

CHILD IMMIGRANTS TO THE “EDGE OF EMPIRE”:
FAIRBRIDGE CHILD MIGRANTS AND BRITISH COLUMBIA’S
QUEST FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE “WHITE MAN’S
PROVINCE”

by

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Abstract

Beginning in the 1860s British children participated in migration schemes to Canada. Philanthropists, motivated by evangelical beliefs and despair at the state of childhood for homeless and dependent children in Britain, would send 80,000 British boys and girls to Canada between 1867 and 1929. Placed with Canadian families in rural communities, the schemes directed these children toward lives as farm labourers and housewives. By the 1920s, rampant opposition to these child migration schemes in central and eastern Canada brought about their termination. Opponents of child migration, mobilized the language of eugenics to condemn the children sent to Canada as “degenerate castoffs” of British society, and argued that the children were beyond saving and posed a threat to Canadian society. This was not the end of child migration to Canada, however, for in 1935 the Fairbridge Society, a rescue organization, opened the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School in British Columbia. This final scheme would see 329 children sent to British Columbia before its demise in 1950.

The earlier period of child migration to Canada, 1860 to 1929, has received the majority of scholarly attention with the recommencement in 1935 often overlooked. This thesis examines how the Fairbridge Farm School at Cowichan Station was able to open and operate in British Columbia without popular opposition by exploring how British Columbian constructions of whiteness were projected onto and internalized by the operators of the Farm School and its children, and in doing this incorporate the Fairbridge Farm School into the larger narrative of child migration to Canada.

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Introduction

“Lame, knock-kneed, humpbacked and cross eyed...his mouth was crooked and he was short-sighted and of weak intellect.”¹ This was how the sixteen-year-old victim, George Everitt Green was described during the manslaughter trial of Miss Helen Findlay. Shipped to Canada in March 1895 by *Dr Barnardo's*, George was one of thousands of poor British children sent across the Atlantic for a better life. Nine months later George lay dead.² “Emaciated [and covered in] wounds caused by physical abuse;” the coroner described the teenager who had been beaten with axe handles and pitchforks.³ Even with such horrendous descriptions of abuse it was the depiction of George as “stupid...slow” and of “peculiar appearance” which garnered the most attention in court as it was used by the defence to get Helen Findley acquitted.⁴ The jury claimed that, due to his shortcomings, George could have had some disease “inherent in his system” which directly caused his death.⁵ The sad case of George Green became a centerpiece of the politics surrounding child migration schemes to Canada as opponents of the system mobilized it to argue that migrating children were defective and unhealthy and therefore posed a threat to Canadian society.

Child migration from Britain to Canada began in the 1860s. Initiated and maintained by various evangelical philanthropists and organizations the schemes, by 1929, had seen 80,000 British boys and girls from orphanages and slums sent to Canada.⁶ Once in Canada the children were placed with local farmers, mainly in central Canada, where they were ‘transformed’ into farm labourers and housewives. Hard work and rural environs were

¹ Roy Parker, *Uprooted: The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867 – 1917*, (Bristol: Policy Press, 2008), 155-6.

² Joy Parr, “George Everitt Green”, Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, accessed on April 1 2013, <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?Bioid=40255>.

³ Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 107.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., i.

believed to morally and physically save the children from their ‘degenerate’ lives in the slums of Britain. By the 1920s the labour movement, politicians and child welfare workers mounted a growing opposition to the scheme on the basis of the children being degenerate castoffs, which would bring about the termination of all child migration to Canada. The 1930s, however, saw a rekindling of interest in western Canada for child migration and from this came the Fairbridge Farm School in British Columbia.

Opening in the midst of worldwide economic hardship, the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School at Cowichan Station, Vancouver Island, welcomed its first shipment of British children in 1935. In the tradition of earlier migration schemes, the Fairbridge School aimed to educate the children in domestic service and farm labor, yet with one important difference: these children would be together in a school, rather than fostered out to private homes. From the outset, various organizations and individuals in British Columbia embraced the Fairbridge community calling it “an inspiring scheme.”⁷ When the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School closed in 1950 it signaled the end of Canada’s century long experiment in child migration schemes.

While academic interest in child migration can be traced to Joy Parr and her 1980 book, *Labouring Children*, which was an expansion of her doctoral dissertation, public curiosity was not drawn to child migration schemes until the late 1980s with the work of British social worker Margaret Humphreys. Humphreys’, who worked in post-adoption support, received a letter in 1986, from a woman in Australia who claimed she had been shipped to Australia, aged four, by a British children’s home and was now seeking to trace her parents. Initially shocked by the claim Humphreys’ began researching child migration schemes in Britain before travelling to Australia to meet former migrants, the majority of

⁷ Newspaper article, *Standard*, No Date, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

whom sought “to discover [their] roots” and find out why they had been sent away.⁸ Humphreys’ work and campaigning brought widespread public acknowledgment of child migration schemes, which resulted in the British Government’s 1998 Health Committee enquiry into the assisted migration of thousands of children from Britain to Australia, Canada and Rhodesia.

As the titles of many of the studies suggest, the focus of much academic work is the period between 1860 and 1930, such as Joy Parr’s *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869 -1924* and Roy Parker’s *Uprooted: The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867-1917*.⁹ The result of this has been that historians have left the short-lived Fairbridge Farm School out of the story.

The focus of the leading studies by Parr, Parker and Gillian Wagner’s *Children of the Empire* have dealt extensively with the overwhelmingly negative experiences of the children at the hands of ‘foster parents’ who turned the children into little more than indentured servants. In tandem with this focus these historians have detailed how the opposition movement to the migration schemes in Canada helped the professionalization of child welfare in the country. The recommencement of child migration in 1935 and the establishment of the Fairbridge Farm School has in comparison received very little academic engagement. It was not until Marjorie Kohli’s 2003 study, *The Golden Bridge*, that the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School was incorporated into the narrative of child migration to Canada.¹⁰ Kohli’s work has since led other scholars to follow suit, such as, Stephen Constantine and Marjorie Harper in their 2010 book, *Migration and Empire*. None of these studies, however, have engaged with the recommencement of child migration in an analytical

⁸ Margaret Humphreys, *Empty Cradles: A shameful secret, A miscarriage of justice, And a woman who wouldn't give up*, (Corgi Books: London, 2011), 32-3, 62 & 143.

⁹ Parr, *Labouring Children*, Parker, *Uprooted*.

¹⁰ Marjorie Kohli, *The Gold Bridge: Young Immigrants to Canada, 1833 – 1939*, (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2003), 206.

way that matches the studies of the earlier migration schemes.¹¹ Harper and Constantine's inclusion of Fairbridge was little more than a footnote, reading, "from 1935 to Vancouver Island (Prince of Wales),"¹² whereas Kholi's, though much more detailed only consisted of one short paragraph detailing the school's opening, reception of children and then closure.¹³

Historian Patrick Dunae has been the only scholar to actively engage with the Fairbridge Farm School in British Columbia, publishing articles analyzing child welfare practices, gender, class and memory at the school. Dunae has argued the reason for the neglect of the Fairbridge School in the Canadian narrative of child migration may in part be due to the characterization, by Old Fairbridgians, of the Farm School experience as generally positive. Dunae, who has conducted interviews with former child migrants from the Farm School, has reported that the overwhelming response, when asked about their experiences at the school was a favorable one. Many former students articulated their gratitude for having the opportunity, for what they saw as a better life than they believed they would have experienced in Britain.¹⁴ This adds an interesting dynamic to the child migrant discourse, as it complicates the characterization of child migration as overwhelmingly negative. In particular the respondents to Dunae's questions recorded overt offense to the characterization of all forms of child migration as abusive and scarring for those involved. Dunae argues that scholars have "ignored the voices of those who do not consider themselves victims" because they do not fit with the "world view" that all child welfare institutions were and are "inherently corrupt."¹⁵

¹¹ Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration & Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 257.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Kholi, *The Golden Bridge*, 207.

¹⁴ Patrick A. Dunae, "Recollections of Fairbridge: British Child Emigrants in Canada", (paper presented at annual meeting of the Social Science History Association, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, October 27 2000), 11-2.

¹⁵ Ibid., 12-17.

Unsurprisingly the discussion of changing child welfare beliefs has come to dominate the analysis of British Columbia's Fairbridge Farm School. Dunae has highlighted how the emphasis on de-institutionalization of child welfare in Canada, which rose to prominence in the 1930s, contributed to the closure of the British Columbia Farm School two decades later. Expanding on this, Dunae has linked these changing attitudes to differences in the gender, generation and social class of the older imperial gentlemen who operated the Farm School, and the young middle class female social workers who actively sought to terminate the scheme from its inception. These changing attitudes to child welfare in the 1930s were part of a larger international shift in child welfare thinking and practice. As Geoffrey Sherington and Chris Jeffrey have argued, in a parallel study on the Fairbridge Society, child migration schemes to Australia did not end until the 1960s due to continued support in the country where the schemes were viewed as ideal post-war immigration; children did not compete for jobs and easily assimilated into Australian society. It was in fact only because of a shift in thinking in the United Kingdom, whereby a preference for reuniting children with families, rather than institutional care or adoption, meant the transportation of children to Australia ceased.¹⁶

The engagement with the changing ideas on child welfare, like the favoring of fostering or adoption over orphanages, and aversion to institutional care in 1930s British Columbia is important to the study of the Farm School. It was these changing beliefs which instigated the minimal, but outright, opposition that did occur in British Columbia from child welfare workers who begrudged non-governmental private child welfare operations. Coupled with financial difficulties brought about by the Second World War, the Fairbridge scheme in

¹⁶ Geoffrey Sherington & Chris Jeffery, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration*, (Portland: Woodburn Education Series, 1998), 212-19. While Patirck Dunae has described Sherington and Jeffrey's *Fairbridge* as the definitive study on the Fairbridge Society, in their discussion of the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School, Sherington and Jeffrey acknowledge that their analysis draws extensively from Dunae and does not add any new analysis to the specific discussion surrounding Fairbridge in British Columbia.

