

THE WESTERN CANADIAN DICTIONARY
AND
THE MAKING OF THE CANADIAN WEST

by

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Abstract

The Western Canadian Dictionary and Phrase-Book (WCD) was written in 1912 as a guide for British immigrants who were encountering a variety of English that was “more resistant to British linguistic norms than the conservative Anglophone heartland of Ontario” (Considine 2003: 252). Though the dictionary has been researched in terms of its lexicographical value, relatively little research has examined the historical and cultural reasons as to why a dictionary of western Canadian English was viable at the time it was written. This thesis examines the connections between the *WCD* and the Canadian Government’s pre-World War I immigration campaign. This includes connections between the writer of the dictionary, John Sandilands, and the Canadian Government through Sandilands position as a proofreader of pamphlets intended to advertise the West that were produced by the Department of the Interior. The thesis also examines how the dictionary participates in a network of literature produced at the time to reproduce a “Promised Land” (Francis 1989) narrative of the Canadian West which became “the dominant perception of the region during the formative years of agricultural settlement” (Francis & Kitzan 2007: IX). This network of literature includes stories by Nellie McClung and poetry by Robert J. C. Stead, who both employ Promised Land narratives in their work. Within these narratives a western Canadian dialect, marked by slang found in the *WCD*, becomes associated with a heightened morality of its speakers, and is used as a shorthand for values of hard work and honesty. Ultimately, it is argued that the dictionary reflects a dominant, settler, narrative of the West that was pushed by the Canadian Government to ‘sell’ the West.

Lay Summary

The Western Canadian Dictionary and Phrase-book was written in 1912 at the height of an immigration boom into the Canadian West. Though supposedly written to be helpful to newcomers to the Canadian West, the dictionary used tactics like those used by the Canadian Government to ‘sell’ the West to potential immigrants. This thesis explores the close connections between the *Western Canadian Dictionary* and the Canadian Government’s immigration campaign. This includes how government pamphlets and literature connected western Canadian slang found in the dictionary with a greater morality in the people who used the slang. It is argued that the Government’s immigration campaign ultimately made the publication of the dictionary possible in the years before World War I.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work.

A version of Chapter 2 was presented in May 2019 at the Dictionary Society of North America Conference 22 in Bloomington, Indiana. The presentation was titled “The Western Canadian Dictionary and the Making of the Canadian West.”

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List of Abbreviations

AmE – American English

BrE – British English

CanE – Canadian English

CPR – Canadian Pacific Railway

DCHP – A Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles

HBC – Hudson’s Bay Company

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

UAP – University of Alberta Press

WCD – The Western Canadian Dictionary and Phrase-Book

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On the eve of the 20th century, a single poem caused uproar in a dominion that had only recently begun to call itself “Canada.” The controversy centered around the title of the poem, “Our Lady of Snows,” which painted Canada as a barren land of ice and snow, an image that was seen as “an impediment to tourism and immigration” (Francis 1989: 110). This was especially offensive to western Canada, which was then sparsely populated, as the Dominion was particularly trying to attract immigrants to settle the land from Manitoba westward. *The Western Canadian Dictionary and Phrase-Book*, first published in 1912, neatly captures Canada’s response to the poem in one of its entries:

Lady of the Snows, a name bestowed upon Canada by Rudyard Kipling. **God’s Own Country** is what the patriotic Canadian more frequently calls it” (Sandilands 1912a). The *Western Canadian Dictionary and Phrase-Book* by John Sandilands was printed in Winnipeg, Manitoba at the height of immigration into the Canadian West, and was ostensibly written as a guide for British immigrants who were encountering a variety of English that was “more resistant to British linguistic norms than the conservative Anglophone heartland of Ontario” (Considine 2003: 252). The first edition advertised itself as “useful to the newcomer” who find in western Canada terms which “he could only fathom by much questioning and consequent betrayal of the fact that he had just blown in” (Sandilands 1912a). It is remarkable that Sandilands believed the language of the Canadian West to be so strange and so particular that other English speakers would need a dictionary to navigate it, even more so that he believed a dictionary dedicated solely to the English spoken in western Canada was a viable investment. The language found in this dictionary is bound up in the settling of the Canadian West, and

evidently reflects, if not reproduces, the Canadian Government's concern with creating an appealing narrative of the West to attract settlers.

The Western Canadian Dictionary and Phrase-Book (henceforth *WCD*) marks the beginning of Canadian English lexicography. Although the *WCD* does not live up to its own claim of being the "First Dictionary Ever Printed in Canada" (Sandilands 1913b: 1), as there had already been a tradition of French language lexicography (Considine 2003: 252), it was the first attempt to differentiate Canadian English from other varieties in book form. It appeared in two editions. The first edition contains 853 headwords and the second edition is almost double the size at 1530 words. Despite his wish to help newcomers navigate the vocabulary of the West, Sandilands' dictionary is often a light-hearted affair. The entry for *pigeon's milk*, for example, reads: "an imaginary fluid for which boy and simpletons are frequently sent on the 1st of April" (Sandilands 1912a). He also includes language that would have been considered offensive at the time, though often in abbreviated form and with euphemistic definitions (Gregg 1989: 155). Examples include *B.S.* meaning "bullshit" which Sandilands says is used to describe "a story as lies and nonsense" (Sandilands 1912a) and *knocked up* which "in Canada . . . [has] a meaning that precludes [its] use in the presence of females" (Sandilands 1912a). Though Sandilands was careful in his definitions, the *WCD* "created a mild sensation when it first appeared because it included several slang words which were not exactly proper" (N.B.Z. 1943: 6). Despite its occasional irreverence, the *WCD* offers a valuable reflection of the cultural moment of the boom years just before The Great War (Orrell 1977a: ii).

As the first stand-alone dictionary solely dedicated to a variety of English spoken in Canada, the *WCD* has been primarily of interest to lexicographers working with Canadian English (CanE). The *WCD* is prominently mentioned in surveys of Canadian Lexicography

(Görlach 1990, Gregg 1989 and 1993, Considine 2003, Dollinger 2020), however there has been relatively little analysis of the dictionary and from a lexicographic perspective it has been deemed to have little scholarly value (Görlach 1990: 1484, Gregg 1993: 27, Considine 2003: 253). The major shortcomings of the dictionary have been analyzed in terms of lexicographical conventions. Görlach (1990) discusses the questionable ‘Canadian’ status of many of the lexical items found in the dictionary, arguing that “very many of the entries turn out to be all-American – or must have been known ‘back home’” (1484). Considine (2003) contrasts the dictionary with contemporaneous English-language projects from South Africa, Australia, and India and concludes that “in the first years of the twentieth century, English-language lexicography was . . . practiced with less sophistication in Canada than in several other major dominions” (253). Another shortcoming noted by Gregg (1993) is the lack of usage labels in the dictionary, where slang terms are left “without any label restricting their use stylistically” (27) and, likewise, racist terms are “entered without any reference to their derogatory implications” (28).

The question of what counted as ‘Canadian,’ let alone what it meant to be western Canadian, was in flux in the relatively new Dominion in 1912. The idea of a Canadian West was actively being negotiated at the time of the *WCD*’s publication – Canada had recently completed the purchase of “Rupert’s Land” (sparsely populated land that included a great deal of what is now the Canadian West) from the Hudson’s Bay company in 1870, not without conflict with the Métis and Indigenous populations that had resided there for centuries (Thompson 1998: 42). The provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta had only joined Confederation in 1905, a mere seven years before the dictionary was printed.

For Sandilands, ‘Western Canadian’ meant anything “unknown in the Old-Country” (Sandilands 1912a) by which he means unknown in England. He used British English (BrE) as

his reference point. For example, a *bell-boy* Sandilands explains is “the youth who would be the page-boy in the Old-Country” (Sandilands 1912a). A word enters the *WCD* if it would not be recognized by people in Great Britain at the time. Given this criterion, Sandilands has no problem including Americanisms, even occasionally labelling them as such (see section 2.0), as they would have been foreign to BrE speakers.

Though certainly not a comprehensive dictionary the *WCD* contains “some very useful indications as to the state of the language at beginning of the century” (Gregg 1993: 27-28). Sandilands generally follows British spellings established by traditional dictionaries (Gregg 1989: 161), but he occasionally chooses spellings from Webster’s American English spelling reforms for headwords (*plow* and *check*, for example) [Gregg 1989: 161] and reluctantly notes how Canadians make use of *-ense/-ence* in words like *defense* as “through carelessness, the wrong spellings have got into the newspapers until they have become almost the custom” (Sandilands 1913a: 16). This blend of American and British spellings would, later in the century, characterize the mixed nature of CanE (Dollinger 2019: 14). Sandilands also provides examples of early Canadianisms that are “nowadays well established” including *acclamation*¹ and *deadhead*² (Gregg 1993: 28). The *WCD* acts as a source of 30 quotations for the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*). Considine (2003) notes the *WCD* provides the first citation for *B.S.* “as an abbreviation for *bullshit* meaning ‘nonsense’” and *make the grade* meaning “be successful” (253). It appears that the *OED* only drew quotations from the first edition of the dictionary and did not expand to the second edition, so the potential for further antedatings exists. In the

¹ “A candidate who is unanimously elected to office without the trouble of going to the poll is said to be elected by acclamation” (Sandilands 1913a: 3)

² “A person who occupies a theatre seat on free admission or who travels by train or boat on a free pass.” (Sandilands 1913a: 13)

Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles [DCHP] (Dollinger and Fee 2017), the *WCD* also provides quotations for several entries.

Besides the scholarly interest, there has been a consistent public interest in the *WCD*. John Orrell (1977a) in his introduction for the facsimile edition, conceives of the *WCD* in terms of its popular appeal more than for its practical use calling it “a celebration . . . and not a technical book” (ii). The public interest in the *WCD* appears to have begun at publication as one edition includes a number of reviews praising the dictionary for fulfilling a “long-felt want” (Sandilands 1912d). The fascination with the dictionary has continued through the 20th century and into the 21st as journalists rediscovered the dictionary³ every few decades and reproduced select entries from the *WCD* for the benefit of a reading public who could not access the print dictionary (Lepkin 1942: 5, N.B.Z. 1943: 6, Geller 1978: 16, McIntosh 1991: 55, McGregor 2005: A.2). One of the terms most commonly of interest in these newspapers is *drink* (noted by Lepkin 1942: 5, Geller 1978: 16, McIntosh 1991: 55) which consists of over 60 euphemisms for alcoholic drinks, including *grapple the rails* and *strip-me-naked* (Sandilands 1913a: 16). To Geller (1978) and Lepkin (1942) *Cost of Living* is particularly fascinating as it lists approximate prices for a variety of things in Winnipeg, Manitoba. For example, instead of purchasing the second edition of the *WCD* for 25 cents, one could apparently buy a pound of bacon (Sandilands 1913a: 13). Broadly, these articles show interest in what has changed and what has remained the same in the language of the Canadian West. A surprise to myself was the headword *the Peg*

³ This is not unlike the “Ground Hog Day Loop of Canadian English” discussed by Dollinger (2019) who remarks on the lack of recognition for Canadian English as journalists “rediscover” Canadian English every few years (221).

(Sandilands 1913a: 33), meaning ‘the city of Winnipeg’, which is a word absent in the *DCHP-2* but that I have used most of my life growing up in Manitoba.

A broader interest in Sandilands’ dictionary was renewed in 1977 with the publication of the University of Alberta Press’s (UAP) facsimile edition which allowed more people to access the difficult to find *WCD*. This re-publication was part of a larger publishing project at the UAP in response to the Symons Report of 1975 which sought to “remedy [the] glaring disregard” for Canadian Studies in Canadian Universities (Perrone 2013:12). Consequently, UAP aimed to publish material that was “of value to Canada, particularly western Canada” (Rothrock 1977: 2), reviving the second edition of the *WCD* which had been reportedly “virtually unobtainable for years” (ibid.). In addition to the Canadian dimension, the book was printed as part of UAP’s mandate to “meet long-felt needs” and re-publish books of “a wide appeal” (ibid.), which the *WCD* certainly met.

Despite its relevance to Canadian Studies, there has been virtually no research into the *WCD*’s place in Canadian Studies beyond CanE. While it is valuable evidence of certain features of CanE and lexis, it also an interesting book in its own right. Seen strictly through a lexicographic lens, the dictionary is overdue for a more thorough assessment in its historical context rather than holding it to current lexicographical standards. An important question missing from previous analysis of the dictionary is why the dictionary exists at all. Not only is the *WCD* the first attempt to represent Canadian English in dictionary format, it also preceded the next lexicographical attempt by 25 years when the *Winston Simplified* became the first general dictionary directed at a Canadian audience (Considine 2003: 254). The study of Canadian English did not have its start until 1940 (Dollinger 2019: 30) and the *WCD* preceded the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* (Avis et al. 1967) by 55 years. This

raises an important question: What made the publishing of a dictionary solely of western Canadian English viable at this time, without the precedent of another Canadian English dictionary?

This thesis aims to shed light on how an image of the Canadian West was consciously developed by the Canadian Government to attract immigrants and was supported by the enthusiasm of private individuals which contributed to a language of the Canadian West exemplified by the *WCD*. Chapter 2 is concerned with establishing the historical context of the dictionary to contextualize the *WCD*'s relationship to the Canadian Government's westward immigration campaign. The chapter provides the beginnings of a biography of John Sandilands and describes the print history of the dictionary, both of which show how the creation of the *WCD* was intertwined with the printing of immigration pamphlets. Chapter 3 is focused on the cultural context of the dictionary as it participates in a network of literary narratives of the Canadian West exemplified in the image of the "Promised Land" (Francis 1989) used by both the Government and independent writers. I will explore how the idea of a western Canadian dialect and slang was portrayed favourably in these literary narratives of the West. Generally, I will show how the language of the Canadian West was 'made' by the deliberate and concerted effort of both the Government and the public to celebrate the West, and how Sandilands' dictionary reflects the language that resulted from these efforts to create a positive image of the West that could be 'sold' to British immigrants.

