

Race and Assimilation:
Doukhobor Education as Colonial History

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From 1953 to 1959 the government of British Columbia undertook a program of forced education and confinement of the children of Sons of Freedom Doukhobors. These children were placed in a former tuberculosis sanatorium at New Denver as wards of the province under sections of the Child Protection Act because their parents either engaged in nude protest or refused to send their children to public schools. Initially a school was set up at the New Denver institution, but soon after the children were taught at the local New Denver school. The issue of forced education of these children has been framed variously as "a long and painful process of accommodation to the Canadian ways,"¹ as an issue of state accommodation and religious minority rights,² as an example of poor public policy that could easily have been avoided,³ as a severe infringement of children's rights by both parents⁴ and the state⁵ and finally as an internal factional conflict between moderate Orthodox Doukhobors and radical Sons of Freedom Doukhobors.⁶ While most of these interpretations provide valuable insights into what has historically been called the 'Doukhobor problem', John McLaren has argued that this forced education should be seen as a political tool of assimilation with parallels to the federal Indian residential school program.⁷ The framing of the New Denver program in relation to Canadian colonial history is hinted at in Woodcock and Avakumovic's influential work *The Doukhobors*, but remains underdeveloped; this paper will examine what it means to frame the New Denver program, and Doukhobor education in general, through the interpretive lens of anti-colonialism.

The inspiration for this study is not the connection made by some scholars to colonial projects of forced assimilation, but rather the fact that a group of former residents at the New Denver institution calling themselves *The New Denver Survivors Collective* have relied on the discourse of race, assimilation and genocide. The group states on its website, "Abuse, forced assimilation, genocide and crimes against humanity committed on 7-15 year [old] children by a provincial government in a democratic society is extreme racism."⁸ Further, a cursory reading of the 1999 BC Ombudsman's report into New Denver suggests parallels with the Indian residential school program regarding physical and emotional abuse as a result of unqualified staff and understaffing.⁹ These surface similarities, however, are complicated by the fact that some of the most damaging characteristics of the Indian residential school program—the half-work day, the missionary aspect, lack of professional educators—were specific to the federal program. Framing the New Denver program in terms of colonial assimilation also seems particularly problematic in light of the history of Doukhobor encroachment on traditional Sinixt territory and the eventual displacement of the last remaining Sinixt family—the Christians—from the area at the confluence of the Kootenay and Columbia rivers.¹⁰ The distinctness of

1 Koozma Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava: The Doukhobors* (Grand Forks, BC: Mir Publication Society, 1982).

2 William Janzen, *Limits on Liberty: The experience of Mennonite, Hutterite, and Doukhobor Communities in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

3 J.C. Yerbury, "The 'Sons of Freedom' Doukhobors and the Canadian State," *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes ethniques au Canada*, 16:2 (1984): 48.

4 Simma Holt, *Terror in the name of God: The story of the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1964).

5 Ombudsman Province of British Columbia, *Public Report No. 38: Righting the Wrong: The confinement of the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor Children*, April 1999.

6 Gregory Cran, *Negotiating buck naked: Doukhobors, public policy, and conflict resolution* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

7 John McLaren, "The State, Child Snatching, and the Law: The Seizure and Indoctrination of Sons of Freedom Children in British Columbia, 1950-60," in Dorothy E. Chunn, John McLaren and Robert Menzies, *Regulating Lives: historical essays on the state, society, the individual, and the law* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

8 New Denver Survivors Collective, accessed online: <http://www.newdenversurvivors.tk/>.

9 Ombudsman, *Righting the Wrong*.

10 For a brief history of this relationship see: Myler Wilkinson and Duff Sutherland. "From our side we will be good

the "Doukhobor problem" in the 1950's was not lost on Frank Calder when he urged premier W.A.C. Bennett to press the federal government for indigenous representation in the senate by saying, "Governments approach the Doukhobors with recommendations and solutions to their problems and the Doukhobors remain silent...In our case, we approach the governments with recommendations and solutions to our own problems and the governments remain silent."¹¹

Any attempt to equate New Denver and federal residential schools is problematic and cannot be sustained in light of historical evidence; however, important insights can be discovered by reading Doukhobor history as part of a larger colonial history in Canada. Understanding Doukhobor education as implicated in settler colonialism provides an alternative reading of Doukhobor history; in this reading of educational history an ideology of Anglo-Saxon racial and civilizational superiority is central to colonial economic development. Within this ideology the Doukhobors are sometimes characterized as insiders and sometimes as outsiders to the colonial project and this ambiguous position is important in explaining the New Denver experiment. The goal of the New Denver program was to create 'good Canadians' out of the radical minority of Doukhobors who represented an obstacle to the economic development of BC in the 1950s. My research draws on a small portion of the literature on the residential school system as well as secondary literature about Doukhobor educational history in order to provide context for my central focus: the 1950s political crisis of Sons of Freedom education. I rely on provincial government correspondence, the 1948 Sullivan Royal Commission, the Hawthorn Doukhobor Research Committee, publications from the Reformed Sons of Freedom, studies from the 1950s on anti-Doukhobor prejudice and historical newspapers to re-interpret this era of BC Doukhobor history.

Anti-colonialism as interpretive framework

The use of 'anti-colonialism' in this paper deserves a quick explanation as this use might be considered idiosyncratic to some. Anti-colonialism shares some affinity with thinkers in the 'post-colonial' tradition. A foundational text in this tradition is Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which he argues that colonial government and society have created a degraded sense of self for Blacks where good is measured only through the cultural ideals of the white world.¹² The most important contribution of this work is that it shows that racism is not simply a matter of legal discrimination, it is also about cultural supremacy.¹³ Likewise, Edward Said's work *Culture and Imperialism* demonstrates the important relationship between power and culture in constructing an identity for imperial subjects as well as for the imperialists.¹⁴ What is central is that colonialism and imperialism are not simply about racist subjugation, but about the *ideology* that justifies the subjugation as a noble cause.¹⁵ This emphasis on cultural ideology is taken up by contemporary Indigenous scholars like Taiaiake Alfred who makes the case that the dominance of settler society in Canada is sustained, to this day, by a neoliberal ideology that separates Indigenous peoples from their cultures and lands.¹⁶

While the preceding thinkers focus on cultural supremacy, it must not be forgotten that in settler colonialism this ideology of supremacy cannot be separated from the material process of land dispossession and economic development. In the Canadian context, one can think of anti-colonialism as an historical narrative that gives an overarching coherence to diverse processes, ideologies and government policies. From this perspective the agricultural and later industrial economic development

neighbour[s] to them': Doukhobor-Sinixt Relations at the Confluence of the Kootenay and Columbia Rivers in the Early Twentieth Century," in *BC Studies* 174 (Summer 2012): 33-59.

