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Department of Social & Educational Studies

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date 27/1/91
ABSTRACT

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racism, in the form of white supremacy, shaped relations between whites and Chinese British Columbians. In resisting and accommodating to white supremacy, the Chinese were active participants, along with the members of the dominant society, in shaping these relations. White supremacy was consequently a dynamic system, one whose many parts were continually in flux, and whose central constructs--notions of "race" and British Columbia as "a White Man’s province"--were largely political in nature.

The thesis argues that white supremacy, as both ideology and organization, was deeply imbedded in British Columbia society. Exclusion based on "race" was incorporated into government institutions as they were remade at Confederation in an effort to enhance the power of white male property-owners. By the early twentieth century, ideological constructs of "the Chinaman" and "the Oriental" were used as foils in the creation of identities as "whites" and as "Canadians." The official public school curriculum transmitted these notions, while schools themselves organized supremacy in practice by imposing racial segregation on many Chinese students.

In reaction, the Chinese created their own institutions and ideologies. While these institutions often had continuities with the culture of South China, the place of origin of most B.C. Chinese, they were primarily adaptations to the conditions of
British Columbia, including the realities of racism. Chinese language schools played an especially important role in helping to create a Chinese merchant public separate from the dominant society. This public was at once the consequence of exclusion and the greatest community resource in resisting white supremacy.

The study concludes by questioning the workability of contemporary anti-racist strategies which treat racism as a marginal phenomenon, or as merely a set of mistaken ideas. Instead, it suggests that such strategies must recognize that racism is one of the major structures of Canadian society.
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FOREWORD

The discussion on school segregation in Victoria which runs through the thesis was originally published under the title "White Supremacy, Chinese Schooling and School Segregation in Victoria: The Case of the 1922-1923 Chinese Students Strike," Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation 2,2 (Fall 1990): 287-305. The discussion on school textbooks which appears in revised form in Chapter Five was originally published as "White Supremacy and the Rhetoric of Educational Indoctrination: A Canadian Case-Study" in J.A. Mangan (ed.) Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialization and British Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 144-162.
CHAPTER ONE:

SCHOOL SEGREGATION, THE CHALLENGE OF CHINESE ACTIVITY
AND THE HISTORY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The 1922-23 Strike of Chinese Students in Victoria

In September 1922, the Victoria School Board attempted to segregate all of the Chinese students enrolled in the district's elementary schools. On September 5, the first day of classes, the principals of the Boys' Central and the George Jay Schools called the Chinese students out of their classes, lined them up and marched them down the road to the schools which had been set aside for the Chinese only.¹

Much to the surprise of the Victoria School Board and its officials, the Chinese community did not passively acquiesce to this discriminatory move. When Principal J.A. Cunningham of Boys' Central School and his charges reached the segregated King's Road

School,

... a Chinese boy holding the reputation of being the quietest and most studious in the class shouted something in the Oriental lingo, and like a flash the parade disbanded, leaving Principal Cunningham in the middle of the roadway and wondering how he could overcome the difficulties of the situation.2

Similar events took place with the students from the George Jay School.3

The Chinese community had organized a boycott of the public school system in Victoria to pressure the school board into allowing their children to return to their former classes. Despite various attempts at resolution in the coming months, the deadlock between the Chinese community and the Victoria School Board continued for the rest of the school year. Consequently during the 1922-1923 school year, "less than six" Chinese students attended the public schools in Victoria, compared to 216 the previous year.4

This incident poses a number of problems for understanding the operation of racism in British Columbia’s history. To date the major studies of racist ideology and its place in the political and

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2 "Chinese Pupils Start ‘Rebellion’."  
3 Ibid.  
social life of the province have focused entirely on "whites," their attitudes and activities. Incidents such as the 1922-23 dispute between Victoria's Chinese community and the school board suggest that a different approach is needed. The members of target groups such as the Chinese did not meekly submit to white domination, but actively resisted racist pressures sometimes successfully. As target groups challenged some measures and accommodated themselves to others, racist ideas and activities in turn changed. This means that the members of target groups need to be taken into account as actors in the history of British Columbia who played a role in shaping the society, its politics and public life.

Once the active, if unequal, participation in history of subordinate groups like the Chinese is recognized, the study of racism can no longer focus exclusively on the attitudes and

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5 This term is used with some reluctance and for want of a satisfactory replacement. If used uncritically, it can imply that racial identities were grounded in a neutral and objective reality which, it will be argued, they were not. At the same time, there is no really satisfactory replacement to refer to the conglomerate of people of primarily British, eastern Canadian and American origins, who often called themselves "white," sometimes "Anglo-Saxons," and who used these term as a way of constructing a shared identity. Where appropriate, I have used terms such as "Anglo-Canadian" and "European," but except when directly citing historical records I have avoided other "race" labels entirely. The term "Chinese" is intended to refer to a national or ethnic group.

practices of the dominant group. Rather it must consider the activities of both dominant and subordinate groups and the relationship between them. Racism then becomes fundamentally a relationship between a dominant and a subordinate group, rather than merely a set of prejudicial ideas and discriminatory practices however reprehensible. Prejudice, individual and institutional discrimination, physical and psychic violence, all promote the dominance of the members of one group over the members of the other, at the same time that racist ideology justifies this dominance and defines which individuals belong to which groups. Racism in this sense establishes the dominance of one group while circumscribing the lives of the subordinate group members, profoundly inhibiting their life choices. In societies like that of British Columbia, it has came to involve what, in a different context, Hannah Arendt referred to as "the organization of an entire texture of life according to an ideology."\(^7\)

While admittedly racism has not been the only form of domination to operate in the above ways,\(^8\) it has been of at best marginal interest to Canadian historians and remains to be recognized as the major factor in shaping our society that it has

\(^7\) See Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, new ed. with added prefaces, (San Diego, New York and London: Harvest/HBJ, 1951, 1979). She observed that "In Nazi Germany, questioning the validity of racism and anti-semitism when nothing mattered but race origin, when a career depended upon an 'Aryan' physiognomy (Himmler used to select the applicants for the SS from photographs) and the amount of food upon the number of one's Jewish grandparents, was like questioning the existence of the world" (363).

\(^8\) I particularly have in mind oppressions with respect to gender and class.
in fact been. At least to some extent, this lack of recognition reflects the fact that once racism has been woven into the "texture of life," its operations have been by and large invisible to members of the dominant group or have become so taken for granted as to appear natural and inevitable.

The following therefore argues that racism was integral to the making of British Columbia society (and, by extension, that of Canada as a whole) during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. White supremacy is the form of racism that will be considered in this argument. Particular attention will be paid to documenting ways in which the dominance of "whites" was constructed over non-white groups, in particular British Columbians of Chinese ancestry, and the actions of these other groups in contesting this dominance. Since it was one of the few institutions in the early twentieth century whose claims to universality required the presence of both whites and Chinese, schooling will be the principal institutional setting for the study.

Racism

The British sociologist Robert Miles has defended the value of racism as an analytical category when narrowly defined as an

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9 For example, Carl Berger in The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing since 1900, 2d ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) has noted that studies of "the opinions and feelings of elements of the native-born, British-Canadian majority" have done much "to qualify, if not overthrow, the image of Canada as a relatively tolerant community" (311), but sees this merely as part of the contribution of "ethnic history" to "the new history" (Ibid., 307-12).
ideology. He notes,

The distinguishing content of racism as an ideology is, first, its signification of some biological characteristic(s) as the criterion by which a collectivity may be identified. In this way, the collectivity is represented as having a natural, unchanging origin and status, and therefore as being inherently different. Second, the group so identified must be attributed with additional, negatively evaluated characteristics and/or must be represented as inducing, negative consequences for any other. Those characteristics may be either biological or cultural. Thus all the people considered to make up a natural, biological collectivity are represented as possessing a range of (negatively evaluated) biological and/or cultural characteristics.\[10\]

In effect, racism picks a biological property that can define a group, and ascribes additional negative characteristics to that property so that all members of that group appear, naturally and unchangingly, to have these characteristics simply because they supposedly share the same biological property. Thus the statement "Blacks are lazy" is racist since 1) it picks skin colour to define a group, 2) assigns the negatively evaluated characteristic of laziness to all members of the group and 3) has the effect of ascribing this characteristic of laziness to all individuals whose skin colour can be classified as "Black."

Central to Miles' definition of racism is the concept of "racialisation." He defines "racialisation" as "[an ideological] process of delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent cultural and/or biological (usually

phenotypical) characteristics."¹¹ The division of populations into "races" is a common form of racialisation. Miles points out that this is "a dialectical process of signification" since "ascribing a real or alleged biological characteristic with meaning to define the Other necessarily entails defining Self by the same criterion." Accordingly, European definitions of the people of Africa as "black," those of East Asia as "yellow" and those of the Americas as "red" were simultaneously definitions of themselves as "white."¹²

Miles' discussions of racism and racialization build upon a literature which recognizes that "race" categories themselves are highly problematic. The problematic nature of "race" is increasingly apparent. First, it is evident that the various scientific attempts to sort and classify human beings on the basis of physical and mental characteristics have been fraught with difficulty.¹³ As Ashley Montagu has pointed out,

¹¹ Ibid., 74. Miles believes that it is possible to have a racializing discourse without "race." This was essentially his argument with respect to Irish working class immigrants to England in the nineteenth century. See Robert Miles, Racism and Migrant Labour: A Critical Text (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982). Much of Anglophone/Francophone relations in Canada and Québec could be seen as racialized in this sense.


All [anthropological] classifications of "race" have taken completely for granted the only thing which required to be proven, namely, that the concept of race corresponded to a reality which could actually be measured and verified and descriptively set out so that it could be seen to be a fact. In short, that the anthropological conception of race is true which states that there exists in nature groups of human beings comprised of individuals each of whom possesses a certain aggregate of characters which individually and collectively serve to distinguish them from the individuals of all other groups.\textsuperscript{14}

In other words, it remains to be demonstrated that human "races" are "naturally occurring populations."\textsuperscript{15} Indeed criticism of the use of this term by biological scientists is as old as its use.\textsuperscript{16}

Even where "races" are narrowly defined in biological terms, as populations defined by gene or blood group frequencies, their existence is problematic. Montagu has argued that the use of the term "race" to refer to populations defined on the basis of gene frequencies is misleading: "the very notion 'race' is antithetical to the study of population genetics, for the former traditionally deals with fixed clear-cut differences, and the latter with fluid or fluctuating differences."\textsuperscript{17} In any event, the majority of biologists and geneticists would probably agree that the most important aspect of human "races," if they accept their existence at all, is the extent of their commonality. In this respect it has been shown that genetic differences within populations are greater


\textsuperscript{15} Miles, Racism, 73.

\textsuperscript{16} Montagu, "Concept of Race," 2, 15-18.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 19.
than those between populations.\textsuperscript{18}

Whether human "races" can be said to exist on a scientific basis, their existence is certainly a matter of popular faith. It is "common sense" that there are "races," populations with different skin colours, even though on a global scale skin colour variations are gradual and continuous, rather than sudden and sharply fixed. In addition, differences in physical appearance (today as well as historically) have been often associated with invisible mental and moral characteristics. The problem is, as Montagu puts it, "[t]here is no such thing as the kind of 'race' in which the layman [sic] believes, namely, that there exists an indissoluble association between mental and physical characters which make individual members of certain 'races' either inferior or superior to the members of certain other 'races'."\textsuperscript{19} Rather than being accurate reflections of the world, "race" categories are the result of attempts at explaining and representing the world. This has led Miles to describe them as "socially imagined, rather than biological realities."\textsuperscript{20} In this respect, the supposed existence of "races" has not inappropriately been called "a modern superstition."\textsuperscript{21}

The problem for the historian is not to deny that people act


\textsuperscript{19} Montagu, "Concept of Race," 24.

\textsuperscript{20} Miles, \textit{Racism}, 7.

on the basis of superstitions, but to explain how superstitions come to be held so deeply that people not only believe in them, but are willing to allow them to govern their actions. In part this means establishing superstitions as expressions of the societies which produced them: treating them as historical artifacts which need to be understood in the contexts which produced them.

Unfortunately when racial differences are invoked as an explanation, historians, and some others as well, have tended to end their searches for explanation. This point has been made by Montagu and more recently by Miles. According to Montagu, "The chief objection to the term 'race' is that it takes for granted as solved problems far from being so and tends to close the mind to problems to which it should always remain open." Proposing "race" as an explanation assumes what in fact needs to be explained. Robert Miles has commented,

If "races" are not naturally occurring populations, the reasons and conditions for the social process whereby the discourse of "race" is employed in an attempt to label, constitute and exclude social collectivities should be the focus of attention rather than be assumed to be a natural and universal process. Hence, the construction and reproduction of the idea of "race", is something that requires explanation. This task is circumvented by transforming the idea itself into an analytical concept. Thereby, what needs to be explained and represented as a social process is reconstructed as a social fact which is

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22 Thus the historical problem is not to deny that Joan of Arc heard voices which she thought was God, but to explain how it was that so many people accepted her explanation at face value.

23 For a brilliant discussion of the value of the task of placing particulars in historical context, see Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Toronto: Lester & Orpan Dennys, 1987).

24 Montagu, "Concept of Race," 15.
Particularly important is Miles' comment that "the construction and reproduction of the idea of 'race'" requires explanation. The problem is to recognize that racial categorization is a social phenomenon without falling into the trap of thinking that "races" themselves are naturally occurring. Instead one must be aware of two interlocking social and political dynamics. One is that of dividing society into "races". Another is that of establishing the dominance of one of these groups relative to the other groups. In other words, the challenge is to be aware that an active historical process is at work. That process is racism.

Miles differentiates between racism which he defines as an ideology and "institutional racism." Miles points out that racism can become "embodied (or institutionalized) in . . . exclusionary practices." Miles' treatment of institutional racism differs from those who find exclusion of a racialized group as a sufficient proof of institutional racism. Miles believes that one must find evidence of a "racist discourse" at the time the institution was shaped for there to be institutional racism, although he does admit that the racist discourse may have become silent. For example, Miles argues that the exclusion of Blacks from certain workplaces in Britain may be due to traditional hiring practices, rather than

25 Miles, *Racism*, 73.

26 Ibid., 85. Miles also points out that racism "articulates" with sexist and nationalist discourses. It shares in common with them certain key characteristics, can perform similar functions, and continually interacts with them. See Ibid., 87-97.
institutional racism. Some companies like to hire relatives of existing employees. Over time, this would tend to exclude Blacks from long-established workplaces. Miles would admit that such cases involve institutional racism only where it can be established that a racist discourse is or was present. This would be the case when the employer deliberately encourages white workers to get their friends and relatives to apply for workplace openings in order to keep Blacks from applying.

Miles' distinction between racism as ideology and institutional racism, as valuable as it may be in general or for Britain today in particular, is largely an academic one for the history of British Columbia however. Virtually all institutions and the exclusion of certain peoples from them arose in eras in which racist discourse was part of the air that people breathed. In British Columbia, racist discourses and their embodiment in institutional forms have usually been inseparable, as the institutions have been organized along the line of racist ideologies. In this respect racism organized, systematized and structured the relations and interactions between groups such as "whites" and "Chinese," at the same time that it created and recreated these groups.

Thus racism also divided society along racial lines. State institutions have played a particularly important role in this

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27 For example, while it is true that the uniform code of the RCMP was not deliberately intended to keep Sikhs out, that code was formulated in an era in which the RCMP, as visibly set apart by its uniform, was actively involved in the suppression of First Nations people.
division. For example, its role is apparent in the case of First Nations people and their treatment under the federal system of "Indian agents," reservations and the structures of the Indian Act. In terms of schooling, this meant that First Nations children in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada, were barred from attending provincial "public" schools and instead attended separate, federally-controlled, missionary-run schools. It will be seen that state institutions also organized the division between whites and Chinese.

These two aspects of racism, as ideology and as organization, were inter-related and fed upon each other. The organization of society along racial lines lent weight to ideological representations, while the ideological representations in turn justified the racial organization. Since First Nations people were self-evidently "different" from whites, they required different policies. They were believed to be unsuited to provincial public schools and consequently ended up in separate Indian schools. This separation in turn insulated white students from meaningful contact with First Nations children, thus insuring that white representations of First Nations people went largely unchallenged.

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Although the imposition of this racial organization was often contested by the members of affected groups themselves, it was usually sufficiently powerful to prevent them from confronting whites with their shared humanity.

Racism, in these two senses as ideology and as organization, it will be argued, has been as important a dynamic of British Columbia society and its history as have been the relations of class and gender. As with these other relations, racism needs to be seen as a complex dialectic involving the activities of the oppressed as well as oppressors. As its victims respond to racist ideas and practices, successfully challenge some, accommodate to others and are violated by still others, its victimizers find new ideas and new practices to maintain their dominance. Racism, is not a static one-way system, but is in constant flux, continually finding new forms and new expressions.

The Chinese

The choice of the Chinese in British Columbia as the target group whose experiences will be taken into account by this study also requires some justification. The experiences of other groups—First Nations people, Japanese Canadians, Indo-Canadians or even the tiny Black enclave—could have also been considered. There are however a number of advantages in choosing the Chinese, some having to do with the nature of the group itself and some having to do

29 Haig-Brown is particularly strong in documenting such resistance. See Resistance and Renewal, passim.
with the historiography of the group.

Amongst the non-First Nations "minority" groups, the Chinese have been established in British Columbia the longest. The Chinese community has been continuously present in British Columbia since the gold rush of 1858 and consequently is in effect a charter group in the province's social history. They also have one of the most developed historical records of any "minority" group in British Columbia, including works by Chinese Canadians themselves. Especially for the early twentieth century, this makes it possible to find Chinese Canadian representations of themselves fairly easily.

Invaluable in this regard, and a product of the well-tilled nature of Chinese Canadian history is the Chinese Canadian Research Collection at the University of British Columbia. This collection contains much of the background research for From China to Canada, the history of the Chinese Canadian community produced for Multiculturalism Canada's Generations Series. Included in this

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30 By contrast, only recently have non-First Nations researchers gained access to the histories of First Nations in forms familiar to them. See, for example, Joanne Drake-Terry, The Same as Yesterday: The Lillooet Chronicle the Theft of Their Lands and Resources (Lillooet, B.C.: Lillooet Tribal Council, 1989).


collection are the notes of three native Chinese speakers who were asked to read through the pages of ***Tai-hon Kung-po [Dahan Gongbao]*** or ***The Chinese Times***, a Chinese language newspaper published in Vancouver since 1907. These readers were asked to make notes on, and occasionally supply verbatim translations of, matters of interest paying special attention to the local and Canadian news sections. The result is an English language index to this vital source on the history of the Chinese in Canada. This index greatly facilitates access to this source on the part of non-native readers of Chinese.

Furthermore, historical scholarship on the Chinese in Canada has consistently recognized that racism was an essential element in shaping their experiences. This is true of historians writing in

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33 As Cantonese was the spoken language of the Chinese residents of British Columbia, it is inappropriate to romanize Chinese characters used in B.C. by means of the standard Mandarin pinin system. Therefore, I have followed local usages for the names of organizations and people in the text, while providing the pinin romanization in square brackets. However I have used pinin in the references. The standard in this as in other matters has been set by Wickberg, *From China to Canada*. See the glossary of local usages, 272-294.

34 This newspaper is now only available on microfilm for the years 1915 on. The Chinese Canadian Research Collection (CCRC) includes a folder for 1914, however. See CCRC (UBC Special Collections), Box 4. *The Chinese Times* is still published in Vancouver.

35 Although generally of good quality, these translations have occasional lapses. For example, at times terms such as bairen or "whites," Kanren "Canadian," Yingren "English [speakers]" and wairen "foreigner" are indifferently translated as "Caucasians." By contrast, great care has been taken to insure accurate translations of the Chinese transliterations of English place names.
both Chinese and Western historical traditions. David T.H. Lee’s (Lee Tung-hai) Jianada Huaqiao shi [History of the Overseas Chinese in Canada] has several chapters dealing with anti-Chinese racism and its consequences, as well as chapters dealing with traditional concerns in China: chapters on Chinese exclusion and Chinese response, as well as on the visits of the Imperial Qing statesmen, Li Hongzhang, the activities of Chinese reformers such as Kang Youwei and revolutionaries like Sun Yat-sen.


Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 137-158, and 355-379, 256-272, 273-296, 297-320 respectively. Wickberg has called this work, "The most comprehensive source on the history of the Chinese in Canada" and "the result of years of careful research" even though its organization "reflects traditional Chinese standards of historical writing (From China to Canada,334.)." Also important is Lee’s earlier edited work, Jianada Weiduoli Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xuexiao chengli qishiwu/liushi zhounian jinian tekan [Special memorial publication marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of Canada’s Victoria Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and the sixtieth anniversary of the Overseas Chinese School] (Victoria: Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, 1960) (hereafter cited as Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xuexiao tekan). This is an essential source on the history of the two institutions named in the title and on Chinese Canadian history generally. Many findings, later reproduced in more accessible sources, were first published here. It also contains a number of articles on various aspects of the Chinese experience in Canada, sometimes by the original participants, and is a product of the same kind of fine scholarship.
Anthony B. Chan's pioneering social history of the Chinese in Canada, Gold Mountain, similarly begins with a discussion of racism.\textsuperscript{38} More recently, Peter S. Li has published an extended discussion of the manner in which racism shaped Chinese Canadian society.\textsuperscript{39}

These factors suggest that taking into account the experiences of the Chinese Canadian community is an appropriate choice for a study on the history of racism in British Columbia. Beyond this, focusing on the role of racism in shaping the experiences of the Chinese community can be a vehicle for the incorporation of Chinese Canadian history into the broader history of Canadian society.

To date much of the historical writing on the Chinese in Canada has treated them separately from the history of Canada as a whole. Chinese and other Asians are often invisible in mainstream political histories of Canada\textsuperscript{40} or at best are present only as the

\textsuperscript{38} For example, Chan writes, "racism has continually intruded into the daily lives of Chinese Canadians and no serious history can ignore it," Gold Mountain, 10-11. See his ensuing discussion, 11-19.

\textsuperscript{39} Li, Chinese in Canada. The role of racism in shaping the experiences of Chinese Canadians is a major theme of this work.

\textsuperscript{40} For example, Kenneth McNaught, The Penguin History of Canada (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1969, 1988), a standard textbook on Canadian political history, does not even mention Asians, ignoring such issues as the racial nature of the electoral franchise or internment of the Japanese Canadians during the Second World War.
objects of white attitudes. On the other hand, studies of the Chinese communities themselves have either been carried out as an aspect of the history of China, i.e. the study of "Overseas Chinese" as is evident in David T.H. Lee, or as a separate engaged "Chinese Canadian" history written by non-first generation Chinese Canadians. Indeed the major English-language work to date, *From Canada to China*, is a hybrid of these two forms.

The separateness of Chinese Canadian history from the mainstream of Canadian history has led Edgar Wickberg, the foremost scholar on the history of the Chinese in Canada, to call for its incorporation into the writing of broader Canadian history. Wickberg made this call in a review of a pictorial history about the Chinese in Canada before 1923. He noted that the collection under review documented not so much white racism as "something a

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41 This is evident, for example, in Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1986-1921: A Nation Transformed*, The Canadian Centenary Series (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 68-71. Even then, Brown and Cook suggest that the Asiatic Exclusion movement merely raised "in extreme form the general question of the kind of society and culture Canadians wanted to create (71)," a question posed by immigration (71 ff.). As will be discussed below, the invisibility of the Chinese and other Asians in Canadian historical writing is also evident in the major studies to date of white attitudes towards Asians.

42 This is most evident in the works of Chan, *Gold Mountain*; Li, *Chinese in Canada*; and Yee, *Saltwater City*.

43 This work has several authors: Harry Con, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg, and William E. Willmott. Interestingly, both Wickberg and Johnson are sinologists, while the two Cons are Chinese Canadians. Wickberg is the book’s principal compiler and editor. Previously, Wickberg’s major work was on the history of the "Overseas Chinese" community in the Philippines. See Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).
bit more subtle: a documentary of white perceptions of the Chinese and their attempts to understand them." According to Wickberg, what emerged from this collection was "Chinese marginality in the eyes of the Whites." Regardless of whether the creators of the materials reproduced in the collection approved or disapproved of the Chinese, they "assumed the centrality of white people. Their interests were the norm, they made the rules, and it was their prerogative to allow, or not allow Chinese into the picture." 44 This poses a larger problem for how history has been written. Wickberg suggests,

It may be that only Chinese Canadians should write Chinese Canadian history from Chinese perspectives, or tell us how racism feels. But non-Chinese authors can surely document changing attitudes by non-Chinese. Beyond that, the next step is to integrate Chinese Canadian history with more general Canadian history. That should begin at the local level by bringing out Chinese activities as a major theme in local history. 45

Bringing out "Chinese activities" in a study of racism in B.C. would be a step towards integrating the history of the Chinese in Canada into the larger Canadian history. 46

The value in rendering the history of non-white groups as part of the mainstream of Canadian historiography has been demonstrated by Robin Fisher in his award-winning study of what he

44 Edgar Wickberg, Review of In a Strange Land, 126-7. Emphasis in the original.

45 Ibid., 127.

called "Indian-European" relations in British Columbia, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*. Fisher noted that "the relationship between the native Indians and immigrant Europeans" of Canada had been at best peripheral to Canadian historical writing, that the Indians themselves were relegated to the "background" of that history. He described his project as in part being "to establish the role of the Indians in the history of British Columbia." However, since he found that "the historian relies upon written, and therefore European, sources," which inevitably were distorted by "ignorance and prejudice," he argued that it was more appropriate to concentrate on Indian-European relations, rather than Indian history per se.

One of the advantages of "bringing out Chinese activities as a major theme in local history" is that it can lead to understanding of how social constructions are acted out in practice. By documenting the interactions between people at an everyday level, such examinations are better able to avoid the reification of categories such as "Chinese" and "white." This advantage is apparent in two local studies on the creation of racial categories, one on "Indians," the other on Chinese. Duncan Duane Thomson examines how the category of "Indians" was constructed as part of a broader racial stratification of society.

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48 Ibid., xi-xiii.
in the Okanagan. In Contact and Conflict, Fisher had observed that "Indians" were not a uniform group. However, according to Fisher the First Nations "did have something in common during the period 1774 to 1890; and that was the European." Settler accounts emphasized differences between the Europeans and the First Nations people of British Columbia and "succeeded in treating all Indians as if they were the same and ignored the differences between the various Indian cultures of British Columbia." The geographer Kay Anderson has conducted a superb study of Vancouver’s Chinatown and its role in the creation and maintenance of racial categories. Anderson argued that Chinatown was not so much an expression of Chinese ethnicity as it was the creation of white society. "Chinatown" was a white invention in imagination and in practice.

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50 Fisher, Contact and Conflict, xiv.

51 Ibid., 88.


53 Wickberg also implies this in another book review. He points out that until the 1960s Chinatowns and their leaders remained largely independent of local white governments, and "despite White suppositions--part of the folklore about Chinatown--there were never master networks enforcing community uniformity at all times. In fact, Chinatowns were extraordinarily divided in the
Gillian Creese's work on the role of racism in the creation of what she calls "a politically divided working class" in Vancouver has also contributed to an understanding of how these categories shaped the lives of workers, without reifying them. Creese pointed to the need to take racial and gender constructions into account in the creation of class categories. She argued that, before the end of the First World War, racial divisions in B.C. society were such that male white workers often did not recognize their Chinese counterparts as workers at all. Rather than the working class being a single entity, it was divided into subgroups defined by "race" and gender. Thus, there were white male workers, white women workers, and Chinese male workers. Her more recent work suggests that these categories were maintained through the efforts of capitalists to keep the wages of all workers low.

opinions and interests of their residents." Wickberg further suggests that these two aspects are linked. See, Edgar Wickberg, Review of Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada, by David Chuenyan Lai, in Canadian Historical Review LXX, No 4 (December 1989): 592-594. Anderson's approach to racial categories is very similar to mine. See "'East' as 'West'," 4-15.


Creese supplies an important correction to the so-called Race and Class debate. W. Peter Ward argued that most British Columbians at the turn of the century were more aware of "race" boundaries than class ones.\(^{57}\) This drew the ire of the sociologist Rennie Warburton who countered that class divisions were most important.\(^{58}\) Creese's correction is that both, along with gender, need to be taken into account, and that these change over time.\(^{59}\)

**History**

Incorporating Chinese activity into the history of British Columbia especially requires its inclusion in historical analyses of the role of racism in B.C. society. Previous studies of this issue have had a number of shortcomings. The studies themselves can be divided into two major groups: those that in many ways belong to an earlier generation of scholarship which was uncritical of the use of racial categories and those building on a more recent literature which has rejected fixed notions of "race" in favour of a broader analysis of "racialization."

The problems inherent in uncritically accepting the natural


\(^{59}\) In this respect, Patricia Roy bears out Creese's thesis. Roy notes, "Students of 'class' and 'race' in British Columbia would be wise to consider timing as well as terminology in their debates . . ." Roy, *White Man's Province*, xiii.
existence of racial categories are most apparent in one popular account of anti-Chinese sentiment in British Columbia. James Morton's *In the Sea of Sterile Mountains: The Chinese in British Columbia* totally confuses white opinion about the Chinese with the reality of the Chinese themselves. That is, it assumes that the history of white opinion about the Chinese is the history of the Chinese themselves. A similar problem is evident in the most important scholarly accounts of Asian-white relations, the works of W. Peter Ward and Patricia E. Roy. Although Ward and Roy are well aware that they are not writing the history of the Chinese themselves, they have not been fully successful in recognizing what Wickberg calls "Chinese activities" as a means of separating white opinion from the historical reality of the Chinese in British Columbia. This also applies to their treatment of other Asians in B.C.—the Japanese and immigrants from India.

Ward saw stereotyping as central to the shaping of "public policy toward orientals" in British Columbia. In the case of the Chinese, while admitting that to some extent white stereotypes had their origins in western attitudes to the Chinese and Chinese

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60 James Morton, *In the Sea of Sterile Mountains: The Chinese in British Columbia* (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1974). As its title suggests, this purports to be a history of the Chinese in British Columbia. In fact, it chronicles white opinion—newspaper and official—about the Chinese. Ironically, it remains one of the most thorough catalogues of white opinion. Its lack of detailed references is therefore unfortunate.

civilization in general, he still claimed,

... far more important as a source of racial imagery was the contact between whites and Chinese which immigration made possible. Once resident on the Pacific rim, Chinese immigrants offered their hosts occasion for close observation. This greater intimacy led to social and economic conditions which engendered the majority of stereotypes accepted by west coast whites. Thus many of these racial assumptions were home-grown, not borrowed. Ward accepted that white stereotypes originated, in some manner, through contact between whites and the Chinese as they actually were.

According to Ward, this contact between whites and Asians was sufficient to produce racism. Noting that stereotypical images of Asians were long-lived, Ward argued that what was ultimately at work in the province were "psychological tensions derived from white society’s desire for racial homogeneity, a drive continually stimulated by the racially plural condition [of British Columbia]." In effect, Ward saw this psychological desire for "racial homogeneity" as a "natural," almost biological drive.

As has been eloquently pointed out elsewhere, there are profound problems with biological determinist explanations, but what concerns us here is that far from coming to terms with the role of the Chinese in the history of British Columbia, Ward’s treatment maintained their status as outsiders, or at best passive

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62 Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 6. Ward does not discuss the stereotypes that arose out of the earlier white migration to the coast of south-east China, also part of the "Pacific rim."

63 Ibid.

64 See, for example, Gould, *Mismeasure of Man.*
witnesses to that history. This was readily apparent in his terminology. He tended to speak, and too unilaterally so, of "British Columbians" or "hosts," by which he in practice meant whites, as opposed to "Chinese [and other Asian] immigrants" or "newcomers." These "host"/"immigrant" distinctions are problematic. For much of B.C.'s history, the majority of whites have been newcomers to the province, and the Chinese and other Asian communities have long included a significant Canadian-born population as well as long-term residents of the province. Even in terms of his own typology of "desire for racial homogeneity," Ward did not consider whether the Chinese and other Asians had similar desires and if their desires interacted with those of whites. The end result of Ward’s discussion was that white images of the Chinese, rather than the Chinese present in British Columbia themselves, took on the appearance of being historical actors. Thus for Ward "Chinese activity" was effectively invisible.

This invisibility is in large part due to Ward’s uncritical treatment of "race" as a category of analysis. Ward’s reduction of racist attitudes to racial differences is unhelpful as it hides the question of how these (perceived) racial differences came to be. For example; how can the differences in living standards between whites and Chinese as reflected in supposedly different standards

65 In fairness to Ward, he is writing before the publication of many of the histories of the Chinese in Canada. This difference in time may also explain why Roy tends to refer to "white British Columbians" and "Asians" rather than "host"/"immigrant."
of morality and health arise in the first place.  

By not recognizing that the Chinese also were actors, Ward missed the significance of an important dynamic which ironically he himself noted. He observed that even though white attitudes originated in contact with the Chinese,

This is not to say that British Columbians ever came to know the newcomer well. On the contrary, they had only a superficial knowledge of the Chinese in their midst, even though the two races lived side by side. Much of their understanding was formed, not by direct observation, but by contact with the image of John Chinaman itself. As is often the case with stereotypes, those linked with this central image had a self-perpetuating tendency. They acted as a filter through which the Chinese were perceived: they screened out many of the immigrant's characteristics and magnified a few others. In effect, they acted as prophecies concerning the Chinese character. Sometimes these prophecies were fulfilled, and once fulfilled, they were reaffirmed. Thus, in this circular process, the stereotypes were perpetuated. West coast racialism continually fed on itself. Contact with popular attitudes, rather than the Chinese themselves, was quite enough to keep it alive.

If one assumes that the Chinese (and other groups such as the Japanese and First Nations) as well as whites were also actors in the history of British Columbia, these observations (which Ward did not follow up) pose a number of historical problems about the manner in which racism operated. Were white stereotypes in fact linked to "characteristics" of the Chinese immigrant? If so, what were the circumstances which allowed stereotypes as prophecies to be confirmed? What Chinese acts confirmed or challenged white

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66 On supposedly innately different moral and health standards as aspects of the white image of the Chinese, see Ward, White Canada Forever, 7-10.

67 Ibid., 6-7.
stereotypes? What factors were at work in insuring that "[c]ontact with popular attitudes, rather than the Chinese themselves" perpetuated these images? Did these stereotypes play an important role in white society (such as helping to cement it together) at the same time that they excluded the Chinese and other Asians,\(^{68}\) and were there factors other than cognitive ones which insulated whites from contact with the Chinese? Ward ends up taking for granted a great deal of what in fact needs to explained.

Potentially more promising than Ward's treatment of white attitudes towards Asians is the work of Patricia E. Roy. Drawing upon her profound knowledge of English-language sources on B.C. history, Roy provides a number of important corrections to Ward in her book, *A White Man's Province*. For example, she notes that attitudes towards the Chinese and other Asians were largely class-based and that they varied considerably in intensity with time and place.\(^{69}\) In contrast to Ward, Roy is very much concerned with the significance of these attitudes for white society. Where Ward claimed that "racial beliefs persisted independent of social and economic circumstance,"\(^{70}\) Roy argues that the social and economic

\(^{68}\) Contrast Ward's discussion of white stereotypes about Asians with Fisher's discussion of white stereotypes about First Nations people. Fisher notes that white settlers emphasized differences between themselves and the original inhabitants, homogenizing First Nations peoples into a single image of the "Indian," as part of a process of assuaging their guilty consciences arising from their treatment of First Nations people and at the same time as a way of justifying this treatment. See Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, esp. 73-94.

\(^{69}\) Roy, *White Man's Province*, xiii-xvi.

\(^{70}\) Ibid.
circumstances of British Columbia produced a fear of what she calls "Asian superiority". In her catalogue of anti-Asian sentiment in British Columbia, Roy claims that "concern for Asian competition evolved from being the business of a few demagogues and workingmen to a broadly held fear that became part of the provincial identity."\(^{71}\) Far from being white supremacist in nature, through anti-Asian measures "white British Columbians betrayed their doubts about white superiority and revealed their fears that they could not maintain their status or improve their standards of living if the 'swarming' millions of Asians were allowed to immigrate and compete freely."\(^{72}\) In other words, white supremacy was really a mask for white inferiority. Where Ward saw a sharp distinction between "racial" and "economic and social" matters, Roy noted, "The Asian question was always political, but it had moved from being largely an economic matter with racial trappings which divided white British Columbians to a mainly racial one with economic underpinnings which united them."\(^{73}\) Thus Roy recognizes that anti-Asian sentiments came to unite white British Columbia society. This in itself is a significant observation about that society.

Despite these contributions, Roy still has great difficulty in separating the images presented by her sources from the realities they reflect. In this respect what white British

\(^{71}\) Ibid., viii.  
\(^{72}\) Ibid., viii.  
\(^{73}\) Ibid., xvii.
Columbians feared was not "Asians," i.e. the peoples of Asia\textsuperscript{74} or even the people of Asian origins in British Columbia as they actually were, but their images of these people. The beast they feared was of their own conjuring. Roy often assumes that these images were accurate, or that they corresponded to reality. At the very least this assumption needs proof. For example, one long-standing white image of Asians was their alleged clannishness, their supposedly perverse refusal to participate in white society. Roy notes that in British Columbia, "[g]enerally, Asians and whites lived apart" and that the Chinese "were chastised for their non-participation in white society." However, she claims that this separation was not the product of "externally imposed segregation" as it was in California and Australia. Rather "informal segregation" was the norm in B.C and, "[t]he Chinese and Japanese themselves established their own distinctive residential areas." She adds, "except in some workplaces, Asians had limited direct contact with the white community."\textsuperscript{75}

Although it is certainly true that there was a pattern of residential segregation for Asians in British Columbia (even the smallest towns often had a "Chinatown"), Roy cites no evidence which suggests that this was at the choosing of the Chinese. Indeed, given the paucity of Chinese sources for the nineteenth century, it is difficult to imagine what such evidence would be

\textsuperscript{74} There was, for example, no danger of what Roy calls "the 'swarming' millions of Asia" suddenly invading British Columbia.

\textsuperscript{75} Roy, White Man's Province, xiv.
other than white opinion about the Chinese and their alleged clannishness. In fact on those rare occasions when the comments of Chinese spokespeople were reported in English-language sources, they suggested that they would be more than happy to participate if white society were open to them. In effect Roy ends up accepting the white sources at their face value. Like Ward, she has not moved beyond white perceptions. She too assumes what Wickberg called "the centrality of white people."

Similar problems of taking for granted "the centrality of white people" can be seen in more recent literature which has built upon the concept of racialization rather than fixed notions of "race". This literature, however, has tended to reduce racialization to allegedly more basic economic activities. This reduction has sometimes done great violence to the reality of racism as experienced by members of target groups.

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76 In the most detailed study of Canadian Chinatowns to date, the geographer David Lai notes that Chinatowns were initially formed in British Columbia as "the result of a complex process of voluntary and involuntary factors." According to Lai, these range from fear of racist violence, the discrimination of landlords, to economic necessity and cultural barriers. See David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 34-35.

77 See, for example, the testimony of Huang Tsun Hsien, the Qing Consul-General in San Francisco to the 1884 federal Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration and the testimony of various Chinese before the 1902 federal Royal Commission of Chinese and Japanese Immigration. See Canada, Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration: Report and Evidence* (Ottawa: By order of the Commission, 1885), 41 and Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Subject of Chinese and Japanese Immigration into the Province of British Columbia* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, King's Printer, 1902), 65, 324-327.
The reductionist view of the role of racism in British Columbia has been most visibly championed by the sociologist, Rennie Warburton. While providing an important and valuable review of the recent literature on race and class, Warburton has articulated a highly problematic position. He suggests that scholars should concentrate on "capitalist development, state formation and the growth of British Columbia society, with a view to explaining the various types of ethnic and race relations by looking beyond attitudes and prejudices, important though these may be, to the historical situations in which participants used ethnic and racial labels." He further claims that the evidence arising from examinations of these situations suggests "a situational and interest-based explanation for many of the most prominent hostile encounters, rather than the force of racist ideas."  

In this view, disputes like the 1922-23 Chinese school segregation crisis or the 1907 Anti-Chinese Anti-Japanese riot in Vancouver, would be seen as the products of more fundamental class competitions and antagonisms. The 1922-23 dispute would be seen as primarily the result of competition between white and Chinese merchants, while the 1907 anti-Chinese, anti-Japanese riot would be seen as the result of white workers and their fears of competition from their Chinese and Japanese counterparts, a competition no

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79 Ibid., 7.
doubt manipulated by capitalists.

While there is some truth in this position (competition was indeed an aspect of incidents such as the 1907 riot or the 1922-23 school segregation dispute), it has several historical problems.\footnote{This is aside from the house of straw that Warburton erects in order to knock down. I am not aware of any serious scholars who have claimed that "race prejudice" alone explains such incidents. There are also some theoretical shortcomings in Warburton's thesis. His reification of "the state" is particularly unhelpful.} First, it underestimates "the force of racist ideas" and their persistence in Western culture. As Robert Miles has observed, "[a]ttempts to represent the process of determination as one in which either the economic or the ideological factor was the sole "cause" are mistaken because they fail to appreciate the complex totality of economic, political and ideological relations."\footnote{Miles, Racism, 94.} Thus Miles would find Warburton's reduction of "race prejudice" to economic imperatives simplistic at best. In this respect it is revealing that Warburton refers to "race prejudice" rather than racism. He is not willing to admit that there is a deeper relationship at work.

arise in particular situations, as its operations become visible in them. The racism already at work in broader relations of society mean that it "works" in particular situations.

Second, this analysis begs the question of how the divisions that existed between white, Chinese and other workers, had come to be in the first place. While admitting the existence of racializing discourses, Warburton nonetheless takes for granted the existence of "whites," "Chinese" and "Native Indians." If only by default, Warburton ends up taking these divisions as naturally occurring.

Third, the conclusion that racism arises in special "situations," such as strikes in which the members of one group scab upon another, that there are only particular "historical situations in which participants used ethnic and racial labels," can only be supported by focusing exclusively on the experiences of whites. It was primarily whites who were in a position to use "ethnic and racial labels" along the lines Warburton suggests, i.e. "to make sense of particular historical conjunctures, to cope with the contradictions of their experience and to build a culturally and symbolically meaningful concept of British Columbia as a province in Canada." 83 This view does not take into account the testimony of the members of target groups themselves to the effect that racism shaped their experiences. Their testimony has consistently been that racism is an ever-present reality, one


83 Warburton, "Ethnicity, Race, Class and Gender," 7.
formative of people's experiences, and often involving a constant threat of violence, if not constant violence itself. In the case of the Chinese community, between 1915 and at least 1925 The Chinese Times continually reported on anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese violence in Canada, discrimination, legislated exclusion, or threats of exclusion. This suggests that far from being exceptional, racism was a constant reality confronting the Chinese.

Similar problems are inherent in the somewhat more textured view that it is appropriate to speak of "racisms," rather than "racism" in British Columbia. This view had been argued by another sociologist, Vic Satzewich. Satzewich's discussion is an attempt to take seriously the notion that racism as an ideology "works" by appearing to make sense of people's experiences. This view tried to build upon the kind of understanding identified by Miles and others who point out that racism not only involves systematic theories, but can also be a hodge-podge of sometimes contradictory beliefs "which are constructed and employed to negotiate everyday

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84 This remains the case today. See, for example, the comments of members of groups targeted by racism in Toronto today, D. Brand and K.S. Bhaggyadatta, Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have Roots: Speaking of Racism (Toronto: Cross Cultural Communications Centre, 1986). See also Donald Fisher and Frank Echols, Evaluation Report on the Vancouver School Board's Race Relations Policy (Vancouver: Vancouver School Board, 1989).

85 See CCRC, Box 4, passim.

life."

In this respect, according to Miles "[t]oo many contributions to the debate about the nature of racism as an ideology have an intense fascination with the writing of fellow intellectual practitioners but an almost complete ignorance of the way in which representations of the Other have been created and reproduced in the daily life of the working class. Racist assertions can be coined as easily in the factory or office as in a university library." For British Columbia during the first decades of the twentieth century, this means that an accurate understanding of Chinese/white relations needs to take into account how ordinary people, as well as intellectuals, saw the Chinese. Satzewich's examination of the class-based representations of the Chinese found in the reports of various federal royal commissions leads him to conclude that the racism of the white working class was different from that of the white middle classes. He concludes,

Racism takes on meanings in the context of lived experiences and lived contradictions. Because these lived experiences differ on the basis of, amongst other things, class, it makes little sense to speak of racism as a homogeneous ideology with homogeneous consequences. Further empirical and theoretical analyses of the racisms which have been associated with capitalist development is therefore necessary.

87 Miles, Racism, 79. For example, I have heard people express the view that non-white immigrants "Come to Canada, go on welfare and take our jobs." That these two actions are mutually exclusive is ignored by those who feel that non-whites are taking advantage of whites. For similar observations, see also E. Ellis Cashmore, The Logic of Racism (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Cohen, "Perversions of Inheritance," esp. 79-86.

88 Miles, Racism, 79.

89 Satzewich, "Racisms," 325.
Satzewich, of course, is quite right in his conclusion that racism was not a homogenous ideology. Other factors shaped people's experiences of it. The question is, however, whose "meanings," whose "lived experiences" and whose "lived contradictions" do we seek to understand by using racism as a category of analysis. If, as Satzewich does, racism is merely taken to be a process of representation on the part of a dominant group, rather than also part of the "lived experiences" of a target group, it is easy to see a particular historical form of racism as comprising several different things. This fragments rather than helps analysis.90

Racism and "The State"

While Satzewich's discussion of "racisms" is valuable insofar as it attempts to be cognizant of the ways in which racism "makes sense" of people's experiences, it does not explain the relative power of whites over groups like the Chinese, a power evident in the reproduction of representations. Whites in a variety of contexts were able to represent the Chinese, while the Chinese representations of themselves rarely affected white perceptions. While all white representations of the Chinese were not equally influential (white miners were not able to disseminate their view of the Chinese as widely as white newspaper owners), most white

90 This is not to suggest that racism in Canadian history does not take different forms at different times and places, and acts in different ways in shaping the experiences of various groups. For example, the racism against Chinese Canadians differs in many significant ways from the racism against First Nations people.
males—workers and capitalists alike—exercised power relative to
most Chinese, and were in a position to deny or ignore Chinese
self-representations. This points to a broader construction of
racism's relations of power than that suggested by Satzewich.

The kind of relations of power at work in the processes of
representation have been documented by Edward W. Said with respect
to the Middle Eastern "Orient." Said has pointed out that the
currency of "cultural discourse and exchange" is "not 'truth' but
representations." Insofar as written statements are concerned,
"there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence,
or a representation." Statements about the Orient consequently
have very little to do with the Orient in practice:

On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the
reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made
supererogatory any such real thing as "the Orient." Thus
all of Orientalism [the body of European ideas about the
Middle East] stands forth and away from the Orient: that
Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West
than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to
various Western techniques of representation that make the
Orient visible, clear, "there" in discourse about it. And
these representations rely upon institutions, traditions,
conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their
effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient.\footnote{Said, Orientalism, 21-22.}

In other words, Western ideas about the Orient were the product of
Western, and not Middle Eastern, cultures. So too with white
Canadian opinion about the Chinese.

Orientalism is not just the consequence of linguistic
conventions. According to Said the displacement of the people of
the Middle East with European representations of them was a

\footnote{Said, Orientalism, 21-22.}
consequence of "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" between Europe and the Middle East.  

Similarly white Canadian representations of the Chinese and other Asians were the product of the same kind of relationship between white and Asian Canadians, the product of white Canadian, and not Asian Canadian, cultures. Because of the imbalance of power that existed between them, Asians were often not allowed to speak for themselves, but were "represented" by whites, well-intentioned and otherwise. For most whites, as Ward had observed some time ago, the consequent white representation of the Chinese had come to displace the real people actually present in their society.

The ability to substitute real people with one's images of them belies more basic relationships of power that exists between groups, relationships which amongst other things "invent" the identifying characteristics of these groups and the boundaries between them. That relationships of power are at work in this kind of process has been recognized by a number of scholars, writing on subjects as diverse as the Spanish conquest of America, wartime propaganda in the Pacific, and literary characterizations of aboriginal peoples.  

92 Ibid., 5.

93 For a classic study of how the Spanish conquistadors, and their critics, constituted the First Nations of Central America as Other, see Todorov, Conquest of America. On how self-knowledge is the only possible through knowledge of an other, as well as on the conscious process of creating Self and Other, see Roy Wagner, The Invention of Culture, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1975, 1981) and Johannes Fabian, Time and
In modern society, relationships of power are by and large organized around the activities of state institutions such as schools, and around the idea of the state itself. This suggests a connection between "the state" and racism. This connection challenges Warburton's view that studies of "State formation" should go "beyond attitudes and prejudices," i.e. that the state is separate and distinct from the process of racism itself. Warburton's view involves a reification in which "the state" becomes "the thing" that "influences relations between people of diverse national origins by managing society through the processes of nation- and province-building and the promotion of social stability." This reification of "the state" is a common failing when it comes to discussions of racism.

A more useful approach to "the state" has been suggested by


Warburton, "Ethnicity, Race, Class and Gender," 19.

This is to a large extent evident in the case of Anderson, "'East' as 'West'," but is most evident in the work of Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s (New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), which, while providing an important argument that "race" is an essential element in state formation, tends to reify the state.
Philip Abrams.  Abrams has noted that over fifty years of studying the state has not produced satisfying results. He claims that while it is evident that there is such a thing as "the state system," i.e. a network of government institutions whose activities and relations can be observed in empirically verifiable ways, the state as "a hidden reality in political life" or "the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice" does not exist. Rather "the state" is "an ideological thing" and can be looked upon as "the device in terms of which subjection is legitimated." This involves a broader "ideological project," a sort of myth-making or "a managed construction of belief about the state" which really involves "the binding of subjects into their own subjection." The resulting belief is one whose generation is not restricted to state institutions and their activities. Accordingly, "we should abandon the state as a material object of study whether concrete or abstract while continuing to take the idea of the state extremely seriously." The idea of "the state" systematically "misrepresents" social relations making them appear to be different from what they really are: "[t]he state, in sum, is a bid to elicit support for or tolerance of the insupportable and intolerable by presenting them as something other than themselves, namely,


97 Ibid., 61 and 82.

98 Ibid., 68.

99 Ibid., 75.
legitimate, disinterested domination." The resulting task is to demystify the prevailing "world of illusion" by focusing on how this legitimation is historically constructed.

Developing this view of the state, two of Abrams' students, Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer have argued that state formation is "cultural revolution," i.e. "the state" and the organization of certain cultural activities are inseparable. For example,

What counts as "politics" evidently receives much of its definition from the institutions of state (Parliament, parties, elections) through which it is organized, so that, for instance, the distinction between "political" and "industrial" strikes (or, much more generally, between "public" and "private" life) becomes second nature within our culture. But much else is nuanced, inflected, shaped too. Out of the vast range of human social capacities--possible ways in which social life could be lived--state activities more less forcibly "encourage" some whilst suppressing, marginalizing, eroding, undermining others.