Chapter 2: Making the Language of the West

Sandilands' dictionary is something of a peculiar document. With no precedent of earlier regional dictionaries, one has to look at the historical context to understand why a private citizen would undertake to write a dictionary for immigrants and why it might be popular enough to sell in multiple editions. Boberg (2010) notes that "the current form of Canadian English is closely bound up with the history of immigration" (55). In 1912, when the first edition of the *WCD* was printed, Canada was in the midst of an "unprecedented" immigration boom (Boberg 2010: 86) and, according to official records, pre-War immigration would peak in 1913, with over 400 000 arrivals most of whom would settle in Western Canada (ibid.). Ontario migrants "were crucial in establishing the basic character of the Canadian West as English-speaking and Protestant . . . and in transplanting Ontario speech westward" (ibid.: 88) but the language of the West received its own character from a "diverse mixture of native languages in addition to the blend of regional dialects of British and American English" (ibid.: 93).

Some of the "diverse mixture" of languages is evident in the *WCD*. Gregg (1989 and 1993) groups and lists terms found in the *WCD* including loan words from a variety of languages, as well as terms which were of particular cultural relevance to Canada. The *WCD* includes loan words from French (*portage*), as well as borrowings from Spanish (*broncho*) and German (*wander lust*): the latter two Gregg (1989) predicts came via the United States (159). America was a large source of immigrants into the West and played an important role in establishing western Canadian English (Boberg 2010: 104). As such, many American terms are included such as a large variety of nicknames for various American states and their people (*hoosier* = "an immigrant coming from Indiana, or a native of that State" (Sandilands 1912a))

and terms Sandilands explicitly identifies as American (*almighty dollar*). In addition to the loan words, the *WCD* contains culturally relevant terms related to, for example: fauna (*beaver*) [Gregg 1989: 162]; western Canadian history (*H.B.C.* and *Riel*); a variety of industries where immigrants might find work including forestry (*log jam*) [ibid.: 163] and mining (*pay streak*) [ibid.: 164]. Finally, the many railway terms signal the importance of the railway in the West (*all aboard!*, *baggage*, *caboose*, *depot*, *express*, *freight*, etc.). That which constitutes the language of western Canada in the *WCD*, beyond formal features that might identify the style of speech as Canadian, was connected to a particular cultural moment and the conversations which were taking place in the settler population of the West in pre-War Canada.

There are also many racist terms in the *WCD* (Gregg 1989: 156) that reflect a concern with “the hierarchy of racial groups” that justified imperial ambitions to bring “civilization” to different lands (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2016: 19). Sandilands carefully defines and explains perceived racial divisions found in this offensive language for his readers in, for example, his definition for *nigger*: “a negro. New-comers should note negroes and Indians are two very distinct and different races” (Sandilands 1913a: 31). The “racialization of the human subject and social order” that was used as justification for colonialism (Smith 2012: 64) has implications for both the immigrants coming to settle in what would be called ‘western Canada’ but was devastating to the lives of Indigenous peoples who, in order to accommodate settlers “were separated from their land (and source of their livelihood)” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2016: 14). It is important to note too that the rise of the English language threatened the survival of Indigenous languages (Boberg 2010: 55-56) and that this was done deliberately through the seizure and settlement of Indigenous peoples lands and continued through a variety of policies which aimed at assimilation (Truth and Reconciliation

Commission of Canada 2016: 106). The only term which is actually labelled as derogatory in the *WCD* is the word *siwash* (Gregg 1993: 28) which was defined in two distinct ways:

1. a native Indian.
2. a mean, contemptible, worthless, person; a term of address that is meant to give offence (Sandilands 1912a).

Evidently, the word *siwash* was considered derogatory but only when used to describe white people, revealing deeply ingrained beliefs connected with policies of colonization which are present in the *WCD*'s definitions and which are found today in a Canada grappling with the "ongoing process [of settler colonialism]" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2016: 15). In a society that was highly concerned with racial hierarchy, especially with regard to immigration policy and colonization of the West, Sandilands occupied a privileged position as an English-speaking immigrant from Great Britain and it is from this position that the dictionary describes the language of the Canadian West. As little work has been done to establish the *WCD* within the Canadian historical narrative within which it participates, this thesis will largely focus on elucidating Sandilands' position within a dominant settler narrative of the Canadian West which I will argue that the dictionary represents, though this is by no means the only narrative of the land's colonization.

2.1 Selling the West

After Confederation in 1867, the expansion of the Dominion of Canada to the Pacific became a priority. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) controlled the sparsely populated 'North West' at that time but "American westward expansion was so vigorous that some in Canada saw it as a potential threat to Canadian sovereignty" (Boberg 2010: 84). The Government purchased

the land from the HBC, in part, to secure it from potential American expansion. Canada intended to colonize the land which “meant colonizing the 40 000 Indigenous people who lived there” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2016: 106) and establishing the land as ‘Canadian’.

The railway was central to controlling the land of the Canadian West. Part of the agreement between Canada and British Columbia before B.C. joined Confederation in 1871 was the promise of a transcontinental railway. The need for a railway made the question of colonization all the more pressing as the vast area between Ontario and British Columbia would have to be settled to “justify such a daring undertaking” (Knowles 2016: 73). The railway was both a public and private project as the federal government agreed to give the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) a monopoly on its construction (Thompson 1998: 53). To encourage settlement, the federal government introduced the Dominion Lands Act in 1872, which granted land to any homesteader who could “prove up” the land, that is, plant crops, build a dwelling, and survive on the homestead for a set amount of time (Thompson 1998: 52). The CPR had a vested interest in encouraging settlement and began to produce pamphlets celebrating the West (Dunae 1984: 85).

Attracting immigrants to the West was a problem, however, even with the new railway and the offer of free land. The sparsely populated West could not always compete with the infrastructure in the United States. Part of the problem was perception. As Owsen (2007) notes: “for decades [the West] had been seen as a remote, semi-arctic wilderness suitable only for the fur trade” (4-5). One important aspect of the solution was to create a new image, the ‘making’ of an attractive West. Under the Liberal government in 1896, a new Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, was appointed and made it his goal to populate the West with farmers. According to David Hall (2007), his approach was based on “aggressive salesmanship”, as Sifton

told the House of Commons that “immigration work has to be carried on in the same matter as the sale of any commodity” (82). Sifton used various tactics to give a positive account of the West overseas:

Canadian exhibits were mounted at fairs, exhibitions, and public displays in Britain, the U.S., and Europe. Foreign journalists were wined and dined on guided tours across the West and successful homesteaders were encouraged to visit their homelands, for Sifton believed that the most effective advertising was done by individual contact (Knowles 2016: 88).

In addition to these tactics, the production of pamphlets that the CPR had begun was finessed and modernized under Sifton (Dunae 1984: 89). In these pamphlets the quality of the soil was extolled, the lack of trees in the prairies made clearing the land easier, and even the cold climate was claimed to have a positive effect on character (Francis 1989: 110-112). An increase literacy rate in Britain combined with advances in printing created what Dunae (1984) calls “an information revolution” (84) which made the pamphlets and newspaper articles particularly effective in doing this advertising work as the narratives of the West caught on in the popular imagination. Sifton’s campaign appeared to be a success as immigration increased immensely from the previous years of disappointment (Hall 2007: 82).

During Sifton’s time as Minister of the Interior, immigration was wide open, at least to white settlers. After Sifton’s resignation in 1905, Frank Oliver was appointed as Minister of the Interior. Reflecting mounting anxieties among English-speaking settlers in Western Canada about the assimilation of foreign immigrants, immigration became more selective. Oliver developed an immigration hierarchy which ranked Eastern Canadians first, followed by British immigrants, then Americans (Knowles 2016: 107). Oliver introduced various kinds of legislation

including the Immigration Act of 1910, which allowed the cabinet to “issue orders-in-council to regulate the volume, ethnic origin, or occupational composition of immigration destined for Canada” (ibid.: 110). The focus on attracting British settlers was heightened and Oliver took steps to increase British immigration such as providing bonuses to British booking agents and hiring government agents who were likewise given bonuses for recruiting British agriculture workers (ibid.: 114). The image of Canada’s prosperity however had already been established, and Oliver’s policies did little to stem the migrational flow from continental Europe as European-born settlers nearly equalled British settlers in 1911 (Boberg 2010: 90). Immigration would continue to rise, peaking in 1913 before dropping dramatically during the war.

Sandilands’ dictionary enters this story right at the height of this western Canadian immigration boom, providing a timely guide for the many new (British) immigrants populating the West and contributing to the substantial volume of print material available about the West. The marketing for the West, including slogans, iconography, and pamphlets had their own language which Sandilands represents in the dictionary. The maple leaf, for example, was a prominent advertising symbol for the West (Dunae 1984: 89) and Sandilands explains its significance under the headword *maple*: “the maple tree of great sentimental value to Canadians” (Sandilands 1913a: 29). Another example is the term *Last Best West* which was used in the title of immigration pamphlets (Dunae 1984: 89); Dollinger and Fee (2017) note that the *Last Best West* “was inspired by the fact that the more easily accessible US West had already been largely settled” (*DCHP-2*: s.v. *Last Best West*). Sandilands defines *Last Best West*: “a favourite term for describing a new district beyond which one must not dream anything better” (Sandilands 1913a: 27) and, though Sandilands does not note it is “favourite term” of the Canadian Government in particular, it is unmistakably intertwined with the Government’s immigration campaign. The

attractive image that the Government created was remarkably successfully in encouraging people to settle in the West and the “picturesque language” (Sandilands 1913b) that Sandilands describes developed from both the “diverse mixture” (Boberg 210: 93) of languages and varieties of English that came with the settling of the West, and the language and symbols used to encourage people to immigrate.

2.1.1 Who was John Sandilands?

Despite both scholarly and public interest in his *WCD*, we know relatively little about its author, John Sandilands. John Orrell attempted to retrieve biographical information on Sandilands before he wrote his introduction to the 1977 facsimile edition of the *WCD* by posting a notice in the *Winnipeg Free Press* (Orrell 1977b: 42). His search apparently came up empty as he ends his introduction to the dictionary by saying Sandilands’ “only memorial, it seems, rests in the pages of his *Dictionary*” (ii). Around the same time, and likely in connection with the University of Alberta’s project, Linda Hoade (1977), working on the Peel bibliography on Microfiche for the National Library of Canada, was also seeking biographical information on John Sandilands in the *Winnipeg Tribune* (9). Peel’s Prairie Provinces’, an online resource managed by the University of Alberta, has an Author Bio for Sandilands referring to him only as an “early Winnipeg printer.” Despite several attempts to confirm his identity, much of John Sandilands’ life has remained curiously elusive. With the benefit of digitized archives and the help of many libraries’ staff⁴, I have compiled the beginnings of a biography on Sandilands that further helps to place his dictionary within the context of the settling of the Canadian West and

⁴ I am especially indebted to Elaine Elizabeth Radman and Nicole Watier of Library and Archives Canada for materials and advice that have enriched this section.

Sandilands' connections to the Government pamphlet program. I must note that much of this account is derived from Sandilands attempting to solicit funding from Richard Bennett, who was Leader of the Opposition of Canada when Sandilands wrote letters to him. More attention will be given to these letters in section 2.3 but I have attempted to contextualize Sandilands' claims where relevant for this short biography.

An important fact to begin with is that Sandilands was, himself, a new immigrant to Canada. Dollinger (2019) notes that there is "a long tradition of . . . outsiders [who] propose, carry out, and, more often than not, see to completion projects that are connected with the linguistic autonomy of a certain place" (58). Sandilands seems to fit into the tradition, to a certain extent, and his position as an outsider perhaps made more sensitive to differences in the way (western) Canadians spoke. Sandilands was born in Scotland in around 1861 (Library and Archives Canada 1910: 3121741) and immigrated to Winnipeg in 1910 (Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37858) just two years before the dictionary was printed. He was 49 years old when he immigrated. Sandilands left on the ship *Ionian* boarding in Glasgow on the 10th of September (Board of Trade 1910: 113989) and arrived to port in Quebec City⁵ (Library and Archives Canada 1910: 3121741). I have been unable to find evidence that he travelled with family members, though Sandilands was married at the time of his immigration to Canada (Library and Archives Canada 1910: 3121741).

There is little information about his life before his arrival in Winnipeg. Sandilands had been working at a newspaper in Glasgow until 1910 when he emigrated to Canada (R.B. Bennett

⁵ Based on the date of his death and his own account of immigrating to Canada (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37869), it appears that the "John Sandilands" on the *Ionian* is the correct John Sandilands.

Fonds 1929-30: 37869) and he was a “member of the Institute of Journalists” before his arrival (ibid.: 37858). Sandilands also claims in letters to have known J. Ramsay McDonald, who was British Prime Minister when Sandilands was writing the Bennett letters. Sandilands had made acquaintance with McDonald when McDonald worked for “*The Daily Chronicle* and at Stanton Street” (ibid: 37862) and was apparently Sandilands’ guest in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1894 (ibid.) where Sandilands was presumably living. Generally, Sandilands appears to have been well-connected in British newspaper circles, as he would later be in Canada.

