GENDER, CLASS AND COMMUNITY: THE HISTORY OF SNE-NAY-MUXW WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis documents the employment history of Sne-nay-muxw women. The Sne-nay-muxw, a Coast Salish peoples, live on the southeast coast of Vancouver Island close to the city of Nanaimo. Nanaimo was established by the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1852 as coal mining town. Coal dominated the economy until the early 20th century when forestry related production became important. Today a service economy has eclipsed both the primary and secondary industries. Within these economies a distinct gender, race and class segregation structured Sne-nay-muxw women's employment opportunities. This study examines the nature of this segregation, the Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy and the gender ideology that promoted both women's inclusion and exclusion in wage labour. A central question posed in this thesis is why Sne-nay-muxw women today perceive their traditional roles to be within the home despite their historical participation in the labour force.

Feminist anthropology provides the theoretical and methodological approach used for this study. It is accepted that women's experiences in the labour force are different not only from men but also from other women based upon relational inequalities of race and class. Historical data was collected from a variety of sources; published and unpublished government reports, missionary accounts, letters and journals. Nineteen women and eight men were interviewed in the community for both historic and contemporary accounts of employment experiences.

History reveals that during the mining economy Sne-nay-muxw women were excluded from working in the mines and limited to employment as domestic servants. The
introduction of Chinese labour, decreasing coal demands and increased technology forced many women to migrate with their families to the canneries on the Fraser river and the hop fields in Washington state. In the forestry related production economy, Sne-nay-muxw women’s opportunities were limited despite the expansion of employment for women in the service sector. State policies and inferior education were significant factors in this exclusion. At this time Sne-nay-muxw women continued to migrate with their families to the fish camps on Rivers Inlet and the berry fields in Washington state. In the last two decades the service economy has dominated in Nanaimo. Sne-nay-muxw women have found increasing job opportunities on and off reserve in administration, management and professional service delivery programs. While this employment is part of the wider trend for women in the service economy, Sne-nay-muxw women’s opportunities remain segregated by gender, race and class.

Women’s participation in the labour force is shown to be linked to the organization of their domestic economy. Before 1920 this economy incorporated both subsistence production and farming with seasonal wage labour. After this time the Sne-nay-muxw became increasingly dependent upon wage labour. However, extended family and kinship networks have remained important for support and cooperation. This form of household organization did not constrain women’s participation in the labour force. Today extended families remain the central organizing principle in Sne-nay-muxw lives. Sne-nay-muxw women’s identity and opportunities for education and employment remain linked to their membership in these families.

Shifts in women’s participation in the labour force is shown to be accompanied by acceptance of a domestic ideology. During the mining economy when women actively
sought wage labour, they acquired domestic skills needed for wage labour but did not accept an ideology that promoted their dependency upon men. Historical evidence indicates that they retained a significant degree of autonomy in their lives. With men’s increased security of employment in the forestry economy, the idealized role of women as housewives was promoted. Families that were able to realize women’s exclusion from the labour force gained status and prestige in the community. Finally, in the service economy, the Sne-nay-muxw gender ideology includes women’s participation in the labour force to occupations linked to their domestic and nurturing roles.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Research Problem

In a survey taken in 1991 to assess the community needs of women in Nanaimo, a young Sne-nay-muxw woman when asked about her problems finding employment said:

It has not been the traditional way for Salish women to work outside the home. Traditionally women's role was to stay home and look after the house and the children.

This statement is problematic for such a description of women's roles is incompatible with accounts in the ethnographic literature about the sexual division of labour in Coast Salish economy. According to this literature, there was great flexibility in gender roles and women were not restricted solely to work within the home. The segregation of men and women into two distinct spheres of work is in fact a product of the historical transformation produced with the introduction of wage labour, and was not found in 'traditional' economies.

Furthermore, the historical material as well as oral accounts reveal that Sne-nay-muxw women were not segregated into the domestic sphere when wage labour was initially introduced. They, like men, were an important part of the early economy in the province that depended upon a cheap and unskilled labour force. Nonetheless, their participation did change and steadily declined after the Great Depression of the 1930's. Only within the last two decades are Sne-nay-muxw women again seeking wage employment to a

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1 This survey was undertaking for the Nanaimo Women's Resource Center.
significant degree. Thus the statement above is a description of women’s lives in the immediate past when their participation in the labour force was low. It would seem that a corresponding ideology accommodated this change and became accepted as the ‘traditional way.’

The focus of this study is to understand why Sne-nay-muxw women’s participation in the labour force changed and how a gender ideology supported this change. Several studies have analyzed the impact of a wage economy upon Coast Salish peoples but few, with the exceptions of Mitchell (1976) and Sparrow (1976), have examined how this economy specifically affected women’s employment. ² It is clear from their work that Coast Salish women had similar experiences in the labour force. Nonetheless, despite this similarity there were differences produced by local economy demands, women’s own family situation, and a gender ideology that either supported their participation or exclusion from wage labour. To understand the history of Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment this thesis raises these central questions: 1) How did the local economy of Nanaimo structure Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment opportunities? 2) How did Sne-nay-muxw family organization help or hinder women’s participation in the labour force? 3) What was the gender ideology that accommodated this participation? and 4) What changes in the economy have encouraged Sne-nay-muxw women to seek wage employment today?

The Sne-nay-muxw are a Coast Salish people who live on the southeastern coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Traditionally their territory encompassed various hunting and fishing resource sites on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and the mainland of Vancouver. Today they live on four of their six reserves in close proximity to Nanaimo, one of the large urban centers on Vancouver Island. This community began when the Hudson’s Bay Company established a coal mine on the site in the mid 19th Century. Over the next half century the prosperity of the town was linked to coal production and the monopoly of a single mining company, the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company. The decline in coal demands by the early 20th Century and the Depression of the 1930’s forced the community to turn to forestry related production, and later to retail and service industries. This transition from a coal mining industry to the well developed secondary and tertiary economy of today, produced a variety of wage opportunities for both Sne-nay-muxw men and women. These opportunities were determined by a segregated labour force that was intrinsic to the specific industries found in Nanaimo. Understanding Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment experiences and the gender ideology that supported this participation demands situating women within this local economic context.

Discerning how the particular economic structure of Nanaimo shaped Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment experiences I propose to use the theoretical and methodological approach developed in feminist anthropology. This approach has undergone several developmental phases. It began with what has become known as the ‘anthropology of women’ which explicitly focused on women to combat the previous bias
in the discipline that centered on men. However, it soon became clear that this approach segregated and marginalized the study of women. Understanding women and women’s lives demands more than singling women out or adding women to a study. This criticism led feminist anthropology to move away from studying women as individuals or categories, to the study of gender, an analytical concept that describes the interrelations of men and women. The recognition that gender is both a cultural construction and a social relation that determines what men and women do in their society places the emphasis upon cultural and historical specificity of gender. This leads to increasing concern to deconstruct gender in order to understand the meaning of ‘women’ but also to understand the comparative differences among women. Understanding how the social relations of gender, race and class intersect to produce differences in women’s experiences is the challenge now faced by both anthropology and feminist theory. One objective of this thesis is to provide an empirical example of this articulation.

For the Sne-nay-muxw the issue of employment is a primary concern today. Despite their close proximity to Nanaimo, a large urban center, they suffer high unemployment like many other Native peoples living on more isolated reserves (see Canada, Department of Indian Affairs 1980, Powless 1985). Recent funding for education and job training programs, and the hiring of an employment counselor have enabled them to make some gains, but the future remains bleak for changes in this employment situation. It is the hope of this thesis to be more than an academic exercise and to offer the Sne-nay-muxw a means of understanding their own contribution to the local economy as well as the

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structural barriers that have conditioned their employment. As they seek new directions in their relationship with the capitalist economy through various economic development initiatives and land claims, consideration of the limitations capitalist division of labour imposed in the past, and continues to impose in the present, may help them to formulate new solutions. It is with this in mind that I have undertaken this research.

Literature Review

The literature on Native American women is extensive as revealed in several bibliographies published since the 1980’s (Koehler 1982; Green 1983; Bataille & Sands 1991). Until recently most of this work was highly descriptive and heavily influenced by the stereotypical myths and images drawn from European ideas about Native women’s roles in society. However recent work has applied a more theoretical approach exposing these previous biases. Perhaps the most important finding of this literature is that the impact of capitalism has had varying affects upon Native women’s lives. The following literature review discusses some of the important insights of this literature as it bears upon the historical experiences of women in the fur trade, the early industrial period of the 19th Century, and the contemporary employment situation on the Northwest Coast.  

Several historical studies of the fur trade have confirmed that Native women played a vital role in this mercantilist economy. They were an essential labour force in the daily operations of the fur trade, processing furs, acting as translators and middlemen, as well as taking on roles as political allies and wives (Van Kirk 1980). However, the impact of this

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4 Northwest Coast is defined here as the Northwest Coast Cultural region as identified by Kroeber (1923).
economy varied with the intensity of the interaction. Women who lived close to the fur trading posts and within the sphere of intense trading had different experiences than women who lived greater distances away. This uneven impact is evident in the history of the fur trade on the Northwest coast. The maritime fur trade which began after 1775 and ended in 1825, had a regional impact that was limited to areas where sea otter furs were abundant. Communities on the northern outer coasts were drawn into an intense trading sphere that only ended with the scarcity of furs (Wike 1951). On the other hand the land fur trade drew upon trade from interior groups and intensely affected those groups that were strategically placed close to the fur trading posts. The 'homeguard' and the fur trade society that sprang up around the posts was distinctly intermeshed and interdependent (see McNeill 1982).

Whether the fur trade undermined or expanded women's economic and political roles on the Northwest coast is one of the key questions addressed in the literature. Elsewhere there is agreement that the level of stratification in Native society is a factor. For example, in egalitarian hunting and gathering societies it is argued that the complementary gender relations characteristic of these societies was eroded leaving women in subordinate roles and wealth concentrated in men's hands (see Perry 1979; Leacock 1978, 1980; Klein 1983; Bourgeault 1983, Anderson 1985). However in stratified societies, the impact of the fur trade was easily incorporated into the existing class structure. Women were able to take advantage of the new wealth and prestige that the introduction of new trade goods produced (see Brown 1975, Grumet 1980, Rothenberg 1980). This was most certainly the case on the Northwest coast where women were noted to have considerable power
and wealth in their societies (Klein 1980, Blackman 1982, Cooper 1992). Their
behaviour in trade transactions was often viewed as an anomaly to the fur traders who
were unaccustomed to women in such public roles (Littlefield 1988).

However, this argument is not supported in all the literature. As Albers (1989) points
out the decline in women’s status in egalitarian societies is far from uniform. Plains Indian
literature reveals that some women retained a great deal of power and autonomy in their
lives during the fur trade (see Schneider 1983, Medicine 1983, Buffalohead 1983, Kehoe
1976, 1983). While women’s roles became more circumscribed there is significant
evidence that indicates that some women achieved wealth and prestige in their societies.
In the same respects there is caution in accepting that women in stratified societies were
not adversely affected. Increased class differentiation and emphasis upon slavery on the
Northwest coast most certainly had a negative impact upon women who were not of the
elite class (see Mitchell 1984, 1985). The issue, as Albers (1989) rightly summarizes, is
not the level of stratification in Native society but whether women retained control over
production and property during the fur trade. If shifts in demands of production or new
demands upon production favoured men’s ownership, then women’s ability to maintain
power and influence in their society was jeopardized.

Many studies confirm that important role of Native women as a vital work force in the
early industrialization and capitalist agricultural economy (Gonzalez 1982, Klein 1980,
Albers 1983, Knack 1988). Despite recognition of this role in other parts of North
America there is little material that documents the initial experiences of women of the
Northwest Coast in the early industrial period. Much of the history written of the late
19th Century focuses upon the relationship of Native people with the state, their placement on reserves, their alienation from resource sites and land, and the impact of government policies that left them impoverished (LaViolette 1961, Duff 1977, Fisher 1977). How Native people interacted with the early economy received little attention until the seminal work by Knight (1978) who documented their participation in the early labour force of British Columbia. He acknowledged that Native people were an important source of cheap labour for a number of industries that developed in the province before 1930. Since his study a revisionist history has begun documenting Native peoples interaction as workers in the early economy (see Mackie 1985; Burrows 1986; Lutz 1992, 1994).

Although Knight (1978) recognized women’s active role in this labour force he principally emphasized the employment experiences of men. Aside from an article by Mitchell & Franklin (1984) a counterpart history of Native women’s labour in the province has not been written. This is not to say that the experience of Native women in the early labour force have been totally ignored. Various studies have documented the important use of their labour in the cannery (see Muszynski 1986, 1987) or the sealing industry (Crockford 1991). Other studies have included women’s individual work experiences through life histories (Sparrow 1976, Mitchell 1976, Blackman 1982). Together these studies have offered important insights into the use of Native women as a cheap labour force for the regional economy.

Studies about Native women's contemporary involvement in the labour force are more sparse. Several surveys undertaken in British Columbia during the 1950’s and 1960’s are not very enlightening as they underreport Native women’s employment (Thompson 1951,
It was not until the 1970's that the issue of women’s employment was studied as part of the interest in the growing trend of Native urbanization (Stanbury, Fields & Stevenson 1972, 1972a; Stanbury & Siegel 1975). Since this time much of the documentation of Native women’s employment has come from Department of Indian Affairs or Census statistics. Apart from a recent paper by Smelser (1991) there has been little analysis of what these statistics mean or how women’s employment varies from region to region. This has not been the case elsewhere. The Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg has published several reports on Native women in the Winnipeg labour force (see Clatworthy 1981, Hull 1982, Peters 1984, Kariya 1989). These studies have revealed the importance of understanding the particular demands of an urban versus rural economy upon women’s employment. Also significantly they have shown that women’s experiences in the labour force are different than Native men’s. Native women find employment in the service sector of the economy while men’s employment opportunities are linked to the primary and secondary sectors. This is also the recent conclusions of Satzewich and Wotherspoon (1993) for Native women’s employment in Canada in general. Nonetheless, despite their participation in an expanding sector of the economy their income remains low and they suffer high unemployment (see Canada, Department of Indian Affairs 1983).

How women’s contemporary employment affects their relationship within their own communities has been the focus of several studies. Despite their marginalization in the labour force many authors observe that within specific Native communities women have a substantial degree of status and power. As well as considerable autonomy in their families
and households they are actively involved in the social and political life of their community. The question why Native women have such power has led to various explanations. Kidwell (1979) and Powers (1986) argue that the high status of Native women in their societies is based on persistent traditional cultural values that always places the role of mothers and wives in high esteem. It is women’s association with this role that has enabled them to move into political roles in dealing with the welfare of their communities. Niethammer (1977), Allen (1986) and LaFromboise, Heyle & Ozer (1990) point to women’s spiritual association with the Spirit or Earth Mother as the key to their power in Native societies. They insist that despite the loss of much Native peoples’ spiritual base, women have retained positions of authority and prominence in their important roles as caretakers and transmitters of culture.

This explanation that women’s status is linked to their real or spiritual roles as mothers and wives is not supported by others who link women’s power and status in their communities to their contribution and control of production within the household. This was noted in the early work of Hamamsy (1957) on Navajo women. Despite men’s access to wage employment, women’s ownership of sheep, essential for the well-being of her family, guaranteed her power and wealth in her society. Conte (1982) in her later study of the Navajo concurred. The insecurity of men’s employment in wage labour increased the importance of women’s control and distribution over the resources in the traditional sectors of the economy. This gave women considerable status and power in the household. This was also the conclusion Fiske (1988) made in her study of Athpaskan speaking people much further north. The high status of Carrier women in their society
was linked to their traditional control of fishing resources which remained essential to household income.

However, other work points to wage income as the key to women’s influence and control in their communities. Albers (1985) maintains that the large contribution made by women of both wage income and traditional resources, gives Dakota women considerable autonomy and power in their households and reservation politics. This is also the conclusion reached by Knack (1989) about the source of power for Paiute women in their community. She contends that this power has notably increased in the last decade with the rise of women’s wage employment. Ackerman (1988) agrees that the high employment of women on the Colville reservation provides them a significant degree of autonomy and equality in their lives that is reflected in their public roles in their community.

While these arguments are insightful about the sources of Native women’s status in their society, they alone fail to explain the great variability in Native women’s lives. In seeking an explanation through the continuity of traditional roles or ownership and control of production within the household, little is understood about the differences that exist among women. This was first described by Hamamasy (1957) and Spindler (1962) who noted that Navajo and Menomini women respectively, experienced the impact of wage labour differently within the same community. Aside from the level of regional development near their communities, age, marital status and place in traditional kinship networks were important variables in women’s lives. Conte (1982) in her study of Navajo women on Black Mesa, observed that the penetration of capitalism created significant stratification among women and their households. As work and resources remained
organized along family kinship lines, women in key positions in these kinship networks were able to control the flow of resources and labour. This was at times to the detriment of other women and households. As Lamphere (1989) discovered in her work with the Navajo, status for women was not a unidimensional issue. The incorporation of Navajo families into the capitalist wage economy revealed a complex situation which was not been the same across time, between communities, or even within communities. She writes:

The experience of Navajo women in the past and in the contemporary period is certainly not “one thing” Further attention to the determinants of variability, both on the reservation and in border communities, is important if we are to isolate the factors that have shaped Navajo women’s lives (Lamphere 1989: 453).

According to Lamphere (1989) there is a great diversity in Navajo women’s situation and even a tendency towards polarization along class lines. The determinants of this variability are women’s position within their families, the regional development that either excludes or draws women into wage labour, and the specific relationship of the community with this economy.

Identifying the factors that influence the variability in women’s lives is also important to Miller’s (1992) study in his analysis of the political roles of Coast Salish women. In comparing the incidence of women’s success for elective political positions among various Coast Salish bands of western Washington and British Columbia, he noted that there are highly localized notions of politics and gender. Some communities associated politics with women while others did not. While there was some correlation with low household median income, indicating that women’s relative wage income was a factor, Miller (1992) acknowledged that women’s employment in the labour force was not the only
variable to consider. Women's access to political power was also linked to their position in families. It was through their membership in a family that women were able to access education and job training. This gave selected women the skills to be activists and managers in their communities.

To summarize there is a general agreement by the above authors that there is great variability in the life experiences of Native women in their communities. Much of this variability now centers upon the access women have to wage employment vis a vis men. Documenting the history of the regional economy and how it offered distinct opportunities to both men and women is essential in understanding how this variability occurred in Sne-nay-muxw women's lives. In this thesis I hope to add to these previous insights by showing that historical and cultural factors explain the employment situation of Sne-nay-muxw women today. These factors are revealed in the gender, race and class segregation of the local economy of Nanaimo, the organization of Sne-nay-muxw families, and a gender ideology that either endorses or excludes their participation in wage labour.

Theory

Gender, Race and Class

Various theories have been used for understanding the historical position of Native peoples' in the labour force, their poor participation rate and segregation into the most exploited sectors of the economy. The earliest theories such as human capital theory, culture of poverty, and modernization theory placed the blame upon indigenous cultural values and behaviours that were incompatible to a capitalist economy (see Thompson
1951, Nagler 1975, Zentner 1973). These theories were easily challenged by the historical and contemporary data that showed that Native peoples attitudes and values about employment differed insignificantly from the wider Canadian society (see Duprez and Sigurdon 1969, Smith 1975, and Knight 1978). Other theories pointed to the structure of the labour force itself. The dual economy perspective linked Native peoples marginalized employment to the historical forces that place them in the secondary segment of the economy. In this segment jobs are low paying and insecure, in contrast to the primary segment (see Wien 1986, Clatworthy 1981, Hull 1982, Stabler 1989). Dependency theory located the problem in capitalism and its creation of Native peoples as an internal colony. From this position it was argued that colonization of Native peoples has created a cheap labour force and simultaneously drained off raw resources from their traditional lands and reserves (Jorgenson 1968, Mitchell 1976, Mooney 1978, Hudson 1989, Carsten 1991, Frideres 1993). Finally, the Marxist approach situated Native peoples employment history within the class structure of the economy. Native people form an underclass in Canadian society and as a consequence of this position are marginalized into the least secure employment (see Forcese 1975, Elias 1975, Pritchard 1977, Adams 1990).

While these theories in turn offer some significant insights into employment conditions of Native people, they fail to explain the variability in Native communities and the cultural and historical conditions specific to them. For example they do not explain the unique employment experiences of the Sne-nay-muxw vis a vis other Coast Salish communities as

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5 While this theoretical approach has been challenged present programs and policies continue to endorse this perspective.
6 See Peters & Rosenberg (1992) for a more detailed discussion of these theories as they apply to Native people in the labour force.
they treat all Native peoples as a homogenous group. Also they do not account for the different participation of Sne-nay-muxw men and women in the labour force today and in the past. Why were Sne-nay-muxw men and women segregated into distinct occupations? Why were Sne-nay-muxw women at specific historical periods displaced from local employment? Such questions are unanswered in theories that only address the issues of race and class and not the gender discrimination in the labour force.

Understanding the gender discrimination within the labour force has been one of the great challenges for Marxist feminists. An early answer focused upon ‘patriarchy’ a universal system of oppression that preceded capitalism and guaranteed male domination both in the domestic sphere and the labour force. This led the analysis to focus upon the role of the family as the mechanism for transmitting a patriarchal ideology, and the economic practices of the labour force that excluded women from the same opportunities as men. However the concept of patriarchy proved problematic (see Beechey 1979). The ahistorical nature of patriarchy had limited value in exploring the nature of women’s subordination in capitalism. While an attempt to see patriarchy as a system that combined with capitalism to segregate women both in domestic labour and in the labour force seemed promising, the synthesis failed to show how the two systems were related historically and conceptually (see Eisenstein 1979, Hartmann 1979, 1981 for this synthesis). Significantly too in trying to articulate the relationship between gender and class such a synthesis had ignored the relations of race. Treating all women as a homogenous racial category neglected a fundamental division of labour that is integral to the capitalist economy.
Such criticism has called for a unified theory of gender, race and class that incorporates the three systems of domination that women experience in their lives. Developing such a theoretical framework has been the focus of recent work (see Parmar 1982, Creese 1986, Sacks 1989, Ng 1993). However, one of the outstanding questions, is how to theorize these interconnections. Are they three distinct relations interconnected in some essential way and thus can be analyzed separately, or are they so intermeshed that analysis demands their incorporation simultaneously? I maintain that analyzing gender, race and class separately as autonomous conditions of production is not possible or desirable in understanding the history of Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment for these three social relations are embedded throughout the economic system. To separate them is to distort the reality and conditions that influenced Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment history. Nonetheless, this is not to contend that one relation is not more salient than the other within a particular context (see Stasiulis 1990 for this argument). As is shown in the history of Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment, wage opportunities were at various times influenced more by race than gender and vice versa.

To this point I have discussed gender, race and class without defining these concepts. For this study the definition of gender is taken from the insights of anthropology and feminist studies that gender is both a social construct and social relation (see Lamphere 1987, Moore 1988). As a social construct it is derived not from the biological differences between men and women but from an ongoing consciousness produced by everyday socialization. This socialization, which defines what is masculine/feminine or male/female, is realized through the social functions of what men and women do (see Bourdieu
Thus gender relations are those social relations that arise between men and women and are specific to the historical and cultural context in which they are found.

In the same respects race and class are also historically and culturally specific. Race, like gender, is a social construction based upon some notion of an immutable difference linked to a biological or cultural group. Social relations of inequality are ascribed to those differences. On the other hand, class is a social construct based upon an individual’s relative position in a stratified society. As a social relation it is derived from how people relate to one another economically through productive and reproductive activities. In capitalist societies class is determined by those who produce surplus (the proletariat) and those who appropriate or control it (the bourgeoisie). Thus class is determined not by a person’s prestige or status but a person’s control or non-control of the means of production (see Marx 1968:181-185).

**Domestic Economy, the Family and Gender Ideology**

As well as locating women in the labour force, gender, race and class segregation also situates women within a distinct domestic economy. How a domestic economy articulates with capitalism, and how women’s position within it defines their status in society, has been at the forefront of feminist theoretical debates. The debate initially began with a conceptual separation of the domestic economy from the wage economy. The domestic economy was associated with the household and the domestic labour of women. An early debate ensued to discover the structural relationship between the two (see Benson 1969, Fox 1980). While there was no consensus on this relationship, these authors did agree
that women's non-wage labour was functional to the perpetuation of capitalism. Women’s
domestic labour within the household was necessary to reproduce the conditions for the
labour force. Others furthered this argument by pointing to the advantages for the labour
force in segregating women within the household. This guaranteed a cheap and available
labour force that could be used at times of economic expansion. The position of married
women as a reserve labour force was analogous to that of semi-proletarianized or migrant
workers whose labour was partially dependent upon non-wage sources to meet the cost of
reproduction of labour power.

These early authors agreed that it was women’s segregation in the domestic economy
that subordinated their status in capitalist society. Furthermore, this subordination was
guaranteed through the nuclear family with women and children dependent upon a male
wage earner. When capitalism articulated with other pre-capitalist economies it
subsequently segregated and transformed women’s labour. The making of women into
housewives is, according to one author, an integral part of the colonial process that
ensures capital accumulation:

...these two processes of colonization and housewifization are closely and
causally interlinked. Without the ongoing exploitation of external
colonies....the establishment of the ‘internal colony’, that is, a nuclear
family and a woman maintained by a male ‘breadwinner,’ would not have
been possible (Mies 1986:142-3).

Whether this process occurs as fully as described and whether women’s oppression lies
within their roles in the family as housewives is now a disputed point. Several critics have
observed that the creation of women as housewives and the nuclear family is more
ideological than an empirical reality (Carby 1982, hooks 1984, Glen 1993). Many studies,
both historical and contemporary, show gender, race and class segregation in the labour force drives many women to seek wage labour to support their families. This is certainly the case when examining the employment history of Sne-nay-muxw and other Native women. The inability of Sne-nay-muxw men to make an adequate wage that would support women and children because of discrimination in the labour force compelled Sne-nay-muxw women to seek wage employment.

Furthermore studies show that the nuclear family is not the only form of household organization that exists within capitalism (see Stoler 1977, Mueller 1977, Agonja 1981, MacGaffey 1986). A variety of indigenous family organizations that existed prior to capitalism continue to be adaptive with the introduction of wage labour. This is most certainly found in many Native communities where extended families based upon traditional kinship networks remains evident. Extended families and kin networks, important for support and access to a wide range of resources in the pre-contact economy, continue to offer security to family members at times of employment instability (see Knack 1980, Medicine 1982, Albers 1985). Despite the appearance of nuclear families interfamily cooperation and sharing remains an important factor in the survival of many Native households.

This leads to the question of whether the family is the site of women’s oppression as argued by many feminists (see Kuhn and Wolpe 1978, Engels 1884/1981). Many studies that have examined Native women in their communities have linked their power and status to their position in their families (Albers 1985, Lynch 1986, Knack 1989, Miller 1992). The influence and control that women have in their own families gives them the ability to
move into the wider economic and political arena of the community. This has reached an acceptance in some Native communities that managing the affairs of the reserve is deemed to be the role of women (Miller 1992).

Such empirical reality raises several questions about how gender roles are defined in Native communities. Historically through missionary teachings, a segregated labour force, and the state, Native peoples have been exposed to a gender ideology that promoted exclusive domestic roles for women. Studies confirm that there was some accommodation to this ideology in Native communities with their conversion to Christianity, shifts in residence to nuclear families, and the learning of new domestic skills (see Leacock 1980, Ackerman 1987, Shoemaker 1991, Devens 1992). However the presence of women in public roles and positions of economic and political power in Native communities today indicates that this ideology was either not fully accepted or resisted.

Elsewhere studies have shown that changing economic circumstances can either encourage such ideology or discourage its acceptance (Mann 1985, Ellis 1986, Liddle and Joshi 1986). It is encouraged when men are able to make a ‘family wage’ that can support women and children. Women are more likely to accept their roles solely within the domestic domain when there are limited opportunities for women in the labour force. Does this then explain the statement that opens this study? Sne-nay-muxw women accepted that their traditional roles were in the home because previously they were limited opportunities for them in wage employment. With the expansion of job opportunities for women, are we witnessing a change in ideology that now redefines women’s roles to include their participation in the labour force? In this study I examine these questions. By
tracing the historical employment of both men and women I trace how a gender ideology was either accommodated or resisted in light of the opportunities in wage labour.

Methodology

The research for this thesis was divided into two parts. The first required a search of the ethnographic material and the historical records relevant to the region. Due to the paucity of material on the Sne-nay-muxw the reconstruction of gender roles and ideology was obtained through a number of Coast Salish ethnographies. Much of this material was collected long after the introduction of wage labour and many of the principal informants for these ethnographies were men. This is problematic for understanding indigenous gender relations. However, acknowledging both the historical nature of the data and its male-centered bias does allow for some reinterpretation as well as reconstruction of the past. While we can never know with any certainly what was the true nature of the indigenous economy and gender relations, I believe that the richness of the ethnographic material collected at the turn of the Century on Coast Salish peoples and the insights offered in the comparative studies of gender relations in anthropology, can offer some understanding of Sne-nay-muxw society before contact.

The most helpful historical material for understanding the early economic and social history of the Sne-nay-muxw was found in the form of unpublished government reports, letters and journals. Hudson’s Bay Company records were helpful in documenting the early use of their labour in the community. After 1862 the history of Sne-nay-muxw employment was derived from a number of sources such as visitor’s journals, missionary accounts, and settlers’ recollections. Indian Agent’s reports and letters from the
Cowichan agency proved to be a rich resource for understanding the socio-cultural changes of the Sne-nay-muxw between 1881 and 1920. Census records from the Department of Indian Affairs as well as three nominal Census offered information about the household organization and changing demographic patterns. These records are in manuscript form and accessible in the various archives and libraries in the province. Government records on the Sne-nay-muxw after 1920 were more difficult to find or access due to the issue of privacy. Generally there is a paucity of historical material on the Sne-nay-muxw between 1920 and 1960 as these records are still held by the Department of Indian Affairs. Statistical studies of the socio-economic status of Sne-nay-muxw women vis a vis men, and the wider Canadian society in terms of employment, unemployment, income, and other factors are more readily available after 1960 through both Statistics Canada and the Statistics branch of Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The second part of the research involved fieldwork. Permission by the Sne-nay-muxw Chief and Council was granted in the early summer of 1991. An initial six weeks was spent in the community followed by a number of shorter visits over the next two years. In the first few weeks of fieldwork a short survey form was drawn up and published in the weekly band newsletter. The response was poor but the survey served as an introduction when personally visiting homes on the reserve. At this time nineteen women and eight men were interviewed. In order to compare changes in both men and women's working lives I selected individuals who covered the widest age range possible. Respondents who were sixty-five and older were important for understanding Sne-nay-muxw work
experiences between 1920 and 1970. Younger individuals offered work histories of the more recent period. While a general schedule of questions was drawn up respondents were encouraged to digress and expand on their answers. In many cases spouses, or children, were present during the interviews. The general focus of the questions centered upon their employment history and their general understanding of the present situation of women in the labour force. Although interested in documenting wage income and distribution within the household I was aware that these question were of an intrusive nature so I did not pursue them if respondents were not readily forth coming.

During the fall of 1991 I attended a language session given by the elders at the cultural center once a week. I was given permission to attend the band’s annual general meetings in order to learn the current issues for the band. Also I attended a workshop for the South Island District Advisory Board on the new federal initiative, Pathways to Success. Members of several organizations in Nanaimo that offer educational upgrading and job training to Native women were also contacted to determine how accessible such programs were to Sne-nay-muxw women.

I have defined the community in this study to be the Sne-nay-muxw band. The band is a group of Native people who are registered by the Indian Act, share the right to reside on particular reserves and hold a common interest in both land and money. This concept of community has been imposed upon the Sne-nay-muxw by the federal government of Canada. No such community identity existed before contact as the Sne-nay-muxw, like other Coast Salish peoples, lived in villages and identified themselves as members of those villages. With the creation of reserves and the introduction of the Indian Act, the concept
of the band has become both the social and political identity of Sne-nay-muxw people today.

Having said this it should also be acknowledged that this sense of community has changed since the 1970’s. Until this time the band membership and community were synonymous with on reserve residence but today half of the band membership lives off reserve. While some off reserve members live only a few streets away from the reserves others are as far away as the United States. However family ties and not geographic distance, determines a member’s closeness to the community. Members who live in Seattle and California may be far more active members of the community because of their close ties to their families on reserve than some members who live in Nanaimo or other close urban centers. This is particularly evident since the introduction of Bill C-31 that has allowed a number of members to regain their band membership. Despite their geographic closeness to the reserves, these members often have few interactions with the on reserve community.

While the band is the dominant community for this study I would like to acknowledge two other senses of community that the Sne-nay-muxw experience. One is the wider Coast Salish community that includes the southeastern region of Vancouver Island, the mainland of British Columbia and coastal Washington State. This wider community is activated during the bighouse season when the Sne-nay-muxw travel to the neighbouring reserves to witness the ceremonies linked to naming, memorials and new dancers. During the summer months, the canoe races held on the different reserves bring this community together again. The second community is the non-Native community of Nanaimo. As this
study shows the Sne-nay-muxw actively participated in this community in various ways. Not only were they workers in the local economy, but they participated in the labour strikes, parades, sports teams, and other community events. I maintain that the Sne-nay-muxw identity with the non-Native community was strongest during its early years. Significant factors that increased this sense of belonging to this community were: working as miners and other occupations linked to the mines; accepting Methodism the predominant religion of the miners in Nanaimo and not Catholicism, the religion of other Coast Salish peoples; and intermarriage with the early settlers in the region. In later years the links to the non-Native community were not as strong but there continued social ties to families that lived on streets bordering the town reserve or on farms close to the River reserves. Today that sense of community has changed again to include the growing Native population (non-Sne-nay-muxw) that live in Nanaimo. Discrimination, poverty, and service delivery programs for Native peoples has strengthen this community sense.

Before closing this section on methodology I would like to address a reflexive process that occurred in the writing of this thesis. With the present political climate in the province in British Columbia surrounding land claims, I was aware that this thesis, like other work of anthropologists, could be used as a document in a legal setting to either support or not support Sne-nay-muxw claims. This awareness did lead to a conscious selection of document material that I felt best described the history of the Sne-nay-muxw

7 The issue of reflexivity is one that the discipline of anthropology as a whole is now facing (see Marcus and Fisher 1986, Clifford 1988). That anthropologists have in the past selected or omitted material in their studies of Native peoples is now readily acknowledged. For a discussion of the important implications of this selection for public policy see Dyck (1993).
people. In writing this history I have tried to omit any ambiguous statements that might be misinterpreted to the real intent of the meaning I am trying to make. However, I admit that I have on many occasions simplified what are at times very complex and interconnected phenomena. It is impossible to give a complete account of the complex history of the Sne-nay-muxw within this single study. As well as declaring that this is my interpretation of Sne-nay-muxw history I also want to acknowledge the academic constraints of the discipline of anthropology that upholds a moral and ethical obligation to the people one studies. My obligation to the Sne-nay-muxw people to tell their history as they wanted it told did influence my selection of particular documents to describe their history. However, their concern to show their role as wage workers in the economy, the forced dependency upon wage employment with the alienation of their resources and land, and the discrimination they experienced in finding employment, were not contrary to my own interpretation of their labour history. That I was able to set it within the context of a theoretical interpretation linked to the social relations of gender, race and class is most certainly my contribution.

Organization of Thesis

The following chapters are divided chronological and are dictated by both the type of data available as well as the distinct economic periods that shaped Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment. Chapter two provides the cultural and historical context in which Sne-nay-muxw women entered the labour force. Through a reconstruction of the pre-contact economy I identify several important features of Sne-nay-muxw economic and social organization as they pertain to women. One of the most important features is that
the Sne-nay-muxw had a distinct division of labour determined by sex but there was a
degree of flexibility based upon the task at hand. This enabled both men and women to
share tasks preparing food when necessary. Women had significant economic autonomy
in their lives that was assured with a bilateral kinship system, gender related ownership of
production, and relationships within the household based upon exchange. The early
contact period and the fur trade is described to show how demographic change and new
trade goods began to transform Sne-nay-muxw women’s lives.

In Chapter three I describe the establishment of Nanaimo and the initial experiences of
the Sne-nay-muxw in wage labour with the Hudson’s Bay Company between 1852 and
1862. The history of the Hudson’s Bay Company coal operation in Nanaimo and the
Treaty of 1854 that effectively alienate the Sne-nay-muxw from coal deposits in their
territory is first summarized. This is followed with a description of employment in an
economy that segregated labour upon gender, race and class lines. Sne-nay-muxw men
worked in the mines digging shafts and transporting coal to the pit face, while women
conveyed coal to the ships. Other employment around the post was similarly segregated
so that Sne-nay-muxw men and women were given the poorest paid and least desirable
employment. In the final section I discuss the impact of this wage economy upon Sne-
nay-muxw lives. Not only were the Sne-nay-muxw moved off many of their village sites,
but the arrival of European settlers and other Native peoples in the region began to
alienate them from their traditional resource sites. On the other hand the Sne-nay-muxw
gained wealth and prestige because of the coal operation in their territory. However this
increased wealth was not equally accessible to Sne-nay-muxw men and women. The
different value placed upon men and women’s production encouraged women to seek wage labour in order to maintain their economic autonomy within their households.

Between 1862 and 1920 the coal mining industry dominated the economic and social life of Nanaimo. This is the focus of Chapter four. In the first section I describe the mining economy and the nature of its segregated labour force. This sets the context for understanding the employment history of Sne-nay-muxw men and women during this period. This history reveals that Sne-nay-muxw men were employed in the local economy as casual labourers in the mines while women worked as domestic servants in the community. Despite this early integration into the labour force variable market demands for coal, increased competition by Chinese workers, and changing technology left both Sne-nay-muxw men and women the most vulnerable workers to unemployment. During this period the Sne-nay-muxw continued to integrate wage labour with subsistence production and farming. Although faced with the lack of arable land and the increasing encroachment upon their traditional resource sites, the Sne-nay-muxw had relative success integrating these incompatible productive activities. An important part of this strategy was the retention of kinship networks and extended families that allowed for cooperation and exchange between and within households. The sharing of food and labour between kin enabled women to pursue wage labour when opportunities arose. In the final section I examine how a gender ideology that promoted domestic roles for women was imposed upon the Sne-nay-muxw by the mining community, missionaries and state policies. I document how Sne-nay-muxw women both accommodated and resisted this ideology. Women acquired the domestic skills related to this ideology but continued to maintain
considerable autonomy in their lives. This is evident in the control and distribution of wage and non-wage production within the household and in formal exchanges.

The employment history of the Sne-nay-muxw in the logging economy of Nanaimo between 1920 and 1970 is described in Chapter five. For the Sne-nay-muxw this was a time of increasing dependence upon wage labour as subsistence production and farming declined. Gender, race and class segregation that structured the mining industry changed to accommodate the shift to logging and related industries. Although this gave some Sne-nay-muxw men greater security in the labour force women’s employment remained limited. With reduced employment in the local economy women’s only access to wage income was to accompany their husbands fishing or to migrate to the berry fields in Washington. Despite the preference to live in nuclear families, extended families and kinship networks remained important for support and cooperation to offset the poverty many Sne-nay-muxw families experienced. In this last section I show that throughout this period, women’s roles became increasingly circumscribed to the domestic sphere despite their participation in the labour force. At this time the acceptance of a gender ideology that promoted domestic roles for women gained strength in families headed by men in secure jobs. These families supported the exclusion of women from paid labour. How fully families were able to meet this ideal became a mark of class and status in the community.

In Chapter six I examine the changing participation of Sne-nay-muxw men and women in the service economy of Nanaimo from 1971 to the present time. This economy continues to segregate along gender, race and class lines. This restructuring has given
Sne-nay-muxw women advantages vis a vis men in employment. It is women not men who seek employment in the service economy as men remain committed to shrinking jobs in the primary and secondary industries. Women have been successful in finding employment because they now have equal access to education and employment training. With men’s insecure employment women’s income contribution to the household has become increasingly important to supplement the shrinking wages of men. Family status and wealth is now linked to women’s employment. Those families that in the previous period embraced the exclusion of women from wage labour, now support their inclusion into the labour force. A gender ideology to accommodate this inclusion now redefines women’s roles to include employment in the gendered jobs of the economy. However, the increased income contribution women in their households has not allowed women to gain formal political power. Despite considerable autonomy in their family lives women’s power continues to be vested in men and their association with a specific extended family.

Chapter seven presents the conclusions and the broader implications of this study for understanding the employment situation of Native women elsewhere. The question of whether wage employment increases women’s power in their communities and the role of gender ideology in promoting women’s inclusion into wage labour are also discussed.
CHAPTER 2

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

This chapter provides the cultural and historical context in which the Sne-nay-muxw entered the labour force. The first section begins with a brief discussion of the sources available and the problems in reconstructing the Sne-nay-muxw pre-contact economy and gender roles. This is followed by a description of the Sne-nay-muxw as known through the ethnographic accounts. Special attention is paid to the role of women in the division of labour, their access to wealth, and the importance of exchange within the household. The final section examines the effects of early contact and the fur trade upon Sne-nay-muxw life.

Ethnographic Background

Sources

Little ethnographic work has been published about the Sne-nay-muxw. One of the earliest anthropologists to visit the region was Franz Boas who arrived in the winter of 1886-87. Unlike other Coast Salish communities on Vancouver Island he found the Sne-nay-muxw very cooperative (Rohner 1969:72). In a short article he included information about marriage and mortuary customs as well as the history of a series of battles with the northern Lekwiltok (Boas 1889). Boas’ other references to the Sne-nay-muxw are either unpublished or in passing including no details of their traditional economic activities
Considering that the Sne-nay-muxw traditional cycle of exploiting local resources was still evident at this time Boas' neglect is truly unfortunate. In the 1930's both Homer Barnett and Diamond Jenness visited the Sne-nay-muxw. Barnett's research was included within a wider study of the Coast Salish and remains one of the most important sources for understanding Sne-nay-muxw economic life. His informant Albert Wesley was born in the 1860's and was quite knowledgeable about traditional life. Jenness also used Albert Wesley as an informant but his work to date is unpublished (see n.d.; 1934-36). In the late 1940's and early 1950's Wayne Suttles conducted fieldwork with the Sne-nay-muxw. He has published a series of articles on the Coast Salish that include this work (Suttles 1987).

More recent ethnographic work has been done by Sarah Robinson (1963), Ted Little (1981), Marjorie Mitchell (1984) and Randy Bouchard (1992). Robinson (1963) examined the historical change in Sne-nay-muxw spirit dancing. Little (1981), taking an educational focus, used Sne-nay-muxw archaeological data and place names to create a Native studies curriculum. Mitchell (1984) completed an oral history of the life experiences of the six Sne-nay-muxw elders. Finally, Bouchard (1992) in conjunction with the archaeological project at Departure Bay, included information about subsistence practices as revealed from the early ethnographic studies as well as material from recent informants.

Aside from Mitchell's (1984) rich contribution, the lives of Sne-nay-muxw women is poorly documented. This is a product of the male bias that existed in the work of male ethnographers who visited the region. In seeking out male informants they omitted
important aspects of Sne-nay-muxw culture that included activities important to women.

This omission was based on an assumption that men and their roles were the dominant ones in Coast Salish society. Interestingly in a letter to his family Franz Boas acknowledged that Coast Salish women he encountered were far more knowledgeable about traditional customs than men. However despite this insight he continued to use men as his principal informants (Rohner 1969:23). During his brief visit to Nanaimo he used Amos Cusheon, a lay minister, and his nephew, Daniel Cusheon for his work on the Sne-nay-muxw (Rohner 1969:72). A noted exception in the early work is found in the writings of Beryl Cryer, a journalist who interviewed two Sne-nay-muxw women during the 1930’s: Jenny Wyse was born at Departure Bay and the daughter of Quen-es-then, a principle Sne-nay-muxw leader; and Mary Rice, while originally from Kuper Island, married into the band and lived here later years with the Sne-nay-muxw. Both were prominent women in the community and very knowledgeable about Sne-nay-muxw history. Their stories, as told by Cryer, offer important insights into Sne-nay-muxw history as well as the daily lives of these women during the 1930’s (Cryer F8.2/C88 BCARS).

The Sne-nay-muxw

The Sne-nay-muxw live along the central east coast region of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. They are part of the linguistic group known as Coast Salish who are found on

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1 There are various spellings and translations for Sne-nay-muxw in the historical and ethnographic material (see Rozen 1985:43)). The spelling in this thesis is not linguistically correct but is presently used by the band. In terms of interpretation, Suttles (1990:473) notes that the translation 'the whole' or 'big strong tribe' which is most
the southern coast of British Columbia and parts of Washington State. Like their immediate neighbours, the NanOOSE, the Chemainus and the Cowichan, they are Island Halkomelem speakers. This is one of the three dialects of Halkomelem which is spoken on Vancouver Island from Northwest Bay to Saanich Inlet. They, like other speakers of Halkomelem, comprise the Central Coast Salish which also include the Clallam, Northern Straits, Nooksack and Squamish. Northern Coast Salish, the Sechelt, Comox and Pentlatch live in the northern half of the Straits of Georgia and the Lushootseed and Twana speaking peoples who are the Southern Coast Salish live in the drainage of Puget Sound and Hood Canal. The Southwestern Coast Salish, Quinault, Lower Chehalis, Upper Chehalis and Cowlitz, live on the Washington Coast and in the river drainage’s of Queets River to the north and Cowlitz River in the south.

Traditionally the Sne-nay-muxw territory extended from several kilometers north of Neck Point in the north to Boat Harbour in the south (Bouchard 1992). Gabriola Island and other adjacent islands constituted the eastern boundary and the watershed of the Nanaimo river, the western boundary. While it is unknown how long they have lived in this region the area is rich in archaeological sites which several surveys have confirmed frequently found (e.g. Walbran 1909:348) is not linguistically supported as the prefix is an unidentifiable root.

2 The other two dialects, upriver and downriver Halkomelem, are found on the mainland from the mouth of the Fraser River to Harrison Lake and the lower reaches of the Fraser Canyon. Hill-Tout (1902:356) translates Halkomelem as “those who speak the same language.”

3 There is some dispute in the literature of the northern and southern boundaries of Sne-nay-muxw territory. Boas (1889) designates Horsewell Bluff and Five Finger Island as the northern boundary, Dodd Narrows the southern. Bouchard’s (1990) recent research indicates that it is two miles further north at Neck Point and that the southern boundary is three miles south of Dodd Narrows at Boat Harbour. His conclusion on this southern limit coincide with both Duff (n.d.) and Rozen (1985).
(Abbott 1963, Mitchell 1971, Cassidy, Cranny and Murton 1974, Will and Cassidy 1975, Acheson and Riley 1977, Apland 1977, Murray 1982, Wilson 1987, and Burley 1988). Many of these sites reveal short term and seasonal occupations, however three sites that have been extensively excavated at Duke Point (Murray 1982), False Narrows (Burley 1988) and Departure Bay (Arcas 1994, Wilson 1994) indicate that there has been a continuous in situ cultural development in this region for at least four thousand years. 4 Excavations at these shell middens have yielded a diverse array of artifacts that testify not only to the specialization to the rich resources in the area but the presence of a highly developed stratified society that is identified with the Northwest Coast cultural pattern.

This cultural pattern, while distinctive, exhibits a substantial degree of variation and complexity which is attributed to interregional contact and variable features of the habitat (Suttles 1987).

The Sne-nay-muxw like other Northwest coast peoples depended upon salmon and other marine resources for their principal food source. They were highly mobile as they followed their seasonal round, fishing, hunting and gathering. Traveling as much as 500 kilometers on an annual basis, their traditional movement included not only the immediate territory but also the annual crossing of the Strait of Georgia to the Fraser River and as far north as Qualicum River (Mitchell 1971:27; Sproat 1876). This high degree of mobility was most apparent during the spring and summer months for during the fall and winter months they lived in permanent villages on the Nanaimo river, Nanaimo harbour and Departure Bay.

4 Cybulski (1994:80) concludes that archaeological data on the Northwest Coast suggests that the social system in the southern region was present 5,000 years ago.
Figure 1

Sne-nay-nuxw Territory and Reserves

Known Village

Strait of Georgia

Vancouver Island & Mainland

Gabriola Island

Sne-nay-nuxw Territory

and Reserves

5 km

Known Village

Neck Point

Mount Benson

Million Dollar

Mountains

Mumford

Bay

Stuart Island

Festus Island

Jack Point

Strait of Georgia

Oysterville

Burrard Inlet

Vancouver Island

Neck Point

February

Harrison

Bay

Mountains

Mount Benson

Mumford

Bay

Stuart Island

Festus Island

Jack Point

Strait of Georgia

Oysterville

Burrard Inlet

Vancouver Island

Neck Point

February

Harrison

Bay

Mountains

Mount Benson

Mumford

Bay

Stuart Island

Festus Island

Jack Point

Strait of Georgia

Oysterville

Burrard Inlet

Vancouver Island
Like other Northwest Coast peoples in the winter months they lived in large longhouses that were made of cedar planks. Most of them were gabled but some shed types were also found that were long enough to accommodate an extended family or an entire village. In the summer months the Sne-nay-muxw made lean-to structures of mats and some planks from their winter homes.

The Sne-nay-muxw were comprised of five known named groups. Boas (1889) identified them as “clans,” Hill-Tout (1904) “septs,” Jenness (n.d) “communities,” Barnett (1955) “tribes,” and Duff (1969) “families.” More recently Suttles (1990:464) maintains that they are best identified as “local groups” which consist of an established kin group and several dependent households. A local group may have its own winter village or may live with other local groups in separate longhouses in the same village. In the case of the Sne-nay-muxw four of the “local groups” lived in a winter village called sti’ilup at Departure Bay, while the fifth had its winter village on Nanaimo Harbour. In the fall all five “local groups” had distinctive fishing sites and houses on the Nanaimo river.

Bouchard (1992:6-7) has identified the names of these known five groups through the

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5 See Suttles (1990:7) for a descriptive comparison of these two types of house styles.
ethnographic and historical literature as “kwelsiw’l,” ta’toxen,” “yeshexen,” “enwines,” and “xwsol’exwel.” It was the “xwsol’exwel” that remained separate with their winter village on the Nanaimo Harbour (Barnett 1955:22).  

Generally social organization was not as rigid as that found in Northwest Coast groups further to the north. The Sne-nay-muxw lacked clans, phratries, and clear-cut class distinctions. There was however some stratification in that people were divided between upper class or worthy, “si?ém,” lower class and worthless people, “stéxem,” and slaves. The distinction between worthy and worthless people was based on possession of private or guarded knowledge concerning family traditions, and the absence of slavery ancestry (Suttles 1958). Worthless people were individuals who had no inherent access to resource sites and a blemished past. Their status was apparent in their behaviour and poverty. In any village the proportion of worthy was much higher than the proportion of worthless people. Thus class hierarchy was not a pyramid as found in the more rigidly ranked societies of the north, but an inverted pear with the greater number of individuals considered upper class. Also within this upper class there was a degree of individual ranking that was expressed in both social and material ways (Snyder 1964:170). But unlike their northern neighbours, there were no formal chiefs but an ‘informal’ leader of a

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7 Suttles in a personal communication to Bouchard (1992:5) noted that several of these local group names are translated into directional terms, north, middle and south which probably indicates their position in the winter village at Departure Bay.

8 Barnett (1955:22) believed that this local group was higher ranked than the others but this is disputed by the Sne-nay-muxw. Also they dispute Jenness’ (1955:86) assertion that the Nanoose village to the north of the Sne-nay-muxw was a tributary village of the Sne-nay-muxw.

9 Drucker (1983) believes that this class is a product of contact and not found in the indigenous social structure.
household group (Miller and Boxberger 1994). High ranked individuals had great advantage to assume this leadership but relative merits as revealed in individual ability and wealth remained as important as heredity. Beneath the worthless peoples was a class of slaves which were acquired through trade or warfare. Slaves had no status in the society and were considered outcasts. Only the wealthiest people owned slaves and it is believed that they were not numerous in Sne-nay-muxw villages.

Descent for the Sne-nay-muxw was reckoned bilaterally with an emphasis upon patrilineal ties. Kinship terms distinguished between order of birth in collateral lineage but not between lineal and collateral relatives beyond the first ascending and descending generations. Thus there was no distinction between a mother’s or father’s relatives. Village exogamy and patrilocal residence was the preferred marriage pattern but it was not obligatory. There was a great deal of flexibility in the residence pattern that allowed a couple to choose to live with the bride’s parents if they had no son, had a higher rank in their community than the husband’s family, or might need someone to care for them (Duff 1952:79). Nonetheless, it was considered incestuous to marry between close or “blood” kin which was determined as distantly as third or fourth cousins (Barnett 1955:184; Suttles 1990:463-4). Polygyny, sororate, and levirate were also common marriage arrangements.

For the Sne-nay-muxw, like many Northwest Coast groups, the winter was a time for ceremonial exchanges, wealth displays and interaction with the supernatural world. However, the Sne-nay-muxw and other Coast Salish emphasized the acquisition of a guardian spirit through a personal vision quest and not through public and theatrical
displays. Spiritual power was acquired privately after ritual fasting and purification. It was only expressed or hinted at by songs and dancing as it was dangerous to do otherwise (Barnett 1955:146; Collins 1974:145; Suttles 1984:59). With the exception of the sxwaxwe mask and rattles, the Sne-nay-muxw lacked the elaborate ceremonial regalia found elsewhere on the coast. 10 One theory to explain this difference is put forward by Suttles (1984) who believes that due to the association of representation with spiritual power art as a decorative medium was limited. Nonetheless, despite the scarcity in decorative items the Sne-nay-muxw like other Halkomelem speakers had a distinctive art style that was evident on spindle whorls, rattles, combs, houseposts, and grave figures (Kew 1980; Feder 1983; Suttles 1984).

Pre-Contact Economy

Subsistence Round

The Sne-nay-muxw, like other Coast Salish and Northwest Coast groups, were primarily dependent upon salmon and other marine resources for food. The first principle food activity of the year began in March with the arrival of the herring into Departure Bay and Hammond Bay. 11 Herring was caught in great quantities using a herring rake, dried on racks, and cured by roasting on cedar splints. Also herring roe was collected by placing fir branches at different locations along the shore. Herring deposited their spawn

10 The myth explaining the origin of the mask for the Sne-nay-muxw is presented in Jenness (1955:91-2).
11 One important site for the earliest herring fishing was approximately three and a half miles northwest of Departure Bay known as sk'ol'em (Bouchard 1992:9).
on the branches which could then be dried in the sun and the leaves and eggs stripped off. The roe was either eaten fresh or dried.

The spring was also an important time for hunting ducks and other waterfowl that returned from their winter feeding grounds. Waterfowl were abundant in the Nanaimo River estuary and shoreline of Gabriola Island. While many species of ducks were hunted the most important duck for the Sne-nay-muxw was the scoter duck or as commonly known, the black duck. This duck was plentiful in Sne-nay-muxw territory all year round. A variety of hunting techniques were used to hunt these ducks, such as snares, nets, and duck spears. Eagles were caught using a dead fish as bait and a foot hook on a pole (Barnett 1955:98). Their feathers and down were used for ritual costumes. Egg gathering was an additional source of food.

By the end of April the Sne-nay-muxw moved to False Narrows and Gabriola Island to fish for cod, grilse12 and other species during the summer months (Jenness n.d.; Barnett 1955:22). Most of these fish were caught by trolling. Clams were the principal reason the Sne-nay-muxw went to this location. False Narrows on Gabriola Island was one of the most important clam beds of the region and clams were gathered here with digging sticks at low tide (Thompson 1913:155-6). Clams were either steamed and eaten fresh or dried on withes shaped into circular strings for later consumption. Dried clams were also an important trade item (Bayley BCARS; Fraser 1906:102; Barnett 1955:61; Suttles 1951a:69, Smith 1940a:245; Aswell 1978:44; Norton 1985:129). Other shellfish gathered at this time were mussels, cockles, littleneckcs, oysters, crabs, and sea urchin which were

12 Immature, half grown salmon.
all steamed and in some cases dried. Generally shellfish was available throughout the year and was an important resource to supplement stores in the winter months (Belcher 1985). Shellfish, next to fish, was a highly desirable food resource that was reliable and plentiful in Sne-nay-muxw territory.

