LIFE ON THE LINE:
INDIGENOUS WOMEN CANNERY WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF PRECARIOUS WORK

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the experiences of Indigenous women engaged in precarious and seasonal salmon cannery work. The dissertation argues that to grasp the nature of the women's work, which is exceedingly precarious, it is necessary to consider how it is shaped by a host of social, political, environmental and economic forces. In particular, the dissertation illustrates how provincial and Canadian neoliberal policies that developed during the past few decades have amplified the vulnerable status of Indigenous women cannery workers. Neoliberal discourses of active (worthy) and passive (unworthy) citizens embedded in social policies powerfully shape qualification requirements to programs such as Employment Insurance and Income Assistance while individualizing social inequalities experienced by Indigenous women. The dissertation employs both decolonizing and feminist methodologies to examine the everyday experiences of Indigenous women and to map out the social relations that shape their experience as precarious workers. Overall the dissertation contributes to making Indigenous women worker's lives more visible, to showing their significance in the salmon canning industry, to highlighting how their precarious labour undermines their well being and that of their families, and to demonstrating their resilience in the face of major obstacles.

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The fishing industry is a major source of private sector employment on British Columbia's northwest coast. Presently, the Canadian Fishing Company's OceanSide Plant in Prince Rupert, B.C. is the largest operating cannery in North America with a workforce of approximately 900 labourers at peak season. The United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union UNIFOR (UFAWU-UNIFOR), which represents cannery workers at this site, estimates that 75% of its union members are Indigenous workers, most of whom are women. Historically, at least half a dozen salmon canneries were located in Prince Rupert. The Canadian Fishing Company's OceanSide Cannery is the last to survive as a fully operating salmon cannery.[1]

Although wages for cannery workers are relatively high (with a starting wage in 2015 at $13.86), the work is rarely available on a full-time basis. Since the 1990s, the work has become increasingly precarious due to a host of social, political, environmental, and economic forces. The local canning industry has been undermined both by the restructuring of local salmon harvesting practices which – influenced by the overfishing of Atlantic cod – favour the conservation of the salmon stocks over commercial fishing and by the rise in availability of less expensive farmed salmon (Marshall, 2000[2]). These changes have resulted in both the devastating reduction in the availability of salmon for canning and low work hours for cannery workers.

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[1] OceanSide also processes herring but this work is only available to a select few workers during the Spring.

[2] Marshall (2000: 38) states that "Chile has become one of the world's top [farmed] salmon producers, second only to Norway. More than half (56.6%) of Chile's salmon exports go to Japan, while 30.9% go to the United States, which are both key markets for BC wild salmon."

Coupled with the decline of work in salmon canning are the increased restrictions that began in 1997 in the access of seasonal workers to Employment Insurance (EI). While workers across Canada have experienced greater restrictions in access to EI, those in Prince Rupert face specific regional problems in the way EI is calculated within a context of the economic boom in the northeast of the province.[3] EI qualifying regulations in northern BC have significantly affected seasonal cannery workers in Prince Rupert and many of these workers have been disqualified from benefits because they are unable to accumulate enough work hours at OceanSide. For instance, in 2003 (before the economic boom of the northeast) cannery workers had to accumulate 420 hours to qualify for benefits. At the time that I conducted fieldwork in Prince Rupert in 2011 the number of hours to qualify for EI had increased to 490. Since few employment opportunities exist outside the cannery, the remaining workers had to rely primarily on provincial Income Assistance (which from 2001 has also been reduced). With diminishing natural resources and the recent attempts to diversify the economy through tourism (UFAWU-UNIFOR, 2007), employment continues to be seasonal and resource-based in Prince Rupert.

Despite the massive changes to this economy, sociologists have paid remarkably little attention to the devastating consequences for workers and how workers reorganize their everyday lives under these conditions. This question is all the more significant if one takes into account the social context of workers' lives, including their marginality in a society that

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[3] A significant problem for seasonal workers in Prince Rupert is the calculation of EI benefits based on the unemployment rate for the region. This requirement has received a great deal of criticism from UFAWU-UNIFOR who highlights the unfairness of the inclusion of the northwest in the same economic region as the booming oil fields of northeastern BC. The northeast economic boom of the province has caused the steady decline in the unemployment rate for the northern BC region which has driven up the number of hours needed to qualify for EI (QCI Observer, 2007).

is marked by social exclusions based on Indigenous status, gender, family formation, race and social class.

My interest in this study stems from being raised by my grandmother who worked at the Canadian Fishing Company's OceanSide plant from 1972 to 2002. She was a hard worker with expert filleting skills and worked long hours but was often placed on-call for work. What interested me most during this time was the calendar she kept beside the phone in the kitchen and used to record her work hours. This calendar served as my first introduction to the topic of precarious work and its effects on everyday lived experiences. Working on-call meant that my grandmother's work hours were often sporadic and unpredictable and keeping a record of her hours on a calendar provided her with a broader perspective of how many work hours she accumulated as the season progressed.   For my grandmother, the hours she recorded on the calendar took on greater significance than solely reflecting her daily log of hours – for her, the calendar was used to track her progress towards attaining employment insurance. Because my grandmother found it challenging to attain work during the off-season this meant that every hour of work at OceanSide was important in securing income stability for our family. My grandmother's experiences of working on-call and keeping track of her work hours is characteristic of present day experiences of cannery workers.

This study will provide valuable insights into the everyday experiences of Indigenous women salmon cannery workers. It draws on feminist theories that examine power (social, institutional, state) in the everyday experience of Indigenous women workers. I employ feminist standpoint epistemology (Harding, 1986; Haraway, 1988; Hartsock, 1983; D. E. Smith, 1987) and decolonizing methodology (L.T. Smith, 1999) to place Indigenous

experience at the centre of analysis. Beginning from the standpoint of Indigenous women allows an examination of how power moves through organizational and institutional practices at various levels and filters through lived experience. Using feminist theory and highlighting the standpoint of women is particularly necessary given the invisibility of Indigenous women workers' experience in sociology and in Canadian society generally. This dissertation addresses the invisibility of Indigenous women workers by drawing primarily on semi-structured in-depth interviews of women working in the cannery.

In this chapter I explore how colonial policies enacted in the re-settling of Prince Rupert contribute to a social and spatial divide between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. I then outline the context of Prince Rupert and highlight how shifts in the socioeconomic circumstances of the city are linked to a decline in the resource based industries of forestry and fisheries. Following this discussion, I outline the historical establishment of salmon canneries in Northwest BC and outline the complexities of cannery work as both a site of agency and dispossession for Indigenous women cannery workers. I then outline the importance of neoliberalism to understanding contemporary structural forces that shape their labour and lived experiences today.

RE-SETTLING PRINCE RUPERT

The geographic location of Prince Rupert has been an important site to the Tsimpsian Nation who lived along its shorelines for thousands of years. Tsimpsian oral history states that villages along the Prince Rupert harbour were densely populated with as many as 10,000 people living in these communities. Interest in exploring the traditional lands of the Tsimpsian have led to archeological excavations around the Prince Rupert shoreline where

the remains of cedar plankhouses dating back 5,000 years have been uncovered (Ames and Maschner, 1999). The northwest coast interested non-Indigenous people who saw it as a significant location of trade and natural resources. In 1791, Spanish explorers arrived in the region searching for gold, precious metals, as well as evidence of American, British or Russian settlements. In 1834, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) established a permanent fur trading post in Port Simpson, located north of Prince Rupert, in an effort to eliminate competition for furs by Russian and American coastal traders who did not have permanent trading posts in the area. The Port Simpson trading post was very successful and attracted Indigenous fur traders from surrounding nations including the Tlingit, Nisga'a, and Haida. By the 1840s the Tsimpsian villages from the Prince Rupert harbour moved from this location to Port Simpson (Clayton, 1992) which had transformed into a centralized location of fur trade between Indigenous people and the HBC as well as a place of trade between and within Indigenous Nations. It wasn't until 1904 that non-Indigenous people planned to re-settle Prince Rupert as a northwest port (Young, 2008).

The development of Prince Rupert came as a result of a corporate plan initiated by Charles Hays, president of the Grand Trunk Railway, to build a second national railway from Winnipeg to the Northwest coast and develop a port that would rival the existing Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) port of Vancouver. The decision to establish the city of Prince Rupert in its current location on Kaien Island was made because it is the second deepest, natural, and ice-free harbour in the world and because of its close proximity to Asia. "The Port of Prince Rupert is North America's closest port to key Asian Markets. Situated 436 miles/36 hours sailing time closer to Shanghai than Vancouver and over 1,000 miles/68 hours closer than Los Angeles" (Rowse, 2005: 2). Hays believed that Prince Rupert would surpass Vancouver

and become the dominant port on the west coast. Promotional material by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway outlines Hays' vision:

> To this port will come the ships of the Seven Seas. Ships of the east, laden with silk and rice will soon be riding at anchor in this splendid harbour, to sail away laden with lumber; ships for the West with wares of the west; ships from the shores of far off continents trading through the new and picturesque port of Prince Rupert.[4]

Building the city of Prince Rupert necessitated the purchase of local Tsimpsian reserve lands. Reserve lands were bought by the Grand Trunk Pacific Town and Development Company – with the assistance of the Department of Indian Affairs and a local missionary – from the Tsimpsian Nation who sold 13,519 acres of land at $7.50 per acre (Rowse, 2005). In 1910, Prince Rupert became incorporated as a city and in 1914 the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was completed. The completion of the railway occurred two years after Charles Hays perished on the sinking of the Titanic.

At the time the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was completed it faced substantial debts with the high costs of construction and failed land deals. In 1919, the railway was taken over by the federal government. Despite failing to become a successful port as envisioned by Charles Hays, the city of Prince Rupert became a central and important location for the commercial fishing industry, with 23 salmon canneries located in the surrounding area (Young, 2008).

Since canneries were first established in BC in the 1870s several changes within the salmon industry have been made affecting the number and location of salmon processing facilities throughout the province and in Prince Rupert. According to Gaullaugher and Vodden (1999: 291), salmon processing businesses started to consolidate and close down in

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[4] Quote from the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway booklet (1909), as quoted in Young (2008: 52).

the 1960s with "increased mechanization of the canning process, which began earlier, changes to refrigeration technology, and the development of ground transport facilities, brought an end to remote and isolated plant operations." Depleting salmon stocks and the increase of supply of cheaper farmed salmon also made it financially difficult for small processing facilities to survive, leading to further consolidation of processing plants. These changes lead to the centralization and concentration of salmon processing in Prince Rupert and Vancouver. Today, only one small fish processing facility, Aero Trading Company Limited (ATC), in nearby Port Edward (16 km east of Prince Rupert) remains apart from the OceanSide plant in Prince Rupert. According to their website (Aero Trading Company Limited, n.d.), ATC specializes in a diversity of seafood products including salmon, halibut, crab, prawns, herring, shrimp, sablefish, and rockfish. They are a custom wholesale distributor with markets in Canada, United States, and Europe. ATC employs up to 50 workers, from both Prince Rupert and Port Edward, who are mostly male.

The racial organization of the fishing industry as discussed below significantly contributed to the establishment of white European superiority within Prince Rupert. Today there are still huge economic disparities in the wages earned between Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers in fishing and outside of the industry. Indigenous workers are shuffled into menial jobs and are overrepresented in low-paying, low-status jobs in the service sector and the fishery and underrepresented in work in managerial positions and jobs that provide full-time and full-year employment. This has contributed to the social and economic divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents in the city.

Prince Rupert continues to exist as a city characterized by a predominantly European 'White' majority and an Indigenous minority population. In 2011, Prince Rupert had a total

population of 13,105 residents (Statistics Canada, 2013e). While this population is made up

of people of diverse ethnic origins, there is a white 'majority' population who comprise 7,465

of the total residents.[5] Indigenous residents make up 4,750 of the total population (Statistics

Canada, 2013d). The population also includes a small proportion of 'visible' minorities of

diverse backgrounds including South Asian, Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, and Black.

While Prince Rupert is located on the traditional territory of the Tsimpsian Nation, the

urban Indigenous population in Prince Rupert is diverse and comprised of those of Gitxsan,

Nisga'a, Haida, Tlingit and Tsimpsian backgrounds. Many Indigenous families in Prince

Rupert have lived there for several generations while working the forestry and fishing

sectors. Prince Rupert's economy relies heavily on the processing of natural resources,

which is discussed further below.

FORESTS AND FISH

> Neither policy or policy making are neutral or value free. Rather, as socially
> constructed conventions, policy and policy-making are loaded with dominant
> values, Eurocentric ideals, and vested interests. So systemically embedded
> are notions about what is normal, desirable, or acceptable with respect to
> policy design, underlying assumptions, priorities and agenda, and process that
> even institutional actors are rarely aware of the logical consequences by which
> some are privileged, others excluded. (Fleras and Maaka, 2010: 2)

Prince Rupert is situated on the northwest coast of BC just 60 kilometres south of the

Alaskan panhandle. The city is located within a coastal rainforest and is surrounded by

western hemlocks and red cedars, Douglas fir and Sitka spruce. Prince Rupert is also the

midway point between the Nass River to the north and the Skeena River to the south. Both

of these rivers produce abundances of all five species of salmon (Sockeye, Chum, Coho,

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[5] Of this group, those of British Isles origins make up the largest number of residents totaling
5, 090.

Pink, and Chinook) that feed into Chatham Sound, the body of water surrounding the city.

Growing up in Prince Rupert – from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s – it was clear to me

that natural resources played a significant role in the local economy. For instance, wood

extracted from the local forests provided a rich supply of raw materials for the Skeena

Cellulose Pulp Mill, while salmon from the Pacific Ocean supplied fish for processing plants

in Prince Rupert. Between the 1960s and the 1990s Prince Rupert reached its economic peak

and several municipal amenities were built including a swimming pool, public library, civic

centre and performing arts centre. Over the last two decades, however, Prince Rupert has

undergone a radical transformation from a thriving resource town to having – in 2011 – an

unemployment rate of 14.6%, nearly double the national and provincial unemployment rate

of 7.5% (Statistics Canada, 2015). This socio-economic transformation has directly resulted

from the decline and restructuring of the resource based industries of forestry and fish.

Over the last few decades several factors have contributed to the restructuring of the

fishing fleet and fishing practices. First, in the 1980s farmed salmon from places such as

Norway and Chile were introduced to the global market as alternatives to wild BC salmon.

Second, in the 1990s Japan, an important market for BC salmon, took an economic

downturn. These two factors have contributed to declining prices for salmon (Muse, 1999).

Additionally, environmental concerns about overfishing and declining Coho and Chinook

stocks (Muse, 1999) on the west coast prompted changes in the industry. The federal

government responded to these concerns with the Mifflin Plan in 1996. This plan made

several key changes to fishing practices including reducing the size of the fishing fleet

through buying back fish licensing, the redefinition of licensing by fishing area and gear

type, and the permitting of license holders to purchase and combine – referred to as license

stacking – redefined licenses (Ecotrust, 2004; Muse, 1999; Pinkerton et al., 2014). The

Mifflin Plan resulted in a 42% reduction in the commercial fishing fleet as well as reduced

access to fisheries through limited gear and fishing area requirements (Pinkerton et al., 2014).

For example, before the Mifflin Plan was implemented fishers were able to fish year-round

from the Nass and Skeena areas along the north coast to the Fraser River in the south as well

as to fish herring, salmon, and halibut and make a decent living doing so. Changes in fish

licensing confined the fishing profession to a select few with more economic resources,

causing negative socioeconomic effects to coastal communities (Dolan et al., 2005), with

northern communities more strongly affected than southern communities, and Indigenous

fishers more affected than non-Indigenous fishers (Ecotrust, 2004; Pinkerton et al., 2014).

Changes to fish licensing favoured those with more economic capital and pushed out

fishers who could not afford to purchase more than one license to fully participate in the

fishery. This privatization of the fishing industry has resulted in local fishers and

communities losing their traditional access to fishing resources (MacDonald, 2005). Ecotrust

(2004) highlights that this shift in fisheries policy favoured urban-based industries and those

with more access to economic capital. They state that:

> The most resource-dependent rural regions are losing their connections to the
> sea because of the urbanization of the fishery. Local residents on the West
> Coast of Vancouver Island, for instance, only own two percent of all
> individual fishing quotas in B.C. The number is three percent in the North
> Island and nine percent in the North Coast. By contrast, residents of
> metropolitan Vancouver and Victoria own 44 percent of quotas. (Ecotrust,
> 2004: iii)

Fishers in the south coast had more economic advantages than fishers in the north

because many were able to mortgage their (more expensive) homes so they could purchase

fish licenses. This was not an option for those with homes of lesser value or for Indigenous

fishers who lived on reserves. Ritchie and Gill (2011) further note that most fishers who

reside in and fish the central and north coast are First Nations, while the majority of fishers

who fish the central and north coast and live in southern BC are non-First Nations. Thus

Indigenous fishers were disproportionately affected by this fishing policy because most were

unable to gather the economic resources to purchase more than one license, which then made

it impossible for them to make a living by fishing. Changes in fish policy directly resulted in

a downward spiral in income for Indigenous fishers (Ritchie and Gill, 2011). For example,

my aunt, whose husband worked in the fisheries, explained that many Indigenous fishers who

owned gillnetters (a smaller commercial fishing vessel) could no longer afford to participate

in the commercial fisheries because their earnings from fishing one area and one species was

often not enough to pay for the cost of gear, deckhands and fuel. As a result many Indigenous

fishers were excluded from commercial fishing.[6] The Mifflin Plan not only decimated the

livelihoods of rural and Indigenous fishers it also displaced skilled boat crew workers

including deckhands, cooks, and onshore net menders. The Mifflin Plan also had significant

consequences at the household level of Indigenous families who relied on combined incomes

from the commercial fishery and cannery work. Indigenous women cannery workers had to

carry the financial stress of supporting their families on seasonal earnings from OceanSide

while their spouses searched for new employment and new careers in Prince Rupert.

While the fishing industry was undergoing restructuring, changes were made to the

forestry sector, which has also powerfully impacted the community of Prince Rupert. The

Skeena Cellulose Pulp Mill, while it was in operation from 1951 to 2001, was Prince

Rupert's major employer providing full-time, full year employment for 11% of local

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[6] She further states that in many villages along the coast there are decaying gillnet boats that
are no longer in use because their owners could not afford to fish and, therefore, afford the
upkeep of their vessels.

residents (Dolan et al., 2005). Similar to the fishing sector, the BC forestry industry shifted through boom and bust cycles according to changes in supply and demand in the global market as well as to changes in trade rules and practices such as the North American Free Trade Agreement. In the 1980s and 1990s the mill experienced partial closures resulting from poor markets, and in 1997 the BC NDP government, in an attempt to preserve jobs, paid $250 million to bail the company out of bankruptcy. The forestry industry in the province took a significant downtown with the election of the BC Liberal Party under Gordon Campbell in 2001. Premier Campbell removed local milling requirements that tied logging rights on Crown land to processing in local BC mills. As a consequence, processing declined and soon the forestry industry tripled the export of unprocessed and raw logs from BC to mills in China, Japan, Korea and the USA. Since 1997, 27 mills in BC have been closed taking 13,000 jobs with them (Hyslop, 2014). In 2001 the Skeena Cellulose Pulp Mill closed resulting in an estimated loss of 750 direct and 1,331 indirect jobs in Prince Rupert alone (Prince Rupert Economic Development Commission, 2002).

Changes in the forestry and fishing industries have had a significant socioeconomic impact on Prince Rupert. The city has experienced heightened outmigration with the population steadily declining from 18,000 in the early 1990s to 13,105 in 2011. Over this period of time several businesses in the downtown core have closed. In the conversation I had with my aunt about this issue she stated that "We lost Maclean and Rotherham's furniture store, a grocery store, Fountain Tire, Kaien Sports, the Universal Clothing Store, and a local gift store, the Green Apple restaurant and a few other restaurants." One local business owner has referred to the downtown core as similar to a "toothless grin" with only every third retail space being occupied (Kolenko, 2013). Prince Rupert is now classified as a

"partial shopping centre" (Halseth, Ryser, Durkee, 2005: 21). Loss of businesses means that more residents are competing for fewer available jobs in the retail and service industries. Important to note here is that these shifts in fishing and forestry policy have occurred at the same time the federal and provincial governments have changed access and eligibility requirements for social programs such as EI (discussed in Chapter 3) and Social Assistance (discussed in Chapter 4) that have reduced the number of people eligible for these benefits.

Prince Rupert is no longer the thriving resource town it was 20 years ago. While the city remains surrounded by natural resources the local residents no longer fully benefit from them because of these policy changes in forestry and fishing. As Blackburn (2005) notes "[w]orld-connecting flows in trade and capital are not an entirely new thing and residents of British Columbia […] have not been untouched by these flows in the past (Wolf 1982). However, the speed, volume, and character of these flows have all intensified within the last three decades of the 20th century (Appadurai 1998:228)" (589).

The changes over the last few decades to the local economy have significantly transformed the lived experiences of cannery workers who live in Prince Rupert. Indigenous women cannery workers have witnessed full-time and better paying jobs disappear as a result of the closure of Skeena Cellulose Pulp Mill and the downturn of the fishing industry. These changes in the forestry and fish industries have combined with the restructuring of the labour market towards precarious flexible employment as well as the restructuring of social policies towards neoliberal ideologies of individual responsibility. As a result, class and racialized differences have intensified in Prince Rupert. In my conversations with support service workers in Prince Rupert they commented that the majority of those who access their services are Indigenous residents. For example, in an interview I conducted with a service

worker at the Food Bank he stated that Indigenous residents make up 99% of those who access their services. Also, the Executive Director of the Hecate Strait Employment Society identified Indigenous workers as comprising 60% of her clientele (discussed further in Chapter 5).

COLONIAL HISTORY OF SALMON CANNERIES IN NORTHWEST BRITISH COLUMBIA

To better understand the current Prince Rupert class and racialized demarcations in salmon cannery work, it is necessary to outline major aspects of its colonial history. In 2010, *BC Magazine* (Neering, Winter 2010: 48) featured an article on salmon canneries in British Columbia, which described the fishing industry as a seasonal hub of activity that for over 90 years brought together workers of diverse ethnic backgrounds and different communities.

> From native villages, nearby cities, and the Chinatowns of Vancouver and Victoria they came, stepping ashore in the late spring to process and pack the thousands of salmon caught by Caucasian, Japanese, and aboriginal fishermen. Each summer for some 90 years, the coastal cannery villages were alive with the clink and groan of machinery, the soft slash of sharp knives through salmon flesh, the laughter of children, and the barking of dogs. At the end of summer, the workers departed, their bloody aprons packed away, their cabins left to the elements, the wharves forlorn and empty.

The history of salmon canneries in the Pacific Northwest of British Columbia is, however, much more complex than *BC Magazine* suggests, with overlapping socio-economies, Indigenous cultures, geographies, and politics intertwining to shape the lives of those who worked in the industry. This history is significant to this study because of the ways that Indigenous women engaged with and were incorporated into fish processing work in the early 20th century and the continuing legacies of this within Prince Rupert. Additionally, the long history of Indigenous women comprising the majority of workers at the cannery has had the effect of characterizing this work both as seasonal 'cheap wage labour' and as work for

Indigenous women, reflected in the high percentage of Indigenous women who continue to be employed at OceanSide.

In 1867 the first salmon cannery in British Columbia was established in Annieville along the Fraser River (Barman, 1991; Lichatowich, 2001). At this time the commercial salmon industry was in full operation in Saint John, New Brunswick in Eastern Canada and along the Columbia River in the United States (Campbell, 2004). Salmon has always been highly prized in the Pacific Northwest and while there are five species of salmon, sockeye and pink salmon are the most commonly used for canning (BC Salmon Marketing Council, 2014). Sockeye salmon holds the most value because of its succulent flavour and bright red flesh while pink salmon holds lesser commercial value because of its smaller size, pale pink colour, and softer meat. The canning process transforms salmon into an ideal commercial product giving it a long shelf life while retaining its quality, taste and nutritional value (Campbell, 2004). Additionally, canned salmon is easily stored and transported making it a good product for export. Canned salmon quickly found a market in Britain where – as a manufacturing country with a limited land mass and growing population – they were unable to produce enough food to sustain the population (Barman, 1991; Ralston, 1981). Canned salmon gained popularity in Britain among the working class and commonly became known as a "working man's feast" (Muszynski, 2005: 99). Muszynski (2005) argues that commercialization of British Columbia's resources, including salmon, developed in response to the economic imperatives of Great Britain. By the end of the nineteenth century the commercial salmon canning industry had spread throughout the Pacific Northwest along the three major salmon-bearing rivers of the Fraser, Nass, and Skeena and along the coast including Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii (formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands) thus

making the fishing industry a significant player in the economic growth of British Columbia (Newell, 1993; Muszynski, 2005).

Indigenous workers actively incorporated waged labour into their economic activity and actively participated in the developing resource industries in the late 19th century (Menzies and Butler, 2008). Several scholars (Knight, 1996; Lutz, 2008; Menzies and Bulter, 2008; Newell, 1993) have argued that Indigenous workers were central to the successful operation of salmon processing in British Columbia and that Indigenous peoples understood the industry as an economic opportunity that fit within existing seasonal activities.[7] Hereditary chiefs and high-ranking members within villages recruited Indigenous labourers for cannery work and often determined which cannery locations community members worked at (Menzies and Butler, 2008; Newell, 1993).

For Indigenous workers, wages earned in fish processing plants were an important source of income in their combined wage and subsistence economy (Lutz, 2008; Menzies and Butler, 2008). Income generated through salmon season helped Indigenous workers pay for supplies needed during the remainder of the year, and covered the costs of materials needed to host feasts (or potlatches) where traditional territories, fishing grounds and status were publicly declared and acknowledged. Additionally, company stores granted cash and credit advances to Indigenous workers both during salmon season and during the off-season. The fishing industry provided an important source of income to cannery workers but was also a significant site of social and cultural exchange. Menzies and Butler (2008: 140) state that

> The canneries became a site for the reproduction of the indigenous economy
> and society in much the same way as gathering places like the Nass River

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[7] Additional seasonal activities among coastal Indigenous nations included hunting in the fall and winter months followed by harvesting and processing herring and oolichans and herring roe during the spring.

eulachon settlements, were summertime centres of indigenous commerce. Families brought the food stuffs they had produced to the canneries to trade and sell. The industry drew from both coastal and interior villages and thus provided the opportunity to trade for the particular food specialties of each community.

Indigenous processing workers took advantage of the opportunities that the fishing industry provided to not only earn wages but also to maintain trade connections with communities outside of their own.

In Muszynski's (2005) study of salmon processing workers in British Columbia, she states that "First Nations labourers were neither docile nor subservient" (102). Indigenous workers in the cannery were a strong labour force for a few reasons. First, Indigenous workers entered into waged labour in the canneries as entire communities or villages rather than individualized workers (Menzies and Butler, 2008). This meant that cannery owners had to employ collective strategies to attract families of workers to their plants each season. For example, cannery owners guaranteed the labour of Indigenous women by securing fishing licenses specifically for Indigenous fishermen whom they recruited to work in their fleets. This meant that Indigenous workers not only engaged in the fishing industry as communities but also as family units. And second, Indigenous workers were able to exercise independence from waged labour as a result of their mixed wage and subsistence economy. This independence from paid wage work made Indigenous workers an "'unreliable' labour pool in the eyes of some canners" (Muszynski, 2005: 107).

The seasonal nature of cannery work along with their geographic locations limited the pool of labourers that cannery owners could attract to their processing plants. Muszynski (2005) argues that European men were not interested in cannery work because the seasonal wages did not provide enough earnings to raise a family on and because cannery work was generally understood to be 'cheap wage labour' (Muszynski, 1996; 2005) for marginalized

workers. Indigenous women were perceived as a suitable fit for fish processing work because, as racialized women, they were paid lower wages than white male workers. In addition to Indigenous women, cannery owners also targeted Chinese and Japanese men for work in canneries. Chinese and Japanese labourers immigrated to Canada as 'solitary males' and they had few social supports locally. In contrast to Indigenous workers who had resources (through subsistence economy, traditional rights to resources, and home communities) outside of the cannery to rely on, Chinese and Japanese workers had to be more dependent on waged labour. In Lutz's (2008: 38) description of Chinese workers in the 1880s in British Columbia, he states that they "were a true 'landless proletariat': they either worked or they starved".

The mixed subsistence and waged economy enjoyed by Indigenous people later changed as the federal government enacted management policies such as the 1888 Canadian Fisheries Act aimed at making fishing "a 'white man's' industry through claiming the sea and the resources in it" (Lutz, 2008: 239) while restricting Indigenous rights of access to these resources. Menzies and Butler (2008: 141) state that the Act

> made a distinction between a registered Indian's right to fish for the purpose of food, (which was exempt from certain regulations), and the right to sell, trade or barter fish. This distinction was based upon erroneous mainstream colonial conventional wisdom that the selling of fish or the trade of fish for benefit was not an indigenous practice. The effect of this regulation was to facilitate the incorporation of indigenous fishers within the growing capitalist economy.

Through this process the federal government effectively positioned itself as an authority over fisheries management while criminalizing Indigenous resource activity. This change left Indigenous workers little choice but to rely heavily on waged work in the cannery. Thus through the process of colonial resource displacement, Indigenous women became 'cheap wage labour' for fish processing while male Indigenous fishers were pushed

out of the industry and replaced with white European fishermen who were granted independent fishing licenses and sold their catch at higher prices than non-white fishers who were tied to fish processing plants (Lutz, 2008). Harris (2002) argues that colonial policies, like the Fisheries Act, were designed in British Columbia to displace Indigenous peoples from land and resources and had the effect of increasing Indigenous peoples' dependence on waged labour. Without a subsistence economy to fall back on, income gained solely from seasonal work has significantly contributed to the experiences of poverty among many Indigenous women cannery workers. Moreover, the creation of the Fisheries Act has significantly contributed to the emergence of Indigenous workers as part of the working class within the waged economy. Cannery owners significantly benefited from these policies because they were able to keep the costs of production down while operating a seasonal business.

The social organization of the fishing industry based on white male dominance and Indigenous dispossession of resources established a racial hierarchy on the northwest coast. This resulted in construction of commercial fishing for profit as the domain for mostly white fishermen while the cannery became a space of racialized and gendered Indigeneity. Local Indigenous groups have responded to and challenged federal fisheries management policies arguing that Indigenous people have the right to fish based on a long history of harvesting and that fisheries management policies infringed this right (Harris, 2002). Nevertheless, present day fisheries policies like the Mifflin Plan continue to uphold European dominance over fisheries management while sustaining the marginalization of Indigenous fishers and processing workers within the industry.

In the context of dispossession from resources, Indigenous women continue to play an important role in fish processing. Indigenous women still enter cannery work as part of families, nation groups, and communities. And cannery work is part of the collective experiences and histories of Indigenous peoples on the northwest coast. This history of work in the fishing industry is a source of pride for many Indigenous peoples (Muszynski, 2005) with most cannery workers being able to trace their ancestral family histories through cannery work along the coast[8] (Thorkelson, union representative for the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union – UNIFOR).

THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET AND RACIALIZATION

The racialized and gendered experiences of Indigenous women as BC salmon cannery workers are not simply the result of the historical development of the fishing industry but

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[8] In my family history, for instance, my great grandmother worked during the summer months at the Arrandale Cannery located at the mouth of the Nass River. It was at this location where in 1937 she gave birth to my grandmother. In conversations with my grandmother about her childhood she has talked about summers spent in Arrandale where she would help her mom fill cans with salmon and how this helped increase the amount her mom was paid. At this time, workers were paid based on the volume of cans they processed and many women of my grandmother's generation were introduced, as children, to salmon processing by helping their mothers. My grandmother's career in salmon processing continued when she married in 1955 and my grandparents settled at the North Pacific Cannery on the Skeena River located just a 20 minute drive from Prince Rupert. My grandparents lived at the North Pacific Cannery year round and worked herring season in the spring and salmon season in the summer. They raised their six children (including my mother) at North Pacific Cannery. In 1968, the Canadian Fishing Company bought and closed the North Pacific Cannery as well as other processing plants in the area. After closing these locations the Canadian Fishing Company centralized their fish processing operations in Prince Rupert at the OceanSide Cannery. The consolidation of these processing plants and the centralization of cannery operations in Prince Rupert inspired my grandparents to move from North Pacific Cannery to Prince Rupert to continue work at the cannery. This history of tracing family lineages through cannery work and salmon processing sites along the Northwest coast is a shared experience among Indigenous cannery workers today.

also of broader structural forces that create barriers for many workers in the Canadian labour market. As Galabuzi (2006) observes, Indigenous peoples experience systemic barriers, limited mobility, discrimination in the workplace, and income insecurity. Indigenous peoples are over-represented in low paying occupations, especially in the service sector and in precarious and unregulated temporary or contingent work, and under-represented in high paying occupations and sectors (Wilson and Macdonald, 2010). In addition, unemployment rates are higher among Indigenous peoples. In 2011, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people in Canada aged 25 to 64 years was 13%, twice the national average of 6% for Canadians of the same age (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013). In the same year, people with disabilities (8.6%), lone parents (8.1%) and recent immigrants (12.3%) also experienced disproportionately high unemployment rates, though not as high as Indigenous populations (Employment and Social Development Canada, n.d.).

The little data available indicate that Indigenous women living off-reserve and participating in the labour force are unable to earn enough to support their needs and those of their family (Statistics Canada, 2006). This is highlighted in a report published by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (Quinless, 2012) that states that 36% of Indigenous women (compared with 17% of non-Aboriginal women) were living below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-off and were more dependent than non-Aboriginal women on government transfers. At this time, the average annual income for Indigenous women was just over $21,733 compared to $28,272 for non-Aboriginal women, an income that is difficult for one person, let alone women with children, to survive in Canada.

Barriers to employment and income security are exacerbated by the changing nature of the labour market. De Wolff (2000) argues that the labour market in Canada is increasingly

characterized by contract, temporary, insecure, and 'flexible' employment referred to as 'precarious' or 'contingent' work (4). More than half (54.2%) of Canadian labourers enjoyed full-time work in 1998 while the other 45.8% were engaged in more precarious kinds of work such as self-employment, part-time (in one or more jobs), and temporary work (de Wolff). She demonstrates that precarious forms of work contribute to "the creation and maintenance of ethno-racial segmentation" in the workforce as well as "an ethno-racial polarization in income" (i). This is evidenced in the fact that most workers engaged in precarious labour (unstable, part-time, and low wage work) are racialized peoples, and particularly women (Khosla, 2003).

While considerable research has documented statistically the overrepresentation in Canada of racialized groups and women in precarious labour, little is known about the lived experiences of Indigenous women workers. To explore such experiences, it is necessary to consider the social policy environment that is relevant to their high degree of income insecurity. In particular, substantial research suggests that the societal shift towards neoliberalism in Canada has had a major impact upon the labour market and the welfare state, and upon existing gender relations in ways that create a great deal of vulnerability, especially among racialized and Indigenous groups.

NEOLIBERALISM

Women who participate in the labour force are disproportionately represented in positions that pay less, have few benefits and less flexible working conditions (Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; Fudge and Vosko, 2003). Several authors argue that the restructuring of the welfare state over the last three decades along neoliberal ideologies has further deepened

the economic disparities between Canadian men and women (Brodie and Bakker, 2008; Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; Fudge and Vosko, 2003; Fuller and Vosko, 2008; McBride, 2001; McKeen and Porter, 2003; Townson and Hayes, 2007). Cohen and Pulkingham (2009: 16) define neoliberalism as a set of policies, ideologies and practices reflective of a

> particular Western philosophy of government that shapes state, civil society, and market relations. Neoliberal ideology, rooted in a philosophy of liberal individualism, rests in the theory that the best approach to securing and protecting human well-being is through individual economic and social freedoms and that state intervention in market activities should be kept at a minimum.