Canada was terminated in the late 1940s. However, there has been little engagement with how the Farm School came to be celebrated by communities in British Columbia, before and during the school's existence, when an atmosphere of hostility towards all immigration existed. Dunae's work has demonstrated that the Farm School came to be established due to imperial sentiment and personal relationships between Canadian federal politicians and the Fairbridge Board of Directors. While this is undisputable, merely reading the events surrounding the Farm School's establishment in this way fails to recognize the particular scaffolding upon which the School was built in British Columbia.

British Columbia was a product of a specific moment in nation building when race animated the construction of identity. This thesis examines how the Fairbridge Farm School at Cowichan Station was able to open and operate in the province without popular opposition by exploring how British Columbian constructions of whiteness were projected onto and internalized by the operators of the Farm School and its children, and in doing this incorporate the Fairbridge Farm School in British Columbia into the larger narrative of child migration to Canada.

To demonstrate how British Columbia's construction of whiteness was tied to Fairbridge, and presented to the general public, articles from various newspapers in Vancouver and Vancouver Island about the Farm School, from between 1936 and 1948, will be utilized. Alongside the media sources, reports from both the Fairbridge Society in London and the Principals at the school will be used to present how those who ran Fairbridge internalized British Columbia's construction of whiteness.

This study begins with a brief discussion of the history of child rescue, the role it played in empire building at the start of the twentieth century and its evolution into child migration schemes to Canada. From there the focus will move to how the ideas on race

perpetuated by the child rescue movement influenced the beliefs of the Fairbridge Society and its founder, Kingsley Fairbridge, and how this led the Society to establish a farm school in British Columbia five years after the demise of all other child migration schemes to the country. From there the thesis examines the concept of whiteness and how it was conceived and played out in British Columbia. By studying the history of the province, and exploring how the colony of British Columbia developed in isolation from other British colonies, it becomes clear that this led white settlers to internalize ideas of whiteness in the face of a large Aboriginal population and large scale Asian immigration. This resulted, by the early twentieth century, in what Patricia Roy has described as the construction of British Columbia, in the minds of white settlers, as, “a white man’s province.”¹⁷ From here the thesis will focus more narrowly on how the Fairbridge Farm School fitted into and reinforced the racial discourse of the province by examining how the individuals who ran Fairbridge internalized ideas of whiteness. Following from there this thesis examines the motives behind the supporters of Fairbridge in British Columbia and how the provincial press helped present the School as a purveyor of whiteness through the widespread detailed reports on all aspects of the School.

Finally, the thesis analyses the voice of the Fairbridge children as students of the school and then as adults. Examining the student run paper, the *Fairbridge Gazette*, and the 1942 radio broadcast, raises the problematic nature of discovering the children’s experiences at the school as all accounts could have been produced under supervision of Fairbridge staff who saw the scheme as an ideal instrument of empire citizenship. Letters from recent graduates of the school and interviews conducted by provincial welfare workers provide a slightly less influenced construction of the children’s time at Fairbridge, though it is perhaps

¹⁷ Patricia Roy, *A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), vii – xvii.

not until the Fairbridgians reached adulthood that a more balanced view of the school appeared.

Canada and Britain's Children

In the nineteenth century the concept of childhood and what it meant to be a child underwent profound change under the weight of industrialization.¹⁸ As adult life became more bleak in Britain's newly industrial cities, childhood became seen as "the other"; an idyllic existence where one was in touch with nature and the virtues of earlier periods were preserved.¹⁹ These shifts resulted in the growing assertion of a prescriptive childhood ideal in which children were viewed as future citizens, not simply parental property; these developments in turn influenced the advent of the child rescue movement. Beginning in 1844 with the establishment of the Ragged School Union by the Earl of Shaftesbury, the child rescue movement can be seen as an outbranch of the Empire-wide evangelical movement that sought to "civilize" native populations through conversion to Christianity. Evangelical philanthropists also turned their attention towards Britain's industrial cities in the nineteenth century to deal with what they perceived to be a threat from within, endangering the future of the nation, race and Empire: the children of the poor.²⁰

The industrialization and urbanization of Britain involved a dramatic transformation in lifestyles of the rich and poor, and subsequently produced deep anxieties about a widespread decline in the health of the nation. Britain, the British race and the Empire were seen as "no greater than its citizens," which, due to the rise of a new industrial working class, was fragile and in danger.²¹ Forced to live in cramped housing and squalor the poor became characterized as diseased, criminal and inferior to the middle and upper classes. Middle-class observers racialized poor children, calling them "street Arabs" who lived in "disgusting

¹⁸ Margot Hillel & Shurlee Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850-1915*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 3.

¹⁹ Hugh Cunningham in Hillel & Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

filth” and sported a “wild” appearance and “barbarian freedom.”²² Fearing for the health of the nation, evangelical philanthropists like Thomas Barnardo saw the children of this class as “malleable and open to salvation” and the key to the prevention of a wider degradation to society.²³

Barnardo, who began working in the East End of London after arriving from Ireland in 1866, established his first permanent receiving home for poor children in 1870 and from there established himself as one of the most influential child rescuers of the nineteenth century. Barnardo and three of his peers, Thomas Bowman Stephenson, Edward de Montjoie Rudolf and Benjamin Waugh, shaped public opinion on childhood and thus helped transform child welfare policy. Highlighting the vulnerability of children through illustrations of the poverty in which the children lived, these evangelical philanthropists constructed an image of the child that emphasized its citizenship and central role as the future of the nation, race and Empire. In shaping the public opinion in this manner these philanthropists created the welfare policy of proactive removal of children from corrupting environments. For the child rescuers, corrupting environments included city slums and parents they deemed unsuitable. The thinking behind such a policy was that if a child could be removed from a corrupting environment early enough they would be prevented from descending further into poverty and criminality, thus securing the next generation.²⁴

For child rescuers in the nineteenth century, rural England was viewed as the perfect environment for saving children as it offered an environment completely opposite to that of the cities. Described as ‘idyllic’, the English countryside was deemed more physically and morally pure than the city due to the clean air, green fields and hardworking farmers who

²² Earl of Shaftsbury, 1844, in Hillel & Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, 9.

²³ Hillel & Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, 17.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-35.

inhabited it. In removing children to the English countryside philanthropists sought to convert children into a prosperous and productive workforce through religious education and agricultural training.²⁵

As child rescue came to be seen as essential for national survival, the philanthropists involved began looking farther afield, in particular to the white settler colonies of the Empire. While the migration of children from Britain to its colonies was not an invention of the evangelical philanthropists of the nineteenth century,²⁶ it was a natural progression for the child rescue movement as Barnardo described emigration as, “the final stage of child rescue.”²⁷ The Empire was seen by many of those involved with child rescue as offering the children opportunity and redemption. The colonies lacked the slums of Britain, instead offering an untouched environment where the children could be constructed into good citizens of the Empire. By transporting the children out of Britain child savers at once sought to save the children and rid Britain of its surplus population, while also providing the Empire with loyal white citizens in colonies, like Canada.

Canada’s history of receiving British child migrants is largely framed by the years 1867 and 1929. During these decades the evangelical philanthropists sent 80,000 British boys and girls to Canada. The children were typically placed with Canadian families in rural communities, mainly in Ontario and New Brunswick, where the organizations operating the schemes had receiving homes close to the ports of entry. Originating in 1867 with the sending of girls by Miss Maria Rye, who had previously been involved in facilitating the emigration of women to Australia and New Zealand, child migration expanded in 1870 when Miss Annie Macpherson began a scheme involving both girls and boys. The number of

²⁵ Ibid., 64-74.

²⁶ Britain had sent children to the Virginia colony in the 1600s, see Stephen Constantine, ‘Child migration: philanthropy, the state and the empire’, *History in Focus*, accessed April 1 2013, <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/welfare/articles/constantines.html>.

²⁷ Thomas Barnardo in Hillel & Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, 112.

philanthropists involved in child migration steadily grew until a peak at the start of the twentieth century with estimates of up to thirty separate organizations involved in child migration and over 2500 children being sent to Canada annually.²⁸

Barnardo, who had previously sent children through Annie Macpherson, began operating independently in 1882, from where the Barnardo's name would go on to become synonymous with child migration in Canada. Fuelled by the idea that rehabilitation of the poor would come from training in farm labour and domestic work, upon arriving in Canada the children were sent out to local farmers, where, as historian Joy Parr has argued, many become little more than indentured servants.²⁹

While the schemes and children were at first celebrated by local communities in Canada, by the 1920s rampant opposition to such schemes brought about its termination. In central and eastern Canada, opposition vocalized by trade unions, members of Parliament, the press and child welfare workers, effectively argued against all child migration to the Dominion, helping to bring the schemes to a close. Appearing first in the 1890s, opposition to the migration of destitute British children to Canada slowly built until its peak in the 1920s. While the main groups of opposition shifted between the 1890s and 1920s, one key theme remained the same: these migrant children threatened Canada. Many opponents to the emigration schemes saw impoverished children as inherently criminal; so much so, that a new environment could not transform them into good citizens. The Toronto Trades and Labour Council, led by DJ O'Donoghue, was one of the first groups to mobilize opposition around the threat of migrant British children. O'Donoghue used the unfortunate case of George Green as the corner piece of the Council's argument that child migrants were not only

²⁸ Kohli, *Golden Bridge*, 376-377.