A “John Sandilands” is listed in the Winnipeg Henderson Directories from 1911 until 1914:

1911 – “journalist lvs 144 Donald.” (p. 1294)

1912 – “proofreader Free Press lvs 319 Cumberland” (p. 1518)

1913 – “editor Western Canadian Dictionary r 56 Adelaide” (p. 1546)

1914 – “proof reader Telegram Job Printers r 405 Cumberland” (p. 1506)

and

“editor Western Canadian Dictionary r 56 Adelaide” (p. 1666)

The “56 Adelaide St.” address listed is the address of Telegram Job Printers which printed the dictionary. It is likely that all of these listings are for the correct John Sandilands, as these dates roughly match up with Sandilands’ own account of his time in Canada, though he claims to have begun working for Telegram Job Printers in 1911 (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37858). The fact that Sandilands had apparently moved on two occasions suggests that he did not own property in Winnipeg, so it is possible that he had not planned on staying in Canada long term. Having arrived in Winnipeg, Sandilands says that he began work at the *Manitoba Free Press* newspaper, but he “did not hit it with the exchange editor and got out” (R.B. Bennett Fonds

1929-30: 37858). After leaving the *Free Press*, he apparently began working for the *Tribune* newspaper, but “after a week or two” he, again, left (ibid.). It is important to note here that newspapers were a political business as the “sometimes indistinct blend of journalism and politics was a vital part of Canada’s political culture” (Fetherling 1990: 94). The *Manitoba Free Press* was owned by Clifford Sifton, a former Liberal Minister (ibid: 100). Similarly, the politics of the the *Tribune* were what Fetherling (1990) calls “renegade Liberal” (100). Given that Sandilands was providing this information to the Conservative leader of the Opposition (see section 2.3), there is room to doubt that Sandilands’ account is precisely accurate regarding his connection with these Liberal newspapers.

After his newspaper jobs, Sandilands began working as a proofreader for Telegram Job Printers (TJP), which he calls the place “where the government printing was done” (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-1930: 37846). He would remain at TJP “in 1911, 12, 13, and the early months of 1914” as “they wanted a reliable man to read and correct the proofs of the literature sent over to this country” (Bennett 1929-30: 37858). Sandilands notes that he corrected the “emigration literature” (ibid. 37894), very likely immigration pamphlets to be sent to Britain because Telegram Job Printers had a large contract to print what they call “pamphlets” (see section 2.4). According to Sandilands, as he was correcting these pamphlets, he “sent so many queries down to Ottawa that finally two of the Department of Immigration and Colonization arrived in Winnipeg to inform the King’s Printer that all [his] corrections were to be done” because “he is always right” (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-1930: 37846).

There were three major daily newspapers in Winnipeg when Sandilands arrived (Fetherling 1990: 100), these are listed by Sandilands in the definition of *three for a nickel!*:

Three for a nickel!, Long the cry of the Winnipeg newsies, the evening editions of the three papers (“Free Press,” “Telegram,” and “Tribune”) being sold at the price of a nickel for the three (Sandilands 1913a: 46).

It seems that Sandilands had already worked for two of these rival papers before 1912 (*Free Press* and *Tribune*), and it is likely that he found the job at TJP through the newspaper industry as well, as it appears that Telegram Job Printers had some association with the *Telegram* newspaper. H. W. Dearman, the manager of TJP (listed on the cover of the Red printing of the *WCD*), is listed as “Manager Job Dept.” at the *Winnipeg Telegram* in 1910 in the Henderson directory (157), and TJP is not included at all in 1910. In 1911, Dearman is listed as the manager of TJP (ibid.: 1407) and there is no mention of a job department at the *Winnipeg Telegram* in its staff listing, perhaps suggesting that the *Telegram* job printing department separated from the newspaper to become Telegram Job Printers⁶. In his definition for *West (the)*, Sandilands seems to confirm that there is a relationship between the *Telegram* and Telegram Job Printers:

[The West] begins at the eastern gable of the office of the ‘Western Canadian Dictionary,’ 56 Adelaide Street, Winnipeg, (which by courtesy and some proprietorial right which we have not hitherto questioned, is called the office of the ‘Telegram’ Job Printers, Limited)” (Sandilands 1913a: 51).

The bulk of job printing in the early 20th century would have consisted of “short-run” printing of ephemera, though many printers were expanding in urban areas to accommodate a growing market for print products, including fiction and newspapers (Raible 2007: 56). In the fall of

⁶ It is worth noting that in 1911 a Conservative government had taken power under Robert Borden and the *Telegram* newspaper was also Conservative. A relationship between the newspaper and the government might have something to do with this nominal separation of Telegram Job Printers from the *Telegram* considering the contract granted to TJP was quite large (see section 2.4). Further investigation into this point is needed.

1911, TJP purchased a new cylinder press (Dearman 1912: 3). The cylinder press was an innovation brought about by the need for the newspaper industry to produce many copies quickly (Raible 2007: 56). It is possible that TJP continued to print the *Telegram* but had also expanded to allow for the printing of post office lists (Sessional Papers 1914: S-139), immigration pamphlets (ibid.: T-29) and, it seems, the *WCD*.

At the conclusion of the second edition, Sandilands expresses a fair amount of optimism that a third edition would be forthcoming: “The Student of ‘English as she is spoke’ in the Golden West must now wait patiently for the issue of a third enlarged edition, beguiling the time by . . . mailing copies of this present edition to friends in the Old-Country who want to know about Canada” (Sandilands 1913a: 52). World War I seems to have interrupted this edition as a third edition never arrived. Sandilands, who would have been in his early fifties at the onset of the war, returned to the UK in 1914. He claims to have gone back to rejoin the military but he says: “[I] got told by the inspecting officer who was also the recruiting officer he would be quite pleased to send me over, but I might get sent back and my experience as a sniper would be no good” [emphasis in original] (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37858).

We hear almost nothing of Sandilands between 1914 until 1929. However, in 1916, the trade newspaper *The Voice*, a “newspaper published in the interest of the laboring classes,” printed a section called “Typographical Union Notes” which contained Sandilands’ name: “A Newcastle-on-Tyne paper to hand contains a communication signed “Winnipeg” and from the phraseology it seems to be a safe bet that John Sandilands is using this nom-de-plume” (Anon. 1916: 8). This is likely the *WCD*’s Sandilands as had previously lived in Newcastle upon Tyne

(R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37862) and he had worked as a proofreader in a print shop⁷. If not a member himself, Sandilands would have worked in close quarters with members of the Typographical Union which had in “its jurisdiction originally included all printing tradesmen in the city” (Manitoba Archives 2018). Definitions in the *WCD* reflect this membership and familiarity with the printing trade: “**I.T.U.**, International Typographical Union, which has some 60 000 members . . .” and “**Jig**, in printing and certain other trades, means a day’s work . . .” (Sandilands 1912a). It is possible that Sandilands had returned to Newcastle-upon-Tyne at some point during the War, or made use of connections with the newspaper industry to write for this paper remotely. I have also located a “John Sandilands” who was listed as a printer was admitted into a workhouse in London in 1915 and apparently became homeless shortly afterward when he was readmitted to the same workhouse (London Metropolitan Archives 1915: 286). Though this “John Sandilands” is the right age and appears to be the right profession, it is impossible to determine if this is the *WCD*’s John Sandilands at this stage⁸. Regardless, Sandilands seems to have continued working within the newspaper industry to some extent during the War.

The next we hear of Sandilands and the *WCD* is in 1929 as he tries to fulfill his promise of bringing out a third edition. He was then working as a secondhand bookseller in Brighton,

⁷ When Sandilands was requesting funding for the third edition of the *WCD* it would be used, in part, for a printing machine (R. B. Bennett: 37879), perhaps intending to print the dictionary himself. It is likely that he had become familiar with the printing process at this time, if not directly working as a printer in addition to his proofreading duties.

⁸ This “John Sandilands” was also Scottish and he was born July 22, 1861 (London Metropolitan Archives 1915: 286), which does not contradict any known dates about the *WCD*’s Sandilands (taken from immigration documents and his death date). This “Sandilands” was admitted on two occasions to this workhouse. The first time he was admitted from a Rowton house (low-cost accommodation for working people (Higginbotham 2020))) and the next time he was homeless. During his first admission he also appears to have been married, and in the second widowed. Ultimately, it is impossible to confirm that this is the *WCD*’s Sandilands, but for “John Sandilands” these documents tell a sad story.

England. Sandilands had requested funding, in the amount of 25 pounds, from the Canadian Government towards the third edition, which was refused. He then wrote to the Leader of the Opposition, Richard Bennett, who would later become Prime Minister of Canada, to ask for funding. When his initial request was refused, he continued sending letters to Bennett so that he might have the matter of funding “decided by the House [of Commons]” (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-1930: 37846).

Sandilands died on March 18th, 1933 at 71 years of age (General Register Office 1933: 512), only four years after his attempts to have the third edition of the *WCD* published. There are still many unanswered questions about what Sandilands did before coming to Canada including his motivations for coming to the West in the first place. His death certificate provides little information except that he seems to have died at his daughter’s house⁹, and his daughter, “F. Sandilands”, was present at the time of his death¹⁰ (ibid.). His third edition never was published, Sandilands having been denied the funding by both the Government of Canada and the Leader of the Opposition.

⁹ The residence which Sandilands daughter lived, and where Sandilands died, “18 Meeting House Lane” (General Register Office 1933: 512) is in the same neighbourhood as Sandilands’ bookstore located at “9, the Lanes, Brighton” (R.B. Bennet Fonds. 1929-30: 37908). It is possible that Sandilands was living with his daughter at this time.

¹⁰ This information opens a possibility to identify Sandilands with one “John Sandilands” listed in a 1901 British Census in Manchester (The National Archives 1901: 29). However, despite several other details fitting, the *WCD*’s Sandilands could not have been 41 in 1901 as the census indicates, as based on other known dates Sandilands would have been at most 40 at that time if he was 71 in March, 1933. This “John Sandilands” was a journalist, the same profession listed on the *WCD*’s Sandilands passenger list (Board of Trade 1910: 113989). This “John Sandilands” was also from Scotland, and he was married to “Jane E” Sandilands from “Northumberland, Newcastle”. This fits with known information of our Sandilands who had lived in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1897. They had three daughters one of whom is “Frances E. D.”, potentially the F. Sandilands from Sandilands’ death certificate. This Frances E. D. appears to have been born in 1892 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (General Register Office 1891: 464) and died in 1964 (General Register Office 1964: 617). Frances died in Brighton where F. Sandilands (Sandilands daughter) had been living when Sandilands passed away. Although this is a compelling lead, it requires that Sandilands’ age be incorrect on the census form.

Sandilands would have encountered many of the pamphlets encouraging potential immigrants to settle in the West even before he arrived in Canada. His nationality made him an attractive immigrant to the Canadian West, and it is likely that he would have encountered different language, or perhaps have a different interpretation of it, had he been a less desirable immigrant. This is not to say that Sandilands was simply producing a ‘pamphlet’ narrative of the Canadian West, however, he would have had good reason to be enthusiastic about a West where his skills as a journalist were warmly welcomed, where boosting the West created a career for him in Canada, and where the immigration boom suggested that narratives of a new, better society in the West were well-founded, at least until war broke out in 1914.

2.2 Printing the Dictionary

The *WCD* was reprinted at least five times in two different editions of 1912 and 1913. The first edition, small enough to carry on one’s person, contains 853 headwords. The second edition is nearly doubled at 1530 headwords. Judging by the fascicle “B”, the texts of all three printings of the first editions are identical with one another, as are the texts of the two printings of the second edition. Sandilands himself notes of the second edition printings that the Stampede Edition “only differs from the others in that it has not the Red cover” (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37862). It is difficult to confidently place the editions in chronological order, but I have arranged them in the likeliest sequence based on the cover material and dateable events in the contents. I have also named each cover for ease of the descriptions that will follow (with the exception of the Stampede Edition, the name of which was provided by Sandilands on the cover).

First Editions

1. Plain [figure 1] (Sandilands 1912b). Published 1912.

2. Hardcover [figures 2 and 3] (Sandilands 1912c). Printed before August 1912.
3. Souvenir [figures 4 and 5] (Sandilands 1912d).

Second Editions

1. Red [figures 6 and 7] (Sandilands 1913b and 1913c). Printed after March 1913.
2. Stampede Edition [figures 8 and 9] (Sandilands 1913d). Printed before August 1913.

Both the first and second edition printings have copyright dates of 1912, with the exception of the Stampede Edition which has no copyright date. However, an entry in the second edition under the headword *Cost of Living* lists “retail prices at Winnipeg in March 1913” (Sandilands 1913a: 13), suggesting that the 1913 date attributed to the second edition by Orrell (1977a) is correct. In order to discuss the order of the editions and how they participate in the immigration campaign of the Canadian West, it is necessary to describe the cover matter in detail.

2.2.1 First Editions

The major difference between the Plain and Hardcover editions¹¹ is the contents of the back cover. The Plain printing has a blank back cover, but the Hardcover has an advertisement for the Saskatoon Industrial fair that took place August 6-9th, 1912 (figure 3) suggesting that the book was printed before that date. As it is more likely that Sandilands had acquired a sponsor for this printing of the dictionary after the dictionary had already been printed, I have placed the Hardcover printing second in the chronology of editions. The Souvenir printing cover text is altered significantly from the other first editions. Added to the cover is the phrase: “Interesting souvenir to send to friends in the old country. . .” and a list of distributors of the book (figure 4).

¹¹ Beyond the material of the cover, paperback and a thicker cardboard cover respectively.

