

The Settler Colonial Paradox of T.C. Douglas and the CCF in Saskatchewan, 1945 -  
1962.

by

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**the degree of** Masters of Arts

**in** History

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## **Abstract:**

This paper uses the life and politics of one man to analyse the dynamics of settler colonialism in Saskatchewan over the years directly following the Second World War. It tracks the history of Thomas Clement Douglas (1904 - 1986) and his peers in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. It examines his career and colleagues in the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) party, where Douglas served as Premier of Saskatchewan from 1944 - 1962 before moving to the federal government as leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP).

This paper demonstrates how settler colonialism circumscribed what was ‘thinkable’ for Douglas and his peers, with the resulting effect that well-intended policies intended to help Saskatchewan’s Indigenous population had negative outcomes. Douglas’ policy goals towards Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan differed little from the ways he approached the empowerment of all minority groups, and focused on political representation, citizenship rights (notably, for Indigenous groups, liquor licensing and the provincial franchise), and the extension and improvement of provincial welfare services. This paper focuses in particular on the extension of the provincial franchise and liquor licensing policies. Although Douglas planned wide-reaching reform for almost all parts of Saskatchewan society, he never imagined that Saskatchewan society would be fundamentally altered in order to accommodate Indigenous peoples. On the contrary, he always assumed that Indigenous people would have to be shaped to fit into the existing social and political framework. Douglas’ Indian Policy was not a paradox or an anomaly within an otherwise radical, progressive agenda. Rather, his progressivism itself was situated within the tenets of settler colonialism.

## **Lay Summary:**

This paper examines the life and political career of one of Canada's most famous politicians, Tommy Clement Douglas, the Cooperative Commonwealth Party Premier of Saskatchewan from 1945 - 1962. In the wake of World War Two, Douglas was celebrated for his efforts to introduce a kinder, more humane, and more caring atmosphere in the administration of government policy, with the goal of benefiting all those dependent on welfare and social services. When these same policy goals were applied to Indigenous groups, however, they had unintended deleterious consequences. This paper demonstrates how settler colonialism circumscribed what was 'thinkable' for Douglas and his peers, with the resulting effect that well-intended policies intended to help Saskatchewan's Indigenous population had negative outcomes. Douglas was unable to conceptualise Indigenous peoples as anything but a disadvantaged minority (much like immigrant groups) in Saskatchewan and as a result, tried to use the same 'top down' strategies that had been successful elsewhere in Saskatchewan when it came to implementing CCF government policies. This often amounted to paternalism and undermined the potential of Douglas' stated beliefs about the rights and capacity of Indigenous peoples, which were radical for their time among white politicians.

**Preface:**

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Rosalynd Anna Boxall.

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## 1.0 Introduction:

This paper uses the life and politics of one man to analyse the dynamics of settler colonialism in Saskatchewan over the years directly following the Second World War. It tracks the history of Thomas Clement Douglas (1904 - 1986) and his peers in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. It examines his career and colleagues in the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) party, where Douglas served as Premier of Saskatchewan from 1944 - 1962 before moving to the federal government as leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP).

T.C. Douglas was an immigrant settler to the state of Canada, travelling to Winnipeg from Scotland with his parents and siblings in 1911. Douglas forged a successful career in Saskatchewan, first as a Baptist minister, then as a politician in local and federal government. Many remember him fondly for his dedication to the improvement of the country that his family made their home.<sup>1</sup> Many of his goals in government, including the creation of a strong multicultural society, improved social welfare, accessible healthcare and education, and modernisation continue to find advocates throughout Canada. The mythology that once surrounded Douglas' political record is beginning to fade as many of the political ideas and principles he held, although they seemed radical in 1945, are now regarded as conventional political wisdom. He is still occasionally hailed by the political left as

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<sup>1</sup> A 2017 article for the the Regina Leader post, in commemoration of Canada's 150th Anniversary, carried the headline "CCF Premier Tommy Douglas Changed the Face of His Adopted Country". [<https://leaderpost.com/news/saskatchewan/canada-150-tommy-douglas> (accessed 16/05/2019)]. See also: Regina Leader Post, 19 October 2013, "Tommy Douglas Legacy Continues to Shine." and CBC, "Who is the Greatest Canadian? CBC Viewers Respond", (October 2004), [<http://jimmccullough.com/greatest%20Canadians.htm>, accessed 12.04.2018].



the father of democratic socialism in Canada and the originator of many of the best aspects of Canadian social welfare, most notably medicare.<sup>2</sup>

As a preacher and a politician, Douglas was committed to the process of socially and politically empowering otherwise disadvantaged groups: from unemployed veterans in Weyburn during the Depression to Indigenous groups throughout the province after he became Premier. In keeping with these commitments, Douglas sought to introduce a kinder, more humane, and more caring atmosphere in the administration of government policy, with the goal of benefiting all those dependent on welfare and social services, including Indigenous peoples. The basic intent of these policy goals was to equip Indigenous peoples with what Douglas saw as the necessary skills, political rights, and access to services that would enable them to survive in a capitalist and racist world. These goals differed little from the ways Douglas and the CCF approached the empowerment of all minority groups, and focused on political representation, citizenship rights (notably, for Indigenous groups, liquor licensing and the provincial franchise), and the extension and improvement of provincial welfare services. Although Douglas planned wide-reaching reform for almost all parts of Saskatchewan society, he never imagined that Saskatchewan society would be fundamentally altered in order to accommodate Indigenous peoples. On the contrary, he always assumed that Indigenous people would have to be shaped to fit into the existing social and political framework.

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<sup>2</sup> As recently as June 2019, the NDP referenced Douglas' legacy when they unveiled their 2019 election platform: "Seventy-five years ago yesterday, Tommy Douglas was elected the premier of Saskatchewan, where he led a movement that gave us medicare and, ever since, being Canadian means doctor visits, hospital care — without having to worry about how to pay for it. That was a powerful dream, but we know that dream is not complete. We can take it further," NDP leader Jagmeet Singh told a crowd of supporters in Hamilton. [<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/singh-ndp-speech-1.5177568> (accessed 21/06/2019)]. Ontario NDP leader, Andrea Howarth, claimed in the 2014 election campaign that she "walks in the footsteps of Tommy Douglas." [[https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2014/06/21/ontarios\\_nda\\_needs\\_to\\_rediscover\\_its\\_core\\_values.html](https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2014/06/21/ontarios_nda_needs_to_rediscover_its_core_values.html) (accessed 12/02/19)]. She reiterated these statements in her 2018 Ontario election campaign. [<https://www.macleans.ca/opinion/what-canada-needs-now-is-another-tommy-douglas/> (accessed 12/02.18)]. At a campaign event in Regina in 2015, NDP leader Thomas Mulcair read a quote from Douglas as he announced NDP support for a universal prescription drug plan in Canada: "Let's not forget that the ultimate goal of medicare must be to keep people well, not just keep patching them up when they get sick." [<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/09/18/nda-promises-26-billion-towards-universal-drug-plan.html> (accessed 12/02/19)].

An article written for *MacLean's* ahead of the NDP's 2018 election campaign called Douglas' premiership in Saskatchewan “the most ambitious Canada-building era in our history.”<sup>3</sup> The author intended this statement to be unequivocally positive. Yet for Indigenous peoples, the process of “Canada-building” has been anything but positive. Herein lies the paradox of Douglas' life and policies. Despite his good intentions and the fact that his CCF party was often ground-breaking and radical for their time in their approach to Indigenous peoples, his policies frequently proved to be destructive to Indigenous interests, particularly with regards to Métis colonies and Indigenous groups in the North of the province. Douglas' Indian policy was not an anomaly within an otherwise radical, progressive agenda. Rather, as I demonstrate below, his progressivism itself was situated within the tenets of settler colonialism.

Douglas failed to recognise this paradox: despite extensive critique and feedback on his policies from Indigenous leaders throughout the province from as early as 1946, he frequently acted in a paternalistic way with regards to the imposition of his Indian Policy. This paternalism, however, was not unique to his approach to Indigenous peoples. It fit within the broader CCF strategy of top-down social engineering, a mindset of ‘knowing what was best’ for people. While this strategy was often highly successful for the white population - for example, with the introduction of compulsory motor insurance, hospital insurance, and lowering the provincial voting age - for Indigenous peoples it was a practise of colonialism.

The first section of this paper situates Douglas and the working-class, farming population of Saskatchewan firmly within the tenets of settler colonialism, from Douglas' earliest days as a settler-immigrant in Canada to his transition into politics. This paper then examines two key CCF Indian Policies, liquor licensing and the extension of the provincial franchise, to show the limits of how

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Parkin, “What Canada Needs Now Is Another Tommy Douglas”, *MacLeans*, 2018, [<https://www.macleans.ca/opinion/what-canada-needs-now-is-another-tommy-douglas/>] (accessed 12/02/18)].

Douglas was able to conceptualise and respond to Indigenous peoples. I then examine Indigenous critiques of and responses to Douglas and these policies, showing how even as Douglas argued that Indigenous peoples had the intelligence, skills, and capacity to partake in the ‘rights and responsibilities’ of Canadian citizenship, he foreclosed the real possibility of these stated beliefs by overriding the concerns of Indigenous leaders when their wishes did not comply with his policy goals. This paper finishes by examining the limits of ‘thinkability’ that enabled Douglas to act in this way, again firmly situating Douglas and the CCF as beneficiaries and products of settler colonialism.

### *1.1 Historiography:*

Other scholars have already complicated Douglas’ legacy for Indigenous peoples considerably. I build on a rich historiography of T.C. Douglas and his CCF government, and the CCF’s Indian Policy. James Pitsula in his paper *The CCF and Treaty Indians* concluded that “an examination of Saskatchewan policy reveals a remarkable congruity with the basic principles of the 1969 White Paper.” He continued to suggest that “at best, [the CCF goal of] integration meant tolerance for minor ethnic particularities; at worst, it was indistinguishable from [historical policies of] assimilation.”<sup>4</sup> Laurie Barron convincingly argues that Pitsula is incorrect in conflating CCF policy and ideology with that of the 1969 White Paper. He argues instead that while Douglas was generally well intentioned and radical for his time in his approach to Indigenous peoples, his policies were fundamentally flawed by paternalism and underlying racism throughout the CCF party.<sup>5</sup> Tester, McNicoll, and Forsyth in their overview of CCF and NDP Indian policy argue that while the party (particularly after 1969) did not always adopt the most progressive stance towards Indigenous peoples, they were always willing to

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<sup>4</sup> J.M. Pitsula, ‘The Saskatchewan CCF Government and Treaty Indians, 1944 - 1964’, *The Canadian Historical Review*, 75, 21 - 52 (1994), 23.

<sup>5</sup> F. Laurie Baron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press (1997).

listen and modify their position in response to demands from Indigenous peoples.<sup>6</sup> David Quiring has laid important groundwork for this paper by complicating the ways in which the CCF government in Saskatchewan has been viewed. He characterises CCF policy as modern-day colonialism, accusing the party - and Douglas - of paternalism, neglect, and the imposition of a socialist ideology that hindered the advancement of northern Indigenous peoples in the province.<sup>7</sup> Raven Sinclair and Allyson Stevenson have linked the social welfare policies of the CCF to the deleterious Indigenous child welfare outcomes later in the century.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Stevenson is explicit in asserting that “the CCF, and Tommy Douglas specifically, bears a great deal of responsibility for the current crisis in child welfare.”<sup>9</sup>

The prevailing concerns and debates around the CCF’s Indian Policy have focused on the intentions behind and outcomes of Douglas’ politics.<sup>10</sup> Instead, I focus on how the limits of settler colonialism in Saskatchewan circumscribed what was ‘thinkable’ for Douglas and his peers. Labour historian Fred Burrill has recently suggested that foregrounding the structuring role of settler colonialism - adopting a “settler order framework” - can go a long way toward articulating a more

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<sup>6</sup> Frank James Tester, Paule McNicoll, Jessie Forsyth, “With an Ear to the Ground: The CCF/NSP and Aboriginal Policy in Canada, 1926 - 1993”, *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’études canadiennes*, 34, 1 (1999).

<sup>7</sup> David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press (2004).

<sup>8</sup> Raven Sinclair, ‘All My Relations ~ Native Transracial Adoption: A Critical Case Study of Cultural Identity’, PhD Thesis, University of Calgary (2007) and Raven Sinclair, ‘Identity Lost and Found: Lessons from the Sixties Scoop’, *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, 3, 65 - 82 (2007). Allyson Stevenson, Vibrations across a Continent: The 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act and the Politicization of First Nations Leaders in Saskatchewan, *American Indian Quarterly*, 37, Special Issue: Native Adoption in Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia, 218 - 236 (2013) and Allyson Stevenson, “Intimate Integration: A Study of Aboriginal Transracial Adoption in Saskatchewan, 1944 - 1984, PhD Thesis, University of Saskatchewan (2015).

<sup>9</sup> Allyson Stevenson, ‘Colonial legacy of the CCF’, interview for Red Anthropology (2016), [<https://redanthropology.wordpress.com/2016/03/17/colonial-legacy-of-the-ccf-an-interview-with-allyson-stevenson>], (accessed 30 September 2016)].