Also important during the summer months was the gathering of plant foods such as roots, bulbs and berries. Camas, a bulbous root similar to an onion was a preferred food and grew extensively on the bluffs of Gabriola Island (Jenness n.d.). It was dug for about three weeks in May before the bulbs seeded and a single family could fill 10 to 12 cattail bags in a season (Jenness n.d). While they could be stored raw they were most often steamed in pits and then dried into cakes. Berries were also plentiful throughout Sne-nay-muxw territory and beginning with wild strawberries in May numerous berries such as salmonberries, thimbleberries, blackberries and bog cranberries were picked through to the late fall and winter. Berries were either eaten fresh or dried into cakes. They were stored in little crates made of dried alder, and pieces were soaked in water before eating (Suttles 1951a:63). Sometimes eulachon oil which was traded from the north was mixed with them.

In July the Sne-nay-muxw moved to the Fraser river to fish for sockeye (O. nerka) and in alternating years humpbacked salmon (O. gorbuscha). Their fishing site was located several miles from the mouth of the river near Barnston Island. One historic source noted that they had a permanent village at this site to accommodate 400 “Nanaimooch” (Ft. Langley Journal 1827-1830). Here salmon was dried on open racks and stored in baskets. As well as salmon they also fished for sturgeon in the river using a harpoon. They also
had a fishing site for sturgeon on Lulu Island (Barnett 1955:34). As the salmon run
diminished in September women gathered cranberries that were abundant in bogs at the
mouths of small tributaries to the Fraser river. Wapato, an aquatic plant was also available
on the Fraser river particularly at the fork of the Pitt River. Here the Sne-nay-muxw with
other Fraser river peoples harvested this root for several weeks in late September and
early October.¹³

By mid October many of the Sne-nay-muxw returned to their fall villages on the
Nanaimo River in time for the chum salmon run. Chum, or dog-salmon (*O.keta*), was the
last of the salmon species to return to the rivers in October and November. It was an
important source of food for the winter months because it was a much leaner species of
salmon that could be dried for longer lasting preservation. The fall run of salmon in the
Nanaimo River was therefore an important one for the Sne-nay-muxw to supplement the
summer provisions to last until the spring when food getting activities began again.¹⁴
Sockeye and humpbacks fished on the Fraser river were dried outside while chum on the
Nanaimo river were smoked in smokehouses.

¹³ The Ft. Langley journal reports that the Sne-nay-muxw with 5000 others assembled at
Pitt River forks to harvest this root. Jenness (1955:76) notes that the Sne-nay-muxw had
strong marital alliances with the Katzie which would give them rights to such resource
sites on the Fraser River. They also had rights to the chum run on the Qualicum river
through such alliances(Sproat 1876).
¹⁴ Suttles (ms) has calculated the annual consumption of salmon for the Sne-nay-muxw as
similar to those estimated by Schalk (1986) for the Chinook on the Lower Columbia
river. Thus a given population of 500 with a consumption rate of annually 600 lbs of
salmon per person gives a total of 300,000 lbs. a year.
The Sne-nay-muxw caught chum on the Nanaimo river using a weir that was described in some detail by an early visitor, John Keast Lord, a naturalist in the late 1850’s. He wrote:

On the Nanaimo River the Indians have a very ingenious contrivance for taking salmon, by constructing a weir; but, instead of putting baskets they pave a square place, about six feet wide and fourteen feet long with white or light-coloured stones. This pavement is always on the lower side of the weir, leading to an opening. A stage is erected between two of these paved ways, where Indians lying on their stomachs, can in an instant see if a salmon is traversing the white paved way. A long spear, barbed at the end is held in readiness, and woe betide the adventurous fish that runs the gauntlet of this perilous passage! (Lord 1866:76-77)

Most salmon fishing was done in the night or on dark rainy days so that the white rocks as a background was an ingenious way to see the fish. According to Barnett (1955:22) this weir was owned by the “xwsol’exwel’” but Suttles (ms) maintains that all the local groups were given access to it. Rituals that regulated the run of salmon on the river were performed by a shaman they included singing a special song, marking male and female salmon with paint and down feathers, and applying red ochre to designs etched on the rocks (Barnett 1955:89-91). The designs on the petroglyph at Jack Point consists of various fish which Jenness (n.d:84) has identified as dog salmon, coho, spring salmon, humpbacked salmon, and flounder. Until this ritual had been completed the Sne-nay-

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15 Barnett (1955:91) believes that the right to perform the ceremony was more of a personal family prerogative than a true first-salmon rite because of the passive participation of other families. Suttles (ms) disagrees and maintains that the ritual was performed on behalf of the tribe. To think of a single family having a monopoly on this ceremony negates the Salish concept of community interest.

16 There are many petroglyphs throughout Sne-nay-muxw territory (see Leechman 1952, Bentley& Bentley 1981 and Hill & Hill 1974)
muxw were limited to roasting the fish for immediate consumption and only after the ceremony had been performed were they able to cure them.

Land animals was also an important source of food for the Sne-nay-muxw. Deer were plentiful in the region. Bucks were hunted in the spring and early summer, does in the fall. Either they were hunted individually with bow and arrow or through drives using deer nets. One source indicates that they hunted deer in canoes as they crossed to the small islands (Bouchard 1992:23). Elk were also hunted using these techniques. Smaller animals such as raccoons, minks, martens and beavers were trapped.

Food gathering activities ended in the winter months when the Sne-nay-muxw depended upon their stored foods. This was the time for ritual give-a-ways and spiritual renewals. These winter ceremonials validated the successes of summer food getting activities in potlatches. An individual’s spiritual power which enabled this success was reaffirmed so that the future year would be as successful. The winter ceremonials conceptually unified the religious and material elements of Coast Salish life (Snyder 1964:96).

Although the Sne-nay-muxw had a rich and varied food supply, there was great seasonal differences in the availability and abundance of resources in their territory. To

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17 Mitchell (1990:239-47) maintains that it is difficult to determine the relative importance of particular food sources from the ethnographies or archaeological sites in the region as various methodologies produced different results. The recent use of bone weight as a fraction of live weight, and classifying according to broad taxonomic categories, reveals a stronger dependence upon land mammals than previously acknowledged for Coast Salish peoples.

18 Barnett (1955:79) notes the importance of supernatural helpers to catch fish and relates a story of how one Sne-nay-muxw fisherman acquired the supernatural helper to be a good fisherman.
some extent food resources were regular and predictable but fluctuations did occur and subsistence strategies changed to accommodate them. What was important throughout the year was that the Sne-nay-muxw monitor their resource sites to ensure exploitation at optimal times and preserve and store food when possible. The diversity in resources and in particular the abundance of ducks, shellfish and herring in their territory gave the Sne-nay-muxw a security in food resources that only few Northwest coast groups experienced. Their ability to access these resource sites was assured with a bilateral kinship system that traced rights through both men and women. This gave the Sne-nay-muxw a wide circle of kinship networks that could be used to optimize individual family rights to food sources. The following discusses the role of women in the division of labour and how their rights to resource sites, as well as wealth property, gave women economic and political power in Sne-nay-muxw society.

Division of Labour

As noted above the Sne-nay-muxw were divided into local groups which consisted of an established kin group and several dependent households. A household was comprised of several nuclear families usually a set of brothers with their wives, children and slaves. Married sisters with their husbands and other relatives could also be included. Each nuclear family to a certain degree was self-sufficient and responsible for its own food requirements. The individuality of the family was maintained by their separate storage and

19 For a discussion of the importance of shell fish for the Puget Sound region see Belcher (1985). This was a rich food source that was available year round and an alternative to offset any conditions of scarcity.
consumption of food within partitioned sections of the longhouse. Sharing of food between families occurred but only at times of ceremonial feasting and scarcity.

The autonomy of the nuclear family was stressed by the fact that much of the food getting activities such as gathering shellfish, certain types of fishing and hunting could be done on an individual or two person basis (Snyder 1964:69). Families, however, did work cooperatively in activities such as building weirs, constructing houses, or participating in deer drives and duck hunting. Shared ventures occurred more frequently in the fall and winter months when families lived together in the communal longhouses. However food taken in this manner was apportioned immediately and equally among families. In the summer months individual families dispensed to the various resource sites and while several might work together in collecting roots, berries, or shellfish this was primarily for sociability and not a necessity.

The division of labour within families was based on sex. Men were the fishermen and hunters while women gathered, processed and preserved foods. There was some degree of flexibility between men and women's labour in that women helped men fish and men helped women gather and process food. Both men and women cooked and did chores such as carry wood and water. Also both cared for children. In many respects the division of labour in food production was based more on convenience and upon the needs of the task at hand (Smith 1940a:139;1969:10; Collins 1974:75). However there were

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20 Slaves were also part of the labour force and generally used for menial tasks such as carrying firewood and water (Suttles 1951a:305; Elmendorf 1960:345). However, they did not constitute a large proportion of the Sne-nay-muxw population and thus their economic contribution was not significant.
exceptions, one of which was hunting. Hunting taboos not only restricted women from this activity but also confined their behaviour while men hunted (Elmendorf 1960:59,101; Barnett 1955:105; Suttles 1951a:97-8; Haberlin & Gunther 1930:49-50; Jenness n.d:9-10).

This loose gender assignment of labour did not occur in more specialized activities such as craft production. Generally men were the carvers and worked bone, shell and wood. As well as hunting and fishing tools, they made a variety of household utensils, furnishings and canoes. They also carved houseposts, grave figures and other ritual paraphernalia such as the sxwaixwe masks and rattles.

Sne-nay-muxw women, like other Salish women in the region, were the weavers and wove blankets, baskets, and mats. They were very proficient in weaving blankets out of a combination of a domestic dog hair and a variety of other materials such as fireweed and down from geese and ducks. 21 A few Sne-nay-muxw blankets were also mixed with mountain goat wool which was not available locally except through trade from groups on the mainland. 22 Baskets, important for gathering and storing food, were made out of split cedar roots or limbs and cedar bark. Mats used to cover stored foods and for furnishings were also made out of flat leaves of cattails and tule stems which were gathered in the late spring or early summer (Stern 1934:93). Women also made a variety of clothing such as

21 A domestic dog resembling a small white haired Pomeranian was observed by many of the early visitors to the area.
22 The Sne-nay-muxw traded from the Katzie on the Fraser river (Suttles 1955:25) and the Sliammon from Squirrel Cove and Cortez Island (Barraclough 1979:16). Barnett’s (1955:120) informants date the introduction of greater quantities of mountain goat wool to more recent times with the marriage alliance of a Sechelt woman with a Sne-nay-muxw man.
skirts, aprons and robes out of cedar bark, deer and elk skins, and cattail rushes. Cedar bark hats were also woven. Both men and women made various types of cordage used for lines and nets.

Men and women’s specialization was to a large extent more important to the economics of production than the question of the division of labour. The degree of autonomy for a household, or a local group, depended upon its ability to include all the expertise needed to make it independent as well as competitive with other local groups. Women who were good blanket weavers and basket makers were accorded great status and honour. Similarly men who were good carvers and canoe makers were also given high standing in the community.

However not all men and women could be specialists for such skills often monopolized an individual’s time to the exclusion of other tasks. Thus an individual’s contribution was not always measured by their expertise but also by their productivity. The work ethic was very much entrenched in the Sne-nay-muxw value system. The habits of hard work were the most highly prized of any personal characteristic and men and women were praised for continually working (Collins 1974:82). Laziness was the worst of all faults and most despised (Barnett 1955:141). It was an accepted justification for marriage dissolution. An individual’s self-worth was thus linked to what they did and their productivity.

Children from an early age were impressed with the importance of industry and ambition. This emphasis was evident in the puberty ceremonies. When a young girl sought a supernatural helper it was not only to make her attractive but industrious.

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23 A picture of a Sne-nay-muxw basketry hat is presented in Eells (1985:116).
During her days of seclusion she was kept busy at wool carding and twisting or making baskets (Jenness n.d:56). Women acquired spirit helpers to increase skills at weaving or luck in such things as root digging (Elmendorf 1960:396). The acquisition of spirit power was thus linked to productivity and the accumulation of wealth.

This account of the division of labour reveals the important contribution of women to the maintenance of the household group. Not only were women essential for the gathering, processing and preserving of food but for their specialized skills that made a household self-sufficient. The value placed on women’s work increased with productivity and skill. Often this coincided with age as older women perfected weaving skills that were highly admired. Women’s exclusion from economic activities that men did was often linked to taboos and their inability to acquire spiritual helpers linked to those activities. However, as the following section shows this did not exclude women from the ownership and distribution of wealth.

Ownership and Distribution of Wealth

The concept of property and wealth was well developed among the Sne-nay-muxw as it was for all peoples on the Northwest Coast. Property was acquired in two ways, inheritance or one’s own production. Inherited property was obtained by virtue of one’s membership in a descent line. Descent was traced bilaterally but there was some preference in emphasizing patrilineage descent due to the presence of a patrilocal

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24 According to Barnett (1955:180) the Sne-nay-muxw also practiced “conspicuous leisure” for the well born girl who was expected to do nothing to the point that she became pale and weak and incompetent to perform any physical task. It is hard to judge if this was an indigenous custom or a product of the Victorian ideal “woman” which the Sne-nay-muxw were trying to emulate.
residence pattern. Inherited property included resource sites, house planks, and fishing weirs, as well as intangible property such as personal names, songs, dances, spirit powers and other ceremonial prerogatives. This property remained the inalienable right of an individual and could be passed on to anyone of their choosing however most frequently it was passed on to one’s own children. Marriages were arranged to give access to this property.

Either men or women could inherit property (Boas 1889). While women could inherit any or all of their family’s property there was certain property that was gender linked. Resource sites such as clam and camas beds, as well as berry patches were often the sole possession of women and inherited from mother to daughter (Elmendorf 1960; Collins 1974:55). Intangible property such as spiritual powers and ceremonial prerogatives could also be inherited from mother to daughter. While women generally seemed to inherit spiritual powers associated with femininity some women did have ceremonial prerogatives that were considered masculine (Snyder 1964:). In some households this gender related ownership was extended to the point that they possessed two sets of titles, one for women and the other for men (Jenness n.d.:40).²⁵

As well as inherited wealth, property such as tools, clothing, furnishings and food were acquired through one’s own individual production. Women owned the blankets, baskets and mats they wove, while men owned their tools and canoes. Thus within a household

²⁵ One of Barnett’s informants noted that titles could be feminized for a girl child and the reverse. A title also skipped a generation (Barnett papers, Box 1, folder 1).
there was distinct property owned by men and women (Stern 1934:33). This gender related ownership of property was noted by Gibbs:

The maker of anything is its necessary owner.... Not only do the men own property distinct from their wives, but their wives own each her private effects, separate from her husband as well as from the others. He has his own blankets, she her mats and baskets and generally speaking her earnings belong to her (Gibbs 1877:187)

Women’s ability to both inherit and create wealth through their own labour enabled women to attain almost unlimited status and authority in Coast Salish society (Snyder 1964:255). Indicative of this are the historical accounts that attest to the presence of women leaders amongst the Coast Salish. For example, two observers noted the power of one particular woman encountered in Puget Sound:

...she seemed to exercise more authority than any that had been met with; indeed her character and conduct placed her much above those around her....Although her husband was present, he seemed under such good discipline, as to warrant the belief that the wife was the ruling power, or, to express it in more homely language, “wore the breeches” (Wilkes 1845 (4):124).

...a woman of great energy of character, and exerts greater authority over those round her than any man chief I have met with since I have been in the country. She is about 50 years of age, and dresses very neatly for an Indian woman....Her canoe was large and handsomely painted, and was paddled by five slaves, two of them women (Colvocoresses 1842:243).

Women in upper class families secured a great amount of wealth through inheritance alone. They inherited wealth from both their mother’s or father’s side of the family. This wealth was inherited at the time of a woman’s marriage or when her parents died. It was not shared with her husband but inherited by her children. A dowry given to women at the

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26 This is disputed by Smith (1940:48) who argues that while the Puyallup and Nisqually women acquired prestige in their society they were excluded from public authority.
time of marriage was her property and remained so (Elmendorf 1960:363). Other women who did not inherit wealth, could through their own industry create wealth. All the products of one’s labour had wealth value. Specialization as noted above gave women status for the need such specialization fulfilled within the local group. But specialization also gave individual women wealth from their own production as their products had great wealth value in the various levels of exchanges.

Women’s economic autonomy was emphasized in the informal and formal exchanges that occurred within and without the nuclear family and household unit. At its most informal were the exchanges that occurred at the family level between husband and wife. While sharing was essential for the well being of a family, property was not pooled but exchanged to a point of a recognized balance of give and take. Any misbalance could produce divorce and the loss of prestige for the household. Smith explains how this balance worked between men and women amongst the Puyullup and the Nisqually:

If a woman sewed upon hide which she had gotten in exchange for her own labour, or the product of her labour, the garment belonged to her. If her husband had tanned the hide she had to sew it for him and it belonged to him. If she worked on her own hide and let his lay, he could raise hell. If she needed a mat creaser and he wouldn’t make it for her, she could raise hell (Smith 1940a:142).

As well as this informal exchange, women also participated in other informal exchanges with their affines in the household group and own kin outside. Within the household group exchanges were generally reciprocal and were expressions of friendly feeling. These exchanges were an important way for women to consolidate their relationships with their in-laws as patrilocal residence pattern placed them in the same household.
Exchanges outside the household group occurred with one's own kin and were an important part of a network of relations that solidified women's claim to resources owned by her kin.

More formal exchanges occurred in three kinds of named gatherings: taking food to affines or 'paddle'; household feasts where a family feasted other household members and other households in the village; and the 'true potlatch' that was given with invited guests from other households in nearby villages (Suttles 1960, Amoss 1978). Affinal exchanges from the men's position were more than balancing of exchanges that occurred with marriage. They were an important means of directly converting food to wealth as well as creating mutual support during warfare (Suttles 1960). From a woman's perspective they continued to substantiate her claim to her natal village and her use of kin group resources. This relationship was essential to a woman as a form of economic insurance for those times when a marriage dissolved through incompatibility or death. While levirate and sororate were commonly practiced among the Coast Salish, affinal exchanges were an additional measure of security for women. They reaffirmed her connection with her own kin and their resource sites.

Feasting of the household occurred when one household feasted another household in the same village. These feasts occurred when there was a surplus of food and were an occasion to validate changes in status on a small scale. For example, one such occasion was when a child was given a name (Amoss 1978:11).

The 'true potlatch' occurred less frequently and was given on the occasion of namings, memorials, transfer of property, paying of debts and other important life events. Such
formal exchanges of wealth occurred in the spring and early summer months before intensive food getting activities occurred. The primary object of accumulating and distributing wealth in this exchange system was to validate status and rank. This was equally important to both men and women as women exchanged their wealth either in their own name or through their husbands (Stern 1934:33). For a woman however, contributing to a husband’s ‘potlatch’ to validate his status had the potential to be at the expense of her own kin. Affinal exchanges were a means of reconciling this conflicting situation.

From the ethnographic material it is evident that Sne-nay-muxw women’s roles were multi-faceted. Not only were women mothers and wives, but major contributors to the household economy through their daily work. From an early age young women were socialized to believe that their worth was linked to work. Work was defined as both that which reproduced the family and that which created wealth. Women were not alienated from either production. Through their work women could acquire considerable power and status in the household which was validated through their hereditary rights. The importance of exchange on both an informal and formal level within and between households emphasized women’s economic and political autonomy. How wage labour affected this division of labour and autonomy is examined in the following chapters. The immediate section describes the early contact and fur trade period that was to begin a transformation in the nature of gender relations.
Early Contact

The earliest contact of the Sne-nay-muxw was made by an expedition led by the Spanish explorers Alcala Galiano and Cayetano Valdes in 1792. While exploring the islands in the Strait of Georgia, a part of the expedition anchored off the northwest end of Gabriola Island at Descanso Bay. They were met by several canoes of Sne-nay-muxw people who eagerly traded dried herring and other trade goods for iron, shells and beads.27 A small party explored a few miles south and discovered what they thought was an abandoned village as the houses were stripped of their planks (Kendrick 1991:118-223).28 While the location of this village is unknown it is likely to have been a permanent village site at False Narrows. This site was not abandoned but Sne-nay-muxw customarily moved to more temporary fishing sites during the summer months. Planks were often taken to help construct their make shift summer houses giving winter villages an abandoned appearance. The Spanish themselves noted four canoes loaded with house planks while anchored in Descanso Bay (Kendrick 1991:118-223; Burley 1988:11,48; Wagner 1933:258).

The arrival of the Spanish in 1792 was probably not a great surprise to the Sne-nay-muxw as first contact on the coast had occurred two decades earlier and new trade goods had already found their way by intertribal trade throughout the coast.29 This Spanish visit

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27 The Spanish artist Jose Cardero rendered three drawings of this first encounter, two of which are of Sne-nay-muxw chiefs (Kendrick 1991:117).
28 A year earlier Jose Narvaez anchored in the vicinity and noted a village on the southeast end of Gabriola Island. However, it is unknown if contact was made at this time (Wagner 1933:40).
29 Burley (1988:131-2) notes the presence of Russian beads in the historic deposits of Senewelets at False Narrows. It is assumed these were acquired through intertribal trade.
coincided with the peak of the maritime fur trade that had developed on the west coast of Vancouver Island and the northern region of the coast. However the lack of sea otters in the Strait of Georgia had excluded maritime traders in this region. The eagerness of the Sne-nay-muxw to trade for Spanish goods indicates that they were not ignorant of them despite no evidence of European goods amongst them (Wagner 1933:256). After this visit the Sne-nay-muxw experienced occasional visitors to their region but it was not until the establishment of Hudson’s Bay Company posts in the region that any regular contact was made. The presence of these posts was to produce a new era for the Sne-nay-muxw but before discussing how this mercantilist economy affected their lives some consideration should be given to the demographic changes that occurred with the introduction of new diseases at the time of initial contact.

Demographic Change

The introduction of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, syphilis, smallpox, and measles, to name a few, had a drastic impact upon the Sne-nay-muxw as it did upon other indigenous people who had no immunity to them (Newman 1976). Our understanding of the effects of these diseases upon Sne-nay-muxw population is limited as estimates of their pre-contact population have varied from 2000 to 5000 people (Duff 1961; Johnson 1958; Nanaimo and District Museum Society 1987:3). While a population of 5000 is considered high, the multiplicity of archaeological sites and the recognition that Sne-nay-muxw territory included one of the largest river estuaries in the province, indicates that this area did have the potential to support a large population (Bell & Kallman 1976).
The first smallpox epidemic occurred simultaneously with the first Spanish expeditions to the Northwest Coast and the settlement of Kamchatka Peninsula in Eastern Siberia around 1775 (Boyd 1994:19). It was not witnessed by Europeans but observations of pockmarked individuals throughout Coast Salish territory several decades later were noted by many explorers (Puget 1939; Vancouver 1798, I:217,241; Menzies 1923:29,35). This first epidemic reduced the population throughout the coastal region by more than a third (Boyd 1990, 1994). 30 Duff (1961) taking the precontact population of the Sne-nay-muxw at 2000 estimates that the first epidemic reduced them to 1100 individuals. Several other smallpox epidemics occurred on the Coast but Duff believes were not as devastating as the first as not all of these later epidemics reached the Sne-nay-muxw. 31 By the end of the third epidemic in the mid 1830’s he estimates they numbered 800 individuals. 32 After this period the population seems to have remained fairly stable. A Hudson’s Bay Company census taken in 1853 enumerates the Sne-nay-muxw with a total of 943 which includes 159 men with beards, 160 women, 300 boys, and 324 girls (Douglas Private Papers, BCARS). If these figures are correct two outbreaks of smallpox on the coast, one in 1836 and the other in 1853 had minimal impact upon the Sne-nay-muxw.

This fits with Boyd’s (1990:141) theory that the 1836 epidemic was confined to the northern and southern regions while the 1853 was primarily in Washington State and the

30 There is no consensus in the literature about the effects of each of these epidemics. It is highly conceivable that each epidemic had varying effects throughout the region.
31 These epidemics occurred in 1801-2, 1836-38, 1853, and 1862-63.
32 Suttles (1987:4) maintains that at this time the Sne-nay-muxw population was four to five hundred people. A Hudson’s Bay Company census taken of the Sne-nay-muxw on the Fraser River in 1839 enumerated 477 individuals, (23 leading men, 37 wives, 35 sons, and 27 daughters, with 355 followers).
West Coast of Vancouver Island. He attributes the reduced impact of these epidemics to a discontinuity in population and communication, and to the dissemination of smallpox vaccine from the mid coast forts. Both his reasons are questionable in light of the historic and archaeological evidence of the Sne-nay-muxw. Not only did they have a great degree of interaction between peoples the length of the coast but there is no evidence of the posts giving out vaccinations to the Sne-nay-muxw at these times. Nevertheless, there is no indication in the historical literature of any smallpox epidemics affecting the Sne-nay-muxw during this period of time. Yet, the establishment of Hudson’s Bay Company posts in the region did introduced a variety of new diseases to the region, such as measles, influenza and tuberculosis. These diseases had a substantial impact upon Sne-nay-muxw population particularly in the later years. A census taken in 1860 lists the population of Sne-nay-muxw at 399 which included 50 old men and women, 211 young men and women, and 138 children (Heaton BCARS). This is considered a low estimate as it was taken during the summer when many of the Sne-nay-muxw were away fishing on the Fraser River. In 1876 when the Sne-nay-muxw reserves were officially set out by the Reserve Commission they were enumerated at 223. If this figure is accurate it indicates a substantial decline in population from 1853.

Aside from disease, another factor that affected Sne-nay-muxw population was warfare. It is unknown if the high frequency of warfare witnessed by the early fur traders and settlers occurred during traditional times but skeletal remains in archaeological sites in the Central coast region, unlike the Northern region, provides little evidence of warfare.

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33. Vaccines were given out to the Sne-nay-muxw in 1862 and this did save the Sne-nay-muxw from one of the most devastating smallpox epidemics in British Columbia.
before contact. Warfare in pre-contact times is believed to have been a result of conflict over the critical resources produced by population pressure, temporal and spatial availability, trade demands, and labour requirements for production and exchange (Ferguson 1984). These factors were more critical in the northern region than in Sne-nay-muxw territory where there was a great diversity and fluctuation of food resources. However, warfare did become endemic after contact and is believed to have been a product of the fur trade and the demand for trade goods and slaves (Donald 1987). At this time the traditional enemies of the Sne-nay-muxw were the Lekwiltok, or as they were commonly known a century ago the Yucultas or Euclataws. They lived in and around Cape Mudge and were estimated to number about 4000 at the end of the 18th Century. When the Hudson’s Bay Company established posts in the region they noted that the Lekwiltok annually raided the southern regions of the Strait of Georgia as well as Puget Sound (Douglas Private Papers, BCARS). They fought to control territory on the northeastern coast of Vancouver Island and eventually displaced the northern Coast Salish from Qualicum Beach and Comox (Taylor and Duff 1956:63; Boas 1969:93,105). Shell mounds in the woods where women and children hid, fortified villages, and tales of battles during this period are evidence of their incursions into Sne-nay-muxw territory (Matthew 1955:188,273; Boas 1889; Robson 1950).

Depopulation from disease and warfare greatly altered Sne-nay-muxw movement and exploitation of their territory. A decline of more than half the population from disease in a short period of time left villages deserted and resource sites unused. Endemic warfare shifted preferences for habitation and resource locations that offered protection and were
easy to defend. As well as these changes we can only guess at the extent of social
disorganization that followed such depopulation. Family histories would have been lost as
many of the elders died. New leaders may have arisen emphasizing new skills such as
warriors and shamans. Shamans for example, may have exercised more power in their
society with their connection to cleansing ceremonies and death (Guilmet et al 1991).

Despite these changes, it is believed that the Sne-nay-muxw lived in an area of the
coast that experienced the greatest cultural continuity (Boyd 1990: 147). This is
supported by early historical accounts when the Hudson’s Bay Company sent a
reconnaissance party to the region in 1824 they reported that Native people in this region
had few European trade goods and no experience with white men (HBCA D 4/121,15d ).
While depopulation produced change, it is easily assumed that this change occurred along
indigenous lines of development intrinsic to Sne-nay-muxw culture. Yet, more changes
were to occur with the arrival of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the establishment of fur
trading posts in their midst. By 1850 the Sne-nay-muxw had adapted to new trade goods
and made some shifts in subsistence production to accommodate the fur trade. The
following section examines this change.

The Fur Trade

As noted above, before the establishment of the Hudson’s Bay Company posts in the
area the Sne-nay-muxw had little contact with maritime fur traders or other visitors to the
region. This was to quickly change with the establishment of two fur trading posts in the
region, first Ft. Langley on the Fraser River in 1827 and Ft. Victoria at the southern tip of
Vancouver Island in 1843. Ft. Langley was established quite close to the Sne-nay-muxw summer village on the Fraser River. In the summer of 1827 when the Hudson's Bay Company schooner, the Cadboro, sailed up the Fraser River seeking an ideal location for the post, it passed a large Sne-nay-muxw village situated at a site on the south shore of the Fraser River across from the present day Barnstone Island (see map Simpson 1827). This was one of the largest settlements on the river as it contained "400 souls." Immediately a number of canoes containing 150 Sne-nay-muxw men came out to greet them. Their first meeting with the Hudson's Bay fur traders however was an inauspicious one as noted in the Ft. Langley journal:

They occasioned us a little annoyance by repeatedly and obstinately attempting to come on board and it was not till all were under arms that they desisted from their purpose. They were urged forward by an elderly man who gave out orders with a loud voice and in a very determined tone. Finding their efforts of no avail they went quickly away and soon afterwards the vessel came to an anchor (Ft. Langley Journal, July 25, 1827, BCARS).

Relations with the Sne-nay-muxw quickly became more amicable as the "chiefs" Punnis and Squatches, were finally allowed on board the schooner. It took the Hudson's Bay several months to build the post and during that time many Sne-nay-muxw came to the post to visit as well as to trade. They traded a number of items but most specifically fish, which they often caught within view of the post. Women also came to trade berries for rings, buttons and other trade goods. By the first week of September visits to the post declined as many of the Sne-nay-muxw left for Pitt River to collect wapato (ibid Sept 5th, 1827). They returned to their summer village briefly before they left at the end of September for their winter residence on the Island. The journal kept at Ft. Langley in
these early years notes their presence again in the following spring when a small party of Sne-nay-muxw came to the post to trade sturgeon and report that their "chiefs" had furs to exchange (ibid May 4th, 1828). However it was not until the beginning of July that the whole tribe appeared again at their summer village site (ibid June 26th, 1828; July 4th, 1828).

When they returned the following summer the Sne-nay-muxw possessed a number of furs to exchange. The first to bring furs to the post was a Sne-nay-muxw woman who brought five skins which she traded for a blanket. She assured the post she had more to bring but unfortunately there is no further record of this woman returning to trade (ibid July 7th, 1828). After these initial transactions other individual Sne-nay-muxw traded a number of furs throughout the summer (ibid Aug 23rd, 1828). While not all entries indicate what type of skins the Sne-nay-muxw were trading, many were beaver and land otters which were traded at a rate of five skins for a 2½ point blanket. As well as furs the Sne-nay-muxw also traded fish and berries for which they received knives and other small trade goods.

The quantity of furs traded during the summer months indicates a new interest in trapping fur bearing animals that had not been important to the Sne-nay-muxw subsistence economy. These furs were probably obtained during the winter months in Sne-nay-muxw territory on Vancouver Island but may also have been trapped during their summer stay on

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34 The journal does not identify her but it is assumed that she was a woman of some importance to be the first the Sne-nay-muxw to come to trade.
35 The Hudson's Bay Company's had various grades of blankets with the 2½ point blanket demanding the highest number of furs.
the Fraser River (ibid May 4th, 1828). Despite this initial trade in furs fur bearing animals were not numerous on Vancouver Island or in the Fraser river drainage region around the post. The Hudson’s Bay Company aware of the limited stock in the area had primarily established Ft. Langley to intercept the furs from the interior. What little game was available on Vancouver Island and the Fraser River drainage was quickly depleted within the first decade. Sne-nay-muxw access to any great wealth of trade goods through furs was greatly limited.

By the 1840’s fur returns had dwindled from the interior and Ft. Langley turned to a more lucrative industry in salting salmon. This became an important export product for the post and many local tribes on the river began to trade salmon during the peak runs. One observer at this time noted how fish was traded at the post from the Sne-nay-muxw and other tribes on the Fraser River through a single trader:

Orvid Allard did all the trading with the natives for their salmon. He used to stand at the wharf with two or three trunks full of the Indians favorite stuff such as vermilion for the women to give themselves rosy cheeks and tobacco for the men (Manson BCARS).

The Sne-nay-muxw had a distinct advantage in trading salmon as their fishing site was only a few miles from the post. Trade however was limited in the early years as only 400 barrels were prepared annually between 1831 and 1840. However, by the early 1840’s Ft. Langley was exporting one to two thousand barrels of salmon a year (Nelson 1927:17; Cullen 1979:96-97; Mackie 1985:27). After 1848 production exceeded 2000 barrels and profits from salmon exceeded furs at the post (Mackie 1985:27).
As well as catching fish, Native labour was also used for cleaning and salting fish. Principally this labour was drawn upon Native women and children. Aurelia Manson, the daughter of the Chief Factor of the post gives a description of how Native women helped clean and salt fish for barreling:

The boys of the fort with 2 or 3 native lads from the Indian village did the running with the fish from the wharf, which they piled up before the women of the fort, and others who seated in a circle in the shed, where they were salting the salmon. And so they worked all day, early in the morning until late at night, till the salmon run was over (Manson BCARS).

While it is unknown if Sne-nay-muxw women were directly involved in this production certainly they observed other Native women employed in this occupation. Native women were also used for other labour around the post.

How successful the Sne-nay-muxw were in acquiring goods through trade of furs and fish is difficult to assess. A Census taken by the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1839 reveals that the Sne-nay-muxw had acquired a number of guns in a decade of trade. Guns were a desired trade good not only for hunting but also for protection against the raiding northern tribes. Before 1825 the Hudson’s Bay Company estimated that very few Native groups around Juan de Fuca Strait and the Strait of Georgia owned guns. Yet by 1839 all tribes on the river and on the southeast coast of Vancouver Island had acquired a considerable number. The Sne-nay-muxw had in their possession at this time 56 guns or one gun for every eight individuals (Douglas Private Papers BCARS). While a crude measure of trade wealth it does indicate that in just over a decade the Sne-nay-muxw were
successfully in acquiring a number of wealth goods such as guns for furs, fish and other trade goods. 36

While there were small shifts in subsistence production to accommodate the fur trade there was little change in the yearly subsistence round. The Sne-nay-muxw continued to come to the Fraser river to fish in the summer months and returned to Vancouver Island for the fall fishing and winter ceremonials. The spring was a time for herring and movement to Gabriola Island to gather camas and shellfish. The interest in trapping and hunting increased but not to any extent that changed the traditional movement through their territory. There was however one substantial change in food getting activities that affected the labour of women. It was the cultivation of potatoes.

While potatoes on the coast were first introduced by maritime fur traders and present at the Russian settlement at Kodiak as early as 1783, it is probable that the Sne-nay-muxw had not seen potatoes until the establishment of Ft. Langley in 1827 (Suttles 1951b). Posts were expected to be self-sufficient and it was customary to set out extensive gardens of various crops to feed their employees. Potatoes because of their short growing season and easy maintenance were one of the first crops extensively planted at Ft. Langley in the fall of 1827. While it is unknown if the Hudson’s Bay Company encouraged the local women to plant potatoes, evidence of extensive potato fields in the 1830’s attest to the quick diffusion of this food throughout the region (McKelvie 1947:57). It is believed that

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36 The Hudson’s Bay Company Census of 1839 included the number of guns owned by the various tribes in the region. The Musqueam had more guns than any other group on the Fraser River, one gun for ever five people. On the coast of Vancouver Island both the Comox and the Nanoose had more guns per capita than the Sne-nay-muxw.
this quick diffusion was due to the fact that potatoes were well adapted to the traditional marine economy as they could be planted in the spring and left to harvest in the fall. Potatoes too were like local gathered roots in that if kept cool and dry they could be stored for a long time. They were to become an important staple for the Sne-nay-muxw, replacing camas which became more of a delicacy in the diet (Grant 1857:290).

Sne-nay-muxw women planted their potatoes in several areas but principally along the banks of the Nanaimo river. Not only was soil good here for cultivation but it was close to their fall fishing area so that harvesting potatoes could occur either before or after the peak chum run. Each local group or village had its own potato fields and like camas patches and clam beds they were maintained and owned by women. Douglas (1854:246-247) in his visit to the region in 1852 commented on the extensive potato fields under cultivation along the river:

They live chiefly by fishing, and also grow large quantities of potatoes in fields which they have brought into cultivation earn (near) their villages. These are built chiefly on a river named [Nanaimo], which falls into the inlet, and is navigable for canoes to the distance of 40 miles from the sea coast. Food is cheap and abundant, and we were plentifully supplied with fresh salmon and excellent potatoes during our stay there.

The introduction of potatoes as a staple in the diet gave the Sne-nay-muxw an additional commodity for trade. In the northern regions a high volume of potatoes were traded to the posts (Ft. Simpson Journal BCARS; Dunn 1844:249; Gibson 1978:54). The demand for potatoes by Ft. Langley was not as extensive as the northern posts but once Ft. Victoria was established and settlement began potatoes were an important trade commodity throughout the region.
Other significant changes in the lives of the Sne-nay-muxw at this time was the forging of new political alliances with visitors that arrived at the post. Tribes from both the northern and southern regions of the coast made annual trips through Sne-nay-muxw territory to reach Ft. Langley and later Ft. Victoria. Initially the Sne-nay-muxw were vulnerable to raids by these visitors, particularly by the northern tribes who had access to guns from the earlier maritime fur trade. Once the Sne-nay-muxw rectified this balance through trade at Ft. Langley they began to seek peace agreements with various Lekwiltok groups. By 1839 the Sne-nay-muxw used one group of Lekwiltok as middlemen to trade their furs to Ft. Simpson (Douglas Private Papers, BCARS). This was a profitable arrangement as Ft. Simpson was offering higher prices than Ft. Langley in order to stave off the competition by American maritime traders who seasonally visited the area. In the Sne-nay-muxw oral history there are many stories of the intermarriage of Sne-nay-muxw with the Lekwiltok in attempts to maintain trade and peaceful alliances. Such intermarriage would have extended resource sites for specific Sne-nay-muxw households. Sne-nay-muxw movement to Qualicum Beach and Comox, which are noted in later historic records, were assured through these marriage arrangements during this period. 37

Much has been written about the effects of the fur trade upon Northwest Coast social organization. However, to date there is no consensus whether the introduction of new wealth goods intensified class distinction (Collins 1950; Ostenstad 1976; Donald 1983) or

37 Qualicum Beach and Comox fall within the Coast Salish culture area, but by the mid 1800's this territory was under the control of the Lekwiltok (Barnett 1955:25; Taylor and Duff 1956). Some Sne-nay-muxw families, through intermarriage with the Qualicum and Comox, had always exploited these resource sites before Lekwiltok control (Cryer BCARS, v.3, p78-80). When Sproat visited Qualicum in 1876 he found Sne-nay-muxw people living there (see Sproat in RG10, Vol. 3611, file 3756-4).
produced more equitable social relations (Drucker 1939). Most certainly new trade
goods reemphasized the importance of wealth and the validation of status through
exchange. Sne-nay-muxw leaders are well noted in the Hudson’s Bay Company accounts
but whether these leaders gained increasing status in their society because of the fur trade
is difficult to judge.

In the same respects it is difficult to know how the fur trade affected gender relations.
If women’s access to wealth through their own production and bilateral kinship ties
continued it is assumed that gender relations would have remained intact. Nonetheless,
the value of women’s production did begin to change with the introduction of new trade
goods. Most notably the introduction of the Hudson’s Bay blanket as a medium of
exchange and measure of wealth gradually replaced the production of indigenous blankets.
Also trade for clothing, iron kettles and other utilitarian goods replaced many of the other
goods both men and women made. Such a shift in production altered the exchange
relations between men and women as many of these goods could now be acquired through
trade. However, while women’s production of goods had less utility they remained
important in ceremonial exchanges. This is evident in later historic times when indigenous
blankets, mats and baskets were accorded great value in potlatches and other formal
exchanges. This retention of value placed upon women’s production maintained the
indigenous gender relations found before contact. A woman’s status and economic power
remained linked to her inherited property as well as production of wealth through her own
ability and skill.
Summary and Conclusion

This chapter reconstructs the pre-capitalist economy of the Sne-nay-muxw through Coast Salish ethnographic material. The division of labour, while based on sex, exhibited a degree of flexibility in food production. Women helped men fish and men helped women gather plant foods and shellfish. Areas of non-flexibility and specialization were in craft production and offered important means for both men and women to gain status. The presence of a gender related ownership of production as well as a bilateral inheritance system gave women access to resources and wealth. This fostered women's economic autonomy that was evident in the exchange rather than the pooling of goods within the household. The support of extended family was assured through affinal exchanges that occurred throughout both men and women's lives. For a woman they also affirmed her links to her natal kin and their resource sites.

In the early contact and maritime fur trade interactions were only brief and episodic but there was substantial depopulation and a new interest to acquire European trade goods. With the establishment of posts in the area there were some shifts in subsistence production and movement throughout their territory. The establishment of Ft. Langley and later Ft. Victoria increased the emphasis upon the hunting of fur bearing animals. Also the introduction of potatoes introduced a new food source. However, gender relations continued to maintain women's ownership and distribution of wealth. Despite the shift in the value of both men and women's production women's economic autonomy remained intact.
CHAPTER 3

ESTABLISHMENT OF NANAIMO: 1852-1862

Introduction

During this decade the Sne-nay-muxw were drawn into wage labour by the Hudson’s Bay Company mining operation that was established at Nanaimo. This was their first exposure to a segregated economy that was to separate men and women’s labour into distinct occupations. The immediate sections outline the history of the Hudson’s Bay Company coal operation and the Treaty of 1854 that was to effectively alienate the Sne-nay-muxw from the coal deposits in their territory. This is followed with a description of Sne-nay-muxw men and women’s experiences in wage labour and their important role outside of wage earning in provisioning the new settlement. The last section examines the socio-economic adaptation to this new economy.

Nanaimo Coal Company

Nanaimo was founded in 1852 by the Hudson’s Bay Company solely for the exploitation of coal. This interest in coal by a fur trading company was part of the policy of economic diversification that had been actively pursued in the region for several decades. As noted in the previous chapter, since the 1830’s the declining fur returns in the southern region of British Columbia and the low fur prices on the London market had forced the Company to exploit other resources in the area. Agricultural products, salted salmon, spars, and shingles were some of the commercial enterprises initiated by the
Hudson’s Bay Company at this time (Ormsby 1971; Mackie 1985). The establishment of Nanaimo and coal mining was a product of this economic expansion.¹

The Hudson’s Bay Company’s experience in coal mining began as early as 1835 when coal was first discovered near Beaver Harbour on the northeastern end of Vancouver Island. For several years a local group of the Kwakwaka’wakw (Kwakiutl) surface mined the coal to include with furs in their trade at Ft. McLoughlin.² Initially the Hudson’s Bay Company’s only interest in the coal was to supply their blacksmith shops at the various posts, or to combine with imported coal to fuel the Company’s only steamer the Beaver. However, by 1846 the Company’s interest was heightened by the increasing demand for coal by steam vessels and the growing American settlements to the South. The Hudson’s Bay Company established Ft. Rupert in 1849 to begin mining the coal in earnest. As a compliment to the regular post personnel a small group of experienced miners were contracted from Britain to begin underground mining. Plagued by a lack of mining equipment and discovering that much of the deposits were lined with sandstone and shale, these miners had little success in finding productive seams. A second contingent of miners arrived in 1850 but their attempt only confirmed that the coal deposits were not of sufficient quality to mine. A decision to abandon the coal operation at Ft. Rupert was made when more productive coal deposits were found at Nanaimo in 1852.³

¹ Originally Nanaimo was called Colville. The name Nanaimo is attributed to the surveyor J.D. Pemberton who corrupted the name of Sne-nay-muxw.
² From the beginning the Kwakwaka’wakw were quite accommodating and helped the Company mine the coal (see Vaughan 1978).
³ The Ft. Rupert post continued operation concentrating on fish and furs until it closed in 1878 (Healy 1958:19).
There are several stories of the discovery of coal at Nanaimo (Bancroft 1890:196; Walbran 1909). The one related by Joseph William McKay tells a colourful story of a Sne-nay-muxw chief, known hereafter as Coal Tyee, arriving in Victoria in the winter of 1849 to have his gun repaired. While observing the operation of the blacksmith the chief noted the use of the coal in the fire and made the comment that this stone was plentiful in his territory. The blacksmith relayed the information to McKay, the acting Clerk, who promised the chief a bottle of rum and free gun repair if he brought some to the post. In the following spring of 1850, when the chief returned with a canoe load of fine quality coal, McKay quickly organized an expedition into the region to assess the discovery.4 However it was not until two years later that James Douglas, the Chief Factor at Fort Victoria, after a personal visit to the region, dispatched McKay to Nanaimo to begin the mining operation. On August 24, 1852 he instructed McKay to formally take possession of the region on behalf of the Hudson’s Bay Company.

The establishment of Nanaimo for coal production was unlike other Hudson’s Bay posts in that it was established specifically for its coal and not for furs or other resources. Although the exploitation of other resources was encouraged, as is noted below, it was solely the commodity of coal that governed the operation of this post. This is reflected in the appointment of McKay, a clerk, as a manager of the post rather than a chief trader. McKay was to remain under the direct supervision of Douglas, who oversaw all aspects of the operation. While initially part of the general organization of the Hudson’s Bay

4 There are many renditions of this story (see Walbran 1909:, Johnson 1958:9, Akrigg and Akrigg 1977:36). Lillard (1986:102) believes that this story has little factual basis and is practically identical to the discovery of coal at Ft. Rupert. Knight (1978:135) agrees.
Company, over the next ten years the coal operation at Nanaimo eventually evolved into a separate organization known as the Nanaimo Coal Company (Ralston 1983).

The Hudson’s Bay company’s coal operation at Nanaimo began immediately with McKay’s arrival. Like their experience at Ft. Rupert with the Kwakwaka’wakw, the Company found the Sne-nay-muxw eager to accommodate their interest in coal. As well as pointing out where various exposed seams of coal were in the region, they dug at surface seams and traded several thousand tons of coal in the first few years. However the Hudson’s Bay Company’s interest was to develop underground mining. Several British miners were sent to Nanaimo to begin shaft construction and underground work. By the fall of 1854, 22 Staffordshire miners and their families arrived on the *Princess Royal* and the work on a number of shafts began in earnest. Within a ten year period several mines were started in the area bounded by present day Wharf St., Front St., and Commercial St. and included the No. 1 pit, the Douglas mine, No.3 pit, the Newcastle mine, and other minor workings including the small islands (Leynard BCARS).

During the first few years production remained limited. By November 1859, only 25,398 tons of coal had been exported by the Company (Macfie 1865:143). Part of the reason for the low productivity was the nature of the coal seams found at Nanaimo. The coal was found in three seams which were subject to strong faults or “pitches” that caused serious set backs as once productive seams either abruptly ended or petered out. This forced miners to search for fresh seams and construct new shafts which slowed the production of coal (Buckham 1947:463-69; Gallacher 1970:10-17). As well the continual flooding in the shafts and mechanical breakdowns of the single steam engine owned by the
Company produced difficult conditions for working at the face and hauling the coal. On top of these problems, the primitive loading operations whereby coal had to be transported by canoe to anchored ships in the harbour, severely limited the Company’s ability to export large quantities of coal. One observer was to note how inadequate these loading facilities were when he visited Nanaimo in 1859:

> The appliances for delivering the coal, for instance, were so faulty that a ship had to lie there often for three or four weeks before she could take in a load (Mayne 1862:35).

At this time the Company began to make increasing improvements, another steam engine was added, a new wharf, and a coal tramway. These improvements helped to double the production of the previous seven years. Between November 1859 and December 1862 a total of 48,128 tons was produced and the Nanaimo Coal Company was shipping over 18,000 tons of year (Geological Survey of Canada, Annual Report 1886:65-69; Macfie 1865:146). Loading coals was no longer a problem as a single vessel could take on 150 tons of coal a day and several vessels could be loaded at one time (Macfie 1865:144).

However aside from technological limitations, the Company also suffered from labour shortages and low worker moral. Coal mining was not only a labour intensive industry but demanded both a skilled and unskilled labour force to sink shafts and work the coal face. To acquire the skilled labour of miners the Hudson’s Bay Company imported experienced colliers from Britain. These men became indentured labourers by signing an agreement for
a five year period to become Company servants.\(^5\) While successful in acquiring this labour, from the start the Company had difficulty contracting the unskilled labour of assistant miners. More lucrative wages were offered for unskilled labour in American settlements and young men in Britain were drawn to Australia. Even with the inducement of 25 acres of free land at the end of a five year contract the Hudson’s Bay Company had difficulty finding unskilled labour for the mines (Burrill 1987: 8).

Labour problems did not end for the Hudson’s Bay Company once adequate labour was recruited as there was increasing dissatisfaction with the original contracts once the miners arrived in Nanaimo. These contracts based on an annual salary and a bonus over a certain tonnage of production, while acceptable in a developed mining industry were not satisfactory to either miners or their assistants.\(^6\) Plagued by a series of strikes and desertions the Company was able to shift payment to piece rate by 1855 which to some extent reduced labour dissent and increased productivity.\(^7\)

Labour relations remained an issue throughout this period. One historian (Ralston 1983) argues that the difficulty stemmed from recruiting skilled colliers from a developed mining industry who had to adapt to frontier mining. Men whose specialty was to work the coal face were now expected to locate productive coal seams, dig shafts and timber them, as well as load coal wagons. Another historian attributes the labour conflicts to the

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\(^5\) The conditions of their employment stipulated that they would be paid seventy-eight pounds sterling a year to produce forty-five tons of clean coal a month.

\(^6\) Originally miners were given an annual salary of £50 and a bonus of 2s6d a ton for every ton over 30 a month. Assistant miners were paid £17 a year and inducements of 25 acres free land after five years service (Burrill 1988:8).

\(^7\) This piece rate was set at 4 shillings and 2 pence per ton, plus 1 shilling and 4 pence per day in lieu of rations.
changing relations between the Hudson’s Bay Company and their employees as they shifted from a paternalistic relationship developed in the fur trade to one of a free labour market based on the law of supply and demand (Burrill 1987; 1988). Whatever the reason the persistence of labour shortages and labour conflicts ensured the employment of Sne-nay-muxw and other Native peoples to work as casual labourers for the struggling industry. Their labour remained essential to the operation until the arrival of a casual labour force to the region with the gold rush of 1858. In 1862 the Hudson’s Bay Company sold the Nanaimo Coal Company to the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company for the price of £25,000 cash and £15,000 mortgage. The Hudson’s Bay Company’s removal from the coal operation was to end this distinctive period of Sne-nay-muxw labour history. Before describing in some detail the employment opportunities of the Sne-nay-muxw during this decade, the following discusses the Douglas Treaty of 1854 and its implications for the history of Sne-nay-muxw people as wage earners.

Treaty of 1854

On December 23rd, 1854 James Douglas reported that a treaty had been signed by the Sne-nay-muxw. This treaty was last of the fourteen treaties that were negotiated on Vancouver Island between 1850 and 1854: nine were made in 1850 to cover land around Victoria, Metchosin and Sooke; two in 1851 to include land around the Ft. Rupert region; two more in 1852 for the region on the Saanich peninsula; and the final treaty in 1854 at Nanaimo. These treaties, apart from Treaty 8 that included a portion of northeastern British Columbia, are the only treaties made in British Columbia. Referred to as the Douglas Treaties they cover only a small portion of Vancouver Island, three hundred and
fifty nine square miles or three percent. These treaties were an outcome of the ongoing Indian policy observed by the British Crown since the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The Royal Proclamation recognized aboriginal rights to the land and pursued treaties in order to alienate those rights to the possession of the Crown.

The incentive of the Hudson’s Bay Company to negotiate these treaties was in part a concern to fulfill their obligation to colonize Vancouver Island as stipulated in the Royal Grant signed in 1849. In order to prepare land for settlement the Hudson’s Bay Company supported the colonial policy that recognized the implicit idea that Native peoples had rights to the land (Madill 1981:12; Tennant 1990:20). Archibald Barclay, the Company Secretary, in a directive to Douglas outlined the general principles upon which these treaties on Vancouver Island were to be based:

With respect to the rights of the natives, you will confer with the chiefs of the tribes on that subject, and in your negotiations with them you are to consider the natives as the rightful possessors of such lands only as they are occupied by cultivation, or had houses built on, at the time when the Island came under the individual sovereignty of Great Britain in 1846. All other land is to be regarded as waste, and applicable to the purposes of colonization. Where any annual tribute has been paid by the natives to the chiefs, a fair compensation for such payment is to be allowed (Barclay to Douglas, December 1849).

Douglas was also directed that he was to use his own discretion for settlement depending upon the character of the tribe and the circumstances. It is from these instructions that Douglas attempted to negotiate a treaty with the Sne-nay-muxw.
The Sne-nay-muxw treaty was the last treaty to be directed by Douglas. The primary incentive by the Hudson’s Bay Company to negotiate this treaty was not land for settlement as much as formalizing ownership of the coal deposits. Although the Sne-nay-muxw had accommodated the Hudson’s Bay Company’s mining operation in their territory, experience with the Kwakwaka’wakw at Ft. Rupert who resented white miners working their coal deposits, made it imperative that the Nanaimo coal deposits be secured. In January 1853 Douglas was instructed by the Board of Management of the Hudson’s Bay Company to extinguish “the Indian claim to the coal district” (Barclay to Douglas, Jan 14, 1853). In July 1853 he assured them that in doing so he would include the land which contained the most valuable seams of coal. However negotiations with the Sne-nay-muxw were more difficult than they had been with the other tribes. To explain the delay in procuring a settlement, Douglas, in a letter Barclay dated Sept. 3, 1853 noted his problem:

I observe the request of the Governor and Committee that I should take an early opportunity to extinguish the Indian claim in the coal district and I shall attend to their instruction as soon as I think it safe, and prudent to renew the question of Indian rights, which always gives rise to troublesome excitements, and has on every occasion been productive of serious disturbances (Douglas to Barclay, Sept. 3, 1853).

8 The document title erroneously refers to the Sne-nay-muxw as the Sarlequin Tribe which describes only one local group.
9 Vaughan (1978) contends that the lack of conflict between the Sne-nay-muxw and miners was that their presence did not pose a visible threat to the cooperative economic relationship. I would argue that unlike the Kwakwaka’wakw the Sne-nay-muxw had more experience with the various economic enterprises of the Hudson’s Bay Company and were well aware of the benefits peaceful and amiable relations produced.
10 Ft. Victoria Correspondence Outward on the Affairs of Vancouver Island, May 16, 1850-May 6, 1855, BCARS
The resistance on the part of the Sne-nay-muxw to negotiate a treaty is perhaps understandable in light of the loss of rights to their coal deposits. In their experience of mining and trading coal to the post they were well aware of its value as an important trade good. A second consideration that may have hindered negotiations was the hanging of a young Sne-nay-muxw, Siam-a-sit, for the murder of a sheep herder during the winter of 1852-53. Crew members of the 'Virago' while coaling at Nanaimo the following spring of 1853 noted that several Sne-nay-muxw held a grudge against the 'King George men' and that the Sne-nay-muxw were still actively mourning his death (Hills BCARS; Inskip BCARS).  

Why the Sne-nay-muxw would willingly agree to a treaty that would alienate them from the coal resources and a portion of their territory is only conjecture. Most certainly it is questionable that they understood the full import of such a treaty. Duff (1969:51) points out that legal concepts of sovereignty over the land, recognition of aboriginal title, and treaties that relinquished this title, were foreign ideas to indigenous people. How Douglas interpreted these concepts or convinced the Sne-nay-muxw to sign the document is not explained in his correspondence. The only historical evidence that the treaty was signed is in a postscript in his letter to London.

