sources”). Brewer notes, for instance, that the reading lists sent out to volunteer readers “at various stages in the compilation of the first edition are dominated by literary works,” a reflection of the volunteers’ own reading preferences as well as the editors’ beliefs that the *OED should* in fact turn to the great canonical writers as exemplary users—and thus reliable sources—of the English language (“*OED1*”). Of course, contemporary scholars have explored the ways in which “the concept of a literary canon is in itself problematic” and have “question[ed] the view that literary writing is in some way the epitome of the language” (Brewer, “The Canon”). However, as Brewer reminds us, the assumed link between literature and language was “an unexceptional bias to hold at the time,” touted by lexicographers and the general public alike, as “great works written in the past were seen as the storehouse of the nation’s culture and as the way to access the accumulated wisdom of the past” (Brewer, “Literature”). Literature, therefore, was made “as central to the cultural enterprise of Empire as the monarchy was to its political formation” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 3), and it was literature which was afforded “first claim to be preserved in a nation’s dictionary” (Brewer,

*Treasure-House* 124). A quick look at Brewer's graphical summary of the *OED*'s most quoted sources, for example, shows that Shakespeare tops the list with approximately 33,000 quotations ("Top Sources"). Along with Shakespeare, the *OED*'s "Victorian and Edwardian editors" also favoured writers such as Walter Scott, Dickens, and Tennyson, while "under-represent[ing] the 18<sup>th</sup> century" (Brewer, "Loss of OED2") and providing "less-than-adequate coverage" of "women, Commonwealth, [and] working-class writers" (Willinsky, *Empire* 11). These "literary, prosaic, and omitted citations," Willinsky asserts "authorize a definition of the English language" through a "marginalization of certain areas of language activity" (*Empire* 177). Thus, the *OED* finds its authoritative power not just from its reliance on "literary heroes, the respectable press, and the reference trade," but also in part through its "exclusion of texts and authors" (Willinsky, *Empire* 177). Again, though a close examination of the bibliography of the *DCHP-I* is not within the scope of my project, I think it would be an important and worthwhile consideration for future studies.

Thus, we should not underestimate the importance and extent of the dictionary's influence, and it becomes all the more incumbent upon us to view the dictionary as an important tool that can either affirm or subvert political ideologies, and to critique it as such. To read a dictionary, then, is to analyze the dictionary as part and parcel of the sociohistorical and political context in which it was engendered. It is to look at the dictionary, at its inclusion/exclusion of certain headwords, its choice of citations, its definitions and usage labels, not as authorities in and of themselves, but as heavily influenced by the ideologies and biases of the editors and other contributors to the dictionary, and of the society at large. To call to attention the "workings of the dictionary," therefore, is to "explore the intricacies of its construction" and to "expose the mechanisms behind a naturalized, controlled and selected, production of discourse" (Willinsky, *Empire* 250). It is to resist the tendency to mistake the dictionary as representing the "entirety of

the English language,” and the definitions provided as being “carefully lifted, via the citation, directly out of the language” (Willinsky, *Empire* 13).

However, at the same time, it is not productive to read the *DCHP-1*, or any other dictionary for that matter, as simply a product of its times, acknowledging the problematic and derogatory terms and biased editorial choices as a mere “sign of the past” and ignore the ways in which these ideologies continue to inform and impact us today. Such an approach oversimplifies both the past and present, relegating racist and outdated modes of thought to the past in order to portray an “enlightened” present. Pennycook notes that “there is a tendency to view colonial history as a simple tale of old-fashioned bigotries which are very different from the complex liberalisms of the present” (29). However, such a view “serves to distance ourselves from the colonial era” and occludes both the “complexity of colonial relationships” and the ways in which “colonialism is more closely linked to the complexities of current relationships” (Pennycook 29). Distancing ourselves from a “racist past,” then, leads to a “concomitant inability to see that discourses of the present may have direct lineages to the colonial past” (Pennycook 29). Instead, Daniel Coleman advocates for what he calls a “wry civility,” or an awareness that “English Canadian whiteness” remains a persistent “floating signifier” and is the “anchoring concept that structures Canada’s racial hierarchy” (44). Wry civility, Coleman contends, is essential for us to “retain self-consciousness about the myth of progress” and to avoid the “temptation in historical critical endeavour” of assuming that we have “evolved above and beyond” the people of the past and therefore have a “progressive relation to them” (44-5).

### **1.5 The “Master Narrative” of Canada and the *DCHP-1***

With this in mind, I turn now to an examination of how this notion of nation-building—one that centred specifically around “English Canadian whiteness”—was actually integral to the publication of the *DCHP-1*. After all, the concern over who could define the Canadian nation

and in what terms was definitely at the heart of the *DCHP-1* project, its publication coinciding with a period of growing interest in a Canadian national identity. Edgar Schneider identifies a “growing national orientation” in 1960s Canada, as evidenced through events like the unveiling of the new national anthem in 1967 and the maple leaf flag in 1968 (245). This growing political nationalism, according to Schneider, directly contributed to “an endonormative linguistic orientation” which saw the rise of “new public interest in Canadian English” in this decade (245). Additionally, it is during this time period that Canadian English reached what Schneider calls “phase 4”: it was “fully accepted, endorsed, and appreciated as the nationally appropriate way of speaking” (246). It is this “independent codification of Canadian English,” Schneider argues, that was “the direct motivation” for the *DCHP-1*’s compilation (247). It is no accident, then, that the publication of the *DCHP-1* in 1967 coincided with the year of Canada’s Centenary. In fact, M.H. Scargill, one of the editors of the dictionary, writes in the Preface that the dictionary was pushed “to advance the publication date of the dictionary from 1970 to 1967,” in order to be incorporated into Canada’s centennial celebrations (vii).

Likewise, in his book *Canadian Content*, Ryan Edwardson explores the process of “‘inventing’ nations” for a “select part of the population” in Canada and charts the “changing ways in which Canadian nationhood has been defined and pursued through cultural means during the twentieth century” (5-6). Like Schneider, Edwardson points to the 1960s as a “period of national reification” that saw a growing concern over the dangers of foreign influence, especially from the United States (16). In this decade, “Canadians were reimagining the ‘imagined community’ into a Peaceable Kingdom” in a moment not only of “nation-building but nation-reclaiming; turning inwards offered a means of consolidating nationhood in a time of American imperialism” (Edwardson 16). However, Edwardson stresses that this “Canadianization [was] undertaken by Anglocentric ethnic nationalists [...] particularly through a network loosely

comprising educated elites, well-to-do patrons, artists, and social critics” (50). While Edwardson is more concerned with cultural influences in the form of the liberal arts and mass media here, his work applies to the Canadian English lexicon as well. A distinct Canadian identity, after all, could be ratified by the use of expressions and vocabulary seen as unique to Canadian English.

Thus, instead of reading the *DCHP-1* as “evidence” of how Canadian society formed and progressed, I read the *DCHP-1* as evidence of how the editors and other contributors wanted this Canadian narrative to be written in light of the ideological climate around its publication. But what exactly constitutes this Eurocentric “master narrative” that was celebrated and cemented around the time of the *DCHP-1*’s publication, and is this reflected in the dictionary? According to Kieran Keohane, this narrative is a “hegemonic (predominantly white, male, Anglo) discourse of Canadian identity” that focuses on European settler experiences and history (6). In this white settler narrative of Canadian identity, there is a fixation on, even a fetishization of, nature and its abundant resources, as European settlers relied on forestry, mining, fishing, and the fur trade for their economic advancements (Keohane 112). Such a narrative with its heavy emphasis on an untamed wilderness and boundless natural resources is at play in *DCHP-1* as evidenced by Harris’ work on the dictionary less than a decade after its original publication. Harris begins her dissertation by claiming that her goal is to “show how the history of the country has contributed to the vocabulary and thus is reflected in it” (ii). Her project links Canadian history and national identity with the contents of the dictionary, asserting that “the vocabulary not only reflects the development of the nation, but does so, with more or less chronological accuracy” (iia). Thus, Harris reads the history of Canada as influencing the vocabulary of Canadian English, and vice versa, Canadian English as reflecting—and affirming—the history of the nation state. This interpretation, however, is a closed circulatory one that does not allow room for alternative histories, alternative narratives.

Ultimately, Harris ends up re-affirming the dominant narrative without problematizing it; she reads the dictionary as “proof” of this narrative rather than as mere proof that the editors wanted to tell a story very similar to hers when they compiled the dictionary. Nevertheless, her study does inadvertently provide an important demonstration of the *DCHP-1*’s Eurocentricism and exclusive narrative vision. Specifically, she mentions that in terms of headwords describing Indigenous customs, her research finds that the distribution “lean[s] rather towards terms from west coast native culture” (183). The reason, according to Harris, is that “the dress, life, and customs of the plains Indians have, whether accurately or not, been made so familiar to most North Americans that much of the terminology is recognizable to some extent, so that when a choice had to be made of what items to include, it seemed reasonable to take the less obvious and equally *interesting* ones” (*my emphasis*, 183). That entries relating to Indigenous cultures and customs were chosen for their “interestingness” is problematic to say the least; it suggests in some sense that Indigenous cultures—or at least, the “interesting” aspects—are packaged as exotic and unfamiliar to be appropriated and subsumed by the Canadian mythology. Harris herself is complicit in perpetuating this colonial gaze, as she notes that “it would be impractical to list all the names used at one time or another to refer to the Indians and Eskimos of Canada” because “many are simply [...] an attributive plus Indian as the head noun” (178). Instead, Harris focuses on “other names for natives, whites, and half-breeds that are more interesting” (178). Again, this statement has important implications in terms of how language can operate as tools of colonial hegemony, producing certain truths while invalidating others and casting subaltern groups as the perpetual Other to be studied, named, categorized, or even ignored. As it is, Harris never explains why she finds these certain headwords more interesting, nor does she explore the problematics of a Canadian English in which there is a proliferation of terms that are—often derogatory—names for certain ethnic groups.

## 1.6 Labeling Pejorative Words in Dictionaries

How, then, should subsequent publications of the *DCHP*-1, or any other dictionary, for that matter, handle racist, outdated, or derogatory language, acknowledging the histories of these words without legitimizing them or reinscribing this “regime of representation” (Hall 394)? Certainly, many dictionary editors fear that their inclusion in the dictionary may inadvertently validate their usage. Lynch remarks that lexicographers often struggle over how to “handle obscenities” and “wring their hands over racially and ethnically insensitive terms, apparently out of a belief that their appearance in a reference book amounts to a kind of approval” (248). There is a chance, after all, that “despite [lexicographers’] protestations that their works are objective records of the language as it is used, and not advice on how it *should* be used, people will turn to dictionaries to regulate their own language” (Lynch 248). Nevertheless, most scholars seem to agree that offensive words cannot simply be omitted altogether from the dictionary. Willinsky, for instance, suggests the “simple use of a label such as *rac. epith.* (*racial epithet*), like *obs. rare*, to demarcate these opprobrious terms would avoid what is otherwise a slight awkwardness of designation” (*Empire* 143). While the use of status labels could be one useful way of directing the reader’s attention to the problems of any given term, a point I will return to momentarily, I do not think that the issue is as “simple” as Willinsky would have us believe; nor does “slight awkwardness” do justice to unravelling the fraught racial politics behind these offensive terms. A status label appended for the purpose of overcoming an “awkwardness of designation” and appeasing the “politically correct,” then, can end up becoming a crutch for lexicographers as a “simple” solution and an “easy fix,” ultimately hindering a dictionary’s potential for striving towards true inclusiveness, historical accountability, and cultural sensitivity.

Like Willinsky, Jonathan Green argues that the dictionary’s role is to “reflect the language, which in turn is a reflection of the culture in which it exists” (380). Thus, if the culture

is in part “racist, sexist and in other ways politically incorrect, then so too in part must the dictionaries be” (Green 380). Green’s solution is to suggest that lexicographers add “some parenthetical declaration” of the headword’s offensiveness (380). However, despite his insistence that “all these [offensive] words, like *Jew* and the rest, have to be included, albeit with a maximum of sensitivity” (375), Green’s own approach to resolving problematic words in dictionaries seems to lack the very sensitivity he calls for; indeed, his attitude borders on the dismissive at times, such as when he uses the case of *Jew* as an example. Claiming that he is “writing as both a Jew and a lexicographer,” Green asserts that he “finds it all very simple: include the word, opprobrious though it undoubtedly is, and mark it as derogatory, offensive or *whatever*. But do not on any account exclude it” (*my emphasis*, 374).

More troubling, perhaps, is Green’s argument that “to criticize the *OED*, as a recent book has done, as overly middle-class, masculinist, chauvinist, imperialist and insulting to minority groups, is to batter down an open door” as “all dictionaries” will “[fall] into these errors” when they are “judged by the narrow standards of contemporary political correctness” (373). This statement seems rather disingenuous to me, and oversimplifies the issues at stake. It is not, after all, merely a matter of “political correctness” and judging dictionaries overly harshly; instead, it is a matter of working towards future publications of dictionaries that can be racially and culturally inclusive and sensitive, and that can address problematic headwords of the past. Deborah Cameron, in particular, examines the “linguistic politics” surrounding the “political correctness” (PC) debate, remarking that the term itself has been co-opted and used ironically by its opponents in such a way that “‘PC’ now has such negative connotations for so many people that the mere invocation of the phrase can move those so labeled to elaborate disclaimers, or reduce them to silence” (123-4). “Adopted” by the “counter-culture” to use as a “joke at [the] expense” of those who fought for political correctness, the “so-called ‘politically correct’” were

accused of “abus[ing] language for their own ends” and from ignoring “real politics” in the world by “privileging ‘trivial’ questions of language” (Cameron 127, 124). These accusations, Cameron notes, are not only contradictory because language intervention cannot “be both a trivial diversion from politics and a threat to our most fundamental liberties” at the same time (140), but could easily be “levelled against the opposing camp” who “set out to make ‘political correctness’ a ‘snarl term’ for their own ends” (124) and to represent [political correctness] as an attack on freedom of expression” (122). This rhetorical strategy is employed frequently to silence those who advocate for linguistic reform, as we see with *Iron Chink*.