According to this view of the state, the ideology of the state above all involves "moral regulation: a project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word 'obvious', what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order." This project applies to

100 Ibid., 76.

101 Abrams goes so far as to suggest that the task is somewhat akin to "[t]he task of the sociologist of religion [which] is the explanation of religious practice (churches) and religious belief (theology): he [sic] is not called upon to debate, let alone to believe in, the existence of god." Ibid., 79-80.


103 Ibid., 4.
Horn and "race" divisions just as it does to those of class or gender. The division of society along these lines is rendered morally acceptable by being painted as self-evident.

Racism is involved in every aspect of state formation. According to Corrigan and Sayer,

On the one hand, state formation is a totalizing project, representing people as members of a particular community—an "illusory community," as Marx described it. This community is epitomized as the nation, which claims people's primary social identification and loyalty (and to which, as is most graphically illustrated in wartime, all other ties are subordinated.) Nationality, conversely, allows categorization of "others"—within as well as without (consider the House Un-American Activities Committee during the McCarthyite era in the United States, or Margaret Thatcher's identification in 1984 of striking miners as "the enemy within")—as "alien." This is a hugely powerful repertoire and rhetoric of rule. ¹⁰⁴

In British Columbia, racism as an ideology was integral to this "hugely powerful repertoire and rhetoric of rule." It will be seen that as leading opinion and school textbooks defined Anglo-Canadian nationalism, i.e. created a sense of Marx's "illusory community," they also defined the Chinese as Other, as "aliens" within and without "the state."

Racism is also involved in the other feature of state formation noted by Corrigan and Sayer:

On the other hand, as Foucault has observed, state formation equally (and no less powerfully) individualizes people in quite definite and specific ways. We are registered within the state community as citizens, voters, taxpayers, ratepayers, jurors, parents, consumers, homeowners--individuals. ¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 4-5.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 5.
In British Columbia, one's individuality and one's "race" were inseparable. For the members of the two "racial" groups which had to register with the federal government, status as citizens, voters and jurors was effectively barred, rights as parents or homeowners severely abrogated, and even their roles as taxpayers denied. Indeed, in large part, it will be argued that the creation of the individuality of whites, i.e. of their identity as voters, etc., was concomitant with its denial in the case of First Nations and Chinese. 

Corrigan and Sayer further argue that as an integral part of this dual process of representation, "alternative modes of collective and individual identification (and comprehension), and the social, political and personal practices they could sustain, are denied legitimacy." In the case of the Chinese in British Columbia, amongst other things, this denial of the legitimacy of alternative modes of identification has meant the silencing of their voices in the dominant media. They are a group which tended to be represented by whites and represented in historical specific ways. This emphasizes the need to lend their voices weight in understanding the nature of racism in British Columbia for moral reasons as well as methodological ones.

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106 So-called "Status Indians" had to be registered as such under the Indian Act, while the Chinese had to register with the Department of Immigration and Colonization under the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923.

107 Ibid. Original Emphasis.
Schooling

In the light of the foregoing discussion, schooling seems to be a particularly appropriate institutional setting for a study of the nature of racism in British Columbia society and its effects upon a group like the Chinese.

First, during the era which we are considering, schooling in British Columbia became "a mass phenomenon."\(^{108}\) Most people went to school. Schooling was one of the common features of British Columbia society. Other possible sites for this study, in particular the workplace, could have been chosen instead. But there is growing evidence that workplaces, and their participants, varied widely in British Columbia on the basis of geographic location as well as industry.\(^{109}\)

Second, schools are an essential element of the modern state project. As schooling became a mass phenomenon, it was one of the few state institutions that all people experienced directly. Schools became amongst the most important vehicles for instilling in each rising generation the attitudes, habits and ideas, the cultural practices, which are the basis for the modern state system.

The view that schools are an integral element of the modern

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state system has recently been used by Bruce Curtis in his study of the formation of the common school system of Upper Canada/Ontario during the mid-nineteenth-century. According to Curtis, the system of state schools which arose out of the reforms of Egerton Ryerson and his contemporaries has come to shape all aspects of our society. He therefore calls the resulting state "the Educational State." Curtis notes that through education, this "state" has become internalized as part of the web of social identities:

To the extent that educational development succeeded, it embraced all relations of civil society. . . . To the extent that pedagogical practice colonized individual character, and to the extent that it became a general condition of discipline, all members of Canadian society have come to embody a particular capitalist state, as voice, gender, desire, age, situation.\textsuperscript{110}

For our purposes, one need only include the relations of racism as amongst the things that educational development embraced, and add "race" to the list of ways in which we have all come to embody the relations of a particular capitalist state.

One of the advantages of the approach used by Curtis is that he sees the construction of the "Educational State" as the results of the efforts of the ruled as well as the rulers. On the one hand, educational reform was "a project, a set of conscious initiatives guided by clearly articulated goals," carried out by and for the property-owning classes of nineteenth century Ontario.\textsuperscript{111} On the other, the meanings, categories and experiences


\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 14. Emphasis in the original.
created by this project were actively contested by those upon whom new conditions of rule were being imposed. According to Curtis, the resulting, "[p]olitical conflicts about what should be taught, how, to and by whom, on what conditions, and so forth, were at once conflicts about who should rule and be ruled, and of what rule should consist."\(^{112}\) Thus the resulting educational structures were shaped by the actions of the various participants in schooling even if they more closely approximated the efforts of educational reformers themselves.

Third, the members of particular ethnic or immigrant groups are no less actors in shaping Canadian society, in contesting imposed meanings and in using state institutions for their own purposes, than are the subjects born into that society. Since state schooling often provides what J. Donald Wilson has called "an important meeting point" for these groups and the dominant society, it becomes an appropriate place to study their interactions.\(^{113}\)

This view of schooling as a contested terrain involving conflicts around conditions of rule is readily adaptable to the study of racism. The racist meanings, practices, and forms of subjugation, created through schooling were actively, if unequally, contested in British Columbia. This is evident in the experiences of the Chinese communities of Vancouver and Victoria, in their use

\(^{112}\) Ibid., 14-15.

of their own Chinese-language schools and in their resistance to school segregation in the provincial public schools.

Chapter Outline

The following, then, will argue that racism as ideology and organization was a key dynamic in the history of British Columbia. It will primarily focus on the role of schooling and the experiences of the Chinese Canadian community in making this argument.

Chapter Two demonstrates that racism was built into the institutions of British Columbia's state system, as part of the worldwide project of British imperialist expansion and colonization. Chapter Three describes the major features of the Chinese community in British Columbia and the ways in which they were shaped by the interaction of racism and of Chinese culture. Chapter Four examines the ways in which leading white opinion defined the Chinese as Other as part of a process of creating a collective identity for whites themselves. Chapter Five examines the role of provincial public schooling in indoctrinating children into this ideology and in organizing school provision along racial lines, while Chapter Six deals with Chinese language schools and their role in creating a distinct Chinese "public." Chapter Seven concludes the study with a discussion of its significance in terms of broader social issues and contemporary educational policy.
CHAPTER TWO:

ESTABLISHING THE WHITE MAN'S PROVINCE: RACISM, SCHOOLING AND STATE FORMATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Implications of School Segregation for State Formation

The extension of the organization of state schooling along racial lines was at the heart of the 1922-23 dispute between Victoria's Chinese Community and the school board. This was not the only instance in which Chinese children in British Columbia were subject to segregation or calls for segregation. At various times, they were placed in separate classes or schools in Vancouver, Nanaimo, New Westminster, and Cumberland. Nor was segregation restricted to the Chinese. The Japanese were also occasionally separated from white students in Vancouver and in

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other areas. In addition, First Nations children were barred from the provincial public school system completely.

For the Victoria Chinese community, the issue of school segregation was also not new in 1922-23. It had been an issue, in one way or another, almost from the moment that Chinese pupils first presented themselves in the Victoria School District in any significant numbers. In 1901, when there were only sixteen Chinese students in the entire district, a group of white parents from Rock Bay School petitioned the school board to bar Chinese children from their school altogether or at least place them in a separate class. In 1902, under pressure from the Victoria Trades and Labour Council, the Board created a segregated class at the North Ward School for the twenty to thirty Chinese students in the district. A similar class was established in rented quarters in 1904-05, while in 1908, after non-English-speaking Chinese had been denied permission to enrol in the schools at all, a separate school was created for junior grade Chinese students in rented rooms at the Methodist Mission in Chinatown. This "Fisgard Street School" operated until 1915. Again in 1919, the old Rock Bay School was

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3 "To Exclude the Chinese," Victoria Daily Colonist, February 14, 1901, 8.


set aside for Chinese students in the junior grades. Ostensibly, the Rock Bay students were non-English-speaking immigrants, but it seems that some Canadian-born Chinese also attended this school. It was still in operation on the eve of the students' strike.

The Chinese consistently resisted the segregation of their children. As early as 1902, ten Chinese merchants whose children attended public schools in Victoria, directly intervened with the school board to respond to calls for racial segregation. The 1902 class for Chinese students at North Ward School appears to have been short-lived at best as there is no record of such a class in the Superintendent of Education's Annual Report for that year.

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6 See British Columbia, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1908-1909, A XX; Annual Report, 1909-1910, A XXI; Annual Report, 1910-1911, A XXV; Annual Report, 1911-1912, A XXIX; Annual Report, 1912-1913, A XXXIV; Annual Report, 1913-1914, A XXXVI; Annual Report, 1914-1915, A XXXVIII. In 1915-1916, this school was closed and the Chinese students moved to Rock Bay school which was closed quite quickly due to "a lack of enrolment," see Annual Report, 1915-1916, A 43 and A XLI. The Rock Bay School re-opened in 1919, with 44 Chinese students (43 boys, 1 girl) and by 1921 had 171 (167 boys, 4 girls) students in 3 divisions. See Annual Report, 1919-1920, C12; Annual Report 1920-1921, C12; and Annual Report, 1921-1922, C15. The annual reports do not make clear whether these segregated classes applied to immigrant Chinese or the native-born. In fact there are some indications that the Rock Bay School may have contained both while earlier schools had not. See, for example, "Chinese Segregation," Victoria Daily Colonist, October 11, 1922, 4.

7 The prevalence of segregated schools and classes for the Chinese is discussed in Chapter Five, below.


9 See Annual Report, 1902-3, C xiv-v. At this time the average class size in Victoria was over sixty. Thus a class for fewer than thirty students would have been easily identifiable in the Annual Reports.
Segregated classes had to be closed, due to lack of enrolment in 1905 and again in 1916. In 1907 and 1908, the Chinese brought legal challenges against segregation and the exclusion of immigrant Chinese students from the district. In 1921-1922, Chinese students in segregated schools may have deliberately subverted school discipline to protest segregation.

This pattern of resistance suggests that affected groups like the Chinese actively contested attempts to organize school provision along racial lines. This resistance to attempts to organize state schools on a racial basis is significant not only because it shaped the lives of those involved in the struggles around segregation. State schools, whether provincially or federally controlled, are essential elements in the modern state system as a whole. Such schools have been among the most important vehicles for instilling in each rising generation the attitudes, habits and ideas which are at the heart of modern systems of bourgeois rule.

This point has been most forcefully made by Bruce Curtis in his study of the origins of the common school system of Upper


11 See, for example, "Victoria West School Plans," Victoria Daily Times, September 24, 1907, 6 and "Government to Defend Action," Victoria Daily Colonist, September 24, 1907, 7.

12 See "Says Chinese Are Menace in Schools," Victoria Daily Colonist, January 12, 1922, 9 and "No More Chinese Teachers Here," Victoria Daily Colonist, August 30, 1922, 5. This report of disciplinary problems is in such contrast to other assessments of the Chinese that it suggests an unusual problem.
Canada/Ontario during the mid nineteenth century. Curtis has argued that the educational reforms of Egerton Ryerson and his contemporaries really involved a broader "project" of state formation. For the architects of educational reform, this "project" involved nothing short of a revolution in culture. For them,

Education was . . . a means for the remaking of popular culture and character, for the transformation of tastes, for the solidification of genial habits, for the creation of a popular intelligence capable of appreciating the "rational merits" of bourgeois society. Educational practice was centrally concerned with political self-making, subjectification and subordination; with anchoring the conditions of political governance in the selves of the governed; with the transformation of rule into a popular psychology.¹³

Amongst other things, creating this "educational state" involved inculcating respect for private property, acceptance of "legitimate" authority and tolerance towards injustice arising from exploitation.

According to Curtis, once this cultural transformation took place it reshaped political conflicts between different social classes: "educational reform did not end political conflict. Rather, it framed political conflict, it set conflict on a new terrain and changed some of its terms."¹⁴ In other words, once the system of state schooling was established, struggles around the form of educational provision and its contents were often larger contests between antagonistic social groups. Indeed, one of the

¹³ Curtis, Building the Educational State, 14-15.
¹⁴ Ibid., 14.
strengths of Curtis’s thesis is his documentation of resistance to the imposition of state schooling by the ruled as well as the rulers. Consequently his argument is not a social control one. His "Educational State," although principally the creature of the ruling classes, was also shaped by other actors.

Curtis’s thesis is highly suggestive not only for Upper Canada/Ontario but for British Columbia as well. After all, of all Canadian provinces, it was in British Columbia that the common school system was established in its purest form. The broad outlines of Curtis’s "educational state" which emerged in piecemeal fashion in Upper Canada were established at a single stroke in B.C. There were no provisions for separate or denominational schools in the first provincial school act and the establishment of this system apparently reflected a high degree of consensus amongst the white settlers. This consensus existed in large part because state-controlled schooling was well-established in the places of origin of many of these settlers. Ontario and Nova Scotia expatriates would have been familiar with state elementary schooling, while recent immigrants from England would have witnessed the creation of a system of state-run elementary schools under the Education Act of 1870. Consensus also existed because the demographics of white settlement meant that denominational schools were impossible in most areas. Attempts at establishing denominational schools during the 1860s had in large part ended in

failure.¹⁶

Significantly, battles over the position within the public school system of racialized groups such as the Chinese arose in the same era that common schooling in British Columbia became "a mass phenomenon." Although the framework of British Columbia's educational state was established relatively early in the province's history, it was not generalized until much later than in Eastern Canada.¹⁷ Thus in British Columbia as "educational development" came to embrace "all relations of civil society," it also came to embrace those of "race" and the status of Chinese students became an issue. In this respect, the ideology of common schooling arising from B.C.'s educational consensus tended to act as a brake on implementation of racially-based school segregation. Before World War One, provincial authorities opposed organizing public schools along racial lines on the grounds that it would lay the groundwork for a denominational system. Thus when the white residents of Victoria's Rock Bay School first approached the school board to ask for segregation, one trustee pointed out that their petition "would establish a precedent which struck at the vital principle of the common schools; in which children of all races and


¹⁷ On the generalization of the B.C. school system, see Dunn, "Rise of Mass Public Schooling."
creeds have equal rights."

A year later, the school board had decided to establish a segregated class for Chinese pupils in the junior levels, but was concerned that this action might be contrary to the School Act. When the board asked the Superintendent of Education whether it could establish an ungraded class, the Superintendent replied that the Board could organize any classes it wished, "except that no public schools in British Columbia can be established on the grounds of colour, creed or nationality."

In 1912, on the advice of his Minister of Education, Dr. Henry Esson Young, Premier Richard McBride informed the British Columbia Federation of Labour that the province could not support racially segregated schools since it was funding "a non-denominational" system and would not support separate schools.

Ultimately the nineteenth century consensus behind common schooling in British Columbia was an expression of the power of white settlers and their concomitant ability to transplant what for them were familiar cultural forms to the territory of British Columbia. For this group, the supposed existence of intrinsically different groups of people in the province, embodying different characteristics, different rights, different moral sensitivities, was part of the overall political framework of the province.

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18 "To Exclude the Chinese," Victoria Daily Colonist, February 14, 1901, 8.


20 Cited in Roy, White Man's Province, 26.
Contending class, regional, party and even gendered interests all came to define themselves in relationship to the issues of "race" and racism.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, fixing "race" categories and their contents, establishing which groups could participate in state institutions and under what terms, were all aspects of state formation in British Columbia. The result can be called a "racial state."\textsuperscript{22}

\textit{"Race" and the Creation of the B.C. Public}

Significantly, the contours of British Columbia's "racial state" were fixed in the years immediately following British Columbia's entry into Confederation in 1871. Whatever else Union involved, it marked a devolution of political power from the Colonial office in London to the local settler/property owners. Consequently after 1871, "the state" was remade so that it more closely approximated the interests of local European property-owners. As has been pointed out, "[t]he great work of the first session [of the B.C. Legislature] was to introduce legislation to provide for the smooth working of the new provincial government."\textsuperscript{23} The ninety acts that were passed by this legislature established such things as a consolidated revenue fund, "the rules for interpreting the statutes," as well as the province's system of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} This point has essentially been made by W. Peter Ward in "Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia."
\item \textsuperscript{22} Omi and Winant, \textit{Racial Formation in the United States.}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Margaret Ormsby, \textit{British Columbia: A History} (Vancouver: MacMillan of Canada, 1958), 252.
\end{itemize}
common schooling. More importantly, these acts also remade the franchise, fixed relations of property and defined the racial composition of the various elements of the new government.

For the Chinese, this remaking of the state following Confederation meant they were excluded from equal participation in state institutions. It was only after British Columbia’s entry into Confederation that anti-Chinese measures began to be fixed in law. Thus, one of the first acts of the new B.C. legislature barred the Chinese from registering their vital statistics under the Registration of Birth, Deaths, and Marriages Act passed in 1872. As W. Peter Ward has observed, this measure was, of little practical but great symbolic importance. Few if any Chinese were likely to be discomfited by this practice. But the act was an open assertion that Chinese immigrants had no integral role to play in west coast society. The province’s first legislators were founding a white community, one in which, at best, there was only a subordinate place for newcomers from Asia.

Another bill introduced in the same legislative session proposed a more practical means of subordination. The franchise involved in the first provincial election, and during the colonial period, was based on a number of qualifications including maleness, nationality and ownership of property and there is evidence that those Chinese who met these qualifications voted. It was in the process of

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24 Ibid.

25 One of the pieces of legislation passed was The Married Woman’s Property Act.

26 Statutes of the Province of British Columbia, 1872, No. 26, Section 22.

27 Ward, White Canada Forever, 32.
abolishing the property qualification in favour of manhood suffrage.

that a bill was passed in 1872 barring Chinese from registering to
vote, however because of this act's provisions disenfranchising
First Nations people and their potential interference with federal
jurisdiction, it did not become law until 1874. In 1875, another
act closed a loophole which had allowed some Chinese to remain on
the voters' list and participate in a by-election. The result
was that while some Chinese may have voted in the first provincial
elections, none voted in the second. After a number of Chinese
participated in the Victoria municipal election in 1876, the
provincial legislature also amended the Municipal Act to bar them
from participating in municipal elections. By 1885, the School
Act also had provisions barring Chinese from voting or serving as
school trustees. Since the federal franchise was provincially
based at the time, these acts also had the effect of

28 The Lieutenant Governor, William Joseph Trutch, reserved his
assent to the act until informed by the federal Minister of Justice
that the province had the right to establish its franchise on
whatever basis it wished. On the Chinese and the franchise in this
era, see Roy, White Man's Province, 45. The 1874 bill was adopted
unanimously. See Qualification and Registration of Voters Act,
S.B.C., 1874, No. 12, S. 3.

29 See Relating to the Qualification and Registration of Voters
Act, S.B.C., 1875, No. 2, SS. 1 and 2.

30 Municipality Amendment Act, S.B.C. 1876, No. 1, Section, 9.
Interestingly Chinese property-owners would not have been
immediately disenfranchised as far as school board elections were
concerned. An amended School Act in the same year provided that
"Any male householder or freeholder resident in a School District,
shall be entitled to vote at any school meeting held such School
District." These amendments also barred women householders from
voting or running for school board. S.B.C., 1876, No. 2, S. 24.

31 See Public Schools Act, S.B.C., 1885, Ch. 25, s. 19.
disenfranchising the Chinese residents of British Columbia at the federal level. When the federal government established its own electoral system under the Dominion Franchise Act in 1885, Chinese disenfranchisement was re-affirmed, a condition not reversed until after the Second World War.

Historians have not provided adequate explanations for these anti-Chinese measures. Many have simply noted disenfranchisement and other anti-Chinese measures without explanation. Others have noted that disenfranchisement was part of broader changes in the electoral system. For example, F.W. Howay pointed out that disenfranchisement took place in the context of ending a franchise "limited to British subjects having certain property qualification" in favour of manhood suffrage. He noted "At the same time Chinese were excluded from voting, a privilege which they had exercised, if otherwise eligible, from the earliest days of elections on the mainland." More recent historians have admitted that disenfranchisement held ramifications for white politics. Martin Robin claimed that Chinese disenfranchisement was largely motivated

32 The Act applied to "persons" which it defined as "a male person, including an Indian, and excluding a person of Mongolian or Chinese race." Statutes of Canada 1885, Chapter 40, s. 2.

33 See, for example, Ormsby, British Columbia, 252. For Ormsby, the Chinese were important solely as the objects of tension in Dominion-Provincial relations and were not in any way historical actors.

by gerrymandering so as to prevent an important opponent of then Premier George Anthony Walkem from being elected. Robin cites the 1875 amendments to the *Qualifications and Registration of Voters Act* which established differential qualification in different regions of the province as further evidence of such gerrymandering.  

Prior to the enactment of these measures, some Chinese had been active in the public life of the province. Chinese property-owners had not only voted in the first provincial election and in earlier colonial ones, Chinese merchants in Victoria and New Westminster had also participated in the welcoming of new governors and visiting royalty, and were even active on the organizing committees for these receptions. However, their rights had been the subject of occasional dispute during the colonial period. In an apparently isolated incident in 1863, a returning officer in the Cariboo region disallowed all the votes cast by Chinese voters in

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35 See, Martin Robin, *The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province 1871-1933* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 54. This might explain why the government was eager to disenfranchise the Chinese, but not why it was unanimously supported by the legislature. Patricia Roy notes that Robin's work presents a "plausible thesis" but is marred by "sloppy scholarship." See, Patricia E. Roy (ed.), *A History of British Columbia: Selected Readings*, New Canadian Readings (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989), 144. This may be one of the instances that she had in mind as the anti-Chinese measures of 1875 were in a separate piece of legislation from the other franchise amendments. See *S.B.C.*, 1875, No. 1 and No. 2.

an election to the mainland colonial assembly.\textsuperscript{37} At the time the Chinese were probably half of the electorate in the district.\textsuperscript{38} In the late 1860s, a number of unsuccessful motions in the Legislature attempted to impose poll taxes on itinerant Chinese labourers on the grounds that they were not paying their share of school and excise taxes.\textsuperscript{39} But it was only after Confederation that the franchise was established on a racial basis.

Disenfranchisement not only had the effect of preventing the Chinese from voting and standing for election, it also had the effect of barring them from participating in the remade public realm of state institutions. Establishing a new basis for the franchise was significant not so much because it extended the franchise to a previously disenfranchised working class, as it involved a reconstruction of the public realm. In this respect, it is likely that the earlier property-based franchise was not as restrictive as it might at first seem. In British Columbia, the rules for land pre-emption would have made meeting formal property

\textsuperscript{37} Ward, \textit{White Canada Forever}, 30. N.B. the colonial franchise was open to adult males who were either natural-born British subjects, who were aliens who had taken the oath of allegiance to the crown and who were able to read English. It is likely that the latter provision could provide a basis for a challenge. In 1870, the franchise was extended to those who did not read English but who could make use of a translator.

\textsuperscript{38} In 1870, there were 670 Chinese males, compared to 835 white males and 29 blacks in Cariboo. \textit{Census of Canada, 1665 to 1871}, vol. IV (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1876), 376.

requirements for the franchise relatively easy. Often, length of residence, as Walkem's Gerrymandering suggests, was a more difficult qualification than formal property requirements.

Studies of other jurisdictions with restrictive property-based franchises suggest that in practice most adult males could vote in elections. For example, in New Brunswick custom was that males of standing in their communities could vote even if they did not meet the formal property requirements. Such people, provided they were judged fit by the other adult males, would not have their eligibility to vote challenged.\(^40\) Thus exercising the franchise was in many ways more a measure of one's standing in the community, as judged by one's peers, than it was of property qualifications. Voting itself, prior to the introduction of the secret ballot, was a direct acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the government. It involved appearing in front of one's male peers, being judged formally or informally as to one's standing in the community, and declaring one's support for a particular candidate and politics. In essence it, in and of itself, was a public activity.\(^41\) Communal knowledge of the voter and his standing could insure that those "unfit" to vote were prevented from doing so. It is likely that the returning officer who refused to recognize Chinese votes in


\(^{41}\) According to Corrigan and Sayer, John Stuart Mill, amongst others, opposed the introduction of the secret ballot in England on the grounds that how someone voted was "of legitimate concern to other electors because it was an exercise in power." See Great Arch, 146.
1863, for example, had done so under pressure from the non-Chinese, while few people seriously questioned the fitness of Victoria's black entrepreneurs and merchants to vote and stand for election.\textsuperscript{42}

Changes in the franchise by removing property-based qualifications and introducing the secret ballot involved a remaking of the public realm. No longer would judging an individual's suitability for entry into the public realm be a communal function. Rather it became (in theory at least) a neutral function carried out by the returning officer, a state administrator who was above partisan politics.\textsuperscript{43} In effect, determining fitness to vote became an administrative function, and as with all bureaucratic organizations, this required the establishment of seemingly neutral and objective conditions or "rules" of procedure which were above dispute.\textsuperscript{44}

In this respect, changes to the ballot were consistent with the kind of state forming activities described by Curtis with respect to educational reform. Amongst other things, according to Curtis, educational reform as state formation "embodied a new division of labour in which part of a state structure was constructed through the appropriation of functions formerly carried

\textsuperscript{42} On the Black population, see Crawford Killian, \textit{Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia} (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1978).

\textsuperscript{43} In this respect the Cariboo returning officer was anticipating later changes. It should be noted that white settlers by an large came from jurisdictions undergoing the kinds of changes in the franchise embodied in the 1874 legislation.

\textsuperscript{44} The several changes in the franchise introduced in this era are an indication of the experimental nature of these efforts.
The professionalization of formerly communal functions was part and parcel of the remaking of state institutions at Confederation. Thus, the 1872 School Act created the superintendency, while union with Canada brought with it the federal system of managing "Indian" affairs through "Indian agents."

It was in this context that "race" was established as a readily visible, easily determinable, mark of one's fitness to participate in the public realm. In most instances, "race" was easily determinable and "objective." Eventually what was originally a political construction establishing the supremacy of the members of one group took on the air of being natural and unproblematic.

Disenfranchisement was a cornerstone of the new provincial structures because it insured that only whites could assume the new positions created by these institutions. In other words, the Chinese and other disenfranchised groups could not themselves become administrators of the new provincial state. This prohibition was later expanded to include legislation blocking the Chinese from working on provincial and municipal crown contracts, and barring the Chinese from becoming lawyers. In the new

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46 One of the best discussion of the history of racist legislation in B.C. is Bruce Ryder, "Racism and the Constitution: The Constitutional Fate of British Columbia Anti-Asian Legislation, 1872-1922," (unpublished manuscript, 1990). Part One of this work is forthcoming in Osgoode Hall Law Journal 29, #3. All my
provincial state only white property owners were to be masters. Other whites—women and workers—would be allowed to participate in the public terrain to a limited degree, but no other group was allowed to threaten their hegemony. Certainly, the officials appointed under the new structures seem to have been hostile to the Chinese. This hostility was apparent as late as 1884. Some of the most virulently anti-Chinese views expressed before the federal Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration were from British Columbia government officials.47

As far as the creation of the racial basis of the B.C. state is concerned, it is significant that disenfranchisement and even the vital statistics provisions were not restricted to the Chinese. They also applied to First Nations people. Thus, the 1872 Registration of Births, Death and Marriages Act states "Nothing in this Act shall be construed to apply to births, marriages, or deaths of Chinese, or Indians."48 Similar language disenfranchised both groups in 1874.49 And the 1876 amendments to the Municipal references refer to the unpublished manuscript.

47 See, for example, the testimony of Superintendent Bloomfield and Sergeant Flewin of the Victoria city police. Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 47-51.

48 S.B.C., 1872, No. 26, s. 22.

49 "Nothing in this Act shall be construed to extend to or include or apply to Chinese or Indians." Qualification and Registration of Voters Act, S.B.C. 1874, No. 12, s. 3. When this Act was replaced by another in 1875, a separate Relating to the Qualification and Registration of Voters Act provided that "No Chinaman or Indian shall have his name placed on the Register of Voters for any Electoral District, or be entitled to vote at any election of a Member to serve in the Legislative Assembly of this Province." This Act also called for "the name of any Chinaman now
Act provided that "No Chinese or Indians shall be entitled to vote at any Municipal Election for the election of Mayor or Councillor," while the 1885 School Act also barred "Indians" from voting or serving as trustees. Even the 1885 Dominion Franchise Act disenfranchised both groups. Thus First Nations people in B.C. were disenfranchised and barred from registering their vital statistics at the same time that the Chinese were. This suggests that these measures were not only intended to regulate the Chinese, but also the First Nations people and their relations to the new British Columbia society.

The character of these measures is made more evident when the fact that they were being applied to the overwhelming majority of the population is taken into account. (See Table I.) According to

on the List of Voters" to be stricken off, and provided fines or imprisonment for inserting "the name of any Chinaman or Indian is any such Register." S.B.C. 1875, No. 2, ss. 1 & 2.

50 Municipality Amendment Act, S.B.C. 1876, No. 1, s. 9.

51 The Act applied to "persons" which it defined as "a male person, including an Indian, and excluding a person of Mongolian or Chinese race." Statutes of Canada 1885, Chapter 40, s. 2. Thus for the purposes of this Act all woman and Chinese men were not "persons," and consequently barred from voting. While the Act implied that "Indians" were, in fact, persons, the section "Who Shall Not Vote at Elections" specified that amongst those barred from voting, such as supreme court justices and returning officers, were "Indians in Manitoba, British Columbia, Keewatin and the North-West territories, and any Indian on any reserve elsewhere in Canada who is not in possession and occupation of a separate and distinct tract of land in such reserve." S.C., 40, s. 11 (c). The latter provision was intended to preserve the franchise of those First Nations People in a few key ridings in Ontario who voted for Sir John A. Macdonald’s Tories, while generally disenfranchising all others, especially those of the West. See Gordon Stewart, "John A. Macdonald’s Greatest Triumph," Canadian Historical Review LXIII (1982), 3-33.
**TABLE I: BRITISH COLUMBIA POPULATION BY ORIGINS, 1870-1931***

| Year | First Nations | White | Chinese | Other Non-White*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>est.20-50,000</td>
<td>8,576</td>
<td>1,548</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>25,661</td>
<td>19,134</td>
<td>4,350</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>est. 27,305</td>
<td>est. 61,962</td>
<td>8,910</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>28,949</td>
<td>127,402</td>
<td>14,885</td>
<td>7,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>20,234</td>
<td>342,767</td>
<td>19,568</td>
<td>10,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>22,377</td>
<td>462,960</td>
<td>23,533</td>
<td>15,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>24,599</td>
<td>619,787</td>
<td>27,139</td>
<td>22,738</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Figures for 1870, 1901-1931 are by racial origin, figures for 1881 are by nationality, and for 1891 by place of birth.

** 1870 figures are for Coloured; 1881, African; 1901-21, Japanese, Hindu, Negro; 1931, Japanese, Negro.
the 1870 Blue Book census, British Columbia's non-First Nations population was 10,586. The Blue Book divided this population into three groups: 8,576 members of the "White Race;" 462 members of the "Coloured Race" and 1,548 members of the "Chinese Race." However, in arriving at the Terms of Union with Canada, the British Columbia delegation gave 60,000 as the base population for calculating federal subsidies, i.e. a population including up to 50,000 First Nations people. Whites, including presumably members of the legislature, were well aware that the overwhelming majority of the population were First Nations people. A few years after Confederation, the Victoria British Colonist editorialized, "About four fifths of the population of the country are Indians.

The 1881 census still showed a population of 25,600

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52 Census of Canada, 1871, vol. IV, 376. This census gives an estimate of the population in 1874 as "Whites 11,500; Chinese 3,000; Blacks 360 and Kanakers [South Sea Islanders or Hawaiians] 200." Ibid., 377. The census also noted that "The aboriginal population was represented by figures varying from 20,000 to 50,000." Ibid.

53 Articles 2 and 3 of the Terms of Union provide for subsidies to the B.C. government based upon various per capita payments. Articles 1 states "the population of British Columbia being taken at 60,000." See, for example, British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, Rules, Orders, and Forms of Proceeding of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia (Victoria: Richard Wolfenden, Queen’s Printer, 1893), 194. The First Census of Canada also noted an estimated population in 1874 of 11,500 whites, 3,000 Chinese, 300 Blacks and 200 Kanakers (Hawaiians) and an "aboriginal population" of between 20,000 and 50,000. Wilson Duff has estimated that the First Nations population declined from "considerably larger than 75,000 in 1835 to 28,000 in 1885." See Wilson Duff, The Indian History of British Columbia (Victoria: Provincial Museum, 1964), vol. 1, The Impact of the White Man, 38-44.

54 See, "Indian Affairs," Daily British Colonist, January 13, 1874, 2.
"Indians," 4,350 Chinese and 19,500 others of whom 14,600 were of British nationalities. It was not until the mid-1880s that whites first became the majority of the population.\textsuperscript{55}

Thus, if anything, Ward underestimates the radical nature of the program being carried out by the province's "first legislators" in their efforts to found "a white society." They were actively consolidating the power of a small minority by blocking the participation of upwards to eighty-five percent of the population in the new, supposedly more representative and democratic institutions. A century later, the Lillooet Tribal Council has quite appropriately called this "a policy of apartheid."\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{The New Colonial Masters}

Where in Ontario and elsewhere in the European world during the nineteenth century, questions of rule primarily revolved around the colonization by the bourgeoisie of popular working class culture, in British Columbia during the colonial period, these questions involved the literal colonization and subjugation of the

\textsuperscript{55} Rolf Knight suggests that whites first became the majority in 1885. See Rolf Knight, \textit{Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia 1858-1930} (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1978), 29. Also see the population figures provided by Ward, \textit{White Canada Forever}, Table 1, 170. The 1891 Census does not give a breakdown of ethnic backgrounds. For the general size of populations from various origins, see "Table 5. British Columbia Population by Ethnic Origin" in Jean Barman, \textit{The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia} (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991), 363.

\textsuperscript{56} Drake-Terry, \textit{Same as Yesterday}, 100.
territory and peoples already present.\textsuperscript{57} As in other parts of the world, this process of colonization was a project involving a set of consciously articulated goals on the part of a group of would-be property owners.

According to Margaret Ormsby, there were three well-defined political groups amongst the white settlers, each sufficiently powerful to be represented in the delegation which negotiated the Terms of Union. These were the British colonial elite, local surveyor/contractors and Canadian professionals and businesspeople.\textsuperscript{58} Although she does not mention it, each of these groups consisted of property-owners who saw "the state" as the vehicle for creating and protecting their property. Indeed the rapaciousness of Vancouver Island's settlers was such that the governor during the mid-1860s, Arthur Kennedy, formed the opinion that there were two kinds of inhabitants in the colony: "those who are convicts and those who ought to be convicts."\textsuperscript{59} Kennedy's opinion was not challenged a few years later when the Assembly voted to abolish real estate taxes at a time when by what he called a "curious coincidence" seven members who supported the measure

\textsuperscript{57} This is not to suggest that this process had not been taking place with respect to the First Nations of what is now Ontario. Unfortunately, Curtis fails to consider the construction of "the state" with respect to these groups. For a history of First Nations-white relations, see J.R. Miller, \textit{Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

\textsuperscript{58} Ormsby, \textit{British Columbia}, 233-251.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 214.
The British colonial elite consisted of Hudson’s Bay Company officials, retired military officers and men, members of the English gentry who were colonial settlers, the Victoria representatives of English capital as well as serving Royal Navy officers. This group had enjoyed a monopoly on government positions during the colonial period and generally supported the policies of the colonial administration. In many ways, they were part of an imperial elite which could be found in various settlements throughout the British Empire and which looked to England as their basic frame of reference. They were not especially interested in Confederation with the Eastern provinces, but were mollified to some degree by the financial arrangements which were the principal components of the Terms of Union. The Dominion government promised to build a railroad and dry dock, and agreed to assume the growing colonial debt which was preventing further development of the provincial infrastructure. The Terms even provided for the Dominion government to supply pensions for former officials. As the former Hudson Bay Company physician and speaker of the Vancouver Island Assembly, John Sebastian Helmcken, expressed it in the Legislative Council of British Columbia in 1870: "... no union on account of love need be looked for. The

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60 Ibid., 216. The use of the legislature for personal gain was a time honoured tradition in England. According to Corrigan and Sayer, in the medieval period Parliament was a "private business" while as late as the eighteenth century, the English gentry, sitting as M.P.’s, enacted legislation empowering themselves as Justices of the Peace to more effectively control their tenants. See, for example, Great Arch, 39-40.
only bond of union outside of force—and force the Dominion has not—will be the material advantage of the country and the pecuniary benefit of the inhabitants."

The second group consisted of surveyors, engineers and contractors who were directly tied to neither of the other groups, but had been able to build up their fortunes through government projects, in particular road construction. They too expected to benefit from Confederation since under the Terms of Union Ottawa assumed responsibility for the colonial debt. Capital projects such as the railroad and dry dock of course were also attractive to them.

The third group consisting of Canadian professionals, merchants and speculators, had agitated for representative institutions and union with Canada so that they could get the government to better serve their interests. Essentially, they hoped to benefit from Confederation in the same way the colonial

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61 Cited by Walter N. Sage, "British Columbia Becomes Canadian, 1871-1901," in Friesen and Ralston Historical Essays on British Columbia, 57. The British element never really disappeared in B.C., nor did it become entirely politically impotent, but Confederation did mean a reduction in their influence. Few would have had the kinds of links and influence in Ottawa that they may have had in London.

62 Joseph William Trutch was perhaps typical of this group. He had made his fortune in road construction and from 1864 served as the Chief Commissioner of Lands in the mainland colony. In this capacity, he was solely responsible for Indian land policy on the mainland. In this respect Trutch was a pioneer professional official. In 1871, he was appointed lieutenant governor even though he told Sir John A. Macdonald that he preferred to be employed in a professional capacity, i.e. as a surveyor. See Robin Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy," BC Studies 12 (Winter 1971-72): 3-10.
elite had benefitted from the colonial regime. This was apparent to Governor Anthony Musgrave whose instructions had been to bring about the union. He noted in 1869, "The more prominent Agitators for Confederation are a small knot of Canadians who hope that it may be possible to make fuller representative institutions and Responsible Government part of the new arrangements, and that they may so place themselves in position of influence and emolument." 63

Thus they looked to Ottawa and the new province as sources of patronage and power, while at the same time they intended to use their new political power for their private ends. As the 1874 Texada Island scandal of Premier Amor de Cosmos' government suggests, this is precisely what they proceeded to do once they were in government. 64

Another key group, not officially represented in partisan politics, were the Americans who consisted of Victoria-based commercial interests tied to San Francisco and who made up the bulk of the gold miners and prospectors. But the Americans, despite a brief annexation scare arising from the Victoria merchants in 1869, never acted as a major political force in the internal politics of B.C. This is not entirely surprising since the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia had been created in the first place to forestall United States expansion. But it is also apparent that Americans were generally content with British efforts

63 Cited by Ormsby, British Columbia, 242.

64 See, Robin, Rush for Spoils, 54. Confederation was largely disappointing for British Columbians as far as federal patronage was concerned.
to maintain the conditions needed to pursue their economic endeavours, and only became politically active when they felt those interests threatened.\textsuperscript{65}

In addition, all of these groups were probably not as separate as Ormsby has represented them to be. The Victoria-based American commercial interests, for example, were often closely tied to the established British interests such as the Hudson's Bay Company and even more closely tied to British capital operating from San Francisco. One Victoria-based trading house, for example, while ostensibly American, had a long trade relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company and was largely financed out of San Francisco by British interests.\textsuperscript{66} Furthermore, the members of all these groups had common class interests and were interested in insuring that the new state served those interests more effectively than the old colonial one.\textsuperscript{67} These interests included creating and maintaining relationships of property, in particular ownership of land. In this respect all of the members of these groups were colonial property owners.


\textsuperscript{67} That the new state institutions were serving certain class interests became apparent in 1877 when Robert Dunsmuir enlisted the support of the militia in dealing with a strike at his coal mines. Robin, \textit{Rush For Spoils}, 24.
British Colonialism and First Nations

In British Columbia, at the heart of the questions of who should rule and be ruled and of what rule should consist, were questions of colonial conquest and British imperialism. Among these issues the position of the aboriginal population in the colonial society was crucial. In British Columbia, First Nations people, the overwhelming majority of the population, provided most of the labour, occupied most of its territory and controlled most of its wealth. Inevitably, they were the principal targets of efforts at state formation. Amongst other things, this involved the establishment of the physically superior force of the new European rulers, the destruction or marginalization of aboriginal cultural forms, and the creation of the dominance of British ones, including their relations of property. This entire project was carried out by an imperialist minority colonizing an aboriginal majority and involved sustained and multidimensional conflict between the two groups.

Thus, the institutions which the first session of the B.C. legislature remade were relatively recent transplants to British Columbia. Although these institutions formally originated with the establishment of Vancouver Island as a British colony in 1849, the cultural forms involved in this colonial project had actually begun earlier when the fur trade began to introduce a commodity economy and wage labour. Colonial government, however, marked a departure from earlier political and trade relations between First

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68 Knight, Indians, 10.
Nations and Europeans which had largely been at the pleasure of the First Nations themselves and the beginning of a process which gradually and progressively imposed British and later Canadian rule over the territory that is now British Columbia. This rule was established through a combination of statecraft—diplomacy, alliances, use of First Nations customs and culture—which encouraged First Nations to recognize the authority of the colonial administration, and military force—and gunboats, punitive expeditions, collective reprisals, police actions—which forced First Nations to accept this authority.69

The creation of British colonial power in British Columbia simultaneously involved establishing British control over the territory and its inhabitants, and transforming their cultures. A cornerstone of this transformation was the establishment of what for the First Nations were new relations of property. Thus British and later Canadian policy was directed towards progressively weakening First Nations and disrupting their existing social and political structures. For example, one technique used with considerable effect on the B.C. coast was the freeing of First Nations slaves. These were often prisoners of war whom gunboat

69 Fisher, Contact and Conflict and Barry Gough, Gunboat Frontier: British maritime authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-90 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984). For example, according to Fisher, various First Nations groups accepted the police authority of the governor, James Douglas, in the area surrounding Victoria by the mid 1950s. Once such authority was accepted over a specific area, it was standard British colonial policy to try to extend it to progressively larger territories. A similar process also occurred in the Fraser canyon. See, Drake-Terry, Same as Yesterday, 39-72.
captains released. Whatever the conditions of these slaves or their importance for First Nations economies, this was a deliberate disruption of the social structures of First Nations. This programme had the added benefit of creating the now freed slaves as allies and justifying British imperialism by allowing the imperialists to claim the moral high ground.\textsuperscript{70} Other policies established a monopoly upon the use of force for the British alone, putting an end to warfare amongst First Nations. Finally, after Confederation, the federal government replaced the social and political divisions of the First Nations people with its own system of "Indian bands" and chiefs who served at the pleasure of government officials under the provisions of the Indian Act.\textsuperscript{71} Later still other regulations forbade the practising of the potlatch, a traditional form of governing and redistributing social wealth.\textsuperscript{72}

The destruction of First Nations forms of property and land usage and the establishment of European ones was in many ways the whole point of colonialism, for through it the colonists became the new masters. Although colonial land policies emerged in piecemeal fashion, their overall thrust was to create a system of property

\textsuperscript{70} Gough, Gunboat Frontier, esp. 75-94.

\textsuperscript{71} This remains a cornerstone of federal and provincial policies towards First Nations peoples. The B.C. government's defence to the land-claims case brought by the hereditary chiefs of the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en has been to deny that the chiefs represent who they claim to, by amongst other things, denying the existence of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en peoples. See, Terry Glavin, A Death Feast in Dimlahamid (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990).

\textsuperscript{72} Fisher, Contact and Conflict, 146-174.
along British lines.

The desire to create such a system was apparent in the policies of James Douglas. While he was the chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Douglas concluded a series of private treaties with some First Nations groups on Vancouver Island. The texts of these treaties betray the notions of property at work in them behind them. According to these texts, "the Chiefs and People" of certain First Nations communities on Southern Vancouver Island surrendered vast tracts of land which became "the Entire property of the White people for ever" with the exception of "our Village Sites and Enclosed Fields." In other words, lands which were settled and well-laid out were understandable to the British settlers as property, while what they saw as "unused" land was up for grabs. This notion of property was deeply fixed within the culture of the settlers and would have been virtually unconscious. According to Cole Harris, the same "British" notions of property were at work in the Fraser Canyon during the 1870s when Gilbert Malcolm Sproat laid out reserves for the First Nations people of the area.74

A similar conception of property apparently shaped Douglas's

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73 Text of the Teechamitsa Treaty, cited by Paul Tennant, Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), 18-19. Douglas apparently had the chiefs sign a blank piece of paper upon which he later inscribed the text of a New Zealand treaty provided him by his London superiors (Ibid., 19.).

land policies on the mainland colony after 1858. Rather than signing treaties, Douglas had his agents lay out reserves for First Nations groups, while making the remaining lands available for pre-emption to First Nations people and settlers alike. This has led Paul Tennant to argue that Douglas intended to transform First Nations people into small farmers owning individual parcels of land.\(^\text{75}\) Douglas's policies deliberately kept reserves small, while encouraging First Nations people to individually pre-empt land. Certainly Douglas's desire to assimilate First Nations people to British cultural forms is suggested by his 1863 comment that in his opinion First Nations people "are in point on law regarded as British subjects" and "are fully entitled to the rights and privileges of subjects."\(^\text{76}\) Presumably the rights and privileges of subjects included the right to vote and to own property.

Douglas's land policies, however, were subject to criticism from many white settlers. Consequently, they were abandoned after he left office. The attitudes of colonial officials to First Nations and land were aptly summarized by Joseph William Trutch, the Chief Commissioner of Lands in British Columbia before Confederation and later the new province's first Lieutenant

\(^{75}\) See Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics*, 26-38. This is a major departure from Robin Fisher's explanation of Douglas's policies. Fisher essentially saw Douglas as sympathetic to First Nations people in contrast to later governors. Interestingly Tennant does not draw out the implications that this remaking of forms of property held for the white settlers. If Indians were to be a new yeomanry, whites were presumably to be a new gentry.

Governor when he wrote in 1867,

The Indians really have no right to the lands they claim, nor are they of any actual value to them; and I cannot see why they should either retain these lands to the prejudice of the general interests of the Colony or be allowed to make a market of them either to Government or to individuals.\(^7\)

The implication of Trutch's statement is that in contrast to First Nations people, settlers had a right to the lands they claimed, these lands were of tremendous value to them, and they could buy and sell these lands as they saw fit. In essence Trutch was drawing the line between First Nations people and settlers. His attitude was reflected in colonial laws such as the Land Ordinance of 1866 which barred First Nations people from pre-empting land without the consent of the governor. This policy was re-affirmed by the Land Act of 1870, with the result that only one first Nations person had pre-empted land by 1875.\(^8\)

Barring First Nations people from pre-empting land, at the same time that they were marginalized on tiny reserves, meant that they could not be economically self-sufficient. This forced them into the wage economy, further transforming their cultures. Thus Robin Fisher's argument that as European land usages replaced First Nations ones, so too did Europeans replace First Nations people, does not take the small size of reserve lands into account.

\(^7\) Ibid., 164. Emphasis in the original.

\(^8\) Ibid., 165. First Nations people were not barred from buying land pre-empted by others. But poverty, coupled with the reluctance of whites to sell to First Nations people, effectively blocked this route to land ownership. After Confederation, such activities would have been subject to the approval of the Indian agent.
Rather, as Fisher himself admitted, First Nations attitudes towards the land also changed. Some First Nations people themselves were directly involved in entrepreneurial activity closely integrated into the new settler economy. During the colonial period, once the initial gold rush boom was over, First Nations people were the major market for European goods. In 1866, for example, the magistrate at New Westminster estimated that the 10,000 First Nations people in the area purchased the same goods as whites spending up to three hundred dollars each annually.79 First Nations chiefs involved in the fur trade continued their activities after the arrival of the gold miners of 1858.

However, most First Nations people became wage-labourers rather than entrepreneurs. This has been persuasively argued by Rolf Knight who suggests that up until the influx of European settlers following completion of the railroad, First Nations people supplied the bulk of the labour in the province, and continued to do so in much of the province’s resource extraction industry until the Great Depression.80 This, however, was not always the happy process that Knight has made it out to be. For example, in 1860 after the initial disruptions of the gold rush, one Lillooet man was forced to work as a dishwasher at a hotel and had to "save the dishwater and the scraps to feed his children."81 During the 1870s

79 Drake-Terry, Same As Yesterday, 100-101.

80 See Knight, Indians, passim.

81 Cited in Drake-Terry, Same as Yesterday, 61.
and 1880s, the partial survival of traditional subsistence economies insured that First Nation women in particular constituted a plentiful supply of cheap labour in the salmon canning industry. Although First Nations people may have been more common in the labour force during the 1870s and 1880s than during the 1860s, it is also evident that they, along with the Chinese, constituted the bulk of the working class. The result during the 1870s was a settler society "with enough leisure, because of the bountiful supply of Indian and Chinese labour, to show its zeal for public affairs." 

The effect of the land policies, then, were to proletarianize First Nations at the same time that the franchise and other restrictions barred them from entry into the ranks of the settler property-owners and participation in the new state institutions. The institutions of the new provincial government were designed to maintain the dominance of whites. In the Okanagan during the late 1860s, for example, reserves were broken up and replaced by smaller ones to allow whites to establish a monopoly on horse ranching. It seems that the Okanagan people had been actively involved in horse ranching for several decades and had reserved some of the best

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84 Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 257.
ranch land when reserves were first laid out in 1862. Even after Confederation, "the state" undermined First Nations enterprises. For example, the introduction of provincial licensing in 1908 excluded First Nations people from handlogging.

This was the essence of the colonial agenda: establish superior force over the colonial territory, destroy or marginalize existing states, co-opt elements of the old ruling classes, transform native populations into the servants of the new colonial masters. It was a world-wide process at which the British were highly skilled by the mid nineteenth century.

**Excluding the Chinese**

But this colonizing project was not carried out for the benefit of all would-be property-owners. From the inception of the Colony of Vancouver Island, the territory was earmarked as a British colony of settlement, i.e. one in which people of British origins could settle and become the majority. But, possibly because of the reluctance of the Hudson's Bay Company and its officials to disturb their holdings in the area, and also because of the distance of B.C. from England and the more attractive prospects elsewhere, there were few such settlers. Instead, the gold rush of 1858 brought a massive influx of miners and

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86 Knight, Indians, 117.
87 James E. Hendrickson, "The Constitutional Development of Colonial Vancouver Island and British Columbia," in Ward and McDonald, Historical Readings, 245-274.
speculators of various nationalities. The result was that few of the newcomers to the area were British subjects and the British often found themselves to be a minority in mining areas. For example, in 1859 Judge Matthew Bayley Begbie was unable to assemble a grand jury at Cayoosh to look into complaints of ill treatment by the Lillooet people as "there were not twelve British subjects there."\(^{88}\) In 1862, a census conducted by the local magistrate in Lillooet showed a population of seven hundred First Nations people, thirty-three British subjects, forty U.S. citizens, seventeen Europeans, ninety-seven Chinese and twenty Mexicans.\(^{89}\)

But even though they were a minority of the newcomers, it was by and for the British, including British Canadians, that state power was being established. Thus, only British subjects and naturalized aliens could pre-empt land, participate in elections, serve on juries, be lawyers or be appointed as magistrates and the like. Colonial governors selected their officials from amongst the natives of England. The legal profession in the mainland Colony of British Columbia was similarly restricted as for many years Judge Begbie would not allow Canadian-trained lawyers to appear in his court.