This shift in governance has implications for everyday lived experiences because neoliberalism discourages direct state interventions into the lives of citizens, and hence does not address the social inequalities and distress that are experienced by many groups.

In Canada the consequences of neoliberal reforms, including the restructuring of the welfare state, spending reductions for programs and services especially for social programming aimed at vulnerable populations have been documented at both provincial and federal levels. In particular, benefits such as Employment Insurance at the federal level and Social Assistance at the BC provincial level have been scaled back and eligibility curtailed. Morrow, Hankisky, and Varcoe (2004: 358) suggest that:

> in Canada, the idea that social entitlements are important components of citizenship and equality is currently being undermined by neoliberal state values, expressed in federal and provincial policy shifts that favour self-sufficiency and economic competitiveness over a strong welfare state. In this context, social problems are seen as individual failures that require private rather than state-based solutions.

As Brodie and Bakker (2008) note, neoliberalism in Canada has served to reproduce gender inequality:

> In the past 30 years, Canadians have witnessed both a marked rise and precipitous decline in the importance attributed to gender in the development

of social policy and in the pursuit of the broader social goals of gender equality and inclusive citizenship. (59).

Replacing governing discourses and strategies for achieving gender equality are initiatives focused on child and family, market principles and individual responsibility. Brodie and Bakker argue the erasure of women from social policies is based on the assumption that equality has been achieved and policies no longer need to be concerned with issues of gender equality.

Yet within the context of neoliberalism, full-time permanent jobs became less common, dropping from 67% in 1989 to 63% in 2005 of total employment (Vosko, 2006). Recent studies have documented the trend towards temporary employment including seasonal, casual (on-call), employment through temporary help agency, contract and limited term. Temporary employment is not only less secure than permanent employment, it generally offers lower pay, restricted access to social benefits and statutory entitlements, and less control over the labour process (Fuller and Vosko, 2003). Fuller and Vosko (2003) argue that temporary employment is arranged in gendered and racially stratified ways raising concerns that increases in this type of employment will add to existing labour market inequalities. In the Canadian context, marginalized citizens such as youth, women, Indigenous peoples and immigrants are over-represented in temporary work and are consequently more likely to experience the consequences of labour market deregulation.

The shift from full-time permanent employment to temporary employment has had differential effects for men and women. Vosko (2006) highlights that in 2005, men were more likely than women (66 per cent versus 59 per cent) to hold full-time employment and that women are disproportionately represented in jobs "characterized by multiple dimensions

of labour market insecurity, including part-time paid employment and self-employment, especially of the solo variety, as well as temporary employment" (377).

Hence neoliberalism has an impact on women workers, especially those who are marginalized and poor. However, little is known about the effects on Indigenous women workers. This dissertation explores how neoliberalism's emphasis on individual responsibility amplifies existing forms of systemic inequality, and serves to further marginalize Indigenous women cannery workers.

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW NEOLIBERALISM SHAPES INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S WAGED LABOUR AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

Many scholars (Knight, 1996; Stevens and Knight, 1992; Newell, 1993; Muszynski, 1996; 2005; Butler and Menzies, 2000; Dombrowski, 2002; Harris, 2002; Kuhn and Sweetman, 2002; Raibmon, 2005; Lutz, 2008; Menzies and Butler, 2008) have considered different forms of Indigenous labour in British Columbia, either historically or in the contemporary context, but have given little attention to the experiences of Indigenous women. Other studies that focus on Indigenous women have demonstrated their centrality to community, family relations and aboriginal rights (Fiske, 1993; 1999; 2000; Monture-Angus, 1999; Green, 2001; Napoleon, 2001; Lawrence, 2004) as well as their vulnerability to violence, sexual assault, exploitation, poverty and racism (e.g. Janzen, Strega, Brown, Morgan, Carriere, 2013; Razack, 2002; Smith, 2003; 2005; Strega et al., 2014). Such studies, however, provide little insight into how Indigenous women negotiate precarious employment and family responsibilities. At the same time, many studies have shown that large proportions of Canadians have jobs that are unstable and insecure (e.g. Fudge and Vosko,

2003; Galabuzi, 2006; Creese, 2007) and that women disproportionately work in precarious

jobs (Brodie and Bakker, 2008; Fuller and Vosko, 2008; Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009).

Again, however, the research has not focused on Indigenous women and their work-family

strategies in specific contexts. The little data available indicate that Indigenous women living

off-reserve and participating in the labour force are unable to earn enough to support their

needs and those of their family (Statistics Canada, 2006); Indigenous women have larger

families than the Canadian average (Health Canada, 2005); and one-third of Indigenous

children (34.4%) live in single-parent families headed by women (Statistics Canada, 2013a).

By undertaking a qualitative case study of Indigenous women working at the Canadian

Fishing Company's OceanSide Cannery, this research will contribute to understanding how

women's diverse strategies unfold in a context of seasonal and precarious employment, and

complex policy regimes.

More generally, this dissertation opens up for exploration the understanding of how

neoliberalism and neoliberal policies shape Indigenous women's paid labour and lived

experiences. While neoliberal ideologies present as race and gender neutral in their focus on

individual responsibility, neoliberal policies have racialized and gendered outcomes that

sustain inequality. This is an important point because Indigenous women are often

considered responsible for their circumstances (i.e. unemployed, impoverished, housing

insecure, food insecure), and their opportunities are understood to be open-ended. However,

Indigenous women in Prince Rupert find that they are confined to precarious and poorly paid

jobs mostly in the service sector, and that their jobs options (i.e. poorly paid, part-time, on-

call) are very limited. As discussed above, colonial displacements through the Fisheries Act

and other fisheries policies have marginalized Indigenous women and constructed them as

seasonal, poorly paid cannery workers. Neoliberal policies and discourses ignore these broader contexts and focus on individual responsibility, reinforcing systemic racial inequalities within the labour market.

The primary objective of this research is to examine factors that construct Indigenous women cannery workers as precarious workers at the Canadian Fishing Company's OceanSide Cannery in Prince Rupert, and explore how they negotiate work within this context. A number of questions guide this research: What are the major institutions that shape cannery work? How do these forces interact with gender, racialization and Indigeneity to produce experiences of precarious labour for Indigenous women cannery workers?   What impact do these experiences have on everyday life? And lastly, what are the survival strategies employed by Indigenous women cannery workers engaged in precarious work?

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This dissertation, which provides a case study of Indigenous women's experiences as precarious workers at the OceanSide fish processing plant in Prince Rupert, highlights the interconnections between gender, Indigeneity, and precarious labour. The present chapter (Chapter 1) locates the case study by discussing the labour market of Prince Rupert, the history of cannery work and the experiences of Indigenous women workers in British Columbia. It also outlines how the Canadian labour market is structured and racialized and how it is shaped by neoliberal social policy.

Chapter 2, Methodology, outlines the methodology used in my case study of Indigenous women workers.   In this chapter I explain the significance of beginning from the standpoint of Indigenous women for exploring how social structures coordinate their

everyday experiences. I outline how beginning from Indigenous women cannery workers'
experiences situates them as experts and challenges notions that they are not significant
actors in the fishing industry. I also discuss some of the challenges I experienced in the field
as an Indigenous researcher with both 'insider' and 'outsider' status.

Chapters 3 to 6 focus on field research conducted in Prince Rupert and maps out how
Indigenous women cannery workers' experiences are mediated and orchestrated within a
complex web of institutions (i.e. organization of seasonal cannery work, Employment
Insurance, Income Assistance). Chapter 3, Precious Work/Precarious Lives, examines how
the precarious labour market structures the lives of Indigenous women workers struggling to
gain financial stability for their families. Chapter 4, Employment Insurance, focuses on
Employment Insurance policy, its framework and how accessible it is to Indigenous women
in Prince Rupert. Chapter 5, Survival Strategies, examines the various services such as
Income Assistance and community services like the Food Bank that Indigenous women call
upon when they are unable to make ends meet. In Chapter 6, "Talking Back": Indigenous
women workers' responses to neoliberal reforms, I explore the importance of Indigenous
women cannery workers' sense of agency and their experiences in resisting informally and
formally neoliberal ideologies and practices of individualization and individual
responsibility.

Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation by summarizing its key findings and discussing
their significance for understanding how the precarious labour market further marginalizes
Indigenous women cannery workers. The dissertation argues that to grasp the nature of the
women's work, which is exceedingly precarious, it is necessary to consider how it is shaped
by a host of social, political, environmental and economic forces. In particular, the

dissertation illustrates how provincial and Canadian neoliberal policies that developed during the past few decades have amplified the vulnerable status of Indigenous women cannery workers. To make ends meet, the women have had to rely on support from family and friends and non-governmental organizations like the Food Bank to get by. Overall the dissertation contributes to making Indigenous women workers' lives more visible, to showing their significance in the salmon canning industry, to highlighting how their precarious labour undermines their well-being and that of their families, and to demonstrating their resilience in the face of major obstacles. These findings point to the necessity of understanding such experiences for assessing current labour market and social policies, and how they (re)produce systemic inequalities in Canada.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology of the study and the scholarly debates that inform the procedures undertaken in the fieldwork and analysis. It begins with a discussion of the analysis. It then considers the debate about feminism and decolonizing methodologies and how reflexivity can bring these two perspectives together. Finally, the chapter describes how the data were collected.

In this dissertation, I employ feminist standpoint epistemology (Harding, 1986; Haraway, 1988; Hartsock, 1983; D.E. Smith, 1987; 1992) and decolonizing methodology (L.T. Smith, 1999) to examine the experiences of Indigenous women workers. Both of these approaches offer methodological alternatives to Western positivist epistemological approaches of dispassionate, objective, and value free research. Within positivistic epistemological approaches:

> subjectivity is an obstacle to knowledge: the observer's personality and feelings introduce errors in observation. The practices of research are designed to minimize and hopefully erase any impact of the researcher's subjectivity from data. Observations are made through a process of objective measurement, which circumvents the subjectivity of the observer, allows for application of statistical analyses, and makes data collection and interpretation open to replication and testing by others. (Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2006: 26)

Standpoint theorists have rejected the positivistic claims that knowledge can be created from no-where while arguing that knowledge emerges out of embodied social experience (Naples, 2003). For example, in Haraway's (1988) concept of situated knowledges she highlights that a disembodied, omniscient, and objective position from above is impossible and argues, instead, that knowledge is subjective and grounded in experience. Haraway argues that there is no one truth and that all knowledge is partial and situated within the context it was created.

D.E. Smith (1987) links claims to objective knowledge with male privilege in her critique of 'established sociology' which she identifies as being dominated by the standpoint of men in positions of power. She argues that within established sociology (and academia in general) women have learned to set aside, deny, and understand as irrelevant their experiences and have learned to work within discourses that reflect the perspectives, relevances and interests of male experience.

Feminist standpoint epistemology is influenced by the Marxist idea that individuals' daily activities and lived experiences frame their understanding of the social world. Marx understood knowledge as historically constructed and based on a 'given mode of production.' According to Marx, the ruling class configure knowledge to justify social inequalities. Marx argues that the perspectives of the owners of the 'means of production' are partial and distorted in contrast with workers whose knowledge is more comprehensive based on their need to understand their world as well as the perspectives of the owners (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Similarly, feminist scholars (Harding, 1986; Haraway, 1988; Hartsock, 1983) argue that the social location of women and marginalized people offer fuller insights into social relations because they experience structural inequalities. For instance, Hartsock's (1983) feminist historical method draws on Marxist thought to highlight how women's lived experiences are structurally different from those of men resulting from their experiences of gender subordination. She states that this experience of subordination provides women with a vantage point to understand gender relations as socially constructed in unequal ways.

D.E. Smith (1987) argues that sociology for women begins with the experiences of women while also considering the greater social relations that contextualize and situate experience. For example, D.E. Smith suggests that sociology needs to begin with women's

everyday lived experiences but also to problematize the experiences and use them as an entry point to examine how the everyday is mediated by broader social and political structures. She states:

> My notion of standpoint doesn't privilege a knower. It does something rather different. It shifts the ground of knowing, the place where inquiry begins. Since knowledge is essentially socially organized, it can never be an act or an attribute of individual consciousness. (Smith, D.E., 1992: 91).

From this perspective, D.E. Smith argues that by examining how everyday experiences are mediated we can begin to see how they are linked to larger social, material, and political structures. D.E. Smith's offers an alternative to the Enlightenment paradigm of dispassionate research, objectivity and neutrality in beginning with everyday experience. This process challenges knowledge production as an objective and neutral experience.

In her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, L.T. Smith (1999) shares similar concerns about objective knowledge within positivistic frameworks. She points to non-Indigenous researchers as those in dominant positions of knowledge construction, who often view Indigenous people through the perspective of Western 'imperial eyes'. Western knowledge considers itself to be legitimate and maintains racial hierarchies in research that silences Indigenous experiences and understandings while constructing Indigenous people as *other*. According to L.T. Smith, critical theories and feminist perspectives have offered an understanding of the social constructiveness of knowledge that is valuable to research in Indigenous communities. However, she contends that a decolonizing framework that privileges Indigenous voices and experiences is needed in such research. Similarly, Archibald (2008) argues that Indigenous life stories need to be understood within a holistic context that takes into account the impacts of historical colonial processes as well as the present day social context. For instance, in her work she discusses how Indigenous life

stories reflect diverse experiences of social, political, and economic survival. Taken together these approaches open up space for acknowledging Indigenous women's experience and for starting with their standpoints as an entry to an analysis of social structures. Research on Indigenous peoples needs to acknowledge the legacies of colonialism and how this interacts with contemporary structural inequalities that shape the material realities of Indigenous women's experiences.

Decolonizing methodologies are often associated with participatory action based research models that are linked in turn, to struggles for self-determination within Indigenous political movements. L.T. Smith (1999: 116) states that:

> Self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains. It necessarily involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples.

While participatory action based research is consistent with a decolonizing approach, I argue that it is not inherent to it. In my study, I do not employ action based decolonizing methodologies. The Indigenous women who participated in this study did not express an interest in mobilizing as a workforce or in transforming the work they do at OceanSide. Instead the Indigenous women cannery workers spoke with pride of the work they do in the fishing industry and also acknowledged the challenges and limitations that they struggle to work and live within. Indigenous women talked about wanting year round work, longer hours, and access to social supports that would adequately fit their needs. For the purpose of this study I use a decolonizing approach specifically to mean the situating of Indigenous women at the centre of analysis and acknowledging Indigenous women cannery workers as knowers in their everyday lives. It was the stories of Indigenous women cannery workers and their everyday struggles to make ends meet that guided the research and that inspired me

to examine further the connections between their experiences and the broader social and political structures that shape them.

Centering the voices and experiences of Indigenous women is important because they are rarely recognized as experts on policies that shape their daily lives, and their stories and lived realities are often absent in discussions of the fishing industry. The absence of Indigenous voice and perspectives is also noted in Menzies and Butler's research on *The Indigenous Foundation of the Resource Economy of BC's North Coast* (2008). They argue that non-Indigenous narratives of the resettling of the province depict Europeans as heroic pioneers arriving into an unclaimed, unoccupied, and ownerless landscape while treating Indigenous people as a tragic afterthought and not significant, active players within capitalist relations of production in the fishing and forestry industries (as discussed in Chapter 1). Similarly, the fishing industry has been constructed as male dominated within popular and policy discourse and the important role of women in fish processing has been trivialized and made invisible (Neis, 2000). Centering the voices and experiences of women engaged in fish processing work is also significant to Neis' (2006: 7) study of fish processing workers in Newfoundland and Labrador where she argues that:

> Like men, women contribute directly to fisheries as workers, organizers and managers in fishing-based households, markets, credit systems, industries and communities. They have fishery knowledge and skills, and they depend on fish resources and industries for their livelihoods and, to some extent, for food self-sufficiency.

The interviews I conducted provide insights into how Indigenous women experience cannery work as well as how they respond to, negotiate, and contest the current policies that shape their day-to-day lives. I examine the cannery industry and how it determines the lives of workers, from working on an on-call basis, to the day-to-day tasks, the Employment Insurance system and who qualifies for this benefit, Social Assistance programs (and what is

mandated of workers when they access them), the lack of formal child-care services and the

need to rely on 'informal' networks of family members or neighbours. This approach

uncovers the everyday experiences of Indigenous women cannery workers.

As I undertook research on Indigenous women cannery workers and drew upon their

standpoint, it became increasingly evident that federal and provincial social policies mediated

their experiences. As a result, I employ a feminist standpoint approach to undertake

qualitative research that contributes to social policy. Naples (2003: 144) argues that:

> Feminist materialist standpoint methodology offers something very few policy
> approaches offer; namely, 'situated knowledges' (Haraway 1988) on hidden
> dimensions of state activity as experienced by women who must negotiate the
> multiple policy arenas throughout their daily lives.

A feminist standpoint methodology is useful because it situates Indigenous women's

experiences at the centre of analysis as a basis to explore conflicts between their everyday

lives and the demands and expectations of government policies such as Employment

Insurance and Social Assistance.

Although I take a feminist and decolonizing approach, it should be noted that

Indigenous women scholars have generally not integrated feminist perspectives into their

research and only recently have edited collections (Green, 2007; Suzack, Huhndorf,

Perreault, Barman, 2010) emerged where Indigenous women are explicitly engaging in

feminist approaches. The following discussion examines the ways in which Indigenous

scholarship has been critical of feminist approaches to research, and argues that specific

feminist methodologies have much to offer in exploring Indigenous women's lives.

Many Indigenous women scholars (Lawrence, 2004; Monture-Angus, 1999; Napoleon, 2001; Ouellet, 2002; L.T. Smith, 1999 & 2005; Turpel, 1990), engage with feminist analysis yet do not identify themselves as feminists. Their work tends to avoid creating political and cultural divisiveness within Indigenous communities and focuses on histories of colonialism and oppression and their legacies in shaping the lived experiences of both Indigenous men and women. Some of these scholars (Green, 2001; Lawrence, 2004; Napoleon, 2001) advocate for Indigenous women's rights and examine how racialized and gendered oppressions intersect to shape the material circumstances and experience of Indigenous women. Other Indigenous women scholars (e.g. Ouellette; Monture-Angus; Turpel) fully reject identifying as feminists and argue that these perspectives are not adequate for addressing the concerns, issues and lived experiences of Indigenous women.

Drawing on the work of Ouellette (2002), Monture-Angus (1999) and Turpel (1990; 1997), I consider some of the reasons why Indigenous women scholars have been critical of feminism. Following this analysis, I address their concerns while also considering possibilities of bridging feminist and Indigenous perspectives. The concerns of the scholars addressed here are not meant to be representative of all Indigenous views nor are they presented as the voice of Indigenous women. This analysis contrasts with that of Ouellette and Monture-Angus who do not specify which feminisms they are critical of and seem to make generalized criticisms of what they understand to be 'the feminist approach'. These theoretical debates about Indigeneity and feminism are central to my methodological concerns, which I explore below in the discussion about reflexivity.

The first challenge by Indigenous scholars involves (what they understand to be) the central focus of feminism on patriarchy and gendered oppression. Ouellette argues that male

domination is not universal and Indigenous scholars are more interested in examining the

multiple oppressions that Indigenous people generally experience. Ouellette believes this

emphasis on patriarchy stems from feminist "ethnocentric blindness" (41) and the

unacknowledged differences in histories of "Euro-American women" (Ouellette, 2002: 41)

and Indigenous women. This is echoed by Turpel (1997) who states that "we are tired of

being subject to the patriarchy and paternalism of the Canadian state. We are also weary of

the paternalism of the feminist movement, which fashioned an agenda based on its own

concepts of gender without questioning the universality of its methods and prescriptions"

(78).

     Additionally, Monture-Angus and Ouellette argue that Indigenous women's

experiences of oppression are the direct result of patriarchal ideologies external to Indigenous

communities but embedded within Canadian colonial policies. For example, beginning with

the implementation of the Indian Act in 1867, federal policies imposed patriarchal legislation

that determined Indian status, band membership and the right to live on reserve. Indigenous

women who married members from another band or nation were automatically transferred to

their husband's band while Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous or non-status

men were automatically and involuntarily disenfranchised from their community and lost

their Indian status. As a consequence, Ouellette states, "the oppression of Native women

must be seen within a broader context, not simply on sex specific terms. The whole process

of colonization must be taken into consideration, with the *Indian Act* recognized as Canada's

main legal instrument of colonialism" (39).

The second criticism of feminist theory is the separation of race and gender and the marginalization of the concerns of women of colour. Thornhill (1989: 20) states that within feminism:

> Women has become synonymous with White Women, whereas Women of colour, such as myself, are seen as Others, as nonpersons, as dehumanized beings – or sometimes not seen at all …. We Black women, it would appear, have no role in the finalized script of Canadian Women's Studies.

Ouellette and Monture-Angus contend that any analysis of Indigenous women's experiences must include an understanding of the intersections of racialized and gendered oppression.

The third criticism put forward by Turpel (1990 as cited in Ouellette, 2002) is the rejection of the feminist goal of "complete equality of men and women in all areas" (31). For Turpel, this translates into the desire to have the same rights as white men. She argues that Indigenous women are not interested in recreating the structures that privilege white men, nor in sustaining unequal power structures through having equal rights. These criticisms articulated by Indigenous women scholars of the feminist movement have led Ouellette, Monture-Angus and Turpel to reject feminist perspectives in their work.

While I value the concerns raised by Indigenous women scholars, I do not agree with their arguments that feminism does not examine issues of intersectionality, or the ways in which, for example, race, Indigeneity and gender intersect. First, the claims made by Ouellette, Monture-Angus and Turpel about feminism do not acknowledge how feminist scholarship has evolved to include understandings of the multiple positions that women occupy. The oversight by Indigenous women scholars of feminist attention to multiple oppressions inclusive of race, class and gender may stem from their lack of engagement with more recent feminist research, and the period when Ouellette and Monture-Angus published their works. They cite dated feminist work, which weakens their arguments. Several critical

feminists (Beverly, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Maynard, 1994; Narayan, 1997; Naples, 2003; Winddance Twine, 2000; Wolf, 1996; Zavella, 1997), for example, have contributed to research that focuses on the intersections of race, class and gender with an eye on how experiences are shaped by national policies (Naples, 2003) and by histories of imperialism and colonialism (Beverly, 2000; Narayan, 1997; Winddance Twine, 2000; Zavella, 1997). Fisher (2006: 55) argues that critical race scholars

> have shed light on the ways in which race as an axis of inequality, difference, and power intersect with gender and other forms of inequality (i.e., class). These paradigms are useful in making sense of structural inequalities and in understanding the complex matrix of race, class, gender, and nation. Intersectional approaches, for example, are helpful in talking about the ways in which low-income women of color are differently positioned with respect to the state and are experiencing neoliberalism.

Second, Turpel-Lafond is critical of feminist theories and movements that she understands as solely focusing on patriarchy. She argues that this concern within feminism lacks an important intersectional analysis for understanding Indigenous women's experiences shaped by histories of colonialism as well as race, class, and gender. These claims ignore the complex debates within feminist movements dating back to the 1970s that focussed on the conceptual usefulness of patriarchy to understanding the foundations underlying women's oppression. For instance, Beechey's (1979) work "On Patriarchy" argues that socialist feminists rejected the concept of patriarchy as universal dominance of men over women because it is too simplistic. Instead she points out that socialist feminists "do not believe that the subordination of women can be absolutely separated from the other forms of exploitation and oppression which exist in capitalist societies, for example, class exploitation and racism" (67). Given this argument by Beechey it is clear that intersectional approaches were important within feminism as early as the late 1970s.

Third, Turpel's conception of feminism as centred around women achieving equality with men in all areas is a narrow reading of feminism. While liberal feminists may strive for equality with men, their perspective is only one of many within the broad paradigm of feminism. It is my view that the concerns of feminism raised by these Indigenous women scholars do not hold within contemporary feminist theory where it has long been deemed critical to include an intersectional analysis.

BRIDGING THE INDIGENOUS/FEMINIST DIVIDE

Indigenous and feminist approaches have broad similarities that help to bridge the Indigenous/feminist divide. Both perspectives recognize the need to create emancipatory research methodologies and acknowledge the challenges within academic institutions and funding agencies that continue to have narrow definitions of what 'good' research and valid research practices are. Both approaches continue to push the boundaries of academic legitimacy with the goal of transforming research practices and academic institutions and of broadening notions of scholarship that have value. Although the two approaches may come from different theoretical traditions, they share such common questions as, 'What is knowledge?' 'How is knowledge produced?' and 'Who has the right to determine knowledge?' They aim to problematize the Enlightenment paradigm, which claims that 'acceptable' research is objective and dispassionate research, when in fact this is only one of several epistemologies (such as positivism, realism, and postmodernism) that have differing "rules on what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and about what criteria establish knowledge of social or natural reality as adequate or valid" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2004: 12).

Indigenous and feminist approaches both view the research process as inherently political. They demonstrate, particularly with respect to qualitative fieldwork, how conducting research and data analysis reflect the positionality and location of the researcher. There is no unlocated, neutral position from which to conduct research. Thus feminist perspectives "emphasize the need to challenge sexism, racism, colonialism, class, and other forms of inequality in the research process" (Naples, 2003: 13). Indigenous perspectives specifically privilege research practices that begin from Indigenous experiences (Tuhawi Smith, 1999 & 2005). For me, an Indigenous feminist approach combines all of these characteristics. Arguments that view researchers as having to choose between being a feminist researcher or an Indigenous researcher play into problematic narrow and essentialist notions of what it means to be feminist or Indigenous. Further, these notions do not acknowledge the complex analyses Indigenous feminist approaches have to offer. By utilizing the methodological approach of reflexivity, this study explores how Indigenous and feminist theories can be bridged. My intention here is to show how an Indigenous feminist approach creates dialogue across differences.

CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY: INSIDER-OUTSIDER

It is important to locate my own social position in my research. Haraway (1988) argues that research always begins from somewhere. She claims that universal truths and the unlocatable observer – advanced by positivism – are not possible in knowledge production. Instead, Haraway advances the notion of situated and embodied knowledges that are always partial and contested. From this perspective the positionality of the feminist researcher is acknowledged as shaping the construction of knowledge. Similarly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith

(2001) argues that the positioning of oneself as an Indigenous woman in research involves a "claiming [to] a genealogical, cultural and political set of experiences" (12) and that this has important effects on one's research.

As an Indigenous woman, I have experiences and knowledge resulting from a shared history of colonialism within the Canadian nation state that has engendered particular ways of seeing and understanding the positioning (or situating) of Indigenous women. This experience grants me some level of 'insider' status that is valuable in examining Indigenous women and work. However, such a status is not without its problems, especially when it is associated with essentialized identity traits. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that not only Indigenous people can research Indigenous 'issues'.

Wolf (1996: 17) argues that

> [a]ssuming that […] personality traits arise naturally or are naturally present in a context where identity is shared suggests a kind of essentialism similar to the one concerning women making better field workers by nature of their feminine traits.

Narayan (1997) suggests that shared experiences of oppression do not necessarily mean that researchers understand those they research. Experiences of oppression may lead to critical insights that may not be readily apparent to those who do not share the same experiences. However, Narayan also argues that critical insights and understandings may be achieved by those from different social locations. As Wolf indicates, rather than focusing on the race or ethnicity of the researcher it is more useful to consider the "quality of relations" (17) between the researcher and the researched.

Within my research there is a need to problematize my positionality and recognize that I occupy multiple positions that do not necessarily grant me easy access to or ensure smooth interactions or bonding with the Indigenous women with whom I worked in my field

research. The challenge of such positionality became obvious in the interactions I had with

workers at the Canadian Fish site, as seen in this note from the field:

> August 10, 2011: After being here for nearly 3 months I have
> interviewed less than 10 women. It's been very difficult to
> recruit participants despite my attempts to make connections with
> workers by hanging out in the break room or the picnic table area
> before work and during lunch breaks. Most workers smile and
> nod at me but seem reluctant to sit and talk. Some workers give
> me a lot of physical space when I am on the cannery grounds
> which makes me feel like I am one of the floor ladies or
> managers or someone with similar status in the cannery.   Many
> workers have also started to refer to me as either the Morgan-girl
> or the researcher.

The interactions I had with workers at OceanSide reflect my position as both 'insider' and

'outsider' within this community. It was this awareness of my privileged social location that

I brought with me into the field and that influenced my attempts to present myself as

approachable, nonjudgemental, and attentive in my efforts to establish a rapport with workers

at the cannery. Despite trying to appear open and friendly, my differing social location as a

researcher was reflected in the responses I received by workers at OceanSide who gave me a

lot of physical space, making our interactions more formal than I had planned for.

I entered the field acknowledging that as a researcher I hold multiple positions as a

result of my Indigeneity, class, gender, educational level, and local knowledge of Prince

Rupert. These multiple positions do not allow me to fit into a simple box of either insider or

outsider. My 'Indigenous status,' family history, and familiarity with the geographic location

may give me some degree of insiderness with cannery workers. As someone who grew up

with family who worked at the OceanSide cannery I may have an advantage in being able to

understand the discussions around cannery work and be able to establish a rapport that

researchers new to the topic may not have been able to achieve. For example, I am familiar

with the seasonal cycles of salmon cannery work and the importance of this on the income

stability of families. I also have an understanding of the importance of work at OceanSide as a place where community connections and support are maintained and strengthened between Indigenous workers. Also, I have knowledge of local references used by cannery workers in the work they do at OceanSide. At the same time, however, I have not lived in Prince Rupert for 22 years and entered the field as a graduate student who has experienced privileges that may not be accessible to those interviewed.

Ramazanoglu & Holland (2004) caution feminist researchers from assuming a shared sense of identity or a "delusion of alliance" with participants based on "being women" (106). In Naples' (2003: 49) discussion of 'insider/outsider debates' she also challenges researchers to "reexamine taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitutes 'indigenous' knowledge and how researchers draw on their commonalities and differences to heighten sensitivity to others' complex and shifting world views." Rather than seeing 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' as binary categories, these authors advocate for an understanding of these positions as fluid, negotiated, and constructed between the researcher and the researched (Naples, 2003; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2004; Wolf, 1996).

While social location is an important component to both feminist and Indigenous methodologies, Jacobs-Huey (2002) argues that positionality poses particular problems for Indigenous scholars. Indigenous anthropologists, for example, who discuss their positionality or dilemmas in the field are more likely to be labelled as "'navel gazers', axe grinders, politically motivated, hypersensitive, or not native enough" (799). She notes that native ethnographers who aim to situate themselves in their work do so not as an uncritical privileging endeavour, but in order to challenge stereotypes and directly confront othering of natives in research.

Research reflexivity opens up space for acknowledging Indigenous women's experience and for starting with their standpoints as an entry to an analysis of social structures that includes the history of colonialism and the social and contemporary impacts it has on the lived realities of Indigenous women's experiences. The research that I undertook is informed by an Indigenous feminist analysis. As a case study, it explores Indigenous women's everyday experiences with cannery work at OceanSide, employment conditions, relations with family and friends and the wider community, and the social policies that govern their lives as part of broader processes of neoliberal income insecurity.

ETHICAL ISSUES

To begin my research, I applied to the University of British Columbia's Research Ethics Board and my project was approved in April 2011. I ensured that my research followed the guidelines set by the University of British Columbia's Research Ethics Board for ethical research with human subjects and paid particular attention to the *Tri-Council* and the Canadian Institute for Health Research's guidelines for research involving Aboriginal peoples. Following UBC's Policy 89 Ethics Directive, I gained informed consent from the women that I interviewed. I provided full information about my research project to participants to enable them to make an informed decision about whether or not they would like to participate in the study. I informed participants that my research study involved semi-structured interviews and that during our conversation unexpected directions and new questions might arise. Participants were also informed that if at any point they became uncomfortable during the discussion the interview would end and they could request that the interview be erased from the recorder and the information shared would be kept confidential.

The participants were also informed that their identities would be kept confidential. All of the names of Indigenous women cannery workers in this dissertation are pseudonyms[9] while public figures in the community are referenced with their full names (this was discussed with participants when they signed the consent forms).

DATA COLLECTION

To conduct research I lived in Prince Rupert from June 2011 until October 2011. Upon arrival I made contact with the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union as well as the OceanSide Plant management and dropped off letters at their main offices introducing myself and outlining the research project (see Appendix B).   Living in Prince Rupert for this time period allowed me to be present during salmon season and made it easier to conduct interviews with workers at a time that worked best for them.

The data generated for this study are drawn from in-depth semi-structured interviews. The Indigenous women workers who participated in the study were identified through personal contacts, referrals from participants, and advertisements[10] on community boards (in grocery stores, the UFUWA office and the OceanSide Plant) and in the local paper.   All of the women lived in Prince Rupert year round and had at least one dependent living at home; these were criteria for participating in the study.

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[9] Names for Indigenous women workers were chosen from a social media website focussed on the historical salmon cannery sites of Sunny Side, North Pacific Cannery and Port Edward that surround Prince Rupert.   This website includes vintage photos of Indigenous women cannery workers and first names attached to these pictures were chosen at random to represent the women in this study. This decision was purposely made with the intention of connecting names historically used within the Indigenous cannery work community to present day workers.
[10] See Appendix D

In total I conducted 26 semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A: Interview Guide): including 20 with Indigenous women cannery workers, one with a manager from the OceanSide Plant, one with a manager from Kaien Island Employment Society, two with UFAWU-UNIFOR representatives, one with a representative from the BC Federation of Labour and one worker at the Prince Rupert Food Bank. The interviews with the 20 Indigenous women cannery workers lasted between 1.5 to 2 hours and took place in local coffee shops as well as in the outside lunch area of OceanSide. Most interviews took place during September and October when the salmon season was near its end. Interviews with the other 6 informants lasted between 1 to 2 hours and took place at their offices between February and September.

Interviewees varied according to ethnicity and occupation: the cannery workers interviewed were all Indigenous; the non-cannery workers were all white (e.g. the assistant manager of OceanSide, the union representatives, the manager from the employment society, and the volunteer from the Food Bank). While all of the interviews with cannery workers were with Indigenous women, they form a diverse group. The workers interviewed ranged in age from 21 to 60. They had varying levels of education, with the majority having graduated from high school (17 out of 20); others had achieved some high school (3 out of 20) and some had training in trades (3 out of 20 women interviewed). The women varied according to different levels of income security. Five of the women interviewed stated that their yearly income was based solely on work at OceanSide; the remaining 15 women interviewed mentioned working other jobs during the off-season and/or having a partner who was employed. While the women in this study came from diverse backgrounds (i.e. Nisga'a, Tsimpsian, and Gitxsan) they did not talk explicitly about their identity as First Nations

people or the cultural differences between themselves and their colleagues. The women whom I talked with emphasized their collective struggles to make ends meet as forming bonds as Indigenous cannery workers.

Some women were better able to find work during the off-season than others. Younger women who had training in Serving It Right (a mandatory educational program for workers in tourism and hospitality industries),[11] SuperHost (a training program that provides workers with an understanding of customer service skills),[12] Food Safe (training in food handling procedures),[13] or Emergency First Aid and CPR (for workplace emergency preparedness)[14] found work more easily than older women with similar skills. Older women seemed to face the most barriers and found it difficult to find other work during the off-season.

Of the women interviewed, only three qualified for Employment Insurance while others had to rely on Social Assistance, part-time work in the service sector, or their spouse's income to get by during the year. If Social Assistance did not meet the needs of women and their families, they also accessed informal services such as the Food Bank through the Salvation Army, or Good Food Boxes through the Friendship House.