Nonetheless, recent dictionary (re)publications have made an effort to address some of their problematic entries, and I turn now to Anita Henderson’s work on the treatment of ethnic slurs across several dictionaries, including the *OED*, as she analyzes the “qualitative differences in the definitions” for slurs referencing different ethnicities (52). In particular, Henderson’s study investigates how “social change for African Americans” has “been incorporated into dictionaries through changes in entries, definitions, and usage notes” (52). Regarding derogatory and racist terms such as *nigger*, Henderson’s approach largely corresponds with other scholars like Green or Willinsky; that is, though entries seen as offensive should be reviewed, the words should not be omitted from the dictionary altogether. The reason for this is that not only would it neither “alter its use in American society” nor “change the underlying sentiment that its usage conveys about African Americans,” but it would also actively “deny information about its offensive connotations and its historical literary use to those unfamiliar with it” (Henderson 53). Nevertheless, Henderson reminds us that even when dictionaries edit entries to reflect social changes and increased cultural awareness, such as updating usage citations or changing definitions, they can still subtly reveal “the attitudes of the majority culture” (54). Furthermore, updating dictionaries to reflect increased cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness entails various

considerations; it is not, Henderson reminds us, a simple matter of appending a status label or rewriting the definition.

The word *nigger* (along with variants such as *nigga* or *niggah*), for example, has been “debated as furiously within the African American community as it is across all American communities” (Henderson 65). Henderson notes that while there is no question that *nigger* is a slur and is “root[ed] [...] in racial bigotry,” the word nonetheless still has “legitimate non-derogatory senses” and “some insist that it has been reclaimed and neutralized by blacks as *nigga* or *niggah*” (65-6). Furthermore, Henderson observes that the debate regarding *nigger*’s meaning as “either a slur used about blacks by whites or its use as a neutral or amiable, reclaimed term (i.e. *nigga*) among African Americans” has “obscured another robust and contemptuous usage” of the word that is based on “socioeconomic status and perceived behavior” (67-8). This omission of a sense used primarily among African Americans, Henderson argues, is part of a larger problem of dictionary coverage; that is, despite revisions to these entries to reflect more cultural sensitivity, dictionaries still “do not fully detail the controversial status of *nigger*” and “do not take African American usage into account on any level” (68-9), a problem that will be relevant to my case study of *half-breed*.

Then there is the matter of inconsistent status and usage labels, which can provide important pragmatic cues to the reader for appropriate usage, but can also “easily slide into the subjective and idiosyncratic,” revealing more about the “individual judgements, predilections, and biases” of the lexicographers responsible “than about the usage they characterize” (Brewer, “Authority” 262). As Brewer’s work on the *OED* shows, the lack of consistent standards in the usage of status labels is particularly noticeable in the dictionary’s treatment of derogatory and racist words, a result of either “a perceived difference of status in the terms, or lack of editorial tidiness” (“Authority” 270). Sometimes, for example, a headword is indicated as offensive only

in the definition and is not given a status label or vice versa; in other instances, a derogatory term is simply labelled as “slang,” and still other times, a “warning or comment appears as a note separate from both label and definition” (Brewer, “Authority” 293).

Henderson observes this inconsistency in her study of five dictionaries, pointing out, for instance, the “subtle differences between definitions of slurs for whites and those for African Americans” in Merriam-Webster’s online *Collegiate Dictionary (MWOCD)* (56). Specifically, “all but one” of the slurs applied to African Americans that have usage labels are labeled “offensive,” whereas all of the slurs “applied to whites” are labeled as “disparaging” (Henderson 56). This differential treatment of these ethnic slurs is significant in revealing “the attitude, sometimes unconsciously expressed, of the lexicographers towards their material” (Brewer, *Treasure-House* 245). The major difference in the two labels, as Henderson explains,

can be compared to a passive/active contrast in grammar and an illocutionary/perlocutionary effect in pragmatics. For ethnic slurs used for blacks, the label *offensive* focuses on emotional senses and feelings experienced by the referents. On the other hand, the use of *disparaging* with slurs for whites implies, on the part of the speakers, an intent to lower the value of the references (i.e., depreciate). (57)

Though subtle, this discrepancy in status labelling arguably denies agency from African Americans, putting them in the position of passive recipient and foreclosing the possibility that their reaction to the slur can ever be anything but to “take offense.” “Disparaging,” on the other hand, makes clear the intentions of the speaker but leaves open the door for different reactions from the recipient. Furthermore, the label “offensive” suggests an inevitability to the recipient’s reaction and, as Henderson points out, does not take into account African American usage of these words, despite the fact that “interpretation and use of ethnic slurs requires complex and intimate information about the specific culture in which they are rooted” (71).

Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge the changes that *have* been made in dictionaries to properly address and represent racist, derogatory, or otherwise controversial terms, and to see, perhaps, whether the *DCHP* revision project might incorporate any of these solutions (a point I return to at the end of my thesis). On his work on the *OED*, for example, Willinsky notes that the *Supplement* “shows greater sensitivity in selecting citations” by including “what is in effect a counter-citation, especially a citation from among the party suffering the definition” as a means of “redressing the weight of disparaging use (*Empire* 142). Of course, Willinsky adds, the question of whether or not “it is a warranted form of affirmation action” by the dictionary’s editors “must be considered in light of the often privileged treatment of literature as an integral component of the nation-building project” (*Empire* 142).


In order to perform a more in-depth examination of some of these issues I have outlined, I now turn my attention towards two specific headwords as case studies, *half-breed* and *Iron Chink*.

## Chapter 2: Half-breed

I turn my attention now to the case of *half-breed* and its various derivations in the *DCHP*-


1.<sup>4</sup> *Half-breed* is defined in the *DCHP*-1 as follows (see Figure 2.1):


**Figure 2.1: *DCHP*-1 entry for *half-breed***


**half-breed** <sup>†</sup> 


- **1** *n.* a person of mixed Indian and white ancestry.

See also: [half-Indian \(\(n.\)\)](#) [half-white](#) [Metis](#) [mixed-blood](#)


**1815** (1940) Article of Agreement entered into between the **Half-Breed** Indians of the Indian Territory on the one part and the Honorable Hudson's Bay Company on the other. . . .


**1862** In this country, in fact, the name applies to all who have Indian blood in greater or less degree. This is the general acception of the term, and, in this sense nine-tenths or more of the civilised people of Rupert's Land are "Half breeds."

**1903** I am married to a **half-breed** and have three ornery looking, copper-colored brats.

**1962** "Ari-stock-rats," sometimes "moccasin aristocracy," is a term used to designate the **half-breeds** (or Metis) which they prefer being called.

- **2** *n.* See 1920 quote.

**1842** Their number may be on an average, about forty-five souls, of these eight are white men, the remainder **half-breed** Esquimeaux.

**1920** In the Home we have only one pure Eskimo, a few **half-breeds** (Indian and Eskimo), and the remainder are of English descent.

Source: "half-breed, *n.*" *A Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles Online*. 2011. Ed. Stefan Dollinger with the assistance of Laurel J. Brinton and Margery Fee. Based on Avis et al. (1967). Web. 20 Jan. 2012. (Included with permission from Stefan Dollinger).

Although *half-breed* was not coined in Canada,<sup>5</sup> the term has a historical—albeit problematic—importance to Canada. Indeed, twenty-three entries in the *DCHP*-1 include *half-breed* as part of the definition of the headword, and term appears in no less than 122 citations in

<sup>4</sup> Because *half-breed* is a largely considered an outdated and politically incorrect term, I will use *Métis* when referring to people that the term *half-breed* historically designated, and *half-breed* when I am referring to the word in and of itself. *Métis* is defined in the *DCHP*-1 as "a person of mixed Indian and European, especially French, parentage; half-breed" with its etymology derived from the French word meaning "mongrel; half-breed". Despite being considered the French equivalent of *half-breed*, it is regarded as the more politically correct term today.

<sup>5</sup> Both the *Dictionary of American English* (1940) and the *OED*-3 list attestations for *half-breed* from as early as the mid-eighteenth century, thus indicating earlier usage in both the United States and in Britain.

the dictionary. Historically, *half-breed* was mostly commonly used to designate those of a mixed Aboriginal and French heritage, i.e. the Métis, though the *DCHP-1* lists several variations of the term to apply to those with different mixed heritages. The Métis participated, whether actively or indirectly, in several significant events in Canadian history. In the Red River Rebellion in 1869, for example, the Métis resisted the Canadian government's seizing their territory in Rupert's Land (what is now present-day Manitoba). Louis Riel was the elected leader of their provisional government (Wallace, "Red"). This government negotiated the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, which created the province of Manitoba and granted land to some Métis. While the government took control of the "ungranted" or "waste lands in the Province" which included the "Crown lands, the natural resources and the revenue to be derived thereof," Bélanger argues that *The Manitoba Act* "was not ungenerous towards the Métis province" and granted subsidies to support the provincial government and promised land grants to the Métis. This was followed six years later by the *Indian Act* of 1876, which "turned the Aboriginals into legal wards of the state" and defined who could or could not gain legal "Indian status" ("1876"). Notably, "all 'half-breed' Indians, like the Métis," were excluded from having Indian status ("1876"). Unhappy with the policies in Manitoba, many Métis moved to Saskatchewan where they were involved in a second rebellion in 1885, led by Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, after tension grew over farmland allotment and the depletion of the buffalo population, an important resource for the Métis' livelihood (Wallace, "North-West"). The rebellion ended with the defeat of the Métis at Batoche, Saskatchewan and Riel's surrender and his subsequent hanging, which, according to Bélanger, "epitomized the last defeat of Natives in preserving their way of life in the West" and the "deep wounding of an entire people" (as qtd in Wallace, "North-West").

*Half-breed*, then, is linked to the fraught political history of a people who fought against assimilation policies of a discriminatory and dismissive government, and thus, has important

historical significance as a Canadianism. Its entry in the *DCHP-1* is also deeply problematic in that both the term and its definitions are considered out of date with current political sensibilities. Certainly, the term is considered a pejorative by many people today. In his 1995 work on Canadian anthropologist Marius Barbeau (1883-1969), for instance, Laurence Nowry laments the “disconcerting and unpalatable fact” that Barbeau used the term *half-breed*, noting that he could not possibly have been “unaware of its pejorative connotations” (108). Struggling to reconcile Barbeau’s dedication to championing for Aboriginal rights and preserving their cultures with his “persistent use of the term,” Nowry goes so far as to argue that Barbeau “was not a racist,” but his use of such a term with “disgusting implications and applications” implicates him in “perpetuating Eurocentric chauvinism” (108-9).

Given that the term is widely accepted as a pejorative, it is rather surprising that there are no usage labels under *half-breed* or any of its derivations to mark the term as derogatory. Moreover, the citations included in the *DCHP-1* to illustrate the term do not convey a sense of its derogatory nature, nor do they adequately represent its fraught historical background. In fact, there are a total of nine headwords in the dictionary which incorporate *half-breed* or *halfbreed* in some form: *Canadian half-breed*, *French halfbreed*, *English half-breed*, *half-breed*, *Half-breed Rebellion*, *half-breed scrip*, *half-breed scrip millionaire*, *Half-breed Uprising*, and *Scotch half-breed*.<sup>6</sup> Of these headwords, only *Half-breed Rebellion*, *half-breed scrip*, *half-breed scrip millionaire*, and *Half-breed Uprising* are marked as historical terms, and the rest have no usage labels at all. Furthermore, of the six citations used by the *DCHP-1* to illustrate the term, not one is quoted from someone who actually identifies as a “half-breed” or had the label appended to them, despite available evidence of usage from Métis writers at the time of the *DCHP-1*’s publication (Louis Riel, for instance, called himself a “half-breed.”). The poverty of

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<sup>6</sup> While it is important to acknowledge all of these derivations, my analysis will treat *half-breed* as the blanket term for all the derivations, as my focus here is on the use of the term, whether by itself or with a qualifier.

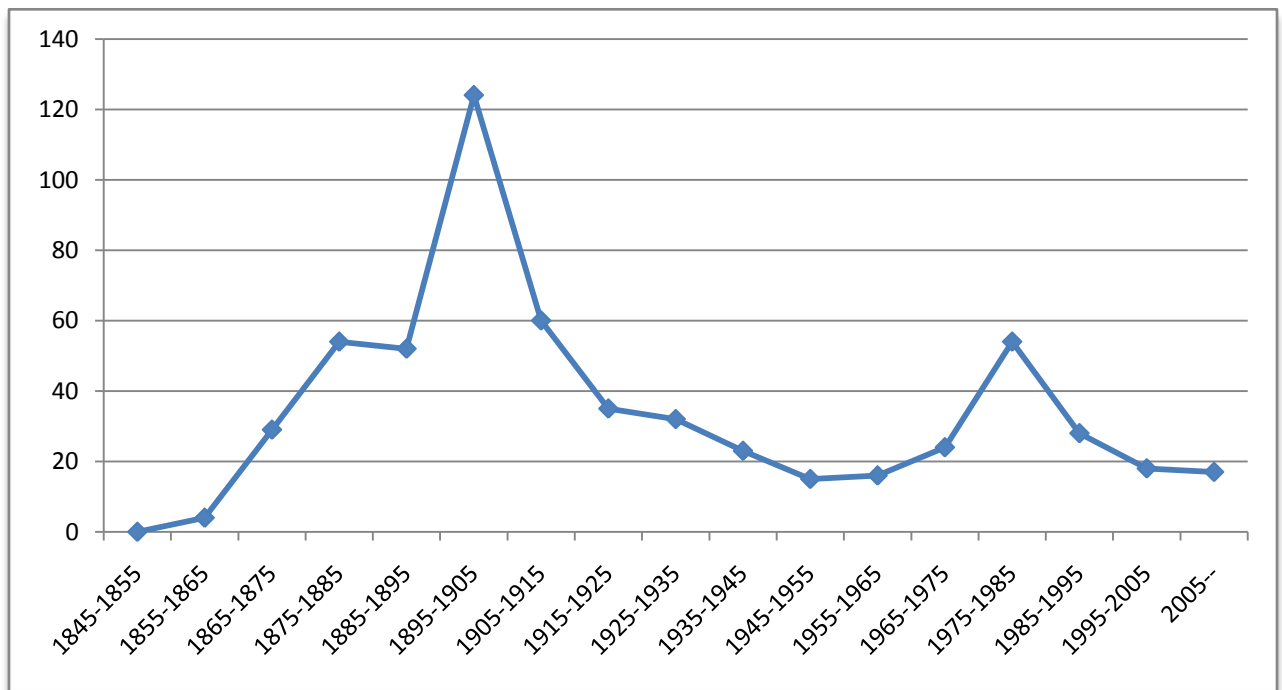
representative citations is a result, perhaps, of biased editorial practices that legitimized and favoured certain sources during the culling process. This chapter, therefore, seeks to fill the gaps in the information by thoroughly examining the use of *half-breed* over the last two centuries or so by both Anglophone writers (mostly from newspaper sources) and Métis authors, and suggesting ways in which the entries such as *half-breed* can be edited to reflect greater inclusiveness, sensitivity, and representativeness.