²⁹ Joy Parr, *Labouring Children*, 54-5.

inherently criminal but also physically incapable of the tasks for which they were being brought to Canada.³⁰ At the same time, certain medical doctors seated as Members of Parliament, argued that these children were carriers of defects and disease, in particular feeble-mindedness, tuberculosis, and syphilis. The MPs effectively ‘medicalized’ a political issue as they made outrageous claims that the defects carried by the immigrant children could easily be passed on to healthy Canadian children merely by association. As a result, these MPs began to push Parliament for the introduction of compulsory physical and mental tests of all children sent to Canada. These cases of opposition were some of the first instances when the supposed health and biological threat posed by the child migrants to the Canadian nation were used to oppose the schemes, foreshadowing what was to come following the rise of eugenic thinking in the twentieth century.³¹

With the emergence of eugenics as an accepted science at the beginning of the twentieth century, opponents to child migration were handed a much stronger platform from which to challenge the migration schemes. Eugenics, which first emerged in Britain around the 1880s with the work of Sir Francis Galton, was the study of how the hereditary nature of characteristics, such as criminality and disease, were more influential on a person’s development than the environment in which they lived. Eugenic theory became popular among the professional classes, particularly social workers and doctors.³² Coinciding with the rise of eugenics was the professionalization of social welfare in Canada, which brought about a new class of social workers dominated by middleclass women like Charlotte Whitton.

³⁰ See life of George Green in introduction, 1; Active opposition from the Toronto Trades & Labour Council ceased with the appointment of Labour leaders to immigration posts. Labour leader Alfred F. Jury, was appointed an immigration agent for the Canadian government in Liverpool, while O’Donoghue was made Canada’s first fair wage officer – see Parker, *Uprooted*, 156-7.

³¹ Parker, *Uprooted*, 162-5.

³² Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885 – 1945*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1990), 50-9.

Born in 1896 in Ontario to descendants of British immigrants, Whitton was raised as a patriotic member of the British Empire.³³ After graduating from Queen's University in 1918 Whitton was offered a job with the Social Service Council of Canada (S.S.C.C.). From her position in the S.S.C.C. Whitton founded the Canadian Council on Child Welfare (C.C.C.W.) in 1920. Whitton then went on, after 1922, to transform the C.C.C.W. into Canada's major child welfare organization with significant political influence concerning child welfare. Using organizations like the C.C.C.W and S.S.C.C. Whitton, acting as a spokesperson for welfare workers, campaigned to end child migration to Canada through petitioning the government and producing numerous reports on the shortfalls of the schemes and the weakness in the quality of children being sent. Many of these reports and calls for the end of child migration highlighted the eugenic beliefs held by the child welfare opponents.³⁴ Whitton and her fellow social workers' central issue with child migration was that they believed "Great Britain [was] just trying to rid itself of its undesirables," thus the children being sent to Canada were "defectives."³⁵ For the social workers "ill health and low mentality" were the major faults of the children being sent which, in their view, was due to the class of children; their parents were alcoholics, criminals and immoral, and as such, "these children [were] handicapped from birth."³⁶

For the opponents of child migration, who had mobilized the language of eugenics to condemn child migrants as "degenerate castoffs" of British society, the children were beyond

³³ Patricia T. Rooke & R.L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton A Feminist on the Right*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 7-23.

³⁴ Charlotte E. Whitton, *Some aspects of the immigration problem: prepared for the Committee on Industrial Life and Immigration of the Social Service Council of Canada*, (Toronto: College Press, 1922), Library and Archives Canada; Canadian Council on Child Welfare, *Some Angles of Discussion on the Juvenile Immigrant Problem of Canada*, (Ottawa: C.C.C.W., 1924), Library and Archives Canada; Canadian Council on Child Welfare, *Juvenile Immigration Report No. 2*, (Ottawa: C.C.C.W., 1925), Library and Archives Canada; J. Breckenridge McGregor, "Several Years Later" (*An analysis of the histories of a selected group of juvenile immigrants brought to Canada in 1910, and in 1920, by British Emigration Societies*), (Ottawa: C.C.C.W., 1928), Library & Archives of Canada.

³⁵ C.C.C.W., *Some Angles of Discussion on the Juvenile Immigrant Problem of Canada*, 1.

³⁶ McGregor, *Several Years Later*, 6.

saving and posed nothing less than a threat to Canadian society. This opposition led to the commission of the 1924 Bondfield Report by the British government that sought to investigate the claims of inferiority and mistreatment. The British government subsequently sent a committee, headed by the British MP Margret Bondfield, to Canada to review the child migration schemes. While the report was overwhelmingly positive about the schemes and organizations involved, Bondfield suggested that only children of fourteen years and older be sent to Canada, as they were expected to work upon arriving.³⁷ The Bondfield report subsequently resulted in the Ontario Immigrant Children's Protection Act of 1924. The repercussions of this act meant that no children under-fourteen were allowed to be transported to the province under the child migration schemes; a juvenile could be sent to Ontario only after passing the vetting process. The Act also required that all societies had to keep detailed records on all the children sent, including their family history.³⁸ The result of these increasing limitations on child migration schemes and continued opposition ensured a gradual decline in the number of children sent to Canada and the eventual termination of all schemes in 1929. Opponents of child migration, like the C.C.C.W. and Whitton, celebrated the final termination of the schemes as a triumph, believing they had saved Canada from the "mental taint" of the children that had been "infiltrating the whole of our [Canadian] race."³⁹

Following the conclusion of child migration schemes to Canada in 1929, organizations involved in this vein of child rescue refocused their attention on Australia, which had remained secondary to Canada as a preferred destination for children due to transportation costs. As operators of child migration schemes shifted their attention towards

³⁷ Margaret Bondfield, *Report of the Delegation appointed to obtain information regarding the system of child migration and settlement in Canada*, (London: House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1924).

³⁸ Statutes of the Province of Ontario, Chapter 14 George V, *The Immigrant Children's Protection Act*, 1924, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁹ Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons, Fourth Session-Fourteenth Parliament, Volume III, 1925, (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1925), 4188.

Australia at the start of the twentieth century there was also a shift away from the evangelicalism that had been at the core of child migration schemes, as the imperialist concepts of schemes became the more important ideology.

One organization not propelled by religious sentiments, but by the ideas of Empire and race was the Fairbridge Society and its founder, Kingsley Fairbridge. Though a relative newcomer to child rescue and migration, Fairbridge would become one of its most celebrated schemes. Fairbridge, a Rhodes Scholar from southern Africa and enthusiastic believer in Empire, had formed the Child Emigration Society in 1904 while at Oxford University. Fairbridge had envisioned “shift[ing] the orphanages of Britain...to the shores of Greater Britain,” the “man-hungry corner[s] of the Empire,” so that the Empire could be populated and cultivated by destitute children from the slums of British cities, and thus secure a white loyal populace for the empire.⁴⁰ This drive led him to establish the first Child Emigration Society Farm School in 1912 in Pinjjara, Western Australia. Unlike many other societies involved in child rescue at this time, the Fairbridge Society did not operate its own orphanages in Britain, thus the selection process for children sent to the Fairbridge Farms depended upon third party organizations. These third party care homes and orphanages selected children that were believed healthy enough to pass the stringent medical examinations required by receiving nations and were then sent, by Fairbridge, to the relevant inspectors in London. The children who passed inspection were sent via ship to begin their lives at a Fairbridge Farm School.

In the farm school system used by Fairbridge the children lived in cottages overlooked by a ‘mother’, which aimed to provide more of a family environment than the majority of child welfare institutions in the early twentieth-century. The use of the cottage

⁴⁰ Kingsley Fairbridge, *The Autobiography of Kingsley Fairbridge*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), 143.

system was not unique to Fairbridge, as many child welfare institutions, such as Barnardo's,⁴¹ had shifted to the use of "family cottages" in an attempt to placate critics of institutions.⁴² The farm school system also attempted to ensure patriarchal governance with a principal who oversaw the running of the school, and sought to prevent the widespread abuse British immigrant children had experienced in earlier migration schemes when the children were placed with families. The patriarchal governance was important because, as Veronica Strong-boag has argued, foster care came to be seen as an alternative to institutions in the twentieth century because fostering would ensure a return to the patriarchal governance that was found in family homes, whereas institutions may have been run solely by women.⁴³ The experience at the farm schools ensured that the children had both a patriarchal figure, in the principal, and a matriarch in the cottage mother, who oversaw all aspects of their "home" life in the cottage. For Fairbridge and its supporters the farm school system also provided an alternative to earlier migration schemes where the children were essentially fostered by rural families and subsequently many children, like George Green, experienced abuse as they were turned into little more than indentured servants.⁴⁴ In using the farm system, rather than fostering, however, the children lost any sense of individualism. Rather than allowing children to assimilate into Canadian society as individuals, as the earlier schemes had aimed, the farm school system took a group of British children and sought to develop them into Canadian citizens in a controlled environment before permitting the children to enter Canadian society.

⁴¹ Barnardo opened the Girls' Village Home in Ilford, a model village, in 1876, see: 'From Barrack Schools to Family Cottages: Creating Domestic Space for Late Victorian Poor Children', Lydia D. Murdoch, 147-173, in Jon Lawrence & Pat Starkey (ed.), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: International Perspectives*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001).

⁴² Veronica Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation?: Canada Confronts Its History of Childhood Disadvantage*, (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press), 47.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁴ Parr, *Labouring Children*, 54-5; Rye & Macpherson used "contracts of indenture", Kohli. *The Golden Bridge*, 359-361.