To gain a better understanding of the organizational structures that shape the lives of cannery workers I interviewed key informants at the OceanSide cannery, Social Services

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[11] Serving It Right informs servers of their legal responsibilities when serving alcohol and provides them with tools to prevent problems with alcohol service.
[12] SuperHost also educates workers on the importance of the tourism industry and its contribution to their home communities and the province.
[13] This program teaches workers how to handle food, the causes of food poisoning and how to prevent it.
[14] This program provides workers with the skills needed to respond to cardiovascular emergencies, choking emergencies, prevention of disease transmission and other potential emergencies at work.

Canada, and the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union. The interview with the

assistant manager at the Canadian Fishing Company's OceanSide cannery gave me a sense of

the organization of the cannery. This included: how many people are employed by

OceanSide during the on- and off-peak salmon canning periods; the composition of the

employees according to gender, age group, and ethnicity; how employees are called in for

work (i.e. how much notice is given to workers from the time they are called into work to the

time they are expected to be on the salmon canning line); and what kinds of supports are

provided by OceanSide to their workers. This interview was also important for gaining

further knowledge of where work performed in the OceanSide plant is situated in terms of

local/global relations and the location of the markets for the products.

The interview with the key informant at Social Services Canada provided a better

understanding of the process of applying for Employment Insurance and Social Assistance,

institutional expectations of applicants, and how these expectations shape the daily

experiences of women. This interview was particularly important because most of the

women I interviewed relied on the services provided by this office to get by during the off-

season.

In addition, I conducted an interview with two United Fishermen and Allied Workers

Union (UFAWU-UNIFOR) representatives in Prince Rupert. This interview provided a

broader picture of the operations of the OceanSide cannery, as well as a greater

understanding of how the cannery workers are faring as an overall group. This interview

highlighted the difficulties that cannery workers experienced in attaining Employment

Insurance and the financial struggles that come with being part of the working poor. As well,

before beginning fieldwork I conducted an interview with the president of the BC Federation

of Labour who has a history of working with the United Fishermen and Allied Workers'

Union. This interview provided further insights into the organizational structure of the

OceanSide cannery.

DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the transcripts, I listened to the digital recordings again and then read and

reread each transcript several times to identify major themes and relationships. Having read,

highlighted, and colour coded all transcripts according to major themes and subthemes, I then

listed and organized the themes into a Word document. Since this study is based on 26

interviews, I choose not to utilize coding software in the analysis of the data.

Given that feminist and decolonizing methodologies are significant to this study, I

paid particular attention to how Indigenous women cannery workers described their

experiences and how these experiences are connected to broader social, political, and

economic forces. I included in my analysis the number of years Indigenous women have

worked at OceanSide, the social programs (EI or Income Assistance) they accessed, the

number of dependents they have, and the survival strategies they employ to get by. Overall,

the data gathered in these interviews allowed me to understand how Indigenous women

cannery workers' experiences are shaped by both legacies of colonialism and the current

context of changes to global capitalism.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

There are a few limitations to my chosen research methods that shape how this

research was written up and what I could include in this study. First, as a qualitative study,

this research with semi-structured interviews was not designed to provide statistics on the demographics and services accessed by the participants. Second, it was important that my research begin with the standpoint of Indigenous women so that the women were able to exercise power during the interviews and share their experiences to the extent that they were comfortable. This method resulted in some differences in what the women shared. For example, while some women spoke directly about their experiences with accessing Income Assistance (IA), others did not but did share their experiences with utilizing services such as the Food Bank, which is restricted to those on IA. I believe that these differences in what research participants discussed is, in part, a reflection of their differing social locations. Some enjoy more income stability than others, or have access to resources that allow them to get by without having to access IA or community services like the Food Bank; others do not. In addition, many participants seemed uncomfortable talking about money, especially their own financial supports. We might understand such reticence in the context of broader systemic influences such as neoliberal ideologies of individualization and personal responsibility, and colonial histories of surveillance of Indigenous women that may influence how much information they share. For example, Fiske (1993) argues that the colonial construction of Indigenous women as irresponsible, neglectful and incompetent parents has led to the "inferiorization of Aboriginal motherhood" (20). This colonial image continues to inform current policies and policing of Indigenous mothers by the child welfare authorities (Hunting and Browne, 2012) and has directly resulted in the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the foster care system (Anderson, 2000; Kline, 1993; Fiske, 1993; Fiske and Browne, 2006; Salmon, 2007; Swift, 1995).

Additionally, the interviews were conducted within a broader context of neoliberalism and its focus on individual responsibility in lieu of state interventions to provide a social safety net. This focus which serves to stigmatize those in need of social support services. The gaps between Indigenous and other Canadian women in terms of indicators of well-being have been well documented by the Native Women's Association of Canada (2010) and Madeline Dion-Stout (2007). Their works show that in comparison to non-Indigenous women in Canada, Indigenous women experience higher rates of poverty, lower educational attainment, higher unemployment, and lack of safe and affordable housing. Hunting and Browne (2012) argue that despite Indigenous women experiencing social and economic marginalization and systemic racism embedded in current policies and legislation, there has been an inadequate response from the Canadian government in terms of addressing Indigenous women's experiences of economic dislocation. This lack of a meaningful response by the government has served to perpetuate systemic discrimination.   Neoliberal ideology of individual responsibility works to make invisible the systemic barriers experienced by Indigenous women, adds to their marginalized status, and simultaneously makes them individually responsible (and stigmatized) for their disadvantage. This obfuscation of systemic inequalities may have contributed to decisions about what information to share as Indigenous women reflected on their experiences of income insecurity.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous women's experiences of fish processing work are examined through decolonizing methods and feminist standpoint theory that place Indigenous women's voices

and experiences at the centre of the data collection and analysis. While we know that Indigenous women comprise the majority of fish processing workers on the Northwest coast, little is known about their lives. This research fills this gap in knowledge by examining the racialized and gendered dynamics that shape the material realities of Indigenous women cannery workers.

By employing a decolonizing approach my research positions Indigenous women as knowers across multiple dimensions: in their work in the fishing industry; in their care-giving responsibilities; in their interactions with OceanSide management; in their attempts to find work outside of fish processing; and in their struggles with Employment Insurance and Social Assistance policies and benefits. Feminist materialist standpoint approaches complement and build upon decolonizing methodologies by considering how collective experiences have been shaped by broader social and political practices and policies (Naples, 2003). In the following chapter, I examine the place of Indigenous women's labour in the broader context of salmon canning nationally and internationally.

CHAPTER 3: PRECARIOUS WORK/PRECARIOUS LIVES

Prince Rupert is a city that has faced complex social and economic challenges. In the last 30 years it has shifted from a city that primarily relied on processing natural resources to a port city focused on importing goods from Asia and exporting raw materials such as raw lumber to international processors. Historically Prince Rupert has been home to a significant population of Indigenous people and this remains true today. According to Statistics Canada (2006), Prince Rupert is second to Thompson Rivers, Manitoba, in having the highest percentage of Indigenous residents living in cities in Canada. Over a third, 35.1%, of Prince Rupert's total population is Indigenous. While Indigenous people make up a large proportion of residents in Prince Rupert, their presence has not correlated with access to educational opportunities, secure employment or higher incomes, and many Indigenous people continue to experience social exclusion and economic marginalization. To understand such experiences, it is necessary to consider the ways in which systemic barriers within the labour market intertwine with the intersections of gender, racialization and Indigeneity.

As was discussed in chapter one, studies show that many Canadians have jobs that are unstable and insecure (e.g. Fudge and Vosko, 2003; Galabuzi, 2006; Creese, 2007) and that women are disproportionately represented in precarious jobs (Fuller, 2005; Brodie and Bakker, 2008; Fuller and Vosko, 2008; Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009). While workers engaged in precarious forms of labour come from diverse groups in society, those who are most affected and disproportionately represented are women, visible minorities and Indigenous workers.

Changes in the Canadian labour market towards precarious and flexible employment along with globalized restructuring of local salmon processing have had significant impacts

on Indigenous peoples' experiences of work and work availability in Prince Rupert. The shift towards precarious forms of work and the decrease in full-time, full year work means that Indigenous workers who are already engaged in low paying, temporary and seasonal work have little hope of acquiring stable employment that brings income security.

In addition to this well-known portrayal of the labour market, this study of salmon cannery workers suggests that in some sectors of the labour market, the work is not just precarious and flexible, it is also unpredictable. During the salmon season at OceanSide, when the work is most available, cannery workers are in a constant state of uncertainty. Because the availability of work for salmon processing is dependent on salmon stocks for commercial use, many workers do not know their work schedules a week in advance and are 'on-call' throughout the summer months. Working on-call makes it challenging for the women to look for a second job to complement their shift work at the cannery, which may limit their earnings to whatever work hours they can get at the cannery.

Such a precarious and unpredictable labour market means that Indigenous women salmon cannery workers are also concerned about other employment opportunities throughout the year in Prince Rupert. Since the 1990s, Prince Rupert has experienced an economic downturn with the closure of the Skeena Cellulose Pulp and Paper Mill along with a decrease in salmon stocks, translating into less work for commercial fishers and shore workers. The cumulative effect of fewer people working in these industries has resulted in less money pouring into the local economy. During this time several businesses in Prince Rupert have closed including several restaurants, retail stores and the grocery store Extra Foods that provided groceries at affordable prices (Food bank use grows, 2011). Many unemployed workers now scramble to find work in the low-paying service sector industry

where competition for jobs is high. As a result of the overall precarious labour market in Prince Rupert, most Indigenous women cannery workers are forced to apply for social assistance and utilize such services as the food bank (discussed in Chapter 5).

This chapter examines the various ways that the everyday experiences of Indigenous women cannery workers are shaped by broader power relations (Smith, 1987, 2005, 2006). From this perspective, the local (i.e. the city of Prince Rupert and the salmon processing plant) is understood as a highly political and social site where everyday experiences are choreographed by macroinstitutional policies and practices. To explore these issues, this chapter discusses: 1) the racialized and gendered nature of precarious work and its relevance for understanding Indigenous women's salmon cannery work in Prince Rupert; 2) the systemic barriers to employment identified by study participants; 3) Indigeneity and gender in the labour market in Prince Rupert; 4) the company organization of cannery work; and 5) the research participants' everyday experiences of unpredictable and precarious work.

GENDER, RACIALIZATION AND PRECARIOUS WORK

Critical to my study is an understanding of how precarious work is both gendered and racialized and how this intersection organizes the experiences of work for Indigenous women. Research shows that precarious work is highly gendered, and increasingly, research indicates how gender and racialization intersect in such work. However, few studies have considered precarious work within local contexts of gender, racialization and Indigeneity and the growing trend towards neoliberalism. By exploring the neoliberal barriers that the study participants identify, this section aims to contribute to a more complete understanding of the socio-economic forces that produce precarious work.

Leah Vosko (2006) argues that precarious employment is a significant characteristic of the Canadian labour market and is profoundly gendered. This work is temporary, contract-based, involuntarily part-time, with limited job security. It also has low wages and unstable or unpredictable work hours. In contrast, the traditional model of standard employment is full-time, full-year with one employer. It includes adequate wages, worker benefits and entitlements (Luxton and Bezanson, 2006; Fuller and Vosko, 2008). Studies show that women are disproportionately represented in precarious jobs compared to men (Cranford, Vosko, and Zukewich, 2003) and that women are highly concentrated in feminized occupations and earn lower wages (Creese, 2007; Luxton, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2006).

Since the 1970s there has been a consistent increase in precarious employment in Canada. Critical feminists (Creese, 2007; de Wolff, 2000a, 2000b; Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; Fuller and Vosko, 2008) argue that standard work, or the standard employment relationship (SER) as it emerged in the post-World War II era, became defined as work usually occupied by (typically white) men, who were assumed to be family bread-winners. The SER is important to consider because it "still acts as a norm organizing social and labour policy, [and] economic insecurity is shaped in part by departures from it, notably along axes of employment status and form of employment" (Fuller and Vosko, 2008: 33). This standard definition of work ignores and excludes non-standard work that is largely performed by women, Indigenous people, visible minorities and immigrants. Current labour market trends in Canada towards flexible, temporary, seasonal and casual (on-call) employment combined with the diminishing power of labour and unions along, with more restrictive Employment Insurance policies have further intensified and reproduced racialized and gendered inequalities in the labour market (Fudge and Vosko, 2003; Galabuzi, 2006).

It is important to consider the various dimensions of precarious employment since the Canadian labour market can be understood as a continuum of precarious work arrangements. As Cranford and Vosko (2006: 45) note, "For instance, part-time temporary employees are more precarious than part-time permanent employees in terms of dimensions of control over the labour process, degree of regulatory protection, and income level." This means that while full-time full year work has become less available there has also been a restructuring of part-time work. Part-time work options currently include contract, seasonal, work through temporary help agencies, and on-call work (Cranford and Vosko, 2006; Fuller and Vosko, 2008) which have varying impacts on the economic stability of those who work within these jobs. A more nuanced approach to non-standard work allows us to consider how the quality and character of full-time, full-year work has also deteriorated, and contributes to understanding the work at the OceanSide plant, which does not fit cleanly into the categories of standard and non-standard employment. Rather, most work at the OceanSide plant is seasonal, part-time and precarious and only available on an on-call basis. It fluctuates between periods of steady work when there is salmon for processing and periods of days to weeks with no work.

This precarious employment and its impact on workers' lives are worsened by shifts towards neoliberal governance. Federal and Provincial governments have increasingly deregulated the labour market and moved away from having an active role in responding to social inequalities (Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; MacDonald, Neis, and Murray, 2008; Vosko, 2009). This is exemplified in governments increasingly clawing back social welfare benefits (such as Employment Insurance) that used to provide greater protection for vulnerable workers including seasonal seafood processing workers.

Research suggests that both the racial and gender organization of the labour force fundamentally shape the ways in which Indigenous workers experience barriers, limited mobility, and discrimination in the workplace (Galabuzi, 2006). Yet, to understand Indigenous women cannery workers' employment, it is necessary to analyze how racialized and gendered inequalities intersect in the labour market in specific locations and how they relate to Indigeneity. It is known that the structure of the labour market plays an important role in Indigenous peoples' experiences of income insecurity. Indigenous peoples are over-represented in low paying occupations, especially in the service sector and in precarious and unregulated temporary or contingent work, and under-represented in high paying occupations and sectors (Wilson and Macdonald, 2010). In addition, unemployment rates are higher among Indigenous peoples. In 2006, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people in Canada was 14.8%, approximately 8.5 percentage points higher than the national average of 6.3% (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada - Indicators of Well-being in Canada, 2010). In the case of Aboriginal women, they have much lower levels of employment than other groups. Creese (2007), for example, states that "Aboriginal women have the lowest levels of employment among all groups, with only 41 per cent of women over 15 employed in the labour market compared to 48 per cent of Aboriginal men, 53 per cent of non-Aboriginal women, and nearly 66 per cent of non-Aboriginal men" (197).

Research has established the ongoing deterioration in the quality of many jobs available to Canadians and how the brunt of these shifts are borne disproportionately along the lines of gender, race and Indigeneity. However, little is known about the kinds of systemic barriers that Indigenous women face in trying to access specific employment opportunities such as cannery work in Prince Rupert. The context that shapes the systemic

barriers includes the legacy of colonialism and exploited Indigenous labour, the gendered differences between Indigenous men and women as workers, and the growing influence of neoliberalism. In the next section I explore systemic barriers related to employment and income security identified by Indigenous women cannery workers.

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Indigenous women described three types of systemic barriers (summarized in Table 1) they experience in the labour market. These three categories are: barriers resulting from macro-economic shifts; barriers related to discrimination and exclusion; and barriers related to service and access.

Barriers Resulting from Macro-Economic Shifts

Indigenous women cannery workers struggle to find full-time work in Prince Rupert. Shifts within the labour market towards precarious, flexible employment have resulted in reduced opportunities for Indigenous women cannery workers. For example, the women in my study talked about having to work multiple part-time jobs in low paying positions and without any benefits to try to make ends meet. This shift to precarious employment and its impacts on where Indigenous women work is explained by Diane. Diane works for a community agency during the school year and also spends summers working at OceanSide. She states that "You never see groups of cannery workers in jobs that would get them ahead, you know, places where they would have a chance." Employment in precarious jobs also results in income insecurity for many Indigenous women.

Table 1: Types of Systemic Barriers to Employment and Income Security experienced by Indigenous Women Cannery Workers		
Context	**Barrier Type**	**List of Barriers**
Barriers resulting from macro-economic shifts	Increase of precariousness of the labour market	Decrease of full-time, full-year jobs; decrease of good jobs with benefits; increase in part-time, part-year work with few benefits
	Diminishing worker rights and protections	Lack of benefits and protections in precarious work; on-call work
Barriers related to discrimination and exclusion	Racialized discrimination, particularly discrimination based on Indigeneity	Discrimination based on race; Indigenous workers lacking opportunities for job security
	Age discrimination	Mature workers less likely to be hired (at best, being able to apply for work as a chambermaid)
Systemic barriers related to service access	Lack of affordable services	Lack of affordable formal childcare; lack of affordable training programs
	Transportation barriers	Lack of public transportation that accommodates precarious work schedules
	Limitations within support services	Lack of training opportunities that would lift workers into full-time work

Barriers Related to Discrimination and Exclusion

Stereotypes of Indigenous women and fish processing work are complex and

multilayered and have implications for Indigenous women's work possibilities beyond the

plant. For instance, cannery owners believed fish processing work was best suited for

Indigenous women because this work is similar to traditional forms of preserving salmon for

subsistence purposes. Knight (1996) strongly critiques this notion by highlighting that work

in fish processing is manufacturing labour and is very different from traditional forms of

preserving salmon. He argues that this stereotype does not recognize that fish processing is repetitive and demanding work. He states that Indigenous people have been perceived as being limited by culture and traditions, which causes them to be occupationally limited as well.

The nature of fish processing work as manual labour that is seasonal and on-call contributes to the stigmas associated with this work. Manual labour that is low paying, unpredictable and precarious has low social status. There is a failure to recognize that those who work in fish processing are highly skilled workers.

Adding to the negative stereotypes are pejorative assumptions that Indigenous women do not want jobs, lead high-risk lifestyles and are therefore unreliable. Some of my participants talked about how their experiences of racial discrimination in workplaces outside of the OceanSide plant shape the kinds of work they are given, their opportunities of career advancement, their pay raises, and their job security. Other Indigenous women identified age-based discrimination as a systemic barrier to employment and income security.

Joni has worked at OceanSide for several decades but because the work is seasonal she has not been able to attain enough work hours to qualify for Employment Insurance. To get by and support her family she has taken on work during the off-season. The combined income she earns from work at OceanSide and work at Chances Casino, along with her husband's earnings from work in a logging camp help to sustain their family.

Experiences of racial discrimination are highlighted in my interview with Joni who worked part-time as an event organizer at Chances Casino during the off-season. At Chances Casino, Joni helped to organize private parties and special events. Despite having a successful record of carrying through her duties Joni was not offered the opportunity to

become one of the full-time, regular staff. During her time at Chances she observed race-based discrimination from management where career advancement and full-time positions were offered solely to non-Indigenous, white employees. Joni also describes how Indigenous staff were hired to work in positions that did not require direct customer service. She says "There was a Native waitress there, there was and she was good but you can't have a Native person down in front there. You can't see a Native. We can't have that." Joni's experience of working at Chances reveals the racialized tensions within the workplace and highlights how divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff were cultivated by the ways employers managed, interacted with, and organized the staff.

Joni was not offered support or even acknowledgement from the senior manager of Chances. She remembered, "The boss couldn't even say hi to me. Like what's up with that? You can't say hi to your employees? What, am I too, scum of the earth? Like what the heck?" Joni's account of discrimination in the workplace highlights racism in everyday interpersonal interactions with managers that excludes her and other Indigenous workers from attaining job security while also creating a hostile and stressful work environment.

In conversations with Joy Thorkelson and Christina Nelson at the UFAWU-UNIFOR office they stated that when the Casino first opened they heavily recruited women from OceanSide as employees. Cannery workers were given the impression that they would be given longer hours, higher pay, and year-round work at Chances and because of this some women quit their jobs at OceanSide. Unfortunately, this did not end well and many Indigenous women left Chances and went back to work at OceanSide where they then entered back into the plant as new and probationary workers.   This example reveals the struggles Indigenous women face when they take on work outside of OceanSide, the

judgements they are met with about their capabilities, and ideas about the kinds of work they are qualified for that contribute to systemic racism in the Prince Rupert labour market.

Older Indigenous women cannery workers also pointed to age-based discrimination as a barrier to finding employment. These women felt as though they were being passed over for employment because of their age and talked about their frustrations with applying to a broad range of jobs including work as sales associates, cashiers, receptionists, customer service representatives, waitresses, fast food workers, and chambermaids. The older Indigenous women cannery workers were willing to accept any jobs available to them to help them make ends meet during the off-season but felt that they were shut out of the labour market because of their age. For instance, Sadie who is in her early 60s commented on her struggles with finding work outside of OceanSide: "I want to work but employers only seem interested in hiring young people. I have worked as a Chambermaid before and was hoping to get more work. When I went to ask about it they just took my name."

Sadie's experience of work as a chambermaid as the only option of work outside of OceanSide reflects the racialized and gendered organization of the labour market. Work as a chambermaid is generally associated with domestic skills and manual labour, and is understood to be work for women of colour (Adib and Guerrier, 2003). Sadie's experiences show how, as she got older, even that work was unavailable to her.

Systemic Barriers Related to Service and Access

Indigenous women identified unaffordable childcare, inaccessible transportation services and limited training services as barriers that limit their work opportunities. The stories told by Indigenous women about the inadequacy of these services in meeting their needs reveal the highly gendered impacts of these service gaps. For instance, the lack of

affordable and accessible childcare (discussed further in Chapter 5) makes it difficult for mothers to find work or take advantage of educational and training opportunities.

Transportation is a significant challenge for many Indigenous women cannery workers in Prince Rupert. For most, owning a personal vehicle is too expensive and as a result a lot of participants relied on friends or family members for rides to OceanSide. While some women took public transportation when it was available, most women talked about walking to work. Indigenous women cannery workers had different experiences of transportation depending on whether they worked day shift (8am – 4pm) or evening shift (4pm – 12am). For instance, women talked about how irregular hours contributed to their inability to access safe and reliable transportation while working the evening shift. They explained that while a bus stop is located at the entrance to OceanSide the public transportation service does not adequately meet their needs. Bus service begins daily from Monday to Friday at 7:15am and ends at 6:30pm. On Saturdays bus service begins later at 8:25am and ends at 6:30pm while service is not provided at all on Sundays.

Participants also talked about their experiences of personal safety while walking home from the evening shift. For instance, Mabel who is in her late 40s, said it usually takes her 30 to 40 minutes to walk home from OceanSide after her evening shift and sometimes she does not get home until 1am. She says:

> Mabel: I usually feel pretty safe walking home at night. I don't mind it. Sometimes it's kind of creepy when you have to walk alone but most of the time I enjoy the walk. A few times a car has pulled up slowly behind me but I just walk faster and take out my cell phone and I am left alone.

During my discussion with Ellen, she also echoed Mabel's experiences of walking home at night. Ellen is in her early 20s and she talked about feeling less safe. "I usually call home and let whoever is there know that I am on my way home. I don't like walking home by

myself so I will keep someone on the phone with me while I walk. This makes me feel safe."

A few OceanSide workers try to make up for the lack of transit options by car-sharing with

friends or by offering rides to workers they pass while on their way to or from the plant.

Diane, who owns a vehicle, mentioned that she will often pick-up fellow cannery workers on

her drive to and from OceanSide:

> Diane: I offer rides to as many as I can when I'm driving, but I
> get off later than a lot of people so I have to see them now walk
> from OceanSide to – I mean yes, there is a bus that you can
> catch, but if we're getting off at seven o'clock at night or
> whatever, there is no bus.

Diane talked about safety issues of some of the women who work evening shifts and

suggested that a shuttle bus service should be offered to workers who work late.

In addition to the lack of affordable childcare options and transportation service,

Indigenous women cannery workers also find their attempts to secure full-time work can be

derailed by the existing social safety-net they turn to for help. For instance, Indigenous

women talked about their challenges with seeking out training opportunities from the Hecate

Straight Employment Society. Several women noted that they are restricted to basic

employment programs such as Serving it Right, First Aid Level 1, and Workplace Hazardous

Materials Information System (WHMIS) training. They explained that these training

programs only equipped them for work in the service sector, which generally does not pay

well or lead to full-time work. MacDonald, Neis, and Murray (2009) connect limited

training opportunities to ideas of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' individuals within the

neoliberal social investment state.[15] Within the context of the social investment state,

MacDonald et al. explain that those who live in resource-based communities and who

provide a cheap source of labour to the market are not considered good investments in future

productivity.

Training opportunities differ depending on whether claimants are eligible for EI. The

Mowat Centre Task Force (n.d.: para 3) states that "The federal and provincial governments

provide some funding for training for the non-EI eligible unemployed. In general, however

there are fewer training opportunities available for non-EI recipients than there are available

for unemployed people who qualify for EI." Since only three participants had qualified for

EI, the majority had limited retraining opportunities. For instance, Job Options BC (n.d.)

targets their training programs for non-EI eligible unemployed workers. Training programs

offered by this program include basic skills upgrading and short-term certificate training

(such as the training programs identified above by Indigenous women workers), life skills,

resume development, and job search skills. In contrast, training programs offered to

unemployed who are EI eligible include college programs, industry training, and

apprenticeship training. EI claimants have a wide variety of training options open to them

that can contribute to their status as skilled workers and opportunities for employment.

Targeted training programs that determine who is 'deserving' and who is not, based on EI

eligibility, act as structural barriers to Indigenous women cannery workers unable to secure

better paying jobs with more hours in order to qualify for EI. The training options open to

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[15] The social investment state was conceptuatlized by Anthony Giddens who advocated a
transition of "welfare states from a "corrective" and "passive" welfare state to a more
proactive strategy, with much greater attention to prevention, "activation" and social
servicing. The guideline for future welfare state reform, he argues, 'is investment in human
capital wherever possible, rather than direct provision of economic maintenance. In place of
the welfare state we should put the social investment state'" (Brettschneider, 2008: 22).

non-EI eligible Indigenous women cannery workers do not prepare them for work that is significantly different or better than their jobs at OceanSide. Instead, many of the training options available to Indigenous women cannery workers prepare them for non-skilled, low wage labour that pays less than their seasonal wages at OceanSide. Within this context of limited training, Indigenous women have few options to turn to and become trapped in the precarious job market.

INDIGENEITY AND GENDER IN THE LABOUR MARKET IN PRINCE RUPERT

To understand cannery workers' precarious employment in Prince Rupert, it is necessary to situate them in local and national contexts. First, this section examines the socio-economic context of Prince Rupert and how residents are differentiated with respect to Indigeneity and gender through census data of residents' educational attainment, occupation, and income. Second, the analysis turns to women cannery workers' experiences to demonstrate how they lack educational and employment opportunities more readily available to other Prince Rupert residents.

According to the Statistics Canada 2011 National Household Survey, the total population of Prince Rupert is 13,105. Indigenous residents number 4,750 (35%) of residents while visible minorities[16] comprise 1,425 (10.6%) of the residents.[17] More Indigenous

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[16] Statistics Canada uses the definition of visible minority supplied by the federal Employment Equity Act which states that "members of visible minority means persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." Indigenous people are not categorized as visible minorities because our histories and experiences of exclusion are different from those experienced by visible minorities. Additionally, the federal government employs specific and different policies in respect to each group.
[17] Residents from visible minority groups come from various backgrounds including South Asian (410), Chinese (195), Black (90), Filipino (215), Southeast Asian (360), and Japanese (120).

females (2,500) than males (2,250) reside in Prince Rupert (see Table 2), which means that

many are forced to compete for the few employment opportunities that are available to

women.

Table 2: Population by Age Cohort, Gender and Indigeneity in Prince Rupert in 2011						
Population	Indigenous			All Residents		
	Total: 4750	Female: 2 500	Male: 2 250	Total: 13 105	Female: 5 190	Male: 4 985
Children (0-14)		645	540		1 300	1 415
15-64		1 655	1 530		4 710	4 560
Seniors 65+		175	142		740	665

Source: Statistics Canada 2013d, 2013d

Education Levels

Prince Rupert Indigenous residents have lower levels of educational attainment

compared to the general population, which is a barrier to gaining secure employment. As

research suggests, access to higher education is far less available for Indigenous than non-

Indigenous Canadians. Wilson and Macdonald (2010: 4), for instance, state that "educational

attainment among Aboriginal peoples still lags behind averages for the Canadian population

as whole. Non-Aboriginal Canadians are far more likely to complete high school and to get a

university degree and the gap between the groups is growing." In Prince Rupert, 48% of

Indigenous residents 15 years and older have not completed high school compared with 29%

of the total population. Since the latter figure includes both the Indigenous and non-

Indigenous population, the educational attainment of non-Indigenous residents is even

higher. Indigenous men in Prince Rupert achieve higher rates (24%) of high school

completion than Indigenous women (23%), but a higher proportion of Indigenous women

gain university certificates, diplomas and degrees (11% versus 5%). While Indigenous

women attain higher levels of post-secondary College and University education than

Indigenous men (24% versus 14%), these figures pale in comparison to the same levels of

education for the total population of women and men (36% versus 25%) in Prince Rupert

(see Table 3).

Table 3: Educational Attainment of Residents in Prince Rupert aged 15 years and over in 2011						
Highest level of educational attainment	**Indigenous**			**All Residents**		
	Total: 3,565	Female: 1,860	Male: 1,705	Total: 10,410	Female: 5,225	Male: 5,185
No certificate, diploma or degree	1,705	885 (48%)	820 (48%)	3,030	1,475 (28%)	1,555 (30%)
High School certificate or equivalent	845	435 (23%)	410 (24%)	2,890	1,630 (31%)	1,255 (24%)
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	320	85 (5%)	230 (13%)	1,300	235 (4%)	1,060 (20%)
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma[18]	395	245 (13%)	150 (9%)	1,450	815 (16%)	635 (12%)
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level[19]	95	60 (3%)	35 (2%)	450	275 (5%)	180 (3%)
University certificate, diploma or degree above bachelor level	205	155 (8%)	55 (3%)	1,295	795 (15%)	500 (10%)

Source: Statistics Canada 2013d, 2013e

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[18] "This category includes persons who obtained a postsecondary certificate or diploma from a community college; a CEGEP (either general/pre-university or technical); an institute of technology; a school of nursing; a private business school; a private or public trade school; or a vocational school. Included in this category are persons who obtained a teaching or nursing certificate awarded by a provincial department of education, with the exception of teachers' or nurse's qualifications at the bachelor level or above obtained at university-affiliated faculty of education or nursing" (Statistics Canada, n.d.b, para 5).

[19] This category includes persons who have obtained a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level and who have not obtained any higher degrees, certificates or diplomas. University certificates or diplomas are normally connected with professional associations in fields such as accounting, banking, insurance or public administration. The certificates and diplomas referred to in this category do not require a bachelor's degree as a prerequisite" (Statistics Canada, nd.b., para 10).

Income Levels

Income inequality is associated with Indigeneity and gender in Canada. For instance, while national statistics reveal that Indigenous women's participation in the labour force is not significantly lower than of the total female population (59.2% and 62.6%), Indigenous women's median income of $15,654 is $5,000 lower than of non-Indigenous women (Status of Women Canada, n.d.). Based on the Statistics Canada 2011 National Household Survey of income levels for Prince Rupert, it is clear that Indigenous workers in Prince Rupert experience considerable disadvantage in earnings in the labour market. Even with the inclusion of government transfers that supplement earned income for low wage earners (included in the figures of total median income), the median total annual income of Indigenous residents averaged $15,943.

The median total income of Indigenous residents is 56% of the median total income for all residents in the city of Prince Rupert. As Table 4 shows, the median total income for Indigenous women ($15,992) is 33% lower than the city's average for women workers ($25,638). Further disparities are apparent when comparing the median total incomes of all male residents ($32,062) in Prince Rupert who earn 50% more than do Indigenous residents.

These statistics suggest that a significant proportion of Indigenous workers are not able to earn enough to survive adequately according to the calculations of the low-income cut-off in Prince Rupert. In 2011, the low-income cut-off used by Statistics Canada to measure income inequality was set at $33,905 (before tax) for a family of four in a community with less than 30,000 people (Statistics Canada, n.d.). Median incomes for Indigenous women and men are less than half of this bench mark. This disparity is even more startling when government transfers including Employment Insurance (discussed in chapter 4) and social

assistance (discussed in chapter 5) are included in the figures of total median income. The

transfers have very little impact on lifting Indigenous workers out of poverty (see Table 4).

Table 4: Income Rates Population 15 years and Over With Income in Prince Rupert in 2011						
	Indigenous			**All Residents**		
Population	Total: 3 075	Female: 1 790	Male: 1 285	Total: 10 410	Female: 5 225	Male: 5 185
Median income – Total Indigenous identity population 15 years and over ($)	15 943	15 992	15 731	28 256	25 638	32 062
Composition of total income (100%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Earnings – As a % of total income	65.7	60.0	71.7	75.4	70.9	78.7
Government transfers – As a % of total income	29.4	36.7	20.9	15.3	18.8	12.6
Other money – As a % of total income	5.0	3.2	7.1	8.2	8.5	7.9

Source: Statistics Canada 2013d, 2013e

Significantly, as Table 4 shows, Indigenous women and men share very similar

income levels, which contrasts with the income gap between non-Indigenous men and

women living in Prince Rupert. However, the similarity of male and female Indigenous

incomes is in part due to the larger government transfers that the women receive (which is

explored in Chapter 5) rather than wage levels.

The similar levels of income between Indigenous men and women also reflect the

limited work options available to Indigenous workers of both genders. With the decimation

of the fishing fleet that employed many Indigenous workers as deck hands and fishers, many

jobs that were traditionally held by Indigenous men are no longer available. This shift has

pushed many workers to leave town and look for work elsewhere such as by `moving to

Northeastern BC or Alberta. For men who stayed, some have found work in logging camps while others have taken jobs in seasonal fish processing plants in Prince Rupert, are employed in precarious work in the service sector, or are unemployed.

Statistical analysis of educational attainment and income levels in relation to Indigeneity and gender helps to contextualize the socio-economic position of OceanSide cannery workers. The women's voices provide a fuller account of how they experience the labour market and its barriers, and provide insights into the local consequences of global trends towards precarious work.

The Labour Market

Indigenous women's everyday experiences of work provide a window into the labour market in Prince Rupert. The research participants discussed how the increase of non-standard work was becoming increasingly normalized in Prince Rupert. In their discussions, they noted three things: 1) the lack of jobs available in Prince Rupert; 2) where work is available to Indigenous women it is in the service sector; and 3) the gendered nature of the labour market.

In my conversation with Joni, an Indigenous woman who has worked for OceanSide since she was 16 years old, she observed: "In Rupert we've got no jobs anyway. You could get yourself a better education but an education to do what? There are no jobs." This statement was echoed in a statement, published in *The Tyee* and made by a City Councillor and United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union – UNIFOR representative. Addressing the struggling job market in Prince Rupert, Tom Sandborn stated: "Everybody has the idea we're dripping with jobs. The first phase of the port will bring in around 100 jobs, not thousands.

The port will add jobs, but for now, Prince Rupert still depends on commercial fishing, the

biggest private employer on the coast" (Sandborn, 2006).