Several of the *half-breed* terms included in the *DCHP-1* are qualified by an ethnic marker. For example, the dictionary distinguishes between an *English half-breed*, which is defined as “a half-breed having an English-speaking father and an Indian mother,” and a *Scottish half-breed*, which is defined as a “half-breed having a Scots father and an Indian mother.” Then there is *Canadian half-breed*, which is defined as “a person of mixed Indian and European, *especially French*, parentage; half-breed” (*my emphasis*). The singling out of the French here as being “especially” likely to be defined by the term is little surprise if we bear in mind the earliest uses of *Canadian*, which the *DCHP-1* tells us historically referred to French Canadians before being broadened to encompass all the citizens of Canada. Furthermore, the differentiation here between different kinds of “half-breeds” has important political implications. Errington argues that the “intellectual work of writing speech” simultaneously performed the “‘ideological’ work of devising images of people in zones of colonial contact,” so that “language difference figured in the creation of human hierarchies: with the colonizer’s language on top” (5). I would like to add that these human hierarchies were also enabled through the imposition of the colonizer’s language and the colonizer’s naming on various groups of people. These various derivations of *half-breed* suggest that a racial hierarchy was linguistically figured through an actual designation of the “mixture” of one’s blood/heritage. Spurr identifies this “classification (grouping colonized people into different categories, especially racial hierarchies)” as one of the “eleven tropes of

colonial discourse” (as qtd in Pennycook 50). Thus, the term *half-breed* makes explicit the reality that the Métis’ rights as peoples of the land were based on what amounted to their blood status. Arguably, the term is racist because it figures them in a social hierarchy and designates their place based on the “half-ness” of their genetic design. This term and all it represents enabled the denial of their fundamental rights as citizens of the country because they were figured in terms that described them as *less* than whole.

In order to trace the term’s usage through the last two centuries, I conducted a rough search on *The Globe and Mail: Canada’s Heritage from 1844* database and tallied the number of hits for *half-breed* every 10 years or so.<sup>7</sup> While this is a rough search as it was not possible to go through all hundreds of hits to make sure there were no non-hits, the results nonetheless give us an idea of usage patterns (See Figure 2.2):

**Figure 2.2: Hits for *half-breed* in *The Globe and Mail***



Source: Generated using Microsoft Excel

<sup>7</sup> The *DCHP-1* incorporates two different spelling variants of *half-breed*: “halfbreed” and “half-breed.” While I have chosen the more common spelling variant “half-breed” when using the term in my thesis, all citation searches were done for both spelling variants in order to ensure accurate results.

As Figure 2.2 shows, there is a steady increase in the usage of the term from the 1860s onwards, culminating in a peak in usage around the late 1880s and early 1900s. Given the growing political tensions between the Canadian government and the Métis in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, such findings are hardly surprising. After all, with the Red River Rebellion of 1869, the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, the *Indian Act* of 1876, and the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, the Métis people would have generated much more media attention, especially in English-speaking Canada. Most of the citations found in the *Globe and Mail* during this time period, in fact, reference the Riel and the rebellion:

#### 1883 – half-breed

1870. Riel is thus described :—He wore a black slouched hat, beneath which was a full face, with broad forehead and keen brown eyes of marked intellectuality. His black curly hair was rather shorter than that worn by the average half-breed. He has a full beard, pointed, of a darkish brown colour. He has a straight, large, prominent, well-shaped nose, and a most expressive mouth. He speaks English very well, and is most particular in his choice of words.

“Louis Riel: The Rebel Pays a Visit to Winnipeg.” *The Globe*, page 5. *The Globe and Mail: Canada’s Heritage from 1844*. 5 Jul. 1883. Web. 13 Sep. 2011.

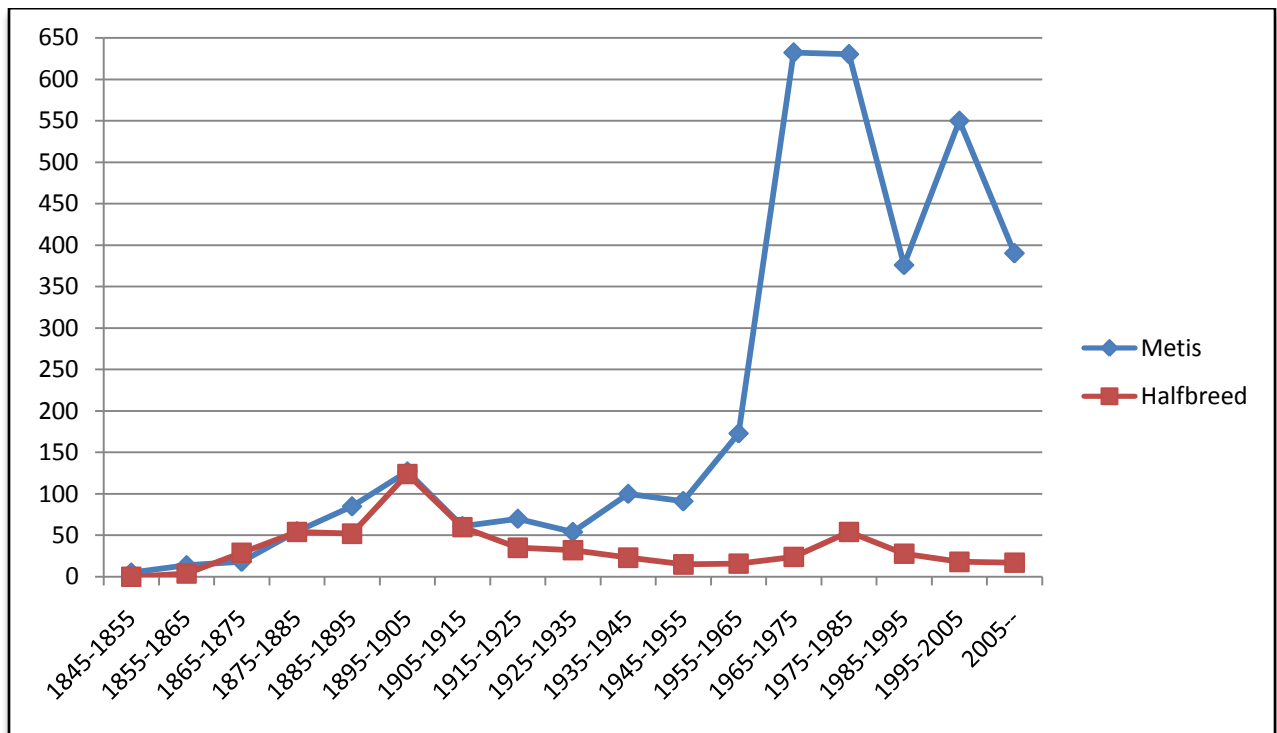
#### 1885 – Halfbreed rebellion

Then he said :—  
“Who those were I hope we may discover. I understand that Riel’s papers have been saved, and I hope some of the correspondence will bring the guilt home to the guilty parties. I fear there will be found among them more than redskins. I fear that unfriendly whites, disloyal whites, men of the Farmers’ Union class, have had a good deal to do with precipitating this Halfbreed rebellion.”  
It is to be hoped that this is merely malignant.

“The Lame Defence of an Incompetent Minister.” *The Globe*, page 4. *The Globe and Mail: Canada’s Heritage from 1844*. 1 Jun. 1885. Web. 20 Sep. 2011.

Although Figure 2.2 seems to indicate quite a steep peak in the occurrence of *half-breed* between 1845 and 1900, these statistics become more meaningful when put into context with the usage frequency of the term's (French) counterpart *Métis* (see Figure 2.3):

**Figure 2.3: Hits for *half-breed* and *Métis* in *The Globe and Mail***



Source: Generated using Microsoft Excel

Here, both *Métis* and *half-breed* show a similar gradual increase in usage towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century we see a growing discrepancy between usage rates for the two terms, with *half-breed* becoming increasingly less popular and *Métis* occurring in much higher frequency. That the frequency rates of *Métis* jump so staggeringly between the 1950s and 1960s may be related to the revisions of the *Indian Act* in 1951, during which there was renewed interest and debate regarding the parameters of “Indian status.” That *half-breed* did not see a similar rise in usage during this time suggests a growing recognition of *Métis* as the socially acceptable and preferred term. It will be interesting to see, for example, exactly in what context *half-breed* is most frequently used in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the citations found in these earlier newspapers, it must be noted that *half-breed* is not so much used pejoratively as it is used as a synonym for *Métis* or for people of mixed European and Aboriginal ancestry in general. Indeed, the majority of articles and documents found before the 1900s seem to use *half-breed* as a commonplace term. This is the case for the earliest citations found, which were from *Early Canadiana Online*.<sup>8</sup> The earliest attestation found, for example, uses *half-breed* casually in the text, but the context does not suggest that the term is intended as a derogative:

**1817 – half-breed**

ble William McGillivray, who has smarted under his Lordship's vengeance, in a manner which I shall notice hereafter. Now the fact is (and Maanlius or his informants knew it,) th<sup>at</sup> there was no Simon McGillivray, nor any other half-breed of the name of McGillivray, at any time this year, within 3000 miles of Red River.

Ellice, Edward. *The communications of Mercator, upon the contest between the Earl of Selkirk, and the Hudson's Bay Company, on one side, and the North West Company on the other.* Montreal: W. Gray, 1817. page 42. *Early Canadiana Online*. Web. 2 Jan. 2012.

Furthermore, while the views expressed in *The Globe* represent a biased, Anglocentric viewpoint, with more articles than not criticizing and questioning the legitimacy of the Red River and Northwest Rebellions, the term *half-breed* itself was not used as a means of delegitimizing the Métis. In fact, *half-breed* is arguably used as a neutral term, as in the following example:

<sup>8</sup> *Early Canadiana Online* is a digital archive that contains “over 80,000 rare books, magazines and government publications” from the “time of the first European settlers to the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.” For more information, please visit <http://eco.canadiana.ca/?usrlang=en>.

### 1955 – half-breed Metis Indians

It was there in the person of Rev. Stanley Cuthand, 36-year-old Anglican missionary at Lac la Ronge, in Northern Saskatchewan. He is a missionary to his own people, the full-blooded Crees, and half-breed Metis Indians who live in the region.

Westall, Stanley. "Canoe, Plane, Dogs Aid Pastor." *The Globe and Mail*. page 7. *The Globe and Mail: Canada's Heritage from 1844*. 3 Sep. 1955. Web. 13 Sep. 2011.

However, the tone begins to shift around the 1970s, and evidence suggests a changing cultural climate in which terms such as *half-breed* were beginning to be re-examined. One 1978 article, for example, indicates that *half-breed* has become outdated by juxtaposing one judge's use of the term with the comment that "Metis is the term now used for persons of mixed Indian-European blood":

### 1978 – half-breed

One of the issues in the case was how much weight should be placed on blood ties, race and religion in child-custody cases.

Evidence at the original custody hearing indicated the grandmother was, as Judge S. V. Legg put it, a half-breed. Metis is the term now used for persons of mixed Indian-European blood.

"Grandmother, aunt loses custody Supreme Court ends legal struggle over Metis boy." *The Globe and Mail*. page T.8. *Canadian Newsstand*. 22 Mar. 1978. Web. 20 Sep. 2011.

Some articles even adopt a remonstrative tone, choosing to take a more prescriptive stance on the usage of *half-breed*. For example, in response to Robert Sheppard's March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1983 article "Metis win some and lose some" (published only a few weeks earlier), detailing Métis land claims, Handbidge critiques Sheppard's uncritical use of *half-breed*:

### 1983 – “half-breed”

It is no longer acceptable to write of "half-breed plainsmen" and "half-breeds," even in a historical context (Metis Win Some - March 22). That abusive English term was used by early settlers - plowmen, shopkeepers, "town" wives - jealous of the enterprising fur traders who took to the woods and to Indian wives up-country.

[...]

Half, yes. But breed? We breed animals. Do we give the name "half-breed" to children of English-Japanese parentage? Or to any other humans?

**Handbidge, Mary. “Abusive English term.” *The Globe and Mail*. page 6. *Canadian Newsstand*. 11 Apr. 1983. Web. 20 Sep. 2011.**

Such a shift in attitude, of course, is not depicted in the *DCHP*-1, which was published over a decade earlier. Examples such as the one above that illustrate this shift, therefore, merit consideration in the *DCHP*-2’s updating of the entry. It is important to note, however, that this change does not occur suddenly, and even as some writers show an increasing concern and awareness regarding the problematic implications of the term, other articles continue to use *half-breed* uncritically and as a “neutral” term:

### 1981 – half-breeds

There are four basic groups in this heterogeneous mix of peoples: Indians, or Dene, as they call themselves; Eskimos or Inuit, as they call themselves (both words translate as The People); Metis or half-breeds, who, like mixtures anywhere, seem to combine the best features of both sides of their ancestry; and the whites, a designation that covers a multitude of nationalities - ordinary Canadian, both English- and French- speaking, American, British, Dutch, German, Swiss.

**Beverly, Gray. “Arctic fever warms the heart Land of myth, mineral riches and high-priced plumbing, the North is making its mark as exotic tourist territory.” *The Globe and Mail*. page T5. *Canadian Newsstand*. 16 May 1981. Web. 20 Sep. 2011.**

At times, *half-breed* is even used in a derogatory sense with a seeming un-self-awareness of the politics and problematics surrounding the term, as in the following example, in which the author uses *half-breed* as a qualifier in a film review:

**1982 – half-breed**

It's a **half-breed** of a film, with the celebrity guessing game keeping the plot from taking off on its own path of lunacy. Martin's one-liners are funny enough, but are restricted to a few scenes with Ward.

**Godfrey Stephen.** "Martin's Plaid woven with a few cuts from the forties." *The Globe and Mail*. page 23. *Canadian Newsstand*. 27 Mar. 1982. Web. 20 Sep. 2011.

Nonetheless, we can see a changing consciousness surrounding the term's usage throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and evidence points towards a growing consensus that *half-breed* was increasingly considered a racial epithet, insensitive and out of date with contemporary sensibilities. By the mid- to late-1980s, in fact, *half-breed* seems to have become commonly accepted as a racial epithet, and whether or not the term was socially acceptable was no longer a topic of debate:

**1987 – "half-breed"**

The ruling was particularly unexpected since in two days of testimony, Ebsary, 75, has let loose a stream of obscenities and the occasional racial epithet, including **"half-breed"** and "white trash."

**Beltrame, Julian.** "Racism ruled key of Marshall probe." *The Ottawa Citizen*. page A5. *Canadian Newsstand*. 11 Sep. 1987. Web. 20 Sep. 2011.