Confederation did not change who this system of rule was for, so much as it did how it was to be exercised. Insofar as it involved a transfer of political power from the persons of the colonial governors to the collectivity of white male property-

\(^{88}\) Cited in Drake-Terry, *Same As Yesterday*, 55.

\(^{89}\) Ibid., 84-85.
owners, it also involved re-drawing the lines between those who ruled and those who were ruled, as well as the devolution of colonial power from the metropolis to the local settlers. In this context, the Chinese were also excluded from the public domain. Since the new class of colonial property-owners expected to benefit directly from the revitalized state, they took steps to bar rivals from such benefits.

The exigencies of imperialism also made it inevitable that this class saw the Chinese as rivals. The Chinese were already the subjects of British Imperialism. Since the Opium War of 1840-42, Britain had been directly involved in an imperial adventure in China. Indeed it is this British imperialism in South China which contributed most directly to the arrival of Chinese in Canada after the first evidence of the gold rush. First, the Opium Wars disrupted the economy of South China, providing much of the push for Chinese emigration.\(^90\) Second, because South China was an area of British domination, the British as opposed to other Western imperialists exerted the pull for immigration to the territories they controlled. All of this meant, of course, that British imperialists tended to see the Chinese as a different group from themselves as well as from native peoples.

After the First Nations population, the Chinese in British Columbia were the largest threat to British hegemony. As Patricia E. Roy notes, "Since there was then approximately one Chinese for every four white males in the province and almost as many Chinese

\(^{90}\) Chan, *Gold Mountain*, 20-36.
as whites in areas such as Cariboo, the Chinese vote could be
decisive if many Chinese sought naturalization. Roy claims that
the legislators were "trying to legislate the Chinese into a
limited place in society" as was evident in the vital statistics
prohibitions which meant that "the Chinese were virtually non-
persons." Anti-Chinese measures were generally supported by
white opinion, as "no white British Columbian wanted to see the
Chinese as masters and most favoured legislation to limit the place
of the Chinese in civil society."

The reason, however, that no "white" British Columbian wanted
to see the Chinese as masters was because they wanted to be the
masters themselves. The Chinese included some of the largest
landowners in the province. In the City of Victoria, for example,
the largest landowners after the Hudson’s Bay Company were the
Kwong Lee & Company, closely followed by two other Chinese
companies. The heads of this company were actively engaged in
importing Chinese labour under contract, and directly employed many

91 Roy, White Man’s Province, 45.
92 Ibid., 42.
93 Ibid. Roy further notes that by the same token most whites
recognized the rights of the Chinese to "formal justice" and
"equality in the matter of certain obligations to the state," by
which she seems to mean paying taxes. As evidence of this, Roy
cites an 1885 Nanaimo Free Press editorial to the effect that "John
Chinaman can never be called upon to take part in the
administration of justice or public affairs, but he can and should
be made to bear his full share of the burden of taxation." (Ibid.)
She seems to completely miss the point readily recognized by Ward
that excluding Chinese from "public affairs" while getting them to
bear a "full share of the burden of taxation" was a way of
establishing white power.
of the 4,500 Chinese in the province. The presence and importance of a relatively large concentration of Chinese capital was problematic for the British/Canadian colonists. In an area in which large amounts of capital were required for industrial development and yet capital was in short supply, any large collection of capital was significant. Unlike the San Francisco-based American interests, the Chinese may have been divorced from the British interests. Certainly there were recurring charges that the Chinese traded only with themselves and were sending large amounts of money out the area. But these concerns may really have revolved around the fact that the profits involved were not going to the colonial settlers. In 1872, an editorial in the British Columbian warned against "the threat" posed by Chinese peddlars:

But we must say that it is extremely to be regretted that these people should enjoy a monopoly of the peddling business of the country. In most new countries it is no unimportant branch of business. In Old Canada there are to-day hundreds of people in positions of affluence and influence who started as peddlars. . . . [including the bankers of Montreal] . . . But where will the historian find the peddlar princes of British Columbia? Why, in China, of course, where every dollar of the Chinese savings goes. Is it not an evil that so important and lucrative a business should fall into such hands?

Thus, "the evil" was Chinese property and the solution was to severely restrict the Chinese from participation in the political control over the province.

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94 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 14-16.

95 See, for example, Robin, Rush for Spoils, 13-19.

The view that the exclusion of the Chinese from British Columbia was essential to the creation and maintenance of British dominance in British Columbia was expressed in 1884 by Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken, the old Hudson's Bay Company doctor and prominent representative of "the British" interests in British Columbia. Helmcken privately told the members of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration that "we want you to prevent the influx of Mongolians because we want to be here ourselves, and do not want others to be here. You will not consider it strange if we tell you that as good Englishmen we see no reasons why any men except good Englishmen should live in this country." In other words, the Chinese needed to be excluded from British Columbia so that it could remain a place for "Englishmen."

For the Chinese, the reconstruction of the state after Confederation meant that they were excluded from the public realm, their status as "aliens" in British Columbia was fixed. They remained "alien" even as their labour contributed to the creation of the society which denied them equality. This was apparent in 1885 as thousands of Chinese workers were completing the building of the CPR. This view of the Chinese was expressed by Sir John A. Macdonald while debating the franchise legislation that he would later refer to as "the greatest triumph of my life." Macdonald,

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97 Canada, House of Commons, Debates, vol. XVIII (Ottawa 1885), 3009.

98 Cited in Stewart, "John A. Macdonald’s Greatest Triumph," 3-33. The legislation represented the culmination of Macdonald’s efforts to construct a party/patronage machine that would insure his continued electoral success. It removed the voting list from
told the House of Commons that the Chinese in Canada were "an Asiatic population, alien in spirit, alien in feeling, alien in everything . . ." A few minutes earlier Macdonald had explained that Chinese labour was needed to build up the country, "But he [the Chinese] has no British instincts or British feelings or aspirations, and therefore ought not to have a vote." 

The Political Context of School Segregation

This racial state was the context for the 1922-23 struggle around school segregation. Not only were all members of the Victoria Board of School Trustees white, so were all of the officials charged with implementing its policies. The Chinese were barred from voting and their ability to participate in B.C.'s public institutions was always contingent on the approval of whites. In challenging the school board's actions, they were provincial control and placed it in the hands of federal officials, all selected by Macdonald himself. It disenfranchised all First Nations people west of Ontario. In Eastern Canada, where Indian votes supported Macdonald, it maintained the franchise of those Indians owning subdivided land. Such ownership was subject to the approval of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs who was Macdonald himself.

99 Commons, Debates, 1885, 1589.
100 Ibid., 1582.
101 In this respect, during the initial phases of the dispute, the school board negotiated not with the Chinese directly but with Mr. Harry Hastings, a white who was fluent in Chinese. This role was ended when the Chinese suggested that the board had to negotiate with them directly. See, for example, "Chinese Submit Two Proposals," Victoria Daily Colonist, October 3, 1922, 11; "Ultimatum Angers Chinese parents," Victoria Daily Times, October 6, 1922, 2; and "Chinese Segregation," Ibid., October 13, 1922, 4. The latter is a letter from Hastings in which he denies that he is
directly confronting this supremacist construction of the public realm and affirming their right to participate within it on an equal basis with whites.

The racist nature of the school board's actions was certainly apparent to the Chinese from the beginning of the 1922-23 dispute. This was evident in several letters to the editor published in the English language papers. For example, one Chinese letter writer saw the school board's actions as "purely and simply a matter of discrimination," while another asked what the reasons for the board's actions were: "Surely they are not moved to act simply out of racial prejudice," he commented ironically.

The Chinese, however, were only too painfully aware that the school board's actions were not simply the result of the prejudices of the individual trustees, but were tied to their own second class status in British Columbia society. In November 1922, a spokesperson for the Chinese Canadian Club, a second generation

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102 The Chinese did not use the term "racism." This only became current in Western usage in the 1930s to refer to "scientific racism," e.g. of the Nazi party, and after World War One, by analogy to refer to other systems such as segregation of African-Americans in the United States. See Miles, Racism, 42-46.

103 See, "School Problem," "Chinese in Schools," and "Chinese in Schools," three letters to the editor in the Victoria Daily Colonist, September 10, 1922, 4. See also, "Segregation," Victoria Daily Times, September 14, 1922, 4. These letters referred to "racial prejudice" rather than racism. This term only gained currency during the 1930s and 1940s. See Miles, Racism.
organization, put the matter directly. The board's justifications for segregation were without substance, rather he stated, "[t]he Chinese charge that the board only dared to take this action of singling them out because they have no vote, and that the whole process is one of rank discrimination and racial prejudice."\textsuperscript{104}

Second generation Chinese Canadians, who may have made up to eighty-five percent of the students attending Victoria schools during the early 1920s,\textsuperscript{105} especially had a great deal to lose through school segregation. The stakes involved for them were made clear by Joseph Hope, the President of the Chinese Canadian Club. In a letter to the \textit{Victoria Daily Times}, he noted that school segregation placed their entire position in Canadian society at risk.

We ask ourselves this question: What can be the purpose behind this movement? Can it be the intention to prevent us securing an English education so that our children can be permanently ignorant, so that they must remain labourers to be exploited? Being ignorant of the language we will be unable to take our part by the side of other Canadians, and we will then be pointed out as those who refuse to learn the customs or social life of the country--in fact, refuse to assimilate. It will have been forgotten by then that it was not because we did not want to learn, but because certain narrow-minded autocrats have taken upon themselves the responsibility of preventing our learning.\textsuperscript{106}

In other words, for second generation Chinese Canadians segregation

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{104} "Chinese Segregation," \textit{Victoria Daily Times}, November 2, 1922, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Letter from P. Lee, "Chinese Segregation," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, October 15, 1922, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{106} "Chinese Segregation," \textit{Victoria Daily Times}, October 11, 1922, 4. Interestingly, Hope signed this letter with his Chinese name, Low Kwong Joe.
\end{itemize}
imperilled their class position within Chinese Canadian society. It would inhibit their ability to learn English which in turn threatened to make them into labourers like most of the first generation. But beyond this, it threatened to further their pariah status and insure that they would never be able to take their part "by the side of other Canadians."  

For their part, the members of the school board must have felt that the Chinese were unreasonable. Indeed the frustration of board members became apparent as the dispute dragged on and deadlines and ultimatums fell by the wayside. Trustees deplored "trouble-makers" who were attempting "to stir up racial prejudice and make the segregation policy a political issue." Trustee John L. Beckworth, for example, noted that the school board's actions were perfectly legal, that the board had "acted in the best interests of the public and the schools," and that "[t]here has been absolutely no attempt on our part to raise the anti-Chinese cry or anything like that. They have tried to drag in the racial  

107 Lack of English had often been used to justify differential treatment. This was not only evident in school segregation but in other areas. For example, it was claimed that since the Chinese did not speak English, they were a safety threat in the mines. During World War One, by studying English the miners of Cumberland circumvented an attempt by the provincial government to get the Chinese out of the mines. See, for example, "Yaoyinmi kuanggong zhizhao zhi shencha" [Examination of Cumberland miner's certificates], Dahan Gongbao, September 5, 1916, 3. The first draft of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act also provided for the expulsion of illiterates. This was amended by the Senate. See Cheng Tien-fang, Oriental Immigration in Canada (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931), 97-99.

question, yet anti-Chinese action on our part was never for a moment proposed."\textsuperscript{109} The Chinese would have been justified in suspecting Beckworth of being disingenuous in these comments. A year earlier, as a member of a special "Asiatic Exclusion Committee" of the Victoria Chamber of Commerce, he had supported a resolution calling for a number of restrictions on Chinese and Japanese residents in British Columbia. These restrictions included school segregation and a ban on Asian land ownership. At that time Beckworth had given a more visceral reason to segregate schools. He told the committee, "[t]he mixture of whites and Chinese in the public schools is abominable."\textsuperscript{110} However, his comments in October 1922 did reflect the fact that he held that "the public good" required that the desires of whites be taken into account to the exclusion of those of the Chinese.

This understanding of the public good, and by implication who made up the public, became more apparent when one trustee broke with the segregation plan. Mrs. Bertha P. Andrew tried to persuade her colleagues to accept a compromise plan in which the Chinese would be still be segregated, but in empty classrooms then available in white schools. The other trustees responded to Mrs. Andrew with ridicule by noting she "walked out of the room and asked to be excused every time this matter came up." According to the \textit{Victoria Daily Times} Mrs. Andrew's plan was unworkable:

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{110} "Aim Resolutions Against Orientals," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, November 29, 1921, 3.
"Municipal Inspector George H. Deane said that most of the accommodation at the schools would be needed soon, so that there would be little room for Chinese classes in white schools."

The future needs of whites came before the present needs of the Chinese.

The Chinese found the notion that they could not find accommodation in the public schools because of the future needs of white students particularly galling. In the spring of 1923, the last in a series of compromise plans under which the Chinese would be accommodated in white schools fell apart, once again because the Board maintained that extra space would eventually be needed for white students. A spokesperson for Chinese parents commented,

The Chinese had always understood that the schools which are being administered by the Board are public schools, the expenses of which are met by a special school tax levied by the city authorities and the Chinese property owners contributing their full share. The Chinese parents feel that they have every reason to expect that the Board will administer these public schools impartially, and for the benefit of the school population as a whole, without discrimination against any section of the population. All that the Chinese parents expect and ask is that their children should be placed on exactly the same basis as all other children in all respects.

As the Chinese parents see it, the precedent that the Chinese children are only to be admitted into the public schools when there is room implies that the schools are no longer "public schools," but only schools expressly for non-Chinese students, and the Chinese children are only acceptable subject to the first call of the non-Chinese.


Although the commentator noted that segregation was "contrary to the spirit of the educational system both of this Province and Canada," it was nonetheless consistent with the entire structure of the British Columbia state system and the position of the Chinese within it. As the Victoria Daily Colonist's labour columnist, T.H. Twigg, had put it in 1902, school segregation involved little more than "carrying into the schools what already exists in every other institution of society--the branding of Chinese as Ishmaelites."  

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113 Ibid.  
CHAPTER THREE:

WHITE SUPREMACY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF
CHINESE CANADIAN SOCIETY

Segregation and Solidarity

Throughout the 1922-23 school segregation dispute, the Victoria Chinese community demonstrated a high degree of organization and solidarity. When segregation was announced, the School Inspector granted special permits which allowed twenty Chinese students to attend integrated classes on the grounds that they spoke English fluently.¹ Despite being exempted from segregation, the twenty children who received these permits also boycotted classes.² For a time in October, five Chinese students showed up for class at the segregated King’s Road School, but they too withdrew after a time.³

Solidarity and organization was also evident in the dramatic walkout of students on the first day of classes. From the very

¹ Strike supporters firmly denounced the permit system as "one of favouritism, permits being granted to the wealthier ones with the intention of preventing cohesion amongst the Chinese," see "Chinese Segregation," Victoria Daily Colonist, October 15, 1922, 4. Apparently one permit had been granted to the Inspector’s insurance agent.

² "Chinese Picketing Schools; Five Boys Start Work To-Day," Victoria Daily Times, October 9, 1923, 1.

³ Ibid.
beginning of the 1922-1923 school segregation controversy, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) played a key role in organizing this response. The CCBA was the major organization of the Chinese community and often spoke for the community with white institutions. It was in this role that it first became involved in the 1922-1923 school segregation issue. At a school board meeting early in 1922, the CCBA directly challenged Inspector Deane's charges of improper sanitation on the part of Chinese students. During the summer, after the Board announced its plans to proceed with segregation, the CCBA, this time in conjunction with other Chinese organizations, again protested. The CCBA organized the students' strike at a meeting the night before the start of classes and established an ad hoc organization, the Victoria Overseas Chinese Resist School Segregation Association [Weiduoli Huagiao Kangzheng Fenxiao Tuantihui], to co-ordinate the fight against the school board in the coming months.


5 "Oppose Plan of Segregation," Victoria Daily Colonist, September 9, 1922, 1. The fact that the CCBA joined with the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Canadian Club in making this protest suggests that merchants and their second generation children were particularly concerned about school segregation. See also, "Showdown in School Crisis," Victoria Daily Colonist, October 8, 1922, 3.

6 Lai, "Discrimination in Education," 57. Formation of such ad hoc organizations was quite common during this era. For example, in 1923 many such groups were formed across Canada to protest the federal government's proposed Chinese Immigration Act.
However as the deadlock continued, it was the Chinese Canadian Club that took on the role of responding to the school board's allegations in the white newspapers. For example, when the school board claimed that segregation was necessary because Chinese students were retarding the progress of white students, the Chinese Canadian Club published a list of the names, ages and class rankings of ninety-four Chinese students, formerly attending non-segregated schools, who were above their class averages. In addition it published the names of another seventeen students who were below their class averages but were two years younger than their classmates. It pointed out that in these classes, "all questions and answers are given in English, and that the Chinese children could not stand so high up in their classes unless they understand the questions asked them, and could answer intelligently."  

Collecting the kind of information that the Chinese Canadian Club used to respond to the school board, and co-ordinating activities the way the CCBA did, not only indicates that there was a great deal of behind the scenes activity within the Chinese community, it also indicates that the strike was able to draw upon a previously existing network of organizations welded together by a sense of shared purposes. What this in turn suggests is that the

See Chinese Canadian Research Collection (CCRC), Box 4, folder for 1923.

Chinese had constructed a society of their own within British Columbia.

Chinese British Columbians

Even though for John A. Macdonald the Chinese were alien to British Columbia and Canada, they were really as native as the province's British and Anglo-Canadians "settlers." As a community, the Chinese had been continuously present in what later became British Columbia since the 1858 gold rush. Throughout the nineteenth century, they remained a major proportion of the province's non-First Nations population.

But beyond mere presence, British Columbia's Chinese were not alien in another sense. They were themselves active participants in the creation of B.C. society, in the operations of its economy and in the definition of its political culture. From the very beginning the Chinese found a niche in the area's economy by fulfilling much of its labour needs. The first Chinese were gold miners who came up from California soon after the news of the gold rush broke. These firstcomers were shortly joined by migrants who came directly from China.  

Even during the gold rush era, most gold had to be extracted by labour-intensive placer mining techniques and most Chinese miners were little more than

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8 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 13.
labourers.\textsuperscript{9}

The Chinese also found ready employment in infrastructural development. For example, several hundred Chinese workers were engaged in building the network of roads that linked the lower Fraser Valley with the interior during the mid 1860s. As the gold rush era drew to a close, Chinese workers remained in B.C., finding employment in the Nanaimo coal fields, the fish canning industry, sawmilling and domestic service, as well as in further infrastructural development such as dike building and land clearing.\textsuperscript{10}

However, initial Chinese immigration was small when compared to that which took place under the impetus of the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. During the 1880s, after the failure of efforts at recruiting labour locally and in California, 15,000 Chinese were imported into the province to meet the railroad's needs. Of these, some 6,000 or so worked for the railway at any given time.\textsuperscript{11}


\textsuperscript{10} Wickberg, \textit{From China to Canada}, 20-22. For a sector by sector account of Chinese economic activities at the turn of the century, see \textit{Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration} (1902). The earlier \textit{Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration} (1885) provides some less detailed information.

The Chinese were the most likely group to meet British Columbia's labour needs for a number of reasons. Although First Nations people participated in the wage economy, their decimation during the decades following European contact and the partial survival of the aboriginal economy precluded them from meeting B.C.'s demand for labour. Before completion of the railroad, distance and the more attractive Eastern seaboard prevented large scale immigration to British Columbia from Europe. Even after the railway's completion, the transportation costs involved normally made the East more attractive for European immigrants. At the same time, internal pressures within China—civil unrest, the disruptions of European imperialism, and perhaps most importantly over-population—created a push for Chinese emigration. This emigration was primarily to South-East Asia, but also Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States and the British colonies of settlement. In addition, the role of Chinese labourers in the infrastructural development of California was well known to B.C. entrepreneurs and policy-makers. Even British control of Hong Kong and the neighbouring Guangdong province made it relatively easy for British and Canadian labour recruiters to set up shop as well as enabled Chinese immigrants to make use of existing shipping routes to come to B.C.  

On the role of First Nations people as wage labourers, see Knight, Indians. An excellent summary of the factors resulting in a net "push" for Chinese emigration in South China is provided by Paul Yee, "Chinese Business in Vancouver, 1886-1914," (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1983), 10-26; see also Wickberg, From China to Canada, 5-12; Chan, Gold Mountain, 20-36. A summary of the role of labour demand as a net "pull" for
Most important, however, was the presence in British Columbia of those who were in a position to recruit large numbers of Chinese labourers when they were needed. Chinese merchants had the necessary linguistic, cultural and economic resources to broker the immigration of Chinese labour through established trade relations and commercial networks.\textsuperscript{13}

The first Chinese merchants accompanied the miners and labourers who came up from San Francisco. These merchants and their successors during the rest of the century provided a number of services to Chinese migrants. They supplied transportation to the interior, sold familiar provisions such as rice and dried vegetables and forwarded remittances and letters back to China.\textsuperscript{14} This ethnic service sector was potentially quite lucrative. As we have seen, Chinese firms were amongst the largest property-owners in Victoria during the early 1860s.\textsuperscript{15} As late as 1908, the largest Chinese firms in Vancouver tended to be based in this ethnic service sector.\textsuperscript{16}

The import/export trade, and financial services, drew upon a

\textsuperscript{13} White firms had the lion's share of the contracting of Chinese labourers for the CPR, but Chinese firms also supplied several thousand workers. See Chan, \textit{Gold Mountain}, 57-58 and Wickberg, \textit{From China to Canada}, 21. White firms would have been dependent on Chinese merchants and their links in order to recruit workers in China.

\textsuperscript{14} Wickberg, \textit{From China to Canada}, 35.

\textsuperscript{15} For a discussion of early Chinese merchants in British Columbia, see Ibid., 14-19.

network of commercial relations which extended throughout British Columbia and China. When a demand arose for large quantities of labour, such as was the case during the early 1880s, Chinese trading companies were in a ready position to meet the demand. Labour-contracting, therefore, was a logical extension of the established role of Chinese merchants as commodity brokers and financial agents.¹⁷

Labour contracting often took the form of advancing passage money (and after 1885 head tax money) to prospective workers in China and arranging their employment (and terms of repayment) once in Canada. Once passage money was worked off, workers were theoretically free to pursue other employment but often remained dependent on the labour contractor for linguistic and other reasons. Labour contractors usually also supplied interpreters and charge-hands who supervised the Chinese labour force for white employers. These employers, needless to say, found this packaged labour, with its fixed costs and self-contained supervision, very attractive.¹⁸ Asians (Chinese and later Japanese) were the only B.C. workers consistently employed through the labour contract system. Although some Chinese labour contractors also hired First Nations women for fish canneries, other workers were generally engaged directly by employers.

The labour contract system was dependent upon both the class

¹⁷ See Wickberg, From China to Canada, 21.

¹⁸ On the operations of the labour contract system, see Yee, "Chinese Business," 31-33; Li, Chinese in Canada, 15-19; Chan, Gold Mountain, 43-46. See also the two Royal Commission reports.
relations of Chinese merchants and labourers, and the hostility of the dominant society. Labour contracting presupposed a certain amount of control by the contractor over the labourer. In the case of Chinese merchants, this control was in large measure the consequence of their exploitation of the pattern of chain-migration which was common among the B.C. Chinese, and the linguistic and cultural features of the labourers and merchants themselves. Almost all Chinese in British Columbia were from the rural areas of Guangdong province in South China. The majority were from the so-called "Sze-yap" [Siyi] region or "the four-counties" of Hoi-ping [Kaiping], Yin-ping [Enping], Toi-san [Taishan], Sun-wui [Xinhui] in the southwest of the province, although a significant minority were from "Sam-yap" [Sanyi] or "the three counties" of Nam-hoi [Nanhai], Poon-yue [Panyu] and Sun-dak [Shunde] in the area of Canton [Guangzhou]. Since this was in the era before mass education and modern communications promoted standard Chinese, people from these areas spoke mutually unintelligible dialects of Cantonese. They were also divided by what were to them important cultural, political and familial differences.

Evidence from the mid-1880s suggests that Chinese immigrants who settled in an area were often from the same village or district in Guangdong and likely related to each other. For example, sixty percent of the Chinese in Nanaimo came from Toi-san, while three-quarters of the Chinese at Quesnel Forks came from Poon-yue county. It even appears that those engaged in particular trades were linked

19 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 7-8.
by kinship and place of origin. In other words, once a Chinese worker was established in a given area or occupation, he would send for relatives and friends from his home town to join him. The result was a society which however homogeneous it seemed from the outside was internally divided along regional, linguistic and even political lines.  

Linguistic divisions, for example, meant that Chinese from different districts could communicate with each other only with great difficulty. The situation was not helped by the chauvinism that sometimes led people to make fun of those who spoke differently. This, of course, made it almost impossible for people who spoke different dialects to work together. The end result was that people from the same district or village were dependent upon each other for employment and for purposes of mutual aid.

This inter-dependence on people who spoke the same dialect, or who were from the same area, encouraged the Chinese to establish their own mutual assistance organizations. These took two basic forms--district and clan associations. The former were nominally

20 Lai, "Home County and Clan Origins," 3-29. Lai's analysis is based upon receipt books for a levy of two dollars per head paid to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in Victoria. These receipts recorded the contributor's name, and home county/village in Guangdong province. They also indirectly indicate their locations in B.C. Approximately one half of the Chinese then in Canada paid this levy. See ibid., 5.

21 In one revealing turn-of-the-century incident, Dr. Sun Yat-sen was heckled by his Vancouver audience because most of them were from Sze-yap and had difficulty understanding his "Shek-ki" dialect. See the account of Chang Yun Ho, reproduced in Yee, Saltwater City, 40-44.
made up of all those from the same district and the latter of those
who had the same surname (and in practice were mainly from the same
area). These associations maintained halls in localities where
their members were active so that other members could find lodging,
news of possible employment as well as other welfare benefits.
Both kinds of organization had continuities with similar
organizations in Guangdong and California, although it is unlikely
that they had direct organizational links.\textsuperscript{22}

Chinese merchants usually controlled these associations and
through them Chinese labourers.\textsuperscript{23} Merchant houses or Chinese
companies themselves often took on the role of organizing these
associations directly. For example, the Tai Soong company of
Victoria provided the support network for people from Poon-yue
through its branches throughout the province.\textsuperscript{24}

Merchant involvement in clan and district associations was an
extension of their roles in Chinese society. Although much has
been made of the traditional Confucian hierarchy of gentry,
peasants, artisans and merchants, which regarded merchants as
unproductive parasites at the bottom of the social ladder, by the
nineteenth century merchants were in fact members of the local

\textsuperscript{22} Wickberg, \textit{From China to Canada}, 30-41, 77-79, 315-321.

\textsuperscript{23} On the control of community organizations by merchants in
the United States, see Roger Daniels, \textit{Asian Americans: Chinese and
Japanese in the United States since 1850} (Seattle and London:

\textsuperscript{24} Wickberg, \textit{From China to Canada}, 40.
gentry/landlord elites. In China, the lowest state official, the county magistrate, could have charge of a quarter of a million people or more. The gentry, which was made up of those who had passed the lower level civil service examination, therefore played a key role in state formation. This included various activities designed to reproduce Confucian ideology as well as organizing public undertakings ranging from irrigation projects to putting down popular uprisings and providing famine relief. As those with the disposable income available to contribute to such undertakings, well-to-do merchants were inevitably involved in these undertakings.

Merchant participation in clan and district associations in British Columbia also facilitated their class control over labourers. For example, people leaving B.C. would be stopped by agents representing clan and district associations. If unable to produce a dues receipt, they could be (forcibly) stopped from

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25 For the view that merchants were at the bottom of the social ladder in China, while at the top in the new world, see Chan, Gold Mountain, 22 and Daniels, Asian Americans, 25. For an important discussion of the social position of merchants in late imperial Chinese society, see Marie-Claire Bergère, The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911-1937, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Paris: Editions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 1986), esp. 13-23.

departing. Presumably, at the same time, any who owed money to an important merchant could also be stopped. In the early twentieth century, the leading merchants of Vancouver were also the Chinese ticket agents for the trans-Pacific steamship companies. This would have provided yet another point of control over labourers.

Thus Chinese merchants were essential participants in British Columbia's capitalist economy as organizers of Chinese labour-power for the Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie. The complex web of relationships between Chinese labourers and Chinese merchants, ties of common home town, shared dialect or surname, made labourers dependent upon the merchants and the merchants in turn assumed some degree of responsibility for the welfare of the workers. Ethnic associations within the Chinese community, paralleling those of South China, were readily adapted to meet the needs of the new society.

Cheap Labour

It should be noted that the demand for labour which the Chinese filled was for unskilled, cheap, male labour. The rugged physical conditions of British Columbia and its distance from major markets necessitated extensive infrastructural development which could only be pursued if labour costs were kept to a minimum.

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27 See Daniels, Asian Americans, 25.
For example, during CPR construction, Chinese workers were paid $1.00 a day out of which they had to pay their own living expenses while white workers were paid from $1.50 to $2.50 per day as well as room and board. Even with these low wages, the CPR's chief contractor in B.C., Andrew Onderdonk, came perilously close to bankruptcy.

It appears that many British Columbian and central Canadian capitalists during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the Chinese and other Asians "as the stuff of an ideal industrial proletariat." In 1896, the CPR President, Sir William Van Horne expressed sentiments shared by many of his peers. He affirmed in a letter to the editor of the Vancouver World that "absolutely necessary to the rapid progress of the country" was "an abundance of cheap labour," which could only be "had from China and to a small extent Japan." Van Horne further noted that the Chinese were hard-working, spent more than other labourers, and were models of good behaviour.

Low wages for Chinese workers were not confined to railroad construction. By the turn of the century, the Chinese were also active in the coal mining industry on Vancouver Island, in saw and shingle mills, and in fish canneries. In all of these industries, they tended to be paid less than whites. Testimony before the 1902

30 Chan, Gold Mountain, 60-61.
32 Ibid., 26.
Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration showed that Chinese workers were paid one-third to one-half less than their white counterparts.\textsuperscript{33} Years later, during the 1930s, provincial and federal statistics showed that they continued to "be found in the low wage groups."\textsuperscript{34}

Chinese wages were kept down through a number of devices all of which depended upon white supremacist practices to at least some degree. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racist violence kept the Chinese out of many areas of B.C., preventing them from competing for jobs in those areas. Between 1898 and 1906, mob violence in the Slocan Valley, in Atlin, Salmo, and Penticton, forced Asians out of town.\textsuperscript{35} The Chinese cook of a CPR crew was not even able to step off the train in the Sandon area.\textsuperscript{36}

While it may be that anti-Chinese violence in Canada never reached the heights that it did in the United States,\textsuperscript{37} it was still a recurring phenomenon. State officials may never have

\textsuperscript{33} Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, passim. This evidence is summarized in Li, Chinese in Canada, 44-45.


\textsuperscript{35} Ward, White Canada Forever, 64.

\textsuperscript{36} Cole Harris, "Industry and the Good Life Around Idaho Peak," Canadian Historical Review 66, 3 (September 1985): 315-46, esp. n. 15.

overtly approved of anti-Chinese violence, but they did prove unable or unwilling to protect the Chinese in all areas of the province. As Chinese workers were unable to move to all the areas that white workers could, they were concentrated in other areas. This tended to produce a relative oversupply of Chinese labour in territories that were less hostile and consequently high levels of unemployment amongst Chinese workers.

High unemployment was even evident during the building of the CPR. Fifteen thousand Chinese labourers were brought to B.C., but a maximum of only 6,000 of these were employed at any given time. Even fewer were employed from 1883 onwards. This resulted in tremendous privation amongst Chinese workers trapped in the country by poverty and unemployment. This oversupply of Chinese labourers tended to keep wages down and actually resulted in a net emigration of Chinese from B.C. between 1885 and 1891. Demand for Chinese labour, as reflected in immigration statistics, did not return to previous levels until the mid 1890s.

Even during the early 1900s, unemployment remained relatively high amongst the Chinese. For example, evidence provided by the

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38 For example, in 1883 an all white jury refused to convict those accused of murdering a Chinese railway worker. See Roy, "Choice Between Evils," 20-21.

39 See Harris, "Industry and the Good Life," 322.


41 Ibid., 29-30, 33-34; Chan, Gold Mountain, 67.

42 "Table 1: Chinese Immigration and Population Estimates, 1880-1901," in Wickberg, From China to Canada, 296.
Chinese Board of Trade in Victoria to the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration suggests that close to sixteen percent of the 2,754 Chinese labourers in Victoria were unemployed. It is likely that this unemployment level was even higher at times as the many labourers, such as Victoria's 886 Chinese cannerymen, were seasonally employed.\(^43\) Indeed concern about unemployment amongst Chinese labourers led Chinese merchants in B.C. to undertake on a number of occasions steps to discourage further immigration.\(^44\)

A series of orders-in-council, provincial enactments, and municipal regulations further restricted the ability of the Chinese to participate in the provincial economy on an equal footing with their white counterparts. In addition to disenfranchisement which barred them from certain professions, between 1877 and 1922 the provincial legislature enacted fifteen pieces of legislation which had as their purpose the limitation of Chinese labour. Often these acts also applied to Japanese. Although all but three of these pieces of legislation were either thrown out by the courts or disallowed by the federal government, they significantly reduced the ability of the Chinese to participate in the labour market on an equal basis with whites. A patchwork of municipal and federal regulations further limited the ability of the Chinese to enter certain sectors of the economy. For example, Vancouver city by-

\(^{43}\) Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 12.

laws barred the Chinese from working on municipal contracts, while in Burnaby, they were prohibited from holding shopkeepers’ licenses.  

Even when ultimately overturned, discriminatory legislation was often enforced for a time. For example, the 1877 Coal Mines Regulation Act barred the Chinese, or any others who did not speak English, from working in a position of authority in a coal mine. This remained in effect for over twenty years, until successfully challenged in the courts. There ensued ten years of provincial enactments, federal disallowances and court challenges, after which the coal mine regulations were replaced by a requirement that miners in certain positions pass an English-language test. This led to inspections of Chinese and Japanese miners on Vancouver Island during the First World War.

Between 1885 and 1907, the B.C. legislature also inserted clauses barring the employment of Chinese or Japanese labour in fifty-seven private acts of incorporation. A number of these acts incorporated railroads or other infrastructural undertakings (e.g. water works and ferries). Meanwhile in 1902, following a legislative resolution to the same effect, the provincial government issued two orders-in-council inserting anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese clauses in all subsequent contracts for provincial

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45 Ryder, "Racism and the Constitution," 78-124.

public works, or leases of public lands (including crown timber licenses). These provisions remained in effect until the early 1920s.  

Municipalities often aped provincial regulations by inserting similar anti-Asian clauses in their work contracts, or enacting by-laws establishing differential hours of operation or license fees for Asian businesses. Some municipalities barred Asians from holding certain store licenses outright. Generally speaking, the courts and the federal government only disallowed those discriminatory enactments which interfered with the ability of large employers to hire Chinese labour.

The effect of these regulations was to keep the Chinese out of certain industries completely, or at least out of those under direct provincial jurisdiction. In addition, as was the case with they Coal Mines Regulation Act, they maintained the better, and higher paying jobs, for whites. Even when not enforced in practice, there was always the possibility that they would be. Thus after World War One, when there was an increase in anti-Asian agitation, the provincial government found it convenient to enforce its 1902 orders-in-council barring Chinese workers from crown contracts.  

Whatever jobs the Chinese held outside of these formal restrictions were not secure either, since restricted spheres could always be extended. The white supremacist notion that the

47 Ryder, "Racism and the Constitution," 126-183.
48 Ibid., 115-122.
Chinese were mere sojourners who did not have the same rights as others and who did not contribute to the provincial economy was widely held. Thus during the First World War, B.C.'s white women's organizations and trade unions campaigned for the replacement of Chinese workers in the hospital sector with white women. Following the war, veterans' groups demanded that returned veterans be given preference for jobs occupied by Chinese workers. This even led to efforts to train veterans to replace Chinese workers in the shingle industry. Thus whenever Chinese workers sought higher wages, they could be threatened with replacement by whites.

Over time, racist hostility forced the Chinese out of many areas of the economy into either the Chinese-controlled ethnic service sector or into providing direct services for whites. By the mid-1920s, for example, there were few Chinese still involved in mining, while the numbers involved in small businesses or semi-professions had grown.

Chinese workers also had fewer resources to draw upon in resisting the efforts of white employers to depress their wages. In part this was a chicken and egg phenomenon. Being poorer to start with, they were less able to engage in prolonged work stoppages or other job actions. They also lacked access to trade

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49 *The Chinese Times*, August 1, 1914, 3, cited in CCRC, Box 4; Ibid., April 14, 1915, 3.

50 *The Chinese Times*, March 5, 1919, 2-3; Ibid., March 11, 1919, 3; Ibid., July 17, 1919, 3, cited in CCRC Box 4, folder for 1919.

union protection as a result of their marginal position in B.C. society. Labour organizations before 1900 were white male working class organizations. Many of these white trade unions specifically barred Chinese workers from membership. Consequently, Chinese workers could not draw upon the resources of these unions, however limited, to improve their conditions. Even after 1900 when there were several Chinese trade unions, the division of the working class along racial lines was such that they could not rely upon the support of organized white labour. In this respect Gillian Creese has noted that white supremacy was also the creation of the white working class, and not solely the creation of Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie.⁵²

Disenfranchisement also prevented the Chinese from participating in provincial politics; unlike white workers they were unable to elect representatives who could at least publicize their grievances and lobby for improvements. However, the Chinese were quite willing to draw upon state resources when they were able to and, for example, made extensive use of workers compensation,⁵³ but, due again to the legal disabilities they suffered, had even less access to these resources than did white workers.

Moreover, white supremacist notions justified the exploitation of Chinese workers. The equation of Chinese workers themselves with "cheap," "servile," "degraded" labour made demands for higher

⁵² Ibid.; see also Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity?" 24-51 and Creese, "Working Class Politics, Racism and Sexism," passim.

⁵³ Wickberg, From China to Canada, 135.
wages on the part of the Chinese seem oxymoronic.\textsuperscript{54} This, of course, did not stop the Chinese from seeking higher wages through a number of strikes during the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{55} It appears that by 1908, the labour contract system was breaking down as Chinese wages increased.\textsuperscript{56}

The control of clan and district associations by merchants also meant that Chinese community resources were not automatically forthcoming to support striking workers. Indeed Chinese merchants felt a great deal of ambivalence towards the efforts of Chinese labourers to improve their wages. Labour contractors and others who had advanced passage money would have favoured higher wages in principle so long as Chinese workers were not priced out of the market. However, at the same time, labour contractors needed to deliver a docile work force at a set price to white employers as this was the key to future contracts. Only in the most extreme conditions might they support demands for higher wages beyond the terms established in the contract. When their profits were threatened, Chinese labour contractors were not above conspiring with whites to keep Chinese workers in line.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} This is discussed in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{55} See Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity?" 24.

\textsuperscript{56} Public Archives of Canada, W.L. Mackenzie King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, vol. C38, 28, Microfilm Reproduction, (M/G/26, J. Vol. C38-C40), Royal Commission to Inquire into Methods by which Oriental Labourers Have Been Induced to Come to Canada, 1907, Report, C30908-30914.

\textsuperscript{57} Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 160-61.
In addition, after 1900 Chinese merchants increasingly provided direct services to white clients. For example, the number of Chinese laundries and restaurants serving whites grew dramatically, as did specialized operations such as merchant tailoring. More and more Chinese came to work directly for other Chinese. These Chinese-controlled enterprises depended upon cheap labour. Restaurants or laundries which catered to white working class clienteles were only viable so long as their costs were kept down by making their workers work long hours for low wages. Thus it is interesting to note that one of the first Chinese strikes of the twentieth century was organized against Chinese employers by the Chinese Laundryworkers Union in Vancouver in 1906.

Chinese merchants, however, also depended upon Chinese workers as a market. Thus it was also in their interests to support other efforts to increase wages. For example, during the period 1915-1923, Chinese merchants supported the efforts of Chinese vegetable peddlars to oppose discriminatory and retributive license fees imposed by the City of Vancouver. This struggle included a prolonged "strike," even though the strike may have hurt Chinese vegetable wholesalers. In the same era, merchants also supported strikes organized by the Chinese Shingle Workers

58 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 80.
59 For an account of this strike, see Yee, "Chinese Business," 35-36.
60 See, for example, The Chinese Times, June 2, 1919, 3 and January 20, 1920, 2, CCRC Box 4, folders for 1919 and 1920.
Union for higher wages and against racist supervisors. They even appear to have supported efforts by white trade unions to organize Chinese forestry workers.

The end result of this pattern of low wages, formal and informal discrimination, dependence on Chinese merchants and lack of support from other working class organizations was the division of the B.C. working class along "race" lines. According to Gillian Creese, the division of the working class between Asian and white workers had several facets. The working class was "1) segmented by job function, with skilled labour and the more desirable unskilled jobs monopolized by Euro-Canadians while Asians performed the most menial of unskilled labour; 2) segregation within the workplace, with Asians hired as groups under the authority of an Asian labour contractor separate from white workers; 3) and ethnically split wage scales, with Asians consistently paid less than Euro-Canadians for similar work." 

**Gender, Class and White Supremacy**

One of the characteristics of the Chinese communities of British Columbia was their small number of women and children. In fact, they were almost entirely made up of adult males. By 1921, there were a mere 503 Chinese females compared to 2,938 males.

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61 *The Chinese Times*, March 5, 1919, p.3; Ibid., April 26, 1919, 3; CCRC Box 4, folder for 1919.

62 *The Chinese Times*, June 11, 1919, 3 and June 16, 1919, 1; CCRC Box 4, folder for 1919.

63 Creese, "Class, Ethnicity, and Conflict," 63.
resident in Victoria. Even though this meant that males outnumbered females by a ratio of six to one, this was the lowest male/female ratio of any Chinese community in Canada. The largest Chinese community, Vancouver, had a male/female ratio of ten to one (5,899 males to 585 females) while out of a total Chinese population in Canada of 39,587 in 1921, there were a mere 2,424 females, for an average of sixteen males for every female. One thousand, seven hundred and thirteen of these women lived in British Columbia, compared to 21,820 men. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this imbalance was even greater. According to evidence gathered by a Qing consular official as presented to the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration in 1884, there were 180 Chinese women and children (including seventy prostitutes) in B.C., out of a Chinese population of 10,471.

The profound gender imbalances that marked the Chinese communities of B.C. were inextricably linked with the pressures of white supremacy and the operations of labour markets. But the presence of wives and children also helped to define the class structure of the Chinese community by marking people's status. This has been summarized by Edgar Wickberg:

The Chinese society of 1900 was made up of a small elite of well-to-do merchants, a large group of small merchants, and an even larger body of labourers. The well-off merchants were usually engaged in the import-export trade between China and Canada. Some of them had their wives and children with them. Indeed, the only complete

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64 Canada, Sixth Census of Canada, 1921 (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1924), vol. 1, 358-359. Wickberg, From China to Canada, 306.

families present in the Chinese communities were those of well-to-do merchants. Small merchants, especially those who operated restaurants, might hope some day to become wealthy. By in the meantime neither they nor the labourers had their complete families with them.  

In addition Wickberg notes that the absence of Chinese families in B.C. further fed into notions that the Chinese were mere "sojourners."

This notion in turn justified the discriminatory treatment of the Chinese.

The gender imbalance within Chinese communities, and its regulation by white supremacist practices and policies, contributed to maintaining the Chinese as cheap labour. British Columbia's demand for cheap labour was for male labour only. Raw muscle power was needed to build the railroad grades, reclaim swamp lands, and construct the dikes. When there was an oversupply of this labour, as there was in the 1870s and mid-1880s, cheap Chinese male labour went into sectors of the economy that in other areas might have been occupied by women. In British Columbia, "women's work" was often "Chinaman's work." Chinese males filled the service sector (hotel and restaurants) and constituted the majority of domestics well into the twentieth century.

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66 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 80.


68 Indeed, in this respect it is interesting to note that the agitation which culminated in the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act began during World War One with demands to replace Chinese male workers in the hotel and hospital sectors with white women. See The Chinese Times, August 1, 1914, 3, cited in Chinese Canadian Research Collection, Box 3; Ibid., April 14, 1915, 3.
Seasonal industries which might have also employed Chinese women tended to have their labour needs filled by First Nations women whose standards of living, and hence whose wages, were subsidized by the partial survival of traditional aboriginal economies.\(^{69}\) Thus there was virtually no demand for Chinese female labour in B.C.

After 1885, this gendered labour demand was compounded by immigration head taxes. These head taxes started at fifty dollars in 1885 and were raised to one hundred dollars in 1901 and five hundred dollars in 1903. Except for Chinese merchants and their families, who were excluded in order to promote China trade, and at times students, teachers and religious leaders and their families, between 1885 and 1923 all other Chinese entrants into Canada had to pay this head tax. In 1923 the Chinese Immigration Act effectively ended Chinese immigration of all types, including merchants and the immediate relatives of those already present in Canada.\(^{70}\)

\(^{69}\) This pattern was evident in the fish canning industry, for example. See Alicja Muszynski, "The Creation and Organisation of Cheap Wage Labour in the British Columbia Fishing Industry," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1986).

\(^{70}\) These federal regulations were supplemented by provincial ones. While provincial immigration laws were invariably disallowed by the federal government, there were still occasions when they were in full effect, preventing the immigration of some Chinese. For example, on August 31, 1900, the B.C. Legislature passed an Immigration Act which imposed the so-called Natal formula on would-be immigrants to the province. It barred from immigration any person who was unable to fill out an application form "in the characters of some language of Europe," but in practice was applied only to Chinese and Japanese immigrants. This legislation was fully enforced by provincial officials until disallowed by the federal government on September 11, 1901. Under its provisions, officials went so far as to track down and deport a number of
The immigration head tax regulated, rather than ended, the migration of working class Chinese men to Canada, while effectively blocking the immigration of working class women and dependent children. The one hundred dollar head tax insured that most Chinese labourers could not afford to immigrate unless they already had significant resources of their own or their head tax and passage money was advanced by a relative, a labour contractor or other would-be employer. In other words, the tax insured that only those Chinese whose labour was in demand could immigrate. Since there was a lack of demand for Chinese female labour, labour contractors or relatives already in Canada could not expect that working class Chinese women would have been able to work off their passage money. Even the fifty dollar head tax made the costs of bringing over an entire family including dependent children prohibitive as it could total several hundred dollars. After 1903, when the head tax reached five hundred dollars, this became even more difficult for most workers.\footnote{Anthony B. Chan provides an estimate of the labourer economy. \textit{Gold Mountain}, 74-75.}

Still it appears that many Chinese workers were married,

\footnote{Chinese and Japanese who failed the test. Trans-Pacific shipping companies were also encouraged to stop carrying passengers who did not meet the act's requirements. Ryder, "Racism and the Constitution," 56-59 and 59, n. 143. Ryder further notes, "Frequently, the period between enactment and disallowance was longer than the period that followed between disallowance and reenactment. As a result, in the period from 1900 to 1908, B.C. anti-Asian Immigration Acts were in force more often than not." Ibid., 64. On the head taxes and other federal restrictions, see also Cheng, \textit{Oriental Immigration in Canada}.}
although their families were in China.\footnote{See the discussion in Chan, \textit{Gold Mountain}, 50-51.} As late as 1941, of the 29,000 Chinese males in Canada, 23,500 were married, yet there were only 1,200 intact conjugal Chinese families in the country at the time.\footnote{Li, \textit{Chinese in Canada}, 65-68.} This was during the era in which the immigration of all classes of Chinese was banned under the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act. This implies that the 22,000 married males with families outside of the country had originally entered the country before 1923, although some may have married after 1923. Indeed there appears to have been a constant traffic in Chinese workers who returned to China for purposes of marriage or conjugal visits and then came back to Canada for a prolonged separation from their families.\footnote{There were also repeated attempts throughout the era under discussion to insure that discriminatory immigration regulations did not inhibit the ability of those already present in Canada to re-enter following trips back to China. See, for example, Wickberg, \textit{From China to Canada}, 157.}

Typical were the experiences of Yun Ho Chang who came to Canada as a young man in 1908, returned to China in 1911 and married, but was not able to bring his wife to Canada until 1949.

\begin{quote}
I went back to China in 1911, . . . . I spent 6 months in my home village and during that time I got married and spent 3 months with my wife. Then I came back to Canada. She didn’t come until 1949. I went back several times after that, but I couldn’t bring her over without paying the $500 head tax which all Chinese had to pay \cite{sic}. And then after 1923 she wasn’t allowed to come at all.\footnote{Yun Ho Chang in Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter (comps. and eds.), \textit{Opening Doors: Vancouver’s East End}, Sound Heritage Series, Vol. VIII, Nos. 1 and 2 (Victoria: Minister of Provincial Secretary}
While visits back to China may have been possible for most workers, the head tax and the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act made bringing their families to Canada an impossibility.

Ironically, raising the head tax to five hundred dollars in 1904 appears to have indirectly stimulated the immigration of Chinese families. The five hundred dollar head tax meant that in certain industries there were not enough Chinese males to meet their demands for labour. This led to higher wages for the Chinese who were no longer cheap labour. Higher wages and waiting jobs enabled workers already in Canada to send for teenaged sons, or other male relatives, and pay their head taxes with the expectation that they could get their money back fairly quickly. Once several male members of a family were established in the country, the immigration of other family members could be financed. Thus after an initial lull, the period between 1904 and 1923 saw the largest immigration of Chinese women and children to Canada. Still, immigration during this period remained overwhelmingly male. Between 1908 and 1923, of the 48,000 Chinese admitted to Canada (including many making return trips), over 1,000 were women, while

and Government Services, Provincial Archives, 1979), 40. I am indebted to Jean Barman for bringing this collection of oral histories to my attention. Yun's comments paralleled those of others. See Wickberg, From China to Canada, 153. See also Li, Chinese in Canada, 63-64.

76 This was one of Mackenzie King's conclusions arising from his interviews as the Commissioner of the Royal Commission to Inquire into the Methods by which Oriental Labourers Have Been Induced to Come to Canada.

77 This has been pointed out by Wickberg. See From China to Canada, 81.
over 38,000 were men (8,600 children). In 1923, the Chinese Immigration Act effectively stopped the immigration of all Chinese to Canada.

Racist violence, as well as the general hostility of whites to the Chinese, also appear to have discouraged some who could afford to pay the head tax from bringing their families to Canada. The successful Nanaimo market gardener Sing Chung Yung, for example, when asked by the 1902 Royal Commission why he didn't bring his family to Canada from China, answered, "The people in this country talk so much against Chinese that I do not care to bring them here." Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, similar sentiments were expressed by various Chinese spokespeople.