The regiment at the farm schools meant the children spent their time split between formal education and practical training: agriculture for boys and domestic duties for girls. The children remained at the farm schools until they were sixteen, at which time they were sent out on work placement. The aim of this was to simultaneously mold the children into hardworking labourers or farm wives and citizens of good character. The character training taught in the farm schools mirrored that of British boarding schools; although in the latter, children were directed towards leadership of the Empire, where child migrants were being instilled with ideas of loyalty to the Empire as a subordinate class of citizen.⁴⁵

Kingsley Fairbridge ran the organization from the Farm School in Pinjarra, Australia in conjunction with a committee in London until his death in 1924. Following Fairbridge's death the Child Emigration Society expanded the number of Farm Schools with two in Australia and one in British Columbia. In 1935 the Child Emigration Society was renamed the Fairbridge Society.⁴⁶

Despite the existence of rampant opposition in Canada, that had successfully and recently terminated child migration schemes to the country, interest in establishing a Fairbridge Farm School in the Dominion emerged in the early 1930s. Support for the reestablishment of a child emigration scheme appeared first from a private citizen who had no affiliation with the Fairbridge organization. Miss Bostock, daughter of Hewitt Bostock, founder of the British Columbia newspaper *The Province* and speaker of the Canadian Senate until his death in 1930, approached the Canadian government in 1931 and enquired about establishing a farm school in British Columbia, a province where child migration schemes had previously not operated. The motivation behind such interest was in part philanthropic

⁴⁵ Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation?*, 51.

⁴⁶ Sherington & Jeffery, *Fairbridge*, 9.

but also because Miss Bostock believed that a child migration scheme would have been nothing but beneficial for the province in introducing the “right kind” of immigrants.⁴⁷

At the same time Miss Bostock approached the Canadian government in 1931, the Child Emigration Society was looking to expand its operation beyond Australia. Interest in establishing a branch of Fairbridge in British Columbia had been present since Kingsley Fairbridge’s visit during his tour of the Empire in 1903, and had discussed his plans with Governor-General Earl Grey, after which Fairbridge identified the province as an ideal location for the establishment of a Farm School.⁴⁸ Fairbridge had again expressed interest in establishing a school in British Columbia in 1914 when corresponding with the future principal of the province’s farm school, Harry Logan. The outbreak of the First World War, however, meant nothing materialized.⁴⁹ Following communication with Miss Bostock in 1931, the Child Emigration Society took over correspondence and planning of the opening of the Farm School with the Canadian Government. With official approval from Prime Minister R.B. Bennett and the Minister of Immigration W.A. Gordon on 5 March 1934, final approval was passed to British Columbia, where politicians expressed widespread support. British Columbia’s Minister of Education, Dr. Weir, offered to provide any assistance necessary, while the Minister of Lands, A. Wells Gray, described the scheme as a “considerable advantage to both Great Britain and the Province.”⁵⁰

Despite the encouraging words expressed by high profile politicians like Bennett, Gordon and Weir there was still some apprehension within the government to the

⁴⁷ Memoranda, Department of Immigration and Colonization, March 5 1934, reel # B-1064, Central registry of the Immigration Branch 1873-1968, microfilm collection, BC Archives.

⁴⁸ Fairbridge, *The Autobiography of Kingsley Fairbridge*, 152.

⁴⁹ Patrick Dunae, ‘Gender, Generations and Social Class: The Fairbridge Society and British Child Migration to Canada, 1930-1960’, 82-100 in Jon Lawrence & Pat Starkey (ed.), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: International Perspectives*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001).

⁵⁰ Letter, A. Wells Gray, Minister of Lands for B.C. to L.R. Lumley of the Fairbridge Society, May 1 1934, D296, K1/1/1, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

recommencement of any child migration schemes. The deputy minister for immigration, Blair, issued numerous memoranda both to Canadian politicians and the Child Emigration Society in which he warned that “the mention of immigration in some quarters is like flaunting the red flag before the bull” because of the conditions brought about by the Depression.⁵¹ Even with permission for the establishment of the school granted, there was fear surrounding a possible outpouring of opposition, similar to that which occurred in the 1920s. Blair, in a letter to Bennett, cautioned that the Canadian government “should not agree to any publicity” regarding the School because the Society “get their children from various other organizations such as Barnardo’s and most of these undoubtedly come from homes broken by crime, destitution [and] disease.”⁵² Reminiscent of the language used by opponents to child migration schemes, Blair’s comments show how in the five years since the termination of the schemes the fear of contamination by inferior stock was still very prevalent. Blair’s concern over opposition, however, were not unfounded, as he wrote to the British politician and head of the Child Emigration Society London Committee, L.R. Lumley, that protests had been sent to him concerning the establishment of the School, in particular from Charlotte Whitton.⁵³

Opposition to the recommencement of a new child migration scheme in the 1930s arose from the same groups in central Canada that had successfully forced the termination of other schemes in the 1920s. However, as historian Patrick Dunae has shown, these had little effect on Prime Minister Bennett and other politicians who supported the Fairbridge Society’s application. For the white, male politicians, Fairbridge and child migration were

⁵¹ Memoranda, Deputy Minister Blair, April 11 1935, D296 K1/1/2, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

⁵² Letter, Deputy Minister Blair to Prime Minister Bennett, reel # B-1064, Central registry of the Immigration Branch 1873-1968, microfilm collection, BC Archives.

⁵³ Memoranda, Deputy Minister Blair, April 11 1935, D296 K1/1/2, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives. & letter, Charlotte Whitton to Deputy Minister Blair, reel # B-1064, Central registry of the Immigration Branch 1873-1968, microfilm collection, BC Archives.

symbols of the Empire, which represented a strengthening of imperial ties between Britain and Canada.⁵⁴ Following permission and support from politicians in British Columbia the scheme received official royal approval from the Prince of Wales, future King Edward VIII. The Prince not only lent his title to the School in British Columbia but also gifted a donation of \$1000 to launch the Fairbridge Society's appeal for funds in the British newspaper *The Times*, at the bequest of the Society, ignoring the Canadian governments plea to avoid publicity.⁵⁵ The result of the royal backing gave the Farm School an element of prestige, which only grew with visits, after the Schools opening in 1935, from the Lord Mayor of London, Governor General of Canada and Lieutenant Governor General of British Columbia. Donations from the future Queen Elizabeth II and money bequeathed in Rudyard Kipling's will⁵⁶ facilitated the Farm School to become a symbol of Empire and pride for many British Columbians, as the provincial press celebrated the scheme as "commonsense immigration"⁵⁷ and a "most important institution."⁵⁸

With the prestige that came with the school's links to royalty and Empire, and the history of child rescue in which the school fit, it is unsurprising that British Columbia's mainstream press were advocates of the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School. White, middle class educated men made up the journalist fraternity of the major provincial and local papers. The ideas of these men about the increase of white settlement in British Columbia mirrored those of other white, middle class men during this period as their articles celebrated

⁵⁴ Dunae, 'Gender, Generations and Social Class', 88.

⁵⁵ "The Prince's Lead", *The Times*, Friday, June 15 1934, 17.

⁵⁶ Dunae, 'Gender, Generations and Social Class', 90: Kipling, who was an unwavering imperialist, saw the Fairbridge scheme as doing good work in strengthening the Empire.

⁵⁷ "Youth Gets Its Chance At Fairbridge", *The Vancouver Daily Province*, 1936, box 4, file 10, MS2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

⁵⁸ "The King Sent Me", *The Cowichan Leader*, August 26 1936, box 4, file 10, MS2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

the “pioneering spirit” of the scheme and how the children would “assist in the development of the province.”⁵⁹

Beyond the press, prominent provincial citizens embraced the Farm School with many joining the school’s local advisory committee, like lumber magnate H.R. Macmillan, MP R.W. Mayhew, Aldyen Hendry, chatelaine of Government House and wife of Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia (1936-41), Eric Hamber, as well as Ruth Wynn-Johnson, wife of W.C. Woodward the province’s most successful retail merchant and Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia (1941-46).⁶⁰ Donations “from [the] pockets of private Dominion citizens – almost all of them in British Columbia” provided \$8,200 annually through the godparent scheme, whereby members of the public could sponsor a child; they were also encouraged to correspond with their ‘godchild’.⁶¹ The feeling towards the School, from the opinion of the press, was that “British Columbians connected with the Farm School are not hesitant in stating that they believe Canada’s federal government should lend a financial hand.”⁶²

By 1935 when the Fairbridge Farm School opened in Cowichan Station on Vancouver Island child migration was being celebrated again. While opposition had appeared and remained in central Canada from organizations like the Trades and Labour Congress and Canadian Council on Child Welfare, the general atmosphere in British Columbia was one of optimism. The location of the Farm School in British Columbia was nearly as far west as it could be from where the original child migrations schemes ran and had been selected for a number of choices. While the memory of Kingsley Fairbridge’s identification of British Columbia as an ideal location for a Farm School was important, the 1934 “*Report on*

⁵⁹ Newspaper article, “Money Problems”, No date, box 4, file 10, MS2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

⁶⁰ Patrick A. Dunae, ‘Child Emigrant, Child Welfare and the Fairbridge Society in British Columbia, 1931-1951’ in Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley, *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History*, (Calgary, Alt.: Detselig Press, 2005), 100.

⁶¹ Newspaper article, no date, box 4, file 10, MS2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

⁶² Newspaper article, no date, box 4, file 10, MS2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

impressions formed...from my visit to Canada...” by Lumley for the Child Emigration Society, drew two important conclusions that identified the province of British Columbia as different to other regions of the country.⁶³ First Lumley stated that the groups expressing opposition to child migration were “not very strong in British Columbia,”⁶⁴ but perhaps more importantly that Vancouver Island was often viewed as “being too British.”⁶⁵ Expanding on this Lumley wrote that this was ideal as the children they would send were “intended to make a contribution of British Stock to Canada” and the “continued British influence” they would find in the region made British Columbia perfect for the establishment of the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School.⁶⁶

⁶³ L.R. Lumley, *Report on the impressions formed and results obtained from my visit to Canada to promote the establishment of a Fairbridge Farm School in British Columbia*, October 17 1934, K1/1/3, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

⁶⁴ Lumley, *Report on the impressions formed*, 4.