11 "Representation in Senate For Indians Asked by MLA," *Daily Colonist*, October 1, 1953.

12 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press. 2008).

13 *Ibid.*, 218.

14 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf. 1993), xii.

15 *Ibid.*, 9.

16 Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press. 2002), 20.

of Canada, the suppression of Indigenous political communities, the creation of the reserve system, the imposition of Euro-Canadian gender norms, regulation of identity through the Indian Act, forced assimilation and the ideology of civilizational superiority and the regulation of natural resources can all be thought of as part of a larger settler colonial project. While this interpretive framework tends to view colonialism as a systemic process, it also privileges resistance and political contingency in contrast to the determinism in the colonial narrative of the inevitable march of progress.

When applied to the residential school program, competing accounts can be seen as either within or outside the anti-colonial framework. For example, Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young's work *The Circle Game* makes the case that there is a "standard account" that describes the residential school program as well intentioned but unfortunate program that led to abuse; in contrast, their account argues that the residential school system cannot be understood as individual cases of abuse, but must be put in the context of systemic assimilation and genocide.¹⁷ Likewise, J.R. Miller's work *Shingwauk's Vision* was written in the context of revelations of abuse at residential schools, but instead of focusing on abuse the work provides a history of residential schools as one aspect of colonial history.¹⁸ George Manuel succinctly expressed the anti-colonial interpretation of the residential school system when he stated that residential schools "were the laboratory and production line of the colonial system...the colonial system that was designed to make room for European expansion into a vast empty wilderness needed an Indian population that it could describe as lazy and shiftless..."¹⁹

The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* makes the case that the residential school program was driven by the economic imperatives of colonial development with the goal of "elevat[ing] the Indian from his condition of savagery" and turning indigenous peoples into contributing citizens in the service of an expanding industrial society.²⁰ Perhaps the most telling evidence of the economic forces behind the program is that pre-confederation experiments in agricultural education, such as John West's school at Red River during the 1820s failed largely because there continued to exist a viable fur-trade economy.²¹ At its core, the project of removing the indigenous 'obstacle' to settlement relied on a racial and civilizational ideology that constructed the diverse first peoples of Canada as infantile, but capable of civilizational development through education.²²

A brief look at the discourse of civilizational development through residential schools shows a repeated use of racial language alongside the hope of assimilation. Various sources characterize the goal of the project as "the extinction of the Indians as *Indians*,"²³ the "euthanasia of savage communities,"²⁴ or the infamous goal put forward by Duncan Campbell Scott to "kill the Indian in the child." Wayne Christian, in framing the stories of survivors of the Kamloops residential school, accurately describes the program as "a policy of cultural genocide where there was a systematic removal of children from their families, communities, language, traditional spiritual beliefs and practices, cultural values and rituals."²⁵ Complimentary to this project of cultural destruction was the

17 Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young, *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books Ltd. 2006).

18 J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1996).

19 Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Volume 1—Looking Forward Looking Back*.

20 Ibid.

21 Miller, *Shingwauk*, 70.

22 Ibid., 154.

23 Allan G. Harper, US Bureau of Indian Affairs official reporting on the Canadian system quoted in Miller, *Shingwauk*, 184.

24 Herman Merrivale, quoted in Miller, *Shingwauk*, 74.

25 Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, *Behind Closed Doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books Ltd. 2000), 10.

'positive' re-socialization toward the Anglo-Saxon ideal based on notions of cleanliness, lawfulness, industriousness, patriotism and identification with British institutions.²⁶ The ideology of civilizational improvement simultaneously debased all things 'Indian' while extolling whiteness, not simply as morphological, but as a civilizational and cultural ideal that was often explicitly Anglo-centric.

While the federal responsibility for 'Indians' created a unique residential schooling program, from an anti-colonial perspective it can be argued that provincial education often shared the assumptions of civilizational superiority and worked as another institutional technology in settler colonialism. Timothy Stanley argues that, "State-controlled schooling was integral to the construction of supremacist hegemony in B.C. ... School textbooks were particularly important in transmitting a nexus of ideas about patriotism, citizenship and 'character'..."²⁷ Much like the residential school program, provincial education constructed British imperialism and Canadian colonialism as a moral duty, but at the provincial level the education was directed at the colonizers. The important connection between federal and provincial education is that in the context of settler colonialism all state-education is used as a technique to manipulate the 'character' of peoples. When interpreted from this anti-colonial angle, the slow shift away from segregated residential schools toward integration into provincial education that began in the late 1940s is less a break from past policy than a refinement of the assimilationist project.

An anti-colonial interpretation of education in Canada is important to an adequate understanding of the history of Doukhobor education because it sheds light on how conflicts between government and Doukhobors regarding education are not free floating, but are part of a larger colonial project; the Doukhobors arrive *in medias res* to a political scene where policy and discourse around education have been shaped by colonial expansion and dispossession. Renisa Mawani makes a similar argument about the inter-related nature of Chinese migration and the dispossession and 'civilization' of indigenous peoples in BC; they are not separate processes, but rather "unfold[] in overlapping temporalities."²⁸ I will now turn to the overlapping history of Doukhobor education, beginning with the Doukhobors' educational experience in the early 20th century as context for the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor crisis in the 1950s.

The Minister of the Interior, Premier J.T.M. Anderson, and the production of Canadians

Nearly all works about the Doukhobors written for non-Doukhobor readers begin with a brief description of who the Doukhobors are. Doukhobor historian Eli Popoff has taken issue with representations of Doukhobors and argues, "When the image of a movement, or the life-concept at its core, is depicted through an assortment of very diverse explanatory pictures, then quite predictably it becomes puzzling and may be seen as something *enigmatic*."²⁹ The assumption of an authentic Doukhobor identity is also put forward by John Stoochnoff who characterizes the Doukhobors or 'Spirit Wrestlers' as a religious group, with origins in Russia, living by the motto "toil and peaceful life"³⁰; the group is sometimes defined by their core beliefs in the Divine Spirit residing in each individual, the rejection of formal Church structure, pacifism, the rejection of earthly governments and communal living. The history of bitter factionalism within the Doukhobor movement in Canada,³¹ however,

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27 Timothy J. Stanley, "White Supremacy and the Rhetoric of Educational Indoctrination: A Canadian Case Study," in *Children, Teachers, and Schools in The History of British Columbia*, Jean Barmen et al. eds. (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1995).