<sup>10</sup> Similar concerns have shaped other historiographical debates around well-intended, yet harmful, Indian Policies, particularly with regards to Indigenous child welfare. I am also building on this important body of research around intentions and outcome. See: Elizabeth Furniss, *Victims of Benevolence: The Dark Legacy of the Williams Lake Residential School*, Arsenal Pulp Press (1995), Celia Haig-Brown & David Nock (eds.), *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada*, UBC Press (2006), Jean Hare, & Jan Barman, *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast*, UBC Press (2006), Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*, The University of Nebraska Press (2009), and Margaret Jacobs, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World*, University of Nebraska Press (2014).

theoretically sound and narratively integrated history of the Canadian working class.<sup>11</sup> Settler colonialism was a structuring reality not only for Indigenous groups in Saskatchewan, but for the settler and working class to which Douglas belonged and represented. As Adele Perry reminds us, “[colonialism] and race are crucial to social experience and thought on both sides of the [colonial] divide.”<sup>12</sup> There is merit, therefore, in both Barron’s characterisation of a ‘well-intentioned’ Douglas and Quiring’s analysis of a ‘paternalistic, colonial’ Douglas. Tommy Douglas embodied all these traits, as he was shaped by the limits of settler colonialism that circumscribed the worldview of even the most radical settlers in Canada.

I do not castigate or condemn Douglas and his peers in the CCF for using the words of their time or for not sharing ideological views that many of us now take for granted.<sup>13</sup> That the CCF government’s policies are found wanting by the standards of today’s discourse on Indigenous rights and self-government is testimony to the fact that Douglas was a man of his time, bound by limitations imposed by existing social understanding. I do not suggest that mid-twentieth-century men and women *should* have conceptualised themselves within settler colonialism in the same ways some of us do today. On the contrary, I argue that they *could not* have done so. Settler colonialism circumscribed the

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<sup>11</sup> Fred Burrill, ‘The Settler Order Framework’, *Labour/Le Travail*, 83, 2019, 176. David Camfield, in ‘Settler Colonialism and Labour Studies in Canada’, *Labour/Le Travail*, 83, 2019, has also argued that the Canadian working class must be studied in their relation to settler colonialism.

<sup>12</sup> Adele Perry, *Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press (2001), 4.

<sup>13</sup> In his critique of the CCF efforts in northern Saskatchewan Quiring is also clear that he is not attempting to blame the CCF and its programme of modernisation, assimilation, socialism, and colonialism for the ills that plagued the north of the province; as he points out, other governments across Canada, including those that did not adopt socialist policies or other programmes of directed change, also experienced similar situations in their northern regions. This is an instructive lesson in how the discursive context that delimited the actions of the CCF in Saskatchewan also operated to circumscribe/direct the policies that other provinces adopted towards their Indigenous peoples, within the material and onto-epistemological logics of settler colonialism. See the introduction to Quiring’s *CCF Colonialism* for further discussion.

limits of what was ‘thinkable’<sup>14</sup> for Douglas and his peers: the ways they lived and flourished within settler colonialism while sustaining and expanding settler systems, and the impact of settler colonialism on class and identity formation among the CCF and the white settler workers and farmers they represented. What was ‘thinkable’ within settler colonialism goes beyond simply what Douglas wished to achieve in politics and his personal life, or the personal opinions he held. Rather, ‘thinkability’ has an epistemic and ontological orientation: it is about the ways in which Douglas experienced and perceived reality within settler colonialism.<sup>15</sup>

### 1.2 *The Archive:*

With this in mind, I begin this project as the dominant Canadian historical tradition has done, in the archives. The Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, where the documentary records of Douglas' political career in Saskatchewan reside, are located on the ground floor of an unassuming government building in the province's capital city, Regina. The building itself sits on Treaty Four territory: the original lands of the Cree, Ojibwe, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota, and on the homeland of the Métis, although in the records contained within the Douglas archive fonds these diverse nations are

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<sup>14</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Beacon Press (1997), 82. For the sake of consistency I use the language of ‘thinkability’ throughout this paper, but many other scholars have articulated similar concepts. Pierre Bourdieu has defined *un-thinkability* as that for which one has no adequate instruments to conceptualise (Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989 - 1992*, edited by Patrick Champagne et al., translated by David Fernbach, Polity (2014)). Boaventura de Sousa Santos has discussed a similar concept within the frame of ‘abyssal thinking’ and ‘epistemic blindness’ - his analogy suggests that knowledge/being production is an abyssal social divide, where the other side of the divide (outside the realms of thinkability) does not/cannot exist in any relevant or comprehensible way of being (Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledge”, *Review*, 30, 1 (2007)). Audra Simpson uses the language of ‘perceptibility’ to discuss the ways in which Indigenous peoples were made visible/recognised to the settler colonial state, and the ways this perceptibility was used to control and ultimately dispossess Indigenous peoples (Audra Simpson, “On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, ‘Voice’ and Colonial Citizenship”, *Junctures*, 9 (2007)). Dian Million has conceptualised these limits as ‘sociopolitical imaginaries’, showing how Indian policy was guided by ‘felt’ common knowledge; something that politicians and administrators felt to be true, based on a complex context of socio-political imaginaries inherited from and informed by the settler colonial community in Canada that projected racialised, gendered, and sexualised presumptions onto Indigenous peoples (Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press (2013)). Riyad Shahjahan and Anne Wagner have termed this as naive realism, which plays a role in the onto-epistemic grammar in terms of defining what is real, knowable, and meaningful (Riyad Shahjahan & Anne Wagner, “Unpacking Ontological Security: A Decolonial Reading of Scholarly Impact”, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 51, 8 (2019)).

<sup>15</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing*, 73.

invisibilised under the homogenising colonial markers of ‘Indian’, ‘Métis’ or ‘Native’.<sup>16</sup> Douglas’ presence in this city has left its mark on the land: on street names, landmarks and schools. The archive sits a stones-throw from Douglas Park, located in Douglas Place, through which runs Douglas Road, leading to Douglas Avenue and Douglas Crescent. Settler colonialism is inscribed into the physical space of the archive: from its location within a government building, the photos and posters on the walls commemorating notable events in Saskatchewan settler history, the systems of record keeping and organisation, and the colonial laws, values, and morals that decide what to redact and restrict, what documents are considered of ‘long term value’ to the province, and what counts as the province’s ‘official record’.<sup>17</sup>

This paper engages deeply with a taped series of interviews with T.C. Douglas. These were recorded between 21 September and 21 December 1958 as part of a project carried out by the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan. Chris Higginbotham, a well-known journalist and radio presenter, conducted the interviews. The original tapes are available in the provincial archives; however, much of the work of transcribing and collating these interviews has already been completed at the hands of John Archer, the provincial archivist from 1957 - 1962. Lewis Thomas, provincial archivist and history professor, assembled a book from the transcripts: *The Making of a Socialist*. I have relied on Thomas’ published version of the interviews for this paper. The translation from transcript to manuscript involved some omissions - the stated criteria included avoiding repetition, unnecessary detail, and references of a very personal or purely family interest. Some errors of syntax were corrected. In a few places, sections were rearranged so that a chronological account was

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<sup>16</sup> A brief note on language, I use the term ‘Indian’ throughout this paper only in reference to the coloniser policies and departments to which it pertains, such as the Indian Act, the Indian Department, and Indian Policy, but want to firmly situate it as a product of settler colonial narratives.

<sup>17</sup> Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, “About the Archives”, [<https://www.saskarchives.com/about-archives> (accessed 30/01/19)].

maintained.<sup>18</sup> Aside from these changes, the content of the interviews was kept the same. My analysis of these interviews has been supplemented with a variety of other records from Douglas' personal files in the Saskatchewan archives, including speeches, correspondence, internal memoranda, and party documentation and reports.

The topics covered in these interviews were arranged in advance by A.R. Turner, the assistant provincial archivist, and Higginbotham, in consultation with Douglas. Broadly, the interviews covered Douglas' early life, his transition from preacher to CCF politician, and his experience in both the World Wars. The interviews ended with a brief reflection on his life and politics. The conversation often focused on Douglas' thoughts and feelings towards events and individuals, rather than discussing the intricacies of CCF policies or government proposals. They offer a uniquely intimate insight into the mindset that shaped Douglas' approach to Indigenous peoples and policy during his time as Saskatchewan Premier, and his self-representation during this period.

The Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan had undergone significant transformation under the Douglas administrations: as Higginbotham observed, it was “one of [Douglas'] greatest achievements... historically speaking... Saskatchewan is probably the only western province that has developed its archives to this extent.”<sup>19</sup> Douglas and Higginbotham were conscious that they were engaging in a project of archive and history creation with these interviews: “This record in itself is an example of the first of its kind”, Higginbotham remarked, “if we had a record of Motherwell and people of that description, we would be much richer.”<sup>20</sup> Douglas agreed, “Yes, and also if we had Walter Scott’s own story of the formation of the province... it is unfortunate that we have so few

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<sup>18</sup> Lewis H. Thomas, *The Making of a Socialist: The Recollections of T.C. Douglas*, Calgary: The University of Alberta Press (1984), xii - xiii.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 321.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 321. William Motherwell was a Liberal member of the Saskatchewan assembly from 1905, and Minister of Agriculture from 1905 - 1918.



records... a great many of the early figures did not take any time to keep a record when the province was developing so rapidly.”<sup>21</sup> As such, these recordings are not just a window into the thoughts of T.C. Douglas in 1958. Rather, they are themselves a colonial project, intended to commemorate how far the settlement of Saskatchewan had come and justify Douglas’ presence there.<sup>22</sup> The Haitian anthropologist, Michel-Rolph Trouillot has written that silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: in the making of sources, the making of archives, the making of narratives, and the moment of retrospective significant - that is, the making of history.<sup>23</sup> I pay close attention to Trouillot’s important insights, particularly with respect to my engagement with this archive and these interviews.

### *1.3 Positionality:*

As a non-Indigenous, white, settler, immigrant to the state of ‘Canada’, currently living on unceded x̣ṃəθḳẉəỵəm (Musqueam) territory, I approach thinking about settler identity, history, and state policy from the desire for a decolonised future. I believe that in ways we cannot always predict, white settlers can play a role in transforming and challenging what are currently extremely oppressive social relations. I also recognise, however, as Macoun and Strakosch have noted, that settler colonial theory “is primarily a settler framework” that is largely about settler intentions to think through colonial relations.<sup>24</sup> My very capacity to engage in attempts at academic (and otherwise) resistance to colonial oppression is in part based on my benefitting from colonial and racial oppression: through

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 321. Walter Scott was the first premier of Saskatchewan.

<sup>22</sup> As Adele Perry has written, colonial archives such as these are a particular, racialised, gendered form of “technology that helped produce the world, rather than a window into it.” Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World*, Cambridge University Press (2015), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing*, 26.

<sup>24</sup> Alissa Macoun & Elizabeth Strakosch, “The Ethical Demands of Settler Colonial Theory”, *Settler Colonial Studies*, 3, 3-04 (2013), 427.

differential access to health, educational opportunities, cultural situatedness, family continuity, and more.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it is possible that this paper itself is another colonial piece of scholarship, written after all from within an institution built on unceded Musqueam territory.

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<sup>25</sup> Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*, University of Minnesota Press (2016), 48.

## 2.0 The Settler Colonial Roots of T.C. Douglas and the Saskatchewan Working

### Class:

Most historical analyses of Douglas and his policy approach to Indigenous groups have focused on his time in office in Saskatchewan, between 1945 and 1962. Yet settler colonialism played a structuring role in Douglas' life from his immigrant childhood and during his early religious and political career. To foreground the structuring role of settler colonialism in the Indian Policy of the CCF, I start this analysis from the understanding that settler colonialism was integral to the existence of the farming working class in Saskatchewan and the election of Douglas and the CCF.

### 2.1 Saskatchewan and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation Government:

Saskatchewan, and the colonies of British North America out of which it was created, was built on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples both from the land and from the political authority to determine their own futures.<sup>26</sup> From 1872 onwards, much of the prairie area of Saskatchewan has been colonised by non-Indigenous groups.<sup>27</sup> Historian James Daschuk in *Clearing the Plains* observed that with the influx of white settlers and the subsequent elimination of bison herds:

a way of life [ended] that had endured for 10,000 years... While extermination of the herds was the greatest environmental catastrophe ever on the grasslands, it also brought a fundamental change in the power dynamic between First Nations and the Canadian state. With the loss of the bison, Indigenous people lost their independence and power.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Patrick Wolfe, in his seminal work on settler colonialism, distinguishes settler colonialism from other forms of colonialism with the argument that “settler colonies were not primarily established to extract surplus value from Indigenous labour. Rather, they are premised on displacing Indigenous from (or replacing them on) the land... settler colonies were (are) premised on the elimination of native societies... [this elimination] is an organising principle of settler colonial society rather than a one-off occurrence... Invasion is a structure, not an event.” Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8:4, (2006), 387.

<sup>27</sup> Alan Anderson, *Settling Saskatchewan*, Regina: University of Regina Press (2013), 7. The land survey system used for original homesteads originated in the United States and continues to be used by farmers in Saskatchewan today: each square mile of land constituted a ‘section’, each homestead allocation was typically a quarter section (160 acres), or simply a ‘quarter’.

<sup>28</sup> James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*, Regina: University of Regina Press (2013). 183-4.