The brutality of the immigration process itself likely also discouraged people from bringing their families. Not only were ship-board conditions often dismal, upon arrival in Canada Chinese immigrants could be detained for weeks while they had their stories verified. In 1921, for example, the eight year old Jack Lee was

78 Calculation based on Li, Chinese in Canada, "Table 4.1: Age and Sex of Chinese Immigrants Admitted Annually to Canada, 1907-24," 60.

79 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 65. These comments are cited by Chan, Gold Mountain, 50. Given his initial capital, Sing could have easily paid the head tax for his family.

80 Chan, Gold Mountain, 50-51.

81 Under the Immigration Acts of 1906 and 1910, immigration officials were conferred with broad discretionary powers. For example, under the 1910 act, the Cabinet was empowered to prohibit the landing of "immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuit
detained at the Vancouver immigration station in prison-like conditions for three months. 82 Frequently Chinese women also seem to have been detained, possibly in the belief that they were prostitutes. 83 Few Chinese would have wanted to subject their families to such treatment.

Discriminatory immigration measures and racist hostility insured that Chinese immigration was an essentially male phenomenon by keeping the wives and dependent children of Chinese labourers in China. Keeping the families of Chinese workers in China, however, insured that the workers themselves were maintained as cheap labour by transferring the costs of reproducing Chinese labour to China. 84 As the cost of living was significantly lower in China than in B.C., the costs of reproducing labour-power there were significantly less than the costs of reproducing labour-power in B.C. Thus Chinese workers could be paid less because white

the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrant of any unspecified class, occupation or character." Cited in Ryder, "Racism and the Constitution," p, 75. This legislation was used to support a white Canada immigration policy. Contemporary official American observers noted that this policy enabled discriminatory immigration without actually naming any groups, while at the same time allowing immigration officials to respond to the needs of the labour market. Ibid., 76. See also Wickberg, From China to Canada, 157.

82 Yee, Saltwater City, 52-53.

83 In 1921, there are several reports of the wives and children of Chinese merchants being detained by immigration officials. The Chinese Times, June 28, 1921, 3; Ibid., June 30, 1921, 3; Ibid., September 16, 1921, 3. Those claiming student status were also suspect, see Ibid., May 2, 1919, 3.; Ibid., May 31, 1919, 1 and September 13, 1919, 3.

84 Creese also makes this point. See "Class, Ethnicity and Conflict," 67.
employers did not have to pay to support their families as they did with white workers. There was an ideological aspect to this as well as the separation of Chinese workers from their families insulated them and other British Columbians from the privation generated by the low wages of Chinese workers. Chinese workers were less likely to demand higher wages than those who had their families with them. Thus the gender imbalance within Chinese communities was an essential ingredient in the economy of Chinese wage labour.

Significantly, the immigration head taxes specifically excluded Chinese merchants and their families from their discriminatory provisions with the result that, before 1923, there were no formal barriers to the immigration of merchant families. Despite this, there were still few women in merchant society. According to information supplied by the Chinese Board of Trade of Victoria to the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, there were 288 Chinese merchants in that city, but there were only sixty-one women married to merchants. (There were twenty-eight married to labourers, one to a minister and two to interpreters.) Similar conditions prevailed in Vancouver, where there were 2,053 Chinese males, and only twenty-seven females, sixteen of whom were married to merchants (eight to labourers, and one each to a minister and an interpreter).  

The relatively few women in merchant society is all the more surprising in light of the fact that the merchant economy

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benefitted from the unpaid labour of women and children.\textsuperscript{86} It was certainly the well-to-do merchants who had their families with them. According to the Chinese Board of Trade, although there were sixty-one merchants' wives, there were only forty-five merchant families in Victoria. This indicates that some of the merchants, following Chinese elite practice, had more than one wife.\textsuperscript{87} Some well-to-do merchants left their first wife in China to manage the Chinese side of their businesses, bringing the second wife to Canada.\textsuperscript{88} It is also possible that medium-sized merchants involved in China trade and who had only one wife found it profitable from a business viewpoint to leave her in China. However, these figures suggest that a number of merchants had more than one wife living with them in Victoria. This may be because after 1900 there were relatively few Chinese merchants involved in China trade; most provided direct services to Chinese and white customers and would have benefitted from the unpaid labour of their wives and children. However, it also appears that it was the more established and secure merchants who had their families present.\textsuperscript{89}


\textsuperscript{87} Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 12-13.

\textsuperscript{88} Yee, Saltwater City, 40.

\textsuperscript{89} Wickberg, From China to Canada, 80.
Chinatowns

To outside observers, the most striking aspect of Chinese Canadian society was its pattern of residential segregation. Even the smallest of communities had their Chinese quarters, while in the larger centres of Vancouver and Victoria, few Chinese lived outside the confines of "Chinatown." Indeed, the pattern of residential segregation common to the Chinese was such that it was transformed by white opinion into a defining characteristic of the Chinese themselves.

The geographer David Chuenyan Lai has identified several factors which led to the creation of Chinatowns. These included both ethnic choices and economic factors. Chinese immigrants who rarely spoke English and were not familiar with Western customs often found it easier to voluntarily segregate themselves in locations where they could "speak their own dialects, eat their own

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90 See, for example, the 1907 account by Henry F. Pullen, "Chinatown in Victoria," The Canadian Magazine, XXX (November 1907 - April 1908): 537-541.

91 Second generation families may have been the exception to this. In Vancouver, the third generation Cumyow family lived in Grandview, rather than Chinatown, even though the children still attended Chinese school there. See the comments of Gordon Won Cumyow in Marlatt and Itter, Opening Doors, 17. There is indirect evidence suggesting a similar pattern in Victoria. During the 1922-23 school segregation dispute, some whites complained about the Chinese moving out Chinatown, and some Chinese children attended schools outside the Chinatown area. See Fred W. Grant’s letter to the editor, "That Chinese School," Victoria Daily Colonist, August 27, 1922, 23. See also the letters from the Chinese Canadian Club, Chinese Segregation," Ibid., November 26, 1922, 14; "Chinese Segregation," Ibid., October 15, 1922, 4 and "Chinese Segregation," Victoria Daily Times, November 2, 1922, 4.
food, and worship their own gods as they had done in China."\textsuperscript{92} Workers who were recruited by labour contractors or merchants were often quartered in the cheapest areas of town, leading to a cluster of Chinese residences, businesses and services.\textsuperscript{93}

But Lai also notes that "[r]acism, hatred and violence . . . resulted in residential segregation." White landowners were reluctant to sell or lease land to the Chinese unless it was useless as far as whites were concerned as is evident in the Victoria and Vancouver Chinatowns which were established on "mudflats." In company towns such as Cumberland, mining companies often deliberately isolated their Chinese workers by assigning them special areas in which to live.\textsuperscript{94}

Most importantly, according to Lai, the Chinese themselves "chose" segregation in order to escape racist violence and harassment. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Chinese immigrants were subject to racist violence and harassment ranging from mob actions to stoning and cart-tipping at the hands of youths.

As a result, the Chinese tended to travel in groups and to isolate themselves from the white community in order to avoid abuse. Thus, voluntary segregation resulted in the birth of a Chinatown, which was a kind of self-defence measure used by the Chinese themselves to avoid open discrimination and hostility. They confined themselves, whenever possible, to the boundaries of Chinatowns, where

\textsuperscript{92} Lai, \textit{Chinatowns}, 35.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 34-35.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
they felt safe and secure. This view confirms the understanding of David T.H. Lee who noted that at the turn of the century in Vancouver and Victoria the Chinese were subject to such random violence on the street that "they normally would not dare go outside Chinatown."

The role of residential segregation in creating places of relative safety can be seen in several instances. Vancouver's Chinatown was established following anti-Chinese riots in 1887. Several incidents of assault or stabbing further indicated to the Chinese that the only safety was in numbers. The role of Chinatown as a sanctuary for the Chinese was particularly apparent following the 1907 Vancouver riot. After the incident, the Vancouver Daily Province observed that many domestic servants had been caught in Chinatown on the Saturday evening when the riot took place, and were afraid to leave Chinatown for the other parts of the city where they worked. A Chinese who worked across the city, and who was unable to reach Chinatown before the riot, was

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95 Ibid., 35.
96 Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 356.
98 In 1901, beating up Chinese peddlars was apparently common sport for school children, see "Ill-mannered boys," The Vancouver Daily Province, January 15, 1901, 4. For other assaults, see "Chinese Mob is Infuriated," The Vancouver Daily Province, September 9, 1906, 16 and "Roughs Assault Chinese Servant," The Vancouver Daily Province, September 24, 1907, 1.
99 "Exodus of Domestics," The Vancouver Daily Province, September 10, 1907, 12.
found hanged under mysterious circumstances.\textsuperscript{100} Fear of racist violence following the riot was such that there was a flurry of Chinese buying revolvers and years later the residents of Canton Alley maintained an iron portcullis that could be dropped at a moment's notice to block the alley's entrance in the event of another disturbance.\textsuperscript{101}

As a place of refuge, Chinatown was the product of pressures emanating from white society. However, white opinion represented residential segregation as the product, not of white exclusion, but of the racial characteristics and preferences of the Chinese themselves. The process of creating Chinatown as a "race" characteristic has been thoroughly documented in the case of Vancouver's Chinatown by Kay Anderson.\textsuperscript{102} According to Anderson, Vancouver's Chinatown came into existence under the tacit license of provincial officials following the riots of 1887. In essence, provincial officials agreed to protect the Chinese provided they

\textsuperscript{100} "How Did Ni Ah Sim Come By His Death?," \textit{The Vancouver Daily Province}, September 11, 1907, 1. The official verdict was suicide, but this report indicates that his friends in Chinatown did not believe that he was the suicidal type. Even assuming that this was indeed a case of suicide and not murder, it is possible that despair following the riot was a factor.


remained within the confines of Chinatown. Over the next several decades, civic officials spearheaded a movement to vilify the area and its occupants. In white opinion, Chinatown became synonymous with all that was diseased, depraved and disgusting. At the same time, however, Chinatown became the area of "maximum entitlement" for the Chinese as far as most whites were concerned. Attempts to move out of the area were resisted through a variety of practices ranging from restrictive real estate covenants to out and out hostility.

At the time of the Victoria Chinese students' strike, the notion that Chinatown was the only place in which the Chinese were entitled to live was also evident in Victoria. The Victoria School Board's plans for school segregation drew the ire of white residents living in the area of a site set aside for the Chinese students. The residents expressed concern that the Railway Street School would lower property values, and condemned the trend towards expanding the territory of the Chinese community which they

103 Anderson, "'East' as 'West'," 107-111.

104 Ibid., 127-246.

105 Overcrowding was a considerable problem in the district. Some Chinese students could be temporarily accommodated at the old King's Road School. This school had earlier been condemned by the provincial school inspector on the grounds that its physical conditions were amongst the worst in the province. British Columbia, Superintendent of Education, Annual Report, 1914-1915, A23. An entirely new school, exclusively for the Chinese, was out of the question for the financially strapped district. The Board's solution was to move two old wooden-frame one-room schools to a segregated site on Railway Street adjacent to Central Park. Years later Chinese commentators still referred to this school as "the chicken coop school." See Hope, "Weibu Huaqiao sanian fendou shiji," Part IV, 6.
claimed the establishment of the school represented. One angry letter-writer to the *Victoria Daily Colonist* pointed out, "the vast majority of the Canadian residents of Victoria are becoming quite alarmed and disgusted with the continued encroachment of Chinese into those residential districts that should be entirely reserved for our own people." The Railway Street site was too valuable to be used for a Chinese school, he said, and claimed that the establishment of the school would result in Central Park becoming "a playground for the Chinese of the city." "Keep the Chinese in Chinatown," he concluded.\(^{106}\) Similar sentiments were expressed by a delegation of ratepayers to the Board. Their spokesperson received applause when he commented that the fringe of Chinatown was becoming the entire city and that he opposed the establishment of the school in order to keep Chinatown in "its proper place".\(^{107}\) Another member of the delegation, who claimed to be the oldest resident of Vancouver Island, said that "Chinamen should be kept together, not allowed to straggle over the city."\(^{108}\)

Thus Chinatown became at once an expression of the supposed racial essence of the Chinese and all the territory they were entitled to in Canadian society. Limiting the Chinese to Chinatown


kept them separate from white society without actually expelling them from B.C. This allowed the Chinese to continue to supply their labour to the provincial economy without actually allowing them into provincial society.

For the Chinese themselves, Chinatown of necessity became the centre of their social life in Canada. Initially Victoria was the major Chinatown in British Columbia, but by 1911 had been surpassed by Vancouver. For transient male workers employed in seasonal industries, these Chinatowns were their bases of operation and the places where they wintered. Another group of workers, those employed outside of Chinatown in services for whites and those who worked in Chinatown in services for other Chinese, also relied on Chinatown as the centre of their social lives. Thus, Chinatown provided a range of services to the Chinese workers of the province. These included inexpensive accommodations, food, clothing and entertainment. The workers who resided in Chinatown in this respect followed the same kind of patterns as white workers: the difference for Chinese workers was that Chinatown was the only part of the city where they could safely reside.¹⁰⁹

Merchant Society

Also present in Chinatown were Chinese merchants and the few

¹⁰⁹ Anderson provides a useful description of the economy of Vancouver’s Chinatown, "'East' as 'West'," 129-136. See also Yee, "Chinese Business," 27-64, and Yee, Saltwater City, passim. On patterns of working class life in British Columbia, see MacDonald "Working-Class Vancouver," 33-69.
Chinese families in B.C. The merchants were involved in what Paul Yee has called "a pyramid of businesses." In 1908, the largest were diversified commercial firms which engaged in the import/export trade, labour contracting, and even acted as the agents for major steamship companies. These larger firms often had considerable real estate holdings as well. In the middle were less diversified businesses, specializing in particular commercial areas or occupations. These ranged from import-export businesses and other wholesaling operations to pawnbrokers and tailors. At the lowest end of the merchant ladder were restaurant and laundry operators. For this group, the distinction between merchants and labourers may not have been very sharp. Laundries in particular seem to have been short-lived, and it is likely that their operators alternated between being workers and entrepreneurs.  

The Chinese themselves seem to have distinguished between well-to-do merchants and laundry owners. Vancouver's Chinese Board of Trade represented the larger firms only and did not allow laundry and restaurant owners into its ranks.  

There were profound differences in the life-styles of the poorest Chinese labourers and the richest merchants. The former led lonely, poverty-stricken lives, usually in sub-standard accommodation, relieved only by the hope of an eventual trip back

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110 Yee, "Chinese Business," 40-44. Yee bases his analysis on the information collected by William Lyon Mackenzie King in 1908 while acting as a Royal Commissioner to settle the damages suffered by the Chinese in the 1907 riot.

111 Ibid., 51-52.
to their home village and engagements in always low-paying, and often seasonal and dirty, occupations. They were usually illiterate, and often separated from other Chinese workers by dialect and home town links. Even though they too adapted to the conditions of British Columbia, gaining western work skills for example, ignorance of English and the ways of the dominant society insured that they were the most likely to be victimized by white supremacy.

In 1907, one Chinese merchant in Vancouver, by contrast, had an import-export trade alone worth $50,000 a year and an interest in real estate in Chinatown estimated at $200,000. Yip Sang also had four wives and twenty-three children living with him.\textsuperscript{112} Many other merchants led comfortable lives within the comparative safety of the ethnic business sector. These merchants managed enterprises stretching across the Pacific, or in partnership with white corporations.\textsuperscript{113} For merchants, literacy in Chinese as well as knowledge of English were consequently vital assets. They also drew upon the practices and resources of the dominant society. While Chinese merchants used various traditional "business devices" borrowed from South China, they readily made use of others borrowed from western civilization. They might have raised their initial capital through such traditional practices as rotating credit groups, but they also readily made use of such non-Chinese forms of

\textsuperscript{112} Yee, Saltwater City, 34-35, 42-43.

\textsuperscript{113} Yip Sang, for example, was the Chinese agent for the CPR. Ibid., 35.
financing as mortgages.\textsuperscript{114} Chinese merchants also frequently employed white lawyers and other professionals to further their ends.

Consequently, Chinese merchants were less subject to the pressures of white supremacy than labourers. They escaped discriminatory immigration laws before 1923 and, having greater resources and more significant contacts with the dominant society, and often speaking English, they were less likely to experience racist violence. But still they could not completely escape the consequences of white supremacy.

\textit{Chinese Canadians and "the State"}

White supremacist hegemony over state institutions rendered the Chinese of all classes the objects of Canadian state activities rather than participants in them. Restrictions on voting and citizenship rights insured that state institutions were in the hands of whites and primarily served their interests, to the detriment of the interests of Chinese of all classes. Altogether between 1871 and 1914, fifteen pieces of provincial legislation excluded the Chinese from the franchise or from holding public office.\textsuperscript{115} "Race" rather than national origin, citizenship, or

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{114} Yee, "Chinese Business," 65-87. See also Paul Yee, "Business Devices from Two Worlds: The Chinese in Early Vancouver," \textit{BC Studies}, 62 (Summer 1984): 44-67. Under the "rotating credit" system, a group of investors would each put a fixed sum into a pool and get the use of the total monies by turns, having to pay back the principal after a period of time.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Ryder, "Racism and the Constitution," 166.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
ownership of property was the basis for these exclusions. The federal 1914 Naturalization Act provided that naturalized Canadians "shall be entitled to all political and other rights, powers and privileges, and be subject to all obligations, duties and liabilities, to which a natural-born British subject is entitled or subject," but provincial laws often discriminated against "any person of Chinese race, naturalized or not."116 With few exceptions these exclusions were upheld by the courts, often on the grounds that, as their provisions applied equally to Canadian-born and immigrant Chinese, the laws were not discriminatory.117

These measures had a number of consequences for the Chinese. First they meant that Chinese of all classes were barred from participation in sanctioned political processes, and were generally excluded from debates over public policy. The Chinese had virtually no influence over state policies. In this respect, discriminatory measures not only applied to Chinese labourers, but to Chinese merchants as well. In 1884, the Chinese were barred from acquiring crown lands or diverting water from natural channels. The 1897 Companies Act prohibited the registration of "any Chinese company or association." Disenfranchisement precluded the Chinese from becoming members of the public professions of law and pharmacy. The 1909 Land Act barred any people not on the

116 Cited in Li, Chinese in Canada, 35.

117 Ryder provides the most thorough discussion of these. Many of these cases were landmark rulings which remain at the heart of Canadian jurisprudence on the rights of citizenship. See "Racism and the Constitution," 141-166.
voters list from holding a hand-logging license while a 1902 amendment to the Liquor License Act barred non-voters from holding liquor licenses. In a direct blow to Chinese laundry-operators, a 1919 amendment to the Factories Act barred laundries from night operation. Another act in the same era prohibited Chinese restaurant and store owners from employing white women.\textsuperscript{118} Perhaps the best example of the inability of the Chinese to influence public policy was the unsuccessful campaign of Chinese organizations across the country to forestall the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act.\textsuperscript{119}

Secondly, disenfranchisement insured that the Chinese were not in a position to directly influence the legal system. Although some Chinese graduated from law school and were able to work for law firms, they could not article in B.C. nor become members of the provincial bar.\textsuperscript{120} While they could help law firms service Chinese clients, they could neither develop their own private practices outside of the control of whites, nor could they act as barristers. Needless to say, their inability to join the bar also disqualified them from being appointed to the bench in the unlikely event that anti-Chinese federal or provincial governments would have wanted to appoint them. Since the Chinese were also prohibited from serving on juries, the courts were entirely white-controlled institutions.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 167-184.


\textsuperscript{120} This was the case with Gordon Won Cumyow, for example. See Marlatt and Itter, \textit{Opening Doors}, 17.
Although the Chinese could bring suit using white lawyers, and often did so, and they were subject to the decisions of the courts, they could not participate directly in legal decision-making. Thus, while white property-owners could use the court-system to further their class interests, Chinese property-owners could not rely upon it to the same extent, while no Chinese could rely upon it for protection. ¹²¹

Generally speaking the courts were unable or unwilling to protect the Chinese from white violence, and were often openly hostile to the Chinese. The courts rarely convicted or gave more than minimal sentences to whites who perpetrated violence against the Chinese. Often this was explained on the basis that the Chinese were unreliable witnesses. The Chinese, by contrast, were rarely given the benefit of judicial doubt. ¹²²

The hostility of the courts to the Chinese was evident in 1922 when Vancouver country court Judge Grant refused a Chinese applicant for naturalization. Judge Grant reportedly asked, "Do

¹²¹ Ryder argues that either the courts or the federal government tended to overturn legislation which interfered with the ability of major white capitalists to hire the labour they wanted. Other discriminatory enactments such as the 1897 Companies Act prohibiting the incorporation of Chinese companies or associations were upheld. See "Racism and the Constitution," passim.

¹²² The discriminatory nature of the court system is outlined by Roy, "Choice Between Evils." On the unreliability of Chinese witnesses, see the testimony reproduced in the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 14-82, passim. The Chinese Times regularly reported on court cases in which whites were given minimal sentences for assaults on Chinese. Compare for example the reports of August 12, 1915, 3 and June 10, 1916, 3, with those of November 2, 1916, 3 and January 12, 1917, 3. See also the report of October 13, 1919, 3.
you think the country is strengthened and made better by adding a hundred thousand of this man's race to the Lower Mainland?" The judge added, "When I die I want to leave a country a fit place for my children to live in. My duty is not to report [fit for naturalization] any person whom I don't believe would make this country better or keep it as good as it is." According to the Vancouver Daily Province, Judge Grant routinely rejected Chinese applicants for naturalization.  

This situation was compounded by the inability or unwillingness of local officials to protect the Chinese from racist violence. The two most spectacular incidents occurred in Vancouver. In early 1887, attempts to exclude Chinese workers from the city erupted into anti-Chinese rioting. These riots and the apparent inability of local officials to keep the peace led the provincial government to revoke the city's charter and send in special constables. Again in September 1907, there was a spectacular anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese riot following a rally organized by the Asiatic Exclusion League. Although this time the higher levels of government did not have to intervene to maintain the peace, they did intervene to repair the damages. Through two federal Royal Commissions, the federal government paid for the damages involved.

123 Cited in Yee, Saltwater City, 50.
125 Thus for the Chinese, as for others, Canada was not the "peaceable kingdom" that it has often been represented to be. For an important discussion of the role of violence in Canadian
Beyond being unreliable as far as Chinese interests were concerned, state institutions also reinforced the pariah status of the Chinese by making them the objects of official inspection. Various regulations subjected the Chinese and other Asians to the random inspections of state officials. During the 1870s and 1880s, for example, measures intended to collect special poll taxes from the Chinese in practice allowed state officials to stop itinerant Chinese, question them and even seize their goods if proof of payment was not forthcoming. The early 1880s saw similar efforts at collecting the per capita school tax from the Chinese.¹²⁶

Chinatown in particular was the focal point for special policing and inspection efforts. For example, in Vancouver during the 1880s and 1890s, special by-laws were enacted to restrict the locations and operations of Chinese laundries. Health and building inspectors demolished buildings, fined the operators of Chinese rooming houses, and harassed the Chinese in a number of ways. During this era, the term "Chinatown" became synonymous with all that was vile, diseased, corrupt and immoral in the white public's mind and many a civic official or politician made their careers out of cleaning up Chinatown, while ignoring similar or greater abuses elsewhere in the city. Often the Chinese were blamed for problems beyond their control. For example, in the 1890s one civic health inspector complained that part of Vancouver's Chinatown was

¹²⁶ See Roy, White Man's Province, 42-45.
standing over "a huge cesspool" while neglecting to point out that the district had not been connected to the city sewer system.  

The police also regularly inspected the Chinese. In 1906 Vancouver's Chinese Board of Trade protested to Vancouver City Council against gambling raids on the part of the Vancouver Police force. The Board noted that its members

... have been constantly annoyed by what we believe to be an unjustifiable intrusion of certain members of the Vancouver Police Force ... in the habit of going into our stores and rooms where our families live, showing no warrant whatsoever, nor do they claim any business with us ... We are subjected to indignities and discriminating treatment to which no other class would submit and to which your laws, we are advised, we are not required to submit.  

Until the 1940s, the police periodically cracked down on Chinese gambling operations, arresting bystanders as well as participants. Following the banning of opium production and consumption in 1908, raids on opium dens were also common.

Special inspections, however, were not restricted to Chinatowns. Chinese coal miners on Vancouver Island were also subject to periodic inspections. In 1917, for example, the Chinese and Japanese miners of Cumberland and Nanaimo were inspected by provincial officials to insure that their competence in English was sufficient for the positions that they held. These inspections

127 Anderson, "'East' as 'West'," 144.

128 Emphasis in the original. Cited in Anderson, "'East' as 'West'," 171. See also Yee, "Chinese Business," 49.

129 See Won Alexander Cummyow's testimony before the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration. Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 236.
followed renewed calls for banning Asians from the mines and frantic efforts on the part of the Chinese miners to learn English.\textsuperscript{130}

Efforts at insuring that all Chinese, whether merchant or labourer, non-citizen, naturalized or Canadian-born, suffered the same legal disabilities culminated in the provisions of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act. This legislation not only effectively ended Chinese immigration into Canada, it also required that all Chinese residents of Canada carry with them at all times this certificate of registration (including photograph). The act made these certificates open to inspection at any time without notice and further provided that the Chinese could be subject to fines, imprisonment or deportation, for failure to comply with its provisions.\textsuperscript{131}

Whatever else this process of inspection implies, it showed the Chinese that the Canadian "state," its institutional arrangements and personnel, could not be relied upon for protection and even had the potential to be actively hostile.

\textit{The Chinese Canadian State}

In this context, Chinese merchants were unable to rely upon the institutions of white society to protect their interests.

\textsuperscript{130} The Chinese Times, May 17, 1915, 3; Ibid., September 5, 1916, 3; Ibid., April 8, 1918, 3 and Ibid., April 12, 1918, 1.

\textsuperscript{131} The Chinese were the only group to whom such regulations applied. In effect this means that they were the only group whose native-born members had to be licensed by the federal government in order to live in the country.
Family and clan associations, useful as these might have been for exercising control over workers, were less suited to meeting their needs with respect to the dominant society. This was especially the case in Victoria, and later in Vancouver, where the composition of the Chinese population was less monolithic than in most Chinese communities. Consequently, Chinese merchants in Canada had to create their own institutions to protect their interests. The first merchant organizations were "jiefang" or ad hoc street associations formed to deal with issues of mutual interest. These associations were similar to those of Chinese merchants in China and in other overseas Chinese communities.

In Victoria their activities ranged from lobbying for the creation of Victoria as a freeport to raising charitable subscriptions. Later organizations such as the Chinese Board of Trade continued to speak for Chinese merchants in the dominant society.

However, as B.C. state institutions became increasingly hostile, merchant organizations began to take on self-defense functions. In 1878, the leading Chinese companies in Victoria organized a campaign to resist a poll tax placed on the Chinese by the provincial legislature. This included a petition, legal action, and a boycott of the tax. When provincial officials seized

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132 Perhaps the best known of such organizations was the "Six Companies" of San Francisco. See Daniels, Asian Americans, 24 ff.; see also Him Mark Lai, "Historical Development of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association/Huiguan System," in Chinese Historical Society of America, Chinese America: History and Perspectives, 1987 (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1987), 13-51.

133 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 34-35.
the goods of a Chinese merchant who refused to pay the tax, the entire Chinese community in Victoria launched a five-day general strike. Eventually the federal government disallowed the tax following a successful legal battle fought by the Chinese.

During the early 1880s, several thousand Chinese labourers were imported into British Columbia to build the railroad. This migration resulted in renewed calls for anti-Chinese measures and an attempt by the B.C. government to re-impose a poll tax on the Chinese. Following on the heels of these workers was an influx of less desirable elements from the point of view of merchants: prostitutes, thieves and gamblers. In addition, starting in the summer of 1883, and following major lay-offs from the CPR during the winter of 1884, there was widespread destitution amongst the Chinese workers.

All of these problems ended up in the laps of the Chinese merchant houses of Victoria. Essentially, the CPR's B.C. contractor, provincial and municipal authorities refused to provide relief to the Chinese claiming that they were the responsibility of the federal government or the Chinese firms which had imported them in the first place. Chinese merchants themselves had to organize relief. In addition, the Chinese merchants were confronted with a problem of how to protect their property as the white-controlled

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134 Ibid., 47-48.


136 Ibid., 29-30; Wickberg, From China to Canada, 36.
courts proved unwilling or unable to protect them. In this atmosphere, several leading Victoria merchants wrote to the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco in 1884 requesting assistance. The merchants noted that as there were several hundred merchants and sixteen or seventeen thousand Chinese workers in the province engaged in a variety of economic activities, "the country’s officials should welcome the Chinese, but instead are infected with cruel habits even surpassing that seen in the United States in recent years." The merchants complained that "the oppression of external troubles is becoming extreme" citing the poll tax and "the enforcement of every kind of cruel law restricting commerce, work and habitation," at the same time that "internal troubles" were growing: the presence of gamblers, criminals, prostitutes as well as privation amongst the workers.

Accordingly they asked for the consulate’s assistance in ending discriminatory laws and banning Chinese prostitutes, as well as urging the formation of a Chinese Association (Zhonghua Huiguan) "to unite the feelings of the masses" and the establishment of a Chinese consulate in Victoria.

The demand for a "Chinese" huiguan was especially

137 Roy provides the best account of the overall political context of these problems. See, "Choice Between Evils," passim.


139 Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 178-79.
interesting. In China, huiguan were mutual assistance organizations made up of Chinese merchants from the same province. Thus the Chinese merchants from Guangdong, might have had a huiguan in Shanghai. But this demand was quite clearly for a "Zhonghua Huiguan," i.e. a "Chinese" huiguan.\(^\text{140}\)

The consulate, which the year before had granted a charter for a Chinese association to the leading merchants of San Francisco,\(^\text{141}\) responded by sending one of its officials to Victoria. Under his supervision, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association was established under an Imperial Qing charter in 1884, incorporating under provincial statutes the following year.\(^\text{142}\)

Edgar Wickberg has variously described Zhonghua Huiguan as umbrella organizations which "stood at the apex of community organizations and spoke for them all and for their membership," and as "the dominant agency of internal control in the community as well as the community's spokesperson to white government and society."\(^\text{143}\) The geographer David Chuanyan Lai, who has examined the archives of the first Zhonghua Huiguan in Canada, the Chinese


\(^{141}\) Ibid., 24-25.

\(^{142}\) Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 176-178.

Consolidated Benevolent Association in Victoria, has gone so far as to describe it as "the de facto Chinese government in Canada." Although this latter characterization seems to be an exaggeration, it is apparent that these associations exercised a number of local governmental functions within Chinese communities. These functions included resolving internal disputes, policing Chinatowns, organizing welfare functions and managing collective institutions such as hospital and cemeteries. They were also the principal associations for organizing the defense for Chinese communities as a whole and assisting individuals who were in trouble with the white-controlled legal system or who were facing individual violence or discrimination. The role of the CCBA in policing the Chinese community and settling disagreements was even tacitly recognized by the federal Parliament. Section 17 of the 1885 Chinese Immigration Act, while establishing sanctions against "[e]very person who takes part in the organisation of any sort of court or tribunal, composed of Chinese persons," in practice recognized the right of the Chinese to submit "any dispute or differences to arbitration." Thus while maintaining the fig-leaf of the monopoly of white legal institutions, in practice the

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144 Lai, "Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association," 57. This claim is repeated by Chan, Gold Mountain, 89.

145 See Wickberg, "Chinese Organizations and the Canadian Political Process."

146 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 58-59.
act extended recognition to Chinese governing institutions.\textsuperscript{147}

The Victoria CCBA nominally represented all Chinese in British Columbia. Its charter provided that "the Association will be commonly held by all the Chinese gentlemen, merchants, workers and others, residing in the English territory of British Columbia province."\textsuperscript{148} There is much evidence that other Chinese accepted its authority. Such acceptance is indicated by the several thousand people who paid the two dollar levy when it was first established. Close to one-third of the 15,000 Chinese in the province, including many outside the Victoria area, paid the membership fee.\textsuperscript{149}

The CCBA never exercised absolute control over Chinese affairs outside of Victoria, but it was still influential. By the mid 1890s, Vancouver included a number of Chinese merchants of sufficient stature to be able to establish their own Chinese Benevolent Association. The Vancouver CBA, however, did not officially incorporate until 1908. Interestingly, even though this CBA was established in the interests of well-to-do merchants, it could not be funded through a per capita levy because so many Chinese residents in Vancouver had already paid one to the CCBA.

\textsuperscript{147} The legislation added the proviso that "such submissions be not contrary to the laws in force in the Province in which such submission is made." Since the Victoria CCBA was incorporated provincially and included provisions for resolving disputes in its by-laws, in effect, its activities were lawful.


\textsuperscript{149} Wickberg, \textit{From China to Canada}, 38.
Instead, it relied upon the contributions of merchants, and other Chinese associations, as well as a loan from a white businessman, to fund its activities.\textsuperscript{150}

The CCBA of Victoria, and later the CBA of Vancouver, could bring considerable sanctions to bear against any Chinese who did not recognize their sway within their immediate areas of control. Since many Chinese labourers used these cities as their bases of operation and locations during the off season,\textsuperscript{151} the associations' influence extended throughout B.C.

These sanctions included official ones decided upon by the CBA board of directors such as refusing to act for those who had not paid their membership levies. Since the principals of the CBA tended to be the leading merchants, other more effective sanctions could also be brought to bear. As merchants included the Chinese agents for trans-Pacific steamship companies,\textsuperscript{152} they could refuse to sell tickets to any who could not produce a dues receipt. This method was used by the CCBA in Victoria to finance a new Chinese hospital in the later 1890s. All those leaving the country had to make a two dollar contribution.\textsuperscript{153} In later years similar methods were used to fund clan and district associations who would have

\textsuperscript{150} Lee, \textit{Jianada Huaqiao shi}, 195.

\textsuperscript{151} See McDonald, "Working-Class Vancouver," 33-69.

\textsuperscript{152} See Yee, "Chinese Business."

\textsuperscript{153} Lai, "Chinatowns," 213-214.
their agents waiting on the docks. Since Chinese merchants were often also labour contractors upon whom Chinese workers were dependent for employment and support during the off season, and since they performed such other functions as forwarding letters and remittances back to families in China, other unofficial sanctions also carried weight.

Still not all Chinese recognized their sway. The members of the Chee Kung Tang (CKT) [Zhigongtang] or "Chinese Freemasons," in particular, "never recognized its supervision," at least before the 1911 Nationalist Revolution in China. The CKT was a branch of the triads or "Hongmeng" society first established amongst the Chinese gold miners of B.C. As it was devoted to overthrowing the foreign Manchu Qing dynasty and restoring the ethnically Chinese Ming dynasty, it did not accept the legitimacy of an organization chartered by the Manchu government. The opposition of the CKT to the Victoria CCBA may also have been part of the motivation for making the Chinese Benevolent Association in Vancouver, an umbrella organization of organizations, including the CKT.

The CCBA also encountered opposition as it was bent on serving the class interests of Chinese merchants. For example, in

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154 Dahan Gongbao, September 4, 1914, 2 and December 1, 1914, 3. Cited in CCRC, Box 3.

155 On the roles of merchants in forwarding letters and remittances to China, see Wickberg, From China to Canada, 35. On the labour contract system, see Li, Chinese in Canada and Creese, "Class, Ethnicity and Conflict," 54-85.

156 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 38.

157 Ibid.
1894, the CCBA offered a reward for the arrest of the burglar of a Chinese shop: $300 if the burglar was sentenced to three years or less in prison, and $600 if sentenced to more than three years. However, a few years later, after the association had not intervened following an assault on a Chinese sailor, residents in Ladysmith complained that the association only protected merchants.¹⁵⁸

However, both the CCBA in Victoria and the CBA in Vancouver were recognized as the major organizations of the community by most Chinese. They were particularly influential with clan and district associations, and eventually became umbrella organizations representing these groups. Their importance is reflected, if by nothing else, in the battles for control of the CBAs among different groups within the Chinese community that were common in the twentieth century.¹⁵⁹

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, overseas Chinese communities became important staging areas for political groups seeking change in China. The first group based solely on Chinese political objectives was the Empire Reform Association established in 1900 under the influence of the Chinese reformers Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, followed shortly afterwards by Sun Yat-sen’s revolutionary movement which later became the Kuomintang (KMT) [Guomindang]. After the fall of the imperial Chinese government in 1911 and the establishment of the Chinese


¹⁵⁹ Wickberg, From China to Canada, 101-115.
Republic, these movements intensified in their attempts to gain support in overseas Chinese communities. The overseas Chinese after all had financed the 1911 Revolution. In order to build support for these domestic Chinese movements in the Chinese communities of British Columbia, control of the CBA and other Chinese institutions was vital. The result was a series of political struggles inside the Chinese communities of B.C. for their control. As groups of merchants and political parties jockeyed for control, the result was the birth of a Chinese politics completely separate from that of white society.160

Chinese Canadian Culture

From the above, it is apparent that there were significant continuities between the lives of the Chinese in Canada and in Guangdong province in South China. However, the Chinese did not reproduce the culture of Guangdong wholesale in British Columbia. Rather, like other migrant groups, they used their ethnic traditions as resources in adapting to the needs of the new country.

The fact that some primal Chinese culture was not reproduced wholesale in British Columbia is probably most evident in the profound gender imbalances that existed amongst the Chinese of British Columbia. Very simply, unlike in China, the population consisted overwhelmingly of adult males. Given this imbalance,

160 This is most striking if one examines the contents of the CKT paper, The Chinese Times. See CCRC, Box 4.
the resemblance of Chinese communities in British Columbia to the society of the old country would have been at best superficial. There were other differences as well. The two largest classes in Chinese society—landlords and tenant peasants—were absent from B.C. and by the twentieth century B.C. Chinese society was primarily urban, while that of China remained rural.\textsuperscript{161}

Rather than having transplanted the culture of South China, it appears that, like their European immigrant counterparts, Chinese immigrants drew upon their experiences and practices from "the old country" to respond to and meet the challenges of the new one. As such they created a way of living which was different from that of the old and unique to British Columbia.

In this respect their experiences paralleled those of other immigrants to North America. This has recently been pointed out by Roger Daniels in his survey history, \textit{Asian Americans}. Daniels noted that Asian Americans have not lost their identities in the American melting pot, but "have remained discrete."\textsuperscript{162} Despite this, they have not been adequately discussed in most histories. Immigration histories have tended to concentrate on European immigrants to the East Coast, while other histories have focused on Asian exclusionists, rather than on the Asians themselves. These treatments, according to Daniels, reflect "the facile, not

\textsuperscript{161} One could even argue that the two societies had different modes of production. On the "semi-feudal semi-colonial" nature of Chinese society, see Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong), "Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society," \textit{Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung} (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1967), Volume 1, 13-22.

\textsuperscript{162} Daniels, \textit{Asian Americans}, 5.
always voiced assumption that Asians are somehow 'different'." Instead of assuming that Asians are different, Daniels argues, "[i]t seems much more reasonable to make the opposite assumption: that immigrants from Asia are, first of all, immigrants. Until incontrovertible evidence to the contrary is offered, the generalizations that apply to most immigrants also apply to Asians."\textsuperscript{163}

There were many parallels between the experiences of Chinese and European immigrants. Often, the first migrants were bachelor males, followed by married males who preceded the arrival of their wives and families in Canada. Bachelor workers usually hoped to return to the old country for purposes of marriage once established in the new country, while married males hoped to send for their families. As with certain European groups, much of this immigration was organized by labour contractors who not only advanced passage money but insured employment in Canada. These contractors were sometimes even acting on behalf of the same large corporation: the Canadian Pacific Railway.\textsuperscript{164} As with these European immigrants, Chinese workers often came as sojourners, intending to stay only a short time and to return to the old

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 6.

country once fame and fortune were made in "Gumsan [Jinshan]" or "Gold Mountain" as they termed the new world, but poverty, unemployment, injury, disease and other forms of ill fortune, often prevented them from doing so. If they were successful and brought over their families, they found that their Canadian-born children did not wish to return, and did not share their emotional attachments to a country which itself had changed.

What was different in the case of the Chinese (and to a lesser extent the Japanese) was not the Chinese immigrants themselves, so much as it was their reception in Canada. While it is true that most immigrants entering as cheap labour encountered some hostility from those already established in Canada, the treatment Asians experienced was different in quality and in ferocity. Italians were not barred from citizenship or naturalization. Norwegians were not prohibited from joining established trade unions. Ukrainians were not forced into segregated schools within the public school system. And none of these groups was subject to the sustained hostility which exploded in anti-Chinese riots and prevented the Chinese from even entering certain districts of British Columbia. As far as British Columbia's dominant society was concerned, the Chinese were permanent outsiders.

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165 See Chan's account of "Bachelor Workers" in Gold Mountain, 47-73.
CHAPTER FOUR:

DEFINING THE CHINESE OTHER: WHITE SUPREMACY AND LEADING OPINION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Leading Opinion

During the 1920s, white English-speaking Canadians widely subscribed to a body of opinion about people of Asian origins in Canada and their supposed alienness. Most would have readily agreed with O.D. Skelton's 1907 characterization of "the Oriental" as someone who "remains alien to the end of time, inscrutable, unassimilated, loyal only to his kin and his homeland, as dangerous by his virtues as by his vices," i.e. as someone who could never truly become a loyal "Canadian," even after generations of instruction in "Canadian" ways through public schooling, intermarriage and experience of daily life in Canada...

This conception of the Chinese as "alien," as intrinsically different from whites, runs throughout the dominant discourse on school segregation in Victoria. In 1902, for example, the Victoria

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1 An earlier draft of this chapter, "Defining the Chinese Other: White Supremacy and Leading Opinion in British Columbia, 1885-1925," was presented as a paper to the Sixth BC Studies Conference, University of British Columbia, November 2, 1990. I am indebted to Dr. W. Peter Ward for his comments on that paper.

Daily Colonist's labour columnist, T.H. Twigg, believed that school segregation was justified in order to insure "the branding of Chinese as Ishmaelites." In 1922, the white residents of the Central Park area of Victoria and the majority of trustees all agreed that the Chinese and other "Orientals" belonged to a "foreign race."³

The prevalence of opinion with respect to the supposed alienness of the Chinese is also indicated by the debates in the House of Commons which led up to the enactment of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act.⁴ Even though the Chinese were the only group in Canadian history singled out for such measures as complete exclusion from eligibility to immigrate to Canada and the requirement to register with the government, when this Act was debated in the House of Commons, Members of Parliament did not question its racist and Draconian nature, but merely whether it would have the desired effect of excluding the Chinese and whether similar measures could be applied to the Japanese and South Asians.⁵


⁴ See, Canada, House of Commons, Debates (1923), 2308-2326, for discussion of the Chinese Immigration Act. See also the important discussions of "Oriental Aliens" the year before, House of Commons, Debates (1922), 1509-1577. This earlier discussion was more detailed that the 1923 debates. Cheng Tien-fang still provides the best discussion of official attitudes towards the Chinese and other Asians during this era, see Oriental Immigration, passim.

⁵ Commons, Debates, 1923, 2308-2326.
The notion that Asians were intrinsically alien to Canada was constructed over time. Leading opinion amongst white English speakers, that is opinion which had the power to shape "public opinion," was the principal agent of this construction. Leading opinion with respect to " Orientals" can be found in royal commissions and other official reports, House of Commons and Legislative debates which rendered certain views of the Asians respectable and consequently influential at the level of policymaking; academic discourse which lent these opinions the air of objective truth and increasingly of "scientific" authority; commentaries in the periodical and daily newspaper press as well as in trade union papers which linked certain characterizations of Asians with the (broadly-speaking) political interests of particular groups; and even popular fiction and the contents of school textbooks which transmitted characterizations found in leading opinion to a mass audience.

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7 For the Royal Commissions, see Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (1885); Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration (1902); Royal Commission: W.L. Mackenzie King Commissioner, Report of Losses Sustained by the Chinese Population of Vancouver, B.C., 1907 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1908); and Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Methods by which Oriental Labourers Have been Induced to Come to Canada (1908). On the role played by academic discussion in fixing hierarchies of human beings, see Stepan, The Idea of Race in Science; Gould, The Mismeasure of Man; Lewontin, Rose and Kamin, Not in our Genes; and Schiff and Lewontin, Education and Class. On the role of literature in defining difference, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (ed.), "Race," Writing and Difference, special issue of
Leading opinion with respect to Asians was not monolithic, but shifted in its contents over time and depended a great deal on the class background and normal forms of discourse familiar to the opinion-maker. For example, a shift in opinion amongst white capitalists in British Columbia with respect to the Chinese is evident between the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration and the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration. The evidence reproduced in the former Commission showed that white British Columbians were sharply divided along class lines, with large employers of Chinese labour generally favouring Chinese immigration whereas white workers, populist politicians and employees of the provincial government favoured exclusion. By 1902, even most employers of Chinese labour favoured their exclusion, usually on the grounds that there was already a "sufficient" supply of Chinese labour in the country.

In fact, throughout this era white attitudes towards the Chinese were to a large extent class-based. For example, before the First World War, it was mainly working class organizations, and

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politicians pandering to the working class vote, who called for school segregation. The drive towards school segregation in 1902 was spearheaded by the Victoria Trades and Labour Council. In 1907-1908, it was the Asiatic Exclusion League, an organization actively supported by white trade unions, that pressured for action against Chinese students who were supposedly using schools to evade the immigration head tax. These concerns were motivated by fears that the Chinese were cheap labourers who were undercutting the wages of white workers. Indeed working class opinion was so inimicable to the Chinese that it is likely that otherwise class-conscious white workers did not see their fellow Chinese workers as workers at all. During the summer of 1907, fears that Chinese labourers were using the school system to circumvent the immigration head tax led the Victoria School Board to refuse admission to Chinese students unless they spoke sufficient English as "to be amenable to the ordinary regulations of school discipline," thus effectively barring recent Chinese immigrants from the district. In January 1908, it ruled that it would admit only native-born Chinese students who met the English test.

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8 This was apparent in the platforms of the Labour candidates in the 1902 local elections in Victoria. See, "With the Labor Candidates," Victoria Daily Colonist, December 21, 1902, 3.

9 Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity?," 24-51.

10 "Chinese and City Schools," Victoria Daily Times, August 31, 1907, 1.

Fear of competition from cheap Chinese labour even led the provincial government to pass an order-in-council complaining that Chinese students were only using the educational system, "to increase their efficiency and to render them better able to compete with white labour."

By contrast upper class whites living in Victoria, themselves often the employers of Chinese servants and industrial workers, probably saw the Chinese as no threat at all, but merely a rather exotic aspect of life in British Columbia.

They may well have been somewhat bemused by calls for school segregation.

However, even those whites who opposed the excesses of white supremacist opinion shared the view that the Chinese were alien. They too took for granted that B.C. was a white society. For example, in 1914, Principal Cunningham of the Boys' Central School publicly questioned the Victoria School Board's policy of segregating Chinese primary students. He noted that the Chinese students "make good use of the educational chances available in the higher grades, and are docile and easy to teach," but pointed out that they enter these grades with little fluency in English. "Hence," he informed the board, "it is no remedy to establish a


13 Ormsby, British Columbia, 303.

14 For example, when segregation was first proposed in Victoria, one trustee reportedly commented that "if our Anglo-Saxon civilization could not withstand the effects of educating a hundred or so of Chinese, it was time that the school board should be abolished." See "To Exclude the Chinese," Victoria Daily Colonist, February 10, 1901, 8.
separate graded school for the Chinese, who would thus never thoroughly learn English or western ways."\(^{15}\) However, Cunningham also commented that the problem of how best to provide for the Chinese students was one "which is inevitable with so many children of Chinese nationality residing and growing up in a white country."\(^{16}\)

Class-based attitudes began to shift during the First World War. Increasingly, it was the white middle classes, rather than the working class, which saw the Chinese as a threat.\(^{17}\) The problem for white opinion was that the Chinese were no longer just cheap labour, but were entering other fields of endeavour. The contradiction was summarized by *The Daily Colonist* in 1922, "So long as Orientals, or the members of any foreign race, are property owners in British Columbia our municipalities cannot refuse to provide for the education of their children."\(^{18}\) In a political and social system predicated on the rights of property-owners, the Chinese, although a "foreign race," were now property-owners. This posed more of a problem for white property-owners than white workers. In this respect it should be noted that it was the

\(^{15}\) "Chinese Children in Public Schools," *Victoria Daily Times* February 2, 1914, 12.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) For example, in the late 1910s and early 1920s, white merchants led a campaign to keep Vancouver’s Chinese community from expanding into the Grandview-Woodwards area of East Vancouver. See Anderson, "‘East’ as ‘West’," 206-209.

Vancouver Board of Trade and the Victoria Chamber of Commerce whose calls for school segregation, and laws barring the Chinese from owning land, led to the actions of the school board in 1922.\footnote{See "Aim Resolutions Against Orientals," Victoria Daily Colonist, November 29, 1921, 3; Wickberg, From China to Canada, 137. See also Lai, "Discrimination in Education," 54-55.}

Gillian Creese has documented a shift in white working class opinion. Before World War One, working class spokespeople and their organizations solidly supported Chinese exclusion, indeed saw the Chinese as so different from themselves that they did not recognize them as fellow workers at all. Under the influence of international socialist sentiment, however, many leaders of white working class organizations began to actively support and work towards solidarity between Asian and white workers.\footnote{Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity?," passim.}

Similarly, not all Asians were viewed in the same ways at all times. Early in the century, the Japanese were often described as being more like whites than the Chinese and consequently less alien.\footnote{This was the perspective taken by Margaret Henderson, "The Japanese in British Columbia," The Canadian Magazine, XXXI (May 1908 - October 1908): 3-14.}

Later their very similarity to whites could be seen as a threat.\footnote{Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians," passim. Roy argues that during the 1920s and 1930s, white hostility increasingly focused on the Japanese rather than the Chinese.}

Despite differences arising from class position and time, white opinion of all kinds still had some common features. If, for example, as the testimony reproduced in the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration shows, white workers saw their
Chinese counterparts as direct threats to them and white capitalists saw the Chinese as a necessary source of cheap labour (and hence high profits), both workers and capitalists also saw Chinese workers as intrinsically different from white ones. If Principal Cunningham and the trustees had different view on how best to accommodate Chinese students, they agreed that they were a problem in "a white country." This chapter explores some of the common features of white English-language opinion about Asians, with particular reference to the Chinese. Essentially, it argues that by the time of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, notions about the Chinese as intrinsically different from whites, and alien to Canada were relatively fixed in the minds of most whites, and that further the construction of this notion, which I am calling "the Chinese Other," was the product of the dominance of the white society and not in any way descriptive of the Chinese actually present in Canada. The Chinese Other was, in fact, a function of the invention by whites of what might be called "the Canadian Self."