28 Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities* *Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009) 4.

29 Eli A. Popoff, "The Doukhobors: The 'Enigma' and the Reality," in Andrew Donskov, John Woodsworth, Chad Gaffield eds., *The Doukhobor Centenary in Canada* (Ottawa: Slavic Research Group at the University of Ottawa, 1999), 22.

30 John Philip Stoochnoff, *Toil and Peaceful Life: Doukhobors as They Are* (Vancouver: Liberty Press, 1971).

31 See Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava* and Woodcock, *Doukhobors* for detailed history of the emergence of the three Doukhobor factions in Canada. See Cran, *Buck Naked*, for discussion of competing conceptions of 'true' Doukhobors.

suggests no easy definition of Doukhobors. The best understanding of 'the Doukhobors' comes from a history of their origins in Russia and experiences in Canada that is well developed by Tarasoff³² and Woodcock³³ and is well beyond the scope of this research. What is important to this study is not the *truth* about who or what the Doukhobors are, but how they are constructed as a group through colonial education and the consequences that flow from this.

In 1899, with the help of Tolstoy, The Society of Friends (Quakers) and Canadian contacts, approximately 7 400 Doukhobors—the vast majority to ever immigrate to Canada—fled repression in Russia and arrived in the Canadian prairies. Due to the parochial nature of Canadian politics at the turn of the 20th century, the same official responsible for bringing the Doukhobors to Canada was in charge of Indians as the Minister of the Interior. The Minister, Clifford Sifton, was eager to have the Doukhobors populate the West because of their accomplishments as agriculturalists.³⁴ The character of the Doukhobors seemed impeccable, and led some to characterize them in phenotypical terms as the best type of settler.³⁵ The initial enthusiasm, however, soon turned to hostility. By the time Frank Oliver replaced Sifton as Minister of the Interior in 1905 a number of factors, including the emergence of a radical element in the Doukhobors who engaged in nude protests against materialism, an increased demand for settler land on the Prairies, and opposition to Doukhobor communal land holdings³⁶ made it clear that the Doukhobors were a problematic people rather than ideal settlers. The Doukhobors, as a quasi-political and economic community, stood in the way of free market development. In 1907 the Department of Interior took the position that "Doukhobors will need a constant watching until schools and contact with other settlers will transform them and make them think in the same way as an ordinary man does."³⁷

John Lyons' study of Doukhobor schooling in Saskatchewan shows that acceptance of public schooling by Doukhobors depended largely on which of the emerging three factions of Doukhobors one belonged to.³⁸ The Independents, who rejected communal living and were quickly integrating into settler society, were the first to embrace public education with the majority of children attending by 1912.³⁹ The Community or Orthodox Doukhobors, who followed the spiritual leadership of Peter V. Verigin and lived communally, donated land in 1913 for the construction of a public school in Verigin, Saskatchewan, but remained fearful of forced attendance and wrote the deputy minister of education warning that compulsory education would cause trouble.⁴⁰ Lyons concludes that the institutional design of provincial education in Saskatchewan—that is, its decentralized control by local school boards—along with lax enforcement of the 1917 School Attendance Act, led to a gradual building of trust and acceptance of schooling by Doukhobors in Saskatchewan.⁴¹ Despite the mostly peaceful integration with public schooling, between 1929 and 1931 the radical faction known as the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors or Freedomites burned 25 schools in response to coerced education.⁴² This period is particularly telling as it coincides with the election of the former inspector of schools J.T.M. Anderson as premier and a shift toward an overtly assimilationist education policy.

32 Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava*.

33 Woodcock and Avakumovic, *Doukhobors*.

34 Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava*, 46-7.

35 Cornelius Jaenen, "The Doukhobor First Perceived as 'The Other'," in Donskov et al. eds., *Doukhobor Centenary*, 104.

36 Woodcock and Avakumovic, *Doukhobors*, 218.

37 Yerbury, "Sons of Freedom," 47.

38 John Lyons, "The (Almost) Quiet Revolution: Doukhobor Schooling in Saskatchewan," *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes ethniques au Canada*, 8:1 (1976): 23-37.

39 John Lyons, "The (Almost) Quiet Revolution," 26.

40 *Ibid.*, 28.

41 *Ibid.*, 29.

42 *Ibid.*, 33.

There is little doubt about the motivation behind J.T.M. Anderson's education policy of tough enforcement of attendance as well as amendments to the School Act requiring school trustees to read and write English and declare naturalization. His treatise, *The Education of the New-Canadian*, written while school inspector in Yorkton—in close proximity to Doukhobor communities—provides a blueprint for the Anglo-Saxon supremacist vision of education in Saskatchewan. In it, he argues against the Sifton policy of quickly populating the West and argues for more careful attention to the character of future immigrants and the role of education in re-socializing problematic peoples like the Doukhobors.⁴³ While engaging in grandiose language praising Canada's role in British imperialism, he makes the case that adult foreigners are a lost cause and that their children are "the material upon which Canadians as nation-builders must work."⁴⁴ Anderson singles out the Doukhobors as particularly problematic because their communal settlements make them resistant to "racial assimilation"⁴⁵; he characterizes the Doukhobors as being in need of salvation from their autocratic leader through public education for their "bright, but mentally starved children..."⁴⁶

Besides praising the integrated "one language school" as the key to 'Canadianization', Anderson also provides a racial taxonomy and hierarchy of 'foreigners'; in this scheme Icelanders are the ideal non-Anglo-Saxon with Slavs significantly inferior.⁴⁷ While quick to point to variations in the Slavic type based on differences of nationality and religion,⁴⁸ he nonetheless provides a sketch of the phenotypical⁴⁹ and moral⁵⁰ characteristics of the Slav. The most important feature of this racial ideology is that Anderson recognizes these peoples have been hastily let in to Canada, and they are here to stay; however, he provides a solution: "The paramount factor in racial fusion is undoubtedly the education of the children of these non-English races..."⁵¹