⁶⁵ Lumley, *Report on the impressions formed*, 7.

⁶⁶ Lumley, *Report on the impressions formed*, 7.

Whiteness in British Columbia

Founded in 1858 as a British colony, British Columbia maintained a large diverse Aboriginal population that outnumbered the white settler population until late into the nineteenth century. Built upon an economy of fur trade, gold mining and later resource extraction the colony existed, to use Adele Perry's description, on "the edge of empire" until 1871, at which time it joined the Canadian confederation. As a result of the colony's isolated existence until 1871, the demographic reality of the region, and the politics of Empire, British Columbia was left with a lasting preoccupation with the construction of whiteness in the province.⁶⁷

As the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the growth of European empires and new sciences like eugenics, race, nation and empire became synonymous. For new emerging dominions like Canada, race became a central issue in nation building. White Canadians, who saw themselves as British aimed to create a strong British colony through the immigration of the best of the 'British race'.⁶⁸ To be British became racialized, as being classed British became a signifier of whiteness and membership of the British race. For Canada, and in particular British Columbia with its large Aboriginal population and as a port of entry for Asian immigrants, constructing the region as predominantly white was central for their acceptance as an important member of the British nation.

The concept of whiteness, as described by Adele Perry, is a "slippery yet significant racial category,"⁶⁹ particularly for the history of Canada and British Columbia as whiteness, in part due to its use in Empire, is the process through which whites acquire and deploy social

⁶⁷ Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the making of British Columbia, 1849-1871*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

⁶⁸ Phillip Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2.

⁶⁹ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 5.

dominance.⁷⁰ For British Columbia this was particularly true, as Paul Tennant has argued that white settlers in the region called themselves white and drafted laws that reflected the identity and power it conferred to legitimize their control over Aboriginal populations and non-British white immigrants.⁷¹ British Columbian colonial, and later on provincial officials, sought to construct a white identity, which would conform to Victorian norms and legitimize their dominance over the large Aboriginal population.⁷²

In creating and shaping the white identity in British Columbia officials placed themselves in opposition to other racialized groups. In the nineteenth century the large Aboriginal population was at the centre of anxiety surrounding white identity, however, as the Aboriginal population began to decline and white settlement increased at the start of the twentieth century, the group seen as the biggest threat to white identity in the province shifted to Asian immigrants. The result of this fear was, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, legislation to limit white-Aboriginal contact and prevent the entrance of Asian immigrants with the Gentleman's Agreement with Japan⁷³ and continuous journey regulation⁷⁴ in 1908, as well as the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923.⁷⁵ The aim of these exclusionary laws, introduced by the provincial elite in order to perpetuate their construct of white identity, was to create the "white man's province."⁷⁶ Provincial leaders sought to prevent the number of non-whites from drastically increasing through immigration and interracial relationships by

⁷⁰ Cynthia Levin-Rasky (ed), *Working Through Whiteness: International Perspectives*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 332.

⁷¹ Paul Tennant in Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 5.

⁷² Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 2.

⁷³ Roy, *A White Man's Province*, 194: The Gentleman's Agreement was an arrangement between the Japanese and Canadian governments first implemented in 1908, whereby no more than 400 Japanese immigrants a year could enter Canada; in 1928 this was further reduced to 150.

⁷⁴ Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 198: The continuous journey regulation required all immigrants entering Canada to travel from the country of their birth directly to a Canadian port without any stops. The result of this was the end of immigration from British India as it was impossible for a ship to sail, without making port, from India to Canada.

⁷⁵ Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-31*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 31-6: The Chinese Immigration Act, 1923 effectively ended all immigration from China to Canada until it was repealed in 1947.

⁷⁶ Roy, *A White Man's Province*, vii - xvii.

the use of laws that limited non-white immigration and contact between working class whites, who were deemed more susceptible to interracial relationships, and British Columbia's non-white population.⁷⁷ The result of these measures was, as Cole Harris has argued, that "whiteness became the first and most essential marker of social respectability."⁷⁸

Despite the consolidation of whiteness as a defining feature of British Columbian identity in the twentieth century, an anxiety surrounding the racial make up of the province still prevailed. As Veronica Strong-Boag has argued, even in the 1940s when British Columbia most resembled the 'white man's province' with anti-Asian immigration laws, Japanese internment and a white population which exceeded the Aboriginal one, white British Columbians still believed they had to fight to assert and secure their white identity.⁷⁹ The opening of the Fairbiridge Farm School in the 1930s, fed directly into the mentality for the provincial quest of the construction of a 'white man's province'. The School, which was tied to the narrative of British child rescue, which itself was concerned with saving children to secure the future of the British race, directly supported British Columbia's construction of whiteness by sending white, British children to be trained in useful professions and Canadian customs who would effortlessly integrate into white British Columbia.

⁷⁷ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 48-78: Since the founding of British Columbia, as a colony, there had been interracial marriages between white men and Aboriginal women, which bore children. Officials saw these relationships, and children, as a threat to white identity and responded by characterizing men in these relationships as no longer white. Further officials expelled the majority of Aboriginal's from Victoria. General support for anti-Asian legislation fluctuated during the twentieth century depending on economic considerations i.e. working class supported Anti-Asian movements when most Chinese immigrants were labourers, middle classes took over once Chinese & Japanese immigrants entered middling classes as merchants etc.

For studies on the restriction of Asian immigration see, Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province*, (1989), *The Oriental Question*, (2003) & Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, (2012).

⁷⁸ Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: essays on colonialism and geographical change*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 273.

⁷⁹ Veronica Strong-Boag, "Society in the Twentieth Century" in Hugh J.M. Johnston, *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1996), 277.

The Fairbridge Society and Constructions of Whiteness

Upon opening in 1935 the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School appeared to be the embodiment of the British Columbian quest for a ‘white man’s province’. The school perpetuated a racial discourse which mirrored that of British Columbia’s through an emphasis on keeping Canada British and shaping the children in the moral qualities of Britishness. It was the school’s Britishness that appears to have been one of the most significant factors in garnering the support of the provincial press. The committee members who ran the Society from London, the Principals they appointed to administer the Farm School in British Columbia and the provincial press, were all active participants in the construction of the school as a purveyor of whiteness.

The members of the committee who ran the Fairbridge Society were predominately white upper class men of standing in Great Britain, like the committee chairman, L.R. Lumley, a British MP. The beliefs the committee members held concerning the role of the Society were evident in a 1930s promotional pamphlet distributed about the British Columbian Farm School in which it was commented that the “frequently occurring signs that the Dominion’s...[were] again recognizing the need to increase their British stock” was “very welcome.”⁸⁰ These sentiments were similarly expressed in a 1934 inquiry conducted by Lumley on a trip to Canada to discover how a Fairbridge Farm School would be received in British Columbia. This report embodied many of the ideas of the Farm School as a purveyor of whiteness. The impression deduced about British Columbia was that there was “little doubt of the willingness of [the province] to receive British immigrants” because “an increase in population [was] one of their paramount needs...and they all wanted any increase to be British” due “to a fear that in some distant future there may be a menace from Orientals to the

⁸⁰ Arthur G.B. West, *Georgian Pamphlets III – Fairbridge Vancouver Island - 1934/1935*, D296 K1/1/5, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

Pacific Coast.”⁸¹ These comments on the racialized atmosphere within British Columbia mirrored the aims of the Society as they emphasized how “our School is intended to make a contribution of British stock to Canada” and that their children were to “number amongst the British type of Canadians.”⁸² The focus on the children being British reflected the belief in Canada, during this period, that Britons, being of the British race, were the most desirable form of immigrant, more so than whites from any other country.

The suggestion that Canadians were derived of British stock and this needed shoring up was a recurring theme throughout the Farm School’s existence. Focusing on children, promoters of the school emphasized their role in ensuring Canada’s white Britishness. The children had a destiny set out for them, they were to combat what W.A. Gordon, the Minister of Immigration, called the “foreign element” which was “getting too large”⁸³ in Canada and “sow seeds in Canada from the Mother Country.”⁸⁴ The British Columbian Premier, Duff Pattullo, told the British children on a visit to the school in 1936, “remember that you have not left home but just moved to another part of the Empire.”⁸⁵ Other prominent politicians, individuals and the press often expressed the same sentiment, that Canada should “get as big a leaven of people of our own stock as we can get.”⁸⁶

These ideas and beliefs surrounding the school were further perpetuated during the running of the Farm School by its principals. There were four principals during the school’s operation - Major F. Trew, Colonel H.T. Logan, Mr. W.J. Garnett and Major A.H. Plows - all

⁸¹ Lumley, *Report on the impressions formed*, 1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸³ Child Emigration Society, ‘break down of opinion of those in Canada’, D296 K1/1/2, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

⁸⁴ Speech delivered by Major-General V.W. Oldum, November 4 1942, D296 K1/3/2, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

⁸⁵ ‘Extends Welcome – Premier Visits Fairbridge – New Children on Way’, *Cowichan Leader*, October 15 1936, K1/1/5, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

⁸⁶ ‘Young Immigrants’, *Vancouver Daily Province*, May 10 1940, reel # B-1064, Central registry of the Immigration Branch 1873-1968, microfilm collection, BC Archives.

highly educated imperially minded white men. The longest serving Principal, Harry Logan (1936-1944), was a Rhodes Scholar, lieutenant-colonel in the Canadian army and University of British Columbia professor. Logan, who had known Kingsley Fairbridge personally and been present at the founding of the Child Emigration Society in 1904, greatly influenced the ideology of the school and the publicity it received, as he saw children as the future of Canada and the Empire, and the school as the ideal immigration scheme.