**Chinese "Aliens" and "Native" Whites**

Notions about the Chinese as alien only developed over time. For example, the position favouring Chinese exclusion taken by the House of Commons in the debates of 1922 and 1923 stood in marked contrast to its position when anti-Chinese discrimination was first

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23 With the exception of those changes documented by Creese in "Exclusion or Solidarity?"
proposed by an M.P. from British Columbia in 1878. On that occasion, Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie, with the support of the majority of the House, rejected discriminatory measures out of hand, noting that many Chinese immigrants were from Hong Kong and consequently, "as much British subjects as were the hon. members . . .; and, as such, were entitled to the rights and privileges of British subjects anywhere over the entire extent of the empire." Not only were the Chinese not aliens in law, according to Mackenzie they were and should be treated the same as other residents of Canada. Of course, a great deal changed in the country between 1878 and 1923 when the country as a whole underwent an economic, social, political and cultural, "transformation." This transformation included changing notions of citizenship as well. By the 1920s, Anglo-Canadians no longer saw themselves as merely British subjects but were increasingly self-aware as a distinct nationality in their own right. This Canadian nationalism was closely coupled with both the political ability and willingness to distance their concerns from imperial policy. It was in the context of this transformation that notions of intrinsic Asian alienness were popularized. These notions were not simply the

24 Canada, House of Commons, Debates 1878, 1209.

25 Brown and Cook, A Nation Transformed, passim.

26 Imperial interests often limited Asian exclusionist measures. A series of B.C. legislative initiatives which discriminated against Chinese and Japanese residents were struck down by the federal government following protests from London, and Japan. Japan and Great Britain were formal allies during much of the period under discussion. The best discussion is provided by Ryder, "Racism and the Constitution."
product of white supremacist agitators and their fantasies, nor of a particular viciousness on the part of influential opinion makers. Asian exclusion, in one form or another, had been popular in British Columbia since before the province joined Confederation, and it was the bread and butter of some politicians. However, the degree of agreement over the alleged nature of the Chinese evident in the House exclusion debates cannot be understood solely as the product of political opportunism, or of pandering to white opinion in British Columbia. Particularly in B.C., there were deeper ideological processes at work, processes integral to the development of the self-identity of those who saw Asians as alien. Over time, this process of self-identity defined and popularized across Canada the notion of the "Oriental alien."

The alleged alienness of the Chinese and other Asians was often expressed in close conjunction with affirmations that whites, the British or Canadians, were "native," or at least, the proper residents of Canada and British Columbia. Naked imperialism, that is occupying and taking control of a territory to which one is not native, was never very far removed from such affirmations. Before

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27 For example, Vancouver M.P. H.H. Stevens was not only prominent in the exclusion debates, he had earlier written a pamphlet on the subject. See H.H. Stevens, "The Oriental Problem," (Vancouver: n.p., n.d.). See also Tom MacInnes, Oriental Occupation of British Columbia (Vancouver: Sun Publishing Company, 1927). The view that politicians manipulated anti-Asian sentiments has been used to explain the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. This is essentially the position of Ann Gomer Sunahara, The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of the Japanese during the Second World War (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1981). If anything, Sunahara's analysis, while strong on the political machinations surrounding internment, underestimates the broad social nature of racism.
1885, imperialist ambitions were evidently behind the disdain toward Chinese immigrants felt by English immigrants to B.C. By 1885, English Canadians, too, had their own version of Imperialism. After all Canada in 1885 was a part of the British Empire. It shared the "sense of European superiority" that marked Western civilization before the First World War. Imperialism and Canada's role in it was at the heart of discussions amongst the country's leading intellectuals, many of whom argued that Canada had its own imperial mission: expansion into, and the European settlement of, the West where a new and better British nation could be built. Canada's own westward expansion was in this sense part of the "New Imperialism" which after 1870 led the Western powers to scramble to divide up the

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28 See Chapter Two above.

29 Michael D. Biddis, The Age of the Masses: Ideas and Society in Europe since 1870 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 44. Brown and Cook, A Nation Transformed, 27, write that "This 'New Imperialism' had a direct impact on Canada. That spirit of Anglo-Saxon superiority and mission, celebrated wherever the members of that "race" lived, naturally influenced English Canadians. It made them part of a great enterprise, and was often used as justification for the way they treated people of other nationalities who lived in Canada."


remaining autonomous areas of the world.  

As the Canadian Pacific Railway, the material manifestation of the English Canadian imperial mission, neared completion, the Chinese too became useful foils for English Canadian self-definition. For example, the unstated contrast in Sir John A. Macdonald’s 1885 characterization of the Chinese as alien was of course that those of British nationality, or those like them, were not alien and properly belonged in the country. In contrast to Mackenzie’s view of seven years earlier, there were the British and then there were the Chinese. The former belonged and should have rights, and the latter were alien and should not. 


In part, Macdonald’s comments reflect notions of "the rights of Englishmen, i.e. of an equation between rights and British nationality. For the origins of this notion, see Corrigan and Sayer, Great Arch, and for a discussion of its contemporary relevance to British forms of racism, see Cohen, "Perversions of Inheritance," 9-118. By the twentieth century, the lack of Asian voting rights could be trotted out as proof of their alienness. To the editor of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council organ, the
Canadian Nationalism

No doubt the views of Macdonald and Mackenzie were motivated in large part by political convenience. Macdonald, for example, had steadfastly withstood pressure from B.C. M.P.s for anti-Chinese measures earlier in the decade, on the grounds that the Chinese were the only group in a position to supply the tremendous amounts of labour needed to build the C.P.R. through British Columbia. But Macdonald’s characterization of the Chinese as alien was also indicative of nascent Canadian nationalism, even if built around notions of loyalty to Britain. Consequently it is not surprising that similar views were expressed in nationalistic circles. For example, in 1896, the Principal of Queen’s University, George Munro Grant, commented on trade union demands for Chinese exclusion. While deploring some of the rhetoric surrounding the issue and calling for calm reflection, Grant commented in detached academic style, "But, on the other hand, the Chinese are the product of a civilization so entirely different from our own that probably many generations would pass away before they assimilated with us, even if they brought their wives and families to Canada, instead of coming as transient labourers."^{34} After commenting on the American experience of "race" relations, he added, "We intend British Chinese and other Asians became "CHEAP NON-VOTING LABOR; which will not, nor cannot, exercise its power to question the right of the industrial bosses to RULE and ROB them." See "The Problem Confronting Labor in British Columbia," The Trades Unionist, February 1908, 8. See also "Fruits of Importation," The Trades Unionist, March 1908, 6.

^{34} George Munro Grant, "Current Events," Queen’s Quarterly, IV, 2 (October 1896): 158.
Columbia to be Canadian, and of the Caucasian not the Mongolian type, . . . ."\(^{35}\) Thus for Grant, "we" were "Canadian" and "Caucasian," while "they" were "entirely different."

A more extended discussion of immigration policy in *Queen's Quarterly* a few years later presented much the same view of Chinese alienness. J.R. Conn questioned "the unfortunate policy of filling up the country with a 'hungry, poverty-stricken, skin-clad population of wild-eyed Asiatics and Eastern Europeans'."\(^{36}\) He argued that there was no such thing as an inherent right to immigrate and unless carefully regulated, immigration posed a threat to a non-industrial country like Canada. Rather, because "the social interests of communities" mediated the right to immigrate, each nation had the "jurisdiction to say who shall or who shall not come to dwell within its bounds." But not all communities were equal. According to Conn, the same values that enabled imperialism, also justified exclusion.

The higher civilization has a moral right to displace the lower. This alone can justify European occupation of China, American conquest in Cuba and the Philippines, and the assertion of Britain's sovereignty in South Africa. The same right of the higher against the lower types of life justifies the people of this continent shutting out such alien elements of population as seem likely to lower rather than raise the general type of life.\(^{37}\)

Conn left little doubt that immigrants from various backgrounds were likely to lower "the general type of life." He noted that

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) J.R. Conn, "Immigration," *Queen's Quarterly*, VIII, 2 (October 1900): 130.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 119.
there was concern about cheap labour in British Columbia, but

The real objection to cheap labor is social rather than economic. If the Chinese could be dealt with from the economic standpoint alone, the cheapness of their labor would be a clear advantage to the country. They would be on the same level as machinery and it seems hardly necessary at this late day to defend the use of machinery, although it does displace men and sometimes deprives them of their means of livelihood. But the Chinese are not machines; they are part of the social organism. They are able to work for so little because their standard of living is abnormally low, and this fact, together with other race peculiarities, makes them an anomalous element in the community, incompatible with the ideals and free institutions of a democracy. \(^\text{38}\)

For Conn, the Chinese could not be accommodated in the kind of society he favoured. They had "peculiarities," were "anomalous" and "incompatible." This implied that certain non-Chinese were normal, fit in well, and were compatible, and, following from his earlier discussion of superiority, had the inherent right to occupy Canada. Although in the above statement, he identified whites as his frame of contrast, the real thrust of his article was a fundamental distinction between "native Canadians" and "foreigners," \(^\text{39}\) and it was the protection of "Canadian" "ideals and free institutions" which required exclusion of the Chinese.

By 1914, some Canadian nationalists accepted the alienness of the Chinese and other Asians to such an extent that they were

\[^{38}\text{Ibid., 122.}\]

\[^{39}\text{This is evident in his conclusion. Immigrants are "ignorant" for settling on marginal lands, while Canadians are "shrewd" for not doing so. Such settlement will further hinder the assimilation of "foreigners" with "native Canadians." Ibid., 131. Conn was evidently influenced by eugenic thought. On the eugenics movement in Canada, see Angus McLaren, Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990).}\]
willing to redefine the British Empire and Canada's relationship to it if necessary. In "The Test of Empire," O.D. Skelton argued that the challenge to Canadian immigration laws presented by the Komagata Maru incident "has brought the theory of empire in conflict with the fact . . . ." The solution was either to "set up a central parliament" with the power to override the Dominions' "'prejudices' against Asiatic immigration," or to "recognize that the great Dominions are partners, not subjects, independent allies of the United Kingdom under a common king." It was the latter position that Skelton favoured. "Canada must be kept a white country, even if new definitions of Empire have to be framed," he argued. For Skelton and other nationalists "whiteness" had become potentially even more important than ties to Britain in defining "Canadianness."

Identification of Canadianness with whiteness was also evident in the opinions of those who did not see a contradiction between the Empire and Canada. A case in point was the address of the editor of British Columbia Magazine, Dr. Frank Buffington Vrooman, to the Royal Colonial Institute in London. Even though Vrooman's address, like his journal, was largely devoted to chamber of commerce boosterism, he made clear that he saw Canadian patriotism in racial terms. Vrooman warned his audience that British Columbia was the site of "the struggle of the white and

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40 O.D. Skelton, "The Test of Empire," Queen's Quarterly XXII, 1 (July 1914): 100.

yellow peoples for world supremacy." After appealing for the unity of the Anglo-Saxon "race" so that it could "act as a unit in the championship of the ideals which have made it what it is." Vrooman claimed that "today, not only is our supremacy challenged, not only is our advance disputed, but our very race fibre is flouted when even the question is raised as to whether we are equal to the expectations of our forebears--whether we have the sense to keep what they had the nerve to get."42 Since this threat came from Asians, he announced that he would "bid adieu to all cosmopolitan sentiment, and fall back on the more selfish and neglected virtues of patriotism," and added, "[f]rankly I am for my own race and kin, and the ideals and institutions of my own race and kin, and I am against the man who is not."43 To Vrooman, "patriotism" required exclusion of Asians. He noted,

The first principle of sound Imperial politics and sound Canadian patriotism is that our fertile areas of incomparable promise be never surrendered as a dump-heap for the overflowing population of a hundred millions over half the human race. To open once the gate of [sic] these nameless hordes is to be lost--these ominous hundreds of yellow millions, these countless alien numbers to whom there is no end.44

Thus "the yellow hordes" were "alien" and threatened the very fabric of Canadian society which was in peril of being "lost."

Anti-Orientalism, coupled with affirmations that whites naturally belonged in the province, was a long-standing position of

42 Ibid., 316.
43 Ibid., 320.
44 Ibid., 321.
For example, a month earlier, one particularly vehement attack on Asians concluded:

British Columbia, on the eve of a superb future, is both climatically and in every other way the very chosen land for the Anglo-Saxon. Japan for the Japanese. China for the Chinese. And British Columbia for the white man.\(^{45}\)

The very factors which made whites naturally belong in British Columbia, according to Vrooman, dictated that Asians did not.

By the 1920s, the notion that Canada was and should be a white country was so deeply rooted in English Canadian nationalist opinion, that it was even argued that Canada had a particular "race" destiny. For example, after the First World War *The Canadian Magazine* actively promoted a new sense of Canadian self-identity.\(^{46}\) As part of its efforts, it published an article which suggested that Canada had a special destiny. "Canada -- Saviour of the Nordic Race" claimed, "Canada is now the only country on the earth which possesses all the conditions necessary for the propagation of the Nordic race, and for the salvation of the white civilization in the centuries to come."\(^{47}\) The article further claimed that achieving this racial destiny required stringent measures.


controls of immigration as well as internal eugenic programmes.\textsuperscript{48}

\textit{Oriental Alienness as a Social Construct}

During this era, the notion of the Oriental alien was so deeply rooted that it was at the level of "taken-for-granted" reality.\textsuperscript{49} This was evident in the 1924 \textit{Survey of the School System} in British Columbia conducted by J.H. Putman and G. W. Weir.\textsuperscript{50} The survey included the first comprehensive usage in Canada of "scientific" intelligence testing. These tests were carried out under the direction of Peter Sandiford, professor of psychology at the University of Toronto. One issue that particularly interested Sandiford was the relative I.Q.'s of white and "Oriental" students. He noted that as "[t]he real meeting-place of East and West is no longer in Asia Minor, but along the Pacific shores of North America," and as "[n]o one can forecast accurately what the new migration portends, . . . B.C., at least, should be interested in determining the mental capacities of her alien groups."\textsuperscript{51} Consequently, Sandiford and his team took steps to test the I.Q.'s of some 305 Chinese and Japanese students in the Vancouver public school system. Although he tried to explain the

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 139-140.


\textsuperscript{50} J.H. Putman and G.M. Weir, \textit{Survey of the School System} (Victoria: Chas. Banfield, 1925). Although published in 1925, the survey was actually conducted in 1924.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 506.
results he obtained as the product of a process of self-selection through which brighter and more ambitious people immigrated, the result of cultural practices which encouraged brighter Asian boys and girls to attend school, and even the size of his sample, Sandiford was disturbed by his findings. The Japanese had a median score of 113, the Chinese one of 107.9, compared to a mean of 100 for whites. Sandiford warned,

... from the political and economic standpoints the presence of an industrious, clever, and frugal alien group, capable, so far as mentality is concerned, of competing successfully with the native whites in most of the occupations they mutually engage in, constitutes a problem which calls for the highest qualities of statesmanship if it is to be solved satisfactorily. ... These facts have very great importance for B.C. Here we have an alien group whose mental capacity is greatly superior to that of the native stock.\(^{52}\)

Sandiford was unaware that he had started from the assumption that "Orientals" were indeed different from whites and consequently required differential treatment and methods of judgment. He pointed out that some Japanese and Chinese students had been involved in the general testing programme, "but it was felt that tests involving a use of the English language would not be fair to them."\(^{53}\) Instead a different test, individually administered, had been used.\(^{54}\) This test was not administered to a comparable

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\(^{52}\) Ibid., 508.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 506.

\(^{54}\) This was the "Pinter-Patterson Scale of Performance Tests," apparently an adaptation of the United States Army "Beta" tests for people not literate in English just as the general tests were adaptations of the U.S. Army "Alpha" test for literates. For a discussion of the "Alpha" and "Beta" tests, see Gould, Mismeasure of Man.
"control" group of white B.C. students, and the comparative mean for white students was merely a "theoretical one."\textsuperscript{55} He did not report whether the Chinese and Japanese students were tested for their levels of competence in English, nor apparently did he test immigrant students who may not have been fluent in English, such as those born in Scandinavia, by methods intended for non-native speakers.

In other words, Sandiford applied different means of judging the I.Q.'s of British Columbia public school students on the basis of whether or not they were Chinese and Japanese or white. The reasons that he did so is suggested by the language he uses to refer to them. Throughout his discussion, the Chinese and Japanese are referred to as "alien," while whites were called "native." This was despite the fact that many white students in British Columbia were, like many of their Chinese and Japanese counterparts, immigrants from non-English-speaking countries, and many Japanese and Chinese students, likely the majority in the case of the Chinese, were themselves Canadian-born. To Sandiford, Chinese and Japanese students, wherever born, were "alien," while whites were "native." These categories would have seemed self-evident and natural.

The alienness of the Chinese was a theme as well in the supposedly descriptive accounts of travel literature. For example,

\textsuperscript{55} Putman and Weir, \textit{Survey}, 508. These tests were later criticized for not having been administered to a control group of white students, something which apparently eliminated the differences. See Young and Reid, \textit{Japanese Canadians}, 135-36.
a 1907 account of "Chinatown in Victoria" emphasized the alienness of the Chinese. It began, "It is curious to notice how little the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of the Pacific Coast cities know of the thousands of aliens that always inhabit that district known locally as Chinatown."\textsuperscript{56} Alienness again applies to aesthetic principles: the idol in the "joss house" was a carving of "the crudest kind, resembling somewhat the carvings of our Pacific coast Indians."\textsuperscript{57} But the most striking impressions of the trip were the smells arising from "a thousand odours":

> At times these became so sickening that one felt that one really could stand it no longer. If in our cool country under the regulations of our sanitary officers it could be as base as this, what must it be like in the hot cities of the Orient, where there are no such restrictions. Surely there can be nothing more horrible this side of Hades!\textsuperscript{58}

This kind of literature, while appearing to be objective description of the Chinese, was in fact categorizing them as alien.\textsuperscript{59}

\textit{Characterization vs. Description}

The key to understanding the process of characterizing the Chinese and other Asians as alien, and the British and other


\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 538.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 541.

\textsuperscript{59} In this respect, it played a similar role to travel literature elsewhere. Mary Louise Pratt, "Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen," \textit{Critical Inquiry} 12 (1985): 119-143, has argued that English travel literature about Africa created "a stable form of othering."
Europeans as native, is the recognition that the characterizations of the Asians found in white English-language opinion were not in fact descriptive of the people of Asian origins actually present in Canada. Indeed, insofar as this opinion labelled all people of particular origins with the same characteristics, it could not possibly describe the real individuals actually present in the country. The Chinese in British Columbia, for example, were no more (and arguably from the point of view of First Nations people, no less) alien than were the white residents of British Columbia. As a group they had been present continuously in British Columbia since the gold rush of 1858. Like other migrants to British Columbia, they had contributed their labour in building the modern society of the province, and had played a particularly important role in the creation of the material infrastructure of British Columbia's capitalist economy. After 1885, the number of Asian-born people settling in B.C. was small in comparison to the number of people from other areas, including non-English speaking ones. Although whites often accused them of merely being sojourners in British Columbia, there is evidence that, like other immigrants, they chose to settle their families in Canada whenever they could afford to do so from the points of view of economy and of safety.

60 This point has been made most forcefully by Peter S. Li. See Chinese in Canada, 24-27.

61 See Table I, above. According to census figures, by 1921 there were 39,739 Asians in British Columbians, in comparison to 387,513 of British nationality, 72,743 from Continental Europe, and 22,377 First Nations people. See Barman, West Beyond the West, 363.
Despite their contributions and presence, white opinion of all kinds consistently represented the Chinese as outsiders who were not integral participants in the life of British Columbia.

Generally, white opinion characterized the Chinese as anti­
thetical to whites, as having a fixed, unchanging, and alien, character. "Character" was an important element in the intellectual currency of the times. H. John Field has identified "character" as the "shared presupposition" of late Victorian imperialism, the device that linked the individual and the empire, mobilized the elite around the empire and enabled the indoctrination of the masses in the imperial idea. "Its usages transmitted a sense of shared intellectual currency; as though, when "character" came up, everyone knew without further explanation what was being discussed and could in fact even anticipate the ensuing conclusion."62

Character was considered to be the product of breeding and not environment or experience. As a turn-of-the-century health text-book used in British Columbia put it, "Not only property, but faces and character are inherited."63 As something which was inherited, it followed that it was passed down from generation to generation and would over the course of time become common to all members within a genetically-definable population. Therefore "races" too had distinct characters.

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62 Field, Toward a Programme of Imperial Life, 231-232.

The notion that each "race" had a distinct character was accepted regardless of how the term itself was used. Most commentators on the Chinese and other Asians in Canada used the term "race" to refer to communities related by blood and culture in much the same way that we might use the term "ethnic group" today. For example, to J.R. Conn the English and French were different "races." The problem in the case of the Chinese was that there were not only race differences, but skin colour ones as well. For Sandiford "race" also meant something akin to ethnicity. One of the questions that he was interested in was the relationship between "race" and I.Q., but for his discussion of this issue he defined "races" as "English," "Scotch," "Irish," "Scandinavian," and "Rest of the World."  

School textbooks played a particularly important role in popularizing "scientific" "race" concepts. Geography textbooks, for example, introduced "race" concepts in much the same way that

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64 Michael Baton has argued that the original meaning of the term "race" was "blood lines," or lineage groups, see Michael Baton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). The use of "race" to refer to ethnic groups was evident in a number of areas. The best known example is perhaps Andre Siegfried, *The Race Question in Canada*, ed. with an intro. by Frank H. Underhill, ([Toronto]: McClelland and Stewart, [1966]), which is an extended discussion of English/French relations. Similar usage is also evident in the popular media, not just in discussing Canadian immigration issues. *Canadian Magazine*, for example, published articles using the term in this way. See Stuart Jenkins, "Is the Old Roman Race Still Dominant," *The Canadian Magazine* XXXV (1909-1910): 491- 499 and Laura Denton, "Alien Races in Russia," *The Canadian Magazine* XLIX (May 1917 - October 1917): 307- 311.

they described the solar system.\textsuperscript{66}

However used, whether "scientific" or not, "race" terms always contrasted the character of one group with another. Thus "Caucasians" were contrasted to "Mongolians," "Orientals" to "Anglo-Saxons," Chinese and Japanese "aliens" to "British" or "Canadians." Whether or not it had any basis in fact, "race" terminology always divided the population of British Columbia into those who belonged and those who did not.

\textit{The Immutability of Alienness}

The immutability of "Chinese character" was also a recurring theme. It was evident in the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration. The section of the report written by Commissioner J.A. Chapleau contains a long exegesis on "the character of the Chinaman in China."\textsuperscript{67} In effect, Chapleau argued that the Chinese were not inferior, just different. Or as the Commissioner put it, so that in the face of the charges made against the Chinese, "the statesman would not be deterred by one or all of these charges, even if established beyond doubt, from encouraging Chinese immigration, were he certain that it brought men and women of whom or of whose children good Canadians could be made."\textsuperscript{68} While rejecting the most extreme anti-Chinese opinion in British Columbia, Chapleau was still affirming the view that "the Chinaman"

\textsuperscript{66} See the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration,} xxxix.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
has a fixed character (although not necessarily the one identified by critics of Chinese immigration). Further, his report went on to suggest that this character was evident wherever the Chinese had settled: in China and other places of Chinese settlement, and consequently would also be found in British Columbia.

Notions of the fixed, unchanging and unchangeable nature of the Chinese character and consequently of Chinese civilization were evident in a number of turn-of-the-century commentaries in The Canadian Magazine that purported to explain China to Western readers. For example, in 1895 an article claimed that the Confucian influence on Chinese culture and society was all-encompassing.69 Readers were told that the character of Confucius "in some way or other seems to have permeated every social, domestic and religious institution of his country; his teachings have practically transformed themselves into a fixed and immovable polity for his race, during the greater part of two thousand years of history."70 The problem is that Confucius, and consequently the Chinese, worship the past. The result was "[t]his inexorable idea rules the Chinese character of to-day as it has controlled so many centuries of Chinese history."71 If anything Confucianism was too good, since "[t]heoretically, Confucianism presents an almost perfect moral code, practically it has created in the minds of the

70 Ibid., 528.
71 Ibid., 530.
people a hopeless dislike of change, progress or improvement; a fossilism somewhat similar to that produced by the teachings of Mahomet after the pulsing of religious enthusiasm had gone out of the great mass of his followers and adherents." But Confucius himself was "a Chinaman of the Chinese," "emphatically the product of the national mind," and "unable to look into the future or to do anything but see what had gone before him." Consequently, his teachings,

... hindered the growth of the Chinese intellect, cramped the development of the Chinese character, and laid the ground-work for the present degrading national superstition. His people, as a consequence of this slumber of centuries, have still a language without an alphabet; a religion without a God; a profound veneration for the dead without any belief in immortality; a moral code without individual comprehension of its greatness or the necessity of practising its beneficent principles.

Thanks to Confucius and his Chineseness, the Chinese and their civilization was static.

The notion that Eastern civilization was decadent, in contrast to that of Canada, found expression in other ways. For example, R.W. Shannon, the editor of the Ottawa paper The Citizen, argued that "[s]ocialism in its essence is the system of antiquity and of the Orient to-day." The result of the prevalence of collectivism in these civilizations meant that,

... we do not look for modern progress in the East. The

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72 Ibid., 531.

73 Ibid., 533.

countries where collectivism reigns are stagnant and low in the scale of civilization. Among them the value of personal character is not understood; the individual leans upon his social setting for support. The advance of the race has been carried forward in quite another way by the independence, self-reliance and virile energy of which the Anglo-Saxons are the chief exemplars. It is these qualities that have enabled the people of the British Isles to go forth and conquer the world.\textsuperscript{75}

Thus "Anglo-Saxons" in contrast to Orientals, had the desirable characteristics of individualism, "independence," "self-reliance" and "virility," in short all the characteristics of good capitalists.

The decadence of Asian civilization was presented as more than a cultural or historical product. Instead it was described as a biological characteristic. Indeed all cultural characteristics were presented as at root "racial." Thus another article on Chinese modes of transportation, wittily entitled "Terrestrial Travelling for Celestials,"\textsuperscript{76} helpfully pointed out, "In keeping with the general characteristics of the Celestial race, their different modes of locomotion, whether by land or water, are slow and cumbrous, and in most cases decidedly uncomfortable."\textsuperscript{77}

If the character of the Chinese was fixed, it followed that


\textsuperscript{76} Harry C. Smart, "Terrestrial Travelling for Celestials," \textit{The Canadian Magazine} XVI (November 1900 - April 1901): 33 - 37.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 33. Even commentators sympathetic to the Chinese presented the notion that they were fixed in their civilization and character, and that their culture was based on racial characteristics. See Arthur H. U. Colquhoun, "China, The Past & Present," \textit{The Canadian Magazine} XVI (May 1900 - October 1900): 445-449.
they could not be "assimilated" to life in Canada. Thus J.A. Chapleau's view of the Chinese as "a non-assimilable race, clearly marked off from white people by color and national and race characteristics," was repeated in many different ways and places over the next forty years. The non-assimilability of non-whites, including the Chinese, was a concern of J.R. Conn's 1900 discussion of immigration when he claimed that where "a color line divides people it can hardly be expected that they will mix," and that "[t]his difference may be only skin-deep, but it is a very conspicuous circumstance, and is the index to other differences which are more than skin-deep."79

The assimilability of Asians was still the focus of concern in Queen's Quarterly a quarter of a century later. Theodore H. Boggs provided an extended discussion of this question when he rejected the arguments most frequently offered in favour of Asian exclusion. He attributed much of the anti-Asian feeling on Canada's west coast to "race prejudice" and even rejected economic arguments against Asian competition, noting that, while on the surface economic arguments appeared convincing, "[i]f the Oriental had a white skin and therefore was as readily capable as the Irishman and Italian of being assimilated through intermarriage, the economic argument would be no more sound when applied to him that it was

78 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, cxxx.

79 Conn, "Immigration," 124.
when applied to cheap laborers from Europe."\(^{80}\) Racial assimilation of the Chinese was not possible, however, since "the Oriental because of his color is not assimilated through intermarriage."\(^{81}\) Consequently "so long as racial assimilation through intermarriage is not feasible exclusion must be recommended."\(^{82}\)

According to Boggs, if racial assimilation was not possible cultural assimilation could only achieve what were at best partial results. In the United States cultural assimilation, particularly involving Chinese Americans, had lead to "a cleavage and lack of understanding between the younger generation of Orientals and their parents." The result was that the former "tends to acquire all the external mannerisms, sentiments, personal characteristics, and loyalties of the American community in which he grows up" and ends up as "a separate racial entity, not wholly in sympathy with either of the parent stocks," and "[t]hough quite sure he is no longer an Oriental, he finds himself, as it were, in a sort of 'no-man's-land' so far as national badges are concerned."\(^{83}\)

Similar views of the unchangeability of the Chinese were expressed in less learned formats. For example, in 1900 Carleton

\(^{80}\) Theodore H. Boggs, "The Oriental of the Pacific Coast," Queen's Quarterly, XXXIII, 3 (February 1926): 317.

\(^{81}\) Ibid., 319.

\(^{82}\) Ibid., 320.

\(^{83}\) Ibid., 321. In Boggs' view, efforts of the Victoria Chinese to resist school segregation in 1922-1923 became "[a]n interesting example of the readiness with which the younger generation of Orientals are prepared to dissociate themselves from their race antecedents" (Ibid., 321).
Dawe gave a lurid account of a tour of Hong Kong in which a Chinese Christian was his tour guide.\textsuperscript{84} When they came across a gambling game in progress,

Ting kept close to me, but I noticed that as the play progressed his lips grew white with excitement, and he trembled violently; and thoughtlessly, I gave him a couple of dollars to play with. Then the real Chinaman came out. His eyes sparkled, his lantern jaws flushed a deep dark red; he could not speak, for the madness of the game had seized him. I was sorry afterwards, for at that moment I realized that I had lent him the wherewithal to travel the old heathen way.\textsuperscript{85}

Even Chinese Christians were only superficially changed. The "real Chinaman" was always just below the surface.

White supremacist opinion in *British Columbia Magazine* put the non-assimilability of the Chinese and other Asians in much starker terms. Not only did editorials point out that the Oriental immigrant "cannot be assimilated into the life of the predominant white race,"\textsuperscript{86} other regular contributions argued that whites and Asians were completely incompatible:

Racially he [the Oriental] is as opposite to the Anglo-Saxon in life, thought, religion, temperament, taste, morals, and modes, as ice is to fire. AND HE CAN NEVER BE OTHERWISE. There is the test; this is the touchstone that irrevocably fixes the difference. He cannot be changed, even by centuries of contact, any more than the leopard can change his spots. He may adopt certain of the white man's vices, because to him these seem virtues; but he will not take up any of the white race's virtues, because these seem, either as vices to him or negligible trifles. So that, to begin with, in this review you may set it down as


\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 411.

\textsuperscript{86} "Asiatics in British Columbia," *British Columbia Magazine*, 9, 11 (November 1913): 711.
unalterable that, racially, the yellow man can never become a white man.\(^7\)

According to this view, Asians in their very essence were incompatible with whites in theirs. Differences between the two were antithetical and immutable.

By the 1920s, the non-assimilability of Asians was expressed almost casually. For example, an extended discussion of the future potential of Pacific Rim trade in *The Canadian Magazine* noted the existence of "[t]he Chinese problem in Canada" and consequent "need of certain strict limitations upon the influx of Orientals." The article concluded by pointing out that, although the assimilation of Europeans was producing exciting, if imperfect, results, "to assimilate Europeans is one problem; to assimilate Asiatics quite a different problem."\(^8\)

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racial purity abounded, shape was also given to more concrete threats. One of these was the idea that Chinese "cheap labour" threatened the white working class. Another was the alleged moral and physical threat to white children presented by older Chinese boys.

The Chinese were amongst a number of evils that trade union spokespeople identified as threatening to the survival of white workers. This position was put forward in explicitly racist terms by the organ of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council during 1908 which warned its readers about the threat from non-whites: "With the country filled with Japs, Chinks, Hindus, Siwashes, Doukhobors, Drunkards, and old-party politicians, British Columbia will ere long resemble the Garden of Eden overgrown by swarms of locusts and mosquitos." 89

It should be recognized that Chinese workers were in practice paid substantially less than their white counterparts. However, white opinion consistently explained the lower Chinese wages as the product of the intrinsic differences between Chinese and white workers. Thus, one of Chapleau's conclusions in the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration was that "being able to subsist on much less than white men, they lower wages." 90 This view was repeated in 1900 by Conn who pointed out, "they are able to work for so little because their standard of living is so low." 91

89 The Trades Unionist, June 1908, 10.
90 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, cxxx.
91 Conn, "Immigration," 122.
Many whites saw the alleged ability of the Chinese to subsist on less as the product of "race" characteristics and a genetic predisposition to a lower standard of living. This view was reproduced in the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council organ, The Trades Unionist.

Centuries of habits and necessity have inured the Asiatic to a standard of living far below that of the Caucasian, especially that of the American people. . . .

Wages being governed mainly by the standard of living, the Asiatic is able to work, live, and even thrive, according to his own standard, upon a wage that would mean pauperism in an average American community, even when compared with the sweatshop scales prevailing in densely populated centers. It is useless to talk of raising the Asiatic to the Caucasian standard in these respects, since the former's standard is second nature to him, and can not be changed except by a process of evolution.92

In other words, Asians' lower standards of living were aspects of their biological characteristics, i.e. those characteristics which are only subject to "a process of evolution."

The identification of Chinese with labour that was cheap, "degraded" and the dupe of the bosses was such that the terms "Chinese labour" and "cheap labour" became interchangeable. The Chinese came to symbolize all that organized white workers opposed. For example, The Trades Unionist exhorted its readers to buy products with union labels, since "[t]he union label unites all interests that lie in the improvement of industrial conditions

92 "The Asiatic Question," The Trades Unionist, April 1908, 4. This article had originally appeared in a California labour newspaper, but according to the editor of The Trades Unionist, it was "on all fours with the conditions prevailing on this side of the line [i.e. Canada]." American opinion was highly influential in shaping Canadian views. For example, both the 1885 and 1902 Royal Commission included samples of official and unofficial American opinion.
through the abolition of child labor, night labor, unsanitary factories, Chinese labor, sweatshop, tenement house crowding, etc."\(^93\) Opposition to "Chinese labour" became the rallying cry for white workers before World War One. The notion that unions were opposed to Chinese labour was actively used by some union organizers, and had been part of the basis on unity in the formation of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council.\(^94\)

Far from being able to live on less, either because of biological or cultural characteristics, Chinese workers in fact had to live on less because they were paid less. There is some evidence that the Chinese workers of British Columbia were sometimes close to starvation. In the mid 1880s following mass lay-offs from the C.P.R., there was widespread famine amongst Chinese workers. This famine was sufficiently serious that Chinese community organizations took steps to discourage further immigration from China.\(^95\) Further evidence of near starvation is found in the testimony of employers who appeared as witnesses to the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration. Even those employers who favoured Chinese workers consistently

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\(^{93}\) Kempton McKim, "History and Uses of the Union Label," The Trades Unionist, January 1908, 4.

\(^{94}\) See "Organizer W.R. Trotter Delivering Congress Goods in Cent Belt," The Trades Unionist, August 1908, 9 and "History of Vancouver Trades and Labor Council," The Trades Unionist, September 1908, 1. The view that lower wages was the result of the fixed characteristics of the Chinese themselves could even be accepted by those who explicitly rejected "race prejudice." See Boggs, "The Oriental of the Pacific Coast," 314.

\(^{95}\) See Lai, "Chinese Attempts to Discourage Emigration to Canada," 33-49.
testified that it took three or more Chinese workers to do the work of two whites. While this may have been the result of differences in skill levels between white and Chinese workers, it may also have been the result of the relative inadequacy of the Chinese diet resulting from a standard of living imposed by lower wages. 96

Peter S. Li and Gillian Creese have both argued that the Chinese workers of British Columbia were subject to the operations of a different labour market from their white counterparts. Consequently, direct competition between the two groups for jobs was virtually non-existent. Li goes so far as to suggest that the low wages paid Chinese workers, if anything, allowed white workers and their wages to be subsidized. 97 Creese, however, points out that the existence of separate labour markets for Asians was the product of the desires, and consistent efforts, of capitalists to depress wages in general so as to maintain higher profits. In other words, the relatively lower wages paid by the Chinese were the product of capitalism and not of any intrinsic differences on the part of the Chinese. 98

Racism, emanating from the white society, was certainly an element in depressing Chinese labour rates. For example, one white

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96 See, for example, the testimony on the shingle industry contractor, Arthur Gordon, Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 131. As a contractor, Gordon would have been interested in the lowest possible labour costs per unit. Since he wanted to employ Chinese, his comments are unlikely to have been merely another way of putting them down.

97 Li, Chinese in Canada, 45.

98 See Creese, "Class, Ethnicity and Conflict," passim.
witness to the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration told the shocked Commissioners how he had terrorized a group of discontented Chinese workers into remaining on a contract paying extremely low wages by pretending to be a policeman.\textsuperscript{99} Racism was also evidently a factor in calls for school segregation.

The physical threat of disease probably motivated residents in the area of Victoria's Rock Bay School to call for school segregation in 1901,\textsuperscript{100} while the threat posed by alleged improper sanitation was certainly an issue when the Victoria Trades and Labour Council resurrected the matter the following year.\textsuperscript{101} This theme was returned to in 1922 by Municipal School Inspector George H. Deane when he reintroduced the subject to the Victoria School Board. "There is a danger in these Chinese boys, many of whom cannot even speak English, coming from the unsanitary living quarters downtown and mixing with other children with no attempt at segregation," he told the Board. "We know that it is not only a tendency with the Chinese to live in insanitary quarters, but a

\textsuperscript{99} Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 160-61. In fact racism was essential to this system. It isolated Chinese workers within a separate labour market and meant that there were few alternative sources of employment outside of the contract labour system. Beyond this racist images of the Chinese justified their exploitation.

\textsuperscript{100} "To Exclude the Chinese," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, February 14, 1901, 8. On the issue of motivation, see Roy, \textit{White Man's Province}, 24.

What most captured the imaginations of white parents was the moral threat posed by older Chinese students in the lower grades. School segregation again became an issue in Victoria in 1908 when white residents threatened to pull their children out of the Rock Bay school, after one of the older Chinese students was expelled for "employing his spare-time in drawing obscene pictures in the exercise books of little white children."

White girls were believed to be particularly vulnerable to the threat of older Chinese boys. There was a brief scare in 1909 over the risks facing white girls teaching English in Chinatown, but matters really came to a head in 1914 when a Vancouver Chinese youth who was a public school students was accused of murdering the white woman who employed him. This led Vancouver City Council to

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103 Older Chinese boys in the public school were a recurring issue. These were English as a Second Language students who were placed in primary classes. Most often, they were only one or two years older than the average white students in the class. In some instances, however, they were as much as ten year older, being sixteen to eighteen year olds. This is discussed in Chapter Five below.


105 "Orientals in the Schools," Victoria Daily Colonist, March 28, 1908, 3. See also Victoria Daily Times, March 28, 1908, 1 and 3.

demand the complete segregation of the Chinese in the schools. Its resolution on the subject made its concerns clear in no uncertain terms:

By being indiscriminately thrown into association with Orientals many years their senior, our children are wantonly exposed to Oriental vices at an age when revolting incidents may be indelibly stamped upon their minds. Furthermore the health of our children is endangered by such close association with Oriental children, many of whom hail from habitations where reasonable sanitation and cleanliness are not only despised but utterly disregarded. In some cases, these Orientals come into our public school classrooms with their apparel polluted with the fumes of noxious drugs and germs of loathsome diseases on their persons.  

School segregation, it was argued, was essential for the protection of white children.

But the fears that underlay these concerns were made the most explicit in popular fiction. One novel, published in serial form in the Vancouver Sun in 1921, described the unusually "hopeless despair" felt by two parents who woke up one morning to discover that their daughter had eloped during the night:

Pretty Eileen Hart, the pride of her mother, the apple of her father's eye, and only eighteen years old, had run away and married—a Chinaman, The horror of it turned them sick. She had been better dead. Eileen, with her beauty, her daintiness, her originality—they had always been specially proud of this and her daring—was now Mrs Wong Fu.

Since Eileen had met Wong Fu, an older student, at school where she was seduced by his more worldly ways, the distraught father placed

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107 City of Vancouver, Council Minutes (City of Vancouver Archives), vol. 10, April 8, 1914, 122, cited by Kay Anderson, "'East' as 'West'," 152.

the blame squarely on "this damned system of co-education" and "co-education with the spawn of these yellow dogs."\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{Representations and the Chinese}

Rather than being descriptions of the Chinese and other Asians, white characterizations of them were in fact "representations," the result of the same kind of process that Edward W. Said has documented with respect to the Middle Eastern "Orient." The imbalance of power involved in this process was evident in the two Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration. The only Chinese witnesses to appear before the 1885 Commission were two members of the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco and while a number, like Sing Chung Yung, did appear before the 1902 Commission, their comments, their advice and their perceptions were discounted by the Commission which concluded that the head tax should be raised to $500 as a temporary measure until complete exclusion could be effected.\textsuperscript{110}

The relationships of power at work in the process of

\textsuperscript{109} Glynn-Ward, \textit{The Writing on the Wall}, 84-85. Emphasis in the original.

\textsuperscript{110} Won Alexander Cumyow, the first Canadian born Chinese, testified that the head tax was unnecessary, that Chinese immigration would be self-regulating since too many Chinese workers entering the country was not in the interests of Chinese merchants. He also testified that "[m]any of the chief opponents of the Chinese are comparatively new arrivals in the province, who have very little idea of the facts of the case." In effect Cumyow was challenging the broad construction of Chinese as alien and whites as native. See \textit{Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration}, 234-238. The Commission passed no comment on Cumyow's testimony.
representation are most readily apparent in the gendered nature of the discourse discussed above. Asian women were almost entirely invisible as far as white opinion was concerned. In the case of the Chinese, at least, the Oriental alien was invariably the "Chinaman."

The invisibility of Asian women was not simply a reflection of the tremendous gender imbalances within the Asian communities, but was a reflection of the relative powerlessness of these women to represent themselves in white society. For example, in one of the few references to Chinese women, a turn-of-the-century account of Victoria noted that "low-caste Chinese women go about as freely as do their white sisters" but expressed pity for "a girl-wife" who "being of higher caste" had bound feet: "There is something indescribably pathetic about the life of such a woman, apart from the squalid existence of the ordinary Mongolians who infest our British Columbian coast towns." In no way did this statement indicate how this woman herself saw her life, but it did say a great deal about what the author of the statement thought about the lives led by the Chinese. In other words, it was fundamentally a

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111 Julian Durham, "The Queen City of British Columbia," Queen's Quarterly, XII (November 1898 - April 1899): 213. Western commentators in this era and since then have made much of the evils of footbinding. It should, however, be remembered that equally monstrous deformities, including increased morbidity in child birth, resulted from the tight corsets worn by upper class Western women during the same era. In both the Chinese and the Western cases, such practices were demonstrations of the status of the families to which the women belonged. In essence they were statements that these families did not need their women's labour to survive, that they were unimportant except as the objects of patriarchal attention.
statement about the values of the viewer.

When discussed at all, Chinese women were invariably represented in terms of the values of the white society. Both the 1885 and 1902 Royal Commissions discussed Chinese prostitution. The 1885 Commission heard considerable testimony to the effect that the majority of Chinese women in Canada were prostitutes, and even more "degraded" than their white counterparts. The Commission claimed, "The Chinese are the only people coming to the continent the great bulk of whose women are prostitutes" and charged that these women had "a most virulent form of syphilis" and that "in a special way they corrupt little boys." The 1902 Commission was more interested in the "rescue work" carried out by the Chinese Girls' Home in Victoria than in the practices of Chinese prostitutes themselves, but even the anti-Chinese commissioners had to admit to being surprised at the small number of prostitutes in relation to the Chinese community's size.

The accuracy of the Commissions' assessments of Chinese prostitutes is impossible to determine, but prostitutes were not the only Chinese women present in British Columbia. As we have seen, women played a particularly important role in terms of the merchant economy and by 1900 those born in Canada were the majority

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112 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, lxxix. Thirty-two of the seventy witnesses who intervened with the commission commented on Chinese prostitutes.

113 38-41, see also page 22.
of Chinese women. The fact that it was only in discussing prostitution that white society exhibited an interest in the Chinese women living in Canada suggests that is was only as prostitutes that white society valued Chinese women. If white society undervalued male Chinese workers, it did not value Chinese women at all except as the objects of prurient interest, as the objects of pity or of Christian charity. In either event, for white opinion, they were always objects.

Consequently, by the 1920s, to most Anglophone Canadians, the real Chinese and Japanese people of British Columbia had become the iconic "Oriental." Ideas about Asians in Canada evident in the House of Commons debates, the Royal Commission reports, the academic, popular and labour press, were the products of white opinion, rather than of any genuine knowledge of the Asians themselves. These ideas were used as foils for defining "Canadians" and who was "native" to British Columbian and who was not. They were expressions of the dominant white society, its values and identities, and its economic imperatives, rather than descriptions of the Asians actually present in Canada, their

114 Given the small number of women within the community, almost all women, except those brought over from China as prostitutes, would have been desirable marriage partners.

115 It is likely that many Chinese women "rescued" by white missionaries were not in fact prostitutes. In the case of the United States, it has been argued that Chinese American women used white missionary rescue homes as a means of resisting Chinese patriarchy. See Peggy Pascoe, "Gender Systems in Conflict: The Marriages of Mission-Educated Chinese American Women, 1874-1939," Journal of Social History 22, 4 (September 1989): 631-652. I am indebted to Bill Maciejko for bringing this reference to my attention.
activities or their characteristics. These ideas were also reproduced wholesale in provincially controlled public schooling.
CHAPTER FIVE:

SCHOOLING AND THE ORGANIZATION AND IDEOLOGY OF WHITE SUPREMACY:
EDUCATIONAL INDOCTRINATION AND SCHOOL SEGREGATION

Schooling and the White Man's Province

By the time of the 1922-23 strike of Chinese students in Victoria, British Columbia had been made into a white supremacist society. In this society, an individual's "race" defined his or her political and civil rights, potential areas of economic activity and circumscribed such day-to-day matters as place of residence. First Nations people and Asians, unlike whites, were politically disenfranchised, barred from certain occupations and free associations, confronted by legalized discrimination, and subjected to random violence. In short it was "A White Man's Province" which defined non-white peoples as intrinsically alien.

This society, however, had not come into existence overnight. As we have seen, it had been constructed through political and ideological definitions which claimed that whites properly "belonged" in British Columbia and First Nations people and Asians did not. Definitions of this kind were evident both in leading opinion and in the laws which established the structures of the British Columbia state system.

State-controlled schooling was integral to the construction
of supremacist hegemony in B.C. As schooling became what Timothy A. Dunn has called "a mass phenomenon" at the turn of the century, the curriculum of the public schools indoctrinated students in the ideologies of dominance: racism and imperialism. Meanwhile the racial segregation of school children threatened to further extend the organization of British Columbia society along racial lines by effecting what T.W. Twigg had called "carrying into the schools what already exists in every other institution of society."

The school's roles of organization and of indoctrination were inseparable. Racial segregation insulated white students from the common humanity of non-whites, thus facilitating their ideological indoctrination. Meanwhile racist ideologies justified segregation and made the differential treatment of non-whites appear natural and morally desirable.

The ideological role of schooling was evident in the textbooks used in B.C. schools. Textbooks transmitted a nexus of ideas about patriotism, citizenship and "character" which made supremacist notions virtually impossible to challenge. Above all, textbooks fostered "an ideology of difference" which legitimated the white occupation of the province as both natural and morally necessary at the same time that it rendered First Nations people and Asians as "Other," as "that which Europeans were not,"¹ as morally depraved and illegitimate in their presence.

¹ For discussions of the creation of notions of the "Other" and ideologies of difference, see Said, Orientalism. See also Gates, "Race," Writing and Difference, especially, Edward W. Said, "An Ideology of Difference," 38-58.
The era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was one in which textbooks were in practice the curriculum and in which school readers, geographies and histories were intended to transmit what one contemporary observer referred to as "the dominant ideas of the people at the time that they were written." For example, readers, the most important textbooks, were intended to "excite the interest, improve the taste, develope [sic] the judgment, and ennoble the ideals of the pupils." Through a variety of contents—fairy stories, adventure fiction, morality and historical tales, heroic and nature poetry, and excerpts from the great works of English literature—readers sought to describe and explain the world. In the process of conjuring up the world for the imagination of students, readers simplified and abstracted it.

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2 E.T. White, Public School Text-Books in Ontario (London, Ontario: Chas. Chapman, 1922), 14. Although completely concerned with Ontario, this remains a valuable resource on text-books, their selection and reception. White describes a number of instances in which texts were banned or re-written because they presented controversial opinions.


They presented the world not so much as it actually was, but rather as it was "represented" to be in Western, and especially British, elite culture. In later years, as the curriculum diversified, other texts joined in this function.

One of the central facts of the world as represented to B.C. students by their textbooks was imperialism: the western European and increasingly American domination of the world. The textbooks used in B.C. between 1885 and 1925 never questioned this domination. Instead they reproduced and propagated a world-view based on an "ideology of difference" which legitimated it.

Textbooks were able to play this ideological role because their carefully controlled contents presented a world view that was consistent with elite opinion. With the notable exception of a few American and B.C. books, almost all of the textbooks used in British Columbia were published in Toronto usually by the W.J. Gage Company. Frequently, these texts were standardized "national"

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5 For a discussion of the way in which the world was "represented" to Europeans, see Said, Orientalism, 21-23.

6 Other facts included gender and class constructions.

7 Edward W. Said, "An Ideology of Difference," 38-58. Although in this article, Said is primarily concerned with the creation of an ideology of difference in Israel with respect to Palestinians, much of his argument applies to the settler colonialisms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.


9 The role of the W.J. Gage Company in producing textbooks points to the need for a study of the political economy of textbooks in Canada. Apparently Gage also supplied textbooks to
publications which were reprinted in special "British Columbia" editions.10 With the exception of readers, textbooks were usually written, or reworked, by prominent academics of the day. Canadian textbook authors included such establishment figures as the noted scientist and Principal of McGill University, Sir William Dawson, the long-time Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Toronto, George M. Wrong, and the Rhodes Trust administrator, George Parkin. A B.C. geography textbook was co-written by a national textbook writer and the wife of the B.C. Minister of Education.11 The extent of ideological agreement about textbooks in B.C. was demonstrated on one occasion when a textbook which did not completely support conventional interpretations was banned in the province for presenting a supposedly subversive


10 Often texts were used in more than one province, but some deletions or additions would be made for each province's edition. Most frequently in B.C. this took the form of the incorporation of a special B.C. supplement. An example is W.J. Robertson's Public School History of England and Canada. British Columbia Edition (Toronto: Copp, Clark Company Limited, 1902). This text is an adaptation for senior elementary schools of the High School History of England and Canada (Toronto: Copp, Clark Company Limited, 1891) which was revised for Canadian schools by Robertson from Arabella B. Buckley's (Mrs. Fisher) History of England. (High School History, [v]) The High School History also included a Section, "History of Canada" written by Robertson. The B.C. Edition of the Public School History included an appendix, "The History of British Columbia," written by R.E. Gosnell.