The environmental, economic, territorial, and political dispossession of Indigenous peoples from Saskatchewan was reified with a series of numbered treaties that segregated Indigenous peoples on a network of reservations<sup>29</sup>, side by side with the legislated dispossession of Indigenous groups through the federal Indian Act in 1876.<sup>30</sup> The province of Saskatchewan was formally created in 1905 by combining most of the former Districts of Assiniboia and Saskatchewan, and the eastern half of the District of Athabasca. In reality, the creation of the province began much earlier, with the stripping of territory from the Northern Cree, Swampy Cree, and Woods Cree, Nakota, Dene, Chipewyan, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux Nations.<sup>31</sup> Labour historian Bryan Palmer has argued that class formation in settler colonies such as Canada was predicated on the commodification of land through the dispossession of Indigenous territories and resources, giving rise to a relatively prosperous and politically influential, racially exclusionary, male-gendered white working class.<sup>32</sup> The conditions for the emergence of the immigrant and farming working-class in Saskatchewan were, therefore, rooted in colonial dispossession, genocide, and the colonial extraction of resources.

By 1944, when the CCF came into power in Saskatchewan as the first provincial or state socialist government in North America, farmers in Saskatchewan had faced a long period of difficult economic conditions. The international financial depression had hit farmers hard in 1929, drastically lowering the prices of crops that were already suffering from a severe drought, and lasting through to 1937. Although the province saw an economic recovery around 1939, the Second World War saw the province's young men sent off to a distant war from which many never returned.<sup>33</sup> Thousands of

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<sup>29</sup> Starting with Treaty 2 in 1871 and extending to Treaty 10 in 1906.

<sup>30</sup> Anderson, *Settling*, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Anderson, *Settling*, 23-24.

<sup>32</sup> Brian Palmer, "Nineteenth Century Canada and Australia: The Paradoxes of Class Formation," in "Australia and Canada: Labour Compared" special joint issue of *Labour/Le Travail* 38 and *Labour History* 71 (1996), 35.

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, *Settling*, 17.

farmers had lost their land to mortgage companies or banks and had become tenants during the economic downturn of the 1930s, and Saskatchewan farmers were increasingly concerned with the guarantee of security of tenure of farm and home. The farmers' political movement that elected Douglas to power in Saskatchewan envisaged a well-ordered society derived from their particular class position and life experience that was radical by standards of the time, diverging from the orthodox view of mainstream capitalism that was accepted by most of Canadian society.<sup>34</sup> Many farmers who supported the CCF believed that the poverty and destitution in the province were the products of an economy distorted by vested interests and monopolists, who siphoned off western wealth by manipulating grain markets and imposed monopoly prices on western farmers for the transport of crops and consumer goods.<sup>35</sup>

The conditions of settler colonialism defined the existence of poor and working class farming settlers in Saskatchewan, and they aligned themselves with the party they believed best supported their interests *as settlers* in Saskatchewan. In reality, these ills were part and parcel of the dark side of modernity - a situation in which settler privilege played an integral part, if not at all to the same extent for all settlers. Douglas and the CCF, in seeking to rectify what they saw as the inequalities and ills of capitalism, made political choices as the representatives of the working class that expanded and intensified settler colonialism. In this context, government intervention was a social good designed to liberate individuals from corporate interests and the social ills that accompanied capitalism and industrialisation. Douglas in turn transferred this attitude to his understanding of Indigenous communities. He believed that Indigenous individuals (rather than collective groups, nations, etc.)

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<sup>34</sup> R. Walker (ed.), Chapter: 'William Irvine and the Farmer in Politics', *A Sovereign Idea: Essays on Canada as a Democratic Community*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press (1992), 89.

<sup>35</sup> Barron, *Moccasins*, 10.

needed assistance. What was a progressive, anti-capitalist stance in relation to farmers, was a squarely colonial one in relation to Indigenous peoples.<sup>36</sup>

T.C. Douglas was the powerhouse behind the CCF party in Saskatchewan and the driving force in the reform of the Indian Administration in the province. Influenced by the radical social-gospel teachings of Revered J.S. Woodsworth, Douglas had originally trained to become a minister and in 1930 took a position in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. Douglas' transition into politics was, in his own words, “a cumulative conclusion.”<sup>37</sup> The effects of drought, economic depression, and state repression of workers during the Estevan Coal Strike of 1931 persuaded him of the necessity of social and economic reform in the province. As a young man in Weyburn in the autumn of 1931, while still working as a preacher and on his graduate degrees in Social Science, Douglas created the city's first unemployment association. Douglas recalled about the time:

I felt that the church could not divorce itself from social and economic, and consequently, political involvement, and that just as I ought to be active in relief, in helping the unemployed, helping distribute milk, or active in any mental health association, so I ought to belong to a political party and try to do something about these economic conditions.<sup>38</sup>

Although Douglas was building on an earlier legacy of Social Gospel religious activism throughout Canada, his stance was controversial among many of his peers in Saskatchewan religious circles and he “ran into a good deal of conflict from the people.”<sup>39</sup>

After running unsuccessfully for the Saskatchewan Farmer-Labour Party in 1934, Douglas became provincial CCF president in 1941 and provincial leader the following year. In 1944 he was elected the first social-democratic Premier in Canada. He was acknowledged by virtually all for his

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<sup>36</sup> Baron, *Moccasins*, 47.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 67.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 74.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 66. Douglas recalled that at this time he had a public confrontation with another preacher who responded to Douglas' attempts to organise the unemployed and confront the poverty in his community by arguing that the categories of rich and poor were immutable and made by God. The popular position at the time was that the church had nothing to do with social and economic questions.

attentiveness to others and dedication to the cause of social improvement, from his days as a young radical clergyman to the end of his eminent political career in Saskatchewan and Ottawa.<sup>40</sup> An entire oral history project has been assembled to remember the personal contributions Douglas made to the lives of many individuals in Saskatchewan.<sup>41</sup> Historian A. Whitehorn has suggested that many farmers in the 1940s voted for ‘Tommy the man’, rather than the CCF as a party or the cause of socialism.<sup>42</sup> The list of pioneering and progressive legislation implemented by the Douglas regime is long. His passionate belief in universal hospital and medical care is well documented. Having struggled with financial obstacles to obtain his education, Douglas oversaw a significant improvement in the quality and funding of schooling in the province. Equally, the Saskatchewan civil service underwent improvements as Douglas directed the expansion of its provincial social services in the 1940s and 1950s. These were notable achievements, and yet in-themselves were a product of settler colonial privilege and served to further entrench settler colonialism in the province. For example, the strengthened, centralised social services that Douglas created proved to be an invasive presence in Indigenous communities, where white-settler ideas about family organisation drove the removal of disproportionate numbers of Indigenous children from their families into the care system.

Settler colonialism had deep roots in the history of the CCF and the Saskatchewan working class. As I show below, an existence outside of the framework of settler colonialism did not and could not exist in any relevant or comprehensible way for settlers like Douglas. Settler colonialism was not just a peripheral concern for the working class in Saskatchewan, it shaped every part of their existence and experience of reality. This in turn shaped the ways in which Douglas conceptualised Indigenous peoples as a collective, and the policies he formulated in response to the issues he diagnosed.

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<sup>40</sup> Alan Whitehorn, *Canadian Socialism: Essays on the CCF-NDP*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1992), 149.

<sup>41</sup> Ed & Pemrose Whelan, *Touched by Tommy: Stories of Hope and Humour About Canada's Most Loved Political Leader*, Regina: Whelan Publications (1990).

<sup>42</sup> Whitehorn, *Canadian Socialism*, 148

## 2.2 Immigrant vs. settler:

T.C. Douglas' experience as an immigrant and a settler to the state of Canada framed his worldview and his politics, especially with regards to Indigenous peoples and other groups that he perceived as struggling minorities. Douglas responded to Indigenous communities not *because* they were Indigenous, but because of the recognition of the markers of poverty and marginalisation that led him to engage with any poor and marginalised group. Douglas subsumed Indigenous self-governance and culture within a Canadian multicultural mosaic where Indigenous groups resembled other integrated minorities and immigrants, much like the Douglas family themselves had done.

Douglas and his family emigrated from Falkirk, Scotland to Canada when he was eight years old. He arrived in Winnipeg in April 1911 with his mother and sister, Nan, after a three week journey by boat and train from Glasgow. Although as a child Douglas had little say over the relocation of his family, as an adult he had internalised a narrative of immigrant prosperity and opportunity. In one of their first interviews Higginbotham asked Douglas: “You’ll tell us why you came, will you?” Douglas replied:

We came for the same reason that most people came from the old country. We felt there was better opportunity. Britain was badly crowded and there were limited opportunities, limited housing. There were always people in every family who felt that they should get away to the colonies to improve their lot.<sup>43</sup>

In his view, immigrants to Canada such as the Douglas family, who had struggled with poverty and marginalisation in their efforts to integrate into Canadian society ‘and improve their lot’ were analogous to the Indigenous peoples (and other minorities) that Douglas sought to help in government.

Many modern biographies of Douglas and his CCF government have fed into a Western discourse on colonisation, progress, and the development of ‘Canada’ that has not strayed very far from the bonds of the ontological milieu in which Douglas lived. Douglas' biographer, Jean Lamour, asserted

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 12



in 1987 that “there was no scope for development... in Scotland.... this is the consciousness of class structure and the ability to get ahead that he came over here for...”<sup>44</sup> A 2004 biography of the Douglas Government written by A.W. Johnson, the Deputy Treasurer in Saskatchewan (1952 - 1964), asserted that immigrants such as the Douglas family faced a challenge to “populate and develop the vast and empty land” of the province.<sup>45</sup> Ed and Pemrose Whelan, in their 1990 edited collection of oral histories of Douglas, glossed over any comment on his emigration to Canada. Beyond a brief note that his journey was delayed by fog and ice, they focus on his achievements once he had arrived in Winnipeg in 1911.<sup>46</sup> The act of settling is invisibilised. John Oussoren, in his 1998 monograph on Douglas, observed that for the Douglas family immigration to Winnipeg was accompanied by “the usual immigrant disorientation, uncertainty, and relative poverty.” He continued, however, to frame this in light of Douglas' focus on work and study, “part of an immigrant’s drive for opportunity and upward mobility... for Douglas the necessary ingredient to achieve educational, vocational and financial security.”<sup>47</sup> Much like Douglas and his family, Oussoren framed the narrative of the Douglas family not as settlers, but as immigrants seeking a better life. A.W. Johnson treated settlers to Saskatchewan in a similar light, writing that they shared “a freshness of outlook, a certain energy, and a passion for education and self-improvement.”<sup>48</sup>

Douglas’ identity as a settler in Saskatchewan was subsumed within his framing of himself as an immigrant. This dichotomy shaped both his personal life as a settler in Canada and his politics in

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Jean Larmour, Mar 11 1987, Quoted in: John Oussoren, From *Baptist Preacher to Social Gospel Politician: T.C. Douglas' Transition*, Chalmers Institute, Vancouver School of Theology (1998), 8.

<sup>45</sup> Johnson, *Dream No Little Dreams*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Whelan, *Touched by Tommy*, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Oussoren, *Baptist Preacher*, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, *Dream No Little Dream*, 8.

Saskatchewan. Chelsea Vowel in her recent book *Indigenous Writes* reminds us succinctly of the need to include working-class European immigrants in our analysis of settler colonialism in Canada:

The original settlers were of various European origins, and they brought with them their laws and customs, which they then applied to Indigenous peoples and later to all peoples who have come to Canada from non-settler backgrounds. *This does not refer only to those European people with sociopolitical power, but also to those of lower classes who settled here to seek economic opportunity.*<sup>49</sup>

Notably, the idea that opportunity was something to be wrested from Indigenous land defined Douglas' relationship to place and prosperity in Saskatchewan. In the midst of the 1930s depression in Saskatchewan, when Douglas was beginning his involvement in politics and farmer-labour organisation, he recalled that: "I had members of my congregation who finally just pulled up stakes and went up north with an axe and a cow to try and wrest a home for themselves out of the bush."<sup>50</sup> Douglas saw this as a valid response to the failure of the state to support and provide for farming families in the south of the province.

These same conditions defined the success of the Farmer-Labour and later CCF party in Saskatchewan. Douglas considered the 'immigrant' history of the province the reason for his success in the 1944 provincial election, and the party's successive reelections: "On the one hand, people came from traditions in which socialism wasn't a bad word, and second, a mixed group of people hadn't yet settled into a new tradition in which certain things were sacrosanct and unquestionable."<sup>51</sup> Saskatchewan citizens, he suggested, had *less* veneration for colonial institutions,<sup>52</sup> and were more willing to take a chance on a new political party that promised to disrupt the current order of things. And yet, successive CCF elections were fought on question of land ownership: the ultimate settler

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<sup>49</sup> Chelsea Vowels, *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada*, Highwater Press (2016), 16. Emphasis added by Fred Burrill in *Settler Order Framework*, 185.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 71.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 181.