The back cover features a page headlined “Boosts!” which contains reviews of the first edition (figure 5). Given the reviews, which necessarily mean that at least one printing was released prior to the Souvenir Edition, I have placed it last in the list of first editions¹².

2.2.2 Second Editions

The Red and Stampede Edition printings of the *WCD* are significantly different from one another in their cover matter. The books are larger than the first edition, resembling something closer to a traditional print book. Interestingly, as I was examining copies held in Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of British Columbia, I noticed that the flimsy paper cover of the Stampede Edition was damaged and red paper (the same colour as the Red printing) was visible underneath (figure 10). It appears that the Red printing covers were removed for some or all of the dictionaries so that the Stampede cover could be attached, which suggests that the Red printing came before the Stampede edition.

Considine (2003) speculates that the “Stampede Edition” was handed out as a souvenir for the 1913 Winnipeg Stampede. While Considine appears to be correct, there is evidence that the dictionary was also distributed before the Stampede as part of a promotion to sell tickets. Newspaper advertisements for the Winnipeg Stampede invite readers to “write [to the Stampede organizers] for the Cowboy Dictionary and other free literature” (Anon. 1913: 5). It is likely that this “Cowboy Dictionary” was the *WCD* as even The Stampede Edition cover omits the real title of the dictionary, choosing instead to call it “The Famous Slang Dictionary” and it features

¹² The Red printing also mentions of a “10-cent Pocket and Mailing Edition”, though I have been unable to locate such an edition. It is possible that it is simply a first edition copy sold at a reduced price, as the 10-cent edition is advertised in much the same way as the cover matter of the first edition copies with the subtitle: “Containing a Choice Selection of the Words, Phrases and Information Contained in the Larger Edition – Just those Things the Newcomer Wants to Know.”

several images of cowboys (figure 7). The Winnipeg Stampede took place August 9th - 16th, 1913. If the dictionary was tied to the Winnipeg Stampede, it is probable that all editions and printings of the dictionary were completed well before August 1913.

2.2.3 The Evolution of the Print Editions

The first edition¹³ is characterized by its target audience of newcomers to western Canada. John Orrell (1977a) calls the first edition “useful . . . staid and sober” (i) and describes what he views as a difference between the first and the second editions: “The second edition . . . is no mere utilitarian word-list but a celebration of the rhythms and emphases of Canadian English” (i). Orrell emphasizes the difference in content between the first and second editions; however, the majority of the definitions of the first edition are taken over in the second edition either unchanged or with only minor changes. For instance, of the 91 entries under the letter “B” in the first edition, 76 were included verbatim in the second, unsurprising considering the time and expense required to change the type. Several of the changes amount to clarification or correction of the definition. The table of contents draws attention to the more tongue-in-cheek entries which appear in the edition, but the differences mostly lie in what Sandilands chooses to highlight. Ultimately, the second edition appears to be an enlargement but not a revision of the first edition. The cover pages, however, certainly align with Orrell’s appraisal. Given that each edition is identical while the cover matter changed significantly between printings, the project evolved over time and was adapted to suit the dictionary’s various markets.

Even within the first edition printings, the cover matter begins to show a growing awareness of the market for the dictionary. The Plain and Hardcover printings show a more local

¹³ All images are of the *WCD* copies housed at UBC Rare Books and Special Collections.

interest. The covers of both printings note that the reader could have the dictionary shipped, but only specifies that it can be shipped within Canada. As well, the advertisement for the Saskatoon Industrial Fair suggests a local, western Canadian focused interest for the project. This begins to change in the Souvenir printing, however, as Sandilands sets his sights on markets outside of Canada. His audience was no longer just newcomers in Canada, but he invites readers to send the dictionary abroad to the ‘old-country’ and notes that the dictionary could be shipped to Britain as well as within Canada.

The Red printing of the second edition shows a further expansion of the market for the *WCD*. Added to the booksellers listed on the Souvenir printing cover, are further sellers in Canada as well as sellers from Ireland and Scotland. The cover matter no longer explicitly evokes the newcomer as its primary audience; the Red printing is directed at the “Globe-Trotter, the Tourist, The Newcomer, and the Settler”. The additional subtitle “The Picturesque Language of the Wild and Woolly West” reflects Orrell’s appraisal that the second edition is the more playful, but it is also reflective of the larger market which Sandilands was appealing to and the ways in which the image of the West had to be sold not only to convinced settlers but also to potential immigrants.

The Red printing cover also features an advertisement for Telegram Job Printers and a call for submissions of “thrilling tales of Western Canadian life” to be sent to John Sandilands (Sandilands 1913b). The call for submissions of western Canadian “tales” is particularly interesting in the context of marketing the dictionary, because the popularity that Sandilands assumes these stories will achieve is not in western Canada but rather in Britain: “Old-Country readers will welcome [the stories], and they will boost the most-favoured portion of God’s Own Country. We have a consuming desire to help in the boosting of God’s Own Country”

(Sandilands 1913b). The verb *boost* features prominently in the second editions' cover matter as Sandilands highlights a portion of the definition for the word *boost* on the back of the Stampede edition. It is one of the few definitions altered significantly in the fascicle "B" between the first and second editions and is likewise one of the definitions listed in the table of contents which directs readers to amusing entries. In the first edition *boost* is defined: "**Boost**, to puff, to advertise. Nearly all the Western towns have a publicity commissioner or some other official who boosts the place at every opportunity" (Sandilands 1912a). The first edition is relatively traditional, if perhaps slightly sarcastic about western Canada's propensity to boost itself. The second edition is more earnest, suggesting that everyone will eventually start boosting Canada and it prints a poem in its entirety which, in an unspecified North American dialect, invites its reader to "become a booster rooster"¹⁴:

Boost, to laud, praise, advertise, boom; the opposite of **knock**. Canadians boost their country, their town, and everything they set their hands to, and the newcomer ultimately falls into the habit. "Do you know there's lots o' people settin' 'round in every town, Growling like a broody chicken, knockin' every good thing down. Don't you be that kind o' cattle . . . You just be a booster rooster, crow and boost for all you're worth. . ."

(Sandilands 1913a: 7).

Though not specific to the Canadian West, the word *boost* was tied closely to the attempts to settle western Canada. As Sifton's vision of the West caught on, individual cities took advantage of the enthusiasm in order to attract people and railway lines their own cities. According to

¹⁴ The poem is titled "Be a Booster" appeared in both American newspapers (for example *The Ellsworth American* (Anon. 1913: 3)) and Canadian newspapers (for example *The Abbotsford Times* (Anon. 1910: 5)). Though Sandilands does not note the source nor the name of the poem.

Francis (1989), “Boosterism” in the context of the Canadian West, was “a popular form of the nineteenth-century concept of ‘progress’, . . . based on the belief that a particular town or city was superior to all others” (116). Though an extension of the government’s idealization of the West, a “booster” could also be a private citizen and, especially in the second edition of the *WCD*, the unqualified celebration of the Canadian West is viewed as a positive character trait. The concept of “boosting” within the poem is tied to a regional dialect which Sandilands uses to support his attempts to describe western Canadian slang as something to celebrate in itself (discussed further in Chapter 3).

In the first edition, Sandilands was already drawing inspiration from the language of urban boosterism to supply his definitions. Three headwords were dedicated solely to the claim that there are no poorhouses in Canada. The headwords *workhouse* and *poorhouse* are defined simply: “none in Canada. (See **Pauper**).”¹⁵ The headword *pauper* is defined: “**Pauper:** as known in the Old-Country are unknown in Canada. There are many charitable societies to help the really deserving poor, but no workhouses to harbour the loafers and won’t-works” (Sandilands 1st ed. 1912). The same claim, that there are no poorhouses in Canada, was used in Saskatoon to “boost” their city: “Where, of all places in the West, your success is most fully assured; where no deserving man has ever yet failed; **where there are no poorhouses because there are no poor**” [emphasis added] (Francis 1989: 145). Though Sandilands is more explicit about boosting Canada in the second edition, the fact that he includes three definitions claiming that there are no poorhouses in Canada suggests that he was concerned with celebrating Canada in the earlier edition as well.

¹⁵ Interestingly, in the second edition, the definition reads “none in Western Canada . . .” (Sandilands 1913a: 34).

Though Orrell (1977a) suggests that Sandilands was just being “helpful”(i) to new immigrants by printing the first edition, Sandilands was participating in a market that had already been established by the Government in their attempt to create an attractive image of the Canadian West. With the success of Canada’s immigration program, a belief in Canada’s prosperity was established (Knowles 2016: 122-23), and Sandilands appears to have been capitalizing on the enthusiasm for the West. The evolution of the print editions reveals a certain degree of opportunism as Sandilands tried to appeal to different markets with his dictionary cover matter. This smart marketing plan, achieved through printed material, is in line with the Canadian Government’s attempt to wage an “aggressive, million dollar advertising campaign” (Dunae 1984: 73) which Sandilands himself was more than familiar with as he worked in a printing house favoured by the Government to print promotional material (see 2.1.1). In the second editions Sandilands is more explicit about trying to “boost” Canada and this is especially evident in the changing cover matter of the printings. Sandilands’ concern with sending the dictionary overseas can be seen as an extension of the project to ‘sell’ western Canada, as one of the Government’s most successful tools to encourage immigration was the pamphlets which were sent overseas (ibid.). Sandilands seems to have come to understand whom his dictionary was appealing to and that there this could be capitalized on as he explicitly aligns his interests with the Canadian Government whose immigration campaign made the existence of the dictionary possible.

2.3 Printing a Third Edition?

We know of two editions of the *WCD* from 1912 and 1913, however a half-completed third edition may well exist somewhere as Sandilands was working on a new edition in 1929. Sometime prior to July 30th, 1929, the Canadian Government had denied Sandilands’ funding for

a third edition of the *WCD*. Sandilands had written letters to a number of influential people requesting this funding. These people included Robert J. C. Stead, a noted writer of western Canadian poetry who was working for the Department of Immigration (Ivanhoe 1929a: 17) and High Commissioner Peter Larkin (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37845). After all other appeals failed, Sandilands turned to then Leader of the Opposition, Richard Bennett, who would later win his election to be Prime Minister in August 1930 by a landslide. Between August 5th, 1929 and April 1st, 1930, Sandilands sent more than fifty handwritten letters to Bennett's private secretary though he only received five replies. With these letters, Sandilands included a variety of other documents including advertisements, newspaper articles, and a copy of the Stampede Edition of the *WCD*. In these letters he appears to specifically try to sell these new editions as an extension of the Canadian Government's immigration program as he offers to "boost" the West and Bennett himself in exchange for the funding.

Sandilands was eager to work with the Government on his new edition of the *WCD*. His motivation and eagerness to have this dictionary printed becomes evident when we consider that on one occasion, when Bennett had been away from the office, Sandilands sent about twenty letters before he received his first response. Sandilands' request for 25 pounds would pay for "a machine and [the] extra type required," (ibid.: 37879) which would enable him to print the dictionary in two editions,¹⁶ "[both] boosting the Dominion" (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37851). He wrote that he would print additional documents related to immigration in the Dominion, including a book called "The Happy Immigrant" (ibid.: 37850), one called

¹⁶ Sandilands illustrates his plan for the third edition: "I am first preparing a small booklet of 48 pages and 4-page cover so that it may be sold for [six pence], and later on a larger book to be sold at [one shilling], all boosting the Dominion" (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37851). His plan to produce a booklet and then an expanded edition mirrors how the 1st and 2nd editions of the *WCD* were printed.

“Pioneering in Canada” (ibid.: 37860), and offers to print a weekly paper “on Prospects in Canada” (ibid.: 37864) for which the “Department of Immigration and Colonization might mail [him] a weekly . . . letter on latest prospects in Canada” (ibid.: 37878). In one letter Sandilands asks for a photograph of Bennett or the Opposition MPs saying he will put it in the dictionary as a frontispiece “to show [his] gratitude” (ibid.: 37874) if they give him the funding. Sandilands’ offer to publish essentially immigration literature quite explicitly connects him to the Government immigration campaign as it existed prior to 1914, and he attempted to offer his potential governmental supporters quick returns-on-investment through these documents.

Sandilands made use of his know-how and connections that he had forged as a journalist to try to convince Bennett to fund the dictionary, often dropping the names of influential people whom he was acquainted with. For example, Sandilands makes much of his relationship with British Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald, claiming in some letters that it was MacDonald who suggested Sandilands try to have the third edition funded by the Opposition (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37850). In many of his letters, he also describes the “exalted circulation” (ibid.: 37861) of the *WCD* as he lists people who have copies of the dictionary¹⁷.

Sandilands was advertising in Winnipeg newspapers about the new edition before he actually had the funding for it. Sandilands sent one of these articles to Bennett several times in order to prove to him that support existed for the *WCD*’s third edition. The article was printed in the *Tribune* by one “Ivanhoe”, the pseudonym of W.T. Allison (Fetherling 1990: 75), who was a “veteran political journalist and poet writing literary articles” (ibid.: 75). Allison had favourably

¹⁷ This list includes: The Prince of Wales at St. James Palace; The Library of the British Museum; Lord Willingdon’s home at Thorpe Hall; The Duke of Connaught’s home; Lord Rothermere at the Daily Mail Office; Lord Byng, chief commissioner of Metropolitan police at New Scotland Yard; and The Royal Empire Society (who have two copies) (Bennet Fonds 1929-30: 37830 and 37870)

reviewed the first edition of the *WCD*, and Sandilands had evidently contacted him about his attempts to get the third edition published. Allison's "Ivanhoe" article recounts the story that Sandilands had sent a copy of the dictionary to both Lord Byng (Chief Commissioner of Scotland Yard) and to The Prince of Wales, but both copies were returned because they already had copies of the book. Given that Sandilands was sending out dictionaries in this way, it is likely that the list of people that Sandilands claims to have copies of his dictionary were people whom he had contacted for funding and he only knew they had a copy because he sent them one. The "Ivanhoe" article was directly in support of the project as it concludes Sandilands "ought to be encouraged to bring out a new edition of what was a most amusing book," and Allison printed a follow-up a month later as part of a larger article in *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune* informing readers that Sandilands has been in contact with Robert J. C. Stead to "prove to him that the Dictionary of Western Canadian slang would not only be serviceable to new settlers but might dispose Englishmen to emigrate to a country which has such a lively style of speech" (Ivanhoe 1929a: 17). Sandilands also appears to have purchased an anonymous article in *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune* titled "English Immigrant Requires Slang Dictionary" in order to gather support for the dictionary (Anon. 1929: 3).