Early 20th Century Education in BC

In response to the 1907 'Doukhobor land crisis' in Saskatchewan,⁵² Peter V. Verigin purchased land in the Kootenay/Boundary region under the assumption that he would be able to move the Orthodox Doukhobors to an area with less government interference than in Saskatchewan. At the time Verigin exclaimed, "No schools. No government interference. An ideal place to build a brotherhood."⁵³ This idealism was quickly dashed by the reality of a province with centrally controlled compulsory provincial education and a political culture formed through the rapid building of a colonial white-supremacist society.⁵⁴

43 J.T.M. Anderson, *The Education of the New-Canadian* (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1918), 8.

44 Ibid., 9.

45 Ibid., 203.

46 Ibid., 33.

47 Ibid., 39, 60.

48 Ibid., 49.

49 Ibid., 50.

50 Ibid., 60.

51 Ibid., 89.

52 The land or homestead crisis involved a reversal of homestead policy on the part of the federal government that had initially granted the Doukhobors the ability to live in communal villages and improve their land allotments communally rather than on each individual entry. More importantly, in the eyes of many Doukhobors, was the requirement under the Dominion Lands Act to swear an oath of allegiance; this requirement led many Doukhobors to fear the cancellation of their exemption from military service given the connection between oaths and military service in Russia prior to their arrival in Canada. In 1907, some 258 880 acres of land entries by the Doukhobors were cancelled by the federal government. This period is well covered by Woodcock and Avakumovic, *The Doukhobors*, 215-222, and by Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava*, 85-94.

53 Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava*, 102.

54 Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989), W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

Soon after arriving in BC, Verigin had two schools built for Doukhobor students—one at Grand Forks and one at Brilliant. In 1912, in what Tarasoff describes as an act of "unbelievable clumsiness,"⁵⁵ provincial authorities arrested four Doukhobor men for failing to register a death; this action led to the withdrawal of Doukhobor students from the schools⁵⁶ and disobedience of registration laws. The resulting backlash against this 'flaunting' of Canadian laws led Premier McBride to appoint William Blakemore as the head commissioner for the first Royal Commission on Doukhobors. While Blakemore's report assumed assimilation of Doukhobors was beneficial and inevitable, his recommendations regarding education were conciliatory because in his words, "Persecution is fuel to the flames of fanaticism. Withdraw the fuel, and the fire dies out."⁵⁷ The report laid out the Doukhobors' arguments against education which included the belief that schools teach immorality, militarism, patriotism and materialism; in contrast, Doukhobor education was based on immersion learning of practical skills through the "wide school of Eternal Nature."⁵⁸ While Blakemore called for enforcement of the Public Schools Act, he also recommended winning the Doukhobors' "sympathy" through the hiring of Russian speaking teachers and a modification of the school curriculum.⁵⁹ Any chance of this policy of patient assimilation succeeding was eliminated by Blakemore's recommendation to cancel the Doukhobors' exemption from military service—one of the primary reasons for the immigration to Canada.

An uneasy compromise existed between government and Orthodox Doukhobors on the education question between 1915-1922, but the governments of the time maintained a posture of compulsory school attendance with the goal of breaking up the Doukhobor community. In 1914, Attorney General William Bowser introduced the Community Regulation Act, which was aimed at levying fines against the entire Doukhobor community and seizing communal property for any number of infractions such as truancy from school. Government correspondence from the time shows that the Community Regulation Act was meant to bring pressure on the entire communal organization and "directly affect the most cherished doctrine of their leader—economy."⁶⁰ According to inspector of Schools A.E. Miller, the act, which applied to groups "under communal or tribal association,"⁶¹ would "...put Peter where he belongs and would also furnish an effective test of the real strength of the opposition to the schools without putting the Government to any unnecessary expense."⁶² When the act was put into full force in 1923 in response to declining school attendance, public schools became the targets of Sons of Freedom arson attacks.⁶³

The emergence of the Sons of Freedom faction in BC led to a number of public protest burnings of their own homes and nude demonstrations, but also to "black work" bombings and burnings of public buildings and infrastructure as well as attacks on Orthodox Doukhobor property.⁶⁴ In 1931, the federal government amended the Criminal Code to provide a three year sentence for public nudity; the three year sentence was meant to make Sons of Freedom protesters eligible for incarceration in federal

55 Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava*, 117.

56 John McLaren, "Truancy and 'child snatching': law, social control and Doukhobor education in British Columbia, 1911-1935" (paper presented at BC Studies Conference 1994, Okanagan University College, Kelowna, BC, October 7-10, 1994), 12.

57 British Columbia, *Report of Royal Commission on Matters Relating to the Sect of Doukhobors in the Province of British Columbia 1912, 1913*, 38.

58 *Ibid.*, 51.

59 *Ibid.*, 66.

60 A.V. Pineo, Memo to Attorney General Bowser, 1913, UBC Doukhobor Collection, D.Ms. 13.

61 Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava*, 123.

62 A.E. Miller, Letter to Dr. Alexander Robinson, March 31, 1915, UBC Doukhobor Collection, D.Ms. 13.

63 Yerbury, "Sons," 56.

64 Woodcock and Avakumovic, *The Doukhobors*, 312.

penitentiaries and thus the burden of 'the Doukhobor problem' could be shared between levels of government.⁶⁵ This legal development set the stage for the mass arrests of Sons of Freedom during a nude demonstration in Thrums, BC in 1932. The adults were placed in a specially constructed penal colony on Piers Island, while 365 children were dispersed between foster homes, orphanages and industrial schools for juvenile delinquents.⁶⁶ During this time children alleged abuse and officials tried to keep this information from parents by translating and censoring letters from the children; for a short time the children were forced to write in English despite many of them lacking basic English skills.⁶⁷ Another factor increasing Sons of Freedom sense of persecution was the fact that prior to the prisoners being transferred to Piers Island, three infants who were taken from their mothers at Oakalla prison died in hospital. The matron at Oakalla prison claimed that the breast-feeding infants were sickly upon arrival at the prison and were made worse when their mothers went on a hunger strike,⁶⁸ but the Sons of Freedom always maintained that they were left to die by officials.⁶⁹ According to R.H.C. Hooper's 1947 master's thesis on custodial care of Doukhobor children, "The placement of three hundred and sixty-five children was an experiment that did not last long enough to test its possible value."⁷⁰

Sons of Freedom Doukhobor education crisis 1948-1959

The period leading up to, and during, the confinement of Freedomite children at New Denver, cannot be adequately understood without taking into account the anti-Doukhobor rhetoric of the time and its impact on electoral outcomes and W.A.C. Bennett's 'get tough' Doukhobor policy. While the discourse about Doukhobors during this period was not as straight forward as the racial-assimilationist ideology of J.T.M. Anderson, the use of racial language persisted in debates about the 'Doukhobor problem'. Many academics, journalists, politicians and non-Doukhobor citizens saw clearly enough that the bombings, arsons and nude protests were only engaged in by a minority faction, and many observers provided thoughtful insights about how to best deal with the situation. Many others, however, held fast to an anti-Doukhobor stance that had a significant impact on educational policy. Regardless of one's position, it seems as if everyone had something to say about the 'Doukhobor problem'.