The lack of stable work available, along with the low levels of earnings from cannery

work, has pushed Indigenous women cannery workers into jobs in the service sector. When

reflecting on the kinds of work available to fellow OceanSide workers, Diane explained:

> Diane: I'm trying to think where I've seen other people work.
> Zellers, 7-Eleven. Where else do I see other people working?
> You know, I don't see a lot of them working unfortunately. And
> if it is, it's just McDonald's. There's another one. Just mediocre
> places. You know, not nothing… Bars, you know? Places that
> don't pay a lot and that it's okay that they can give you the time
> off or whatever, you know? Or work around their flex schedule
> for you to do something. Tim Hortons. You know, stuff like that
> where you could get people to cover you and stuff like that.

For older cannery workers the kinds of work available are even more limited (as

discussed earlier in this chapter). For these workers, jobs in Zellers or similar places of work

are almost unattainable. One participant talked about working at the salmon plant for 30

years and not having enough hours anymore to qualify for Employment Insurance. She was

mandated by Social Assistance to apply for work at Zellers and other retail stores while

knowing that she would not be considered as a potential hire for these places because of her

age.

Joni who talked about the lack of work options for men since the pulp mill had closed,

also mentioned the gendered nature of the labour market in Prince Rupert.

> Joni: In Rupert it was always the guys were out at the mill and
> now that is gone, there is nothing there anymore. Then there are a
> few people that are lucky to work out of the port because they
> had to, yeah. So that is where we lost some of our men from
> down at the cannery there but that is it, that is the only place that
> you see the Native guys. Any labouring jobs you will see, I will
> see them.

Joni then went on to say: "You would hardly see any guys serving coffee but you see all the women serving coffee freely. The guys won't freely come over to do our jobs." The gendered nature of work options reaffirms traditional gendered roles in work in Prince Rupert as elsewhere in Canada.

As we have seen, Indigenous women workers are over-represented in low-paying and low-end jobs. Furthermore, unemployment rates for Indigenous workers are higher than for any other group. In Prince Rupert, the unemployment rate for Indigenous workers is 24.4% compared with 14.6% of non-Indigenous residents. Among women, the unemployment rate is 13.8% for non-Indigenous women (Statistics Canada, 2013e) compared with 22.6% for Indigenous women (Statistics Canada, 2013d).

Participants' experiences of systemic barriers in the labour market are not only the result of gender and Indigeneity at the local and national level, but also of global restructuring. This process, which has accelerated during the past several decades, has had a major impact on Canadian fisheries. The next section discusses how several key features of global restructuring and Canadian Fishery regulations have had a major impact on salmon processing at OceanSide.

COMPANY ORGANIZATION OF OCEANSIDE

Since OceanSide cannery belongs to the Jim Pattison Group, it is part of an enormous enterprise. The Jim Pattison Group is the second largest private sector company in Canada with a diverse industry focus on food and beverage, media, automotive, entertainment, periodical distribution and marketing, packaging and export. While The Jim Pattison Group is headquartered in Vancouver, BC, the company is made up of over 470 locations globally. In 2012, The Jim Pattison Group (n.d.a) employed 35,000 workers and earned $7.5 billion in

sales. The Canadian Fish OceanSide Plant is one of several food and beverage companies owned by The Pattison Group. Other companies in this category owned by the company include Associated Grocers: Home of the Independent, Canfisco, Urban Fare, Bulkley Valley Wholesale, Buy-Low Foods, Coopers Foods, Ocean's, Western Family, SaveOnFoods, Van-Whole Produce Ltd, PriceSmart foods, Nesters Market, Gold Seal, Overwaitea Foods, SunRype, and Montfitello (The Jim Pattison Group, n.d.b).

The Canadian Fishing Company's OceanSide Plant is a local processing plant within the Canadian Fishing Company (Canfisco). Canfisco owns and operates the largest fishing fleet in British Columbia, and at the peak of the 2012 salmon season more than 5000 employees from Western Alaska to Southern BC worked in Canfisco's seven processing facilities (Canadian Fishing Company, n.d.).[20] Four of these processing plants are located in BC and three in Alaska. In BC, Canfisco operates, in addition to the OceanSide plant in Prince Rupert, a processing plant in Richmond and Delta, Pacific Seafoods (an affiliate company). Delta Pacific is the largest processor in BC of fresh, frozen and value added seafood. Canfisco also has two affiliate companies operating in Alaska: Alaska General Foods and Leader Creek Fisheries. Canfisco processes several types of seafood including salmon, salmon roe, herring roe, black cod, sardines, canned tuna, clams, crab, mussels, shrimp, canned smoked oysters, salmon oil, hake and halibut. The goods produced by Canfisco are kosher quality and sold to 27 countries globally (The Jim Pattison Group, n.d.c).

To observe the OceanSide plant in the small town of Prince Rupert hardly gives an indication of how it is part of such a global corporation. But a great deal goes on within the plant, which was built in 1950 and opened for operation in 1951. It is a large warehouse

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[20] According to the Canfisco website, the Pattison Group owns seven facilities with four located in British Columbia and three located in Alaska.

located on the oceanfront in an industrial part of town. Beside the plant are docks that house both commercial fishing boats and charter boats. The warehouse is approximately 118,800 square feet in size. The interior of the building is sectioned off into three different areas with one area designated for fresh frozen salmon, an area for salmon canning and processing herring, and another area for packaging.

The OceanSide plant specializes in producing herring roe, kosher canned salmon and fresh frozen salmon. At peak salmon season, the OceanSide plant processes 800 pounds of salmon on a daily basis and employs 700 workers (Interview with Canadian Fish Assistant Manager). The majority of processing at the OceanSide plant happens during salmon season with the production of fresh frozen fish and canned salmon.

All of the products manufactured in the plant are marketed worldwide. Fresh-frozen salmon is sold both locally and globally; the majority of canned salmon products goes to Europe and Australia; and the herring roe is marketed exclusively to Japan (Interview with Canadian Fish Assistant Manager). The herring roe is a specialized product for Japan. For this market two products are made from herring roe. The first product is made from high-grade herring roe that is targeted to the gift market and sold mostly at New Year. The second is a lower grade herring roe that is a ready-to-eat product and is sold in Japanese supermarkets.

The production of fresh frozen salmon lasts from mid-June to late August. The salmon canning season, which includes Pinks and Sockeye, lasts from mid-June to late August or into September depending on the availability of salmon that season. The herring roe is processed in late April and generally this work lasts for three weeks. Because the work is

only available for a short period, work during herring season is only available to those who have high seniority at the plant (Interview with Canadian Fish Assistant Manager).

In recent years, seafood companies in Canada have become more specialized in the products they manufacture. For example, some processing plants exclusively process groundfish while others process only lobster, crab and mussels. The OceanSide plant is unique because it is the only processor in Canada of kosher salmon. The assistant manager of the plant explains:

> Assistant Manager: The entire plant is kosher, so anything that is produced here can be sold as kosher. We do have special kosher for Passover and for that a Rabbi has to actually be here and in order for our plant to be kosher our boilers are started remotely by phone by a Rabbi because they have to have control of the cook. So in the morning the engineer comes in and Rabbi calls and they start the boiler. And then the Rabbi will come in. We have a Rabbi who is here for a couple weeks during the year just …for the kosher for Passover and some specialty pack. And they also have audits that come through to make sure the remote start is working correctly the way it should. And they go through the plant to make sure we only have kosher approved products: Our soap has to be kosher, our oils, any salt has to be kosher, any additive has to be kosher.

Adding another layer to the management of the work performed in the OceanSide plant are audits performed by international buyers of OceanSide products. Audits ensure that the products manufactured in the plant comply with the quality, health and ethical standards of the buyer and their respective countries.

> Assistant Manager: So if we sell to John West, John West will send somebody to inspect the plant to make sure it meets their standards. Our two biggest audits of the year are Epps Isu which is the European Food Inspection, which now the BRC, the British Retail Consortium, has taken over their inspection for them, and our CFIA. If we don't pass the BRC we can't sell here and they are a huge part of our market and if we can't pass the CFIA one we can't sell anywhere, we can't process. So, those audits are very big for us and then we also have John West Foods and

> Princess Foods and various other people who buy our product
> and they want to make sure that it's met their standards.

The specialized products manufactured at OceanSide along with the international audits of how the products are processed show how Indigenous women salmon cannery workers' experiences are tied into translocal chains of action. These audits affect women's work because they suggest that the interests of national and international companies and religious faiths regulate work conducted at OceanSide. Further these audits suggest that organization of the Canadian Fish plant privileges the interests of companies (and consumption) rather than labour conditions. In contrast to these growing market and religious regulations, the growing (neoliberal) state has engaged in deregulating labour practices.

Another significant factor that organizes the salmon processing work in OceanSide are regulations on commercial salmon fishing openings that are determined by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). DFO determines the amount of salmon available for commercial catch based on salmon stocks available and the amount of salmon escapement needed for salmon to make it to the spawning grounds to ensure the regeneration of the salmon stocks for future years. Essentially, when the salmon stocks are strong the commercial fleet is able to catch more fish which translates into more work for OceanSide workers, but when the salmon stocks are weak there is, in turn, less salmon made available for commercial processing and less work for cannery labourers. Whatever work is available in the cannery is tied to the vagaries of the global market and federal regulations of salmon stocks, over which the cannery processors have no control.

It is important to consider how gendered divisions of labour play out 'on the floor' of

the cannery because this division translates into work hours and impacts earnings.

Historically, fish processing workers came from diverse backgrounds including Indigenous,

Japanese, South Asian, and first generation Italian and Portuguese and there are studies

(Gladstone, 1959; Muszynski, 1996; Newell, 1993) that have examined the racialized and

gendered stratification of labour in the fishing industry historically. Stainsby (1994) argues

that while both racialized and gendered dividing lines exist in fish processing plants it is

gender that is central in determining the kinds of jobs workers receive in the plant. She

argues:

> The division of labour by gender not only applies to formally assigned tasks –
> for example fish washing for women and unloading boats for men – but also
> influences the amount of work available to an individual, control over the
> work processes, income levels, promotability, level of comfort or job
> satisfaction, and support and activism within unions, as well as more hidden
> benefits like the amount of vacation pay and Unemployment Insurance
> available to workers. (Stainsby, 1994: 62)

While I agree with Stainsby that gender does impact where workers are placed at the

cannery my position differs from hers because I believe that race *and* gender are intertwined

and cannot be examined as independent categories. In my observations[21] of the social

dynamics of OceanSide it was clear that gender and racialized stratification continue to

organize the everyday operations of OceanSide. For instance, when positions in OceanSide

are mapped out along racial lines, white workers are represented in the manager and assistant

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[21] My initial research plan included conducting participant observation of the OceanSide
cannery while it was in operation but this was not possible. Instead, the Canadian Fishing
Company granted me permission to spend coffee and lunch breaks in the break room and in
the outside picnic area. It was in these areas where I was able to engage in discussions with
workers and make observations of the organizational structure of OceanSide.

manager positions while the majority of workers in all remaining positions are Indigenous. In my observation of OceanSide, gendered divisions of labour are still present. The head manager, engineers, mechanics and the majority of the tow truck drivers and maintenance crew are men while the assistant manager, charge hands, quality control inspectors and the majority of the processing line workers are women. The OceanSide workforce no longer reflects the racialized diversity of the past. The handful of Italian and Portuguese women who remain at the cannery are first and second generation immigrants to Canada who have worked for Canadian Fish for several decades. And when Skeena Cellulose closed, many of the South Asian women who worked at OceanSide moved with their husbands to the lower mainland. In my conversation with Joni about why workers at OceanSide no longer reflect a wide diversity of women she said: "They don't bring in their daughters and young women to work at the cannery. We bring ours but they don't." The large number of Indigenous women who make up the workforce of OceanSide speaks to their marginalized social position relative to fellow residents of other ethnicities. Ultimately, while gender does influence placement on the assembly lines in OceanSide this cannot be divorced from race since the vast majority are Indigenous.

Recent changes in Workers Compensation policy, which have attempted to address gender equality in the workplace, have influenced the operations of the plant. These changes have opened up opportunities for women to access jobs that were traditionally designated in the plant as men's jobs including pushing heavy carts of salmon, being part of the clean-up crew, weighing totes, and tow motor driving.

Unfortunately, in my conversations with participants they have indicated that gendered divisions of tasks continue to exist on the floor. Women who have taken on jobs that were

historically held as men's jobs face harassment by some of the male crew. For instance, when checking-in over tasks to be done during the shift women have been instructed to carry through unnecessary tasks, or they have experienced verbal harassment in the form of sexist jokes directed at them. Additionally, the gendered division of labour within the plant is underscored by the naming – by male workers on the floor – of the fish washing line as the 'honey line' because this is where young women workers begin their careers in the cannery (Thorkelson interview).

ORGANIZATION OF THE OCEANSIDE PLANT

From my interviews and fieldwork observations, the OceanSide plant is a highly regulated and mechanized workplace. Its physical structure has changed little since it first opened in 1951 and its organizational structure continues to demarcate strong divisions between management and workers.

Rows of processing lines fill the plant in which the workers in each line specialize in a specific stage of salmon processing. Production lines are connected by machines that serve to coordinate successive stages of production and to transport salmon along them. While machines transport the salmon from one stage to the next, workers remain stationary on the production line performing the same task until either the shift ends or until they are moved to another station. Located above the processing lines is the catwalk that runs the length of the processing line and is used by mechanics to access the parts of the production line that are not easily reached on the ground; supervisors also use the catwalk to observe the production process. The structure of the cannery with production lines on the floor and the manager's office perched overhead provides easy access to observing the mechanics of the lines and the labour of the workers below. The architectural structure of the processing facility brings to

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mind Foucault's (1977) work on governmentality and discipline where he developed the

analytical concept of the panopticon where the architecture of the building and workspace

allows for the possibility of constant observation of workers by those in positions of power.

From observing the structure of the plant it appears that little has changed from earlier

days of processing. The machinery in the plant is the original machinery from when the

plant opened in 1951.   A loud buzzer signals the beginning and end of shifts as well as the

start and end time of coffee and lunch breaks. As Muszynski (1996: 5) notes in her study of

the historical development of salmon canneries in BC from the 1870s to mid-1980s, the

assembly line system continues to be used in the plant:

> The assembly line was adopted as the various steps in preparing salmon for
> canning were broken down and assigned to specific groups of workers who
> focused on one set of tasks: cleaning the fish, butchering it, making the cans,
> placing the fish in them, cooking the contents, soldering the cans to seal them,
> testing for leaks, and lacquering the cans.

On the plant floor the charge hands assist the managers in placing workers at their

stations on the line at the beginning of shifts and in supervising the production process during

the shifts. The charge hands tell the workers what to do, check the lines to make sure

processing is going well and relieve workers who need to leave the line. The assistant

manager of OceanSide explains the work on the floor and the role of the charge hand as

follows:

> Assistant Manager: And it's not like you come to work and you
> are going to stay there all day, that very seldom happens. If
> you're working on the canning lines there might be something
> wrong with the canning lines and they shut down for a while or
> we might not have enough fish butchered to keep all of the
> canning lines going and they might have to go back and wash
> fish or start working on the butcher or vice-versa we might have
> too much fish butchered so we are opening up more canning
> lines. So people are moving back and forth all the time. And the
> charge hands have to know where to place people on the fly
> throughout the day which sounds easy but [Laughs] it's [not].

The next section examines the experiences of Indigenous women workers in the cannery: what this work means to them as a workplace and as a pivotal way of sustaining their everyday lives; how the work is differentiated according to hours of employment and rates of pay; and how such work fails to provide them with adequate employment and income security. The women's experiences attest to the importance of the cannery work, yet at the same time how little it contributes to their wellbeing, and how it controls much of their lives. Because of its on-call nature, the work forces the women to be available in case they are called and the work has longer-term consequences leading to poor health.

EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF UNPREDICTABLE, PRECARIOUS WORK

The participants in this study discussed their everyday experiences with salmon cannery work at the OceanSide Plant on a variety of levels. They look forward to returning every summer to the cannery, working and earning a living. One reason for looking forward to the work is that the cannery welcomes their labour, unlike most other occupations in Prince Rupert. As discussed in chapter 1, historically salmon processing has utilized the work of Indigenous women and this has carried through into the present. Currently 90% of plant workers are Indigenous women. In addition, the women find that the cannery work gives rise to community and support networks. During the off-season the support networks created and maintained through cannery work are important sources of information about training programs, social services and childcare (discussed further in Chapter 5). These issues were particularly important to the women as a result of their precarious and unpredictable cannery work.

What is clear in talking with participants is that their experiences of work, income security and daily lives are shaped by broader systemic barriers that hinder their chances of

attaining secure and stable employment. These barriers significantly contribute to creating and maintaining Indigenous women as working poor, destined to experience cyclical patterns of poverty, food insecurity and over-crowded housing. Given that the types of work available both within the OceanSide Plant and in the broader community reflect precarious forms of work, along with low levels of pay, these Indigenous workers experience chronic income insecurity.

The research participants discussed how their earnings from the salmon cannery were not enough to sustain them and their families throughout the year. All participants talked about having to look for work during the salmon off-season months from October to June. For example, a high seniority worker who is able to work enough hours (in 2011 this was set at 490 hours) to qualify for Employment Insurance would still only earn a total of $9,128.70; probationary workers who are new to work at OceanSide would have a very different experience with shorter hours and much less income.

Employment experience outside of the cannery is characterized by low-level entry work, most often in the service sector. A significant number of research participants discussed having to apply for social assistance and utilize services like the food bank to get by throughout the year. The participants talked about income security, securing childcare, being on-call, their experiences on the floor, and the labour market in Prince Rupert.

REGULAR VERSUS PROBATIONARY EMPLOYEES

The working operation of the OceanSide Plant is organized on the basis of employee seniority. This organization is designed to ensure employment security for senior workers and is based on the employee's length of service at the Canadian Fishing Company. Within

this organizational structure there are the three classifications of workers, which are Probationary Employees, Regular Employees and Seasonal Employees.**[22]** Probationary Employees are new workers who are considered by the Canadian Fishing Company to be 'Probationary' for their first 400 hours worked. The Collective Agreement between the Canadian Fishing Company and the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union- UNIFOR states that, "During the probationary period, they [workers] must be available and report for all work as required. Accumulated hours toward seniority shall be cancelled in the event an employee is unavailable for work, quits, or is discharged, for just cause" (3). According to the Collective Agreement the probationary period exists to allow the Company time to assess both the workers' performance and capabilities to do the work. Wages for new probationary employees begin at $13.86 per hour. Probationary Employees who have worked more than 200 hours but less than 400 hours earn $14.81/hour; Employees who do not attain regular employee status by the end of the salmon season have their names and cumulative hours carried forward into the next season. Regular workers with over 400 hours of work earn $18.36/hour. Even for Regular workers very few jobs in the OceanSide plant are full-time and full-year with the exception of the mechanics and engineers, the maintenance crew, the office staff and management.

Attaining the required 400 hours of work to become a regular employee in the first season is an impossible task for new probationary employees whose work is seasonal, part-time and dependent on available fishing stocks. For example, during an interview with Ellen, a young mother of two children under the age of 2, she explained that she began working at OceanSide at 16 years old and was currently entering her 5th year of employment with the

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[22] I do not know the percentage of workers in each of the three categories.

Company. It took Ellen four years of seasonal work with OceanSide to attain regular

employee status. While Ellen was excited about her well-earned place as a worker within the

Company that came with a raise to $18.36 an hour (also referred to as the 400 hour rate) she

acknowledged the limitations of this wage for her financial security. She mentioned that at

the end of the season she would either have to look for a job in the service sector at minimum

wage or apply for Social Assistance and wait several months until she became eligible for

benefits (Social Assistance access is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). Interestingly,

even then, when workers become regular employees most continue to experience income

insecurity.

Regular Employee status does not guarantee full-time work, guaranteed hours or

scheduled shifts but reflects that these workers have passed through the probationary period.

The date of regular employee status is then used as the employee's seniority and the

employee is placed on the regular employee list following the employee who most recently

attained regular employee status. From then on, regular employees accumulate seniority

rights based on their year-to-year employment. Regular employees lose their seniority status

if they quit or are fired by the Company.

Lastly, seasonal employees comprise the final category of workers. They are usually

students, who are only available to work at OceanSide for short periods of time and only

during the summer months. As the Assistant Manager of Canadian Fish explains:

> Assistant Manager: These short seasons are challenging because
> it's very hard to get somebody to have enough time in to feed
> your family. Which is why we are trying to target students more
> and more to hire because it's the perfect job for a [postsecondary]
> student. But in the old days you would have work from ground
> fish, the seasons were longer, there was work between herring
> and groundfish and salmon and with those seasons you could
> feed your family, and now it's very difficult to do that.

While postsecondary students have been singled out as a good fit for seasonal work, the actual hiring of students was not in practice while I was in Prince Rupert. Identifying students as ideal workers for OceanSide highlights the seasonal and precarious nature of work in fish processing and could have devastating consequences for Indigenous women workers who rely on this work year after year. For example, the desire to hire post-secondary students who are only available to work summers and may work at the plant for only a few years demonstrates a lack of commitment to providing long-term work. Also, hiring students on a short-term basis would help to keep the company costs of processing down since few student workers would attain the status of Regular Employee and the higher wages that come along with this classification. This move would also have detrimental consequences for the local economy of Prince Rupert with students saving their summer earnings to help them get by during the school year rather than spending their earnings locally. Ultimately, this move would have the end result of displacing local Indigenous women who are invested in and dependent on work in the fishing industry.

The Company keeps seniority lists for each of the three categories of workers and uses them to organize the call-out procedures for work with those with highest seniority (regular employees) being called into work before those with lower seniority (probationary and seasonal workers). While the Company does try to notify workers at the end of their shift about when they are expected to next report for work, this is sometimes challenging to do. Work availability is based on a number of variables such as the salmon stocks at hand for commercial processing and the amount of salmon the fishers are able to catch and bring into the Plant. When it is impossible for the managers to inform workers about their next shift, the workers are then placed on-call.

Out of the three classifications the regular employees with high worker seniority enjoy the most benefits. For instance, at the beginning of the new salmon season those employees with regular employee status and who have worked for the Company the longest (thus gaining high seniority) are called into work first, before workers with regular status but low seniority, and before any probationary employees.

One consequence of this system is that workers are cycled through differing degrees of poverty based on their employment status with OceanSide. For example, it is safe to assume that given that Ellen worked four seasons before attaining Regular Employee status (having worked 400 hours) that she may have averaged 100 working hours per season at the starter wage of $13.86 for her first two seasons at OceanSide followed by two seasons at $14.81 per hour before attaining the regular wage of $18.36. This would only amount to a total earned income of $1,386 in seasons one and two and $1,481 in seasons three and four.

THE WORK DAY OR NIGHT

The women also talked about their experiences throughout a working day or night.

> Mabel: My day consists of when I start work, I head to work at
> 4:00pm, walk and I get here just after 4:30pm and I start at
> 5:00pm. I work until 1:30am, walk home and get home at
> 2:00am. I wake up about 9-10am whenever my daughter wakes
> up, I spend the day with her and then it's just a cycle.

A typical day shift at OceanSide starts at 8:00am with workers arriving 30 minutes early dressed in coveralls and wearing rubber boots. Arriving early allows workers time to socialize with fellow workers over coffee and/or cigarettes. Diane explains:

> Diane: I'm out the door by seven-thirty. Get down to the plant,
> get my parking space, punch in, get my lunch, put it on the table,
> get everything ready, I go outside, have a couple of cigarettes, sit

down and chit-chat with everybody. Five to eight we go in, gear
up, get ready to go. Find out what we're doing that day, how
many lines are running.

For the morning shift, at 7:55am the 5 minute warning buzzer goes off and workers start to make their way into the cannery. Upon entering the cannery workers put on the remaining items of their gear including a hair net, waterproof apron and arm covers, and ear protectors (all of the gear except for the rubber boots is supplied by OceanSide). The workers then take their positions on the processing lines according to seniority, skill and experience. The assistant manager seeks to place those with high seniority in areas where they prefer to work and that will ensure the longest hours. The assistant manager explains the importance of this process:

> Assistant Manager: If we are shutting down part of the line early
> then we're sending people home. There's a whole bumping that
> has to happen because the new workers go home early. There's
> always keeping people's numbers in mind and who's senior and
> that's why it's important to place the senior people in positions
> where you know they are going to be working the longest.
> (Canadian Fish interview)

The women with the highest seniority are well known to the charge-hands and to fellow workers. The worker's seniority is identified by the employee number written in permanent black marker on the front of their waterproof aprons that are worn over their coveralls. Those with lower numbers (<200) have higher seniority with lower seniority workers having higher numerical numbers (>200).

Throughout the entire shift, workers are surrounded by the sounds of tow motors moving around the plant, the sound of water moving through machinery as well as the clinging and clanging of tin cans against steel. Workers have to yell to talk to each other. Some workers mentioned that even with wearing ear protectors it is challenging to adjust to the noise and some experienced ringing in the ears long after their shifts were done. Several

women talked about knowing fellow workers or retired workers who developed hearing problems during or after leaving their jobs at the plant.

The women also talked about experiencing foot and leg cramps from standing in stationary positions and wearing rubber boots with little support on damp concrete or metal platforms for their shifts. Diane mentioned purchasing insoles to wear inside her boots and talked about the difference this makes in her work experience. She said: "Well for me, I come straight out of one job into another, so it's kind of like you have to get – well basically you have to get things together. Like new insoles for your boots to make sure because this year I didn't do that and I suffered painfully until now."

Another common problem experienced by workers is back pain. Joni states: "Standing there, oh no, it will kill you, that is why I always move. That was the secret that I told my kids to move. Because if you stand there you will hate it, it kills your back. When they want someone to work anywhere, just say, 'Hey, I'll do it.' That way you are moving."

The salmon the women work with is cold to ensure the freshness of the meat and the water used to clean the fish and workstations is cold. The work done by these women typically requires the use of a knife that they employ for their entire shift. For many of the workers I talked with, the repetitive motions used at work with their hands caused them a lot of pain and discomfort.

> Diane: The knife. You're exerting an awful lot of energy
> through here, so yes, your hands swell up, you know? And it's
> extremely painful a lot of it. As you get going it gets better, but it
> never really gets all that better. Like it's never back to normal.
> When you get the time off and then you start all over again, so
> you never really actually get enough time to heal. Like I'm just
> starting so I can move my flex again. I mean for a while, I
> couldn't get my hands closed.

Not only is hand stiffness and swelling a common experience of cannery workers, this problem worsens with age as Diane further explains: "So yeah, it's aches and pains, and bruises, and a lot of the things, and as you get older it gets more harder to – I mean I know the women that are on the nights and stuff like that, they go to bed at night with icepacks on their hands because their hands swell up so much during the night."

The cannery workers experienced difficult working conditions that could include night shift, limited hours of work, noisy surroundings, and bodily ailments, aches and pains. But also distressing is that whatever work they attained, it was often the result of being on-call.

ON-CALL: AT THE DROP OF A HAT

Many of the women interviewed talked about how being placed on-call for work at OceanSide requires that they maintain flexible schedules at home. For these workers being on-call for work is not an option but a requirement of the job and they are not paid a stipend for this time. This form of on-call scheduling ensures that OceanSide has a reserve army of labour available to them so that the plant can be operational 7 days a week depending on the availability of salmon for processing. This type of scheduling benefits the OceanSide plant because it is less expensive and employees are only paid when the plant is in operation. While on-call scheduling may be cost-effective for Canadian Fish this type of work is not without social costs to cannery workers. Indigenous women workers absorb – through their work time and on-call time (as well as through their marginalized social location) – the boom and bust fluctuations of the salmon industry.

For these women on-call scheduling blurs the lines between their time-off and their institutional obligations to the plant. For example, many women talked about having to 'wait by the phone' and be ready to be called into work at a moment's notice.

> Mabel: Well, from all my experience you have to be ready all the time. Cause I always have my bag packed and ready, I have my lunch ready to throw it together. I mean I could be ready at the drop of a hat. And that's one thing they told me they like because they call a lot of people and they're moaning and groaning, what, right now? I mean, if you work in the cannery you have to be ready, especially if you want to get that time in.

> Ellen: And about 2.30, but sometimes they'd phone at four and ask if I could start at five. 'Can you come in like right now?'

> Diane: Yeah. I received a phone call at 5:30pm to tell me that there's work tomorrow. 5:30 this afternoon to tell me that there's work tomorrow. I received a phone call this morning at quarter to ten to tell me to come in at 10:15am. So they could phone you at any time to let you know. They usually don't phone you in the middle of the night unless you're on night shift, but yeah, they usually try to give you as much advanced notice as they can.

These workers are expected to always be ready for work, as Diane explains, "Well that's one thing that you learn when you work in a fish plant is you have everything packed by the door. Lunch is always ready." During one of my visits to the plant one of the workers mentioned that his wife, who works day shift, usually gets up around 6:00am and waits by the phone for a call from the cannery. He said: "I work the evening shift and get home around 4:30am. Today my wife was on-call and this morning I heard the phone ring only once and it was the cannery, my wife was pretty much ready to go."

The anticipation of the possibility of being called into work regulates daily routines and decisions about leaving home to run household errands (such as paying bills or buying groceries) or planning family time. For instance, workers complained that on-call work

limited their ability to take part in social and family activities. When the workers did

participate in these activities they stated that they found it difficult to enjoy themselves or be

present with family and friends. The anticipation of being called into work prevented the

women from relaxing and having downtime with those close to them.

> Diane: My son knows not to expect anything when I am on-call
> because it's salmon season, and if I can I will, if I can't, we'll
> just have to see if we can get someone else to do it. He plays on a
> ball team. If mommy can make it, mommy will make it. If not,
> my sister is there. We'll do what we can. If I'm working
> overtime I can't make it, so he has to make sure he has his gear,
> and he has a bike to get down there, and I will try – if I get off in
> time I will try to get down to see his game. If not, he has to fend
> for himself sort of like.

Given that on-call work scheduling for cannery workers has a significant impact on

Indigenous women's lifestyles and family dynamics it is not surprising that this has

contributed to the creation of strong friendships and sense of community among fellow

workers who share experiences of on-call work (discussed in Chapter 6).

The standardized process of being called-in to work is very restrictive and not

forgiving of unexpected variables that may prevent women from being at home to receive a

call to work. On-call scheduling is especially challenging for workers with young children

because they need to put baby-sitters on notice that they may or may not be called into work.

Those who miss a call-in receive a notation on their employment record stating that they

were not available and to have this removed from their records workers have to call the

personnel office at OceanSide and explain their absence from work.

On-call schedules are experienced differently depending on the social location of

workers in the plant. For example, workers who enjoy full-year, full-time employment at the

plant are less concerned with making enough hours to qualify for Employment Insurance and

so being on-call (for hours over their regular 40 hour work week) during salmon season has

little effect on their income security. Additionally, the amount of time spent on-call decreases with seniority and women who have had the longest tenure at the plant are called into work first, followed by those with less seniority and depending on the amount of salmon there is to process. This is illustrated by my conversation with Diane, who has considerable seniority at the plant, and who mentioned having just ended a three-week stretch of working everyday. Diane's experience is sharply contrasted with experiences of workers who are new hires and have less seniority. For instance, over the same period, Denise, a new hire at OceanSide, mentioned only being called to work on a few days.

Everyday experiences of on-call work vary significantly depending on the level of seniority that workers have at OceanSide. For example, those with high seniority are almost guaranteed a call-in to work on the days that boats deliver salmon to the cannery. Women who are able to predict their work schedule can prepare in advance of being called in to work. For instance, these women can plan their week and commitments around days they believe they may be working. They can carry out everyday tasks like grocery shopping and paying bills. These workers are also able to make transportation arrangements with friends or family if they need to. Because high seniority workers are those who have worked at OceanSide for several decades this usually means that they no longer have care-giving responsibility for young children and do not have to make childcare arrangements. On the other end of the spectrum, the experiences of on-call work for young women who have little seniority are very different. Their experience of work is more precarious than those with high seniority since they cannot predict when they are going to be called in to work. For young women with small children, on-call cannery work is a real challenge because of the

expectation that they should always be available and ready to work while also having to make last minute childcare arrangements.

Being placed on-call can be a stressful experience when cannery workers are depending on their earnings to get by and to accumulate enough hours to qualify for EI. The frustration felt by workers in this situation is highlighted in Mabel's story where she discussed overhearing conversations between workers and her friend in the personnel office who conducts the call-ins for work. She states: "It's like everybody's, I could hear them all, you know, complaining to personnel about it: Why aren't you calling? When are we going to be called? I mean, if they had a nice ball there to tell the future."

Working on-call during salmon season makes it challenging to take on a second job because of the unpredictability of work schedules. While workers choose between day or afternoon shifts they are not guaranteed work during this time. Work at OceanSide swings between shifts with long and intense periods of work and days to weeks of being on-call and without any work. This unpredictability of work and low earnings have pushed some workers to take on work outside of the cannery and outside of their shift-time to make ends meet. Lucy stated: "The cannery has been pretty good at accommodating them [workers who have taken on second jobs], so if they are 15 minutes or sometimes even up to an hour late that is fine." Janis who lives at home with five teenagers talked about her experience of working three jobs while working at the cannery:

> Janis: Last summer I was juggling three. Canadian Fish and I
> was working security at Chances as well as Subway, but then
> before that I had actually just finished at McDonalds so it was
> transitional actually. Yes, I worked three at a time though. I got
> used to little sleep. Some of the jobs I'd go from one to the
> other; I'd be rushing down to Canadian Fish wearing my suit and
> I'd have my boots and stuff in my bag, going off to my other job

wearing my shirt from Subway or something and carrying my
suit.

What was not talked about by workers was their wage losses during the times they
were required to be on-call for work. On-call scheduling contributes to their further
economic marginalization and supports Vosko's (2006) argument that precarious work is not
a homogenous category and that some types of work are more precarious than others.   For
instance, while work at OceanSide pays more than work at McDonalds, Subway, and
Chances Casino – which all offer work starting at minimum wages of $10.25 per hour – work
in these service jobs is scheduled in advance and work is year round. Indigenous women
cannery workers who take on low paying service work outside of the cannery do so because
wages earned at the cannery are not enough to financially sustain their families through the
year and so they are having to patch together various part-time jobs to get by.

SALMON CANNERY WORK AND INCOME INSECURITY: 'SO YOU CAN'T LIVE ON IT BUT YOU
REALLY CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT'

Several participants talked about how conflicted they felt about the benefits of working
at the cannery while not making enough earnings to sustain themselves and their families.
During one conversation with Joni, who has been working at the cannery for 27 years, she
stated: "How much money do I earn there? I can earn $10,000.00. Nobody lives on
$10,000.00."

The majority of research participants acknowledged the limitations of salmon cannery
work in providing income security and identified systemic barriers that shape their daily
experiences to finding more stable and lucrative employment. As Joni suggested, cannery
work is critical to livelihoods because the alternatives are worse:

> Joni: So you can't live on it but really you can't live without it.
> Everybody who works here thinks every year, "Oh the cannery is
> going to start", no matter, like even though you can't live on it,
> you need it, you look forward to it. Okay, now I am going to be
> able to buy [my daughter] the shoes she wants or the jacket she
> wants. It's not a whole lot but it is just a little bit of extra, it is
> just a little bit of help that will help you out.

These women's lives are deeply embedded with family and friends who also struggle with

income security. They are caught up in a perpetual cycle of "small little hours" and income

assistance. For most, income assistance must be combined with casual and precarious work

Adding to the already precarious nature of salmon cannery work is the collective

agreement between Canadian Fish and UFAWU-UNIFOR which designates workers with

less than 400 hours of work as probationary workers. As mentioned earlier, one participant

informed me that despite being available for work during salmon season by not taking work

elsewhere she was considered a probationary employee for 4 years before accumulating

enough hours to achieve the status of a regular employee. Ironically, even when workers

achieve the status of regular employee their work remains precarious, seasonal and insecure.