11 Maria Lawson and Rosalind Watson Young, A History and Geography of British Columbia. Dominion Series. (Toronto: Educational Book Company, 1913), Young was the wife of the B.C. Minister of Education, Dr. Henry Esson Young. I am indebted to Dr. Patricia E. Roy for bringing this connection to my attention.
perspective.\textsuperscript{12}

From the inception of the British Columbia school system, control over textbooks, along with inspections, examinations and teacher certification, were the chief forms of bureaucratic regulation. Teachers in British Columbia were required to use only certain "prescribed" texts. As in other parts of English Canada, "[s]chool inspection and examinations were directly linked to textbooks. Inspectors policed their use and based their judgments of school achievement upon pupil knowledge of their contents."\textsuperscript{13} Periodically lists of these textbooks were revised and published in official documents.\textsuperscript{14}

The official weight placed on textbooks suggests that teaching rarely deviated from them. Classroom teaching often involved little more than having students read, memorize and recite passages from the prescribed text. This emphasis was apparent in


\textsuperscript{13} George Tomkins, A Common Countenance: Stability and Change in the Canadian Curriculum (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 237.

\textsuperscript{14} Between 1872-1892, these lists were published as part of the Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Education. See British Columbia, Superintendent of Education, Annual Reports (Victoria, 1872-1892). Between 1893-1916, these lists were published periodically in the Department of Education publications, Manual of the School Law and School Regulations of British Columbia, with minor changes reported in the Annual Reports. After 1919, the Curriculum Branch of the Department of Education published detailed descriptions of the increasingly complex and diversified curriculum, variously titled, Course of Studies, Programme of Studies, and Curriculum Guide.
the high school entrance examinations. For example, the 1904 Canadian History exam gave students 75 minutes to answer seven questions. Typical of the questions was one requiring students to write a paragraph describing "North American Indians, telling the names of the tribes, where they lived, their physical characteristics and manner of life."\textsuperscript{15} Unless students memorized sections of the authorized textbook which dealt directly with the examination content, it is difficult to imagine that they could have completed satisfactorily such an exam in so short a time. In 1899 a B.C. school inspector noted that memorization of the textbook was central to history teaching: "... little preliminary training is given before the pupil is required to use the textbook. What is learned in the text-books is sought to be brought home to the mind in recitations."\textsuperscript{16} Indeed the emphasis on memorization led J.H. Putman and G.M. Weir twenty-five years later to deplore history teaching in their Survey of the School System.\textsuperscript{17}

Starting in 1908, students were given most elementary textbooks, and some high school texts, by the Free Text Book Branch of the Department of Education. This distribution insured the mass dissemination of "school knowledge" as 10,000 or more copies of a

\textsuperscript{15} Superintendent of Education, Annual Report, 1903-4, A cxiv.

\textsuperscript{16} D. Wilson, Inspector of Schools in Annual Report, 1898-99, 248.

\textsuperscript{17} Survey of the School System (Victoria: Chas. Banfield, 1925), 148-149, 158.
reader and 5,000 copies of a history might be given away each year.\textsuperscript{18}

The textbooks themselves were remarkably stable in their contents, at least as far as their imperialist and racist themes were concerned.\textsuperscript{19} First, through patriotic themes, they described the British Empire as a moral enterprise to the benefit of subject peoples and linked Canada and British Columbia to this enterprise. Second, an imperialist ethic constructed around the notion of "character," transformed B.C. classrooms into imperial outposts and allowed students personally to become part of, and share in the responsibility for, this imperial mission.\textsuperscript{20} Third by explaining the empire as the product of genetically-based moral superiority, they presented subject peoples as morally deficient Others. Finally, textbooks fixed these notions of difference into a scientifically prescribed division of humanity in a hierarchy of

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\item \textsuperscript{18} See the reports of the Free Text-Book Branch in the \textit{Annual Reports}. In 1916, for example, over 10,000 copies of the Beginners Reader, 9,000 of the First Reader, and 10,000 of the Second Reader, along with over 6,000 copies of the Canadian History text were distributed. See \textit{Annual Report, 1916-17, A 85}.
\item \textsuperscript{19} For a discussion of how textbooks "shift" in their contents during this era, see Harro Van Brummelen, "Shifting Perspectives: Early British Columbia Textbooks from 1872 to 1925," in Sheehan, Wilson and Jones, \textit{Schools in the West}, 12-28. Reprinted from \textit{BC Studies}, 60 (Winter, 1984-85), 3-27.
\item \textsuperscript{20} H. John Field has identified "character" as the "shared presupposition" of late Victorian imperialism, the device that linked the individual and the empire, mobilized the elite around the empire and enabled the indoctrination of the masses in the imperial idea. "Its usages transmitted a sense of shared intellectual currency; as though, when "character" came up, everyone knew without further explanation what was being discussed and could in fact even anticipate the ensuing conclusion." See Field, \textit{Toward a Programme of Imperial Life}, 231-232.
\end{itemize}
"race."

**Textbook Representations of Imperialism**

In his 1893 geography primer, *Round the Empire*, George R. Parkin, headmaster of Upper Canada College from 1895 to 1902, wrote that he hoped his "little volume" would assist teachers "in building up British patriotism on that basis of wider knowledge which is necessitated by the wonderful facts of our national growth."\(^{21}\) To Parkin and many of his contemporaries, Canadian "patriotism" and support for imperialism were synonymous.\(^{22}\) Between 1885 and 1925 textbooks presented B.C. students with Parkin's "wider knowledge" in order to instill patriotic feelings. The "wonderful facts" of "national growth," i.e. of Britain's imperialist expansion, linked B.C. classrooms to the empire. Historical, geographic and civic knowledge described Canada as an integral and important part of the Empire and made the Empire into a terrain for the imaginations of B.C. students.

Textbooks often linked Canada and the Empire directly through their physical organization. Typical was a reader in the W.J. Gage and Company's *Canadian Readers* series of the 1880s and 1890s which contained "Canadian" items such as a letter from a "friend" in

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\(^{21}\) George R. Parkin, *Round the Empire* (London, Paris and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, 1893), xii. This text, written for British elementary schools, was used as a teacher's reference between 1893 and 1906.

Ottawa, the poems "Our Canadian Home" and "The Maple Leaf Forever." Also included were British stories such as one on the Duke of Wellington and an imperial epic about a boy who chose certain death by staying at his father's side during a colonial war in Africa. Initially Canadian History was only discussed as part of British History, and even after it became a separate subject, was often contained in the same text as British History. Even after World War One, the Canadian Readers (1922) series included both Canadian and British contents. For example, the Fifth Reader began with "Rule, Britannia" but also contained "A Canadian Boat-Song."

Textbooks not only physically linked Britain and Canada, they did not differentiate between Canadian nationalism and British imperialism. For one thing, even the language used in Canadian texts to describe the empire was inclusive. For example, William Francis Collier's History of the British Empire, one of the history texts authorized for use in B.C. before 1900, referred to "Our

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24 For example, William Francis Collier, History of the British Empire, Canadian Series of School Books, (Toronto: Canada Publishing Co., 1876), 320, explains the 1867 Confederation of the North American colonies as merely one of the events of imperial history of the time. Despite its title, this is essentially a history of England.

25 For example, Robertson's Public School History of England and Canada (1902).

Indian Empire" while an early twentieth century elementary level Canadian history spoke of "the common burden" resulting from the Boer War. A 1921 high school text, written by the Chairman of History Department at the University of Toronto, identified the Canadian troops wounded and killed during the First World War as "only part of the vast cost to the British Empire for its share of the victory."  

Discussions of citizenship made clear that students were citizens both of Canada and of the Empire. A contribution to Gage's Fourth Reader during the 1880s argued that the relatively new Dominion of Canada had only one respectable option open to it "to seek, in the consolidation of the empire, a common imperial citizenship, with common responsibilities and a common heritage." The theme that Canadians and British Columbians shared in "a common imperial citizenship" was returned to repeatedly in subsequent years. Even W.L. Grant's History of Canada, the history text which was banned in B.C. shortly after its introduction in 1920 for being "anti-British" and "pro-German," pointed out that "every Canadian is at once a citizen of a municipality, of a province, of a Dominion, and of an Empire" and concluded by urging students to

27 Collier, History of the British Empire (1876), 320.  
30 Cdn. Readers, Bk. IV ([1883]), 168-173.  
love their municipality, province and Dominion:

And beyond even Canada we must love the worldwide Empire of whose people an English poet has said:

We sailed wherever ship could sail,
We founded many a mighty state.
Pray God our greatness may not fail
Through craven fear of being great!\(^\text{32}\)

Thus throughout the period under consideration, the textbooks used in B.C. represented Canada and Canadian identity to be inseparable from Britain and the Empire.

In order to instill patriotic feelings for the Empire, British Columbia textbooks portrayed imperialism as a fundamentally moral enterprise. Britain, itself, was made into the guardian of civilization and virtue. W.J. Robertson’s turn-of-the-century elementary text, *Public School History of England and Canada*, made this characterization explicit. After noting the vastness and diversity of the Empire, Robertson concluded his discussion of English history by pointing out,

But better than all, England’s influence for truth, justice, and righteousness, is greater than ever. She still leads all peoples in the struggle against vice, ignorance and tyranny. Her shores are still a safe refuge for the oppressed of all nations, and from her the patriots of all lands derive hope and encouragement.\(^\text{33}\)

Potential moral dilemmas associated with imperialism were rationalized on the grounds that British rule was more just and


\(^{33}\) *Public School History of England and Canada* (1902), 195.
better for subject peoples than any other system of rule could ever be. This rationalization was especially evident in discussions of British rule in India. For example, the post World War One History of England for Public Schools noted, "But it is well for India that she is under British rule. Without the firm control of a guiding power, she would be torn by internal strife and exposed to the greed and trickery of powerful neighbours."34 Readers were told that only one seventh of the Empire’s population was "of British blood" and that,

Unless this fact is grasped clearly, it is impossible to appreciate the wonderful work being done in controlling and civilizing the millions of subject people, comprising hundreds of races, each with its own language, customs, and religion. Rarely, if ever, does Britain find it necessary to resort to force in governing her subject peoples. Even their prejudices are respected; their religion, their social customs, and local laws are seldom interfered with, unless for the purpose of preventing crime or abolishing brutal customs.35

Thus the Empire was the best possible form of government as it was really a moral crusade bringing civilization and enlightenment to millions.

British rule in Canada was described in much the same benign terms as its rule in India or other parts of the world. As "Canada’s Progress," a contribution to Gage’s 1880s Third Canadian Reader noted "The progress made [in Canada] under the British has been remarkable. In a little over one hundred years, the vast wilderness has become a united confederation stretching from the


35 Ibid., 297.
Atlantic to the Pacific; the government of the country has been settled on a firm basis that gives every subject the fullest degree of liberty and security; . . . "36 A Canadian history text later described "the fairness and lenience of British rule" in Quebec as winning the support of the "habitants."37

Textbooks represented the Canadian federal government as the direct heir of this benign imperial tradition. For example, Canada's treatment of its aboriginal peoples was categorized as "honest and generous."38 Texts praised the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which recognized aboriginal title to the land and called for the negotiation of treaties or purchases of land prior to European settlement, as the basis of good government in Canada. Textbooks claimed that the Royal Proclamation "has ever since been followed,"39 even though in British Columbia and much of northern Canada, aboriginal title had yet to be recognized through treaty or purchase. The Riel Rebellion of 1885, which was put down through military action, was explained as a temporary aberration due to the unjustified fear of the Metis that their lands would be taken away from them. "There were also complaints of ill treatment and neglect of duty by Dominion officers in the North-West, and the petitions of the half-breeds and Indians did not receive prompt

36 The Canadian Readers, Book III (Toronto: W.J. Gage and Co., [1881]), 165.

37 Duncan, Story of the Canadian People (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada, 1917), 205.

38 Gammell, History of Canada (1921), 108.

39 Clement, History of Canada ([1895]), 95.
attention from the proper authorities," a 1902 history text admitted, but these problems were put to rest as "an inquiry was made into the grievances of the Indians and half-breeds, and many of the causes of complaint removed."40

British rule in British Columbia similarly was characterized as just and far-seeing. Pre-War texts claimed that the benefits of "British justice" were extended to British Columbia during the 1857 gold rush,41 while the "wisdom" of British rule was identified as beginning much earlier with the fur traders who "year after year occupied the outposts of civilization, surrounded by savages . . ."42 and whose "skill in the management of the native races did much to save Canada from the horrors of Indian warfare, and made it possible for the more capable among the Indians to share in the occupations and adopt the pursuits of white men."43 Still other textbooks presented the process of "civilizing" the B.C. Indians as on-going. British Columbia texts assured students that the Indians of the province were in the process of transformation from "savages." Maria Lawson and Rosalie Watson Young provided an


41 Lawson and Young, *A History and Geography of British Columbia* (1913), 54; Gammell, *History of Canada* (1921) 30.

42 Lawson and Young, *A History and Geography of British Columbia* (1913), 41.

43 Ibid., 36. This page contains an illustration of an "Indian Raid" which indicates the extent to which aboriginal peoples have been fictionalized. A group of white men with revolvers are shown holding off a much larger group of knife-wielding, Afro-haired blacks.
extended discussion on the "lonely" work of missionaries among First Nations people in their elementary textbook, *A History and Geography of British Columbia* (1913). They noted that "it is felt that more lasting and better work can be done with the children than the adults," and provided sketches labelled, "Indian boy, civilized" and "Indian girl, civilized" to reassure students of the lasting results.\(^{44}\)

Imperialism and its ethos permeated B.C. textbooks between 1885 and 1925. British imperialism was described as morally uplifting and Canada represented as an essential participant in the imperial mission. The British Columbia school curriculum, however, not only depicted the British Empire as a moral enterprise, it was also intended to instill in students a morality built around imperialism, mobilize students behind this enterprise and enable them to personally participate in it.

*The Nexus of "Character"*

"Patriotism," "citizenship" and "morality" were inexorably linked in the worldview presented in B.C. textbooks. This connection was often a conscious one. For example, a British Columbia school inspector observed at the turn of the century, [History] gives the teacher great opportunities of inculcating true patriotism and citizenship by means of the illustrations of these virtues found in the lives of the great and good men of the nation. From it also an ambition to imitate noble actions and be faithful in the performance of duty may be inspired in the scholars, and all the principles of true morality be brought to their notice in

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\(^{44}\) Ibid., 70, 67, 72.
the most forcible manner.45

Central to the textbook construction of the nexus of patriotism, citizenship and morality, was the notion of "character." "Character" was the device that allowed an analogy between the individual and the group.46 Through it the individual stood for the group, and the group could be reduced to an individual. The "character" of one was reducible to the "character" of the other. Textbooks explained British imperialism by presenting stories about imperialists which were not so much celebrations of their conquests and deeds as they were about their supposedly superior characters. An example was the story "Fidelity" about the son of Sir Henry Havelock who later won the Victoria Cross in India.47 Other stories emphasized the virtues of military heroes like Nelson,48 historical characters such as Oliver Cromwell49 or the blind courage of "The Charge of the Light Brigade."50 Indeed readers were remarkably stable in their contents throughout this era as certain "tried and true" contents


47 New Cdn. Third Reader (1900), 180-182.


were repeated in different series and editions.\footnote{For example, the Cdn. Reader, Book III ([1881]), and the New Cdn. Third Reader (1900) had sixteen stories in common. The New Canadian Reader, 20th Century Edition. Fourth Reader (Toronto: W.J. Gage and Co., 1900) and the B.C. Fourth Reader (1916), had identical contents, although different pagination, except for five stories. Many of the same contents re-appeared in the 1922 Cdn. Readers, Bk. III which again emphasized character models.}

Canadian Histories followed the English-Canadian historical conventions of the times by painting the leading figures of New France as tragic heroes who exhibited chivalric virtues.\footnote{See Carl Berger's discussions of Francis Parkman's and George Wrong's characterizations of the history of New France in The Writing of Canadian History, 4, 20.} For example, a 1906 elementary text described the explorer La Salle in the following terms:

Few greater men than he have ever lived. He had the ability to form vast plans and the energy and perseverance to carry them out. He set his own hand to the hardest tasks, and was the foremost to face danger. He shared every privation and denied himself every indulgence. Even in the wilds of the west he lived the life of a Christian gentleman, and so far as he was able compelled his followers to behave to one another at least as civilized men, not as outlaws.\footnote{Maria Lawson, History of Canada for Public Schools (1906), 71.}

Strength of "character" rather than superior force or mutual self-interest was the secret of rule.

"Character" was also a gendered concept, often meaning "manliness."\footnote{I am indebted to Jane Gaskell for bringing this point to my attention. The textbooks discussed here were involved in transmitting a variety of ideas relating to class, gender, the purity of rustic life, etc. However, I have dealt with these other constructions only insofar as they relate to the nature of racism.} That it was modelled upon male upper class ideals
is apparent in the readers whose contents overwhelmingly consisted of stories about upper class men. But girls were also expected to exhibit "character" as the few stories about women made clear. Thus readers perennially included stories about British heroines such as Florence Nightingale\(^{55}\) and (after World War One) Edith Clavell,\(^{56}\) and Canadian heroines Madelaine de Vercheres\(^ {57}\) and Laura Secord.\(^ {58}\)

Above all, "character" linked individual student behaviour and feeling to the empire. This link was made explicit in Lord Rosebery's 1893 foreword to Parkin's *Round the Empire* in comments which were later reprinted in a Geography text used during the first decade of the twentieth century.\(^ {59}\) Rosebery told students,

> A collection of states spread over every region of the earth, but owning one head and one flag, is even more important as an influence than as an Empire. . . . With the Empire statesmen are mainly concerned; in the influence every individual can and must have a part. Influence is based on character; and it is on the character of each child that grows into manhood within British limits that the future of our Empire rests.\(^ {60}\)

By exhibiting character in their daily lives, students could play a role in maintaining the "influence" that was the glue of the

\(^{55}\) *New Cdn. Third Reader* (1900), 111-114; *Cdn. Readers, Bk. III* (1922), 67-72.  

\(^{56}\) *Cdn. Readers, Bk. IV* (1922), 251-54.  

\(^{57}\) *Cdn. Readers, Bk. IV* ([1883]), 226-232.  

\(^{58}\) *B.C. Fourth*, 251-256; *Cdn. Readers, Bk. V* (1922), 167-169.  

\(^{59}\) *New Canadian Geography, W.J.Gage & Co.'s Educational Series* (Toronto: W.J. Gage and Co., 1899), 209.  

\(^{60}\) Lord Rosebery in Parkin, *Round the Empire*, v.
Empire. Rosebery made clear that this "character" involved selfless devotion, "work, sacrifice and intelligence." These were the same kinds of virtues modelled by readers and other textbooks. Even tolerance was transformed into an imperial virtue by the first B.C. civics text, which identified "a certain imperial feeling" as part of "The Duties of the Citizen." Since "[t]he British Empire is so vast that it contains within itself nations of all languages and all religions," this text suggested, "respect and toleration for the opinions of others" was essential so that "our brother nations may all have an ardent loyalty, whatever may be their creed, race or tongue." 61

Through their emphasis on "character," textbooks linked individual students and the empire. Unless they wished to be accused of undermining the Empire, students had to be virtuous. Since, as has been described earlier, textbook knowledge represented Canada as an integral part of the Empire and the Empire as necessarily good, questioning one's personal responsibility for maintaining the imperial system would have required challenging the self-evident truth of the textbooks. Questioning the legitimacy of the Empire itself would likely have been seen as the ultimate demonstration of "bad character."

61 R.S. Jenkins, Canadian Civics, British Columbia Edition (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1918), 167-168. This was used as a teacher's reference and high school text between 1916 and 1925.
Creating Others

If the superior "character" of the British explained their control of the largest empire in history, it followed that the objects of Imperial rule, subject people, and the groups to which they belonged, must have had "characters" which were inherently deficient in important ways. In other words, part and parcel of the instillation of imperialist sentiment amongst B.C. students and in the transformation of their classrooms into outposts of Empire, was a simultaneous process of "othering." Renderings of this kind were apparent in the treatment of Asians and aboriginal peoples in the textbooks used in B.C.

Textbooks consistently described Asians as the opposites of whites. Even before most of the restrictive measures against Asians were effected, Gage's Canadian Readers were fostering notions of intrinsic Asian difference. This was evident in the extract's from Montgomery's A Voyage Round the World published in the Fifth Reader. It described "Tokio," the capital of Japan, as "a veritable human ant-hill," while China was "the land of oddities and contrarities" where,

Everything seems to be the exact opposite of what we have in this country. In China, the old men fly kites, and the boys look on; people whiten their shoes with chalk, instead of blacking them; white is the color worn in mourning; the Chinaman mounts his horse from the right, instead of the left side; the place of honour is the left; when he enters a room he takes off, not his hat, but his shoes; and when he meets a friend he shakes hands with himself, and works his own hands up and down like a pump. Men carry fans, and women smoke; men wear their hair as long as it will grow, women carefully put their hair up. The spoken language of China is never written, and the written language is never spoken. A Chinese begins to read a book from the end; and he does not read across the page, but up and down. The
Wealthy classes have a soup made of bird's nests. Wheelbarrows have sails; the ships have no keels; the roses have no perfume; and the workmen have no Sunday. This description of the Chinese as the antithesis of the Western norm is an example of the way in which Victorian travel literature promoted notions of innate differences between people. Like travellers' representations of African societies, this description, while appearing to be an objective account of Chinese customs, was in fact creating "a stable form of 'othering'." Through renderings of this kind, the Chinese were "homogenized into a collective 'they,' which is distilled even further into an iconic 'he' (the standardized adult male specimen)." Even the tense of this description is important as it made people such as the Chinese "the subject of verbs in a timeless present tense, which characterizes anything 'he' is or does, not as a particular historical event but as an instance of a pregiven custom." The "othering" of the Chinese remained remarkably consistent throughout this period. The 1922 Canadian Readers Series also had stories contrasting the Chinese with the unspoken norm of white society. For example, the Third Reader in the 1922 series, contained the story of "a funny little boy named Ning-Ting." Ning-Ting was also an abstraction removed from history. He was described as "a Chinese boy and does not wear his hair all cropped short as you do, but it is shaved off his head, all but a little

62 Cdn. Readers, Bk. V ([1883]), 244-246.

63 Pratt, "Scratches on the Face of the Country; or What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen," 120.
piece at the back, and that is plaited into a 'pig-tail'," despite the fact that the wearing of pig-tails, a symbol of Chinese subjugation under the Manchus, had ended with the 1911 Nationalist Revolution which overthrew the Manchu regime. Again the Chinese were contrasted to the unspoken Western norm as the reader was told that unlike "boys here," Ning-Ting wore "queer, tiny shoes, turned up at the toes," and ate "his supper of rice, not with a spoon, but with two little sticks made of bone, called 'chop-sticks'." Even Chinese names were fictionalized, as "Ning-Ting" had a cousin "Foo-Choo" and an uncle "Pon-ge-wan-ge." 64

In British Columbia, the Chinese were not simply the inhabitants of an exotic and distant land, but a major and visible proportion of the population. Textbooks encouraged students to consider the Chinese people in their midst. For example, a 1909 Geography text stated:

Most boys and girls, or at least those who live in a city, have seen the Chinaman who keeps a laundry. You will generally see him with his hair plaited into a queue at the back of his head, wearing a blouse and strange-looking thick-soled shoes. You can easily see that he is not a native of this country. He does not speak our language. The color of his skin is different from ours. He has no family, no wife, no children. 65

Again here the Chinese were abstracted into an "iconic 'he'" whose

64 Cdn. Readers, Bk. III (1922), 25-26. A more advanced Reader in the same series purported to describe a Chinese state banquet in "Dining with a Mandarin" at which the soup "resembles glue and lime-wash" and the fish is served "with acrid sauce, resembling molasses and alum in flavour." The Canadian Readers, Book V (Toronto, 1922), 41.

customs and appearance were different and who was self-evidently "not a native of this country." Even the use of the epithet "Chinaman" suggested intrinsic alienness. This term, when applied to the Chinese in Canada, identified them as the "men" who belonged in "China." Lawson and Young's *History and Geography of British Columbia* (1913) directly labelled the Chinese as part of "our foreign population."  

First Nations people were similarly defined as Other. For example, history textbooks consistently depicted them as "wild," "savage," "cruel" and "uncivilized." In W.H.P. Clement's *The History of Canada* ([1895]), which won the Dominion Education Association contest for a Canadian History text, this description of Indian "Character and Habits" was typical:

> Master of woodcraft, he was seen at his best when hunting. Upon the war-path he was cruel, tomahawking, scalping and torturing with fiendish ingenuity. A stoic fortitude when himself tortured was about his only heroic quality. In his own village among his own clansmen he spent his time in gambling, story-telling, or taking part in some rude feast. In his domestic life the Indian was not without virtues, and his squaw and papooses were treated with a somewhat rough and careless kindness. To his tribe he was usually faithful, though to his enemies false and crafty. Indian religion was purest superstition. . .

Once again this kind of description reduced entire peoples to a single "iconic 'he'."

Unlike the Chinese Other, this Indian Other was described in the past tense. This would have reinforced the notion that Indians

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66 *History and Geography of British Columbia* (1913), 73.

were no longer actors in Canadian society and that they were at best a "vanishing race."\textsuperscript{68} Often textbooks quite literally vanished First Nations from their representations of Canada. The 1881 Canadian Readers, Book III, for example, removed First Nations from Canadian history by claiming that "[t]he whole of the vast country now called the Dominion of Canada was inhabited by Indians, who were divided into three tribes, the Algonquins, the Hurons and the Iroquois."\textsuperscript{69} After the French period, even the Algonquins, Hurons and Iroquois disappeared. For example, the "Sketch of the History of Canada" published in the Canadian Fourth Reader only refers to Indians in connection with the travels of the founder of Quebec, Samuel de Champlain, and omits any reference to Indians in its descriptions of Manitoba and the North-west.\textsuperscript{70} Duncan's The Story of the Canadian People recorded that, "The Indian race falls into three great groups, -- the Algonquin, Iroquois, and Mobilian, but of the third Canadian history takes no account,"\textsuperscript{71} thus omitting virtually all of Canada's aboriginal population, including that of British Columbia.

\textsuperscript{68} The notion of the Indians as "a vanishing race" was popular in B.C. at the turn-of-the-century. This was evident in the memoirs of D.W.Higgins, The Passing of A Race (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1905).

\textsuperscript{69} Canadian Third Reader, 162-163.

\textsuperscript{70} See Fourth Reader, 257-274, 276-279, and 282-288.

\textsuperscript{71} Duncan, Story of the Canadian People (1917), 5.
The Construction of "Race"

The creation of racial Others did not end with the textbook's representation of the non-white peoples of British Columbia. From 1900 on, B.C textbooks fixed notions of character and of the Otherness of non-whites into "objective," and supposedly morally neutral concepts of "race." In fact, such "race-thinking," most evident in geography texts, hid the socially constructed nature of "race" and would have lent the authority of science to the differential treatment of whites, First Nations people and Asians.

As we have seen, the term "race" was commonly used, but rarely defined. Sometimes it was used the way we would use the term "ethnicity"; at others it seemed to mean "ties of blood" or "blood-lines." However "race" increasingly performed the political function of linking Canadian society with the British empire. Maria Lawson's 1906 Canadian History claimed that "[e]ach [of Britain's distant possessions] looks back with pride upon the struggles of the British race for freedom and makes her own the treasures of literature in the mother tongue," while an elementary text used from 1912 on, spoke of "the ties that bid her [Canada] to the motherland--community of race, language, political ideas and loyalty to the Crown."

"Race" terminology was given specific definition in Geography

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73 Lawson, History of Canada for Use in Public Schools (1906), 265.

74 Gammell, History of Canada (1921), 255.
textbooks from quite early on. During the nineteenth century, geography texts presented the idea that "[m]ankind is usually considered as divided into five races or varieties," comprising Caucasians, Ethiopians, Mongolians, Malays and American, however after 1900, they began to give this division the weight of "scientific" interpretation.

The Dominion School Geography, an elementary textbook authorized for use in B.C. between 1911 and 1923, was typical. It began to "lay the foundation for an intelligent study of the continents as places where men live and work" with a consideration of "The Principles of Geography." These principles involved the "objective" description of such matters as the shape of the Earth and its rotation around the sun, and basic geology. Included amongst these principles was a description of the people of the world. "The White Race" was described as "the most active, enterprising, and intelligent race in the world, . . . ." Thus whites were established as the positive norm against which the other "races" could be evaluated. Asians evidently were the opposite of this norm as students were told that "The Yellow Race" included "some of the most backward tribes of the world and, as a

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75 J.B. Calkin, School Geography, New Brunswick School Series (London: T. Nelson and Sons, St. John, N.B.: J. & A. McMillan, 1886). Another geography by the same author was prescribed in B.C.

76 Dominion School Geography (Toronto: Educational Book Company, 1910). ii.

77 Ibid., 7-59.
rule, are not progressive." The Africans and aboriginal peoples in the Americas were described as in need of the paternal guidance of whites as "The Red Race" was "but little civilized, although a few are beginning to develop industries, such as basketry, pottery, and a little farming," while "The Black Race" was described as "somewhat indolent, like other peoples whose homes are in tropical countries. They are often impulsive in their actions, but they are faithful and affectionate to any one for whom they care." The most detailed presentation of race concepts was in the high school geography used between 1900 and 1920. New Physical Geography described many of the same "Principles" as the Dominion School Geography only in much more detail. Its chapter on "Man and Nature" included a table on "Races of Mankind" which divided up humanity under headings such as "Former home," "Present extension," "Physical characteristics," "Mental characteristics," and "Numbers." The "Mental characteristics" of each "race" made explicit the arrangement of people in a hierarchy of inferiority and superiority. The "Ethiopian" race was described as "unintellectual; unprogressive; no science or letters; few arts beyond agriculture . . .; religion very crude." The "Mongolian" as "Sullen; sluggish; industrious in temperate zone, elsewhere indolent; arts and letters moderately developed, science slightly; their culture not of the modern kind." The "American" race was described as "Stern; moody; not emotional; vary from savagery to

78 Ibid., 60.

79 Ibid., 61.
barbarism; . . . .Religion a superstition." By contrast the "Caucasian" race was "Fair type solid and even stolid; dark type fiery and fickle. Both active and enterprising. Science, letters, and art highly developed."\(^80\) The page across from the table presented stereotypical sketches of "the standardized adult male specimen"\(^81\) of each "race" which would have further re-inforced the notion that this was a description of objective reality.\(^82\)

By imbuing racial concepts with the authority of science, these texts would have made it as difficult for B.C. students to question the idea of innate differences between whites, Indians and Chinese, as it would have been for them to question that the Earth revolved around the Sun or that Victoria was the provincial capital.

*Segregation and Assimilation*

The idea that the Chinese were innately different from whites was certainly used to justify placing them in special schools and special classes. During the nineteenth century, relatively few Chinese attended provincially-controlled schools. There are some indications that given the difficulties that interior communities


\(^81\) Pratt, "Scratches on the Face of the Country; or What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen," 120.

\(^82\) The sketches included a representative of the "Malay race" and a caption noted that some classifications include "five races," thus creating the illusion that the number of "races" was an objective issue.
often faced in maintaining enrolments needed to keep schools open, those Chinese children who did show up for school were welcomed. For example, in 1881 a correspondent to the Superintendent of Education from Quesnel Mouth in the Cariboo noted, "Were it not for the Chinese attendance during the past two months we would be considerably under the average required." But still relatively few Chinese children attended school. As the mayor of Victoria, Joseph Westrop Carey, observed to the 1885 Royal Commission on Immigration, "There are not many Chinese children in the city. No Chinese children attend school, although they could do so. They educate their own children."

It was only after the turn of the century that the Chinese first appeared in the provincial schools in noticeable numbers. Almost immediately this drew demands for school segregation. For example, in 1901 when a group of Chinese children enrolled at the Rock Bay School in Victoria, white parents petitioned the school board for segregation. From this point onwards demands for segregation of Chinese and other Asian students was a recurring political issue in British Columbia.

In this respect, it should be noted that the presence of the Chinese, and other "foreigners" including the Japanese presented a problem for the ideology of common schooling in British Columbia.

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83 A.M. McKenzie to C.C. McKenzie, Esq., 31 December 1881, British Columbia, Superintendent of Education, Correspondence Inward, Public Archives of British Columbia, GR 1445, #21 1881 396-397. I am indebted to Jean Barman for bringing this reference to my attention.

84 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 44.
Proponents of common schooling viewed the provincial public schools as necessary agents for resolving "the Chinese problem." Schools, they argued, could and would effect the assimilation of the Chinese and other groups. However, there was also an influential body of opinion that the Chinese and other Asians were so alien, so intrinsically different from whites, that not even the schools could affect their assimilation.

Especially problematic was the presence of older Chinese boys in the junior classes. Before the 1925 Putman-Weir Report, the School Act required that City School Districts provide free schooling for all non-First Nations children between the ages of seven and sixteen.\textsuperscript{85} Although most rural schools continued to be ungraded during this era, urban schools were commonly organized according to the level of the reader the children had reached. For example, the first grade would be on the first primer, second grade on the second primer, third grade on the first reader, etc. In most instances, children entered the school at the age of seven and then advanced from grade to grade along with their age cohorts.\textsuperscript{86}

Immigrant Chinese children presented a problem for this system. They were mostly boys who spoke little or no English and often entered schools at a later age than white children. When graded according to reader levels, they were placed in the junior grades in classes made up of significantly younger white boys and

\textsuperscript{85} See Public Schools Act, R.S.B.C. 1897, c. 170, s. 36.

\textsuperscript{86} Dunn, "Rise of Mass Public Schooling," provides the best account of the organization of the public school system during this era.
girls. Although these immigrant boys were most often only a few years older than their peers, sometimes they were significantly older than the average for their classes and were even over the age of sixteen. Therefore there were two senses in which there were over-aged Chinese students in the British Columbia schools in the early twentieth century: those students who were older than the average age for their class, and those students who were over the age of sixteen.

The view that common schooling could assimilate the Chinese was amply summarized in 1921, by Mrs. James Witcomb, the president of the Vancouver Parent Teachers Association.

Here and there one hears suggestions of separate schools for the foreign but we don't want this at all. . . . That there are drawbacks to the general mingling of Asiatic and Occidental in the schools is also realized, but those studying the problem appreciate the fact that isolation would create antagonisms and destroy the very objectives being aimed at--the making of good Canadians.\[^{87}\]

In other words, informed opinion held that public schools could make even the members of pariah groups like the Chinese into good citizens.

Mrs. Witcomb's opinions seems to have been close to those of the Vancouver Municipal School Inspector at the time, J.H. Gordon. Gordon had addressed the Parent Teacher Association on the subject of Asians in Vancouver schools a few month earlier. In his address he affirmed that out of a total of 18,035 children in the Vancouver schools, there were 434 Chinese, 353 Japanese and 526 "other

\[^{87}\] "Federation Leader Attends Convention," Vancouver Daily Province, April 7, 1921, 28.
foreigners," but that these were "no detriment" to the "native born." Gordon further pointed out that thirty out of the thirty-four principals in the school district shared his assessment.  

Gordon's view seems to have been held by most school officials. On several occasions in response to calls for segregation, school inspectors indicated that as far as they were concerned the Chinese did not pose a problem and it would be physically and financially prohibitive to effect their segregation. This was evident, for example, in the spring of 1902 when the Victoria Trades and Labour Council tried to pressure the Victoria School Board to segregate Chinese students. The Municipal School Inspector, Frank H. Eaton, commented that the Chinese presented no problem and that the segregation of the "20 Chinese children scattered amongst five schools" would be too expensive for a district with a class size averaging sixty-seven. By the fall of 1902, he was telling the Board that the proponents of segregation had not proved their claim that "the presence of the Chinese children in the schools was demoralizing and dangerous to the white children," and that charges to the effect that Chinese who spoke little or no English disrupted classes were "pure fabrications." Eaton added that while he personally was not opposed to segregation, "he did not see how the Board could justify itself in the expenditure of $860 or more in the establishment of a separate ...  


In 1921-22, the Inspector Gordon privately told the Vancouver trustees that "[t]o segregate all the Orientals of the city today would call for a separate building of at least sixteen rooms in addition to the rooms now in use in Central and Strathcona for that purpose. You can readily see how impossible it is to secure any such building." Indeed, it appears that the inspector took several steps to minimize the issue of so-called Orientals in the Vancouver schools. Gordon seemed particularly concerned with limiting the issue to Chinese and Japanese pupils 5 years older than the averages for their classes. In his communication with the Board, he included a chart of Chinese and Japanese pupils five years or older than their class averages and indicated that he had asked several principals to attend the next Board meeting to express their opinions.

The Vancouver principals had already discussed the issue of segregation at their January 17, 1922 meeting when a resolution calling for segregation had been tabled until the next meeting.

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91 Letter from J.H. Gordon to members of the Management Committee, Minutes of the February 13, 1922 meeting, Board of School Trustees, District #39 (Vancouver), Minute Books, Volume 8, (1922), 47, City of Vancouver Archives, Series A-2, 55-G-1.

92 Ibid.

93 The resolution was moved by Major H.B. King of General Gordon School. It read "that in the opinion of the principals of Vancouver Schools it is deemed to be in the interests of the education of both white and Oriental children that they should be
Subsequently the Board was told that thirty out of thirty-four principals in Vancouver also opposed segregation. Most, like their inspector, thought that there were no grounds for segregation, except possibly of those who spoke no English and were significantly older than the averages for their grade levels. In Victoria, school officials also questioned the wisdom of segregation. In 1914 Principal Cunningham of the Boys' Central School, the same Principal Cunningham left standing in the middle of the roadway in 1922, publicly questioned the value of segregating Chinese students, noting "it is no remedy to establish a separate graded school for the Chinese, who would thus never thoroughly learn English or western ways."

Demands for Segregation

In opposition to the assimilationist position was the politically popular and much more widespread view that the Chinese and other Asians constituted a physical and moral threat to white students. It was this notion that the Victoria Municipal Inspector educated separately in the public schools." See School Principals Meetings, Minutebooks, Meeting #84, January 17, 1922, 2, Board of School Trustees, District #39 (Vancouver), Municipal Inspector's Office. The resolution was defeated at the next meeting. See Ibid., Meeting #85, February 14, 1922, 1.


George H. Deane trotted out in January 1922 when he urged the Victoria School Board to segregate all Chinese students. This view essentially held that it was not possible to socialize the Chinese to Canadian ways through the school system. In 1922 Major H.B. King, then the principal of General Gordon School in Vancouver, told the members of the Vancouver School Board’s Management Committee that he favoured the complete segregation of the Chinese and Japanese students in Vancouver schools, and that

His objection is based on his conviction that presence of Oriental children in schools will make it impossible for them to transmit to the next generation the social inheritance of the present and past generations; and he considers this one of the chief faults of schools.

In other words, according to King, the presence of "Orientals" adversely affected the efficiency of the school system. This was anathema to a progressive like King, who fifteen years later would argue that education was not a "purely personal possession," but "a public function, necessary both for the safety and the preservation of the state and for its progress."

What particularly exercised the imaginations of pro-segregationist opinion was the presence of older Chinese boys in


97 Board of School Trustees, District #39, Management Committee, Minutes of the February 13, 1922 Meeting, Minutebooks, Vol 6 (12 December 1912-6 December 1928), 196.

classes with younger white children. The School Act of 1891 required urban school boards to provide schooling up to the age of sixteen. Schooling beyond that age was at the discretion of the board. Thus many whites felt that boards should not provide schooling for older Chinese children. These older boys were further believed to present a moral threat to white students of tender years, especially girls, but the numbers of older Chinese students in the provincial public schools appears to have often been exaggerated by advocates of segregation.

For example, in 1907-08, when older Chinese boys registered in the public schools, allegedly as a way of circumventing the immigration head tax, the government of British Columbia passed an order-in-council requesting Ottawa to amend the head tax provisions which gave exemptions to students. In fact, at the time relatively few children had recently arrived from China and were seeking admission to the schools. According to the counsel for the Chinese in Victoria, Fred Peters, K.C., only twelve students were in this position. Fifteen students had applied for entry after May 1907, but these included three who were the sons of merchants and consequently not liable to pay the head tax. The remainder all had "near relatives living in the city" and were "of a superior class

99 The difficulty was that there were more white high school students who were over the age of sixteen than there were Asian students in the school system. See, for example, "Orientals in City Schools Do Not Exceed 150," Vancouver Daily Province, September 13, 1907, 1.

of Chinese and were desirous of entering school solely for the purpose of becoming proficient in English."\(^{101}\)

Fuel was added to the fire in March 1908 when Chan Wen King, a sixteen-year-old, was expelled from Rock Bay School for drawing obscene pictures in the exercise books of white children as young as six-and-a-half. At the time, trustees told the board that there were twenty-four Chinese children in the class, including at least six who were between the ages of sixteen and eighteen.\(^{102}\) If there were such children in the class, one wonders how they got there. The Board had been denying permits to enter the schools to those who did not already speak English since May 1907. Thus the Chinese in this class must have entered the Rock Bay school before May 1907. This makes it unlikely that they were recent immigrants as few Chinese arrived in Canada between 1903 and 1907. In addition, the Annual Report of the Department of Education, with its fastidiously collected statistics, shows a different picture. In 1907-08, the small school at Rock Bay had only two divisions, one with thirty-seven students, the other with forty-eight. While it is possible that one of these classes included twenty-four Chinese children, the entire school only enrolled one student over the age

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of sixteen.\textsuperscript{103} Thus at the very least, the trustees' accounts of the class, as reported in the newspapers, were exaggerated.\textsuperscript{104}

During the same era, newspaper accounts of overage Chinese students in Vancouver schools also appear to have been exaggerated. In September 1907 there were reported to be 150 Chinese and Japanese students in Vancouver schools. Of these eighty were at Central School, with most of the rest at Strathcona. According to the \textit{Vancouver Daily Province}, only "[s]ome of the Oriental children attending the schools are over the age of sixteen."\textsuperscript{105} But concern about the presence of older children in the classrooms was such that in February 1908 a segregated class, supposedly made up of boys over the age of sixteen, was established at Central School. According to the \textit{Province}, the numbers of Asians at Central School had by then reached 117, including thirty to forty Japanese.\textsuperscript{106} A few months later, the \textit{Province} was reporting this segregated class of forty or more to be a success.\textsuperscript{107} However, once again the

\textsuperscript{103} Superintendent of Education, \textit{Annual Report, 1907-08}, B xxi.

\textsuperscript{104} At the time, the total enrolment of Asians for Victoria Schools was variously reported as between 54 and 57 Chinese with from two to four Japanese. See, "Again Urges Claims of Chinese Scholars," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, August 12, 1908, 2 and "Chinese Question is Knotty Proposition," Ibid., September 11, 1908, 2.

\textsuperscript{105} "Orientals in City Schools Do Not Exceed 150," \textit{Vancouver Daily Province}, September 13, 1907, 1. The tone of the article, published less than a week after the anti-Asian riot of 1907, suggests that it was intended to put to rest fears of an Asian influx.

\textsuperscript{106} "Older Oriental Pupils to be Separated from Whites," \textit{Vancouver Daily Province}, February 11, 1908, 1.

\textsuperscript{107} "Asiatic's Classroom Proves Successful Innovation," \textit{Vancouver Daily Province}, April 8, 1908, 4.
Annual Reports show that while there was a class of sixty-one boys at this school, taught by the same teacher identified in the Province as the instructor of the segregated class, only twenty-seven students were over the age of sixteen.\(^{108}\)

The most detailed information on the distribution of Asians in Vancouver schools was gathered in 1921 and 1922 by the Municipal Inspector, J.H. Gordon, as part of his efforts apparently intended to forestall segregation demands. In February 1922, he informed the Board that there were fifty-five Chinese students and twenty-nine Japanese over the age of sixteen in Vancouver schools out of a total Chinese student population of 500 and a Japanese one of 510.\(^{109}\) In October 1922, he supplied the Board with more detailed information, showing that the majority of Chinese and Japanese students were well within the average ages for their classes.\(^{110}\)

The threat of over-aged Chinese students who were new to British or Canadian ways appears to have been largely overblown. Gordon's findings also showed that the majority of Asian children in the schools were British subjects. His February 1922 report

\(^{108}\) Annual Report, 1907-08, B xiii.

\(^{109}\) J.H. Gordon to Management Committee, February 13, 1922.

\(^{110}\) J.H. Gordon to Management Committee, November 13, 1922, Board of School Trustees, District #39, Minutebooks, 324-25. See especially the chart, "Orientals in Vancouver Schools," which shows the distributions of "Orientals" in the schools, and their age distributions as compared to their class averages. Interestingly Central and Strathcona Schools had the highest enrolments of "Orientals" (154 and 469 respectively), but had relatively few students over the average ages of their classes (9 and 34 respectively). This tends to confirm that older pupils were placed together in segregated classes in these schools.
pointed out that out of a total of 1,010 "Orientals" in the Vancouver schools, 522 were British subjects.\textsuperscript{111} In the case of the Chinese most of these would have been second generation Chinese Canadians although it no doubt included a few born in Hong Kong.

\textit{Segregated Schools}

Certainly it appears that a significant proportion of Chinese students in the provincial public schools were placed in segregated classes. In Victoria separate classes were established for Chinese students at the North Ward School in 1902 and again in rented facilities at the Oddfellows' Hall in Spring Ridge during 1904-05.\textsuperscript{112} In 1905 the school board decided to discontinue its lease on the Oddfellows' Hall as "the number of Chinese pupils has been reduced to only four or five."\textsuperscript{113} It would seem that Chinese parents eventually withdrew their children from the segregated facilities. This was also quite possibly the case with the earlier North Ward class. Certainly both classes were short-lived as there is no record in the Department of Education's Annual Reports of either a small class of fifteen to twenty students at the North Ward School (or any other Victoria School) in 1902-03 or of a site

\textsuperscript{111} J.H. Gordon to Management Committee, February 13, 1922.

\textsuperscript{112} See "World of Labour," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, January 17, 1904, 12.

\textsuperscript{113} "School Board Has Busy Night," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, June 15, 1905, 2.
at the Oddfellows' Hall.\textsuperscript{114}

In 1908 segregated classes were implemented in both Vancouver and Victoria. These classes remained in effect, in one form or another for the next twenty-five years. However, school segregation followed different patterns in both cities. In Vancouver it applied to older "Oriental" boys entering the junior grades and involved at least some Japanese boys as well as Chinese ones. In Victoria, where there were very few Japanese students in school, segregation was applied to the Chinese only, and was extended to all students entering the junior grades who were not fluent in English, girls as well as boys. In addition in Vancouver segregation took the form of special classes in integrated schools, while in Victoria it usually took the form of completely separate facilities for the Chinese. In part, Victoria was able to effect segregation on a school basis rather than on a class one because it had a number of smaller schools, such as the one at Rock Bay, which were conducive to holding the numbers involved.

Although segregation usually applied to students who spoke little or no English, it should not be confused with modern English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, or special classes for older students. The Vancouver classes were for "Oriental" children only, while the Victoria ones were for the Chinese only. In both districts, other non-English-speaking children, and children significantly older than their classmates but of non-Asian

\textsuperscript{114} Annual Report, 1902-3, C xiv-v, and Annual Report, 1904-05, A xvi ff. Usually the annual reports listed temporarily rented facilities separately from regular schools.
backgrounds, were not singled out for placement in such special classes. Indeed in 1922 part of the outrage of the Victoria Chinese community at the school board’s justification of segregated schools for the Chinese stemmed from the fact that other, non-Chinese, ESL students were not being segregated.\footnote{See, for example, the letter from P. Lee, of the Chinese Canadian Club, "Chinese Segregation," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, October 15, 1922, 4.}

Certainly, a number of sources confirm the existence of separate classes for many Chinese children in Vancouver. Such a class was implemented for older Chinese boys who did not speak English in February 1908.\footnote{"Older Oriental Pupils to be Separated from Whites," \textit{Vancouver Daily Province}, February 11, 1908, 1.} This was borne out early in 1911 when the Chairman of the School Board noted.

The separation of Oriental from white children, which commenced two years ago, has been continued, and I am glad to say all friction has ceased. This separation more particularly applies to the segregation of those desiring to enter the junior classes, and who are older than the average pupils of that class.\footnote{Vancouver School Board, \textit{Vancouver City Schools: Seventh Annual Report of the Vancouver School Board} (Vancouver: Evans and Hasting, 1911), 8. Years later, Cheng Tien-fang noted that "the so-called segregate system" started in Vancouver and Victoria in 1908. See \textit{Oriental Immigration in Canada}, 216.}

In 1922, Inspector Gordon told the members of the management committee of the board of trustees in Vancouver, "[i]n only two schools, Central and Strathcona, are there a large number of Orientals. In them they are taught in separate classes except where they know English sufficiently well to join other classes without
being a detriment to them.\textsuperscript{118} In the same era, Sing Lim recollects that he was fortunate to attend one of the unsegregated classes at Central School,\textsuperscript{119} Cheng Tien-fang who had corresponded with the principals of the Strathcona and Central Schools, as well as the Municipal School Inspector for Vancouver, as part of his dissertation research noted that in addition to segregated classes in Victoria, there were "two each in the Central and Strathcona Schools, Vancouver."\textsuperscript{120}

Segregated classes at Central and Strathcona Schools had a number of identifying characteristics. They consisted entirely of boys. As classes of older pupils, they should have also included a large number of pupils over the age of sixteen. In addition, since they were made up of students who spoke little or no English, they should have included students who were at the beginning stages (First Primer to Second Reader) of their courses of study. Finally, a 1908 report identifies the teacher of the segregated class of Oriental pupils at Central School. According to the Vancouver Daily Province in April 1908, the segregated class of forty students was under the direction of Mr. V. [sic] E. Barnes "a very capable" teacher. The report also noted that another seventy Oriental students, mainly younger boys were in regular classes in

\textsuperscript{118} J.H. Gordon to Management Committee, February 13, 1922.

\textsuperscript{119} West Coast Chinese Boy, 23.

\textsuperscript{120} Cheng, Oriental Immigration, 216. On his correspondence, see 287-89.
the school.\footnote{121} The Annual Report of the Department of Education for 1907-08 lists a Mr. Edwin E. Barnes as teaching a class of sixty-one boys, including twenty-seven over the age of sixteen, at Central School. All other divisions in Central School included from eighteen to thirty-seven girls, and seventeen to fifty-four boys.\footnote{122} Thus Mr. Barnes’s class, the fifteenth out of fifteen divisions, was the only one made up of boys only, in fact the only such class in Vancouver. The following year, Mr. Barnes was teaching a class of sixty-nine boys, including eighteen over-aged pupils.\footnote{123}

Based upon this information it is possible to track segregated classes for Chinese and Japanese students in Vancouver. (See Table II.) This tracking is confirmed by the fact that there was considerable continuity in the teachers for these classes. Generally, the teachers at Central School were men with academic certificates, although the Strathcona Teachers were mostly women. The qualifications of the teachers suggest that they were amongst the more experienced personnel of the district. Two teachers, J.A. Stuart B.A. and W.M. Flett M.A., did particularly prolonged service. Both started in 1915-16 with classes of forty-nine (including twenty-four over-age) and forty-six (twenty-two over-age) boys respectively. In 1916-17 and 1917-18 they alternated

\footnote{121} "Asiatic’s Classroom Proves Successful," Dahan Gongbao, April 8, 1908, 4.
\footnote{122} Annual Reports, 1907-1908, B xiii.
\footnote{123} Annual Report, 1908-09, A xii.
TABLE II: SEGREGATED DIVISIONS BY SCHOOL IN VANCOUVER AND VICTORIA WITH MALE/ FEMALE ENROLMENTS, 1907-1931

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<th></th>
<th>Victoria</th>
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<th>Vancouver</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fisgard Street School</td>
<td>Rock Bay School</td>
<td>North Ward School</td>
<td>Central School</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m</td>
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<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>1908-09</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>1909-10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>1910-11</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911-12</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>1912-13</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>1913-14</td>
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<td>1914-15</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>24</td>
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Note: The data for 1915-16 is incomplete.
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1920-21</td>
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<td>1921-22</td>
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<td>1922-23</td>
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<td>1923-24</td>
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<td>1924-25</td>
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<td>1928-29</td>
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<td>1929-30</td>
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<td>1930-31</td>
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Information derived from British Columbia, Superintendent of Education, Annual Reports, 1907-1931.
since there was one segregated class only, but then both taught classes of boys until 1924-25. Stuart also taught a class of boys at Central in 1925-26, and then was transferred to Strathcona School, where he taught classes of boys (with the exception of one girl in 1929-30) until 1930-31.