<sup>52</sup> What Douglas called "the sacred cows of eastern Canada... the CPR and Hudson's Bay Company, the great banks, mortgage companies, and lending institutions, and the Winnipeg Grain Exchange." Thomas, *Socialist*, 181.

institution and a question that had defined the settlement of Canada since the 1800s.<sup>53</sup> Douglas recalled in 1958 that when he first ran for the Farmer-Labour party in 1934:

Most of the campaign was fought on the question of the land policy. This new party, everybody thought, was going to socialise the land, people were going to lose their farms and their titles. Everybody went around waving a title, saying this is the title of your land that is going to be taken away by the Farmer-Labour party.<sup>54</sup>

In 1944, when Douglas ran again against the Liberal party, he recalled that “They used every appeal to prejudice and to basic fears - that people were going to lose their farms, that we were going to socialise all the children and put them into institutions, and that we lacked patriotism.”<sup>55</sup> On both these occasions, Douglas and the CCF were at pains to correct these misconceptions among the Saskatchewan electorate. While Douglas assured non-Indigenous communities that this would not happen under his watch, in fact his Indian policy, in the end, did just that to many Indigenous families. From 1906, Indigenous children in Saskatchewan had been removed from their communities to be educated in residential schools, and these schools remained in operation under the Douglas government. As Raven Sinclair and Allyston Stevenson have shown, as a direct result of CCF welfare policies Indigenous children in Saskatchewan were (and continue to be) removed from their families at a disproportionate rate in comparison to white families.<sup>56</sup>

Douglas also ignored that in very recent history, Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan had lost their farms at the hands of the government. Douglas’ predecessors, the Liberal Patterson government, in response to the Depression had created a land scheme that took unemployed southerners and

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<sup>53</sup> Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*, 387.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas, *Socialist* 76- 77

<sup>55</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 185.

<sup>56</sup> Raven Sinclair, ‘All My Relations ~ Native Transracial Adoption: A Critical Case Study of Cultural Identity’, PhD Thesis, University of Calgary (2007) and Raven Sinclair, ‘Identity Lost and Found: Lessons from the Sixties Scoop’, *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, 3, 65 - 82 (2007). Allyston Stevenson, Vibrations across a Continent: The 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act and the Politicization of First Nations Leaders in Saskatchewan, *American Indian Quarterly*, 37, Special Issue: Native Adoption in Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia, 218 - 236 (2013) and Allyston Stevenson, “Intimate Integration: A Study of Aboriginal Transracial Adoption in Saskatchewan, 1944 - 1984, PhD Thesis, University of Saskatchewan (2015).

relocated them to the north of the province. Many Métis and non-status Indigenous communities had been unable to obtain government surveys of their land as a precondition to official registration of their holdings during the initial settling of Saskatchewan, and so had no official rights to their land in the eyes of the government. The Patterson scheme had dislocated the local Métis populations in many of these areas from their land patrimony, as newcomers were given control over large areas.<sup>57</sup>

Douglas saw no contradiction here between his policy for white Canadians and the reality faced by Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan. Although Douglas sought to treat immigrants and Indigenous peoples in much the same way - or at least, to offer both the same opportunities - we can see here that this was sometimes not the case. He assured white Canadians of the sanctity of private property (in land and family), while he worked in other ways in relation to Indigenous peoples. He did not recognise this as a distinction, however, as all his Indian Policies functioned with the goal of integrating Indigenous peoples into Canadian society and offering them *the same* rights and opportunities as white Canadians. It was unthinkable for Douglas to consider these questions outside of a settler framework. He joked in the *Socialist* interviews about how absurd the Liberal Party's allegations were, recalling that in 1934 "a [white settler] woman with about five youngsters around her said... "Is it true that you're going to take all the children?"<sup>58</sup> Having been reassured that this was not the case she replied "I thought it was too good to be true."<sup>59</sup> When we consider, as Allyston Stevenson has argued so convincingly, that the CCF party were influential in the steep rise of Indigenous child removals in the province and the founders of the Adopt Indian Métis programme, we can see why such seemingly innocuous statements were so harmful for Indigenous peoples. Policies that were progressive for the white population often equated to colonialism for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan.

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<sup>57</sup> Barron, *Moccasins*, 25.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 78.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 79.

### 3.0 Socialisation for Democratic Citizenship:

*“CH: As you see it now, just shortly before Christmas in 1958, it’s still your thought that the first priority of the world is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and lift up the fallen?”*

*TD: Yes.”*<sup>60</sup>

From the outset, the Douglas CCF government had promised to be an instrument of social and economic justice in a supposedly unequal and stratified society. In his first Dominion-Provincial conference as premier, Douglas asserted that: “It has been said that a country’s greatness can be measured by what it does for its unfortunates... we are becoming conscious of our deficiencies and are determined to atone for lost time.”<sup>61</sup> Douglas’ approach to Indigenous peoples fit squarely within this political ideology.<sup>62</sup> He set the tone in March 1946 when he asserted that the treatment of Indigenous people was “one of the blackest pages in Canadian history” and “a blight on the record of a people otherwise noted for generosity and kindness.”<sup>63</sup> He continued:

It has been said that the measure of any society is what it does for the least fortunate group... it is not enough to establish a cooperative commonwealth and to raise the standard of living, if there continues to remain, like a canker, a small, underprivileged, diseased, illiterate minority in society.<sup>64</sup>

At a Métis conference in 1946 he reiterated these sentiments, arguing that:

It is never good for any community to neglect or forget any section of the people, and in Canada I have felt for many years that we have forgotten both the Indian people and the Métis people... you can’t have within a community, if it is a good community and a happy community, you can’t have a section, a certain section of people roped off with a

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<sup>60</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 363.

<sup>61</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, Submission of the Canadian Welfare Council for the consideration of officials attending Dominion Provincial Conference, (August 6, 1945), Federal-Provincial Conference 1945, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, 745a, b (23-22-1), 11.

<sup>62</sup> Indeed, as early as 1943 Douglas had publicly declared his support for the idea that Indigenous people should be given full citizenship rights, including the right to vote. Barron, *Moccasins*, xviii.

<sup>63</sup> “New Deal for Indians Declared Long Overdue”, Regina Leader-Post (22 March 1946), [<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=w9EjUEod0xMC&dat=19460322&printsec=frontpage&hl=en> (accessed 25/10/18)].

<sup>64</sup> “New Deal for Indians Declared Long Overdue”, Regina Leader-Post (22 March 1946), [<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=w9EjUEod0xMC&dat=19460322&printsec=frontpage&hl=en> (accessed 25/10/18)].

different standard of living, and on a different level than the rest of the community. You can't do that without harming the whole community.<sup>65</sup>

In the *Socialist* interviews, Higginbotham asked Douglas: "This is probably the blackest mark in Canadian history, the way we've dealt with our Indians? Do you think it is possible to assimilate them? Is it necessary? What sort of prognosis have you got for these people both in Canada generally and in Saskatchewan?" Douglas replied:

I agree that the story of our treatment of the Indians is the blackest page in our history. I don't think there's any doubt, whether deliberately or subconsciously, that during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the common view was that the Indians would die off naturally, and that this troublesome problem would disappear if we just let them alone. We herded them onto reserves that couldn't possibly have sustained them. The white man's diseases... were killing them off at a shocking rate.<sup>66</sup>

Douglas identified a real problem, one that many politicians of his day failed to see. But the only solution that was thinkable for him was integration, and this was a solution that was very much within the bounds of the epistemology that had caused the problem in the first place. Douglas conflated the notion of help with integration and hence, portrayed integration as a moral responsibility. Yet, Douglas could not recognise that his attempt to give the Indigenous population of Saskatchewan the same rights and responsibilities as their white counterparts denied Indigenous sovereignty and thereby constituted onto-epistemological violence. A brief submitted by the CCF government to the Joint Committee in 1959 suggested that that it was only "lack of common interests, lack of understanding, and fear based hostility" that limited social contact between Indigenous and mainstream white society. It asserted that "the opportunity for positive identification with white people [was] so limited that little real understanding of non-Indian culture [was] possible for most Indians."<sup>67</sup> As the extensive and nuanced

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<sup>65</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, Proceedings of Métis Conference, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, File no. XL. 859, Call no. R-33.1. 'Métis', 859 (44)a., 37-8.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 242.

<sup>67</sup> Government of the Province of Saskatchewan, first draft copy of the Brief on Saskatchewan Indians to be submitted to the Committee of the House of Commons and Senate on Indian Affairs (7 December 1959), III - 1, 'Indians', 864d. (49), T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier,, Saskatchewan Archives Board, II - 12.

critiques of Douglas' policy proposals from Indigenous communities across Saskatchewan shows, Indigenous peoples were fully aware of the implications of being incorporated into 'non-Indian culture'. Douglas and the CCF's dismissal of these critiques helps explain why the CCF vision of a socialist community was unable to expand to incorporate Indigenous worldviews. Douglas believed Indigenous communities simply needed to be persuaded of the necessity of integrating into white society, and he was either unwilling or could not conceive the need to compromise his vision to incorporate Indigenous worldviews.

Investments in the promises of liberalism and modernity defined Douglas' approach to Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan, particularly with regards to liquor legislation and provincial enfranchisement, which he saw as markers of integration and modernity. He recalled in the Socialist interviews that he tried:

to persuade them that they ought to have the provincial franchise, that this was the first step toward getting a federal franchise, and that getting the franchise was the first step toward getting politicians to take some notice of them and deal with their grievances. When they have the vote, politicians are going to try to woo them, and in wooing them will have to make some concessions to them.<sup>68</sup>

The attention of the federal government had been the cause of many of the 'grievances' faced by Indigenous communities, including as Douglas noted, their aversion to the provincial franchise: "The Indians were frightened at the idea of enfranchisement. They thought this meant, as the term had been used in the past, that they would lose their treaty rights and would have to leave the reserve. Or that they couldn't go back to the reserve if they left it, and so they turned it down."<sup>69</sup> Yet for Douglas personally, government intervention was overwhelmingly positive, as it had been for many of the minority groups the CCF helped.

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 240.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 240.

### *3.1 Strategies of integration: liquor licensing and the provincial franchise:*

From a policy perspective, Douglas' main goal concerning Indigenous peoples was integration into mainstream society. In his critiques of the preexisting situation, Douglas' main indictment was levelled at the federal government and the administration of the Indian Affairs branch. Douglas outlined the basis of his strategy to integrate Indigenous peoples in the province in the *Socialist* interviews:

We've got to do several things. First of all, I'd like to see the care of Indians and Métis turned over to the provincial government by the federal government. We would be prepared to accept this burden, providing the federal government would make some financial commitment and pay us an allowance per head for a given number of years until we can rehabilitate our native people. This would remove the anomalous situation of the federal government looking after Indians, and us looking after Métis people. At what particular time does a man cease to be an Indian and become Métis? They should all be citizens of the province and have all the rights and privileges of being citizens of the province.<sup>70</sup>

For Douglas, equality of citizenship demanded the elimination of legal distinctions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and uniformity in the ways these groups related to the government and governmental institutions. He argued that:

We need to train these people so they can take their place in our society... there is no doubt at all about the intellectual capacity of Indians. They can do anything we do, with proper training... I feel that the Indian must now be taught to be a member of our community, and that he must have all the privileges and obligations of being a citizen... to become a Canadian citizen and a citizen of Saskatchewan.<sup>71</sup>

This meant making the same services available to First Nations on reserves that were available to the rest of the community.

The basic intent of these policy goals was to equip Indigenous peoples with what Douglas saw as the necessary skills, political rights, and access to services that would enable them to survive in a capitalist and racist world - elements of Saskatchewan society that Douglas criticised heavily. These

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas, *Socialist* 243.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 244.



goals differed little from the ways Douglas and the CCF approached the empowerment of all minority groups, and focused on political representation, citizenship rights, and the extension and improvement of provincial welfare services. For Indigenous groups this meant the extensions of liquor licensing, the creation of an Indian Association (and the attempted creation of a Métis Association), the granting of the provincial franchise, the creation of Métis cooperative work colonies, and social welfare integration. These different strategies fit within Douglas' conceptualisation of Indigenous peoples as disenfranchised minorities that needed assistance taking up all the promises of being a modern citizen of Canada.

Scholars have written extensively on the implications of Douglas' social welfare policy for Indigenous peoples. Sociologist Allyson Stevenson has written in great detail about this final strategy. She shows how the CCF in Saskatchewan sought to address the 'Indian and Métis problem' through a coordinated social welfare approach with the goal of integration. Two examples of the CCF's very first attempts involved establishing Métis 'training colonies' and the Green Lake Children's Home for Métis children in the late 1940's. Both, she argues, were examples of the settler-colonial removal mentality laced with the social gospel desire for uplifting and social engineering beloved by Douglas. The colonies were eventually abandoned in 1960, after which the CCF shifted their focus to unmarried mothers and children using child welfare legislation.<sup>72</sup> David Quiring has also written in detail about the establishment of Métis training colonies. Laurie Baron has written about the establishment of the Saskatchewan Association of Indians, arguing that although it was always an Indigenous led organisation the CCF very much sought to mould it meet their own preconceptions of Indigenous rights and concerns.

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<sup>72</sup> Stevenson, 'Colonial legacy of the CCF', interview for Red Anthropology, [<https://redanthropology.wordpress.com/2016/03/17/colonial-legacy-of-the-ccf-an-interview-with-allyson-stevenson/>], accessed 30 September 2016].

Here, I focus instead on his two other strategies of citizenship: liquor licensing and the granting of the provincial franchise. Douglas believed that the extension of the provincial franchise and liquor rights would make off-reserve migration more appealing by minimising the differences between Indigenous and mainstream society, and would thus speed the integration of Indigenous peoples into Saskatchewan laws and social infrastructure. Along with other members of the CCF, Douglas saw alcohol and the franchise as exemplifying the inequality that separated Indigenous people from full citizenship. The Indian Act proscribed Indigenous consumption of alcohol with a stringency and punishment far more severe than the regulations governing the consumption for the general population. Compared to other minority groups in Saskatchewan, such as Mennonites or Chinese immigrants, Indigenous peoples were the only ones legally barred from consuming alcohol. Likewise, although Indigenous servicemen and their wives were given the federal vote, the vast majority of Indigenous people were not allowed to participate in either federal or provincial elections, a prerogative other Canadians generally accepted as a fundamental human right.