The status of regular employee as defined by the collective agreement serves to reinforce this

precariousness.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I outline the various structural factors that shape the experiences of

Indigenous women as workers and that, in particular, create multiple institutional barriers for

accessing employment opportunities in Prince Rupert. These barriers include: the lack of

educational qualifications; increased precariousness of the labour market; racialized

discrimination; gendered and age discrimination; transportation barriers; and limitations of

support services and training opportunities. These barriers are situated within the local

context of Prince Rupert as well as within national and international trends of neoliberalism and global restructuring. The study participants experienced how these barriers play out in the local labour market. The work that was available at OceanSide at the time of this study was exceedingly precarious, unpredictable, and poorly paid. Most of the women were on-call for the little work that they could access. While the work was physically demanding and deleterious to health, the women sought to acquire as many hours as they could to help them get through the off-season and to be eligible for Employment Insurance. Many women also sought other jobs, which were similar to salmon processing in being low paid, part-time and insecure. Although these extra jobs helped them to accumulate hours of work for EI and to supplement their low incomes, participants were still seldom able to acquire enough hours to be eligible for EI. The next chapter examines how EI policies affect Indigenous women's lives.

> In my opinion, the changes to EI and the changes to welfare are
> impacting the shore workers more than what has happened at the
> plant because, like I say, cannery workers just had to work eight
> weeks[23] and you always got eight weeks in the summer. And
> that's all you had to do when I first started working and you could
> collect. Well I don't know how long you could collect but most
> of the senior workers worked herring seasons too. Their EI
> always lasted them all the way to herring and so you were never
> without money coming in. And you were never feeling awful by
> being on welfare and having people snoop in your lives, right.
> (Joy Thorkelson, UFAWU-UNIFOR)

Joy Thorkelson (union representative for the United Fisherman and Allied Workers

Union – UNIFOR) made this observation in our first conversation. As marginalized workers,

Indigenous women have seen Employment Insurance (EI) benefit amounts diminish, the

length of access to EI benefits reduced, and eligibility restricted. Cannery workers are

members of a precarious labour force so they are far less likely to qualify for EI benefits. The

EI program is designed to accommodate 'traditional workers' with full-time, full-year work

with one employer. In contrast, cannery work is marked by seasonal, precarious and

unpredictable (non-standard) work. The topic of EI was a recurring theme in many

conversations I had in Prince Rupert. Most cannery workers discussed the challenges of

obtaining enough work hours to qualify for EI, and the implications of not qualifying for

their income security during the off-season.

The cannery workers' predicament with EI is the result of ideological shifts in the

1980s and 1990s when the federal government began to transform the welfare state and

adopted neoliberal forms of governance. Critics saw UI as an income support program that

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[23] The UI Act of 1971 required 8 weeks of insurable employment to qualify for Benefit
Phases 1 and 2. In 1977 the minimum number of weeks of insurable employment increased
to 10 weeks in a Region with an unemployment rate of 9-10%.

encouraged passive dependency and created disincentives to work. Kingfisher (2002) points out that the broader transformation away from a welfare state is often described in terms of a clawing-back or a shrinking of social programs and services. Instead, Kingfisher argues that this shift is a realignment of the public and private and a transformation of social benefits: "The concern here is thus with the nation-states' *reconceptualizations* of the role of the state in the provision of social services in general" (8) (emphasis in original). This shift points to a change in the ideology of governance from Keynesian forms of governing towards neoliberal governance that places individuals at the centre of "state-mandated (em)powering actions" (Dahlstedt, 2013: 7) that seek to impose individual self-sufficiency and individual responsibility (Caragata, 2003; Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; MacDonald, Neis, and Murray, 2008; Porter, 2003; Pulkingham, 1998; Pupo and Duffy, 2003; and Smirl and Fernandez, 2012). Thus the 'passive' Unemployment Insurance program was replaced with 'active' Employment Insurance to encourage recipients to actively look for and find work rather than 'passively' receive benefits. As part of this restructuring, new restrictions placed on EI access have significantly reduced the number of workers across Canada receiving EI benefits (see Table 5 below for a timeline of the major shifts from UI to EI in the mid-1990s).

Feminist critics of Employment Insurance argue that while the restructuring of EI has had impacts on both women and men, the impacts are experienced more intensely by workers who have been marginalized because of their race, gender, immigrant status, or disability. Scholars (Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; Fuller and Vosko, 2008; Luxton and Bezanson, 2006; MacDonald, Neis, and Murray, 2008) have highlighted that while access to employment benefits has expanded and contracted along with shifting political ideologies the

standard employment relationship (typically favouring White male workers) has remained

the gold standard criteria for benefit qualification. This requirement does not take into

account the gendered nature of the labour market that pushes women into feminized

occupations often characterized by non-standard work arrangements. In 2009, for example,

26.9% of Canadian women worked part-time compared with 11.9% of men in Canada (Status

of Women Canada, 2012).

Indigenous women workers are neglected in research that focuses on experiences of

employment and access to EI.[24] By examining the experiences of Indigenous women

workers in their struggles to qualify for Employment Insurance I aim to illuminate the

broader neoliberal context that individualizes structural inequalities that keep Indigenous

women from accessing benefits. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Indigenous

women cannery workers have fared since the restructuring of Employment Insurance

legislation.

This chapter begins by exploring the historical change from UI to EI. It considers how

changes to EI since the 1990s have reduced Indigenous women cannery workers' income

security. The chapter argues that neoliberal discourses of 'active citizenship' and 'active'

labour market policies, which reinforce ideals of individualism and individual responsibility,

have created systemic barriers such that more marginalized workers are not able to access EI.

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[24] For example, in my research I have only come across one study that specifically addresses
the experiences of Indigenous workers. The report that I found focused on the experiences of
EI access for inner-city Indigenous workers in Winnipeg (Townson and Hayes, 2007).

	Table 5: Unemployment Insurance to Employment Insurance Timeline 1990 - 1997

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	
1990	Bill C-21 a) UI disqualification increased from 6 to 7 - 12 weeks for quitting without just cause or for being dismissed for misconduct or rejecting suitable employment; the income-replacement rate fell to 50% for these claimants b) Variable Entrance Requirements (VERs) based on the unemployment rate of the region lived in increased from the required 10 – 14 weeks of insurable employment during the qualifying period to become eligible for UI benefits to 10 – 20 weeks c) The number of UI regions increased to 62 (an increase from 48 UI regions set in 1978) and the federal contributions to UI were removed d) "A single benefit schedule came into effect, based on weeks of insurable employment and on the regional employment rate" (Lin, 1998: 44) 74% of all unemployed Canadians received UI benefits
1993	Bill C-113 a) Claimants who quit without just cause, were fired for misconduct, or who refused suitable employment became ineligible for UI benefits b) The income-replacement rate lowered from 60% of earnings to 57% 57% of all unemployed Canadians received UI benefits
1994	Bill C- 17 a) VERs increased to 12 – 20 weeks b) Income-replacement increased to 60% for those with low earnings and dependents and decreased to 55% for all others c) The single benefit schedule was replaced with a two-component system: "the work component – providing up to 20 weeks of benefits (one week of benefits for every 2 weeks of work for the first 40 insured weeks) and up to 12 additional weeks of benefits (one for each additional week of work beyond 40); and the regional component – up to 26 weeks of benefits (2 for every percentage point by which the regional unemployment rate exceeded 4%). The maximum benefit entitlement remained at 50 weeks" (Lin, 1998: 44). 51% of all unemployed Canadians received UI benefits
EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	
1996	Bill C-12 (enacted on January 1, 1997) a) Unemployment Insurance system renamed Employment Insurance b) EI benefits based on total hours worked to determine coverage and eligibility replaced the old system based on eligibility and benefits based on weeks worked (based on a minimum number of hours or earnings per job) c) The average earnings over the previous 20 weeks used to determine benefits d) Income replacement rate for repeat claimants reduced by one percentage point for each 20 weeks of claims in the previous 5 years, up to a maximum of 5 percentage points e) Weekly maximum insurable earnings of $750 42% received EI benefits[25]

Excerpt adapted from *Employment Insurance in Canada: Policy Changes* by Zhengxi Lin (1998a)

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[25] In 2012, the EI program underwent another transformation with Bill-38 further restricting EI qualification and benefits. After this shift 39.9% of all unemployed Canadians qualified for EI (Smirl and Fernandez, 2012: 3).

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) program has undergone several important changes since its inception in 1940. UI was introduced along with various other state supported social programs as part of an emerging welfare state in Canada. The welfare state was based on the idea that citizens were entitled to social protection and government interventions into areas such as health, labour, and economic inequality (Cohen & Pulkingham, 2009; Kingfisher, 2002). Cohen and Pulkingham (2009) highlight that "the welfare state was initiated on a specific idea of an active state with an important role in stabilizing economic activity to ensure the economic security of most citizens" (21). Within this context, the UI program focused on providing lost wages for workers experiencing temporary, infrequent and unpredictable periods of unemployment and aimed at providing them with economic support while they were between jobs. The UI program covered workers in occupations that were understood to have a moderate risk of unemployment and focused on those working in the commercial and industry sectors. While the program was funded mainly through a combination of worker and employer premiums, the federal government contributed a 20 percent share and covered the administrative cost of the program.

Pulkingham (1998) argues that the Unemployment Insurance program was originally designed to be more than a simple 'plan of insurance' and had clear social objectives of social equity that were evident in the program's practice of vertically and horizontally redistributing economic resources. "Vertically refers to redistributing resources from those with greater to those with lesser means. Horizontal equity entails redistributing resources to recognize certain contingencies and/or responsibilities (e.g., dependents) regardless of income level" (12). This meant that claimants with dependents and those with lower

incomes received higher benefit rates. While workers with higher incomes may have received benefits at the same rate or greater than those with lowered incomes, higher income earners received a lesser percentage of their income. The provision of higher benefit rates to those with dependents and lower income remained in place until 1976 (Pulkingham).

Kingfisher (2002) takes aim at the notion that welfare state interventions were universal in both access and coverage and argues that interventions differed depending on the workers' class, ethnicity and gender. Other scholars (Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; Vosko, 2009) have made similar criticisms of the welfare state and have called attention to how women and men are treated differently and how this has resulted in restricted access to social services for women. For example, the UI program was founded on a household income model which understood married women to be dependent on the male breadwinner (Porter, 2003). This meant that women's earnings were perceived as secondary and non-essential to men's earnings and they were only able to collect UI under the dependent's allowance of their husbands (Pulkingham, 1998). Additionally, workers in large numbers of jobs were originally excluded from gaining access to Unemployment Insurance including

> jobs in agriculture, forestry, fishing, transportation, teaching, health care, government services, domestic service and non-profit and charitable institutions. In addition part-time employees (individuals employed less than four hours per day), individuals employed in casual and seasonal work. (Pulkingham, 1998: 11)

It is clear from this list that many jobs that were excluded were those considered to be feminized occupations such as teaching, domestic service and charitable service. Additionally, women were (and still are) more likely than men to work casually and part-time thus disqualifying them from access to Unemployment Insurance. What is less considered, however, is the exclusion from UI of racialized citizens who occupied jobs in the resource sector listed above.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) states that historically the Unemployment Insurance program denied benefits to most Indigenous workers because UI did not cover seasonal workers or those working in forestry, agriculture, hunting and trapping and fishing. The seasonal characteristic of this work and the predictability of being without earnings during the off-season contrasted with the UI objectives of providing lost wages only during times of unpredictable and infrequent periods of unemployment (Pulkingham, 1998). The denial of Unemployment Insurance to Aboriginal workers contributed to their experiences of economic hardship because they were concentrated in occupations that paid lower wages and were without extended benefits. Additionally, Indigenous women (along with Asian women and Black women) were excluded from jobs that were designated as white women's work in clerical, secretarial, and sales sectors (Porter, 2003). Work in these occupations held a better chance of longer term, full-time employment than jobs in the resource sector like fish processing work.

As incremental changes were made to UI legislation in its early stages, seasonal workers (in 1946) were permitted to apply and qualify for Unemployment Insurance. These changes in UI reforms reflected further expansions of the social safety net and a recognition of the income security needs of different categories of workers (Pulkingham, 1998). The inclusion of seasonal workers into the UI program also signalled an understanding of the importance of seasonal work to the economy as well as the importance of seasonal work for many regions of the country (Pulkingham, 1998).

Under the welfare state, social programs were structured around contributory and non-contributory benefits (Pulkingham, 1998). Contributory benefits were comprised of Unemployment Insurance as well as the Canadian and Quebec Pension Plans, which are

understood to be earned and paid for. On the other hand, non-contributory benefits consisted

of universal programs such as health care, education, Old Age Security and Income

Assistance. Pulkingham points out that debates about contributory and non-contributory

social programs shifted in political and popular discourse to where "'needs-based' non-

contributory benefits are generally thought to promote 'dependence'" (Pulkingham, 1998: 8).

According to Sidhu (2009: 2):

> This assault on the UI program would eventually be reflected in program changes starting in the mid-1970s which saw the introduction of Variable Entrance Requirements (VER) where regional unemployment rates were factored in to determine how many weeks of insurable employment were needed in order to qualify, as well as cutting of benefit rates, reduction in benefit period, among others….While the cutting back of UI benefits was first introduced by the government in the late 1970s, the most significant modifications to the program occurred from 1990 to 1996.

In the 1990s, new workers now need 20 weeks at a minimum of 15 hours per week

(totalling a minimum of 300 hours) of employment regardless of the unemployment rate of

the region they lived in. The program set a level of maximum insurable earnings at $780 a

week in 1994.

> Benefits for most claimants were set at 55% of the average weekly insured earnings, based on their 20 most recent weeks of employment up to a maximum of $429 a week in 1994 and indexed annually. It was estimated that about 80% of workers in 1994 had earnings at or below the current maximum insurable earnings level. For example, in 1992, while the maximum weekly benefit was $426, the average payment was $252. For claimants with low insured earnings and with dependents, the benefit rate was 60%. (Townson & Hayes, 2007: 5)

In 1990 the federal government introduced Bill C-21 that effectively cut federal contributions

to UI funds (Lin, 1998a; 1998b).

Indigenous women cannery workers received better worker protections under the UI

program than they currently experience under the Employment Insurance program. As

Thorkelson states above, at one time workers only needed to work 8 insurable weeks to

qualify for UI benefits. This requirement remained consistent until 1990 when the number of

insurable weeks needed to qualify increased to 10 to 20 weeks.   Still, more Indigenous

women cannery workers were able to access unemployment benefits under UI because the

program was committed to economic stability for workers.

In 1996 the federal Liberal government restructured the Unemployment Insurance

program to reflect neoliberal ideals of government restraint, 'active citizenship' and

individual responsibility. The neoliberal discourse of 'active citizenship' rearticulated rights

and responsibilities of workers where citizens were now encouraged to be more active in

developing individualized strategies for finding and keeping jobs. Labour market policies

were reformulated with the intention of restricting benefits so that workers were encouraged

to take responsibility for their well-being through labour market attachment. The new EI

program serves to 'activate' workers through policy practices that discipline workers into re-

entering the job market as soon as possible. As a result of the change, fewer workers are

eligible for EI, and to receive benefits workers are forced to prove that they are 'actively'

seeking employment. For example, claimants are required every two weeks to submit reports

on their job search activities. They are required to research and assess employment

opportunities, prepare resumes and cover letters, register for on-line job banks, attend job

fairs and employment workshops, attend interviews and inform Human Resource and

Development Canada (HRSDC) when they refuse work or are unavailable for work (Service

Canada, 2015a).

The restrictions made to EI eligibility mean that fewer people qualify for EI. In 2012 only 39.9% of unemployed workers qualified for benefits, and those that did qualify for benefits received less than they used to (Smirl and Fernandez, 2012). Not only that:

> The active citizen is foregrounded, and in this manner "responsibilised" in terms of her/his economic fate, while the structural determination of disadvantage and the hidden and not-so-hidden barriers of discrimination in the labour market are at best acknowledged as surmountable challenges to be overcome through active and persistent job search (Dahlsted, 2013: 6).

Essentially, these requirements call on workers to consistently demonstrate their worthiness to access EI benefits while ignoring structural barriers within the labour market that limit employment possibilities for marginalized workers. For example, the Indigenous women cannery workers in my research experienced multiple and intersecting barriers to securing full-time and full year work. While these women were willing to take any jobs outside of OceanSide during the salmon off-season they often found that they were limited in the kinds of work they were found suitable for. Additionally, the active and responsible citizen discourse does not acknowledge challenges of finding work in a location where few jobs are available. This is evident in the stories told by Indigenous women cannery workers in Prince Rupert where the number of labourers searching for work outnumber available jobs.

Additionally, Employment Insurance policies have resulted in a widening gap in benefit coverage between men and women (Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; Townson and Hayes, 2007). Presently, men are more likely than women to hold full-time jobs while women are disproportionately represented in jobs that are part-time, temporary, precarious and insecure. For example, the gendered division of labour in OceanSide reflects different employment opportunities for men and women. Year-round positions in the cannery are open to mechanics and welders, which tend to be male-dominated occupations. Mechanics and welders have full-time, full-year employment that allows them to maintain the upkeep of

the canning machines both during salmon season and in the off-season. On the other end of the spectrum, Indigenous women are heavily concentrated in seasonal processing jobs and they are only called into work during herring and salmon seasons.

As the Indigenous women in my study repeatedly pointed out, they feel ghettoized in feminized occupations that are precarious and part-time and provide few protections or benefits, greatly reducing their chances of becoming eligible for EI benefits. For example, as shown in Table 6 below, in Prince Rupert the highest number of Indigenous women (320) or 31%, and all women (925) or 28%, work in sales and service occupations which tend to be low paying and part-time. Furthermore, within the occupational level of trades, transport and equipment operator the representation of Indigenous women and all women is similarly low (3%) whereas Indigenous men (39%) and all men (32%) are highly represented. This gendered disparity within the level of trades has significant material consequences for women workers within the context of Prince Rupert where the economy is heavily reliant on resource extraction and requires workers for these positions.

Adding to this, at the same time that EI policies have become more restrictive there has been a drop in full-time permanent jobs available in Canada. Between 1989 and 2005, for instance, the rate of full-time work declined from 67 per cent to 63 per cent of total employment (Vosko, 2009). The combined result of these changes in the labour market towards precarious work, and the restrictions to EI benefits under the new program, mean that many women workers who were able to access benefits under the UI program now find themselves excluded from eligibility.

Table 6: 2011 Demographic Profile, Labour and Occupation in Prince Rupert						
Occupation	Prince Rupert					
	Aboriginal			Total Population		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total experienced labour force 15 years and over	2,050	1,005	1,040[26]	6,860	3,555	3,305
Occupation - not applicable	110	60 (6%)	55 (5%)	170	80 (2%)	85 (3%)
Management	105	50 (5%)	55 (5%)	705	400 (11%)	305 (9%)
Business, finance and administrative occupations	240	45 (4%)	195 (19%)	910	210 (6%)	700 (21%)
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	50	45 (4%)	0 (0%)	340	290 (8%)	55 (2%)
Health occupations	50	20 (2%)	25 (2%)	275	75 (2%)	205 (6%)
Occupations in social science, education, government service and religion	305	50 (5%)	250 (24%)	945	240 (7%)	705 (21%)
Occupations in art, culture, recreations and sport	40	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	130	60 (2%)	55 (2%)
Sales and service occupations	515	190 (19%)	320 (31%)	1,530	605 (17%)	925 (28%)
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	420	390 (39%)	30 (3%)	1,250	1,140 (32%)	105 (3%)
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	115	105 (10%)	0 (0%)	325	290 (8%)	35 (1%)
Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	130	85 (8%)	45 (4%)	270	185 (5%)	85 (3%)

Source: Statistics Canada 2013d, 2013e

Under the new EI rules, it is really difficult for precarious labourers who work in seasonal,

part-time positions to meet the eligibility requirements for EI benefits. The eligibility

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[26] In this table a total of 65 Aboriginal women are unaccounted for in the list of occupations. Statistics Canada, the original source of this information, does not provide a reason this missing data.

requirements for EI benefits reward full-time and permanent jobs, yet a large proportion of women are not employed in this work (Townson and Hayes, 2007).

MacDonald, Neis, and Murray (2008:159) argue that:

> (t)he change to hours-based eligibility and the formula for calculating weeks of benefits hurt those working 15-35 hours per week – a group in which women predominate. The implicit norm of the program – the 'deserving' unemployed is a full-time, full-year worker.

Dahlsted (2013) explains that the new EI policy views the active and employable citizen as someone who deserves benefits because of their secure attachment to the labour market. Within this discourse, the active citizen is perceived as reliable, responsible, and self-sufficient. The discourse of the valuable active citizen also constructs workers whose attachments to the labour market are less secure as passive, problematic, and not sufficiently responsible.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TYPES OF CLAIMANTS

EI policy poses another problem for Prince Rupert Indigenous women cannery workers in the way that it classifies workers according to their labour market attachment. The Employment Insurance Act defines three classifications of workers by their prior 'attachment' to the labour market. These classifications are Long-tenured workers (25% of all claimants), Frequent claimants (17% of all claimants) and Occasional claimants (58% of all claimants) (Service Canada, n.d.). Each of these classifications has detailed requirements that stipulate what is considered to be 'suitable employment' and what the 'scope of job search' should entail.

Long-tenured claimants are those who have paid into Employment Insurance for the last seven to ten years, who have experienced little unemployment and who have received 35

or less weeks of EI regular claims over the previous 5 years. These workers are considered major attachment claimants and they are eligible for pregnancy, parental and sickness benefits. For the first 18 weeks of their EI claim, long-tenured workers are required to search for work within their occupation at similar wage levels, starting at 90% of their wage before the claim (Service Canada, n.d.). After 18 weeks these claimants are required to broaden their job search to work similar to their occupation and accept wages starting at 80% of their wage before the claim.

Frequent claimants are those workers who are regularly unemployed, and who have had three or more EI regular claims over the last 5 years, and have collected more than 60 weeks in benefits. Claimants who work seasonally and who access yearly EI benefits fall into this category. This group is comprised of seasonal workers and those who make an EI claim on a yearly basis. For the first six weeks of their claim these workers are required to search for work similar to the job they had previously worked, at 80% of their previous wage, and starting week seven they are required to accept any work with wages starting at 70% of their previous wage. The small percentage of Indigenous women cannery workers who qualify for EI benefits (34 out of 900 workers or 3.8%)[27] fall into the category of frequent claimants.

Indigenous women cannery workers who do not qualify as frequent claimants fall into the re-entrant or new entrant category. These workers have accumulated less than 490 insurable work hours in the previous 52 weeks before a claim is made. This is "equivalent to 14 weeks of at least 35 hours/wk or 33 weeks of 15/hrs/wk" (Pulkingham, 1998: 23).

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[27] Statistics Canada (2013d) estimates that 3.8% of Indigenous women workers qualified for Employment Insurance benefits in 2011.

Claimants in this category are required to work 910 hours[28] (or work 23 weeks full-time) over the following year to qualify for EI benefits. While Indigenous women cannery workers are not really new entrants or re-entrants, since they return to work at OceanSide every salmon season, some are defined as such within this policy and are deemed to have low labour market attachment. The 910 hour requirement is almost impossible for them to attain.

Occasional claimants are workers who do not fit into the long-tenured frequent claimant classifications. In contrast to new or re-entrants, workers in the occasional claimants category have filed less than 3 EI claims in the previous five year period. These workers must search for a job in the usual occupation for the first six weeks of their claim. After six weeks they are expected to search for work similar to the work they previously performed at 80% of their previous wage. Beginning week 18 these claimants must broaden their search and accept any work at 70% of their previous pay rate. Occasional claimants differ from frequent claimants because this group is new to the work force and has not paid into EI for 10 years prior to their claim. These workers are identified by Statistics Canada as young workers or new immigrants.

These classifications focus less on providing support for workers than it does on tightening the restrictions of EI benefits for those who qualify. Workers are now expected to return to work sooner or lose their benefits. These regulations have an impact on Indigenous women cannery workers who, if they qualify at all are frequent claimants. If they are jobless after searching for work for six weeks, they are then forced into a situation where they have to accept work at 30% less than their $18 wage. The $18 wage is referenced here because it is only the high seniority, regular employees who make this wage who are ever able to

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[28] I have searched for information that explains the justification for the 910 hour rule but have not found literature on this.

qualify for EI. These regulations push workers into lower paying jobs that are less stable than the work they performed at OceanSide.

Townson and Hayes (2007) point out that EI calculations based on the Variable Entrance Requirement (VER) do not consider gender differences in paid employment and, as a consequence of this, EI coverage has resulted in a widening gap between men and women. The authors argue that because women are over-represented in part-time work this results in women having to work longer hours then full-time workers to demonstrate their labour market attachment. The VER of EI benefits exposes the unequal access that women and marginized workers have to this program and reveals the limitations of EI as a social safety net for workers.

The Variable Entrance Requirement to EI benefits has significantly impacted Indigenous women cannery workers who have traditionally relied on this social program to get them by during the off-season. As the unemployment rate for region 55 has gone down, the number of insurable work hours required to qualify for EI has increased to levels unattainable to most workers other than those with very high seniority at OceanSide. Women who have not been able to qualify for EI in one year are required to work 910 hours to qualify the next year; this is referred to as the Re-Entrant or New Worker requirement for EI benefits. This is nearly an impossible task for most cannery workers in Prince Rupert. As McDonald (2014) points out, "The lower your income, the less likely you are to be able to surmount the 910 hours barrier to qualifying for EI in the first place. The more frequent bouts of unemployment experienced by low income Canadians paradoxically makes it harder for them to access the benefits that would help them while unemployed". Additionally, the 910 hour New entrant or Re-entrant requirement unfairly penalizes those who live in coastal

communities where it is nearly impossible for these workers to acquire these hours in

seasonal jobs available to them (McDonald, Neis, Murray, 2009).

Additionally, the VER component of the EI program acts as an activating policy where

workers are required to demonstrate through their insurable work hours a strong labour

market attachment. Townson and Hayes (2007) argue that built into this policy is an

assumption that those who are unable to qualify for EI lack a commitment to working full-

time and therefore have a weak attachment to the labour market. This pushes labourers

engaged in precarious work to seek additional jobs to make up for their low work hours.

Table 7: Minimum Divisor by Unemployment Rate	
Unemployment rate in your region	Minimum divisor
0% to 6%	22
6.1% to 7%	21
7.1% to 8%	20
8.1% to 9%	19
9.1% to 10%	18
10.1% to 11%	17
11.1% to 12%	16
12.1% to 13%	15
13.1% and over	14

Source: Service Canada (2015c)

Table 8: Variable Entrance Requirement or the number of Insurable Employment Hours needed to qualify for benefits based on Unemployment Rate by Region	
Regional rate of unemployment	Required number of hours of employment in the last 52 weeks
6% or less	700 hours
6.1% to 7%	665 hours
7.1% to 8%	630 hours
8.1% to 9%	595 hours
9.1% to 10%	560 hours
10.1% to 11%	525 hours
11.1% to 12%	490 hours
12.1% to 13%	455 hours
13.1% or more	420 hours

Source: Service Canada (2015b)

CALCULATION OF CLAIMANTS' BENEFITS

These EI changes also need to be understood in their regional context. The ways that EI benefits vary according to regions across Canada is particularly important when examining labour force conditions in Prince Rupert for Indigenous women workers.

The Employment Insurance program identifies 58 regions across the country. Prince Rupert is situated in economic region 55. This region includes the northwest coast of British Columbia and encompasses the top two-thirds of the province; it extends from Haida Gwaii in the west to the Alberta border in the east and from Quesnel in the middle of the province and north to the Yukon border. As noted by the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, region 55 is larger than many Canadian provinces. This region is comprised of 10

separate economic regions[29] that have been combined together because of their small population sizes and their close proximity to each other. Region 55 is economically diverse with the northwest coast economy focused on fishing and pulpwood, the central Cariboo area of the province tied to logging, and northeastern BC relying on gas and oil extraction (Thorkelson, interview).   While in 2011 the unemployment rate for region 55 was calculated to be 11.5% (Statistics Canada, 2011), there is a great deal of economic diversity within this region. For example, at this time Fort St. John in Northeastern BC held the lowest unemployment rate in the province at 5.9% (Statistics Canada, 2013b),[30] while Prince George in the central Cariboo region had an unemployment rate of 7.9% (Statistics Canada, 2013c), and Prince Rupert in Northwestern BC had an unemployment rate of 14.6% (Statistics Canada, 2013e). In 2011, the unemployment rate of Prince Rupert (14.6%) was almost twice the national average unemployment rate (7.5%) and the provincial average unemployment rate (7.5%) (Statistics Canada, 2015). These economic disparities within region 55 suggest that the current hours needed to qualify for EI in Prince Rupert do not reflect the high local unemployment rate.   Nonetheless, at the time of my research, workers had to accumulate a minimum of 490 hours to qualify for EI.

The calculation of EI benefits based on the average unemployment rate of the region has significant implications for Indigenous women cannery workers. For instance, the booming economy of Northeastern BC means that claimants receive disproportionately higher benefits in that area relative to the local unemployment rate in contrast to Prince

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[29] Region 55 includes the Stikine Region, Fort Nelson-Liard Regional District, Kitimat-Stikine Regional District, Peace River Regional District, Bulkley-Nechako Regional District, Queen Charlotte Regional District, Central Coast Regional District, Cariboo Regional District, Mount Waddington Regional District, and the Fraser-Fort George Regional District.
[30]Followed by Vancouver Island/Coast (6%) and the Mainland/Southwest (6.8%).

Rupert, where claimants receive lower benefits relative to the unemployment rate. As a

result, EI has become a key institutional policy that contributes to the precarious material

realities of Indigenous women workers in Prince Rupert who encounter multiple barriers to

employment. As Marjorie Haugan's (a former employee of the OceanSide plant) cogently

writes in an open letter to the Canadian Government:

> I am writing to voice my concerns as to what is occurring in my
> workforce, and the repercussions that are happening to my fellow
> employees as well as myself. I have been working in the
> canneries off and on since I was 16 years old. But because of
> certain circumstances I had to leave for some time. Now I am
> back in the workforce for five years at Ocean Fisheries. I would
> like to work year-round. My home is in Terrace. It's hard for
> me to come back and forth. So I have to rent in Prince Rupert
> and the rent is not cheap. Due to the poor economy there is no
> other suitable work for me. To link our disastrous economic
> situation to the booming northeastern B.C. and Alberta's
> prosperity is unfair and only enlarges the gap between the rich
> and the poor Canadians. I have spent my life in this area and
> have roots here, home, family, etc. To work 600-700 kilometres
> from home is an impossible hardship. Steady work in our
> industry is needed or at least some form of improvement for
> seasonal workers. Immediate help is needed, such as lower EI
> hours, benefit of 60 percent over best eight to 12 weeks.
> Lengthen claim weeks. Make-work projects like the early 1980s
> really helped this area get through that economic crisis. Longer
> benefits for people who are older – perhaps 50 years or better.
> Please give us your unhindered and immediate attention.
> (October 20, 2006).[31]

These concerns reveal the personal burden that results from the way EI is calculated in

Northern BC.

In another interview, Diane, another worker at OceanSide, speaks to the challenges of

working enough hours to qualify for EI benefits.

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[31] This letter was published in the Letter to the Editor section of a newspaper. The specific
newspaper is unknown. The article was provided to me by the UFAWU-UNIFOR
representatives.

Diane: Well they started changing things and they started making it harder, and harder, and harder for people to get on EI. I mean they've lumped us in with Prince George and that area for Prince George, which Prince George is booming because they had the pine beetle epidemic, and people are being hired left and right. Prince Rupert wasn't. Prince Rupert is dead in the water, right? They were upping the EI to almost unreachable – I mean when they dropped it down to reasonable … 350 (hours), 400 (hours) people can make it, but you go up to [490] and you start going up higher than that and people can't make it.

Diane's suggestion of 400 hours as a reasonable number of hours to work in Prince Rupert to qualify for EI benefits is in keeping with the actual unemployment rate of the city. If EI were calculated to reflect the unemployment rate of Prince Rupert (14.6%) the outcome would be very different from what it is now at 490 hours.

The current calculation of EI benefits takes the Region and unemployment rate into account along with hours of work and earnings before the claim. The Unemployment Rate is seasonally adjusted and the number of hours needed to qualify for Employment Insurance benefits fluctuates with this adjustment. Seasonally adjusted employment figures are considered to be a more accurate reflection of employment conditions than unadjusted figures. In Prince Rupert, for example, the employment rate fluctuates with the salmon season.

At the time the interviews were conducted in 2011 the unemployment rate in Region 55 was 11.5% and the total number of hours of work needed to qualify for EI was 490. The weekly EI benefit payment is calculated based on the worker's total earnings before deductions in the last 52 weeks before the start of a claim, as well as the unemployment rate in the region, and, lastly, the minimum divisor based on the unemployment rate of the region, set higher than the actual rate. After the average weekly earnings have been calculated, they are multiplied by 55% to obtain the worker's weekly EI benefit. The unemployment rate of

the region also determines the length of time benefits may be received; in Region 55 with an unemployment rate of 11.5% this is calculated to be 23 weeks of EI benefits. For instance, for a cannery worker who, in the last 52 weeks, worked 16 weeks (between June and September) and a total of 490 hours with earnings of $9128.70, the divisor is 16. Her average weekly earnings are calculated by dividing her total earnings of $9128.70 by 16 which totals $570.54 a week. Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC) uses a minimum divisor that is greater than the number of weeks worked. According to Employment and Social Development Canada (2012: para 124), "The minimum divisor encourages workers to accept all available employment and provides claimants with a strong incentive to work beyond what is required to establish a claim, in order to avoid a reduced weekly benefit." In this example, the weekly EI benefit will be 55% of $570.54 or $313.80. There are two significant problems with calculating EI benefits in this way: first, the unemployment rate of the region does not reflect the local unemployment rate of Prince Rupert which is higher; and second, this process of calculating EI benefits penalizes those who are unable to qualify and have few employment options to acquire the requisite number of hours annually.

In contrast, as suggested above by Diane, if EI were calculated to reflect Prince Rupert's unemployment rate (14.6%) the outcome would be more beneficial to cannery workers. The minimum divisor for an unemployment rate of 14.6% is 14, as shown in Table 7, and is used to calculate the number of hours required to work to be EI eligible which is 420 as shown in Table 8. For example, a cannery worker who, in the previous 52 weeks, worked 16 weeks and a total of 420 hours would have earned a total of $7824.60. Her average weekly earnings are calculated by dividing her total earnings $7824.60 by the

minimum divisor of 14 which totals $558.90. In this case her weekly EI benefit would be 55% of $558.90, which equals $307.40. Within this example, workers may collect EI benefits over a 28-week period. While a cannery worker would receive lower EI benefits under this calculation that takes into account the unemployment rate of Prince Rupert (14.6% rather than 11.1% for the region), the reduced number of work hours (420 hours rather than 490 hours) makes qualifying for EI benefits attainable and length that benefits may be collected would be longer. Christina Nelson, Northern Organizer for UFAWU-UNIFOR, advocates utilizing the local unemployment rate of Prince Rupert over the employment rate of the region because this calculation would be consistent with the original purpose of employment regions which were constructed to "ensure that workers living in similar areas of unemployment face comparable EI rules in terms of eligibility and length of entitlement" (Nelson, interview). The average unemployment rate of the region sets a nearly unreachable standard for low-income Indigenous women workers in Prince Rupert.

EI FIT AND COASTAL REALITIES

MacDonald, Neis, and Murray (2009) are critical of the 'fit' of state policies that have been restructured to reflect neoliberal ideologies while emphasizing individual responsibility, privatization, and targeted programs for the 'right' people. In their work they point to the limitations of these policies within coastal communities by examining the gendered impacts of restructuring Employment Insurance and fisheries management in Newfoundland and Labrador.