The treaty document itself is a list of 159 names of Sne-nay-muxw men with 160 x marks. These marks appear to have been made by a single clerical hand. The document is signed by James Douglas and three other Hudson’s Bay Company employees. Like the

11 Also see Bayley (fol 9, BCARS), Moresby (BCARS) and Lamb (1942) for further description of the events of this incident.
other thirteen treaties, it had no text attached to it. In all previous Douglas treaties the appended text is the same text used by the New Zealand Company in their treaties with the Maori (Hendrickson 1988). 12 In this text all the land was to be alienated and transferred to the Crown aside from "our village sites and enclosed fields" to become "the Entire property of White people for ever." Also in the text was the right "to hunt over the unoccupied lands" and to carry on "fisheries as formerly." 13 Interestingly, for the Sne-nay-muxw this text was never appended to their treaty. At the bottom of the document the words '636 white', '12 blue', and '20 inferior' are written. This may pertain to the 668 blankets that Douglas states were distributed at this time (see Smith 1971:60; Madill 1975; Fisher 1977:67; HBC F/53/H86 BCARS).

In reasons for Judgment in Bartleman vs. the Queen, the Honorable Mr. Justice Esson recognized that Native peoples at the time could not read, write or speak English, and as they did not personally apply their signature to the treaty, it is likely that Native peoples themselves attached little significance to it. The uncertainty of this treaty is evident in an account recorded by Beryl Cryer. She records the Sne-nay-muxw understanding of this treaty through Tstass-Aya (Jenny Wise) who interprets for her husband, Joe Wyse, the son of Squoniston, the first name on the treaty document:

Well, one day a Hudson's Bay man came to see my father. "We want to talk to you and your people about this coal," he said. We will have a meeting. You and your people, and you must get another chief and his people, and on a certain day we will all talk this thing over." "So my father,

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12 See Appendix A.
13 Duff (1969:52) contends that in light of Coast Salish exploitation of widely dispersed seasonal sites the treaty reflects an 'ethnographic absurdity.' Also such wording assumes that a particular family or tribe owned specific tracts of land. This is in effect land ownership in terms of European conceptions and not Coast Salish.
Chief Suquen-Es-Then[aka Squoniston\[aka Squonston\,'4J, called his people, and he told another chief, whose name was Chief Schuwn-Schn[aka Wunwunchen\[aka Wunwunchen\,'5], to call all his tribe, and together they went to the meeting. “Now you know, where the big wharf is now—where the steamers come? Well, down there is a rock, in the water. In those old days it was part of the land, and at that place was a very big house. To that house there went all the Hudson’s Bay men, and the two chiefs with their people. “I was at that meeting.” “I can remember all the people in that house, and lots outside, but I was only a small boy standing beside my father.” “Then the Hudson’s Bay men talked to the Indians. “This coal that is here, “they said, “it is no good to you, and we would like it, but we want to be friends, so if you will let us come and take as much of the black rock as we want, we will be good to you.” They told my father,” The good Queen, our great white chief, far over the water, will look after your people for all time, and they will be given much money so that they will never be poor.” “Then they gave each chief a bale of Hudson’s Bay blankets, and a lot of shirts and tobacco, just like rope!” “These are presents for you and your people, to show we are your good friends”, they said. “The chiefs took the things, and they cut the blankets, which were double ones, in half, to make more, and gave one to every chief man, then the shirts, and to those who were left they gave pieces of the rope tobacco; so that every man in the tribes had a present (Cryer BCARS, F8.2/C88.1/vol. 3/pp. 11-14).

According to this account the treaty conferred a right to the coal resource and not to the land itself. Sharing resources in their territory was not a foreign idea to Coast Salish peoples and not doubt was not a new idea to the Sne-nay-muxw. That this meeting was linked to the coal resources and not their traditional land is confirmed by an additional comment made by Tstass-Aya (Jenny Wyse):

Now you know”... “we think there was some mistake made at that meeting, or, maybe, the people could not understand properly what was said; but later, when our people asked for some of the money for their coal, the Hudson’s Bay men said to them, “Oh, we paid you when we gave you those good blankets!” But those two chiefs knew that the men had said, “The Queen will give you money” (Cryer BCARS, F8.2/C88.1/vol. 3/pp. 11-14).

\[14\] This is the name used on the treaty document. \\
\[15\] ibid.
This interpretation was further confirmed several decades later in the evidence given May 28, 1913 to the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for B.C. Dick Whoakum recollects when Governor Douglas came to visit them to see the coal:

He asked if there was any more of this coal, and we told him “yes”, just a little way off. We mentioned a place a little way from here, Departure Bay, and told him there was coal there. About a week later a crowd of white people came here when they came they started working on it. Two months later, Sir James Douglas himself came over to see where the coal was. Sir James Douglas said "I will buy this coal but he said "I will not buy anything but the coal". "All the wood and the land is yours". "The land where the coal is, is yours, and the land up the River is yours." (Royal Commission of Indian Affairs Evidence 1913:51).

In May of 1855 the Hudson’s Bay Company purchased from the Crown 6,193 acres for their coal operation. This purchase included Cameron, Newcastle, and Douglas Island. In addition to the 6,193 acres another 1,074 acres were set aside: 724 acres for public use, 100 acres for roads, and 250 acres for Indian reserves. Whatever the Sne-nay-muxw understanding of the treaty the subsequent purchase of the coal fields by the Hudson’s Bay Company from the Crown was to forever change the relationship between the Sne-nay-muxw and coal production. The Hudson’s Bay Company no longer traded for coal from the Sne-nay-muxw. The Sne-nay-muxw were effectively alienated from ownership of coal resources in their territory and their participation in the coal operation defined solely as wage earners. The following section examines Sne-nay-muxw experience as wage earners during this decade.
Sne-nay-muxw Employment

Wage Labour

Before the establishment of Nanaimo, the Hudson’s Bay Company had successfully employed Native labour for various occupations in and around their establishments (Mackie 1985). As the Company began to diversify into various economic endeavors the demand for skilled and unskilled labour increased. Skilled labourers, such as carpenters, blacksmiths and coopers, had to be imported, but casual unskilled labour was readily available in the local Native population. The hiring of Native labour was a preferred option by the Company as their wages were substantially lower than that needed to entice imported labour. The payment in trade goods, rather than moneys, had an additional advantage for imported labour was not necessarily interested in patronizing the Company’s stores. Hiring the Sne-nay-muxw as unskilled casual workers for the mines and other labour about Nanaimo was a continuation of the policy adopted at other establishments.

When the Hudson’s Bay Company established its post at Nanaimo the Sne-nay-muxw proved to be as enthusiastic as the Kwakwaka’wakw at Ft. Rupert to work in the coal operation. This was evident to Douglas on his initial visit in 1852, for they helped to dig up 50 tons of coal in a single day (Douglas to Barclay, August 18, 1852). Surface mining was very labour intensive and before the Sne-nay-muxw were supplied with light pick axes and miners’ shovels they used their own axes and wedges to dig up the coal. A description by Douglas of the method used by the Kwakwaka’wakw at Ft. Rupert reveals the extent and commitment the Sne-nay-muxw miners must have had to this labour:
Their mode of working, is to remove the trees and overlaying earth, until they hit the coal from two to five feet below the surface. The labour involved by that process is excessive, and the quantity produced extremely limited, for the number of Indians employed (Douglas to Barclay, April 3, 1850).

The surface coal deposits were far more abundant at Nanaimo than at Ft. Rupert so the Sne-nay-muxw were from the onset more productive than the Kwakwaka’wakw. After two weeks the Sne-nay-muxw produced 480 barrels of coal from a surface seam near the harbour. A week later a more productive seam was found below a bluff slightly north of the harbour. From this seam several thousands tons of coal were raised in a short time (McKay to Douglas, Sept. 16, 1852). By the end of September, the Sne-nay-muxw were producing 20 tons of coal a day. By November, just two months after production had begun, the Sne-nay-muxw had produced a total of 1315 tons of coal from the surface seams (Vaughan 1978:20).

Payment to the Sne-nay-muxw for this surface coal was originally set at the same rate of trade established at Ft. Rupert for coal; a shirt for every ton of coal and a 2½ point blanket or equivalent amount of gray cotton for every two tons. While this rate did not initially please the Sne-nay-muxw they were convinced by McKay that this was a fair payment. However these terms were to prove an initial problem to the operation which was unprepared for a great demand on their trade goods. While labour was initially plentiful the Hudson’s Bay Company was limited by the terms of the Sne-nay-muxw cash

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16 This seam was located at the location of “Pemberton’s Encampment” which McKelvie (1944:178) notes is a steep bluff just south of present day Comox Road.
and carry policy. Acute shortages in trade goods were lamented for the first few years of operation.  

When production switched to underground mining in 1855 Sne-nay-muxw men were hired to help build the shafts and push the coal wagons from the face to the pit entrance. Also they were used to pump out the water, and wind out the refuse (Robinson to Douglas, Jan 23, 1858, A.11/76, #976). When the price of coal fell in 1858 and white labour in the mines was reduced, Sne-nay-muxw men were subcontracted by the coal miners to clean the coal (Burrill 1987:128).

There are no accounts to indicate that women helped dig up the surface coal, but there are several accounts that confirm that women’s labour was used to convey coal to the ships. When the ‘Virago’ moored at Nanaimo to take on coal in the spring and summer of 1853 it was women and young girls who brought several hundred tons of coal in their canoes out to the ship (Inskip BCARS; Hills BCARS). This method of conveying coal to the ships by women was noted by many other observers during this decade. The process itself was very labour intensive. Initially all the coal was hauled in baskets from the pit site to the weigh station. It was then transferred to the canoes and then up to the ships to be stored in barrels. Later small barges or lighters were used and by 1858 when a wharf was built ships were loaded right from shore. Charles Bayley, the first school teacher who arrived at Nanaimo in 1854, offers a very descriptive account of women’s labour:

Loading ships was done in a very primitive manner in early days. Hundreds of natives, mostly women, being employed who conveyed the coal alongside the ships in canoes ... it was a curious sight to see the string of

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17 By 1855 the acute shortage in trade goods ended as there is no further mention of this problem in the correspondence.
natives of both sexes working like ants in one continuous line over the trail to where they deposited their loads (Bayley BCARS).

Bayley also noted that women were given tickets for every tub of coal they carried. These tickets were then exchanged at the Company store for a variety of trade goods.

According to another source one tin tally was given for every tub of coal and a hundred tubs of coal equaled a ton for which they were paid a blanket (Mayne BCARS). A Hudson’s Bay Company employee, Mark Bate, in his reminiscences of this period, maintained that women earned more wages than men for doing this sort of work. He writes:

Coal was conveyed in canoes for shipment—whether to a Man o War, a San Francisco freighter, or a coaster—thrown into a lighter made fast alongside a vessel, thence hoisted or shoveled on board. In this work of conveyance, the Indian women, as well as the men were engaged—the former as a rule, earning the most wages or goods. Payment was made at the Hudson’s Bay Company’s store in blankets, beads, shirts and other articles (Nanaimo Free Press, Feb. 16, 1907).

While there is no clear account how many women were employed at one time loading coal, the Nanaimo Wastebook lists the type of goods women exchanged for their coal tallies. For coaling the ‘Prince Albert’ in November of 1854 women received the following:

51 Blankets 2½ pts, 11 bunches trade beads, 28 yards salem-pore cotton, 15 yards 26 inch gray cotton, 9 common cotton shirts, 15 lbs tobacco, 54 yards Baize, 2 metal frame looking glasses, 3 pair dung trousers, 20 yards red ribbons

In the same month for coaling the ‘Rose’, ‘Otter’ and the ‘Cadboro’ women were paid in the following goods:
2 Blankets 2½ pts best, 13 lbs tobacco, 13 yards Baize, 20 bunches transparent beads, 1 doz. Tky red handkerchiefs, 3½ doz. finger rings, 2½ doz. brass thimbles, one eighth lb. vermillion, 1 horn comb, 2 common cotton shirts, 1 scotch bonnet, 1 pr dung trousers, 7 yds printed cotton, 27 yards salem cotton, 1½ doz. ball buttons.

From the type of work men and women were assigned in the coal operation it is evident that the Hudson's Bay Company had very distinct ideas of what constituted men and women's work. Men were employed to help construct the shafts and transport the coal to the pit head, women were employed above ground to transport the coal to the ships. This segregated ideology was also applied to other work around the post. For example only Sne-nay-muxw men were hired to work in the sawmill which was built in 1854. The sawmill produced a variety of finished lumber products to meet the lumbering demands for pit props in the mines and the miners' houses.18 Aside from working inside the sawmill, Sne-nay-muxw men supplied the mill with logs. Between 1855 and 1857 the Sne-nay-muxw transported a total of 2,715 logs to the mill at a going rate of a blanket for eight 15 foot logs or sixteen undersized logs (Aug. 29, 1855). Other labour assigned to men was the cutting and stacking hay, tending and transporting the horses, and assisting the carpenters in repairs and building the miners' houses.

Women were primarily assigned work as domestic servants. They were hired on a daily basis to clean, cook, wash clothes and sew. While hired to work in the cook house and for general domestic chores around the post by the Company itself, much of their domestic labour was hired individually by the post personnel. In the fall of 1855 women were hired as manual labourers to dig up clay and build a dam for the sawmill. They also weeded the

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18 Between the year 1855 and 1857, the sawmill produced 140,175 feet of assorted lumber and 33,750 shingles (Mackie 1985:148-9).
gardens as well as collected seaweed and manure for fertilizer. Women were also directed
to gather shells off the beaches. Shells were important for making lime which was then
mixed with water and sand to produce mortar for the chimneys and house foundations.

How many Sne-nay-muxw were employed for the coal operation and daily chores at
the post is difficult to determine from the records. When the operation first began McKay
noted that in light of the shortage of trade goods he was forced to decrease the number of
Native workers around the post to twenty. At other posts in the region the workforce
varied from 50 to 100 casual workers depending upon the season and the industries
initiated. This was probably the number regularly employed at Nanaimo. After five years
of operation the total amount of Native labour used at Nanaimo is noted in the account
books for the winter of 1857 and 1858. Labour was recorded not by the number of
workers employed but by the number of full days worked. For the months of January
1857 and February 1858 is the following list:

(January 1857) 62 days at the cook house, 53 days on the garden, 55 days
attending oxen, 152 days at the salt spring, 56 days on the slope mine, 140
days at the sawmill, 117 days at the establishment, 11 days general mining
purposes, 73 days George Baker and Co., 20 days at the blacksmith shop,
28 days shipping coal, 11 days at No 3 pit, and 40 days carrying coal.

(February 1858) 84 days at the cook house, 47 days on the garden, 52
days driving oxen, 197 days at the sawmill, 26 days at the establishment, 52
days carrying coal, 62 days on no 3 shaft, 24 days at Park head mine, 24
days at the carpenter shop, 29 days on Cameron wharfe, 35 days at the
loading wharfe, 59 days shipping coals, 63 days on the coal tramway, and
48 days loading 'George Krill'.

During these two months it is evident that an average of 400 days of Native labour was
needed a month for a variety of occupations in the coal operation and around the
settlement. Wages in trade goods for this labour were less than a shilling a day.

Considering that miners and assistant miners at this time were making five to nine shillings a day one can see that Sne-nay-muxw served as a cheap labour force for the Company.\(^{19}\)

As noted above after the gold rush of 1858 there was an abundance of casual labour in the form of white miners to work in the mines. Also the building of a wharf and coal tramway displaced Sne-nay-muxw women from hauling coal to the boats. Despite these changes both Sne-nay-muxw men and women continued to find employment in the settlement. Sne-nay-muxw men worked as casual labourers in and about the mines while women were increasingly hired for domestic work. A surveyor in the region in 1859 was to comment on the importance of Sne-nay-muxw labour as wage earners at Nanaimo. He wrote:

> The Indians are numerous, are perfectly peaceful, and are made use of by the whites as ploughmen, servants, voyagers, in fact, labourers of all kinds of work. Their pay and rations amount to little, and if kindly treated and properly superintended, the results of their labour are profitable to the employer (RG 10, Vol. 3609, file 3316-1, June 11, 1859).

As noted in the following chapter these occupations remained important to the Sne-nay-muxw throughout the 19th Century. Nonetheless, as the immediate section reveals, aside from wage earning, Sne-nay-muxw labour was also in great demand for provisioning the settlement. This demand enabled many Sne-nay-muxw, both men and women, to acquire trade goods without fully committing to wage labour during the initial years of the Nanaimo establishment.

\(^{19}\) Four years earlier the wages were for Native labour was set at two 2 1/2 point blankets a month. These blankets were valued at 2 shillings or $4.00 a piece (Douglas to Barclay, Aug. 24, 1854).
Provisioning the Settlement

Ensuring an adequate food supply for the growing settlement was a paramount concern of the Hudson’s Bay Company particularly in the early years of the mining operation. To feed the miners, extensive gardens were planted and staples of flour, sugar and tea sent from Ft. Victoria. Yet despite these measures the settlement remained heavily dependent upon the Sne-nay-muxw and other Native peoples for meat, fish and other local foods. Correspondence in the first few years reveals the extent of this dependency.

The primary foods traded to the post were deer and waterfowl which were abundant in the area. Fish such as salmon, cod, and herring were also supplied. When the Virago arrived in the spring of 1853 the Sne-nay-muxw were noted to be trading salmon and other provisions on a daily basis. One observer noted that they preferred trade with the Company despite the better price offered by the ship’s crew. W.H. Hills, the paymaster, writes of his trade experience with them:

We experienced here the curious feeling of the Indians showing their desire to get property, and the influence the Company have over them. Several canoes would come alongside with salmon for barter, which they offered at 4 for a shirt. But as we know the Company’s tariff, from which they never depart, to be 8 or 10 for a shirt we would not trade at this rate; they would remain bargaining alongside half a day, and after refusing to sell us 6 for which a shirt was offered, would go alongside the Company’s schooner and give 8 or 10. So with grouse and one or two deer that were brought in (Hills UBCL, fol 162).

As the above indicates the Sne-nay-muxw were very accommodating in providing fish for inexpensive trade items. Two later observers, who worked for the Hudson’s Bay Company, noted that these provisions were traded at a set cost:
Deer and game of all kinds abound and could be bought for some trifle. Such as tobacco powder and shot; the price of a grouse in those days being two charges or twice as much as it was supposed it cost to kill it (Bayley BCARS).

A whole carcass (of deer) could be bought for two shillings and a penny-half for one shilling and four pence - a quarter for eight pence (Bate in Nanaimo Free Press Feb. 16, 1907).

Provisioning the post was not exclusive to men's hunting and fishing, for women traded berries, shellfish, birds eggs, and potatoes. Potatoes as noted above, were grown on the Nanaimo river and by the time of the establishment of the post were an important food staple for the Sne-nay-muxw. Potatoes were in high demand by the post. From the start the Sne-nay-muxw were unable to meet the demand forcing the Company to send trading expeditions south to the Cowichan who had extensive acreage’s of potatoes at this time.

Food quantities needed to sustain the settlement were sizable. At the beginning of the operation the Hudson’s Bay Company took on the responsibility of feeding the miners and their families. This was part of the contract signed before they arrived and was the standard practice of the Company during its fur trading history. For the month of November 1854, the Nanaimo daily account book notes that 25 deer, 89 ducks, 9 geese and 2 bushels of potatoes were traded to the post. This was probably only a partial list of what was consumed as Company employees also hunted but their catch is not included in this record. Considering that the population at this time was only fifty people which grew to approximately four hundred by 1862 the amount of food needed to provision the settlement was substantial. 20

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20 A large contingent of miners and families from Staffordshire arrived at the end of this month. It is feasible to assume that the post was preserving food for their arrival.
It is not surprising that the demand for provisions far outstripped what the Sne-nay-muxw could produce particularly when their labour was also needed for the coaling operation.  

This problem was noted from the start in the correspondence. Once the Sne-nay-muxw were used for loading and shipping coal their ability to supply provisions decreased drastically. This encouraged other groups besides the Sne-nay-muxw to bring food to the post. The Comox were important for supplying elk to the post. The Sechelt, who lived on the Mainland, were also regular visitors who brought deer across the Strait. One source noted that at one time they arrived with as many as 63 deer in one day (Grant 1857:268).

As well as food, other items were traded to the settlement. Women traded their baskets, blankets, and mats which were used for a variety of purposes. Baskets were important as storage containers as well as to transport coal to the ships. Mats were used to line the floors and walls of the miners houses while blankets were used for bedding and rugs. Under the heading of country produce the Nanaimo account book notes that a substantial number of baskets, dog hair blankets, blanket rugs, cedar mats and rush mats were kept in stock for use in the post and trade. As well as these goods, men traded canoes and deer skins. Their canoes were in great demand during the gold rush of 1858.

By the end of 1855 miners bought their own food for their families from the Company store. In 1859 the Company abolished the officers' mess so that personnel had to buy and

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21 It is estimated at this time that the population at the post was approximately 50 individuals, which included the post personal, and the miners from Ft. Rupert and their Native wives and children.

22 According to Homer Barnett’s fieldnotes some Sne-nay-muxw families had fishing rights on Jervis Inlet.
prepare their own food. What effect this had upon the provisioning by the Sne-nay-muxw is unclear. Nonetheless, the role of providing fresh fish and game to the settlement continued for the Sne-nay-muxw and was always an important alternative to wage labour. Trading food and other items first to the Hudson’s Bay Company and then to individual households created a relationship between the Sne-nay-muxw and the settlement that was to foster an economic interdependence. Hudson’s Bay Company personnel and miners’ families forged close links to the Sne-nay-muxw who lived in their midst. Chinook was the language of the settlement and intermarriage was common. This interdependence was to continue to some extent throughout the 19th Century. However, as the settlement grew and the Sne-nay-muxw population proportionately declined this interdependence was never as obvious as it was during this first decade of Nanaimo’s economic history.

Socio-Economic Adaptation

From the above history there are several questions raised about Sne-nay-muxw women’s participation in wage labour. What drew women into wage labour? Why were Sne-nay-muxw women willing to participate in such labour intensive activity such as hauling coal to the ships, working as domestic servants, building dams, labouring in the gardens, and collecting shells? Did all Sne-nay-muxw women have equal access to employment in the settlement? Were younger women more employable than older women? Did women access wage labour individually or as a family group? How was women’s wage labour integrated with non-wage labour? Finally, how did gender relations change with increased access to wealth goods through wage labour? Specifically how did the informal exchange relationship between men and women change with segregated wage
labour opportunities? Unfortunately there is very little in the historical material to help us answer these questions. Visitors to the region were more concerned with reporting the progress of the coal operation than the behaviour of the Sne-nay-muxw. Nonetheless, the reports on the mining industry do offer some glimpses into Sne-nay-muxw socio-economic adaptation at this time. From these observations we can infer changes in women’s lives and the motivation for their participation in wage labour.

**Subsistence Production**

As the above has shown the introduction of wage labour and the demands of the new settlement for fish and game provided the Sne-nay-muxw with new opportunities to acquire trade goods. Despite their commitment to these new activities the Sne-nay-muxw remained dependent upon their subsistence economy. Aside from sugar and molasses, the Sne-nay-muxw were not trading or exchanging their labour for food. In this respect the Hudson’s Bay Company did not have the means or the desire to make the Sne-nay-muxw replace subsistence production with wage labour. On the contrary, as noted earlier, their continued participation in subsistence production guaranteed their labour as cheap labour force. However the indigenous economy demanded a great degree of seasonal mobility as well as periods of intensive exploitation of resources to assure sufficient food during the winter months. Such engagement was far from compatible with the demands of a wage economy that needed labour all year round. Evidence of this incompatibility is found in the early correspondence between McKay and Douglas between 1852 and 1853, and later a journal of the mining operation between 1855 and 1857.
As noted above during the first month of the establishment of Nanaimo the Sne-nay-muxw were very accommodating, working the surface coal and loading the coal on the ships as they arrived. In fact they were so accommodating that the Hudson's Bay Company quickly ran out of trade goods to pay them. However, at the end of the first week in October McKay noted to Douglas that all the Sne-nay-muxw had moved away to their fall fishing sites on the Nanaimo river. This migration away from the settlement greatly hindered loading coal on the waiting ship, which was of great concern to the early success of the operation:

Oct. 6, 1852: Most of the Native Colliers are now engaged in laying in a winter stock of salmon. 15 tons of Coals per diem may still be depended on.

Oct. 7, 1852: Most of the Indians have left for their fisheries up the Nanaimo River.

Oct. 22, 1852: The Cadboro is now loading, the coals come in very slowly, partly owing to the inclemency of the weather and principally because most of the Indians are still employed laying in winter stock of salmon.

This fall migration was part of the important seasonal movement to fish for chum on the Nanaimo River. Chum were the last fish of the season and important for maintaining the Sne-nay-muxw throughout the winter months. To have foregone this important subsistence production would have left the Sne-nay-muxw in great need. McKay, a seasoned Hudson's Bay Company employee on the Northwest Coast, was probably very aware of this seasonal migration and the importance of this food for winter supplies. However it was inconvenient to the coaling operation. It is unknown when the Sne-nay-muxw returned to help again to work the coal and load the ships as the correspondence
from November 6th to April 4th 1853 are missing. By April 4th McKay reports that the Sne-nay-muxw were again living in their midst and helping to work the coal as well as provision the post for fish and game.

Another important migration occurred during the summer months when the Sne-nay-muxw went to Fraser River for the sockeye runs. Two years later in August 1855 when the journal of Capt. Stuart begins this migration is noted. While some Sne-nay-muxw are present working at various occupations around the post, such as in the pits, sawing logs for the sawmill, and cutting hay at Nanaimo river to feed the livestock, it is quite clear that the establishment is short of Native labour and feeling some “difficulties for want of Indian assistance” (Aug. 22, 1855). This was in fact the first summer for the new contingent of Staffordshire miners and work in the pits had just begun to gear up when the Sne-nay-muxw left for the fishing season. Without Native labour to carry the coal out of the pits, the miners were reduced to searching for new coal seams until they returned. There was a brief respite when they returned in September but by October the Sne-nay-muxw had again left for their fishing sites on the Nanaimo river.

It was clear to the Company that this was going to be a problem every year and plans were made to alleviate this dependence by widening the shafts in order to use horses to draw out the coal wagons. By the following year this had been accomplished however it seems to have done little to prevent a slowdown in coal production, for during the summer months of 1857 the coal operation ceased completely (Robinson to Douglas, Dec. 20, 1856, A.11/76, #446). The closure of the mines forced many of the miners to seek
employment in Victoria. 23 Douglas wrote to London of the inconvenience of Sne-nay-muxw labour to the coal operation:

The want of Indian labour is certainly a great inconvenience for the miners, but really they must learn to be independent of Indians for our work will otherwise be subject to continual stoppages (Douglas to Stuart, Aug. 22, 1857).

The Sne-nay-muxw commitment to subsistence production remained an inconvenience to the Hudson’s Bay Company until the arrival of casual labour with the gold rush in 1858. Their seasonal movements, an essential part of their subsistence production, was highly incompatible to the demands of the mining operation. For the Sne-nay-muxw these years were a new experience in choosing the options of wage labour over subsistence production. Subsistence production however remained paramount as at no time did the Hudson’s Bay Company consider paying for their labour at the same rate as white miners. The segregated nature of the labour force ultimately determined the choices the Sne-nay-muxw were to make.

Conflict and Compromise

While the Sne-nay-muxw maintained a considerable degree of mobility during the summer months, during the winter months many abandoned their winter villages to live even closer to the establishment. When Reverend J. B. Good, an Anglican missionary, arrived in 1861 he noted that many of the Sne-nay-muxw were living in and around the

23 By this time many of the imported miners had renegotiated their contracts for a piece rate. This began a new practice of individual miners hiring Sne-nay-muxw labour when coal seams were wide and productive. This sub-contracting out enabled the Sne-nay-muxw to negotiate their labour with individual miners.
settlement. Part of this shift in winter residence was due to the desire to be close to their employment, the pits, the wharves, the sawmill, and part was due to coercion of the coal Company to move the Sne-nay-muxw away from areas they planned to develop. By 1862 the Sne-nay-muxw had been convinced to abandon their village sites nearest the town so that a tramway could be built from the mines to the loading wharves.  

Despite the Sne-nay-muxw displacement from their traditional village sites they remained committed to their precontact ideas of ownership and control of resources in their territory. This included rights to work the coal in the settlement. The Hudson’s Bay Company was well aware that resource sites as well as wage opportunities in the coaling operation were jealously guarded by the Sne-nay-muxw. McKay in his correspondence noted that the Sne-nay-muxw were very protective of their rights to work the coal. Other visitors to the post were often forced to seek other employment opportunities. For example, the Squamish and Sechelt entered the shingle business as the Sne-nay-muxw initially restricted them from working the coal:

Sept. 16, 1852: A number of Shusuhomis and Shesalls arrived here last week. They are anxious to enter into the shingle business as the Nanaimoes will not allow them to work the coal.

In the first year it is evident that outside Native labour was only present with the permission of the Sne-nay-muxw. One incident observed by a crew member on the ‘Virago’ in the summer of 1853 noted that there was a falling out between the Sne-nay-muxw and one group of Comox who originally were given permission to work the coal.

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24 There is some indication that the housing built close to the mining sites were not of the longhouse type but of small more temporary housing.
McKay with great difficulty prevented the Sne-nay-muxw from shooting them while they worked (Inskip, Aug. 1st, 1853, BCARS). Another incident that ended less amicably occurred two years later over rights to employment at the sawmill. In the summer of 1855 two Lekwiltoks were hired to log timber for the sawmill. Several Sne-nay-muxw took exception to their employment and after warning them to leave, which they refused to do, shot both of them. This resulted in large number of Lewiltok descending upon the establishment seeking revenge. Only after taking the life of one of the Sne-nay-muxw leaders, Wunwunsen, was this volatile situation resolved peacefully (Robinson to Douglas, Aug. 20, 1855).

Such confrontations were of great concern to the Hudson’s Bay Company not only for their employees safety, but for the disruptive effect on the business of the post. From the start other groups were encouraged to come to the post and work in order to offset the labour shortages that occurred when the Sne-nay-muxw were absent. However intertribal warfare was endemic at this time and many of the groups who sought employment at the post had long histories of hostile relations with the Sne-nay-muxw. Complying with the Company’s wishes to maintain peace forced the Sne-nay-muxw to accept enemies living in their midst. Understandably, relations between the groups were far from amicable, but by the end of the Hudson’s Bay Company tenure the few reports of hostility indicate that the Sne-nay-muxw had acquired a certain resignation to visitors in their territory. This resignation perhaps was due to Sne-nay-muxw interest to maintain good relations with the Hudson’s Bay Company and thus confirm their access to wages and trade goods.
Wealth and Exchange

Elsewhere in the literature it is argued that the primary incentive for the initial participation of Native people in wage labour was the acquisition of wealth (Codere 1966, Vaughan 1978, Lutz 1992). Most certainly wealth was an important incentive for the Sne-nay-muxw as it was linked to social status and prestige. The redistribution of wealth through formal gatherings continued to be a feature of Sne-nay-muxw life. This was noted by many visitors to the post (Hills BCARS; Bryant’s BCARS; Nanaimo Day Book NCA; Mayne 1862). One account notes that such activities at times even hindered the coaling of the ships:

We had to coal ourselves from the pits mouth, all the Indians still suffering from the effects of a grand feast giving[sic] lately by the chief of the Tribe (Mayne, Oct. 28th, 1859, BCARS).

It is unknown whether these formal exchanges of wealth increased in frequency during this period but additional wealth as well as the presence of competing tribes may have increased their occurrence. This is the argument proposed by Codere (1966) for the Kwakwaka’wakw. She argues that with increased wealth and the presence of competing tribes, potlatching replaced intertribal warfare. While this interpretation is highly contentious there is some evidence that Coast Salish potlatches did portray elements of mock battles during the formal presentations (Smith 1940; Snyder 1975). Most certainly, endemic warfare did end for the Sne-nay-muxw and they were forced in a very short period of time to live in close proximity to enemy tribes and to compete with them for employment. It is feasible to assume that formal exchanges were an important part of substantiating their claims to their territory and as well as their rights to employment at the
post. One particular potlatch was noted to include a large number of visitors from various tribes:

These few days there is a grand assemblage of Indians at a feast in Sewet’s camp at Nanaimo, consisting of Indians of the “Comuck,” “Ses-shelts,” “Lummy,” “Cowitchan,” “Songish” and other tribes (Bryant, Oct. 18, 1859).

While we are unsure if formal exchanges occurred more frequently most certainly the amount of wealth distributed in them did increase. Albert Wesley, a Sne-nay-muxw informant, remarked on the change that had occurred since contact in the formal gift distributions. He pointed out that before the establishment of Nanaimo Sne-nay-muxw gatherings were small and included only a few men from each village. Fifty blankets, or fifty goat skins, was considered a tremendous amount of wealth and often at these exchanges blankets were torn into strips so that everyone could receive a portion. After the establishment of the settlement the gatherings grew in size as whole villages were invited to witness the distribution of wealth. The amount of wealth exchanged at these gatherings increased to such a level that blankets were bought in bales of fifty and given to individuals in tens and twenties (Barnett 1955:256).

What changes this new access to wealth produced in the social life of the Sne-nay-muxw is only speculation but for other Coast Salish there have been several theories. Collins (1950) for example, argues that the social ranking among the Upper Skagit became more marked as access to wealth was not equally distributed. This unequal distribution created greater class differentiation. Those leaders who lived closest to the white settlements and established themselves as traders benefited the most. Through their daily
dealings with the settlements these entrepreneurial leaders came to represent the interests of the village. In many respects there is evidence that this also occurred for the Sne-nay-muxw. Several leaders are noted in the historical data who were attached to the villages in the area. One such leader was Wunwunsen who was highly regarded by the Hudson’s Bay Company and used as interpreter.

As the above discussion has shown there were significant changes in the lives of the Sne-nay-muxw during this decade. Not only was wage labour an added option to be integrated with subsistence production, but the Sne-nay-muxw were moved off their traditional winter sites in order to oblige the mining operation. Also within a few short years they found their traditional enemies living in their midst. In order to maintain good relations with the Hudson’s Bay Company and assure themselves employment at the establishment they were forced to tolerate outsiders’ presence. Why the Sne-nay-muxw were willing to accommodate these changes is unknown. However, I speculate that from their observations and experiences at Ft. Langley and Ft. Victoria the Sne-nay-muxw were perhaps well aware of the benefits which a trading post in their territory could bring. Increased access to wealth goods as well as the protection the Hudson’s Bay Company establishment provided in their territory would also have been a significant factor. However the coal operation at Nanaimo placed distinct demands upon Sne-nay-muxw labour that were different from either Ft. Langley or Ft. Victoria. The following section discusses the implications of these demands upon gender relations.
Gender Relations

The preoccupation with the mining operation by the Hudson’s Bay Company personnel and the visitors to the region leave little detail in the historical accounts about the Sne-nay-muxw and their lives at this time. Exceptions are the journal accounts written by the crew of the ‘Virago’ who visited Nanaimo in the spring of 1853. At this time the Sne-nay-muxw were still mourning the death of Siam-a-sit, who was hanged for the murder of a sheep herder on the Saanich peninsula. Several crew members noted that one of the most conspicuous objects found at Nanaimo at this time was a large wooden monument in the shape of an urn, painted red and white, built to commemorate this young man. This urn contained several guns with ammunition while food and water were replenished regularly. As the crew wandered around the small settlement they visited several Sne-nay-muxw dwellings. In one account William Hills, the paymaster, describes the mourning ritual he observed:

I was much struck by a peculiar song several were singing. About a dozen men sit together each with two sticks in his hands with which they beat time. One commences the song in a low note key and voice, then another joins in, and then another, and so on, the key gradually rising and the song becoming louder, and gradually dying away by the singers leaving off one by one; all the time they keep beating time with their sticks. The same air and words are repeated over again and again, and at a short distance the effect is both pleasing and melancholy... (Hills, UBCL, fol 158).

Hills was informed by McKay that these mourning ceremonies were for the benefit of the ‘Virago’ crew who the Sne-nay-muxw viewed as a separate tribe of King George men “who go about punishing all who offend the other tribes” (Hills UBCL, fol 158). The ‘Virago’ a warship in Her Majesty’s Service with uniformed officers and crew was linked
to the 'Thetis' that had arrived early in the new year to capture Siam-a sit. Hills also noted that the mother and the young widow were prominent in these mourning rituals. These women were constant visitors to their vessel as well as other visiting ships to the harbour. On one occasion he remarked on the behaviour of the young widow which the crew nicknamed the 'Gallows Widow:'

The Company's steamer Beaver arrived from Victoria on her way to the Northern trading posts. The Gallows Widow...was alongside in a bran (d) new green blanket, with lots of beads, smiling and skylarking, and looking quite pleased with the small presents of biscuit she received in virtue of the interest to her story (Hills UBCL, fol 160).

The hanging of this young man was viewed as a great injustice by the Sne-nay-muxw. From the above observation it is evident that the widow expected compensation for the loss of her young husband. Her husband had been the son of a principle leader and it is likely she was a woman of equal status. Her visits to the ships indicates that she had considerable freedom to interact with visitors to the establishment. It is unknown who accompanied her however young women were often chaperoned by their mother-in-laws and other family members. The accounts from the Virago also noted that the young widow was soon to marry her husband's brother once the mourning period was concluded. This followed the practice of levirate which was a common marriage custom for the Coast Salish.

Aside from these accounts we have little description of women during this decade. The continuation of subsistence production indicates that women's labour in preparing and preserving food remained important to their families. However, as noted in the earlier chapter a shift in the value placed on women's production began with the fur trade and
many of the introduced trade goods replaced their indigenous production. The access to wealth goods through labour about the mines and the Hudson’s Bay Company post continued that trend. Increasingly women found the product of their labour vis a vis men devalued when trading at the post. This is evident in the Hudson’s Bay Company account books. As table 3:1 reveals trading a single deer brought the same return as a woven blanket that took a woman weeks or months to complete. Similarly food that women gathered and traded to the post did not give the same return as food hunted by men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crafts</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 baskets</td>
<td>6d</td>
<td>1 goose</td>
<td>1s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 baskets</td>
<td>3s4d</td>
<td>1 deer</td>
<td>2s6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 baskets</td>
<td>1s</td>
<td>1 doz. hen’s eggs</td>
<td>1s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 mats</td>
<td>5s6d</td>
<td>6 gal oysters</td>
<td>1s6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 blanket</td>
<td>2s8d</td>
<td>1 qt berries</td>
<td>4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 ducks</td>
<td>1s6d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Nanaimo Day Book NCA

How this affected the exchange relationship between men and women within the household is unknown but the lower trade values placed upon women’s production would have upset the informal exchange relations between men and women. This imbalance had the potential to change the economic autonomy women experienced in the households. Perhaps this is why Sne-nay-muxw women were drawn into wage labour, first to convey coal to the ships and later other labour around the post. Women did not have the
opportunity to gain as much wealth goods from trade as men. This encouraged them to seek trade goods through the sale of their labour as wage earners. This may explain the above observation by Mark Bate, a Hudson’s Bay employee, that women were better wage earners than men. The ability of Sne-nay-muxw women to increase their wealth through wage earnings would have maintained their autonomy within their family. As noted above much of the goods given to women were primarily luxury goods. These goods were important for an individual as well as family wealth and status.

Another means by which women could gain status was through marriage with Hudson’s Bay Company officers and staff. As noted earlier, intermarriage was endorsed by the Company to guarantee trade goods as well as labour around the post. At Ft. Langley intermarriage with various personnel had occurred with Kwantlen and Cowichan women. According to one source there were at one time as many as seventeen women attached to this post (Allard BCARS). This practice of intermarriage also occurred at Nanaimo with both the Hudson’s Bay Company personnel and the immigrant miners. At Nanaimo one observer noted that many of the first miners to the settlement lived with Native women (Inskip Oct. 6, 1853, fol 231 BCARS). Such marriages offered distinct advantages for employment in the coal operation. One important alliance at this time was the marriage of Ellen with the stone mason, William Isbister. In 1858 he became the Indian labour organizer and a lively “pushing” boss after the departure of Orvid Allard (Bate NFP April 16, 1907). This marriage guaranteed employment for Ellen’s family and

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25 Also see Morton (1980).
26 Some of these women were from Ft Rupert where a small contingent of Scottish miners were first sent.
kin as well as other Sne-nay-muxw. Another notable marriage occurred between Sarah and John Dolholt who piloted the coal ships in the harbour. His knowledge of the coaling needs of each ship was an asset in knowing the daily labour requirements in the coal operation.

Sne-nay-muxw women’s lives changed with the establishment of Nanaimo in their midst. Although their experiences with the Hudson’s Bay Company at Ft. Langley and later at Ft. Victoria prepared them to some extent for these changes, the mining operation was distinctly different from other Hudson’s Bay Company settlements with new demands on their labour. The arrival of miners and their families from England in 1854 exposed them to new gender roles and standards of domesticity. 27 As the next chapter reveals Sne-nay-muxw women were to experience an ideology of domesticity that was to determine not only their roles within the family but their employment in the labour force.

Summary and Conclusion

The arrival of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Nanaimo was to mark the initial transformation of the Sne-nay-muxw from traders to wage earners. Both Sne-nay-muxw men and women were an important part of the labour force in the early coal operation. However, women’s employment was assigned according to the gender linked pattern of employment developed in the mining industry elsewhere. While there is some indication in the historical literature that Native women in the early economy of the province did find employment outside of the specific gender linked occupations, (i.e. sealers, boat pullers, packers and guides), this was not the case for Sne-nay-muxw women in their initial

27 Several stories in the Cryer material describe how women acquired these new skills.
experience in wage labour. Work above the pits had traditionally been assigned to women in the British mining industry. Segregation based on race was also evident as it was Sne-nay-muxw women and not the British miners' wives who were hired as wage earners in these early years.

During this decade the Sne-nay-muxw were compelled to adapt to various socio-economic changes in order to participate in this new economy. While they remained committed to subsistence production they were obliged to shift their winter residence and accommodate the Hudson’s Bay Company labour demands needed for the mining operation. Although we have limited data for understanding gender relations during this decade, increased wealth women acquired through wage earning would have enabled them to maintain a significant degree of economic autonomy that was fundamental to gender relations. However, as the following chapters reveal women's access to wage labour was increasingly segregated along gender, race and class lines.
CHAPTER 4
EMPLOYMENT IN A MINING COMMUNITY: 1863 -1920

Introduction

The period from 1862 to 1920 was one of great change for the Sne-nay-muxw. The colonization of Vancouver Island occurred rapidly and Nanaimo grew from a settlement of 400 in 1862 to over 6,000 by the turn of the Century. The coal mining industry dominated the local economy during this period. Within this economy there was a distinct gender, race and class segregation that determined Sne-nay-muxw wage labour opportunities. This segregation left Sne-nay-muxw men and women highly vulnerable to unemployment in the community. This chapter examines this employment history and the nature of a domestic economy that accommodated both women’s insecure employment and a conflicting gender ideology that excluded women’s labour from wage production.

The Mining Economy

Once the Hudson's Bay Company relinquished control over their coal operation the settlement of Nanaimo grew quickly. 1 The primary industry remained coal mining and, while several companies mined the region, the industry was generally monopolized by the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company and the Dunsmuir, Diggle and Company Ltd. which had begun operation in 1871. 2 In the beginning mines clustered around the

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1 There are several general histories about the early history of Nanaimo (see Johnson 1958; Bowen 1982)
2 The Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company was reorganized in 1889 to be known as the New Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company. In 1903 it was sold to the Western Fuel Company which reorganized in 1918 and later in 1928 bought out the
waterfront and the northern district of the city but later they were opened in the southern
district around Chase river and Ladysmith. Both Companies opened many mines but due
to irregularities in the seams they were short lived and few operated for more than 15 or
20 years. The exception and most productive mine was Esplanade located on the
waterfront within Nanaimo city limits and on the northern outskirts of the Sne-nay-muxw
town Reserve. This mine was active from 1883 to 1938 and closed due to the lack of
market demand not exhaustion of coal deposits. 

The demand for coal by the American market as well as the growing local need made
Nanaimo a prosperous city in the later half of the nineteenth Century. The Black Diamond
City, as it became known, was incorporated in 1874 and by this time was considered the
most important coal producing centre on the Pacific Coast. Between 1880 and 1900
Nanaimo experienced a boom and rate of growth that was to be unequaled in its history.
Yearly coal production rose from 18,000 tons in 1863 to a million tons a year with a
record of 1,298,445 tons in 1923 (B.C., Ministry of Mines Annual Report, 1923). The
labour force grew with this increase in production. In 1874 there were an estimated 400
workers in the mines but by the turn of the century this number was close to 3,000 with a
peak of 3,345 workers in 1921 (ibid 1921).

competing Dunsmuir interests. Dunsmuir organization became Dunsmuir and Sons in 1883
and was reorganized in 1899 as the Wellington Colliers. In 1910 it was reorganized again
as the Canadian Colliers (Dunsmuir) Ltd. and purchased by the Western Fuel Company in
1928 (see Leyland PABC; Johnson 1958).
3 Around some of these mines other small communities arose, such as Wellington, East
Wellington and Extension. These communities, unlike Nanaimo, were abandoned once
the coal seams ran out.
4 As an indication of the productivity of this mine, it is estimated that this mine alone
contributed 18 million tons to the 50 million tons of coal produced locally by all the mines
(Leynard PABC).
As well as employment in and around the mines, servicing the mines generated other forms of employment. Several sawmills were established to produce the timbers for the mines and housing materials for the settlement. These sawmills were generally small, as demand for finished wood was restricted to local supply. With the building of the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway in 1886 the demand expanded for ties, trestles and bridges (Lawrence 1957). By the turn of the century there were several sawmills in and around Nanaimo that cut anywhere between 5,000 and 40,000 board feet daily.

Other industries linked to the prosperity of the mining industry arose in Nanaimo. By 1894 there were two breweries, a tannery, an explosives factory, a cigar factory, two foundries, a carriage and wagon works, machine shops, and gas and electric light works (British Columbia Annual 1894). A number of hotels, boarding houses, saloons and restaurants were also established to accommodate the hundreds of young, single men employed in the mines. Farms were started on the outskirts of the town to supply feed for the mine livestock as well as fresh produce for the community. Good arable land was to be found around the Nanaimo river and Cedar districts where hay and oats were grown with some success. At the turn of the century dairy farms were started and a creamery opened in 1905.

The only industry of note that was independent of mining in Nanaimo was the herring industry. In 1905 there were six companies engaged in herring fishing that employed 150 men but this increased to 43 companies that employed close to 1,500 workers by 1910

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5 The Company itself maintained a large farm, known as Wakesiah farm, to feed the Company livestock.
The majority of herring were salted and several salteries were established in and around Nanaimo. By 1914 there were 15 herring salteries within the district, three of which were located near Cowichan gap (Porlier Pass). Besides salteries other fish processing plants were opened in and around Nanaimo for the manufacture of fish meal and fish oil. For a short period of time a whaling station, employing close to 300 workers was established on Hammond Bay just north of the city at Pages Lagoon. Between 1911 and 1912 Nanaimo had a clam cannery and 36 smoke and fish houses that employed 400 workers (Canada: Marine and Fisheries, 1911-12). The First World War created a heavy demand for canned herring and pilchards and coupled with a developing market for the cheaper fall salmon, many canneries opened on Vancouver Island. After the war all three markets collapsed.

While a record amount of coal was mined in 1923, the demand for coal began to decline long before the First World War. The shift to oil, a more efficient fuel, and the larger coal seams discovered in Northern British Columbia spelled the end of this industry for Nanaimo. The First World War gave the industry a reprieve but by the 1920’s the end was in sight. Only twenty-five percent of the Nanaimo labour force worked in the mining industry at this time (Gidney 1978:21).

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6 In 1903-4 it was noted that herring was so plentiful ‘that large numbers were washed upon the beaches by the waves of the passing steamer’ (Department of Fisheries, AR 1905-07:46).

7 Whales were not plentiful in the Strait and after one successful season the station turned to processing dogfish oil before it was finally closed (Henderson 1984).
Segregated Labour Force

The labour force in Nanaimo had a distinct class, race and gender segregation that was linked to the labour intensive demands of an underground mining industry and the services it generated. Class lines were sharply drawn between those who owned or managed the mines, and those who worked in the mines (see Phillips 1988). Most visible in the class of owners was Robert Dunsmuir the owner of Dunsmuir, Diggle and Co. Ltd. and later a member of the Provincial Legislature as Nanaimo's representative. Also visible was the various mine managers of the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company who were sent directly from England to manage the interests of the Company. These men and their families constituted a small class of bourgeoisie whose economic and social life was quite distinct from the rest of the community. Much has been written about the different managing techniques and policies of these two companies that often reflected the personality of these two leading men (Phillips 1967; Gallacher 1979; Mouat 1988). Dunsmuir arrived in Nanaimo in the 1850's to work for the Hudson's Bay Company. He began as a coal miner, a supervisor for the VCMLC and then an owner of his own mines. He was an entrepreneur in the truest sense and often had an adversarial relationship with his workers. On the other hand, the mine managers for the VCMLC were part of the bourgeois class in Britain and had never worked as miners or labourers. While they offered a more paternalistic approach, their limited understanding of the working conditions in the mines often led to their share of conflicts with their work force.

The class of men who worked in the mines was divided into skilled and unskilled workers. Skilled workers were the miners or hewers who worked directly on the coal
face. Attached to them were assistants who through various grades of apprenticeship eventually reached the senior positions of hewer. Unskilled workers were the labourers who were responsible for loading coal on cars to transport to the surface, cleaning coal, and surface work. These men worked as teams with productivity determined by both the physical geology of the coal seams and the level of technology used to extract it. 8

This dichotomy of skilled and unskilled labour was to fall along three racial lines, White, Chinese and Native. Skilled labour was assigned to White miners and their sons. Most of these miners were of British extraction but other ethnicity’s appear around the turn of the Century such as Italians, Croatians, Swedes and Belgians. Unskilled labour was either Chinese or Native workers. This racial segmentation in the mines was reflected in a three tiered wage structure (see table 4:1). White miners were paid the highest wages, while Native workers and young boys were paid at times less than half the average wages of White skilled miners. Chinese workers, were an indentured labour force and paid the lowest wages. In looking specifically at the labour force of the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company, White labour was by far the most abundant except for specific years when Chinese labour in the mines exceeded fifty percent of the labour force. Native labour in the mines never exceeded more than 13% of the labour force (see Appendix B).

There was also racial segregation in other employment in the community. Both Native and Chinese workers worked as casual labourers in a variety of industries. They were

8 Small groups of men worked together; two hewers or those who worked the coal face, and two or three unskilled labourers who transported the coal away from the face. Beshaw (1986) maintains that this division of labour in the mines allowed for greater solidarity during labour disputes.
employed in the local sawmills, worked on the roads and helped build the E & N railway from Victoria to Nanaimo. The Chinese also worked as domestics in private households and hotels and they opened a number of laundries in the community. The Japanese were later arrivals at the turn of the century and worked predominately in the herring industry.9

This racial segmentation, coupled with poor working conditions and wages in the mines, led to considerable class conflict in the community and to the growth of unions early in Nanaimo’s history.10 The Miners’ Mutual Protective Association, appeared as early as 1877 (Phillips 1967:7). Later the Miners’ and Mine Labourers’ Protective Association with unions for Coal Trimmers, Carpenters, Engineers, and Tailors formed one of the earliest labour councils in the province, the Nanaimo Labour Council in 1891 (Phillips 1967:20). This early unionization of the white Nanaimo work force was to produce a solidarity that was not experienced in other communities in British Columbia at this time.

Like all coal mining communities there was a very gender specific link between men and women’s work. Men were wage earners who worked in the mines while women’s work was in the home. Women’s exclusion from the mines was not only an accepted practice but enforced through legislation. This legislation had its precedence in the British

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9 Only one herring company in Nanaimo was not owned by Japanese families. The Nanaimo Fish and Bait Company was an amalgamation of Robinson & Stanall and Johnston & Rudd, who had both been engaged in the herring industry since 1896. These companies practiced a racist policy of excluding Japanese labour (Brown 1912).

10 Much has been written of the struggle and radicalism of the unions in the labour history of British Columbia (see Bergren 1966; Phillips 1967; Scott 1974).
Mines Act of 1842, which restricted women from working underground. Until this time women had worked in the mines giving assistance to their menfolk as part of a family economy (see John 1980; Humphries 1981). A similar Act was passed in British Columbia in 1877 but women’s exclusion from underground work in the mines was accepted practice in the community from the start.

This exclusion from employment in the mines left few women in the paid labour force in Nanaimo before the turn of the Century. By 1881 only 33 women were listed as “gainfully employed” in occupations such as dressmakers, milliners, and domestic servants (Census 1881; Baskerville et al 1990). It was not until the turn of the century that this began to change when professional occupations such as teachers, nurses, clerks and bookkeepers became available to women (see Lowe 1980, Warburton & Coburn 1988).

The segregated labour force in Nanaimo was a product of the economic demands of a mining industry. It is within the context of this gendered and racially segregated economy that the Sne-nay-muxw were to interact and seek employment. In the following sections, I describe their employment history and the labour conditions that structured their participation.

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11 This Act also limited boys under fourteen to work only five days of the week and for a maximum of six hours daily.

12 Women were limited to surface work but with the introduction of automatic machines for cleaning and sorting coal at the pithead were excluded entirely from employment in this industry before the turn of the Century.

13 While women only represented a fraction of the collier labour force in Britain by 1842 areas of concentration were South Staffordshire, Shropshire, Cumberland, South Wales, Scotland and West Lancashire. It was from these areas that most of the miners in Nanaimo emigrated.
Men's Employment

There are no records to indicate that Sne-nay-muxw women worked in the mines or continued to convey coal to the ships after the Hudson's Bay Company sold its concern to the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company in 1862. Women, from the onset of this period, were excluded due to the prevalent gender segregated ideology of the mining industry. However it is evident that in the early years this industry remained an important source of employment for Sne-nay-muxw men. Many visitors to Nanaimo noted that in the early years of the coal operation that many young Sne-nay-muxw men were hired as coal pushers, cleaning the coal, or on the wharves as coal trimmers. Nonetheless, how many Sne-nay-muxw men worked in the mines or trimmed coal during this period is unclear. In the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company records, Native labour only constituted a small percentage of the total labour force and after 1891 none were recorded. These figures, however, only report the number of Native workers employed directly by the mining company and do not indicate the number subcontracted by individual miners.

Despite generations of Sne-nay-muxw men working in the mines, only a few were employed as skilled labour or hewers. The majority remained on a casual basis as

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14 Knight (1978) maintains that coal trimming remained an important occupation for the Sne-nay-muxw until the strike of 1913.
15 It should be noted that some of the Native workers reported were not necessarily Sne-nay-muxw, as many northern peoples such as the Comox, Qualicum and Kwakwaka’wakw from Ft Rupert came to Nanaimo seeking work (Codere 1966; RG 10, vol. 1331, Feb. 29, 1884, July 6, 1884; vol. 1334, April 4, 1888). A site north of the city on the Millstream River was set aside primarily for these northern visitors and many camped here until 1899 when the city removed them.
unskilled labour. In spite of a lack of formal employment records after 1890, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that Sne-nay-muxw men continued to work in and around the mines (Department of Indian Affairs, AR 1901-11). They were given employment sinking shafts for the mine opened on the Reserve at the turn of the century (RG 10, vol. 6404, file 832-1, pt.). Also evidence given in the hearings for the Royal Commission of Indian Affairs in 1913, reveals that many Sne-nay-muxw men considered mining a preferred occupation to any other in the community. Today only a few individuals are remembered to have worked steadily in the mines before and after World War I.

In addition to mining, men worked as casual labour in a number of other occupations in Nanaimo. During the 1870’s several small sawmills in Nanaimo offered casual work to individual Sne-nay-muxw men (Tate, Feb. 2, 1872; Sproat in RG 10, vol. 3611, file 3756-8, DEC 20, 1876). The largest sawmill in the area was at Chemainus which began operation in 1883. A few Sne-nay-muxw relocated close to this mill while there was steady employment. Longshoring at Chemainus became an important occupation for some Sne-nay-muxw as well as other Native men in the region. Native gangs in the region were known to be good workers as longshoremen and noted for their ability to load a ship. H. R. MacMillan (1963) in his Reminiscences wrote of his observations of the native gangs he saw at Chemainus during World War I:

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16 The 1881 Nominal Census lists 10 Sne-nay-muxw household heads as miners while listing others as labourers or fishermen.
17 Some casual work in the mines was available to some band members when the Reserve mine opened on reserve land in 1910 and closed 1930. It was again opened in 1934 to 1939.
18 The gangs from the Squamish band, the Bow and Arrows were known for their skill in loading lumber (ILWU Local 500 Pensioners 1975).
The Chemainus stevedores included a large number of Indian blood. They lived within ten miles of Chemainus and were very much inter-related. They were competent and proud of loading a sailing ship so well and carefully that almost without exception more lumber was put on any specific ship at Chemainus than at any other port at which she loaded (MacMillan 1963:58).