Sandilands received his first reply from Bennett's private secretary on October 28th 1929, acknowledging receipt of his "several letters" (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37883), and rejecting his funding request as it would be "utterly impossible for Mr. Bennett to meet all the demands for contributions that are made upon him" (ibid. 37897). Sandilands did not give up however, continuing to ask for funding in the amount of 16 to 35 pounds (depending on the letter), and asking for the matter to be voted on by the House of Commons (ibid.: 37891). Not afraid to involve himself in political matters, he refers to the Canadian Government as "the

present lot of hoboes in office” and predicts that “they [will not] be in office long” (ibid.:37895) though some of his bitterness may have come from their rejection of his previous funding requests.

After Bennett had rejected the request multiple times, Sandilands’ opinion of Canada in general seems to have soured as he writes “Canada has let me down” (ibid.: 37907) and calls it “a land of hoboes, grafters, and daylight robbers¹⁸” (ibid.: 37909). In earlier letters, he requests that the Stampede Edition, which he had sent to Bennett, be returned, saying “you will have to answer [for it] if it is lost” (ibid.: 37913). Conveniently for Sandilands, it apparently *was* lost. In his final letters to Bennett he accuses a man called Gordon Mayne (ibid.: 37915) (or he says he has a name like “Richard Mayne” in a later letter (ibid.: 37936)) of stealing the dictionary, a matter which he would bring to the attention of Lord Byng of Scotland Yard if Byng was not “laid up” (ibid.: 37924) at that moment. Sandilands threatens that “if [the dictionary] is not returned” he demands 20 pounds “from the postmaster General in London as [he’s]been robbed long enough” (ibid.: 37933). The 20 pounds was supposed to be sent to the printing company from which he intended to order the machine, suggesting he had not really given up on publishing the 3rd *WCD*.

Sandilands found himself faced with a different Canada when he attempted to have his third edition published, his funding requests having been denied by both the Government and the Opposition. Sandilands expressed his desire to “make 1930 a banner year for emigration to Canada” (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37887), though the actual circumstance turned out to be

¹⁸ *Hobo* and *grafter* are words from the *WCD*, see section 2.2 for a detailed discussion of Sandilands use of dictionary words in these letters.

quite different. Though immigration had increased somewhat in the years preceding Sandilands' attempt to get the dictionary published, it would drop again dramatically in 1930 during the Depression. The enthusiasm for the creation of the West, both in terms of attracting immigrants and creating a new image, was also not pursued to the degree that it had been previously. Dunae (1984) argues that although "postwar immigration was substantial, the Dominion's campaign for British immigrants was never again as intense, as diverse, as dynamic, or as flamboyant" (91) as in the earliest years of the 20th century. Sandilands' enthusiasm, drive, and flamboyance were not enough in the 30's to support the dictionary project and without the security of funding from the Government, undertaking to publish a dictionary of western Canadian English appeared to be too risky.

2.4 Funding the Dictionary

Printing was a front-heavy investment, and there was no guarantee that the printing of a dictionary would be profitable. The production of five different printings of the *WCD* in a relatively short time period is remarkable and suggests that the dictionary was either popular enough to support these printings, or that Sandilands received support from other sources. When Sandilands asked for funding for his third edition, his request amounted to 25 pounds for the machine and type, which, in today's money would be about 1560 pounds (Bank of England Inflation Calculator), or 2650 Canadian Dollars, which could be a substantial amount if he was printing multiple editions. Considering Sandilands requested funding for a third edition, it is possible that he had received funding for the earlier editions as well, though Sandilands never admits this in his letters. In fact, Sandilands claimed to have spent "scores of dollars boosting Canada" (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37898) though many of these expenses appear to have been incurred in "expressing parcels all over Canada, Scotland and Ireland" (ibid.: 37846) by

which he seems to mean shipping the *WCD*. Telegram Job Printers (TJP), who employed Sandilands, had significant connections with the Government's pamphlet program, meaning that Sandilands certainly indirectly benefitted from the immigration campaign and was aware of the potential to make money in the business of boosting the West.

Evidently, revenue from advertising would have provided Sandilands with some funds, though only two printings of the *WCD* contain ads. The Hardcover printing features an ad for the Saskatoon Industrial Fair, and the Red printing has a large ad for Telegram Job Printers. In his letters to Bennett, Sandilands claims that he "was only given one advert and that from Saskatoon, which was never paid" (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37856), which refers to the Industrial Fair advertisement. For the Stampede edition, he would likely have had funding from the Winnipeg Stampede organizers if that truly was where the dictionary was distributed. By the time the first edition of the dictionary printed Sandilands was already employed by Telegram Job Printers (TJP). Sandilands evidently took full advantage of his position at the printing house, very possibly avoiding the full printer's fees for the dictionary.

TJP's business was picking up in 1911. In the fall of 1911, TJP purchased a new cylinder press (Dearman 1912: 3) and by January 1912, they had added "an extension to their building to meet the natural increase in their business" (ibid.: 44). This increase in their business likely had something to do with their relationship with the Canadian Government. In a letter to Richard Bennett, Sandilands calls Telegram Job Printers the place "where the government printing was done" (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-1930: 37846) and this included the printing of pamphlets. Sometime between March 30th 1912 to March 30th 1913, TJP had received payment in the amount of \$9 035.47 CAD, approximately \$206 000 in 2020 dollars) for a contract to print thousands of "pamphlets" with such titles as: "*Canada West, British Columbia, Canada as Seen*

Through Scottish Eyes, Heart of Canada and Thunder Bay” (Sessional Papers 1914: T-29).

Sandilands was proofreading what he calls “emigration literature” (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-1930: 37894) at TJP and the pamphlets listed in the Sessional Papers were likely among those things he was proofreading. Sandilands appeared to draw inspiration from the pamphlet *Canada West* for his definition of Saskatchewan in the 1st ed. of the *WCD*:

Saskatchewan, the great wheat Province, situated between Manitoba on the east and Alberta on the west. **Singular to remark, Edinburgh Scotland, is farther north than any of the settled parts of Saskatchewan.** Regina is the capital. [emphasis added] (Sandilands 1912a).

The pamphlet *Canada West* provided an almost identical description: “Edinburgh is nearer the top of the map than is any one of the settled parts of Saskatchewan” (Department of the Interior 1912: 25). His definition of *Homesteader* likewise appears to be pulled directly from these pamphlets. Sandilands defines *Homesteader* with a list of the specific requirements for being granted land under the Dominion Lands Act including that a homesteader “must reside six months in each of three years, cultivate 50 acres and erect a house worth \$300” (Sandilands 1913a: 23). These requirements are listed in many government pamphlets including on the first pages of *Canada West* (Department of the Interior 1912).

The pamphlets “were written by a variety of authors. Some were written – or rather compiled – by [Government] clerks. . . Other tracts were written by professional authors such as Catharine Parr Traill” (Dunae 1984: 79). It is possible that Sandilands conceived of the *WCD* as an extension of the pamphlet program and sought to benefit from the government program. This certainly appears to be evident in the later editions when the impetus to send the dictionary

abroad became central to its cover matter. Dunae (1984) lists the things that the pamphlets did well:

In the absence of other media, they served admirably as “channels of communication” between the Dominion and Britons who were disposed to emigrate: not only did they publicize Canada’s resources, they also communicated official policies respecting transportation, homestead laws, and a host of other matters of interest to the emigrant. At the same time, they operated in a ‘facilitating’ manner, by drawing emigrants’ attention to that part of Canada which the government most wanted to settle – the West (92).

Sandilands’ dictionary ticks many of these boxes, including serving as a channel of communication between the English spoken in Britain and the Canadian West, describing policies, and focusing attention on the West. The fact that Sandilands was an immigrant from Great Britain (among those whom the Government was especially courting), and he was writing for an audience of British immigrants from the “Old-Country,” means that the *WCD* fit into the Government’s vision of what the West ought to be. Sandilands’ position as a journalist was also privileged within the context of the Government’s immigration program as “foreign journalists were wined and dined on guided tours across the West” (Knowles 2016, 88) and paid to “incidentally [give] information about Canada of such nature as an English paper would be willing to publish and would consider to be interesting to its readers, and also not doing any injury to the present administration.” (Sifton in Knowles 2016: 88). In his 1929 letters, Sandilands shows he was aware of these tactics when he offered to produce a weekly “letter” (if he were to receive funding for the third edition) which he proposed to call “Prospects in Canada” (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929: 37864). In his later attempts to secure funding, Sandilands is evidently aware of the interconnected politics of funding and boosting: “as the Canadian mail

goes to-night I may say that the bigger the cheque, the bigger the boost” (R.B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37861).

In the formative years of the ‘Canadian West’, there was an “unjustified suspicion that all books dealing with Canada, especially those that are adulatory, [were] financed by the Government” (Fraser 1905: 2). Considering Sandilands’ was employed at a place where he was actively proofreading immigration literature, and that he directly asked for funding from government officials in 1929, it is not an wholly unjustified suspicion that Sandilands’ dictionary might have been partially financed by the Government. That said, there were opportunities for private citizens to produce what could be considered immigration literature and profit from these efforts. Sandilands claims that he paid for the dictionary by himself saying: “I gave you all [i.e. Canadians] at my own expense the first phrase-book ever printed in Canada and the poor old Lady of the Snows does not know it” (ibid.: 37906), though this claim was made in the context of pressuring the Opposition to provide funding so should be taken with a grain of salt. He does not acknowledge any previous funding from the Government in these letters so the question of how he financed the dictionary is open. It is undeniable, however, that the push for immigration into the Canadian West and the overwhelming amount of ‘talk’ about the West in the form of newspaper articles and immigration literature made it possible to describe this new language of western Canada and allowed Sandilands to produce the *WCD*.

Chapter 3: Writing the West

While the notion of ‘Canada’ was still in its infancy in the early 20th century, the idea of a cohesive Canadian West was even more so. The early immigration campaign of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which began the printing of pamphlets, was an important part of establishing a “recognizable Canadian iconography” (Sugars & Moss 2009: 259). This nation and identity building continued during Clifford Sifton’s immigration campaign, which was based on “aggressive salesmanship” of the Canadian West (Hall 2007: 82). Such advertising was facilitated by innovations in print, as increased literacy rates created an “information revolution” (Dunae 1984: 84) in which “large numbers of readers who did not know one another, and who lived hundreds of miles apart” were able “to read the same material and share the same cultural-historical information” (Sugars & Moss 2009: 259). The wide dissemination of government pamphlets and other advertising material was an important aspect of establishing the early images of the West, which was supported by popular enthusiasm to ‘boost’ the West. People were able to share a cohesive picture of the Canadian West and this idea of the West was remarkably successful in attracting immigrants.

Sugars & Moss (2009) describe the idea of ‘Canada’ as a belief system: “More than a political document, the creation of Canada required a body of people who contributed to the consolidation of that abstraction in the minds of the citizenry” (263). Although, the culture of the West was still very much “under construction” (Warne 2007: 210) and the question of what counted as ‘Canadian literature’ was under debate (Sugars & Moss 2009: 267), the immigration campaign conceived of a consistent vision of the West (espoused by print material including newspapers, literature, and the *WCD*) that was able to take shape relatively quickly. In the years

before the first World War, the “consolidated abstraction in the minds of the citizenry” with reference to the Canadian West, appeared stable enough for Sandilands to recognize a distinct language spoken in the West and print his *WCD*.

Sandilands was well aware of the role fiction played in attracting immigrants to the Canadian West. In the inside cover of the Red second edition of his dictionary he calls for submissions of western Canadian fiction to be edited by himself:

Just at the present moment there is an opening for a few thrilling tales of Western Canadian life. Old-country readers will welcome them and they will boost the most-favoured portion of God’s Own Country. We have a consuming desire to help in the boosting of God’s Own Country (Sandilands 1913b).

Sandilands’ decision to refer to Canada as *God’s Own Country* (a word found in the *WCD*) marks his concern for seeking a particular narrative of the Canadian West that was also pushed by government pamphlets. Sandilands defines *God’s Own Country*: “a name frequently given to the Dominion by patriotic Canadians and satisfied settlers” (Sandilands 1913a: 20).

This definition ties the phrase to an enthusiasm for the settlement of western Canada (“satisfied settlers”) as well as the broader imperial project of the “Dominion” of Canada within British imperialism (“patriotic Canadians”). The phrase *God’s Own Country* itself also suggests a kind of religious ‘goodness’ stemming from the land itself that is tied to the idea of the West as “Promised Land” described by Francis (1989):

The image of a new and better society – the promised land, a garden of abundance in which all material wants would be provided and where moral and civic virtues would be perfected – infused the immigration literature that lured thousands of immigrants to the prairies . . . and dominated the early literary and artistic depictions of the West (107).