Anti-Doukhobor sentiment was widespread enough that John Stoochnoff, an Orthodox Doukhobor went on a public relations tour in the 1950s in order to address the "not always complimentary" image of 'Douks' in the news.⁷¹ Koozma Tarasoff similarly tried to combat bias in print media through a 1958 study of newspaper representations of Doukhobors.⁷² Tarasoff, in taking up a challenge by the *Vancouver Sun* to prove press bias, found significant variation between papers but nonetheless found widespread use of the derogatory term 'Douk', frequent conflation of 'Doukhobors' and 'Sons of Freedom Doukhobors' and general bias and innuendo.⁷³ The sense of anti-Doukhobor sentiment also inspired a 1952 study of high-school student attitudes towards Doukhobors and compared this with data from a survey completed by adults.⁷⁴ Though Zubeck's study would not stand up to today's social science methods, it found increasing prejudice as students aged and found evidence

65 Harry B. Hawthorn. ed. *The Doukhobors of British Columbia* (Vancouver: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd. 1955), 214.

66 Ibid., 280.

67 Ibid., 282.

68 Ibid., 283.

69 Fraternal Council, Union of Christian Communities and Brotherhood of Reformed Doukhobors, An Open Letter to BC attorney-general Robert Bonner September, 1953. SFU Doukhobor Collection.

70 Hawthorn, *Doukhobors of BC*, 283.

71 Stoochnoff, *Toil*, 1.

72 Koozma Tarasoff, Report on the Press of British Columbia Regarding Doukhobor and 'Sons of Freedom' News, August 30, 1958, SFU Doukhobor Collection.

73 Ibid.

74 John Zubek, "The Doukhobors: A genetic study on attitudes," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 36:2 (1952): 223-239.

that economic competition drove prejudice in the adult sample.⁷⁵ This link between anti-Doukhobor prejudice and occupation was not new; the Blakemore commission had to deal with angry retailers from Grand Forks who believed the Doukhobors unfairly purchased their consumer products from wholesalers.⁷⁶ The Hawthorn Research Committee, in a survey of 74 employers of Doukhobor labour, found that while the majority of firms held "neutral views" toward Doukhobor employees, 25 firms held "predominantly unfavourable" views compared to only 5 firms with "predominantly favourable" views.⁷⁷

In hindsight, the results of the Piers Island experiment seems clear enough: increased isolation of Freedomites from moderate Doukhobors, a virulent sense of martyrdom amongst the Freedomites and a growing security crisis involving bombings and arsons. In response to a series of bombings and arsons the previous year, the *British Columbia Royal Commission on Doukhobor Affairs 1948* was convened with Harry Sullivan as the head commissioner. In his interim report—the commission was never completed because of ongoing violence—Sullivan paints a picture of a small minority that shows "utter contempt" for the government because they have been allowed to "get away with it."⁷⁸ While Sullivan differentiates between fanatics and 'good Doukhobors' who have integrated into Canadian society, he nonetheless argues that "a state of emergency exists,"⁷⁹ and this means that "If you have a cancer in your right hand, it may be necessary sometimes to amputate the whole arm. A lot of muscle and healthy tissue may be sacrificed, but that sacrifice has got to be made for the preservation of life in the whole body."⁸⁰ Once again the assimilative force of childhood education is called upon:

It requires very little observation and thought to come to the conclusion that the only real and permanent solution of the 'Doukhobor problem' lies in education and assimilation; and with this thought in mind I feel that opportunity must be provided [to] the Doukhobor children to participate in all the educational, cultural and recreational activities which our larger schools afford.⁸¹

This report is particularly important because it shows that representatives from the Independent Doukhobors and the Orthodox Doukhobors were willing to throw their support behind any program that would end Sons of Freedom attacks on their community. The details of internal factionalism, however, seemed to be lost on many non-Doukhobors.

Following the failed Sullivan Commission, the Liberal-Conservative coalition government of BC called for a study of the 'Doukhobor problem' as it was by then obvious that previous government action had failed to assimilate all Doukhobors. In fact two committees were created: the Consultative Committee on Doukhobor Affairs that was to deal with the immediate problem of an ever-expanding Freedomite prisoner population and the Doukhobor Research Committee headed by Harry Hawthorn to engage in a longer-term multi-disciplinary study of the 'Doukhobor problem'. One of the main focuses of the Consultative Committee—made up of representatives of all three Doukhobor factions, government representatives and police representatives—was the relocation of the Sons of Freedom either within BC or to another country. The consequence of this proposed 'solution' was another outbreak of anti-Doukhobor agitation.

By the time of the Consultative Committee in 1950 the Sons of Freedom had gone through several leaders in quick succession; the most significant impact of these short-lived leaders was a

75 Ibid., 232-3.

76 British Columbia, *Royal Commission Doukhobors 1912*, 57.

77 Hawthorn, *Doukhobors of BC*, 80.

78 British Columbia. *British Columbia Royal Commission on Doukhobor Affairs 1948-interim report*, 1948, 10.

79 Ibid., 23.

80 Ibid., 24.

81 Ibid., 7.

growing emphasis on the Second Coming of Christ⁸² and the notion of catalyzing the migration of the Sons of Freedom through confessions of crimes.⁸³ Stephan Sorokin, a non-Doukhor, briefly united the Sons of Freedom through a promise for migration and was active in pressing for migration through the Consultative Committee.