Timber legislation restricted entrepreneurial hand logging but two Sne-nay-muxw men obtained contracts with Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway Company to provide railway pilings (RG 10, vol. 1335, Feb. 4, 1889). There was also employment clearing land and building roads as the community grew and expanded. Several Sne-nay-muxw men owned their own teams of horses which were hired out to clear stumps as well as annually plow the small five acre plots that were common in the area. Other men worked as porters for the local stores and hotels, and worked on the steamers that plied from Nanaimo to Vancouver and Victoria.

Sne-nay-muxw men also worked in the commercial fishing industry as simple commodity producers and as wage workers. Before the 1880’s their participation was limited to meeting the local demand for fish and fish oil by the community. Early pioneers of Nanaimo remember that Sne-nay-muxw men fished on a daily basis and peddled their catch from door to door as well as supplying the local fish market on Victoria Crescent and the City Fish Market that opened later in 1903 (Nanaimo Free Press, Dec. 9, 1903, 1907, Norcross 1979:103).

Dogfish oil was also a source of income. Dogfish oil was an important commodity in Nanaimo because it was used for the miners lamps as well as greasing skid roads for the

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loggers. While the oil was not a traditional part of their diet, the petty commodity production of dogfish oil by Native peoples began as early as the 1850's (Stacey 1982). Sne-nay-muxw participation in the manufacture of dogfish oil was assured with their access to dogfish schools in March near Nanoose Bay. Other groups such as the Nanoose and Penelakuts also made a good living selling dogfish oil to the mining community of Nanaimo (DIA, AR 1889; RG 10, vol. 3662, file 9756, pt 3). At the turn of the century dogfish was also dry salted (Victoria Colonist, Sept. 6, 1902).

After the 1880's commercial fishing expanded in the province and some Sne-nay-muxw men who did not have steady employment during the summer months were hired as fishermen for the salmon canneries on the Fraser River. Fraser River canneries were established as early as the 1870's and by 1900 there were over forty canneries in this region (Lyons 1969). It is estimated that 1300 Native fishermen were employed on the Fraser river in 1882 (DIA, AR 1883:61). Like many other bands on the southeast coast of Vancouver Island, working for the canneries on the Fraser River became an important seasonal income for the Sne-nay-muxw. Fish ledgers and missionary records reveal that the Sne-nay-muxw frequented several canneries on the Fraser River during this time.

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20 Dogfish oil was used to fuel miners lamps until the turn of the century when safety lamps and electricity were introduced. According to one source during the months of March, August and December individuals could earn as much as $4 to $6 a day (Stacey 1982).

21 Many of the large dogfish oil producers in the region had marriage links to the Sne-nay-muxw (RG 10, vol. 1332, May 4, 1886). According to a local Nanaimo historian, the local supply of dogfish oil for Nanaimo was in the hands of Nanoose Bob who was married to a Sne-nay-muxw woman, Mary.

22 There have been several good histories of the cannery industry in the province. One of the early definitive works is Lyons (1969). A recent study by Newell (1993) documents the history of Native peoples in the commercial fishing industry of British Columbia.
Initially they went to the Ewen cannery and later the Imperial, Terra Nova, Pacific Coast and Vancouver Cannery.23 As well as fishing for the canneries, Sne-nay-muxw men worked inside the canneries hauling and stacking cases. However, after the Hell’s Gate slide of 1914, salmon runs on the Fraser River decreased drastically and the Sne-nay-muxw were forced to move to more lucrative fishing areas in the north.24 While they continued to go to the Fraser River during the summer months many began to fish chum and pinks during the fall months for the Quathiaski cannery at Campbell River (DIA, AR 1915; Tate, 1917).

Sne-nay-muxw men were active participants in the local economy. While individual men were able to find steady employment in the local economy, employment generally remained highly seasonal and casual as Sne-nay-muxw men were excluded from the higher paid employment in the mines. The poor wages coupled with the poor working conditions in the mines encouraged many Sne-nay-muxw to migrate to the canneries or seek employment at Chemainus in the sawmills. Few Sne-nay-muxw men were able to find secure employment in the local economy.

Women’s Employment

After their displacement from the mining industry Sne-nay-muxw women’s access to wage employment was severely limited in Nanaimo. Excluded from employment in the

23 The Ewen cannery opened on the Fraser River in 1876 and remained in operation until 1930. This affiliation however was not always secure as canneries changed ownership, did not open some years, and in some cases burnt down.

24 Hell’s Gate is a narrow gorge on the Fraser River that was damaged with railway construction. Several slides occurred here that prevented sockeye and pinks from spawning.
mines, women were also excluded from work in the sawmills and the majority of other occupations in the community. However, their labour remained in great demand as domestic servants in the hotels and boarding houses that opened to accommodate the rising number of young single men working in the mines. Sne-nay-muxw women were hired as maids, cooks, and serving staff on a permanent as well as casual basis. As well as in commercial establishments hired domestic labour was also used in private homes. This demand for domestic service in commercial establishments as well as private homes ensured Sne-nay-muxw women's participation in the early labour force of the settlement.

The most demanding domestic work in the mining community was washing and women who ran boarding houses or had large families hired domestic help for this labour intensive and time consuming domestic chore. Washing clothes took a full day to complete. In the early years in Nanaimo, water had to be carried in buckets from springs which were found under the rocks of the tidal ravine (Bowen 1987:134). In 1883 piped water was drawn out of Hamilton Creek. The actual washing required that water be heated on stoves, clothes were then rubbed on washboards, wrung, rinsed, wrung, and then hung to dry. Ironing was done with flat irons heated on a stove. The demand for this labour in the mining community was exceptionally high, and hiring Sne-nay-muxw women to help with the washing was well established throughout the latter half of the nineteenth Century (Gordon, Methodist Scrapbook). As well as private households, Sne-nay-muxw women also worked for various hotels and boarding houses. Both forms of domestic service remained important after the turn of the century.
Another source of employment available to Sne-nay-muxw women was work in the local canneries. A few canneries opened in the community by the turn of the century. This employment was far from secure from year to year as these canneries failed to open some years and on occasion burnt down (Nanaimo Free Press, March 28, 1910).

Nanaimo Canning Company opened in 1914 and canned both sockeye and chum during the war. However, a Sne-nay-muxw informant maintains that by the turn of the century the majority of people who worked in this cannery were people from the north who camped out on Newcastle Island.

When the canneries began operation on the Fraser River, Sne-nay-muxw women began to accompany their husbands to work inside the canneries cleaning fish and stacking the empty boxes. On occasion women were also used as boat pullers and a few women were hired to fix the nets before the canneries began operation. With the introduction of manufactured nets at the turn of the century this employment ended. The success of women’s adaptability to the cannery industry was noted by Lomas in his first report to the Department of Indian Affairs in 1881:

There is no class of labourers to compete with them at the fisheries ... Their women also, who are very industrious, are profitably employed at the fisheries during the fishing season, making nets and cleaning fish for the canneries... (DIA, AR 1882:166).

At this time Sne-nay-muxw women were part of an estimated labour force of 400 Native women in the canneries on the Fraser River earning $1.00 a day (DIA, AR

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25 According to one source Native women were not hired as fillers in the Fraser River canneries as they were on the Skeena river (Ladner 1979:56).
1882:61). By 1901 they were paid 15 cents an hour (RG 10, vol. 1359, July 29, 1901, #382).

Working in the clam cannery was also an important source of income for Sne-nay-muxw women. There was a small cannery at Departure Bay, Nanaimo Herring Canning and Packing that was formerly conducted on a barge and towed from place to place. Several Sne-nay-muxw women worked in this clam cannery which employed as many as 30 people (Thompson 1913). As noted earlier, Sne-nay-muxw territory contained one of the richest clam beds on Vancouver Island. The clam industry in the province began slowly but by 1914 had increased to a value of $84,097. In the year 1911-12 more clams were harvested in the Nanaimo district than any other district in British Columbia. Fisheries Reports note that on average 1500 sacks of clams were collected yearly at this time from this district. (Canada: Marine and Fisheries 1912, 1914).

The principle clam diggers in the Nanaimo district were Sne-nay-muxw women and children but men often accompanied their wives if they had no steady employment in the local sawmills or mines. Several elders remember that families would camp out for days at a time to gather clams. In the early 1900's a clam buyer would pick up the clams for which the Sne-nay-muxw were paid seventy five cents to $1.00 for a 125 pound sack. According to one source two persons were able to gather as many as six sacks of clams at one low tide (Thompson 1913). Digging clams was most productive during low tide. Low tide occurred twice during the lunar month but the lowest tides of the year occurred during the summer and winter solstices.
The arrival of Chinese in larger numbers after the 1880’s guaranteed a demand for various types of seaweed which were used as food and medicine. Sne-nay-muxw women’s knowledge of the coast and the location of good seaweed patches helped them to supplement their incomes selling seaweed. Although the demand for seaweed decreased in Nanaimo after the turn of the century as the Chinese population declined, buyers from both Vancouver and Victoria still made frequent visits to Nanaimo to buy seaweed from Sne-nay-muxw women.

In the fall, many Sne-nay-muxw women went to pick hops in Washington or the Fraser Valley. Men accompanied their mothers, wives or sisters if they could not find local jobs. The first hop fields were established on White River in Washington State as early as the 1860’s. Vancouver Island people went to the hop farms in the Puyallup River Valley in Washington State as early as 1880’s (RG 10, vol. 1331, Aug. 15, 1884). A steamer left from Victoria on a regular basis but many paddled down in their canoes where they were met at the mouth of the river by the field bosses and directed to the farms (RG 10, vol. 1334, Aug. 17, 1889). Going to the hop fields was an established practice for many Sne-nay-muxw families by 1886 as it was for other bands in the area. A missionary who accompanied them and other Cowichan agency bands noted that the lower deck of the steamer from Victoria to Seattle was so full that people could barely lie down (Tate Sept. 1, 1905 BCARS).

Local hop production began on the Saanich peninsula in the 1870’s and employed over 200 Indian pickers from the local villages (Victoria Colonist, July 9, 1922; Victoria Times, Sept. 16, 1955). At the turn of the century hop fields were established in the
Fraser Valley around Chilliwack and Agassiz, but the initial production was limited and variable from year to year. The United States placed a duty on hops to protect their market, limiting the provincial hop production to local breweries in Nanaimo, Victoria and New Westminster (Victoria Colonist Oct. 7, 1928). It was only after 1910 and particularly during the first World War that production increased and remained consistent. At this time some Sne-nay-muxw women made the annual migration to the Fraser Valley to pick hops as the local growers paid out advances and fares to guarantee their participation. For women who accompanied their husbands’ fishing on the Fraser River, going to the hop fields in the Fraser Valley was more convenient than Washington despite better wages paid there.

Other agricultural labour was also available to Sne-nay-muxw women on local farms in and around Nanaimo. Women were hired for weeding or picking berries and potatoes (RG 10, vol. 1357, July 29, 1901, no 382).

From the historical material it is evident that the Sne-nay-muxw women were actively involved in the wage economy throughout this period. Living in close proximity to the mining town of Nanaimo was an important advantage for finding employment as domestic workers in private households and local hotels. However Sne-nay-muxw women also gathered local foods such as clams and seaweed to sell to the canneries and the Chinese markets. Seasonally they moved to the canneries on the Fraser River and the hop fields in Washington and the Fraser Valley. The variety of means by which women participated in

26 In 1891 only 48 acres in B.C. were devoted to hops which produced 55,288 bushels. Ten years later this had increased to 262 acres producing 299,717 bushels (Census 1901).
wage labour reveals the nature of the economy that, on one hand demanded seasonal
labour, and on the other, guaranteed this labour through a racially and gender segregated
labour force. The following section examines the labour conditions that reinforced this
segregation.

Labour Conditions

Depressions, Strikes and Accidents

Aside from the technical problems of producing coal, uneven market demands, strikes
and accidents affected both Sne-nay-muxw men and women's employment in the mining
industry in Nanaimo. While there was great expansion in the coal industry from the mid
1870's on there were several depressions in the coal trade. Several small depressions
occurred in every decade but a severe economic depression hit the industry at the turn of
the century. These economic slumps were caused by various factors such as unsteady
demand for coal from the San Francisco market, competition from other coal fields,
transportation costs, and high tariffs that protected American coal producers.

As well as these recessions, numerous strikes and accidents closed the mines for days,
weeks and sometimes months. Strikes plagued the industry and, while some were
reconciled quickly and amicably, others were more extensive. One of the longest and most
bitter strikes in Nanaimo's history lasted two years between 1912 and 1914 during which
the mines were only operated with the aid of the militia. The 'Big Strike' as it was known,
crippled the community and left many families destitute (Mathews 1955:176-177; Bowen
Accidents were also a cause of work stoppages for weeks or months at a time. Fire, flooding, and gas explosions were all hazards faced in the mines. In order to get out as much coal as possible both the company and the miners cut corners, a practice which often led to serious accidents. While deaths occurred annually from falling rocks and small explosions, the worst disaster occurred in 1887 when 148 men died in one large explosion in the Number One Mine that bordered the Sne-nay-muxw town reserve. A year later another explosion in the Number Five Mine at Wellington claimed another 77 lives. Such devastating losses led to the reputation that Nanaimo mines were among the most dangerous mines in the world (Griffin 1958; Gallacher 1979).

This insecure employment in Nanaimo was in fact a consistent feature of the early economy in British Columbia (see Sager & Baskerville 1990). Even in the most productive years miners did not work all year round. In assessing the working days of a single miner, it is estimated that in one of the most productive years, 1890, a full-time miner only worked approximately 222 days a year (Belshaw 1988). This would indicate that miners were often faced with part-time employment or unemployment for months at a time. This continued after the turn of the Century. It was reported to the Labour Commission in 1912 that miners in Nanaimo, on average, were unemployed two to three months a year.

Working as casual workers in and around the mines the Sne-nay-muxw were the first to be displaced when there was a shortage of employment in the community. When labour was scarce there was a preference to give available jobs to skilled White miners. The

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27 This disaster left 46 widows and 146 orphans in the community.
Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company extended this preference to the hiring of married White men first. This was a standard policy followed in many mining towns to maintain a secure and reliable labour force. While some Sne-nay-muxw miners were favoured because of their good work records and commitment to mining, increasingly others were displaced from the mines as casual labourers. During the economic depressions the Indian agents were to note the difficulty the Sne-nay-muxw experienced in finding adequate wage labour in the community.

While labour shortages were few and far between during this period there were occasions when Sne-nay-muxw labour was actively sought. One such demand occurred after the large explosion at the Number One mine that killed a hundred and forty-eight miners. This mine was closed for three months and when it opened there was a shortage of miners and unskilled labour in the community. The loss of such a large number of men enabled some Sne-nay-muxw to find employment in the mines at this time. The banning by the VCMLC of Chinese miners underground after this accident ensured that unskilled labour was available. Many of the accidents in the mines was blamed upon Chinese miners who, it was argued, could not read important instructions posted in the mines. In hindsight it is more likely that the Chinese were placed in more hazardous working conditions and this may have also been the situation for Sne-nay-muxw workers as well (see Bowen 1987:273).

The economic cycles in the mining industry also impacted Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment as domestic workers in the community. With no work in the mines, hotels and restaurants that catered to the single male population, either closed or reduced their
employment demands. The shortage of income for many families in the community also ended their means of hiring Sne-nay-muxw women to do washing and other chores.

Such insecure employment produced by this racially segregated labour force obliged both Sne-nay-muxw men and women to seek employment outside the local economy. One such opportunity was the growing canning industry on the Fraser River that began to expand during one of the recession periods in the 1880’s. Although seasonal wages of the canneries were far from secure due to cyclical salmon runs and market demands, the number of canneries increased on the river. During the years of peak runs labour was in high demand but it dropped off significantly for other years. While not all Sne-nay-muxw were committed to going to the canneries the majority did go for these peak runs (Lyons 1969). In 1913 during the ‘Big Strike’ in Nanaimo, most Sne-nay-muxw worked at the Pacific Coast Cannery, which was only open for the peak runs at this time. The end of productive runs on the Fraser river after 1913 saw fewer Sne-nay-muxw going to the canneries. By 1920 they had moved north to Quathiaiski cannery for the fall fishing and canning of chum.

Another option for employment during poor employment periods in Nanaimo was harvesting hops in the fall months. Like the canneries however hop production was also variable in its demand for labour. During the periods of economic depressions many farmers did not bother to plant or harvest hops. It was only after the turn of the century that hop production began to steadily increase particularly in the Fraser Valley.
Competition

Another factor that affected Sne-nay-muxw participation in the local labour force during this period was the competition by Chinese workers and non-Native women. The history of Chinese immigration to this province and the discriminatory practices by both the labour market and the state have been well documented by both historians and sociologists (Ward 1978; Roy 1980; Creese 1986, 1988, 1988-89). Chinese workers were imported to the province to work as cheap unskilled labour in the least desirable employment. Primarily men, they were recruited under a contract system of indentured labour. This subjected them to the lowest standards of living, denied them rights to citizenship, and prohibited them from bringing their families and settling as other immigrants. As a cheap unskilled labour force they were in direct competition for the employment opportunities available to Sne-nay-muxw men and women in the community.

The first Chinese labourers were brought to Nanaimo by the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company in 1867 to work in the mines. Initially their arrival did not replace Sne-nay-muxw labour as they were believed to be unsuitable as pushers and drivers of the coal tubs (White’s diary, Dec. 14, 1867; Sproat 1876). However by the 1880’s Chinese labourers were employed in greater numbers in all the mines and used in a variety of underground and surface work. The Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company

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28 Within the literature there is disagreement on what motivated this race segregation in the economy, an idealist (Ward 1980) or economic motivation (Creese 1988, Li 1979, and Warburton 1981).

29 Companies in San Francisco contracted individual Chinese labour to mining companies for a five or ten year period. This indentured labour was cheaper to employ as the contract companies were responsible for housing and food. Indentured labour persisted until 1949 when legislation introduced during the Second World War required that each employee have individual wage records.
employed 61 Chinese workers in 1880 but by 1885 this number had tripled. The Dunsmuir's Mines had even higher numbers of Chinese working in their mines. They constituted as much as a third of the workforce by the turn of the Century (B.C. Minister of Mines, AR. 1899). This increased presence of Chinese labour in the mines coincided with the expanding demand for unskilled labour as coal production began to escalate. At the same time records from both the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Co. and the nominal Census indicate that Sne-nay-muxw participation in mining declined (Census 1881, 1891). In 1881 a third of Sne-nay-muxw household heads reported mining as their principal occupation however only two household heads were enumerated as miners by 1891 (Census 1891).30

The primary reason for this decline was that Chinese labour was cheaper than Sne-nay-muxw labour. As table 4:1 showed there was a three tiered salary offered to workers by the VCMLC. Chinese unskilled labour was far cheaper and more economical for the company than Native labour. With the exception of four years, Chinese average wages remained at $1.13 a day, while White labour rose to a high of $3.50 and Native labour to $2.50. As unskilled labour Sne-nay-muxw workers were placed in direct competition for work in the mines by the cheaper Chinese workforce.

30 It should be noted that one of the miners also listed farming as a part-time occupation.
Table 4:1

Average Wages Per Day, Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company, 1874-1890

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Native</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>$2.75</td>
<td>$1.19</td>
<td>$1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td>$1.19</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>$2.75</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>$2.88</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>$2.88</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>$2.88</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
<td>$1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>$2.88</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>$2.88</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>$2.88</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>$1.13</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>$2.78</td>
<td>$1.15</td>
<td>$1.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: B.C. Ministry of Mines Annual Report 1874-1890

It is in the first Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration in 1885 that the preference for Chinese over Native workers in the mines was voiced. This preference, according to Dunsmuir, the owner of the Wellington mines, was not due to the economic benefits of cheaper wages but to the perception of Native labour itself as undependable (Canada, Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration. 1885:129). His testimony and others before the Commission maintained that the problem with Native labour was that Native people were prone to "nomadic propensities" and were not suitable for any permanent work.
Chinese labour, it was argued was far more reliable and suitable for the highly labour intensive industries.

This view of Native labour was not shared by all, but this racist ideology that legitimized a cheaper labour force was a common one found throughout the province at this time (ibid. 1885:108). However testimonies also reveal that Native labour was readily available and always willing to work (ibid. 1885:xliii). The mines manager of the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company noted to the Commission that Native labour was always a potential labour force that could be tapped as strike breakers to use in the mines (ibid. 1885:118). The Commission concluded that cheap Chinese labour would not displace skilled labour and endorsed their continual use in the mines. Such a decision was to effectively limit an important source of wage employment for many Sne-nay-muxw men. Unable to compete for skilled employment which was limited to White miners only, they were simultaneously curbed from unskilled employment unless they accepted the poorest wages and conditions.31 After the mining disaster of 1887 in the Esplanade mine, Chinese labour was excluded from underground work by the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company. At this time there was active recruitment of Native labour to work in the mines(RG10, vol. 1334, March 24, 1888; April 18, 1888). However, this recruitment only increased their number in the mines for that year only as Appendix B shows. All underground work from 1889 on became the principal domain of white workers.

31 The Nanaimo mines were estimated to be among the most dangerous mines in the world (Griffin 1958; Gallacher 1979).
Chinese competition was also felt by Sne-nay-muxw women for work in domestic service and in the canneries. The establishment of several Chinese laundries in the community paralleled their occupational specialization in other communities throughout North America (see Ong 1981). The demand for this service was great in a mining community with a large number of single men and was one of the few businesses that was not coveted by Whites.\(^{32}\) Chinese laundries sprang up immediately on the arrival of Chinese miners and by 1881 there were ten establishments operating in the town (Census 1881).\(^ {33}\) Chinese men were also hired as servants in private households and hotels. By 1901 forty-two were employed in this capacity (Census 1901).

The presence of Chinese laundries and the employment of Chinese as domestic servants was a direct competition for Sne-nay-muxw women who depended upon this labour for an income. A brief delivered by the Knights of Labour to the Royal Commission in 1885 acknowledged that Chinese labour had displaced women from employment in domestic service in Nanaimo (ibid. 1885:158). This brief was primarily concerned with the displacement of White women but it reveals the competition that Sne-nay-muxw women must have faced at this time. Although wages were the same other testimony to the Commission noted that there was a racial preference for Chinese servants over Native women in the colony (ibid. 1885:xx).

\(^{32}\) Ong (1981) maintains that Chinese success in operating laundries was due to their own social ties and institutions. Retaining reliable labour was only assured through lineal or locality lines.

\(^{33}\) Two decades later this number decreased to seven with the competition from a White laundry (Census 1901). The white laundry known as Imperial continued operation on Comox Street in the early 1900’s (Directory 1910).
Sne-nay-muxw women also had to face increasing competition for employment from non-Native women in the community. Many young women, in order to support themselves or supplement their families' incomes, were forced to seek such employment. While domestic work was the most common employment for women in the community it was not the most desired and became less so by the turn of the century. This attitude was noted by a local doctor in Nanaimo in 1902:

The men of this town earn fairly good wages, and as soon as they are able to give their children an education they do not care for their girls going out to domestic service (ibid 1902:170).

The need for young women to contribute to family incomes was important particularly during times of men's unemployment (see Tilly & Scott 1987). Women were often forced into domestic service to support their families during periods of economic depression. While at the same time as these women sought increased employment the economic stress within the community simultaneously decreased the number of households with disposable income that could hire domestic help. For Sne-nay-muxw women such economic depression meant fewer employment opportunities and increasing competition by non-Native women who needed to supplement family incomes. During the strike of 1912-1914 that placed many families in Nanaimo in great distress, Sne-nay-muxw women's access to domestic labour was diminished substantially.

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34 Scott & Tilly (1975) document the importance of young single women's income to the maintenance of the family in the 19th Century.
35 Beishaw (1988) argues that Chinese presence in the mines reduced overall household income as young boys were not employed.
Competition was also a factor for Sne-nay-muxw women in the canneries. The introduction of Chinese male workers in the canneries occurred early in the industry's history as the demand for labour exceeded the available Native labour (Lyons 1969:181). By 1884, there were far more Chinese men working in the canneries than Native women. This employment, according to the Indian agent at the Fraser River agency displaced the labour of Native women:

The Indians from all parts of this agency complain very much this spring and summer of how they are undermined in the labour market by Chinamen, especially in all kinds of light work, where the Indian women and their boys and girls used to be employed (DIA, AR 1885:104).

By the turn of the century Chinese labour had more than doubled in the canneries (Royal Commission 1902:143-45, Gladstone 1959:121). Their initial introduction did not displace Sne-nay-muxw women entirely as a distinctive division of labour arose along racial and gender lines. Sne-nay-muxw women were hired primarily to clean fish and fill the cans, while Chinese men made the cans, soldered the tops, boiled and cooled them and packed them in the boxes. This racial and gender division of labour suited cannery operators as it guaranteed a seasonal labour force within and without the cannery as Sne-nay-muxw and other Native women accompanied their husbands who fished for the cannery.

After 1890 the introduction of the Japanese in the commercial fishing industry created further competition for both Sne-nay-muxw men and women in this industry. Japanese immigration began during the 1890's and escalated particularly between 1896 and 1901

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36 At this time 1,157 Chinese were employed in the canneries while Native employment for both men and women was 1,280 (Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration 1885).
when it is estimated that 13,913 immigrated to the province. The majority of Japanese
entered the fishing industry and in a short period became the dominant ethnic group in the
industry (Rounsefell & Keles 1938; Canada, Report of Fisheries Commission 1905-07:23;
Gladstone 1972:170)). Such competition was to adversely effect Sne-nay-muxw
fishermen. By 1902 the Sne-nay-muxw no longer made the money from the canneries they
made eight or nine years earlier. They reported that they were lucky now to go home with
$100 (News Advertiser, Feb. 7, 1902).

The introduction of Japanese in the commercial fishing industry also affected Sne-nay-
muxw women. Unlike the Chinese, the Japanese were not indentured labourers. Initially
immigrants were primarily men, but at the beginning of the century a ‘family building’
phase began through a picture bride marriage system (Adachi 1976:87-108). This was
highly successful and by 1921 out of 15,868 Japanese living in Canada, 5,348 were female
(Cheng 1931). This new population of Japanese women in the province became an
increasing threat to the security of Sne-nay-muxw women’s jobs in the canneries. As early
as 1901 canners were well aware of an additional growing labour pool attached to
Japanese fishermen. During a labour dispute in that year they were quick to point out that
they no longer needed Native labour in the canneries as they could always hire Japanese
women (Vancouver Daily Province, June 22, 1901, p1). By 1920 Japanese women were
a significant part of the labour force for the canneries on the Fraser River.

37 The presence of Japanese fishermen on the Fraser River encouraged Native fishermen to
align with white fishermen and support the fishermen’s union, the Fraser River
Fishermen’s Protective and Benevolent Association (Gladstone 1972).
Regardless of the presence of Asian and other immigrant workers, the Sne-nay-muxw were not displaced from employment in the hop harvesting. While there were attempts to encourage white pickers during times of depression, this never proved successful because of the poor wages and living conditions. Before the turn of the century hop picking in Washington was taken up by white workers however one observer noted that Native workers maintained their monopoly despite this competition as they were preferred by some of the farmers themselves:

Many growers prefer them as they are more willing to live out doors, begin early, and complain less than most whites (Eells 1985:305).

Nonetheless, White workers did displaced Native hop pickers in the Fraser Valley during the economic depression that followed World War I but this labour force did not remain committed to this seasonal and insecure employment. By the 1920’s hop picking in this region was again monopolized by Native workers.

Mechanization and Resegmentation

In addition to variability in demand for labour and competition produced by other marginalized workers, Sne-nay-muxw employment was also affected by increased mechanization, a product of management’s ongoing efforts to reduce labour costs. As noted in chapter three, coal extraction in Nanaimo began with primitive mining techniques that were highly labour intensive. During this period, considerable technological advances increased coal output and decreased the need for unskilled labour. The introduction of

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38 The major technological innovations in coal mining did not occur until the 20th Century when continuous mining was introduced that cut and transported coal in a continuous non-stop operation.
steam powered machines reduced the number of coal pushers needed in the mines (Gallacher 1979:229,259). However it was the introduction of electric cars in 1890 that made coal pushers and mule skinners redundant. The first electric cars, which were used at the Esplanade mine, allowed 60 tons of coal to be brought to the surface at one time. By the turn of the century this had increased to ninety-six fifteen ton cars (Belshaw 1986:49-50; BC, Minister of Mines AR 1899:834-5). This improved technology shifted coal haulage to machines operated by white workers.

One occupation that remained highly labour intensive was coal trimming and longshoring. While coal chutes were devised to swing over the hatches of coal ships, the coal had to be trimmed to make the load secure. Loading before the turn of the Century took anywhere from two to three days. When coal was not readily available it might take as long as a week. Coal trimming however was not steady employment and considered one of the least secure forms of employment around the mines. When loading coal became more mechanized the number of coal trimmers was substantially reduced.

Women’s paid employment was also affected by increased technology. The most dramatic mechanization to affect women occurred in the canning industry. Initially the entire canning process was dependent upon their manual labour. However, the early introduction of the gang knives and circular blades increased productivity substantially so that by the turn of the century labour work that had previously required 300 to 400 people in the cannery could now be performed by 120 people (Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration 1902:136). After the turn of the century the introduction of the fish butchering machine (known derogatorily as the “Iron Chink”) and the solderless
and sanitary can reduced the labour force by another 30 to 35 percent (Stacey 1982:23). Further refinements of the butchering machines enabled two operators to do the work of a crew of fifty-one butchers. Despite these technological advances not all canneries mechanized to such an extent. Small canneries still existed as late as the 1920’s that did not have iron butchers and ran only one or two lines (Muszynski 1987:56). Also washing the fish remained labour intensive and continued the demand for Native women’s labour.

Technology also entered the private household and changed the demand for paid domestic service. As part of the growing consumer orientated economy, new technological devices became available and affordable to the majority of households by the turn of the century. Perhaps the most labour saving device and one that was to influence Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment was the introduction of the washing machine. In the 1890’s the first hand operated rotary washing machines began to appear in Nanaimo. The washing machine quickly transferred the responsibility of laundering from paid domestic labour to the housewife (see Cowen 1983:248). This self-sufficiency was further assisted when the arduous chore of heating water on top of the stove was eventually replaced with the hot water tank at the turn of the century.

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39 The first electric washing machines however were not available until after 1920.
Table 4:2

Population and Sex Ratio of Men and Women in Nanaimo and Suburbs, 1881-1921.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1645</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>6512</td>
<td>4217</td>
<td>2295</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>6130</td>
<td>3488</td>
<td>2642</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>8168</td>
<td>4877</td>
<td>3291</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>9088</td>
<td>4874</td>
<td>4214</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 1921, Table no 12, p235, Table no 16, p338.

The introduction of ready made clothing, the availability of canned fruits and vegetables, as well as meats and fish further reduced the need for domestic help. While women’s allocated time for such activities in the household did not decrease, it became differently distributed. Increasingly such labour could be managed by a single housewife ending the need for domestic servants. Along with these technological improvements the decreasing number of single men in the community lessened the demand for paid domestic labour. As table 4:2 shows the sex ratio in Nanaimo and corresponding suburbs equalized by 1921. The demand for domestic labour was now readily available to most men through the labour of a single housewife. Hiring domestic servants remained the custom for the rich and upper classes which were limited in number in this working class mining community.
Domestic Economy

Labour conditions such as economic depressions, strikes, competition and increased mechanization reinforced a segregated labour force that placed Sne-nay-muxw men and women in the least secure and desirable occupations in the mining economy. Several questions arise about the effects of this segregated economy upon Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy. How was wage labour integrated with subsistence production? How did the social organization based upon kinship networks and extended families adapt to this change? Much of the literature that examines the effects of contact upon Coast Salish peoples argues that while they easily adapted to the new economy they suffered great social disorganization. Not only did the traditional household organization that centered upon sets of brothers, their wives and children breakdown into smaller nuclear families living in separate residences, but kinship was no longer the central organizing principle of their lives (see Smith 1940, Robinson 1963, Lewis 1970).

In the following section I show that kinship networks and extended families were an integral part of Sne-nay-muxw life at this time and that the continuity of this social organization was important for integrating wage labour with non-wage labour. Although gender, race and class segregation limited women’s options in paid employment, this social organization played a crucial role in determining women’s participation in the labour force.

The immediate sections describe the importance of non-wage labour in the form of subsistence production and farming to supplement the insecure wage labour available to the Sne-nay-muxw. How kinship networks, extended families and exchange remained an integral part of Sne-nay-muxw economic strategy is then examined.
Subsistence Production

The importance of subsistence production to supplement wage labour was evident to many observers who noted the continual movement of the Sne-nay-muxw families to their various resource sites. They fished for herring in the spring, sockeye salmon in the summer on the Fraser River, and chum in the fall on the Nanaimo River. Hunting of deer and other animals occurred in the spring and fall months. Berries were gathered during the summer months and shell fish remained an important staple all year round. Men and women’s roles in the production of these foods continued as it had in pre-contact times. Men fished and hunted while women gathered shell fish and plant foods as well as preserved fish. In addition to drying and smoking fish, canning became popular by the turn of the Century when home canning materials became available.

As families moved together to their resource sites there persisted a flexibility in the division of labour that enabled men and women to help each other when the need arose. However, men and women continued to form separate work parties depending upon the task at hand. Several women would go claming or berry picking together while men formed small work parties to build houses or other joint ventures. Craft production remained more circumscribed but this activity increasingly declined as European materials replaced indigenous goods. Nonetheless, some women, particularly older women, did continue to weave blankets, mats and baskets.

Integrating subsistence production with wage labour demanded adaptable seasonal strategies by each family as very few food getting activities could occur at the same time. Local wage labour in the mines or domestic service limited the time spent at local resource
sites, but the insecurity of such employment encouraged Sne-nay-muxw to remain committed to fishing, hunting and gathering shell fish. One of the complaints voiced about Native labour in the province was that they preferred to pursue subsistence production to wage labour. Most assuredly this was a preferred pursuit by many Sne-nay-muxw families but the limited options in wage labour made it a necessity. The nature of the segregated labour force in Nanaimo compelled the Sne-nay-muxw to integrate this production with wage labour.

Nevertheless, the seasonal demands of subsistence production placed constraints upon wage labour and vice versa. The Sne-nay-muxw made active choices for wage labour over subsistence production in their migration to the canneries and the hop fields. Although the cannery season corresponded with Sne-nay-muxw traditional times of fishing on the Fraser River, the demands of cannery production limited subsistence production. There is some evidence that while camped at the cannery sites on the Fraser River the Sne-nay-muxw and other Native peoples were able to fish for their own daily needs. Unlike the Chinese who were supplied with daily rations from their contractors, the Sne-nay-muxw were expected to supply their own food. Despite the fact that many families brought their own provisions and supplies such as flour, sugar and tea could be debited at the cannery store, they needed daily supplies of fresh fish. Cannery operators, in order to assure Native labour for the season, promised access to fish around the canneries.40 Those

40 One of the large cannery operators on the Fraser River, assured the Indian agent that he would allow his workers to have all the fish they wanted (RG10, Vol. 1332, June 2, 1886). The only restriction at the canneries was that smokehouses could not be used as they were considered a fire hazard.
canners who restricted fish often lost their labour force in mid season (RG10, Vol. 1332, June 2, 1886; Lyons 1969:181).

While access to fish was promised, it is questionable how much time the Sne-nay-muxw had to preserve fish for later subsistence needs. There were slow periods in cannery work before the peak runs began but canneries often operated twenty four hours a day with sixteen hour shifts common during the peak of the runs. Such conditions were far from conducive to integration with the labour intensive food getting activities needed to preserve fish. Few men or women had the time or energy to process their own fish during these periods. Some preservation of fish did occur as drying racks were a common feature of the camps around the canneries. Later, when home canning equipment was available this became a preferred method of preserving fish as it was far less time consuming.

Subsistence production was not pursued when the Sne-nay-muxw worked in the hop fields. The hop farms were not close to any of their traditional resource sites and harvesting demanded that picking begin early in the day and continue until dusk for three to six weeks. The end of hop harvesting coincided with the peak chum runs on the Nanaimo River and the Sne-nay-muxw returned to fish.

This pattern of seasonal exploitation varied with each year. When employment in the community was meager the Sne-nay-muxw spent more time pursuing subsistence

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41 Later conservation measures on the Fraser River did close the canneries for thirty-six hours on the weekends however missionaries and food fishing permits introduced in 1894, restricted the time and quantity of fish that the Sne-nay-muxw could take on the Fraser River.
production. This option became increasingly more constrained after the 1880’s when resource legislation and settling of the land in and around Nanaimo limited access to resource sites. A land grant to the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway Company in 1884 alienated a large corridor of land on the southeastern portion of Vancouver Island where many of the Sne-nay-muxw traditional resource sites were located. This land was subjected to logging and settlement throughout the latter part of the Century. Aware of the effects of the alienation of resource sites W. Lomas, the Indian agent, wrote of the hardship that this land settlement had upon the older peoples more committed to subsistence production:

All the young men can find employment on farms or at the sawmills and canneries, and many families are about leaving for the hop fields of Washington Territory; but the very old people who formerly lived entirely on fish, berries and roots, suffer a good deal of hardship through the settling up of the country. The lands that once yielded berries and roots are now fenced and cultivated, and even on the hills the sheep have destroyed them. Then again, the game laws restrict the time for the killing deer and grouse, and the fishery regulations interfere with their old methods of taking salmon and trout (DIA, AR 1888:105).

As the Indian agent noted such legislation began to limit Sne-nay-muxw access to resource sites in their territory. This legislation was introduced to protect over-exploited fish and game which had come under increased pressure from the growing population and commercial interests. Sne-nay-muxw treaty rights ‘to hunt and fish on unoccupied land’ were ignored as both federal and provincial officials redefined how they could use these resources. While recognizing the importance of fishing and hunting for their food, restrictions were placed upon the use of aboriginal technology, limits and seasons of procurement. For example, the Dominion Fisheries Act, extended into the province in
1874, restricted salmon spearing without special license and stipulated the times that traps and weirs could be used on the Nanaimo River. An Order in Council in 1888 restricted outright both nets and spears for food fishing on the river. Sne-nay-muxw fishermen were fined as much as five to six dollars for spearing chum on the Nanaimo river (Kelly in Conference of Allied Indian Tribes 1923:136-37).

A similar Act, the Provincial Game Act, came into force in 1887 with subsequent amendments that restricted the hunting of deer, grouse, ducks, rabbits and many birds. Unlike more isolated parts of the province where enforcement of these regulations was difficult, the immediate proximity of the Sne-nay-muxw to the white community placed them under close surveillance early on. Deer hunting, always an important food source for the Sne-nay-muxw, was restricted by season and bag limits. The Dominion’s Migration Bird Convention Act of 1917 extended the hunting restriction of ducks and birds in the Provincial Game Act to include all migratory birds, cranes, and other shorebirds. Birds still available for food and for gathering eggs were herons, loons, grebes, and gulls (Gottesman 1983).

Despite exemptions to the Fisheries and Game Acts to allow the Sne-nay-muxw to continue fishing and hunting for food, the application of these exemptions was left to the discretion of fish and game wardens. This led to considerable frustration for the Sne-nay-muxw as these laws did not recognize their aboriginal rights. In one particular incident a Sne-nay-muxw was fined $25 and $3 court costs for shooting a duck. It was argued that the duck was not shot for food because the individual had in his canoe “an orange, a bag
of sugar and a bucket of herring.” Understandably the Sne-nay-muxw were “very much agitated over this” (RG 10, vol. 1340, March 12, 1896, no. 54, 55).

Farming

Many Sne-nay-muxw turned to farming to supplement wage earnings and subsistence production. As noted in Chapter three, the Sne-nay-muxw grew potatoes and hay along the Nanaimo River during the 1850’s. Throughout the 1860’s and 1870’s farming was further encouraged by the missionaries. The desire to have suitable land to farm was part of the compensation demanded by the Sne-nay-muxw for moving from their traditional village sites. This was expressed in their address to the new governor of the colony in 1864:

We want to keep our land here and up the river. Some white men tell us we shall soon have to remove again; but we don’t want to lose these reserves. All our other land is gone, and we have been paid very little for it. God gave it to us a long time ago, and now we are very poor, and do not know where our homes will be if we leave this. We want our land up the river to plant for food. Mr. Douglas said it should be ours, and our children’s after we are gone. We hope you our new chief, will say the same. We have over 300 people in our tribe, though a number are away fishing now. Many are old and not able to work, and some of our children, who have neither father nor mother, have no clothes. We hope you will be kind to them. Our hearts are good to all white people and to you, our great white chief. We hope you will send our words to the great Queen. We pray that the Great Spirit may bless her and you. This is all our hearts today.

At this time they had been moved from their winter village site at Departure Bay and the village site on the 79 acre reserve set out by the Hudson’s Bay Company (White, BCARS May 30, 1864). When Gilbert Sproat, the Reserve Commissioner, set out the reserves in 1876 the Sne-nay-muxw were insistent that their reserves include land to farm.
The most suitable land was on the river, but the relaxed regulations for preemption and the purchase of land without adequate surveys had increased the number of trespassers on their reserves.\textsuperscript{42} The Sne-nay-muxw not only requested that these trespassers be removed but that more land be allocated to them (RG 10, vol. 3611, file 3756-8, Dec. 20, 1876).

At this time Sproat noted that on the river reserves there were substantial fields of hay and oats and that many Sne-nay-muxw continued to plant potatoes. He also recorded that another 10 acres were fenced and cultivated on the town reserve. In his report he listed their total livestock to include: 3 horses, 29 head of cattle, 3 pigs, 141 hens and 6 ducks.

In setting out their reserves, Sproat recognized the importance of the town reserve to the Sne-nay-muxw for its close proximity to employment. He included this reserve as one of the six for a total of 637 acres. These reserves were finally tabled in 1887 (DIA, AR Sessional Papers, 6th parl., 1st sess, 1887, no. 6, p59). They were, in relation to the size of Sne-nay-muxw population, one of the smallest reserves given to a band in British Columbia.

The adaptation to farming by some Sne-nay-muxw introduced a new division of labour in the family. Men worked outside with the machinery and livestock, while women were primarily confined to the interior household activities. As well as cooking, cleaning and sewing, women made butter, soap and candles. Children were an important source of

\textsuperscript{42} The Sne-nay-muxw, like all Native peoples in British Columbia, were restricted from pre-emptying land in the same manner as white settlers. Colonial land policy stipulated in 1865 that Indians could only pre-empt land with the consent of the governor. This was further complicated by a required Minute in Council to authorize the transaction (See Report on Indian Reserves, Appendix A:65; Call 1974:178, 201-8). That no consent was given effectively barred the Sne-nay-muxw from staking out lands and territory important for their use.
labour for the multitude of chores that farming demanded. Both men and women shared
garden work such as planting, weeding and harvesting. After the establishment of the
Cowichan agency the Indian agent was directed to monitor the success of farming in his
agency (DIA, AR 1881:160). The success of Sne-nay-muxw farmers was noted in the
1900 report that listed a total of 400 acres of cultivated land. From this land Sne-nay-
muxw farmers produced 175 bushels of wheat, 8820 bushels of oats, 79 bushels of peas,
560 bushels of potatoes, and 130 tons of hay. Livestock at this time consisted of 28
horses, 35 cattle including milking cows, and 200 poultry. Farming not only produced
food to be consumed by the family but also produce to sell in the town and to other local
mining communities. The Indian agent in 1900 observed these farmers were doing
relatively well. He wrote:

The (Sne-nay-muxw) make good return on agricultural products, such as
oats, roots, fruit, etc.; they being near town and therefore having no
difficulty in obtaining a market for their produce.

Eager to expand their farms they requested aid in the form of machinery. The first
threshing machine and baler in the area was owned by Sne-nay-muxw farmers and hired
out to the surrounding white farms at harvest time. When coal was discovered on River
reserve the primary concern was to save their good farm land. When several companies
expressed interest in mining on the reserve the Sne-nay-muxw wrote to the Department of
Indian Affairs of their wishes:

That in signing this surrender we would beg to express our wish, that if as
good terms can be made with the New Vancouver Coal Mining and Land
Company as with other parties, we would much rather that they become
the purchasers, as from the position of their shafts they could work the coal
without damaging our surface land to the extent that other companies
would be obliged to do (RG10, vol. 3903, file 102,301).
Before the turn of the century only a few families lived on the farms all year round as they moved back to the town reserve in the winter months (B.C., Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, Evidence, 1913:65-66, 74-75). This gave both men and women access to wage employment in the town or freedom to move to clam beds and other resource sites. By the 1890's several families moved to the River reserve to live permanently and farm full time (DIA, AR, 1897). Not surprisingly a close relationship developed between these families who farmed full time on the River reserves with non-native farming families in the surrounding district. At this time a community of approximately three hundred people composed of intermarried families lived on the outskirts of the town in what is known as Cedar district today.

Despite this initial success federal government policies increasingly restricted the ability of Sne-nay-muxw farmers to compete with local farmers.\(^43\) Department of Indian Affairs records indicate that between 1900 to 1915 farming income decreased (see table 4:3). Although sheep were introduced in 1906, other livestock declined as did wheat production which ceased completely in 1912. The majority of Sne-nay-muxw farms were less than five acres with the exception of one that was approximately 100 acres.\(^44\) The inability of Sne-nay-muxw farmers to increase their farm holdings forced many of them to either hire out their labour to surrounding farmers or to work for the local mines or canneries. One source noted that these families would return for a few days between the canneries and the

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\(^{43}\) Contrary to the myth Native peoples did embrace farming as an alternative way of life. Recent work has pointed the failure of farming to government policies and not Native peoples lack of interest (see Knight 1978, Carter 1990, Buckley 1993).

\(^{44}\) This farm was owned by Louis Good, the designated chief of the Sne-nay-muxw. His success in farming is noted in an auction notice of 1906 which included 30 head of prime cattle, 6 good working horses, 25 calves, and 4 good milching cows (NFP, Oct. 26, 1906).
hops to check their gardens and farms (RG 10, vol. 1343, Oct. 5, 1905). Evidence given for the Royal Commission of Indian Affairs in 1913 noted that one of the most successful farms on the reserve only produced $300 yearly income.

The significance of farming to supplement income from wage labour is revealed in the income estimates in the Department of Indian Affairs Reports. As table 4:3 shows, between the period of 1899 to 1914 Sne-nay-muxw income was generated from three sources, farming, wages earned, and fishing.\(^{45}\) Within this period there is a slight change in the relative distribution between the three sources. In the year 1899-1900 farming constituted 60%, wages earned 23% and fishing 16%. By 1913-1914 this rose to 66% (includes farm produce and beef), while wages and fishing were 26% and 11% respectively.

The importance of farming to their economy is also evident in the Sne-nay-muxw per capita income. While the Sne-nay-muxw do not have the highest per capita income in the Cowichan agency in earned wages during this period (the Songhees do) they have almost double the per capita in total income of any other band in the agency. This reveals the success the Sne-nay-muxw achieved in combining wage earning with farming and subsistence production. However, the total per capita income for all bands in the agency decreased during this fifteen year period. The Songhees income decreased as much as 45% while the Sne-nay-muxw only 12%. The Songhees were more reliant upon wage

\(^{45}\) Estimating the value of fishing for sale or food was actually based on a formula. See Appendix C.
labour than the Sne-nay-muxw which again attests to the importance of this combined economic strategy.

Table 4:3

Estimated Income in Dollars by Source for the Sne-nay-muxw Band, 1899-1914.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Farm Produce and Hay</th>
<th>Beef sold/food</th>
<th>Wages Earned</th>
<th>Fishing</th>
<th>Hunting</th>
<th>Total Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899-1900</td>
<td>$7530</td>
<td>$2900</td>
<td>$2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$12,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1901</td>
<td>$8100</td>
<td>$3100</td>
<td>$2100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$13,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1902</td>
<td>$8100</td>
<td>$3000</td>
<td>$2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$13,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-1903</td>
<td>$8200</td>
<td>$3000</td>
<td>$1500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$12,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-1904</td>
<td>$8000</td>
<td>$2500</td>
<td>$1200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$11,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-1905</td>
<td>$7500</td>
<td>$2500</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1906</td>
<td>$7500</td>
<td>$2500</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1907</td>
<td>$7500</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$3000</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
<td>$11,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-1908</td>
<td>$7000</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$3000</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
<td>$11,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908-1909</td>
<td>$7000</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$3000</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
<td>$11,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>1909-1910</td>
<td>$7000</td>
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<td>$11,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910-1911</td>
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<td>$3000</td>
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<td>$11,500</td>
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<td>1911-1912</td>
<td>$6000</td>
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<td>$10,900</td>
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<td>$6000</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$3000</td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
<td>$10,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913-1914</td>
<td>$6500</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$2700</td>
<td>$1100</td>
<td></td>
<td>$10,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DIA, RG 10, volume 1391.

That the Sne-nay-muxw did not have enough land to farm is evident in the conflict that land played within and without family relationships on the reserves. Less than half the reserve land was suitable for farming and what arable land was found on the River reserves had to be extensively dyked and cleared (DIA, AR 1886/87). 46 This lack of land was a

46 In 1913 the British Columbia Royal Commission of Indian Affairs noted that the Sne-nay-muxw had cultivated 405.5 acres of their reserves, 195 acres were under wood, and 37 acres were not cultivated. In terms of farming land they noted that IR1 had 47 acres
divisive issue for the band as the land was not distributed equally among the families. Allotment of land on the reserve began informally by the early missionaries but more formally by the Indian Agent after 1881. In the 1880's an exchange of reserve land for more productive farming land on the Nanaimo River was made with the Vancouver Coal and Land Company. However, this exchange was never formalized by the Department of Indian Affairs and led to great misunderstanding and concern on the part of several Sne-nay-muxw families who farmed this land. Despite this increase of arable land, in 1913 a third of the Sne-nay-muxw families did not own land (Royal Commission Aboriginal Affairs Evidence, 1913).

An increasing dissatisfaction with reserve allocations, fishery and game laws, and the Indian Act prompted the Sne-nay-muxw, with other Coast and Interior Salish in the region, to support a delegation to London to outline their grievances in 1906 (LaViolette 1973:127; Shankel 1945:193). While not successful, their discontent forced the appointment of a joint commission between provincial and federal governments in September 1912. The McKenna-McBride Commission, as it became known, held hearings in Nanaimo to hear the Sne-nay-muxw grievances in 1913. Despite the testimony from the Indian agent and the Superintendent of Indian Affairs that Sne-nay-muxw reserves were far from adequate to accommodate their population, no further lands were added and no

which were classified as good land for farming; IR2 had 200 acres of second class land of which 128 acres was heavy timber; and IR3 had 260 acres, all of which was considered nearly good land (BCRC 1913-1916).
concessions for fishing and hunting rights given (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Affairs Evidence 1913:326-27). 47

The Sne-nay-muxw were increasingly alienated from their subsistence resource sites and land for farming during this time. Increased settlement in the region and the limited land given them for reserves left them little land to use. Yet the Sne-nay-muxw remained relatively successful compared to other bands in the region, in integrating wage labour and non-wage labour activities in their economy. The opportunistic strategy that had been important in pre-contact times to exploit a large range of resources was now applied to integrating what at times were incompatible activities of resource production, farming and wage labour. Several scholars (Smith 1940, Collins 1950, Duff 1952, Robinson 1963, Lewis 1970, Amoss 1978) propose that despite this success a significant degree of social disorganization occurred for the Sne-nay-muxw and other Coast Salish peoples as their territory was quickly engulfed by the growing urban centers. The following section examines the evidence of this social disorganization as it applies to the Sne-nay-muxw to show that, despite these conditions, kinship networks and extended families remained the organizing principles of Sne-nay-muxw life. Furthermore, the retention of this social organization was highly adaptive to the insecure economic opportunities in wage labour.

47 There were nine applications in the Cowichan agency for additional lands but none were granted. The Sne-nay-muxw were told that it was impossible to get any additional land because all the land now belonged to the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway Co. The mayor of Nanaimo also stated that the city was not willing to give up land either.
Kinship Networks and Extended Families

The Sne-nay-muxw suffered from significant population decline from 1862 to 1920 as revealed in the various Census. Their close contact with the mining community, while an asset for wage employment, increased their exposure to a number of contagious diseases such as measles, whooping cough, influenza, tuberculosis and diphtheria. The most susceptible were children and the elderly. By the 1880’s many young couples were childless and only 57% of the total households contained children under the age of 15. The Census taken in 1881 enumerates only 1.3 children per childbearing woman. This number did not increase until after the turn of the Century. Similarly the number of elderly also declined. In comparison with other Coast Salish bands in the region, the Sne-nay-muxw suffered the highest rate of attrition for individuals 65 years and older (Census 1901). In 1881 there were only 18 individuals over the age of 65, or 9% of the population (Census 1881). This decreased to 9 individuals or 5% of the population by 1901 and to 3 individuals or 2% of the population by 1911 (Census 1901; DIA, AR. 1911).

This depopulation had significant impact upon Sne-nay-muxw social cohesion. The loss of elders who were the repositories of knowledge and ritual expertise in Coast Salish society placed the cultural continuity of Sne-nay-muxw family traditions in jeopardy (Guilmet et al 1991). Elders were the primary teachers who taught family history, how to prepare for the vision quest, how to speak in public, and everyday behaviour. An

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48 The high cost of medical care for the Sne-nay-muxw was of great concern to the Department of Indian Affairs. Two rival pharmacies in Nanaimo competed for this lucrative account (RG10, vol. 1332, Nov. 21, 1892; vol. 1337, May 21, 1892). The devastating flu epidemic of 1918 reduced the population by another 10% in only a few short months. Tragically one family lost four children (RG 10, V84-85/316 vol. 500365 file 988/20-5-15).
individual’s success in life was dependent upon the education from elders or grandparents (Barnett 1955:14). As elders died so did this knowledge leaving the new generations open to foreign ideas and social institutions. This latter condition was immediately noted by missionaries who viewed this attrition as a positive step towards Sne-nay-muxw assimilation. The Anglican missionary Reverend John Booth Good wrote:

Death is making many gaps amongst this fated people, and soon all the old generation will have passed away, and with it the old habits and superstitions of them and their forefathers; to be succeeded by others speaking our language, adopting our habits, and possessing our faith (Good 1865:30).

The loss of elders contributed to the tension and conflict reported in Sne-nay-muxw society at this time. Elders were necessary for their political skills to strengthen kin solidarity within and between villages. These skills were much needed when the Sne-nay-muxw relocated to the town reserve. Compelled to live together, families within the five villages were forced to create new political and social realignments as various family leaders maintained their political autonomy. 49

Aside from tension produced by population decline and relocation, an added factor was missionary interference into political organization. Missionaries arrived on Vancouver Island with the Hudson’s Bay Company in the late 1840’s. Throughout the 1850’s Catholic missionaries visited the settlement but it was not until the early 1860’s with the arrival of the Anglican and Methodist denominations that there was any success in converting the Sne-nay-muxw. It was missionary practice as part of the proselytizing to

49 Incidents of quarrels in the community were noted in several sources (Crosby 1907; Nanaimo Gazette, Aug. 21, 1865, Nov. 6, 1865).
disassociate the young from the traditional leaders and to favour those leaders who
converted to Christianity by giving them special status in the community. Thomas Crosby
(1907:51), a Methodist missionary, set out to convince his young converts to resist the
demands of the elders. He highly praised his convert, David Sallosolton, for disowning his
parents for their heathenism (Crosby 1906, 1907). With a similar end in mind the
Anglican missionary, Reverend Good, gave out armbands with red crosses to the newly
converted Sne-nay-muxw and designated them the power to police the band (Robin
1990:51-2).