**1988 – "half-breeds"**

For the 1980s' viewer its attitudes are archaic, its dialogue a little racist (references to "yellow men" and **"half-breeds"**) and its story line, based on a short story by James Oliver Curwood, Wapi, the Walrus, delightfully naive. It's pure nostalgia for an era before cinematic cynicism was born.

**Taylor, Noel.** "Festival of silent films to show Soviet classic." *The Ottawa Citizen*. page D13. *Canadian Newsstand*. 21 Jul. 1988. Web. 20 Sep. 2011.

Furthermore, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, most of the hits found use *half-breed* in a strictly historical context:

**1988 – “half-breeds”**

Key words:

[...]

Metis: so-called “half-breeds” who originally mainly in Manitoba, and were historically treated by governments as a separate group who were no longer really Indians.

**Taylor, Noel. “Festival of silent films to show Soviet classic.” *The Ottawa Citizen*. page D13. *Canadian Newsstand*. 21 Jul. 1988. Web. 20 Sep. 2011.**

Of course, what all of these quotations and the *DCHP-1* neglect to represent is how the Métis themselves perceived and used the term *half-breed* both in the past and present. Indeed, we must remember that perceived neutrality or not, the citations above are still instances of a label being used to describe a group of people by another, more privileged group.

Thus, I turn my attention now to some of the instances in which *half-breed* is used by Métis writers in order to examine the ways they have navigated the term and their relation to it. Maria Campbell, in fact, titles her memoir *Halfbreed* (1973), and self-identifies as such throughout the book. For Campbell, a Métis woman, *half-breed* seems to be a socially acceptable identity marker, and she begins by addressing the audience: “I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country” (8). The book continually uses *half-breed* throughout, with the term being used fourteen times within the first chapter alone as Campbell starts by detailing the Northwest Rebellion, during which “petitions and resolutions went to Ottawa from white settlers, Halfbreeds and Indians” (10). Furthermore, Campbell’s consistent capitalization of *half-breed* figures the term as a proper noun, suggesting her recognition and

acceptance of *half-breed* as a legitimate name for herself and for her people. Indeed, Campbell even describes individuals who find laughable the idea that *half-breed* is a derogatory term, quoting Alex Vandal, for example, as saying, “Did you know the new government felt sorry for us because we’re called ‘Half-breeds’? They passed a law changing our name and now we’re CCF horses” (63).<sup>9</sup> Such a joke suggests at once a cynicism of the CCF’s idealistic goals and a recognition of the inadequacy of any government which attempts to rectify racial injustices simply by superficially changing a name (63).

However, although Campbell’s work insists upon the normalcy of *half-breed* and uses it, for the most part, without a sense of irony, there are moments within the text which suggest an ambivalence towards the name, almost a cynicism and bitterness, but which is never quite articulated. On some occasions, for instance, *half-breed* is quoted in the dialogue in which a person expounds his/her racist and discriminatory views against the Métis. For example, Campbell describes her childhood self as “terribly hurt and above all ashamed” of her heritage due to the constant bullying at school, resulting in her lashing out at her mother and saying that she “hate[s] her, Daddy, and ‘all of you no-good Halfbreeds’” (47). However, moments later, Campbell tells us that her grandmother reprimands her for allowing the “white man” to “make [her] hate [her] people” (47). Although Grandmother Campbell quotes some of the Métis as saying, “I want good clothes and horses and you no-good Halfbreeds are ruining it for me,” thus mimicking the young Campbell’s use of the term as a pejorative, she avows that this attitude is a result of the “white man” turning the Métis against themselves as “a more powerful weapon than anything else with which to beat the Halfbreeds” (47). By juxtaposing “no-good Halfbreeds” with “Halfbreeds” in Grandmother Campbell’s speech, the text conveys an awareness of the

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<sup>9</sup> CCF stands for “Co-operative Commonwealth Federation,” a “farmer-labor-socialist party founded 30 July, 1932, in Calgary, Alberta,” later being “superseded in the early 1960’s by the New Democratic Party” (*DCHP-1*). The CCF’s principles were “embodied in the Regina Manifesto,” a program that aimed to achieve public ownership, a planned economy, and social services like universal pensions and health care (*DCHP-1*).

tensions surrounding the term, suggesting that *half-breed*, at the time of Campbell's writing, already bears negative and derogatory connotations, but only if the Métis people allow it to "make [them] hate [their own] people" (47). It suggests, furthermore, that like Grandmother Campbell, Campbell herself recognizes the possibility of resisting the discrimination and oppression of the dominant culture by mimicking and co-opting the colonizer's discourse for the Métis' own political purposes.

Like Campbell, Howard Adams self-identifies as a "half-breed" in his book *Prison of Grass* (1989), a text that explores western Canadian settlement history from an Aboriginal perspective and the cultural and psychological trauma Aboriginal cultures suffered by colonialism. First published in 1975, there is something at once defiant and proud but also self-conscious about Adams' profuse use of the term *half-breed*. Indeed, in the first chapter alone, which consists of about thirty-five pages, he uses *half-breed* no less than sixteen times, with four of those instances occurring right in the first page! Relating his frustrations in finding employment, for example, Adams writes, "Since I knew how police regard halfbreeds and Indians and how they support white bosses, I would always leave immediately" (6). Throughout the book, Adams continually stresses the distinction of the Métis from "white and Indian" society, saying that they "became a recognized separate racial group on the prairies during the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century" when "the halfbreed communities began to evolve into a distinguishable society" (46). The text, then, functions both as an avowal of the Métis' unique culture and a critique of the discriminatory and racist practices the Métis suffered from both the "Indians" and the "whites."

In his writing, Adams seems to use *half-breed* and *Métis* interchangeably. He mentions, for example, that "Halfbreeds were allowed to buy their river lots *after* April 1885," and a few sentences later, he notes that "Many Métis families settled on the South Saskatchewan River in

the 1870s” (62). While *Métis* is glossed in the preface as “the group of people who are ‘mixed bloods’ – part Indian and part white” (7), nowhere in the text does Adams gloss *half-breed*, nor does he ever remark on the fact that he uses the two terms interchangeably. However, what emerges as the text progresses is also an undeniable tone of bitterness surrounding Adams’ use of the term, a sense that he is being betrayed by the very term he is trying to reclaim, the very identity he is trying to advocate. Indeed, there are moments which suggest the author’s acknowledgement of just how derogatory the term is. Adams writes, for example, that his “mother was completely halfbreed. All you had to do was look at her—her appearance, her manners, her clothes, her speech—everything gave her away as a halfbreed, yet she was still the most precious person in the world to me” (123). Here, Adams’ use of the word “yet” implies that he loves and cherishes his mother *despite* the fact that she embodies the very “halfbreed” culture he is trying to celebrate.

Furthermore, the text erupts into a moment of intense bitterness as Adams relates his experience with a racist employer, writing “[My boss] didn’t ask *me* if I had walked across the neighbors’ fields. Oh no. He automatically took whitey’s word against mine. What could I expect though: I was only a sneaky halfbreed” (164). Although spoken ironically in this passage, the author nonetheless adopts the dominant culture’s gaze as he sardonically labels himself a “sneaky halfbreed.” That *half-breed* is used and not “*Métis*” in these two examples is telling indeed, for it rhetorically implies the derogatory nature of such a term, despite the fact that Adams uses both in his writing. The unarticulated implication, therefore, is that while the *Métis* may “reclaim” the term *half-breed* and call themselves so if they like, it is socially unacceptable and discriminatory for outsiders to do the same. However, this passage suggests at the same time that on some level, names such as *half-breed* can, and perhaps should, never be fully reclaimed. By juxtaposing his proud declaration of his “halfbreed” identity with fraught moments such as

these, Adams strategically introduces a sense of dissonance and discomfort. It is a reminder to his Métis readers, perhaps, not to become complacent in their struggle for liberation and redress, that the terms of the colonizer will always contain the spectres of a violent, wounded past, and that names, when used uncritically, can slip into re-inscribing the colonizer's gaze. After all, Adams ends his book with a warning and a call to revolution, cautioning his readers against being too optimistic about true liberation at the hands of the institution as "the advanced liberal corporate state is able to co-opt native nationalism and revolutionary consciousness" and appropriate "even [their] own revolutionary rhetoric" (186).

While the two texts discussed so far were published in the latter quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this is not to say that *half-breed* was considered an acceptable and unproblematic term through the larger part of the 1900s, as Métis and other mixed-ancestry authors show a recognition of the term's racially loaded and discriminatory implications much earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as in Emily Pauline Johnson's short story "The Shagganappi" (1913).<sup>10</sup> "The Shaganappi" centres around "Fire-Flint" Larocque, a young Métis man, as he leaves his family and home to attend an eastern college in Canada. Upon visiting the school, the Governor General of Canada admonishes the principal for labelling Fire-Flint a "half-breed," instead encouraging Fire-Flint to use the nickname "Shagganappi," which his family and the other fur traders call him because he resembles a "shagganappi cayuse," which is a "buckskin color" (13). The Governor tells Fire-Flint to be proud of his heritage and "worthy of the nickname" for the buckskin is "essential to white people and to Indians alike" and the cayuse is "the noblest animal known to man" (13). This becomes a life-altering moment for Fire-Flint, and we are told that from that point on he no longer "despise[s] his own unusually tinted skin" or lament his "half-breed" status

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<sup>10</sup> Although Johnson never identified as a Métis or a "half-breed," she was a mixed-heritage writer, being born of Mohawk chief George H. M. Johnson and Englishwoman Emily Howells. In her writing, she explored the complexity of her experience as a "writer and performer of mixed blood who spoke from both inside and outside native experience" ("Johnson").

(14). The rest of the story follows Fire-Flint (or “Shag,” as he is called from that point forward) as he navigates school life, befriending Hal, the son of the well-respected Sir George Bennington and eventually rescuing Hal from drowning. The story culminates in a stand-off between a group of vocal, prejudiced classmates and Hal and Shag, ending with a “conversion” of the narrow-minded boys and reconciliation between all parties.

“The Shagganappi,” uses *halfbreed* or *half-breed* a total of thirteen times, but in an explicitly self-conscious way. The first occurrence of the term comes when the principal of the college tells the visiting Governor General of Canada, Lord Mortimer, that “Fire-Flint belongs to no tribe; he is a half-breed,” for which the Governor immediately admonishes him. Johnson describes the Governor reacting negatively to the principal’s labelling of Fire-Flint as a “half-breed”:

"What an odd term!" said the Governor, with a perplexed wrinkle across his brows; then, "I imagine you mean a half-blood, not breed."<sup>11</sup> His voice was chilly and his eyes a little cold as he looked rather haughtily at the principal. "I do not like the word 'breed' applied to human beings. It is a term for cattle and not men," he continued. (11)

Notably, then, the first instance in which “half-breed” is used is promptly followed by a discussion of the inappropriateness of the term. The Governor goes on to tell the principal:

"I certainly do not like that term 'half-breed.' Most of the people on the continent of America are of mixed nationality—how few are pure English or Scotch or Irish—or indeed of any particular race? Yet the white people of mixed nations are never called half-breeds. Why not? It would be quite reasonable to use the term regarding them.” (12)

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<sup>11</sup> Although the *DCHP-1* does not seem to distinguish between *half-blood* and *half-breed* (the definition for *half-blood* is actually left blank with only a note to “see *half-breed*”), Johnson here suggests that she finds *half-blood* an acceptable term to use. Though she does not engage in the problematics of a name that identifies and hierarchizes individuals based on their “blood status”, she nonetheless argues against the stigmatizing of mixed-ancestry peoples. In particular, the Governor tells Fire-Flint to be proud of his lineage because with “the blood of old France and the blood of a great aboriginal race that is the offshoot of no other race in the world,” Fire-Flint has “blood in [his] veins that the whole world might envy” (12).

I quote at length here from the text because I would like to argue that the Governor's speech outlines some of the issues of naming, language, and power that Johnson is grappling with in her story. That Johnson chooses the character of the Governor General as the voice of dissent against a term that is commonly used and considered socially acceptable by the dominant society is significant because it leans upon the symbolic power of the Governor General to give weight and credibility to her viewpoint. After all, the Governor General, representative of the British monarch, represents a certain authority and influence that Johnson, writing as both a female and mixed-heritage author in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, might not have had. Furthermore, Johnson's use of the Governor General may even arguably be read as a call for better accountability and linguistic reform at the level of the government and the institution, as well as a sign of faith in the government ability and willingness to be more accountable to people of mixed-ancestry.

Significantly, after this initial interaction between the Governor, the principal, and Shag, *half-breed* is not used again until near the end of the story, thus forming a sort of framing device for the tale. In the last few pages, Harry Bennington (Hal) elicits the outrage of some of his classmates when he elects Shag as his replacement to read the address to Lord Mortimer. Emphasizing the derogatory connotations of the word, Johnson describes the protestors thoughtlessly throwing the word around as they voice their objections to Shag's appointment. *Half-breed* is repeated by the protestors five times within a few short paragraphs, with different qualifiers each time so that Shag is called a "Red River halfbreed," a "halfbreed," a "French halfbreed," a "halfbreed North-West Indian" and a "North-West halfbreed" within the span of two pages (35-36). Here, Johnson emphasizes that the hurtfulness and violence of this verbal attack lie not so much in the use of the term per se, but in the negative associations the boys attribute to it. *Half-breed*, after all, becomes the protestors' own justification for their animosity

because it implies Shag's unworthiness, incompleteness (as either a proper "white man" or a "decent Indian" [36]), and overall lower-class status. Thus, Johnson seeks to strategically reclaim the term with the surprise reveal at the end by Hal, who declares that his mother is "a North-West halfbreed" (37). *Half-breed* is then repeated another three times as Hal emphasizes his point and the news sinks in to the other boys. Shorty, the most vocal of the protestors, is the last person in the story to use the term *half-breed* as he ruminates "dazed [and] breathless" that "'Lady Bennington [is] a halfbreed!'" (37). That the last use of *half-breed* is a declaration affirming a respected character's "halfbreed" status instead of a denunciation of the term (as in the beginning of the story) is significant, as it suggests that for all the Governor General's good intentions, his efforts to curb usage of *half-breed* are progressive but ultimately not as effective in the long run as a reclamation of the term. What changes at the end of the story, after all, is not the boys' attitude towards using the term *half-breed*; it is their perceptions of what the label *half-breed* implies.