In his drive to implement these policies, Douglas was influenced by events across Canada. The Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on the Indian Act, convened between 1946 and 1948, was the centre point in national discussions about Indigenous rights throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Major policy issues including treaty rights, control of Band membership, continued tax exemptions, enfranchisement, access to liquor, trespass on reserves, and improvements to education.<sup>73</sup> Two basic federal government objectives emerged from the Joint Committee hearings: to improve conditions on reserves and to continue to facilitate Indigenous transition into mainstream society. The Indian Act underwent a set of amendments in 1951 in response to the findings of the Special Committee, including the amendment that prohibited Indigenous peoples from consuming

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<sup>73</sup> J.F. Leslie, 'Assimilation, Integration, Termination? The Development of Canadian Indian Policy, 1943-1963', PhD thesis, University of Carleton (1999), 112.

alcohol in licensed establishments.<sup>74</sup> Provinces had to petition the general-in-council in order to fully implement the amendment within their jurisdictions. Ontario became the first province to do so in 1954, under the Progressive Conservative Party and the Premiership of Leslie Frost. The Saskatchewan Provincial Committee of Indian Affairs recommended in 1956 that the CCF government adopt these changes as the basis of its general Indian policy, both of which could be achieved with minimal federal involvement. A 1959 briefing paper submitted to the Joint Committee argued that living on reserves subjected “the Indian to discriminatory liquor laws and voting regulations. As long as he lives within the boundaries of the tracts of land set aside for his special use he is looked after but has little control over his own destiny... features of reserve life now appear to be a negative preparation for life outside rather than a protection.”<sup>75</sup> The report underscored that all “services to Indians must be oriented to encourage off-reserve movement.”<sup>76</sup> In many ways, Saskatchewan Indian policy shared many of the basic principles of the federal Indian policy. Although Douglas did not recommend repealing the Indian Act and terminating treaties in the near future, he did share the long-term goal of treating Indigenous peoples in the same way as all other Canadian citizens.<sup>77</sup>

Saskatchewan followed Ontario’s lead in 1960: on 8 June 1960, Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan voted in provincial polls for the first time. In June Douglas also petitioned the federal

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<sup>74</sup> Previously Section 87 when added in 1951, s88 specified that all laws of general application were applicable to Indians in the province. First added in 1951, Section 88 of the Indian Act disclosed that except where the federal government legislates, the treaty Indian had all the same rights and responsibilities as his fellow provincial residents. Justice K. Lysyk, a specialist in constitutional and Aboriginal law, concluded in 1967 that “where Parliament has not legislated, and putting aside matters relating to Indian lands, the provinces have a relatively free hand in legislating for the well being of the Indian, and this is so with respect to reserve Indians no less than for this who have moved off the reserve into the mainstream of non-Indian society.” This meant that provincial governments had ‘the same responsibility for ameliorating the condition of Indians and Indian settlements that these governments would assume for non-Indians and non-Indian communities.’

<sup>75</sup> Government of the Province of Saskatchewan Department Memorandum, Provincial Government Brief to Senate House of Commons Committee on Indian Affairs (1959), III - 1, ‘Indians’, 864d. (49). T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, Saskatchewan Archives Board.

<sup>76</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, *Brief on Saskatchewan Indians*, 1959, VII - 1.

<sup>77</sup> Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 23.

government for the necessary proclamation to allow Indigenous peoples to drink, and the amendments came into effect on 27 July that year.

### *3.2 The Provincial Franchise:*

Douglas had been passionate about political representation for minority groups since his first forays into politics in the 1930s, when he organised unemployment and farmer groups in Weyburn. Even before he entered politics he “was labelled as a rather dangerous radical in the community, stirring up the unemployed to ask for more money and sticking [his] nose into places where it was none of [his] business.”<sup>78</sup> This drive to empower disadvantaged groups continued during his time in office. Douglas saw political representation (via the franchise) as the most important first step to ameliorating conditions for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan, in the same way that it had for the Farmer-Labour movement: resulting in the election of the CCF government.

With the exception of Nova Scotia, where Indigenous peoples had had the right to vote in provincial elections since the province’s Confederation in 1867, provincial electoral laws were uniformly strict across Canada. In Saskatchewan, when Douglas came into power in 1946, Indigenous groups were specifically excluded from voting by provincial legislation, regardless of whether they were status and non-status. Douglas and his government had seriously considered giving Indigenous peoples the provincial vote as early as 1947, when they passed a provincial Bill of Rights, guaranteeing in law the human rights of all citizens of the province. Douglas was one of the first to acknowledge the inconsistencies between this legislation and the fact that a significant proportion of the Saskatchewan population did not have the right to vote in the province. He recalled in the *Socialist* interviews:

In 1948 I called a conference of Indians, trying to persuade them that they ought to have the provincial franchise, that this was the first step toward getting a federal franchise,

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 69.

and that getting the franchise was the first step towards getting politicians to take some notice of them and deal with their grievances... we have just have another conference with the Indians at Fort Qu'Appelle a few weeks ago [in 1958]. I put two questions before them again: the matter of the vote that we were quite prepared to give them, and also the matter of equality in liquor legislation. This time we had more success. They... have set up a federation of Indian bands and tribes in the province. They now have one organisation to speak for them.<sup>79</sup>

Once Indigenous peoples had an organisation to represent their needs to the government, Douglas focused on the extension of the provincial franchise. This could be achieved simply by removing the clause in the Saskatchewan Election Act that prohibited Indigenous people from voting.<sup>80</sup> As Douglas explained in a letter to Assiniboine Chief Dan Kennedy, "if our Indian brothers are to be given the vote they have an equal right to claim all the other privileges which Saskatchewan citizens enjoy."<sup>81</sup>

The language Douglas used to justify the extension of the franchise to Indigenous groups was very similar to that he used to justify lowering the settler voting age to eighteen in 1945:

If we had a right to conscript men, put them in uniform, and send them out to fight for a country at eighteen years of age, then automatically they had the right to have something to say about how the country should be governed. I pointed out that young men of eighteen, nineteen, and twenty were flying bombers worth two or three million dollars, and if they were old enough to do that, they surely had sufficient intelligence to know how to cast a ballot. It's rather significant that in subsequent elections, the old-line parties who had voted against the legislation spent a good deal of their time making a special appeal to the young people.<sup>82</sup>

In a similar way, Douglas repeatedly argued that Indigenous peoples were just as intelligent as their settler counterparts in Saskatchewan. When discussing his policy proposals he qualified it by saying that "there is no doubt at all about the intellectual capacity of Indians."<sup>83</sup> Later in the same interview he suggested that Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan are "the same standard of social development" to

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 242.

<sup>80</sup> Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 31.

<sup>81</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, 'Indians,' R-33.1, file XLV.864 a(49), Douglas to Kennedy, 23 February 1956.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 204.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 244.

the Maori in New Zealand, who have “very successfully integrated into the economy of New Zealand. They’ve elected their own members to Parliament, they’ve graduated from universities, they’ve gone into the professions, into the business world, into the various trades and occupations...”<sup>84</sup> There was no reason Canada’s Indigenous people could not do the same, he concluded. Douglas emphasised that the vote would become an instrument of emancipation and a tool that Indigenous peoples could use to make politicians and the rest of the white community listen to them, as it had for young people in Saskatchewan. In his own words, “the wheel that squeaks the loudest gets the grease.”<sup>85</sup>

In this approach and rhetoric Douglas could only conceive of Indigenous peoples as a disenfranchised (in the literal sense of the word) group who needed access to the conventional channels of power in colonial society, via the franchise (and a representative political organisation), to make their grievances heard and take up all the rights and benefits of being a modern citizen. As many Indigenous leaders recognised, these ideas were not inherently useless or harmful, and could be used strategically to amplify Indigenous concerns in mainstream channels of power. At a Conference that Douglas held with Band leaders in 1958, Chief J. Dreaver hailed Douglas for having done “more for Indians since taking office than Indian Affairs had done in the last seventy years.”<sup>86</sup> Douglas was misguided, however, in his assumption that solutions that he had formulated for other minorities in Saskatchewan would map unproblematically onto Indigenous peoples. The granting of the franchise was, therefore, limited in what it could achieve by itself, and fitted within Douglas’ conception of Indigenous peoples as analogous to immigrants and other disadvantaged minorities in the province.

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<sup>84</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 244.

<sup>85</sup> Baron, *Moccasins*, 100.

<sup>86</sup> Baron, *Moccasins*, 73.

### 3.3 Liquor Licensing:

The extension of liquor licensing to Indigenous peoples was central to Douglas' beliefs in the shared rights of citizenship, despite not drinking himself. Amendments to the Indian Act in 1951 and 1956 enabled the provincial governor to request permission from the federal government to allow Indigenous peoples to drink and consume alcohol off-reserve following a proclamation from the federal governor in council. For a reserve to 'go wet' an additional referendum had to be held with the majority of the Band leaders giving approval.<sup>87</sup>

In 1958 Douglas argued that:

I think Indians should have equality in the matter of liquor legislation. There are two one main reasons. The first is that undoubtedly they're getting liquor anyway, from bootleggers, or making all sorts of home brew.... Second, when you have different laws for Indians than you have for other citizens, you're making them second class citizens. In effect, you are saying that liquor is good for a white man, but because another man's skin has a different pigmentation, liquor is bad for him. Liquor is either bad for both of them, or it's alright for both of them, or people should have the right to choose for themselves whether or not they think liquor is good or bad. The Indians have the same right to make that decision as white men.<sup>88</sup>

This logic was remarkably progressive by the standards of the time and he faced strong opposition from the general population and the hotel industry. Barron has written that Douglas was "practically inundated with letters from concerned citizens, asking him not to legalise Indian drinking."<sup>89</sup>

The hotel industry held similar reservations. Douglas addressed the thirtieth annual convention of the Hotels' Association of Saskatchewan in 1961, the year after the liquor licensing changes went into effect, to explain the logic behind his policy:

We are having this trouble because we are reaping the harvest of fifty years or more of making the Indian a second class citizen. We are going to have to make up our minds whether we are going to keep the Indian bottled up in a sort of Canadian apartheid or

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<sup>87</sup> Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 31.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 241.

<sup>89</sup> Barron, *Moccasins*, 110.

whether we are going to let him become a good citizen. Allowing Indians access to liquor outlets is the start in allowing him to become just like any other citizen. Indians haven't had the opportunity for advancement that white men have and it's our responsibility to give them that opportunity. This will take some time. They themselves are conscious of their own responsibilities.

He emphasised that while:

Indians have been given equal rights, they have not been given special rights. He has no more right to break the law than a white man. If he is drunk or causing a disturbance then he should be put out of the premises the same as a white man should. But he should not be put out just because he is an Indian.<sup>90</sup>

Douglas argued that both white and Indigenous people had a shared right and responsibility to engage in societal vices, as they did towards the other services the province offered its citizens.

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<sup>90</sup> "Douglas Asks Patience in Dealing with Indians", *The Regina Leader Post*, 18 May 1961 [<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=w9EjUEod0xMC&dat=19610518&printsec=frontpage&hl=en> (accessed 25/07/2019)].



#### 4.0 Indigenous responses to T.C. Douglas:

Leaders in Indigenous communities across Saskatchewan had concerns about both of Douglas' key policies. Although many Indigenous people welcomed the opportunity to purchase alcohol legally from liquor stores, this consensus was not universal and Band governments worried about the deleterious effects of alcohol consumption on reservation life. Semantic and functional confusion existed between the terms 'enfranchisement' and 'franchise'. This was further aggravated by language issues, given that English was often not the first language of many Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan and many CCF officials made little distinction between the two terms.<sup>91</sup> Many rightly saw that regardless of linguistic distinctions, the *intentions* behind the granting of the franchise represented a step towards integration - one which would serve to deny both Indigenous nationhood and the integrity of Band government.

To allay these concerns, Douglas held a conference to discuss the two proposals in Fort Qu'Appelle in the fall of 1958, attended by 103 Band chiefs and councillors. Douglas promised that neither voting nor liquor rights would be granted without first obtaining the consent of the Indigenous population. The issue was postponed for a year to another conference, with the reasoning that Indigenous people had not been properly consulted. In reality, the CCF government faced opposition to both issues and the decision was postponed to avoid the proposed legislation being voted down. The CCF set up an Advisory Committee, containing one member from each of the nine Indian Agencies in the province. A year later, in 1959, Douglas again failed to secure the consent of the Band leaders to introduce the franchise and liquor legislation. At that point, Douglas broke his promise not to proceed with enfranchisement and liquor rights without securing the support of First Nations governments. In June 1959 the provincial government formally petitioned the federal government for the power to grant

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<sup>91</sup> Baron, *Moccasins*, 103.

liquor rights to Saskatchewan Indian Bands. Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan voted for the first time in the provincial election on the 8th June 1960 and the federal proclamation on liquor came into effect on two months later, on the 27th of July.