MacDonald et al.'s study points to various similarities in the experiences shared between fish processing in Newfoundland and Labrador and Indigenous cannery workers in

my study. These similarities include: lack of jobs outside of fish processing; shorter seasons in the plants; decline of fish processing; increased number of workers turning to work in the service sector; and unreachable EI requirements. The shared experiences of women in the fishing industry in BC and Newfoundland and Labrador highlight the limitations of being working class in a resource based economy. At the same time, however, there are differences in that on the West coast this work has been constructed historically as work specifically for Indigenous women as we saw in chapter 1.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN WORKERS

The interactions between Indigenous women and staff members in Employment Insurance offices provide further insight into how Indigenous women cannery workers' lives are socially organized through dominant discourses of neoliberalism. The discourses mobilized by Services Canada staff (who are at the front lines of determining EI eligibility) reveal institutional expectations and understandings. Often, as the conversations with the women reveal, the expectations of EI staff reflect a disconnect between what is required by policy and practices and the constraints of the everyday realities of the women's lives and the employment possibilities in their location. For example, in reflecting on a conversation with a Services Canada worker about employment availability, Diane states:

> Diane: And the people that they [Services Canada] send are from places like Prince George, Vancouver, stuff like that who say lightly to your face, 'You can find a job if you look.' This is Prince Rupert! Good luck, you know. We're like the forgotten. Nothing has been done here and anything that has been done has been just been a downfall; like minimum wage thing, eight dollars!

Diane expresses frustration with Services Canada staff who are sent to Prince Rupert from urban centres and do not understand the local context of the limited job market. Rather than addressing the structural complexities of employment insecurity such as the proliferation of non-standard work, the EI policy process passes judgment on the individual worker's failure to find a job.

Further problems with EI are illustrated in a conversation with Sadie, a worker at the OceanSide Plant in her early 60s. She has worked at the plant for over 30 years and has high seniority and is among the first set of workers to be called in for work when salmon is available at the plant for processing. Her husband is retired and previously worked in the fishing industry. When I interviewed Sadie she was sharing a two-bedroom apartment in a house with her husband, daughter and grandchild. While she explained that sharing a home with her daughter and grandchild was cramped, she also said this living arrangement allowed the family to share the costs of rent and childcare. Sadie described herself as a major income contributor to the family but also stressed that the income she earns is not enough to support herself and her family members. She explained that 2009 was not a very good year for salmon fishing, which led to low hours of available work at the cannery. Despite her readiness and availability to work over the salmon season Sadie (along with all other cannery workers) has little control over how much work she is able to get and given the nature of the fluctuations in salmon stocks there are no guarantees of work. She said:

> Sadie: I needed 20 more hours to qualify for EI. When the cannery closed during the off-season I tried to find work elsewhere. I applied to work as a chambermaid in the local hotels, I applied at Zellers, I even applied to McDonalds but no one was hiring.

Sadie explained that before the changes to EI requirements were made, she was able to work enough hours by working both herring and salmon seasons at the plant, but now with

the increased EI requirements even with working both seasons she is no longer able to qualify for EI benefits. Because Sadie was not able to qualify for EI benefits in 2010 (20 hours short of 490 hours) she is now categorized as a Re-entrant into the labour force and will have to work 910 hours over a 52 week period to qualify for EI benefits.

While for workers like Sadie we might expect that having high seniority work status with over 30 years experience at the OceanSide plant would ensure income security, this is not the case. For the women who participated in this study, qualifying for Employment Insurance was a major concern and was an issue many of them thought about daily. Accessing EI provides income stability for themselves and their families and also signifies that they have been able to work enough hours to ensure that they have access to the social safety net.

Joni also discussed the problems of trying to qualify for EI benefits. At the time I interviewed Joni it was mid-September and nearing the end of salmon season. Joni is a long-time worker of OceanSide and talked about how she enjoys work at the cannery because of the work that she does, as well as the social support networks she has there. At the time I conducted interviews, her husband was a logger at a camp where he worked year round with 2-week shifts in camp and 1 week at home. Joni described both herself and her husband as the major income contributors to their family. Joni talked about strategies she would use to accumulate as many hours as she could at OceanSide so that she could qualify for EI.

> Joni: I went for jobs that normally weren't taken by women so I would get more hours in the cannery. I was always looking for a way to get more hours, just more employment because you never get enough. I was always trying to get enough for EI. I never did get enough, never did, never did.
>
> Interviewer: How long…you've been working there 26 years?

Joni: Yeah, and I never once had enough for EI. You have to go
from there and get another job, right after. That is the only way I
had gotten EI was I left the cannery after the summer and then go
to find another job and then go right back to the cannery.

Joni was only able to qualify for EI after securing a full-time job at the casino during the off-season outside of the cannery.

QUALIFYING FOR EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE OR 'TRYING TO CATCH A FALLING STAR'

The changes made to EI benefits since 1996 have made it increasingly difficult for marginalized workers to qualify despite paying into this plan (Caragata, 2003; Fairey, Hanson, MacInnes, McLaren, Otero, Preibisch, Thompson, 2008; Silver, Shields and Wilson, 2005; Pupo and Duffy, 2003; Vosko & Clark, 2009). This had a particularly negative impact on Indigenous women workers in Prince Rupert. In 2011, for instance, 3.8% of the total number of Indigenous women compared with 6.1% of the total number of Indigenous men working in Prince Rupert qualified to collect EI benefits (Statistics Canada, 2013d). This means that out of 1,855 Indigenous women workers in Prince Rupert, 70 successfully qualified to claim EI benefits. While it is difficult to know exactly how many of these women were workers from OceanSide we can estimate this number may be around 50 Indigenous women cannery workers. Only a select few (around 20 workers) are employed full-time at OceanSide. They work for approximately 10 months out of the year and are laid off from work from the beginning of November through to the beginning of January. Of these full-time positions around 15 are located among the maintenance and mechanics crew (nearly all men) and 5 office support staff (all Indigenous women). These workers earn enough hours to qualify for EI benefits. After accounting for full-time positions at OceanSide we are left with

perhaps 50 on-call workers who are able to piece together enough hours to qualify for EI out of 900 workers.

There are very few Indigenous women workers who manage to work enough hours solely at OceanSide during herring and salmon season to qualify for EI benefits. Of the participants I interviewed only two workers mentioned qualifying for EI benefits based on the work hours gained through their seniority status.

> Lucy: We usually get [EI] through enough hours for seniority
> but other people lower with higher numbers don't make enough
> hours for EI so it's kinda hard for them.

> Diane: All I know is that I make sure I have enough hours to go
> on EI and I do. But [490] hours for a lot of people, that's
> unreachable. It's like trying to catch a falling star.

Workers like Lucy who have high seniority gained over 35 years of working with OceanSide have several protections that ensure that they work more hours than workers with less seniority. High seniority workers are the first to be called into work and the last to leave. Often they are called into work at OceanSide a month ahead of low seniority and probationary workers. High seniority workers work straight through salmon season from mid-June to mid-September whereas those with lower seniority are called into work sporadically when there are large amounts of salmon to process.

What became clear during the research process is that those who are able to complement their work at OceanSide with temporary full-time work during the off-season are in a better position to qualify for EI than workers who work part-time jobs. This was a strategy used by Mabel who works full-time for the school board during the school year and at OceanSide during the summer months. Mabel has worked off and on with OceanSide for the past 30 years and left Prince Rupert 10 years ago to pursue higher education and work in Vancouver. When, for various reasons, this did not work out and Mabel was unable to find

secure work in Vancouver, she and her husband and two children moved back to Prince

Rupert. Mabel explained that she has a better support system of family and friends in Prince

Rupert and this was the main reason they returned. Unfortunately, because Mabel resigned

from her work at OceanSide when she moved away she lost the seniority that she gained

before leaving and had to start over as a probationary worker. Mabel is the primary income

earner in her household and she lives in subsidized housing with her husband and children.

> Mabel: For me a challenge is waiting to be called in the
> beginning of the season. It's like a race between the job or EI,
> which one will go through first? And it always seems to be the
> cannery like even one day a week will help me out more than
> nothing, waiting for EI will have to wait for [2] weeks which is
> ridiculous, they should change that, they have a surplus there,
> they've been talking about that for awhile. They should reach out
> to communities like this. Like back in the day they used to set up
> programs for EI where they subsidize everything and you don't
> see that anymore. The wait for EI is really stressing. I think
> that's one of the reasons I stay in BC Housing because they have
> been flexible with us.   I always let them know my other job is
> ending and I'm waiting for EI or another job, they've been pretty
> good as long as you keep going there and talking to them and
> being honest with them.

Like Lucy, Diane is also a high seniority worker and has worked at OceanSide for

nearly 40 years. Diane started work at OceanSide in a summer job during her senior years at

high school and mentioned that at that time the pay was really good and there was a lot of

work. Diane has two children and describes both herself and her husband as major income

contributors to the family. She works both herring and salmon season and works during the

day-time shift.   During the off-season Diane works for a community agency full-time:

> Diane: I'm lucky because I get [EI] because I have two jobs, so
> that tops things off. And plus I have my other job, which pays
> good, and it's steady, but from what I [earn from] work in the
> fishing industry, no. It's good for the summer, and then after that
> ….

To maximize their work hours and ensure that they qualify for EI both Lucy and Diane bank their over-time hours. According to the Ministry of Labour (n.d.), employees can request that their employers keep a time bank where their overtime hours can be credited to and paid out at the employee's request. The advantage of banking overtime hours is that it allows workers' overtime to be paid at the rate earned for overtime work at time-and-a-half. For example, if Lucy worked 4 hours at time-and-a-half she could bank this time and be paid for 6 hours of work.

> Lucy: This coming September will be my first time off work and I'll be around my kids. Employment Insurance. I've got enough hours from my previous employment but next year is when I'll really have to bank my over-time and everything to qualify.

According to the Collective Agreement, employees may bank their overtime up to 160 hours straight, which is equivalent to four full-time weeks. Diane describes her experience with banking overtime hours:

> Diane: I'm actually very fortunate because every year I've managed to make my banked overtime, which is 160 hours. Last year was, I made my banked time. It was a really sad year, wasn't very productive for a lot of people. This year is a lot better year.
>
> Interviewer: What does banked hours mean?
>
> Diane: It means that overtime that I work year-to-year, so from as long as it – from December to December, anything that I work that is considered overtime, which is double-time, Saturdays, Sundays, anything over eight hours goes into my banked time, which it is put in – if I work eight hours on Saturday, it goes into my banked time but it registers as 12 hours instead of eight.

Banking overtime hours is a strategy used by these women to gain income security through EI.

Lucy and Diane shared similar views of feeling fortunate to work enough hours to qualify for EI while also acknowledging the challenges of co-workers who are not able to secure full-time work during the off-season and therefore were unable to qualify for Employment Insurance benefits. Rather than perpetuating ideas of 'active citizenship' within EI policy that define workers who qualify for benefits as 'deserving,' these women pointed to the structural inequalities that prevent fellow workers from being able to access EI benefits.

While Mabel, Lucy and Diane were able to secure full-time work during the off-season this was not the case for most of their co-workers. Many of the women I talked with worked part-time jobs during salmon season as well as during the off-season in an attempt to both gain income security as well as to gain enough hours to qualify for EI.

In 2009 Statistics Canada reported more multiple job holders were women (56%) than men (44%) and that more Indigenous women (15.9%) than all women (14.1%) work multiple jobs (see Table 9). If these women are working to gain enough hours to be eligible for EI, they often have little choice but to accept work in jobs that pay less than the wages they make at OceanSide. When participants were asked where they typically see their co-workers employed during the off-season this was a standard response.

> Diane: Bars, you know? Places that don't pay a lot and that it's okay that they can give you the time off or whatever, you know? Or work around their flex schedule for you to do something. Tim Hortons. You know, stuff like that where you could get people to cover you and stuff like that. I haven't seen anybody that – well first off, if you had worked a job that was all-year round and had good pay, why would you want to go back to the cannery?

For my participants, holding multiple jobs is a significant issue in relation to Employment Insurance benefits because if the worker loses one of these jobs, but manages to keep the other, they may be denied EI benefits if their earnings exceed what is allowable within EI policy.

A claimant can't work full-time and receive EI benefits. However, a claimant can work part-time while receiving regular unemployment benefits and may earn up to $50 per week or 25% of weekly benefits, whichever is higher. Any monies earned above that amount will be deducted dollar for dollar from the person's EI benefits. (Townson & Hayes, 2007: 21)

Table 9 shows the distribution of Aboriginal women and the total female population in Canada who hold multiple jobs. While there is not a large difference between the women in each category or between how many jobs are held, the table reveals significant numbers of women who need to hold multiple jobs to get by.

Table 9: Canadian women working multiple jobs in 2009				
Number of Jobs Held	Aboriginal Women		Total Female Population	
	Number	%	Number	%
None	120 935	29.2%	2 639 095	28.8%
1	227 017	54.9%	5 241 609	57.1%
2	52 609	12.7%	1 079 954	11.8%
3+	13 128	3.2%	214 768	2.3%

Source: 2009 Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics

The practice of multiple job holdings points to the inadequacies of the labour market and of employment policies such as EI. These inadequacies have only worsened during neoliberal restructuring of the welfare state and the increased flexibilization of the labour market.

CONCLUSION

What neoliberal accounts so often fail to address is the reality that social exclusion is not simply a consequence of individual failure or welfare state policies, but the result of structural, economic forces. There are simply not enough good jobs in the new economy; a situation which flows out of an economic environment geared toward promoting increased labour market flexibility. This naturally results in the casualization of work (i.e., the increased use of insecure forms of employment such as temporary, contract,

part-time and self-employment), a movement away from policies that promote full-employment, and a drop in real incomes. Hence, it should be of little surprise—at the level of the labour force—that exclusion and polarization are becoming more pronounced (Burke and Shields, 2000) under neoliberal led regimes. (Silver, Shields, Wilson, & Scholtz, 2005: 35).

This chapter contributes to a critical analysis of neoliberal EI policies in the labour market. It shows the extensive effects of neoliberal policies on the daily lives of Indigenous women cannery workers in Prince Rupert. The chapter illustrates the strategic importance of EI in their lives and the complex and deleterious ways in which neoliberalism frames EI and influences policy.

As discussed in chapter 1, systemic discrimination and racial hierarchies, favouring white Europeans, have been built into fisheries policies and management and helped to displace and marginalize Indigenous fish processing workers. The long legacies of Indigenous dispossession of access to natural resources, and colonial governance and authority have resulted in social and economic inequality. While Europeans have profited most from the fishing sector, Indigenous workers have been pushed into seasonal labour and Indigenous women into fish processing. These colonial legacies continue to shape present realities. When Indigenous women workers apply for work outside of the cannery, some find jobs but most are only part-time in the service sector. Many are unable to find any jobs outside of the cannery and feel that they are confined to seasonal fish processing work. Hence often the only work available to Indigenous women in Prince Rupert is part-time, precarious work in the cannery. Yet Employment Insurance policy ignores their limited job options. Instead the policy, which is shaped by neoliberal ideologies of individual responsibility, blames and stigmatizes Indigenous women for their lived realities.

As access to EI has become more restrictive, many Indigenous women cannery workers who have been denied insurance have had to turn to income assistance in order to try

to make ends meet. Unfortunately, most of the women find income assistance (IA) as

restrictive and challenging to access as EI. The next chapter explores the experiences of

Indigenous women cannery workers who access IA and the strategies they employ to get by.

Finally, […] what emerges is a public welfare system that is structurally dependent on food banks and other charities in order for people to meet basic needs. Many people on welfare cannot find housing, cannot afford a phone, and cannot meet core food and nutritional needs. Much of the public would be surprised to learn that the social welfare system we collectively fund through our taxes – a system many assume is there for people in need – is so woefully inadequate and leaves people living so deeply below the poverty line. The combination of inadequate benefit rates with the elimination of earnings exemptions in 2002 means many simply cannot make ends meet on income assistance income alone. (Klein and Pulkingham, 2008: 36)

The restructuring of welfare state policies to meet the demands of the new neoliberal economy has powerfully impacted low-income Indigenous women workers. These workers now have very little protection to guard them against the neoliberal focus on individual responsibility and shift to non-standard work. As a consequence, many working in precarious jobs have even greater need than in the past to access social safety nets in the form of Employment Insurance and Income Assistance, as well as from non-governmental services such as charitable and community-based agencies (Lightman, Mitchell and Herd, 2008). This is certainly the case for the women in this study.

This chapter examines Indigenous women workers' experiences with accessing government programs such as Income Assistance (IA) and JobWave (a job placement program that is accessed through Income Assistance) and with enacting survival strategies to gain childcare, food and housing security. It also examines the macroinstitutional policies and practices that shape these strategies. This analysis takes into consideration the significance of neoliberalism as an ideology and economic policy that privileges free market competition and fiscal restraint (Cohen and Brodie, 2007; Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; Fuller and Vosko, 2008; Luxton and Bezanson, 2006; Pulkingham, Fuller, Kershaw, 2008) and the impact of this ideology on the social institutions used by Indigenous women.

Neoliberal ideology argues for the natural and inevitable processes of globalization, privatization and deregulation and discourages direct state interventions into the lives of citizens. Within the context of neoliberalism, individuals are constructed as responsible, self-reliant, self-sufficient and invested in attaining income-security while rejecting governmental intervention in their lives. Neoliberalism has shifted welfare responsibilities from the public sphere to the Third sector such as charitable organizations and public-private partnerships while emphasizing individual responsibility and self-care. Feminist scholars have argued that neoliberal restructuring is a gendered process because it significantly deregulates social welfare programs that more women than men have to rely on and therefore the cuts have had a disproportionate impact on the material conditions of women (Bradley and Luxton, 2010; Brodie, 2008; Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009; Kingisher, 2002; Man, 2004; McLaren and Dyck, 2004). Equally important to this study is the analysis of how racialization is further intensified by neoliberal governance processes (Galabuzi, 2006; Braedley and Luxton, 2010). Braedley and Luxton (2010: 16-17) state that

> the fundamental systemic inequalities created by four hundred years of imperial and colonial economic and political domination were exacerbated by neoliberalism. Again, three dynamics contribute to these conditions. First maintaining racist regimes privileges elite cultures and peoples. […] The second dynamic is the ways in which global markets and divisions of labour regulate racialized people into work that tends to be more dangerous, more precarious, and poorly paid. […] The third dynamic is that neoliberalism has completely freed up capital to invest in wherever labour is cheapest.

Neoliberal restructuring disproportionately affects Indigenous women in Canada who have suffered historical inequalities that have resulted in the need for social services and other supports that address their disadvantaged economic and political circumstances (Fiske, Belanger, Gregory, 2010; Salmon, 2011). Within this context, neoliberal rationalities of 'fiscal restraint' and individual responsibility for care intersect with historical legacies of

colonialism that have marginalized Indigenous women as low wage cannery workers within

the fishing industry.

While I was living in Prince Rupert in 2011 there were several news reports

(Anonymous, 2011a; Anonymous, 2011b; Anonymous, 2011c; Anonymous, 2011d;

Anonymous, 2011e; Anonymous, 2011f; Anonymous, 2011g; Duggan, 2011; Lee, 2011) that

featured stories about the declining numbers of people on Employment Insurance. These

stories, which praised the decreasing numbers of EI recipients, failed to discuss the

corresponding increase in the number of Income Assistance recipients.

> Diane: It's really sad, and a lot of these people, they always say
> oh the unemployment rate goes down in Prince Rupert because
> there's not a lot of people on EI, but they don't see the welfare
> rate has skyrocketed. You know? You never, ever hear what [the]
> welfare rate is. Yeah. And there's a lot of people that have to
> live on welfare that is below poverty.

To understand the significance of Income Assistance in Indigenous women cannery workers'

lives, it is necessary to outline recent shifts in the program and its reduced benefits and

protections. While the women in my study seldom referred directly to Income Assistance,

thereby maintaining its somewhat invisible and generally stigmatized status, it helped to

frame how they conducted their survival strategies in the context of income insecurity.

In 1995, the federal Liberal government established the Canada Health and Social

Transfer (CHST), a single block funding transfer, by combining federal funds for Income

Assistance, Postsecondary Education, and Health Care (Brodie and Bakker, 2008;

Kingfisher, 2002).   This merger of federal funds under the CHST eliminated the Canada

Assistance Plan (CAP). CAP was a significant social policy because it provided established

uniform national standards in welfare provision and access (Brodie and Bakker, 2008).

Under CAP, income assistance claimants were not obligated to work and an appeals

procedure was in place (Carson, 2014). Brodie and Bakker (2008: 22-23) state

> More critically, CAP insured the right of all Canadians, regardless of their
> personal circumstances, to the collective provision of a social minimum – to
> food, fuel, clothing and shelter – on the basis of need alone. CAP was also a
> critical social program for Canadian women, especially single mothers who
> were more likely than their male counterparts to depend on provincial and
> social assistance regimes to meet their daily needs and those of their children.

The shift from CAP to the CHST significantly impacted the provinces by reducing federal

transfer funds and removing targets for specific programs or populations (Butterwick and

White, 2006). Additionally, under the CHST monetary expenditures were set at rates set in

1994 significantly affecting annual fluctuations in spending for social services (Carson,

2014). Brodie and Bakker (2008) argue that implementation of the CHST signalled an end to

the federal government's obligations to marginalized populations, including the right to

access income assistance based on need alone, as well as the right to appeal.   Two other key

changes to B.C.'s welfare policy powerfully shaped the study participants' experiences: 1)

earning limitations, and 2) a work first welfare program. IA placed earning limitations on

those on social assistance by eliminating all earnings exemptions, which meant that all

earnings would be clawed back from income assistance cheques.[32]

Study participants talked about the hardship that this earning limitation poses.

IA provides benefits that are far below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO)

"and fail to provide sufficient income for an adequate material standard of living and

economic security" (Willows, Veugelers, Raine, & Kuhle, 2009: 1152). For example, in

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[32] In 2012 the BC Government – and under Premier Christy Clark's Families First Agenda –
restored earnings exemptions for income assistance recipients in the 'expected to work'
category where recipients can now earn and keep up to $200 per month.

2010, a BC family of four with two children aged 3 and older on income assistance received

a total income of $21,608, which is $12,297 below the low-income cut-off[33] set for a family

of that size in an urban area the size of Prince Rupert (Murphy, Zhang, Dionne, 2012: 98).

On a monthly basis, this amounts to $1,800 to support a family of 4. IA requires workers to

wait three weeks before they receive IA benefits. This means that the women's low wages

have to be stretched beyond the canning season for nearly a month. Moreover, IA deducts

from the benefits "dime for dime" workers' earnings during the rest of the year. This measure

ensures that workers and their families receiving IA benefits live in poverty, even when they

are working at the cannery in the summer months in order to lever months without any IA

support. For example Ellen, a young mother in her early 20s with two young children under

the age of 2 and living with her fiancé, states that

> Ellen: The hardest part about being on social assistance is not
> being able to qualify for income assistance after work finishes at
> the cannery. Depending on how much money I have made
> sometimes I have to wait until November to start getting
> assistance again. If I made $3000 at the cannery in the summer
> time Assistance will take those earnings and count them towards
> what I would get on Assistance. I have to budget my money
> through the summer time knowing that I will have to save what I
> have earned for the months that I won't qualify.

For Ellen, the seasonal earnings of $3,000 stretched from June to October means that she and

her family are getting by on $750 a month plus whatever earnings her partner is able to make

at his on-call job at Aero Trading Company in Port Edward. Ellen explained during our

conversation that because her fiancé is new to his job he works on-call and his earnings are

not stable. At the time of our conversation, Ellen was the major income earner in her family.

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[33] The low-income cut-off is produced by Statistics Canada and this is used as a measurement
of low-income in Canada. A familiy is considered to live in 'strained circumstances' or
below the low-income cut-off if they spend more than 63% of their income on the basic
necessities of food, clothing and shelter.

Janis also talked about the struggles of getting by financially on Income Assistance while having her wages deducted from the benefits she received. Janis explained that this was a difficult experience for her while raising five teenagers at home. She explained that she – as the only wage earner – would get her family through each month by having a strict budget. When talking about earnings deductions, Janis states

> Janis: They deduct dime for dime. Before, I remember when we were allowed to earn up to $250 a month before they deducted, but now everything you earn they deduct.

This comment demonstrates the hardship experienced by Janis in raising her children as a single mother and providing financially for her family.

While Joni was not on Income Assistance at the time of our interview, she expressed her frustration with seeing her family members and friends trying to get by on IA. As discussed in earlier chapters, Joni is a high seniority worker at OceanSide and her husband works year-round at a logging camp. In talking about earnings deductions, she says

> Joni: I feel for the people who live on income assistance like my son and my friend. They cut them off and then they have to pay back, pay back and then they are cut off, cut off. She is cut off until December. Some work in June, July, August, all these small little hours she has been getting there, it adds up. Now she is cut off until December.

The experiences of these women highlight the failure of Canada's Income Assistance program in lifting its recipients out of poverty. The program effectively legislates their ongoing poverty.

As stated earlier, women, visible minorities and Indigenous people are concentrated in jobs that are precarious and pay less. Indigenous women in Prince Rupert, like Ellen and Janis, have limited choices about where they work and part-time, short-term employment in the cannery is their only option to welfare. But because it is not enough to support their

families, and they cannot qualify for EI, they find themselves penalized when they are forced

to re-apply for welfare.

> Joy (UFAWU-CAW Representative): We go off welfare, work
> hard all summer, earn a bunch of money and welfare claws a
> 100% of it back now. So, you can't go back on welfare if you
> work all summer and make seven grand, welfare allocates it by
> month and so you may not get back on welfare until the middle
> of November. So it becomes, what the hell did I work for? You
> are just as poor. In the old days, you used to be able to take your
> summer money and it wouldn't be allocated, it might be allocated
> for September because August is always allocated for September
> but by the end of September you are back on welfare. So that
> meant, you bought your kids decent clothes to go back to school,
> you know, you bought them a new bed, you bought a TV, you
> bought a decent washer if you needed one, or a new dryer, or
> something like that. So you spent your money on the stuff that
> enabled you to live like a proper human being and then you went
> back on welfare and scrounged to make ends meet but at least
> you had the things that you needed. And now they take that
> [money earned through the summer] and they allocate it all the
> way through and they don't care that you need a new washer and
> that's what you worked all summer for.

The second key change to welfare policy was the BC Liberal Government's adoption

of a work first ("take a job, any job") welfare program that has resulted in many welfare

recipients gaining employment in jobs that are low paying and offer few protections

(Butterwick, 2010). For many cannery workers accessing income assistance is a strategy

used to make ends meet, especially if they have not been able to secure work during the off-

season, do not have a partner, or do not have a partner in stable employment, and have not

been able to qualify for Employment Insurance from hours worked at Canadian Fish. At the

time this study was conducted Income Assistance in B.C. was organized through categories

of recipients. Cannery workers fall under the welfare category of 'Expected to Work,' which

powerfully shaped the lives of cannery workers who resort to income assistance.

As part of the neoliberal reframing of social assistance, the BC government has created

retraining and recertification programs that seek to remove individuals from the welfare rolls.

As Butterwick (2010: 6) notes, however, these programs – that the government has

contracted out primarily to for-profit companies –

> reduced caseloads, but at great cost, as many of those denied assistance experienced great hardship. Many of those who remained on income assistance (IA) had multiple barriers to employment. They are not well served when the dominant approach is to cut costs and reduce caseloads.

JobWave is funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Human Resources and exists

as one of four contracted, private-public partnership programs in the province. This program

is part of the provincial government's welfare-to work strategy and is an example of current

neoliberal shifts away from government support to low-income families towards shuffling

social assistance recipients into the workforce. The primary objectives of JobWave are (1) to

support BC businesses by helping in their search for employees and (2) aid income assistance

clients move from social assistance to secure employment. According to Kuhnke (2001: 6)

"JobWave has an exclusive partnership with the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce,

which provides access to 103 community chambers and its 30 000 small business members."

Local Chamber of Commerce members advertise the program in their company

communication (newsletters and websites) and promote the JobWave program at their mixers

and luncheons. To ensure the JobWave program is current in providing relevant training to

their clients they regularly survey members about labour practices and needs. According to

the Provincial Liberal government, the JobWave program is a 'win-win' situation for

participants, government and the small business sector (Kuhnke, 2001). According to Klein

and Pulkingham (2008), JobWave has saved the BC government millions in income

assistance payments and "helps small - and medium - sized enterprises thrive by finding the

appropriate human capital they need, at no cost to them. JobWave becomes the HR Division

of small business" (36).

In my interview with the Executive Director of the Hecate Strait Employment

Development Society (HSEDS), she stated how the JobWave program works locally in

Prince Rupert. She states:

> Executive Director: Our mandate is to provide employment and
> training to enhance the quality of life to the communities we
> serve. So it's very broad, it open's up huge doors for us. There's
> a valuing of the communities and the people that live here. A lot
> of the programs we have here are for people who are on Social
> Assistance like JobWave. As long as you are unemployed you
> can gain access into the programs. Our population we see here is
> probably 60% Aboriginal and from all over.
>
> JobWave is targeted to persons on Social Assistance. What we
> basically do is a person is referred to us through the Ministry of
> Social Development. They come in and we have some timelines
> that we must meet and it's around the orientation, bringing
> people into a session that explains the program, the expectations
> of the program. Getting people assistance for food, bus
> transportation. Then they actually have to have a caseworker
> assigned to them. So they sit down and do an action plan for
> individuals so they can access workshops around employability
> and learning skills, they can also access certified skills. They're
> with us a limited time, so they can't be with us forever.
>
> We have people who come to us that continue to return, have a
> cup of coffee, meet their caseworkers.   The program also has the
> ability to refer out to other services like addictions, violence,
> abuse. You know, people that are looking for specialized
> services that we don't necessarily offer under our roof. So there
> is that partnership out into the community. We refer to the
> Friendship Centre, the transitions house, all of the services. So
> it's a resource centre as well. So it's knowing what services are
> there and how can we help people move themselves forward. So
> we see people here from a variety of backgrounds, it's really nice
> to see them walk through that next future goal. We call it
> empowerment here, it's not enabling. We definitely look to
> empower people to move themselves forward.

Within my conversation with the Executive Director of HSEDS there was a clear focus on 'enhancing the quality of life' and 'empowering people to move themselves forward' for the clients they serve. This focus deflects attention away from the restructuring of social services to meet the goals of neoliberalism in reducing social spending while emphasizing the responsibility of the individual worker to improve their employability and skills. This process shifts attention away from the responsibilities of the government, bringing attention away from reduced funds directed at social assistance and the creation of stricter eligibility criteria, while creating the illusion of providing programs to support workers help themselves. Additionally, the mention of programs like addictions and violence services reveals the understanding on the part of this job program that participants may have individual deficiencies that they may need support in overcoming so that they can progress towards being employable and skilled workers.

In an effort to demonstrate willingness to work, interview participants on IA were caught in an endless cycle of having to participate in employment programs offered through JobWave[34] located at the Hecate Strait Employment Development Society (HSEDS). Some of the women referred to ways in which the program could be helpful. For instance, Joni talked about a previous time when she accessed Income Assistance.

> Joni: Generally, [we] reapply again [for Income Assistance] and
> then we sign to go on this JobWave program with Hecate Strait
> [Employment Development Society] where we do a job search
> and they offer assistance for the training sometimes if they can.
> And they offer workshops, everything from budgeting and
> planning. For training they do cashiers, whatever the person is
> interested in; if they can Food Safe, Serving it Right. Like my
> First Aid Level 3 they'll do one and I think they're willing to
> assist with funding for short-term courses that are offered like at
> the college or elsewhere.

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[34] In 2012 Job Wave was replaced with the Job Options program.

It is clear from this quote that while JobWave provides training opportunities, the program

prepares workers for low paying entry-level positions.

Denise talked about her experience with JobWave and its importance in supporting her

search for employment and securing her new job at Oceanside.

> Denise: I was in JobWave and when they found out I got a job
> here at Canadian Fish they bought my boots for me and the gear
> that I needed and they helped me out. I wasn't able to buy boots
> if it wasn't for them. They help you with your resumes and all
> that. They even paid for my babysitters when I was in that
> program. I'm a single mother and it's really difficult for me.

While Joni and Denise identify JobWave as a supportive employment program, Joy,

UFAWU-UNIFOR representative, points out that such government retraining programs rest

on many problematic assumptions. In particular, the programs overlook and denigrate the

multiple skills that First Nations people working in the cannery already possess.

> Joy: Shore workers are the single largest group of workers that
> the Manager of Hecate Straight [Employment Society] sees as
> potential clients and that is who she geared her programming for.
> And so she does things like the 'Old workers' program and we
> cooperate because they pay people to get training, for some it
> may open their eyes up because they see they can do something
> other than canning. I get quite upset when people say that First
> Nations people, our workers, don't have work skills and I say
> they run the whole goddamn plant down there. There is 5
> managers for a 1000 people how dare you insult our workers.
> All your charge hands at Canadian Fish are First Nations. All the
> senior workers run the goddamn plant. How dare you suggest
> that our people don't know how to get up in the morning. Get
> dressed, pack their lunch, go to work, put in a full days work, and
> argue grievances. Almost all our shop stewards are First Nations
> and our membership is. How dare you be so insulting. Because
> they have these programs [through JobWave] on how to get up in
> the morning, how to get dressed and how to pack your lunch.
> Those are the kinds of things they are referring our people to.
> Fuck it made me mad.

The continual revamping of certification, resumes and keeping up with EI program mandates

takes its toll on participants especially when these retraining opportunities do not result in

long-term work. Participants find this experience especially frustrating in interactions with office workers at the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation office where staff individualize the women's difficulties in obtaining full-time work after participants have received retraining.

> Kate: The Social Assistance workers have different views when we have a lot of training certificates. They said I haven't focused on one thing, I said well I have five different training certificates, I couldn't get a job on this one so I went on to get another certificate and I still couldn't get a job. So I said, you all have different views and so do I because the learning and training I have to do is never ending.

> Denise: I am trying to get work out in the Port. I've been taking courses and everything possible to get out there. From what I hear it is good money, it's year round. I've just got to get my tickets and put my application in.

Workplaces such as McDonalds and Tim Hortons tend to hire workers in work placement programs organized by the high school and/or Employment Services Canada. These programs are short-term and are used to provide workers with on-the-job training in areas like customer service, Serving it Right and Work Place Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) certification. Older workers seeking work in the service sector have found that they are often competing for jobs against high school students for whom these programs are beneficial because they allow students opportunities to build their resume. For older workers these programs have limited benefits. For instance, hours required to work while in these work placement programs do not count towards hours needed to qualify for Employment Insurance.

In the end, work placement programs offered to these workers ultimately serve to benefit the companies which do not have to pay the workers and do little to provide women with meaningful training that might enhance their human capital to lift them out of cycles of

precarious work. In speaking with Indigenous women it was clear that they were all offered

the same retraining programs and had certifications in Serving it Right, WHMIS, Food Safe,

Super Host and cashier handling qualifications.

> Joy: And then they started doing these Older worker programs
> which presumed that these people were workers but wanted to
> get out of their field, right? So then they trained them to do
> different things that weren't the how to get up in the morning,
> how to brush your teeth before you got to work, right? They go
> to try out something different, they got to try out a few different
> jobs but, you know, Sharon [a charge hand] for example runs the
> whole goddamn plant, I mean she really does. And Sharon is out
> pouring coffee and talking to visitors out at the airport and kind
> of orienting them and stuff. I saw her several times out there and
> she was having a gas, she loved it but, you know, it wasn't
> exactly training. Sharon, who runs the plant, you know to do
> other things, Sharon has been bossing people around for 30 years
> down there, she doesn't need --- you know.