Overall, an examination of how Métis and other mixed-ancestry authors have negotiated the term *half-breed* reveals a fraught and complex relationship with the name, one that is not currently represented in the *DCHP-I*. One important revision that must be made, therefore, is the inclusion of citations that represent how various mixed-ancestry writers have used *half-breed* in their works. Furthermore, to simply append a usage label of "derogatory" or "offensive" or "historical" without further explanation would not do justice to all the racial politics and tensions surrounding the term, and as such, the entry perhaps merits an explanatory footnote at the very least. As in the case of *nigger*, one possible route is to give examples of different senses of the term and the different contexts and ways in which *half-breed* has been used throughout history, factoring in usage by mixed-ancestry writers as much as possible, as well as providing counter-citations for derogatory uses of the term (see Appendix 1 for an example of a revised entry for

*half-breed*). Ultimately, it would seem that what is at stake for many Métis and other mixed-ancestry writers is not so much the use of the term, but *who* gets to use it and on whose terms the defining and naming are done, whether that be reclaiming the term, cautiously incorporating it as part of an appropriation of colonial discourse, or eschewing it altogether.

# Chapter 3: Iron Chink

As my second case study, I turn my attention to the headword *Iron Chink*, which is defined in the *DCHP-1* as (see Figure 3.1):

**Figure 3.1: *DCHP-1* entry for *Iron Chink***

iron chink

- a machine for cleaning and dressing fish, so called because this work was often done by Chinese in the West Coast salmon factories.

**1913** In the salmon canneries the introduction of a machine called the "**Iron Chink**", for cleaning and cutting the fish has made a great economy in the cost of labor. 📖

**1926** . . . garnering the silver harvest of the sea for the insatiable maws of the "**Iron Chinks**" at the Sliam cannery. 📖

**1963** [Advert] Fishing company requires qualified **iron chink** operator. Also filling machine operator. Apply to Box 1617, Sun, for interview. 📖

Source: "iron chink, *n.*" *A Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles Online*. 2011. Ed. Stefan Dollinger with the assistance of Laurel J. Brinton and Margery Fee. Based on Avis et al. (1967). Web. 20 Jan. 2012. (Included with permission from Stefan Dollinger).

Obviously, the name is widely regarded as racist and derogatory, not least because it contains the word “chink,” a racial slur use against the Chinese since at least the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as shown by the *OED-3*. The *DCHP-1*, however, does not include any status labels or fistnotes to indicate that the term is a derogatory one. Indeed, the dictionary definition matter-of-factly states that the “Iron Chink” is so named because it performs the fish-cleaning work “often done by Chinese,” seeming to imply that since the machine is literally a metal, mechanical version of the Chinese workers, the name was coined for practical and logical reasons.<sup>12</sup> This is problematic to say the least. In addition to entirely neglecting to address the racist nature of the term, this entry also presents a one-sided and incomplete picture of the history of the “Iron Chink” itself. Of the three citations included, one extols the virtues of the machine which has

<sup>12</sup> I will be using “Iron Chink” with quotation marks when referring to the machine and its properties, and an italicized *Iron Chink* when referring to the term.

“made a great economy in the cost of labor,” the second one is a literary description of the machine at work, and the last one quotes an advertisement looking to hire an “iron chink operator.” Neither the citations nor the definition, however, explain the fact that the machine displaced hundreds of Chinese labourers—and was specifically designed for that purpose. Also omitted in the DCHP-1’s entry to Iron Chink is a sense of the sociohistorical context in which the machine was introduced, namely, that which saw widespread and institutionalized discriminatory practices against the Chinese, including the Chinese head tax policy first introduced in 1885 as part of the *Chinese Immigration Act*, and the *Chinese Exclusion Act* in 1923, which barred Chinese immigration to Canada altogether. In the fishing industry specifically, the “Iron Chink” machine became another instrument in a racist and oppressive system that disadvantaged Chinese workers while at the same time exploiting them for subpar wages and forcing them into dirty, segregated living quarters in a “huge shed-like building” known as the “China House” (McKervill 43).

A 1907 advertisement for the “Iron Chink,” for instance, makes explicit the anti-Chinese sentiment rampant at the time of the machine’s invention (see Figure 3.2).<sup>13</sup> This advertisement touts the “Iron Chink” machine as a means of combating a supposed Chinese labour shortage, but in terms that seem to place much of the blame on the Chinese themselves, as evidenced by the line “Another Oriental Labor Problem” which is prominently placed in the centre of the page directly beneath the header, “Squarely Up Against It!” Furthermore, the advertisement’s declaration that “Public Opinion is set against renewing the [Chinese butcher] supply” underscores racist sentiment and discriminatory practices at the time of the machine’s invention on two levels: firstly, it highlights the exclusionary policies set in place by the Canadian government throughout the 1900s and sanctioned by the public to deny Chinese immigration;

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<sup>13</sup> Although this advertisement was printed in an American journal, it nonetheless exemplifies the discrimination against the Chinese that occurred throughout the entire west coast fishing industry in both Canada and America.

and secondly, it demonstrates public racist perception of Chinese immigrants as little more than a “supply” of labourers, a disposable work force that is easily and more cost-effectively replaced by a machine. Thus, as a convenient scapegoat, the Chinese are blamed in this advertisement for at once not providing enough of a labour source and for becoming too expensive to employ:

Figure 3.2: 1907 Advertisement for “Iron Chink”

**Squarely Up Against It!**

“Canners Face Labor Problem”      “To Appeal To Congress”  
“Another Oriental Labor Problem”

You must have read these articles in the daily press

**CANNERS FACE  
LABOR PROBLEM**

Alaska Operators May Ask  
Congress to Preserve Sal-  
mon Industry by Amending  
Chinese Exclusion Act.

**WANT CHINESE HELP**

Alaska Canners to Appeal to  
Congress.

OTHER LABOR IS NO GOOD.

Packers Try Whites, Japanese and  
Indians With Poor Results. Ca-  
lose More Chinese Are Allowed  
Pack Must Be Curtailed.

The Harvest is Plenty but the Laborers are Gone—Take a Steady Think. The  
Chinese Butchers are no more. Public Opinion is set against renewing the supply

**WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?**

**“THE IRON CHINK”**

Will clean Fish better--Will clean them faster--Will  
clean them more economically

**And Every Canneryman knows it too**

Last Month we gave the figures---This Month we give the facts

Don't Fool with the Question any Longer  
Insure your 1908 and 1909 Pack Right Now

**Smith Cannery Machines Co.**

2416 Utah St., SEATTLE, WASH.

Image Courtesy of  
Pacific Fisherman

Source: *Pacific Fisherman* 5.11 (Nov. 1907): 30. Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest. Web. 25 Jul. 2012.

I argue, therefore, that *Iron Chink* functions not only as a relic of a racist past, but also as a reminder of how easily certain aspects of history can be skewed and (re)narrated to privilege a specific point of view, as is seen in the *DCHP-I* entry for the term. To not address the racist nature of the term and all the fraught sociohistorical politics surrounding it is to retell that narrative without contextualization or subversion, and thus to reinstate the violence and injustice perpetrated upon the people whose livelihoods were negatively affected by the *Iron Chink*. This case study examines the treatment of *Iron Chink* in various texts which discursively enable such a historical erasure, as well as the ways in which other authors have attempted to navigate the term in order to subvert the dominant narrative and (re)tell history from a different perspective. What I discuss here, of course, is not the legitimacy of the invention to the advancement of the fishing industry. Rather, I examine how *Iron Chink* figured, and continues to figure, in the dominant discourse. I wonder also how such a term and the machine itself may be employed in furthering our understanding of race relations and racial politics surrounding B.C.'s fishing industry history and how they may be used as a means of redressing these injustices. Furthermore, I explore how one treats this term in the context of publishing a dictionary that claims to represent Canadian history. What is at stake, then, is how the dictionary can best represent a term such as *Iron Chink* in order to communicate a sense of its fraught historical usage while demonstrating at the same time the ways in which a culture can, and has been able to, subvert the dominant narrative and reclaim the term.

The "Iron Chink" is often touted as a machine of progress, necessary to the advancement of the fishing industry. Edith Swank's 1943 book about food preservation history, for example, names the "Iron Chink" as the "most remarkable [canning] machine of all," noting that this "amazing machine even adjusted itself automatically to the size of each fish as it came along"

(76).<sup>14</sup> Regarding the Chinese labour the machine replaced, Swank only mentions that the “tedious job” of cleaning and preparing salmon “used to be done entirely by Chinese labor” until the “Iron Chink’s” invention (76). Moreover, in addition to emphasizing the machine as a symbol of progress and technological advancement, discussion of the machine’s history often centers the life of its inventor, Edmund A. Smith. The *Steveston Virtual Museum* website, for instance, focuses more on the “Iron Chink” as a machine of progress that “dramatically reduced both the cannery space and the labour force needed.”<sup>15</sup> Though it notes that it is nicknamed the “Iron Chink” because it “replaced up to 30 Chinese men working with knives,” the description does not elaborate further, avoiding discussion of the fraught racial politics surrounding this “nickname.” In similar fashion, *A Mosaic of Fishing Memories*, a British Columbian fishing website, (“Funded in whole or part through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement”) outlines the development and history of the “Iron Chink”, but only very briefly touches on the topic of the machine’s racist nickname, noting that “the fish cleaning machine became widely know[n] as the “Iron Chink”, because it could perform the work of approximately 50 Chinese salmon butchers.”<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, in an article published in *British Columbia History*, Scott B. Jo’s “Smith’s Iron Chink” expounds at length upon E. A. Smith’s biography as it pertains to the machine’s invention, but says little about the machine’s (nick)name:

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<sup>14</sup> Swank, Edith Elliott. *The Story of Food Preservation*. Pittsburgh: H.J. Heinz, 1943. *HathiTrust Digital Library*. Web. 26 Jan. 2012.

<sup>15</sup> “The Canneries of Steveston.” *Steveston Recollections, The History of a Village*. *Virtual Museum of Canada*. CHIN (Canadian Heritage Information Network), 2012. Web. 24 Mar. 2012.

<sup>16</sup> “The Iron Chink.” *Mosaic of Fishing Memories*. Mosaic Projects, 2009. Web. 13 Mar. 2012.

### 2005 – “Iron Chink”

He worked unsuccessfully for eight months, finally, \$60,000 in debt, he admitted defeat to his wife and decided to get a job to repay all the money. That night he awoke with a flash of inspiration. His daughter recalls that at 3:00 a.m. there was no transportation available and he ran all the way to his workshop where he remained for ten days and nights emerging at least, wreathed in smiles.

Borrowing more money, he headed to Washington D.C. to register the patent for his "Iron Chink" machine. This name is written in the first patent and it stuck. In later years, the patented name changed to "Smith Butcher Machine" but "Iron Chink" was used on the manufacturer's plates on all machines for many, many years. (22)

**Scott-B, Jo. “Smith’s Iron Chink: One Hundred Years of the Mechanical Fish Butcher.” *British Columbia History* 38.2 (2005): 21-24. *America: History and Life*. Web. 4 Mar. 2012.**

Here, the author does not even bother to comment on how *Iron Chink* is a problematic term, or to even mention that the name *is* problematic; all we are told is that the name “Iron Chink” was used “for many, many years” before it was changed to the “Smith Butcher Machine” (22).<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the article focuses heavily on the life of the inventor Smith but largely elides the story of the actual cannery workers who enabled the factories to run long before the machine’s invention. The Chinese labourers become a faceless, even invisible workforce, subsumed under the butchering machine so that they seem merely to be the predecessors of their more efficient, more cost-effective machine counterpart, an impression hammered home by the name “the Iron Chink” itself.

Thus, in all of these sources, the spotlight falls on the “Iron Chink” machine and on its inventor E. A. Smith. The Chinese labourers, on the other hand, are rendered into nameless and faceless masses, invoking a racist stereotype of the Chinese as a cheap, well-oiled, mechanized workforce. It matters little whether the “Iron Chink” could perform the work of thirty or fifty

<sup>17</sup> It remains unclear exactly when and why the machine was re-patented, as the sources found say little more than to mention that after some time, the machine’s name was changed. One possibility for the re-patent, however, is that growing awareness of *Iron Chink*’s derogatory nature pushed the machine manufacturers to give the machine a less controversial and more politically correct name.

butchers (although most of the sources say thirty, there is enough discrepancy between works that suggest an uncertainty in the actual number), for the depiction of the Chinese labourers as just masses of people effectively dehumanizes them and figures them as nothing more than the primitive predecessors of the “Iron Chink.” Indeed, in her work on race and gender relations in B.C.’s fishing industry, Muszynski describes Smith’s gradual process of inventing and introducing his “Iron Chink” to the fishing industry as one which subsumed the bodies of the Chinese labourers, and “incorporated into machinery” the most “crucial and skilled components” of their labour (262). In a sense, then, Muszynski depicts the Chinese labourers as not only being “displaced” by the “Iron Chinks,” but consumed by these “mechanical monsters” as well (262). That the racist nickname for the machine reflects this conflation of the Chinese body of labour with the machine itself is not lost on Muszynski, as she suggests that it mattered little to the cannery owners whether the butchers were “human or mechanical,” as long as they ‘fed the canning lines’ (168). Similarly, this racist stereotyping of the Chinese as cheap, mechanized labour is discussed by Lien Chao, who notes that the “widespread racist term ‘Chinaman,’ [...] was invented to categorize the Chinese as a human machine” (8). Hugh McKervill, in fact, goes as far as to claim the Chinese labourers were “treated as chattels, units of energy to be poured into the production pot,” exploited even by their “own countrymen, the Chinese contractors who were fortunate enough to have some education and who could speak English” (43).

With this in mind, I analyze how contemporary journal and newspaper publications have treated *Iron Chink*. Like the *DCHP-1*, a look through the citations found in English newspapers and fishing websites reveals incomplete and skewed treatments of *Iron Chink* as well. However, while the dictionary elided discussing or even mentioning the racial politics of the term completely, the majority of these citations suggest a reluctance to dwell too long on the racist overtones of the term, opting instead to “let the word stand for itself,” so to speak. Indeed,

numerous entries seem to take for granted that the reader will have prior knowledge of the term's problematic history—and all the fraught racial politics that it encompasses—or to at least wash their hands of the responsibility of explaining it to the reader. In other words, the majority of citations found choose not to delve into the term's full history, opting instead to point out its racist nature in passing and to trust the reader to understand or to research this history. “A Thematic Guide to the Early Record of Chinese Canadians in Richmond,” compiled by the city of Richmond, British Columbia, for example, mentions the “Iron Chink” only briefly, noting that the “Smith Butchering Machine [was] introduced to offset labour shortages [and] is known as the “Iron Chink” since it ultimately replaces the Chinese butchering crew” (2).<sup>18</sup> What the guide does not fully expand upon is the fact that these labour shortages were a direct result of the socioeconomic and racial discrimination against the Chinese. This discrimination manifested in policies such as the Head Tax, a “a federal anti-Chinese bill” that restricted immigration to Canada by imposing a tax—which began as \$50 in 1885 when the bill was passed and had increased to \$500 by 1903—“upon every person of Chinese origin entering the country” (“History”).