At Central School most of the boys in such classes were Chinese, although they may have included some Japanese. At Strathcona, the opposite was the case. For example, in January 1921, Inspector Gordon told the Vancouver Parent Teachers Association that there were 152 Chinese and fifteen Japanese students at Central School, although the boys-only classes enrolled 176 students according to the Annual Reports. At Strathcona, there were 160 Chinese and 164 Japanese early in 1921, but no segregated classes until the following year. In 1921-1922, Central had enrolments of 147 Chinese and twenty-one Japanese with 158 students enrolled in boys-only classes, while Strathcona had 135 Chinese students, and 266 Japanese students with boys only classes of 122 students. Assuming that Chinese and Japanese students were distributed proportionately to their overall numbers in the schools, at Central School segregated classes would have consisted overwhelmingly of Chinese, while at Strathcona they likely included some Japanese.

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125 "One Child in Nineteen is Oriental," Vancouver Daily Province, February 18, 1922, 16 and Annual Report, 1921-1922, C 32 and C 44.
During the same era, there was also segregation in Victoria (See Table II). School segregation re-emerged there in 1907 after the School Board refused entry to fifteen recently-arrived Chinese boys. In August 1907, it passed a resolution to the effect that "no pupils be admitted to the schools until they can so understand the English language as to be amenable to the ordinary regulations and school discipline."¹²⁶ In the ensuing discussions between Fred C. Peters, K.C., the solicitor representing the Chinese, and Superintendent Eaton, it was mutually agreed that these children would be allowed entry the following school year if they learned English in private schools. However, when twenty-seven Chinese children applied for admission in 1908, the Board passed a resolution restricting permits "to the native born children."¹²⁷ The result, Mr. Peters told the Board, was that some thirty-five students, twenty-eight of whom were under the age of sixteen, were denied admission. At the same meeting of the School Board, a group of trustees reported that there were fifty-four Chinese students and two Japanese in the District, and called for placing all Chinese students in a separate school.¹²⁸ A few days later, Peters

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again wrote to the Board informing them that "all that is required is that a separate school be established for the education of Chinese children in the primary class, and that all Chinese children who have gone through their first reader should be admitted to the general public schools." He further noted, "[t]he establishment of a separate school for the education of the Chinese in the elementary class will be acceptable to the Chinese as a whole provided their attendance at such [a] school does not debar them from entering the higher classes in the schools later on, but the Chinese will not be satisfied with a general school for Chinese only, for all classes." Peters further reminded the board of the position taken by the Superintendent of Education several years earlier opposing racially segregated schools, but suggested that a school for those in the primary grades who did not speak English would not contravene the Superintendent's directives.¹²⁹ In October, the Board decided to rent the Methodist Mission in Chinatown as a separate school for Chinese children in the junior grades who met the English test.¹³⁰ This Fisgard Street School, as it was known, is identifiable in the Annual Reports of the Department of Education until 1915-1916, when the school was closed and the students moved to Rock Bay School. This school in turn was


closed shortly after due to "a lack of enrolment." The Rock Bay School re-opened in 1919, with 44 students (43 boys, 1 girl) and by 1921 had 171 (167 boys, 4 girls) students in 3 divisions. In 1922 in urging school segregation, Inspector Deane affirmed that this school was "exclusively for Chinese." As part of the resolution to the 1922-23 school segregation dispute, the segregated junior grade classes were moved to the North Ward School, where they remained until 1929.

Chinese and Japanese students were also segregated in other locations in British Columbia. In the summer of 1911, the New Westminster School Board tried to solve the problem of overcrowding in the District’s schools by, among other things, accommodating twenty-four Chinese and eleven Japanese pupils in a tent placed in a city park. In 1921, Chinese students were segregated in Nanaimo, while in the mid-1920s, Japanese students in the

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131 See Annual Report, 1915-1916, A 43 and A XLI.


134 According to David Lai, in that year they were moved back to the Railway Street site and remained in effect until after World War Two. See Lai, "The Issue of Discrimination in Education in Victoria," 63. However, there is no record of such a school in the Annual Reports. See, for example, Annual Report, 1930-31, L 48 ff.

135 Roy, A White Man’s Province, 276, n. 31. It was common for Asians to be scapegoated for overcrowding in school districts. See, for example, "Congestion in City Schools," Victoria Daily Times, August 23, 1907, 1.

136 See "Jishi Dong Ya xuetong" [Angry glares at East Asian students], Dahan Gongbao, November 8, 1921, 3.
Marpole District of Vancouver and in Cumberland on Vancouver Island were also segregated.\footnote{Ashworth, \textit{The Forces Which Shaped Them}, 99-100.}

\textit{The Experience of Segregation}

From the above, it would appear that a significant proportion of Chinese students attended segregated classes in British Columbia between 1908 and 1925. Despite claims by school board personnel that segregation was in the best interests of the students involved, there is evidence that, at least as far as the Chinese were concerned, segregation created considerable difficulties.

Ironically, Chinese parents appear to have sought an education for their children in the provincial public schools so that they could escape the social isolation that characterized Chinese life in British Columbia. As a group of Victoria merchants explained to the Victoria School Board in 1902 when their children first confronted school segregation, "the object of seeking the advantage of education [in the Victoria public schools] is to enable the children to acquire the mode of expression and pronunciation of the English language, and the refinements of speech resulting from a teaching in the classes in the schools, and to enable the rising generation to obtain knowledge and form habits which will fit them for intercourse with their fellow-subjects under British rule."\footnote{"The Chinese Enter a Protest," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, June 12, 1902, 3.} The view that an education in the
provincial public schools was needed for purposes of learning English and overcoming social isolation was echoed years later by Joseph Hope, the spokesperson for the Chinese Canadian Club, in his condemnation of the Victoria School Board’s segregation plans. Hope pointed out that school segregation inhibited the ability of the Chinese to learn English and, "[b]eing ignorant of the language we will be unable to take our part by the side of other Canadians, and we will then be pointed out as those who refuse to learn the customs or social life of the country—in fact, refuse to assimilate."\textsuperscript{139}

But if the Chinese sought an education in the provincial public schools so as to end their social isolation, many were to be severely disappointed.\textsuperscript{140} Some Chinese found the curriculum unacceptable. As Kew Yip, one of Yip Sang’s sons, who attended King George High School in Vancouver in 1915,\textsuperscript{141} recalled,

I don’t like the whites. I hate them like the devil. I didn’t want to learn their stuff. You read the history and see what they did. They pumped all that opium into China, that’s what they did. I quit high school after one year or so.\textsuperscript{142}

Kew Yip consequently left for China in search of greener pastures.

\textsuperscript{139} "Chinese Segregation," \textit{Victoria Daily Times}, October 11, 1922, 4.

\textsuperscript{140} Not all children had negative reactions to provincial public schools. Sing Lim, for example, was very fond of his grade two teacher who encouraged his artistic interests. See \textit{West Coast Chinese Boy}, 23.

\textsuperscript{141} Board of School Trustee, District #39, Vancouver High School Examination Results, 1907-1915, City of Vancouver Archives, Series G-2, 22-B-1.

\textsuperscript{142} Cited in Yee, \textit{Saltwater City}, 67.
To students like him, public schooling had little to offer.

In addition schooling was often the focus of anti-Chinese violence. Victoria, for example, was the site of recurring violence against Chinese school children. In 1899 a Chinese school boy was so severely assaulted by a group of larger white boys that it occasioned negative comment from the *Victoria Daily Colonist*.

In 1904 a Chinese school boy had his legs amputated after being run over by a street-car while being chased by a group of white boys.

Again in 1908 a group of white boys was reported to be making "an organized attempt to prevent Chinese pupils from attending the Rock Bay and Central Schools," while in 1915 a Chinese school girl was so seriously injured when she was stoned by a group of white boys that she required major surgery to save her life.

Racist violence was occasionally such that parents withdrew their children from the schools entirely. In 1906, Tong Ork, a Victoria merchant, wrote the *Victoria Daily Colonist* that he had been forced to withdraw his children from Victoria's Rock Bay school.

Being a considerable property owner and taxpayer, I avail

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145 *Victoria Daily Times*, November 4 1908, 5. This report was untitled.

146 "Hua nu beiwu" [Chinese girl assaulted], *Dahan Gongbao*, February 26, 1915, 3.
myself of the privileges as such to send my two girls to the Rock Bay school; but I regret they are often driven away from attendance on account of being frightened by rude boys throwing stones at them, besides other indignities as hair pulling and being thrown to the ground.

Tong's letter left no doubt that these deeds were being perpetrated by white students and noted if such deeds took place in China, the papers would be "teeming with sensational headlines: 'Another Barbarian Outrage'."¹⁴⁷

In this context, school segregation combined with the already hostile climate to further isolate the Chinese from the dominant society. Although school officials and leading opinion never overtly sanctioned such violence, by singling out the Chinese and Japanese boys for special treatment segregation may have encouraged other children to engage in anti-Chinese activities and certainly to view the Chinese as different. The 1911 observations by the Chairman of the Board of School Trustees, for example, noted the that "all friction had ceased," while in 1908 the Vancouver Daily Province variously noted that "[t]he white scholars [at Central School] regard themselves as the offspring of a superior race" and "[t]he children of rival races do not mingle or fraternize."¹⁴⁸

This situation continued into the 1920s. For example, in 1922, Mr. Brown, the principal of Lord Strathcona School, told the trustees that the older Asian boys did not play with other children at


¹⁴⁸ Vancouver City Schools, 1911, 8; "Older Chinese Pupils to be Separated from Whites," Vancouver Daily Province, February 11, 1908, 1; and "Asiatic's Classroom Proves Successful Innovation," Ibid., April 8, 1908, 4.
recess and that he had accordingly arranged for them to have a separate recess time.\textsuperscript{149} At the time tensions were sufficiently high at that school so that a snowball fight ended in the stabbing of a white boy.\textsuperscript{150} During the same era, going to and from Central School was an ordeal for students living in Chinatown. As Sing Lim recalled,". . . we had trouble with the white kids on our way to and from school. We walked in groups for protection, the small kids following closely behind the bigger, stronger boys."\textsuperscript{151}

Segregated classes and schools also appear to have offered a relatively poor quality education. Indeed, throughout the early twentieth century various spokespeople for the Chinese community claimed that segregation retarded the progress of pupils because of "the different ages of the children and the stages of school work at which they have arrived."\textsuperscript{152} These concerns were also echoed by school personnel. In effect, Principal Cunningham of Victoria's Boys' Central School in 1914 stated that Chinese children did not learn English well in segregated classes,\textsuperscript{153} while the principals of Central and Strathcona Schools both told Cheng Tien-fang that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{149} Board of School Trustees, District #39, Management Committee, \textit{Minutebooks}, Vol 6., meeting of February 13, 1922, 197.
\item \textsuperscript{150} "Huatong cishang xitong," [Chinese youth stabs western youth], \textit{Dahan Gongbao}, February 4, 1922, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{151} Lim, \textit{West Coast Chinese Boy}, 23.
\item \textsuperscript{152} "The Chinese Enter a Protest," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, June 12, 1902, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{153} "Chinese Children in Public Schools," \textit{Victoria Daily Times} February 2, 1914, 12.
\end{itemize}
segregated classes did not seem to improve the English of Chinese students. Teachers may also have been more concerned with maintaining discipline in these classes and may not have exerted a great deal of effort in teaching. In 1922 Mr. Thomas, the principal of Florence Nightingale School, told the members of the Board of Trustees that "years ago" he had taught a segregated class at Central School and "had not found it strenuous." Meanwhile in Victoria during the 1921-22 school year the school board hired a young Chinese women, Miss L.F. Dickman, to teach a class of forty-two boys only to fire her the following year because of "her inability to maintain discipline in the classroom."

It would certainly seem that the kind of instruction provided in segregated classes was rudimentary at best. Given the huge class sizes in Vancouver in comparison to regular classes, it may be assumed that students made slow progress. In addition, attendance figures show that relatively few students enroled in these large classes actually attended on a daily basis. This further suggests that students found these classes to be of relatively little value. In 1912-13, for example, one segregated class at Central School in Vancouver enroled ninety-seven students, but only had an average daily attendance of slightly more than

154 Oriental Immigration in Canada, 217.

155 Board of School Trustees, District #39, Management Committee, Minute Books, Vol 6, Meeting of February 13, 1922, 195. There is no record in the Annual Reports of the Department of Education of Mr. Thomas having taught at Central School.

forty per cent. In contrast, the average daily attendance in non-segregated classes at the same school was in excess of seventy-five per cent of enrolment. One small class of thirty students even had attendance levels of eighty-eight per cent.\textsuperscript{157} In Victoria, segregated classes were not as large as in Vancouver, but they too had relatively low levels of attendance. For example, at the Rock Bay School in 1921-22, there were three classes of sixty-six, sixty-three and forty-two students each. The average daily attendances for these classes were forty-two per cent, sixty per cent, and seventy-one per cent, respectively. Ironically, the highest level of attendance was in the smallest class which was taught by Miss Dickman. Thus she may not have been as poor a teacher as the school board let on. During the same year at Spring Ridge School, enrolments in regular classes ranged from thirty-five to forty-four students per class, but average daily attendance ran from eighty-two to ninety-two per cent of enrolments.\textsuperscript{158}

The poor quality of instruction in segregated classes and the general hostility of public schools towards the Chinese forced Chinese merchants to fall back upon their own community to provide the kind of education their children needed to prosper. Ironically, to challenge white supremacy, the Chinese not only had to fight to participate in the very institutions in which white supremacist ideology was at its strongest, they also had to create their own parallel institutions and countervaling ideologies.

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Annual Report, 1912-1913, A xxi.}

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Annual Report, 1921-22, C 52.}
CHAPTER SIX:

WHITE SUPREMACY, CHINESE CANADIAN SOCIETY AND PATTERNS OF
SCHOOLING DURING THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Schooling and the Chinese

The Victoria Chinese community was able to continue the 1922-23 students' strike for the better part of a school year in part because it could draw upon existing Chinese language schools to provide for the students on strike. When the protracted nature of the strike became evident, the Victoria Chinese proceeded with plans for the creation of a Chinese language school for the children involved in the strike. The idea of a school for the striking students had first been discussed on October 5, 1922 when some of Victoria's most "prominent Chinese residents" met because "the school board persists in upholding school segregation."1 By the end of October, quite detailed plans for the Weiduoli Bu Zhonghua Yixue [Victoria Chinese Free School] were announced. The school, which would not charge tuition, had been "specially established to support the students on strike against school segregation." It would hold classes in the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) building and be divided into two

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1 "Huaren kăngzhēng fēnxíao zhī jùdōng" [Activities of Chinese resisting school segregation], Dahan Gongbao, October 7, 1922, 3.
grades—a "national grade" for students ages seven to twelve, and a higher grade for students thirteen to eighteen. Its staff of seven teachers and one principal would teach a curriculum which would "normally" include Chinese language, calligraphy, arithmetic and English.²

The main purpose of this school seems to have been to strengthen the resolve of the striking students and their families by instilling them in Chinese nationalist feeling, as well as by continuing their education. Chinese nationalism was evident in the school’s "Guiding Principles" which stated that it was "[e]stablished in order to further understanding of Chinese [language] amongst the students of the western schools on strike to resist school segregation" and to "nourish knowledge amongst the overseas people of the homeland’s common written characters and stimulate the overseas people to have the idea that patriotism wipes out shame."³

It may be that this nationalist character was also the result of expediency. Harry Hastings who was generally well-informed about the community claimed that the school was established on a Chinese language basis because the Chinese had "no intention of establishing their own English schools at an additional cost to themselves when they are already paying more than their share


³ Ibid.
through the school tax." However, the Victoria Chinese would also have drawn upon existing resources to create a school for the striking students. This would have included both available curriculum materials and instructors. For example, out of the school's seven teachers, three were already teaching at the leading Chinese language school in Victoria, the Chinese Public School (CPS). A fourth was also a qualified teacher as he also taught at the Vancouver Chinese Public School in 1925. The existence of other schools was even apparent in the announcement of the Chinese Free School's formation which made careful provision to insure that no students would be taken away from any existing schools.

The existence of Chinese language schools in Victoria points to the fact that by the mid-1920s, attendance at Chinese language schools had become an important element in the education of Canadian-born and immigrant Chinese children. According to Cheng Tien-fang's 1926 University of Toronto Ph.D. dissertation, altogether there were fourteen Chinese language schools in British Columbia enrolling five hundred students.

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5 Compare "Zhonghua Yixue zhaosheng" [Call for students of the Chinese Public School] and the list of Chinese teachers at the Victoria CPS in Zhonghua Huiquan/Huaqiao Xuexiao tekan, Part III, 16. See also "Zhonghua Huiquan zhongyao yi'an" [An important proposal from the Chinese Benevolent Association], Dahan Gongbao, May 8, 1925, 3.

6 "Zhonghua Yixue zhaosheng" [Call for students of the Chinese Public School].

7 Cheng Tien-fang, Oriental Immigration in Canada, 220. I have been able to identify twelve Chinese language schools in B.C. c. 1925. Another one also existed earlier in the decade. Cheng's
Edgar Wickberg has noted that Chinese language schooling was a necessary consequence of the social segregation of the Chinese in Canada during the 1920s and 1930s: "Occupations open to Chinese in Canada continued to be largely those that did not require a knowledge of English and often did require skill in the Chinese language. Residence and social relations continued to be mostly with other Chinese." However, Wickberg also observed,

Chinese schools in Canada were seen as sources of additional training for Chinese-Canadian youth, who were expected to attend the Canadian public schools as well. Chinese classes were supplementary and part-time institutions. Classes were held after public school concluded, from late afternoon to early evening.

In other words, according to Wickberg, Chinese language schooling was merely supplemental to an education primarily pursued in the provincial school system.

On the surface, Chinese language schooling in British Columbia would indeed appear to be supplemental to an education in provincial public schools during the 1920s. With one important exception, all held their classes outside of the provincial school hours. Also, if one accepts Cheng's figure of 500 students in Chinese langage schools circa 1926, the provincial school system held significantly more Chinese students at the time. There were 1,346 Chinese students in the B.C. public schools in 1922-23, estimate of enrolments for B.C. as a whole seems accurate, but his estimate of 250 students in language schools in Vancouver seems rather low. There were more likely 350 pupils enroled there.

8 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 170.

9 Ibid.
1,423 in 1923-24 and 1,312 and 1,397 in 1924-25 and 1925-26 respectively. Of these, ninety per cent were in city school districts. In fact, a closer examination of the nature of Chinese language schools in British Columbia, their relation to the provincial public schools, and the nature of the Chinese experience in both kinds of schools, suggests a more complex pattern, one that changes over time.

When able, Chinese families appear to have drawn upon both kinds of schools in the education of their children. This, however, was not always possible. As we have seen, provincial public schools were often hostile places for the Chinese, while Chinese language schools were not always available, especially for working class families. Consequently Chinese school attendance patterns shift over time. At the turn of the century, relatively few Chinese children attended schools of any kind. Amongst those that did go to school, more appear to have attended Chinese language schools than the provincial public schools. Thus at the turn of the century for the Chinese the provincial schools, if anything, supplemented an education in the Chinese schools. By the 1920s, Chinese language schools were simply unable to provide for most Chinese children, forcing many children to rely exclusively on the provincial public schools. It may well be that by the 1930s,

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this situation had changed, but before 1925, as far as the Chinese residents of British Columbia and more particularly Vancouver and Victoria were concerned, these sectors complemented each other with one making up for the failings of the other.

**Chinese Educational Traditions**

British Columbians of European ancestry were not the only immigrants to bring their traditions of education to the province. The Chinese also did so. Particularly important in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the gentry tradition of hiring private tutors for their children. The wealthiest Chinese merchants, following elite practice in China, hired tutors to instruct their sons. These tutors were themselves members of the Chinese gentry who had passed the county level of the Imperial civil service examinations. They taught the Confucian classics with a view towards enabling their students to pass the civil service examinations. The practice of hiring tutors from China

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12 In the long run, becoming an official, which required passing the examinations, was a family's only guarantee of continued gentry status. Before 1905, the Chinese Imperial Civil Service was chosen from the successful candidates in an examination. The civil service examinations, which involved three levels, were based on knowledge of the Confucian classics, and the candidates' grasp of the bagu or "eight-legged" essay style. Those who had passed the lowest or county level of the examinations were automatically members of the gentry and could make their living as teachers or tutors for other would-be candidates. Those who passed the highest level of the examinations eventually became officials.
was especially common amongst the wealthier merchants during the nineteenth century and is simply another example of their elite status by Chinese standards. These tutors account for most of the Chinese "school teachers" which appear in the historical records of the nineteenth century. For example, the 1881 manuscript census lists one Chinese teacher in Wellington. In 1884, eight Chinese "school teachers" (four in Victoria, two in New Westminster, one each in Wellington and Nanaimo) were recorded to be in the province by the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration. In 1909, the wealthy Vancouver merchant and labour contractor, Yip Sang, continued this tradition by bringing a tutor over from China to teach his twenty-three children in his family's quarters above his shop on weekends and provincial school holidays.

But literacy was also useful to merchants and their clerks,


Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 323.

Census of Canada, 1881 Manuscript Census, District No. 3, Vancouver Island, S. District 5, Wellington, Division 2, 27, #106. I am indebted to Jean Barman for bringing this reference to my attention.

See "Appendix C. Numbers and Occupations of Chinese in British Columbia," Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 363. These were the four centres of Chinese population at the time. These figures were compiled by the Chinese themselves and submitted to the Commission by Huang Sic Chen, an official from the Chinese consulate in San Francisco. See Ibid., 363-366.

Yeh Ch'un t'ien xiansheng chuanji [Biography of Yip Sang]. (Hong Kong: n.p., [1973]), 6., CCRC, Box 25, no. 56.
even if not for purposes of taking the civil service examinations. Consequently, in the nineteenth century there was also a number of private "schools" which likely catered to the smaller merchants and clerks. According to David T.H. Lee these were usually little more than a space at the back of a shop in which merchants or their clerks taught basic literacy, accounting and other commercial skills.\textsuperscript{17} One such "Chinese school" is listed as being located at 115 Hastings Street in Vancouver in \textit{Henderson’s British Columbia Gazetteer and Directory} for 1889, but disappears from the directory the following year.\textsuperscript{18}

Chinese gentry traditions also included the organization of schools on a voluntary basis. It was not uncommon for village schools to be supported by a group of landlords and members of the local gentry. This not only socialized the costs of hiring tutors and provided employment for gentry members, it also insured that local gentry would benefit from students who were successful in the examinations and became officials.\textsuperscript{19} The first formal Chinese language school in British Columbia seems to have been of this

\textsuperscript{17} Lee, \textit{Jianada Huaqiao shi}, 321.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Henderson’s British Columbia Gazetteer and Directory, 1889} (Victoria: C.G. Hendersons, 1889), 426. Subsequent volumes in this series do not list such schools until 1904 when a "Chinese School" is listed at 44 Fisgard Street in Victoria. This was apparently the Le Qun Yishu associated with the Consolidated Benevolent Association whose address was listed as 44½ Fisgard. See \textit{Henderson’s British Columbia Directory, 1904}, 1168.

The Le Qun Yishu [literally "Happy Multitude Free School"] was established in 1899 under the auspices of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in Victoria. The school was located on the third floor of the CCBA building at 44 Fisgard Street. Although one of the prime instigators of the school was Lee Mong Kow, the immigration interpreter, the school was organized following extensive discussions within the CCBA and after it had raised three thousand dollars to support the school. This school, which began with an enrolment of thirty-nine, was intended for Chinese children, especially those of the poorer merchants and shop keepers, who were not attending school. A Chinese commentator, most likely Lee Mong Kow himself, told The Victoria Daily Colonist that the school was opened because,

We are Chinamen, no matter where we go, . . . , and find that, in view of the international relations now opening up, it is necessary to have an education in Chinese as well as in English. We have reckoned on there being about 100 Chinese boys and girls in Victoria. Some of these are going to the public schools, others, for different reasons, do not attend a school of any kind, and none get any insight into the literature and language of their own race, more than what they pick up at home.

Certainly, the school appears to have been motivated by a concern that many Chinese children, especially those from poorer backgrounds, were not attending schools of any kind. As an

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20 Lai, Chinatowns, 214.


22 Li, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 323.
yishu or "free school", it charged no tuition and was accordingly supported by the CCBA, benefit performances and the charitable contributions of merchants.

Although the Le Qun Yishu was a traditional school directed towards the Imperial examination system, in many ways it set the pattern for subsequent Chinese schools in Canada. That is, Chinese language schools, starting with the Le Qun Yishu, followed courses of study similar to schools in China and their teachers usually had Chinese credentials. The Le Qun Yishu employed as teachers two graduates of the county examinations in China, and taught a classical Confucian curriculum similar to that of would-be participants in the Imperial examination system in China. The lower class studied the Sanzi Jing (Three Character Classic), the Bai Jiaxing (Book of Family Names), and the You Xue Qionglin (literally, Youth Study Precious Things), while the upper class studied The Four Books—The Great Learning, The Analects, Doctrine of the Mean, The Mencius—and the classics of history and poetry.\(^{23}\) The Confucian emphasis of the school was further revealed by the presence of an altar to Confucius in front of which students and their parents were expected to perform annual rites.\(^{24}\) This suggests that at least part of the motivation for the school was insuring that Confucian ideology was inculcated in the rising generation.

Ironically, by the early twentieth century, the classical

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 321-322; Lai, Chinatowns, 215.

\(^{24}\) Li, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 322.
The curriculum of the Le Qun Yishu was increasingly becoming irrelevant to the rapidly-changing society of China. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were years of tremendous intellectual upheaval in China as intellectuals subjected the old Confucian system to rigorous criticism and the Imperial system began to collapse under the foreign onslaught. One result was that in 1904 the Imperial Chinese government established a Ministry of Education and planned a Western-style system of schooling stretching from the elementary to university level. In 1905, the civil service examination system itself was abolished.\(^{25}\)

The trend towards a more modern education reached British Columbia shortly after the founding of the Le Qun Yishu. In 1898 there was an abortive attempt at transforming the Chinese government into a constitutional monarchy. In the ensuing conservative reaction, the Empress Dowager Cizi seized power from her nephew, imprisoned him, and forced the advocates of reform to flee for their lives. In 1899 the principal reformer, Kang Youwei, arrived in British Columbia and tried to establish a "Save the Emperor Society" in the province to restore the reform-minded Emperor to power. The idea of constitutional reform in China was quite appealing to the Chinese merchant elite, but as they were more conservative than Kang, they named their organization the Chinese Empire Reform Association.

\(^{25}\) On the role of educational reform in remaking Chinese society during this era, see Marianne Bastid, *Educational Reform in Early Twentieth Century China*, Paul Bailey (trans.) (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988). See also, Bailey, *Reform the People*. 
The Empire Reform Association used schools as a vehicle for fostering reform in China. In 1903 and 1904 the Association opened schools in Vancouver and Victoria to teach "new knowledge" [xin zhi]. Both of these schools were named the Oi-kwok Hok-tong (Aiguo Xuetang) or "Patriotic School." Their formation was consistent with the reformist outlook of the Association and reflected the notion that through appropriate education and training, the Chinese could gain "the wealth and power" of the West. The school apparently even taught subjects like chemistry, and certainly catered to the wealthier merchants and community leaders. The richest Chinese merchant in British Columbia, Yip Sang, served as the principal of the Vancouver school for ten years. The Association's secretary, Won Alexander Cumyow, also sent his son, Gordon, to the school. The B.C.-born Cumyow, a former merchant and labour contractor, had been one of the founders of the CCBA in Victoria and was serving as the court interpreter in Vancouver.

26 Lee, Jainada Huagiao shi, 321.

27 The gradualist view that Western technical knowledge could reform the Chinese government and social institutions was widely held by Chinese intellectuals during the pre-Republican era. See, for example, Benjamin I. Schwartz, In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964).

28 See Sing Lim, West Coast Chinese Boy, 26. In the 1920s, Sing Lim attended a school of the same name in the old headquarters of the Empire Reform Association. However, his school was organized by his clan association the Lim Sai Ho Tong.

29 Yeh Ch'un t'ien xiansheng chuanji, 6.

30 Gordon Won Cumyow in Marlatt and Itter, Opening Doors, 17.
However, this school was also relatively short-lived due to the vagaries of its parent organization. By 1909 the Empire Reform Association in Vancouver and elsewhere in British Columbia had lost many of its members and much of its influence to Sun Yat-sen’s revolutionary group, the Tong Meng Hui. Consequently the school ceased operating at this time. The closing of the school was likely instrumental in Yip Sang’s decision to hire a tutor from China in 1909.

In 1908, the Le Qun Yishu was also re-organized along modern lines. In 1907, the school had become overcrowded as it had absorbed a group of Chinese students who were not allowed to attend the Victoria School Board schools on the grounds that their lack of English posed a discipline problem. Consequently, the school began to provide instruction in English, as well as Chinese. In 1908, plans were laid to build a new facility along modern lines at 636 Fisgard Street at a cost of more than $7,000. Plans for this new facility included the incorporation of three old-style private academies as well as the Victoria Oi-kwok Hok-tong. At the same time, the school became more closely affiliated with and supervised by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association.

The reorganization of the Le Qun Yishu along modern lines was encouraged and partially financed by the Imperial Chinese government which had become concerned about the activities of various revolutionary groups operating amongst Overseas Chinese

31 On the vagaries of the Empire Reform Association, see Wickberg, From China to Canada, 74-76. On the fortunes of the school, see Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 322.
communities and had been trying to garner support by establishing schools in these communities. By a happy coincidence, a Chinese delegation headed by Liang Qingkui was touring North America at the time of the re-organization. This delegation was mandated to establish schools along the lines sanctioned by Beijing. Consequently, the Victoria school was recognized by and received funding from the Imperial Chinese Ministry of Education. It was re-opened at its new site at 636 Fisgard Street as the Imperial Chinese School (Daqing Zhonghua Xuexiao) by the Chinese Consul General from San Francisco. Shortly thereafter it was renamed the Chinese Public School (CPS).³²

This school’s importance is indicated by its enrolment. Beginning in 1909 with two teachers and seventy students, for the next thirteen years it enroled an average of thirty new students every year.³³ Its total enrolment at any given time appears to

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³³ For a list of students in the years they entered, see Zhonghua Huiquan/Huaqiao Xuexiao tekan, Part III, 65 ff. For the school’s yearly enrolments, see Ibid., Part V, 26.
have been approximately 100.34

Glimpses into the operation of this school are provided by reports in The Chinese Times. In 1915, the school was inspected by officials of the Chinese government. According to their report, the school which they classified as a higher and lower elementary, enroled ninety students (62 boys and 28 girls) in six classes. The four upper classes, consisting of fifty-nine students altogether, were held during the evening from 6:00 P.M. to 9:30 P.M. as they were made up of students who attended the white public schools during the day. The two lower classes were held during the daytime between 10:00 A.M. and 12:00 Noon and from 1:00 P.M. onwards. The school's two teachers, both in their fifties, had taught school in China, in both traditional and modern elementary and middle schools. Both had also been school principals there. Classes were organized so that as one grade was practising their reading out loud, another grade would be practising their calligraphy.35

It is, however, unlikely that the school operated along purely Chinese lines. This was evident in September 1915 when another report in The Chinese Times provided a further glimpse into the school's operations. The school had hired two young women, Luo Caijuan and Guan Hefeng, both graduates of the CPS, as

34 See, for example, "Weibu Huaqiao Gongxue baogao ce," [Text of the report on the Victoria Overseas Chinese Public School], Dahan Gongbao, July 13, 1915, 1 and "Weibu Huaqiao Gongxiao huo jiang," [Victoria Overseas Chinese Public School obtains reward], Ibid., December 27, 1918, 3.

assistants for the junior classes. According to The Chinese Times, "[t]heir duties will include playing the qin and singing, reciting poetry, verifying pronunciation, paper folding, and being in charge of recreation and excursions."³⁶

Apparently this decision drew some criticism as the newspaper noted, "[t]here are those who ask why not use the male graduates."³⁷ Consequently The Chinese Times launched a defence of the school's actions. None of the nine male graduates were available to teach in the school as they had either left for China to pursue more advanced studies, were "studying English during the daytime or helping out in their fathers' shops." This left the three female graduates: one was unavailable since she was continuing her studies at home, while the other two "have much free time."³⁸

The paper also justified the decision to hire the young women on the grounds that hiring a teacher from Hong Kong or China was prohibitively expensive. The thirty-eight day students paid $2 per month as tuition, while the sixty evening students paid $3 each. This produced annual revenues of $3,000. If a teacher left,

³⁶ "Wei Xiao riban youwei sheng ju jiaoyuan zhiyung biye nusheng zhi diaocha," [An investigation of the temporary hiring of female graduates for the young student's day class at the Victoria School], Dahan Gongbao, September 8, 1915, 3.

³⁷ Their surnames, following standard usages, would have been Low and Kwan, respectively. It is possible that Low was the daughter of Low Mong Kow, the school's principal. This would account for some of the criticism of the decision to hire the two women.

³⁸ Ibid.
it was usually necessary to suspend classes until a replacement could be hired from China or Hong Kong. Unfortunately, in the interim, the enrolment and hence the revenues decreased, making it difficult to guarantee a salary, which in turn made teachers reluctant to come. Thus, the paper argued, hiring the local women as assistants was a wise move since it saved money and allowed classes to continue functioning. In addition, the two women were familiar with the school’s method of organizing the bulk of classes during the evening so as not to conflict with the provincial public school day. This was something which teachers from China found difficult. For example, the two regular teachers at the school at first objected to these arrangements until they were explained by the outgoing teacher.  

Although The Chinese Times did not mention it, another advantage of hiring the young women teachers was that they could provide English language instruction to the younger students. This instruction was necessitated by the Victoria School Board’s policy of barring entry to any Chinese pupils who spoke little or no English, and had been a feature of the CPS and its predecessors since 1907. Consequently the day class was made up of children waiting to enter the Victoria School Board and had been organized with the Board’s knowledge.  

By 1924, the school even included

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39 Ibid. The fact that classes for the older students were held during the evening for a relatively short school day would also have been a concern to the teachers.

an English language instructor for the kindergarten classes.\textsuperscript{41} Certainly Luo and Guan were fluent in English. According to The Chinese Times, they "have no need to continue their studies because they have studied in the Western schools for many years and can now communicate with Westerners in common language."\textsuperscript{42} Luo Caijuan was still attached to the school in 1919.\textsuperscript{43}

Providing English language instruction was one of the considerations behind the formation of B.C.'s second Chinese Public School (CPS) in Vancouver in 1917. In that year the Vancouver Chinese Benevolent Association raised funds for the school through public subscriptions and benefits, establishing it rent-free on the third floor of the CBA building at 108 East Pender Street.\textsuperscript{44} At the time of the creation of the CPS in Vancouver, there was only one Chinese language school in that city.\textsuperscript{45} This was the Oi-kwok Hok-tong which had ceased functioning before the 1911 revolution, but had resumed classes by 1916.\textsuperscript{46} A private school had functioned

\textsuperscript{41} Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xuexiao tekan, Part III, 60-1.

\textsuperscript{42} "Wei Xiao riban youwei sheng ju jiaoyuan zhiyung biye nusheng zhi diaocha," Dahan Gongbao, September 8, 1915, 8.

\textsuperscript{43} See, "Weibu Huaqiao Gong Xiao youxing jicheng," [Report on the excursion of the Victoria Overseas Chinese School], Dahan Gongbao, July 11, 1919, 3. Interestingly, neither young woman is listed as one of the school's teachers in its official history. See the list of instructors in Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xuexiao tekan, Part III, 60.

\textsuperscript{44} See Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 334.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 322.

\textsuperscript{46} The Oi-kwok Hok-tong was functioning in September 1916 when its students participated in the celebrations of Confucius's birthday. See The Chinese Times, July 16, 1916, 3, CCRC, Box 4,
briefly in Vancouver in 1915. The Jingcun Xueshu or "Struggle for Existence School" enroled forty six-students (thirty-one boys and fifteen girls) in three classes.\(^{47}\) The fact that it operated outside of the provincial school day suggests that many of its students attended British Columbia public schools as well.\(^{48}\) However, after 1915, there were are no further references to this school.

When the Vancouver CPS was established, it was a modern school by Chinese standards, but its curriculum went beyond Chinese language instruction. The Chinese Benevolent Association's announcement of the opening of registration for the school noted, "This school has been especially created for native born sons and younger brothers who have no schools [shixue, lit. 'lost studies'] and will pay particular attention to several courses including written Chinese, English, Arithmetic, History and Geography in both primary and higher classes."\(^{49}\) The curricular emphasis on English

\(^{47}\) "Jingcun Xueshu Minguo sinian dierqi xiaji kaoshi chengsu," [Results of the 1915 second term summer exams of the Jingcun School], Dahan Gongbao, July 30, 1915, 3 and "Jingcun Jiashu zhu sheng dongtian kaoshi chengsu," [Results of the winter exams at the Jingcun School], Ibid., January 1, 1915, 7.

\(^{48}\) "Jingcun Xueshu biangeng jiaoshou shijian bugao" [Announcement of changes in the Jingcun School's hours of instruction], Dahan Gongbao, June 25, 1915, 3. The school hours changed from late afternoons to the day time. This was to conform with the summer holidays of the provincial public schools.

\(^{49}\) "Weibu Zhonghua Huijuan Gongli Huaqiao Xuexiao jiao sheng guang gao" [The advertisement for students of the Vancouver Chinese Benevolent Association Overseas Chinese Public School], Dahan Gongbao, April 24, 1917, 7.
and arithmetic suggest that the school was directly supplementing the provincial public schools, possibly to insure that Chinese children entered them with some knowledge of English so as to escape segregated classes.

The credentials of the teachers further suggest that the school's focus was not solely Chinese language instruction. Its teachers included Chen Shuren, a graduate of the Kyoto School of Fine Arts and the Tokyo Teachers' College, and previously an instructor at normal schools and official academies in South China. The other teachers were Yip Sang's daughter Susan Yipsang who was a graduate of the British Columbia Normal School, and Zhao Yinfu, a middle school graduate from China. The presence of a B.C. Normal School graduate suggests that the school, at least initially, was intended to provide the kind of schooling that the B.C. provincial public schools provided. Certainly, the school was such a success that in July the CBA also decided to provide the fourth floor of its building rent free.51

50 Ibid. The announcement of the school identifies Susan Yipsang as "the female scholar, Ye Su." Later references to events at the school, however, refer to "Mr. Ye Suzhi." See, for example, "Zhonghua Huiguan Gongli Huagiao Xuexiao ding qi juxing kaixue qingdian" [The Chinese Benevolent Association's Public Overseas Chinese School fixes the date for opening celebrations], Dahan Gongbao, May 4, 1917, 2-3. See also, "Yunbu Gongli Huagiao Xuexiao kaixue qingdian zhi jicheng" [Report on the celebrations of the opening of the Vancouver Public Overseas Chinese School], Ibid., May 7, 1917, 3. But Yip Sang's biography shows that Gim Ling (Susan), Yip's youngest daughter, was the first women to teach at the Vancouver's Overseas Chinese School. See Yeh Ch'un t'ien xiansheng chuanji, 6.

51 "Zhonghua Huiguan lai zhongyao han [An important letter from the Chinese Benevolent Association," Dahan Gongbao July 17, 1917, 2.
As the initial curriculum of the Vancouver CPS suggests, and what is known about the Victoria CPS further implies, Chinese-controlled schools were at least in part intended to make up for the inadequacies of the English language instruction in the provincial public schools. Thus, Chinese language schools were at least in part intended to overcome the hostility with which provincial public schools often greeted the Chinese. But the nature of these Chinese-controlled schools also signals a broader project on the part of the Chinese merchants of British Columbia.

Schooling and the Formation of the Chinese Merchant Public

Schooling was an important element in the formation of a separate realm of Chinese politics and institutions in British Columbia. In particular, Chinese language schools were important vehicles for the formation of a Chinese "public" largely separate from that of British Columbia's Anglo-Canadian society. Canadian historians have tended to use the concept of "public" uncritically, referring to such things as "public" opinion, "public" policy or

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52 This would explain the emphasis on English at both the Victoria and Vancouver Chinese Public Schools. It would also account for the apparent enthusiasm with which missionary-run language schools were greeted in the Chinese press. For example, in April 1922, The Chinese Times welcomed the opening of a school at 147 East Pender Street by a group of nuns with the headline, "Huaqiao jiang duo yi xiao xi Zhong Ying Wen, [Overseas Chinese Gain Another School for Studying Chinese and English]" Dahan Gongbao, April 22, 1922.
"public" life, but as Jürgen Habermas has pointed out, the concept really involves "a multiplicity of concurrent meanings." According to Habermas, in industrially advanced bourgeois societies these meanings have built up over time into a single category so that the various meanings "fuse into a clouded amalgam".

There are several senses in which Chinese language schooling was part of this separate Chinese public. First, the Chinese Public Schools of Vancouver and Victoria were under the direct control of, and in large part funded by, what for most Chinese were "public" institutions: the Zhonghua Huiguan. For the Chinese, the CCBA of Victoria and the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) of Vancouver performed key local governmental functions including organizing collective self-defense and social welfare. These organizations were accountable in their actions to other Chinese, in particular members of the merchant class. Thus, for the Chinese, the Victoria and Vancouver schools were "public" institutions in many of the same senses that B.C.'s provincial

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53 This is evident, for example, in Ward's usages in White Canada Forever. See also the discussion of the division between public and private violence in Judy M. Torrance, Public Violence in Canada, 1867-1982, 14-16. Bruce Curtis, who discusses the creation of a public as an aspect of state formation as seen in early school reform, also does not define the term. See Curtis, "Preconditions of the Canadian State," 99-121 and Building The Educational State.

54 Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, Thomas Burger (trans.) (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 1. I am indebted to Bill Maciejko for bringing this work to my attention.

55 The terms for the CCBA and CBA are the same in Chinese, "zhonghua huiguan."
public schools were. Second, the CPS and other Chinese language schools were actively involved in recreating a "public" or audience for Chinese institutions. This involved instilling an identity as Chinese in students and continuing such acts of "public representation" as the annual celebrations of Confucius' birthday. This "public" created by Chinese language schools in British Columbia had a complex relationship with the institutions, ideology and officials belonging to the Chinese "state." Third, as a terrain open to the inspection of others, Chinese language schools held public events which were actively followed in the Chinese media. Finally language instruction in itself formed the Chinese "public" in a fourth sense, by maintaining and extending a Chinese reading "public," a group of people literate in Chinese.  

While not all individuals involved in the Chinese public in each of the above senses belonged to it in every sense, most were involved in it in more than one way. For example, not all those literate in Chinese belonged to the audience for such practices as honouring Confucius' birthday or could claim Chinese public institutions as their own. A few non-Chinese were literate in Chinese as indeed were many Chinese women. However, men were overwhelmingly the predominant actors within Chinese public institutions. By the same token, while many of the programs organized by CBAs, for example public welfare ones such as Chinese hospitals, were intended for Chinese workers, the CBAs themselves

56 Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 5 ff.

57 Ibid., 23-26.
as a terrain of action primarily belonged to upper class Chinese merchants. These considerations point to the class and gendered nature of the Chinese public sphere. As an sphere controlled by men, it played an important role in the social construction of gender within Chinese communities. While as a sphere controlled by merchants, it facilitated their dominance inside the Chinese community with respect to labourers.

As we have seen, the CCBA of Victoria and the CBA of Vancouver were directly involved in the creation of the Chinese Public Schools of those cities, and continued to have the major responsibility for their operation. For example, the CCBA had re-organized the Le Qun Yishu in 1908-09, and as late as 1925 the resignation of the teachers at the Vancouver CPS was a matter of direct concern to the CBA Board of Directors.

Chinese language schools and their acitivities certainly seem to have been keenly followed in the Chinese press. For example, in 1915 the graduation of the first students from the Victoria CPS was an event of some importance. The graduation ceremony was a major

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58 This is an additional sense in which there was a Chinese public sphere. Habermas discusses this in the context of the Greek polis, Structural Transformation, pp.3-4. This notion has more recently been developed by feminist scholars as a major aspect of the social construction of gender. See Margaret Stacy, "The Division of Labour Revisited or Overcoming the Two Adams," in Philip Abrams, et al, (eds.), Practice and Progress: British Sociology, 1950-1980 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 172-190 and Eva Gamarnikow, et al (eds.), The Public and the Private (London: Heineman, 1983).

59 See "Zhonghua Huiguan zhongyao yi'an" [An important proposal from the Chinese Benevolent Association], Dahan Gongbao, May 8, 1925, 3.
occasion with speeches by the school principal, the Chinese consul, and other association representatives. The Jingcun School in Vancouver even cabled its congratulations to the students.\textsuperscript{60}

More mundane matters also drew the attention of the press. The \textit{Chinese Times} published an account of the extremely detailed regulations for conducting the end of term examinations at the Victoria CPS, as well as the speeches at the end of term closing ceremonies.\textsuperscript{61} School openings were also public events, even when the schools were sponsored by a particular organization. This was evident when the Qing Consul General in San Francisco came to Victoria to open the new Chinese Public School Building in 1909.\textsuperscript{62} From 1914 onwards, the \textit{Chinese Times} faithfully reported school openings including the speeches of the notables at them. These events seemed to move beyond partisan concerns as was evident when the \textit{Chinese Times} reported on the participation of the Kuomintang (KMT) at the opening ceremonies for the Chee Kung Tang (CKT) school in New Westminster. This was despite the fact that the two groups

\textsuperscript{60} See "Weiduoli Huaqiao Gong Xue diyi hui biye li shi" [The first graduation ceremony of the Victoria Overseas Chinese Public School], \textit{Dahan Gongbao}, March 22, 1915, 3; "Weiduoli biye sheng ming biao" [List of names of the Victoria graduates], Ibid., March 23, 1915, 3; "Li Mengjiu xiaozhang xunci zhaolu" [Text of Principal Lee Mong Row’s address], Ibid., March 24, 1915, 3. The March 23 report includes a photograph of the graduating class, a rare event for \textit{Dahan Gongbao}.

\textsuperscript{61} "Wei Xiao qikao wenxi du fa zhi zhuyi" [Important points in the revised methods for conducting the end of term examinations at the Victoria School], \textit{Dahan Gongbao}, July 25, 1915, 3 and "Wei Xiao fangjia xingli yanshuo gei shang lu ji" [Record of the speeches at the end of term ceremonies of the Victoria School], Ibid., July 23, 1915, 3.

\textsuperscript{62} Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 329-330.
were inveterate, even deadly, enemies.\textsuperscript{63}

Chinese teachers were notable figures in their own rights. As the most educated members of the local Chinese communities, they were automatically part of the social elite. Their comings and goings were consequently reported in *The Chinese Times* as were their other activities. *The Chinese Times*, for example, regularly reported on the hiring of teachers and their departures, as well as on the official banquets marking such occasions. During the summer of 1918, it even reported on the tour of the province by two teachers from the Victoria CPS, a tour which included a series of banquets organized by various associations for the travelling scholars. In 1921, the teacher from the CKT school in Victoria not only visited Vancouver, but wrote several guest editorials in *The Chinese Times*.\textsuperscript{64} His position as a scholar, and therefore presumably an informed commentator, was evident in the fact that one of the editorials was on the rationale behind Canadian immigration policies and the difficulties this occasioned for the Chinese in Canada.

All of this activity on the part of Chinese language schools, their teachers, sponsoring organizations and Chinese government officials, faithfully reported in *The Chinese Times*, points to the existence of a collective terrain of common interest to the

\textsuperscript{63} See, for example, *The Chinese Times*, March 191, 1922, CCRC Box 4, folder for 1922.

\textsuperscript{64} See, for example, *The Chinese Times*, July 22, 1918, 3, CCRC Box 4, folder for 1918; Ibid., November 5, 1921 and Ibid., December 1, 1921, 1, folder for 1921.
newspaper’s readers. The term sometimes used in the newspaper itself to describe this terrain was *huajie*, meaning "Chinese district" or "Chinese domain."\(^{65}\) This "jie" was not only the creation of *The Chinese Times*, however. Indeed the paper provides evidence of a broader construction. As the official paper of the CKT, it also reported on the CKT and the activities of its members. However, it reported on the activities of other schools as well. Most of these were not affiliated to the CKT. For example, it reported on the graduations of the Guangzhi school in Vancouver, as well as the CPS in Victoria. It also reported on the recruitment of Chinese teachers by various clan organizations in Vancouver and Victoria.\(^{66}\)

The separation of this sphere from the dominant society is evident in the lack of coverage afforded to these events by the English language media. For example, on July 9, 1919, two hundred people, including one hundred students, participated in the First Annual Picnic of the Victoria CPS. While this event may not have been remarkable in itself, it is significant that it was reported in *The Chinese Times*, a paper published in Chinese in Vancouver.

\(^{65}\) See, for example, the editorial "Ben bao zhi zhizhi" [The mission of this newspaper], *Dahan Gongbao*, May 17, 1918, 1.

\(^{66}\) See, for example, "Guangzhi Xuexiao zhi qian xue" [The Broad Knowledge School to move," *Dahan Gongbao*, October 23, 1922, 3; "Jingcun Xueshi Minguo si nian dier qi xiali kaoshi chengsi" [The results of the second term of the 1915 summer session of the Jingcun School], Ibid., July 20, 1915, 3; "Weiduoli Huaqiao Gong Xue diyi hui biye tishi" [First graduation ceremony of the Victoria Overseas Chinese Public School], Ibid., March 22, 1915, 3 On clan association school teachers, see Ibid., November 17, 1920, cited in CCRC, Box 4, folder for 1920.
No doubt *The Chinese Times* had a number of reasons for providing this coverage not the least of which was the fact that Victoria, as the oldest and second largest Chinese community in Canada, was an essential part of its market. In addition, Victoria was the location of the CKT's Canadian headquarters and the organization was actively involved in local politics and community organizations. However, the CPS picnic did not attract the interest of Victoria's English-language daily newspapers even though these papers did report regularly on the social activities of various groups in and around Victoria. Indeed during the same week as the CPS event, the *Victoria Daily Colonist* and the *Victoria Daily Times* reported on the picnics of groups as diverse as the Corner Club, the St. Jude's Junior Women's Auxiliary and the Board of Trade. These papers tended to be interested in Chinese events only in so far as they directly affected whites, provided local colour, or offered a further opportunity to paint them as intrinsically different from whites. By the First World War, the "social distance" between Chinese and whites was such that most whites were either unaware of, or totally disinterested in, Chinese


activities like the CPS picnic.  