The Promised Land narrative constituted a rebranding of the West from its image as a barren wasteland to a *tabula rasa* where a new, morally perfect society could be formed (Francis 1989: 113). This image relied on the myth that the Canadian West was uninhabited and served the notions of progress delivered by popular settler colonialism that “permit[ed] a narrative in which settler colonizers, not Indigenous peoples are the original rightful inhabitants” (Griffith 2019: 5).

Warne (2007) is careful to emphasize that the metaphor of “Promised Land” does not necessarily map neatly onto the biblical narrative from which it originates in that it is “not the salvific narrative of reward and entitlement found in the Exodus story and the ideology of American exceptionalism” but rather the narrative of the colonization of Canada is connected to ideas of “hope and possibility” (201)¹⁹. That is to say, only those who worked hard enough could ‘make it’ in the Canadian West, absolving the Government from responsibility if the new resident could not find success under the difficult conditions under which they would find themselves. Sifton’s focus on attracting farmers in particular to Canada solidified the vision of a “rural, agricultural West” (111) to fulfil this narrative. The ideal settler for Canada was the homesteader who exhibited the virtues of industry, honesty of speech and a broader ‘goodness’ of character who would receive salvation from working the land. The *WCD* participates in a larger network of symbolism used in the pre-War Canadian West, and western Canadian slang itself began to be associate with the values of hard work and honesty.

¹⁹ Francis and Kitzan (2007) are likewise carefully to note that the narratives employed by the Canadian West were differently conceived than those of the American West. The Canadian West was focused on the principles of “peace, order, and good government” above the “inalienable rights of the individual” found in American frontier culture (XIII-XIV).

3.1 *Making it in the literature of McLung and Stead*

In order to show how the *WCD* participated in a larger network of literary symbolism connected to the idea of the West as Promised Land, I will examine texts written by Robert J. C. Stead and Nellie McClung both of whom were connected to Winnipeg²⁰, and who published work around the same time that Sandilands was resident in Winnipeg writing the *WCD*. I will focus on selections of Stead's poetry from the collection *Songs of the Prairie* (first published in 1911) and two stories by McClung from *The Black Creek Stopping-House and Other Stories* (1912). Because these writers occupied a world similar to Sandilands at the time the *WCD* was published, the lexis found in the *WCD* as reflected in their writings should be used in similar ways. Both Stead and McClung make use of a western Canadian dialect which they attribute specifically to homesteaders. Use of western Canadian slang from the *WCD* in these stories acts as a shorthand for the values of honesty, hard work and a religious 'goodness' that served a narrative of British imperialism in the context of colonizing the Canadian West.

Robert J. C. Stead makes no attempt to conceal that he is 'boosting' the West in his poetry and he would later find a career in doing just that as, in 1929, Stead was working for the Department of Immigration, meaning he crossed paths with Sandilands who had requested funding from Stead for the *WCD*'s third edition (Ivanhoe 1929a: 17). Stead's poem "Just be Glad" (37) in *Songs of the Prairie* (1911) reads like immigration literature, explicitly encouraging people to move to the West:

Feelin' kind of all run down?

²⁰ Nellie McClung was "raised on a homestead in rural Manitoba" (Sugars & Moss 2009: 522) and had moved to Winnipeg in 1911 (Hallett 2008). Stead had also been raised in Manitoba and lived in Winnipeg, though he was living in Alberta in 1912 where he was involved in the newspaper industry (Toye 2001: 459).

Mighty bad:

Sick and tired o' life in town?

Don't be sad:

What you're needing isn't rest: Square your shoulders, raise your chest;

Pack your turkey; go out West—

Just be glad! (1-7)

Though he only briefly invokes God in the third stanza of this poem (“Praise the Lord, you’ve got your health” (30)), he already in the opening stanzas suggests that working hard in the West will improve one’s moral character. The phrase “just be glad!” appears at the end of each stanza and resembles the slogans commonly used to advertise the West (Dunae 1984: 85). Stead chose to write the poem from the perspective of a settler and establishes the voice of the poem in the first stanza in what is presumably a western Canadian dialect. In the final stanza, Stead populates his poem with western Canadian slang including phrases *hump yourself* (“get out, or get on your journey”) [Sandilands 1913a: 24] and *make the grade*:

Though you work at book or trade,

Though you work with pen or spade,

Hump yourself—you'll make the grade—

Just be glad! (37-40)

Sandilands defines *make the grade* as “make the running” and “complete the work satisfactorily and on time” (Sandilands 1912a). The *WCD* is the first quotation for *make the grade* in the *OED* (Considine 2003: 253), though it appears Stead predates that entry by a year. The entry’s designation in the *OED* as “Originally *U.S.*” is not supported by the Canadian antedatings. The moral and spiritual salvation that the speaker expects settlers to receive in the West is necessarily

tied to the industry of the settler as they attempt to “complete the work satisfactorily” and this value becomes associated with the speaker’s western Canadian dialect in the poem.

In “Hustlin’ in my Jeans” from the same collection, Stead likewise writes in a western Canadian dialect (specifying this time that the speaker is a homesteader) and makes use of western Canadian slang in order to boost the West with words such as *hustle* “to work hard” (Sandilands 1913a: 24) and *hobo* (ibid.: 23):

There are times when most folks figure
that their life has been a blank;
You may be a homeless hobo or director of a
bank
But the thought will catch you nappin’ . . .
That the world will roll without you till the Resurrection morn,
An' that no one would have missed you if
you never had been born;
An' I give you my conclusion—all that
livin' really means
Is revealed to those who hustle on the
homestead in their jeans. (Stead 1912: 80-94).

Sandilands definition for *hustle* is one of the more flamboyant entries (and one which changes between editions) as Sandilands quotes a poem reflecting what is seen as a the religious value of hard work: “Hustle! and fortune awaits you;. Shirk! and defeat is for sure; For there’s no chance of deliverance For the chap who can’t endure” (Sandilands 1913a: 24). Also, the definition for *hustler* ties this idea to specifically to succeeding in the Canada: “the man who gets on in Canada

and elsewhere” (ibid.). Stead appears to be using *hustle* in the same way as he evokes religious imagery with the lines “resurrection morn” suggesting a more significant godly existence in the West, and places *hobo* in opposition to the hardworking, hustling, homesteader. Ultimately these lines reproduce the ‘pamphlet’ narrative of the West, exemplified by the locus of the Promised Land; the choice to feature western Canadian speakers rather than government officials, however, obscures the imperial narrative from which these poems arise.

The concern for an honest portrayal of the West was a persistent issue with the many effusive pamphlets and accounts of Canada that were circulated abroad. John Foster Fraser, a travel writer, wrote a book titled *Canada As It Is* (1905). He is careful to frame the narrative as an honest outsider’s perspective of Canada as he is aware of questions surrounding the validity of accounts in “government pamphlets and [by] subsidised lecturers” (2):

I feel it necessary to record this because the impression abroad is that Canada is ‘booming’ itself a little too ardently, and there is an unjustified suspicion that all books dealing with Canada, especially those that are adulatory, are financed by the Government (Fraser 1905: 2).

Despite “mild caveats” (Kitzan 2007: 45), Fraser’s ‘honest’ opinion ultimately supports the vision of Canada as an agricultural empire. A common technique in the early days of the immigration campaign to legitimate the pamphlets was interviewing settlers about the quality of their farm (Dunae 1984: 84). Fraser likewise validates his largely positive narrative of the West by printing interviews with farmers:

Many of Fraser’s interviews with farmers in the West were with men who had arrived with little or nothing and had achieved comfort and, sometimes, considerable wealth. But,

he was careful to point out, very much depended on hard work ... and the ‘good luck’ that brought the Canadian Pacific Railway (Kitzan 2007: 45).

Fraser was writing for a British audience in, as Kitzan puts it, “the context of the popular imperialism prevalent in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century which held that any area ruled or advised by the British was bound to flourish” (48). Stead also explicitly places himself as an imperial subject, dedicating a poem in *Songs of the Prairie* to defend his position as “a colonial” (Stead 1912: 75). Both are concerned with the expansion of the British Empire and the success of Canada within it, and both use the voice of homesteaders to provide validity to their accounts and to function as a friendly voice of settler colonialism.

The question of morality found in the ‘new’ society of the West is also central to Nellie McClung’s work. McClung’s concern was located more firmly within the society that was already present in western Canada than with attracting more immigrants as she was best known for her role in “social and moral reform movements” that were “prevalent in western Canada in the early 1900s” (Sugars & Moss 2009: 522). Her support of such movements encompassed issues such as women’s suffrage and, more troublingly, eugenics. Despite her more local concern, McClung makes use of the similar narratives of the honest, hardworking homesteader in her stories to celebrate western Canada. Warne (2007) argues that McClung saw the prairie as “a land of opportunity and rich resources waiting only for energetic, hardworking effort to turn it into a welcoming, just, and life-affirming home” (201). The concept of *making good*, defined in the *WCD*, is central to two of her stories in *The Black Creek Stopping House and Other Stories* with a focus on the concept of moral ‘goodness’ connected to the industry of homesteaders.

In stories where the narrators otherwise speak in standard (Canadian) English²¹, the colloquialism *make good* is a marked usage of western Canadian slang. This is especially clear in the story “The Return Ticket” where McClung sets the phrase in quotations, marking it as a colloquial expression differentiated from the main narrative voice. Sandilands’ entry for *make good* (Sandilands 1913a: 38) directs the reader to the definition for *good* which Sandilands says is used in a “multitude of other [Canadian] expressions” and defines *make good*: “to do well or come up to expectations in one’s employment” (ibid.: 20). A similar definition is provided in *DCHP-1 Online* “to succeed in an undertaking, become a success” (Dollinger, Brinton, and Fee 2013: s.v. ‘make good’). The *OED* cites the term *make good* (in the intransitive sense) as “chiefly U.S.”, though both the *WCD* and the *DCHP* suggest that, like *make the grade* in Stead’s poetry, the association with American English alone is not accurate. Important here is that both McClung and Sandilands associate the word with a particularly western Canadian way of speaking. McClung explicitly ties the concept of *making good* to morality, but her usage implies that the road to morality is found in the West and encompasses the value of industry and Sandilands’ more vague definition of “do well.”

In McClung’s “The Return Ticket” the narrator recounts the story of a woman she had met who was transporting the body of her daughter Annie back to the West. It is heavily implied that Annie’s husband’s intemperance and his failure to send a letter to his dying wife, because he was “off on a spree” (McClung 1912: 138), had caused Annie’s death. The story begins at a train

²¹ McClung interestingly uses both spellings of plow/plough in different parts of her *The Black Creek Stopping House and Other Stories*: “plow” (26) for the noun and opting for “plough” for the verb for example “ploughing” (125) and “ploughed” (180). Sandilands comments on “plow” being “the American and British way of spelling plough” (1913:34). McClung’s usage of both appears particularly Canadian as the mix of BrE and AmE spellings is a particular characteristic of CanE (Dollinger 2019: 14).

station in Emerson, Manitoba, a border town south of Winnipeg, and ends with Annie's body journeying westward. As the train disappears on the horizon the narrator suggests that Annie, who was "a good girl" (ibid.: 134), will achieve spiritual salvation on her journey back to the West, and that it is possible for her husband, Dave Johnson, to do the same: "As the sun's warmth began to thaw the tracery of frost on the window, I began to hope that God's grace may yet find out Dave, and that he too may 'make good' in the years to come" (ibid.:141).

The question of what counts as "good" in "The Return Ticket" is tied to a particular vision of marriage located on a homestead. When Annie and the narrator go to Minnesota to seek treatment for Annie's unnamed illness, they meet a very sick woman whom the narrator expects to pull through because "a woman can stand a lot if she has a good man" (ibid.: 139). This couple serves as an archetype of a good marriage. This "good man" is the woman's husband Jim, who is taking care of their four children in Quill Lake, Saskatchewan. This is in contrast to Dave, whose union with Annie has apparently produced no children. Unlike the "good man" of the story who is reliably located on the homestead in Saskatchewan, Dave is dislocated in space, as he "often went away and stayed for weeks, and [Annie] not knowing where he was or how he would come home" (ibid.: 134). In a story in which illness is largely metaphorical, and prognoses are based on whether or not one has a "good man" at home, the story implies that had Dave sent a letter "from the West" (ibid.: 138), Annie would have survived. Although the concept of 'goodness' is that of spiritual salvation, in the story this salvation is ultimately located in the West and tied to the ability to support a family on a homestead.

In "You Never Can Tell" the question of *making good* resurfaces and is, again, explicitly tied to western Canadian speech. The story follows Kate Dawson, a writer who is invited to speak at an arts and crafts convention in Ontario. Gossip begins to spread that Mrs. Dawson is

unhappy with her marriage and her life on an Alberta homestead. These rumours, including suggested infidelity, get back to her husband who is at home taking care of their children. The tension of the story lies in the two different narrative viewpoints that describe Kate's actions. The first viewpoint, located in Ontario, is filtered through the gossip about Kate, and the other viewpoint comes from Jim Dawson who is located on the homestead. "Jim" is the same name as the "good man" in "The Return Ticket" and Jim Dawson likewise seems to fill that roll in "You Never Can Tell" though with added focus on the honesty of Mr. Dawson. The language used to describe Kate's actions is central to the story, as the reader is left in the dark about which account is the honest one until the end.