Thus, far from elaborating on the racist nature of the nickname, the majority of citations found seem to assume that readers already understand—or will research on their own—*Iron Chink*'s problematic history, as in the following two examples:

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<sup>18</sup> Chan, Claudia (*prepared*). *A Thematic Guide to the Early Records of Chinese Canadians in Richmond*. Richmond: City of Richmond Archives, 2011. Print.

### 1996 – Iron Chink

The lack of money has crippled the [Vancouver] museum. A good exhibition can cost \$200,000 or more. The last major show the museum mounted was four years ago, a presentation called Making a Living, Making a Life. It looked at how work and race have dogged one another in the Lower Mainland. (It displayed materials such as the Smith fish butchering machine, more shamefully known along B.C.'s cannery rows as the **Iron Chink**). That exhibition cost \$250,000 to create.

Scott, Michael. "Lack of political will, money ensures museum's treasures remain hidden." *The Vancouver Sun*. 10 Feb. 1996. page F10. *Canadian Newsstand*. Web. 17 Feb. 2012.

### 2002 – "The Iron Chink"

The cannery building is strewn with other machinery which still has to be brought back to working order, including the butchering machine, called, in politically incorrect lingo according to an engraved iron plaque on its face, **"The Iron Chink"** -- because it replaced manual [C]hinese labour.

Mettrick, Alan. "New life for old cannery: A unique project has the old canning line cranking at North Pacific." *Daily News*. page 1. *Canadian Newsstand*. 27 Nov. 2002 Web. 10 Feb. 2012.

Admittedly, both articles *do* acknowledge that *Iron Chink* is a problematic term; Scott remarks that the Smith butchering machine is "more shamefully known" as "the Iron Chink," while Mettrick rather casually identifies the term as "politically incorrect lingo." However, that is the extent to which both authors take the discussion, suggesting that they are paying little more than lip service to the issue. By briefly acknowledging that they themselves are aware of the term's racist origins, they avoid any real engagement with *Iron Chink*'s racist overtones history, instead depicting the term—and these issues of racism—as relics of the past.

Arguably, such a glossing over of *Iron Chink* may be understandable given the word and space limitations of a newspaper article. It is, on the other hand, perhaps more surprising that Duncan Stacey and Susan Stacey's *Salmonopolis*, an entire book dedicated to exploring the history of the salmon canning industry in Steveston, British Columbia, would have so

comparatively little to say on the matter of the “Iron Chink”. The book’s actual discussion of the machine comprises basically of one paragraph, and rather than expand into a discussion of the machine’s problematic nickname, the authors briefly address the issue of racist language in their preface by noting that in their cited quotations “people speak in the language and context of their times, which may require forbearance by modern sensibilities” (7):

**1994 – “Iron Chink”**

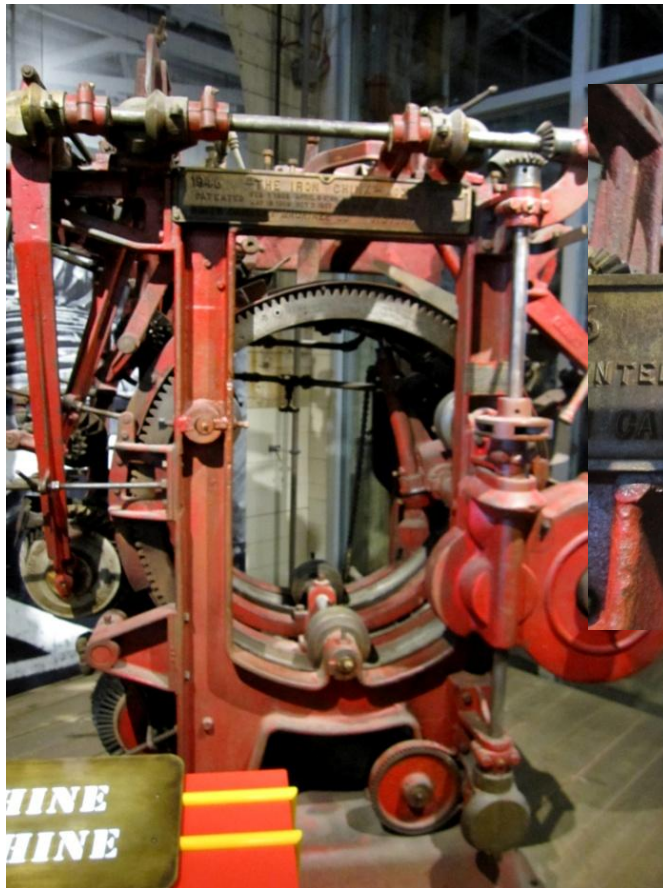
Labour shortages caused by the head taxes and the resulting demands for better wages by those who remained in the industry were great incentives for the canners to consider mechanizing the process. In 1905, a peak salmon year, canners were faced with widespread labour shortages. In 1906, the Smith Butchering Machine was introduced to counteract this problem. The first model, nicknamed the “Iron Chink” because it eventually replaced the Chinese butchering crews, processed sixty to seventy-five fish per minute with the aid of three men. (77)

**Stacey, Duncan and Susan Stacey. *Salmonopolis: The Steveston Story*. Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 1994. Print.**

In addition to this paragraph, the authors also include a picture of an advertisement for the machine from the *Pacific Fisherman*, noting in the caption that it “shows the racial attitudes of the time” (77). Curiously, whether by coincidence or not, this echoes the description used by the Steveston Cannery Museum in Richmond, B.C., which displays an actual “Iron Chink” machine at its entrance (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4). A walkthrough the museum shows, moreover, that though it may feature the “Iron Chink” in the front entrance, the coverage of the machine and its controversial name in the museum exhibit is as vague and incomplete as the description of the entrance display (See Figure 3.5).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Figures 3.3 – 3.6 are photographs that I took at the Steveston Cannery Museum in Richmond, B.C.

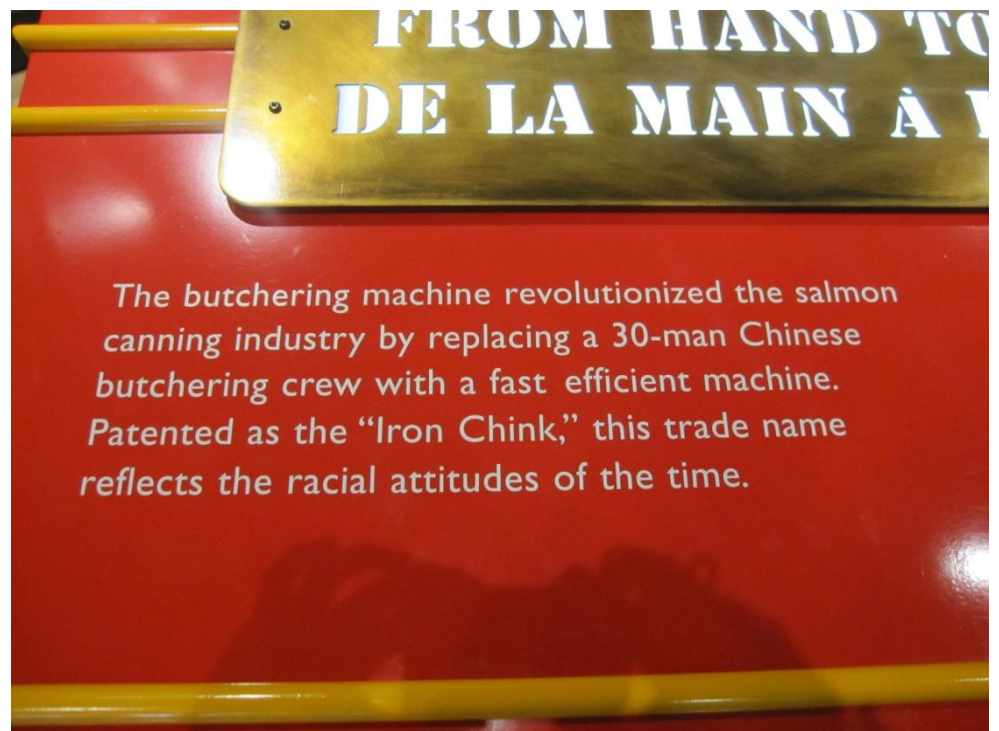
**Figure 3.3: The “Iron Chink” at the Steveston Cannery Museum**



**Figure 3.4: Plaque on the “Iron Chink” at the Steveston Cannery Museum**

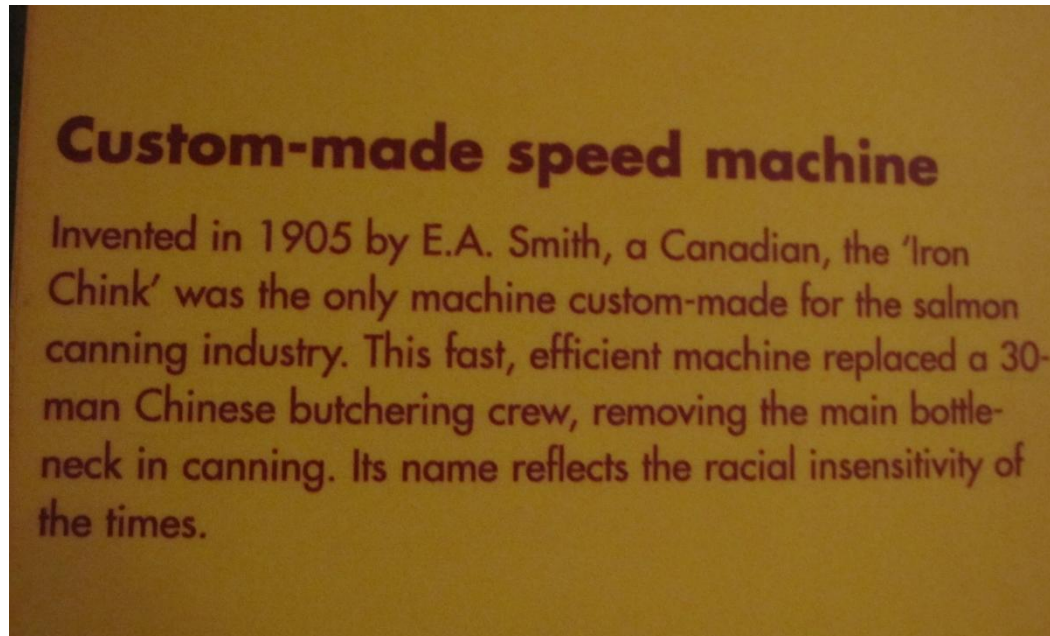


**Figure 3.5: Description of the “Iron Chink” at the Steveston Cannery Museum**



Inside the museum, on a walkthrough of the entire canning process, the “Iron Chink” is labelled as “Butchering Machine,” with a sign telling us that “Called the ‘Iron Chink,’ this amazing machine butchered and cleaned salmon at over one per second.” It is only at the back of the machine, however, that we find the rather obscurely placed description (see Figure 3.6):

**Figure 3.6: The “Iron Chink” display inside the Steveston Cannery museum**



Here, we see a curious juxtaposition of the inventor E. A. Smith—whom the plaque makes a point of identifying as a “Canadian”—with the “Chinese butchering crew, which implicitly suggests that the Chinese butchers, while having suffered the “racial insensitivity” of the “Iron Chink’s” name, were still nonetheless outsiders and foreigners, different from the “Canadian” who built the machine to serve the canning industry. Again, the Chinese are rendered as faceless and nameless masses, making it easier to justify their replacement by the machine, which the description tells us was essential in “removing the main bottleneck in canning.” Furthermore, the irony of the sign is that while it insists on Smith’s “Canadianness” as opposed to the Chinese, Smith actually lived much of his life in Seattle, Washington and developed his butchering machine there as well. That the Chinese are still implied as the outsiders despite their

essential contributions to the canning industry is what Henry Yu argues is

one of the political effects of the white supremacist narratives that marked anti-Asian agitation [as] the presumption that even the most recently arrived European migrant was Canadian and belonged here and that Asians were always migrants, and always perpetually late in arriving. (8)

If so many of the citations found for “Iron Chink” inadvertently make even more invisible the Chinese cannery workers affected by the machine, the Richmond-funded website *In Their Words: The Story of BC Packers* does attempt to give voice to the people who worked at the canneries. It is the only citation source, in fact, that goes on to explicitly comment on the problems of the name *Iron Chink*:

**2007 – ‘Iron Chink’**

During the early 1900s the word ‘Chink’ was a derogatory term used by the dominant non-Asian community to describe people of Chinese origin. The machine was called the ‘Iron Chink’ because it was a big iron machine that replaced Chinese men who used to butcher the salmon by hand.

[...]

The name ‘Iron Chink’ reflected the racial segregation that existed in society and in the canneries at the time. The name persisted for decades in the west coast salmon canning industry. Today the machines are known as butchering machines or iron butchers.

**“Butchering Salmon.” *In Their Words: The Story of BC Packers*. City of Richmond, 2007. Web. 14 Mar. 2012.**

While this citation is certainly more than other sources have stated on *Iron Chink*, the focus is nonetheless still on racism and anti-Chinese sentiment as something that happened in the past. As the Steveston Cannery Museum and other citations demonstrate, there is a tendency to gloss over *Iron Chink* as a product of a racist past that has little relevance to the enlightened present. That *Chink* was a derogatory term used in the early 1900s is undeniable, but what these sources do not seem to address the fact that “Chink” is *still* considered and used as a derogatory term,

thus problematizing the continual usage of the nickname for the machine. Indeed, several citations suggest that *Iron Chink*—and all the fraught racial politics that it encompasses—is but an artefact of the past, a window through which we glimpse racism in B.C. history, as in the following examples:

#### 1998 – “The Iron Chink”

There are now more than a thousand such chapters in this book of industrial mourning. The precise number will never be known because in a **meaner, more brutal time**, the names of the dead were sometimes not deemed worthy of recording. "Jap" or "Chinaman" sufficed in the days when "Coontown" was a real place and equipment could be patented as "The Iron Chink."

Hume, Stephen. “The Quinsam inquest and B.C. history: Coal mining is a bloody business. The resentment that certainty has generated over the years is one explanation for at least some of the tension between labour and business in our province.” *The Vancouver Sun*. 27 Feb. 1998. page A21. *Canadian Newsstand*. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.