The personal ideologies of the principals of the school were important to the Fairbridge Society as they had to mirror those held by the organization and be “familiar and sympathetic towards not only the British background but the Canadian of the Canadian citizens to be.”⁸⁷ It is perhaps because of this that Harry Logan served the longest time at the school before he joined the Fairbridge committee in London in 1945. Logan’s belief in how important the scheme was for both Great Britain and Canada could be seen throughout his reports and the media coverage he ensured the school received. In the *Principal’s report on the first seven years*, Logan stressed how the children were future citizens of Canada and the Empire, thus it was Fairbridge’s job to mold the children into “decent young citizens of Canada” through character shaping, which he saw as the “moral part of [the] children’s training.”⁸⁸ The idea of character training had been central to child rescue since its foundation, as it ensured children would be saved from lives of depravity by molding them into loyal productive subjects. Character was fundamental to the idea of Britishness and was particularly important for the upper-classes as it was placed at the root of the British boys’ school model, which Fairbridge resembled, with the belief that character could be shaped by

⁸⁷ ‘Building Young Canada on the playing fields of Fairbridge’, K1/1/11, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

⁸⁸ Harry Logan, *Principle’s report on the first seven years*, 1942, Logan Family fonds, University of British Columbia Archives, 1.

education, providing personal improvement.⁸⁹ The importance placed on character at Fairbridge could be seen in the 1942 live Canadian Broadcast Corporation radio broadcast from the Farm School. The broadcast, which included interviews with Logan and countless children, showed the politeness of the students and significance placed on raising and lowering the flag each day, alongside the emphasis the school placed on sport and hard work.⁹⁰ The emphasis on the sport and hard work the children were participating in also served to reassure the Canadian public that the children were going to “come out of [the] School with something more to give Canada” because they were productive, healthy members of the British race.⁹¹

For the men who ran the Fairbridge Society and the school, the children were seen as the right kind of immigrants for Canada and British Columbia because they were white, British and young enough to be molded into ‘ideal’ citizens. For many of the school’s supporters, like the provincial press, this was exactly what was needed from an immigration scheme in British Columbia as it helped secure the elusive ‘white man’s province’.

British Columbia’s press in the 1930s and 1940s supported, celebrated and reinforced the Farm School as a purveyor of whiteness. This is unsurprising given the demographics of newspaper journalists during this period, who were predominantly white middle class males. While the language used by the press did not explicitly refer to the children being white, a focus was placed on the fact that the children were British, and therefore the kind of immigrants British Columbia wanted. The language in the reports on the school was also very similar to that used in late nineteenth-century child rescue literature, which itself was also

⁸⁹ Jean Barman, *Growing up British in British Columbia: Boys In Private School*, (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2011), 78.

⁹⁰ Canadian Broadcast Corporation radio broadcast, May 22 1942, T4216:0001 & T4216:0002, CBR radio broadcast collection, BC Archives.

⁹¹ Logan in ‘95 Fairbridge Children Now Out in World’, no date, *The Cowichan Leader*, K1/1/6, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

conveying the importance of children as purveyors of whiteness through a focus on health and the redeeming qualities of the environment.

For the press and many who championed the school the children were the future of white settlement in British Columbia as they were described as embodying the “pride of [the] race.”⁹² Stress was placed on the idea that it was their “job” to help develop British Columbia and “make it greater.”⁹³ In presenting the School as creating “future Canadian citizens”⁹⁴ the press in British Columbia tied the Fairbridge scheme to the history of the province’s struggle to create the ‘white man’s province’, as the children were perceived as the right kind of settlers – white, young and destined to work the land.

To fulfill the pioneer spirit, the children had to be the right kind of immigrants. The desirability of the children took up much of the newspaper coverage, as the children were presented as ideal and healthy immigrants. The language used to describe the physical appearance of the children, though generic for the 1930s and 1940s, was also reminiscent of child saving literature of the nineteenth-century, which focused on how the children saved were “bright eyed” and “robust.”⁹⁵ Described consistently as “sound British stock”⁹⁶ and “children of good blood”⁹⁷ they were lauded by the provincial press as “immigrants of the best possible type.”⁹⁸ “Rosy cheeked”, “alert eyed” and “fine looking” they were considered

⁹² “Young Farmers From the Old Land”, *The Daily Province*, October 15 1935, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

⁹³ “The King Sent Me”, *The Cowichan Leader*, August 26 1936, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

⁹⁴ “Fairbridge Farm Gives Welcome to Governor-General”, *The Daily Colonist*, April 2 1941, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

⁹⁵ Hillel & Swain, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire*, 42.

⁹⁶ “New Principle for Fairbridge”, *The Victoria Daily Province*, May 30 1945, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

⁹⁷ Newspaper article, *Vancouver Daily Province*, 1936, box 4, file 10, MS2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

⁹⁸ Newspaper article, no date, box 4, file 10, MS2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

the “healthiest, most contented looking children” of “sound mental and physical fitness.”⁹⁹ For the white middle class men who praised the children and school so much, the scheme was “almost too good to be true”¹⁰⁰ because “improvement [of the province could] be obtained by one means, the introduction of the right kind [of immigrant] – and of that kind British stock [was] surely first”¹⁰¹ because they were “people of our own stock.”¹⁰²

While the original health and desirability of the children was stressed, the press was sure to assert how the Canadian environment had helped ‘transform’ the children. This concept, which had been key to the child saving movement since its founding, was important because the healthier the children, the more desirable they were for taking part in the construction of whiteness. The clean, healthy environment of British Columbia’s Vancouver Island would remove any undesirable elements that may have prevented the children from being true purveyors of whiteness. As the press described, the “virgin landscape”¹⁰³ brought about “marvelous change...in physique and general bearing”¹⁰⁴ as the “Fairbridge transformation”¹⁰⁵ “salvage[d] and develop[ed] British stock”¹⁰⁶ into “good Canadian

⁹⁹ “Youth Gets Its Chance At Fairbridge”, *The Vancouver Daily Province*, 1936, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁰⁰ “New Canadians At Fairbridge”, *The Vancouver Province*, December 18 1937, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁰¹ “The King Sent Me”, *The Cowichan Leader*, August 26 1936, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁰² “Young Immigrants”, *Vancouver Daily Province*, May 10 1940, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁰³ Newspaper article, *Vancouver Daily Province*, 1936, box 4, file 10, MS2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives..

¹⁰⁴ “Fairbridge Transformation”, *The News-Herald*, November 28 1938, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ “New Principle for Fairbridge”, *The Victoria Daily Province*, May 30 1945, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

citizens.”¹⁰⁷ Coupled with the healing power of the environment, the farm work to which the children were set was also believed to build “them physically, mentally and morally.”¹⁰⁸

The crowning aspect of the scheme for the press was that the children of “sound British stock” who had been “transformed” by the Canadian environment and molded into “Canadian citizens” assimilated seamlessly into British Columbia’s white society. Fairbridge was lauded as “Maker of New Canadians” and having an “enviable reputation for making boys and girls into good Canadian citizens,”¹⁰⁹ while other papers declared “operation successful.”¹¹⁰ The scheme was considered a success by many, as the Fairbridge Society reported that by January 1948 98% of all the children who had passed through the Farm School were residents in British Columbia; all of them employed.¹¹¹ For the press in British Columbia the children from the Farm School represented the ideal immigrants because they were members of the British race brought to Canada specifically to be assimilated into Canadian society as farmers and domestic workers.

¹⁰⁷ “B.C. Is Scene of Ideal in the Working”, *The Vancouver Daily Province*, August 28 1943, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁰⁸ Newspaper article, no date, box 4, file 10, MS2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁰⁹ “Makers of New Canadians”, *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, August 6 1947, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹¹⁰ “Operation Successful”, *The Daily Colonist*, April 24 1947, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹¹¹ Fairbridge Society, *Building Young Canada on the playing fields of Fairbridge*, 1948, D296, K1/1/11, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

1940s Change

Despite the privileged position the Farm School held and widespread support the scheme received in 1930s British Columbia, by the 1940s the outlook was not good. The support of prominent politicians before 1935 had meant the school was a viable project, with the pledge politicians “were prepared to do anything [they] reasonably could in regard to...admitting farm school children” to Canada. With the beginning of the Second World War and a number of scandals at the school, political support for the project began to wane.¹¹² Even with a fall in political backing, however, support from the British Columbian public remained, existing until the final days of the Farm School’s operation in the late 1940s.

While initial approval for the child migration scheme from British Columbian politicians like Dr. Weir, Minister of Education for British Columbia and Minister of Lands for British Columbia, A. Wells Gray, provided independence and protection for the Farm School from provincial and federal child welfare legislation and workers, this soon began to decline with the removal of supporters like Weir to Ottawa during the Second World War.¹¹³ The provincial child welfare department which had been trying to gain jurisdiction over the School since its opening, but had been told “hands off”¹¹⁴ by the government, began moving in, making it clear that they did “not like the system”¹¹⁵ as it was “antagonistic to every concept of Canadian Child Welfare.”¹¹⁶

¹¹² Letter, W.A. Gordon Minister of Immigration to L.R. Lumley, 19 January 1934, D296 K1/1/2, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

¹¹³ ‘Concerning Fairbridge & new child welfare Act in BC’, 14 November 1938, D296 K1/2/5, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

¹¹⁴ Letter, Gorge F. Davidson, Director of B.C. Child Welfare, to Harry Logan, undated, D296 K1/2/7, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

¹¹⁵ Letters, Isobel Harvey, superintendent for Child Welfare BC, to Ottawa, 1944, reel # B-1065, Central registry of the Immigration Branch 1873-1968, microfilm collection, BC Archives.

¹¹⁶ Isobel Harvey, ‘Report on Study made of Fairbridge Farm School during the month of August 1944’, reel # B-1065, Central registry of the Immigration Branch 1873-1968, microfilm collection, BC Archives, 9.