McClung sets up an explicit contrast with Kate and Jim's honesty and the Ontario townspeople's dishonesty. Kate's storytelling is notable in Ontario because it is simple: "there was no art in the telling, only a sweet naturalness and an apparent honesty" (McClung 1912: 166). This is contrasted explicitly with the gossip-filled newspaper account of her time in Ontario which is anything but simple as "good old phrases, clover-scented and rosy-hued, that had lain in cold storage for years, were brought out and used with conscious pride" (ibid.: 170). This flowery language is used to hide the more sinister assault on Kate's moral character as the people in town had encouraged Kate to reconnect with Bruce whom they suppose is an "old lover" (ibid.: 169) and this was reported in the newspaper story which is viewed as full of "good old phrases" from the Ontario viewpoint space. When Jim Dawson reads the newspaper article he discovers that it is in fact not "good" and the dishonesty of the gossiping townspeople is revealed as he is shocked by the "utter brutality of the printed page" (ibid.: 172) including "the paragraph about the old lover with its hidden and sinister meaning" (ibid.: 172). Kate returns to Alberta in part because of the dishonesty of the Ontarians' speech saying that in Ontario

“everything is ‘perfectly sweet’ and ‘darling’ to [the women]” (ibid.: 175) and that the supposed old lover Bruce was “always saying tiresome, plastery sort of things” (ibid.).

The honesty of speech in Jim Dawson is connected to western Canadian slang found in the *WCD*. When Jim reads the article’s headline, his thoughts are represented as indirect speech: “his girl had made good, you bet!” (ibid.: 172). Beyond his literal association with homesteading as a rancher in Alberta, his speech is distinctly colloquial, intended to represent a western Canadian way of speaking as both *make good* (see quote above) and *you bet* (Sandilands 1913a: 6) are found in the *WCD*. Given the moral trials that Mrs. Dawson goes through as the townspeople gossip about her marriage and encourage her to be unfaithful to her husband, *make good*, again, has both a moral dimension (Kate *made good* by being proved faithful) and Sandilands’ sense of doing well, or satisfying expectations (i.e. Kate impressed her audience with her honest storytelling). The phrase is spoken by the honest Jim who has achieved his own success as he is able to support his family on the homestead.

In both of McClung’s stories, as in Stead’s poetry, a western Canadian style of speech is specifically associated with a heightened honesty and is particularly tied to religious moral values that come from hard work on the land in western Canada. An enthusiasm for the project of the West depended on both the governmental narratives and the popular enthusiasm for the Promised Land myths that so quickly created a feeling that the Canadian West had a distinct culture. It is significant that Sandilands did not attempt to create a dictionary of Canadian English more generally but chose to focus on the language of the West specifically. The West was its own project and the *WCD* would not have had an audience if the idea of the ‘Canadian West’ did not inspire its own distinct story which was tied to the narratives that the Government pushed as they tried to settle the West.

3.2 Lady of the Snows or God's Own Country?

In 1897, Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem that caused a controversy in the relatively new Dominion of Canada. The poem, "Our Lady of Snows", was "immediately denounced as an unkind criticism of Canada, and in particular western Canada, and as an impediment to tourism and immigration" (Francis 1989: 110). In the years leading up to Confederation, Canada was seen "as a remote, semi-arctic wilderness suitable only for the fur trade" (Owram 2007: 4-5) and this image of Canada as a land of snow, which the poem reinforced, was precisely what the Canadian Government was trying to avoid as the Department responsible for immigration attempted to create an appealing image of Canada to attract potential homesteaders (Knowles 2016: 88). John Foster Fraser²² (1905) describes the reaction of Canadians to the phrase *Lady of the Snows*: "if, with an attempt at poetical facetiousness, [the visitor] speaks of Canada as 'Our Lady of the Snows,' he is made aware he has said something which is not appreciated" (3). The many Canadian responses to the poem attempt to reinforce the image of Canada as an agricultural haven: the pamphleteer George Livingstone Dodds, for instance, describes Canada as "Lady Bountiful not the Lady of Snows" (Francis 1989: 110). Another writer accuses Kipling of 'obscuring' the fact that the 'Dominion' had the "largest and finest area of wheat-producing land" (Machray 1903: 314); and even in 1930 the controversy continued as Kipling was reportedly still "impenitent" for his poem which was thought to be "damaging to the Dominion's

²² Interesting to note, Sandilands was apparently acquainted with Fraser (and took issue with his position as Press Representative to J. Ramsay McDonald). Sandilands says of Fraser's book *Canada As It Is*: that it "gave great offence to real Canadians because he alleged they were uneducated and in The Press Club in London six years later he was told by myself that he would be ignorant too if he had to work on the land in summer and snatch a bit of learning in the winter. I remember, when in Winnipeg that many old-timers said his book was pure impertinence and if you remember it was banned from many of the public libraries" (Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37875).

reputation” (Anon. 1930, 12). The *WCD* provides what appears to be a subtle response to the controversy:

Lady of the Snows, a name bestowed upon Canada by Rudyard Kipling. **God’s Own Country** is what the patriotic Canadian more frequently calls it (Sandilands 1912a). Though not as accusatory as some of the more heated responses to the poem, Sandilands’ decision to contrast the idea of *Lady of the Snows* in opposition to *God’s Own Country* is a loaded one. The phrase *God’s Own Country* implies a moral aspect to the West fitting within the “Promised Land” narrative discussed by Francis (1989), and is contrasted with the undesirable idea of the West as a ‘frozen wasteland’ epitomized by the term *Lady of the Snows* suggesting that Sandilands had a good grasp on the larger significance of the language he described in his *WCD*. When Sandilands attempted to have his third edition published in 1929 he used these same narratives to attempt to convince Richard Bennett (then Leader of the Opposition of Canada) that the *WCD* was still necessary to maintain the integrity of the West as *God’s Own Country*.

Although Sandilands was enthusiastic about participating in the Government’s vision of the West with his choice of dictionary entries in 1912/13, he struck a different tone as he continuously refers to Canada as “Lady of Snows” using Kipling’s description of the West. The first letter that Sandilands sent to Richard Bennett was not from Sandilands himself but from High Commissioner Philip Larkin in England who refused Sandilands funding for the *WCD*’s third edition. Sandilands sent Bennett the letter with a handwritten note which reads: “Poor old Lady of Snows!!!” and suggested that there was “no knowledge of Canada at Canada House” (Bennet Fonds 1929/30: 37854). Sandilands appears to suggest that his dictionary is a source of knowledge of Canada that is different from the ‘ignorant’ view Canada as a land of snow. Likewise, his invocation of “Lady of the Snows” implies a vague threat that the imperial project

of Canada would regress if his dictionary was not published and if those in government did not recognize the importance of the image of the West that the *WCD* represented.

As Sandilands grew more frustrated with the Opposition's refusals to fund the dictionary, he turned this language on Bennett to whom he wrote that "[the] Lady of the Snows . . . is afraid to pay for rye in her turn" (Bennet Fonds 1929/30: 37904). Sandilands implies that in addition to the symbolic regression back to the Lady of Snows, Canada has undergone a moral regression in its dishonest refusal to pay the amount which Sandilands claims is his "due" (ibid.: 37906). He threatens that "no one will go from this district [i.e. Brighton] without being warned that [Canada] is a land of hoboese, grafters, and daylight robbers" (ibid.: 37909). These insults make use of the language found in the dictionary to attack the values of honesty and hard work specifically. His use of the word *grafter* is an assault on the honesty of Canada: "**Graft**, bribery and corruption . . . **Grafter**, a person who uses his position to fill his purse or who sells posts and employment to the highest bidder" (Sandilands 1913a: 21). Likewise, his use of the word *hobo* (defined in the *WCD* as a tramp, a vagrant (ibid.: 23)) is an attempt to insult the image of the 'hard working' western Canadian. As discussed in section 2.2.3, the *WCD* mentions, on three occasions, the fact that there are no *poorhouses* in Canada, saying "there are many charitable societies to help the really deserving poor, but no workhouses to harbour the loafers and won't-works" (Sandilands 1912a). Calling Canada a land of "hoboese" is a dramatic turn from the narratives of a new society pushed in the pre-war editions of the *WCD*.

This new attitude was put to the extreme. In one of his later letters when the prospect of funding appeared nearly impossible, Sandilands self-consciously makes use of as many western Canadian slang words as he can:

In 1910 when I arrived in Winnipeg and had more dough than I have now people flocked round the new timer to give him the glad hand and put up a dandy proposition for him to get soaked over and I fell everytime and even when I went to the C. P. R. depot at Winnipeg to get any trains to the coast a Canuck carried my bag and tapped me for a few dollars [emphasis in original] (37905).

Sandilands marks his authority and knowledge on the language of the West, and shows how the narrative could be turned to view Canada in a bad light as he paints the whole country as fundamentally dishonest.

In addition to changes in the Government's immigration program alluded to in section 2.4, the language used to discuss the West had changed. In 1914, the enthusiasm for the West was still a present concern; however, a dramatic change in Canadian society and in the enthusiastic belief in the West was about to occur as "the prevailing mood of optimism that characterized the first decade of the new century ... was replaced by one of horror and disillusionment with the advent of the first World War in 1914" (Sugars & Moss 2009: 451-452). The images that Sandilands was evoking from 1912/13 no longer had currency in 1929/30. Sandilands' own disillusionment with Canada, seen in his letters to Bennett, is ironically more fitting to the general mood at the time, on the eve of the Depression, than his invocation of western Canadian slang and the narratives of hard work and honesty, as the belief in the idea of a new society gave way to a starker reality in the decades following The Great War.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

In many ways, the *WCD* was an anomaly. Published 25 years before any other attempt to produce a dictionary of Canadian English, it was an unprecedented journey into lexicography for Canada. It was apparently chance that one man, John Sandilands, decided to write the “bizarre little phrase-book” (Geller 1978: 305) that was the *WCD*. In other ways, the project seems almost inevitable, and the idea of a western Canadian dictionary was waiting for someone like Sandilands to write it. The population of the West increased dramatically “from a near-vacant land with fewer than 300 000 people in 1896 to a region with a population of over one and a half million by 1914” (Francis 1989: 108). The dominant group was immigrants, and with them came a variety of different languages which enriched the English spoken in the West (Boberg 2010: 93). These immigrants were attracted by a carefully cultivated image, that of the “Promised Land” (Francis 1989) that contributed to the idea that there really was something significant in the idea of ‘the West’. Sandilands was aware of how these narratives were used in selling the West and was skilled at harnessing them for his dictionary. This awareness likely stemmed in part from his time working in the newspaper industry in Britain where much of the immigration propaganda was directed and which produced its own propaganda in the newspapers (Dunae 1984: 84), as well as his eventual employment as a proofreader of immigration pamphlets. Sandilands had a keen marketing sense, evident in the evolution of the *WCD*’s print editions (discussed in section 2.2.3), and saw that a dictionary dedicated to a western Canadian way of speaking was a project worth pursuing. Despite the Canadian West’s relative youth, a reviewer could say in 1912 that the *Western Canadian Dictionary* fulfilled a “a long felt want”

(Sandilands 1912d) because the sheer amount of dialogue surrounding the West took its own shape that was distinct from the rest of Canada.

The narratives of ‘hard work’ as a moral value and the belief that “settlers ought to make it on their own” (Hall 2007: 94) meant that those who failed to succeed in the West were thought to suffer from “‘a lack of intelligence or perseverance’, had ‘some other defect of character,’ or were simply not industrious enough” (Francis and Kitzen 2007: XII). This effectively meant that whatever difficult conditions a settler might have faced, and exaggerations about the quality of the land that they were told, their failure was a moral failure and not a reflection on the Canadian West. These narratives needed to be, if not thrown away, at least adapted in the face of the unprecedented, and uncontrollable disaster that the first World War would bring:

The bitter divisions within the country and the widespread loss on the battlefields of Europe belied the pre-war optimism that fuelled the image of the Promised Land. So too did the severe climatic conditions and the dramatic economic downturn that arrived during the 1930s (Francis and Kitzen 2007: XVI).

Sandilands himself experienced this western Canadian disillusionment in his turn, evident in his desperation to have the third edition of the *WCD* published. As he could not procure any support for his project and resorted to calling the residents of Canada *hoboes* and *grafters*, attacking the values of hard work and honesty which western Canadian slang had represented well. Sandilands likely experienced his own hardships during the war as he was not allowed to join the military for employment and it is possible that he is the “John Sandilands” printer who had to turn to a workhouse during the war and later became homeless himself. Sandilands certainly did not lack drive and perseverance, evident in the great many letters sent to a great many people trying to find support to publish another edition of the *WCD*. Sandilands drive to celebrate western

Canadian slang was not as effective in 1930 as it had been in 1912; the West was, in a sense, speaking a new language. Sandilands ultimately, like many other settlers, felt that Canada had lied to him and expressed disappointment in his final letters that Canada was not helping him in his time of need saying that “Canada has let me down” (R. B. Bennett Fonds 1929-30: 37907).

The enthusiasm for the West exemplified by the Promised Land narrative was found both in the government pamphlets, literature, the language of western Canadian society at large, and the *WCD*, as it became “the dominant perception of the region during the formative years of agricultural settlement from the mid-nineteenth century to the first World War” (Francis & Kitzan 2007: IX). The origins of this image come from British Imperialists who “painted rosy pictures of exotic lands in the distant corners of the empire” (XIII), and these narratives had and continue to have devastating effects as Indigenous Peoples were separated from their lands and ways of life by the influx of settlers onto the land.

The creation of the ‘Canadian West’ was not an organic process. A concerted effort went into cultivating a coherent narrative of the West, and this required the destruction of ways of being which already existed on the land. This image of a new land and new life was effective in attracting hopeful immigrants to a utopian “Promised Land” but it meant minimizing and ignoring narratives that did not fit. Settlers in the West participated in these narratives as well, as society as a whole was encouraged to work hard if they were to *make good* or *make the grade*. Ultimately, a great deal of work went into creating the idea of *the West* – it was, indeed, *made*.