The Consultative Committee initially tried to export the Sons of Freedom to a willing host country, but unsurprisingly, the answer from ten different countries was a resounding 'no'.⁸⁴ A pamphlet published in 1950 for public consumption called for a different type of migration for the Freedomites; a forced displacement and dispersion of individual families to hasten assimilation.⁸⁵ It seems many would have preferred this course of action, as the Consultative Committee's new plan to relocate the Sons of Freedom to Adams Lake near Kamloops created an uproar from locals. At the third meeting of the committee in August 1951, the Kamloops Protest Committee made clear their objections to the relocation to Adams Lake based on the perceived security threat;⁸⁶ but strikingly a letter from a local board of trade stated that the "first reason presented for this opposition is that this Sect has given no indication of becoming good Canadian citizens."⁸⁷ Soon after this initial opposition, the local MLA Sydney Smith, a member of the Coalition government, called for vigilante action if the Freedomites were allowed to relocate near Kamloops.⁸⁸ Smith was quoted as saying, "As a last resort I am suggesting we may have to defy the law to combat them."⁸⁹

The sense of political crisis only deepened the following year. With the break up of the Coalition government, a Progressive Conservative MLA, A.B. Ritchie, urged the Liberal government to "Leave the Doukhobors alone. ... You've seen what happens with foot-and-mouth disease. If you don't leave them alone, you will get into more trouble."⁹⁰ The next day the Farmer's Institute called for 200 mile buffer around Kamloops to keep the Freedomites out.⁹¹ In the legislature, discussion of the government's estimates was dominated by more than a dozen MLAs discussing the 'Doukhor problem' and the proposed relocation.⁹² A PC member argued that the government funded research committees were a waste of money that have accomplished nothing, while a CCF member argued the solution was to "drive a wedge" between the Doukhor factions by giving the Orthodox Doukhobors "all the rights we give other *racial* groups."⁹³ The Attorney General's response to those opposed to the relocation of Sons of Freedom Doukhobors drew on a developing post-WWII shift in attitudes toward race and racism; he characterized the Kamloops opposition as 'race prejudice' and argued that MLA Maurice Finnerty's call for the forced dispersal of Sons of Freedom risked repeating "the appalling treatment of Japanese during the war."⁹⁴

Several scholars have argued that the coercive education program of New Denver could have been avoided if cooler heads had prevailed and the more reasonable recommendations of the Doukhor Research Committee had been followed.⁹⁵ The Committee correctly assessed the danger of

82 Woodcock and Avakumovic, *Doukhobors*, 324.

83 *Ibid.*, 329.

84 "Doukhobors' search for new home in other land fails," *Herald*, December 18, 1950.

85 Phillip J. Lipp, *Doukhobors*, 1950, UBC Doukhor Collection file 351.

86 Consultative Committee on Doukhor Affairs, Minutes, August 3rd, 1951. UBC Doukhor Collection, D.Ms. 7.

87 *Ibid.*

88 "MLA Urges Force to Keep Douks Out," *The Province*, September 5, 1951.

89 *Ibid.*

90 "'Hands off' Doukhobors B.C. government told," *The Province*, March 4, 1952.

91 "Kamloops fears 'Sons' invasion" *Victoria Times*, March 5, 1952.

92 "Province in favor of relocating sect," *Victoria Colonist*, March 18, 1952.

93 *Ibid.*, emphasis mine.

94 "Wisner hits Kamloops on Racial Intolerance," *News-Herald*, March 18, 1952.

95 Margaret Hill, "The Detention of Freedomite Children, 1953-1959," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*. 18:3 (1986): 50.; Janzen, *Limits*, 139.; McLaren, "The State," 269; Yerbury, "Sons of Freedom," 48.

creating martyrs through coercive education and noted, "No school or other group should push for an assimilation policy framed in those terms, acceptable to immigrants of other backgrounds; such pressures will inevitably engender future Sons of Freedom."⁹⁶ The Committee's conciliatory approach to education based in proposals for Russian speaking teachers, cultural sensitivity and a modified curriculum⁹⁷ was contrasted with coerced education. It is worth quoting Claudia Lewis' thoughts on removal of children at length:

I believe it is generally recognized now that the removal of children from home during the time of imprisonment at Piers Island was a mistake, albeit one made with good intentions. In fact, the recognition that children need their homes is such an accepted consideration in social welfare work today that it is probably unnecessary for me to develop the point further here.⁹⁸

While this position is clearly at odds with the New Denver program's confinement of children, the spirit of assimilationist education is present throughout the Committee's report.

The Doukhobor Research Committee made clear that despite Sons of Freedom 'violent' opposition to education, school attendance would need to be enforced in order to end the isolation of the faction.⁹⁹ The key was to make education palatable to the parents through professional teachers who understood that "their function involve[d] more than classroom instruction."¹⁰⁰ The something "more" was meant to be a sort of cross-cultural bridge building, but other areas of the report show that the end goal of this integration was a reshaping of the Doukhobor culture. Harry Hawthorn, an anthropologist from UBC, explained this process of change:

From one viewpoint, therefore, it is Doukhobor culture which is unfit; it fails to furnish these constructive roles, and denies the opportunity to develop and to attain goals which are conceivably within the reach of the people. [...] A programme for changing the culture should select new traits for reward, offer new constructive roles, ignore or punish undesired traits, and constrain destructive individuals. This would be only a specialized form of a universal process of history...¹⁰¹

One might think that it is coincidental that this programme sounds somewhat familiar to the ideology of civilizational development applied to indigenous peoples. It is no coincidence, however, as Hawthorne explains, "Successful results of this procedure could be documented from some instances of rapid cultural change among primitive peoples."¹⁰²

Hawthorn stressed that this controlled development of a culture should not focus only on children, but other areas of the report could easily be interpreted to give support to later government policy. Claudia Lewis' chapter, *Childhood and Family Life*, suggests that there is a Doukhobor "way to bring up children" based on "authoritarianism" that when pushed to the extreme creates "the kind of personality structure that may be strongly attracted to the Sons of Freedom."¹⁰³ Lewis emphasizes factors internal to the Doukhobor community at the expense of examining the impact of government policy; the impact of the Piers Island experiment on family life is given less coverage than a section detailing Doukhobor toilet training methods.¹⁰⁴ Alfred Shulman's contribution, dealing with personality

⁹⁶ Hawthorn, *Doukhobors of BC*, 25.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 38-9.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

characteristics and psychological problems, likewise locates the source of the 'Doukhobor problem' as internal to the group. He argues that "the majority of Doukhobors are partially sick and unhappy through causes that lie largely within themselves."¹⁰⁵ Once again, the cause of Sons of Freedom hostility is to be found in overbearing parents who create a 'basic personality type' of passivity and dependence; the burnings and bombings are simply a displaced hostility toward their parents.¹⁰⁶

Later government action clearly ignored many of the recommendations from the committee, but it is also the case that the committee gave support to an ongoing process of educational assimilation. If the source of 'Doukhobor problem' lay in the parents, why not target the children with the goal of a generational solution? The experts from various fields involved in the Doukhobor Research Committee in a sense created 'the Doukhobor' they were studying, but were careful to avoid the racial language of an earlier period. The real political impact of the study, however, was its use by opponents of the government as an example of government inaction on 'the Doukhobor problem'.