#### 1988 – Iron Chink

The [North Pacific Cannery] is now gathering marine artifacts from the north coast and storing them at the cannery for the day they have the funding to properly display them.

The artifacts tell of the hardships and dangers of life on the coast as well as the **social attitudes of the time**.

Blyth pointed out one artifact with a name that spoke of the racial discrimination that was part of highly-segregated cannery life: a mechanical fish-dressing machine known as the **Iron Chink** because it replaced Chinese workers.

Hamilton, Gordon. “Abandoned cannery evokes faded visions, fresh dreams: [3\* Edition].” *The Vancouver Sun*. 14 Jan. 1988. page F15. *Canadian Newsstand*. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.

While it is important to acknowledge that indeed cultural sensitivity has much improved since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the article nonetheless implies that such racist words are nothing more than relics of a “meaner, more brutal time” and not the by-product of a deeply entrenched, institutionalized racial discrimination that continues to perpetuate white privilege and

marginalize different ethnic groups today. Indeed, Pennycook argues that “it has been too easy to juxtapose a simple, bigoted colonial past with a complex, liberal present” and to ignore the ways in which this colonial past can “throw light on our own contemporary actions” (126). An uncritical citation of *Iron Chink*, then, denies the reality that our present discourse “may have direct lineages to the colonial past,” thus making us complicit in a re-instigation of the colonial gaze and the continued “construct[ion] [of] “a passive colonized Other” (Pennycook 42, 41).

We must keep in mind, however, that addressing these problems is not as simple as censoring the term or limiting its use as much as possible and using instead the re-patented name “Smith Butchering Machine,” although some citation hits show that this has been advocated over the years. A 2000 article from the *Toronto Star*, for example, asked readers to imagine themselves as newspaper editors and decide how they would handle certain tricky situations, one of which involved whether or not to use the word *Chink* in a piece covering Toronto comic Kate Rigg whose direct quotes include frequent uses of the word. One reader’s response was posted:

**2000 – “IRON CHINK”**

I, for one, have cared since a day in 1972 when I saw "IRON CHINK" stamped on an old fish-cannery machine displayed at the Royal B.C. Museum in Victoria. Star reader Joseph Kim, a young journalist at the Etobicoke Guardian, rightly says: "The offensive word could have been used just once to give a reader a feel for the nature of the article." The gratuitous language, even used in an anti-racism context, lowered the tone of The Star.

**“You be the editor: What would you do?” *Toronto Star*. 1 Apr. 2000. page 1. *Canadian Newsstand*. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.**

However, this debate sparked the opposite reaction as well, with some arguing that limiting the use of *Iron Chink* in descriptions of the B.C. fishing industry or changing the name to the more politically correct “Smith Butchering Machine” represented a whitewashing of history and a perversion of “facts.” Indeed, in the early 2000s, “Iron Chink” became one of the terms given as

an example by those who felt that Canadian political correctness had gone too far and was hindering their right to freedom of speech. In particular, former senator Pat(ricia) Carney brought attention to this as she publicly criticized editors for censoring certain terms in her book:

### 2001 – “Iron Chink”

This is a serious pitfall of political correctness; **altering language can completely distort and defuse facts**. Sanitizing language can strip away our history and with it the ability to understand our past.

The machine that revolutionized the canning industry on the B.C. coast in the early 20th century was called the “Iron Chink” because it displaced the rows of Chinese-Canadians who staffed the canning lines, beheading and gutting salmon.

I never dared to use the term “Iron Chink” in *Trade Secrets*: I knew Cold Reader would axe it. But the term evokes images of early coastal canneries with a force like a fist in the stomach.

**We rely on accurately recorded observations to understand our history;** that is the power of accounts drawn from personal journals, politically correct or not.

**Carney, Pat. “Pitfalls of political correctness: Senator and former Tory MP Pat Carney learns the hard way why you can hardly write nothing no more.” *Times – Colonist*. page A15. *Canadian Newsstand*. 25 Apr. 2001. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.**

Similarly, Darah Hansen’s article covers a mild controversy that broke out in 2004 over a photo caption that was perceived as racially insensitive (This photo was one among archival documents used in fifty interpretive signs by the City of Richmond to promote the city’s rich history).

Interviewing the manager of access services at the B.C. Archives, Hansen reports:

## 2004 – ‘Iron Chink’

Kathryn Bridge, manager of access services at the B.C. Archives in Victoria, said there is no government policy that covers language sensitivity or political correctness in reference to historical records.

[...]

She said, along with photograph captions, there are many written records in the archives that reflect a language or attitude towards people of varying cultures and religions that today's society would deem inappropriate.

"There's even a machine invented to improve the canning process that is called the 'Iron Chink.' There's one on display at the Royal BC Museum," she said.

But, she said, it's not the archives job to "whitewash" history.

**"It's our job to maintain the historical records and provide them as evidence of the past.** It's not our job to then massage them into something that people can understand. That is the job of people who are accessing the collection, the historians and curators."

**Hansen, Darah. "What's in a name? Man labeled by religion." *Richmond News*. page 1. *Canadian Newsstand*. 11 Sep 2004. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.**

However, these and similar arguments often occlude the issues at stake. While the desire to “accurately” represent history by including the past use of controversial and problematic terms has validity, it is not simply a matter of “telling it as it is,” especially when the telling of this “truth” can cause racial injury and re-inscribe the colonial gaze. Furthermore, Carney’s argument that “alternating our language can completely distort and defuse [the] facts” that are presented in “historical records,” and Hansen’s similar contention that historical records are “evidence of the past” both falsely equate history with truth. After all, simply portraying historical records as they are is not equivalent to taking an unbiased, neutral viewpoint towards history, for even in the avowal of such documents as “historical records,” one is omitting the fact that these records were recorded by a specific group of people for a specific purpose. As Claude Lévi-Strauss asserts, "history is never only history *of* but history *for* (emphasis mine); history is constituted

from selected data for a specific manifestation or latent purpose” (as qtd in Chao 2-3). Moreover, Cameron reminds us that “objections to linguistic reform tend to focus much more on language than on the social questions at issue” (120), and certainly, the teachers’ rhetoric oversimplifies the issue at hand by reducing the debate to one of political correctness. Recalling Cameron’s work on the “political correctness debate,” individuals such as Carney and Hansen, then, co-opt the term “politically correct” itself in order to de-legitimize the call for linguistic reform, accusing those who fight for political correctness of “privileging ‘trivial’ questions of language” over “accurately” portraying historical facts (Cameron 124).

Thus, as the last part of this case study, I turn my attention towards some authors who have navigated *Iron Chink’s* fraught and complex history, using the name and symbol of the machine itself in ways that subvert the dominant narrative and open up a space for alternative narratives and creative re-imaginings. Renisa Mawani, for example, is explicitly invested in the cross-cultural tensions and spaces of contact between different subaltern groups in British Columbian history in her book *Colonial Proximities*, and more thoroughly investigates the “Iron Chink” in a chapter on the province’s fishing industry. Unlike many other authors that have been mentioned, Mawani immediately remarks upon the racist overtones of the nickname, noting that the machine “now permanently [bears] bore the racial epithet that was commonly used to describe the Chinese” (49). Significantly, Mawani does not bother to include the name of the machine’s inventor, E.A. Smith, mentioning only that the “Iron Chink” fish-butcher machine was “developed by a Canadian living in Seattle” (49). That Smith’s displacement from the actual canneries—and from B.C. itself—seems a more important piece of information than his actual name suggests a deliberate attempt to retell the narrative from a different perspective, namely, that of the Chinese labourers the machine replaced. Indeed, as we have seen, works dealing with the “Iron Chink” often focus on Smith’s story and his contributions to the advancement of the

fishing industry, glossing over the story of the Chinese labourers so crucial to the success of the canneries. Here, Mawani explicitly refuses to rehash the narrative of Smith's success, suggesting instead that she is exploring British Columbian history from a different vantage point, (re)imagining and (re)telling a narrative that tries to address the wounds of the past without reinstating them.

Furthermore, Mawani stresses the "other political work" that the "Iron Chink" performed in addition to its "nominal effects on replacing Chinese labour," including exemplifying the tensions between capitalism and biopolitical aspirations that marked British Columbia's settler economy—the simultaneous demands for profits, production, and cheap surplus labour, on the one hand, and the desire for racial homogeneity and purity, on the other. (50)

Thus, while Mawani outlines the fraught racial tensions embodied by the name, she nonetheless suggests a different reading of the machine, one that arguably brings agency back to the displaced Chinese butchers. Specifically, she reads the butchering machine as an "enduring reminder to cannery owners, white workers, and local authorities that Chinese labour had always been vital to the canning industry" (50).

However, I contend that Mawani's reading of the machine as a symbol of Chinese labour actually enables an erasure of a history of violence and discrimination against the Chinese, whether in the fishing industry or in larger society. It also does not take into account the Chinese butchers' own perceived relationships with the machine that took away their jobs and robbed them of their livelihood in a society that already marginalized them and restricted their employment opportunities. Far from celebrating Chinese contribution to the canning industry, then, I believe the "Iron Chink" is an enduring reminder that in the past, the Chinese were always seen by dominant society as a source of disposable labour, easily replaced. Furthermore, I argue

that the name *Iron Chink* itself, by subsuming the body of the Chinese labourer under the mechanical body of the machine, and by representing Asian workers as a different “super-evolved” species whose working and survival ability likened them more to robots than to humans, even while simultaneously and paradoxically Othering them as something less than human because of their “machine-like” work ethic, further dehumanizes the Chinese workers as simply replaceable machine parts. The name *Iron Chink*, therefore, makes more palatable the idea of displacing the Chinese labourers, as it contributes to the notion that they were merely cogs in a mechanical system to be replaced.

Nonetheless, Mawani’s assertion of the important political work that *Iron Chink* can potentially perform merits further consideration, especially in terms of the ways in which the machine has been incorporated into contemporary literature, artwork, and performances as a means of carrying out some of this political work. Certainly, these artists’ efforts have garnered attention in the media, thereby resurrecting the topic and (re)opening a space for dialogue that can work towards redressing this fraught history without necessarily rehashing familiar colonial discourses. Jim Wong-Chu, for example, incorporated the *Iron Chink* into his work as part of *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered*, a national exhibition featuring contemporary Asian Canadian artwork, including film, photography, and video, that toured from 1990-1991. Wong-Chu’s work in the exhibit included “five poem scrolls and the photo-triptych from *Iron Chink*”.<sup>20</sup> Another, more recent example is *Salmon Row*, a 2011 theatre production by the Mortal Coil Performance Society and directed by Peter Hall which “explores issues of immigration, ethnic conflict, labour history and memory” in the B.C. fishing industry alongside “the story of the salmon and the

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<sup>20</sup> Wong, Paul. “Yellow Peril: Reconsidered.” *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered*. OnEdge.tv: 20 Years of Contemporary Canadian Art, n.d. Web. 14 Apr. 2012.

constancy and mystery of its journey as it meets the need and greed of its human predators”.<sup>21</sup>

According to the reviews, a highlight of the performance involves a martial arts battle between the “Iron Chink” and a Chinese butcher, symbolic of the struggles of the Chinese labourers against being forcefully removed from their jobs as the machine replaced them, but also, on a larger scale, against the hegemonic system that marginalized and exploited them:

### 2011 – Iron Chink

Rather than rely on a conventional narrative form to tell this complex tale, Harwood and Hall should have stuck to the symbolic side of things, as when a Chinese cannery worker does menacing martial-arts battle with the **Iron Chink** (sadly, I kid you not) butchering machine that would replace him.

**Birnie, Peter. “Tale of fish swims too many narrative streams; Slap at capitalist excess and tribute to working stiffs drops threads in its 60 years of history.” *The Vancouver Sun*. 22 Aug. 2011. page D5. *Canadian Newsstand*. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.**

Importantly, this performance gives agency back to the Chinese workers; they actively engage in a battle against the machine that has been introduced to replace them. Similarly, Paul Yee attempts to give agency and voice back to his Chinese characters in his stories as he explores the “unrecognized historical contributions” of British Columbian Chinese labourers in his collection *Tales from Gold Mountain* (Chao 55). The closing tale of the collection “The Revenge of the Iron Chink” is a fictional retelling of the replacement of Chinese cannery workers by machines such as the “Iron Chink” which demystifies the “legendary setting” of the fish canneries and portrays instead the “dehumanizing social environment” faced by Chinese labourers in the fishing industry (Chao 56). Each of Yee’s eight folktales begins with a full-page illustration by Simon Ng, and the opening image for “The Revenge of the Iron Chink” is telling indeed (see Figure 3.7). Featuring a Chinese man with two raised bloodied and bandaged hands,

<sup>21</sup> “Salmon Row.” *Mortal Coil Performance Society*. n.p., n.d. Web. 19 Apr. 2012. For more information and for photos of the performance, visit the production’s official website at [www.mortalcoil.bc.ca/shows/current-show/salmon-row](http://www.mortalcoil.bc.ca/shows/current-show/salmon-row).

the “Iron Chink” canning machine in the background, and fish at the bottom of the page, the image immediately emphasizes the injured body of the Chinese worker, suggesting that, as the title implies, the “Iron Chink” has “taken revenge” on the worker by malfunctioning and injuring him somehow. However, this assumption is subverted once we reach the end of the story.

**Figure 3.7: Illustration accompanying Yee’s “The Revenge of the Iron Chink”**



Source: ‘The Revenge of the Iron Chink’ illustration taken from *Tales from Gold Mountain* by Paul Yee text ©1989 and illustrations Simon Ng © 1989 published by Groundwood Books reprinted with permission.

The tale itself centres on a Chinese butchering crew’s last days at a fishing cannery before they are forcibly displaced by the “Iron Chink” machine, which is introduced to eat “up hundreds of jobs [...] with a monstrous speed” (Chao 56), just as it “gobble[s] up the fish” (Yee 61). Chimney Head, the white owner of the cannery, is described as a “fat little man who [wears] a tall hat and puff[s] on cigars” and walks through the cannery without ever looking at the workers, “as if the smell of fish bother[s] him” (61). Yee emphasizes Chimney Head’s greed as

the main reason for introducing new machines and technologies to the cannery, noting that Chimney Head is “always hidden inside his office, adding columns of numbers and counting his money” (60). Lee Jim, the Chinese cannery manager, on the other hand, is respected by all of the workers; we are told that he “long[s] to laugh and joke with [the workers], but he [cannot]” because “company rules [say] that boss men [cannot] mix with the workers” (59-60). In addition, we learn that as Chimney Head eagerly anticipates the increased profit and renown brought to the cannery by his new butchering machine, he delights in the idea that he “[will] be known as the fastest canner on the west coast,” despite the fact that he has never done any canning (61). Here, Yee highlights the invisibility of the Chinese labourers in dominant discourse, where their contributions to the B.C. fishing industry are often ignored and uncredited, focusing instead on individuals such as E.A. Smith, the inventor of the “Iron Chink.”