Not all leaders were opposed to this change. Some willingly aligned themselves with
the missionaries eager to learn the new religion and participate in economic opportunities
in the community. One such leader was Skinahan who sent his son to live with Reverend
Good to learn the language and the new religion. 50 This young boy was later to become
the designated chief of the band (Bishop Hills, June 10, 1862; Good BCARS). An
excerpt from Reverend Good’s reminiscences describes how this adoption came about:

...we had won to our side an Indian Chief of great influence and importance
by name Skenahun. He had from its first commencement strongly attached
himself to me, with all his household. His first born son was a chubby
sturdy lad who may have been about ten years old when we first knew him.
One morning whilst we were at breakfast in our new home at the Rectory,
we were told this Chief had come to call upon us accompanied by his son.
He explained to us that he had brought the boy as a present to my wife,
having made up his mind to surrender him entirely into our hands. He was
soon very happy in his new surroundings and came under steady instruction

50 Skinahan was later killed in a hunting accident which Rev. Good believed was planned
by people who were always plotting against him (Good BCARS). While this is difficult to
confirm it is acknowledged that traditional leadership was based on consensus and respect.
Leaders with strong personalities that upset this political autonomy often faced
assassination (Smith 1969:13).
as a Catechumen of the Mission. In due time he was baptized by name Louis Augustine Good, by which he is still known (Good BCARS).

Whether this tension was new to the Sne-nay-muxw social dynamics is questionable. Several scholars contend that conflict and tension was an integral part of Coast Salish life. For example, Smith (1940b) maintains that Coast Salish peoples placed great emphasis upon secrecy and privacy around an individual’s supernatural powers. This produced suspicion and social distancing within and between families. Living in separate dwellings, as advocated by the missionaries, was a welcomed relief by Coast Salish families. Suttles (1987:220) on the other hand, believes that intravillage conflict was an important incentive for Coast Salish families to continue intervillage links and maintain extended family alliances. This guaranteed support as well as access to a wider range of resources which was important for a family’s survival.

Whether conflict increased with missionary interference or was always part of Sne-nay-muxw life, kinship networks and family alliances continued to dominate social relationships. This is apparent with the presence of political leaders who were linked to extended families. The appointment of Louis Good as ‘chief’ of the Sne-nay-muxw, first by the missionaries and later the Indian agent, created ongoing family conflicts in the community. These conflicts forced the Indian agent in 1890 to appoint four councilors to help manage the reserve (RG10, Vol. 1337, Dec. 26, 1890). These four men, Solomon Sewell, Billy Yacklum, William Culadeson, and Albert Wesley were acknowledged leaders of the dominant Sne-nay-muxw families. Thirty years after their relocation to the town reserve, family leaders were still an integral part of Sne-nay-muxw social organization. After Louis Good’s death in 1916, the Sne-nay-muxw were asked to choose a new chief.
This they did selecting Paul White, because of his ability and links to prominent families on the reserve.

As well as the persistence of indigenous leadership, kinship networks and family alliances remained important to support formal exchange ceremonies and spirit dancing. As noted in chapter two, formal exchanges occurred in three kinds of named gatherings: taking food to affines or 'paddle'; household feasts where a family feasted other household members and other households in the village; and the 'true potlatch' that was given to pay off a funeral debt and accept the rank and status of one's parents (Suttles 1960, Amoss 1978). Most noted in the historical literature were the larger potlatches. Missionaries attempted to end this custom, but by the 1880's one missionary lamented that the Sne-nay-muxw were potlatching more than they had in the past (Methodist Scrapbook, Dec. 14, 1882; Aug. 8, 1883). Recognizing that much of the missionary accounts at this time were politically motivated to outlaw the potlatch, other accounts do verify that potlatching was a common feature on the Sne-nay-muxw reserve during this time (see Cole & Chaikin 1990:29-31, 38-39). In the mining community, Sne-nay-muxw potlatches were important events that knit the two communities together as they provided entertainment as well as business for the local merchants (Province, March 21, 1896). Not surprisingly when potlatches were banned in an amendment in the Indian Act of 1884, Nanaimo businesses did not support the law. Cornelius Bryant, an early teacher to the community, and later a missionary, noted that the Sne-nay-muxw were advised by these local businesses to ignore the law:

Indians have been advised to rebel against the idea of discontinuing the Potlatch by respectable trades whose business interests have been
temporarily benefited by the Potlatches being held in the neighborhood (RG10, vol. 3628, file 6244-1, Jan 30, 1884).

The Department of Indian Affairs was forced to tolerate these formal gatherings as they had no means of restricting the custom. The Indian agent of the Cowichan Agency, was himself highly tolerant. William Lomas, as an Anglican lay minister, had experienced his first potlatch in 1867 at the Lyacksun village on Valdez Island (Lomas 1868:39-41). He viewed the custom more favorably at this time than he did in his initial years as an Indian agent (see DIA, AR, 1883:98-9). However, when it came time to enforce the act he requested that individuals be allowed to pay back their debts, assured that once they had done so that the custom would die out (RG10, vol. 3628, file 6244-1, Dec. 27, 1884; vol. 1353, Jan 17, 1885). Nonetheless, potlatching did not die out for the Sne-nay-muxw. By 1900 there were fewer and fewer potlatches in the agency as a whole but the Sne-nay-muxw were noted to be present at several large potlatches on Vancouver Island and the Fraser Valley. Their participation in potlatching continued after the turn of the century.51

The Department of Indian Affairs was forced to give the same toleration to spirit dancing. Despite their conversion to Methodism, the Sne-nay-muxw remained committed to their religious beliefs of power acquisition. Gatherings for spirit dancing were generally small but they increased in size by the turn of the Century as potlatching and spirit dancing combined (Suttles 1987: 207). Formal distribution of wealth occurred during Sne-nay-muxw spirit dancing as one observer noted with the distribution of mats and strips of hand woven blankets at the dances (RG10, vol. 1340, Nov. 9, 1896, #208-9). Reports of spirit

51 In the ledger of the Pacific Coast Cannery a sum of $6.00 is recorded out of their seasons pay for a donation to a summer potlatch (Pacific Coast Cannery 1913, 7-3, UBC, Special Collections).
dancing on the Sne-nay-muxw reserve decreased by World War I, but elders today maintain that the Sne-nay-muxw continued to participate in spirit dancing elsewhere as their reserve was too exposed to the prying eyes of white authorities. Furthermore some Sne-nay-muxw families were more committed to spirit dancing and potlatching than others. This created a split between families that continues to remain an integral part of the social and political dynamics on the reserve today. 52

While the Sne-nay-muxw were undergoing significant changes with declining population, Christian conversion, and the integration of wage labour into their economy, many aspects of their social and political organizations continued. This is evident in the persistence of traditional leadership, formal exchange mechanisms for the distribution of wealth, and the acquisition of power through spirit dancing. Without kinship solidarity the economic support and cooperation needed to continue these institutions would not occur.

As noted earlier, Sne-nay-muxw kinship affiliation was based on a bilateral descent system. This gave each Sne-nay-muxw a personal network of kin that was unique and at the same time overlapping with other Sne-nay-muxw. Outside of immediate kin this system allowed for a degree of flexibility as kinship ties were either emphasized or de-emphasized according to an individual's social and economic needs. The obligation that kinship, once recognized must be honored, guaranteed economic support and cooperation that was necessary not only to continue political and social institutions, but also to ensure the economic survival of individuals and families.

52 This type of split occurred on most reserves as some families shunned spirit dancing as contrary to their Christian beliefs. Some reserves resolved this split but it has never been resolved on the Sne-nay-muxw reserve (see Suttles 1987:20).
It has been suggested elsewhere that in some societies the introduction of wage labour strengthens kinship networks and extended family organizations (Talmon-Garber 1970, Hammel 1972, Medicine 1981). Kinship networks and extended families offer important economic support in allowing individuals to share their production from various economic endeavours. This is particularly important in the presence of insecure wage employment and incompatible economic activities (i.e. non-wage labour). This gives greater security for their members than a ‘nuclear’ family that is dependent upon limited adult labour (Pasternak, Ember and Ember 1976). Despite the criticism of the direction of this causal link (whether extended families produce incompatible activities or are the outcome of incompatible activities), this argument leads to an intriguing question whether the maintenance of kinship networks and extended families encourages women to participate in the labour force (see Yanagisako 1979:173-5). Having the support of other members in the household to share in household management and the care of children allows women more time to devote to other productive pursuits including wage labour. This has been documented in both Knack (1980) and Albers (1982, 1983, 1985) for the Southern Paiute and Dakota women. In the following section I explore this argument through an analysis of Sne-nay-muxw household organization and production.

**Household Organization and Production**

To begin it should be noted that to understanding the historical nature of Sne-nay-muxw household organization and production between 1862 and 1920 is problematic because of the lack of historical and ethnographic data. As chapter two revealed, the only ethnographic data collected prior to the 1920’s was by Franz Boas. In his limited visit
with the Sne-nay-muxw, his primary concern was to document myths, language and
mortuary customs and not to detail household organization and production. Historical
data is equally limited despite the large amount of data collected by the Department of
Indian Affairs to aid in administering the Indian Act. The only source available on
household composition during this period is found in the nominal Census taken by the
federal government in 1881, 1891, and 1901. Before examining this data a cautionary
note must be added about using these figures. While the Indian agent in the Cowichan
agency was assigned the task of enumerating the Sne-nay-muxw, it is unclear how he
gathered this data; whether he went house to house, used informants, or used annual
Department of Indian Affairs Census. If the agent went house to house the completeness
of the data would be suspect given that the Sne-nay-muxw were constantly migrating for
both wage and non-wage labour opportunities. Furthermore the assumption that a male-
headed and autonomous nuclear family was the normative family type effectively
eliminates enumerating other members in the household or not counting households that
do not conform to this type.

Accepting these data as far from complete, a comparison of the 1881 and 1901 Census
suggests there was a decline over the twenty year period in the number of households, as
well as three generation households (see table 4:4). Correspondingly there was an
increase in the proportion of two generation households (or nuclear families), the majority
of which were composed of couples with children. This is the dominant household type
to be found amongst the Sne-nay-muxw by 1901. Also the average household size
increased and there are fewer variations in household composition in 1901. Although in
1881 there were several non-conjugal households as well as individuals living alone, by 1901 neither type of household is reported. The traditional Sne-nay-muxw household composed of a set of brothers with their wives and children is still present at this time. In 1881 and 1901 they constitute 19% and 17% of all families respectively.

Table 4:4
Sne-nay-muxw Households Based on Generation and Average Household Size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>1881 Households</th>
<th>1901 Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nominal Census 1881, 1901

If one includes the 1891 Census this trend of decreasing three generation households is not so clear. While there is a decline in the number of households from 1881 there is a decrease in two generation households and a rise in three generation households. Significantly a third of the households are composed of sets of brothers. This Census cannot be wholly dismissed as the most inaccurate, as the Indian agent at this time had worked with the Sne-nay-muxw for a decade and may be the most accurate of the three. What perhaps may be surmised from this change is that age distribution may have had more to do with household composition at this time than a shift in family ideology.

53 Generation is determined by a difference of twenty years in age or when the relationship is known.
Demographic pressures upon the composition of domestic groups is well acknowledged in the literature (Fortes 1958, Burch 1972). In analyzing the age distribution of the Sne-nay-muxw one finds a higher percentage of individuals 45 years and older in 1891. This would increase the ability to form three generation or complex households. As table 4:5 shows, by 1901 this age group had declined while the age group under 15 had increased significantly.

### Table 4:5

**Age Distribution of the Sne-nay-muxw 1881, 1891, and 1901**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-44</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 and over</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nominal Census 1881, 1891, 1901

Acknowledging that age composition places constraints upon household organization, other cross cultural studies reveal that households are highly responsive to the changing economic circumstances. Is it possible that this changing household composition is part of a flexibility needed to accommodate changing circumstances in wage labour, subsistence production and farming? Recent studies (Wilk 1984, Wallerstein & Smith 1991) suggests that households respond relatively rapidly to changing economic conditions, altering their composition and boundaries. In periods of economic expansion there is greater wage dependence and relatively narrow boundaries of inclusion (the number of individuals included within a household), while during periods of economic stagnation boundaries shift in the reverse direction increasing the number of individuals. Between 1881 and
1891, household size and the number of three generation households did increase. This period corresponds to the displacement of the Sne-nay-muxw from local employment in Nanaimo with the arrival of the Chinese indentured labour. By 1891 most Sne-nay-muxw families had entered a cycle of seasonal migration for wage labour at the canneries and hop fields. Nevertheless, this does not explain why household size and three generation households decreased in 1901 as this seasonal migration continued. It is highly probable that the primary cause influencing the formation of three generation households was the attrition of elders. At this time only 20% of the population was over the age of 45.

It can be concluded from these data that Sne-nay-muxw participation in wage labour did not produce a continuous shift in household organization to nuclear families. While missionaries encouraged the Sne-nay-muxw to abandon the longhouse and to build small cottages on the reserve, household composition retained a significant degree of flexibility as individuals or families aligned with other families according to economic and social circumstances. Significantly the composite or extended family remained an important organizing principle of Sne-nay-muxw household membership during this period. Furthermore the persistence of households composed of sets of brothers and their wives indicates that Sne-nay-muxw family ideology remained intact for many families.

Insights into how Sne-nay-muxw extended families organized their labour to adapt to these new economic conditions is also limited in the historical material. Yet missionaries and Indian agents consistently noted the importance of age as young men and women were linked to wage economy and older individuals to subsistence production and farming. Young Sne-nay-muxw were far more employable in the labour force because of health,
language, and in some cases their ability to read and write. Reverend Garrett, an Anglican missionary, noted this division of labour in his early observations in the mid 1860’s. He linked wage labour to the young people who had been successfully converted by the Methodist missionaries. He wrote:

They are divided into two parties. The younger and more industrious portion who work in the mines earn good wages, dress well, and live in neat little cottages surrounded with fences. These belong to the Wesleyans who have a chapel situated in the midst of their cottages. The remainder of the tribe consisting of all the old and middle-aged and few of the young live as Indians (Garrett 1868).

This dichotomization of production by age is noted elsewhere (DIA, AR 1888:105; RG 10, vol. 3828, file 60,926, Oct. 17, 1888; Kelly 1923:171). Older men continued to fish and hunt while women gathered berries and shellfish. Those who had access to adequate land combined this production with farming (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Affairs Evidence 1913). In addition to these activities, fish, game, berries, seaweed, produce and crafts were produced and often peddled from door to door. The fishing legislation in the late 1880’s which forbid the Sne-nay-muxw to sell fish in the mining community was viewed with great alarm by the Indian agent. He quickly pointed out the detrimental effects this would have upon the livelihood of older people in the community (B.C. Fisheries Regulations, November 26, 1888). These individuals did not go to the canneries

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54 Language was most certainly a barrier for older individuals finding employment in Nanaimo. Chinook, a trade jargon, was common during the Hudson Bay era and throughout the early period of the mining community. It was also the language used in the canneries on the Fraser River until the turn of the Century. However as the immigrant population in Nanaimo increased the use of this language declined. Not many Sne-nay-muxw spoke English fluently and less still could read or write by the turn of the Century.
but remained behind to fish for a meager income (RG10, vol. 3828, file 60,926, Oct. 17, 1889).

The different opportunities in wage labour based on age perpetuated exchange within and between families. While younger individuals sought wage employment, older individuals contributed through their participation in subsistence production and farming. This cooperation and exchange among the Sne-nay-muxw families was noted by Peter Kelly in his testimony to the Allied Indian Tribes in 1923:

...while they are away some of the older Indians stay home and dry fish. And the ones that are drying the fish, sometimes put up more than their own need, with the understanding that the Indians who are away would come back and take dried salmon from them (1923:167)

Older individuals committed to subsistence production and farming made an important contribution to the family particularly when younger members were involved in wage labour. The obligation of exchange based on kinship networks created the security necessary for families that were unable to depend upon a single source for reproduction. The strategy that had been essential for exploiting a wide range of resources in the indigenous economy was now applied to incorporate wage labour as another economic activity.

This sharing and cooperation between family members enabled women to participate in the labour force. The division of labour that shared the care of children and management of the household among various members of the family enabled women to spend time in wage labour. In particular it was often the grandparents who were the principal care givers of young children. This division of labour was important in the indigenous
economy for it allowed both parents to fully participate in subsistence production.

Grandparents too, as noted earlier, were essential for teaching children the important history of the family. With the introduction of wage labour, this division of labour did not change. Grandparents continued to look after young children while their parents devoted time to wage labour activities.

However, the demands of childcare increased substantially for Sne-nay-muxw households with the rising survival rate of children after the turn of the Century. As table 4:6 shows children under the age of 15 increased to 50% of the population. At the same time grandparents or elders over the age of 65 decreased to a low of 2% in 1911. This decrease in the number of elders would have had significant impact upon the way childcare was organized and shared. Increasingly children remained under the care of their own parents or if available older siblings. That older siblings became more important for childcare is evident in one report by both the Indian agent and the Native constable who noted the absenteeism of children from school because of parents employment:

...understanding their nature and general circumstances of their parents here and there fishing, digging clams, catching crabs, others at home minding the house and younger children while the mothers are engaged washing scrubbing and etc. for people about the city (RG 10, vol. 6404, file 832-1, pt1, June 15, 1911).

Finding employment that could combine childcare became an important alternative for women as the younger population increased and the older population decreased.

Employment at the canneries and hop fields was one such alternative wage labour that was compatible with childcare. Families with children were welcomed and encouraged by these industries that needed the Sne-nay-muxw as a seasonal work force.
Table 4:6

Sne-nay-muxw Age Distribution 1881, 1901, 1911, 1924

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>0-15 years</th>
<th>16-64 years</th>
<th>65+ years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 1881, 1901: DIA AR. 1911, 1924

Clearly women’s contribution in wage income was a necessity to Sne-nay-muxw families. The importance of women’s income for family support was noted by the Department of Indian Affairs. When the Department considered restricting women’s movement off the reserve, the Indian agent, was quick to respond that such a restriction would create great hardship for many families who were dependent upon the wages of women (RG 10, Vol. 3842, file 71,799, May 20, 1886). After the turn of the century another attempt to ban children from the canneries and hop fields because of poor health conditions met with a similar response (see RG 10, Vol. 4045, file 353,304).

What is clear from this material that the success of integrating wage labour with non-wage labour was dependent upon the sharing and cooperation within families. Women’s participation in wage labour was a necessity realized through the retention of kinship networks and extended families. The separate spheres of work for men and women found in the mining economy did not govern the Sne-nay-muxw families who remained dependent upon women’s income producing activities. Women’s opportunities in the
labour force, while limited by race, class and gender segregation of the economy, were also constrained by the nature of a domestic economy that continued to depend upon subsistence production and farming.

**Domestic Ideology**

While the Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy allowed women to participate in the wage economy, the Sne-nay-muxw were exposed to a new ideology that supported the exclusion of women from paid labour. The ideology of domesticity arose during the late 19th and 20th Century with the growth of industrialism and the separation of the family from the workplace (Tilly & Scott 1987). With this dichotomization, men’s roles were defined as wage earners while women were defined as housewives and mothers. Implicit in this definition was the subordinate status of women dependent upon men for their support. Yet the identity of Sne-nay-muxw women in this economy, was unlike non-native women in the mining community who were not wage earners. Not only was Sne-nay-muxw women’s participation in the labour force a necessity for the support of their families but it was encouraged by the needs of a capitalist economy that sought a seasonal and cheap labour force. This identity while determined by the gender, race and class segregation of the economy came under increasing conflict with the practice of the mining community, missionary teachings and state policies that fostered a domestic definition of women’s roles. The following section examines these forces and how Sne-nay-muxw women both accommodated and resisted this gender ideology.
Mining Community

The mining community of Nanaimo was similar to mining communities in other frontier regions of the world. It was a town with rude wooden houses, roads full of stumps, and coal slag heaps dominating the skyline. Revelry and rowdiness in the streets of Nanaimo was common with a large population of single men and more bars per capita than any other community in the area. By the 1880's there was a cluster of saloons around the Number One Mine that bordered the Sne-nay-muxw town reserve. At this time the town had spread south and miners' houses, hotels and stores lined Haliburton Street.

Nonetheless, although the image to many outsiders was a rough and rowdy town with a large single male population, Nanaimo was also a family town and more so than other mining communities in the region. Interested in securing a permanent and stable work force for the mines, the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company encouraged families to settle in the community by giving married men preferred work and offering five acre lots on reasonable terms. Accounts in the Nanaimo newspapers throughout this period characterize Nanaimo as a family community with such social activities as picnics, parades and sports days (see Smith 1956; Johnson 1958; Norcross 1979; Bowen 1982, 1988).

It is within this family community that the Sne-nay-muxw observed the day to day practice of a gender ideology that dichotomized the labour of men and women. (see Mouat 1990). Men worked in the mines and other paid labour, while women remained at home taking care of the children and other domestic responsibilities. This gender

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55 Consumption of beer was an integral part of the social life of the mining community. At one time in the history of British mining, miners were paid a portion of their wages in beer. One of the preferences cited for Chinese labour in the mines by mine managers was that they did not suffer from 'Blue Mondays.'
segregation in the mining industry was backed by legislation that forbid women to work in the mines (see Humphries 1981). Exclusion from the dominant employment in the community left limited opportunities for women, so few worked in the labour force before the turn of the Century. This exclusion from paid labour enforced a domestic ideology in this mining community that strongly defined women as housewives and mothers (see Bowen 1982).

In a community where there was such an established division of labour between men who worked for wages and women who worked in the home, only those women who did not have the benefit of a male supporter, such as widows and deserted wives, were considered appropriate workers in the labour force. It is not surprising the majority of women who list occupation in the early Census in Nanaimo are single or widowed. The stigma associated with married women in paid employment not only accounts for their absence in the labour force but created an underreporting of their employment in the Census. For example, many homes in Nanaimo took in lodgers as an additional income. This was a common practice in many mining communities where there was a large single male population.  

56 In 1891 of the 1,387 mine workers in the community almost half of them were lodgers. 57 Meutzner (1993) identifies more than several dozen women in the Census of 1891 who were not listed as earning an income despite a number of lodgers in their household. One women in particular was listed with no earnings and yet she had 23

56 There has been some recent criticism in the area of women’s history that endorsing the ideology of domesticity and two separate spheres ignores those occasions when women did venture into 'men's economic areas' (see Kerber 1988).
57 Seager & Perry (1992) note that in the mining community of Springhill nearly 25% of families kept lodgers. This high rate may have occurred in Nanaimo as well.
lodgers living in her home. This underreporting of women's earnings reflects a set of assumptions about what work should count as legitimate wage labour. Despite the number of lodgers a woman cared for, her identity as housewife and mother took precedence over her role as a boarding housekeeper.

Value laden assumptions about women's work also extended to the type of wage work deemed most suitable for women to pursue in the labour force. Women were expected to seek employment that complimented their nurturing and domestic roles. Yet within the few occupations available to women in a mining community some offered more prestige than others. For example, dressmaking and millinery work were considered skilled labour and offered a woman some respectability. Unfortunately, at a period where the majority of women made their own clothes, the demand for this labour was limited. Domestic work was the most common employment for women in the community but as noted above it was not the most desired and became less so by the turn of the century (see Leslie 1974).

During this time the increasing feminization of occupations such as clerical, retail, teaching and nursing offered employment with more prestige and income. Teaching and nursing offered the highest prestige and income as they demanded higher levels of education and training. A nursing school attached to the Nanaimo hospital opened in 1906. Nonetheless, this employment was not appreciated for its wage earning potential and considered inconsequential to women's support or the local economy. This is revealed in several testimonies given at the Royal Commission on Labour in 1912 concerning female employment in Nanaimo:

Very few in this city [work]. A few girls work in the stores but they don't have to depend on that for a living.
Most of them live at home with their parents and just work to get enough money for their clothes (Royal Commission on Labour 1912, vol. 2:61).

Despite the years of training women needed for these occupations, once they were married they were expected to end their careers and devote their full attention and time to their roles as wives and mothers. This ideology was imposed by the institutions whose policies immediately terminated a woman’s employment once she married.

The employment history of the Sne-nay-muxw women was substantially different from other women in the mining community. Marital status did not exclude Sne-nay-muxw women from paid employment as their labour was sought in domestic work, the canneries, hop fields and other occupations. However, they were excluded from what were considered by the mining community respectable and prestigious occupations in the labour force for women. Although accomplished in sewing and needlework, they did not open businesses as dressmakers or milliners. By the turn of the century the expanding service occupations of clerical, retail, teaching and nursing were unavailable without adequate education and training. The following section describes Sne-nay-muxw women’s education which was in the hands of missionaries. Their primary concern was to promote the domestic roles of women and not encourage them to seek wage labour.

Missionaries and Early Education

The first missionaries to Vancouver Island and Nanaimo were Catholic, but it was the Methodists and Anglicans who established the first missions among the Sne-nay-muxw.  

58 The Catholic presence in Nanaimo was limited before 1881 as it was not until 1876 that a resident priest was placed there. In the following year a Catholic order of sisters began a combination convent and school that was attended by 29 children. Half the children were Protestants.
As part of their agenda to convert the Sne-nay-muxw to Christianity, missionaries were committed to proselytizing a gender ideology that linked women solely to a domestic role in the household. This role was not only considered a natural function for women but for many missionaries its acceptance was believed to be fundamental for the cultural and social progress of Native peoples. Persuading Native peoples to shun the longhouse and teach women their proper roles as mothers and housewives was the primary focus of missionary conversion and education.

Some missionaries were more tolerant than others of the longhouse but they generally disliked this living arrangement and connected its presence to a "heathen" lifestyle. Living in nuclear families in separate households was perceived as an important and necessary step in promoting new gender roles. This was the Anglican minister, Reverend Good's motivation in persuading the Sne-nay-muxw to move from their village sites in and around Nanaimo to the single town reserve in 1862. The general manager of the Nanaimo Coal Company at the completion of the sale to the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company, suggested this move to further the Company's development plans. The missionary admitted that his incentive for convincing the Sne-nay-muxw to move was to encourage them to live in nuclear families and single dwelling homes. He wrote:

In the beginning of the year 1862, Mr. Nicol proposed moving away the whole body on to their own Reserve. The village was felt to be a nuisance; and, besides, seriously in the way of contemplating improvements of the Company's property. I cordially seconded his proposal, but for different reasons; I felt they would be farther removed from temptation. By changing their location I might induce them to live separately in families, and to build after a better style. Physically, morally, and socially they must be benefited by a change, and, therefore, when the proposition was made and the chiefs came to consult me on the subject, I urged it with all my might (Good 1863:117).
Once settled on the single town reserve, several Sne-nay-muxw built "King George-
man's houses" as they were called and by the turn of the Century several small cottages
lined a street close to the Methodist chapel aptly named Christian Street (Crosby
1906:23). Gilbert Sproat, the Reserve Commissioner, describes these cottages in 1876 as
having a "pleasing appearance," surrounded with small gardens that grew potatoes and
vegetables.

Aside from promoting separate family dwellings, education was the core of the
missionary agenda. A day school was established on the reserve first by the Methodists as
early as 1861 and then by the Anglican church when the Sne-nay-muxw were moved to
the town reserve (Robson BCARS, Aug. 17, 1861: Good BCARS). For the last half of
this Century both denominations competed for Sne-nay-muxw attendance at both their
church services and mission school. In the first years at the Anglican day school, the
school reports are positive of the progress of Sne-nay-muxw children. In particular young
women were attentive to their lessons and subsequently given an additional two hours of
instruction in needlework at the girls' school in the White community:

I found the children anxious to learn, all having been more or less under
religious and secular training for some time. Our attendance is now 30 to
40, and I think it may fairly be said a great improvement is visible in their
habits, conduct and acquirements. Some of the eleven girls, ranging from
7 to 13 years of age have lately been chosen out of the morning school to
receive two hours additional instruction in needlework in the classroom of
the St. Paul’s Central School (Victoria Colonist, Jan 24, 1863).

This success continued for a few years and it was noted in a yearly report that young
women who were good students at the school. Nonetheless, education for the Sne-nay-
muxw was uneven during the late period of the 19th Century. Attendance remained highly irregular and throughout this period there were many years when the day school was not open. This irregularity in attendance was of prime concern to the missionaries who early on embraced residential schools as the solution. A number of residential schools based on the industrial school model were established in the region in the early 1890’s. The Methodists opened Coqualeetza at Sardis in the Fraser Valley and the Catholics operated several schools, one at Mission, and the other on Kuper Island. Records indicate that only a small percentage of Sne-nay-muxw children attended these schools but many of the young women who married into the band were students of this system. Considerable literature about these schools clearly demonstrates their mandate was not to prepare Native women for wage labour but for a domestic role in the home. This was most succinctly stated by the principal at Coqualeetza in his yearly report to the Department of Indian Affairs in 1900:

The boys and girls both need to be trained especially in habits of diligence, orderliness, promptness, thoroughness and thrift....To fit the girls for the common duties of the home should, we feel, be our first care (DIA, AR 1900).

59 The Methodists closed the school in 1878. However the Anglican mission operated a school between 1886 and 1892. In 1894 the Methodists again reopened the day school and it remained open until a new school was built in 1920 (RG 10, vol. 3645, file 7915, April 2, 1877: vol. 3929, file 117,008-5)
60 The Protestant boarding school at Port Alberni did not take children from the Cowichan agency until after 1920.
61 Redford (1979-80) maintains that before 1920 only a small percentage of Native children went to residential schools in the province.
62 This argument is refuted by Alice Littlefield (1993) who argues that education for both Native men and women was to prepare them for the labour force. She is right that missionary education did teach women to be subservient workers but the emphasis was upon their domestic roles within the home and not skills in the labour force.
Residential school programs were set up to teach women a variety of household duties such as cooking, sewing and housekeeping. At least half a day was set aside for such training with other large blocks of time devoted to religious studies. Not surprisingly with such a curriculum, only basic literacy was achieved. Later cuts in funding by the federal government in the early 1900's further restricted this curriculum. Women's education in food preparation, laundry and working in the gardens became solely linked to the maintenance of the school.

While not geared towards women's employment this education did allow some women to use their practical training in household skills to find work as domestic servants in private homes and institutions. Some schools were more aware of this possible employment than others and sought an active role in finding ex-students such situations (see Barman 1986). For the most part finding paid employment for young women was not a priority as it was expected that they would return to their villages and take up domestic roles. That young women did not always seek this role was noted by the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA, AR 1910, 273-75; 1911, 337).

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63 Preparation for employment was not necessarily viewed in a positive light by the Department of Indian Affairs. One minister, Clifford Sifton, questioned that residential schools should even have this mandate (Canada, House of Commons, Debates, June 14, 1897). This sentiment changed after the turn of the Century as Indian agents were expected to help ex-students find employment in their agency.

64 The Superintendent of Indian Education in 1911 reported that only half the women from residential schools found marriageable partners or made good housewives. The reason, he believed, was that education made these women too smart to live in Indian villages. To get them back to the reserves and away from the “temptations” of an independent life was of paramount importance for the Department (DIA, AR 1910, 273-75; 1911; 296,337).
State Policies

The state also linked Sne-nay-muxw women to this domestic role through policies and practices enforced through the Indian Act. The Indian Act consolidated and amended various legislation respecting Native peoples and was passed by the federal government in 1876. With British Columbia’s entry into Confederation in 1871, the Sne-nay-muxw became wards of the federal government and subject to the administration of the Act through the Department of Indian Affairs. The setting out of their reserves in 1876 and the formation of the Cowichan agency in 1881 began a new era for the Sne-nay-muxw where the state increasingly regulated their lives. As well as formalizing their social and political status, the Indian Act also enforced a domestic ideology that redefined the relationship between Sne-nay-muxw men and women.

The sexual discrimination of the Indian Act has been well documented by Jamieson (1978) who described the ramifications of various sections upon women’s lives. Implicit within this Act is the assumption that women take the nurturing and domestic roles in the society and remain dependent upon men as the wage earners. This is most evident in the sections that outline women’s band membership, property rights and residence.

With the passing of the Indian Act in 1876, a legal definition of an Indian was imposed upon the Sne-nay-muxw. This definition was not based on culture or race but whether an individual was registered as an Indian according to sections 11, 12 and 13 in the Indian Act. These sections outlined a definition based upon an individual’s father, or for women their husband’s status as an Indians. The Act effectively excluded Sne-nay-muxw women who married non-Indians from a social identity with their community.
The Indian Act recognized the band as the only legitimate political organization of the Sne-nay-muxw. This ignored the indigenous political organization of the family and the rights of members through their kinship links. As a band member all Sne-nay-muxw were entitled to share in the communal resources and property associated with the band. Alienation from these rights only occurred with enfranchisement or membership in another band. This occurred most frequently for women. On the day of her marriage a Sne-nay-muxw woman became a member of her husband’s band. While entitled to share in his band’s resources, she and her children were alienated from her own band resource rights. This alienation was contrary to the indigenous property rights that derived from a bilateral kinship system and flexible residence pattern. The introduction of a patrilineal system and a patrilocal residence pattern effectively left women dependent upon their husbands.65

Enforcement of the Act was limited during this period but the assumption that Sne-nay-muxw women’s status and property was linked to the men was implicit in the policies that the Department of Indian Affairs implemented. Policies concerning the allotment of land, the appointment of political leaders, and inheritance of property, were shaped by the assumption that women assumed the subordinate status in their society and fulfilled only domestics roles. Conflicts that occurred at this time over land, political power and property were often linked to the changing ideology that excluded women’s rights. This affected not only women but also men who claimed rights to land, political power and property through their mother’s family.

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65 That women’s status was linked to men was most fully expressed when Sne-nay-muxw women married white men and lost their Indian status entirely.
A domestic ideology that promoted the exclusion of women from paid labour and defined their roles solely within the domestic sphere was imposed by a mining industry, missionary proselytizing and policies from the state. Despite these forces, there are many examples in the historical material of Sne-nay-muxw women not accepting their exclusion from wage labour and a subordinate status in Sne-nay-muxw society. The following section examines the accommodation and resistance to this gender ideology by Sne-nay-muxw women.

Accommodation and Resistance

During this period there is evidence that Sne-nay-muxw women began to emulate the roles of other women in the mining community. When Gilbert Sproat, the Reserve Commissioner, arrived in 1876 he noted the cleanliness of Sne-nay-muxw homes and the domesticity of women:

…it is worthy of note that during our visit, several of their wives were engaged in household duties in a wife like way, while others were knitting and making articles of clothing for their families (RG10, vol. 3611, file 3756-8, Dec. 20, 1876).

Missionaries, too, commented on the eagerness of women to learn new skills related to domestic roles. The ability of Sne-nay-muxw women to fulfill the occupations of washerwomen and domestic servants in the community attests to their new acquired skills. When the Indian agent, William Lomas, arrived in 1881, he noted in his first report that the Sne-nay-muxw were the most civilized of all the bands in his agency (DIA, AR 1882). He based his judgment upon the occupation of Sne-nay-muxw men in the mines, and women's success to work as domestic workers in the community. Nonetheless, despite
these skills Sne-nay-muxw women continued to resist a gender ideology that defined their roles in society as restricted to the domestic sphere. This is evident in their active participation in wage labour, formal exchanges, and marriage alliances.

As noted above Sne-nay-muxw women actively sought wage labour when it was introduced in the mining operation established by the Hudson’s Bay Company. While their employment was more limited after 1862, Sne-nay-muxw women continued to seek employment as domestic servants, cannery workers, and agricultural labourers at the local farms and hop fields. Lomas noted the enthusiasm of women in his agency for seeking such employment. In particular he commented on their eagerness to go to the hop fields after their work in the canneries. In his report of 1886 he wrote:

The Indian women and children are always the most eager to go to the hop fields, where they always earn considerable sums of money and amongst these Indians, the wife’s purse is generally entirely separate from the husband’s. A great deal of the money earned is spent in clothing and household furniture, stoves, and sewing machines sometimes form part of the freight of the canoes, but they also bring back many thousand of dollars (DIA, AR 1886:92).

This report suggests that women’s earnings were important in purchasing many of the household luxuries available with the increased settlement in the region. Equally significant is the observation that women’s income was separate from men’s. This behaviour, which was perceived as a great anomaly by the Indian agent, confirms that ownership related to individual production remained intact despite the introduction of wage labour (Cf. Hamamsy 1957, Conte 1982, Albers 1983, 1985). Women continued to
own and control their own production as they had in the pre-contact economy. This separate control of income implies that exchange rather than pooling continued to dominate gender relations within the household. While we have no evidence in the historical or ethnographic data that this was the case at this time, we do have documentation that Sne-nay-muxw women continued to contribute and participate in the distribution of property in formal exchanges.

There are several accounts in the historical literature that document the participation of Sne-nay-muxw women in formal exchange ceremonies. The most descriptive and explicit are the oral histories collected by Beryl Cryer in the 1930’s. An interview with Tzea-mntenahht (Mary Rice) documents the preparations for a potlatch honouring her deceased husband, an American Indian buried on Kuper Island at the turn of the century. This potlatch was given on Kuper Island where she was part owner, with her brother Tommy Pierre, of the largest longhouse on the reserve. Her brother and her son, Charlie, helped to organize this potlatch. The amount of preparation and wealth distributed was enormous for it catered to eight hundred people. Here are Tzea-mntenahht’s own words as recorded by Cryer:

I went to the store and I got nearly two hundred yards of cloth, and I only paid five cents a yard for it! Me and the girls cut it up into pieces, two and half yards in each piece, and that took a long time. Then we bought cups for the people to use—oh, the cups! Tommy Pierre, he bought six hundred and we got more! And pans—oh, so many pans! At another store we bought ten double blankets to give away, and of course we gave lots of money.
...One man at Quamichan, he had given me five dollars at his potlatch, so I gave him the same money back, and a woman, Michell’s wife, she had

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66 To some extent this separate accounting was encouraged by the paid piece rate system of the canneries and hop fields. While women worked with their families they were paid individually through a ticket system in accordance with their own individual labour.
given me two and half dollars and a blanket when they had a potlatch and I
gave her the same back—all the people who had given to me at their
potlatches I gave back and so I was square. ...The people stayed for a week
at our potlatch. And my the food they ate! Tommy Pierre killed three of
his heifers, and Charlie got seven hundred ducks....now I must ‘member
some of the things we got from stores. First, bread. There were eleven
More than seventy pounds of tea (we gave each woman one pound when
she came), fifty boxes of apples and fifty boxes of oranges. And potatoes!
-I can’t tell how many sacks of potatoes! There were lots more things, but
I don’t member them (Cryer BCARS: F8.2/C88.1/V.3/p.22-23).

It is evident in this account that Tzea-mntenahnt contributed her own wealth and paid
back her debts to those she invited to the potlatch. Her son and brother were important
contributors but Tzea-mntenahnt was the primary host. This was not the only occasion that
Tze-mntenahnt distributed such large amounts of wealth for she also hosted the marriage of
her daughter. At the turn of the Century arranged marriages and the indigenous marriage
customs were still practiced despite the insistence on Christian marriages by the
missionaries. Both ceremonies were given for the marriage of Tzea-mntenahnt’s daughter
to Johnny Jim who was a Sne-nay-muxw living at Penelakut. Married at Easter in an
traditional style, on the insistence of the priest they married again in a Christian ceremony
at Christmas. This new ceremony also included the distribution of wealth. Tommy Pierre,
the young woman’s uncle gave a description of this exchange:

This time all the Nanaimo[Sne-nay-muxw] Indians and from away up to
Comox came too—more than four hundred people. Tze-mntenahnt and I
 got one hundred sacks of flour, and seven hundred ducks, and we took
them over to Penelakut for the wedding. Well Father Donkele married
them in the church, and Mary had a new fine dress, and Tzea-mntenahnt she
had a new skirt and shawl. After the wedding we gave away all the flour
and ducks to the Nanaimo people and then everyone went over to Johnny
Jim’s big house that he had at Penelakut for a dance (Cryer, BCARS:
F8.2/c88.1/v.3/p.25).
Tzea-mntenahht was assuredly a woman of wealth who gained great status and power with age. She is still remembered as such by Sne-nay-muxw elders today. Tzea-mntenahht was not unique and it was common for women to amass wealth for potlatching or other formal distribution ceremonies. This is evident in the agency records taken when the law banning potlatching was to be enforced. Many people within the agency wrote to the Indian agent demanding to pay off their debts before the law was enforced. One woman wrote to Lomas about her concern for the wealth she had accumulated to pay off her debts at a potlatch:

I owe 150 blankets and my sick husband owes 200 more...Joseph's wife and several other women owe many hundreds of yards of calico to other Indians they have most of it on hand what are they to do, the stores will not take it back and it is not their own (RG 10, vol. 3628, file 6244-1, April 8, 1885).

The distinct ownership of property indicates that women retained a significant degree of economic autonomy in their lives. This autonomy, which derived from their own production, remained embedded in the lives of the Sne-nay-muxw throughout this period. At the same time people organized according to convention rules of kinship. A woman's identity and success in life was still linked to the kinship networks of an extended family. Ownership of production and household cooperation among extended family gave a woman a significant degree of independence from her husband. This mitigated against the full acceptance of a domestic ideology that was based on male providers and female dependents.

This independence is expressed in marriage alliances and in particular with the frequency of marriage dissolution. Many observers and ethnographers during this period
noted that marriage dissolution was a common occurrence (RG10, Vol. 3801, file 48,567, March 14, 1897; Tate BCARS, Jan 19, 1902, Feb. 4, 1902). For missionaries, this was a sign of non-Christian behaviour but more recent cross cultural studies indicate that high rates of marriage dissolution often are indicators of women’s independence. When women are high contributors to food production or when separation does not interfere with the subsistence needs of either spouse or their children, high divorce rates are found (see Albers 1983, 1985; Huber 1991:43). Ethnographic literature reveals that marriage dissolution was accepted by Coast Salish peoples as part of their indigenous marriage practices (Barnett 1955:195; Haberlin & Gunther 1930:52; Stern 1934:33). 67 Although marriages were arranged and included the exchange of property between affines, divorce occurred for a variety of causes including spousal incompatibility. While it is difficult to understand whether the frequency of divorce changed during this period, many observers noted that both men and women maintained considerable freedom to leave their spouses if they so chose. The new gender ideology advocating dependency for women was far from assured with the retention of this indigenous marriage custom.

Summary and Conclusions

Once the Hudson’s Bay Company left Nanaimo, Sne-nay-muxw women faced increasing segregation based upon gender, race and class that limited their employment opportunities. Although Sne-nay-muxw men were hired in the mines, women were confined to domestic service and petty commodity production. Despite this limitation,

67 One exception is Collins (1954:354; 1974:104) who maintains that divorce was infrequent before contact. She argues that the economic necessity of affinal exchanges and the unwillingness of families to return property mitigated against their frequency.
Sne-nay-muxw women were an integral part of Nanaimo's early economy. This began to change when the economic depression of the 1890's, coupled with the big strike of 1912 to 1914, diminished both Sne-nay-muxw men and women's employment in the local economy. Increased competition from other workers such as the Chinese who were also segregated into marginal sectors of the economy, and technological changes that reduced the demand for unskilled labour, left Sne-nay-muxw women the most vulnerable to unemployment. Forced to migrate with their families, women sought employment in the canneries on the Fraser river and the hop fields in Washington State and the Fraser Valley.

Traditional subsistence production continued to be important to the survival of Sne-nay-muxw families. However, increasingly restrictive hunting and fishing regulations impeded full dependence upon this production. Farming, which had been introduced as early as the 1850's, became significant to Sne-nay-muxw economy and by the turn of the century families were successful in integrating wage economy, subsistence production and small scale farming. Due to this economic diversification, the Sne-nay-muxw were more successful than other bands living in the region who were forced to rely upon insecure wage employment. Nonetheless, such success was short lived as income from farming declined after the turn of the century. By 1920 the shortage of land and lack of capital left Sne-nay-muxw farmers unable to compete with the more successful farms bordering the reserve. This was compounded by the Department of Indian Affairs policy of leasing reserve land rather than supporting Sne-nay-muxw farmers.

Throughout this period there remained a degree of social and political continuity based on kinship networks. These kinship networks were important for the economic support
needed to cope with incompatible economic activities. Kinship obligations of cooperation and exchange assured that young individuals with access to wage employment, and older individuals who fished and farmed would exchange their production. Although nuclear families were present at this time, there remained significant flexibility in household organization that allowed members to align as economic needs dictated. Such organization and kinship obligations placed no obstacles on women to pursue wage labour when opportunities arose because household management and child care could be met by other members in the household. The need for all members in the family to seek a diversity of economic activities to assure their security did not segregate women’s production solely into non-wage labour.

At the same time the Sne-nay-muxw were exposed to a domestic ideology imposed by a mining economy, missionary proselytizing and state policies. This ideology, promoted women’s segregation into domestic roles and their dependence upon men. While there was some accommodation of this ideology the insecure wage opportunities offered to Sne-nay-muxw men mitigated against its full acceptance. Evidence of women’s eagerness to participate in wage labour, control over the distribution of their own incomes, and participation in formal exchanges and spirit dancing attests to the retention of a gender ideology that continued to support to a significant degree women’s autonomy within the household.
CHAPTER 5

EMPLOYMENT IN A LOGGING COMMUNITY: 1921-1970

Introduction

This chapter examines Sne-nay-muxw employment during a critical period of transition in the Nanaimo economy. From 1920 to 1970 forestry and related industries increasingly dominated the economy of the region and offered the most employment in the community. The gender, race and class segregation that was entrenched in the mining industry was transformed to accommodate the new demands of this industry. This resegmentation of labour was to significantly affect Sne-nay-muxw employment. It offered advantages to Sne-nay-muxw men but left Sne-nay-muxw women in the most marginalized sectors of the economy. It is in this period that we find a distinct transformation of men and women's roles with acceptance of the idea that women were 'housewives' and men were 'workers.'

The Logging Economy

Economic growth for Nanaimo after 1920 was unlike the earlier period. The mining industry, while given some reprieve during World War I, had all but ended by the 1920's. The depression finalized its fate and in 1939 the Western Fuel Company closed all its mines in the region. Unlike other single resource communities Nanaimo did not become a ghost town but underwent a transition to accommodate new economic demands (see Basque 1992). Many of the early industries that serviced the mining economy evolved to accommodate the new demands of a more diversified economy (Matheson 1950). Canning, salting and reduction plants were opened in and around Nanaimo. The
demand for lumber exports during the 1920’s led to an increase in logging and the number of sawmills in the area. However, the Depression hit Nanaimo hard. By 1932 close to 700 people were on relief in Nanaimo and two years later this figure had almost doubled (Victoria Province, April 21, 1934). A recovery from the Depression was slow but the outbreak of World War II brought a new prosperity to the community. The establishment of a military base with two battalions of troops (some 2000 men), created a boom in the construction and service industries. Within six months restaurant licenses doubled in the city. After the war another construction boom occurred with the building of veterans’ houses.

Commercial fishing which had experienced several slumps gained increasing importance during the War with guaranteed government contracts for canned fish, Vitamin A supplements from fish reduction, and fish meal for fertilizer. Inflated fish prices and an all year round fishing season to meet the demand, brought a new prosperity to this industry.

Similarly the prosperity that had begun before the war continued in the logging industry. The construction of a deep sea wharf by the federal government in 1937, and later a passenger freight terminal on the downtown waterfront, made Nanaimo an important transportation link and centre for lumber export. By the 1940’s forest products were the new resource base to direct Nanaimo’s economy. Close to good transportation links, many logging companies relocated their headquarters in or around Nanaimo so that

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1 The largest sawmill in the province during the 1920’s remained the Chemainus mill which employed close to 600 workers (Daily Colonist Victoria, July 10, 1927, p31).
2 According to Gidney (1978:28) the economy during the War provided an artificial prosperity which allowed the community to adjust to the disappearance of mining and the growth of a more diversified economy.
logging crews and gypso contractors were based in the area. Throughout this period there was also growth in secondary industries related to the forestry sector. In 1949 MacMillan Bloedel established the Harmac mill, a large pulp and paper operation at Duke Point which many viewed as the "linchpin" of Nanaimo economy.³ Between 1954 and 1963 the number of industries in Nanaimo doubled. The larger concerns included the Mayo mill, the Doman chipper mill, and the Hooker Chemical plant.⁴

While primary and secondary industries slowly grew, the tertiary sector expanded and eclipsed these sectors. In the earlier period the tertiary sector had grown to service the mining industry but after World War II an increasing retirement population and growing tourism on the Island generated new service demands. Retail and wholesale sectors grew as a number of shopping centers were built during the 50's and 60's. During the 60's there was a flurry of housing construction as the population moved out to the unorganized territory, particularly Departure Bay.⁵ A range of government services, federal and provincial, located in Nanaimo due to its transportation links and central location on the Island. A community college opened in Nanaimo in 1969.

³ This mill initially employed 200 workers but by 1970 had increased to over a 1000 workers.
⁴ Both the Mayo mill and the Doman chipper mill were owned and operated by East Indian immigrants who had come to British Columbia at the turn of the century. The Mayo mill was one of the earliest mills in operation on the Island and had originally been located in the Sahtlam area just west of Duncan. The mill relocated to Nanaimo in 1958.
⁵ This growth in population north of the town was created by real estate development. One developer alone built 10 subdivisions and five resort developments in this region (Gidney 1978:42-3; NFP, Feb. 29, 1964).
Segregated Labour Force

The segregated labour force in Nanaimo was substantially different from the former period because of the transition from mining to logging to secondary and finally service industries. The racial cleavages between white, Asian and Native workers that had dominated labour relations in the mining industry were transformed. Asian workers were reduced in number due to the exclusionist Chinese Immigration Act in 1923 which effectively halted Chinese immigration to the province. At the same time Japanese agreements were made to restrict Japanese immigration (see Ward 1978, Roy 1980, and Creese 1986, 1988). During the Second World War the displacement of the Japanese ended their monopoly in the herring and ship building industry in Nanaimo. In 1960 Chinatown, which at this time was located on Pine street, burned to the ground and effectively ended any visible presence of a Chinese community in Nanaimo. The Asian population, which in 1931 constituted six percent of the total population in Nanaimo was reduced to two percent by 1971.6

While the labour force in Nanaimo became more racially homogenized the class conflict that had developed out of the mining economy continued to plague the new resource based industry. The union movement which had an early beginning in Nanaimo underwent restructuring and expansion after the Depression. By the 1950's small scale radical unions had been transformed into large, bureaucratic organizations which were effective in

6 This matched the overall percentage of the population in the province as a whole (Census 1931: Census 1971, vol. 1, part 3, table 3).
dealing with the new industrialization that occurred after the War (see Phillips 1967, Bergren 1967).

During this period the participation of women in the labour force increased. Throughout the 1920’s and 1930’s women slowly entered the expanding gendered service sector. During the War years the number of women in the labour force doubled in Nanaimo. After the war it continued to grow and by 1971 was only slightly lower than the provincial rate. Despite their increase in the labour force, women were predominantly employed in the service sector. Most notably there was an expansion in clerical and sales employment which eclipsed domestic service and manufacturing. Clerical occupations in Nanaimo doubled in three decades. This rapid expansion in clerical work often found labour in short supply particularly in the mid 1950’s (Nanaimo Free Press, Aug. 28, 1956).

While women’s participation in the labour force increased, their income in relation to men decreased during this period. This decline is believed to be a product of two factors; the increased participation of women in the part-time labour force, and the increased segregation of women into the lower paid tertiary sector of the economy. The part-time

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7 By 1958 53.9% of the paid labour force in the province were union members (B.C. Dept. of Labour, AR 1958). After this period union membership leveled off so that by 1966 it had been reduced to 42.7%.
8 In 1931 there were 277 women over the age of 20 who were enumerated as wage earners (Census 1931, vol. 6, table 3). A decade later this had increased to 455 (Census 1941).
9 This lower participation rate, evident for both men and women, is believed to be a product of the larger retirement population in the region: eleven percent of the total population in the region is over the age of 65.
labour force grew substantially after the War. By 1971 thirty-seven percent of women, in comparison to sixteen percent of men, worked in the part-time labour force in Nanaimo. There was a higher percentage of women in the part-time labour force in Nanaimo than there was in the province as a whole (33%). Whether full time or part-time, women’s wages remained lower than men’s and the discrepancy widened throughout this period. Men’s wages increased as an outcome of the presence of unions in the primary and secondary industries. A list of unions present in Nanaimo in 1961 reveal that only two unions had women members, and in 1971 only five percent of women in Nanaimo, in comparison to forty percent of men, worked in unionized occupations.

Men’s Employment

The changes in the economic base of Nanaimo and its demands upon the labour force were to generate new constraints and options for Sne-nay-muxw employment. Most noticeably during this period one sees the increasing displacement of Sne-nay-muxw men from fishing. In the 1920’s the Sne-nay-muxw abandoned the Fraser river as more lucrative fishing was found in Rivers Inlet. By the 1930’s all the Sne-nay-muxw fished this region as well as local areas in and around Nanaimo. Taking the steamer up to Rivers Inlet became an annual affair for many families, as few owned their own boats. Rivers Inlet was a different experience for many Sne-nay-muxw who had never been further north than Qualicum River. During the depression years however, the market for fish fell drastically and many canneries closed. Sne-nay-muxw fishermen who were dependent upon these

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11 In 1971 tradesmen and loggers wages ranged from $4.50 to $4.00 an hour. Clerical, retail and service occupation wages ranged from $2.50 to $1.70 an hour (B.C. Salary and Wage Rate Survey, 1970).
canneries were forced to sell fish door to door in Nanaimo. One elder remembers that one had to take what one could get for fish in those days—with luck twenty cents for a two or three pound fish.

Sne-nay-muxw men were forced to turn to other employment. One alternative was working in the salteries during the winter months. Salteries were established in several locations around Nanaimo by Japanese Canadian families who catered to the Asian market for salted herring and chum salmon. There were five salteries initially at Departure Bay but once this area was overfished they moved to the Gulf Islands. In 1930 there were seven herring salteries on the Gulf Islands. By 1941 there were six salteries on Galiano Island alone (Haig-Brown 1992). While most herring fishing and processing was done by Japanese, the introduction of a federal regulation in the mid 1920’s, with the goal of eliminating Japanese monopoly in this industry, stipulated that half the crews were to be white. Native labour in this instance was defined as white labour. Dry salting of herring was highly labour intensive as fishing went on for twenty-four hours when the herring runs were on. Few white men in Nanaimo sought this employment and this enabled Sne-nay-muxw men to find employment for approximately three to four months during the late fall and winter months. One elder recollects his working experience at one of the salteries at Departure Bay in 1925:

I didn’t like the work, your clothes would get all stiff from the salt. It was hard work, shoveling herring and putting in the salt. You always had to be outside, rain or shine. You even ate outside. In one boat, half the crew would be Japanese, and the other half white or Indian. We didn’t make much money for all that work, about $75.00 a month. It was the only work we could find in those days.

12 Several canneries on the Fraser River also salted herring from 1918 to 1930.
The salteries remained a viable winter employment until the end of the 30's. At this time the Second World War began and Asian demand for salted herring declined. Japanese Canadians who owned the salteries were removed at the end of the season in 1941.

While employment in the salteries ended, commercial fishing prospered. Unlike the years during the 1930's when fishing was generally poor, the War brought guaranteed government contracts so that fishing occurred all year round. For the first time Sne-nay-muxw fishermen were fully employed in this occupation and many were able to buy their own boats rather than lease from the large fish companies. The majority worked for B.C. Packers, but a few also worked for Nelson Brothers, McCann Brothers, and Northcoast Fishing Company. After the War, the demise of local fishing opportunities led one Sne-nay-muxw fishermen to seek work crewing on American boats in California and Alaska. His experience fishing for pilchards on the West Coast in the mid 1930's gave him the necessary deep sea fishing experience needed for this employment:

I went to Ballard. I met a fellow by the name of Carl Henderson who had a seiner. I told him I had experience fishing pilchards so he hired me.... For the first few days I worked preparing the nets. I found out that in the States they don't pay you for fixing nets... We first sailed to Cape Flattery but there was no fish. Then we went to California. In San Francisco they had a bad season that year. I didn't make very much money. I tried to get on a tuna boat but I missed them... The following summer I went up to Alaska and fished for summer herring. Then I went up to Ketchikan and fished for halibut and salmon which we sold in Prince Rupert. Later I went down to the Columbia River.