For the provincial child welfare workers the Farm School, as an institution, was an outdated form of child welfare that left children open to numerous dangers. In particular children were vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse by staff, as well as “unnatural” practices amongst themselves.¹¹⁷ While British Columbian child welfare workers like Laura Holland, a protégée of Charlotte Whitton’s, and Isobel Harvey disliked all aspects of the Farm School, criticizing everything from the health of the children being sent from Britain to the tin plates the children ate off, it was the sexual scandals at the school caused the most concern. Discovered during an inquiry by provincial welfare workers “the Rogers case,”¹¹⁸ as it was often cited, referred to sexual abuse by the duties manager on a number of boys; the offender was imprisoned and then incredibly rehired before subsequently re-offending and being dismissed once again.¹¹⁹ The welfare workers were also dismayed to see “pairs of boys and girls walking off together...[with]...no supervision...[and]...homosexual activities” among children.¹²⁰ For Logan, however, this was of little issue as he was alleged to have responded to Harvey that “the British people are over-sexed”¹²¹ though his tolerance for such practices may have stemmed from the attitude held by most British boys’ schools who “had to turn a blind eye”¹²² to such behavior due to its prevalence.

Even with such negative events occurring at the school the British Columbian public remained supportive. Pride British Columbians felt for Fairbridge was remarked upon by M.J. Scobie, Supervisor of the Juvenile Division in Ottawa in his 1941 report on the Farm School. Scobie concluded that he met “some of the supporters in British Columbia who

¹¹⁷ Letter, Edwin Rogers, Duties and Sports Master, to Harry Logan, May 10 1938, 10-2, Logan Family fonds, University of British Columbia Archives.

¹¹⁸ Harvey, ‘Report’, 8.

¹¹⁹ Dunae, ‘Gender, Generations and Social class’, 93.

¹²⁰ Harvey, ‘Report’, 8.

¹²¹ Ibid., 8.

¹²² Barman, *Growing up British*, 106.

[were] very worthy people” that all approved of the school and what it was achieving, despite the negative press the scheme was receiving.¹²³ Scobie, also personally approved of the school, writing, “my only criticism...would be that the scheme is tremendously expensive”.¹²⁴ Scobie even came to the defence of the School in 1944 following the overwhelmingly negative report produced by Isobel Harvey, declaring that the negative press was nothing more than “outside gossip encouraged by those who wish to destroy” the Farm School.¹²⁵ Similarly the support the public had for Fairbridge could be seen in the provincial press as one disgruntled member of the public wrote to the editors of the *Vancouver Sun* and *Daily Province*, following a Canada Pacific Exhibition, distressed that there was no exhibition from the Fairbridge Farm School, writing, “the school is not for Vancouver Island but for the whole of B.C.”¹²⁶

Despite support from individuals like Scobie and the general public, by 1945 the School looked certain to close. The effects of the Second World War had meant drastic cuts in government funding along with a fall in donations. The loss of the school’s special independence in 1945 also meant the scheme was subjected to all the regulations of the provincial child welfare department. The combination of more restrictions and less funding, along with the growing costs of the immigration scheme, signaled the decline of the school as the child welfare department appointed a number of people to the School’s Board of Directors, who gradually began dismantling Fairbridge. The children still enrolled in the school were sent to foster homes in Victoria and Vancouver, despite a report in 1950 that

¹²³ Memoranda, M.J. Scobie, Supervisor of Juvenile Division, to Deputy Minister Blair, report on Fairbridge Farm School, 15 August 1941, reel # B-1064, Central registry of the Immigration Branch 1873-1968, microfilm collection, BC Archives.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ ‘Report on official visit to British Columbia RE Fairbridge Farm School’, M.J. Scobie to Mr. Jolliffe, 28 December 1944, reel # B-1065, Central registry of the Immigration Branch 1873-1968, microfilm collection, BC Archives.

¹²⁶ Letter to the editor, 8 September 1938, *Vancouver Sun/Daily Province*, K1/1/8, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

argued experience had shown some children received more benefit from group living, thriving on the routine of institutional life.¹²⁷ Even with these developments, however, support for the scheme was still being expressed as late as 1949, as the Native Sons of British Columbia passed a resolution calling on the Dominion and Provincial governments to step in with financial aid and ensure that the Fairbridge Farm School remained.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation?*, 61.

¹²⁸ 'Native Sons Urge Aid for Fairbridge', 9 September 1949, *The Vancouver Sun*, K1/1/6, Fairbridge Collection, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives.

The Children

Even with the widespread coverage the school received in Canada the voices of the children were noticeably absent. While the supporters and opponents of British Columbia's Fairbridge Farm School publicly asserted their opinions about the school through the media, the children's opinions about the migration scheme were seemingly irrelevant. Only in rare circumstances were children given an opportunity to publicly remark on their experiences at Fairbridge. Often it was not until adulthood that many of the Old Fairbridgians publicly expressed their opinions on the school. Due to the scarcity of sources it is hard to know whether the children felt Fairbridge benefited their lives, providing them with an opportunity they would never have received in Britain, or if there was a sense of loss, displacement or mistreatment.

Materials from Fairbridge included children's voice but only when they were under supervision of the Fairbridge staff; examples include the 1942 radio broadcast and the student paper. The radio broadcast from the school literally captured the children's voice as they were interviewed about their daily routine, favourite sports and skill specialization by a broadcaster. In this context the children's comments were largely positive as they performed in a disciplined way for the adult interviewer and audience. They were likely selected by Fairbridge staff for their potential to be good representatives of the school. When one student was asked what he liked about Fairbridge and replied in the negative the interviewer quickly passed over him to the next child. As a result, we find little variation in the words of the children, though the vast majority indicated a happiness with the school and that they individually liked the work they were doing - farming for boys, domestic work for girls. Each child was asked the same questions – where in England did they come from, what did they

like best about Fairbridge and what type of farming they were specializing in - and each gave similar generic answers – “Newcastle sir,” “boxing sir,” “dairy farming sir.”¹²⁹

The student-run paper, the *Fairbridge Gazette*, offered more of an opportunity for the children to express their opinions on life at the Farm School, though also under supervision of staff. The *Gazette* was first produced in February 1939 and every month until the school shut in 1950, after which it became the newsletter for Old Fairbridgians. Distributed to students, Old Fairbridgians, God-parents and supporters in England and Canada, the *Gazette* documented the running of the farm, sports events, progress of graduates, as well as poems, slang and cartoons – all written and edited by Fairbridge students. Unsurprisingly given the intended audience, the content of the *Gazette* was overwhelmingly positive and upbeat. Detailed reports on the success of the farm covered everything from the planting of seeds to students winning awards at the local calf club, showing how much the children were learning in preparation for their future as British Columbian farmers.¹³⁰ Regular reports on Old Fairbridgians included, which graduates were at university, where individuals were working and marriage announcements.¹³¹ The purpose of this was to keep fellow Fairbridgians aware of each other’s success and also express to readers how successful graduates of Fairbridge were.

Amongst the positive coverage, however, was a lurking sense of displacement and longing for England. During the war years the *Gazette* published a poem entitled ‘England’ which expressed sadness over the “Bombed out Land” but also gratitude for Fairbridge

¹²⁹ Canadian Broadcast Corporation radio broadcast, May 22 1942, T4216:0001 & T4216:0002, CBR radio broadcast collection, BC Archives.

¹³⁰ *Fairbridge Gazette*, Vol. VII ,No.2, Autumn 1946, box 4, file 2, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, This issue included four wedding announcements, four Old Fairbridgians starting their own businesses, one discharge from the army, one remaining in the army & five who were farming in B.C.

because the children had “food enough to live, And a place that cares for...” them.¹³² The sense of grief felt by some of the children about leaving England may have helped the development of the inward-looking character of the school that was present in *Gazette* features like ‘Fairbirdge Slang’. The purpose of this feature was to detail words the children at the school used alongside a ‘translation’. Interestingly much of the slang was either British, or regional working class accents, like “ganin” for going, “anna” for I know and “scram, skidadle” for “got away.”¹³³ The inclusion of this feature shows that there was awareness among the children of how different they were from Canadian children in the area. Slang created a sense of belonging to the school by emphasizing their difference but also provided a link to their real home in England. This awareness among the children might have created insularity at the school. In the coverage of the success students achieved in sports and farming, there were often comments that Fairbridge was “outdone by only one outsider”¹³⁴ suggesting that the children at Fairbridge generally perceived themselves as a coherent group different to the children around them and perhaps not assimilating as easily as was hoped by the schools promoters.

The development of an insular character among the children at Fairbridge would correlate with comments in the negative report conducted by child welfare worker, Isobel Harvey. In her damning 1944 report Harvey claimed to have discussed the Farm School with several graduates who had returned for a visit while the investigation was being conducted. Harvey reported they said “they were handicapped by their lack of knowledge of Canadians, their accents, their clothes and their inability to make friends.”¹³⁵ Harvey expanded on her

¹³² *Fairbridge Gazette*, Vol. II, No.4, October 1941, box 4, file 2, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹³³ *Fairbridge Gazette*, Vol. I, No.1, February 1939, box 4, file 1, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹³⁴ *Fairbridge Gazette*, Vol. VII ,No.2, Autumn 1946, box 4, file 2, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹³⁵ Harvey, ‘Report’, 7.

belief that the children of Fairbridge were brought up in an atmosphere not conducive to entering Canadian society by explaining that the staff at the school instilled the idea that as “poor English children [they were] therefore different from...ordinary children”¹³⁶ and that she heard various children “make very derogatory remarks about Canadians.”¹³⁷ The reason for such comments may have been due to the nature of the school, as Veronica Strong-Boag has identified many child rescue organizations which used farm school systems copied many of the characteristics of private British boys’ schools,¹³⁸ many of which had been transplanted from Britain directly into British Columbia in the twentieth century. As with many of the boys’ schools, Fairbridge taught students to embrace their British identity as it was central to them as perpetuators of whiteness within the province.¹³⁹ Unlike the boys’ schools that trained the sons of wealthy British emigrants for leadership, however, Fairbridge was training its students to populate the lower levels of society, as farmers and housewives, though subsequently failing to integrate them into Canadian society. After leaving such an environment, many graduates of the school could have felt isolated once they left the confines of Fairbridge, an argument Logan used in his defence of the school, saying all children felt isolation upon leaving home.¹⁴⁰

Even with these feelings of isolation, interestingly the majority of recollections of Fairbridgians were positive. In the 1950s in a number of letters between Old Fairbridgians and staff, the experiences graduates recall were generally positive, though this is perhaps unsurprising given that the correspondence was with people who worked at the school. One

136 Ibid., 9.

137 Ibid.

138 Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation?*, 51.