On April 10, 1952, at the height of the Adams Lake fiasco, Social Credit won a surprise electoral victory due largely to the use of the Alternative Vote system that rewarded the Socreds with many second preference votes.¹⁰⁷ It is impossible to say how much impact the 'Doukhobor problem' had on the 1952 and 1953 elections, but the central role it played in political debate indicates that it definitely played some role in W.A.C. Bennett and the Socreds' populist appeal. If populist parties are able to come to gain influence during times of crisis,¹⁰⁸ the crisis in BC in the early 1950s was not solely one of big company capitalism and monopoly, but also the crisis of the Sons of Freedom. Bennett's core support in the interior of the province, coupled with his party's focus on small business free-enterprise aligned with the those most likely to harbour anti-Doukhobor sentiment—small-town shopkeepers in the interior of BC. Bennett's 'no-nonsense' approach to the Sons of Freedom was reflective of what David Elkins describes as a British Columbian populist "preference for 'action', getting down to work rather than wasting time talking, and preferably simple, concrete, common sense actions rather than the complicated schemes of experts or intellectuals."¹⁰⁹

The Socred approach to the 'Doukhobor problem' did not materialize immediately, but was rather the result of local demands from residents of the interior. In the run-up to the 1953 provincial election campaign, the CCF MLA from Grandforks-Greenwood called on the government to crack down on Sons of Freedom through increased policing, while defending the majority of Doukhobors.¹¹⁰ Another CCF MLA from Cranbrook argued that if the Socreds did not "get tough" on the Doukhobors, Kootenay residents would take the law into their own hands.¹¹¹ Bennett seemed to take the demands seriously as the government dispatched thirty extra RCMP officers to the area in preparation for the announcement of an election date and a "new plan" for the Sons of Freedom. Just days after the election was called, Attorney General Bonner revealed the government's three point "get tough" policy for dealing with the Sons of Freedom: 1) relocation outside Canada of those willing; 2) 'Rehabilitation' of those remaining; 3) A "firm attitude" toward education and taxation enforcement.¹¹²

The 'get tough' rhetoric struck a chord with those sympathetic to Bennett's anti-intellectualism; Bennett was fond of saying, "An expert is only an ordinary person three miles from home and lost."¹¹³

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 154.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 137.

¹⁰⁷Gordon Hak, "Populism and the 1952 Social Credit Breakthrough in British Columbia," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 85:2 (2004): 2.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁹Hak, "Populism," 9.

¹¹⁰"MLA for Doukhobor Riding Defends Majority of Sect," *Victoria Daily Times*, February 12, 1953.

¹¹¹"House told Douk problem 'serious'," *News-Herald*, February 13, 1953.

¹¹²Cran, *Buck Naked*, 14.

¹¹³David J. Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1983), 185.

A sympathetic editorial in the *Daily Colonist* said, "there is no more silly talk this time of appeasement, of the 'psychological' approach..."¹¹⁴ while *The Province* summed up the frustration of interior residents:

When this radical minority of the Doukhobors begins to burn and bomb and undress it is easy for people in Vancouver and Victoria and Ottawa to be tolerant and academic about it. But if you live in Nelson or Slocan or Grand Forks, if you are a railway man on the much-bombed Kettle-Valley Railway, you find about 30 years of this nonsense makes you impatient. You reach for your gun.¹¹⁵

About mid-election, the Slocan Valley Citizens' Committee called for a curfew to be placed on Doukhobors and a demand that employers hire only non-Doukhobors.¹¹⁶ This same group intercepted Bennett on the campaign trail and forced him to send a telegraph to Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent demanding federal imposition of a curfew on *all* Doukhobors. While some saw this move by Bennett as problematic because it provided ammunition to eastern Canadians who were "all too eager to dismiss [BC's] problems as racial or religious intolerance,"¹¹⁷ Bennett was able to harness this turn of events and paint the federal government as the enemy because of its refusal to act on the crisis.¹¹⁸ This was certainly not the first time anti-minority sentiment and anti-federal rhetoric were combined in BC politics.

In the days immediately before the election, with voters exposed to sensationalist headlines like "Kenya on Vancouver's Doorstep: Man, Guns Lurk in Night in Fear-Ridden Doukland," the Socreds used their "get tough" policy to consolidate support in the interior of the province and form a majority government in 1953. In a policy speech delivered soon after the election, Bennett reiterated the 'get tough' policy, but was careful to distinguish between 'good Doukhobors' and the Sons of Freedom.¹¹⁹ The central pillar of this policy was the mass arrests of Sons of Freedom adults for public nudity and the removal and education of their children. If the government's hand was forced by popular calls for action, debate about the forced confinement of children at New Denver shows that the chosen method was controversial.

Some of the debate about New Denver closely resembles the earlier discourse of 'racial fusion' through education. For example, one commentator argued, "Until all Doukhobor children learn to speak English and think in English, the Doukhobor, like any other racial group similarly situated, will merely be an indigestible mass in the Canadian craw."¹²⁰ For the most part, however, racial language was being used by *opponents* of the New Denver program; a concerned citizen wrote to the editor of the *Vancouver Sun* comparing the government's action to the Nazi regime.¹²¹ In an open letter to the premier, the Sons of Freedom framed their grievances along similar lines. The letter states, "And by the shades of Hitler, anyone with even a drop of Doukhobor blood (it was a drop of Jewish blood in Hitler's day) in their veins is 'verboden' to vote in Dominion Affairs!"¹²² The forced education program, in their view, was "aiming at the extermination of the entire Doukhobor community."¹²³ The Sons of Freedom not only used post-WWII anti-Nazi discourse, but also tried to use the less than ten year old

114"Beyond provincial control," *The Daily Colonist*, April 18, 1953.