While some years were good, many Sne-nay-muxw remember the insecure income that fishing brought them. As the number of fishermen increased in the industry and the seasons shortened, they were unable to maintain their boats and equipment. Technological
advances after World War II required greater investments to remain competitive. Many felt it wasn’t worth it and sold their boats. By the mid 60’s only a third of Sne-nay-muxw men continued to fish and only eleven owned their own boats (RG10, V84-85/316, Box 33, File 20-2, Vol. 2). The amalgamation of canneries in 1969 and the introduction of the Davis Plan was to mark the end for Sne-nay-muxw fishermen.\(^\text{13}\) The Davis Plan limited licenses and imposed a quota requirement which the majority of Sne-nay-muxw fishermen could not meet. They were forced to sell their licenses and boats at this time. Those boats that were in poor condition were simply beached. By the mid 1970’s only two boats were registered by Sne-nay-muxw fishermen (Friedlander 1975).\(^\text{14}\)

The reduced opportunities in fishing after the War encouraged other Sne-nay-muxw men to turn to logging and related industries. The occupation of logging goes back several generations in some families. One Sne-nay-muxw logger remembers that all the men in his family, his grandfather and uncles, had been hand loggers cutting pilings for the railroad. Later they worked for small family businesses in the area. His father, had taught him and his brothers how to log and he began logging when he was fifteen:

I was 15 years old when I started logging, that was 1937. They were making pilings then for the railroad...I was left handed. This was an asset for the old two man saws. I worked for jippo loggers, small family companies that had small claims. However I also worked for Comox Logs, which became Crown Zellarback, which became Fletcher Challenge. I worked for them altogether 38 years.

\(^\text{13}\) In 1969 mergers and consolidations reduced the number of Fisheries Association members from seven to five. B.C. Packers dominated controlling almost 90% of the production (Meggs 1991:189). The Native Brotherhood subpoenaed the canneries to explain why there had been such mergers and cannery closures at this time (Province April 28, 1969, p10).

\(^\text{14}\) Between 1971 and 1978 there was a reduction of 29% of Native gillnetters in the province (Meggs 1991:197).
His family was very successful in logging. During the late 1940's and 50's his older brother was a falling contractor for Comox Logging and Railway Company. At this time their headquarters were at Ladysmith. The crew consisted of his brothers, a brothers-in-law, as well as non-Native loggers. They were the first contractors to use power saws on the Nanaimo Lakes.

For those without any experience, getting on a logging crew was more difficult.

Another elder who logged for some of his working years, remembers that his first job was outside of Seattle just before the Depression. He had been unable to find work around Nanaimo because he had no experience in the bush. His family had been full time farmers and had never worked outside of farming. While down in Washington picking berries he went to a hiring hall in Seattle. Here many Native men from British Columbia were regularly hired to work in the logging camps around Washington. While he only worked a few months, the experience ensured him work once he returned to Nanaimo. He mixed logging with fishing for a good part of his life:

I went down to Vashon Island to help my family pick berries. I managed to get hired on a logging outfit outside of Seattle. I had never logged before. The money was good. I was paid 30 cents a thousand board feet. After Christmas the depression began and the price fell to 12 cents a thousand feet. I continued working for about three weeks but quit because there wasn't enough money to be made. When I returned to Nanaimo I was able to work logging for a small local family operation. I bought my first boat in 1936 and fished part-time. During the War I started fishing full time. I returned to logging full time in 1960 when Crown Zellarsbach was logging timber stands on the Nanaimo Lakes.
Another retired logger remembers that his first job as a logger was also in the United States in the late 1940's. He too was able to find work as a logger once he returned home. He recalls:

My Uncle Jim at that time was falling at Snoqualmie Falls. He was working with Alan from Comox. You didn't make too much money in those days. You worked as two man sets. Alan went back to Comox. I got on working as a faller with Uncle Jim. He asked the boss but he first refused. Uncle Jim threatened to quit so he put me with him. Chester had arthritis and wrote to Uncle Jim to come home and help him fish. So he went back...I went to the hiring hall in Seattle and...met up with a guy from Lillooet. He had been working in the woods for years. We worked as partners. In 1950 or 1951 I left to come home....I was able to get several jobs falling when I got back.

As well as finding jobs with relatives another logger recalls that his soccer skills helped him find his job. Like Sne-nay-muxw men before him who found jobs in the mines athletic skills assured young men jobs in logging camps and the sawmills. One elder explains:

I got my first job through soccer. When I was young I was a punk. I only worked at odd fishing jobs. I was always playing soccer with the guys. My wife started nagging me to get a job. One day they asked me if I wanted to be on a soccer team. I told them if they gave me a job I would. The next day I had a job...I worked up at M & B, at Northwest Bay, about 18 miles north of here. I worked there for 30...40 years. I was a logger first and then eventually got on the booms. When I first went there to work the boss said, 'Don't we have enough of these guys?' My friend told me, "Don't worry about him, I'm the foreman."

Besides working in the logging camps others worked for the local sawmills. Before the War there were several small mills in and around Nanaimo that employed five to six men. Several Sne-nay-muxw were able to find casual employment in them. However it was not until after the 1950's that Sne-nay-muxw men were able to find more secure mill work. The Mayo mill moved to Nanaimo in 1958 and leased part of the reserve shoreline. As
part of their leasing contract they employed half a dozen Sne-nay-muxw men who worked
the green chain or booming grounds. This was steady employment until the mill closed
down in 1975. One worker who worked the log booms remembers why he preferred that
job:

Working the booms was dangerous but I liked it. You were your own boss
out there. I worked booms for almost 45 years. There used to be a lot of
men who worked the booms before they brought in the machines. I
worked for Mayo twenty-two years and was lucky to retire before they
closed their doors so I was able to get a pension.

In the early years of the Harmac operation no Sne-nay-muxw men found employment
there. In fact despite the great expansion of pulp and paper mills in the province during
the 1950’s there were no Native men employed in this industry. The first Sne-nay-muxw
to find work at Harmac was in 1963 when the sawmill was opened. From this time on
there have been approximately half a dozen Sne-nay-muxw men working at Harmac.

Throughout this period Sne-nay-muxw men continued to find work on the waterfront
either trimming coal or longshoring. In the early 30’s many men were able to work on a
casual basis for about four or five days a month. Native gangs in the region were known
to be good workers as longshoremen and noted for their ability to load ship. Longshoring
was highly labour intensive in the early years and demanded long hours and brute strength.
Gangs were often competing against each other to finish loading their hatches. One elder
who grew up on a farm on the river reserve remembers his first and only experience in
longshoring in the late 20’s:
The only time I did longshoring was when I was seventeen. In 1927, 28, 29...they were making piling ties for the railroad...We would work out of Duncan, Westholme and Kuper Island. We didn’t have the modern machines in those days and it would take a lot of men to load a boat. It would take a month to load a boat with one by six’s and two by eight’s. A boat would have five hatches and on each hatch there were 8 men, one tender, one winchdriver and one siderunner. Moses Johnny was the forman in charge of all five hatches. That’s how I got my job through Moses Johnny. Our home port was Chemainus.

The company running the stevedores, the guy in charge was a breed. In those days he had each gang working against each other. I remember coming to eat and they were still carving the meat when the men would be running out to work. They are probably dead now eating so fast...It was really hard work. On the town reserve they were fishermen. They weren’t as fit as those that grew up on the farms. However there weren’t many boys on the River reserve.

Another Sne-nay-muxw who worked most of his life as a longshoremen, remembers that while the hours were long, the work was fairly steady, particularly after the War. He commuted from the reserve to Chemainus or whatever port needed labour:

I use to work with my uncle Moses Johnny. He had a very good eye and no one could load a boat like him....My father worked out of Chemainus... There was a foreman on top and a siderunner in the hatch. The foreman belonged to a different union...Many foreman got the jobs because of who they were. They didn’t know how to load a boat...I used to work out of Port Alberni, Victoria, wherever. The dispatcher would tell you where you had to be the next day...I liked that because it was always different. I would get paid for the mileage and time it took to get there....It was always a dangerous job.

With increased mechanization the demand in labour decreased. During the 1940’s and the 1950’s there were as many as a dozen men on the reserve working as longshoremen but by 1970 fewer than half a dozen were still employed in this occupation.

No Sne-nay-muxw men were able to find employment outside of these occupations. According to a study in the mid 1950’s there were: 9 fishermen, 5 owned their own boats
and 4 crewed; 10 loggers; 15 mill workers, 13 longshoremen, 2 railroad sections workers; 15 casual labourers, 3 part-time; and 4 permanently unemployed (Hawthorn et al 1958:213). This list reveals that a majority of men’s employment was linked to the logging industry but many experienced several occupations in their working lives. During the summer and winter shut downs of logging camps, many went fishing, berry picking or claming for money. However, there was a small core of men who found secure employment in logging and later mill work. These men did not have to seek alternative sources of income remaining reliant upon a single industry for their income.

Women’s Employment

Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment was far more limited in opportunities than men. After 1920 few women were to find employment in the salmon canneries. The decline of the Fraser River sockeye runs after 1913 displaced their labour in the Steveston canneries. While a few Sne-nay-muxw women found work in the canneries on Rivers Inlet, this employment was taken up principally by women from the north. More frequently Sne-nay-muxw women remained on the boats with their husbands fishing, rather than working in the canneries. Two women recall these early years fishing with their husbands:

I started fishing with my first husband. We went gillnet fishing for two years up at Rivers Inlet. My husband was lazy so I did all the fishing. I left him because of this. I never fished after that.

We all lived on the boat...The kids would help out. I can’t believe I used to pull those thirty pounders over the side. I was so strong back then. I couldn’t do it now.
There were a few local canneries that opened in Nanaimo before the Second World War but they did not offer secure employment. The Nanaimo Canning Company which primarily canned chum, did not open every year and by the 1930’s it was closed. According to one source no Sne-nay-muxw people worked at this cannery as only northern peoples from Cape Mudge, who camped on Newcastle Island, were hired here. None of the Sne-nay-muxw women worked at the salteries or reduction plants in and around Nanaimo. However it was common for them to accompany their husbands to the local salteries on the Gulf Islands. One woman remembers it as a very social time:

While my husband fished I would stay behind in the camp. There were four camps at Odie’s. The Indians were in one camp. We did that for a couple of years. We baked pies and donuts for the men to take out with them. We would show the Japanese women how to bake them. We would also knit long underwear for the Japanese fishermen when we were there.

When the demand for salted herring ended at the beginning of the War, several canneries began to can herring. The work in a cannery was new to many Sne-nay-muxw women at this time. One woman recalls her only work experience at one such cannery which she remembers as far from pleasant:

I worked at the cannery on Galiano Island. My uncle, Russell Rice, got me the job. He was working the seine...I didn’t like it. It was in November and December when it was cold. I only worked the one season...It was a messy job. My job was to cut off their heads. I can’t remember how much I was paid but I think it was by the box.
Another woman remembered finding work during the War at the Esquimalt cannery that depended upon the fish traps at Sooke.\(^{15}\) She too was inexperienced for the demands of cannery work. She explains:

> I found the work very fussy and I was slow filling the cans. I asked the Chinese foreman if he would pay me by the hour instead of by the piece. This he agreed to do so I did whatever was needed at the cannery. I worked there two seasons. Most of the other women were from the Westcoast and they were very fast.

Two clam canneries on the Island, one at Saanich and the other at Deep Bay also offered some employment to Sne-nay-muxw women during the 1920’s. By the 1940’s only the cannery at Saanich remained and none of the Sne-nay-muxw women I spoke to remember working there then.

Although Sne-nay-muxw women were not employed in the canneries digging clams remained an important income source for women. After the Depression the market for clams began to grow with a large demand for clams from both Canadian and American canners. During the war this demand increased and many Sne-nay-muxw women remember digging for clams during the winter months:

> My mother, brother and myself would camp out and dig for clams. A lot of families in those days would dig for clams. A buyer would come by regularly to our camp to buy them. I don’t remember how much he paid us. I don’t think it was much, maybe two or three cents a pound. It was always a way to make some money.

\(^{15}\) Fish traps were used principally by the Americans. One fish trap needed at most 6 men to look after it which was equivalent to 150 Fraser River boats and 300 men (Meggs 1991:46).
Working as domestics in the town also remained an important occupation for many Sne-nay-muxw women throughout this period. As in earlier years women's only access to local employment was through domestic labour. One elder recalls that it was a daily sight to see young women walking along the railway tracks from the River reserve to work as domestics in the town. One woman describes her experiences during the late 1930's:

I worked as a domestic for 25 cents an hour. I would get a bonus of $1.00 if I did a good job. I worked for good families and got the jobs through word of mouth. My mother and grandmother taught me how to do that work. I worked for some important people, the minister of the United Church and the president of the mill...I did that for 6 years even while I was first married.

Another woman recalls that cleaning houses was her first job during the War. She explains:

My first job was as a domestic. For several years I worked for five different women. I started at 16 and did that until I was 21. That's when I got married...It was good job because I was making $30 a month. I thought that was good money in those days.

After the War a few Sne-nay-muxw women found employment as cleaners or kitchen help in institutions in the community. In 1949 a 220 bed Indian hospital opened in Nanaimo. This hospital was one of three federal hospitals to meet the hospitalization needs of the Native population in the province. These hospitals dealt with a large proportion of T.B. cases as well as long term, rehabilitative care (see Hodgson 1982).¹⁶ Approximately half a dozen Sne-nay-muxw women were able to get on as housemaids and nurses aids, however, one source recalls that many women who worked here were from

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¹⁶ It was not until the 1940's that the federal health services began to expand. This also coincided with the discovery of drugs and an increased public priority to control T.B.
elsewhere, Duncan, Victoria and the West Coast. As the treatment for T.B. improved, the
demand for beds declined. The hospital finally closed in 1967. One woman recalls her
experiences there:

My mother was at that hospital for eight years before she died. The head
nurse remembered her and told me to come back when I was older...and
she would give me a job. I did. I was a housemaid. That’s what they
called them then, you cleaned the rooms and set up...They paid us $1.17 an
hour. I remember they gave us a raise to $1.25 but a week later the
hospital closed.

Other women after the War were able to find employment in town as kitchen staff:

Two women who were sisters-in-law worked in the cafeteria at the high school. One
woman explains how she was hired for this job:

I got the job at the high school because I was helping out at a banquet for
the church that was held there. The manager of the kitchen asked me if I
would like a job. I worked there for four years. After this job I washed
dishes at the Old Malaspina Hotel. It was on the weekends so Don could
look after the kids. Later I was promoted to the sandwich boards. I
initially got this job through a friend. Actually she was the mother of my
son’s friend. Another job I had was at the Big Seven Restaurant.

Jobs such as these however were not easy to find and some Sne-nay-muxw women
were forced to find work in other urban centers. One woman recalls moving first to
Victoria and later Seattle to find employment:

I went to Victoria...to find a job. I worked as a waitress at a fancy hotel
for about a year. The cafe was called the Black Horse...My next job was
working in a laundry in Seattle. My cousin and aunt lived there and got me
the job. I liked working in the laundry. It wasn’t hard work and it was
clean. I worked here for almost a year too. I returned home for my sister’s
funeral. I didn’t go back. After this I got married and was a housewife full
time.
Going as far as Seattle to find work was not new for many Sne-nay-muxw women who had accompanied their families to Washington to pick berries and fruit. This remained an important source of income for women as well as for men when logging and fishing was poor. Families would start out in mid May or early June and begin picking strawberries on Vashon and Bainbridge Island. One woman remembers the preparation on the reserve in the early summer and how they would travel to the berry fields:

Every summer the families piled all their blankets and pots outside their homes waiting for the trucks to come and pick them up. We would go first to Victoria and then take the ferry to Seattle. When we got there we slept under the trucks until the morning when we were taken to Bainbridge Island. When the strawberries were finished the trucks would then carry us to the next farm.

Once the strawberry season was finished the Sne-nay-muxw would follow the seasonal harvest down to Tacoma, through the Puyallup Valley and then to the interior of the State, ending in Yakima to pick apples and finally hops. Many stayed until it was too cold to pick. Several women remember how difficult the work was:

They always want me to talk about the old days. I want to tell them the truth about how hard they were at times. We would go to Washington to pick fruit. We would start in June and continue right through to October. When I was young I went with my mother and brother. We would take the steamer from Vancouver to Seattle and then the ferry to Winslow. It was a long way to go to find work.

Berry picking was harder than fishing. We went berry picking when there was a fish strike. After a day of picking you could hardly walk. Your legs would be so stiff. They would pay 30 cents for the market and 20 cents for the cannery. You were not able to come back with much money. Lots of Sne-nay-muxw people were down there...I hate watermelon because of all the watermelon I ate when I was picking...The best thing to pick was hops because it was cooler then and you could always get in the shade.
Yet at the same time others have fond memories of the months spent berry picking in Washington. Despite the heat and the physical labour it was good to be away from the reserve and to meet new people. One woman looks at those years with fond memories:

We always thought going to the berry fields was a wonderful time. I believed then it was the most fun you could have.

At Yakima, the Canadian Indians lived in tents while the American Indians lived in tipis on the other side of the river. When you weren’t working in the fields everyone would play bone games. Also there was lots of gambling with cards. My dad loved to play cards.

A woman, whose parents moved to Washington for five years during the 1960’s remembers this time as a good one for her large family. It was one of the few times in her life when living was easier for them. She explains:

We moved to Washington for about five years. My Mum had twelve children. My Dad was foreman in the fields so we stayed there all year round. We always ate at a cafeteria. I remember we could eat as much as we wanted...We had to work but we didn’t mind. I wish I could find something like that for my family now. It’s good to get away from the reserve for a time.

Hop picking at Agassiz and Sardis was also important. Hop production was healthy during the 20’s but suffered with the depression. By the late 1930’s production had again resumed and an increasing number of acres were planted with hops. Higher wages were paid in Washington state than British Columbia so families already picking fruit in the United States remained there. Those women who fished with their husbands or had local employment in Nanaimo would travel to the hop fields up the Fraser Valley. By the end of the 1940’s however the mechanized hop picker was introduced and ended the large demand for pickers. Canadian Hop Growers in 1950 employed 2500 pickers, but the
following year with the mechanized hop picker, only 150 people were hired. In that year, 1951, it is estimated that more than 4000 people were out of work in the hop fields in the Fraser Valley alone. One woman remembers how lucky she was to find work when the machines were introduced:

I was lucky I still had a job when the machines came in. My brother-in-law drove one of the machines. My son would sit beside him in the cab. He was only small then. My sister worked on the hooker while I was at the bar. It was good money but it was long hours. You couldn’t finish for the day until you had unloaded the trucks. It was usually dark by the time we had finished. We would start again as soon as it got light enough in the morning.

After Sne-nay-muxw women returned home from picking hops they would pick potatoes at the local farms in and around Nanaimo. As one woman explains you worked in five’s, three digging and two picking and were paid $1.00 a sack.

Another source of income for women was knitting. The first historical evidence of Sne-nay-muxw women knitting is found in Sproat’s account in 1876. However, it was not until after the 1920’s, and particularly after the War, that knitting generated any income of note for women. While Cowichan sweaters are well known today, many other items were knitted by Sne-nay-muxw women, socks, hats, gloves, seamless underwear, for example. Knitting was very labour intensive as wool had to be washed, dyed, carded, and spun before it could be used. Sne-nay-muxw women initially bought their wool from the local farmers and one source noted her grandmother purchased her wool from the local

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17 The industry of Cowichan sweaters has been well documented by Lane (1951) and Meikle (1987).
18 Originally the wool was not dyed and women knitted patterns that they made up or copied out of crochet books.
butcher. Women sold their knitting from door to door and only later supplied stores in Victoria and Vancouver:

We were always knitting in those days. We got the wool from the farmers. It was not expensive. We would sell sweaters for $6.00 and socks for 50 cents a pair. It would take me a week to knit a sweater but some women were very quick and could knit a sweater in a day.

Most women knitted. One woman stated that she had never learnt how to knit as she and her sister were assigned other chores around the farm. Another woman was allergic to wool and took up number of crafts as a means of extra income. Making slippers, hats and sweaters decorated with felt art was also a way of making a little money.

Sne-nay-muxw women had different employment experiences from non-Native women in Nanaimo. Unlike non-Native women domestic service remained the important occupation for Sne-nay-muxw women. During and after the War other employment became available in the service industry as cleaners, kitchen and wait staff. Significantly, Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment in the local economy, unlike men’s, was limited. Many were forced to migrate from the community to find work as casual farm labourers in the Washington State as they had done decades before. The following section examines the labour conditions that continued to structure women’s participation in the labour force upon gender, race and class lines.
Labour Conditions

Depression and World War II

The Depression and World War II were two important world events that influenced Sne-nay-muxw employment. The Depression hit Nanaimo harder than many communities in British Columbia. With the end of the coal industry many people were unemployed. Elders recall that jobs were very scarce, going mainly to people in the town. Aside from selling fish or vegetables door to door, there was little money to be made. For some casual labour a few Sne-nay-muxw men remember being paid in food rather than money. Domestic service for women was scarce until the mid 1930’s.

Families still continued to go to the berry fields in Washington and to the Fraser Valley for hop production, but fewer fields were planted and the Sne-nay-muxw had to compete with displaced ‘white labour’, for as early as 1928 unemployment had risen in the province. For several years the provincial government tried to entice white labourers to the hop fields. However, it was noted that white workers refused to work with Native workers. In 1927 only white pickers were hired for John I. Hass Company at Sardis and Canadian Hop Company at Sumas.19 B.C. Hop Company, one of the largest growers in the Fraser Valley, continued to hire Native labour at this time but in 1928 with production halved only half the pickers from the previous season were needed. Word was sent out

19 The Canadian Hop Company hired white labour when they reclaimed 600 acres from a small lake in the area. Elders today state that Native people refused to go there as the lake spirits were unhappy at this place.
that they would not pay fares further north than Nanaimo (RG 10, Vol. 4045, file 351,304, June 10, 1928). 20

One elder woman believes that while times were hard during the Depression they were better off than many of the people living in the town who were wholly dependent upon cash income. She maintains:

We didn’t feel the Depression like white folks. We were used to poverty and living off the land. We did better than them because they didn’t know how to live off the land. We could always go fishing and hunting. Eating salmon and clams was what we were use to. We didn’t buy much food in those days anyways...Sometimes we would give the white folks food.

While the 1930’s were difficult years, the War brought a new prosperity to Nanaimo. Suddenly there was an abundance of jobs as young men in Nanaimo enlisted and went overseas. A half dozen Sne-nay-muxw men also enlisted and three saw active duty in Europe. 21 With the displacement of Japanese fisherman, many Sne-nay-muxw men were deferred from active service as long as they fished all year round. Guaranteed government contracts during the war kept the canneries busy. As one Sne-nay-muxw fisherman remembers:

I got drafted into the army but B.C. Packers got us out. We could get out 6 months at a time but to stay out we had to fish 12 months a year. The money was good but they took ten percent off the top. Later they had to give that back to us. People on the River reserve did not fish but when farming ended and the War began we had to learn. I went up to Campbell

20 In the same year the Department of Immigration and Colonization sent notice that they would restrict Native people from the United States from coming to Canada because of the large number of white pickers available in the province. B.C. Hop Company in 1930 was forced to lease acreage for potatoes, corn and beans, as a third of the 1929 crop was not sold.
21 One Sne-nay-muxw fisherman was in the Navy during the War. Two Sne-nay-muxw men died in action overseas.
River in 1936 and bought a gas boat for about $200 to $300. I had never fished before. The next season I went up Rivers Inlet.

While fishing was good during the war and for the first time they were able to fish all year round, another Sne-nay-muxw fisherman points out that they didn’t get rich. As he explains:

No matter how much money you made you couldn’t spend it. Everything was rationed, meat, bread, tea and coffee...While we had work all year round we did not get rich. We were just doing better than we had done before.

As well as fishing, other jobs were plentiful. There were increased opportunities in logging as spruce was in high demand for the wartime air craft industry. Improved prices for field crops and farm animals enabled farmers to give better wages to hired farm labour. Some young Sne-nay-muxw were able to find work even though they were underage. Two men, who were barely teenagers when the War began, recall their first paid employment:

I was only a kid when the war started but they needed workers. I knew hard work from working on the farms. I got hired on trimming coal and went up to Union Bay. It was good money in those days but the hours were long. You were away weeks at a time.

I got my first job at a Steveston cannery. I lied about my age. They were so short of workers they didn’t care. I worked there the last year of the war.

Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment opportunities during the war also rose as they did for other women. Locally new restaurants opened to service the military base. One woman remembers there were plenty of jobs around when the war began. She quit school to work in a restaurant washing dishes. She laughingly recalls:
I wasn’t use to work like that.... I didn’t like it because it ruined my nails and hands. That shows you how young I was...I was going to quit but they offered me a waitress job. There were lots of soldiers around...Everyone was nice to me...I didn’t experience any discrimination at this time. Maybe they didn’t like Indians but they were all nice to me.

An important source of income for Sne-nay-muxw women during the war was selling clams. While digging clams was often a family affair, it remained an important income source for women and older people more so than young men. The average quantity of butter and little neck clams taken by one person for the Southeastern region of Vancouver Island increased during the war years (Provincial Fisheries Department, 1943). 22

Employment was also plentiful in the United States. In their regular migration to Washington, Sne-nay-muxw women found good paying jobs in and around Seattle. One woman located employment in Winslow working as welder in the ship yards. However once the war was over, these jobs disappeared as military production ended and jobs were given to the returning veterans. This woman, like other women, were forced back into the home or in lower paid, marginal occupations.

Fewer families migrated to the berry fields during the war years because of the availability of more lucrative local jobs. Families that continued to go found that the shortage of farm labour gave them better wages than they had experienced during the 1930’s. This shortage of farm labour was also felt in the British Columbia and there was some attempt to stop Native peoples from migrating south. However wages in Canada never matched those in United States. For example, in 1942 in British Columbia women

\[22\] A single digger at this time averaged 100 to 200 lbs per tide. This production was a decline from the turn of the century when it was estimated that average catch per tide was approximately 375 lb. per person (Thompson 1913). See chapter 4.
were paid 1 1/2 cents for a pound of hops while at Yakima they were paid 4 cents a pound. Appeals were made to Sne-nay-muxw and other Native peoples to accept poorer wages in Canada as their patriotic duty (Colonist May 17, 1944; June 10, 1944). 23

Women’s knitting also became more lucrative during the War. The great demand for Cowichan sweaters by American soldiers stationed in Alaska increased the price from $5.00 to a high of $25 (Victoria Daily Times, May 17, 1941, p5). On average however, Sne-nay-muxw women remember that they received only ten to fifteen dollars per sweater. This was twice the price they had received during the Depression. Also the demand for sweaters during the war marked the beginning of a successful industry as Cowichan sweaters were introduced to a wider market. They were to remain an important source of income for women in the decades that followed.

The Depression of the 1930’s and World War II offered different opportunities for the Sne-nay-muxw in the local economy. During the Depression they were completely displaced while throughout the war years their labour was in high demand. Such shifts in employment acknowledges that Sne-nay-muxw wage opportunities were closely tied to the wider economic cycle of the world economy. The insecurity of their employment remained linked to the segregated nature of the economy that continued to limit their participation. For Sne-nay-muxw women the War years offered opportunities and wages that were not experienced in the earlier period. Nonetheless, as the following section

23 These appeals were justifiably unsuccessful despite propaganda that Japanese berry farmers in United States were using Native people to secure strategic locations on the B.C. coastline for later invasion (Times, March 14, 1942, mag sec.p5).
reveals, Sne-nay-muxw women were to remain in the most exploited sectors of the economy.

**Unionization and Labour Laws**

As the discussion above has explained the racial segregation in the labour force changed significantly for Sne-nay-muxw men during this period. There were no exclusive occupations within the logging, fishing or longshoring that were specifically assigned for Native men. However, racial discrimination was a distinct factor affecting Sne-nay-muxw employment opportunities. As one woman explains:

> It was ten times worse than it is now. Men would hear they were hiring at one of the mills but when they applied they would be told all the jobs were gone. When there were jobs at the hotels or restaurants it was useless to apply unless you knew someone working there.

Nonetheless, one of the means by which Sne-nay-muxw were able to maintain economic niches in these industries was through union membership that gave them some security in employment.

Unions were not a new phenomena to the Sne-nay-muxw. They had witnessed the rise of early unions in the mining industry in Nanaimo and later the early fishing unions on the Fraser River that united Native and White fishermen in strikes against the canners for high wages (Drucker 1958; Phillip 1967:34-36; Jamieson 1972; Gladstone 1972; Griffen 1974:2-3). Their loyalty to the mining unions led to their being blacklisted during the strike of 1912-14 (Knight 1978:137). In the strike of 1900 the Sne-nay-muxw actively

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24 While the level of Sne-nay-muxw participation in these early unions is unknown there is evidence that some early delegates in the Nanaimo and south Vancouver Island region were Native people.
helped raise strike funds in Nanaimo to support the B.C. Fishermen’s Union (Phillip 1967:36). Later in 1914, many of them were members of the Fraser River Fishermen’s Protective Association. However, throughout the 1920’s their union participation was limited. It was not until after the Depression that Sne-nay-muxw interest in union organization again resurfaced with their membership in the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia.25

There is a consensus among Sne-nay-muxw men that unions offered them the needed security in employment during this period.26 One retired logger maintained that because of his seniority at M & B, that he only had to go on UIC three times in his working life. It was also with the union’s help that he was able to get a decent disability pension after a serious logging accident ended his career as a faller. Those who were longshoremen highly praise the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen’s Union as the best union around at the time.

While unions enabled some Sne-nay-muxw men to gain steady employment it also restricted others through closed shops and union halls. In some respects Sne-nay-muxw men’s employment histories reveal the importance of family circumstances that influenced union membership and job security. Those that maintained their health and had the

25 This organization was formed in the mid 1930’s and was not a union but an organization with a mandate to protect the general welfare of Native people in the province. This organization received its formal charter under the Societies Act in 1945 at which time it was the sole bargaining agent for all B.C. Native fishermen (see Drucker 1958).
26 Jamieson (1972) argues that unions had better records than other organizations in combating prejudice and discrimination for Native peoples in employment in the province.
necessary family support networks to wait out seniority were able to gain steady employment.

But while unions protected Sne-nay-muxw men’s employment and offered good working conditions, women had no such security or protection in any of the occupations available to them. On the contrary, Sne-nay-muxw women were to remain one of the most exploited segments of the labour force. Their exclusion from unionized occupations was assured with union policies and the entrenched gender segregation in the labour force. When unionization occurred for shoreworkers in the mid 1940’s, few Sne-nay-muxw women worked in the canneries at this time. Without unionization women were not assured good wages or working conditions. On the contrary, state involvement in labour relations (i.e. protective legislation) left Sne-nay-muxw women in the most exploited employment in the labour force.

Protective legislation in British Columbia had its beginnings in the mid 19th Century but it was not until the early 20th Century that more sweeping reforms, such as Minimum Wage laws came into force. Several authors (McCallum 1986; Russell 1991, Creese 1991-2) have shown how this legislation entrenched gender discrimination by effectively barring women from high wage occupations and increasing their dependency upon male wage earners. This legislation increased racial discrimination, particularly for Sne-nay-muxw women, by excluding those very occupations that were available to them, such as cannery work, agricultural labour, and domestic service. In these occupations minimum wage laws did not apply.

As well as in wages, the exploitation of Sne-nay-muxw women’s labour is evident in the working conditions found in the canneries and the hop fields. Working conditions in the canneries by the 1920’s improved only slightly despite the introduction of automated machines to alleviate the most fatiguing work. The hours were long and the work remained dirty, wet, and repetitious. Accommodation was in dark, cramped sheds. Housing for white and Japanese workers was always superior to that of Native housing. It was not until the Second World War that this improved for Native people, principally because they were given the Japanese housing. Poor conditions were a concern to the Department of Indian Affairs who tried to force canners to offer women gloves and aprons as well as better living quarters. But without any legislative power over provincial labour laws, the federal government had little ability to change these conditions.

Working conditions as agricultural labourers in both the berry and hop fields was also dismal. The hours were long, beginning at dawn and ending at dusk, and the housing conditions poor. Tents and other make-shift housing was eventually replaced by cabins and stoves, but washing facilities and fresh water remained a luxury few farmers offered. Cases of infections and stomach ailments were commonly reported by the field nurses and doctors assigned to the region during the 1920’s (RG10, vol. 4045, file 351, 304, April 5, 1927, Sept. 6, 1928). Threats by the Department of Indian Affairs to prohibit Native people from going to the hop fields unless conditions improved pushed some farmers to seek white labour.28 This proved unsuccessful as white labourers were even more vocal

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28 To control the conditions on the farms the Department of Indian Affairs considered giving the hop fields special Indian reserve status so that Indian agents could have jurisdiction there (RG10, vol. 4045, file 351, 304, Aug. 20, 1915, Oct. 15, 1915).
about poor accommodation (RG 10, vol. 4045, file 351, 304, Oct. 16, 1920; Oct. 19, 1920; Province May 20, 1926, July 6, 1927, Sept. 11, 1927). Several strikes in the hop fields by Native people themselves demanding better wages and working conditions did produce some results. However, a threatened strike at Agassiz in 1941 reveals that working conditions had changed little over the last several decades (New Herald, Oct. 15, 1941).

Working conditions and wages were a little better in the berry fields in United States. This, coupled with the longer picking season, was the principle reason Sne-nay-muxw women and their families continued to travel this distance.29 One woman explains how wages were determined:

When the crops got scarce you would get paid more. Some years you made good money if you could find a good place. However there were times when picking was poor and you didn’t make any money. I preferred going to the States because the picking was longer and you could stay until it got too cold to pick.

By the late 1960’s working conditions for farm labourers had not improved in the province. There was still lack of enforcement of the Health Act as agricultural workers were not protected in using dangerous chemicals such as pesticides or given adequate housing and sanitation. They were also not protected by Workers’ Compensation or eligible for Unemployment Insurance Claims as their time of employment was often too

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29 A shortage of agricultural labour in the late 1950’s and mid 1960’s in the province reintroduced the possibility of restricting Native peoples migration south (Vancouver Sun, March 8, 1965, p8).
short. Also legislation concerning hours of work and child labour laws were not enforced.\textsuperscript{30} As one source notes:

In short, farm workers face a wide range of legislative "omissions," making their work not only difficult and dirty but also dangerous. These conditions have helped to maintain an ethnically segmented labour market in which labour is cheap and expendable (Dutton & Cornish 1988:164).

Sne-nay-muxw women who accepted domestic work were in a similar exploited situation. Domestic labour was not subject to minimum wage laws and hours and conditions of work were left to individual employers. Sne-nay-muxw women recall the poor wages in this employment.

While some Sne-nay-muxw men found increasing security and high wages with unionization, Sne-nay-muxw women were left in the most exploited sectors of the economy. One of the conditions that ensured women's participation in this sector was the lack of education that enabled them to seek employment in other gendered sectors of the economy. The following section describes the nature of education and employment training that discriminated against Sne-nay-muxw women.

\textbf{Education and Employment Training}

While education and employment have always been linked, the disparity in educational attainment between the Sne-nay-muxw and the non-Native workforce widened after 1920. Employment skills needed for working in the mines, the logging camps, and canneries, demanded only basic literacy skills and some familiarity with the values of white culture.

\textsuperscript{30} Until 1976 agricultural workers were also denied the right to unionize (Dutton & Cornish 1988).
Aside from these requirements many Sne-nay-muxw may have questioned what an education was for, as did many parents in the mining community of Nanaimo. However with the rise of the service economy the demand for higher levels of education began to rise. This was more crucial for Sne-nay-muxw women than men, as the expanding employment opportunities open to women were in the service sector of the economy.

Despite the early resistance to schooling, by 1920 the majority of Sne-nay-muxw were committed to improving their children's education. This new commitment was inspired partially by the new compulsory schooling amendment to the Indian Act, but also by the arrival of Peter Kelly who was assigned to the community as a minister in 1915 and full time teacher in 1917. Peter Kelly was a Haida who had been baptized by Thomas Crosby in 1885. He was a graduate of the Coqualeetza Residential School and was the first Native person in the province to write the provincial high school entrance exams. In 1913 he went to college and became an ordained minister for the Methodist Church in 1916. His success in education inspired many Sne-nay-muxw (see Morley 1967; Howard 1984). Under his guidance the Sne-nay-muxw requested that $5000 be taken out of their trust fund to build a new school for 40 students. The Department of Indian Affairs accommodated this request and the school was completed in 1922. This was the first time some Sne-nay-muxw children attended school.31

However despite this new commitment, improvement in education was far from assured. While a new school was built, the academic achievement at the day school

31 An elder in an interview several years ago noted the hope that Peter Kelly fostered Sne-nay-muxw interest in education. She stated “he was the first to wake up our minds—literally to make us think, study and learn” (Howard 1984:218).
remained poor as few Sne-nay-muxw children progressed beyond the early elementary grades. Good teachers for the day school were hard to find as salaries offered by the Department were substantially lower than those offered by local school boards. Lack of support in terms of supplies and other needs, as well as concern for attendance rather than curriculum, was a difficult task for many teachers with minimum qualifications and skill. Finding teachers for the Sne-nay-muxw day school was difficult even though the reserve was close to an urban center. Aware of the scrutiny of the public, the Department of Indian Affairs was constrained to find qualified teachers. Many teachers only stayed at their position a year of two and either left for better employment or changed their marital status. The only respite in this high turnover occurred between 1923 and 1937 when one teacher remained for that time. This teacher is remembered on the reserve with great affection by her former students.

Children who went to residential schools fared better, but only a small number of Sne-nay-muxw were enrolled at Coqualeetza, Port Alberni or Kuper Island residential schools after 1920 (RG 10, vol. 6443, file 880-10, pt1; vol. 6432 file 877-2, pt1). These children

32 When one teacher retired in 1937 R.A. Hoey, the Superintendent of Welfare and Training instructed the Board of Home Missions that a qualified replacement must be chosen. His concern was not for the quality of education the Sne-nay-muxw were to receive, but motivated by proximity of the school to the town and scrutiny by the community. He stipulated in his letter that a qualified teacher must be chosen “in order that there may be no possible complaint from anyone who might take an interest in the work that is being done” (RG 10, file 832-1, pt 1, Dec. 6,1937: file 832-5, pt2, March 28, 1941).

33 It was policy of the federal government at this time not to hire married women. This policy did not change until the 1950’s.

34 Nevertheless, from the start of her employment Department of Indian Affairs had some concern that her advanced age would limit her ability to cope with the large number of children (RG 10, vol. 6404, file 832-1, pt1). She remained for fourteen years and retired at the age of 70.
were often orphans or had single parents. One woman whose father died when she was young was sent to Port Alberni Boarding School at the age of six. Her recollections of the nine years spent there were of a pleasant and productive time, but she notes that academic subjects or skills for later wage earning, were not the focus of her education. She was taught a variety of domestic skills to prepare her for a role within the household. She explains:

I was at the Port Alberni (school) for nine years. I went there when my father died in 1921. I was 6 or 7 then. My sister went to live with my grandparents at Kulleet Bay. I liked it there. I learnt how to cook, bake and sew. They would rotate you every three months so you could learn everything. I would come home during the summer and live with my mother. You sewed all your own clothes. We sold some of them at the school. Some clothes went into an exhibition and prizes were given for the best ones. I graduated from grade eight when I was seventeen. I came home then for good.

By 1945 the federal government took over the full financial responsibility for education and offered an open door policy that allowed Sne-nay-muxw children to go to provincial schools (Frideres 1993). This open door policy however was not initially supported by the local school board in Nanaimo. While no laws existed that prohibited Sne-nay-muxw children from attending public schools, the local school board had a long standing policy that resisted this integration. As early as 1911 several families on the River reserves requested the Department make arrangements to send their children to the local school at Cedar rather than travel the distance to the Day school at the town reserve (RG 10, vol. 6404, file 832-1, pt1). This request was repeatedly refused, as were other requests during the 1930’s and 1940’s, by the local board which took the position that the presence of Sne-nay-muxw children in the classroom would retard the progress of the other students.
(Native Voice, 1947:13). It was not until the spring of 1950 that the Nanaimo School Board agreed to admit 50 Sne-nay-muxw children to the local elementary school, Princess Royal (Vancouver Sun, March 9, 1950).

Despite their integration into the Provincial schools, educational achievement improved only slightly for the Sne-nay-muxw. Graduating from high school continued to remain an impossible achievement for many Sne-nay-muxw aside from some notable exceptions. One young woman, the granddaughter of the chief, was the first to go to the local high school before the Nanaimo school board agreement in 1950. She graduated in 1948. In her recollections of her school experience she admits she does not know how she managed to go to the high school at this time. She recalls:

I went to the day school on the reserve. All my brothers went there too. However when I was in grade eight a superintendent came by and said that I could advance a grade. My teacher, Miss Underhill, also agreed. How I was able to go to John Shaw High School before integration I don’t know. Maybe my brothers had something to do with it..... There were about 500 students at that high school then. I was the only Native student there.

Other Sne-nay-muxw were unable to emulate her example until more than a decade later. Education was not linked to employment for many Sne-nay-muxw. As one man explains:

I went to grade eleven but that is as far as I got. I was one of the first to get that far. I quit school in 1961. There were too many jobs around to

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35 When the reserve mine closed in 1930 and the Western Fuel Company train stopped running between the river and town reserve it became increasingly difficult for children on this reserves to get to the Day school. The department was forced to set up arrangements first with the Chief of the band who lived on the River reserve to transport the children daily, and later with a taxi service until the children were finally integrated into the public schools in 1952 (RG 10, vol. 6404, file 832-1, pt1).

36 A sum of $73,000 was set aside by the Department of Indian Affairs for the Nanaimo School Board at this time.
stay in school when you could earn money. There was boom work at the Mayo mill and longshoring. Fishing was good about this time too.

Men could find good paying jobs in the local economy without finishing high school but women's options were much more limited. Table 5:1 reveals the correlation between various occupations and education in 1951 in the province. Most noticeably, women needed higher levels of education for those occupations available to women in the service sector. As table 5:1 reveals, the majority of men in fishing, logging and longshoring had less than 9 years schooling. For women's employment in clerical, sales and service jobs, education attainments were much higher.

Table 5:1

**Labour Force 14 years and Over by Education and Occupation in British Columbia, 1951**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schooling</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Logging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-8 years</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 years</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13+ years</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 1951, Vol.4, Table 11, Pp. 153-170

The expanding service sector of the economy available to women in Nanaimo demanded more education than most Sne-nay-muxw obtained. Without high school and training in secretarial work, local employment was limited. The only Sne-nay-muxw woman with a high school degree became the first women in Nanaimo to work for the federal government as a clerical worker. As she remembers it:
I first took the secretarial training at the St. Anne Convent school. I didn’t like it there. I was put in a room on my own. I then went back to the high school to finish the course. I got a job in purchasing at the hospital in 1948. I made $125 a month. Originally I made less as they had no pay scale for me. I was paid a nurses-aid salary. I stayed at the hospital for two years and left when I married in 1950.

The expectation that women would marry, have children and not be part of the labour force was implicit in the policies that excluded women from the Department’s training programs organized on the reserve. As early as 1922 a manual training instructor was hired to teach young boys carpentry for two half school days a week. Later classes were held on Saturdays. There was a good attendance record for the manual training classes and they were continued for over twenty years. A letter from the manual training instructor in his first year noted:

The boys are bright, mentally alert—and I can guarantee they will make good citizens. The work they do is quite advanced. One has built a house, one a boat- and put an engine in it (RG 10, vol. 6404, file 832-5, pt 1, Dec. 2, 1922).

Manual training, it was assumed, would give young Sne-nay-muxw men various skills needed for employment. No consideration was given to women’s additional training for implicit in this educational policy is the assumption that it is men and not women who need skills for the labour force. This policy continued throughout the 1960’s. At this time the Department of Indian Affairs began to increasingly fund vocational training for Native peoples on reserve. By the fall of 1969 twenty-one Sne-nay-muxw were registered in Vocational Training Programs. Only four were women. One woman who sought a pre-

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37 In 1967 thirty-one adult education classes were being conducted in 9 school districts in British Columbia. Nanaimo was one such district (B.C. Indian Advisory Committee 1967).
school certificate at this time recalls how difficult it was to convince the Department to give her financial assistance:

In 1968 I decided I wanted to get my certificate. It took me three and half years... A principal Mr. S... from the school helped me. I was able to convince the Department to pay for the tuition. They didn’t want to in the beginning... But my husband was sick... and I knew I was going to be responsible for the family when he couldn’t work...

The educational policies of the Department of Indian Affairs left Sne-nay-muxw women in the most disadvantaged sectors of the economy. Poorly trained teachers and inadequate curriculum left women without the skills to compete for better employment. As an increasing number of women sought employment in a number of occupations in the local economy of Nanaimo, Sne-nay-muxw women were left segregated into the most marginalized and undesirable employment.

**Domestic Economy**

As the above has shown Sne-nay-muxw women continued to participate in the labour force but unlike men, were increasingly segregated into the most exploited sectors of the economy. This section examines the domestic economy at this time to place this employment in context. There were several important changes during this period: the increasing dependence upon wage labour as subsistence production and farming came to an end; family production to accommodate men’s wage employment as men found more secure employment in logging, milling and longshoring; and the increasing segregation of women into non-wage labour. Nonetheless, there was also a degree of continuity as
kinship networks and extended families remained important for economic and social support.

**Subsistence Production and Farming**

The economic strategy of combining wage labour with subsistence production and farming came to an end during this period. As the previous chapter noted, alienation of land and resources through settlement and legislation curtailed Sne-nay-muxw access to their traditional resource sites. By the 1920’s resource sites in close proximity to the reserves were either private property or under pressure by the growing regional population. At the turn of the Century this population had stabilized but began to grow again after World War II. As this population grew there was increasing pressure by the municipality to move the Sne-nay-muxw off their town reserve.\(^{38}\)

The increasing enforcement of fishing regulations continued to restrain Sne-nay-muxw food fishing on the Nanaimo River.\(^{39}\) While they were given permits to fish they were confined to a period outside of the peak times of the chum run. Fishing at any other time of the year on the river produced harsh fines. Peter Kelly, in his testimony to the Conference of the Allied Tribes in 1923, complained about these fines in the province as a whole. He used the case of two Sne-nay-muxw fishermen as an example:

\(^{38}\) The municipality coveted the town reserve land for annexation but pressure became acute with amendments to the Indian Act justifying reserve surrenders based on the need for public use. When the C.P.R. terminal construction began in 1948 the Nanaimo Board of Trade again pressured the Department of Indian Affairs to move the Sne-nay-muxw off their town reserve.

\(^{39}\) New regulations in 1917 enforced federal permits to area, gear and time for food fishing (Order in Council, September 11, 1917, SC,1918).
I am thinking of one particular instance in Nanaimo only last year, where two parties have gone up the Nanaimo River and speared salmon for food; they had I think two salmon in the canoe, one was on the beach, and they were brought before the Magistrate, and they were fined...five or six dollars apiece (Conference of Allied Indian Tribes 1923:136).

As well as fishing regulations the Sne-nay-muxw were also subjected to stricter hunting regulations. While roads gave better access to some hunting territories, seasonal limits and new regulations limited hunting activities. While there were special exemptions for the Sne-nay-muxw, many families out of necessity were forced to hunt out of season. It was not until the arrest of Clifford White and David Bob in 1964 that Sne-nay-muxw aboriginal and treaty rights to hunt and fish ‘over the unoccupied lands’ was recognized in the province. 40

During this period availability of traditional food resources was further limited by the increased pollution in the area which decimated fish, shell fish and other marine resources. Many elders when speaking of the past remember the white beaches on the reserves, and the clean rivers and creeks in the region. However, since the depression their beaches, river, and creeks have suffered from the build up in coal washings and log booms which have destroyed clam and oyster beds as well as other marine resources. 41 Many elders lament the pollution they have witnessed in their territory. They explain:

40 See Regina vs. White and Bob (1964), 627ff. [B.C. Court of Appeal]; Regina vs. White and Bob (1965), 52 Dominion Law Reports (2d) [Supreme Court of Canada].
41 According to Environment Canada (1974) one of the principle reasons for changes in the eco-habitat of the harbour and local rivers is the destruction of eelgrass beds by log booms. Eelgrass is an essential food or habitat for both waterfowl, fish and shell fish.
Used to be that herring was really thick but they are gone now... There used to be flounder too and you could catch them when the tide went out. I have not seen flounder for about 40 years. There were lots of fresh oysters too. Back in the 40's and 50's on the Chase river flats they would be a foot thick.

There were large kelp beds off the point... You put a net in the river and it quickly gets covered in green slime. It didn’t use to be that way... I would trap mink along the tree line of the Creek behind Harmac. This Creek used to be clear and you could see the bottom. I went over there the other day. The Creek is covered in brown sludge.

When Granby mine went in they would wash the coal in Haslam Creek. The water would be black in the morning. We would have to let the bucket sit so the silt would settle on the bottom... Around the Number One (mine) the beaches used to be white.

I remember going crabbing down the beach here off the reserve back in 1958. The bottom of the harbour was green. You can’t see the bottom anymore.

By the 1950's the stock of steelhead trout and salmon were reduced drastically on the Nanaimo River. Many Sne-nay-muxw blame the redirection of water for the Harmac Pulp and Paper Mill and the effluent from this mill as the final blow to the marine resources in the region. The gradual decline of fish stocks on the Nanaimo River forced the DFO to open a hatchery on the river in 1969.  

Farming on the River reserve was no longer a viable source of support for those families that were committed to farming. While some seasonal produce could be sold in the local market, the Sne-nay-muxw farmers, like other small mixed farms in the area, faced increasing competition from larger more efficient farms in other parts of the region.

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42 By 1970 steelhead catches on the Nanaimo River were as low as 664 to 2,573 fish, while salmon escapements (principally chum) averaged only 48,000 fish per year (Environment Canada 1974:16-17).
province and elsewhere. The local demand for potatoes for the popular restaurants in the area, and sugar beets for cattle feed produced a small income for some Sne-nay-muxw farmers, but by World War II the majority of land was leased out for hay. In 1969 almost all the 277 acres of agricultural land on the reserves was leased. Land during this period became critical not to farm but to house the growing reserve population. Two men remember what it was like to grow up on a farm on the river reserve before the War:

My father and grandfather were farmers. They never worked out. They were quite prosperous as farmers go. They were the first to have a threshing machine and binder. They would hire it out. When I came to my senses I remember seeing it in the yard...Everyone had a team of horses and they would get hired out to plow the gardens...One of the crops that my father grew were large sugar beets for the dairy farmers to feed their cows. They were quite huge and he would get $10 for 2,000 pounds. That was a good income in those days...

It was a nice life. We always had plenty of food. We didn’t have much money in those days but you didn’t need to have money to get by. When I was young I would hire out at Chase River to the Finlanders who had dairy farms there. I would make about $3.50 a day. I was only 13 to 15 years old then. My Dad had three teams of horses and would go to work for them. I still own about 45 acres out that way. About 7 acres are leased out to a farmer who has leased the land for about 25 years...about 20 odd acres are good meadow. I often thought I would like to start a berry farm out that way and grow strawberries and raspberries.

By the end of World War II the Sne-nay-muxw were wholly committed to wage labour as both subsistence production and farming came to an end. The seasonal integration of these activities no longer structured how the Sne-nay-muxw accommodated wage labour into their lives. The following section examines the effects of this transformation upon household and family production.

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43 Table 15.9 in Current use of Reserve Land South Island District, 1969.
Family Production to ‘Family Wage’

With the increasing dependence upon wage labour two distinct types of family production occurred; families that remained committed to the family as the productive unit in wage labour, and those who sought a male ‘family wage’ with the segregation of women into domestic labour. These production strategies were linked to specific wage labour activities. The family as the productive unit continued for fishing and agricultural work, while male ‘family wage’ was increasingly linked to men’s employment in logging, longshoring and sawmill work.

Throughout this period an increasingly smaller number of families relied upon commercial fishing for their livelihood. After the decline of fish runs on the Fraser River commercial fishing was centered in the northern regions around Cape Mudge and the fishing grounds at Rivers Inlet. In the early years Sne-nay-muxw families took the steamer up to these regions and rented the company boats. By World War II many families had bought their own boats and families both lived and worked on them. These families began fishing in the spring when trolling season opened for blue-back and later spring salmon. By July they moved to Rivers Inlet for the gilnetting season. In the fall they moved down to Cape Mudge to fish for pinks and chum. Most families returned to the reserve for Christmas. One woman however recalls that for several years she and her family did not return to the reserve but remained at Deep Bay during the winter months. Here many families fished for dog fish to supply the reduction plant there.

The demand on family labour depended upon the type of fishing required. Sne-nay-muxw fishermen were either gilnetters and/or trollers. While gilnetting and trolling are
considered less demanding gear types than seining, fishing remained hard work. When the fish are located fishing occurred 12 to 16 hours a day as long as the weather and regulations permitted. Women were generally assigned the role of cook and deckhand. When trolling women helped haul in the fish using gaff hooks. If gillnetting women picked fish out of the nets. Once on board all fish had to be cleaned then iced down. Women also took shifts with their husbands steering the boats when they were moving overnight to new fishing grounds. Children were also an essential part of the labour force. The older children looked after the younger, and helped clean the fish. Young men from these families continued to fish with their fathers or acquired their own boats as soon as they were of age. One woman noted with pride that her oldest son had his own boat when he was fifteen:

When we bought our first boat it was thirty feet long for $600. Altogether we had four boats, the last one was a new one...a gillnetter. We used to go fishing almost all year round. We took all the children with us. We wouldn't come home until Christmas. Howard got his own boat when he was 15. I was still getting family allowance for him. I remember that. He called that boat Tiko Tiko. I don't know where he got that name from.

As these families were increasingly displaced from fishing many turned to berry picking in the summer months. Families who went to the berry fields left at the end of May and did not return until the late fall when the hop harvest was finished. Families traveled by way of steamers and ferries to Seattle getting money in advance for their transportation. As noted earlier they lived in makeshift tents or small cabins. Food was bought at the farm stores usually at inflated prices. They moved frequently in open trucks from one farm to another. Everyone in the family participated in the harvesting of berries and fruit. A few men and women became bosses to hire labour for the farms. One Sne-nay-muxw woman
was well known during the 30’s and 40’s for her role in hiring labour for the various farms. She arranged the transportation from farm to farm and was paid a set amount per head.

The most productive families in the berry fields were large families with teenage children who could make more money than smaller families. According to one informant it wasn’t worth it to go if you were only a couple. Few single young men were interested in berry picking as they could find higher wages with other types of employment. One elder who was a deep sea fisherman recalls his only experience picking berries as a young man:

I came home one day and my wife had packed up and gone to pick strawberries. Never told me she was going, just left. She went with P...C... You know her daughter runs the store down at Chemainus....So I cashed my savings and took the bus from Vancouver to Seattle. I found her at Bainbridge Island. They were living in a lean to with straw and were happy as clams. They told me they were making $12 to $14 a day. So I figured I could make more than them....I got up real early and I worked all day and only made $3...I decided to go to Ballard and look for a deep sea fishing boat.

While fishing and berry picking allowed families to work together, men’s employment in logging, longshoring and mill work demanded a different division of labour. Aside from local mill work, men’s employment in logging camps and longshoring left women and children behind on the reserve. One retired logger remembers how pleased he was to get on at Nanaimo Lakes so he could stay home during the week:

I preferred working in a town camp because it was a better life....But you had to get up early...at 5:30 the crummy would pick you up. You would get back early...about 3:00.
With men's absence women's work was more circumscribed to the domestic domain. These women led far more sedentary lives than women who accompanied their husbands fishing or to the berry fields. One logger however does remember his wife taking the children to the berry fields when he was logging:

When I was logging...for several summers my wife took the kids to Vachon Island and Bainbridge Island to pick berries. She had friends down there. She thought this was good training for the kids...that they would learn how to work.

While there was some overlap in the experiences of all families on the reserve, a distinct core of families committed to logging and mill work did not go to the berry fields or fish. One woman recalls that her family only went once to the berry fields. Her father was a successful logger but in 1946 forest fires in the area shut down all logging and mill work. She was a young teenager at the time and had no experience of manual work. Her work experience that summer was one she well remembered. In another case an elder, who grew up on a farm, worked most of his life in the sawmills. He recalls only one occasion when he went fishing. He laughingly remembers he was so sea sick on that trip he never went again.