139 Barman, *Growing Up British*, 22.

140 Harry Logan, ‘An Elucidation of the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School Prompted by the Superintendent of Child Welfare’s Report of August 1944’, 1944, reel # B-1065, Central registry of the Immigration Branch 1873-1968, microfilm collection, BC Archives, 22.

former student wrote that he had “many fine memories and warm feelings for the old school” but felt shame for his “anti-social actions” which meant he was “far from a credit” to Fairbridge.¹⁴¹ Another Old Fairbridgian showed a longing for the social side of the school, writing “the only time I miss Fairbridge is when they have dances and basketball.”¹⁴² The generally positive recollections the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School has in comparison to other Fairbridge Schools and child migration schemes is an issue Patrick Dunae has analyzed, arguing that it is because of this positive memory that the Canadian school has been so thoroughly neglected by scholars.¹⁴³

Dunae’s account of the Farm School through the questionnaires he circulated among Old Fairbridgians reveals an overwhelmingly positive perception of the school. While many former students reported a feeling of unpreparedness for the “real world” due to being taught outdated domestic and farm skills, there was only gratitude.¹⁴⁴ The general feeling among respondents was that Fairbridge gave them an opportunity for a better life than they would have received staying in England. As one Old Fairbridgian wrote “I feel grateful and privileged to have had the opportunity to attend Fairbridge and am proud of my background.”¹⁴⁵ The “firm but fair”¹⁴⁶ discipline was credited for providing graduates with the “strength of character” to succeed in life and “on the whole, I can’t fault Fairbridge for anything.”¹⁴⁷

What these positive accounts of the Farm School do bring to light is the question of authenticity of the memories. In particular one has to wonder if the participants felt

¹⁴¹ Letter, unknown Old Fairbridgian to unknown staff member, August 3 1952, box 1, file 1, MS-2466, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁴² Letter, Ernie Hodge to Miss Schofield, no date, MS-2465, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁴³ See introduction, 4-5 & Dunae, ‘Recollections’, 12.

¹⁴⁴ Dunae, ‘Recollections’, 9.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 10.

compelled to offer a positive memory of the farm school due to the defining role it played in their upbringing, or if those who perhaps did have traumatic experiences chose not to become involved? Dunae himself argues that what Neil Sutherland terms the ‘life review’ stage, whereby people attempt to justify themselves to themselves, must be taken into account but more important is the context of the times in which the children were growing up. According to Dunae, Sherington and Jeffrey’s arguments, the general public in Britain in the 1930s and 40s still experienced imperial enthusiasm for the Empire while suffering tremendous austerity.¹⁴⁸ This would certainly confirm ideas behind many of the responses in which parents’ surrendered children to Fairbridge to relieve poverty but also in the hope of providing them with better opportunities in life. Interestingly the former migrants’ own responses also mirror this idea as they describe their experiences as “good luck,” “providence,” character building and that it taught them discipline and independence.¹⁴⁹

Recollections of Fairbridge in British Columbian newspapers in the 1970s and 1980s were much more balanced than those collected by Dunae. These recollections highlighted both negative and positive experience at the Farm School, though ultimately all attest that their time at Fairbridge shaped them for succeeding later on in life. Many recalled “plenty of wholesome food,” “good experiences” and “fondness” for their time at the school.¹⁵⁰ However, one recollection from a married couple that attended the school at different times, recalled “two Fairbridges.”¹⁵¹ While the husband “looks back on his days at Fairbridge favorably” explaining “it was a lot better than home” in England, his wife, who attended Fairbridge during the war years, remembered Fairbridge less favorably with a high turnover

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 6; Sherington & Jeffery, *Fairbridge*, 160-4.

¹⁴⁹ Dunae, ‘Recollections’, 7-8.

¹⁵⁰ Newspaper article, ‘Students to Host Reunion: Fairbridge old-timers recall past’, no date, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁵¹ ‘Slum Kids Thrived at Farm School’, *The Province*, Sunday March 20 1983, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

of staff, having thirteen mums in just three years.¹⁵² Like Dunae's respondents many of those who were interviewed by newspapers mentioned the character Fairbridge instilled in them through discipline that was "reasonably firm,"¹⁵³ leading the children to develop a "tough reputation."¹⁵⁴ The firm discipline was also credited by many of the Old Fairbridgians for their successes today as they "came out strong."¹⁵⁵ Among these recollections there were less positive memories of children having to "steel themselves against the barbs of their peers" as they dressed differently to local children, again reaffirming some of the criticisms of welfare workers in the 1940s.¹⁵⁶ Going further, two men recalled a much darker aspect of Fairbridge, commenting that "it was a military institution"¹⁵⁷ and that "they used whips and canes. They were bastards."¹⁵⁸

Even memories of physical abuse at Fairbridge by former students were recalled in a manner which attributed these experiences to future success. As one Old Fairbridgian recalled, Fairbridge was the reason for his success in business, as being regularly hit taught him to "beat the odds."¹⁵⁹ Such recollections correlate with Neil Sutherland's 'life review' argument in which people justify their experiences, both positive and negative, to themselves as leading to their 'happy ending'.¹⁶⁰ This certainly seems true for Fairbridge, with the mixed memories of experience at the school and the success many former students have achieved in

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Newspaper article, 'Students to Host Reunion: Fairbridge old-timers recall past', no date, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ 'If only Oliver could see Eric's twist: 'They used whips and canes. They were bastards', *The Daily Colonist*, Saturday October 6 1979, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁵⁶ Newspaper article, 'Students to Host Reunion: Fairbridge old-timers recall past', no date, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁵⁷ 'Slum Kids Thrived at Farm School', *The Province*, Sunday March 20 1983, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁵⁸ 'If only Oliver could see Eric's twist: 'They used whips and canes. They were bastards', *The Daily Colonist*, Saturday October 6 1979, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Dunae, 'Recollections', 13.

their lives, becoming lawyers, councilmen, doctors and family men despite such an unusual upbringing.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Newspaper article, no date, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

Conclusion

The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School at Cowichan Station, Vancouver Island, British Columbia was Canada's final participation in the Empire child migration schemes, which had been operating between Great Britain and Canada for nearly a century. The Farm School, linked to the ideology of the nineteenth century child saving movement which sought to ensure the survival of the British race through the relocation and education of slum children, and the imperialist philosophy of the Fairbridge Society's founder, Kingsley Fairbridge, who pursued child saving because he believed it the means to ensure the whiteness of the Empire, embodied all these ideas and beliefs when established in British Columbia in 1935. It is for this very reason that the Fairbridge Farm School received so much support in the province, particularly from the press. British Columbian newspapers, both province-wide and local, presented a united admiration for the school because of the immigrants it was bringing to the province. Countless articles celebrated the Farm School as "inspiring,"¹⁶² "excellent"¹⁶³ and a "most important institution,"¹⁶⁴ while the children were praised for being of "good"¹⁶⁵ or "sound"¹⁶⁶ British stock who would be "good Canadian citizens."¹⁶⁷ The language used closely mirrored that of nineteenth century child savers, but more importantly it was also the language used by anti-immigration movements in British Columbia who sought to create a 'white man's province'.

¹⁶² Newspaper article, *Standard*, no date, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁶³ "Letters to the Editor", *The Vancouver Sun*, September 8 1938, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁶⁴ "The King Sent Me", *The Cowichan Leader*, August 26 1936, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁶⁵ "Fairbridge", *The Vancouver Province*, June 29 1938, box 4, file 10, MS-2045, Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School fonds, BC Archives.

¹⁶⁶ "Youth Gets Its Chance At Fairbridge", *The Vancouver Daily Province*, 1936; "New Principle for Fairbridge", *The Victoria Daily Province*, May 30 1945.

¹⁶⁷ "Fairbridge", *The Cowichan Leader*, August 13 1936; "C.P.R. President Speaks At Fairbridge", *The Cowichan Leader*, September 3 1936.

The acceptance of the Farm School in 1930s British Columbia, during a period known for intense anti-immigration sentiment shows how important the establishment of the ‘white man’s province’ was to many in the region and how essential children were to the nation building exercise. The British children were constructed by the operators of the Fairbridge Society and citizens of British Columbia as the future of the province. The children’s ‘destiny’ was to effortlessly assimilate into white society and reinforce the British race in British Columbia.

While the belief that Fairbridge was achieving its aims was present in British Columbia, the insularity of the school may have affected the ability of some of the British children to assimilate into Canadian society once they graduated. The growth of a group mentality among the children that saw themselves as different to the Canadian children around them was present at the school, embodied by their, ‘Fairbridge slang’. However, even with the fallibility of memory it is hard to ignore the generally positive view Old Fairbridgians hold of the school and the success they had settling into Canadian life, despite their somewhat isolated and unusual upbringing.

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