"Chinamen, no matter where we go"

Chinese language schools promoted a shared identity amongst Chinese living in British Columbia in a variety of ways. Although British Columbia’s Chinese were mainly from the same Chinese province (Guangdong), they spoke several different dialects of Cantonese or even the minority Hakka language. This made communication amongst them extremely cumbersome. For example, in 1915 the Chinese Public School in Victoria had to conduct its annual general meeting with consecutive translation into three languages, including standard Cantonese and two dialects. Beyond problems of communication, individual self-identification, place of residence in Canada and even occupation were based on place of origin and dialect spoken.

Thus Chinese language schooling helped to foster a collective identity. Written Chinese had long performed an integrative function in China by allowing those who did not speak the same language to correspond with each other. Literacy in itself was

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69 That the members of racially oppressed minorities are often well aware of the activities of members of the dominant group, while the latter tend to be unaware of the former, is a point that has been made in a different context by bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Centre* (Boston: South End Press, 1985).

70 "Weibu Gong Xiao xuesheng yanshuo ci" [Text of the students’ speeches at the Victoria CPS], *Dahan Gongbao*, October 21, 3.

useful in British Columbia because through it the Chinese could become aware of what was happening in other districts of the province, which areas were becoming closed to Chinese activities, or which areas opening up. It also allowed business relations to flourish despite other barriers. Thus by promoting literacy, the Chinese language schools were fostering means of communication which transcended local identities.

Chinese language schools apparently also promoted standard spoken Chinese, namely Cantonese, although Mandarin was also taught. This too helped to foster a collective identity. For example, standard Cantonese was the language of instruction at the CPS in Victoria even though most of its students spoke local dialects.72

The creation of this shared identity as Chinese seems to have been a vital factor in the organization of Chinese schools. As we have seen the motivation behind the Le Qun Yishu was at least in part a recognition by the Victoria merchant elite that "[w]e are Chinamen, no matter where we go" and the consequent need for Chinese children to obtain a sense of their heritage.73 However,

72 The Chinese Times reported that "every girl and boy who graduates from the first class can leave behind their local dialects and are fluent in Cantonese when reading and speaking." "Weibu qikao zhu zhong Shenghua Guoyu ying sheng zhi tese," [Special characteristics of the pronunciation of Cantonese and Mandarin at the Victoria end of term examinations], Dahan Gongbao, July 17, 1915, 3. The writer complained that Victoria’s Cantonese was not standard as it "suffered from the influence of the students." He also noted that there was no standard dialect in Vancouver.

73 Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 323.
the heavy Confucian emphasis of the school and the traditional qualifications of its teachers are more suggestive of a desire to instill Confucian morality than of a desire to merely promote cultural retention. At the Le Qun Yishu, students, along with their parents, formally observed Confucius' birthday, including bowing before his portrait. This Confucian emphasis continued in other schools. The CPS in Victoria and the one in Vancouver, the Oi-kwok Schools and the CKT schools all marked Confucius' birthday with public exercises. The Oi-kwok Schools, in line with the reformist orientation of the Empire Reform Association, seem to have been particularly conservative in this respect and made continuing the cult of Confucius a major feature of the school.

As Confucianism became discredited in China in the face of the iconoclasm of the May Fourth era, Chinese language schools subsumed other rituals to build a collective identity. After 1923, Chinese language schools participated in the ceremonies marking the July 1 "Chinese Humiliation Day," the anniversary of the proclamation of the Chinese Immigration Act. Schools were also

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74 See, for example, the entries in CCRC, Box 4, for The Chinese Times on October 13, 1917, October 2, 1918, October 8, 1920, October 11, 1920, September 29, 1921, September 20, 1921.

75 For example, in 1921, the teacher at the Oi-kwok School in Vancouver published an editorial in Dahan Gongbao praising Confucius in traditional terms. See "Aiguo Xuexiao juxing si sheng qingdian yin bei shu Kong Sheng zhi shiwei" [The reason the Oi-kwok Hok-tong organizes rituals celebrating the birth of the Sage Confucius], Dahan Gongbao, September 30, 1921, 1.

76 See, for example, "Weibu Huaqiao Qi Yi Yundong zhi yangqing" [The situation of Victoria's Overseas Chinese July First Movement], Dahan Gongbao, July 4, 1924, 3.
active in raising relief funds for the victims of natural disasters and imperialist outrages in China.  

Chinese nationalism was also built into school activities. School meetings or receptions of notables were all marked with nationalist salutes and speeches citing the importance of patriotism. School excursions even began with assemblies at which the Chinese national anthem was sung and the Chinese flag raised. Inculcating nationalist sentiment and using education as a vehicle for China's modernization and strengthening were motives even in the creation of schools. Typical was the 1919 announcement of the formation of the Canton School in Vancouver. Although this was a private school, it cited its objective as "baocun guocui, peizhi rencai" or "to preserve the national essence and cultivate people of talent." The CKT school in Victoria was established with "national teaching" as its basis and in the belief that education was the best "prescription for saving the country [i.e. China]."

Certainly, successive Chinese governments found the Chinese

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77 For example in 1925 the Man Wah School in Vancouver undertook to support victims of the Shanghai massacre. See The Chinese Times, July 25, 1925, 3, CCRC Box 4, folder for 1925.

78 For an example at the CPS in Victoria, see "Huanying hui zhi renao" [Warmth of the welcome meeting], Dahan Gongbao, May 3, 1918, 3. See also "Weibu Huqiao Gongxiao explained jicheng [Report on the Victoria Chinese Public School's excursion]," Dahan Gongbao, July, 11, 1919, 3.

79 "Yunbu Guangdong Xuexiao zhaosheng guanggao," Dahan Gongbao, July 22, 1919, 3. This was a well known nationalist slogan.

80 "Qing'e Xuexiao kaimu zhi chengdian," [Plans for the opening ceremonies of the Qing'e School], Dahan Gongbao, July 18, 1921, p 3.
language schools of British Columbia to be worthy of their attention. Between 1915 and 1922, the Chinese schools of Vancouver and Victoria were inspected by official Chinese government delegations on at least three occasions. These inspections were conducted by leading Chinese scholars on behalf of the Northern Chinese government which had official Canadian recognition. The motive for these inspections came out of China’s internal political situation and the desire of the Northern government to win support away from the Southern Kuomintang government and to sell government bonds. Nonetheless, the inspections were major events accompanied by official banquets and much speech-making. A particularly warm reception was given to a delegation headed by the Principal of Beijing University, Cai Yuanpei, in 1921. Meanwhile in 1918-19, the Chinese delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference stopped over in Vancouver and Victoria to inspect the CPS and Oi-kwok schools and present prize money for the students.

This connection of Chinese language schools to the Chinese government was further evident in the invitations extended to the Vancouver-based Chinese consuls to present prizes and degrees to

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81 Until briefly re-unified under the KMT in the late 1920s, China was divided between a Northern government located in Beijing and the KMT-led government in Canton. The Northern government was the one recognized by the foreign powers, and by Canada.

82 See, for example, "Huanying hui zhi renao" [The warmth of the Welcome meeting], Dahan Gongbao May 3, 1918, 3; "Lingshu lai han zhao lu" [Record of delegation’s visit], Ibid., January 2, 1919, 2; "Cai Yuanpei Xiansheng zhi cheng kiang" [Mr. Cai Yuanpei’s activities], Ibid., July, 7, 1921 and "Cai Yuanpei Xiansheng yanshuo ci" [The text of Mr. Cai Yuanpei’s address], Ibid., 1. Cai was raising money for the Beijing Library.
graduating students at the CPS in Victoria and schools in Vancouver. Since the CKT supported the Northern government, such events were reported in its official organ, *The Chinese Times*, but this activity also reflected the roles of the consuls as the leading Chinese citizens in British Columbia. The Chinese consuls at least had the right of audience with British Columbia officials and often acted as a buffer between the Chinese and the dominant society.\(^3\) They were also the ultimate authority figures in the community. On two occasions in 1920 and 1922, the CBA in Vancouver held meetings with all the Chinese students attending Vancouver School Board schools, at which the Chinese consul "explained the rules of the schools" and urged students to obey them in order to forestall school segregation.\(^4\)

The importance of Chinese politics to the Chinese language sector was evident in the efforts of various rival political-fraternal organizations to build schools. The interests of political groups in schooling were two-fold. First an association school insured the indoctrination of members' children in the party's orientation. Second, building schools was a way of gaining support from the community as a whole and demonstrating the

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\(^3\) For example, the Chinese consul insisted on being present when the English language abilities of Chinese coal miners on Vancouver Island were inspected by provincial officials. See *The Chinese Times*, September 5, 1916, 3. Cited in CCRC, Box 4, folders for 1916.

\(^4\) "Zhonghua Huiguan zhixun xuesheng jishi" [Memo on the Chinese Benevolent Association instructions to students], Ibid, September 7, 1920,p. 3 and "Lin Lingshi bugao" [Notice from Ambassador Lin], Ibid., November 7, 1922, 3.
advantages of membership in the association. Consequently, the Empire Reform Association was the first political group to build schools, but after 1911 the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chee Kung Tang (CKT) were also active in establishing schools.

KMT activists were instrumental in creating the Chinese Public School in Vancouver. The KMT had won control of the CBA in Vancouver away from the Empire Reform Association in 1912. Consequently, although the CPS in Vancouver was the creation of the CBA, it was heavily influenced by the KMT. Its first principal Tsang Shak-chun [Zeng Shiquan] was a prominent KMT activist, as was one its first teachers, Can Sue-yen [Chen Shuren]. During the 1930s, the school was even re-organized directly as a KMT organ. During the 1920s, the CKT also became active, if a bit tardily, in creating schools. In 1920-21, The Chinese Times campaigned for CKT schools, noting that "every association" was building a school. The CKT subsequently created schools in Victoria, New Westminster and Cumberland. During this era the Empire Reform Association, renamed the Constitutionalist Party

85 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 108.
86 Ibid, 110.
87 Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 334. See also Li Riru, Wengehua Huagiao Gongli Xiaoxue gailan [An overview of the Vancouver Overseas Chinese Public Elementary School] (Vancouver: Chinese Public School, [1943]), passim.
88 "Qing'e Xuexiao kaimu zhi chengdian," Dahan Gongbao, July 18, 1921, 3; "Qinghua Xuexiao xingdong xueti," Ibid., March 9, 1923, 3; and The Chinese Times, July 14, 1924, 3, CCRC Box 4, folder for 1922, Note 2.
after 1911, worked in close alliance with the CKT. 89

The Class Nature of Chinese Schooling

Providing for shixue, students who had "lost schooling," 90 was a recurring theme in the formation of Chinese language schools. The fact that there were children who were not receiving schooling of any kind was behind the formation of the Le Qun Yishu and its reorganization in 1908. Again in 1917, the CPS in Vancouver was formed to provide for shixue. In 1920, concern for children not attending school even led the teachers at two Chinese language schools in Vancouver to offer correspondence courses. 91

Who exactly these shixue were is an interesting question. It would certainly appear that they were not the children of the wealthiest merchants and community leaders who generally had the resources to insure that their children received both a Chinese and an English education. In Victoria, Lee Mong Kow, the immigration interpreter, had been instrumental in organizing the Le'Qun Yishu. He continued to be active in this school, serving as its principal, for the next twenty years. 92 Lee's interest in insuring that his children received a Chinese education was such that in 1914 he even

89 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 109-110.

90 The construction is similar to the term "shiye," meaning literally "lost enterprise," i.e. to be unemployed.

91 "Liang jiaoyuan tongxue yucai zhi rexin" [The enthusiasm of two teachers for cultivating the talents of students], Dahan Gongbao, April 21, 1920, 3.

92 See the list of principals and their terms in Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xuexiao tekan, Part III, 59.
sent his two sons back to Canton for further studies.\textsuperscript{93} In Vancouver, Yip Sang and Won Alexander Cumyou were intimately involved with the Oi-kwok Hok-tong, and in 1909, as previously mentioned, Yip even hired a tutor to teach his twenty-three children. All of these community leaders sent their children to the provincial public schools as well. In 1908, Lee applied for and received a permit from the Victoria School Board to allow his three children to attend its schools.\textsuperscript{94} In the same year, most of Yip Sang’s children were attending Central School in Vancouver.\textsuperscript{95} Gordon Cumyow’s daily trip to attend school in Chinatown came at the end of his regular school day in Vancouver School Board schools.\textsuperscript{96}

Although these members of the Chinese elite were actively involved in school provision, it appears that the schools were not only intended for their children, but for those of other less prosperous merchants. Chinese language schooling was of direct instrumental value to the members of the merchant class. Literacy

\textsuperscript{93} The Chinese Times, October 22, 1914, 3, CCRC, Box 4, folder for 1914.

\textsuperscript{94} Lai, "Discrimination in Education in Victoria," 53.

\textsuperscript{95} "Older Oriental Pupils to be Separated from Whites," Vancouver Daily Province, February 11, 1908, 1. This report claims that there were 27 children belonging to Yip. In fact, he only had 23, nineteen boys and four girls. See Yee, Saltwater City, 43. Judging from the 1906 photograph of some of his family members reproduced in Ibid., 43-44, several of his children were far too young to have attended schools of any kind c. 1908. This is another example of the exaggerated reporting on the number of Asians in British Columbia public schools common to the English language media.

\textsuperscript{96} Opening Doors, 17.
in both Chinese and in English not only allowed merchants to enter into extended commercial relations, it also was a valuable tool for survival in Canada. Life in a country like Canada placed a premium on literacy. The ever-changing nature of white supremacy meant that previously barred areas of endeavour might suddenly open up, thus providing work or new opportunities for investment. By the same token, a district, or economic sector, that had earlier welcomed the Chinese might suddenly become hostile. In the former case, one's economic well-being could depend upon accurate information and in the latter case, one's very survival might depend upon it. Chinese language newspapers, like The Chinese Times, provided this kind of information.\(^97\)

At the same time, the periodic efforts of white supremacy to further restrict the Chinese provided an incentive to organize beyond the local level. Such organization in turn presupposed a common identity and a common language. The utility of organizing beyond the local level was apparent in the 1922-1923 school segregation dispute. One of the first acts of Victoria's Resist School Segregation Association was to write to other communities, and even China, to request support.\(^98\) In response, the Vancouver Chinese Benevolent Association established the Vancouver Resist

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\(^97\) See Chinese Canadian Research Collection, Box 4.

School Segregation Rear Support Association to raise money and provide moral support to the Chinese in Victoria. It also held several public meetings which claimed that unless school segregation was stopped in Victoria, it would not only spread to Vancouver schools, but all sectors of Chinese endeavour in Canada.99

In this context, the Chinese nationalist content of schooling was probably a reaction to the hostility of the dominant society. As David T.H. Lee has noted of Chinese immigrants in Canada,

Because of early immigration laws barring their ever becoming Canadian citizens and also because they could not live together with their families, very often they took discrimination and oppression from the Western people to heart, and deep down, in their heart, they cherish the idea that "people of different races think differently." This kind of idea inevitably led to their loyalty to their original country. They were more concerned about the development of their former country than that of Canada where they were residing.100

Thus it is not surprising that Chinese language schools took China, not Canada, as their point of reference.

White supremacy also encouraged Chinese language schools in Canada to be similar to their counterparts in China. The conditional nature of the Chinese presence in Canada meant that Chinese entrepreneurs or professionals might easily find their ambitions blocked in Canada, in which case, China could provide the best area of endeavour. It is likely that both white society and

99 For example, "Bokuan ju Weibu Kangzheng Fenxiao Tuan" [Funds assist Victoria Resist School Segregation Association], Chinese Times, December 20, 1922, 2.

100 Li, Tung Hai (David T.H. Lee), "Inside the Chinese Community," (typescript, n.d.), CCRC Box 25, Number 6.
first generation Chinese pressured second generation children to seek fame and fortune in China.\textsuperscript{101} This ability to return to China was evident when several graduates of the Chinese Public School in Victoria went to China for further study.\textsuperscript{102} Would-be engineers and teachers who had their careers blocked in Canada also could go to China. For example, Susan Yipsang, the daughter of Yip Sang, eventually became the principal at a prestigious girls' middle school in Canton.\textsuperscript{103}

White supremacy is also important in explaining an additional feature of the Chinese Public Schools. In comparison to the Chinese attending provincial public schools, they appear to have enrolled a higher proportion of girls. In 1915, for example, of the Victoria CPS's ninety students, sixty-two were boys and twenty-eight girls. In 1914-1915, the segregated school board school on Fisgard Street in Victoria enrolled eighty-one boys and only seventeen girls. The next year at Rock Bay, there were forty boys and five girls.\textsuperscript{104} Although it is no doubt true that some Chinese

\textsuperscript{101} See, for example, "'All For China',' Victoria Daily Colonist, August 13, 1909, 4.

\textsuperscript{102} This was the case with the majority of the first graduating class. See "Wei Xiao riban youwei sheng ju jiaoyuan zhiyung biye nusheng zhi diaocha," Dahan Gongbao, September 8, 1915, 8. By 1918, ten of the school's fifteen graduates had gone to China for further studies. See "Weibu Huaqiao Gong Xiao huojian" [Accomplishments of the Victoria Overseas Chinese Public School], Ibid., December 27, 1918, 3.

\textsuperscript{103} Yeh Ch'un-t'ien xiansheng chuanji, 18. See also Yee, Saltwater City, 86, 99-103.

\textsuperscript{104} Annual Report, 1914-1915, A XXXVIII and Annual Report, 1915-1916, A XLI.
girls did not attend schools of any kind during this era, and that the schooling of girls was devalued by Chinese patriarchy, it appears that the Chinese schools may well have been less hostile to Chinese girls than white schools. This points to the fact that white supremacy had a differential affect on Chinese males compared to Chinese females. This differential affect can be seen in the gender imbalance created by immigration patterns. It can also be seen in the discussions of school segregation which, as should be apparent, were gendered. Thus school segregationists often spoke of "Chinese boys" in contrast to "white boys and girls."

The fact that a significant number of girls attended Chinese language schools is a further indication of the instrumental value of Chinese schooling to the merchant class. Confucianism did not allow for the schooling of women, thus the presence of girls in classrooms was already a departure from traditional gender practices. The number of girls who made up the graduating class of the CPS in Victoria and enroled at the Jingcun School in Vancouver in 1915, as well as the post-secondary studies of several of Yip Sang's daughters, suggests that the right of girls to an education had gained some recognition from the leading merchants.

105 See Yee, Saltwater City, 44-46.

106 During this era the male/female ratio amongst Chinese in Victoria was six to one, in other centres in B.C. is was as high as twenty to one. See Census of Canada, 1921, Vol. 1, 542-542.

107 See the graduation pictures of the Victoria Chinese Public School in Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xuexiao tekan, passim.

108 Wickberg, From China to Canada, 95.
This openness to the education of girls may have reflected the importance of Chinese women to the merchant economy, rather than a weakening of Chinese patriarchy. Since the unpaid labour of Chinese women was particularly valuable to Chinese merchants, and since acting as clerks and the like required some literacy, otherwise conservative merchants may have encouraged their daughters to attend Chinese schools.109

Because of the value of Chinese language schooling to the Chinese residents of British Columbia and the at times inadequate education obtained from the provincial schools, various associations tried to establish schools for their members. The interest of clan and district associations in schools suggests that they served more than narrow political purposes. These schools were directly controlled by their parent organizations. For example, there was considerable overlap in the executives of the Kwong Chi School in Vancouver and its parent organization, the Yin-ping Tong Fook Tong. The president of the association was even the honourary principal of the school.110 Clan and district

109 Adilman, "A Preliminary Sketch of Chinese Women and Work in British Columbia," 53-78. The presence of girls in significant numbers may have also reflected the upper class pretensions of Chinese merchants. In this era, the schooling of girls was becoming more acceptable. Best known perhaps were the three Soong sisters, who attended Ivy League schools in the United States. Soong Qingling married Sun Yat-sen and became the head of state of the People's Republic of China as Chairman of the National People's Congress. Her sisters married Chiang Kai-shek and the financier H.H. Kung.

110 Compare the two entries for The Chinese Times on January 5, 1922 recorded as Note 2 and Note 5 in CCRC, Box 4, folder for 1922.
association schools were open to association members only and their graduates would have been expected to contribute to the success of the association and its members as a whole. One such school was the Yin-ping association's Kwong Chi School which was opened in 1919. Another was the re-organized Oi-kwok Hok-tong in Vancouver which operated under the Lim Sai Ho Tong, or Lim Association. In 1925, the Wong Kong Har Tong, or Wong clan association, opened the Mon Keong School in Vancouver.\footnote{111}

There were also several private schools. One was the Canton School which opened in 1919, apparently founded by a group of Vancouver merchants, and was still operating in 1923.\footnote{112} Another was the Man Wah School which was opened in 1925 in order to follow "the scientific teachings established by China’s Ministry of Education." This school was run by Zhu Shuocun who had taught at the Victoria CPS from 1920-21 and again from 1923-1925.\footnote{113}

Significantly, merchants were not the only Chinese in British Columbia who had school-aged children. There was also a working class component which had significantly increased in size by the 1920s. At the turn of the century, there were few Chinese families

\footnote{111} "Wenjiang Xuexiao kaixue jicheng" [Report on the opening of the Mon Keong School], Dahan Gongbao, June 12, 1925, 3. This report confirms that the Oi-kwok Hok-tong was being run by the Lim association.

\footnote{112} For a list of donors to the school, see "Yunbu Guangdong Xuexiao mingxie juankuan" [Vancouver’s Canton School thanks donors], Dahan Gongbao, September 1, 1920, 3. See also The Chinese Times, December 8, 1923, 3, CCRC Box 4, folder for 1923.

\footnote{113} "Jiaosheng guanggao" [Notice calling for students], Dahan Gongbao, July 25, 1925, 3. See also Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xuexiao tekan, Part III, 60-61.
of any kind and most children were from the wealthier merchant backgrounds. In 1902 in Victoria, there was a mere seventy-six Chinese families altogether. Of these, twenty-eight were the families of labourers, while forty-five belonged to the merchant class. However, since some merchants had several wives, an even greater proportion of the children would have belonged to merchant families. Therefore, the majority of the 145 Canadian-born Chinese children in Victoria at the turn of the century are likely to have come from merchant backgrounds.

Although it is not known how many Chinese children were in Vancouver at this time, much the same situation likely applied. One measure was the number of married women present. According to the information presented to the 1902 Royal Commission, Vancouver’s Chinese population stood at 2,053 males and 27 females. The latter included sixteen merchant wives, eight labourers’ wives, as well as one women married to a minister and two to interpreters. Assuming a proportional distribution between children and married women, the majority of Chinese children in Vancouver would also have been from merchant backgrounds.

The number of Canadian-born Chinese, however, was minuscule in relation to the overall size of the Chinese community. For example, as late as 1921, according to census figures the total Chinese population of Canada was 39,536, but this included only

114 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 12-13. There was also one minister’s family and two of interpreters.

115 Ibid.
2,966 Canadian-born of whom 2,133 had been born in British Columbia.\textsuperscript{116}

At the turn of the century, few Chinese children attended schools of any kind. The 1902 Royal Commission cited a total of 147 Chinese children as attending public schools in British Columbia out of an estimated Chinese population of 15,942. This included twenty-nine in Victoria and twenty-six in Vancouver.\textsuperscript{117} This figure of twenty-nine Chinese children in the Victoria schools was only one-fifth of the Canadian-born Chinese children there and would have been an even smaller proportion if the number of immigrant children were included.\textsuperscript{118}

Although most families at the turn of the century and earlier would have belonged to merchants, there also appears to have been a large number of immigrant teenaged boys. This was certainly the case at the height of the Chinese influx during the building of the railroad when there was a large number of Chinese boys between the ages of twelve and seventeen in British Columbia. Most of these boys were likely labourers. In the most settled community of

\textsuperscript{116} Census of Canada, 1921, Volume I, 560-561.

\textsuperscript{117} Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, 13.

\textsuperscript{118} It is not known how many immigrant Chinese children were in Victoria at this time. It was presumably few, since otherwise their numbers would have been included in the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association's population figures. In fact, fewer Chinese children than the number cited by the Commission may have attended Victoria schools. During discussions of proposals for school segregation in Victoria in 1901-02, between fifteen and twenty was the figure usually cited as the Chinese enrolment. See, for example, "Chinese in The Schools," \textit{Victoria Daily Colonist}, March 13, 1902, 2.
Victoria, there were thirty-one girls, ten boys under the age of twelve, ninety-two twelve to seventeen year old boys, while in New Westminster, then the second most important Chinese community, there were two girls, five boys under twelve and eighty-five boys between twelve and seventeen.\textsuperscript{119} In the rest of the province there were seven other Chinese children (including presumably both boys under twelve and girls) and 330 boys between twelve and seventeen.\textsuperscript{120} The boys were likely younger than these statistics at first suggest. The statistics which were compiled by the Chinese themselves would have followed the Chinese custom in which a child is one \textit{sui} (year old) at birth, becoming one \textit{sui} older at each subsequent Chinese New Year. Thus a Chinese child, who would be considered a few days old under Western calculations, could be two under the Chinese system, and seventeen-year-olds only fifteen.

During the twentieth century, native-born Chinese Canadian children were also joined by a significant influx of immigrant Chinese. Between 1906 and 1924, 43,380 Chinese immigrants entered Canadian ports, most destined for British Columbia. These numbers included 3,987 children under the age of eighteen. Significantly, however, only 896 of these belonged to the families of merchants or clerks. The remainder included 122 children of general labourers, three of farmers and seven of mechanics and 3,048 unclassified children. Towards the end of this period, the proportion of merchant children entering Canada decreased. In 1921-24 1,715

\textsuperscript{119} Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 363-65.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
Chinese children entered Canada, but only 192 belonged to merchant or clerk backgrounds. All of this suggests that the proportion of non-merchant children in British Columbia society was increasing significantly by the early 1920s. But few of these children appear to have been in schools of any kind. Certainly the voluntary Chinese sector could not hope to accommodate these numbers.

**The Growth of the Chinese Sector**

This growth in the school-aged population, along with the inadequacies of the provincial public schools, help to account for the relative explosion in the number of Chinese language schools in the province from 1917 onwards. In 1915, when Chinese language schools in British Columbia were inspected by a delegation from China, there were only three in operation. These were the Chinese Public School in Victoria, an Oi-kwok Hok-tong in New Westminster, and the Jingcun School in Vancouver. By 1917, these schools were joined by the Chinese Public School in Vancouver, and the Oi-kwok Hok-tong which had resumed functioning in 1916. By 1921, there were two more Chinese language schools in Vancouver. These

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122 See *The Chinese Times*, June 26, 1915, 3, CCRC, Box 4, folder for 1915; Ibid, June 30, 1915, 2; and Ibid., July 2, 1915, 3.

123 See *The Chinese Times*, July 16, 1916, 3, CCRC, Box 4, folder for 1916. It was likely in this era that Gordon Won Cumyow attended the school. In 1915, he was a high school student at Britannia High School. See Board of School Trustees, District 39, Vancouver High School Examination Results, City of Vancouver Archives.
included the Kwong Chi School [Guangzhi Xuexiao] run by the Yin-Ping Tong Fook Tang district association, and the Guangdong Xuexiao or "Canton School" which was a private school sponsored by a wealthy merchant.\textsuperscript{124} By 1926, there were at least seven schools operating in Vancouver. These included the CPS, and the Canton School, the Mon Keong School run by the Wong Association, the Wenhua Xuexiao, a private school run by a former teacher for the CPS, and two other schools.\textsuperscript{125} In addition the Lim Association had taken over the old Aiguo School of the Empire Reform Association sometime around 1923.\textsuperscript{126}

Several other schools were established elsewhere in British Columbia. In 1924 in Victoria, in addition to the CPS there was an Oi-kwok Hok-tong, and the Qing’e School.\textsuperscript{127} This latter school was affiliated with the CKT and had been established in 1921.\textsuperscript{128} In


d\textsuperscript{124} The Kwong Chi School was a year old in 1921. See "Tong Fu Tang yangqing Feng Jiaoyan zhi chenghui" [The Mutual Benefit Association’s welcoming celebrations for Teacher Feng], Dahan Gongbao, December 5, 1921, 3 and "Yunbu Gaungdong Xuexiao zhao sheng gaunggao" [Notice of the Vancouver Canton School’s call for students], Ibid, July 22, 1919, 3

d\textsuperscript{125} See "Huaqiao jiaoyu jie zhi hao xiaoxi" [Good news from the world of Overseas Chinese education], Dahan Gongbao, June 7, 1926, 2-3. This was an announcement of the formation of an instructors’ association. I have not been able to identify two of the schools mentioned in the announcement, but one was likely run by a clan association.

d\textsuperscript{126} Sing Lim, West Coast Chinese Boy, 11, 22, 50 and 62.

d\textsuperscript{127} All three schools participated in the events marking the July 1 "Humiliation Day." See "Weibu Huaqiao Qi Yi Yundong zhi yangqing," Dahan Gongbao, July 4, 1924, 3.

d\textsuperscript{128} "Qing’e Xuexiao kaimu zhi chengdian" [Report on the opening of the Qing’e School], Dahan Gongbao, July 18, 1921, 3.
the same era, the CKT also established schools in New Westminster and Cumberland. 129

The variety of these schools reflects the difficulties that Chinese communities had in meeting their educational needs. Chinese language schools were severely constrained by the practical realities of Chinese life in Canada. Whatever their roles in promoting Chinese nationalism, building collective identities through language instruction, and fostering a separate Chinese public in Canada, they were always limited in their ability to provide for all Chinese children.

In 1899, when the Le Qun Yishu was opened in Victoria, by the organizers' own calculations, the majority of Chinese children would still not have attended school. 130 In the middle of the 1920s, almost three times as many Chinese children attended British Columbia provincial schools as attended Chinese language schools. 131 Except for the two Chinese Public Schools, which seemed to have enrolled approximately 100 students each, the other schools in Vancouver and Victoria most likely enrolled thirty to fifty students each. The Jingcun School enrolled thirty-one boys

129 "Qinghua Xuexiao xingdong xueti" [Qinghua School starts classes], Dahan Gongbao, March 9, 1923, 3. On Cumberland, see The Chinese Times, July 14, 1924, 3, CCRC Box 4, folder for 1922, Note 2; also see Wickberg, From China to Canada, 125.


131 Cheng, Oriental Immigration in Canada, 216 & 220.
and fifteen girls in 1915.\textsuperscript{132} The Kwong Chi School had thirty students shortly after it began in 1921,\textsuperscript{133} while in the mid-1920s, the Lim Association's Oi-kwok school had sixty students and the CKT School in Cumberland had 26 students.\textsuperscript{134} Thus altogether it is unlikely that the eleven Chinese language schools in British Columbia that I have identified c. 1923 enroled more than 550 students.

This low enrolment is due to several factors. All Chinese language schools were under severe financial constraints and appear to have been continually in search of funds. Several launched fund-raising campaigns in order to survive. For example, in 1917, the Oi-kwok Hok-tong in Vancouver announced that it was short of funds.\textsuperscript{135} In 1923, the Canton School in that city launched a door-to-door subscription campaign.\textsuperscript{136} Even schools supported by well-endowed associations were dependent on public subscriptions. The CKT in New Westminster financed its school from donations,\textsuperscript{137} while


\textsuperscript{133} The Chinese Times, January 5, 1922, CCRC, Box 4, folder for 1922, Note 2.

\textsuperscript{134} Sing Lim, West Coast Chinese Boy, 26 and The Chinese Times, July 14, 1924, 3, CCRC Box 4, folder for 1924.

\textsuperscript{135} "Yunbu Aiguo Xuetang tonggao" [Notice from the Vancouver Oi-kwok School], Dahan Gongbao, July 30, 1917, 3.

\textsuperscript{136} The Chinese Times, December 8, 1923, 3, CCRC Box 4, folder for 1923.

\textsuperscript{137} The Chinese Times, March 28, 1923, 3, CCRC Box 4, folder for 1923.
in 1922 the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in Victoria announced that it was so severely strapped financially that the bank might foreclose on the Chinese Public School building. In Vancouver in 1923 the CPS launched a subscription campaign, in effect selling shares in the association, and canvassing door-to-door.

This uncertain financial situation had two consequences for attendance at Chinese language schools. First, fund-raising and contributions from the CBAs or parent associations could only go so far. Consequently all Chinese language schools, at least after World War One, with the possible exception of clan and district association schools, charged some form of tuition. This would have prevented poorer and working class children and youths from attending such schools. As their families were the most likely to need children's labour to help them survive, even if they were able to afford the tuition for Chinese language schooling, it would have been for a short time at best.

Second, the schools themselves, possibly with the exception

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139 "Mingxie rexin jiaoyu zhu jun" [Formal thanks to the gentlemen enthusiastic about education], Dahan Gongbao, September 20, 1923, 3 and "Mingxie" [Formal thanks], Ibid., October 12, 1923, 3. See also The Chinese Times, September 21, 1923, 3, CCRC, Box 4, folder for 1923.

140 See Wickberg, From China to Canada, 171-2.

141 Sing Lim, for example, spent much of his childhood working. See West Coast Chinese Boy, 35-41.
of the CPS in Victoria often functioned intermittently. As we have already seen in the case of Victoria, replacing teachers could be prohibitively expensive. Consequently, if a teacher quit it was often necessary to suspend classes. This was apparently the case at the CPS in Vancouver. According to David T.H. Lee, the school functioned only intermittently after its founders left for China until reformed by the KMT in the 1930s. The school even suspended operations for a time in 1922.\textsuperscript{142} In 1925, the school was again plunged into a crisis when both of its teachers announced their resignations at a meeting of the Chinese Benevolent Association.\textsuperscript{143} This intermittent functioning doubtless prevented many Chinese children from attending.

Altogether these factors may have prevented many people from attending Chinese language schools or have forced them to attend for only a relatively short time. This lack of attendance in turn translated into a very low graduation rate for Chinese language schooling. For example, few students appear to have graduated at the Victoria Chinese Public School. Between 1909 and 1925 the school enroled between forty-three and one hundred and forty seven y-three students graduated.\textsuperscript{144}

For all of its importance to the Chinese merchant society,

\textsuperscript{142} Lee, Jianada Huaqiao shi, 334.

\textsuperscript{143} See "Zhonghua Huiguan zhongyao yi'an" [An important proposal from the Chinese Benevolent Association], Dahan Gongbao, May 8, 1925, 3.

\textsuperscript{144} For enrolments, see Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xuexiao tekan, Part 5, 26. For graduates, see the pictures of graduating classes, Ibid., Part 1.
few Chinese children seem to have attended Chinese language schools. Those that did were most likely the sons and daughters of the wealthier merchants and professionals. By the 1920s, there were too few schools which were too expensive and which operated too intermittently to be usable by the majority of the school-aged population. Consequently for most Chinese, the only forum open for their education was the provincial public schools. For them at least, there was no escaping the dominance of the white society.
CHAPTER SEVEN:

"QUESTIONING THE EXISTENCE OF THE WORLD."

White Supremacy

To white supremacists, the Chinese, other Asians, and First Nations people of British Columbia were immutably different from whites. They spoke different languages, came from different cultures, had different needs and concerns. These differences seemed self-evident and required no explanation. For whites, the members of these groups became Others who were at best useful servants, never equal partners, and only rarely people like themselves. The Chinese people of British Columbia became replaced in the eyes of most whites by the iconic "Chinaman" who, as the World War One era textbook explained, "is not a native of this country" and who not only "does not speak our language," but whose skin colour "is different from ours" and worse yet who "has no family, no wife, no children."

This ideological fiction was belied by the presence and the activities of the Chinese themselves. By the 1920s, they were as much "natives" of the province as were the members of any other group. The society they had formed was as much a part of British Columbia as was the society of whites. They were no more alien than were the white settlers and later arrivals who labelled them
as such. The constructs of the iconic "Chinaman," and its generic counterpart in "the Oriental," were not reflections of them. Rather they were the product of dominance, a result of the power to define who could, and who could not, legitimately and equally participate within the dominant society. This power was manifested in the codification of the Chinese status as Other in law and in custom, and the definition of different groups by a variety of allegedly objective characteristics as well as differential rights and privileges.

Thus, at its heart, racism in British Columbia helped to create the hegemony of people of European origins, to legitimate this hegemony and to marginalize the members of other groups. White supremacy in this sense was not merely a racial doctrine, it was a political one. As a political doctrine, it defined the boundaries of political discourse and came to be interwoven into the fabric of identities that made British Columbia society. It acted in concert with other ideological constructs—for example, notions of law and of property—and depended upon a whole series of taken-for-granted assumptions: notions of Asians as alien and whites as native, notions of character, and of collective interests. As a political doctrine it was not the exclusive creation of opportunists or the badly-intentioned, but was exercised and maintained even by those who explicitly rejected racist doctrines or, as was evident in the case of Principal Cunningham, questioned the wisdom of segregationist practices. It operated in large part by denying Asians the reality of their
presence in the province, and the reality of their voices. White supremacy defined what it was to be a British Columbian and what it was to be a Canadian. In these respects white supremacy, far from being the marginal phenomenon that historians of British Columbia have often ascribed it to be, was integral to the making of British Columbia society and its political institutions. It shaped people's identities, their forms of government and their ways of living.

Public schooling was an important vehicle for the construction of supremacist hegemony. Schooling and school textbooks indoctrinated young people in imperialist and racist ideologies, linked notions of difference and notions of character, justified and glorified Western domination and control, and dressed up these notions in a scientific and supposedly objective description of the world. As schools inculcated Canadian nationalism in each rising generation, racism became so integrated into the forms and contents of state schooling that it would have been almost impossible to question the supremacy of whites, or to

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1 The most recent survey history on British Columbia, Jean Barman's The West Beyond the West, is refreshing insofar as it admits that racism was a major feature of the province's history. It even elevates discussion of the position of First Nations people in the province's history to a chapter in its own right, one coming in the middle of the book rather than as merely an introductory discussion of pre-contact society (see "Chapter 8, Disregard of Native Peoples, 1858-1945," pp. 151-175). However, the work, largely influenced by the perspectives of Patricia E. Roy and W. Peter Ward, still assumes what Edgar Wickberg referred to as "the centrality of white people." In this respect, as Edgar Wickberg has pointed out, it is time that this perspective was abandoned in favour of one which allows the writing of a truly "multicultural history" of the province. See Wickberg, review of A White Man's Province, 100.
conceive of British Columbia as anything other than "a white man's country."

This is not to say that this ideology was universally accepted by all young people or uncritically presented by all teachers. Forcing students to memorize and regurgitate passages of texts does not guarantee agreement or understanding, and children when left to their own devices are quite capable of circumventing adult conventions. Many a teacher has also been in the position of disagreeing with the prescribed text's view of the world. Certainly Asians and First Nations people themselves, in challenging racist policies and practices, often resisted being "othered" and took steps to confront whites with their shared humanity. As Brian Simon has observed, even the most carefully thought out educational policies often have "unintended consequences."²

However, there is considerable evidence that the white people of British Columbia, by and large, bought the ideas of innate difference, 'race' and imperial superiority. While it is too much to suggest that schools alone were responsible for indoctrinating the population of B.C. in white supremacist concepts, it was in school that many of those who believed that B.C. was and should be the white man's province were first indoctrinated, and systematically so, in racist ideology. It was also in and around school that the violence which characterized white relations with

the Chinese began. It is certainly evident that by the 1920s, the contents of schooling were part of the "organization of an entire texture of life according to an ideology".\footnote{Arendt, \textit{Origins of Totalitarianism}, 363.}

Therefore, historically racism in British Columbia was much more than simply a set of negative attitudes, mistaken beliefs, prejudices or errors in thinking. Nor was racism merely physical and psychic violence. While it was certainly all of these things, it was also much more. It was integrated into the structures of power and authority within the state system, shaped the social constructions of public and of private domains, and structured people's experiences in a myriad of ways. In a fundamental sense, whites were unable to recognize the Chinese, and the members of certain other minority groups, as human beings like themselves. The fracturing of society along lines of 'race,' reproduced daily in the most mundane of interactions, was near total.

The resulting system of white supremacy was almost perfectly closed. The effects of supremacist domination on the Chinese remained largely outside the range of vision of the white society. For whites, their domination became invisible. The physical and ideological separation between the two groups engendered by domination insulated whites from the reality of their dominance. This insured that whites did not have to live with the consequences of their actions towards the Chinese, that as far as they were concerned the human costs involved went largely unencountered. For them the consequences of supremacy were private, while for the
Chinese they were all too public.

But white supremacy was not the only set of ideas and practices which shaped British Columbia society. While it often worked in conjunction with other ideological constructs, it occasionally conflicted with others. One such construct, itself originally invented to promote the dominance of a particular group if Bruce Curtis is to be believed, forestalled school segregation. The idea of the "common school," open to all regardless of race, colour, creed or even class, was used by the opponents of segregation, whites and Chinese alike.

The ability to create ideologies as part of an effort to understand and control the world is not the exclusive domain of the rulers. The targets of supremacist domination, in this case the Chinese, also created ideologies. Consequently, their response to supremacist domination was neither one of passive acquiescence nor futile, but heroic, resistance. Especially in the case of the merchant elite of the Chinese communities of British Columbia, their response involved a process of counter invention: creating a common identity as Chinese, creating parallel institutions. Like their white counterparts, Chinese merchants also used schooling as a vehicle for indoctrinating children in their constructions, only this time to instill in each rising generation the tools for survival in the face of domination. These tools

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4 The term "invention" is used deliberately to imply creation through conscious human activity. On the concept of invention, see Wagner, Invention of Culture. See also Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
included an identity of what it was to be Chinese separate from the dominant society's icons. For the Chinese in Canada, coming to terms with white supremacy at least in part involved the creation, through the devices of literacy and Chinese language schooling, of a domain separate and distinct from that of white society. This domain existed largely beyond the ken of white society and proved to be the greatest resource available to the Chinese in resisting white oppression. Its existence made possible their invention as a community, and enabled organized, community-wide, politically-conscious challenges to white domination such as the 1922-1923 students' strike.

The resulting picture of white supremacy that emerges is of a complex system, one whose many dimensions were continually in flux as they were challenged by the Chinese, and other groups, and as it found new forms of expression. Segregated schooling, for example, expanded and contracted under the pressures of white opinion and Chinese resistance. To acknowledge that white supremacy was in constant flux is not to render it any more palatable as a system. Rather it is to try and come to terms with its true horror: to recognize that for Chinese Canadians, their presence in British Columbia society was always contingent, and subject to potential renegotiation and exclusion.

Social Structure

But the question remains, how was this system possible? How was it that racism became such a sustained reality, part of the air
that people breathed as far as groups like the Chinese were concerned, but almost invisible as far as whites were concerned? How has it been possible that historians of British Columbia have treated racism as if it were an unfortunate aberration in the history of an otherwise decent society?

As should be evident, part of the answer lies in the operation of racist notions in conjunction with other ideological constructs, especially those of British imperialism and capitalist exploitation. Racism became part of the social construction of reality and part of people's "taken-for-granted" and officially-sanctioned knowledge about the world. It became one of the ways in which people made sense of their world.

However, part of the answer also lies in the ways in which people's interactions became structured over time; so that the human-made world came to be shaped in ways which did not render these taken-for-granted notions problematic for most members of the dominant group; so that it actually appeared that whites naturally belonged in British Columbia and other groups were at best sojourners. In this respect, racism was made possible through at once more mundane and more disturbing operations. What made this racist system possible in the first place was not simply a particular viciousness or greed on the part of people of European origins, but rather the severing of the bonds that otherwise weld people together.

In the conclusion to her seminal essay on totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt identified the social basis of this most modern of
tyrannies as something other than the strength of totalitarian regimes or the ruthlessness of their political programmes. Rather, according to Arendt, the social basis of totalitarianism is loneliness. For Arendt, writing in the sexist idiom of the 1950s, loneliness is at the same time contrary to the basic requirements of the human condition and one of the fundamental experiences of every human life. Even the experience of the materially and sensually given world depends upon my being in contact with other men, upon our common sense which regulates and controls all other senses and without which each of us would become enclosed in his own particularity of sense data which in themselves are unreliable and treacherous. Only because we have common sense, that is because not one man, but men in the plural inhabit the earth can we trust our immediate sensual experience.

Once these common bonds and myriad links between human beings are broken, what Luther called "thinking everything to the worst" becomes possible, since "[t]he only capacity of the human mind which needs neither the self nor the other nor the world to function safely and which is as independent of experience as it is of thinking is the ability of logical thinking whose premise is the self-evident." 5

Certainly in British Columbia, whites could "think everything to the worst" when it came to the Chinese and other groups. It was possible to imagine them as at once the most servile and the most fiendish, since the fact that they were most often neither was hidden from experience.

Arendt further observes that this fragmentation of the human

5 Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, 475-76. Emphasis in the Original.

6 Ibid., 477.
community "is closely connected with uprootedness and superfluousness which have been the curse of modern masses since the beginning of the industrial revolution and have become acute with the rise of imperialism at the end of the last century and the break-down of political institutions and social traditions of our own time."\(^7\) In this respect it is significant that white supremacy was produced out of the European colonization of British Columbia. In their haste to recreate the world they had left, settlers were unable and unwilling to establish the kinds of links between human beings that did not make the destruction of First Nations inevitable. Indeed, they did not know First Nations people well enough to know whether other options were possible. When the Chinese arrived, economic, cultural and class differences produced similar results, even if they were less catastrophic. In the uprootedness that gave birth to British Columbia society the normal connections between human beings were still-born, and racism came to full flower.

Arendt's discussion also suggests a way of evaluating the nature of the accomplishment involved in the Chinese process of counter invention to white dominance. She notes that totalitarianism, insofar as it robs human beings of their creative capacities, reduces humanity to "an animal laborans," with the result that

Isolation [in the political realm] then becomes loneliness. Tyranny based on isolation generally leaves the productive capacities of man intact; a tyranny over "laborers,"

\(^7\) Ibid., 475.
however, as for instance the rule over slaves in antiquity, would automatically be a rule over lonely, not only isolated, men and tend to be totalitarian. . . . Totalitarian government, like all tyrannies, certainly could not exist without destroying the public realm of life, that is, without destroying, by isolating men, their political capacities. But totalitarian domination as a form of government is new in that it is not content with this isolation and destroys private life as well. It bases itself on loneliness, on the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man.  

White supremacy in seeking to reduce the Chinese to mere labourers, in reserving for whites the capacity to define the social and political life of the province, and in imposing on male Chinese labourers years of loneliness and separation from families, was necessarily totalitarian in nature, albeit far less ruthlessly so than the more familiar systems of mid-twentieth century Europe. In this respect, the history of white supremacy in British Columbia bears out Arendt’s observations that anti-semitism and imperialism were earlier versions of later tyrannies.

But in resisting being reduced to animal laborans, the Chinese were also asserting their humanness. It is in this context that their invention of a public realm, however weak or however tentative, assumes its true significance. It was not only a re-assertion of their political capacities, but a strengthening of their connectedness and a way of bridging their loneliness. It was in this respect that their activities forestalled the totalitarian project, and sowed the seeds for the eventual demise of the structures of racism directed against them.

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8 Ibid.
Schooling and the Public Realm

If racism operates not only through its ideological completeness but also through a broader social process in which cause and effect are separated from each other and in which it becomes possible to think everything to the worst, this study holds ramifications for both contemporary educational policy and public policy as a whole. These implications go beyond the necessity of using the study of history to inform understanding of the present. Certainly this study implies that racism is deeply embedded in the structures of Canadian society and its key institutions, not the least of which are the structures of government. Although some of the more overt forms of discrimination may have gone by the wayside, and the most blatant of stereotypes may now be questioned, the basic separation between cause and effect remains. There still tends to be a profound disjunction with respect to racism between the experiences of the members of minority groups across the country and the members of the dominant society. It seems that Canadian society is split into a multiplicity of publics, but few are recognized and granted legitimacy by the Canadian state and society. This continues to allow racism to be at once a daily reality for the members of minority groups and invisible for most whites. This invisibility, in turn, makes it almost impossible in

9 A case in point is the continued existence and use of traditional forms of rule amongst some First Nations, even though these forms are not recognized by the dominant society. In the case of the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'an, see Glavin, A Death Feast in Dimslahamid.
practice to ameliorate racism as it insulates whites from the consequences of their domination.

Our educational system is no different from the rest of society in this respect. Recently British Columbia has entered into major changes in its educational system, but neither the 1988 B.C. Royal Commission on Education nor the Year 2000 curriculum reforms address the reality of racism in the experiences of minority students. Even school districts that have well-developed race relations policies and programmes seem to approach the subject with a combination of denial and lack of interest. Thus in education, white dominance continues to be invisible and unproblematic. Most often it goes unrecognized and in practice is sanctioned by silence.

When there are anti-racist interventions in education, they are pursued by isolated, if not lonely, individuals and are most often directed at what are believed to be abberations from otherwise tolerant norms. Often approaches are naive at best, trying to get people from different groups to "like" each other, or teaching children how to spot prejudice. Whatever the value of these activities in their own right, they tend to reduce racism to

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the contents of a lesson plan or of a unit in Social Studies, while ignoring on-going hostility and tension. Sometimes, however well-intentioned, interventions are dangerous when they are pursued by those ill-informed about racism and they shift attention away from the realities to reified notions of culture, or transform a social problem into the moral failings of individuals.12

Instead, other strategies are needed, strategies that make visible what is invisible, that make evident to whites the ways in which they take their dominance for granted and that render their dominance problematic. These strategies need to begin with the affirmation of the legitimacy of presence and of voice of all the peoples of Canada. Ultimately, they need to remake the public realm so that it incorporates and grants legitimacy to the many publics of Canadian society.13

This is an agenda which needs not only to be pursued at the

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12 These observations are in large part based on my own experience of anti-racist interventions in education in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. There is, however, some growing recognition of the problematic nature of some of the assumptions governing such interventions. For recent perspectives, see, for example, Celia Haig-Brown, "Science Teaching: Ethnicity and Gender Considerations," in Vincent D'Oyley and Stan Shapson (eds.) Innovative Multicultural Teaching (Toronto: Kagan and Woo, 1990), 92-105; Edith King, "Prejudice Reduction for North American Classrooms: Suggestions for Teachers," Ibid., 106-115; and Walt Werner, "Editorial Assumptions in Multicultural Curriculum Materials," Ibid., 194-203. See also Enid Lee, Letters to Marcia: A Teacher's Guide to Anti-Racist Education (Toronto: Cross Cultural Communications Centre, 1985).

highest levels of official policy; it is one that can also be pursued in classrooms. It involves recognizing the value of what each student brings, allowing each child to represent him or herself, and avoiding imposing identities because of their external characteristics. It means fashioning the classroom as a public space in which all children can participate.\(^\text{14}\) This is not a new strategy, but perhaps it is time to re-assert it, so that the next time officials call children out of classes, line them up and march them down the road, we all go with them.

\(^{14}\) See, for example, Vincent D'Oyley and Timothy J. Stanley, "Locating the Classroom: Wrestling with the Impact of Public Policy," in D'Oyley and Shapson, *Innovative Multicultural Teaching*, 17-35.
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