It is difficult to obtain information about family income during this period for informants cannot remember with much accuracy the income they made. Many explain that their income varied depending upon the weather, the market and other circumstances. All families, whether involved in fishing, berry picking or logging, were affected by these conditions. The families with highest incomes were those with men employed in logging and longshore work which was unionized. In 1951 income varied from $2000 to $3000 a
year in these occupations. This increased to above $4000 by 1967. Families who
depended upon fishing made less income. In 1966 gillnetters in the province made an
average income of $4,246 a year (Fields & Stanbury 1973:190). However according to
DIA estimates Sne-nay-muxw fishermen at this time were making much less. In 1965 they
were averaging an annual income of $3000 a year (RG10, V84-85/316, Box 33, File 20-2, Vol. 2). Families who went to the berry fields earned the least income. In the 1960’s
their income ranged from $500 to $2000 depending upon family size and yearly harvest.

With such low annual income what women contributed from knitting and local
employment was important. By 1960 women’s income from knitting varied from $200 to
$800 a year.44 Domestic work returned less than $500 a year as did other employment in
the community. As few women found employment in the local economy the majority of
Sne-nay-muxw women only added to family income through knitting and family allowance
payments.45

By the end of the 1960’s the displacement of families from fishing and the berry fields
increased the dependence upon social assistance. Historically the Department of Indian
Affairs had given relief to deal with temporary shortages. Most of this relief had gone to
the elderly. However increasingly social assistance supplemented family income on a
regular and seasonal basis. This is evident in reviewing the number of families on social
assistance in 1962. In July of that year twenty-one Sne-nay-muxw families were on social
assistance but by December this had increased to forty families (RG 10, Ac. V84-85/316,

44 Mitchell (1971:248) estimated that by 1971 women were only making $.60 and $1.00 an
hour from knitting.
45 Family allowance payments were based on $6.00 a child per month.
vol./box 500349, file 988/29-1-6). In terms of total population on reserve this constituted
19% and 35% in July and December respectively. This seasonal increase of social
assistance reveals the poverty a large number of Sne-nay-muxw families experienced by
the 1960’s as wage employment failed to support families all year round. The following
section examines the role of cooperation and exchange between families as a means of
coping with the insecurity of wage income.

Family Networks and Exchange

There is little data about Sne-nay-muxw household composition at this time Elders
recollections confirm that families were quite large as it was customary for women to have
eight to twelve children. As one woman explains:

I had eleven children. It was common then to have that many. All were
home births except for the last four. I had those in the hospital. Not all of
them lived. My first boy died...Three boys died...After I had six I asked old
Doctor G...for some birth control. I was tired I didn’t want to have
anymore children. He told me I was a healthy woman and that having
children wouldn’t hurt me...I went to him twice...I had my last one when I
was forty..

Women began their families around the age of nineteen or twenty with spacing between
children often only a year or two between. One exception was a woman who had her first
child at nineteen years of age but did not have her second until she remarried when she
was twenty-nine years old. She had eight children in all. She explains:

46 At this time the Sne-nay-muxw were receiving cash payments rather than food and
clothing vouchers. These monthly payments were less than the provincial rate as it was
argued that Native people could supplement their income with hunting and fishing. Such
reasoning was not realistic for the Sne-nay-muxw economy.
47 There are several Census taken by the Department of Indian Affairs, (1931-1936, 1947)
but they were used for band membership and do not report household composition.
I had my first one when I was nineteen, and my second when I was twenty-nine. I wasn’t interested in having another one after my first... She died when she was young. I was with A....for more than a year before my son was born. We moved to Bainbridge Island for five years. A.... worked on the farm all year round. The only times I saw my friends was at harvest time. I was on my third child when we came home. There was no place for us to live here. We moved in with my Dad. My kids were small. I got so fed up telling them not to touch things. My Aunty fixed up the boat house for me...My husband looked for a job or went clam digging. When winter time come, we moved up to where N...is now. There was an old home there. I’ve had eight children. Today only four of my children are still living. None of them died at birth. I have nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

As this woman notes there was a shortage of housing on the reserve that became acute after the War. The Sne-nay-muxw population more than doubled during this fifty year period to reach 515 by 1969. This increase in population produced a growing gap between housing requirements and supply for many Sne-nay-muxw families. Young families who moved regularly off the reserve for commercial fishing or to work in the berry fields in the United States, found it increasingly difficult to find adequate housing when they returned. Some families remained in the United States if they could find full year employment. Others moved to rented housing on the streets that bordered the reserve. By 1969 a quarter of the band membership lived off reserve.

Many households were composed of composite and extended families. However, according to several informants, young couples preferred to live alone and did so as soon as they could acquired their own home. Living with in-laws remained an uncomfortable

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48 This was consistent with the demographic trends found throughout the province as increased birth rates and decreased mortality rates doubled the Native population from 1920 to 1970 (Romaniuk 1981; Duff 1965).

49 Despite a decreasing birth rate by the 1960’s the housing shortage increased average household size to 6.4 in 1965 (DIA 1974).
situation. The flexibility in residence that had characterized the earlier period came to an end with the increased surveillance of the Department of Indian Affairs. Band membership numbers were assigned and land allotments updated in a reserve registry. This placed increased emphasis upon residence and identity with a band. However, as the following reveals extended family remained important to the Sne-nay-muxw for social and economic support.

All the elders recall that sharing and cooperation among families was an important aspect of life on the reserve. It was an expectation that families would share with those who had little. Several women remembered that they always put more food aside than they needed so that they would always have some to give away. For those families that fished the sharing of fish was expected. One woman recalls a particular incident when they gave away fresh fish to whoever needed it:

I remember one time A... put out a set too early. He was afraid to sell the fish so he put out the fish on a table on the beach...about 200 of them. He told D...to save him six. When he got back they were all gone. We used to share deer meat too because you couldn't keep it. We had no freezers in those days. You had to share it.

As well as the sharing of food women also helped other families in domestic labour.

The sharing of cooking, childcare and other tasks were often crucial in times of illness or a families involvement in other productive work. Those who lived on the River reserves and farmed remember that there was a good relationship with their extended kin on the Town reserve. This relationship was strengthened by exchange as one elder man from the River reserve explains:
We used to trade farm produce for fish as everyone on No. 1 were fishermen. Such arrangements always worked out well for families...

People were close back then. Always helping each other. Some families remained fairly close.....

Another elder from the River reserve also noted the close relationship between families on the River reserve and the Town reserve. In the fall months families from the Town reserve would help in the harvesting. This was also a time for social activities between the two reserves. He recalls some of the games they played:

In the fall at harvest time people from No. 1 reserve would come over and have a picnic. We would play with a ball that was made out of hewn wood, really smooth, round and red. We also used to play lacrosse but we used two sticks, one inch in diameter and four inches long, notched in the middle..and there was a leather (strap)..There was also a woman’s game where the women would sit across from each other as in the bone game...but they had to get up and walk across to the other side. Women would call out names to make them laugh. If they laughed they lost...We had these picnics where K...W...’s house is now.

In addition to these events, church socials also brought families together. The United Church was an important part of most peoples lives on the reserve. It was situated on the town reserve until the mid 1950’s when it was moved to Haliburton Street, a few streets from the reserve. It was later moved again to its present location. The social events of the church were organized by women. Picnics, box socials and other events were used to raise money for the church as well as support families in need. Most elders have fond memories of these times. One woman remembers:

We were all church goers...Sunday. Then you would invite people to your house for lunch....In the afternoon there was a soccer game going on in the Central Sports Ground... they use to call it...You would see the people walking down the track to watch the soccer game.
However, an ex-boom operator who worked at the Mayo mill remembers how his support for the church came to an end:

I stopped going to church... the minister used to come to the bar after we got out of the mill to give us heck. I told the minister to mind his own business. We all showed up at church on Sunday so that should have been enough. But...no...the minister would keep pushing...always trying to change us. Used to be that everyone, Catholic, United, whatever, would all go to the same church. It was good in those days.

As well as support among families on reserve, women remained linked to their extended families on other reserves. While arranged marriages ended by the 1930’s marriage between the reserves remained the preferred form. Marriage continued to linked Sne-nay-muxw families to other Coast Salish reserves on the Fraser River and South Island, but now expanded to include the West Coast, southern Puget Sound and the interior of Washington. Increasingly women from more distant areas came to live on the reserve. While these connections increased the geographic distance for relatives support they widened the possibilities for employment opportunities. For example the marriage to an Ahousaht woman enabled one Sne-nay-muxw fishermen to find employment fishing for pilchard on the West Coast. Later he found work at the mill at Port Alberni. Marriage links to people at Cape Mudge enabled others to find work crewing with their uncles on the seining boats. Marriage ties to families living in and around Seattle increased Sne-nay-muxw opportunities to employment in this large urban center. As noted above one woman was able to find work at a laundry while she visited her cousins in Seattle.

As well as family connections through marriage, intervillage ties continued and strengthened with summer canoe races and slahal (bone) games that were held throughout
the region (see Kew 1970, Dewhirst 1976, Amoss 1978, Maranda 1984, Suttles 1987:209). Many Sne-nay-muxw recall their participation in the eleven man canoe races that became popular after World War II. These events were organized by various Coast Salish reserves throughout B.C. and Washington. By the late 1960’s there was an annual schedule for canoes races that began at Duncan in the beginning of May. The Sne-nay-muxw held their races during Coal Tyee days which coincided with Victoria Day weekend in late May. Prince Charles, Warpath, Blue Bird were some of the names of the fifty foot cedar canoes that the Sne-nay-muxw built and raced. One elder who was a strokesman for the Warpath remembers that the crew was mostly Sne-nay-muxw but individuals from Shellbeach and Westholme were also included. These annual events provided opportunities to reestablish links to relatives on other reserves as well as promote their status and identity within the wider Coast Salish community (see Kew 1980). Often well known white dignitaries were invited which raised the visibility of the Sne-nay-muxw in Nanaimo.  

Sharing within extended families remained important for the Sne-nay-muxw but whether some families shared more frequently than others at this time is difficult to judge. Families who fished or farmed may have shared their production more frequently than families who depended upon wage labour. However, even in families where men were loggers, longshoremen, or worked in the sawmills, sharing and supporting one’s kin remained significant. Mooney (1976, 1978, 1988) has linked variation in generalized

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50 Women canoe races were also held as well as an Indian princess contests.
51 In 1968 Arthur Lang, the then minister of Indian Affairs, was invited to Coal Tyee days and given an Indian name.
reciprocity between families to a number of variables: genealogical and sectoral distance; rank and wealth; employment and social assistance. Many of the conclusions reached about these variables may be equally applicable to the Sne-nay-muxw but the employment history of specific families needs also to be included. For example, families that went to the berry fields in United States or the northern fishing grounds had a closer relationship with distant kin in this region. More sedentary families that were committed to logging, longshoring and sawmilling developed closer relationships with close kin living on reserve. In Mooney’s study (1988) families on social assistance had a broader sphere of assistance relations than those families which had employed members. On the Sne-nay-muxw reserve those families that remained committed to berry picking and fishing in the 1960’s became dependent upon social assistance.

As this section reveals, Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy underwent a transformation as families became more dependent upon wage labour. Increasingly family production in wage labour and non-wage labour declined as men found secure employment in various forestry related occupations. However, kinship networks and exchange remained important strategies to offset the insecure employment that families often faced. These kinship links also continued to assure opportunities for employment when they became available. The following section examines the shift in gender ideology as women were increasingly associated with the domestic role.
Gender Ideology

While the Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy was increasingly linked to wage income women’s opportunities in wage employment became more limited than men’s. Women participated in wage employment within the context of the family but this option diminished as the Sne-nay-muxw were displaced from fishing and agricultural labour. The rise of men’s employment in logging and forestry related production led to increasing sedentary and domestic roles for women in some families. Several questions arise out of the acceptance of this role: How was this domestic role justified in light of other families where women continued to participate in the labour force? and How was family status linked to women’s wage employment?

Housewifization

Most notably during this period Sne-nay-muxw women’s roles became more circumscribed to the domestic domain of the household. Men were perceived as the principal wage earners and women as the housewives. Women cleaned, cooked and took care of the children. As well as this labour women also tended to the vegetable gardens, canned fish, fruit and vegetables, and sewed and knitted clothing for their family. As one woman explains about her daily work in the household:

There was always something to do around the house. Especially when the children were small. I was always canning, cleaning, cooking, and ... there was always something to do.

As interview data show, this was labour women did alone. Sometimes an elder parent or a sister lived in the same household and helped with the housework but this was not
common for most women. A significant change in the division of labour within the household was that childcare responsibilities were no longer the concern of grandparents. As one informant noted there were only a few occasions when her own mother took the children. By the 1940’s the expectation that grandparents should be the primary caregivers had ended:

Grandparents didn’t look after children when I had a family.....It had changed. My mother sometimes took the kids out ...to the store...She liked to take them...but she didn’t spend time with them like my grandmother...My grandmother brought me up...

At this time men’s labour was increasingly removed from household work. Women whose families were young during the nineteen forties and fifties voiced the same sentiments about men’s absence from housework. Some men did help with washing wool or care of the children when women were sick, but for most women these occasions were rare. Housework and the care of children was considered women’s work even in families where women worked as deckhands on the boats or labourers in the berry fields.

There is some indication, too, that women’s labour in the home was not regarded as work. This is evident in one woman’s recollections of the occasion when her husband was forced to look after the household when she was sick. She explains:

Oh, he never did any housework... I did it all. Sometimes when I was sick or when I had one of the kids, he would stay home and look after things. He would tell me how hard it was ... how he didn’t realize how hard I worked...He never thought staying at home was work.

While women’s labour in the home was devalued as work there is evidence too that women’s contribution in wage income to the household was also belittled. During this
period women find it difficult to accurately report their earnings. While this is in part a function of memory and the irregularity of income, many women were consistent in saying that they did not earn very much. The impression they give is that their income was so small it was not important. However, with the insecurity of employment and the poverty experienced by many families it is obvious that women's income was an important addition for the survival of the family. The following account by one elder reveals the importance of her income at the time of her husband's unemployment:

My husband couldn't get a job... We did some claming and fishing. We had nothing. No beds, no furniture. We sat on the floor, slept on the floor, ate on the floor. I never told anyone we were starving... My kids start to cry. Mum I'm hungry I want bread, ... I said later. I didn't have nothing. Then a car stopped outside... It was E... B... why didn't you tell me. I'm not suppose to tell everybody that we have no food. Not long after another car stopped outside. It's my Dad. He had some groceries. Next day my Dad brought some beds and chairs... tables... and fixed the heater in the front room. He buys me wool. He tells my husband to buy me a carder. I started to knit. I just knit and knit. C... she came over every morning. She said... never mind... just keep on knitting. She brews tea and I kept on knitting. She cleans my house, bathes my kids, feeds my kids. Everyday. I kept knitting...

Despite the presence of an ideology that devalued women's labour in the home and income contribution women continued to manage the material resources of the household. The work of managing household resources was, as many women pointed out, their responsibility as men were absent from home for long periods of time. Wives of loggers, longshoremen and later fishermen, found themselves left to manage the money earned by men. Sne-nay-muxw women accepted this as their natural role in looking after the needs of the household. Two women explained:

When he was away logging I had to take care of all the money. I took care of the house, the kids, ... whatever was needed. When he got on at
Nanaimo Lakes I still did it. In those days all the women did the banking because banks were only open a few hours a day...My mother had always looked after all the money. So I did too.

I managed everything when he was away...I paid the bills...I did everything. You had to.

While managing money is not necessarily a sign of control of the family finances women were aware of the income their husbands made and how it was distributed. Also women continued to make a distinction between the wages they earned vis-à-vis their husband’s wages. Whether from berry picking, knitting or family allowance this income was always separate and control over distribution determined by women. Several women spoke of this arrangement:

My father always taught me to be a good person you should always go out and work to make you own money separate from your husband’s. I have always believed in that.

It was always my own decision how I spent my money. When I was young I decided that if I earned the money then I would decide how it was spent. Generally I used the money to buy the kids clothes for school.

What I made in the berry fields was my money. So was the money from knitting and my family allowance. I spent this money on the kids and other things we needed. His money paid the bills and the food. When he had no money he had to ask me for some. Sometimes I said no so he had to ask his mother.

Women at times also controlled their children’s income. One male elder remembered that when he accompanied his family to the berry fields that his mother remained in charge

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52 See Safilios-Rothschild (1976) for a discussion of the distinction between the orchestration of power’ which is the power to make important decisions that determine the major characteristics of their family, and the ‘feeling of power’ that a spouse may have by implementing decisions set by a powerful spouse.
of all the money he made. Even as a young man in his early twenties he accepted this control:

You had these tickets that were punched for every cup or flat of berries you picked. You could cash them in at the end of the day but you usually kept them. My mother kept all our tickets. I didn’t mind. My sisters complain about it now though. When I wanted to go to the city for the weekend I would tell my mother. Say it was Thursday. She would let me pick Friday for myself. I would get up real early to get started as soon as I could. I would make $5.00 if I really worked. That was good money then... enough to have a good time in Seattle.

These accounts reveal that despite women’s participation within the labour force there was an acceptance that labour within the household was the exclusive domain of women. Women were responsible for the maintenance of the household as well as the sole caregivers for children. This labour as housewives and mothers was paramount to their identity despite their important contribution to family income. Yet there is also evidence that women retained a degree of autonomy in terms of the income they earned. The idea that income should be exchanged within the household rather than pooled continued despite the decreasing income of women in relation to men.

**Family Status and Class**

Although a gender ideology linked women’s roles to the domestic domain many Sne-nay-muxw women continued to participate in the labour force. Despite their limitation to the most disadvantaged sectors of the economy, their wage contribution was essential for the survival of their families. The inability of Sne-nay-muxw men to find adequate employment with wages to support a family necessitated women’s participation. Nonetheless, as the employment history of men has shown, some men were able to find
good jobs in logging and mill work. Although a man's self-worth was always linked to his work and the wealth derived from his productivity, increasingly a man's status was linked to his ability to make a wage income that supported a family. As shown in upcoming data a man's status in the community was determined by his wife's removal from wage employment outside the home.

Studies have shown elsewhere that with the increased dependence upon wage labour that there is an increasing link between family status and class with the rejection of women's participation in wage labour (see Das 1976, Srinivas 1977, Papanek 1979, Mies 1982, Sharma 1986, and Standing 1991). The women's 'withdrawal from work' model is equally relevant in understanding how the full acceptance of a domestic ideology contributed to the identity of Sne-nay-muxw family status and class. Family status and class was an integral part of Sne-nay-muxw social structure on the reserve. High class families, were linked to hereditary leaders, but maintained this position through economic and political achievement. Their success in employment affirmed their elite status.

The attention to family status was evident in the appointment of a chief in 1920. This chief was selected by the previous Chief, Louis Good, as the suitable leader for the Sne-nay-muxw. He remained Chief until his death in 1950 when his grandson was elected. The extended family associated with the Chief maintained a degree of high status on the reserve that was reflected in their political as well as economic power on the reserve. As one woman noted about her own early understanding of this family:

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53 His relationship to Louis Good is unconfirmed but one elder believes he was his nephew.
I always thought that they were so way up. When I was younger...We all did...I don't think that now...Now I see they are like everyone else...

This difference in economic class was also evident to visitors on the reserve. Two studies in the 1960's noted two distinct classes on the reserve based on material wealth and the outward appearance of houses (Hawthorn et al 1958, Rawson & Wiles Ltd 1965). Some houses resembled middle class homes as found in the wider community with new paint and neat gardens, while a much poorer class lived in substandard housing. Some correlation was also attributed to geographic location on the reserve with better homes above the tracks and poorer homes along the beach front. This distribution corresponded to family employment. Families committed to logging and mill work lived above the tracks and those committed to fishing and berry picking below.

Linked to the status of these families was men's ability to procure a stable income and women's role in the domestic sphere. The ability of these men to make a 'family wage' and support dependents offered an opportunity for women to refuse highly exploitative and marginal wage labour. This withdrawal of some women from the labour force began to have status significance on the reserve. It not only signaled the success of certain men in the labour force but was also indicated family status and class.

Women married to men who found secure employment accepted that once they married they would not participate in the labour force. Men's absence from home that occupations such as logging and longshoring demanded, restricted women's ability to work in wage labour outside the home. Many women married to loggers and longshoremen, recount the end of their wage employment with their marriages. In one case this employment was
terminated because of the policies of the federal government not to employ married
women. A Snc-nay-muxw woman hired by the federal government to work at the Indian
hospital describes her acceptance of this policy:

In 1950 I got married and had to leave my job because the federal
government did not hire married women. I didn’t think about it at the time.
That was just how it was then. My boss had a couple of people after me
but they didn’t work out. He somehow managed to get me back to work.
I stayed another year until my first was born. I did not go back to work
until my youngest was in grade one.

In those families where men had secure employment and high income the expectation
that women would remain in the home was common. There was increasingly pressure for
women to conform to this ideology. One woman married to a logger with steady
employment did seek local employment in the community. She noted the pressure she and
her husband experienced when she worked outside the home. She states:

My husband was often pressured by other men on the reserve that his wife
should stay home and look after the children. This I always ignored
....because what I earned was important for school clothes and other things
we needed....It was very expensive keeping five children in shoes.

In families where women could exclude wage labour a new role arose linked to
volunteer activities for the community. At this time various volunteer committees were
formed that dealt with conditions on the reserve. Before 1960 much of women’s
volunteer work occurred within the organization of the church. After 1960 the shift in
policy by the Department of Indian Affairs to give more power to the Chief and Council
enabled women to take a more active role in the welfare of the reserve outside of the
church. Several committees were organized. Certain women were assigned to organize
garbage collection, report on housing conditions, and advise on welfare distribution.
These women were also responsible for the educational needs of the reserve. A kindergarten was opened on the reserve in the early 1960’s and a school committee was formed. Organizing a home study center in the basement of the school and developing a protective playground for the children were some of the projects organized under this committee.

These volunteer activities also occurred outside of the reserve. The integration of Sne-nay-muxw children into provincial school system enabled two Sne-nay-muxw women to gain representation on the local PTA. This membership not only raised the profile of these women on reserve but brought the social and economic issue of the Sne-nay-muxw to the attention of the local community. Coal Tyee days and the establishment of Tillicuum Haus, the Native Friendship Centre, in the late 1960’s further promoted the visibility of Native people in the community. Several Sne-nay-muxw women were instrumental in establishing Tillicuum Haus. One woman won the Woman of the Year award in Nanaimo in 1969, her children were debutantes at the Lieutenant Governors Ball, and accepted as a member of the local chapter of the Native Daughters of British Columbia.

As well as a role in the informal political structure on the reserve, women who were full time housewives increasingly sought formal political office on the council. An amendment to the Indian Act in 1957 enabled women to seek election as Chief or council member. The following year, 1958, the first Sne-nay-muxw woman was elected to Council. From
this time on with the exception of the election of 1970, at least one woman has been represented on council. 54

The more sedentary life of families and the removal of women from paid labour enabled women in some families to affirm family status with their volunteer activities. Papanek (1979) has examined how women released from paid labour enhance the family’s social standing in a community.55 She has identified two types of status production work: work within the home which includes beautification of the home and educational supervision of children’s schoolwork; and work outside the home such as volunteer activities. That Sne-nay-muxw women were active in this form of status production is evident during this period and particularly after 1950. In some respects this dichotomy of within and without the home can be linked to status production on and off the reserve.

Although women’s exclusion from paid employment became a mark of status, for some families status remained linked to the longhouse. Dancing in the longhouse enhanced both a man and a woman’s position in the community as it indicated both spiritual power and knowledge that was accessible to only a few. There were certain women in Sne-nay-muxw society who were known for their role in the longhouse. These women acquired the knowledge from their mothers or grandmothers for knowing the proper initiation rites was linked to hereditary rights as well as personal ability. As one elder was to note about his mother who was an important spirit dancer:

54 In the seven elections that took place after 1958, in 1964 and 1966 two women were elected out of four councilors. See Miller (1992, 1994) for discussion of Coast Salish women’s contemporary political participation.
55 Bledsoe (1980) maintains that women’s volunteer organizations are used to protect the interests of the elite lineage’s.
One woman came up to me and said you are Mrs. J... J...’s son. Your mother is a good woman. I try to live my life like your mother. They said these things because my mother knew the right ways to do things. She knew what to do in the longhouse. Other people would do things this way and that way but my mother knew how do them right.

Dancing and non-dancing were conflicting evaluative systems of status on the reserve. The dominant family on the reserve, the Chief’s family, at this time were not dancers. As one woman explained her family’s position about dancing:

My father was real smart. He didn’t tell us we couldn’t dance. He just told us that we had to be invited. As we were never invited we never danced.... When we were kids...we used to sneak down there and watch.

The cleavages in the community that had begun with missionary intrusion continued to play themselves out on the reserve as families fell into distinct categories of those who danced and those who did not. While not exact, there was a correlation between families that excluded women from wage labour and non-dancers. Most certainly the political leadership in the community at this time supported this relationship.

Summary and Conclusions

The transformation of the local economy to the forestry industry continued to segregate labour upon gender, race and class lines. Labour conditions in this economy offered distinct advantages to Sne-nay-muxw men, vis a vis women, in that occupations such as loggers, mill workers and longshoremen, demanded little formal education and afforded some protection through unionization. Women, on the other hand, were limited to occupations such as domestic service and agricultural labour that had the least wage controls or protective legislation. Sne-nay-muxw women lacked the skills and education
to move into the expanding service sectors that were opening up to women in the local economy. The assumption by the state that women’s roles were in the home and not in the labour force, continued to restrict their access to higher levels of education and employment training. Not until the end of the 1960’s did this situation change.

It is during this period that the dependence upon subsistence production and farming came to an end. The seasonal integration of these non-wage labour activities no longer structured how Sne-nay-muxw families accommodated wage labour. Despite this shift extended families and the obligation of exchange and cooperation remained integral parts of Sne-nay-muxw social and economic life. Family links remained essential for locating employment when opportunities were diminished in the local economy.

Two distinct types of family production occurred that determined women’s participation in the labour force. Women whose husbands remained committed to fishing or migrated to the berry fields in Washington, continued to work in the paid labour force within the context of the family. However, women whose husband’s found secure employment in the local economy increasingly found their labour restricted to the domestic domain. In these families women’s labour was far more valuable to the household in production of non-wage labour than in exploited wage employment.

Family status became linked to the exclusion of women from wage labour. The ideology of ‘housewifization’ that accompanied men’s occupations in the forestry sector became an aspired ideal for Sne-nay-muxw families. Class was increasingly based upon how fully families were able to meet this ideal. The identity of women solely within the domestic sphere reinforced their link to community interests that dealt specifically with the
welfare of families. While excluded from formal political power women moved through informal political channels of their families to affect change and simultaneously increase their family status.
CHAPTER 6
EMPLOYMENT IN A SERVICE COMMUNITY: 1971 to PRESENT

Introduction

The contemporary employment history of the Sne-nay-muxw from 1971 to the present time is marked from the previous period by shrinking employment opportunities for men in primary and secondary industries, expansion of employment for women in the service sector, and increasing income differentiation between the Sne-nay-muxw and the non-Native population in Nanaimo. This chapter begins with a brief description of the restructured Nanaimo economy from 1971 to the present. A discussion of the employment opportunities of the Sne-nay-muxw during this period and the labour conditions that structured their participation then follows.

The Service Economy

Despite a recession, this period was one of increasing growth and change for Nanaimo. After much debate and dissension the city amalgamated outlying regions in 1974 to increase its size from under a square mile to thirty-three square miles. ¹ This was primarily to increase the tax base of the city whose services were under increasing pressure by the growing suburbs to the north, west and south of the city. The population since has continued to increase, particularly in the Hammond Bay and Nanaimo West regions. In the last five years Nanaimo has become one of the fastest growing communities in the

¹ This increased the Nanaimo population from 14,950 in 1971 to 40,340 in 1976 (Census 1971, 1976).
province. Its population in 1991 was 60,129 which is a 22.6% increase from the enumerated population in 1986 (Census 1991). The age structure of this population is somewhat higher than the province as the community draws a number of retired peoples to the region.

Nanaimo has become increasingly known as a "hub city" because of its transportation services and prominent role as a service center to the central region of Vancouver Island. Several federal services have opened in Nanaimo and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs moved its regional office to the community in 1970. 2 Other government departments located here include the Department of National Defense and the Marine Biological Station. A number of retail outlets have expanded as several large shopping centers have opened on the outskirts of the community. In the downtown core of Nanaimo a large shopping center dominates retail business. 3 Knowledge-based services have also grown and the community college is one of the largest employers in the community. A large modern hospital and health related services, particularly for a senior population, are also located here. Finally tourism continues to grow as the areas north of Nanaimo are developed. This trend is expected to continue as projections for growth in the region are centered in retirement, leisure, and tourism (Jennissen 1989; Central Island Community Futures Committee 1987).

2 At the time of this writing the regional office has been dismantled as the DIA continues downsizing.

3 This is beginning to change as the large department store that was the flagship of this shopping center moved to the outskirts of town. This has improved the business for the small local retail stores in the downtown core.
As the service sector escalates the primary and secondary industries in the region have declined in relative importance, as occurred throughout the province. In the forestry industry there were significant reductions in production in the mid 1970's. This was caused by a market slump in the demand for wood products, increased automation in the mills, and labour disputes. These factors have reduced employment in logging and scaling operations as well as pushed out medium and small sawmills as a source of local employment (Marchak 1983). The Mayo mill suffered this fate and closed its doors in 1975. The recession in the early 1980's reduced employment by another 22% in logging, sawmilling and pulp mills in Nanaimo. MacMillan Bloedel's Harmac operation, while highly visible at Duke Point, is no longer a dominant economic presence in the community. The modernization of the Number Three mill and the closing of the Number Four mill in 1989 reduced employment substantially. Smaller mills that still operate today are CIPA Industries Ltd., Doman Forest Products Ltd. and (New) Mayo Forest Products Ltd. A veneer plant owned by Coastland Wood Industries Ltd. began production in 1988.

Aside from wood processing, a number of more diversified companies manufacturing on a smaller scale have become established. Chemicals, furniture, building materials, food products, clothing, electronic equipment are a few of the items now manufactured in Nanaimo. These manufacturing concerns are located in seven industrial parks, five of which are in close proximity to the Sne-nay-muxw reserves. Duke Point Industrial Park

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4 By 1982 forty-four percent of all loggers in B.C. had been laid off. Layoffs also occurred in the manufacturing sector of the forestry industry; thirty percent in the coastal sawmills and sixty percent in the shake and shingle industry (Marchak 1988:177).
which is located close to the River reserves is one of the few major industrial parks that has facilities for deep sea shipping capabilities in the Pacific Northwest.

Commercial fishing and agriculture have become peripheral to the Nanaimo economy. In 1990 three hundred and thirty-eight fishing vessels were registered in the Nanaimo area, a small hatchery was opened on the Nanaimo river, and there are a number of fish farms in the area. The few farms that remain in the region rely primarily upon cattle, with some commercial dairy farms and minor production of miscellaneous products including greenhouse and nursery crops.

Segregated Labour Force

The labour force in Nanaimo has changed to accommodate the demand for labour in the service sector. The largest proportion of the labour force is employed in the public service sector with an almost equal proportion in trade and finances. The smallest proportion of workers are found in the primary sector. This restructuring has produced fundamental changes in Nanaimo class composition. As a result of the rising number of professionals in the economy and a corresponding decline of blue collar workers, class conflict is less significant. However, the increasing unionization in the public service sector reveals that class conflict is still a factor in the Nanaimo economy.

The racial composition of the labour force has remained fairly homogenous with the leading ethnic group continuing to be those of British and European extraction. Significantly there has been an increase in the Native population living in the larger Nanaimo community. In 1991 it had risen to 3,170 with another 1000 peoples living in the
surrounding regional district. However, only a small percentage of this population are Sne-nay-muxw as many are from communities north, south and west of the community. In recent years a small but highly visible Vietnamese population has moved to the area and opened up small businesses such as corner stores and restaurants. The Vietnamese are also active workers in the commercial harvesting of clams in the area.

Most noticeably there has been an increase in the participation of women in the labour force. Two factors have contributed to this increase: the expanding service sector and the decreasing value of men’s income, necessitating women’s contribution to household income. The occupational segregation of men and women in Nanaimo is similar to that found within the province as a whole. Men are more broadly dispersed in various occupations while women are employed predominantly in clerical, service and sales occupations. In Nanaimo sixty-seven percent of women in the labour force are in these three occupations. This percentage has remained constant from 1971 to 1991. The only change for women during this twenty year period has been some gains in managerial, administrative and related occupations. Nonetheless, men continue to outnumber women in the top management and administrative positions.

Women are still underrepresented in the primary, processing, machine fabricating, construction and transport operating occupations. Only 3.6% of women, in comparison to 41% of men, are in these occupations. Nonetheless the declining number of workers

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5 Of the 3170 aboriginal peoples living in Nanaimo off reserve, 875 are registered and 640 are members of an Indian Band (Census 1991).
6 Women’s participation rate in Nanaimo is only slightly lower than the rate for the province, 55.4% and 59.9% respectively (Census 1991).
overall in some of these occupations has increased women’s relative participation vis-à-vis men. For example, only one percent of all women in the labour force are in the primary sector but they constitute almost thirteen percent (155) of all workers (1220) in that occupation.

The high representation of women in low paying occupations such as clerical, service and sales occupations, produces a great disparity in income between men and women in Nanaimo. The average male income in 1991 was $29,634, almost double that of women, $15,870. The median income for men was $27,074 while for women it is less than half, at $12,257. Only 19% of working women make more than $25,000 a year, compared to 54% of men (1991 Census). This income disparity is not solely linked to women’s segregation into low paying jobs for there are many more women (62%) than men (47%) who worked part year or part-time in the labour force. This is comparable to the provincial part-time rate which is 59% for women.

Despite recent growth and diversification, the labour force in Nanaimo continues to suffer a higher rate of unemployment than either the province or Nation as whole. The highest rate of unemployment is found in clerical, service and sales occupations for women, and in construction and fishing for men. In 1991 the unemployment rate for men was 11.6% while for women it was even higher, 13.7%. This is higher than the provincial rate which is 10.1% and 10.5% for men and women respectively (Census 1991). The

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7 Men’s and women’s average income in Nanaimo is lower than the provincial average which is $31,443 and $17,761 respectively (Census 1991).
highest rate of unemployment occurs within the 15 to 24 years of age range which is consistent with the unemployment rate within this age group for the province as a whole.

Men’s Employment

The changing structure of the local economy has had a negative impact upon Sne-nay-muxw men’s employment. Since 1971 the rates of unemployment on the reserve have escalated due to the cutbacks in many of the jobs that men previously held. Fishing is no longer a viable occupation for Sne-nay-muxw men. The Davis Plan, implemented in the late 1960’s, spelled the end for those who owned small boats and outdated equipment. Only two men on the reserve own their own boats and only another three sign on as fishing crews during the summer months. In the early 1970’s a few men took advantage of the Fishermen’s Assistance Program but were unable to keep their boats (see Friedlander 1975). One fisherman explains why few men on the reserve fish today:

It was not passed on. Fathers who fished did not teach their sons. Also in the old days logging used to happen after fishing. Then it changed and logging happened all year round. Most men logged instead. Companies used to rent out the boats to the men but they don’t do that anymore. Buying and maintaining a boat is expensive and more difficult every year.

This fisherman has since given up his boat leaving only one family continuing to fish.

While there are several sons in this family, none are interested in pursuing this occupation.

As this fisherman explains:

I remember that a few years back that about 8 or 9 of them went through this program. Got loans for their boats, courses on fishing ...It was great. I thought that it would be an important source of income for them. However most of them now have failed at it. When I’m out in the Strait I don’t know anyone. It’s different when I go up north because I have buddies up there...I offered my two oldest sons a boat but one flatly said no and the other thought about it...but eventually said no. They don’t know
what they want to do but fishing is not it. I’m not going to push them. I don’t care what they do as long as they find something they like...and can give them a good living. I tell them that the answer is not to work for themselves but to start their own business.

The option of choosing logging over fishing is no longer available to Sne-nay-muxw men. There is no local logging available as timber stands are cut primarily on the northern tip of the Island and West Coast. There is only one man on the reserve who continues to work as a faller. He commutes on a weekly basis to Port Alberni, returning home on the weekends. Sne-nay-muxw men no longer seek logging as an occupation because of the insecurity of this employment. The layoffs and strikes in the industry have reduced the workforce considerably. Also union membership does not offer the security in this industry it once did. One Sne-nay-muxw, who began logging when he was seventeen, explains his discontent over present day union support:

In 1986 my local went on strike. However other members (IWA) were still working. We were out for five months. This was an eye opener to me. I was very disappointed in the union that allowed other locals to work. This strike and the increasing money pinching of the logging companies made me decide to get out of logging. There were fewer and fewer jobs and it was more difficult to put in a good year. I had no seniority anywhere. That’s what it is like these days. You just don’t have any security. My brother is working at the Harmac mill and is worried that the next set of layoffs will include him. This is the only job he has had. He has worked there eleven years.

As this ex-logger notes this insecurity also exists in mill work. The closing of the Mayo mill in 1975 ended employment for more than a dozen men on the reserve. Many had worked there more than twenty years and were forced to take early retirement. The New Mayo mill opened only a few years ago and is a state-of-the art sawmill specializing in cutting wood for the Japanese housing market. It presently employs 130 workers but only
one Sne-nay-muxw presently works at that mill. 8 His wife explains how he found that job:

Before the other mill closed he went over there and applied for a job. He was the only one to do that. He knew they would be looking for experienced mill workers and they hired him. He has been working there ever since.

Coastlands Mill opened in 1988 and in its leasing agreement to use reserve land for docking facilities, promised to hire ten percent of its labour force from the band. At present nine men work at the mill which is approximately five percent of the work force. These positions are highly coveted on the reserve and men who get them hang on to them. One man explains:

I have worked at the mill ever since it opened. The mill is non-union and the shifts are 10 hours long, one shift is 5pm to 3am, the other is 6am to 4pm. I have a bad knee from playing soccer so I don’t know how long I can last at this job. My doctor told me I’m going to have to find something else. But there isn’t anything else. Before I worked at the mill I was out of work for several years...I used to work in construction.

Although Harmac Pulp and Paper Mills remains a larger employer in the area less than half a dozen Sne-nay-muxw men have found steady employment here. As well demand for labour in longshoring has diminished since containers were introduced. The new deep sea loading wharf at Duke Point presently does not employ any Sne-nay-muxw men.

This decline in logging, mill work and longshoring has left many men without other alternatives. Few have made the transition to other occupations. One ex-logger, who now lives off reserve, opened a craft store in town to sell his carvings and other work. He

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8 Sawmills such as the New Mayo mill no longer demand performance based on the number of board feet cut, but the quality of the product.
has depended upon his carving to get through those periods when he was laid off, but as they became more frequent, he decided to start his own retail business. Another ex-logger, also living off reserve, is taking a business management course hoping to find a position in band administration work. These Sne-nay-muxw men are exceptions as other men on reserve have not had the capital to open their own businesses or sought extensive post secondary education to find other work.

Recently half a dozen men have found employment working for Khow'ot'sen Pipeline Contractors who have acquired the contract for laying gas pipeline in the area. This contractor has hired a number of young men in their early twenties who until recently were unemployed or on social assistance. Aside from this, employment prospects for young men remains poor. One young man left the reserve to join the American Marines hoping that he would gain from the experience. After completing his term he returned home. As he explains:

I decided to join the Marines as there were no jobs here...I was stationed down in North Carolina. They trained me to be a gunner. I left because I realized they weren't training me for anything I could use later. I have a family now so I must think of the future.

Some men have found more casual employment. Those with carpentry skills have found employment building houses on the reserve. More recently a longhouse was built that employed a half dozen men for approximately six months. Other casual employment includes janitorial work on and off the reserve. Another dozen men have been able to find employment through various government initiatives. A fish project that began in 1993 has employed four permanent workers while another three work on the shell fish project which
at this time has four leases in the area. These projects all suffer from limited funding but the men who have been hired for these projects are committed to this employment.

In all about sixty-four men on reserve are employed full or part time in the labour force. Table 6:1 compares the participation and unemployment rate for Sne-nay-muxw men 15 years and older on reserve with non-Native men living in Nanaimo. While the participation rate is similar, Sne-nay-muxw men’s unemployment is three times the rate of non-Native men in the community. Also Sne-nay-muxw men make less than half the average income of non-Native men. According to the 1986 Census material this income gap has increased.  

**Table 6:1**

Employment and Income Characteristics of Sne-nay-muxw Men On Reserve and Non-Native Men 15 years and older in Nanaimo, 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sne-nay-muxw *</th>
<th>Non-Native</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation rate</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Income</td>
<td>$14,388</td>
<td>$29,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>$11,264</td>
<td>$27,074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Reserve 1 only.


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9 See the Profile of Aboriginal Population Residing in Selected Off Reserve Areas, vol. 2, prepared by Aboriginal Data and Native Issue Unit, Housing Family and Social Statistics Division, Stats Canada, Feb. 1990.

10 The participation rate is a percentage of the total population considered employable over the age of 15. This excludes students, social assistance recipients, individuals over the age of 65, and those who are institutionalized.

11 The unemployment rate is the percentage of the total population who are considered actively seeking wage employment. This is the definition used by the federal government and does not measure the 'real' rate of unemployment.
The contemporary employment experiences of Sne-nay-muxw men reveals that few have made the transition to the growing service sector. Those men who continue to seek employment in the primary and secondary occupations no longer find the security that was available several decades ago. The insecurity of this employment has left many men unemployed or displaced from the labour force entirely. The changing structure of the local economy has affected Sne-nay-muxw women differently as the following section reveals.

Women's Employment

Many of the previous employment opportunities available to Sne-nay-muxw women have ceased to exist. Women no longer work in the berry fields with their families as agricultural labour is met by other migrant labour in both the United States and the province. Local demand for farm labour has also ended as there are fewer farms in the area that demand manual labour. Furthermore women no longer fish with their husbands or go claming for an income. Despite such changes the increasing growth in the service economy has offered new employment opportunities to Sne-nay-muxw women.

As an extension of their experience in domestic labour some women have found employment working for janitorial companies cleaning banks or other commercial buildings in the evenings. Others have found employment as homemakers working for the band or non-profit home support agencies taking care of the elderly or the sick. Recently a deterrent in seeking this employment is the requirement for a long-term-care aid certificate. This must be acquired through a local college course but few Sne-nay-muxw
women have successfully completed this program. One woman, whose family remains on social assistance, notes the disadvantage she faces without such a certificate. As she explains:

I never did pass the homemakers course because I was having too many family problems...I couldn’t write the exams...Because I don’t have a certificate I make $1.50 less an hour than other homemakers on the reserve....The band hires me and (my husband) whenever they need a one time clean up or the regular homemakers refuse to go. We get paid $100 even if we work only 4 hours. A hundred dollars is the limit we can make on social assistance.

Some work is found in the hotels and restaurants in the area but very few Sne-nay-muxw women seek this employment. With the growing population in the area this industry has grown but Native women are not highly visible in it. One exception is a young woman who works during the summer for a well known resort in the area. She describes how she was hired:

I work in the summer for Yellow Point Lodge waitressing. It’s not very good money, just minimum wage and a little tips from a tip pool. I got the job by helping a friend sell bagels at the market. A woman who worked at the market liked me and asked if I would be interested in working at the Lodge. I’m only working the summer because I go back to my job at the College in the fall.

Another area of the service industry in which Sne-nay-muxw women have found employment is in hairdressing. This is a desired occupation by young Sne-nay-muxw women as more than half a dozen have taken the course offered at the community college. While income is not high in this profession it allows for flexible hours that many women prefer. Also women are able to add to their income by cutting hair on the reserve. One
woman preparing to take the course voiced the hope that in the future she would be able to open her own salon on the reserve.

Sne-nay-muxw women continue to seek income from home based employment. Selling cosmetics from door to door is one option several Sne-nay-muxw women have tried. However this venture has not been very lucrative and one woman in particular noted the hardship she experienced selling cosmetics on the reserve. Not having a car to help transport the heavy cases from door to door was difficult as was demanding payment from women who were frequently in financial crisis. By the time she gave it up she had paid out more money than she had made.

Another option for women is taking care of children during the day. There are no day care facilities on the reserve so women who work in the paid labour force are dependent upon either relatives or their neighbours to look after their children. This generates a little income for several older women whose own children are grown. In one case a woman is also a foster parent which gives her a secure monthly income.

Craft production is not as important for income as it was in the past. There are no young women on the reserve knitting today and only the elders continue to knit items which they do not sell. When asked why, they all voiced the opinion that it was not worth it anymore. In recent years the demand for sweaters has fallen and stores now have a policy of paying half the cost of sweaters in the retail price of wool. Recently there has been a revival of Coast Salish blanket weaving by two women on the reserve but this does not generate an income for them.
A new occupation for women in craft production is carving. One woman is an active member of a successful family of carvers on the reserve. There have always been a number of carvers on the reserve, some more successful than others, but until ten years ago no Sne-nay-muxw women were known to carve for a living. She explains how she began:

I began carving about 10 years ago. My husband was an artist at the time, drawing mostly. I began carving before him. He can draw, I can’t. We have taught all our kids to carve. I hope to learn how to carve silver soon.

While this family is still dependent upon social assistance their carving business has grown. Most noted is the skill of their eldest daughter whose work has drawn great praise in the community.

As well as this family’s success, another family of sisters has begun a very successful business selling native art. Based on the reserve this business initially opened as a store attached to their house. In less than five years they have opened three other stores, one in Nanaimo and two in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver. In addition they have set up booths in selected shopping centers in Vancouver and Seattle. While in a very competitive market and beginning with no retail experience, the women attribute their success to their insight about the quality of Native art and their respect for Native artists. This family owned business is the only one of its kind on the reserve to date.

Few Sne-nay-muxw women seek outdoor work but two women work for MacMillan Bloedel at the tree farm. This is seasonal work and one woman who has no seniority is

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12 Two well known carvers were Stanley James and Jimmy John. Jimmy John was Nuu chah nulth and moved to the reserve in 1920 to live with his wife.
laid off every summer. Another woman has worked for a clam company for three years as a buyer. Unfortunately the company went out of business when they lost their Japanese contract. She remembers:

I got my job through my Uncle Cliff. I liked the job...What I didn't like about it was that you had to be there at low tide. Sometimes this was in the middle of the night. My Mum would look after the kids when this happened.

Other outside work for women in the past related to the salmon enhancement projects that are funded through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Department of Indian Affairs. Women, like men, were hired to clean the tributary streams on the Nanaimo River. However, in the recent fish and shellfish projects, a woman was hired to do the administrative work, not to work alongside men. There are no Sne-nay-muxw women working in any of the local mills despite some hiring of women in the mills. According to the employment counselor there is no desire by any women on the reserve to pursue these jobs.

Significantly new employment opportunities have risen for Sne-nay-muxw women in the public service sector. More than half the employed Sne-nay-muxw women are working in this sector of the economy. As noted earlier the public service sector has grown in the last two decades as various federal and provincial government departments have relocated to Nanaimo. However Sne-nay-muxw women have not found employment in these departments but in the government funded services designed specifically for Native peoples. The Native population in the region is now close to 5,000 which has increased the demand for service delivery designed to meet the needs of Native peoples
(Census 1991). One of the largest and most successful organizations offering services to Native peoples in the community is the Friendship Center, Tillicum Haus. Sne-nay-muxw women have been instrumental in the founding of this center as well as employed in various clerical, administrative and counseling positions. Sne-nay-muxw women have also found employment at the Native Drug and Alcohol Center and Haven House, the transition house for abused women. Others have found employment in the clerical and administrative positions in the educational institutions such as Malaspina College and Chemainus Business College. Presently a Sne-nay-muxw woman is the coordinator for the Native Studies Program at Malaspina College while another is employed to implement the new federal government initiatives, Pathways to Success, for the South Island District Advisory Board. These occupations have placed Sne-nay-muxw women in very key positions in the wider Native community.

Sne-nay-muxw women have also found employment in the public service sector on the reserve. On reserve employment has grown since the 1970's with the change in Department of Indian Affairs policy to give more administrative power to individual bands. Beginning with a bookkeeper in the late 1960's band administration organization has increased to include a band manager, accountant, band membership secretary, secretary and receptionist. As well as these positions, on reserve programs include two educational coordinators, an employment counselor, two social development administrators, two drug and alcohol counselors, and two community health workers. Two school programs include three full time and one part-time teacher. There is also a full time land claims researcher who has worked on reserve for the band since 1992. Several homemakers are
also hired by the band and a general store open on reserve employs four people. This employment, aside from five positions, is filled by women. Until recently all these positions were held by band members with the exception of the band manager. Currently six positions are held by non-band members.

As well as these positions, various programs on the reserve offer women employment for limited periods of time. One such program that has remained ongoing for the last several years is a breakfast club for school age children. Challenge grants during the summer months provide employment to young women students as recreational workers and researchers.

Approximately fifty Sne-nay-muxw women living on the reserve work full or part time in the labour force. As Table 6:2 reveals their participation rate in the labour force is lower than non-Native women in Nanaimo but not significantly so. Yet Sne-nay-muxw women’s unemployment rate is almost twice that found among non-Native women in the community. In comparing the differences in average income, Sne-nay-muxw women make 58% of what non-Native women earn. Such low income indicates that Sne-nay-muxw women continue to be the most marginalized individuals in the local labour force.
Table 6:2

Employment and Income Characteristics of Sne-nay-muxw Women On Reserve and Non-Native Women 15 years and older in Nanaimo, 1991

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<tr>
<td>Participation rate</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Income</td>
<td>$9,216</td>
<td>$15,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income</td>
<td>$7,208</td>
<td>$12,257</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Reserve 1 only.
Source: Census 1991

In comparing the employment history and figures between Sne-nay-muxw men and women it is evident that men and women have different labour market experiences. Sne-nay-muxw men have a higher participation rate in the labour force but at the same time a higher unemployment rate than Sne-nay-muxw women. While there are more men are in the labour force than women, they are more likely to experience unemployment than women who enter the labour force. Also Sne-nay-muxw women, like their non-Native counterparts are overly concentrated in the service economy and underrepresented in the primary and secondary sectors when compared with both Sne-nay-muxw men and non-Native men. Furthermore Sne-nay-muxw women’s income is much closer to non-Native women’s income than the income between Sne-nay-muxw men and non-Native men.

While there is some difference in employment based on race, most notably Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment and income is more marked by gender. This conclusion is reached

13 see footnote 12 for definition.
14 see footnote 13 for definition.
for Native women in Canada as a whole (see Gerber 1990:76; Satzewich & Wotherspoon 1993:61).

Labour Conditions

Recession and Economic Restructuring

Despite the increased stability of the service sector, in the early 1980’s Nanaimo suffered a severe recession that had not been experienced since the 1930’s. This recession was an outcome of wider international economic conditions. Resource based industries and manufacturing sectors were particularly affected. The unemployment rate in Nanaimo during this recession more than doubled over a five year period (see table 6:3).

Table 6:3

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As in earlier periods of economic contraction the Sne-nay-muxw experienced a much higher unemployment rate than the non-Native labour force in Nanaimo. In particular Sne-nay-muxw men who were employed in logging, sawmill work and construction suffered high unemployment. For many families who had never experienced social assistance this condition became a reality. According to the social development staff on reserve social assistance accounted for eighty percent of the total income on the reserve by
the mid 1980’s. While some families have remained on social assistance others sought new strategies to find employment. One woman whose husband was laid off in the construction industry views this period as an important turning point for her family. At this time she did not work outside the home and was completely dependent upon her husband. Their change in economic status forced her to seek work while her husband sought educational upgrading. Her husband’s unemployment, she believes, was a significant lesson for her children in understanding how important education is today in finding employment:

My husband lost his job and could not find work...He went back to school...I had to go out to work so we could get by...I think it was good for the kids to see their Dad doing school work...Then I went back to school.

This woman and her husband have since found secure employment after upgrading their education. They have been fortunate in that they were not forced to move away to a larger urban center.

A recent study of this economic contraction in the province suggests that “the recession” is a misnomer for the restructuring of the nineties. It is not an economic cycle or change in market demands but an outcome of the adjustment and structural transformation that is occurring in the wider economy as it shifts from resource based industries to service industries (Kunin & Knauf 1992). This structural transformation has demanded higher levels of education. As the following section reveals, women who have been given equal access to education and employment training have increased their opportunities vis a vis men in the local labour force.
Education and Employment Training

As service-based industries have expanded in Nanaimo so has the increasing demand for higher levels of education and employment skills. In this respect the Sne-nay-muxw have remained disadvantaged compared to the wider population. Despite integration into provincial schools and the increasing commitment by the federal government to support more equitable access to education through Native education financial assistance programs, few Sne-nay-muxw have attained higher levels of education. Since the 1970's the drop out rate has remained high with the majority of Sne-nay-muxw leaving school in grades 9 and 10. Two women who went to high school in the 1970’s remember their experiences:

When I was a teenager I went to John Barsby School here in Nanaimo. I hated school. I quit in grade nine. I soon got pregnant after that and had three children. One is now 17, the other 16 and 11. I’m teaching my children not to start a family so soon and to finish school.

I graduated from NDSS[Nanaimo District Secondary School] in 1976. I was the only Native student to graduate in that year and only a few graduated the year before or after me. I don’t know why I was able to finish. Perhaps it was because my parents were so strict. I did not have any goals or plans for a career but they expected me to finish high school.

Several educational initiatives have been implemented to improve Sne-nay-muxw educational levels. In 1975 a Home School Coordinator for the Elementary and Secondary Schools was hired. An alternate program for on reserve teenagers who had dropped out of schools began in 1979 with the opening of the Sallassalton Unwinus

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15 Higher levels of education positively relates to higher labour force participation and higher rates of employment for Native peoples in Canada as a whole. Armstrong et al. (1990) have found that Native people make greater gains in employment with increased education than the non-Native population.
School. Halkomelem language, Sne-nay-muxw oral history and arts has been introduced in the elementary and secondary schools. However it was not until the early 1980’s that there was any improvement in the drop-out rate which remained as high as 80% to 90%. According to the band educational counselor the key has been band involvement in motivating students to remain in school. She explains:

It was a primary concern of the band to motivate students to stay in school longer. We began recognizing students accomplishments by giving them trophies and a dinner and dance at the end of the year in their honour. In two years time there was a great improvement. There are no drop outs now in grade 11 or 12. While there are still some in grade 9 and 10 it seems that if we can get them over this hump then they finish school.

Organizing a graduation event has become an ongoing annual event on the reserve and appreciated by both parents and students alike. However, despite this optimism, improvement has been slow as educational attainment levels still remain low(see Armstrong, Kennedy & Oberle 1990). Table 6:4 shows that almost two thirds of individuals 15 years and older on the reserve do not have a high school certificate. In spite of increasing funding for post secondary education there is no one living on reserve who has a university degree.16 To date three Sne-nay-muxw who have graduated from university reside off reserve and in other urban centers. The band itself does not have any educational attainment figures for the on reserve population but in comparing Sne-nay-

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16 In the last two decades there has been increasing support by the federal government for adult education and employment training. Post secondary funding has increased Native enrollment in post secondary institutions in Canada from .88% in 1975-6 to 3.40% in 1988-9. However completion rates are much lower than the non-Native population (Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology 1990:44).
muxw educational levels in the Census data with the population in Nanaimo the disparity in education is evident (see table 6:4).  

Table 6:4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Sne-nay-muxw %</th>
<th>Non-Native %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than grade 9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 9 and 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• without secondary certificate</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• with certificate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades certificate or diploma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-university education only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• without certificate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• with certificate</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• without degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• with degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* excludes Reserve 2 which is not included in the Census data.