115"A powder keg of trouble," *Vancouver Province*, April 27, 1953.

116"Job Boycott of Doukhobors Urged," *Vancouver Sun*, May 4, 1953.

117"Hurting B.C.'s Doukhobor Case," *Vancouver Sun*, May 8th, 1953.

118"Open Door' Policy...Webster," *Vancouver Province*, May 25, 1953.

119Mitchell, *Bennett*, 264.

120Harold Weir, "Teach them English," *Vancouver Sun*, May 10, 1954.

121"Wrong Handling," *Vancouver Sun*, October 23, 1953.

122Fraternal Council CCBRD, I accuse...: An Open letter to the B.C. Government, 1957. SFU Doukhobor Collection.

123Ibid.

U.N. Genocide Convention. In a telegram to the U.N., the Sons argue that "these forcible abductions are an international offence under the U.N. Genocide Convention...It is a direct assault upon human rights and a final attempt to annihilate the identity of our group by assimilating our children into the common nationalistic pattern."¹²⁴

Despite the Sons of Freedom tendency toward dramatic rhetoric and extreme sense of martyrdom, there was an element of truth in these accusations. Government correspondence shows that the proposal for schools to be built in Sons of Freedom communities was rejected because it would not foster assimilation; this document states, "The children will become good Canadians most rapidly if they associate with other Canadian children in regular schools. It is the belief of your Committees that the major hope of solving the Sons of Freedom problem is by a generation or two (25 to 50 years) of compulsory education of children."¹²⁵ Another government official pointed to the success of integrating 'Indians' at a Nanaimo school as a model for dealing with the Sons of Freedom.¹²⁶ While many government officials were enthusiastic about an educational solution, there was concern on the part of the Department of Welfare that the program was not really about education and welfare, but rather about forced assimilation.¹²⁷ The Kootenay and Boundary Citizens' Committee on Doukhobor-Canadian Affairs, seemed to understand clearly enough the purpose of the program; minutes from their first meeting indicate support for a stiffening of the New Denver program with the goal of making "good Canadian citizens out of our minority groups."¹²⁸

The invocation of race and genocide by opponents of New Denver appears to have had an impact on the way New Denver was framed by supporters of the program. The rhetoric of 'getting tough' with the 'Douks' was replaced with the language of children's rights. Supporters of the program would now say such things as, "The children are not being imposed upon in being required to attend school; they are being granted a privilege, which their parents deny them..."¹²⁹ In 1957 W.A.C. Bennett explained, "The children have a right to a Canadian education... We have nothing but goodwill for all the Doukhobors."¹³⁰ The language no longer made reference to the moral duty to populate the West with Anglo-Saxons, but the logic of educational assimilation remained almost identical to this earlier process. The reason Bennett could claim goodwill towards the Doukhobors was because the communal project had almost completely disintegrated and the majority of Doukhobors were integrated into local economies. The Sons of Freedom violent resistance to government intervention, especially the bombings of railways, was a particularly troublesome obstacle to Bennett's comprehensive plan¹³¹ to develop the hinterlands of BC. As on the Prairies fifty years earlier, a faction of the Doukhobors were a 'problematic' people in the government directed development of a settler economy.

Conclusion

The removal and confinement of children at New Denver appears to be somewhat of a puzzle at first; with the rise of 'human rights' consciousness in a post-1945 world and experts warning of the dangers of family separation, why did the BC government take this route? The particulars of BC politics at the time—the invocation of a 'crisis' and the Socred's brand of populism—certainly played a large role; however, the decision to use education as the solution to a problematic people drew on an educational tradition that developed at both the provincial and federal level in the context of expanding

124Fraternal Council CCBRD, Open letter to AA Gusskin, Sondalo, Italy, 1955, SFU Doukhobor Collection.

125Ombudsman, *Righting the Wrong*, 9.

126"Doukhobors not a problem speaker tells women's club," *Vancouver Sun*, November 28, 1951.

127Ombudsman, *Righting the Wrong*, 10.

128Kootenay and Boundary Citizens' Committee on Doukhobor Canadian Affairs, minutes, UBC Doukhobor collection, D.Ms. 25.

129"The 'Sons' Got the Right Answer," *Vancouver Province*, January 8, 1954.

130"Bennett on Doukhobors," *Colonist*, July 26, 1957.

131Stephen Tomblin, "W.A.C. Bennett and Province-Building in British Columbia," *B.C. Studies*, 85 (1990): 47.

settler-colonialism. The New Denver program becomes intelligible when viewed alongside developments in the Indian residential school program at the time; in the late 1940s, while Indian Affairs' goal of assimilation remained unchanged, there was a marked shift toward "educating for citizenship" in integrated provincial schools.¹³² While segregated residential schools would linger for many years, the justification now turned toward the welfare of neglected children.¹³³ New Denver can be seen as a provincial project combining these two imperatives: removal of children for their protection and integration in provincial schools for assimilation. In a related way, Indian Affairs' shift toward provincial education in the 1950s can be understood in light of the colonial foundation of provincial education systems. Provincial education systems developed as a colonial technique to create good settlers and Canadian citizens out of problematic people like the Doukhobors, and the federal government realized it could more cheaply continue its program of assimilation by off-loading responsibility to the provinces.

If re-interpreting Doukhobor history through the lens of anti-colonialism sheds light on some aspects of government policy toward Doukhobors, it also obscures certain details. Other historical accounts have focussed on factionalism in the Doukhobor movement, the strengths and weaknesses of Doukhobor leadership and details about the Doukhobor faith. These details are important if one is to avoid equating Doukhobor education and the residential school program. While provincial education was used to assimilate 'problematic' people, it cannot be forgotten that the Doukhobors—including the Sons of Freedom—were first and foremost settlers, albeit settlers that sometimes got in the way of economic development. While Sons of Freedom parents were invoking the Genocide Convention, the Sinixt—having been displaced by Doukhobors and other settlers—were declared 'extinct' by the federal government. As an 'extincted' people, the Sinixt had little recourse as much of their traditional territory was flooded as a consequence of W.A.C. Bennett's economic vision.

¹³²Miller, *Shingwauk*, 382.

¹³³Ibid., 397.