In 1956, Douglas had made it clear that his government would not bring in any legislation until it had convened a conference of Indigenous representatives to obtain their views. He had promised to respect Band autonomy, assuring Indigenous leaders that the extension of the franchise and liquor rights on reserve would not impair treaty rights, and that neither would be imposed without obtaining the consent of Band leaders. In the *Socialist* interviews he reiterated that: “You can’t force [the vote] on people. I’ve always felt that to compel people to take a privilege is very bad psychology. They should want it, they should understand what they’re asking for, and they should take it with a full sense of the obligations pertaining thereto.”<sup>92</sup> Yet just two years later Douglas broke his promise to not proceed with enfranchisement and liquor rights in Saskatchewan without Indigenous consent. He reasoned that gaining the franchise was in the interests of Indigenous peoples and would not jeopardise treaty rights, despite having repeatedly failed to secure the consent of Band leaders at multiple conferences.<sup>93</sup>

Douglas saw equal liquor rights and the vote as ‘symbols of freedom’<sup>94</sup> and the extension of these as an act of benevolence and modernity, “designed to help the Indian to overcome the difficulties of the adjustment to [integration into white society].”<sup>95</sup> He had denounced the paternalism of the federal administration of Indian Affairs in Saskatchewan as “inimical to the goal of responsible citizenship outside the reserve and to the encouragement of transition from one way of life to participation in another.”<sup>96</sup> His heavy-handed imposition of his policy goals onto Indigenous peoples, however,

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<sup>92</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 241.

<sup>93</sup> Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 37.

<sup>94</sup> Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 38.

<sup>95</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, Brief on Saskatchewan Indians, 1959, II - 12.

<sup>96</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, Brief on Saskatchewan Indians, 1959, VI - 1.

amounted to the same. There was a deep disregard for the decision-making and governing capacity of Indigenous groups in such attempts at ‘help’, even when framed as providing assistance to people struggling with group-threatening situations.<sup>97</sup>

Douglas had been cautioned as early as 1946 about the risks of interfering in Indigenous affairs in Saskatchewan. E.A. Boden of Battleford wrote to Douglas a few months after the 1946 Saskatoon conference held by the government in its attempt to hasten the creation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians:

I am writing you at this time because of a discussion I had recently with John Tootoosis... John was rather reluctant in giving much credit to our Sask., government in being interested or helping to solve the problem... John also mentioned that the Indians were very much disgusted with what was in the press concerning the Indians and the action taken by the Sask., Government on their behalf... John told me that just recently he had to warn Shumiatcher who apparently one of the meetings lately of the danger in being a little too ready to offer advice to the Indian... To sum it all up they are not in a mood to have anyone tell them about how they should run their affairs... John says that he appreciates very much the interest that you and others are taking in the problems of the Indians but he said do not make it more difficult for him to get the Indians to cooperate by not properly understanding the Indian, suspicious as he still is of the white man. God only knows that he has every reason to be suspicious of the white mans ways.<sup>98</sup>

John Tootoosis was not the only person to criticise Douglas' overzealous interference in Indigenous affairs. In October of 1946 Douglas received a letter from Andrew Paull, the Grand Chief of the National Association of the Indian Brotherhood (NAIB), requesting that Douglas instruct provincial CCF agents to stop interfering in Indigenous affairs. He asserted that he had received complaints from Indigenous people throughout Saskatchewan, writing that:

It is with a great deal of reluctance and after much serious consideration that I feel compelled to ask you to instruct Dr. Morris Shumiatcher and other members of your

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<sup>97</sup> Andrew Woolford, *This Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide and Redress in Canada and the United States*, University of Manitoba Press (2015), 35.

<sup>98</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, ‘Indians’, R-33.1, file XLV.864 a(49), Boden to Douglas, 24 June 1946. (Paull to Douglas, 2 October 1946).

group to stop calling meetings, attending meetings of Indians where they attempt to force the Indians to adopt their policies.<sup>99</sup>

Douglas responded by denying that CCF politicians were attempting to force their will on Indigenous groups.

These exchanges help illuminate the limits of what was ‘unthinkable’ for Douglas. As early as 1946, he had indigenous leaders *telling him* that his interventions were inaccurate and unwanted. Despite his sincere desire to be helpful and his sincere empathy for those in poverty, in response he moved not to change his policy but to increasingly paternalistic practices that implemented what he felt was best for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan. As Barron writes, Indigenous “opposition... represented an indictment of the very notion that [Douglas] was walking in Indian moccasins.”<sup>100</sup>

Douglas lamented in 1958 that it was:

almost impossible to get an objective statement of our policy, or even an adequate description of any piece of legislation, printed in the daily press. We can hand the press a statement and either it won't be printed at all or it will be run in such distorted form that it looks almost meaningless and would appear among the classified ads, while the criticism of the legislation would be plainly visible on the front page with a two inch headline.<sup>101</sup>

Yet Indigenous groups faced similar issues articulating their concerns with the policies introduced by Douglas' government. Indigenous concerns or responses to CCF policy were seldom expressed in the public press or the legislature because they lacked access to the instruments of power. Although Douglas sought to grant Indigenous peoples access to these channels of power, he undermined the potential of his policy goals by overriding the authority of Indigenous leaders when they did not comply with his wishes.

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<sup>99</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, ‘Indians’, R-33.1, file XLV.864 a(49), Paull to Douglas, 2 October 1946.

<sup>100</sup> Barron, *Moccasins*, 177.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 224

Douglas faced a barrage of criticism from the vast array of vested interests in the province that opposed his attempts to reform Indigenous policies - from southern farmers that relied on the labour of disenfranchised migrant Métis workers in the summer months, civil servants who were reluctant to change old patterns to integrate Indigenous peoples into the provincial welfare system, and the racist general electorate. These groups were joined by the politically powerful Liberal Party, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the church missions that had historically dominated much of the province.<sup>102</sup> It is understandable that Douglas and the CCF would wish to dismiss much of this criticism as a matter of political expedience. Douglas veered into paternalism, however, by also dismissing Indigenous concerns about policies that directly pertained to them.

Historically, both provincial and federal policy-makers devised Indian Policy and legislation largely without Indigenous consultation or consent, and as such, policy goals were shaped by what was 'thinkable' to white policy-makers with regard to the proper place and role of Indigenous peoples. Despite his vehement critique of the past treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and his stated belief in the capacity of Indigenous peoples to the decision-making rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship, Douglas' own actions fit within this same epistemological milieu. Douglas was frequently reminded of this fact by Indigenous leaders across Canada. In a letter sent to Douglas in 1950, the Alberta Indian Association emphasised the problem with ignoring Indigenous voices, asserting that:

the provincial government should not act to help the Indian unless the latter had gained the consent of the majority of the electors of the Band.... That is the only method by which progress of the Indian can be made. Any arbitrary action, without the consent as above, is arousing resentment and fear, if not stronger emotions.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Barron, *Moccasins*, 177.

<sup>103</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, Representation made by the treaty Indians of Alberta, through the Indian Association, to the federal government with respect to Bill 267 in September 1950, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, 'Indians' 864 b. (49).

As the Association pointed out, the federal government and provincial government failed to recognise that “it takes two to make the bargain.”<sup>104</sup> John Tootoosis, president of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations<sup>105</sup>, was vocal in emphasising that the CCF had forced its will on the First Nations: “this is why Indians never voted much during elections, it wasn’t their consent to have the vote - it was just given to them. One could also say that they were literally shoved into a pool of liquor.”<sup>106</sup> Chief William Joseph of the Big White Fish reserve made speeches and collected money through the Meadow Lake and Loon Lake areas to pay for a protest trip to Ottawa in opposition to the move.<sup>107</sup>

Douglas' well-meaning liberal policies ignored Indigenous wishes for their political authority to be recognised and protected, with the effects that policies intended for their benefit actually worked against their interests.

#### *4.1 The Limits of Thinkability:*

This attitude of knowing what was best for people was not unique to Indigenous affairs. Douglas acted in much the same way when it came to addressing the concerns of doctors and civil servants with regards to hospital legislation. In 1946, the CCF brought in medical insurance legislation, introducing a compulsory income tax to be paid into a hospital insurance plan. Much like his attempts to introduce the franchise and liquor licensing to Indigenous groups, Douglas recalled that “There was tremendous opposition to our plan, unexpectedly so... Doctors were very much opposed.”<sup>108</sup> Yet despite this initial opposition, by 1958, “everybody’s in favour and everybody wants to get in on the act... [and] today the

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<sup>104</sup> Treaty Indians of Alberta, ‘Indians’ 864 b. (49).

<sup>105</sup> Distinct from the Saskatchewan Association of Indians, the organisation Douglas assisted.

<sup>106</sup> Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 39.

<sup>107</sup> Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 36.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 228.

hospitals are the strongest advocates of the plan.”<sup>109</sup> Despite the programme’s ultimate success, Douglas had imposed his will on this group when his wishes went against their own perceived interests. He recalled that in 1946 “about three weeks before the plan was to go into effect the entire executive of the Saskatchewan Hospital Association marched into my office and said, they were not prepared to cooperate with our legislation dated to become valid in January 1947.”<sup>110</sup> The hospital staff had various concerns, from finance to the control of auditors. Having attempted to reassure the executive that the running of hospitals would continue to be in the hands of hospital administrators, Douglas warned them that should they not be prepared to operate the plan from 1st January 1947, the CCF would take over control of the hospitals in Saskatchewan.<sup>111</sup> When Douglas' administration team in the Department raised similar concerns about hospital insurance, he told them “I told people from the beginning that we’ll be making some mistakes because we’re blazing a new trail, but one mistake that we will not make is the mistake of doing nothing. So we’re going to start.”<sup>112</sup>

As such, Douglas did not target Indigenous peoples *because* they were Indigenous, but because he felt that he could meet their needs in the same way the CCF had for other minorities or in-need groups in the province. This did not make his attempts any less harmful. Douglas’ ‘top down’ approach to social and economic reform applied just as much to other groups and as such, fit epistemologically within his efforts to treat Indigenous peoples like other citizens in the province. Douglas’ biographer, A.W. Johnson had argued that much of:

the success of Douglas' public service...emerged from the qualities of the premier himself and the climate he created in which the public service was built and worked. The first reason was essentially this: that the dream of a better life that could be

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<sup>109</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 228-9.

<sup>110</sup> Thomas, *Socialist* 231.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas, *Socialist* 231.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas, *Socialist* 231.

achieved by new policies and programmes - often bracing the frontiers of the known and the familiar - would never be smothered by the mechanics of public administration.<sup>113</sup>

This strategy, however, had particularly negative and colonial implications for Indigenous peoples as collectives. Indeed, as Allyson Stevenson and Raven Sinclair have shown, Indigenous groups had far worse outcomes from CCF intervention in comparison to similar programmes among the mainstream population.<sup>114</sup>

In a context where ‘freedoms’ had to be forced on Indigenous communities against the wishes of Band government by a paternalistic and colonial settler government, policies such as the granting of the vote and liquor licensing actually embodied the distinct *lack of freedom* available to Indigenous peoples in relation to the settler state. This was a particularly complex situation, as unlike many other white politicians at the time, Douglas had justified the extension of these ‘freedoms’ by emphasising the intelligence and decision-making capacity of Indigenous peoples. In his view, Indigenous peoples were deemed capable of deciding who to vote for and how much alcohol to consume, but not capable of deciding when and whether they wished to participate in these settler laws and institutions in the first place. The influential scholar of settler colonial studies, Lorenzo Veracini, has argued that “settler colonialism... is primarily characterised by Indigenous deterritorialisation accompanied by a sustained denial of any state-making capability for Indigenous people.”<sup>115</sup> Glen Coulthard has defined settler colonialism as a social relation of domination that “has been structured into a relatively secure... set of hierarchical social relations that continue to facilitate the *dispossession* of Indigenous people of their

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<sup>113</sup> A.W. Johnson, *Dream No Little Dream: A Biography of the Douglas Government of Saskatchewan, 1944 - 1961*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press (2004), 308-9.

<sup>114</sup> Raven Sinclair, ‘All My Relations ~ Native Transracial Adoption: A Critical Case Study of Cultural Identity’, PhD Thesis, University of Calgary (2007) and Raven Sinclair, ‘Identity Lost and Found: Lessons from the Sixties Scoop’, *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, 3, 65 - 82 (2007). Allyson Stevenson, ‘Vibrations across a Continent: The 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act and the Politicization of First Nations Leaders in Saskatchewan’, *American Indian Quarterly*, 37, Special Issue: Native Adoption in Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia, 218 - 236 (2013) and Allyson Stevenson, ‘Intimate Integration: A Study of Aboriginal Transracial Adoption in Saskatchewan, 1944 - 1984’, PhD Thesis, University of Saskatchewan (2015).

<sup>115</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (2010), 105.



lands and self determining authority.”<sup>116</sup> Douglas exemplified the unequal power balance of these social relations when he undermined Indigenous concerns with regards to liquor licensing and the franchise.