Source: Census 1991, Cat. No. 95-385, Pp. 275, 284

While a number of Sne-nay-muxw have taken vocational training at the local college this has not improved their employment to any great extent. This is consistent with results of studies which have noted that vocational training has had little impact on

17 In 1991-2 average student allocation was $7,282. At this time funding only covered 71% of the band's requests.
18 The Canadian Job Strategy allocates moneys to be set aside for training Native peoples as per their mandate. This money is distributed to the different regional district boards (DABs). On these boards are representatives from different bands as well as Native organizations. In consultation with EIC staff they designate the money to various job training proposals. Often proposals are not approved according to merit but according to an equitable distribution of funds between bands and organizations, and program criteria set out by EIC.
subsequent employment for Native peoples generally (Wien 1986). Funding for this training has been more important as an immediate employment strategy than pursued for future employment gains (see Driben and Trudeau 1983). A recent exception is the successful program offered by Tillicum Haus Friendship Center. According to the present director of the Center their success rate for many of their programs has been as high as 90% for students finding employed or going on to further education.

These low educational levels of the Sne-nay-muxw places them in a poorer position to compete for local employment. The success that Sne-nay-muxw women experience vis-a-vis men is directly linked to their education as women on the reserve have far more education than men. While there are no comparable figures of educational attainment between men and women on the reserve it is most commonly women who seek post-secondary education. In the post secondary assistance program consistently more than 75% of students are women. This is also the trend provincially, for according to the registration in the Post Secondary Support Program 1990/91 there is a higher percentage of Native women in post secondary institutions in British Columbia than men, 67.6% versus 32.4% respectively. Unlike earlier programs, Sne-nay-muxw women have been given equal access to education and job training which has dramatically affected their ability to participate in the local labour force. Table 6:5 shows the link between education and women’s participation in the labour force on reserves in British Columbia. As this

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19 Tillicum Haus Native Friendship Center opened in 1968 and offers a number of services to the Native community (i.e. educational, legal, health and cultural/recreational programs).
Table shows women's participation and employment rate in the labour force increases dramatically with university education—more so than men's.

Table 6:5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Participation %</th>
<th>Employment %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1-8</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 9-13</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school with diploma</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades and other</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 1986

For Sne-nay-muxw women higher educational levels have enabled them to find employment niches on the reserve as well as employment in the service-based industries of the local economy. However, as the following section reveals their employment opportunities in this sector of the economy are a product of government policies and employment equity programs.

Government Policies and Employment Equity Legislation

Government policies enabling Native peoples to deliver services themselves both on and off reserve have increased Sne-nay-muxw women's employment opportunities (see Canada, Department of Indian Affairs 1990). As the above employment history reveals, a large percentage of Sne-nay-muxw women are employed in the public sector of the
economy that is specifically funded for service delivery to Native peoples. Service delivery has grown in the last two decades on and off reserve. On reserve the actual transfer of federal government responsibility to Native bands began in the mid 1970's. The primary function of this shift was to give bands increasing autonomy as well as some involvement in the programs delivered on the reserve. Off reserve service delivery however, was forced on both federal and provincial governments with the increased migration of Native peoples to the large urban centers (Frideres 1993:306). In Nanaimo services for Native people are continually expanding as more than 5000 Native people presently live off reserve in the surrounding region (Census 1991).

However, aside from this sector of the public service few Sne-nay-muxw women have accessed employment in other areas of the local economy. Unlike men, Sne-nay-muxw women's employment is not dependent upon market forces but government funding. Women are thus faced with different employment conditions than men in that their employment is affected by the political and economic policies of the state. These policies presently support these services but funding is contingent upon annual budgetary approval and the interpretation of both the federal and provincial government's obligation to Native peoples. Ultimately the nature of employment conditions in the public service sector, both on reserve and off reserve, rests upon the structure imposed by this relationship.

The majority of women who presently work on the reserve have done so for more than five years. A distinct core of women have been employed for more than ten years. In discussing the working conditions on the reserve several women voiced the opinion that
they preferred this employment to employment off reserve. One woman, who is a social
development officer, explains:

I worked for the Ministry office in town when I started but I didn’t like it. The atmosphere was so unfriendly. Working on reserve is much better. People know you and trust you. It’s a much better place to work...Also I’m close to home...people can come and visit me when they want.

Other women voiced similar views that the positive side of working on reserve was the close contact with their own community. However, these women also concede that there are several negative aspects as well. As Daniels (1986:111) notes, because labour on reserves is not subject to federal and provincial income tax, women working on the reserves are often paid less, even after taxes are taken into account. Sne-nay-muxw women maintained that their income is an issue and has been in the past. They also note that it is difficult to ask for a raise as they are made to feel guilty for taking what is limited band money. In addition to this problem women maintain that the working environment is too political at times. Having as the employer a Chief and Council who can hire and fire administrative staff at will is a substantial down side to their employment. While this does not occur frequently it is always a possibility. One woman recounted her own experience when the new Chief and council fired all the administrative staff when they took office:

When I first started there was a new chief. All the administration staff walked out for a day because of poor wages. Council fired them all. They were all shocked...I stayed but it was uncomfortable because I didn’t know what to do...Things have worked out.

While off reserve employment in the public sector does not have these same problems it also exhibits poor conditions for women’s employment. On the negative side much of this employment is linked to annual governmental funding which creates some insecurity in
employment. Government funded programs come under regular program management review and if not favourable are discontinued. Other employment is linked to specific government initiatives and have short term contracts that are not renewed. Finally some of this employment in service delivery to Native peoples is highly stressful so that women find themselves emotionally depleted and eventually forced to seek less demanding employment. On the positive side wages are higher than in the private sector for similar employment and women may have union protection for wages and seniority. Also some positions give women a significant degree of input into the policy making areas of service delivery.

While the public service sector has both positive and negative employment conditions for women it still raises the question why few Sne-nay-muxw women have found employment outside this sector. Why are Sne-nay-muxw women over-represented in public rather than the private sector? One woman who is presently working as a cultural resource person for the Nanaimo School District has had a variety of jobs in both these sectors of the economy. She believes that the problem stems from the conflict Native women face living on reserve and the demands of the labour force:

Living on the reserve and working is difficult because you are in fact living in two worlds. This is always a problem...You have responsibilities to your relatives and community as well as those that go with working in a white world. I have always managed living in two worlds because I have had lots of practice...When I was six my parents instead of sending me to residential school sent me to public school...I think this prepared me for coping with the demands outside.

This incompatibility of living on the reserve and the demands of employment upon women, while certainly relevant, does not fully explain the segregation of Sne-nay-muxw
women in the local labour force. It ignores the gender and race discrimination that Sne-
nay-muxw women face in seeking employment in the private sector. In a recent study into
the hiring criteria used by employers in Nanaimo, gender stereotyping was most certainly
evident in hiring individuals for specific occupations (see Maybin 1990). But while
gender stereotyping is experienced by all women, Sne-nay-muxw women’s segregation
into the specific areas of the public sector explicitly reflects racial discrimination. While it
can be argued that their own cultural experiences gives them the best qualifications for
some service delivery programs, the inability of Sne-nay-muxw women to find jobs in
other areas of the public sector, as well as the private sector, reveals the extent of this
racial discrimination.

The recent introduction of employment equity legislation passed by both federal and
provincial governments have not substantially changed this condition. The federal
government in 1986 passed the Employment Equity Act and initiated various equity
programs for federally regulated employers and Crown Corporations. The provincial
government passed a similar act in 1993. Young men’s employment on the pipeline is a
direct outcome of this new program for provincial contracts, as is the recent hiring of two
Sne-nay-muxw to work for B.C. Ferries on their local ferry runs to Horseshoe Bay and
Gabriola Island. However, both Acts are limited in their power and scope as neither of the
Acts gives the government power to penalize any company for discriminatory practices

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20 This study revealed that employers had an unconscious perception of the ability of men
and women for particular occupations. Unlike men, who were judged primarily upon their
qualifications, women were chosen by their personal attributes such as appearance and
personality.

21 These Acts have no application to the private sector and complaints of discrimination
are dealt with by the Provincial Labour Relations Board.
(Canada, EIC 1990). This explains why the present employment counselor on the reserve has found other Corporations less accommodating in hiring Sne-nay-muxw applicants for posted positions. She notes that while B.C. Hydro seems to be making an effort, B.C. Telephone and the commercial banks in the community have continued to resist hiring Native peoples. Sne-nay-muxw women with good resumes and business management degrees have applied for posted positions but not been hired.

Government policies and employment equity legislation has had a substantial impact upon women’s employment. While increasing women’s employment opportunities they have at the same time segregated this labour to specific sectors of the public service economy. While this participation is politically motivated by both the state and Sne-nay-muxw themselves, this segregation of women belies the appearance that they are integrating into the local economy. Without government funding for service delivery to Native peoples, Sne-nay-muxw women would not experience the participation rate in the labour force that they do today. Also without effective employment equity legislation, it is unlikely that they will be successful in competing for employment with non-Native women in the wider labour market. Gender, race and class segregation continues to place Sne-nay-muxw women in vulnerable positions in terms of employment in Nanaimo.

Domestic Economy

This economic segregation continues to determine the nature of Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy. In the following section several dominant factors are noted: the full

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22 It does not cover Crown Corporations with less than 100 employees or currently apply to the Federal Public Service.
dependence upon wage income, increased population on reserve, smaller family size, and lower family income relative to the wider community. Also noted are the important links of extended families for women's employment.

Subsistence Production

Subsistence production has a reduced economic role in Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy as their dependence upon wage labour was complete by 1970. Salmon, however, is still considered a favored food and used for all social and ceremonial occasions. Retaining their access to local salmon remains an important concern to the band as fish stocks on the Nanaimo River have decreased drastically despite the establishment of a hatchery on the river. Many Sne-nay-muxw do not find this surprising and blame pollution in the river and harbour, as well as recreational fishermen for the low yields. Since the late 1980's the Sne-nay-muxw have agreed to refrain from food fishing on the river in order to help increase the fish stocks.

As of 1987 a single band permit that covers 60 nets and 20 tidal water permits replaces the individual family permits for food fishing. In exchange for not fishing on the Nanaimo River the Sne-nay-muxw are given compensatory fish in the Strait. In 1990 the Sne-nay-muxw caught 9400 sockeye, 3,900 chum, and 200 coho which were distributed at 20 fish per person. This per capita distribution is viewed as the most fair by Chief and Council but distribution only occurs on reserve. This makes off reserve members

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23 The Department of Fisheries Office continues to allow sports fishing on the river.
24 Not all Sne-nay-muxw are in agreement with this arrangement and several members have been fined in violation of the Fisheries Act for fishing on the Nanaimo River. This has created some conflict within the band as many believe this right should be continued.
dependent upon on reserve households for any share of this resource. This has produced some conflict particularly for those families that have a large number of members living off reserve who expect a share of the catch.

While a few men own small motor boats and fish part-time, the number of fish acquired by a household is now dependent upon the DFO agreements with the band. With one exception families no longer work as a team catching and preparing fish. No Sne-nay-muxw go claming or harvest oysters today. Unfortunately the systematic harvesting has depleted most of the shell fish in the area. As one concerned Sne-nay-muxw man explains:

The clams have been overharvested because the Fisheries gives up to 400 licenses for each tide. Sometimes it covers four or five days, other times twelve and up. People are so thick on the beach that they are only a couple of feet apart. They get in a line and work down the beach as the tide goes out and then work up the beach as the tide comes in.

The band has made repeated requests that the DFO reduce the number of licenses for each tide and monitor the size of harvested shellfish. This has not been done to the band’s satisfaction. Recently the Sne-nay-muxw have successfully applied for clam and oyster licenses in the area in order to protect this resource.

Few traditional plant foods are gathered and berry picking is limited. There are a few households that maintain large vegetable gardens but this activity is restricted to retired band members only. Most of this food is consumed by their own families but some is shared with neighbours and relatives. Only a few women continue to can food today. As one woman explains:

I canned so much when my children were young that I don’t do that anymore. Now we are retired I prefer to eat bought food...I can’t eat that food anymore.
Hunting deer is still an important activity particularly for young men. In recent years increased restrictions on deer and elk on the Island have limited hunting in the region. Deer are no longer plentiful close to the reserve or on Mudge Island as they once were. Some men continue to hunt out of season as part of their rights guaranteed in the Douglas Treaty and upheld in Regina vs. White and Bob decision. This food, an important addition to the larder, is not a staple.

While subsistence production has declined in the Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy, the interest in managing their own traditional food resource sites remains a central concern for the band. The band has recently initiated various agreements with both federal and provincial governments to begin that process.

**Household Organization and Income**

The population of the Sne-nay-muxw has doubled over the last two decades due to the high birth and low mortality rates. The age distribution of the Sne-nay-muxw on reserve has remained fairly young in comparison to the wider population as one third of the population are younger than 15 and half are younger than 25 (see table 6:6). Projected population growth scenarios for the on reserve population suggest an increase of approximately 2% a year. Without migration, the on reserve population is expected to double in twenty years time (Kerr Wood Leidal Assoc. Ltd. 1992).

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25 As of Feb. 1, 1992 it was 906.
The amendment to the Indian Act in 1985 (Bill C-31) has further increased band membership.\textsuperscript{26} Between 1985 and 1990 one hundred and thirty-five Sne-nay-muxw gained band membership under this Bill. This increase of new band members has added mainly to the band membership living off reserve as only 8.4\% of C-31 members live on reserve.

\textbf{Table 6:6}

\textbf{Age/Sex Structure of On Reserve Residents, 1991}

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Age} & \textbf{Male} & \textbf{Female} & \textbf{Total} \\
\hline
\text{80+} & 2 & 2 & 4 \\
\text{75-79} & 4 & 6 & 10 \\
\text{70-74} & 6 & 3 & 9 \\
\text{65-69} & 8 & 5 & 13 \\
\text{60-64} & 4 & 5 & 9 \\
\text{55-59} & 10 & 8 & 18 \\
\text{50-54} & 10 & 7 & 17 \\
\text{45-49} & 13 & 8 & 21 \\
\text{40-44} & 16 & 10 & 26 \\
\text{35-39} & 18 & 19 & 37 \\
\text{30-34} & 19 & 24 & 43 \\
\text{25-29} & 11 & 19 & 30 \\
\text{20-24} & 20 & 19 & 39 \\
\text{15-19} & 29 & 26 & 55 \\
\text{10-14} & 22 & 25 & 57 \\
\text{05-09} & 24 & 25 & 49 \\
\text{00-04} & 30 & 17 & 47 \\
\textbf{Total} & 246 & 228 & 474 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textit{Source: Band On Reserve population survey, 1991.}

Today nearly half the band membership lives off reserve. While movement off reserve has historically been part of the Sne-nay-muxw annual migration to find adequate wage employment, after 1970 this movement became more permanent for some band members.

\textsuperscript{26} This amendment restored Indian status to those members who had lost their status through the discrimination of the previous Indian Act (i.e. clause 12-1 (6)).
While as many as one-third of off reserve members live in the surrounding region others have migrated to larger urban centers such as Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle.\textsuperscript{27} This migration is primarily encouraged by poor employment opportunities in Nanaimo but also by the lack of housing on the reserve. Despite a new housing program begun in 1984 by DIAND and the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the band faces a housing shortage that continues to grow as the demand increases at a rate higher than replacement.\textsuperscript{28} In 1991 there were over sixty requests for new housing with the majority from off reserve members. One of the problems faced by the band in remedying this problem is the lack of available land on the reserve for building more houses.

Approximately 83\% of reserve land, or 262 ha, is under private certificate of possession land tenure. Band members who have not inherited land from their family are dependent upon the communally owned land which is managed by the band. The majority of this land is on Reserve 4 but much of it is unsuitable for housing because of poor ground conditions.\textsuperscript{29} Despite this problem Reserve 4 is the fastest growing reserve, for its population has tripled in the last five years.

\textsuperscript{27} Knowing with certainty where off reserve members live is difficult because band membership addresses are not updated. However, a recent mailing list indicates that more than a third of off reserve members live in the urban center of Nanaimo.

\textsuperscript{28} In 1984 a new housing policy in which housing costs were divided between DIAND and the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) was introduced. Now bands can borrow money through a bank or trust company to cover fifty percent of the costs. According to DIAND annual report in 1984 national average cost of housing was $40,000. This program offered to subsidize half of that sum and the rest would be borrowed through CMHC which would in turn subsidize the interest rate so that the band would only pay 2\%. However, today the average cost of housing is $100,000 which is a much higher cost than the program was devised to serve.

\textsuperscript{29} There still remains a great range of housing conditions on the reserve. In the last ten years fifty new homes have been built but many have only replaced older houses rather than added new housing.
Notwithstanding the housing crisis and the overcrowding, the average household size on reserve has decreased. While some households have as many as nine members the average size is 3.6. This is a significantly less than the average household size several decades earlier but still larger than household size found in the non-Native community of Nanaimo which is 2.5. The residence pattern remains predominantly patrilocal but there are a few cases of men moving to the reserve to live with their wives.\textsuperscript{30} The preference continues for married couples and single parents to live alone but the housing shortage limits this possibility. Out of one hundred and twenty-four households, fifteen are composed of two families, while another six have three or more families. Fourteen individuals live alone of which four are women.

Sne-nay-muxw household composition is significantly different from that found in the non-Native community. There is a higher incidence of multi-families in one household, lone parent families, and grandparents who are the sole caregivers of grandchildren. Also family and household income is lower than that found in the wider community. This gap appears to be widening, as Sne-nay-muxw average family income in 1986 dropped relative to Non-Native family income, from 62% to 57% in 1991. Despite the increase of Sne-nay-muxw employment in the last five years, average family income has continued to decline in relation to the wider Nanaimo community (see table 6:7). Only 15% of family

\textsuperscript{30} Housing survey of 1991.
incomes on Reserve 1 exceeded $40,000 a year while in Nanaimo it was 54% (Census 1991).  

One of the principle factors that contributes to Sne-nay-muxw lower family income is the higher percentage of persons dependent upon social assistance. Today almost forty percent of Sne-nay-muxw income is derived from social assistance and other government transfer payments. This is significantly higher than that found in Nanaimo where such form of income constitutes only fourteen percent of the total income (Census 1991).  

Table 6:7

*Sne-nay-muxw* and Non-Native Family and Household Income in Nanaimo, 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sne-nay-muxw</td>
<td>26,797</td>
<td>23,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Native</td>
<td>47,116</td>
<td>42,459</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Reserve 1 only.

Source: Census 1991

For the Sne-nay-muxw this heightened dependence upon social assistance is a product of the increasing displacement of men from fishing, logging and sawmill work. Unlike the previous period, when social assistance was used to supplement their seasonal

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31 It should be noted that Census figures for Sne-nay-muxw income should be treated with some caution as they constitute 20% of a sample. The Sne-nay-muxw refused to participate in the Aboriginal Post Survey Sample that was carried out in the fall of 1991.

32 This high dependence upon social assistance for support is not unique to the Sne-nay-muxw but a trend found for all Native peoples in Canada (see Frideres 1993:196,200).
employment, it is now used all year round as an alternative to employment. Essentially, the federal government has responded to poor participation in the labour force with social assistance.

Recently there has been great concern by many Sne-nay-muxw that social assistance recipients are getting younger and remaining on social assistance longer. By 1991 a quarter of social assistance recipients on reserve were under the age of twenty-five while sixty percent were under the age of thirty-five. Of those individuals more than half have been on social assistance more than five years. Aware of these problems various government initiatives have tried to remedy the dependency social assistance creates. One strategy has been to apply social assistance to several employment creation programs. The most successful to date and the one that remains funded is the Work Opportunity Program (WOP) which has placed more emphasize upon families than individuals (Shewell 1991:23). However, this program has not been very effective as it stems from the residual model of social welfare. 

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33 This program began in 1971 as a pilot project and received Treasury Board authority to transfer social assistance funds in 1972. While the program itself was terminated after three years the authority to transfer funds was not. In the absence of other development programs for recipients on SA, bands have continued to use this authority.

34 Critics of this program note that funding is not for the project itself but part of the social assistance transfer to core funding. The annual approval for this funding does not allow for long range planning on the part of the band for any meaningful employment project. The time restriction demanding annual turnovers only reinforces an individual perceptions that they are on social assistance (Shewell 1991, Armitage 1991).
Table 6:8

Households by Number of Earners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Four</th>
<th>Five</th>
<th>Retired/Disability</th>
<th>S.A.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: fieldnotes

Table 6: 8 provides the number of wage earners within Sne-nay-muxw households in 1991. Only twenty-seven percent of households have two or more wage earners while fifty two percent are dependent upon pensions, disabilities or social assistance. This dependence upon income from government transfer payments accounts for the low household and family income found on the reserve. The Sne-nay-muxw have not benefited from their urban location as they suffer a poverty that is similar to other reserves throughout the country. The following section examines the role of extended families and their links to women’s employment.

Community and Family Networks

Sne-nay-muxw extended families remain the most important organizational structure on the reserve. An individual’s social and political identity remains linked to their membership in an extended family. In the past there was some distinct geographic distribution of these families between the town reserve and the river reserve, but with the growth of Reserve 4 this is beginning to change. As table 6:9 shows there are ten major families on the reserve that have more than two households. Noticeably the first two
families in the table are the most populous and constitute a third of all the households on
the reserve. Despite their similar size the “A” family are relatively more prosperous than
the “B” family. This is in part due to the demographic differences between the two
families. The “B” family have more members under the age of 19 and have a relatively
smaller work force between the ages of 35 and 64. Average household size is larger for
the “B” than the “A” family, 4.3 and 3.8 respectively. Furthermore the “B” family have
more households headed by young women with young children. In the “A” family the only
female headed households are two older women who are widows.

A second factor is history. The “A” family, members of the Chief’s family had more
political power in the first part of the century. This power gave them advantages for
acquiring land, employment and education. While opportunities are more equally
distributed today, these historic advantages have continued to benefit the family. This is
particularly noted in terms of employment where more “A” family members are employed
in the labour force than “B” family. Also the “A” family has a larger land base on the
reserve than the “B” family so many young members of this family are forced to move off
reserve.

The other families are substantially smaller. In comparing these families there are
significant differences in age composition between them. The ”G”, “I” and “J” families
have fifty percent or more of their family members aged 19 years or under. Also the “I”
and “J” families have a small work force in the age group of 35 to 64. These families are
very young in relation to other families.
### Table 6:9

Sne-nay-muxw Families by Age and Household Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Families</th>
<th>0-6</th>
<th>7-19</th>
<th>20-34</th>
<th>35-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>Pop</th>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Population Survey 1991

There is some intermarriage between the two families but generally families continue to marry individuals off reserve. One elder commented that intermarriages were more common today than in the past. This is difficult to substantiate but some marriages between families on reserve are viewed as strategic ones to close the schism between them. This strategy has had only relative success as there remains substantial conflict between particular families that have had long histories. In the past this dominant cleavage was evident between those families that danced and those that did not. This is not so clear cut today as a recent revival in spirit dancing has occurred among all the Sne-nay-muxw families as it has on many of the Coast Salish reserves in the area. Nonetheless, signs of conflict are still evident. The completion of a community kitchen and a new longhouse on the reserve has fueled the interest in spirit dancing but at the same time family conflicts continue to persist. This was evident before the completion of the longhouse. While still under construction initiation ceremonies began against council wishes. One elder involved
in these initiations criticized the Chief and council at that time that was dominated by families that did not dance. As he explains:

Those people just don't know that there is a right time to do things. That is when you do it no matter what.

Extended family membership continues to determine political alliances. The presence of dominant families on the reserve encourages families to vote as a block in order to guarantee equal representation on Council. Despite this strategy some families have had little to no representation on council. In recent years the Chief's have come from the smaller families which have offset the power of the larger families on Council. However, in reality smaller families are linked to one or two of these larger families through marriage which produces political alliances that are well known in the community. Recently a Chief was elected who resided off reserve. His election brought considerable pressure upon Chief and Council to change the policy that restricted off reserve members' rights to vote.

While extended families remain the important social and political structure on the reserve there have been distinct changes in how families share and support one another. Elders maintain that families do not share as they did in the past. They lament that the reserve is no longer the close community it once was. As they explain:

In those days it was a close neat community. You couldn't walk down the street when people didn't invite you in for food and tea. Not any more. No one knows you. I am closer to people off the reserve at Duncan. My wife's people than people here.

Today we have no friends. You can't even talk to your neighbour. You can't even go in their house. I never go anyways...I just say hi and I keep going. I never visit...They're not friendly...
These Elders maintain that today family sharing is infrequent and often blame the introduction of social assistance as the reason for this change. When families experience financial stress or need support of any kind they seek the help of the social development officer on the reserve. Elders contend that in the past social assistance was only used for those who were old or had no family as there was considerable stigma attached to accepting it. Although this stigma remains, not surprisingly young people, who suffer the highest unemployment, do not share this view. Also it is within this age group that there are a number of single parents on the reserve that are forced to go on social assistance.

While sharing and cooperation may have changed employment opportunities are still linked to an individual's membership in their family. Young men continue to find employment through their uncles. As one young man explained:

I first worked with my uncle R...on the tow boats. It was good money. He works for a small company that is at Steveston. In the beginning I only made half the wages. I had no experience. But by the end of the summer I was getting full pay...I also worked at Queen Charlotte Islands on a survey crew. I got that job through my father’s sister’s husband.

Women, too, use family networks to find employment. This is most evident for on reserve employment for women. As table 6:10 shows on the Sne-nay-muxw reserve women in the “A” family have until recently monopolized most of the administrative and other employment occupations on reserve. This has in the past led to considerable resentment by other families but these women have been better equipped to take advantage of employment opportunities due to their education. Recently there has been an attempt to distribute these positions more equitably among the various families. The recent hiring of non-band member personnel is a new strategy to help curtail this conflict.
Table 6:10

Family Affiliation of Sne-nay-muxw Women Employed On and Off Reserve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>On</th>
<th>Off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldnotes, 1991

Finding employment off reserve through family networks has had limited success for those families who have been displaced from the labour force. The high unemployment in the region has left fewer family members with links to the labour force. As noted above extended funding for various employment programs has occurred in the last two decades. The Sne-nay-muxw have increased their access to this funding by hiring of an employment counselor in the last few years. Her work has helped improve employment substantially for both on and off reserve members.

Recently there has begun a new community awareness that has begun in the last few years. Up until two years ago there was no building suitable to host a large event and even annual general band meetings were held off reserve. However, the recent construction of new buildings and houses on the reserve reveals an ongoing revitalization.
On the town reserve a new and much larger school building has replaced the small preschool and kindergarten. It is expected that higher grades will be offered here in the near future. Several new trailers have been added for the new youth drop-in center and the treaty negotiations office. An addition to the cultural center is used for an RCMP substation. There is also increased visibility of the Sne-nay-muxw in Nanaimo with the annual cultural event of Saysetsen on Newcastle Island held on Canada Day. This event began in 1991 and includes a craft fair, a salmon barbecue, various dance groups and storytelling. In its first year it was highly successful with a large turn out of volunteers from both on and off reserve. For several years a single family on the reserve has put on a slahal tournament the third weekend in July. This draws several hundred people from the reserves south of Nanaimo. Also as is noted below there has been increased interest in the big house. The ability for the community to interact in their own big house and give feasts in the community kitchen has sparked a new feeling of solidarity amongst many families.

**Gender Ideology**

From 1971 Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment opportunities began to rise with the growing public service sector of the economy. At the same time men’s employment opportunities decreased as they remained segregated in the shrinking primary and secondary sectors. This change in opportunities has transformed Sne-nay-muxw gender ideology to increasingly accept dual earning families as the norm. This ideology is also dominant in Nanaimo and the wider Canadian society. In the following section I

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35 Saysetsen and Q’ulutsun are two Sne-nay-muxw village sites on Newcastle Island.
36 The actual percentage of dual earning families in Nanaimo is unavailable. Dual earning families constitute two thirds of all families in Canada (Rashid 1994).
examine how the Sne-nay-muxw have accommodated this changing family ideology to incorporate the wage earning roles of women. In the final section I explore how Sne-nay-muxw women's employment is linked to family status and political power in their community.

Women’s Wage Employment

As with non-Native women in Nanaimo, the majority of Sne-nay-muxw women working in the labour force are married and part of a dual wage-earner family. This condition is not a new one for Sne-nay-muxw women as noted above where they were forced to work in wage labour to maintain their own families. What is new however, is that women no longer work in wage labour as part of a family unit and men and women’s experiences in the labour force are distinctly different. These conditions have ultimately affected the division of labour in the household as well as how the Sne-nay-muxw view women’s roles.

Approximately fifty women on the reserve work full or part-time in the labour force. The majority of these women are between the ages of 35 and 64. The lowest participation rate in the labour force is found among women aged 19 to 24. Closer examination of women in this age group reveals that they are married and have young children. Unlike the trend of later births or elderly gravida found in Nanaimo or in the wider Canadian society as a whole, Sne-nay-muxw women on reserve are still marrying and having children at a young age. In addition they continue to have more children than the average in the wider population. Most certainly childcare demands not only interrupt women’s
education but are barriers to seeking employment. A young woman who has three
children under the age of six noted this dilemma. She quit high school in her last year.
She has done some upgrading but she does not have her high school certificate. With her
qualifications the only employment available to her offers low wages which are then
diminished with baby-sitting costs:

I have never felt that I was discriminated against when I worked. But most
jobs the wages are so low that it is not reasonable for me to work and look
after my family at the same time...Also we don’t have a car so its hard to
get to a job.

Integrating employment with childcare is a problem for young women who do not have
strong supportive kin networks on the reserve or close by. There is no subsidy for day
care on reserve as there exists for women living off reserve. Single parents in particular
stressed the need for such a service but to this point the Social Development Program on
reserve has no such funding. One woman who hopes to take a business program stated
that this would only be possible if she could get her children into a neighbouring reserve
daycare. As her sister lived on this reserve she was highly hopeful they would accept her
children. Another woman spoke of the difficulty she had finding an adequate baby-sitter
when she tried to keep an evening shift as a janitor:

My husband was away all week logging...My brother looked after my son
at night...It was hard for him...He’s young and wanted to go out at night...I
had to finally give it up.

Lack of day care remains a contentious issue on the reserve and is evidence of the
ideological struggles over women’s employment versus their role in the home. While
some in the community believe that a daycare center would be important for enabling
women to seek employment or take employment training, others view daycare as a
"glorified baby sitting service" that will encourage women to neglect their responsibility as
mothers. To date finding funding for a day care center has had a low priority for Chief
and council.

The conflict between the priorities of motherhood and paid employment is most
certainly an important issue for young women. 37 One young woman who is working full
time and has a toddler confesses that she worries about leaving her youngest all day:

It's a worry leaving him all day...but I have a good housesitter...I would prefer not to work or to work part-time. But it's worth it because I can
give them so much more. I can buy them better clothes and other things they need...It's important for their future to have the same as everybody else.

This conflict is not apparent for older women whose children are in their teens or older.
One such woman, while admitting that working full time adds significantly to her family's
income, believes she would work anyway:

I like what I do. I would be bored if I stayed home all day...It's different
for me than other women on the reserve who are forced to work to get by.

The perception that women's primary role is to stay home and look after their children
is still a dominant one in the minds of many men on the reserve. As one woman confided:

Men on this reserve are very conservative. They don't like their women to
work....I lived on another reserve with my first husband... (they) accepted
women working...I would like to find work next year when my youngest is
in grade one...but my husband doesn't want me to. I'm going to work
anyway.

37 This fear is consistently voiced by Native women elsewhere (see Meadows 1980, Hull 1982).
Another woman who works part-time noted that her husband only approved of her employment if it did not interfere with the running of the household or the care of their children. She notes that their roles are clearly defined in that she is responsible for the housework:

I do all the housework. My husband does the odd B.B.Q. but he has only offered once to dry the dishes. My son helps a little in the housework. I may have spoiled them as my mother-in-law says that my husband use to do things around the house.

This observation is substantiated by several men. One man in his early 50's admitted that he did not want his wife to work. He made a good income that supported his family so he did not understand why his wife wanted to work full time. He confessed, too, that this issue had always been a source of strain in their relationship.

While there remains this conservative core of men who support this division of labour, there is increasing acceptance of women's employment outside the home by younger men. This is evident in the changing division of labour within the family as more men take on domestic labour. Several women spoke positively of their husband's help in housework and child care. While it is difficult to know how much of a contribution these men are making without data on time and specific tasks performed, it is important to note that these women believe that men are sharing the responsibilities. Unlike the previous generation of women that described men's exclusion from domestic labour, young women voiced the expectation that men should at least help. This expectation was higher among women who were employed. One woman who went back to school for upgrading for several years remembers that her husband was very supportive in doing the housework:
He looked after the kids. He made my lunch and supper as well as cleaned the house and did the laundry. I was away so much that my youngest son didn't know me. He was brought up by his father. He is still closer to his father than me.

Another woman with a young family also finds her husband supportive while she takes her certificate in the hairdressing program. She notes that he helps look after their three young children and does half of the household work. To this point this division of labour has worked out well because he has been unemployed most of the time due to an injury. When he returns to work full-time she believes the work will still be equally shared.

But there are still sources of conflict for young dual earning couples concerning domestic labour. One woman discussed this conflict particularly when she worked full time. She explains:

We both do the housework now. But when I worked full time we did have a blow out about the housework. He works shifts and would be home all day. When I came home from work he expected me to cook supper and pick the kids up from school...Now we have an agreement. If he works nights he cooks supper. If I'm home during the day I cook supper. I do the wash and put it in the dryer, he folds it and puts it away. I vacuum and he mows the grass. The kids do the dishes. Everyone has their chores and it works out.

The ease with which she was able to resolve this conflict indicates an acceptance on the part of her husband to accept some responsibility for domestic work. Nonetheless as this division of labour reveals, she continues to do the larger share of the housework.

Part of this acceptance for men is linked to the recognition that women's income is important in raising the family's standard of living. While there are no figures available to understand the percentage of women's contribution to family income or how this
percentage has changed over time, there are several indirect measures that can be used.

Sne-nay-muxw women’s average income reveals that it has risen in the last ten years in relation to men’s average income. In 1991 Sne-nay-muxw women’s average income was 64% of Sne-nay-muxw men’s average income (Census 1991). While there is a question of variations in spending patterns, cross cultural data reveals that women generally contribute the majority of their earned incomes to the benefit of the family. It is assumed that with women’s rising income, in relation to men, that they contribute more income to the family than they have in the past.

But whether or not women contribute more to the family income than in the past, they continue to control the distribution of their own income. As two women explain:

When I work I make all the decisions about what to do with the money I earn. While this is a shared decision I have the final say.

I look after my own money. My paycheck pays the utilities such as Hydro, telephone and cable. I spend the rest of my money on the kids entertainment and clothes. He pays the rest of the bills and spends his money on toys, boats and motors. It has worked out well. We also have a joint account.

In another case a woman managed all the family finances. She contended that she was better at it than her husband and he willingly conceded this role. However, this is not a common situation as the majority of women noted that the distribution of money was a joint decision. No women interviewed admitted to any conflicts over money despite their

38 Non-Native women in Nanaimo make only 54% of the average income of men (Census 1991).
39 Much of this research reveals that women contribute a higher proportion of their income than men (see Whitehead 1981, Blumberg 1991:101-104).
control over their own income. Sne-nay-muxw women clearly expect to manage their income and this seems to be accepted by Sne-nay-muxw men.

Status and Political Power

In the previous period women’s exclusion from wage labour was a significant step towards a family’s status. However, with the restructuring of the economy and the increased participation of women in wage labour, women’s employment has become an asset to many families not only for their contribution in income, but for the status associated with the work women do. As noted above, a large percentage of Sne-nay-muxw women are employed in the service sector of the economy that specifically supports Native peoples. They are involved in the administering and managing of programs which affect the every day lives of individuals on and off reserve. Family members related to these women have a distinct advantage in accessing upcoming programs and funding which are increasingly relevant for Sne-nay-muxw employment and education opportunities.40

That family status is now linked to women’s employment is evident when examining the economic and political dynamics of the community. One of the larger families has achieved a higher socio-economic status than other families on the reserve. This family, until recently, dominated the political decision making on the reserve. As table 6:10 shows the “A” family has the largest number of women employed. A large majority of them are employed on reserve. There are many factors that contribute to this condition

40 As noted in recent work (Miller 1989, 1992; Miller & Pylypa 1995) such relationships also have the potential to alienate other families from such benefits because of the very nature of the social relationships between families.
but the most significant is educational attainment and training. Women in this family are far more educated than most people on the reserve as many hold post-secondary diplomas and degrees. Consequently, it is women from this family that are most qualified to manage educational programs, social development programs, and run the administration of the band. At every turn these women make decisions about the distribution of limited funding in their community. Having women in such key positions has led to allegations of favoritism towards their own family members. It is difficult not to accept this claim as members from this family have significantly benefited from this relation. On the other hand, this family puts forward candidates that are the most suitable for the posted positions. In the last two years, there have been significant attempts to distribute employment and other benefits more equitably by hiring women from other families in these key positions on reserve.

Women's employment in such management jobs gives them substantial recognition in the community. The status that women gain from these positions is often translated into political power as women who are employed on reserve are often nominated to run for council. In the last decade all women successfully elected to Council have been employed full time. Many of these women are from the “A” family. In the 1992 election eight women were nominated out of thirty council nominees. Half of these women nominated were from this family. 41 Of the two women successfully elected both are employed on reserve.

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41 One woman was retired but maintains a private business.
Surprisingly, women's employment has not translated into more political power on Chief and Council. As noted in the previous chapter, women have been represented on Sne-nay-muxw Council since 1958. Nonetheless, this representation has only increased to two out of nine councilors in the recent elections. In light of the population increase on reserve, women's representation on council has in fact decreased over time. To date no women have been elected or even nominated for the position of Chief. This poor political representation is not due to lack of women's aspirations. Several women voiced hopes that in the future they could run for council or the office of Chief. However, there are several deterrents for women. Women who work in band administration have recently found themselves excluded from this option with the new hiring policy brought into effect in 1990. The two clauses which are of some concern for these women are as follows:

23) Any member of Chief and Council shall step down as elected Councilor or Chief if they wish to accept a paid non-political position within the Band Administration.

24) Any staff member upon being elected to Chief and Council shall immediately resign their staff position unless it is a political position that is being held.

These clauses were initiated to protect the band from improprieties that such a relationship could create. As the majority of band administration employees are women, these clauses affect women more than men. Not surprisingly it is the women who work for the band that have strongest aspirations to be on Chief and Council.

As well as this hiring policy another deterrent for women is the demands that full time employment and family responsibilities make upon their time. The demands upon Chief and Council for various meetings and social functions are significant. As well as weekly
Chief and Council meetings, there are two or three other meetings a week for selected committees, and a number of conferences and workshops to attend. While there is an honorarium paid for this attendance the time required for these meetings is substantial. Many women who have social responsibilities linked to their families do not have the time needed for such political commitments. As one woman explains:

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I thought about getting on council this time but I just don’t have the time. What with the pressure at work all day and then looking after the family. Driving the kids to lacrosse ...and other things. It would just be too much for me.
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Another deterrent is the conflict that many women experience once elected to Council. Several women who have been on Council noted that their experiences were difficult. They believe that men do not listen to them or give their opinions much weight in the discussions because they are women. This frustrating situation has deterred many women from seeking election. As one woman noted:

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I don’t want to get on Council...They don’t listen to women...They don’t treat you with any respect...That’s the way it is now.
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That this conflict exists on Council is also acknowledged by men. As one member candidly admitted:

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That is one of the issues we have to solve on this reserve...the conflict between men and women...It’s not only on Council but in the families...It’s something we are working on...
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Although employment has become an important status marker for women in the community women’s participation in the longhouse is still held in high regard. The

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42 A survey of women who accept Council appointments in the last decade reveals that the majority of them are single parents with grown children or have no children at all.
longhouse or the bighouse as many Sne-nay-muxw refer to it, continues to be an important part of many families' lives. After a fire, the Sne-nay-muxw were without a longhouse for almost five years, however the recent building of a new longhouse has fueled new interest and energy in the community. The attendance has been very high in the last two seasons as many Sne-nay-muxw families put forward a number of new dancers.

There are recognized women in the community who are known for their work in the longhouse. In the past these women were not employed in management or administrative positions on the reserve. This is beginning to change as several women in administration are actively involved in the longhouse. One woman was a recent initiate who became a red face dancer. This status is significant as this woman came from a family of non-dancers. Many believe that this initiation is the beginning of the end for the long history of conflicts between families that dance and families that do not on the reserve.

This active participation in the long house has different implications for women and employment. Putting forward new dancers or giving memorials and naming ceremonies can be an expensive proposition that only families with employed women can afford. The cost often exceeds thousands of dollars. Women's contribution from wage income is often a necessity for families to even consider participating. However, combining longhouse activities with employment is often difficult for women. The longhouse season is intensely demanding and for three months during the winter season it is an all consuming activity for the community. For women who work full time the demands on their time

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43 These dancers come to the longhouse through spontaneous possession produced by sickness, sorrow or hard feelings. The other variety of winter ceremonial dancer, black face, are grabbed and considered by one source as home-made (see Amoss 1978: 71-2).
produces considerable stress and conflict in organizing other parts of their lives. While dances during the week do not go beyond midnight, on the weekends they are much longer. Many of these dances are held in other communities so women and their families must travel between communities. Aside from the actual events in the longhouse women also take turns helping families assigned to the kitchen for specific occasions. Other events, such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and memorials that can occur after the winter season are equally demanding for women whose families are the host.

Summary and Conclusions
The transformation of Nanaimo economy from forestry and related industries to a service economy accommodated a new gender, class and race segregation. Significantly the expanding service economy has had a negative impact upon Sne-nay-muxw men who have remained committed to occupations in logging, mill work and longshoring. These occupations no longer offer any security and few men have the education or skills to seek alternative employment. This leaves them increasingly vulnerable to unemployment when recession occurs and competition rises for these limited positions. Women on the other hand, have benefited from this restructured economy. New state policies offering women equal access to education and employment training has enabled them to find employment in the expanding service delivery programs for Native peoples. While this employment offers women a modicum of security it remains linked to the political and social politics of the state which often withdraws funding arbitrarily. The segregation of Sne-nay-muxw women into this area of the service sector reveals the persistent nature of a segregated labour force that continues to structure women’s employment opportunities.
During the last two decades Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy shows an increasing reliance upon government transfer payments as Sne-nay-muxw families adjust to this new restructured economy. Many Sne-nay-muxw families have been forced to live off the reserve due to housing shortages and lack of employment in the community. These factors have to some extent lessened the frequency of cooperation and exchange within and between families. However, extended families remain the most important social and political organization on and off the reserve. A woman’s identity, economic support and employment opportunities remains linked to her extended family.

Women’s participation in the labour force is no longer within the family productive unit as families no longer fish together or go to the berry fields. Women’s employment is separate. Furthermore, dual earning families have become the norm on the reserve as women increasingly seek wage employment. The division of labour within the household continues to link women to domestic work more so than men, but this is beginning to change. Family status is now linked to women’s employment and not their roles as ‘housewives.’ Nonetheless women remain excluded from formal political power and obtain power solely through the informal networks of their families.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Sne-nay-muxw women have an employment history linked to the gender, race and class segregation of the local economy of Nanaimo. This segregation was evident at the onset of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s coal operation when the Sne-nay-muxw were initially transformed from traders and petty commodity producers to wage earners. Like men, women, were given the lowest paid menial labour in and around the post. Men were employed to dig the shafts or transport the coal to the pit head while women were used to convey coal to the ships and for domestic chores around the post. Once the mining industry began in earnest, Sne-nay-muxw employment opportunities were increasingly determined by segregated social relations. Sne-nay-muxw men were used as casual labourers in the mines and women were excluded from the mining industry completely. Economic recessions in the coal industry, competition from Chinese workers and increased mechanization displaced the Sne-nay-muxw to the most marginal employment in the mining community. Seasonal employment niches in the cannery industry and agricultural work, open to Native peoples throughout the province, encouraged Sne-nay-muxw families to migrate to the Fraser River and Washington state.

With the demise of the mining industry, labour segregation shifted to accommodate the needs of forest based industries. After the depression of the 1930’s new opportunities opened to Sne-nay-muxw men as loggers, longshoremen and mill workers. Some security in these occupations was achieved after World War II with the rise of unionization and
market demands for forestry products. Despite the increased security in men’s occupations, Sne-nay-muxw women remained segregated in the lowest paid menial work in the community. This was assured with the inferior education available to them. Migration outside of the local economy to the berry fields of Washington and the hop fields of the Fraser Valley continued to supplement local employment for many women and their families. This did not change until the growth of service based industries which again restructured the labour force.

Labour segregation in the service economy of Nanaimo remains based upon gender, race and class lines. Sne-nay-muxw men work in the primary and secondary sectors of the economy while non-Native men are employed in the higher paid service sector. Yet, unlike the previous period, men’s employment has no security as unionization has declined and increased technology reduces the work force in these sectors. To date few Sne-nay-muxw men have made the transition to service occupations primarily because of lack of education and training. Unfortunately young men on the reserve still seek employment in seasonal construction and other insecure jobs.

This is not the case for Sne-nay-muxw women who have taken advantage of new opportunities open to them in the service economy. As well as homemakers and other low paying service employment, some have moved into management positions and service delivery professions. This has guaranteed them on reserve employment as federal policies have increasingly decentralized Department of Indian Affairs services. This has also occurred off reserve as service delivery programs funded by both federal and provincial governments have increased to accommodate the growing Native population in Nanaimo.
Nonetheless, Sne-nay-muxw women continue to be segregated in the economy as they are primarily employed in occupations that service Native peoples. Although this participation is often politically motivated, the employment of Sne-nay-muxw women into these occupations indicates that they remain segregated in the local economy. Without government funding for service programs and employment equity legislation, Sne-nay-muxw women would not experience the high participation rate in the labour force that they do today. Unlike non-Native women, their employment, is influenced more by the state and its policies than market place forces in Nanaimo.

Clearly, Sne-nay-muxw women's employment history does not parallel that of non-Native women in Nanaimo. During the late 1800's few non-Native women worked in the labour force while Sne-nay-muxw women actively sought employment as domestic servants, cannery workers and agricultural harvesters. When non-Native women began moving into the paid labour force they sought employment in clerical, sales and service occupations. These occupations were closed to Sne-nay-muxw women because of inferior schooling and racial discrimination. The lowest paid service jobs offered to them were jobs that non-Native women were not interested in pursuing. The increased opportunities for education and training have allowed Sne-nay-muxw women to seek occupations similar to other women. Today, in many respects, their wage income and employment experiences are more similar to non-Native women than they are to Sne-nay-muxw men. However, to emphasize this similarity is to ignore the gender, race and class segregation that has historically structured Sne-nay-muxw women's access to wage employment.
Although acknowledging that a segregated labour force limited women's employment, I have also examined how Sne-nay-muxw domestic economy and ideology either encouraged women to participate or not participate in wage labour. During the period of the mining economy this domestic economy included both subsistence production and farming which offset the insecure employment opportunities in the economy. Throughout this period women sought wage employment to help support their families. The social organization of extended families and kinship networks allowed women to do so. In the mining economy, Sne-nay-muxw women were able to respond to the demand for domestic servants and other casual labour with the sharing of child care and other non-wage labour by other family members. As the age structure in Sne-nay-muxw population began to change and the number of older members declined, women were increasingly limited to employment that included family participation, such as in the canneries and the hop fields.

Coinciding with the shift of the local economy to forestry related production, the division of labour within the household changed as non-wage labour such as subsistence production and farming came to an end. Women's opportunities in wage labour were restrained by large families, changes in child care responsibilities, and men's absence in the home due to wage employment. Despite the expansion of jobs for women in the local economy, family participation on the fish boats and in the berry fields was often the only alternative wage labour available to Sne-nay-muxw women.

Today, women's access to employment remains conditioned by family size and women's child care responsibilities. The insecurity of men's employment has decreased their absence in the home but women remain the primary caretakers of children. Without
extended family support or day care facilities, women with young children are restrained in wage opportunities. Family employment, always present in the past, is no longer available to them. Nonetheless, this situation is not the same for all women as age, number of children, and education are important factors influencing women’s ability to seek wage labour. Emerging is a distinct trend where women seek post-secondary education and employment later in life when their children are grown.

I have also identified the importance of women’s position within an extended family for understanding their access to wage employment. Although the division of labour within the household transformed with the economy, bilateral kinship networks and extended families remains the central organizing principle in Sne-nay-muxw lives. Their employment history confirms that the decline of kinship networks is not an inevitable outcome of capitalism and urbanization. On the contrary, for the Sne-nay-muxw kinship networks remain important for assistance and links to employment opportunities. In this regard they retain the same function as they had in the subsistence economy; they give each family necessary support and access to a wide variety of economic opportunities. In the face of insecure wage labour such social organization remains a central part of Sne-nay-muxw strategy for resistance and adaptation to economic segregation. A woman’s identity and opportunities for education and employment remain linked to her membership in an extended family.

Shifts in women’s participation in the labour force are also shown to be accompanied by acceptance of a domestic ideology. While there is limited data describing the nature of gender relations during their participation in the mining economy, there is no indication
that women’s labour within the home was devalued or that women became dependent upon men. On the contrary, evidence points to a significant degree of autonomy in women’s lives as they controlled the distribution of their own income, easily dissolved marriages if spouses were incompatible, and were integral for wage support in their families. Such evidence suggests that a gender ideology supporting women’s autonomy remained important in the presence of insecure wage employment and the gender, race and class discrimination in the labour force.

With the restructuring of the economy after 1920 a domestic ideology became accepted that endorsed women’s exclusion from wage labour. At this time women were increasingly circumscribed to the domestic domain. This was a product of the changing division of labour within the household and the ability of some men to find secure employment. Another factor was Sne-nay-muxw women’s preferred avoidance to the lowest paid and most exploited jobs in the labour force. This resistance contributed to an increasing acceptance of an ideology that women’s roles were solely linked to the home. Despite the reality of many women’s lives, who worked in the labour force to support their families, the idealized role for women became full time housewives. Achieving the exclusion of women from wage labour became a mark of status for a family and a single male wage earner.

Today, this ideology is again transformed to accommodate the historical changes in men and women’s employment. Women are accepted as wage earners with men’s insecure wage employment. This is further sanctioned as family status and power are now linked to those families whose women are employed in the labour force. However, an
ideology that strongly links women’s roles to the domestic sphere as mothers and wives remains present. This is manifest in several ways: young women continue to have children early in their lives; seeking employment is not supported with day care funding; and women’s political power in the community remains informal despite their employment in key administration and management positions.

The explanation for why Sne-nay-muxw women’s identity remains strongly linked to the domestic sphere despite their historical participation in wage labour lies in the nature of the segregated labour force that surrounds them. Both the mining and forestry related economy in Nanaimo promoted a distinct identity of maleness linked to manual wage labour and femaleness to non-wage labour in the home. These economies excluded women from wage labour either through legislation or unionization. This gender identity was also affirmed through the ongoing day to day socialization of the work force. For men the production process demanded a high degree of male solidarity. While there was a division of labour based upon racial lines, Sne-nay-muxw men worked alongside non-Native men. This socialization constantly reaffirmed what were appropriate jobs for men. This may explain why today young men continue to seek employment in occupations of the primary and secondary sectors. Few have sought higher levels of education needed for service sector employment despite opportunities to do so. For Sne-nay-muxw men, being male is linked to manual wage labour.

In the same respect Sne-nay-muxw women continue to identify femaleness with domestic roles. Their historical experience in the local labour force was in occupations that were specifically linked to this role. Many of the jobs that young women choose
today are associated with nurturing occupations (i.e. nursing, social work and teaching).

Women do not seek employment in the mills, construction or other male dominated employment despite the increasing participation of non-Native women in these occupations. For Sne-nay-muxw women, being female is identified with occupations that are linked to what they perceive as traditional domestic roles.

One of the leading questions in the wider debate about women’s employment asks whether employment improves women’s lives. In terms of Sne-nay-muxw women’s employment experiences the answer to that question is not easy to answer. Their historical experiences in the labour force reveals a discrimination that placed them in the most marginalized employment. Yet women’s access to an income, no matter how small, benefited their relationship within their families and communities. On the other hand, when they could refuse such exploited wage labour, they readily did so and, in the process, gained a significant degree of status in their community as full time housewives. Today Sne-nay-muxw women are not forced to accept such exploited labour. Depending upon sufficient education and abilities, some women can find rewarding occupations that give them a sense of security in employment they did not experience in past years. Other women, unable to find good employment, often opt to stay out of the labour force. This has been made easier with the access to social assistance and other government transfer payments.

Most certainly Sne-nay-muxw women will continue to seek employment in the local economy and their families will continue to rely upon them for support especially while men are limited to the shrinking primary and secondary sectors of the economy. The
economic recession of the early 1980's, a product of both market demand and a restructuring economy, offers a warning of what the future will bring for Sne-nay-muxw families if men's employment remains in these sectors. This reliance upon women's employment is not without risk. The majority of women's employment is linked to state policies and their economic initiatives. As the government increasingly seeks to divest itself of its responsibility to Native peoples, these employment opportunities may disappear. Sne-nay-muxw women will find themselves competing for employment in the wider economy where gender, race and class segregation is still a reality.
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Stasiulis, Daiva K.

Stenzel, Franz

Stern, Berhard J.

Stoler, Ann

Suttles, Wayne


Talmon-Garber, Y.

Taylor, Herbert & Wilson Duff

Tennant, Paul

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APPENDIX A

Text Appended to Douglas Treaties

Know all men, we, the chiefs and people of the ....Tribe, who have signed our names and made our marks to this deed on the ....day of ..., do consent to surrender, entirely and for ever, to James Douglas, the agent of the Hudson’s Bay Company in Vancouver Island, that is to say, for the governor, Deputy Governor, and Committee of the same, the whole of the lands situate and lying between ........

The condition of or understanding of this sale is this, that our village sites and enclosed fields are to be kept for our own use, for the use of our children, and for those who may follow after us; and the land shall be properly surveyed hereafter. It is understood, however, that the land itself, with these small exceptions, becomes the entire property of the white people for ever; it is also understood that we are at liberty to hunt over the unoccupied lands, and to carry on our fisheries as formerly. We have received, as payment....In token whereof, we have signed our names and made our marks .....
**APPENDIX B**

**Table 1:**

Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company Workforce, 1874-1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
<th>% Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>304*</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>301*</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>237*</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>223*</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>229*</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.8%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.3%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>697*</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1296*</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1331</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: B.C. Ministry of Mines Annual Report, 1874-1891

* In addition to these figures the number of boys who worked the mines is also noted:

1876, 18 boys; 1877, 17 boys; 1878, 20 boys; 1879, 17 boys; 1880, 15 boys; 1890, 25 boys.

** These figures include Indian and boys labour combined
APPENDIX C

Memo to W. H. Lomas from the Indian Superintendent’s Office,

[For] 3rd Column wages earned you can get at this for the present approximately only by estimating the number of your Indian and their time whilst employed for the canneries otherwise that when taking fish, work at the sawmills other than contracts, any other work for which they were paid wages.

[For] 5th and 6th Add to the monies earned for fishing for the canneries and fishing for the markets the following estimates[: ] say half the food or any other proportion you may think correct used by the Indians is the product of hunting and fishing 1/6 hunting and 2/6 fishing estimate the fish at 4 cents pr lb. and the meat at 8 cents pr lb. say each adult consumes 2 lbs meat or 3 lbs fish each day reckoning for this estimate 180 days in the year hence adults x 120 for fish x 3 lb. + 60 for meat x 2 lbs + children at half rations = lbs fish at 4 cents + lbs meat at 8 cents = Earned by hunting and earned by fishing to which last you must add earned by fishing for canneries, earned by fishing for market. By questioning the Indians closely on your rounds you can get sufficient data to enable you to make a very close estimate of the quantities regard by the Department. The proportions which I have given you above are merely arbitrary for illustration but you can readily obtain from the Indians the kinds of food on which they subsist and where they procure it.


Source: RG 10, vol. 1350, #252-253 Aug. 4, 1898

Memo to W.R. Robertson from the Indian Superintendent’s Office,

Sir: In compiling your statistics this year I have to request that you will give very particular attention to those which represent the average income of the Indians under your charge. It has been noticed that in certain agencies sums are not down as income which would be absolutely incommensurate to the support of the Indians of those agencies. The Department is aware that it is in some cases difficult to get the exact sources of income but does not wish any of its agents to commit themselves to statements which are obviously incorrect. The amount f the income of a band it is considered should be, at least, enough to support the number of people in the band even supposing that it would only do so in somewhat straightened circumstances. [Signed] Your obedient servant, J. D. McLean, Secretary.

Source: RG 10, vol. 1350, #316 May 28th, 1901.