The experiences of the participants reveal that JobWave does very little to help these women

attain stable, full-time jobs and contributes to their income insecurity by preparing them for

work in jobs that are low-skilled and part-time.

CHILDCARE STRATEGIES

As part of their daily survival strategies, many of the study participants had to arrange

childcare during cannery shifts. The women faced many challenges in arranging care for their

children given unpredictable work schedules and also a social policy environment that does

not provide support for childcare.

In keeping with neoliberal ideals of fiscal restraint and individual responsibility, the

federal government's discourse emphasizes 'choice in childcare.' The Conservatives have

argued against federal government involvement in funding state-run childcare. Instead, they

stress the importance of parental roles in choosing the best childcare options for their

children (Bezanson, 2010). The federal government maintains that it supports 'choice in childcare' through the child benefit tax. In 2006 the Conservative party under Stephen Harper dissolved the previous government's childcare agreements with the provinces and introduced a taxable cash transfer to parents with children under the age of 6 (Bezanson, 2010). This federal cash transfer – the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) – saw parents receive $100 per month per child, which is an inadequate sum to meaningfully contribute to the cost of childcare. Kate Bezanson, a sociologist, conducted longitudinal research on parental views of the UCCB among parents with significant work and care giving responsibilities. Bezanson found that while her participants found the $100 "handy" they also argued that this did not address the cost of childcare. She states: "No one in the study suggested that the funds were sufficient to change their labour market attachment or to make their child care costs significantly more manageable" (Bezanson, 2010: 104).

In addition to the UCCB transfer to parents with children under the age of 6, the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB), a tax-free monthly benefit, also provides financial support to lower income families with annual earnings below $38,832 who have children under the age of 18. Under the CCTB families receive $113.91 per month for each child below 18 years of age, this amount is increased with an additional $7.91 per month for a child and each additional child thereafter. As stated earlier many Indigenous women cannery workers live below the low-income cut-off, which means that formal childcare is not an option for them even with the combined totals of these child benefit tax benefits. For example, it is estimated that full-time, full-year childcare costs range between $6,000 and

$12,000^{35}$ per child (Battle, Torjman, Mendelson and Tamagno, 2007) with the low-end cost of formal childcare starting at \$500/month. The combined benefit of UCCB and CCTB is \$213.91 per child leaving low-income mothers short at least \$286 each month. The minimal amount of these child benefits brings into question how effective these benefits are for promoting women's childcare choices. The lack of affordable formal childcare in Prince Rupert combined with the minimal financial resources to access this service left many women – especially those accessing Income Assistance with children over the age of 3 and in the Expected to Work category – having to patch together various forms of informal childcare.

Childcare was a significant concern for many of the participants in my study. The combined impacts of unpredictable work hours and low incomes powerfully influenced the types of childcare strategies they could access. This material reality contrasts sharply with the 'choice in childcare' discourse mobilized by the Conservative party which gives the illusion that mothers have free choice between formal and informal childcare arrangements. Formal childcare providers – nurseries or daycare centres – operate during the weekdays and during hours that conform to regular day shifts and that are often not compatible with employment that requires flexible work schedules or night shifts. Also formal childcare is expensive and out of reach financially for these families even with provincial subsidies that help to partially cover the cost for childcare.   Additionally, there are very long wait-lists for formal child care services and the available spots do not meet the demand; only 20 percent of BC's children are able to attend licensed day care and nursery facilities (Early Childcare Educators of BC,

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[35] I have not been able to find information that specifically states what the cost of childcare is in rural and northern BC.

2011). Many of the women interviewed spoke about having to patch together multiple forms of informal childcare arrangements to get by.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, work at OceanSide is seasonal and often unpredictable with erratic hours during weekdays and weekends. Even if the women could afford formal childcare, they found that informal childcare offers the most accommodation to their unpredictable work hours. The most common childcare strategy employed by the women was reliance on close relatives for help. Ellen, for instance, relied on her cousins and her mom to help look after her children while she and her husband were at work. This arrangement was good for her because in exchange for payment for childcare Ellen provided living accommodations for her mom and cousins.

Shift parenting was another strategy employed by women with partners. This strategy allowed both parents to work different (night and day) shifts so that the children could be cared for at home. This arrangement worked especially well with Indigenous women cannery workers at OceanSide whose partners worked at Areo Trading Company Limited where workers could choose between working either day or night shift. One participant described challenges and benefits of this arrangement.

> Mabel: I'm lucky because my husband works during the day in Port Edward – that's a 15 minute drive or hike, whatever he has to do – he's a fork lift driver at the plant and my 13 year old son will look after his sister until dad gets home so that's probably about 2 hours so that's good enough for him. My husband and I we are on different shifts so we are able to be there as much as we can for the kids. Even my other job I prefer him to be at home and sometimes he'll get an afternoon shift while I have my day jobs in the off-season because I think family is important to be around.

> Diane: Childcare? We usually worked different shifts, he usually works nights, I work days. But taking care of the kids was impossible for him because he works long hours, longer hours than I would work, so he needed time to sleep. And he –

sometimes we never even saw each other for quite a while. Yeah.
Well now he gets home at four o'clock in the morning. It used to
be before that he would get home and I'd already gone to work,
and I'd come home and he'd already gone to work, you know.

Deciding which parent took on a night or day shift sometimes reflected a couple's efforts to

maximize earnings. For example, Ellen's night shift work gave her longer hours that meant

more pay.

Ellen: My fiancé works at a different plant and we work
different shifts. I work during the night shift because I can get
longer hours and he works during the day. One of us is usually
home with the kids.

One of the important added benefits of shift parenting is that it is cost-effective and allows

parents to save money on baby-sitters. Jane explains blending different types of care by her

daughter and son-in-law to get by during salmon season.

Jane: Kind of makes it easier if you can switch the two [shifts]
because when my daughter was working days in the summer,
they tried it out and it was a little easier for them because she
worked the days and he worked the nights, so they only needed a
sitter in between, like just so that he can leave early and she can
come home and not have to run home kind of deal. Yeah, so they
had a sitter just for a couple of hours and that worked out fine for
them, so I think they're going to do that next year too because
it's kind of tough for them to be paying somebody.

However, informal childcare can often be unstable and unreliable. Because of the

unpredictability of seasonal and on-call work it is difficult to find a childcare provider

outside of the family who is willing to work erratic hours and as a result some workers go

through several different caregivers.

Joni: That was really harsh when I was in the industry and I did
have to – that was a hard situation because you have to find
somebody that would accommodate the fact that some days you
worked, some days you don't. Some days there's overtime, some
days you're up early, so you have to be a pretty understanding
person for that.

Denise, a mom of a seven-month old baby and a 2.5 year old, has found it difficult to find

childcare for her children:

> Denise: It's really hard. Thankfully my sister will look after
> them on her days off or wait until she get's off work and then
> she'll come. And I've got my younger niece that I've been
> looking after while my sister is working and then when she is
> finished her shift she'll come and look after them until I get
> home. So it's quite difficult for me actually.

Unexpected changes in the lives of relatives or caregivers who were no longer available

when work schedules changed left some participants having to scramble to make new and

unplanned childcare arrangements. Mable, for example, arranged childcare with her mother

and extended family members but found herself in a situation where she was called into work

when her family was unavailable leaving her no choice but to knock on a neighbour's door to

see if they could look after her children.

Some workers question the benefits of paying for childcare while working low-wage

jobs during off-season.

> Diane: Is it feasible for a mother of one to three children that has
> to go out to a job at McDonald's but has to get somebody to
> watch her children? She's going to end up paying more than she
> makes. Yeah. I mean even if you make eight dollars, work five
> hours, that's 40 dollars. $35 of it goes to the sitter, and now you
> have five dollars left. What are you going to do?

FOOD SECURITY STRATEGIES

As a consequence of government cutbacks to Employment Insurance and social

assistance, many workers engaged in precarious work lack social supports. This is clearly

observed in the increase in food insecurity in Canada with the erosion of social welfare

(Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, 2008). Food insecurity is defined as "the inability to acquire or

consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways,

or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so" (Davis and Tarasuk, 1994). In 2009/2010 it was reported that 8.4% of British Columbians experience food insecurity (Health Canada, n.d.). Food insecurity was a major concern among many of the participants whom I talked with in this study and they employed several strategies to address this need.

For women who have worked for OceanSide for decades, accessing the Food Bank was a new experience and a necessity after changes in Employment Insurance increased the numbers of hours needed to qualify for EI benefits. This shift in policy and its effect on the lived experiences of cannery workers highlights the link between food insecurity and social policy. The Indigenous women I talked with discussed accessing the Food Bank as a way to stretch out their limited funds.

> Sydney: I started having to use the Food Bank when I couldn't get work outside of the cannery. I applied everywhere and tried to get work as a chambermaid but no one was hiring. I even applied to McDonalds but didn't get interviewed. I am 60 years old and I can't find work.

The Food Bank in Prince Rupert is operated by the Salvation Army church and is accessible on a monthly basis to those who need it. The Food Bank is open Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays from 10am to 3pm by appointment. The only day the Food Bank is not accessible to clients is the week income assistance cheques are issued. To utilize the services of the Food Bank, clients need to prove that they are low-income when they register. Joy, from the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, explains:

> Joy: You go to the food bank, the Sally Ann demands to get your welfare number because it won't let you go to the food bank unless you are on welfare and you can only go so often so you, it's just demeaning, demeaning, demeaning.

To register, each adult in the household needs to present an official picture ID (for example a drivers license, BC identification, status card, Canadian immigration papers or

landed immigrant card); proof of address (this can be a official piece of mail with a name and address); proof of low-income from every adult in the household receiving income (this can include a recent pay stub, EI cheque or a recent Accommodations and Allowance print out from the Social Assistance office confirming current income); and proof of dependents (BC Services/CareCard[36] for each person in the household).

In my interview with the volunteer at the Food Bank he mentioned that First Nations residents make up 99% of those accessing their services. In July 2011 the Food Bank reported that they serve 300 families every month and see an additional 10 to 15 families per month registering for their services. When the Extra Foods grocery store closed in 2010 the Food Bank was servicing 175 families. The closure of Extra Foods caused an immediate spike in the numbers of those accessing the food bank to 300, or 125 more families (Perry, 2011). The Extra Foods supermarket was the only existing discount grocery store in Prince Rupert. Other options for groceries include Safeway, Save-On-Foods, a deli, and a butcher shop, but these often do not fit within low-income budgets. The closure of Extra Foods left many families little choice but to rely on the Food Bank. The numbers of families accessing the Food Bank fluctuates with the salmon season. For example, in 2013 the local paper reported that there was a drastic decrease in the numbers of those accessing the Food Bank which was attributed to a good salmon season. "The cannery had a good year … a lot of the shore workers did quite well with hours and a lot of them are people we serve" (Perry, 2013).

The Food Bank provides four bags of canned foods, cereal, a pound of ground beef and juice mix. They also provide snack bags for young children and these include juice and

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[36] The Ministry of Health provides BC Services CareCards to residents of BC who are enrolled with the Medical Services Plan. Each card contains a unique personal health number which is used to obtain insured medical and health care services. The CareCard is also used to confirm identity.

granola bars. The Food Bank is unable to provide fresh produce and milk to clients because

they are expensive items. The Food Bank relies on funding from federal grants, local

businesses, residents, and the Salvation Army Christmas Kettle fundraising campaign.

Janis, an employee at OceanSide, talked about her experiences with food insecurity

and the difficulties of having to access emergency food assistance programs to help her

provide food for her family. For Janis and her family the food provided to them from the

Food Bank was not enough to sustain them through the month. In Carson's (2014: 9) study

of Food Banks in BC they explain that the services offered through organizations like the

Salvation Army are limited and do little more than offer families a temporary solution to a

systemic problem of inadequate government social services in meeting the basic needs of

families.

> The majority of food banks provide only limited resources, distributing one
> monthly hamper containing food for only five or fewer days. With this
> constrained service, food banks regularly fall short of adequately providing
> for the nutritional and desired food needs of their users (Food Banks Canada,
> 2010). In the end, many Canadians remain food insecure even after repeated
> visits to the local food bank. (Carson, 2014: 9)

This was the experience of Janis who stated that she often had to access other sources of food

assistance such as the Good Food box program through the Prince Rupert Friendship Centre

and the Soup Kitchen at the Salvation Army. Accessing food assistance outside of the Food

Bank required work on the part of Janis who had to research where she could turn for help,

what the qualifications were and when the services were available. For instance, the Good

Food Box program is similar to the Food Bank where food assistance is offered on a monthly

basis but differs in that there are no income restrictions on who qualifies for the program.

The Good Food Box costs $15 per box and this service provides fresh produce. Similar to the

Good Food Box program the Soup Kitchen does not place restrictions on those who qualify

for this service. The Soup Kitchen is offered free of charge and is accessible Monday through Friday. The Soup Kitchen offers two meals a day with breakfast served at 7:30am and lunch served between 11:00am and 1:00pm. On Saturdays the Soup Kitchen provides a pancake breakfast between 9:000am and 11:00am. Accessing such food assistance programs helps the women stretch their resources.

In addition to utilizing the programs mentioned above the women also employed individual efforts to stretch their dollars and maximize food resources. Janis mentioned that she likes to look at the flyers to see which grocery stores are offering the best deals and she coordinates her shopping trips accordingly: Rather than shopping at one grocery store Janis often shops at both Save-on-Foods and Safeway with the intention of buying items wherever they cost less. Janis also utilizes coupons from flyers, in-store advertisements and product packaging. Sydney talked about how she often volunteers at the Soup Kitchen and is sometimes rewarded at the end of her shift with excess food to take home. This volunteer work is another form of food assistance for her.

Participants also talked about sharing resources and helping each other get by. Janis mentioned that she and her mom shop together and buy in bulk and then divide up their purchases.   As well, Janis mentioned taking advantage of case-lot sales with other family members. This way of purchasing items allowed them to pool their resources and buy items – typically dry goods like cereal, canned soups, Kraft Dinner, powdered juice, granola bars and other children's snacks - in larger amounts at a lesser cost. Again these items were divided up between those who contributed to the purchase. Lucy mentioned that when grocery stores held case-lot sales she would offer to drive friends and relatives who did not have vehicles to the store so they could do their shopping. The efforts on the part of Janis

and Lucy to participate in case-lot sales highlights the significance of these sales for stretching dollars while maximizing food resources. Furthermore, the importance of case-lot sales also brings attention to the high cost of food in the north (Anderson, 2007).

Some of the participants also talked about how their networks share traditional food. Lucy, for instance, states: "When I have extra food like fresh or smoked fish from home I share it with my friends who I know don't have any and they do the same with me when they know I am running low on traditional food." Outside of the Indigenous community there is a perception that Indigenous people living off-reserve have easy access to abundances of natural food sources like fish or wild game and these food sources are easily relied on as a main food staple especially during times of income-insecurity. However, the reality is that for many Indigenous peoples' access to traditional foods is dependent on social support networks who are financially secure and can afford to harvest traditional food. So while this idea holds true for some Indigenous peoples who have family and social networks that are economically secure this is not the experience for everyone. Harvesting and preserving salmon, for example, can be very costly. Harvesting requires resources to pay for all the tasks involved – this includes a boat or the upkeep of a boat, gasoline to power the boat, a fishing net, and a salmon sized cooler. After the salmon is harvested more supplies are needed to preserve the salmon including vacuum sealers, freezer wrap, jars, jar lids, a pressure cooker, and a stand alone freezer. As Anderson (2007) states in her study of diabetes and its link to colonial processes of dispossession among the coastal First Nations community of Gixaala, BC: "While nutritious food is present in the immediate environment, cash is necessary to access it" (26). Additionally, because most designated areas set aside for Aboriginal food fishing are located near reserves and away from urban areas money is also

required to transport the salmon from traditional territories to urban centres. Clearly the cost of harvesting and transporting becomes a barrier to accessing traditional food for those who are struggling financially.

Sharing food and resources provides many benefits for these women. Sharing resources facilitates the creation and maintenance of support networks. Lucy, for example, talked about the emotional benefits of working together to take advantage of grocery store sales within her support network.

> Lucy: It makes you feel like you are not alone. Many of my friends at the cannery you only see during salmon season or when there are things happening in the community. You never know what someone is going through [financially] at home. If we can help each other out even if it's just to offer a ride to the store then I'll do that.

Sharing resources also allows these women to exercise some (albeit constrained) power over their food choices. For example, Janis wanted to purchase snacks that her children desired and, although she was unable to buy them at regular prices, by pooling her resources with others she could purchase these items. The support networks created by the women allowed for collective strategizing that is not possible with programs like the Food Bank, which individualizes experiences of need.

HOUSING SECURITY STRATEGIES

There are several studies that address the lack of adequate housing on-reserve for Indigenous people in Canada (Adelson, 2005; Larcombe, Nickerson, Singer, Dantouze, McKay, Orr, 2011; Peterson, Robillard, 2007; Rosenberg, Kendall, Blanchard, Martel, Waklin and Fast, 1997) but few studies examine the experiences of those living off-reserve (Walker, 2008; Williams, 1997).

Walker (2006) explains that even with 50 per cent of Indigenous people living off-reserve "the concepts of 'urban' and 'indigenous' still seem an uneasy fit in policy and public consciousness" (185). Adding to this is the assumption that Indigenous women and their families can easily move back to their home reserves if things do not work out for them in urban centres. This idea disregards overcrowding conditions and limited housing, lack of employment opportunities, and the experience of many Indigenous women who may never have lived on-reserve and may not have a home to go to. The idea that Indigenous women can easily move back to home communities was strongly challenged in 1985 when Bill-C31 allowed women and their children who had lost status to apply for reinstatement. Following the passage of this bill, which was not matched with increased federal funding to reserve communities, there was concern among community leaders across Canada about the implications of this policy for reserve communities that were already experiencing overcrowded conditions (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb & Hampton, 2004; Green, 2001; Lawrence, 1999; Mann, 2005; Voyager, 2000).

This analysis considers the powerful role of social policy in choreographing low-income Indigenous women's experiences in urban areas and counters Williams' (1997: 76) argument that "The growing number of Aboriginal women, specifically lone-parents, migrating to Canadian cities is a factor in the increasing feminization of poverty of urban areas." It is not the mere presence of Aboriginal women in urban centres that contributes to the feminization of poverty. Such an analysis is too narrow and individualistic in focus and fails to take into account the wage gap between men and women, racialized and gendered segregation in the labour market, and the lack of adequate support for childcare.

Studies focused on on-reserve housing detail the lack of affordable and adequate

housing, and overcrowded housing, as well as houses in poor condition and in need of

maintenance. A study conducted through the University of Manitoba (n.d.) found that

Indigenous people off-reserve experience similar housing issues. For example, it is estimated

that 36% of Indigenous people living in urban centres live in core housing need with single

parents making up 72% of those living in core need. Core housing need is defined as a

household that falls below one of the following three criteria: (1) adequate housing that does

not require major repairs; (2) affordable housing that amounts to less than 30% of monthly

income; and (3) suitable housing that provides enough bedrooms (Canada Mortgage and

Housing Corporation, n.d). Overcrowded living conditions add to the issues of inadequate

housing and Statistics Canada estimates that 7% of Indigenous people, compared with 3% of

non-Indigenous people, living off-reserve live in overcrowded dwellings (Statistics Canada,

2008).

Presently there are no studies that examine housing security in Prince Rupert for

Indigenous residents and this area needs further study. What is clear from the experiences of

some of my research participants is that low-income residents need more affordable housing.

Some of the participants mentioned sharing accommodations with relatives as a way to

combine resources and ensure that an adult is always at home with the children.

> Sandra: Who do I currently share my home with? My brother-in-
> law and my sister-in-law and their kids. We all live in one –
> we're one big happy family. I think we've always tried to get our
> own places, but we all end up back together. It's just because
> things seem to run a little more smoothly, so if they're not there
> I'm there, and if I'm not there, they're there.
>
> We're in a 3 bedroom apartment right now. Yeah. We're looking
> for a house because we just moved in with them about a month
> ago, so it's kind of – maybe you should get a house now because
> our girls are older than when they were younger, so yeah. There's

a 14-year-old, 15-year-old, and a 12-year-old, so you know what
that's like. And they're all girls.

In the quote above Sandra mentions that she and her extended family shift between

having separate rentals and renting apartments together. Sharing accommodation can be

understood as a strategy to help to enhance social support and stretch resources in a town like

Prince Rupert where very few work full-time and full-year. Overcrowded living conditions,

however, have their drawbacks and can increase stress levels and limit privacy. Ellen

explains that while sharing accommodations was challenging, the number of people living

with her ensured that someone was home to help take care of her young children and that this

relieved some of the stress of working on-call at OceanSide. At the same time, however, this

arrangement made it difficult to have time alone with her partner.

> Ellen: This summer I am in a 2 bedroom apartment with my
> fiancé, my two children, my mom and her boyfriend and my two
> cousins. My 2 cousins came to live with me for the summer in
> exchange for providing childcare. It's hard for my fiancé and I to
> have time to ourselves but we manage.

Ellen's experiences of overcrowded housing are the result of combined factors such as the

difficulties of securing full-time and full-year work, the lack of subsidized housing,

inadequate income assistance benefits to support a family, and the high cost of formal

childcare services. For Ellen, the combination of these structural barriers has resulted in a

private responsibility that requires creative solutions to get by. Significant in this discussion

is the mention of six adults sharing a two-bedroom apartment with two children. This

highlights the financial hardship experienced by this group as well as the lack of adequate

social services to meet their needs.

Participants also discussed living in BC Housing owned properties that are located

throughout Prince Rupert.   BC Housing units in Prince Rupert are managed by M'akola

Housing Society, a non-profit housing operator that has almost 30 years of experience of providing affordable housing to Aboriginal residents throughout BC (British Columbia Newsroom, 2014). Currently, 5 properties exist in Prince Rupert that provide a total of 267 units to low-income residents. BC Housing provides rental assistance to low-income families with a gross household income of $35 000 or less and to families that have at least one dependent child. It is clear that the number of social housing units available to low-income families does not adequately meet the current need.

OTHER WAYS OF MAKING ENDS MEET

My participants also talked about the impacts on their daily lives of raising a family on meagre earnings and the stresses this placed on their care-giving responsibilities. Since their earnings combined with income from government transfers did not pull them out of poverty or provide them with much buying power, many of these women had to find creative alternatives to meet their daily needs.

For instance, Sue supplements her income from OceanSide with a table she rents on the days the Cruise Ship docks in the Prince Rupert harbour. Sue sells homemade goods including baked and hand-crafted items. Additionally, in the winter Sue participates in Christmas craft fairs where she sells similar items. In supplementing her wages in this way Sue feels that she is being proactive about her income stating that she likes to have something to do: "I like to be working and keeping my hands busy and baking and making crafts lets me do that."

When it comes to personal clothing and household needs Janis said that she takes

advantage of the Salvation Army thrift store. The Salvation Army offers $40 vouchers per

adult in financial need and $30 per child.

> Janis: They also offer at the thrift store, the clothing store, they
> offer clothing vouchers for people as well. I guess for a certain
> period of time people could get a voucher, and I think for adults
> it's good for $40 and I think it's six months that they have to use
> that, then they can apply for another one if they need another one
> after that time.

In the winter the Salvation Army provides winter coats for children and Janis takes advantage

of this service for her child. Janis also utilizes the Backpack program offered to children

before school begins in September:

> Janis: I think the Bargain Store and they have the backpacks that
> they provide and they usually put some pencils and stuff in there.
> I think the last time they actually had coupons at the Bargain
> Store that you could bring in and you'd get 10% off the purchase
> of school supplies.

The experiences of both Sue and Janis demonstrate the diversity of basic needs -

outside of childcare, housing, and food insecurity – that need to be addressed. The attempts

by Sue and Janis to address the financial and material needs of their families through holding

bake sales and utilizing the services, once or twice a year, of the Salvation Army thrift store

and Bargain store are only temporary solutions that do not contribute significantly to the

financial security of their families.

CONCLUSION

The shift away from the welfare state and the elimination of the Canada Assistance

Plan in favour of the Canada Health and Social Transfer plan significantly altered the transfer

of monetary support to provinces for social service programs while removing national

standards for social assistance provision. These changes have had detrimental impacts on Indigenous women cannery workers in Prince Rupert who are unable to secure work during the off-season and who rely on social assistance to support their families. From the discussion I had with these workers it is clear that existing social services are inadequate in meeting their basic needs for childcare, food, and shelter.

In response to the inadequacies of social services, women develop a range of survival strategies often drawing on kin and friendship ties. While the existing formal and organized social services are inadequate in meeting the needs of most Indigenous women cannery workers, these women employ collective actions to address their needs of financial security, food security, housing, and childcare. This is discussed more in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: 'TALKING BACK': INDIGENOUS WOMEN WORKERS' RESPONSES TO NEOLIBERAL REFORMS

'Talking back' or 'researching back' is central to Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies*. She defines this as involving "a 'knowingness of the colonizer' and a recovery of ourselves, an analysis of colonialism, and a struggle for self-determination" (7). This critical approach demands an understanding of the social and political constraints of neoliberal ideologies and practices and an analysis of how these shape everyday experiences while also acknowledging that Indigenous women carve out spaces of resistance or self-determination within these contexts. While I argue in this chapter that Indigenous women find ways to resist neoliberalism I am not arguing that they are fully rejecting it. This would be an impossible task since neoliberal governance shapes our socio-political and economic realities. Instead, I argue that it is important to consider how resistance and decolonization occur within specific contexts. This approach is supported by Baragh (2007) who encourages a broad understanding of resistance that acknowledges both "everyday acts and acts of 'making do'" (17) and how these highlight the daily ordinary activities of Indigenous peoples engaging in and reshaping power relations. Baragh argues that a broad understanding of resistance illuminates both the subtle and overt acts of resistance to neoliberal practices that shape Indigenous experiences.

Indigenous resistance is an important aspect of this study. While conducting fieldwork in Prince Rupert and talking with Indigenous women it was clear that they are not passive victims of the gendered and racially stratified fishing industry and/or neoliberal welfare state reforms. To describe Indigenous women as passive victims would perpetuate longstanding portrayals of Indigenous women as silent and as lacking agency. It would also reinforce a

neoliberal notion of passive (unworthy) rather than active (worthy) citizens in its critique of

the social safety net. Feminist researchers (Neis, 1988, 1999; Neis and Williams, 1996;

Porter, 1985, 1988, 1993; Stainsby, 1994) have challenged ideas of female passivity in the

fishing industry. For instance, in Porter's research on fish processing workers in

Newfoundland she argues that work in the plants provided women with the opportunity to be

economically independent from their partners. Neis and Williams (1996) further argue that

work in the fishing plants helped women to create and maintain a sense of community with

each other.

Central to the concerns expressed by women in my study was the struggle to maintain

connections and kinship ties with fellow workers within a climate that fragments groups, and

alienates these women from their communities. The struggle to maintain community within

a neoliberal context is also addressed by L.T. Smith (2007: 343) in her study of New Zealand

Maori communities. She states:

> What many communities have learned from these processes is that the
> neoliberal emphasis on the individual cuts against any conception that an
> individual is accountable to, often dependent on, and works in relation to
> social groups. The strength of many Maori communities is their strong sense
> of collective identities; this is, that individuals are members of complex
> intergenerational and extended families, from marae or community places,
> and through genealogical networks that are connected to specific lands and
> histories. These connections provide the glue of community cohesion as they
> work through value systems and practices that ensure reciprocal relationships
> are honoured over time and over succeeding generations, and that recognize
> the process of gifting to ensure that no one goes without.

This chapter focuses on the subtle and overt ways that Indigenous women workers resist

neoliberal ideologies and policies of individualism that encourage restricted interpersonal

interactions, independence and self-sufficiency instead of strong community ties, mutual

support, and interdependence.

The narratives of resistance in my study differ from studies that have examined

volunteer work as a form of 'active citizenship' (Fuller, Kershaw and Pulkingham, 2008). In

Fuller et al.'s study, they found that lone mothers who access income assistance and who

participate in volunteer work in community agencies use this participation to make claims to

'good,' 'active' citizenship and social inclusion while challenging ideas of passivity and

dependency embedded in British Columbia's social assistance policy. Women in their study

perceived their volunteer work as a stepping-stone to paid employment. These women

provided narratives of their volunteer work in ways that reflected characteristics and qualities

of paid work while also framing their activities as demonstrative of 'active citizenship.'

In contrast, the women in my study did not link their community activities with the

end goal of obtaining work for themselves. Their experiences of building community were

closer to those found in Neis and William's (1996) study of fishing communities in

Newfoundland:

> Women's contributions have also been important to the construction of caring
> and effective fishing communities. Through caring for children, the disabled
> and the elderly, and through their involvement in community organizations,
> women voluntarily provided many services essential to survival in rural areas
> with limited public services. Women provided moral and material support for
> the fishery, their communities' reasons for being. The fishery has given
> women some economic independence, as well as sense of belonging, identity
> and self-respect. They have been referred to as the "binding force" of fishery
> communities and the "ground crew" of fishing enterprises.

This chapter begins with an examination of various informal processes that create the

possibilities of resistance for Indigenous women that include information networks and other

strategies to meet the needs of Indigenous women workers. Following this discussion, I

consider the role of formal volunteer work in Indigenous urban local communities in

providing possibilities for the women to contribute to the material needs of fellow workers.

This chapter will then discuss the role of The Dignity Campaign, organized by the union in

response to unfair EI restrictions, and examine how the campaign was mobilized by workers as an opportunity to construct their work as worthy of EI coverage.

Informal Networks, Strategies, And Everyday Resilience

Informal support, such as information networks among the study participants, challenges neoliberal ideals of individualization. Sharing information about work at the cannery, job openings during the off-season and/or work-training programs was a matter of necessity for the women, and such practices strengthened their connections with each other and tied them to the local community. Information sharing enabled Indigenous women to be more knowledgeable about local services and employment opportunities. For example, Sandra discussed how she used her second job, which required her to interact daily with the public, to help fellow workers. In this work she had learned about training programs from clients and had passed this information along to other women whom she knew would benefit.

> Sandra: If I really need it [access to training programs] then I'll go but a lot of the time I don't really need it. Like I kind of let somebody have the opportunity. Rather than take it from them, I'd rather be – because I mean I'm not ever worried about getting through the year.
>
> That's one of the reasons that I seem really resourceful when I come here it's because I'm always told. And even now, like when I'm out and about or something, somebody will say "Hey, did you hear?" And I'm like, Ok if I qualify for it, I'll go for it. If I don't, then I kind of just – if I know somebody in need, then I'll tell them, "Hey, yeah. You should hear this. Go see."

Many of the women showed a lot of empathy towards fellow workers and demonstrated a desire to help others. This attitude is exhibited in Diane's discussion about wanting to pass along her hours to fellow workers after she reached the number of hours

needed to qualify for Employment Insurance, and the resistance to this by OceanSide

management.

> Diane: But I think that the hours would be a really good one. Be able to – if you've reached it, why can't it be that you can bow out and nothing will happen if you say, "Oh, pass it on to the next person who needs the hours?" but if you did that UI would get onto your ass so you can't. But it would be really nice if you could say, "I've maxed my – I'm doing fine. Pass it on to the next person, you know?" I've tried that, and they yelled at me. They said to me, "You have to go to work. You're here to work."

The hostility Diane received to her suggestion of passing work hours onto a fellow worker

who needs them did not discourage her from critically analyzing how the system of work and

EI regulations systematically upholds precarious circumstances for vulnerable workers. The

desire to be part of the community of women working at OceanSide, and wanting to help

others, demonstrates resistances to neoliberal tactics of individualizing workers and

alienating them from each other.

Participants discussed a variety of collective strategies that allowed them to feel good

about their work rather than alienated. Strategies included personal affirmations of being

capable of getting by and taking pride in the work done. Janis, for example, talks about

being aware during her work in the summer that the fall and winter were going to be

financially difficult:

> Janis: Just remembering the... keep in mind that it's just a short-term thing. So I could make sure while I'm working there to put aside money so I'll have some to stretch over the rest of the winter, or whatever. For the hours and the work I don't mind; I actually like it, it's grown on me.

Lucy describes her everyday attitude making it possible for her to get through her demanding

day and deal with her many responsibilities:

> Lucy: You've got to come to work to relax. My kids are nine
> and seven and you've got to get up before 9am and cook, clean,
> cook, clean. You've got to come to work to relax.

Mabel also talks about enjoying work at the cannery because she gets to see her friends and

says:

> Mabel: We do a lot of venting, I guess, when we are in groups
> and we turn around and laugh about it later; so it's like a good
> psychological release too because you get that support you need.

Joni talked about taking a lot of pride in the work that she does at OceanSide and being able

to share this with her children.

> Joni: The biggest benefits…well the things I have seen was, like
> this year my three – was it who? Steve my son, James, my other
> boy, Charlie my nephew came down [to the OceanSide plant] to
> see and they seen working in a job usually reserved for men. I
> thought that was a benefit. They get to see, this is what happens –
> like if you want it you can do it. There are all guys in this plant
> and here I am, a woman, on this machine because I wanted it.
> Because I wanted to do it, I done it. That was one of the benefits.
> It was so awesome. It was like showing them, 'see you can do it,'
> it is not like it is brain surgery. It is not like you will never be
> able to. Anybody can and I am here. That is one of the good
> things that was beneficial to me is that there is something, there's
> something. It may not be much to look forward to but it is
> something because there isn't much honestly for them to look
> forward to in this town. You teach kids how to work. I will be
> teaching him how to work and once I have seen so many of our
> Native people they get pride once you teach them something.

While neoliberal policies focus on individualizing workers and creating conditions

where workers confront hardship alone (for example, Income Assistance and Food Bank

applications), such policies can also inspire collective resistances and create community. A

common response from participants in this study was their discussion of the importance of

the community of OceanSide workers. The participants talked about looking forward to

working salmon season because of the people they work with. Mabel said that during the

off-season she is busy at home with her children and their schedules and that cannery work

gets her out of the house and provides her with an opportunity to meet new people. Kate also

mentioned this:

> Kate: I think meeting a lot of the people that I work with and just
> getting to know them. And the hours and the pay is good while
> it's there, but then we also have the connection sometimes with
> the people outside of work too.

The community of workers at OceanSide provided these women with emotional support and

companionship where they could share stories and strategies based on their experiences.

The support and information networks created among the women are informal and

important in sustaining a sense of community for them as workers. Many of the women

identified wanting to help and support fellow workers as a driving force behind maintaining

contact with colleagues outside of OceanSide. Additionally, the women also talked about

their involvement in their Indigenous urban local societies as a way of mutually supporting

each other.

INDIGENOUS URBAN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Prince Rupert is a location central to various First Nations (Tsimpshian, Nisga'a,

Haida, and Gitxsan) and each of these Nations has formal local organizations that provide

support to their members. Indigenous urban local communities are an important resource for

many Indigenous women cannery workers. These organizations are important for two

reasons. First, they facilitate events where Indigenous community members connect with

people from their home communities. These events allow space for locals to practice their

culture (through traditional dance groups, providing Indigenous language classes, and

traditional feasts) and sustain a sense of community in Prince Rupert. Urban local

organizations also host meetings to keep members informed about the activities of their

particular First Nations government.   Second, these communities provide formal services to their members that help to off-set some of the costs of raising families in an urban environment. For instance, the Indigenous urban locals organize and provide community dinners, sponsor family swims and ice skating times, co-ordinate activities for elders, distribute stipends to cover some of the costs of school supplies, offer vouchers for children's winter coats and boots, and organize social events during holidays. Many Indigenous women cannery workers actively participate in these communities.