This worldview was rooted in Douglas' own experience as an immigrant. In 1958 he recalled that after the family emigrated to Winnipeg in 1912 “there were a tremendous number of people in Winnipeg who had come from all over and hadn’t been absorbed yet.”<sup>117</sup> Reverend J.S. Woodsworth, the influential founder of the Social Gospel movement and the CCF party, had a strong influence on the young Douglas and his capacity to integrate into Canadian society. Douglas referred to the working class north end of Winnipeg where his family first lived as ‘almost slums’ - “poor homes: frame buildings, outdoor toilets, restricted conditions”<sup>118</sup> - reminiscent of his critiques of Indigenous reservations in the 1950s, where he cited the “inadequate housing, interior furnishings, lack of electricity, telephones, modern amenities, inferior schooling, absence of job opportunities, low incomes, and high death rates” as evidence that Indian Affairs administration should be transferred to the province.<sup>119</sup> The fact that Woodsworth was “interested enough to come and live among these people” and help integrate them into Canadian society made a lasting impression on Douglas.<sup>120</sup> Douglas credited this time in his life with developing his supposedly ‘colour-blind’ world view - what biographer Laurie Barron has called his “intrinsic egalitarianism.”<sup>121</sup> He recalled that living with people from “all over the world” meant he:

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<sup>116</sup> Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, University of Minnesota Press (2014), 7.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 13.

<sup>118</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 14.

<sup>119</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, Report of ‘Métis’ meeting (Wednesday 13 July 1949), R-33-1, XL 859 (44), ‘Métis’, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, 1

<sup>120</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 14.

<sup>121</sup> Barron, *Moccasins*, 39.

lost all sense of national or racial pride, and began to realise the value and worth of people of other races. They were wrestling the same problems we were. They were trying to get established. They were trying to get jobs. They were trying to get decent houses to live in. They were trying to speak the language properly and adapt themselves to the country... You found that you were basically the same.<sup>122</sup>

Douglas asserted that it was the kindness shown to him in childhood by his immigrant neighbours that was part of the reason that he had “such a strong sense of disapproval against again kind of racial or religious intolerance.”<sup>123</sup>

We can learn a lot about the ways Douglas conceptualised Indigenous peoples from his comparisons to Chinese citizens in the province. He made comments several times throughout his premiership comparing Indigenous groups to Chinese Canadians. In 1956 he wondered why Indigenous peoples were ever segregated on reserves: “We don’t settle all the Chinese people out in some corner of Canada or some corner of the province”, he observed, implying Chinese Canadians and treaty-status First Nations had the analogous legal status and should be treated similarly.<sup>124</sup> When asked about assimilation in 1958 he mused that:

Over a long period of time, it’s quite possible. Not physical assimilation, but social assimilation is absolutely vital. We have Chinese people in our community who run restaurants and various kinds of businesses, and are highly respected, but this doesn’t mean that they intermarry or that we assimilate them biologically.<sup>125</sup>

This comparison was not arbitrary, however: Douglas’ father’s closest friend in Winnipeg had been a Chinese immigrant, and his father’s commitment to helping people of all nationalities had left a lasting impression on Douglas. Douglas recalled in his memoirs that his father:

took the position that any man was as good as him. He had a marvellous tolerance about people of other nationalities. When we came to Winnipeg in the days when people were pouring in there, my father could be seen coming home from work with some poor chap

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<sup>122</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 14.

<sup>123</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 15.

<sup>124</sup> Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, *Debates*, T.C. Douglas, 2 March 1956. Quoted in Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 49.

<sup>125</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 244.

from central Europe who was trying to learn the language and who was having a tough time... they used to come to our house, people of all sorts.<sup>126</sup>

For Douglas, integration was an unequivocally positive outcome, to *not* be integrated into Canadian society had contributed to “the most unhappy period of [Douglas'] life.”<sup>127</sup> Douglas saw himself taking on the role for Indigenous peoples that Woodsworth had played in his own childhood and that his father had played in Winnipeg.

By the 1950s, the Douglas's CCF party was moving away from the earlier rhetoric of 'assimilation', towards rhetoric that posited 'integration' as the desirable outcome for Indigenous people. This outcome envisioned full Indigenous participation in mainstream society, while retaining some cultural integrity and collective rights as Indigenous peoples.<sup>128</sup> Integration demanded conformity to the values of mainstream society, but promised a limited pluralism, implying at best a degree of tolerance for ethnic traditions and culture.<sup>129</sup> The emphasis, however, was on universal rights and equality of citizenship. The Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America had made 'segregation' synonymous with racism and discrimination and 'integration' equal to justice. Douglas was vocal in adopting this discourse to suit his understanding of the situation in Saskatchewan.<sup>130</sup> Proclaiming that “inherent in the reservation system are many elements repugnant to democracy”, the

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<sup>126</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 18.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 13.

<sup>128</sup> There is a marked semantic shift in the rhetoric used by both the CCF and federal government over this period, from the language of 'assimilation' to that of 'integration'. This change is particularly notable over the three year period that the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on the Indian Act was convened for, from 1946 - 1948, although 'assimilation' was used in CCF speeches as late as 1954. The two terms may seem synonymous, and indeed, Quiring (2004) has argued that there was no difference between the two. It is true that despite 'integration' promising a limited pluralism and respect for Indigenous cultural autonomy this semantic shift held little practical meaning for First Nations groups, as it still demanded conformity to the values of the dominant white culture. For our understanding of the discursive space the CCF operated within, however, it is important to understand how they conceptualised this shift. They intended this language to represent a break from past Indian policy, while simultaneously failing to reconceptualise Indigeneity in any meaningful way that did not involve falling back on the notion of culture as an acceptable marker of difference. The term 'assimilation' persisted among some members of the party as late as 1962, however.

<sup>129</sup> Barron, *Moccasins*, xix.

<sup>130</sup> Douglas even collected donations and sent them, along with a letter, to the widow of MLK Jr after his assassination. (Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 28) Even after Douglas had left the provincial government to lead the federal party, when a white Unitarian minister from Boston was beaten to death in Selma, Alabama, in 1965, the CCF caucus sent his widow a letter of condolence together with a small sum of money they had personally contributed SAB, W.S. Lloyd Papers, R-61.8 XXI 125b 1/2, J.H. Brockelbank to Mrs James J. Reeb, 17 March 1965.

CCF charged that “segregation backed by law implies the relegation of the Indian to the position of a second rate citizen.”<sup>131</sup>

CCF historian James Pitsula has suggested that while at best integration meant tolerance for “ethnic particularities”, at worst it was “indistinguishable from assimilation.”<sup>132</sup> Douglas suggested in 1958 that “complete assimilation [was] quite possible.” He made clear, however, that he was referring to ‘social assimilation’, as opposed to ‘physical assimilation’.<sup>133</sup> Douglas used the example of the Maori in New Zealand as the desired outcome for Indigenous people in Saskatchewan: “Very similar to the Indians, with about the same standard of social development, the Maoris have very successfully integrated into the economy of New Zealand... they are a very proud people, still looking back with pride to their old culture, and yet part of the economy and the society of New Zealand.”<sup>134</sup> Indigenous peoples would maintain a degree of pride for their ‘old’ culture - as Douglas did for his Scottish ancestry and as he imagined the Maori in New Zealand did.

Douglas’ commitment stemmed not from a recognition of Indigenous political rights, but from the notion that Indigenous and Métis populations were disadvantaged groups who, like the Mennonites or Chinese Canadians in the province, needed government assistance. Indeed, Indigenous and Métis groups would be liberated from these conditions *not* by reclaiming/strengthening collective Indigenous identity and rights to land and self-determination, which he believed only perpetuated their segregation, but by integrating them into society as fully functioning individual citizens. The CCF quoted the U.S. Supreme Court *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, which had declared that ‘separate can never be equal’, in the brief submitted to the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on

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<sup>131</sup> Brief on Saskatchewan Indians 1959, III - 1.

<sup>132</sup> Pitsula, *CCF and Indians*, 23.

<sup>133</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 245.

<sup>134</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 244.

Indian Affairs in 1960 as justification for integrating the schooling of white and Indigenous children: to “break down their feeling of being different and prepare them for competition with non-Indians in their adult life by making better known to them the attitudes and morals of dominant society.”<sup>135</sup> Despite the collectivist critique of excessively individualistic society put forward by the CCF in their founding documents, CCF socialism had an underlying liberal creed. Douglas’ CCF government actively promoted the liberal values of equality, individualism, and freedom when drafting Indian Policy. The Regina Manifesto strongly endorsed liberal principles, demanding “freedom of speech and assembly for all... [and] equal treatment before the law of all residents of Canada, irrespective of race, nationality or religious or political belief.”<sup>136</sup> As a system of thought, this liberal socialism allowed little space for group rights, or the idea that legal protection for special rights granted on the basis of racial and ethnic criteria should override individual rights.

The majority of CCF members involved in drafting Indian Policy held his mindset. The brief submitted by the CCF government to the Joint Committee had suggested that that “the social skills and attitudes which make for a good social adjustment on the reserve are frequently the exact opposite of those which would be most useful off the reservation”, and hence for full integration into mainstream white society.<sup>137</sup> In 1952 the Green Lake Co-operative Association were advised at their founding meeting not to include the word ‘Métis’ in the name of their organisation. James Grey, director of Saskatchewan Marketing Services, explained: I strongly urged them not to use the word ‘Métis’ since we are looking forward to the day when all citizens of Saskatchewan are of equal status, regardless of

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<sup>135</sup> Government of Canada, Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, No. 12 (16 & 17 June 1960), 1058.

<sup>136</sup> W. Christian & C. Campbell, *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada: Liberals, Conservatives, Socialists, Nationalists*, Toronto; London: McGraw-Hill Ryerson (1974), 133 - 134.

<sup>137</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, *Brief on Saskatchewan Indians*, 1959, III - 1.

race, colour, and creed. I therefore urged them not to brand themselves with any name indicating special race or colour.<sup>138</sup>

Rather than approaching the effects of colonisation (poverty, ill health, etc.) through recognition of Indigenous rights to land and self-determination, Douglas and the CCF did so through what Allyson Stevenson has called “technologies of helping.”<sup>139</sup> They thought that Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan were simply the victims of the same capitalist economic system that the CCF saw themselves as fighting - and not targeted in a modern/colonial system that had prioritised settler profit and the exploitation of land and resources over Indigenous bodies and lives. The issue at hand, therefore, was the identification of segregation as the problem and integration as the solution to Indigenous poverty. In the Socialist interviews Douglas argued that:

When we talk about the Americans indulging in this horrible segregation, we should realise that we have followed a policy of segregation that is even worse. We have not only segregated them in our own communities, but we’ve segregated them off into back concessions where they can’t be seen, and where their misery and poverty won’t offend us.<sup>140</sup>

Douglas could respond to the situation for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan only with ready-made categories that treated Indigenous dispossession in the same way as other social-ills. Douglas responded to Indigenous communities not *because* they were Indigenous, but because of the recognition of the markers of poverty and marginalisation that led him to engage with any poor and marginalised group. Returning to Dian Million’s concept of sociopolitical imaginaries helps explain how Douglas employed rhetorics and logics of benevolence, freedom and equality while disassociating the value of freedom and sovereignty to Indigenous peoples. The presumption that Indigenous

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<sup>138</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, ‘Métis’, R-33.1, file XL 859 b(44), Letter from James Grey to Mr H.E. Chapman, 19 March 1952.

<sup>139</sup> Stevenson, ‘Colonial legacy of the CCF’, interview for Red Anthropology, [<https://redanthropology.wordpress.com/2016/03/17/colonial-legacy-of-the-ccf-an-interview-with-allyson-stevenson>], (accessed 30 September 2016)].

<sup>140</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 244.

communities were trapped in the grip of social pathology and in need of white assistance was not a deliberate falsehood or ignorance on the part of Douglas. Rather, the presumption was ‘felt’ common knowledge, something that Douglas and his peers felt to be true, based on a complex context of sociopolitical imaginaries inherited from and informed by the settler colonial community in Saskatchewan (and more broadly, Canada) that shaped what was ‘thinkable’.<sup>141</sup>

Douglas was cognisant, however, that the issues faced by Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan were part of a systematic and structural problem; indeed, Douglas and the CCF went significantly beyond other political parties at the time in critiquing modernity and capitalism as responsibly structurally failing significant parts of society. Douglas began to develop this critique early in his political career. He recalls in his memoirs that one of the reasons he moved into politics was because of his dissatisfaction with the church’s failure to address the root causes of poverty in the province:

The church was trying to do what it could about the effect, but what began to bother me was that we weren’t doing anything about the cause. Why did this society break down? What was wrong with it? Why was it, that when you had a surplus of food and clothing and almost every known commodity produced by an advanced technological society, why were there people who couldn’t get decent houses to live in, couldn’t get clothing to wear, and who couldn’t get enough to eat? What had broken down?<sup>142</sup>

This critique, however, stopped short of a recognition of settler colonialism as also being a shaping factor in Saskatchewan.

In an interview in 1976, Douglas candidly admitted that his government did not know what Indigenous groups actually wanted and that his policies were based on what he thought would be good for them. The justification for not consulting Indigenous peoples on this policy formulation, according to the premier, had to do with both process and timing. Commenting on the 1946 conference in Regina, Douglas said that the Indigenous delegates could not come to any consensus as to what they wanted for

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<sup>141</sup> Million, *Therapeutic*, 44.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas, *Socialist*, 63.

themselves. He insisted that had the government waited for Indigenous people to formulate the course of action, the government would have been into its second or third term in office before something was done. He maintained that, although there was an awareness that solutions were being imposed, it was 'a necessary evil' dictated by the need to act quickly.<sup>143</sup> Even by the late 1970s, when the deleterious effects of policies implemented by the Saskatchewan CCF government, such as Adopt Indian Métis, were becoming evident, Douglas understood and justified his turn to paternalism as ultimately in the interests of Indigenous peoples. This is despite the fact that the top-down imposition of government policy in this way conflicted with Douglas's stated beliefs about Indigenous capacity and rights to self-determination - beliefs that he had used to justify the extension of rights such as the franchise and liquor licensing to Indigenous peoples in the first place.