What we realize by the end of this story is that the man with the bloodied, bandaged hands featured on the illustration page is Lee Jim, who upon his departure tells Chimney Head that “in two of the tins, [the Queen of England] will find [his] baby fingers [...] as sweet as any salmon meat [they] have canned!” (62). The idea that the Queen of England herself, symbolic head of the colonial enterprise, will engage in the consumption of the body of the Chinese workers (in the form of Lee Jim’s two fingers) directly links the monstrous “Iron Chink” with the dominant, hegemonic society and imperial powers. The implication, of course, is that the colonial enterprise itself is a well-oiled, churning machine that “gobbles” up its resources and inflicts violence upon the people it exploits, just as the “Iron Chink” gobbles up and butchers the fish. However, the final joke is on Chimney Head, as the final lines reveal that Lee Jim’s hands have not in fact been injured at all, and though the “red color deepen[s] on the long strips” as Lee Jim unrolls his bandages, his baby fingers are “still attached to his hands, as pink and healthy as any man’s” (62).

Thus, Yee's tale emphasizes "the solidarity of the workers" instead of "representing the Chinese cannery workers as mere victims of industrialization" (Chao 60). Indeed, Chao argues that "'The Revenge of the Iron Chink' is a crude verbal joke; yet its punch line, that Jim's fingers are not in the cans, foregrounds the workers' struggle" (60). I suggest, therefore, that Yee's use of "Iron Chink" here is at once a refusal to allow his characters to become the passive victims of systemic racial oppression and a reclamation of the term. That Lee Jim is actually the "Iron Chink" of the title who takes revenge is made all the more significant by the fact that he is ultimately able to "take revenge" *without* actually using the sharp blades of the "Iron Chink" to cut his baby fingers. Furthermore, the conflation of man and machine here suggest a collaborative effort to avenge the injustices done upon the workers. At the end of the day, it is not the machine that monstrosly "gobble[s]" up the province's resources and exploits the workers, but the greedy imperial powers and dominant society as represented by Chimney Head. By conflating the Chinese worker and the machine as "Iron Chinks" who take revenge, Yee ultimately does not disavow the butchering machine as an important technological advancement in the fishing industry, but instead, critiques the use of the machine to systematically displace and further disadvantage an already marginalized people for the sake of profit and greed.

Overall, like *half-breed*, the complex politics and history behind *Iron Chink*, including the ways in which both the term and the machine for which it is name further enabled the displacement and oppression of the Chinese labourers, are not represented in the *DCHP-1* by either the definition or the citations. Furthermore, despite the fact that *Iron Chink* does not have the same ambiguity as *half-breed* does in terms of its perceived derogatory connotations and is considered a racist nickname by Chinese and non-Chinese people alike, the dictionary contains no usage labels designating it so. Any revision project, therefore, must address these points. In addition to editing the definition to more accurately represent the fraught sociohistorical,

economic and political climate in which the term was coined (as well as perhaps inserting a footnote that provides a longer explanation), the entry should be updated with citations that reflect usage of the term by Chinese Canadians themselves and the ways in which *Iron Chink* is used to assert an alternative narrative of resistance and redress (see Appendix 2 for an example a revised entry for *Iron Chink*).

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

With the planned release of the *DCHP-2* in 2014, it seems all the more incumbent upon us to re-examine the dictionary and address the first publication's editorial problems. Certainly, in addition to adding new entries that were overlooked in 1967 or which have come into existence since then, the *DCHP* revision project will also edit and update the existing entries. Stefan Dollinger, chief editor of the *DCHP-2* project, notes that the revision project will address "socially sensitive" entries and "[correct] (and possibly [purge]) misconceived and outdated" ones ("Towards"). In my thesis, I have explored the ways in which editorial biases and nationalist ideologies influenced the compilation of the *DCHP-1*, privileging a colonial perspective in its construction of a "master narrative of the nation" (Thobani 4). Performing an in-depth study of two problematic terms in the *DCHP-1*, *half-breed* and *Iron Chink*, I hope to have provided one possible model of research for how other entries in the dictionary may be studied and updated, as well as to have demonstrated the necessity for a major overhaul of different aspects of the dictionary in order to push it towards greater cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.

Some proposed changes include, but are not limited to, updating the status labels for accuracy and consistency, editing and even rewriting definitions, and adding more representative citations of usage. In addition, Willinsky observes that the *OED* has also had to "respond to the challenge of a redefined situation" over the years by adding "small-type notes, the addition of historical context, and the deliberate citation of the counter-instances" (*Empire* 143), practices that the *DCHP-1* can adopt as well. These counter-instances are especially important for their ability to disrupt the dominant narrative and to demonstrate usage of a term without privileging the colonial gaze. Furthermore, the editorial processes that went on behind the scenes in the compilation of the *DCHP-1* are ripe for further research. Future investigations, for example, may

involve examining the *DCHP-1*'s bibliographical sources or looking at the grounds for inclusion/exclusion of certain headwords and their relation to an Anglocentric narrative of colonialism and settlement history in the dictionary.

An examination of the *DCHP-1*'s selection of bibliographical sources, for example, may draw from Brewer's work on the *OED* and investigate the representation of literary sources in the bibliography. After all, the same period that saw an increased desire to define a Canadian national identity and identify a unique Canadian English lexicon also saw a growing interest in the formation of a Canadian canon, as Robert Lecker notes. We have already seen from studies of the *OED* the ways in which literature—specifically, that of canonical authors—was seen as embodying the spirit and culture of the nation, and thus was the favoured source for citations, and I wonder here whether any of those research questions may be applied to a study of the *DCHP-1*. If, as has been argued by scholars such as Brewer, Willinsky, and now Lecker, canonical writers are often seen as exemplary sources for quotation because they represent the language used at its “best”, how did the increased interest in forming a Canadian canon inform the source selection for the *DCHP-1*? To which sources of writing did the editors turn in their search for headwords and citations? How did the Canadian canon in its earlier conceptions influence the dictionary's contents, and in turn, how might the dictionary's citation of certain sources have validated them *as* Canadian literature and therefore pushed them to *become* canon? Dictionary citations, after all, “establish the contribution of a given piece of writing to the formation to [...] language,” thus affirming the work *as* canon even while it “puts it to work in the service of a national culture and character” (Willinsky, *Empire* 197). Future studies, then, may draw from studies such as Lecker's work on investigating “what forces of inclusion and exclusion” influenced the creation of the canon (4), and examine the correlation between literary works excluded and included in the dictionary and in various anthologies.

However, I also wonder about the *DCHP-2*'s potential to push the boundaries of the colonial narrative that the *DCHP-1* as a whole conveys. In addition to revising individual entries so that they are more socially sensitive, in other words, can these entries be framed in such a way that emphasizes the plurality of histories that make up the Canadian fabric instead of the overarching one that focuses on settler history? In his work on the Canadian canon, Lecker calls for a "rehistoricization of Canadian literature" in terms of a "new and rewritten conception of history as a narrative that is not received but created, not dictated but free, false, in flux" (47). I believe a historical dictionary of Canadian English can—and has a responsibility to—take part in this rehistoricization of Canadian identity, portraying a narrative that acknowledges and includes the various cultural groups that contributed to—and continue to contribute to—the language. Canadian English, after all, did not develop in a culturally homogenous vacuum. Barbara Harris finds, for instance, that loanwords "account for well over half of the total number of borrowings in Canadian English" with over half of these borrowings being "derived from French or Canadian French, just over a third from Amerindian languages, and the rest from non-standard British dialects or other non-native sources" (35). I wonder, then, about the potential for the *DCHP-2* to emphasize the distinctly non-homogenous nature of Canadian English and to reframe Canadian history as Canadian *histories*, as spaces of contact and conversation. In particular, Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone" is relevant here, which Pratt describes as "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (as qtd in Wah96). Importantly, the concept of the "contact zone" foregrounds the relationships and interactions between different minority groups, turning the focus away from the binary relation between the colonizer and the colonized.

Such a refiguring of colonial relationships in a “cross-cultural, affirmative, and productive way” is essential to the (re)writing of the national narrative, Eva Darias-Beautell argues, as history “is never a given but is rather seen as the multiple inscriptions of the relations among pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial/neocolonial histories as experienced differently by the diverse regions and ethno-cultural groups” (126). One way in which the *DCHP*-1 may represent the plurality of histories making up the Canadian fabric and influencing Canadian English, therefore, may be to include counter-instance citations that draw from unconventional sources and postcolonial texts. Many writers, after all, have negotiated the colonial past and incorporated these terms in an act of counter-discourse and counter-narrative. Paul Yee’s “The Revenge of the Iron Chink” is one example, as it co-opts a racist nickname and acknowledges the term’s fraught history even while it reframes it to tell a counter-narrative of agency and resistance from the very people displaced by the machine. The task now is to represent these counter-narratives. With the digitization of both the *DCHP*-1 and the *DCHP*-2, this becomes more feasible than ever, as citations can be updated and added regularly, allowing us to keep track of how these headwords continue to appear in Canadian writing, continue to be used, reused, reclaimed and reappropriated. But the fact that the *DCHP*’s electronic format now allows for continual updating underscores perhaps what is most valuable about giving voice to these alternative histories, these alternative narratives: the ability to represent a Canadian identity that is constantly shifting to make room for new voices and new viewpoints, an identity that is, as Lecker says, “free, false, in flux” (47).

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## Appendices


### Appendix 1: Example of Revised Entry for *half-breed*


**half-breed**<sup>†</sup> *historical, now often considered pejorative*


 Half-breed is often seen as pejorative and racist because it was used historically to justify the denial of mixed-ancestry peoples' fundamental rights as citizens by figuring them in terms that described them as less than whole. While some mixed-ancestry peoples self-identify as "half-breed", and some writers have reclaimed the term and appropriated it into their works, others are more ambivalent towards the term or even outright reject it.


- *n.* a person of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry.


See also: [half-Indian](#) *n.* [half-white](#) [Métis](#) [mixed-blood](#)


**1815** (1940) Article of Agreement entered into between the **Half-Breed** Indians of the Indian Territory on the one part and the Honorable Hudson's Bay Company on the other. . . . 


**1862** In this country, in fact, the name applies to all who have Indian blood in greater or less degree. This is the general acception of the term, and, in this sense nine-tenths or more of the civilised people of Rupert's Land are "**Half breeds.**" 

**1913** "No," said the Governor, again turning to the principal, "I certainly do not like the term '**half-breed.**' Most of the people on the continent of America are of mixed nationality—how few are pure English or Scotch or Irish—or indeed of any particular race? Yet the white people of mixed nations are never called **half-breeds.**" 

**1973** "Did you know the new government felt sorry for us because we're called '**Half-breeds**'? They passed a law changing our name and now we're CCF horses." 

**1983** It is no longer acceptable to write of "half-breed plainsmen" and "**half-breeds,**" even in a historical context (Metis Win Some - March 22). That abusive English term was used by early settlers. . . . 

**1989** [My boss] didn't ask *me* if I had walked across the neighbors' fields. Oh no. He automatically took whitey's word against mine. What could I expect though: I was only a sneaky **halfbreed.** 

**2012** "That's the thing about being a **half-breed.** I'd get called an Indian at school but scorned for being white on reserves." 

#### Citation Sources (in order of appearance)

The first two entries (**1815** and **1862**) are taken from the original *half-breed* entry in *DCHP-1*.

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**1973:** Campbell, Maria. *Halfbreed*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973. page 63. Print.


**1983:** Handbidge, Mary. "Abusive English term." *The Globe and Mail*. page 6. *Canadian Newsstand*. 11 Apr. 1983. Web. 20 Sep. 2011.

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## Appendix 2: Example of Revised Entry for *Iron Chink*


### **Iron Chink** *historical, pejorative*


 The “Iron Chink” displaced hundreds of Chinese labourers along the west coast and was introduced at a time that saw widespread and institutionalized discriminatory practices against the Chinese. The machine’s derogatory name plays off the racist stereotype of the Chinese labourers as nameless and faceless masses, rendering them into a cheap, mechanized workforce.


- *n.* a fish butchering machine designed to replace Chinese labourers employed in the west coast fishing industry. It was later renamed and re-patented as the Smith Butchering Machine.


**1913** In the salmon canneries the introduction of a machine called the “**Iron Chink**”, for cleaning and cutting the fish has made a great economy in the cost of labor. 

**1963** [Advert] Fishing company requires qualified **iron chink** operator. Also filling machine operator. Apply to Box 1617, Sun, for interview. 

**1988** Blyth pointed out one artifact with a name that spoke of the racial discrimination that was part of highly-segregated cannery life: a mechanical fish-dressing machine known as the **Iron Chink** because it replaced Chinese workers. 

**1989** Lee Jim sat with [the Chinese workers], feeling angry and cheated. [...] The next day, the final load of salmon arrived. The workers watched as the **Iron Chink** gobbled up the fish. The belts whirled, the wheels turned, and the gears zipped as smooth as ocean waves sliding over the sandy beach. 

**2007** During the early 1900s the word ‘Chink’ was a derogatory term used by the dominant non-Asian community to describe people of Chinese origin. The machine was called the ‘**Iron Chink**’ because it was a big iron machine that replaced Chinese men who used to butcher the salmon by hand. [...] The name ‘**Iron Chink**’ reflected the racial segregation that existed in society and in the canneries at the time. The name persisted for decades in the west coast salmon canning industry. Today the machines are known as butchering machines or iron butchers. 

**2011** Rather than rely on a conventional narrative form to tell this complex tale, Harwood and Hall should have stuck to the symbolic side of things, as when a Chinese cannery worker does menacing martial-arts battle with the **Iron Chink** (sadly, I kid you not) butchering machine that would replace him. 

#### Citation Sources (in order of appearance)

The first two citations (**1913** and **1963**) are taken from the original *Iron Chink* entry in *DCHP-1*.

**1988:** Hamilton, Gordon. “Abandoned cannery evokes faded visions, fresh dreams: [3\* Edition].” *The Vancouver Sun*. 14 Jan. 1988. page F15. *Canadian Newsstand*. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.

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**2007:** “Butchering Salmon.” *In Their Words: The Story of BC Packers*. City of Richmond, 2007. Web. 14 Mar. 2012.

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