In my conversation with Sandra she mentioned the volunteer work she does with her First Nations local community. The budget for some of the services such a community offers is generated from the volunteer work of members (mainly women) through fundraisers like bake sales, craft fairs, and family game nights. The amount of work invested in these communities by Indigenous women is impressive and, for many low-income earners, also necessary. The services provided and facilitated by Indigenous urban locals fill a resource gap that is not met by provincial and federal social programs (as discussed in chapters 4 and 5). Fuller, Kershaw, and Pulkingham (2008) found that the limited supports provided by social safety net programs means that many rely on a range of community services to survive. These programs provide opportunities for Indigenous women to contribute to community building and present possibilities for Indigenous women to support and help out other families in their community. The women's volunteer activities result also in their families benefiting from the services provided by the urban local communities but this was not identified as the main reason for their involvement. For instance, Sandra expressed empathy for those in her community who were having a tough time financially and who

needed services provided by the urban local, and she said she was involved because she valued being an active part of her community.

Retaining a sense of community was important for the Indigenous women cannery workers engaged in formal and informal networks. These networks provided women with opportunities to discuss challenging work and family situations and to organize ways to collectively address them. This is exemplified in the coordination of the Dignity Campaign by cannery workers that I discuss in the next section.

COLLECTIVE ORGANIZING: THE DIGNITY CAMPAIGN

On October 5, 2006, UFAWU-UNIFOR workers travelled to the British Columbia Legislature in Victoria and made an (unexpected) appearance during the budget committee proceedings. They brought the meeting to a standstill as each worker entered the room shaking pennies in empty salmon cans with the purpose of calling attention to the unfairness of the Employment Insurance policy and to the limited funds they would live on during the off-season months. One after another, workers stood in front of the committee and introduced themselves, explained the years they had worked at the Canadian Fish plant and talked about the small number of work hours available to them that summer (Ritchie, 2006). These workers called on the committee to pressure the federal government to respond to this issue.

The summer of 2006 was a particularly hard summer for workers at OceanSide as failing salmon and herring stocks significantly reduced the number of hours for workers. Those who had worked at the plant for over 30 years and who had high seniority only worked 300 hours that summer leaving them short 190 hours from qualifying for EI (Ritchie,

2006). Even long term Indigenous women cannery workers were not able to qualify for EI and were forced onto Income Assistance. The urgency in addressing the unfairness of the Employment Insurance Program for Indigenous women cannery workers came at a time when union organizers were active across Canada.

On February 15th, 2005, the Federal Parliament's Sub-Committee on Employment Insurance Funds tabled a report called "Restoring Financial Governance and Accessibility in the Employment Insurance Program." This report included several recommendations aimed at making the EI system fairer. These recommendations included halting the government practice of collecting more money in insurance benefits than it expended (in 2006, for instance the federal government accumulated a surplus 48 billion dollars from workers paying into EI but not benefiting from the program). The report also called for a standard amount of 360 insurable employment hours to qualify for EI claims.

UFAWU-UNIFOR launched the "Dignity Campaign" in response to Employment Insurance regulations that increased the amount of hours needed to qualify for EI. This campaign included petitions, lobbying and local gatherings to pressure government to act on the EI reform. The union mobilized Canadian Fish workers, local teachers, the Mayor of Prince Rupert and the Member of Parliament for the Skeena region.

The Dignity Campaign materials reveal the struggles of workers to change the language employed in 'active citizenship' discourse that characterize them as undeserving of access to EI. For instance, these workers demonstrated through their campaign material that their work fits within the characteristics of strong labour market attachment and argued that they are therefore worthy of access to EI services. In material they distributed to local,

provincial and federal politicians, they introduced themselves and the work they did as

follows:

Who we are:

We are fish processing plant workers.

We have invested our lives in the fish plants. We are
professional industry workers.

Over 25% of us exceed 25 years of seniority with one employer

More than 50% have greater than 15 years of seniority with 1
employer

Most of us used to work 6 months per year; 20% used to work
year round

Now most of us work 2 months per year, 5% work year round.

(UFAWU-UNIFOR, 2006)

This campaign material provided an opportunity for workers to claim recognition and

respect while also constructing themselves as workers with long-tenure with one employer.

Additionally by emphasizing their years of work at Canadian Fish they constructed

themselves as long-term workers, and also called attention to their work as skilled

"professional" labour.

The Dignity Campaign also illuminated critical information about the local context

that has constrained their ability to attain full-time and full-year work. This information is

vital to understanding the structural barriers within the local context of Prince Rupert that

make it nearly impossible for Indigenous women cannery workers to achieve financial

security based solely on work at OceanSide. This campaign identified the following issues

that they wanted addressed:

More Work – north coast industry workers need assistance to
ensure that north coast fish is fully processed on the north coast.

Community involvement through licensing or allocation
provisions to protect (or lease) the number of local fishing
enterprises

Lower qualifying conditions for Employment Insurance and
Skills/Training subsidies

Increase welfare rates and accessibility rules

(UFAWU-UNIFOR, 2006)

CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates that while Indigenous women find it incredibly challenging

to achieve financial security in Prince Rupert this struggle has not robbed them of agency and

resiliency. Indigenous women demonstrate this through their strategies for making a living

for themselves, their families and their communities, through their community work and in

their organization of The Dignity Campaign, which allow them to carve out possibilities of

resistance.

The active participation of Indigenous women in the informal and formal communities

discussed in this chapter are acts of resistance to neoliberal restructuring which seeks to

individualize systemic inequalities while casting Indigenous women workers who are unable

to qualify for EI as passive and, therefore, unworthy citizens. By engaging in and prioritizing

community involvement Indigenous women are rejecting neoliberal notions of individualized

responsibility and reaffirming our collective responsibility to each other. Rather than

internalizing neoliberal discourses of unworthiness these women have flipped the

conversation around and pointed to flaws within social policies that have incorrectly defined

these workers as having weak labour market attachment. By highlighting their long-term

work with one employer, Indigenous women cannery workers have argued that, despite

working seasonally, their work reflects similar qualities to full-time, full-year workers who are categorized as infrequent EI claimants.

Through engaging in formal and informal community building, Indigenous women cannery workers claim spaces of resistance and create opportunities to shape their sense of social belonging that rejects notions of individualism and unworthiness embedded in neoliberal social policies.

In this dissertation I examined how colonialism, racism, sexism and class exploitation in the context of changes in global capitalism, interact to shape the lives of these women. In particular I show how government policies undermine the women's capacities to support themselves, their families and their communities. The findings of this study contribute to sociological understandings of the intersections of Indigenous women, work, and fisheries. Whereas previous research on Indigenous cannery workers has focused on their historical participation in the fishing industry, this dissertation examined their present day experiences of part-time, seasonal, and on-call work at OceanSide. This dissertation examined the standpoint of Indigenous women cannery workers to explore the complex structural forces that keep Indigenous women in precarious work at OceanSide. The findings reveal that Indigenous women experience systemic barriers and discrimination that impede their chances of securing stable employment.

In this chapter I address my research questions and explain my findings. I then discuss how neoliberal policies have shaped the income security of Indigenous women cannery workers. I then outline the limitations of the study and discuss possible directions for future research.

RETURNING TO MY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation addresses four research questions outlined in chapter one. Below I summarize my key findings in relation to each of these research questions.

Question 1) What are the major institutions that shape cannery work? The experiences of Indigenous women cannery workers need to be understood in relation to

global, national and local institutions. These include a globally integrated fisheries industry,

Canadian fisheries management policy, the organizational structure of the Canadian Fishing

Company OceanSide, and Employment Insurance and Social Assistance policies in Canada.

Collectively, these institutions have impacted the local economy, employment options, and

income stability of Indigenous women cannery workers in Prince Rupert.

Shifts in the global economy, for instance, have impacted the job security of

Indigenous women cannery workers with the emergence of international fish farming.

Historically, salmon processing was geographically tied to where fish were located and this

provided job security to Indigenous women cannery workers. Farmed salmon now threatens

their livelihood with farmed salmon produced in countries such as Norway, Chile, the United

Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Fish farms introduced farmed salmon into the

global market as a cheaper alternative to wild BC salmon. Farmed salmon is harvested year

round in comparison with wild salmon, which is only harvested between June and September

and on a yearly basis. The increased availability of farmed salmon and lower prices has

contributed to the diminishing value of wild salmon prices. Additionally, farmed salmon has

been linked to diseases in wild salmon as well as to the depletion of wild salmon stocks in

BC. The decreased availability of wild salmon for commercial processing translates into

fewer work hours, shorter salmon seasons, and decreased income for Indigenous women

cannery workers.

The federal government responded to concerns about dwindling wild salmon stocks

through restructuring fisheries management policy in BC and implementing the Pacific

Salmon Revitalization Strategy, also known as the Mifflin Plan. The Mifflin Plan's main goal

was to conserve wild salmon stocks through buying back fishing licenses, and imposing new

restrictions on fishing licenses according to individual species and fishing area. By 2003, the price of salmon licenses for gillnet boats rose to $82,767, double the pre-Mifflin Plan price of salmon licenses (Ecotrust, 2004). These changes have resulted in the reduction of the fishing fleet by 50 percent (Donkersloot, 2006). The restructuring of fishing management through the Mifflin Plan has had uneven impacts. For instance, fishers from urban areas were in better social and economic positions to buy multiple licenses and retain their fishing professions compared to those from rural and on-reserve communities. Many Indigenous men in Prince Rupert were driven out of the fishery. Indigenous women cannery workers whose partners were displaced in the fishing industry took on greater financial responsibility to provide for their families with their work at OceanSide, but their work hours were also diminishing with the declining wild salmon stocks.

The way OceanSide is organized significantly structures the experiences of precarious work for Indigenous women cannery workers. For Indigenous women, work at OceanSide is only available on a seasonal and on-call basis and the work is dependent on available fish stocks for commercial processing. This results in unpredictable work schedules as well as financial uncertainty for workers since it is difficult to predict how much income will be earned over the fishing season. Since work at OceanSide is only available on a seasonal and on-call basis many Indigenous women cannery workers rely on social assistance and other services to make ends meet during the off-season.

Employment Insurance policy also shapes salmon cannery work. Requirements to qualify for EI do not reflect the local unemployment rate of Prince Rupert. Prince Rupert is located in EI region 55, which includes the booming oil and gas economy of Fort St. John and the forestry economy of Prince George. These strong economies have driven down the

overall unemployment of region 55, which has impacted the workers in higher unemployment towns like Prince Rupert. As a consequence, in 2011 Indigenous women cannery workers had to work 490 hours (an impossible number of hours for most cannery workers to attain) to qualify for EI benefits. Those designated as 'new entrants' required an even more unattainable 920 hours of work to qualify. This local context is not taken into consideration when determining the eligibility of cannery workers for EI benefits. Instead, Indigenous women cannery workers are encouraged to understand their circumstances as individualized experiences that they are responsible for addressing. Very few Indigenous women cannery workers had any hope of qualifying for EI benefits even when they took special measures at work to maximize their hours of work. For instance, some workers chose to work night shift because this shift held the possibility of over-time hours, and they could maximize the number of hours they worked by banking their overtime hours.

Question 2) How do these forces interact with gender, racialization and Indigeneity to produce experiences of precarious labour for Indigenous women cannery workers? The institutions discussed above interact with existing relations of gender, racialization, and Indigeneity in ways that further entrench experiences of systemic poverty for Indigenous women cannery workers. For instance, the impact of fish farms on dwindling salmon stocks and lower prices for wild salmon have translated into less work for Indigenous women at OceanSide. Indigenous women cannery workers are expected to absorb, through their work time and on-call time, the fluctuations in the supply of fish as well as the variations in the global market demand for canned wild salmon.

Not only women, whole families were affected. The higher price of fishing licenses under the Mifflin Plan heavily impacted Indigenous fishers who could no longer afford to

purchase licenses under the new fishing regime. Indigenous fishers have limited job options available to them in Prince Rupert, and lower incomes, earning 30 percent less than the Canadian average wage (Wilson and Macdonald, 2010). Additionally, Indigenous fishers were at a disadvantage compared to non-Indigenous fishers living in urban settings. Non-Indigenous fishers located in urban settings were able to mortgage their homes and purchase multiple fishing licenses; this was not an option for Indigenous fishers in rural areas whose homes were lesser in value or for those who live on-reserves and own their homes but not the land their homes are located on, or for those who do not own homes. What is not recognized is the historical context of colonial legacies that displaced Indigenous communities from fishing resources, beginning with the 1888 Canadian Fisheries Act. The purpose of this Act was the restriction of Indigenous rights of access to fisheries resources while making the fishing industry largely a white man's industry. Still, many Indigenous men fished on boats owned by the canneries, while Indigenous women were drawn into seasonal cannery processing. By the 1960s and 70s some Indigenous men had their own boats and fishing licenses. However, the Mifflin Plan further displaced Indigenous fishers from the fishing industry and made it nearly impossible for rural and on-reserve fishers to purchase the multiple licenses now needed to make a living.

Racialized and gendered hierarchies remain in place in the Oceanside plant. Most workers at OceanSide are both Indigenous and women, and are relegated to working in menial jobs in the cannery, while the Assistant Manager and Manager of OceanSide are non-Indigenous and white. Gendered hierarchies continue to characterize the working environment. Positions that are full-time and full-year are reserved for those with trades certification and include electricians, millwrights, and mechanics. These positions are male-

dominated and occupied by Indigenous men. Indigenous women work seasonally in the cannery and they perform tasks that are considered women's work. Indigenous women workers' tasks include washing and cleaning salmon, filleting salmon, filling cans, stacking lids for cans, and quality control. Male workers, on the other hand, maintain the production lines, control the speed of the production lines, repair the machines, and unload fish from commercial boats. Indigenous women are only needed to work at the cannery when there is salmon available for processing, whereas the work that men perform at OceanSide is also needed between periods of salmon processing. These gendered differences in work result in more work hours for men and the increased probability that they will qualify for EI benefits.

Restructured Employment Insurance policy reproduces racialized and gendered structures within the labour market of Prince Rupert with negative consequences for Indigenous women. In my conversations with Indigenous women cannery workers they talked about how difficult it was to find work outside of OceanSide and how their job options were limited. Indigenous women face multiple barriers and discrimination within the labour market impacting their ability to secure good jobs. Colonial legacies continue to inform the work accessible to Indigenous women in Prince Rupert. Indigenous women are often understood by employers in Prince Rupert as only suitable for work in jobs that, similar to the cannery, are part-time and low paying. For many Indigenous women, cannery work was the only source of paid income they found throughout the year. Limited job options impair their ability to qualify for EI benefits by making it very hard to accumulate more work hours outside the cannery.

EI policy continues to cater to those who work in standard employment relationships while punishing those who occupy the margins of the labour market. Indigenous women

face many structural barriers to the full-time, full-year work that EI valorizes. EI policy upholds existing gendered and racialized barriers by rewarding those (typically white men) who are able to secure full-time and full-year work and disciplining more precarious workers who have been pushed to the margins of the labour market.

Question 3) What impact do these experiences have on everyday life? The precariousness of salmon cannery work impacts the everyday experiences of Indigenous women cannery workers on several levels. Maintaining a comfortable work-life balance was challenging for Indigenous women cannery workers because of their on-call schedules. This placed strain on their relationships with family and friends and made it difficult to schedule activities and time away from home. Most women I talked with mentioned always being prepared for work with a packed lunch ready and their work uniform and boots kept by the door.

During salmon season, Indigenous women rely on their support networks, including family members and friends, to help out with childcare arrangements. The women talked about how challenging it is to secure childcare because they are on-call for work from June to September which limits those who are able to support them. One solution to childcare was shift parenting where one parent worked days while the other worked nights. While this allowed Indigenous women to save money on childcare costs it was also difficult because it meant they were not able to spend time with partners.

Most Indigenous women salmon cannery workers I talked with are not able to qualify for EI or find work during the off-season and, as a consequence, have to apply for Social Assistance. For these women, Social Assistance choreographs their lives in the demands placed them. This is displayed both in the types of training offered to workers on Social

Assistance as well as in the amount of assistance received. Social Assistance demands that people accessing their services also receive training to enhance their employability and readiness for the job market. The women I talked with argued that the types of training they received were largely skills needed to work in the low-paid service sector. The training offered did not contribute to lifting them out of poverty; instead it contributed to maintaining their positions of precariousness within the labour market.

The money received from Social Assistance does not cover basic necessities. For example, a family of 4 with one employable parent receives $1,800 on a monthly basis. Many Indigenous workers have had to turn to resources in the Third Sector (such as the Food Bank or other charitable organizations) because Social Assistance failed to meet their basic needs, leaving them mired in poverty.

Question 4) What are the survival strategies employed by Indigenous women cannery workers engaged in precarious work? Indigenous women employ several creative survival strategies to address the needs of their families and communities. Indigenous women create networks to support themselves and each other. On an individual level, Indigenous women talked about sharing resources with each other. For example, they went grocery shopping with family and friends when stories offered case lots sales to help them meet the food security needs of their children and families. Others shared housing accommodation with other adults and children to get by.

Indigenous women also talked about the importance of creating and maintaining a sense of community. Informal networks created mutual support to share information about training services, community services, and family activities in the community. Many were involved with local First Nation groups, like the Prince Rupert Nisga'a Local, which allowed

them opportunities to contribute to the Indigenous community through volunteering their time. For Indigenous women cannery workers, these forms of community-building were also important acts of resistance to neoliberal ideologies that seek to individualize experiences of, and responsibility for, precarious work.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN, PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT, AND NEOLIBERAL SOCIAL POLICY

This dissertation has demonstrated the importance of understanding the impacts of neoliberalism on the experiences of Indigenous women cannery workers. In conversations with Indigenous women it was clear that changes to EI and Income Assistance qualifications and benefits have significantly affected the material realities of Indigenous women cannery workers at OceanSide. These changes reflect neoliberal ideologies and practices of fiscal restraint and the emphasis on individual responsibility for personal circumstances. It is clear that the EI program does not reflect the current realities of the labour market which has shifted from full-time, full-year work to precarious work that is part-time, seasonal, and temporary. Although for many marginalized workers, like Indigenous women cannery workers, engagement in precarious work is not a new experience, restructuring social programs has increased precarity. For instance, EI rewards workers engaged in standard employment relationships with year round and full-time work while excluding marginalized and vulnerable workers, including women and racialized workers, who have historically been funneled into part-time and casual forms of work. Changes to EI policy have made it increasingly difficult for Indigenous women to qualify for benefits. For most of the women who participated in this study, the work hours required to qualify for EI are not available to

them in seasonal work or even when their work hours at the cannery are combined with jobs they may find during the off-season.

Most Indigenous women cannery workers that I talked with must contend with disappointments resulting from structural barriers within the labour market that also prevent them from qualifying for EI benefits. In my conversations with Indigenous women cannery workers they expressed eagerness to work but they find that they have limited options outside of OceanSide. Indigenous women talked about experiences of racism and exclusion when applying for jobs outside of the salmon cannery. When Indigenous women did find jobs they talked about feeling passed over for promotions that would give them opportunities for more work hours, higher pay, or full-time work. When Indigenous women described the types of work they were able to secure during the off-season this work was generally characterized by temporary and part-time work in the service industry with low pay and without benefits.

Additionally, neoliberal restructuring of Employment Insurance and Social Assistance programs have introduced additional obstacles, through the discourse of active citizenship, into the ability of Indigenous women workers to attain a stable income. Neoliberal ideals of individual responsibility for care and the push towards active citizenship ignore structural inequalities and colonial legacies experienced by Indigenous women that limit their job prospects. Neoliberal individualization ignores the fact that there are few good full-time and full-year jobs that exist in Prince Rupert, yet EI and IA programs presume that workers can and will find such jobs. The combined restructuring of welfare state social programs (EI and IA) and economic programs (such as the Mifflin Plan to buy back fishing boat licenses, and the removal of local milling requirements in the forestry sector discussed in chapter 1)

contributes to the growing precarity of low-waged Indigenous women workers in Prince
Rupert.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

   While this study contributes to literature on Indigenous workers there are limitations
that are worth noting. First, in focussing specifically on Indigenous women this study does
not address the experiences of other racialized women employed by the OceanSide Plant.
While Indigenous women comprise a significant proportion (75%) of workers at OceanSide,
15% of employees are first generation immigrant women including South Asian, Italian and
Portuguese workers. These women are long-term employees at OceanSide, having worked
for the plant for over 30 years. They have secure jobs within OceanSide because they are
high seniority workers within the plant but their experiences are beyond the scope of this
research.

   Second, the focus of this thesis is on Indigenous women and excludes the experiences
of Indigenous men working at OceanSide. Indigenous men comprise a small percentage of
those working at the cannery and include both year-round and seasonal workers. While
Indigenous men experience similar structural inequalities based on their Aboriginality within
the legacy of colonialism, they have historically experienced privileged employment
positions within fish processing plants (Muszynsky, 1996; Stainsby, 1994). The gendered
structure of fish processing has meant that male employees enjoyed longer hours than
Indigenous women. Where women were hired to do the hands-on work of processing
salmon, men were called upon to take care of the mechanical and maintenance aspects of the
plant which required longer hours and more full-time work.

Having family members who work at OceanSide also complicated the process of collecting data. My personal connection to the cannery site allowed me to have some insights into the operation of OceanSide and provided me with an understanding of how on-call, seasonal work structures the daily lives of workers. This personal connection to OceanSide affected who talked with me at the cannery and the experiences they shared during the interview process. My connections to OceanSide may have limited the experiences Indigenous women discussed with me.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In their book, *Coasts Under Stress: Restructuring and Social-Ecological Health*, which examines eastern and western coastal communities experiencing economic decline, Ommer and team (2007: 256) states that, "while employment has always been precarious in [fishing] communities, the dimensions of precariousness have changed." Neoliberal restructuring of social and economic programs have made it increasingly difficult for workers to access income security programs. There are fewer good jobs available and most work that Indigenous women cannery workers access is precarious and part-time. The neoliberal context of decreased governmental support for citizens, along with the discourse of responsibilization, means that workers are encouraged to understand their experiences of income insecurity as a private issue rather than a systemic problem. Future research may consider Indigenous women's responses by either migrating out of Prince Rupert or leaving the cannery.

These options emerged from my conversation with Joy Thorkelson (UFAWU representative), who talked about the experiences of some Indigenous cannery workers who

have moved away from Prince Rupert to pursue higher education in Vancouver or take jobs

in the booming economies of Alberta or Northeastern BC with the hope that this move would

result in an economically stable life for themselves and their families. Lack of other

employment opportunities, few existing full-time positions, low-wages, and poverty are

strong motivators for some workers to relocate from Prince Rupert to other urban centres.

Unfortunately, many of these workers find migration from a small town to a large urban city

challenging. According to Joy, many workers found it difficult to find work in another city

and the jobs that workers found paid less than what cannery workers expected. Joy recalled

hearing about the challenges of moving to pursue work in urban centres where the cost of

living is high compared to the cost of living in Prince Rupert. The migration from rural to

urban comes with unanticipated costs such as the higher costs of rent and public transit.

Moving away from Prince Rupert also means leaving an established and important support

network and finding or creating new networks may be difficult. Leaving Prince Rupert has

allowed some cannery workers to escape the local realities of an economy based on natural

resources but out-migration to larger urban centres does not allow Indigenous women

cannery workers to escape the pervasive dimensions of the Canadian labour market that

remains segmented along gendered and racialized lines. Work in full-time, permanent

positions tends to be concentrated in jobs requiring a higher level of education and training

which excludes many workers with only high school education. Also there is already a large

pool of workers in urban centres and high competition for jobs. The combination of these

factors contributes to difficulties Indigenous cannery workers have in securing good jobs in

larger urban centres, and as a result many soon return home to Prince Rupert. Joy states:

> Most of our people have come back or they moved to find jobs in
> Vancouver. And it's just heartbreaking to us when people quit at

the end of the season, and they almost all of them come in here
and tell us they quit. And our heart breaks because we know
they are going to go to Vancouver or to Alberta, they are going to
work all winter and then they are going to hear that first salmon
swish in the Skeena and they are going to want to come back and
meanwhile they had no reason to quit, there wasn't any work for
them all winter, right. Like there was absolutely no reason to
quit and they come back and they are at the bottom of the
seniority list instead of the top, which of course means less work,
it's a terrible situation. So we try if anyone comes in here to say
don't, but what happens is people get in their mind that they are
going to start a new life. I'm going to start a new life and they
want a total break with the old life, so they quit.

Future research on what happens to women who leave Prince Rupert, and how many return,

will contribute to a broader understanding of migration as an option to gain greater income

security.

CONCLUSION

Reversing the growing income insecurity for Indigenous women cannery workers

requires policies that favour social and economic security and protection of citizens. This

would need a commitment to developing a social safety net that provides a living income

when workers are unable to find enough work to sustain them and their families. Other

changes in the local economy of Prince Rupert that would also greatly enhance the income

security of Indigenous workers include a commitment to processing resources (fish and

lumber) locally rather than shipping raw materials out of the country.

Over the last few decades there has been a significant shift towards precarious forms

of work, diminished entitlements, and lower wages. In December 2013, the Canadian

Labour Congress (2013, para 6) stated that "in the past 12 months, part-time work has made

up a disproportionate percentage of job growth, representing nearly 40% of new jobs and

19% of the total workforce." Clearly this shift affects many Canadians. The rise of

precarious employment translates to low wages, few benefits, and low employment security for workers. Important to note is that this trend towards a labour market characterized by non-standard forms of work is occurring at the same time that the federal and provincial governments have made it increasingly difficult to qualify for Employment Insurance while also reducing Income Assistance benefits. This has resulted in the further marginalization of women and racialized workers who face systemic barriers within the labour market. As this study of cannery workers in Prince Rupert illustrates colonial legacies, ongoing gendered inequalities in the Canadian labour market, and neoliberal policies combine to disproportionately relegate these Indigenous women workers to increasingly precarious employment resulting in income insecurity for themselves and their families.

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Life on the line:
A contemporary ethnography of Indigenous women cannery workers
Interview Guide

During this interview we will be discussing your experiences with cannery work. Please know that you are welcome to stop the interview at any time or you may choose to let me know if there are questions that you do not want to answer.

I. Demographics

I would like to start by asking some questions about your background.

What age were you when you started in the cannery? How many years have you worked in the cannery? What age are you now?
Where in prince Rupert do you live? Street/major school/landmark. What kind of transportation do you use to get to & from work?
Who do you share your home with? For example, a parent or grandparent? Spouse? Children?
What are the ages of your children?
Are you a major income contributor to your family? If you have a spouse, are they also employed and where? --- how many people would you say rely on your income?
6 If you have moved to Prince Rupert from elsewhere, what are the reasons that influenced your move? If you have always lived in Prince Rupert, what are the reasons that keep you here?
5. What nation are you from?
6. What is your current job/position in the cannery? Would you describe yourself as having high seniority?
7. Before the salmon season starts, what ways do you make yourself available/ or prepare for work for the next season? For example, do you set up a sitter for the summer? Is there new uniforms you have to get? Do you change your daily routines for work and how?

II. Cannery Workers
Salmon-season

I imagine that during the salmon season that work provides a certain kind of structure to your day depending on whether you work day or afternoon shift.

8. Can you describe what a typical work day is like from the time you wake to when you arrive home at the end of day.

9. Would you describe the work you do in the cannery as work that's typically done by women? Are there jobs in the cannery that you are interested in doing but haven't had a

chance to yet? Are there training opportunities for certain jobs in the cannery that you've thought about accessing? How easy is it to access these training opportunities?

10. How did you get into cannery work? How long have you been a cannery worker?

11.   How many hours do you work? How many weeks of work during the salmon season do you typically work? Does your schedule allow you to spend time with your family/kids?

12. Do you feel the income you make from the cannery provides an adequate amount for you and your family to live on for the year?

Off-Season
12. In what ways do you work to make financial ends meet?

13. What jobs do you see being available to you in prince Rupert?
Do you have other jobs besides cannery work during the months you are not working in the cannery? IF YES, PROBE FULLY: Can you tell me about the work you do.

What jobs do you seen other cannery workers doing during the year?

13. What income resources do you rely on during the months that the cannery is not in opperation? EI/assistance? What has been your experience accessing these services? Are there programs for cannery workers --- for example, job training? Have these been helpful to you?

14. What employable skills do you have or have gained from these programs?

Family
15. Are there programs available that you have used that help you to support your family during the year? Can you tell me about these programs?

16. If school aged children- does the school provide programs?

17. Do you sometimes have to juggle school schedules with EI/assistance programs?

Can you describe a typical day during the off season?

III. Canadian Fish OceanSide Cannery Management - Key Informant

12. Who owns the Canadian Fish OceanSide Plant? Where is the head-office located?

13. What months of the year does the canning department of the OceanSide Plant operate?

14. Which government departments and policies shape how the cannery is run and how?

15. Where is the salmon that is canned in Prince Rupert marketed to? Who is the major purchaser? In BC, Canada as well as internationally?

□6. Can you describe for me the routine that the typical worker proceeds through when they arrive for work?

17. How many salmon cannery workers do you employ?

IV. United Fisheries and Allied Workers Union - Key Informant

18. How many workers does UFAWU-CAW represent? How many of these workers are located at the OceanSide plant?

19. Can you tell me about the UFAWU-CAW collective agreement and describe some of the protections given to workers in this?

20. Can you describe the demographic characteristics according to gender, age and ethnicity at the OceanSide Plant?

21. How many of your members are Indigenous and what percentage are they of the workers you represent? What is UFAWU-CAW's relationship to the Indigenous cannery workforce?

22. What are the working conditions and experiences of cannery workers at this site?

23. How has cannery work at this location and in Prince Rupert generally shifted and changed over time?

V. Wrapping Up
The interview is nearly done. I have a few general questions left about your work.

24. What are the biggest challenges of cannery work?

25. What are the biggest benefits of doing this work?

26. Is there anything we haven't covered that you would like to mention about your experience of cannery work?

27. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for your time and help with this research.

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Letter of Initial Contact

Life on the Line: A Contemporary Ethnography of Indigenous Cannery Workers

Principal Investigator: Gillian Creese, Professor of Sociology,   ,
.

Co-investigator: Jeannie Morgan, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology,
.

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to request your consideration to participate in a study on the everyday experience of work at the Canadian Fish OceanSide Plant. I would really appreciate your willingness to take a few moments to read this letter before giving your response.

The purpose of this study is to develop an in-depth understanding of the everyday experiences of Indigenous women cannery workers and how they balance work and family. This study is being done in support of a doctoral dissertation on Indigenous women and work.

To be eligible to participate, you must: be working as a manager or representative of the Canadian Fish OceanSide Plant's canning department; and have knowledge of First Nations women cannery workers at this site.

The interview will take place in person by the co-investigator, Jeannie Morgan. The interview will be conducted at a time and location convenient to you and will last approximately 90 minutes. With your permission the interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed. The interview will consist of a series of oral questions on the topic described above. If necessary, the interviewer may need to conduct a brief 10 to 30 minute follow-up with you (this may be done in person or over the phone, depending on your availability) to clarify any issues arising from the transcription of your interview.

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Tapes and documents will be identified only by code number and will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Transcripts of the interviews, identified only with a code number, will be kept on the Co-investigator's computer and will be password-protected. Only the Principal Investigator and the Co-investigator will have access to the identities of study participants. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

There is minimal risk to you in participating in this study. Some questions may raise difficult or new issues for you. If you do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions, you can simply tell the interviewer, and you do not have to answer.

The benefits of participating are that you will have an opportunity to share your knowledge and experiences of working for and with the Canadian Fish OceanSide's canning department and of First Nations women cannery workers. Additionally, you may also find the questions interesting and enjoy talking about them.

Please contact Jeannie Morgan by phone or email to request additional information and/or to arrange to participate in the research.

Your time and interest in this study is much appreciated.

Respectfully,

Jeannie Morgan
PhD Candidate

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Consent Form

Interview Study:
Life on the Line: A Contemporary Ethnography of Indigenous Cannery Workers

Principal Investigator: Gillian Creese, Professor of Sociology,
.

Co-investigator: Jeannie Morgan, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology,
.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of First Nations women and their work in the Canadian Fish OceanSide Plant. This study is being done in support of a doctoral dissertation on Indigenous women and work. It will focus on women's experiences of work, and how women who work at the OceanSide Plant balance work and family. You are being asked to participate because you have previously worked with or have knowledge of the Canadian Fish OceanSide Plant and with cannery worker. The study results from this dissertation research will be analyzed and published.

Study Procedures: The study will be conducted through interviews and review of documents. The interview will take about 60 minutes. It will involve a conversation between you and the interviewer about your background knowledge and experiences of working with the Canadian Fish Ocean Side Plant and with First Nations women cannery workers. The interview will be audio-taped to record the details accurately. The interviewer or the Principal Investigator will be happy to answer any questions you have about the procedures.

The interviewer may want to conduct additional follow-up interviews in the future. Your participation in the initial interview and any follow-up interviews will be voluntary and confidential. At the end of the initial interview, you will have a chance to say if you are willing to be contacted again in the future. You can always decide later if you prefer not to take part in any follow-up interviews.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Tapes and documents will be identified only by code number and will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Transcripts of

the interviews, identified only with a code number, will be kept on the Co-investigator's computer and will be password-protected. Only the Principal Investigator and the Co-investigator will have access to the identities of study participants. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Risks/Benefits: Given that the interviews will focus on the everyday experiences of work, the interview may touch upon topics that hold strong emotional significance for the interviewees. If you do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions, you can simply tell the interviewer, and you do not have to answer.

The benefits of participating are that you will have an opportunity to share your knowledge and experience of working with First Nations women cannery workers at the Canadian Fish OceanSide Plant. You will also help a doctoral student in conducting research for use towards a degree. Additionally, you may also find the questions interesting and enjoy talking about them.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or would like further information about this study, you may contact Jeannie Morgan at (604) 876-5686 or

.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns or questions about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at (604) 822-8598 by email at RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

Consent: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also exercise the option of removing your interview from this research study at any time.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study and to have the interview recorded.

_____

Subject Signature   Date

_____

Printed name of the subject signing above

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Invitation to Participate

Life on the Line: A Contemporary Ethnography of Indigenous Cannery Workers

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of First Nations women and their work in the Canadian Fish OceanSide Plant. This study is being done in support of a doctoral dissertation on Indigenous women and work. It will focus on women's experiences of work, and how women who work at the OceanSide Plant's canning department balance work and family.

To be eligible to participate, you must: be a woman of aboriginal ancestry; be working in the Canadian Fish OceanSide Plant's canning department for a period of at least one year; be at least 19 years old or older and have at least one dependent; and be living off-reserve in Prince Rupert.

The interview will take place in person by the co-investigator, Jeannie Morgan. The interview will be conducted at a time and location convenient to you and will last approximately 90 minutes. With your permission the interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed. The interview will consist of a series of oral questions on the topic described above. If necessary, the interviewer may need to conduct a brief 10 to 30 minute follow-up with you (in person or over the phone, depending on your availability) to clarify any issues arising from the transcription of your interview.

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

There is minimal risk in participating in this study, however, given that the interviews will focus on the everyday experiences of work, the interview may touch upon topics that hold strong emotional significance for the interviewees. If you do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions, you can simply tell the interviewer, and you do not have to answer.

The benefits of participating are that you will have an opportunity to share your daily experience of work; the results of the study may help others better understand work in the OceanSide Plant and may help to improve existing work practices and policies. Additionally, you may also find the questions interesting and enjoy talking about them.

If you choose to participate, it would be entirely voluntary and you may decide to withdraw at anytime.

Participants in this research will receive a $30 honourarium.
Please contact Jeannie Morgan by phone or email to request additional information and/or to arrange to participate in the research.