There was a paradox between the internal logic and understanding Douglas used to justify this paternalism and his stated beliefs about Indigenous peoples. At a conference of Métis leaders in 1946, Douglas had clearly asserted that "our idea is not so much to help a group of people as to help them help themselves. Now you people will know better than we do how we can best go about helping the Métis people to help themselves."<sup>144</sup> The alternative - the imposition of ideas and policy goals by CCF politicians was - he argued "not a happy condition, a condition generally described as paternal."<sup>145</sup> Douglas critiqued paternalism, while showing a cognisance that his actions in Saskatchewan amounted to the same. This paradox was subsumed within a settler colonial understanding of equality and rights, combined with Douglas' firm belief in top-down government-led social engineering.

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<sup>143</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, Oral History Project 21, Tape R-A1185, Interview of T.C. Douglas by Murray Dobbin, 8 November 1976. Quoted by Barron, 205.

<sup>144</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, File no. XL. 859, Call no. R-33.1. 'Métis', 859 (44)a., T.C. Douglas Papers, Files of the Premier, Proceedings of Métis Conference, 1946, 35.

<sup>145</sup> Saskatchewan Archives Board, *Proceedings of Métis Conference*, 1946, 35.



## 5.0 Conclusion:

By exploring Douglas' self-representation in the *Socialist* interviews, this paper has sought to explore the complexities, tensions, and paradoxes in the ways that settler colonialism proceeded in Saskatchewan. Other scholars have comprehensively shown how the actions of even the most well-intended settlers could have deleterious outcomes for Indigenous peoples. This was particularly true in Saskatchewan with regards to CCF attempts to integrate provincial Indigenous populations into health, welfare, and education jurisdictions. Despite Douglas' good intentions and the fact that his CCF party was often ground-breaking and radical for their time in their approach to Indigenous peoples, his policies frequently proved to be destructive to Indigenous interests, particularly with regards to Métis colonies and Indigenous groups in the north of the province. Rather, by examining the ways settler colonialism circumscribed what was 'thinkable' for Douglas, I have sought to draw attention to the conditions and contingency of settler colonialism. As Corey Snelgrove, Rita Kaur Dhamoon, and Jeff Corntassel ask, "What good is it to analyse settler colonialism if that analysis does not shed light on sites of contradiction and weakness, the conditions for its reproduction, or the spaces and practises of resistance to it?"<sup>146</sup>

Decolonial scholar and philosopher Walter Dignolo's work offers a useful metaphor for explaining Douglas' approach to Indigenous peoples. Dignolo's metaphor implies that modernity is a two sided coin and that for settlers it is commonly defined and experienced in association with concepts such as progress, industrialisation, democracy, and opportunity. It was investment in these concepts of modernity that motivated Douglas to integrate Indigenous peoples into mainstream Canadian society, through such markers of citizenship as the vote, liquor licensing, and incorporation into social, health,

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<sup>146</sup> Corey Snelgrove, Rita Kaur Dhamoon & Jeff Corntassel, "Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settlers, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations", *Decolonisation: Indigeneity, Education, and Society*, 3, 2 (2014), 26 - 27.

educational, and welfare jurisdictions. Douglas' investment in these concepts was rooted in his experiences as a working class immigrant-settler to Canada.

Douglas' Indian Policy was not an anomaly within an otherwise radical, progressive agenda. Rather, his progressivism itself was situated within the tenets of settler colonialism. The 'shine' of modernity in Mingolo's metaphor is articulated in ways that hide its shadow - or the fact that the very existence of the shiny side requires the imposition of systematic violence on others<sup>147</sup>. In other words, the security and sovereignty that Douglas thought integration into mainstream Canadian society offered was actually made possible through the various violences of colonialism (exploitation, expropriation, displacement, dispossession, ecological destruction) that had led Douglas to engage with Indigenous groups in the first place. These violences were constitutive of settler colonialism (and Canadian citizenship) itself, but for Douglas they were projected outward as if they were external to it. As such, Douglas could not recognise that the very thing he thought he was offering Indigenous peoples had, in fact, been the cause of their poverty and disenfranchisement in the first place. We see this very clearly in his actions around the extension of the provincial vote and liquor licensing. It was 'unthinkable' for him to consider Indigenous peoples outside a worldview that posited them as a disenfranchised minority who needed assistance integrating into mainstream Canadian society and taking up all the rights and opportunities that this offered. Combined with his predilection towards paternalism, framed as 'top-down' social engineering, this meant that the opportunities Douglas thought he was offering Indigenous peoples, in fact, amounted to colonialism.

In calling for a new way of writing racialised histories, Elsa Barkley Brown calls on us to be comfortable with 'the big and loose' rather than the 'small and tight stitches' that we often try to bind

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<sup>147</sup> Andreotti et. al., *Mapping*, 23.

histories together with.<sup>148</sup> The good intentions of Douglas and other individuals in the CCF party are like the small tight stitches of conscious agency. I have worked here to complicate these with my consideration of the ‘big loose’ collective frameworks of action and intent, interlinked and overlapping with questions of unconscious activity and structure. This nonlinear, asymmetrical way of thinking about the world can help us recognise the complicity of individuals (and ourselves) in broader structures of suffering and oppression, help us remember how these affective dynamics and social patterns came to be thinkable (and what remains unthinkable), and understand how they continue to operate. Following decolonial scholars Vanessa Andreotti and Sharon Stein, I conclude by asking us all to consider our relation to colonial histories as a way forward: not simply in ways that are about offering apologies or demanding people deal or make peace with an unfortunate past. Rather, this would entail asking what should be done in the present to enact transformative modes of redress, tracing the desires and processes that produce harmful knowledge, identities, imaginaries and relationships, and identifying the patterns of social relations and subjectification through which we reproduce harmful contexts, even as we try to do otherwise.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Elsa Barkley Brown, “What Has Happened Here”: The Politics of Difference in Women’s History and Feminist Politics, *Feminist Studies*, 18, 2, (1992), 295.

<sup>149</sup> Sharon Stein & Vanessa Andreotti, ‘Afterword: provisional pedagogies towards imagining global mobilities otherwise’, *Curriculum Inquiry*, 47:1, 144.

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## **Appendix 1: Timeline of the granting of the provincial vote and liquor legislation.<sup>150</sup>**

**1947:** CCF government passes provincial Bill of Rights, guaranteeing in law the human rights of all citizens of the province. The government seriously considers extending the franchise to Indigenous peoples. Douglas referred the matter to the Union of Saskatchewan Indians (USI), where it prompted widespread antipathy - not least because of the semantic confusion between the franchise and enfranchisement, exacerbating by careless use of the two terms by CCF officials.

**1949:** The federal government was expected to overhaul the Indian Act in response to the recommendations of the JCSHC on the Indian Act. On behalf of the USI, Morris Shumiatcher of the CCF government petitioned Ottawa for a review process on the proposed amendments. The federal government refused this proposal. This soured attitudes towards the franchise in Saskatchewan, especially as it was known that one of the proposals of the JCSHC in 1948 had been the granting of the federal franchise, a proposal that had been roundly condemned by the USI at the time.

The USI held a government sponsored convention in Saskatoon in spring 1949, in anticipation of sending a delegation to Ottawa to discuss amendments to the Indian Act. The convention came to the decision that the USI should oppose citizenship rights for Indians, although there was some support among younger members of the organisation.

**June 1950:** The Liberal federal government of Louis St. Laurent introduced an entirely new Indian Act, Bill 267. It is roundly opposed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, notably because there had been almost no attempts to consult Indigenous groups about its content. Some of the main critiques of the bill were its failure to endorse Indigenous self government, and enforced

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<sup>150</sup> This timeline is taken from Barron, *Moccasins*, Chapter 4: Citizenship Issues.

enfranchisement at the discretion of Indian Affairs. The government was forced to withdraw the legislation.

**February - March 1951:** The federal government made a more serious attempt to consult Indigenous groups about the proposals for the new bill to be introduced that year. The proposed legislation had 124 sections and, of these, 103 sections were unanimously supported by delegates; 113 sections were supported by a majority of those present; and only 6 sections were opposed by a majority of the representatives, and of these only two were opposed unanimously - these two sections concerned taxation and enfranchisement. The other main sources of opposition were the use of intoxicants.

**1951:** Bill 79 was passed and became the new Indian Act. Indigenous people would only be granted the right to vote in federal elections under the new Act if they surrendered their right to tax exemptions on reserve land. Section 98 of the Act provided that any province could petition the governor general-in-council to permit Indigenous people to consume alcohol in licensed premises.

At the time, Douglas was not prepared to act to implement the changes. He himself was a committed teetotaler, and he was also cognisant of the opposition throughout the province. Concerned white citizens inundated Douglas with letters expressing their opposition to Indigenous people being allowed to drink legally. The move faced strong opposition from vested interests in the liquor industry, especially hotel owners. Indigenous leadership throughout Saskatchewan was also mostly opposed to the proposal, and the USI made no move to support the provisions of Section 98.

**Mid 1950s:** There was renewed interest in the issues of the provincial franchise and liquor legislation. Other provinces had begun to implement these measures: Newfoundland granted the vote to Indigenous peoples when the colony joined Confederation in 1949, BC extended the vote to Indigenous peoples the same year, Manitoba followed in 1952, and Ontario in 1954.

**1954:** Bill Berezowsky, CCF member for Cumberland, introduced a motion in the SK legislature asking the government to honour Indigenous citizenship rights. He renewed the motion in 1956, asking the government to consider submitting legislation to unconditionally extend the franchise to Indigenous peoples and remove from existing legislation any laws that restricted Indigenous rights. The motion was passed unanimously and received more favourable coverage in the press outside the legislature. Douglas now promised that if the CCF was returned to office in the upcoming election, his government would take action on these issues. When he was interviewed for the *Socialist* interviews in 1958 this is his line on Indian Policy.

**1956:** Further amendments to the Indian Act broadened the rights of Indigenous peoples to consume alcohol. According to the new amendments, Indigenous groups would still need provincial sanction to exercise drinking rights, but these rights would now include all rights enjoyed by other citizens, including purchasing alcohol from liquor stores and possessing alcohol off a reserve. Any band could vote by majority to become 'wet' and allow liquor consumption on reserve. The proposal was strongly opposed by much of the Indigenous leadership in the province, and the CCF electorate.

**1956:** Douglas authorised a Special Committee on Indian Affairs, chaired by John Sturdy. First report of the CIA advises against introducing the provincial vote or liquor legislation.

**December 1957:** The government made the decision to proceed with the Indigenous franchise, but only after consultation with Indigenous representatives. The two-day meeting would be held near the end of October 1958 in Valley Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle, and was to be attended by the chief and one councillor from each reserve throughout the province. The cost of travel, accommodations, and food for all delegates would be covered by the government. This was the conference discussed by Douglas in the *Socialist* interviews. Around 103 chiefs and councillors from 57 of the 61 reserves in Saskatchewan registered for the opening session of the conference on 30 October 1958.

**1958:** Douglas was at pains to ensure conference attendees that he would not act on either the franchise or alcohol without the approval of Indigenous groups. Facing opposition to both issues from the attendees, a decision was postponed until another conference to be held a year later. This was to be accompanied by an education campaign on both issues. An advisory committee composed of representatives from the nine Indian agencies in Saskatchewan was elected to advise the CIA on the 1959 conference. At the same conference, the USI and the QVTPA - the two main Indigenous organisations in the province - agreed to create a new organisation, the United Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI). The new organisation was nominally independent, but as with the USI was dependent on government grants to finance many of its activities.

**1959:** The second conference was held - it was sponsored by the provincial government but marketed as the second annual meeting of the FSI. Near the end of the conference and after almost seventy resolutions had already been dealt with, a motion deflecting the whole question of the vote and ignoring the more controversial issue of alcohol was introduced: “WHEREAS in a political democracy the vote is a right and not a privilege and WHEREAS some Indians want the provincial vote and others do not want the vote THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians in Conference assembled be not required to petition the Provincial Government on this question.” This resolution effectively absolved Douglas of the promise to not proceed with licensing or franchise legislation without agreement of the Indigenous population. Pressures on a federal level, combined with voting initiatives in other provinces, made it politically untenable that Saskatchewan Indigenous peoples were still un-enfranchised, especially in light of the CCF’s political stance towards human rights. Delegates almost unanimously voted against the motion.

At the 1959 Provincial Council Meeting the issue of the Indigenous franchise was debated by the party for the first time. The majority of CCF members cast their vote in favour of amending the

Elections Act to include Indigenous peoples. Changes to the Liquor Act were passed this year enabling the government to grant drinking rights to Indigenous peoples living off-reserve, but the government postponed implementation.

**1960:** Douglas announced in February to the Assembly, that despite his earlier promises, his government would proceed without Indigenous consent. On 8 June 1960, Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan voted in provincial polls for the first time. In June Douglas petitioned the federal government for the necessary proclamation to allow Indigenous peoples to drink. On 27 July that year the federal proclamation came into effect.