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Appendices

Appendix A

A.1 Figures of the *WCD*'s First Edition Printings

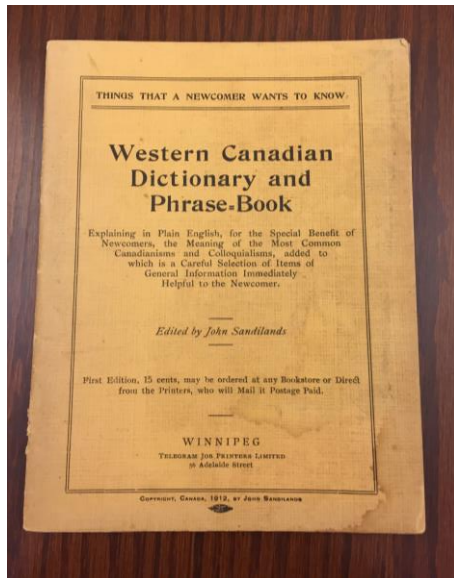


Figure 1 Plain printing of the *WCD* [front cover] (Sandilands 1912b)

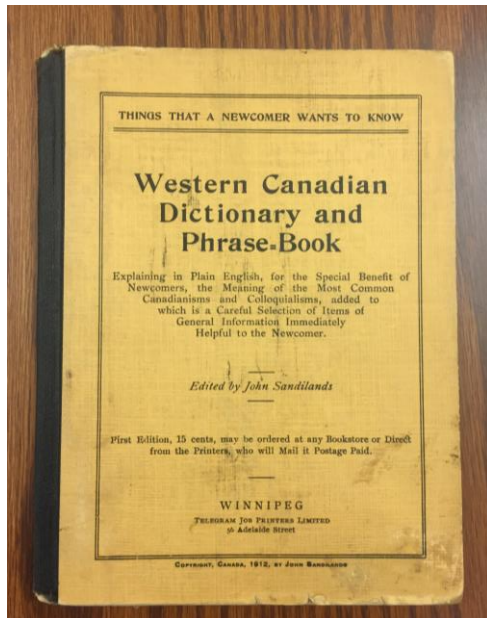


Figure 2 Hardcover printing of the *WCD* [front cover] (Sandilands 1912c)

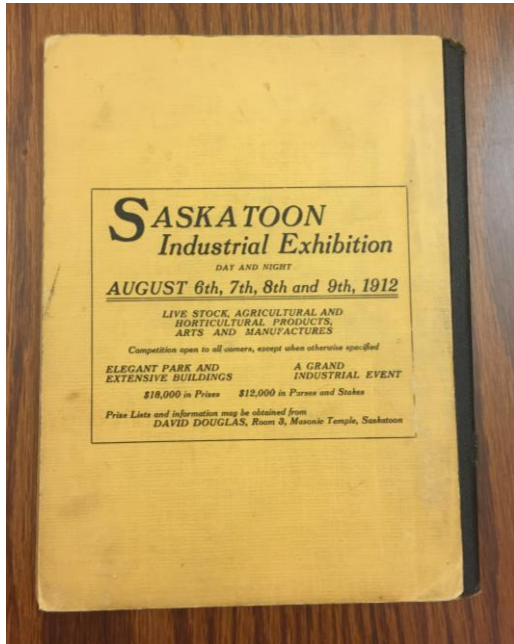


Figure 3 Hardcover printing of the WCD [back cover] (Sandilands 1912c)

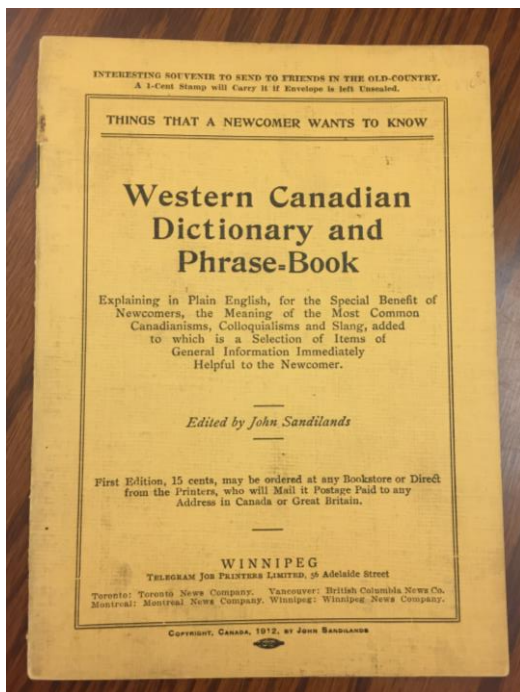


Figure 4 Souvenir printing of the WCD [front cover] (Sandilands 1912d)

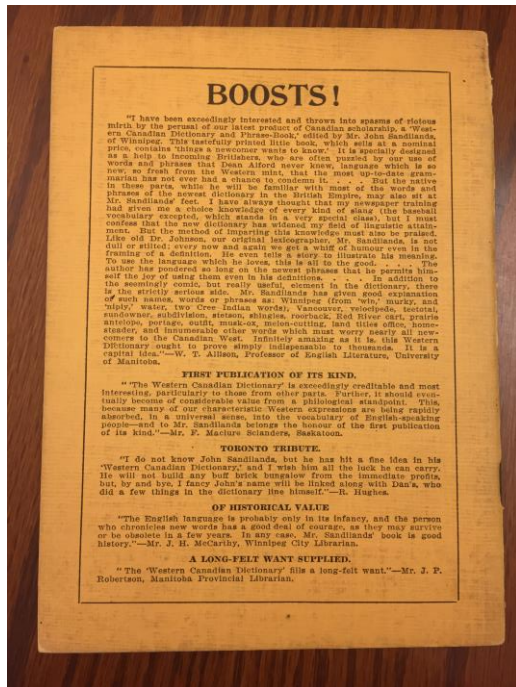


Figure 5 Souvenir printing of the WCD [back cover] (Sandilands 1912d)

A.2 Figures of the WCD's Second Edition Printings

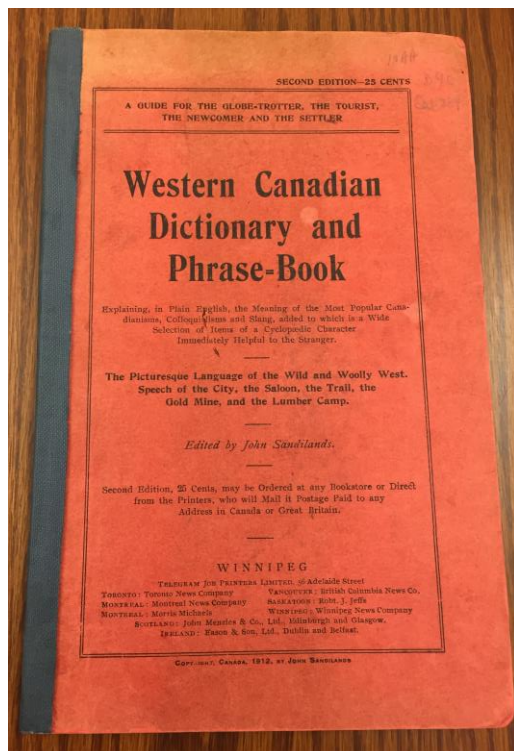


Figure 6 Red printing of the WCD [front cover] (Sandilands 1913c)

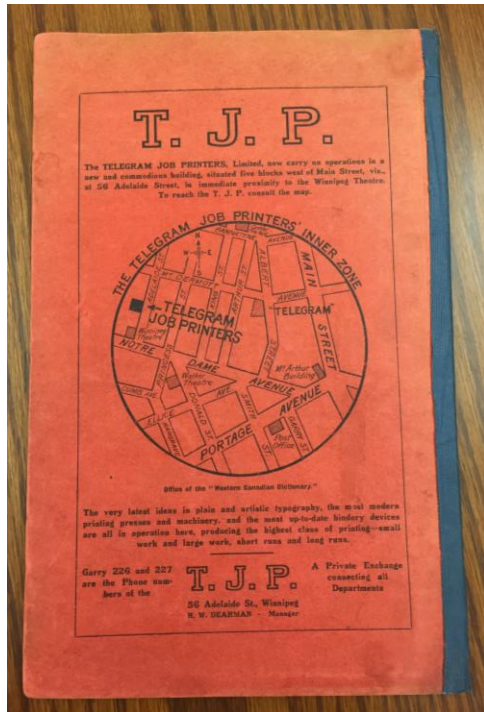


Figure 7 Red printing of the WCD [back cover] (Sandilands 1913c)

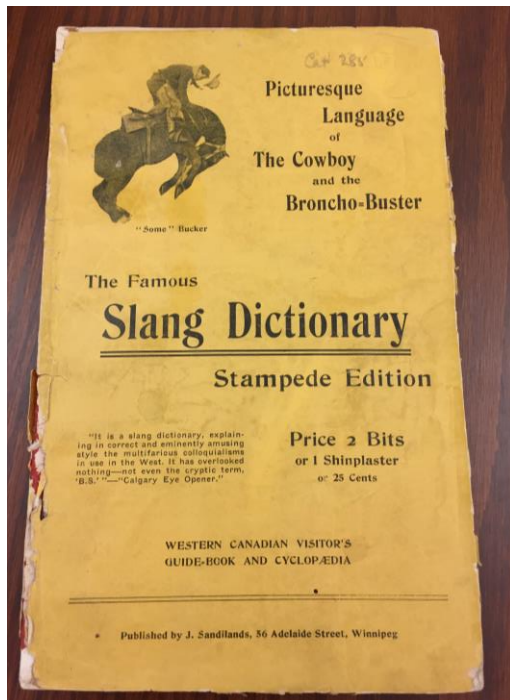


Figure 8 Stampede Edition of the WCD [front cover] (Sandilands 1913d)

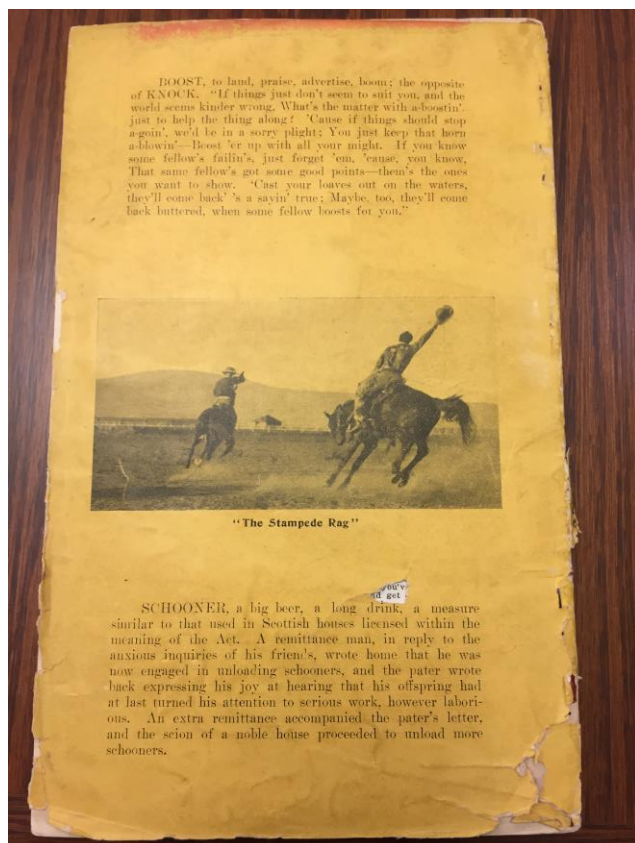


Figure 9 Stampede Edition of the WCD [back cover] (Sandilands 1913d)

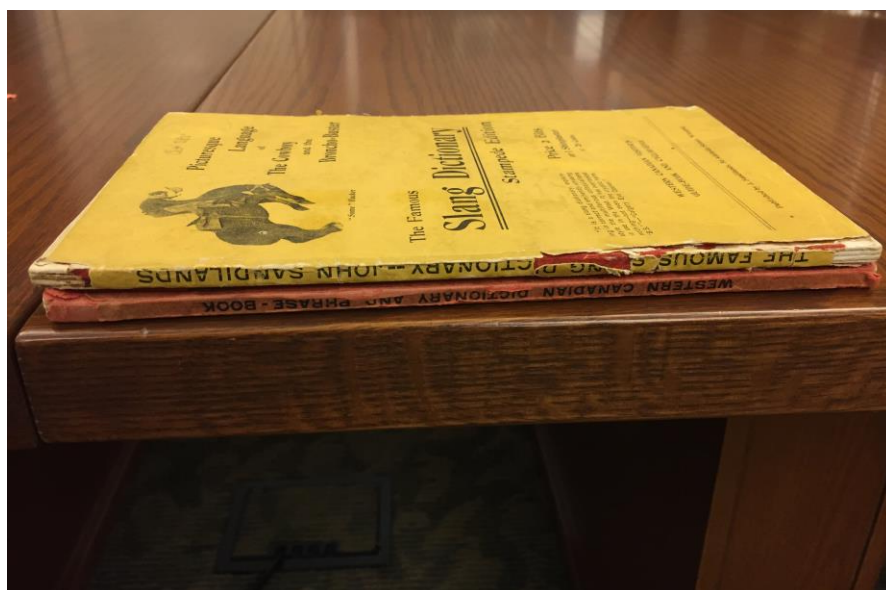


Figure 10 Stampede Edition and Red printing of the WCD [bindings] (Sandilands 1913b and 1913d)